

Ōtari Newsletter

June 2026

For Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust members
Join us on www.owbt.nz

Ngā mihi nui, greetings in this, our Centenary Year

On October 12, 1926, the Ōtari Open-air Native Plant Museum was opened, setting the scene for the protection of some of New Zealand's rarest native plants. This continues in today's Ōtari Native Botanic Garden, an essential part of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

In this issue:

- Our new chair and the Ōtari Lab
- Ōtari Manager's update
- A sculpture and a sign: reflecting and celebrating 100 years
- A new lawn and a refreshed garden
- Our People
- Restoration Revisitation and the amazing outcome
- Botanical art, macro magic, and more



Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Volunteers

Kia ora koutou

It felt a bit strange stepping back into the Chair of the Board role but there was no time for reflection. Fellow Trustee, Kathy Ombler and I were immediately focussed on informing Councillors and local MPs about the important research that is conducted at the Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Laboratory. This also involved preparing our submission on the Draft Annual Plan. After significant delay we did eventually get some engagement with WCC staff but that was well after proposed budget cuts had been locked into the draft Plan. I'm pleased to advise that we and other submitters helped to secure sufficient budget (\$100k) to run the Lab for the coming year, retain Research Technician Jen Alderton-Moss's position and continue work on partly-completed projects. We were gratified that 39 submissions were received in our support, from local individuals to local, national and international organisations, including Botanic Gardens Conservation International based at Kew Gardens.



Over the coming year we will work with WCC, Te Papa, DOC, Victoria University and Karori Lions to establish a long-term operating model for the Lab so that the valuable work to safeguard our native plant species can continue. Currently, the approved Annual Plan indicates the budget for the Lab will be withdrawn altogether from the 2027/2028 financial year. This is concerning. It is our view, and that of many others who know more about the established role and functions of botanic gardens than our humble Trust, that WCC must retain ownership of the Lab and increase its understanding of the benefits the work provides to Wellington City. This is particularly important as global warming ramps up impacts on infrastructure and creates new threats for our native flora.

Meantime, natural regeneration in the Kaiwharawhara Valley has been proceeding apace aided by the work begun more than 20 years ago by volunteers and council staff, led by Jonathan Kennett and Bronwen Wall. The profound changes are described in this newsletter. Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted during the summer months with remeasurement of the sites, light welling, weeding and removal of carpet mesh and rubbish.

Planning for the Centenary celebrations is continuing. We will run a small fundraising auction at the Community Function at the Bowling Club on 12 October and already have some Ōtari-specific artworks donated. **If you have a desirable Ōtari-specific item to donate for auction, please contact me.**

Open Day will be on Saturday 19 September and will be similar to last year's – great weather, tasty sausage sizzle, plenty of luscious native plants for sale, lots of activities and other groups present – and all with a Centenary theme. Mark the date in your calendar and keep an eye on our website, social media and the next newsletter.

I'd like to thank outgoing Chair Kevin O'Connor and Treasurer Ivan Jakich for their contributions to the effective running of the Trust, and welcome our new Treasurer, Paul Clarke. Welcome also to our latest volunteer group, the Track Maintenance Team who made an impressive start by improving access from Ian Galloway Park – see our coverage in this newsletter. Wilbur Dovey has just announced he will step down as leader of the Kaiwharawhara Restoration Group after 21 years. Thank you, Wilbur, for your long service and for the difference you and your team have made to the valley.

We appreciate the great relationship we have with the hard-working Ōtari staff and we thank all of our members for your support of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Did you know about 200 people have volunteered their time over a wide range of activities at Ōtari during the past year!

Ngā mihi nui, Carol West

Ōtari Manager Update

A very mild and dry autumn, with forecasts of a hot and dry summer are a concern to us and horticulturalists across the motu. Fortunately, we started planting early this year. You can see some new plants in the expanded Threatened Species Garden as well as a complete overhaul of the Oval – this can be viewed from the Cockayne Lookout, right next to the maze. We have more planting to do this winter and have been mulching heavily as we work our way around the gardens.



Cockayne Lawn

We are very pleased that we have been able to reopen the Cockayne Lawn. Thank you for your patience while we experimented with the establishment of a native grass lawn. While this was not successful, we have improved the lawn considerably, including new soil, edging and irrigation which will save us a lot of time and water going into the dry summer forecast ahead. Within minutes of opening a local on-leash dog lay down on the new grass – its owner told us that the lawn is its favourite place in the world!

This summer we are anticipating a fair bit of disturbance for our visitors as Wellington Water/Tiaki Wai are planning to renew the water supply main all along Wilton Road. This is in addition to the planned works to upgrade the sewer under Churchill Drive, which will require complete closure of our Northern Carpark for months, from October. WW have told us they are planning to minimise disruption by digging up Wilton Road in short sections. We don't have much more information than that at this stage.

Celebrations for our centenary are ongoing with lots of interest in the seminars and guided walks, including a few live crosses from Ōtari on TVNZ Breakfast for the experts involved. My team appreciated a centenary morning tea shout from the Onslow Garden Club, who came for a Fungi tour with Geoff Ridley.



Fungi walk

The first school term was really busy with school visits. It's fantastic to see more schools visiting and many coming back each year.



Rātā moehau

Our work on rātā moehau (Bartlett's rātā) continues and the plants that we hand pollinated over summer have produced lots of seed. Some of these will be propagated by Ngāti Kuri at their nursery in the Far North. Also, lots of harakeke plants have been distributed to local weavers. These became available after recent storms blew over several bushes. These were salvaged by my team working with local weavers. We were also stoked to be able to provide a large amount of wood, saved following these storms, to local carvers.

In May we farewelled apprentice Amber and have now welcomed our new apprentice, Carys. Amber did a great job on the Wardian Case – which you can see outside Tāne Whakapiripiri, Ōtari's Visitor Centre, until August. We have also had Lyall, from Wellington High School, doing work experience with us recently which has been great. We also were fortunate to have two French interns who spent a whole month working with us.



Track work

Our Groundsman Martin has been working with Kathy from the Trust to set up a new track working group. They have started on the track at our Ian Galloway entrance, at the upstream end of Te Ara o Kaiwharawhara Awa, the pink track which runs along Kaiwharawhara Stream from the northern carpark. This track is one of the most popular we have for locals, so it's great to have locals contributing to improvements. They meet on the fourth Thursday morning of the month, so if you or someone you know is keen to get involved, please reach out.

It is fantastic to be so well supported by volunteers at Ōtari. A recent summary by the Trust showed that volunteers are delivering at least the equivalent of seven full time worker's

time at Ōtari. This is likely a conservative estimate which makes it even more impressive, also it doesn't include interns or people doing work experience. Thanks again to everyone who contributes to the work we do together at Ōtari.

Mā te wā, Tim Park

Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari - Manager Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve

The Oval refreshed and the Kew connection!

By Megan Ireland, Kaihautū o te Kohinga o Ōtari | Ōtari Collection Team Leader



The Oval is below the Cockayne Lookout and differs from most other gardens in Ōtari. Ōtari collections fit into five categories: Taxonomic (e.g. Veronica collection), Horticultural (e.g. Cultivar collection), Ecological (e.g. Alpine collection), Geographical (e.g. Rainshadow), and Conservation (e.g. Threatened species collection).

While most are closely aligned to our horticultural collections, the Oval garden is unique in that it changes more frequently. Every three years or so this provides an opportunity for staff, either individually or collaboratively, to get creative and come up with new designs.

Previously the garden focused on low-growing and mat-forming species, predominantly coastal species such as *Eryngium undulatum*, *Leptinella filiformis*, and *Lepidium banksii*, growing amongst the sun-baked gravel.

This new garden takes a different approach with mulched borders and gently-mounded banks hugged by hedging. Remember the koru-shaped hedge at the bottom of the Native Daisy Garden? Cuttings were grown from that hedge for the Oval, *Olearia cymbifolia* x *nummulariifolia* now line the path and borders. This is our native alternative to box hedging.

Inside, we have planted several ngutukākā. They have rather an interesting story. These ngutukākā were grown from seed collected by Tim from Hinetamatea Marae, in Anaura Bay, Tairāwhiti. The plants that produced these seeds were grown from material returned to Tairāwhiti from Kew Gardens in 2012. And those plants from Kew descend from plants that were originally collected by Banks and Solander during Cook's voyage in 1769! Ever since the return of material from Kew, the Tairāwhiti Ngutukākā Trust has been raising plants from it, engaging marae and schools to nurture seedlings on their grounds. Sharing seeds into the care of Ōtari and creating a back-up population is all part of their restoration process. Watch this space as the garden develops! Soon you will be able to stroll along the path by the bright red flowers.



Coming soon!

Paererewā – a thousand year seat for a hundred year garden

Celebrating and reflecting



Dr Leonard Cockayne

Trustees have for some time been considering appropriate ways to celebrate and acknowledge the centenary of Ōtari Native Botanic Garden. Shortly you will all be able to admire the new ‘Centenary Sign’, acknowledging Dr Leonard Cockayne, on the front wall of Tāne Whakapiripiri. This has been a Trust project, working in collaboration with council.

On a more significant scale, the Trust is partnering with the Paererewā Trust, Wellington Sculpture Trust and Wellington City Council to investigate the commissioning of sculptured artwork to mark the centenary. A ‘paererewā’ (or ‘pae’, a sculptured seat), would be designed for a secluded and peaceful yet accessible part of Ōtari.

The proposed sculpture would draw on the aims of Paererewā: "an artwork designed to last for 1000 years and the creation of spaces for long-term reflections" (see paererewa.org.nz).

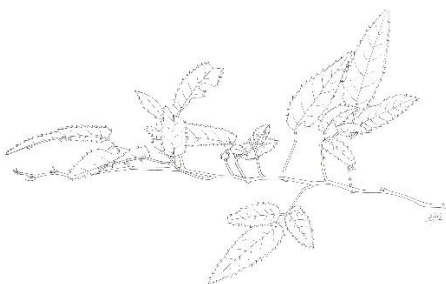
Behind Paererewā is Hideaki Fukutake, a New Zealand-based businessman and arts patron. The Fukutake family has created Benesse Art Site Naoshima, a world-renowned art and sculpture site on islands near Tokyo. Fukutake is also the founder of STILL (still.co.nz), a New Zealand initiative aiming to support, largely through philanthropy, 100 local companies, projects or non-profit activities across business, art and culture.

The Wellington Sculpture Trust is known for its contribution of contemporary art installations around Wellington City, and works with a team of professional arts advisors who assist with selection processes.

It is intended that the sculpture costs will be raised through philanthropic organisations and individuals. This has been the *modus operandi* for both the Paererewā and Wellington Sculpture trusts, who enjoy a strong following from the arts community and art-loving individuals.

Currently, a commissioning process is underway and it is hoped that by October’s centenary, an artist will have been selected to design and install the chosen sculpture.

The Trust feels this is an outstanding and worthy centenary project. The contemplative aims of Paererewā are a strong fit with the reflective ambience and connection with the natural world that Ōtari offers. Also, one of the Trust’s key aims is to promote awareness of Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush and its unique collection of native plants and natural biodiversity. A stunning artwork that will attract new people will surely help to achieve this.



Rubus ×barkeri, a hybrid favoured by Cockayne. By Eleanor Burton

Thanks Wilbur!

When Wilbur Dovey sent his regular email to the Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group this month, he dropped a bombshell.

“Unfortunately, after 21 years, the time seems to have come when I’m going to have to give up leading you all on the second Saturday of each month. It’s a task I’ve really enjoyed but old age and unfitness is catching up. If anyone would like to take on the task please let me know. I’ll keep on providing morning tea until someone takes the job on. Ngā mihi tātou, Wilbur”

Ron Fountain, who has been a longtime volunteer working alongside Wilbur, had this to say: ‘Wilbur, together with his late wife Liz, have been outstanding volunteers at Otari-Wilton's Bush. For over 20 years Wilbur, also a former Trust Board member, has co-ordinated and led the Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Project. He also skilfully managed and guided the cruise ship tours for many years. In these and other ways many of us have benefitted from his knowledge, wisdom and unwavering encouragement as our friend and mentor. Thank you Wilbur.’

Richard Grasse, who says he is a relative newcomer to the Kaiwharawhara group because he ‘only joined in 2012’, added this: ‘Wilbur has put in a lot of effort over the years, emailing the group, getting the tools ready for the morning's session and co-ordinating with the Ōtari staff. Under Wilbur’s leadership, the slope under Ian Galloway Park and the area below the rugby club have been converted from a blackberry/gorse/broom/fennel wilderness into thriving native bush.’



A valley transformed

And this from Tim Park: ‘Wilbur has diligently enabled volunteers to chip away at the ecological restoration of the Kaiwharawhara valley over many years. He should be proud of the massive achievement his group has made by planting native trees, releasing them from weeds, and keeping on top

of weeds throughout the planted areas. When the big slip happened, Wilbur was the first to offer help to remove the rubbish and replant the area. This was a big boost to our morale as it seemed like an enormous task at the time. Thank you Wilbur for your sustained efforts, you are truly a local legend!’



Track Gang

We have a new group! Our brand-new volunteer track maintenance team started on May 28 and immediately made a difference to access into Kaiwharawhara Valley from Ian Galloway Park. Previously this was a narrow track, rutted by a water channel running down the middle. Working with Ōtari groundsman, Martin McCrudden, our fledgling team of Charlie, Reuben and Venkat made good use of grubbers and spades to level the track and chip a swale for drainage. The new track team becomes the Trust’s seventh volunteer group doing good things for Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush. We will meet on the 4th Thursday morning every month (9am to midday). Martin will guide us so there’s no need for specialised skills, just a bit of energy and positive approach. Keen? Email co-ordinator Kathy at kathy@ombler.co.nz



Volunteers Reuben and Charlie

Host History

Thanks to Margaret Crimp for this history of how hosting began, and why.

Ōtari hosts were proposed when the new Information Centre and Canopy Walkway opened in October 1999. No staff were present in the weekends so Council's Gardens staff suggested a group be formed to welcome visitors, similar to one that operated in the Wellington Botanic Garden. Ōtari supervisor, Anita Benbrook, and Leane Killalea and Myfanwy Emeny from Wellington Gardens advertised for volunteers. There was a great response, with 32 people signing up.

In March, 2000, two training sessions were held, covering various aspects about Ōtari. Leanne put together the first rosters (two hosts each in the morning and afternoon) and on Saturday 31st March, the hosts were launched. Two of the originals, Chris Haronga and myself, are still hosting!



Margaret helping at Ōpen Day

Leanne, then Myfanwy, continued doing the rosters for several years until the hosts themselves took over. At first, Sue Ussher rang every host to check availability, drew up a roster on paper, then handed it to me to put onto a spreadsheet. I would then photocopy the rosters at Ōtari and post them out! (We started asking for email addresses in 2005.)

Ōtari staff helped update host knowledge, three training sessions in 2003 covered the Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Project, propagation, native plant identification, dogs, park rangers and tips on public speaking! They also put together a Host Manual full of Ōtari information. (This is currently being updated.)

The Council supplied hosts with polo shirts then long-sleeved shirts. Later hosts were given six polar-fleece vests to share. This was not at all satisfactory as the vests gradually disappeared. (Hosts now have black Ōtari caps.)

In 2005, the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust (which had formed in 2001) took on organisation of the hosts. Numbers had fallen so rostered times were decreased, then a training session in May, 2005, attracted 18 new hosts. Another session in April 2008 attracted 11 new hosts, but there was little response to one in 2010. A session in 2013 was attended by four new people, plus several established hosts.

Since 2013 there have been no major training campaigns. Hosts now come and go. Two great hosts were John Dawson and Olaf John. People on duty with either of these would enjoy great lessons in the native flora. Another generous host was Geoffrey Moss, well known for making walking sticks. He kindly donated five beautiful sticks for hosts to lend to those who needed some help walking around the paths. (He later offered them for sale at an Open Day.)

In 2018, Sumi Sakar took over the roster from me. She was followed by Jeannie and Peter Buxton and now Trustee Justin Nacey.

To conclude, in his report for the 2015 Trust AGM, Wellington Gardens manager, David Sole wrote: "I must also acknowledge the ongoing, and perhaps unsung, role of the hosts whose valuable contribution is the weekend face of Ōtari and our eyes and ears. We remain very fortunate to have this level of support and commitment". I believe this epitomises the weekend hosts.

[Note: The Trust welcomes new hosts and offers various training opportunities. Recent sessions have included a guided tour with our Trust guide training team, and de-escalation training. Hosts are offered first aid training, and new hosts given a full induction. Keen? Email justinnacey@gmail.com]

Meet the volunteers: Helen Milne

No matter the weather, if it's Thursday morning lookout for our weeding volunteers, painstakingly picking out weeds from amongst some of our rarest native plants. This committed team plays no small part in maintaining Ōtari's status as a Six Star Garden of International Significance. Helen Milne has been with the team for four years. Here's what she says about it.



I like having that regular job every Thursday. It gets me out and doing work that I believe to be important. By that I mean conservation, being part of a community and just being useful in my old age. I do like an obvious patch of weeds, where you can pull out heaps of grass, or convolvulus, or tradescantia. I don't like the fiddly stuff, where you have to be careful not to pull out what you are supposed to be protecting!

What makes it fun are the relationships with the staff. Coffee in the staff room with the quiz and hearing garden news is a highlight of the morning. The other volunteers are always interesting, we'll chat about books, movies, music, politics, gossip, you name it! Meeting young trainees and hearing about what makes them tick is also great. Recently, two 20-year-old French girls, Jeanne and Mei Li, were delightful company, always busy with their log books of sketches and diary entries. And of course, the permanent staff who supervise us and teach us what plant is what is a privilege.

It's another language learning all those plant names! *Haloragis erecta* and *Leptinellas* (herbs), *Sonchus kirkii* (puha), *Muehlenbeckia australis* (a vine), and *Urtica ferox* (tree nettle) - these are the good guys. The bad guys are sorrel, milkweed, *Galinsoga*, vetch and creeping oxalis.

There has been one low point - losing my expensive spectacles! Did I throw them out into a bale with the weeds? How could I not notice when they fell off? That aside, losing a fork or a wonder weeder is a cardinal sin, but the worst is pulling out a valuable native!

One of my favourite plants is the pale pink geranium in the rockery (*Geranium traversii*, from Chatham Island). It seeds readily. I like to tell Tom how inconspicuous and boring all the little white flowers on NZ natives are! Give me colour I say. That said, I love the lancewoods. We are so lucky to live near this unique reserve and be able to contribute.



Geranium traversii

Centenary Walks and Talks



Fungi man Geoff

It's been standing room only for some of our evening talks to date. As usual Geoff Ridley's fungi guided walks were a sell-out (see Geoff's latest fungi story in this newsletter), and our ever-popular winter evening glowworm tours have few spots left.

Looking ahead – don't miss hearing about the amazing results achieved by the Kaiwharawhara Restoration Revisitation (July 7) and see the story next page. Our Te Papa botanist friends, Lara Shepherd and Leon Perrie will teach you heaps about native plants on two guided walks (June 28/July 26). Later in the year we will host local authors talking about their beautiful books, and focus on the story of Dr Leonard Cockayne, to mark Centenary year. We plan to send an updated programme to all members shortly. Meanwhile, check out the full programme on <https://www.owbt.nz/visiting/centenary-events/>

Forest forward: 2001–2026

The Kaiwharahara Restoration Revisitation

by Jonathan Kennett and Bronwen Wall. Graphics by Paul Kennett.

[Jonathan and Bronwen were contracted to lead both the initial restoration and the Trust's revisitation project, which was completed this summer.]

Wandering up valley from the Troup Picnic Lawn, it's hard to believe that just 25 years ago the whole place was an impenetrable jungle of weeds, and that between 2001 and 2006, a massive revegetation project took place. Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust worked in close partnership with WCC and GWRC to plant 55,000 trees over 22 sites downstream of Ian Galloway Park.



Bronwen and Jonathan



2001

The first four sites were planted by volunteers in winter 2001. Almost as soon as the trees were in the ground, the weeds returned and, combined with a series of harsh frosts, most of the trees died. The response was swift and scientific. We set up monitoring plots and identified the plants with the greatest survival and growth rates. We called these the 'workhorse species', and our motto became "better to have a small victory than a large loss".

To beat the weeds, four steps were followed at each site.

1. We focused on planting the workhorse species: five finger, kōhūhū, tarata (lemonwood), karamū and makomako (wineberry).
2. We placed a carpet square around the base of every tree to slow weed growth.
3. We introduced monthly tree releasing work parties.
4. We monitored the growth and survival rates of a plot of trees at each site for up to five years.



Carol measuring

By 2006, every site was covered with thick native vegetation, and the weeds had gone. After five hard years, it looked like we had finally won! But had we really?

Twenty years later, the council and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust decided to assess the reforestation project. This would provide important data that would also be useful for other reforestation groups in the region.

Over the past five months, all 22 sites have been revisited to monitor the vegetation, create light wells above slow-growing podocarps and remove the remains of rotting carpet squares.



Lucie recording



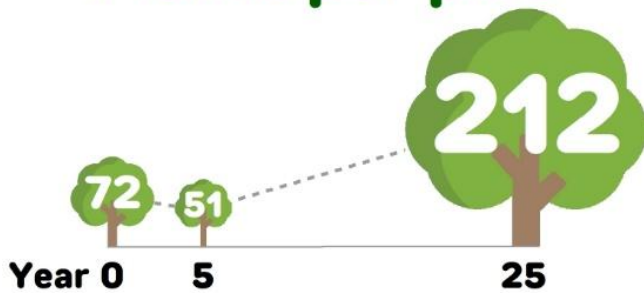
Maggie, Susan and Jonathan checking growth



Charles sorting carpet

What did we discover?

Plants per plot



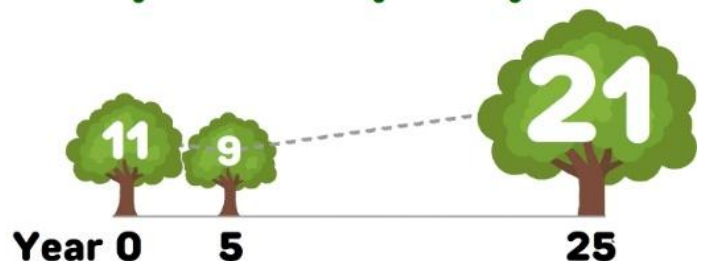
On average, 72 trees/shrubs had been planted in each of the 3m x 10m plots. After 5 years, this number had shrunk to 51 trees, but the survivors had mostly grown over head height and were effectively shading out invasive weeds. Over the last two decades, thanks to the birds and the wind, a silent and significant immigration of self-seeded plants has occurred, and the number of plants per plot has increased to an average of 212 plants. This is a three-fold increase in plant population, although many of the plants are seedlings.

The canopy is now 8–10 metres tall and comprises the trees we had planted, mostly five finger, kōhūhū and tarata, with some large hīnau in most sites.

Underneath this canopy, species diversity has boomed.

Certainly, the number of species declined slightly in the first five years, but since then, the diversity has more than doubled. Most sites now contain significant numbers of self-seeded kohekohe, rewarewa, pigeonwood, kawakawa and hangehange. We did not plant these species.

Species per plot



Native ferns and vines, none of which were planted, are also now common throughout the valley.

Unfortunately, some weeds have also returned. Karaka and a non-local *Hoheria populnea* (lacebark) are common, and native to New Zealand, but don't occur naturally in Wellington. There are also some patches of Tradescantia, Selaginella and Montbretia, which sharp-eyed volunteers pulled out as they monitored the sites. There was hardly any Darwin's barberry or old man's beard, and rank grass, which was our biggest problem originally, has disappeared.

Of course, weeds will always try to reinvade, but current numbers are low thanks to the Trust's awesome volunteer teams; Thursday's weed busters and Wilbur Dovey's longstanding weekend revegetation group. The latter includes many who have been planting and weeding in the valley for more than 20 years!

The reforestation of Kaiwharawhara Valley looks fantastic compared to twenty years ago, but this work raises an obvious question: how awesome will it look in another twenty years?



Simon light welling



The volunteer team gathers for the final working bee



Rhianon weeding

Site 3

A detailed analysis was completed from each site revisited. Here is one, wonderful example.

Planted in 2004, Site 3 was given the gold treatment by volunteers. It was revisited every month for over two years. The weeds didn't stand a chance!

The Global Volunteer Network (GVN) planted 81 trees within the 3m x 10m plot, and after 2 years almost all of them had survived. There are now 217 plants within the plot.

The whole of site 3 had approximately 1,200 trees planted on it.

Native Species	2004	2006	2009	2025
<i>Coprosma robusta</i>	13	19	2	0
<i>Five finger</i>	17	17	16	3
<i>Hinau</i>	2	2	2	1
<i>Kanuka</i>	3	3	1	0
<i>Kohuhu</i>	12	11	6	1
<i>Tarata (lemonwood)</i>	20	20	18	4
<i>Miro</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Ngaio</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Totara</i>	3	3	3	2
<i>Wineberry</i>	9	6	5	0
<i>Kohekohe</i>	0	0	1	37
<i>Mahoe</i>	0	0	3	36
<i>Kawakawa</i>	0	0	1	31
<i>Rewarewa</i>	0	0	1	3
<i>Titoki</i>	0	0	1	7
<i>Cabbage tree</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>Pigeonwood</i>	0	0	0	17
<i>Kaikomako</i>	0	0	0	13
<i>Silver fern</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Coprosma grandifolia</i>	0	0	0	6
<i>Hange hange</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Hen and chicken (fern)</i>	0	0	0	10
<i>Asplenium oblongifolium (fern)</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Blechnum filiforme (fern)</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>Hounds tongue (fern)</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Parsonsia heterophylla (vine)</i>	0	0	0	26
<i>Supplejack (vine)</i>	0	0	0	7
<i>NZ passionfruit (vine)</i>	0	0	0	2
Weeds (all pulled out)				
<i>Old man's beard</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Karaka</i>	0	0	0	2



A Mother's Day Treat, by Frances Fukac

Ten-year-old Frances, our youngest Trust member, was a keen volunteer for the Kaiwharawhara revisitation work.

On Mother's Day, 10th of May, my dad and I went to an Ōtari-Wilton's Bush working bee. This was the last working bee of the Kaiwharawhara Reforestation Revisitation project. At 9am, we all gathered at Tāne Whakapiripiri, the visitor centre. It was a beautiful sunny morning. All the birds in the bush were singing beautifully while we looked at pictures of sites 12 and 13 that Jonathan passed around. He explained that these pictures showed how the two sites looked 25 years ago, when the Kaiwharawhara Reforestation project started. Then we walked down to the sites.



Frances weeding with Sarah

When we arrived, we had to go down a slope and cross the stream. It was a bit tricky crossing the stream, but we all got over it. When I climbed up the other side, I couldn't believe my eyes. It looked nothing like the pictures Jonathan had shown us. It was full of birds, colours, trees and life. It was like stepping into the most beautiful picture book I have ever seen. Not only were the leaves all different shades of green, but also the bark of the trees was the most incredible dark brown.



Kohia

We split into groups. I helped with tree counting and measuring, also with weeding, pulling out carpet squares and picking up plastic bottles. I also gave out some lollies and cookies (I couldn't help but take a few myself).

On the way back, Carol showed us the native passion fruit vine, kohia. I thought it looked like a Christmas tree. The outside of the passion fruit was bright orange, but when Carol opened it, it was a deep red. We all tried a little bit. It tasted a bit sweet and the tiniest bit salty, but mostly tasted like nothing. So, this is what we did on the May working bee. It was huge fun, and if this wasn't the last session of the reforestation project, then I would definitely do it again.

Fungi

What induces the fungus to produce fruit bodies (or mushrooms)?

By Geoff Ridley

Mushroom hunting is typically best in April and May, particularly during the first two to three weeks of May, although this varies across New Zealand depending on local climate conditions. In general, mushroom growth is triggered by cool nights combined with warm days, along with increased autumn rainfall following the drier summer period, which raises humidity and soil moisture and supports fungal growth and the decomposition of plant material. However, conditions this year in Wellington have been less favourable, with an unusually dry May caused by persistent high-pressure systems. Although April was wet, most of the rainfall occurred within a single 48-hour period due to a slow-moving low-pressure system, resulting in a total rainfall three times the monthly average. These conditions have not been conducive for mushroom production: while many species did fruit, overall numbers were low. Despite this, some notable finds were still made, including the first recorded observation of *Serpula himantioides* at Ōtari. [Note: mushroom and fungus are not equivalent terms - the fungus is the whole organism but the mushroom is only the reproductive structure or fruit body.]



Serpula himantioides

Botanical Art: *Clematis cunninghamii*, by Eleanor Burton

Seedlings collected from Pureora, now growing in Ōtari's nursery



This Clematis is found in the northern half of the North Island, down to Hawke's Bay. It is a plant of lowland forest, especially forest margins. Flowers are small, pale green with quite pointed petals. The plant drawn is from one of several seedlings collected from Pureora. At the moment they are still in the Nursery. Adult flowers and foliage are shown here.

Macro magic

We welcome back macro photographer Luca Davenport-Thomas. Luca (Master of Science, MS Marine Biology) does most of his amazing work in the ocean. We're delighted that he sometimes ventures to the terra firma forest of Ōtari, where he discovers 'little things' many of us won't even notice. Most recently he visited during the iNaturalist Global City Challenge. 'I came across more cool critters, not as many tiny ones but still some interesting things.'

Here are six of them:



Wētā (sign of a healthy, predator-controlled forest)



Shaggy Giant Scale bug (Genus *Coelostomidia*)



Harvestman (*Shelob inconstans*)



Square-ended crab spider (*Sidymella angularis*)



White-banded Orbweb spider (*Zealaranea crassa*)



Tiny native wasp (3mm)

Looking back – a centenary year quiz:

(Find the answers on the next page)



1. Who is this half-hidden man and where is he sitting?



2. Who is this girl, where is she and when?



3. What and where was this garden?



4. Who are these people?

That Cockayne Lawn!

Ōtari staff did their level best to create a native lawn and honour the wish of Dr Leonard Cockayne. That said, the recently restored lawn has been a hit, as confirmed by these social media endorsements:

I love walking through there. (Rex)

I remember touching the soft cool grass as a 3yr old in a push chair. (Jules)

Best lawn (and place) in the universe to be married on...IMHO.

It looks fabulous. Well done on the trial(s) though. (Melanie)



Unleashing the lawn!

Wikipedia updated

Need to know more about Ōtari-Wilton's Bush? Wikipedia is well worth a read. The Ōtari pages are up to date, well researched, and include a comprehensive summary of Ōtari's history. This follows recent 'Edit-a-thons', hosted at the Leonard Cockayne Centre by experienced 'Wikipedians', including Te Papa Botany Curator and Ōtari supporter Heidi Meudt. See it here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%8Ctari-Wilton%27s_Bush

Introducing our new (and returning) Trustees



As the former Trust Chair (from 2020-24), a long-time tour guide and active forest weeder, Carol West doesn't need much introducing. Carol has a PhD in Plant Ecology, and worked for the Department of Conservation for decades in various science, leadership and governance roles. She has a good understanding of NZ's native ecosystems and huge knowledge of Ōtari's native plant species.

Welcome to our new Treasurer, Paul Clarke. Paul's background in public sector management includes budget, business cases and governance arrangements. He has previously worked as an accountant, and in international development with a number of African national conservation organizations. Paul also volunteers in other roles involving finance and risk; and visitor experience. He lives in Wadestown, frequently visits Ōtari and is a keen birdwatcher.



Trust Membership

If you've been given this newsletter to read and would like to join or donate to the Trust please visit our website: www.owbt.nz/membership-donations All members receive our quarterly newsletter, free entry to our annual talks and guided walks and winter glowworm tours. Memberships and donations provide funding for our ongoing conservation and education work.

If you wish to learn more about our Endowment Fund, the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund, please visit: www.owbt.nz/membership-donations/endowment-fund

Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust - Trustees

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The Trustees welcome contact from members on any matters relating to Ōtari-Wilton's Bush or the Trust. For Newsletter comments and contributions contact Trustee Kathy Ombler.

*Remember to check our Instagram and Facebook pages. This is where we 'post' regular news and photos about what's happening in Ōtari. If you don't want to join these, simply go to our website: **owbt.nz**, and click on the Facebook or Instagram logo on the home page.*

Quiz answers:

1. Dr Leonard Cockayne. But where is he? The photo, from the Sarah Partridge collection, has no information. We wonder if he is on the Flax Clearing, looking at the Skyline. What do you think?
2. Sarah Phillips (now Partridge) great granddaughter of Dr Leonard Cockayne, at the unveiling of the Cockayne Grave Memorial Stone, in 1951.
3. Maude and Leonard Cockayne
4. The Gresley Lukin Alpine Garden, Ōtari's first Alpine Garden, established by Dr Cockayne in the valley (then forest-free). It didn't succeed, some remaining rocks can be still seen in the regenerated forest beside Te Ara Porowhita (at the bottom of Wilton's old dray road, also known as the Circle Track).