



## Friends of Ben Rudd's Newsletter, No 2-1

27th April 2019

Welcome to the first edition of the second Trust's series of Friends of Ben Rudd's Newsletters. This issue lets you know about the newly appointed Trust and what it has been up to since inception and *welcomes you to help us on site on 4 May.* - also, 7 September is planned.

Your new Trust has been in place for eight months and we have achieved a lot. It seems progress is ripping along.

*Meet the new Trustees, appointed by the OTMC at its AGM last August.*

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Richard Pettinger	03 487 9488, 027 950 4517	richard@pettinger.nz

We are also pleased to have ex-Trustee Alan Thomson continue to take a big interest and help out as he can. His practical knowledge and enthusiasm are important to the work of the Trust. Antony Hamel, our legal adviser, continues his life-long interest in us and the property. We sense a renewed level of support and gratitude from among OTMC membership. We felt increasing interest at the 2018 AGM that set up this Trust for a six-year period. They appointed the above trustees, clarified directions, and revised our internal working and reporting arrangements. A significant change is the appointment of a Chair, and David accepted this role which involves regular feedback to Club committee and the membership on Thursday nights.

The Trust with Alan's involvement, and as required by the OTMC, has proposed a programme of work for the forthcoming term. This planning involved a quick check of our management statement, which was originally prepared in 2002 when applying for the QEII Open Space covenant. Our work must be consistent with that statement, as well as being effective.

***Please do not carry out work on the property without letting a Trust member know in advance. This may allow us to work with you, and stop us planning work you've already done. Also, all work is noted on a (new!) electronic spreadsheet, which records volunteer hours and observations of problems and trends.***

**Bank account:** If you wish to donate, please use our SBS account 03-1369-0356642-00. Let us know who you are so we can say thanks. Donations to charities such as us are tax-deductible, so let us know if you would like a receipt emailing. The first transaction was a donation from Friend, Tim Moore. Thanks, Tim!

**Dunedin City and Otago Regional Council help: drone flights & photography, weed control & broom mites:** The DCC has often underwritten the cost (to pre-agreed limits) of much of our work, through its Biodiversity Fund. They grant up to half the cost of work, and our volunteer hours are the Trust's & OTMC's contribution. Much of the work DCC funds has been the important but wearying work keeping the tussock land above the Firebreak pest -free.

This unique and special ecosystem is a natural relic and our enjoyment of views from the summit relies on its maintenance. OTMC's Barbara Markby voiced concerns in the ODT some time ago about loss of views to weed infestations. Recently, the ORC has offered the introduction of a broom gall mite to Flagstaff, which is intended to reduce broom vigour, and the DCC team welcomes it. A majority on the Trust agreed to accept the trial of the mite.

The Dunedin City Council has also recently become even more helpful:

- Set up in last year's funding round, the City is underwriting much of the cost of a breakthrough method of managing Ben Rudd's. This involves a drone-mounted camera flying over the land, especially over places of greatest concern. This is intended to give a clear picture of the land and, with imagery good enough to identify and distinguish the leaves of species of vegetation, to allow us to fix the position of problem species. It also reveals the exciting native regrowth that we suspected is happening over the majority of the land. Initial trial flights by Graham McArthur have shown enough to make quick management decisions without the usual blood, sweat (and tears – eyes and clothes!) of physically thrashing into the bush just to spot rowans, pines, firs, sycamores, blackberry, Darwin's barberry and the other things that we don't want. We can then assess the extent of issues and send in the guys and girls bent on pest plant destruction (as several sycamore slayers and Douglas fir destroyers have been doing lately).
- But, most welcomed is this - instead of funding the spirit-breaking work above the Firebreak through Biodiversity grants, the DCC's own Scenic Reserve team, supervised by David Blair and managed by Aalbert Rebergen, have adopted the gorse and broom control on our triangle of land there. These weeds have crossed the boundary and that boundary is not always easy to see on the ground, so it was simpler for the team to extend the work it undertakes down to the Firebreak. Antony Hamel and the OTMC are delighted with the formal agreement the Trust has reached. The Trust can now focus on the regenerating forest and its tracks, controlling broom and gorse below the Firebreak.

#### Other valuable assistance:

- Groups including QEII continue to help us. After the generous gift of tools and materials, in January QEII's Robin Thomas set up a meeting with other covenanters and associated biodiversity workers, who have helped inspire and inform us. Operational Solutions for Primary Industries (OSPRI – TBFree) are presently controlling possums on the property, and the Trust put out 12 'chew cards' to help identify pest species we are hosting. Past Friends' donations and auction proceeds pave the way for purchase of 3 A24 Goodnature traps with counters, plus lure for stoats, rats, mice and hedgehogs. OSPRI do not want unauthorised control of possums which could confuse their monitoring.
- The DCC's Hills Reserves Management Plan, the 2018 Wildlands Report *Ecological Assessment of Management Issues on Flagstaff and Swampy Summit, Dunedin*, and a 'Good Neighbour' rule in the proposed Regional Pest Management Plan for Otago (2018) are all helpful science- and regulatory-based documents that guide us.
- Pig control: Taieri District Pig Hunting Club members now have a formal agreement with us and should keep pigs to an acceptable level, which means (we hope) the hunters will have a steadily increasing challenge in time. We need to give the hunters warning of any significant events on our land. We wish them some exciting and worthwhile chases!

The Trust is acutely aware of the enormity of gorse and broom control along the Firebreak, exacerbated by road-working in the last few years that disturbed carefully cleared areas. To complement the DCC's work mentioned above, the Trust is about to plant local-sourced beech trees in a line on the western (downhill) side. **A workparty is planned for 4 May (phone Sue W)** and a follow-up day on 7 Sept is hoped for. Some precisely-targeted herbicide spraying will complement this attempt at out-competing pest plants.

#### Obituary: Ian Sime

OTMC Life Member and long-time friend Ian Sime sadly passed away last year after a short illness.

Ian was always interested and active in conservation activity on the property and elsewhere. He served as a Trustee for many years, and we knew that any task Ian undertook would be efficiently completed in good time. AND we looked forward to meetings at Kenmure Rd as they were always followed with a wonderful spread provided by Betty!

His contribution to the Club, the property and many of us as individuals will not be forgotten. - *Teresa Wasilewska*

**New track:** The "Simes' Beech Walk" is being initiated, recognising both ex-trustees Ian and Jim Sime. Jim suggested this track some time ago and soon he will see his dream being realised - albeit there's no rush for it to be completed as a through track. The Walk visits trees that his brother Ian helped to plant and is already very attractive. Richard & Tracy P, with help from Sue & Sam (and Gregg's whose many donated coffee sacks are intended as weed suppressant), are experimenting with new beech plantings, and disturbing gorse seeds and seedlings. This effort is to assess if the SBW, where it leaves the shelter track and passes through a patch of heavy gorse, can eventually keep itself open via foot traffic. The 1990-era beech trees are already easy to walk through.

Please contact the Trust if you have any contributions, advice, suggestions, etc, for these newsletters, or property management. We can be emailed at [benruddtrust@gmail.com](mailto:benruddtrust@gmail.com), or contacted at any phone number in the box above. Please get involved.

On behalf of the Trustees, **Richard Pettinger**

**A closing message from our Chairman David: "I thank all the team members in the Trust for their fantastic positivity and energy."**