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## Friends of Ben Rudd's Newsletter, No 9

( Stamp )

25 May 2002

Welcome to the ninth Friends of Ben Rudd's Newsletter. This issue lets you know about the Mercier Seat dedication day.

### **Joining the Friends, donations of money, time or expertise**

- If you know of anyone 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. We are grateful to everybody on the current mailing list, for paying subscriptions. There are many who have not got around to paying for this year. Please, if there is a red sticker on this, contact us or Peter M.
- With this newsletter, we thank the following for making generous donations: Edith Mercier, who has donated several more hundred dollars, as the final instalment for the erection of the new seat (see over); Dunedin Tramping Club donated \$50; Mary Balk donated \$10. Thank you all for your generous support and continuing membership.
- REMEMBER: Donations help the Trust and the Friends in the important work of rehabilitating Flagstaff for indigenous ecology and, importantly, for trampers. Money, or offers of assistance or expertise, are always welcome. Subs are \$5 per year per membership. Membership can be individual, family or club. Please send any money to the above address.

### **QEII COVENANT PROGRESS**

Following the OTMC's giving approval to the Trust to seek an Open Space Covenant from the Queen Elizabeth II Trust, for the entire property, Helen Clarke of QEII has put together an early draft of a covenant document. QEII has agreed to accept in principle, the proposal for a covenant. Helen's draft has been examined by the Trust who made some preliminary amendments. It will be discussed with the OTMC committee shortly.

## **Reports: Last year's picnic**

The 2001 picnic held on Sunday 18 November was a very pleasant gathering, with the usual OTMC day trip arriving via Spiers Road and this time descending the Pineapple Track. An excursion to Bruce Campbell's rhodie dell down the newly-realigned Jim Freeman Track was made.

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### **Installation and dedication of the Linda Mercier memorial seat.**

The crowd met on Saturday 20 April at the Bullring, and made light work of carrying the materials pre-built by Peter Mason, to Ben Rudd's hut site. A contingent from the Merciers arrived at lunch time, to catch the last of the installation process for the large durable seat. Everyone, including the children, helped, and a track was put in to the site, which will command a splendid view from the beech trees. A few well-chosen words by Edith, including a reading of one of Linda's famous trip reports (about Snowcaving on the R&P 1967), marked the occasion. Those in attendance were: David Still, Rosemary Watson, Vincent, Rosa, Tracy & Richard Pettinger, Claudia Mercier, Edith Mercier, Kath Beattie, Raewyn Miller, Antony, Kim & Eleanor Hamel, Henry Stoddart, Beth Larkins, Peter, Ken and Brett Mason, and Teresa Blondell. Thanks again for the generous donation, Edith.

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### **1930s**

Old Ben eases back to rest on the slope beside his home and wipes away the sweat from his face. Funny how snowgrass seedheads are always tickling your face no matter where you sit, he thinks, as he watches the sunset glow extending right over Silver Peak. Crunching the last of this year's gooseberries from his garden, he thinks of the stupid boys from school a few decades ago who taunted him about his size, who made him just want to spend his life alone... No pests up here in his little piece of heaven. Time to turn in. More track cutting tomorrow for those trampers, he thinks, then I'll put on my best jacket and go into that blasted Dunedin for supplies. He hangs his rough old coat on the three-prong coat hook screwed into the rafter by the door, gets his fire going from the lunch-time embers and begins to cook up his tea. This is life, he thinks. Day to day peace.

### **Early 1950s**

Old Ben has gone, but his home remains, lovingly maintained by his old friends in the OTC. They never ever got to really know the old chap, but they all admired him. There's a bit of broom climbing the hill into the tussock. Something Ben would have seen off, "All in a day's work" as he would have muttered to himself. It's a pleasant day and the place is peaceful as usual until two stupid boys from school show up among the tussock from the Flagstaff summit. "Hey nobody around. Let's have a look inside to see if there's any gold. The old hermit was probably a miner." "Don't be stupid. No gold up here." "Hey, look at the old coat hook up on the rafter. Bet I can swing on it." There's a groan of timber, and the old rafter begins to shift. The old man's home can't stand too much of this treatment. Luckily for the rafter, the screws in the three-prong coat hook let go and the kid falls, laughing, on the floor, although he's hurt himself. The other one, having finished carving his name, is really amused. Great to see someone else hurt, eh? The boy gets to his feet and yells at the coat hook in his hand as if his fall was all its fault. He steps outside. Flings the offending article up the hill into the flax.

### **2000s**

Just another work day by those trampers and mountaineers from the OTMC. It's still a peaceful spot, although the stupid boys from school still cannot leave Ben alone. They have tried to burn down the shelter that replaces his home, and continue to leave their names and obscenities as only stupid boys can. It's a working party today, though, in a group that bears his name with pride: "The Friends of Ben Rudds", installing a seat at the point where you can still see that treasured view of Ben's. It's misty, but the folk catch a glimpse of Silver Peak every so often. One of the workers, digging out a hole for one of the four seat legs, uncovers a three-prong coat hook from among the broom roots... and, wiping away the sweat from his face, wonders about its history...

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**Note:** The Trust still seeks the help of someone with GPS expertise and equipment, to assist in getting a precise fix on a couple of spots on the property. Please contact Ken Mason, Phone 476 7100.

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The DCC Parks & Reserves Dept (PRD) is looking towards a fire-protection programme for the area, as a joint scheme involving the Trust. It has been pointed out that, as the property is within 1 kilometre of a scenic reserve (Flagstaff SR), then a permit is required for every fire on the property. This appears to apply to any burning, including a billy-boiling fire at the shelter. Also:

- The PRD wants to discourage the use of motorbikes on the firebreak, but keep it open for mountain bikes to keep the latter away from the Walkway. PRD agrees on maintenance at the current surface standard. The DCC's Water Dept has recently carried out work on the firebreak over the Ben Rudd's property, without the Trust's knowledge, but they did not over-do the job, thankfully. It is hoped that they will always work WITH us, to achieve common objectives.
  - The PRD is soon to replace the routed reserve sign at the Bullring and are willing to include Ben Rudd's property signage or information with it.
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The Trust has organised a helicopter spraying job to control broom and gorse above the firebreak. The job was done on 20 May, with Peter Mason supervising. Tordon was used. The Trust has applied to the Otago Regional Council's Biodiversity Committee's environmental enhancement programme for help with funding this important work.

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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 home at (03) 487 9488.

- Richard P.

## Dogs

Antony Hamel's book says dogs are not prohibited on the Jim Freeman track. This is true, but the issue hasn't ever been discussed, to our knowledge, either by the OTMC or the Trust. Since dogs are prohibited on Club trips, maybe it was never an issue, as trampers would so rarely think of taking dogs with them. And, if it was normal for the OTMC members not to take dogs, maybe it was thought nobody else would! Of course, not so long ago, when it might have otherwise been discussed, dogs weren't allowed on any Walkway. So they wouldn't be anywhere near Flagstaff, presumably.

Maybe we should discuss the matter at some stage, in light of ensuring compatibility with scenic reserve management (given dogs taken in strictly for land management purposes -ie, pest control- are apparently appropriate, and can be taken into scenic reserves with a permit).

While dogs are normally free to use public roads, it is the sensitivity of unfenced adjacent land that must be considered. For example, I understand the Trust made an undertaking to assist to keep dogs off Spiers Rd next to Child's land, for instance, and I think Paul Coffey went along with that. If dogs use the road, we could lose the tolerance of Mr Childs. Rather than cough up for fencing off both sides of the road, could the DCC prefer to try to close the road??

If we don't want to fence the Ben Rudds boundary, don't we have an obligation to manage our land compatibly with our neighbours? Or, to go a bit the other way: maybe we should extend the public road rights to use of the firebreak, seeing as how the DCC, I understand, tolerates dogs on the Flagstaff Walkway these days? Does this mean fences, though??

I am beginning to see why the matter hasn't been confronted so far! It's potentially a very expensive issue, if you want to do it right.