



View from the chair

A warm welcome to our new revamped newsletter under the direction of Joe Clarkson. This is our main route for communicating with you our members and we welcome your feedback and opinions on any matters to do with the Park. We have a strong new committee and I am sure we will continue to progress many ideas for improvements to the Park in the coming year.

It has started very well with the announcement that we have received a further grant of \$20,000 from the Wellington Regional Council to complete the fencing off of the Whareroa stream from livestock. As a result of last years grant the stream is already looking much improved and the first planting day on 25 June was a great success (*see report on page 3*) with around 25 volunteers putting in 1,000 plants along the stream margins. The next planting day is Saturday 23rd July at 9.30 so put that in your diaries as we have another large batch of plants to put in.

On a sad note our Chief Ranger Chris Muller is leaving for a new job as Chief Ranger on Waiheke Island. A tribute is on page four of this newsletter. It would not be an understatement to say that Chris has transformed the Park in his 4½ year stay. Not least in the past few weeks in which he has supervised the start of the restoration of the Whareroa stream so well that it is already looking completely different. A small presentation was made to Chris at the first meeting of the new Committee.

John Lancashire
Chairman, Friends of QEP



Chief Ranger Chris Muller, Page 4

Friends AGM report

Our 2nd AGM was held at the Raumati South RSA Hall on 30 May. A good attendance of 70 members plus regional councillors Judith Aitken and Chris Turver and KCDC councillor Alan Tristram ensured a successful meeting.

John Lancashire reported on a good first year for the committee which included a membership drive which increased the Friends to 400 members; a grant of \$15,000 from the Regional Council to start the restoration of the very degraded Whareroa stream which runs through the Park; a detailed submission on the draft management plan for the Park and work on turning the group into an incorporated society.

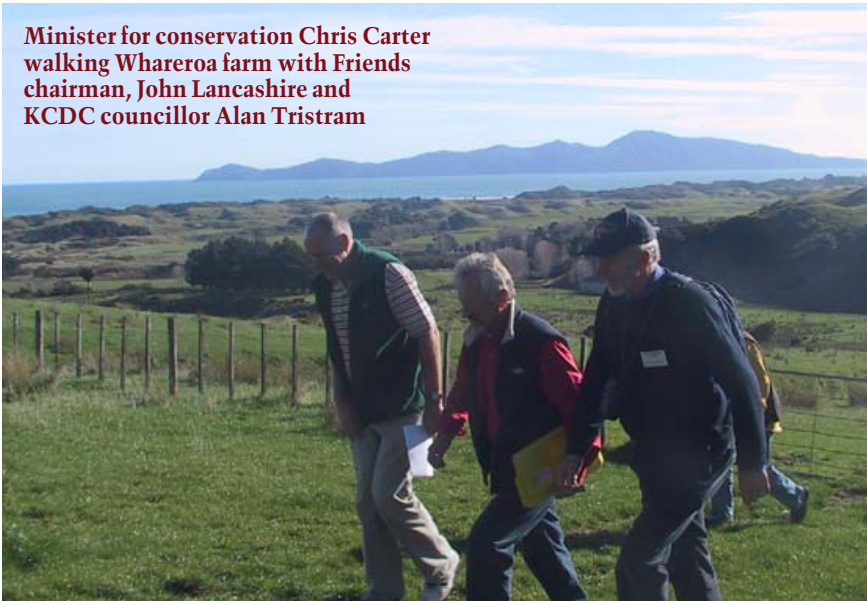
The Friends had also taken a strong position on the need to return Whareroa farm to the Park and retain it in public ownership, which was unanimously confirmed at the AGM.

A new committee of 15 was elected with 8 new members replacing those who did not stand again. The committee for 2005/6 is Daphne Steele, Joe Clarkson, Rex Harris, Michael Stace, Rachel Kiel-Taylor, Leon Kiel, John Lancashire, Peter Brooking, Trish Saar, John Porter, Sue McClure, Ralph Schneideman, John Penney, Carol Reihana and Peter Kraayvanger.

At the first meeting of the new committee on 20 June John Lancashire was re-elected Chairman and Daphne Steele deputy Chair. The position of secretary remained unfilled.

John Lancashire

Minister for conservation Chris Carter walking Whareroa farm with Friends chairman, John Lancashire and KCDC councillor Alan Tristram



Whareroa farm

Are the “Guardians of Whareroa” winning the battle to keep Whareroa Farm in public ownership?

Like many people and organizations in the Wellington region, the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park believes that Whareroa Farm has enormous recreational and ecological potential. It is a public asset which, together with Queen Elizabeth Park, occupies a unique location where the Tararua range meets the sea. There is a virtually unbroken expanse of public open space providing a link to the Akatarawa Forest, Wainui Hill, Battle Hill Farm Park, the Maungakotukutuku Valley and beyond. Whareroa Farm is an ecological and recreational keystone connecting highland to lowland and the sea.

Queen Elizabeth Park has always had strong links to Whareroa Farm. The Farm is the water catchment for QEP and, along with Wainui, it visually dominates the Park. Even before QEP existed the US marines had their camps on both sides of Mackay's Crossing. When QEP was created and

both were managed by Lands and Survey, the Farm was used to fund the Park and recreational activities were encouraged there too. Then in 1987, when the Farm was arbitrarily allocated to Landcorp and the Park to DOC, things began to change. Public access to the Farm was no longer encouraged and the tracks and recreation facilities began to fall into disrepair.

When I arrived in NZ three years ago there were rumours that Pritchard's group had been promised Whareroa Farm to subdivide into lifestyle blocks. The word on the street was that it was a done deal and there would not even be provision for a walking track up into the Akatarawa forest. Today, Pritchard's, who last year were selected as the preferred developer by Landcorp, are on the back foot proposing to develop just 10% of the Farm and calling their plans 'The People's Choice'. It is not

at all certain they will get to subdivide any of the Farm!

So what on earth happened? Whareroa Farm is considered by some to be prime real estate, elevated coastal land on SH1 and with glorious views of Kapiti and the South Island. None better. Things were shaping up to be an all too typical 'land-grab' story; a developer and a handful of wealthy lifestylers getting a little bit richer, the hapless public getting a little bit poorer and the unspoiled view from QEP gone forever.

Well, what happened was that ordinary people began to make a stand. To begin with there were just a few environmentalists fighting to save Whareroa Farm, notably June Rowland of KEA, local historian and long time QEP enthusiast John Porter and Bill Carter of the Conservation Board. Then the GWRC created the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park. We took a strong stand on the issue writing letters to various ministers, our local MP's, the GWRC and KCDC outlining the many benefits of keeping Whareroa Farm in public ownership. We argued that the best way forward was to incorporate it into Queen Elizabeth Park. The key government ministers wrote back dismissing the issue but Winnie Laban, KCDC and the Paekakariki Community Board were soon staunch and active supporters.

From strength to strength

The campaign then went from strength to strength. First a group of local environmentalists led by Leon Kiel formed the Open Space Gateway group. They researched thoroughly and articulated their conclusions in glossy brochures which have been distributed far and wide. OSG pressed Landcorp and Pritchard's to

make time to consult with the community. Then in April of this year representatives of all the interested parties, including the three local Iwi, were brought together under the leadership of Jenny Rowan in an umbrella organization calling itself the 'Guardians of Whareroa'. The Guardians persuaded Environment Minister Chris Carter to visit the Farm on the second of June. It was a gloriously sunny day, helping make the visit a great success. Chris Carter recognized Whareroa for the special place it is and agreed to advocate in the Beehive for it to be retained in public ownership.

Since then 'the Guardians' have been conducting negotiations on two fronts. On the one hand we are pressing for a 'book transfer' of the land from Landcorp to DOC. Plan B is for the community to buy the land from Landcorp and then gift it back to DOC, a perverse form of taxation if you ask me, Landcorp never paid for the land so there is no reason why we should have to buy it back! Whatever the eventual outcome GWRC has already agreed to manage however much land we secure.

I am optimistic that we can win the whole of the Farm but the battle is not won yet. Just in case we do have to buy the Farm, there is a fundraising Concert/Dance event at Paekakariki Memorial Hall on the 20th of August. I urge all friends of QEP to come along and show your support for 'Farm Aid'. Contact Leon Kiel for tickets and further information; 04 905 3045.

Joe Clarkson



From drainage ditch to braided stream. Before and after the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park began restoration of Whareroa Stream

Whareroa Stream restoration

The project to restore the Whareroa stream was the idea of the Friends of QEP committee chairman, John Lancashire. John has a vision of a golden ribbon of Kowhai flowering along the stream from October to March. His energy and enthusiasm got us started by winning initial funding of \$15,000 from the GWRC in the first month of our existence.

The newest Friends committee asking for cash so quickly did not phase the GWRC. They took it in their stride and were soon helping us decide how to spend the money. Ross Jackson and Annabelle Riley patiently guided us through the design process as well as doing 95% of the work. Park Ranger Chris Muller provided all the plants and did a fantastic job supervising the landscaping and fencing.

The first planting day was on Saturday 25th of June was a great success. 25 volunteers, including six committee members, put in 1000 plants on the seaward bank, including Cabbage trees, sedges, flax, manuka and tree fuschias. The transformation from a year ago is so much better than we envisaged. The restoration work to date has impressed the GWRC enough that we have won a further grant of \$20,000 for fencing off the rest of the stream from cattle.

In the meantime there is more planting to do. On the 23rd of June between 9.30 a.m. and noon we will be planting up the east bank. All friends of the park are welcome, light refreshments will be provided by the GWRC. Bring warm clothes, gumboots, gloves and a spade.

Joe Clarkson



MANAGEMENT PLAN

Submissions on the draft Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan are due by the end of July. There is much that is good in this document so don't forget to mention what you support in your submission.

P O Box 11 646, Wellington (or)
emailto:qep@gw.govt.nz

PARK ACTIVITIES

WORKING BEES

The regional council welcomes volunteers for planting and weed control activities:

23 July - Whareroa Stream planting. Meet 9.30a.m. Whareroa beach carpark.

8 & 29 October - Whareroa Stream releasing

To book your own event, contact the Park Ranger on 292 8625

Kapiti Coast Electric Tramway

● The tram ride is across Queen Elizabeth Park between MacKay's Crossing and Whareroa Beach. The trip of about 2km takes about ten minutes each way leaving on the hour and half hour.

● Tickets are available in the Museum shop where souvenirs, drinks and confectionary may also be purchased.

Adults \$4 return, \$2.50 single

Children \$2.50 return, \$1.50 single

Family concession \$10

Under fives free

Open 11am - 4.30pm

Weekends & Public Holidays, and

Daily from 26th December to late January

☎ 04 292 8316

www.wellingtontramwaymuseum.fr.fm

MODEL AEROPLANES fly most calm days.

TALES OF THE PARK

● What does Queen Elizabeth Park mean to you? ● How has it changed over the years? ● What do you want it to become? The Friends of QEP want to tell your stories. With your help, the history of the park and our relationship to it will be told in this newsletter.

email your park stories to;
joeclarkson@paradise.net.nz



A passionate man

After 4½ years in Queen Elizabeth Park, Park Ranger Chris Muller is leaving on the 5th July to take up a new position overseeing Waiheke and Great Barrier islands.

I talked to Chris at the first planting of Whareroa stream on the 25th June. I wanted to know what he felt he had achieved in his time as a QEP ranger and what he was most proud of. I already knew that Chris was passionate about every aspect of his job. Whether it was picking up litter after the public have gone home for the day or a major project like creating a wetland, Chris brought energy, enthusiasm and a vision of what the park could become to the task. Building on the restoration work of previous rangers, his initiatives have transformed the park.

Topping the list of Chris's achievements is the park nursery, which is choc-a-bloc full of native trees and plants grown from locally sourced seed. Chris started this up because of a lack of local native seedlings getting away in the park, their seeds presumably eaten by rats and/or rabbits. Introduced species, like blackberry, gorse and boneseed to name but a few, were thriving

and what was left of the original coastal eco-systems were in decline. This process has now been reversed, the coastal dunes and the bush remnant are being revitalised by Chris's parallel programmes of weed eradication and native re-vegetation.

Other projects that Chris has begun are the establishment of the wetlands at Mackays crossing, the coastal-erosion planting programme and the creation of a new track into the park from Tilley Road, Paekakariki. Good community and contractor relations have been a feature of Chris's tenure, he listened to people and then did what he could to make it happen for us in the park. He has been a Ranger who got things done!

Chris may be off to greener pastures but his influence will live on in the park. The nursery is his legacy. Without it projects such as the wetlands or Whareroa stream restoration would be more costly to implement and consequently limited in scope. How many future projects would never get off the ground without this fantastic park resource?

All the best up north Chris, they are lucky to get you.

Joe Clarkson