

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views June, 2020

Web site: www.owbt.nz For all walks meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane unless otherwise stated. Walks with talks first will start at the Leonard Cockayne Centre. Unless otherwise stated walks are free to Trust members and children under 15, otherwise \$6. For information re walks and seminars contact the Treehouse on (04) 499 1400

The second Saturday of each month. 9am	Plant care is on the second Saturday of each month We restarted on the 13 th June. Contact Wilbur Dovey, 499 1044.
Sunday 26 July 2020 2pm	“Kōwhai” Kōwhai is our unofficial national floral emblem with its distinctive bright yellow flowers. Learn about the eight species of kōwhai in New Zealand, where they occur in the wild and the threats they face. <i>Presenter: Dr Lara Shepherd, Evolutionary Biologist at Te Papa</i> Numbers limited to 30. Free to Trust members otherwise \$6 – please make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz)
Sunday 23 August 2pm	“Using Native Plants in Your Garden” Native plants can look great in your garden and be easy care. But.. you need to find the right plant! <i>Presenter: Jane Humble</i> Free to Trust members otherwise \$6 – please make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz)
Sunday 18 October 2pm	“Miocene Flora of Aotearoa” <i>Learn about the trees that dominated the subtropical forests of Aotearoa more than five million years ago. What was that forest like? What elements of the flora were yet to evolve?</i> <i>Presenter: Dr Carol West</i> Free to Trust members otherwise \$6 – please make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz)

Chairman's Message

Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust Trust Board Report 2019-2020



This is the 20th annual report of the Trust and it has been a full year of activities for Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust. The year will be remembered for the completion of the conservation platform for the 800 year old Rimu tree in the Bush reserve at Otari. Also for the support of our members through the great volunteer work they performed.

The Board activities have included:

- 1) Representing member's interests in the annual plan process.
- 2) Making submissions to Council and DOC on matters impacting Otari-Wilton's Bush.
- 3) Continuing trapping and pest eradication equipment around Otari and environs.
- 4) Providing volunteers, guides, refreshments and BBQ for the Open Day.
- 5) Compiling and producing the 2020 Otari calendar funded by the Trust.
- 6) Arranging provision of hosts at weekends at the information centre.
- 7) Arranging training and enlarging guiding team for tours both local, international and ex cruise ships tours.
- 8) A range of volunteer services during each week to assist with nursery and garden maintenance.
- 9) Supervision of the revegetation maintenance and planting on a monthly basis.
- 10) Planning future volunteer guide operations for tourists to Otari-Wilton's Bush.
- 11) Discussions with WCC on funding for rimu platform and other projects
- 12) Delivering the successful series of seminars on Tuesday evenings in March unfortunately shortened by COVID-19.
- 13) Planning and managing the monthly walks programme.
- 14) Maintaining the existing web site and Facebook page for the Trust.
- 15) The movement of our accounting systems onto a computerised system (Xero) which will provide more timely financial and membership information.
- 16) Support for Alan Mere award nomination for Rodney Lewington.

Planning

The Trust can be proud of its achievements over the past 20 years and Otari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve is an internationally recognised place with great support from its community. The current COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly affect the future of the Trust operations and it is important to discuss our way forward for the next five years and beyond.

We have a strong financial base and are always looking for future projects that fit within our objectives as a Trust.

The Board has been discussing the way forward from 2020 and a strategy session is being planned for the near future. Any thoughts you may have in this regard please let us know or talk to one of the Board members.

Project Rambo (Rats and Mustelid Blitzing at Otari)

This project has now been going for a number of years and the experience is making it more successful. Jim Tait is producing regular reports and liaising with GWRC and other nearby groups. Our special thanks to those who walk these trap lines and rebait the traps.

The general health of the bush and its ecosystems is commented on frequently by visitors.

Hosting

The Trust has recruited and trained a number of hosts this year. We can still accommodate more if any of our members are interested. Peter and Jeannie Buxton have been managing this aspect and are still looking for interested people.



Guiding

This area has been well managed by Wilbur Dovey this year and has carried on the basic structure set by Rodney Lewington and last year by Carol West & Bev Abbott. Having had a successful year in 2018 we knew that we needed more guides and that 2019-20 would be a record year for cruise ships in the Port of Wellington. We ended early due to Covid-19 but still gave 34 tours to nearly a thousand people. Our special thanks to those 28 guides who helped out with all the uncertainties, weather and late cancellations. Six new guides started this year.

Revegetation

Wilbur Dovey continues, as he has done for many years, to supervise and participate in the maintenance and planting work of the Revegetation Team. This dedicated team of volunteers, until COVID-19, did their field work on the second Saturday of each month.

Monthly Walks

The monthly walks programme was well attended. The 2019 program was managed by Clare Stanford but she has resigned. We are still looking for a person for the future.

Membership

A special welcome to all new members this year. We are looking to improve our current membership system.

Finances

Our performance report shows a deficit for the current year but this was signalled last year when the Rimu platform was postponed due to completion of the plant laboratory. See Treasurers report for details.

Newsletter

Vera Burton continues to do a valuable job on our newsletter and we hope you enjoy the regular information about Otari-Wilton's Bush. There is also a database of newsletters available from our website under news.

Conclusion

In presenting this report on behalf of the Trust Board I would like to acknowledge and thank fellow trustees, the Otari-Wilton's Bush staff, WCC managers, Trust volunteers and members for their support during this year in all activities of the Trust.

Phil Parnell
Chair Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust

Otari Awards

Mick Parsons and Jeannie Buxton were this year's recipients of the Otari Awards.

Mick Parsons

Mick formerly worked at Otari-Wiltons Bush for some years. He has continued to help out in a number of ways particularly as a guide. He is a valued member of Otari Trust.

Jeannie Buxton

Jeannie has helped Peter on a number of trust initiatives over the years and last year took over they took over the hosts recruitment, training and scheduling. This has been interrupted by Covid-19 but is about to restart and Jeannie deserves an award for the efforts she has made since taking on this role.

Greetings from the New Chair of the Trust Board

Kia ora koutou

It was an honour to be elected Chair after the recent AGM, succeeding Phil Parnell who has served as Chairman for the past thirteen years.

The Trust has a strong network of volunteers who contribute many hours of work to benefit Otari and its visitors. Some of that volunteer work raises funds which contribute towards improvements at Otari or assist with funding staff training, research and education.

You may have noted, from the Trust Board's Annual Report, that the Board has a strategy meeting planned to discuss activities for the next few years. As COVID-19 has disrupted our major streams of income (guiding tourists from cruise ships, Otari Open Day), this strategic work is more important than ever. In addition we want to ensure that we mark the centenary of Otari in 2026 appropriately and that will take a bit of planning.

Here's a brief history of the origins of the Reserve:

"In 1918, the land was transferred to the city of Wellington for "recreation purposes and for the preservation of native flora". As a result of the vision of J.G. MacKenzie and L. Cockayne, in 1926 the site became the Otari Open-Air Native Plant Museum. The objectives of the reserve haven't changed much since that time. The original four-point scheme still holds: to establish a collection of as many New Zealand species as possible for cultivation in the museum; to propagate various important types of primitive vegetation typical of New Zealand; to restore the bush area to its original form; and to illustrate how indigenous plants could be used in home gardens and for other horticultural purposes."

Please feel free to approach any of us on the Board with your thoughts on how the Trust can continue to contribute to the national treasure that is Otari Wilton's Bush.

Carol West
Chair



Athol Swann - Life Member

At The AGM Athol Swann was made a Life Member of the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust.

Athol Swann was a founding member of the Trust and was on the Board for a number of years, helping to steer the Board through the various procedures needed to establish the group, culminating in it becoming a Charitable Trust. He was Chairman for several years and in this time he organised funding from various sources to enable the building of the protective platform around the Northern Rata and also the platform by the waterfall. Even when he resigned from the Board Athol was very involved in the Trust's activities. He was always ready to guide the Board with advice on the financial affairs of the Trust and helped with the preparation of the end of year financial report; he would be down in the valley helping with the revegetation project and he always turned up to the Cleanup Otari days, armed with his special tool for picking up rubbish. Athol was also an Otari host and guide. The cards that the Trust sells were instigated by Athol as a fundraising project, and still every Open Day Athol is there selling cards and raffle tickets. One of the prizes is always one of the beautiful bowls that Athol turns, often from wood from a fallen Otari tree.

All who know of Athol's dedication to promoting and enhancing Otari will certainly agree that Athol was worthy of a life membership.

Otari Report



What has been happening here at Otari in the last few months? It isn't so easy to recall. It has been a very unusual day to day existence here at the gardens since we emerged from Level 4. However, the last two weeks have seen a return to some normality. The whole team is back on board. The horticultural volunteers, Plant Care and hosts have now returned. The nursery propagation house (which has been in a bad state of repair for a long time) is now powered, plumbed and back into action. The service driveway that was badly damaged in heavy rains almost two years ago has been strongly retained, resurfaced and is now driveable. Various dilapidated wooden seats have now been replaced around the entrances and the information centre. The Leonard Cockayne Centre has just had a fresh lick of paint that is a new colour scheme, and the BBQ's have been switched back on! All of this completed in just the last two weeks.

I live on the Kāpiti Coast so was unable to come to Otari during the whole lock down period. However, gardener Megan Ireland kept a keen eye on the place for a few hours a week and made sure the plants in the nursery were being cared for. Many thanks for all of her hard work during that crazy time. The rest of us returned to a new way of working. Lots of diluted bleach was involved. Looking at the gardens today, I think we had a successful recovery. Work has been excellently prioritised, and the gardening has been assisted by a few redeployed staff from the council Tip Shop. Their work has been greatly appreciated.

Our major project now is the upgrade of the Information Centre. There has been a lot of excellent involvement from various groups, especially the Otari Trust that will improve this building for all it's different users and visitors. Otari is still all about the outside experience, but the Centre will support us more in celebrating New Zealand flora, providing much better opportunities to rest, read and inform. What will soon complement the upgrade of the Information Centre, sometime in the near future, will be the upgrading of interpretation around the gardens. We will also start weaving te ao Māori throughout Otari, something we have wanted to do for a long time now.

You may not know that we also maintain the gardens at Te papa. The team is there today with a plant that Karin has been working with in the Otari Lab, *Lepidium rekohuense*. This plant of the brassicaceae family is endemic to the Chatham Islands and has a threat status of Nationally Critical. The last wild populations are incredibly vulnerable to coastal erosion and animal browse. We are planting out a number of plants that were grown from wild sourced seed at Otari in partnership with DOC. They are the offspring of successful germination tests being done in the Lab. Karin is studying the optimum conditions needed for storing the seed, ensuring the best germination strike rate once they are removed from storage. Hopefully the Te Papa population will flourish and provide lots more seed for future research. The plant is very susceptible to pests and disease in cultivation so we will not be returning them to the Chatham Islands. Introducing unforeseen threats to a very fragile population would be a disaster. But understanding how to store the seed as a last chance insurance is incredibly important.

Anyhow, that's about it for now. I hope you enjoy your next visit to the Otari gardens. I think are looking fantastic right now, but I would say that...

Many thanks,

Finn Michalak
Manager
Otari Native Botanic Garden.

Right: Dave Bidgood propagating Brachyglottis kirkii var. kirkii in the renewed propagation house.



Trust Board 2010 – 2021



The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

Chairman: Carol West	9 Mamari Street Rongotai	carolwest@xtra.co.nz	
	Phone: 387 3396		
Secretary: Wilbur Dovey	40 Warwick St., Wilton.	cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz	
	Phone: 499 1044		
Treasurer. Treasurer. Tim Mason	54 Cashmere Ave, Khandallah.	timmason429@gmail.com	Phone: 479 0544
Bev Abbott	40 Pembroke Road, Northland	bevabbott@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 475 8468
Peter Buxton	3 Ngaio Road, Kelburn, 6012,	pebuxton@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 475 3848 027 4723455.
Jane Humble	16 Izard Road, Khandallah	jhumble16@gmail.com	Phone: 971 6970
Phil Parnell	93 Amritsar St, Khandallah.	landy@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 479 2239
Ian Stockwell	2 Paisley Terrace, Karori .	stockwellian@hotmail.com	Phone: 476 3630

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 938 8207. veeanddave93@gmail.com

Phil Parnell

Phil Parnell has stepped down as Chair of the Otari-Wilton's Bush after 13 years as Chair but will remain as a member of the Trust Board.

Phil was elected Chair in 2007 following the retirement of Athol Swann that year. Phil was heavily involved in the organisation of the Bioblitz in March 2007 and had been active in volunteering prior to that, particularly in the revegetation programme of the Kaiwharawhara Stream Valley from the Troup Picnic Area up to the former tip face below Ian Galloway Park, which is still continuing.

During his time as Chair Phil has developed the Otari Trust website and Facebook page and produced the Trust's annual calendar for a number of years using his photography skills, which are a particular interest of his. His barbecue skills, ably supported by his wife June, have been a prominent feature of the Trust's activities on Open Days and we look forward to continuing to enjoy his gourmet sausages in years to come.

Phil has also effectively fronted many of the Trust's submissions to the City Council on matters of interest affecting Otari during his time as Chair.

His knowledge of the tourism industry has been put to good use in the organisation of the tours run by the Trust for overseas visitors. Board members have appreciated his kindness to them and support in times of sickness or bereavement.

Many thanks Phil.

Wilbur Dovey



OTARI TOUR SEASON 2019-20



The 2019-20 tour season at Otari promised to be the best season yet for the Trust since Rodney Lewington started working with inbound tour operators offering tours for cruise ship passengers in the 2012-13 season. Prior to that, John Dawson had offered individual tours on request for visiting cruise ships and local tour groups. Since then, these tours have become the main source of revenue for the Trust.

In the intervening years the number of cruise ships visiting Wellington has increased greatly, with up to 123 cruise ships originally expected in 2019-20, and the season has been extended from the November to March period to October to April with a concentration of visits in January-February.

Upon Rodney's untimely death in 2018, Bev Abbott and Carol took over at short notice for the remainder of the 2018-19 season with Wilbur Dovey taking over for the 2019-20 season.

At the beginning of the 2019-20 season, the Trust was asked to provide 60 tours by the major inbound tour operator that we work with, and we had requests from smaller operators and garden tour groups for up to 10 more tours during the season. We were able to recruit five new guides for the season to help cope with this number. As it turned out, the bigger ships, for which we were asked to provide two tours of up to 40 people for each visit, in most cases only had enough people for one tour and in the case of one particular ship, 9 out of 10 scheduled tours were cancelled due to lack of numbers.

While it remains normal practice that the majority of the tours we offer go to both Zealandia and Otari, we noticed a growing trend in 2019-20 for tours to come exclusively to Otari, arising from Otari's increasing international reputation as the national plant collection for New Zealand and a growing interest in plants generally. This enabled us to have more time to provide a longer, more relaxed tour which was appreciated particularly by a more elderly clientele. We were also able to provide tours in German and French which we could offer, thanks to the language skills of our guides. It is something we would wish to pursue in the future when overseas visitors are again able to visit in sufficient numbers.

Before Covid19 put a sudden end to the season we had completed 36 tours for 850 people using a pool of 29 guides. We would like to thank everyone for their willingness to guide and their cooperation and understanding to make it all work, sometimes having to make changes at short notice, which is a feature of the tourism industry. It all adds to the excitement but doesn't make for a quiet life.

Wilbur Dovey

We need your help!

In our last issue we asked you for photos for our calendar so we could produce it in time for Open day. We won't be having our usual open day this year. So there is even more reason to get our calendar out early and get all the publicity possible.

We have some beautiful, interesting, quirky photos that you have taken at Otari, or on trips arranged by OWT. But we would like more! So if you have a photo you would like to share please send it in – as soon as possible!

Email to veeanddave93@gmail.com, or if it is in hard copy, phone Vera on 938 8207

FROM THE TREASURER

Thanks to all of those members who have paid this year's membership subscription, and special thanks to those who have made often very generous donations. It all helps to keep the Trust alive.

Can I remind those who have not yet paid to do so as soon as possible so I don't need to hassle you with reminders. Thanks too for your patience with the new electronic system of emailing subscription notices. There are still a few minor glitches but we are getting there.



From the Archives:

Development of the rock garden

Inspecting the new rock garden. On the left is Mr. Hutt who was manager of the Botanic garden at the time; Brockie is probably the one in the middle.



The old photo is from a newspaper clipping at the time the rockery was completed.

Colour photo is the same area from the other direction.

Leon Perrie spoke at the AGM:

Camping in Guadalcanal's jungle, and other tales of Pacific fern exploration

New Zealand often seems a ferny place, but each of New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Samoa have more indigenous species of ferns and lycophytes than our 200 or so. What sets New Zealand apart is the ecological prominence of its ferns, and their high endemism (c. 45%). Most of the Pacific Islands have much lower endemism; e.g., only c. 10% among the perhaps 500 species in the Solomon Islands.

Of the c. 110 indigenous-but-not-endemic species in New Zealand, most are shared with (temperate parts of) Australia. But several tens of species are also shared with the Pacific Islands, with many of these needing taxonomic reappraisal. I've been fortunate to have had six fern collecting trips in the Pacific Islands (three to New Caledonia, 2 Fiji, 1 Solomon Islands).

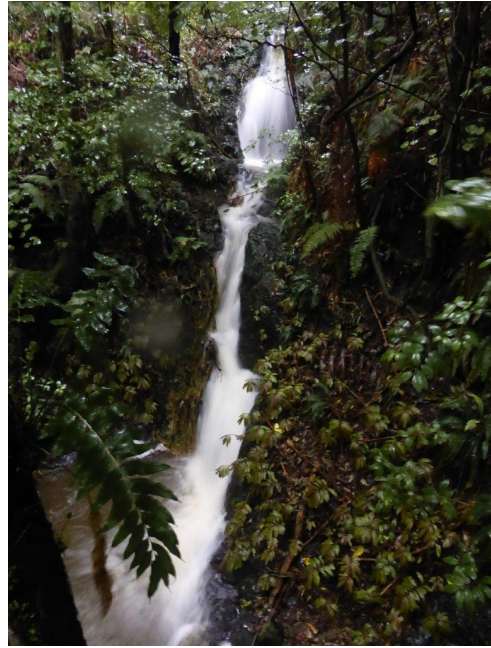


Both the landscapes and the botany are a mixture of the familiar (e.g., *Dracophyllum* and *Xeronema* in New Caledonia) and very different (e.g., New Caledonia's parasitic podocarp *Parasitaxus usta*). A week based in a temporary village constructed in the mountain jungle of Solomon Islands' Guadalcanal is an experience I'll never forget, with mud everywhere, the kitchen tent erected over a stream to provide 'plumbed' water, electric lighting, and the all-night din of tiny frogs croaking. With new species, new records, and re-discoveries, the specimens I've collected are improving the documentation of these nations' ferns and lycophytes. It's also providing a stronger southwest Pacific context in which to appreciate Aotearoa's own flora.

Left: Cyathea intermedia

Above: Parastitaxus dzumac

Photos Taken by Eleanor Burton after the recent rain storm.



Waterfall



Kaiwharawhara Stream



Macrolepiota clelandii, graceful parasol

Myosotis pottsiana

This is a critically threatened plant found in Te Urewera and Raukumara. It is a plant of riverbanks and gorges, especially in places that are prone to occasional flooding. It is a white flowered forget-me-not, and in the garden seeds itself generously everywhere. It is easy to grow and propagate. At Otari it can be seen in the gardens around the Leonard Cockayne Centre.



OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

(Supporting Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve)

Membership Application Form

We are delighted to welcome new supporters and there are a number of ways you can help us to preserve this internationally significant native botanic garden and bush reserve for future generations. 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. Please fill out the form below.

YOUR DETAILS		MEMBERSHIP	\$
Name(s):		Individual \$10	\$
Address:		Double/Family \$15	\$
PHONE Number(s):		Corporate \$30	\$
Email Address:			
* Donation			\$
Billing name & address: (if different from above)		Total Payment:	\$

<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque enclosed (Please make out to Otari Wilton's Bush Trust Please post to: The Treasurer, Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, 160 Wilton Road, Wilton, Wellington 6012	<input type="checkbox"/> Paid electronically (please mark DONATION & your NAME in reference. Westpac account # 030518 0205713 000
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*The Trust is registered as a Charitable organisation and donations over \$5.00 qualify for a tax rebate to individual taxpayers. (annual limits apply). Unfortunately we are unable to process payments by Credit Card.

☐ I would like a receipt for my donation.

• VOLUNTEER

We have over 100 volunteers who are active regularly at Otari. It's up to you how much time you commit – and you can choose how you would like to get involved from a range of activities, from hosting and guiding tours to working in the Otari nursery, pest control and forest restoration. Please contact Secretary Wilbur Dovey cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz