

# *Friends of Ben Rudds*

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From:

*Ben Rudds Management Trust*

*PO Box 6408*

*Dunedin*

Email: ahamel@deepsouth.co.nz

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Hello, and welcome to the first ever Friends of Ben Rudds Newsletter.

First of all, I would like to express the Trust's gratitude that so many keen people have joined the Friends, (55 individuals and families) to help make it such a positive, vibrant community! Hey, how many of you have framed your certificates? Aren't they attractive? These could become collectors' items! -- Also - How about encouraging others to join the Friends? The more the merrier!

In this issue we tell you about past events, and a future one, our PICNIC! Keep 14 March clearly marked on your calendar!

The support given at the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club's 1998 AGM and Reunion weekend events was extremely encouraging. For a while there, one or two in the OTMC were a bit blasé about the property (some were definitely negative), but once these folk (relative newcomers) realised how important the place was in our Club's fabric, the support was virtually unanimous. I believe this overwhelming support is the underpinning reason for the success so far, and encouraging signs, in the management of the property. This is now evident in the optimism among Trust members and the incredible support of the KCC and private individuals who, I believe, treat this wonderful place as a second home, a place where a little toil is rewarded by, not only the achievement of a natural landscape, but also by the camaraderie of people with a common vision. The place *is* looking great already! And it owes a lot to the Friends' convenor – namely Peter Mason – who seems to be able to find the time to fulfil the Kiwi need to do gardening, *on the property!* Good on you Pete. Read of his expeditions overleaf. And of the KCC's continuing efforts. While I have the chance, let me also thank the positive attitude of OTMC President Alan Thompson, and folk like OTMC stalwarts Jenny Lowe and Chris "Chainsaw" Wells who laid waste to many of our problem trees in about five furtive minutes as the heavens opened (see Bevan's Christmas Tree article overleaf)... I was also pleased to note first hand the effort of the tree sellers on that same day, from the oldies (Ken Mason) down to the youngies (Vincent Pettinger). Good work, team!

- Richard Pettinger

FRIENDS AND TRUST PICNIC!!! 11 AM onwards, Sunday 14 March. "You know where!"

We invite you all (and friends of Friends) to our first annual family picnic. Those who were at the OTMC's reunion picnic should have thawed out by now. If not, here's your chance to warm to the tales of the Friends' efforts and successes. And hear about our dreams. Ken may mention an exciting new possibility of using an old track as legal access to our place. Undoubtedly Peter will show you the results of his work, plus, if you need convincing, his diary. Richard will be offering a few ales to the discerning fools among you. Teresa might tell you about the Trust's finances. Bevan and Henri may tell you of KCC ambitions for the place. Geoff Jackson might reveal his own ideas about it all. Antony H may tell us of some new book. Who knows what could happen? Be there to find out!

### **Tree Harvesting**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December started out as the Trust's first venture in reducing the size of the wilding tree problem on the Ben Rudd Property. Our aim was to harvest the young pine trees around the skid site, and further along the hillside some Douglas firs, firstly to relieve the area of wilding growth and secondly to sell as Christmas trees to help raise funds for the native plant regeneration program.

Eight hearty souls set off from the Bullring in overcast conditions, either walking or driving to the skid site. Once there, we set to harvesting both types of young tree until it started to rain at 12pm. By this time our number of helpers had increased, which gave us two people with chainsaws and others with bow saws. We then, with the help of two vehicles transported the trees down the hill and then to the city to two selling points, one on the corner of Ross Street - Highgate, and the other at Pitt Street.

The Pitt Street venue gave us some laughs, the best being when we were approached by a well-dressed lass who wanted to know why we were using her garage to sell trees from, and she wanted to park her car in it. When told that Antony Hamel had given permission to use this garage, we found out that she was Antony's landlord and had no idea that he was in a position to give us permission. At this point, Antony emerged from his office, informed us not to listen to any ravings and he would smooth over his little oversight.

The Trust made a small surplus from approximately 150 trees, with only 11 not being sold. We learnt some good lessons from this exercise. Next year we will be organising the whole operation differently so we can make maximum gains.

I would like to THANK all who helped with the collecting of trees and sale.

Regards,

- Bevan Blackmore

### **Peter Mason's February 1999 report**

Since founding day (30<sup>th</sup> August 1998) small and individual workparties have been busy on the Ben Rudd property on six occasions. A variety of maintenance has been carried out, which includes the following:

- Removal of the stone fireplace from *inside* the shelter!
- Clearing of the track down to the shelter
- Cut new alignment to the top section of the Jim Freeman Track
- Clearing of the hillside behind the shelter (up to the Bruce Campbell Silver beech trees)
- Enlarging the shelter clearing and exposing the original Ben Rudds hut site
- Cut access through gorse to 200 new (early 1990s) plantings of (2 metre tall plus) Silver beech trees just below skid site
- Remove over 90 wilding trees from above the firebreak, in amongst the tussock at the top of the property and beyond
- Spraying along edges of firebreak and skid site to kill gorse and broom encroachment
- Spraying of broom/gorse regrowth on areas previously cut by KCC workday (see below).

Other important activities the Friends have been involved in (through the Convenor) are the drawing up of a new hunting contract with a recreational hunter to shoot all feral pests all year round. A meeting was held with Paul Coffey of the DCC on site to discuss annual firebreak clearing, and to inspect the work done. Currently designing and costing 2 routed wooden entrance signs for the firebreak track approaches, and two small metal signs to go where the Freeman track and Big Rock route cross the property boundary.

### **KIWI CONSERVATION CLUB VISIT**

The KCC expressed an interest in visiting the Ben Rudd property and helping out with a restoration project that they could regularly revisit and monitor progress. After some thought, the trustees suggested that they undertake clearing an area around the old skid site.

So on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 17 KCCers and parents arrived on site to start their contribution towards clearing gorse and broom. We started out with a brief description of the plant types that we were targeting, then a run down on correct usage of the tools that we had on hand, personal safety and finally group safety while on site.

The method used to remove the gorse and broom was: the smaller children paired up with the older kids, set off with either a bow saw, pruning saw or a set of loppers. They would cut the stem of the plant as close to the ground as possible and remove the plant, then an adult would follow up with some Roundup in a small spray bottle, and spray the stump. Labour intensive, but very effective. The group worked for about an hour before having lunch, then for an extra hour and a half after. The KCCers worked very hard and cleared out an impressive area in the time spent there. The kids enjoyed themselves so much that it required some effort from the parents to close the day's work off and set off home.

Since the Kiwi Conservation Club effort, there has been some follow-up spraying on the stumps to stop secondary growth. If you pass through the skid site, you can now see plainly the work areas above and below the site.

The KCCers are now planning their next assault on the area to expand their contribution to the tussocks on Flagstaff Hill, late in April. All welcome.

- Bevan Blackmore

### **A NOTE FROM THE TRUST**

For your information, the Trust has had four meetings, in September, October, December & February, with rotation of chairing duties. Bevan Blackmore keeps the file, Teresa Blondell is treasurer, Antony Hamel is keeper of funds & PO box and, importantly, Ken Mason is Project Officer, keeping all work coordinated and true to the Trust's objectives. Ken has written to Dunedin's walking clubs inviting them to use Ben Rudds.

Sorry this is a bit crammed, but I wanted to keep it to one page.

See you at the Picnic!

- Richard P.