

Whareroa Guardians Community Trust Inc.

Minutes of 9th Annual General meeting

7pm, 18th April 2016 at the Paraparaumu Library

Present: Liffet Stewart, Ann Evans, Michael Keith, Laura van Peer, Jenny Rowan, Sue Blaikie, Rachel Salive, John Porter, Shane Cave, June Rowland, Penny & Ian Redward, Helen & Tony Griffiths, Michael Stace, Jonathan Waterworth, Ruby Durrant-Bush, Dawn Bush.

Apologies: Jan Nisbet, Jill Waterworth, Noeline Gollins, Denise Davis, Theo Barsanti. Liffet welcomed people to the meeting and asked Trustees to stand and be introduced.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

It was moved that these be accepted as a true and correct record (moved Jonathan Waterworth, seconded Helen Griffiths). Carried.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

(a) Ann reported the Guardians 10th Anniversary celebration at Jenny Rowan's had been a wonderful occasion.

(b) Ann referred to Item 8(d) in the 2015 AGM Minutes and said that the two botanists had worked their way through the farm bush blocks and produced an amazing list of plants that will be a very important resource on what is there at the moment, along with some of the things that should not be there.

4. Chairperson's Annual Report

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the loss of John Lancashire. I thank him for the huge amount of energy he put into Whareroa and the environment. We will be planting kowhai trees to John's memory at Whareroa and gratefully accept the bequest he left us. Such thoughtfulness makes a significant difference to the work we are able to do.

This report for the preceding year will be divided into sections of what we do that is obvious and behind the scenes. The projects carried out at Whareroa are consistent with The Farm Plan 2012.

OBVIOUS PROJECTS:

1. Planting and working bees

It has been a busy productive year with the planting season going very well last winter. 4000 plants went in the ground on the Ramaroa wetlands. The army of volunteers who reliably and cheerfully turn up for every planting day and working bee is fantastic. There were 4,572 volunteer hours spent at Whareroa with 95 separate individuals involved. We are constantly grateful for the energy and enthusiasm of every single person, and it is wonderful to see younger people coming. Family activity is encouraged at Whareroa as we "grow our own" next generation of volunteers. Our working bees days would not be the same without the nutritional support of June and Sandra Rowland, Laura van Peer, and others who kindly bring food and fluids to feed the troops. Each plant is provided with the protection of a carpet square of top quality woollen carpet. These are cut by the hands of Dick Caldwell and Julie Lines and make a huge difference to the survival rate of plantings.

2. Track maintenance and development

We would like to nominate Dick Caldwell "volunteer of the year" for his hard work mowing the tracks that we have established. Ian and Penny Redward have also done extensive weed eating of tracks.

Maintenance of tracks is an ongoing issue. Flood damage from May 2015 is still having its effects with the bridge in the lower picnic area having been permanently removed and the Link Track damage still not repaired. DOC with limited resources contributes to the upkeep of the main circuit tracks and picnic area with mowing.

The East Ridge track is now well used. The track from Ti Kouka up to the Rocks is also well trodden. Unfortunately with an absence of counters we are not able to be specific about user numbers. The new walking track currently being worked on through the Ramaroa bush and up the valley will meet up at the Rocks, thus completing the circuit with the Ti Kouka track.

A major user group at Whareroa are the mountain bikers. A huge amount of work has been done across very difficult terrain in building another downhill bike track. Construction of two small bridges at the top end of the track will see the track completed. The excellent access from Queen Elizabeth Park up to Campbell Mill Road and into the Akatarawas makes Whareroa a wonderful gateway for cyclists and trampers.

3. Farmed land

The farmed land at Whareroa is now in the hands of a new licensee, William Beetham of Beetham Pastoral. He and Drew Brown the manager are proving they value and care for the land and the waterways. They have made a significant contribution to the overall health of the area and are very open in their communication and helpful with contributing to the work of the Guardians. There are ongoing concerns with the porous nature of the fences both on the boundaries of the Whareroa Reserve and also between the farmed and restored areas. There will need to be a significant effort made to address this in the future. There was lively debate about spraying mainly conducted in public. The view of the Trustees is that the less spray used the better with a focus towards decreasing the chemicals used on the land. The pragmatic approach is that farming practice and weed management cannot operate without use of some sprays.

BEHIND THE SCENES:

1. Pest management

We have an excellent team of Shane Williamson, Shane Cave, Scott Hill, Jason Bohmer, John Rowland, and Brian Solomon to deal with our animal pests. Their pest report is attached. We do have an ongoing problem with goats which the DOC culler attends to when numbers increase. We do not have a designated group to deal with plant pests and would welcome the formation of such a group. Every Tuesday and Thursday at 0600 an ad hoc group armed with grubbers attack the thistles on the tracks but a much more comprehensive plant pest management strategy is required.

2. Fence Removal

Two other volunteers of the year are the fit and sprightly Don and Mary Beggs. They have removed fences within the retired areas. Most of us would not be aware of these fences being taken away but their removal gives a great sense of openness, tidiness and is much more conducive to rambling thoughts when wandering!

3. Primary School Activities

Jan Nisbet has coordinated trips to increase awareness of both the children and accompanying adults of what happens within the watershed. 150 school children have been involved this year. School groups totalling another 150 students, coordinated by Ann Evans, have planted trees and returning children are delighted to see how well their plantings have progressed.

4. The Kapiti Biodiversity Project

This was initiated by John Lancashire, has taken shape and is producing a flurry of activity. This is a wonderful project that Whareroa is privileged to be part of. Two trustees are closely involved. Sue Blaikie and Jenny Rowan keep us well informed about activities. Jan Nisbet's weta motels are a source of constant surprise and delight to both old and young visitors to Whareroa.

5. Publicity

The regular newsletters with wonderful photos that Ann Evans sends out to the all on the emailing list are a wealth of information and enthusiasm about activities at Whareroa. Our Facebook page and internet presence is maintained by Scott Hill with contributions from Jan Nisbet and Sue Blaikie.

But sadly here are still many people within our community who are unaware of the presence of Whareroa. A brochure has been developed by Mic Keith. This has been circulated throughout various venues in the community. Ann Evans has spoken to local groups including Probus, Lions, Rotary and Inner Wheel as well as the Wellington Botanical Society. We do access the local newspapers as much as possible with stories and will do more in the future.

6. Oral history project.

We received a grant from the Lion Foundation to capture oral history of those who were involved in saving the land. I table a copy of the summary of the project which is now lodged in the Alexander Turnbull Library. We are grateful to Jiff Stewart for her dedication to the timely and thorough completion of this task.

7. Financial Management

All of these activities require financial resources. We are very grateful to Mic Keith our treasurer for his cheerful and reliable ability to keep us on track and to Rachel Salive who is a terrier with grant applications.

8. The caravan project

This is a planned project to relocate and restore the Kiwi Caravan to the Hub for it to be a shelter and meeting place. To date grant applications have not met with success.

There are numerous jobs that occur behind the scenes that go unacknowledged. The painting of blue poles done by press ganged grandchildren, applications for signs for funding and the wording of tracks, keeping of statistics is all done cheerfully by Ann Evans. We have said it before and will repeat it frequently. Ann is the driving force behind the activities at Whareroa. All successful groups need an individual who is the passion and the inspiration. Thank you Ann.

We acknowledge the work of multiple different volunteer groups throughout the region and the country doing similar restoration work. All groups who rely on volunteers have the same concern about dealing with an aging group of supporters. We all do this kind of work in our mid-late years; this is not going to change. The Whareroa Guardians are not going away, we are here to stay and we will keep enjoying our recreation and hard work in this wonderful piece of land. We have a short questionnaire to assess if we are on the right track. Please fill this in and make any suggestions regarding future possibilities that we might be able to action.

In conclusion I wish to thank all the Trustees and our reliable minute taker, Dawn Bush, volunteers for their hard work and good fun throughout the year. We had a great celebration of 10 years of existence of the Guardians with a lovely lunch at Jenny Rowan's place in August. This was a significant occasion to thank and honour the efforts of those who have been stalwarts of Whareroa from the beginning. And it is with much sadness that we acknowledge the resignation of Jenny as a trustee. She provided great leadership in the initial phases of the establishment of the Guardians Trust and has been a fount of knowledge, wisdom and source of transport with TrukTruk and her caravan at all public events. Thank you Jenny, we know where you live and we will continue to pick those great brains of yours!

Liffet Stewart
Chair.

It was moved that the Chairperson's annual report be accepted (moved Penny Redward, seconded Ann Evans). Carried.

Liffet tabled the Whareroa Farm Plan 2012 for people to view.

Michael Stace asked about relations with DoC and Liffet advised that communication channels with DoC have been thwarted as they are very stretched for time and energy. Fences and water supply have been discussed. There needs to be 4-wheel drive access for plant transport.

Ann advised that DoC have allocated 450 hours a year for Whareroa whereas Guardians have volunteered 4500 hours.

Ann reported that DoC owns a Honda LUV which they may leave at Whareroa. If a number of designated drivers volunteer and are trained Guardians may be able to use the LUV.

Liffet noted that DoC have been fantastic in providing any pest control items requested and that Drew and William have been great allies.

Michael Stace asked about the impact of the new health and safety regulations and Liffet explained that the Guardians have an approved Health & Safety Plan. Volunteers do keep each other company or have check in procedures; trapping people and weed eaters carry first aid kits; working bees have a white board explaining particular hazards.

Ann said the main difficulties are loss of approvals for 4-wheel driving and chainsaw use.

It was noted the Management Agreement is still to be signed. (Unfortunately due to errors in communication, DOC's Rob Stone was unable to attend the AGM)

Sue gave a brief update on the biodiversity project which had just come to the end of its first of three years. She showed a penguin box and a dog muzzle and said Queen Elizabeth Park had boxes in the far dunes for little blue penguins and said the biggest dangers are dogs. Up to 50 free muzzles are available and there is signage on the beach about keeping dogs on a lead.

5. Treasurer's Annual Report

Michael Keith presented the statement of accounting policies and notes (attached). He noted that grants were at a similar level to the previous year.

It was moved that the Treasurer's Annual Report as circulated be accepted (moved Jenny Rowan, seconded Sue Blaikie). Carried.

7. Trapping Report

Shane Cave reported that 2910 animals have been caught to date and that numbers had stabilised, particularly for rats. Traps have been concentrated around areas where there had been large numbers of rats especially around the weta motels and that has made an impact on the breeding population. More traps have been available because of the funding that John Lancashire raised through the biodiversity project. Some possum traps have been swapped for rat and mustelid traps. Cameras have shown cats but only six cats have been caught since starting in 2013. DoC had supplied not only the bulk of the box traps and leg holder traps but also two cameras.

Liffet thanked Michael Stace who had got the trappers started.

Helen Griffiths reported she had not noticed any great increase in birds but at different times of the year there are different birds and it is harder to see them now that trees have grown taller.

8. Election of Trustees

Liffet announced that regretfully Jenny Rowan would be standing down.

It was noted that two trustees (Ann Evans and Laura van Peer) terms were due to expire but both had agreed to stand again and were re-elected unopposed.

Ruby Durrant-Bush was nominated by Ann Evans, seconded Penny Redward, and was elected as a new Trustee.

9. Other Business

(a) **Thanks** – A presentation was made to Jenny Rowan with thanks for all her hard work over the years and Jenny spoke of some of the problems to be faced in the future.

June Rowland said she did not think anybody could have kept the group as focussed as Jenny had because she was so dynamic and got great results. June said she had felt it a great privilege to be part of a group that worked in the manner that Jenny encouraged.

Thanks were also recorded to John Lancashire for all the work he had done over the previous 12 years.

(b) **Restoration Day** – Ann advised there were spaces for Guardians who were interested in attending the day on 21st May in Carterton and to let her know.

(c) **Questionnaire** – People were invited to fill in a questionnaire on “How are we doing?” and whether it is time to consider some new directions.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm.

After a tea break Ann showed a medley of photographs recording progress at the farm over the years, wonderful views from various locations at various times of the day, and the people at working bees, planting, gorse cutting, track making and partaking of the greatly appreciated morning teas and sausage sizzles.