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Friends of Ben Rudd's Newsletter, No 5

(Stamp)

12 September 2000

Welcome to the fifth Friends of Ben Rudds Newsletter. This issue is to let you know about the BIG DAY on the beech.

For those who may have forgotten, here is the OVERALL PURPOSE of the Ben Rudds Trust (from the Trust deed):

“To promote the environmental, recreational and educational role of the Ben Rudds property within the context of the Flagstaff area.”

Individual Purposes:

- “To protect and foster the historical connection the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club (and its predecessor groups) have had with the Ben Rudds property.”
- “To maintain the flora and fauna of the Ben Rudds property.”
- “To manage the historical plantings of the Ben Rudds property.”
- “To promote the use of the Ben Rudds property by recreational walkers.”

Friends will have become aware that, since these purposes were expressed, the focus on meeting these purposes has been quite wide, including building an association with the NZ Ecological Restoration Network which reflects the emphasis on reestablishment of locally indigenous ecology; and also the confirmation of the Spiers Road legal access to the property.

For your information, the Trust has continued to meet regularly, with the last meeting being at Bevan Blackmore's place on 9 August. We still use a system of rotation of chairing duties. Bevan Blackmore keeps the file, Teresa Blondell is treasurer, Antony Hamel is keeper of funds & PO box and Ken Mason is Project Officer, keeping all work coordinated and true to the Trust's objectives.

Bits and Pieces report:

- Total Donations for the year 1/7/99 to 31/6/00 amounted to \$255.00. Thanks to all the many folk who have donated time and/or money lately. You are helping the Trust and the Friends in the important work of rehabilitating Flagstaff for indigenous ecology and for trampers! Recent donors have been Jim Fleming, Mary Balk, Dunedin Tramping Club, & AE Green (for work on the property); the Allison family (for work on Spiers Road). Donations are always welcome!
- Subs are \$5 per year per membership. Membership can be individual, family or club. Please send your money to the above address. Remember, if there is anyone you know of who might be keen to join the Friends of Ben Rudds, please let them know about us, what we do, and how we can be supported.
- The popularity of Spiers Road continues to grow. Recently, the track has been used increasingly. This Summer should see it, its great views and its associated history become more well-known. It is a shame to think that, for all these decades, the walkers of Dunedin have been denied use of this valuable recreational opportunity.
- The heavy-duty seat at a look-out down the Jim Freeman's track has been named the Douglas Seat (it was at a point where there were lots of Douglas firs). There has been no comment received from Friends about the possibility of putting another big seat of similar permanence up under the Silver beech clump behind the shelter, except it has been noted that it'd be another challenge for vandalism. How long before it is eyed up by some miscreant for firewood?
- The Trust is looking at spraying with herbicide the most serious area of broom above the firebreak, in the vicinity of the skidsite. Options being considered include knapsack, or truck-based spraying. The option of person-power, cutting and treating the stumps of the broom and gorse has gone out of favour, largely because a big team would be required and nobody seems to want to commit themselves to the time involved! We must assess the effects of herbicide on tussock, flax and inter-tussock species. Another consideration for the Trust is that some bio-control agents (broom twig miner, at least) are established up there. Their effect should soon be known. If you have any comments, please let us know.

THE BIG DAY OUT: 17 September Beech Planting Day: Contact Peter Mason, Phone 455 7074

Supported by Forest and Bird, this could be a pleasant and rewarding day out for OTMCers and Friends alike. Trees, including locally-sourced silver beech along with snowtussock and some celmisia are currently on-site. All we need to do (apart from hoping for some decent weather!) is get up there and plant them!

Meet at the OTMC rooms at 9 AM, or up at the Bullring at 9.20(ish), or on-site any time of the day whenever you can make it. If you are not there at the start of the day, you should know that plants need cunning planting amongst large logs to protect them from pig damage.

A Bit of Good News?

City Forests are about to commence the control of wilding trees in the Silverstream water catchment. It is believed that the uncontrolled growth of pines leads to a reduction in the yield of water from a catchment, especially the summer flows upon which those depending on water (such as the City supply!) really rely. Some species of pines are vigorous invaders of tussock country and may well prevent native regeneration. Some see wild pines as much worse than gorse and broom, as those weeds can act as a nursery for natives, but most plants cannot establish under a pine canopy. Without control, it is only a matter of time before pines close the canopy and that's the end of programmes such as ours on Ben Rudds.

Our plantations (remnants of which still exist, of course) are possibly responsible for a new generation of young trees in the Scenic Reserve and elsewhere. This is a bit embarrassing for the Trust, to say the least. Some people believe that such off-site impacts of pine forest should be seen in the same way as pollution from any other venture, such as a factory.

As you know, OTMCers and Friends have been nibbling away at the remnant pines, birches etc for decades, and going after the wild trees that have invaded from the city's plantations up-wind. We have had the services of David McFarlane and colleagues in tackling these, for which the Trust is extremely grateful.

You may recall from the previous (June) newsletter, that there are two blocks on site: larches (planted 1968) and the remains of the Douglas fir block (planted 1971). These trees were looked at by Peter Mason and forester David Pearson (and many thanks to David for his time, trouble, expertise and advice). They need at least another 20 years growth to attain full millable potential. In the meantime, they'll be having babies everywhere. We don't wish to leave this too long...

City Forests, through John Spiers, have made the approach to take out wild and remaining plantation pines and larches on Ben Rudds, while they are doing the rest of the catchment, over the coming years. They say it will cost the Trust and the OTMC nothing, apart from obtaining the necessary agreement documents and sorting out legal niceties. -- Good, eh?!

"Dunedin Walks"

A soon-to-be-published map. All the maps in the book *From Sea to Silver Peaks* were in black and white. The Friends of Ben Rudds certificate map was the first colour map that I have made. Using the experience gained from making the certificate I have, over the winter months, drawn a double-sided A2 colour map showing 25 walks around Dunedin. I used the 1:50,000 map as my main source. Copyright charges are no longer payable to the Crown when copying this map information. This has greatly assisted publishing specialised walking maps such as this. I have included parts of the certificate map in the new map. I hope to have the new map printed and distributed by the middle of November. It will retail through the visitor centre and most Dunedin bookshops for under \$3.00.

- Antony Hamel

Please support Antony, and buy his new map. He has kindly sponsored the postage of this newsletter. Thanks Antony!!

Please contact me if you have any contributions, advice, suggestions, etc for these newsletters. I can be emailed at richard.pettinger@orc.govt.nz, or phoned at (03) 487 9488.

- Richard P.