

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views December, 2005

Check the web site to keep up-to-date with events: www.owb.co.nz

For all walks meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane

For information re walks and seminars contact the Treehouse on (04) 499 1400

First Saturday of each month

Plant care work party. Be at the information centre at 9am.
Leaders: Bronwen Wall, Jonathan Kennett, ph 472 5891

March Seminars :

The annual seminars will be held again in 2006 on Tuesdays in March at 7.30. The theme will be "Working botanists in Wellington." See the next Newsletter for more details.

Otari-Wilton's Bush walks Jan – March 2006.

Sunday 22 January
2pm

Bring your out - of - town visitors and enjoy this walk through Job Wilton's original forest reserve. Good track but with some steps. About 1.5 hours. *Leader: Dr John Dawson*

Sunday, 26 February,
2pm

Come and explore the Wild Garden with its rare and interesting forest plants from the northern North Island and the Three Kings. A short and easy walk. One hour. *Leader: Dr John Dawson*

Sunday, 26 March,
2pm

Get to know our tree ferns. Some we can see near the Visitor Centre, others will require a walk up the Yellow Trail. Some steps along the latter. 1.5 to 2 hours. *Leader: Dr John Dawson*

Contacts:

The Trust Board: Postal Address: 160 Wilton Rd, Wilton, Wellington 5.

- Chairman: Athol Swann, *Phone* 472 8417 *Email* athol.swann@paradise.net.nz
- Secretary: Margaret Crimp, *Phone* 475 3263 *Email* m.crimp@xtra.co.nz
- Treasurer: Johanne McComish, *Phone* 476 2925 *Email* mccomish@paradise.net.nz

The trustees welcome individual communications from members on any matters relating to Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve or the Trust, particularly from those who would like to assist and participate in our activities.

Newsletter: Vera Burton *Phone* 479 4440 *Email* davee@paradise.net.nz

Manager's Otari Report

Hello all. My first week as Curator/Manager at Otari has passed with plenty for me to come to grips with and learn about.

The most recent development at Otari is of course my appointment on Monday 28 November. I am very excited to have been offered the opportunity to contribute to Otari, and I am looking forward to participating in promoting and developing Otari with the Trust.

I have a horticultural background, including two years of horticultural study at Wellington Polytechnic, which lead eventually to the Wellington Botanic Gardens. Working there fostered a realisation of the importance of plant life beyond the amenity uses often singularly ascribed to them, and it showed me how much more there is to plant conservation than just the plants themselves.

I held three positions at the Botanic Gardens over five enjoyable years but left Wellington in late 2003 and moved to Palmerston North to study at Massey University toward a BA in Environmental Studies. I really enjoyed this period, which allowed me to explore the human and social sciences aspects of environmentalism, in tandem with a biological sciences base. I also learned the truth of the saying 'the more you learn, the more you realise there is to learn'!

Other news at Otari includes the felling of a large *Pinus radiata* along the Otari boundary on Wilton Road just North of the Bowling Club; reveg planting is planned for this site as part of next year's plantings.

Design for the Circular Walk and Troup Picnic lawn development is underway, and it is great to see the stand of large pines above the lawn gone now. It sounds like the Otari staff, with help from elsewhere in the Parks business unit, put in a huge effort to clear this area once the pines had been felled – well done.

I hope to meet you all soon, if you are passing through, please drop in and say hello.

Cheers, Rewi Elliot.

Report from the Chairman

Since last newsletter, we have successfully completed another 'open day' held as part of the Botanic Gardens Spring Festival events. The open day was held on a Saturday falling within the school holidays and it was apparent that the numbers of people attending were down on previous years. Although the proceeds from the tea, coffee and cake stall at \$397 were marginally higher, the 'take' for cards and raffle at \$260 was approximately two thirds the level achieved last year. We had the added benefit from being able to offer for sale the latest book published by John Dawson and Rob Lucas 'The Nature of Plants. Habitats, Challenges, and Adaptations'. Overall the net proceeds for the day including contribution for manning the plant sales tills amounted to \$820 against \$880 for the September 2004 open day. Congratulations to the winners of the raffle prizes:

Chris Haronga - Book 'The Nature of Plants' (John Dawson & Rob Lucas)
Spencer Clubb – Choice of 5 native plant seedlings.

The Trust was unsuccessful in our application for a \$500 grant offered to volunteer organizations under the Wellington Airport Community Awards - the Trelissick Park /Ngaio Group received the award in the revegetation section. At time of writing, no decision has been announced in respect of the Plimmer Bequests for which the Trust submitted suggestions - either funding a Learning Centre dedicated to indigenous plants/forest ecology at Otari-Wilton's Bush, if a large project is preferred, or funding track enhancement between the Troup picnic area and Ian Galloway Park, if it is decided to spread the available funds over several projects.

The Application for Consent for the Wilton Bowling Club building to enclose their No.1 green was notified on the 24 September 05 and submissions closed on 21 October 05.

The Trust made a submission opposing the application and requesting speaking time at the hearing. We have been notified that the hearing before Commissioners earlier scheduled to commence on 28 November has been adjourned indefinitely at the request of the applicant for "reconsideration of the proposal in light of the issues raised in the Council's planning report". There were 24 submissions supporting the proposal and 220 opposing. Of those opposing, 36 have asked for speaking time. The Wellington City Council planning officer's report was issued in the week prior to the scheduled hearing and recommended that the application be declined. The issues of concern outlined in our submission, particularly in relation to non-compliance with the Reserves Act 1977, are continuing to be pursued with Council.

We are all delighted to welcome Rewi Elliot who is appointed as the new Curator/Manager of Otari-Wilton's Bush and commenced his duties on 28 November. Some of you may have met Rewi as he was working in the rock garden last summer and prior to that was at the Botanic Gardens. For the past 2 years he has studied for a 'BA in Environmental Studies' at Massey University, Palmerston North. We wish him well in his new assignment.

The month of August 1906 is a significant historical date for Otari-Wilton's Bush, being the month when the first block of land was gazetted as a 'Scenic Reserve' under the Scenery Preservation Act 1903. It is thus the date of origin of the reserve and **August 2006 is the commencement of our Centennial Year.** The Trust Board considers that this presents an opportunity for branding the reserve, with its centuries-old native forest specimens and NZ native plant collections, as **a unique national asset**, being within a few kilometers of the City center. A subcommittee is currently formulating ideas for events and projects to commemorate this centennial year and you will hear more on this in our next newsletter.

Finally, with Christmas and year 2006 advancing on us quickly, I would like to thank all volunteers for your help willingly given during the year, and to wish all our members and supporters a 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year'.

Athol Swann

Words from the Valley

Things are changing apace down in the valley. Anyone whose been walking the 'reveg promenade' lately will have noticed the lovely new interpretation panel near site 9. The sign was put in by Greater Wellington to applaud the great work that has gone into restoring the Kaiwharawhara streamside, and it's even more proof, if you need it, of how valuable all your efforts have been. The event was celebrated with a walk-through by regional and city councillors.

The results of the Global Volunteer efforts at weeding site 3 once a month, every month, are starting to become apparent. It's hard to believe that this site was a mass of blackberry – and more blackberry – little over a year ago, but it's true. Site 3 was planted out in the winter of 2004, and now the whole area is dominated by natives, natives, natives!

Bearing that in mind, we're certain that with your help, we'll be able to keep on top of the weeds on the other sites as well and give the plants there a chance to catch up. But now's the time when weeds, wind and sun make their most aggressive attack on the native seedlings. Sound like a war strategy? Well, in a way, it is; the summer war is being waged as we speak between the elements and the natives, and we're rooting for the natives.

Remember the rabbit problem? Well, the Wallace and Gromit movie *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* came out recently, and it gave us a few ideas ... you might notice a lack of the little cuties down amongst the reveg trees. It really is a very good movie, by the way, and should be watched by all who care for trees, and little bunny rabbits!

Jonathan, not to be outdone by Wallace's inventiveness, has built a foot-powered water pump. Perhaps we've mentioned this before. It has spent a long time in the gestation period, but recent dry weather gave us the necessary impetus, and we are now giving free exercise classes, complete with personal trainers, down in the valley the first Saturday morning of every month. Why don't you pop along to see the spectacle? You never know; you might be inspired to join in.

Bronwen and Jonathan

Recent major accessions.

Robyn Smith - Propagation Project Manager at Otari

In December 2004 while curator at Otari, Robyn Smith joined a party from Wellington Botanical Society and collected plants in the Western Canterbury region.

A permit was given by the Department of Conservation for the collection of a variety of cuttings and seed from alpine and scree plants. These will eventually become part of the Otari collection.

The Dench Collection

Arnold and Ruth Dench who have been selectively collecting and propagating native plants for some decades, have kindly permitted the staff from Otari to duplicate many of their unique collection of native plants. In addition when Arnold and Ruth Dench vacate their suburban home and gardens in Newlands, they have authorized the Otari staff to transplant selected plants that cannot be propagated in the Otari nursery.

The Dench collection, which mainly focuses on alpine and threatened N.Z. species, is a wonderful example of a collection by learned conservationists because their content includes many rare, threatened and endangered native plant species.

The Druce collection.

The late Tony Druce was a leading botanist of his era, as well as an extremely competent field botanist employed by the old DSIR. He was a mentor for today's leading botanists in New Zealand. In the field he was able to recognize a native plant that appeared different from previously collected species or did not 'fit' a known botanical description or had not previously been described. He transplanted these to his garden in Silverstream where they were propagated or potted on. Botanists from all over N.Z. came to study their geographical variation and provenance, when the this collection was transferred to the Percy Reserve where Robyn Smith was curator of the Druce collection for six years.

Because of space restriction, well over 120 plants from this valuable collection have come to Otari where they are nurtured and duplicated.

Many of these three collections are native alpine plants and will be available for the restoration of Otari's alpine garden. Robyn Smith who is now the Propagation project manager at Otari is responsible for these valuable recent accessions, together with a number of threatened species for the Department of Conservation.

Revegetation Project

In September 2005 the Trust together with the Trelissick Park / Ngaio Gorge Working Group, applied to Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) for funding under their Community Environmental Care Programme ('Take Care' programme). We are delighted to report that this application has been successful.

The funding is for the *restoration of further sites within the catchment of the Kaiwharawhara Stream* and, as was the case with our upper Kaiwharawhara project, we will have access to technical support and advice from the GWRC 'Take Care' team to give the 'project' decisive direction. Also, we will be seeking to obtain WCC grants to enable the continuation of professional support from the Kennett Bros.

The 'Take Care' programme provides \$19000 funding over a five year period, the intention being to continue clearing and planting in Otari-Wilton's Bush and the adjacent precincts owned by the WCC, including the area adjacent to Blackbridge Road. In many respects this five year project supports Greater Wellington and Wellington City 'Project Kaiwharawhara' plan, which has as its focus the restoration of the whole of the Kaiwharawhara catchment.

An important initial step in the implementation of 'Project Kaiwharawhara' is the installation of three special information signs within the catchment, outlining the project and recognizing the initiatives of the community groups involved. Further signs are expected to be erected as the project progresses. The initial signs will be placed at:-

Kaiwharawhara Road – adjacent to School Road.

Trelissick Park – within the magazine site

Otari-Wilton's Bush – new picnic area, close to the stream between Ian Galloway Park and the Troup picnic area.

A formal event will take place on Friday 9 December 2005 when **The Mayor and Councillors from Wellington City and Greater Wellington** will 'open' each sign.

Jock Fleming and Wilbur Dovey, Trust project co-ordinators.

Detail of work plans to be funded by GWRC's 'Take Care' programme 2005 / 2010.

- In-filling planted areas. This will be undertaken to increase the biodiversity and stability of planted areas by planting canopy species -- rimu, tawa, kahikatea etc.
- In addition in-filling will be done to replace plants that have not survived earlier plantings.
- Planting out new areas downstream from the 'Kaiwharawhara Stream Revegetation Project':
 - Areas between the Troup picnic area and Zone 1
 - Downstream within Otari on the riparian areas on the true left of the stream
 - At the base of the tip-face
 - In the valley just north of the Churchill Drive / Blackbridge Rd. intersection.
- Throughout the period control, and eradicate, where possible, the key weed species -- tradescantia, old man's beard, japaese honey suckle etc
Volunteers could do some of this. They have helped do this in the past.
This is a big project.
When undertaken it would allow natural regeneration.
- Build a fish ladder at the culvert just north of the Chirchill Dr. / Blackbridge Rd. intersection. This could be undertaken by supervised volunteers, and done relatively quickly.
- Plant climax species such as Kahikatea in Trelissick Park where the sycamore trees have been felled. Boxes alone for these plants would cost up to \$900.00
- Planting out the two areas of railway land, leased to the WCC. These two areas are ideal for planting after clearance, and would make suitable space for a picnic table in either one.
- Continue rabbit control.
- Continue putting up 'interpretation' signs.
- Continue plant-care and plant monitoring.
- With the permission of the WCC, maintain access walkways and pathways in the Trelissick Park and Ngaio gorge areas.

If you remember, in the last newsletter, we offered you the chance to pit your wits against the mammoth skills of our expert contestants from the Tree Party quiz show. We promised you the answers in the following newsletter, so here they are.

2005 Quiz Answers

1. **Q:** The seeds of which common revegetation species can be roasted and ground to make coffee?
A: *Coprosma robusta* or karamu. It belongs to the same family as the coffee bean.
2. **Q:** What is “dendrochronology”?
A: The science of counting tree rings. By applying ourselves to this science, we have deduced that the trees taken down from the Troupe picnic area were 80 to 90 years old.
3. **Q:** According to our research, what has been the fastest growing native tree in Kaiwharawhara valley?
A: *Aristotelia serrata* or wineberry.
4. **Q:** How could a blind botanist tell the difference between manuka and kanuka?
A: Manuka is coarse to touch and kanuka is softer.
5. **Q:** What is the key ingredient in Treepel, the repellent painted on native seedlings to deter rabbits?
A: Egg powder – acrylic resin is included in the mix to help fix the repellent to the plant.
6. **Q:** Who is buried at Otari Wilton’s Bush?
A: Leonard and Maude Cockayne. They died the same year 1934 and are buried near the Cockayne lawn. *The New Zealand Dictionary of Biography* lists Leonard Cockayne as New Zealand’s greatest botanist.
7. **Q:** Name a critically endangered native bird that cannot be saved by transporting it to a pest-free offshore island.
A: Whio, blue duck. The whio needs sizeable, clear, fast-flowing rivers.
8. **Q:** How do trees renew our air supply?
A: They absorb CO₂ and produce oxygen.
9. **Q:** What was Kaiwharawhara Stream originally called?
A: Te Mahanga.
10. **Q:** If you were starving down in Otari Wilton’s Bush and could only eat one plant, what plant would you choose?
A: The cabbage tree. Both the roots and the core of its trunk can be eaten and have been described as “a very good food indeed, as sweet as the European sugar” and the fronds, when dried make excellent fire starters.
11. **Q:** There are 50,000 of this native New Zealand creature on Stephen’s Island in the Marlborough Sounds. Name the creature and list three of its incredible features.
A: The tuatara can hold its breath for up to an hour.
It can regrow its tail.
It will share its burrows with nesting birds – though watch out bird. Hungry male tuatara have been known to eat small chicks from the nests.
12. **Q:** *The Nature of Plants* is a fascinating book written by Trust member John Dawson. In it is described the essential difference between vines and epiphytes. What is that difference?
A: Vines grow up from the ground, and epiphytes grow down from a trunk or branch. Vine example: *Metrosideros fulgens*, climbing rata; epiphyte example: *Metrosideros robusta*, northern rata.

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE)

One of the objectives of our Trust is '*to promote links with conservation, environmental and ecological organizations*'.

Board members have recently been alerted to work being undertaken by the PCE and have obtained a number of reports and publications in order to come to grips with their function and responsibilities. This has been an interesting and potentially helpful exercise.

It would seem that the PCE is an active monitor between the Government's Environmental legislation and plans, and the implementation of these, by bodies responsible for environmental management.

Looking at community groups, the PCE recognizes an increasing number have initiated a range of environmental projects. Many have gone beyond the traditional focus on native flora and fauna, lifting their sights to be involved in broader issues.

It has been stated that there has been variability in the environmental management plans developed and implemented by Councils. It is perhaps this that has generated frustrations in many community groups and their involvement in sustainable issues.

The key roles of the PCE are, firstly, to check the capability of environmental legislation, policies etc, to ensure that the quality of the environment is maintained or improved. Secondly the PCE may investigate concerns about the environmental management and planning performance of public agencies, with a view to improve their accountability.

In addition there are 'supporting' roles -- to disseminate information and stimulate debate and action on environmental issues -- and audit performance of public authorities to ensure they are meeting their environmental responsibilities.

*Reference: **Future Focus:** Strategic Plan of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment -
- 2003-2007*

JF

What Native Plant is That? This course continues to be very popular, so will be offered again in February/March 2006. It is taken by John Dawson and includes Saturday trips to Kaitoke Regional Park, Waikanae Forest Reserves, Otari—Wiltons Bush Native Botanic Garden and an identification morning at Otari.

Wednesdays 7-9pm and various Saturdays, starts 22 February. \$55.
Phone Onslow college 477 1118 for further information.

An important talk given at Otari - 3rd. October 2005

John Sawyer. During Native week, John Sawyer, an ecologist with DoC explained the significance of the recovery of native plants taking place here at Otari. John has a special interest in involving the public in the conservation of threatened native plants.

Broad issues were discussed, but in the space available the following are notes focused on Otari.

A description of the current state of native plants in NZ.

- In New Zealand there is a total of 2345 vascular flora.
- 5% are acutely threatened
- 4% are chronically threatened
- 21% are “at risk”.

Otari plays many roles in plant conservation.

- It is part of a network that protects native plants
- It is able to influence urban planting
- It has an important role in education, interpretation and providing open days
- It has display gardens of native plants
- It cultivates threatened native plants
- Provides facilities for cultivation research
- Influences regional botanic gardens.

Options for Otari for the next ten years.

- Remain an active member of the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
- Establish and maintain ex-situ insurance populations of threatened plants – especially Wellington plants throughout the city.
- Work to protect the threatened plants of Wellington city and restore their communities (e.g. northern rata project, Makara, Tapu Te Ranga Island).
- Provide plants to Council and Department of Conservation for use in species recovery work and for islands, parks, and urban plantings.
- Empower and develop community confidence by assisting local restoration groups, landowners, and Non Government Organisation’s (NGO’S) by providing advice and threatened plants.
- Increase research on the cultivation of indigenous plants.
- Increase education programmes devoted to plant diversity and participate in training programmes.
- Otari can be at the hub of major Plant Conservation Network initiatives.
- The intrinsic biodiversity of Wellington needs on-going protection and that includes indigenous plant species and communities.

J.F.



Carmichaelia williamsii

Large Flowered Broom

Most species of native broom have small purple or white flowers in clusters. The one exception is *Carmichaelia williamsii*, which has larger yellow flowers with reddish edges and veins. It is a coastal plant from the East Cape area, and is fairly easy to grow. It tolerates wind and prefers good sun and good drainage. The branches are wider than most native brooms, and flattened, making it a distinctive and unusual plant. In a spot it likes it flowers from spring to autumn, and it can be seen at Otari in the Carmichaelia border near the bowling club entrance.

Obituary: Helen Marjorie Olive GORDON

25th June 1907 – 8 August 2005

(Written by her daughter, Helen Waugh)

In August, my mother, Marjorie Gordon passed away in Ashburton. Marjorie had a life-long involvement with Otari-Wilton's Bush. It was the place where she played as a child, took her college friends for walks, and went on family excursions with her own children. Going to see the glow worms and climbing up to the flax clearing were favourite trips. In older years she loved sitting on the verandah at 116 Wilton Road or in the car at the carpark and looking at the trees. The bush was just there, and part of her life. She was a member of the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, and was most interested in their activities. She enjoyed being present at the opening ceremony for the treetops walkway and extended visitor's centre.

Marjorie came to live at the old farmhouse at 116 Wilton Road in 1915, when her parents, Willie and Annie Curtis purchased the house and 5 acres of land around it. The family shifted from Petone to live in the home of Willie's aunt and uncle, Ellen (nee Curtis) and Job Wilton. Marjorie was 8 years old, and her sister Ethel 3 years old. The girls made friends with Old Mac, the gardener employed by Martin Chapman to look after Wilton's Bush. The McLeod family came to live in a house where Otari School is now, and the families enjoyed each other's company. The farmhouse's water was piped from a reservoir higher up the Tinakori Hill, and the neighbours were grateful for access to this supply when their rainwater tanks were empty during dry summers. Several holiday baches were scattered around the edge of the bush, but apart from funeral processions on their way to the Karori Cemetery and the weekly delivery from the Wadestown shops there was very little traffic on Wilton Road. Old Mac was lame and used his fork as a walking stick, and the family could always tell when he and his dog had gone to town because of the fork marks at the side of the gravel road.

Marjorie walked to Wadestown to school. When the new school was built at Rose Street she attended there. To go to Wellington Girls College she caught the tram into the city. It was a 20 minute walk to the Wadestown terminal, carrying a heavy case of books. Marjorie's best time was 7 minutes. The University and Training College were at Kelburn, and the girls walked across the farmland, and crossed a wooden bridge where the Kelburn viaduct is today.

Electricity did not come to 116 Wilton Road until the 1920s. Until then the last electric street light was on the corner of Wilton Road just past Purakau Avenue – a tantalizing glimpse from the farmhouse which was dependent on candles and oil lamps for light at night.

Marjorie attended Victoria University for 2 years, then went to Teachers' College where she spent 3 very happy years. She was selected for a third year in music, sang soprano in the Wellington Harmonic Society Choir and was awarded a blue in basketball. She was elected Vice President of the Student Executive in her second year. Marjorie played the violin and the piano, but her main love was choir work. She trained the school choir in her first teaching position in Martinborough. Later in Ashburton, she formed the St. Andrews Sunday School children into a choir to present a Christmas service of readings and carols each year.

Marjorie married Douglas Ross Gordon in Wellington in December 1936. They began their married life in Ashburton where Doug had been appointed to the position of Engineering Master at the Technical College. Marjorie's home was there for the rest of her life.

Doug died in 1947, leaving Marjorie with two young children. Helen was 7 years old and Alex 4. From then on, Helen and Alex had wonderful holidays, spent with their Nannie and Auntie Ethel at 116 Wilton Road. Wilton's Bush was their playground and George and Margaret Connor and the twins, Ross and John Miller were fellow explorers. Auntie Ethel taught them how to recognize the leaves and the names of the trees and plants - as she taught several generations of Wellington children in her classroom at Northland and Karori and Wadestown Schools. She organized longer walks e.g. up to the skyline, where the wind was so strong that a 12 year old could sit and be supported by the wind.

Marjorie continued her involvement with Wellington and Wadestown/Wilton for the rest of her life, and always enjoyed staying at 116 Wilton Road. In her older years she spent the winters there and always arrived for special events involving family or friends. The Bush was always one of her special places.

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

Membership Application Form

Our membership year is from 1 April to 31 March. New members joining after 1 January will have the membership accredited to the following year. Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter and receive notification of all forthcoming activities at Otari - Wilton's Bush.

I wish to join the Trust
 (name of new member)

Postal Address

Telephone ().....(Home) E-mail.....

Billing Name and Address
 (if different from above)

Subscription:	Corporate	\$30	
	Double/Family	\$15	
	Individual	\$10	
	Student/Unwaged	\$5	
Donation:		\$	
Total Payment:	(please enclose your cheque)		\$

The Trust is registered as a Charitable organisation and donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible. We will automatically send you a receipt for tax purposes. We regret we cannot process payments by Credit Card.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please indicate the areas of interest to you from the following list:

- Work parties Weekend hosting at Otari Information Centre
 Fund raising

Please send your application to: The Treasurer,
 Otari-Wilton's Bush,
 160 Wilton Road,
 Wilton,
 Wellington.