

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

NEWS AND VIEWS FEBRUARY 2002

DIARY

- Wed 20th Feb 7pm at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane.
Host Get-Together and Catch Up. Tea/coffee and biscuits provided
- Thurs 21st Feb 5.30 – 7 pm at the Tree House, Botanical Gardens
Otari-Wilton's Bush/Wellington Botanical Gardens Book launch
(see notice on P2 of this newsletter)
- Sat 23rd Feb 1.30 at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane
Plant Identification Workshop. Participants will be provided with
named leaves or twigs of a number of tree and vine species. At tables
at the Centre these will be studied and their distinctive features
sketched or recorded by notes. Following that we will go out among
the plants to see them in their living state and to test your ability to
identify them.
- Sun 24th Feb 2pm Guided Walk. Meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane
- Sun 24th March 2pm Guided Walk Meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane
- Sun 28th April 2pm Guided Walk Meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane
- Tues 30th April 7.30 pm Annual General Meeting of the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust
at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane

OFFICERS

Chairperson: John Dawson, 24 Winston St., Crofton Downs, Wellington Ph 479 7369
Secretary: Margaret Crimp, 167 Wilton Rd., Wilton Wellington Ph 475 3263
Treasurer: Glenn Denby, 151 Wilton Rd., Wilton, Wellington Ph 475 8438
Committee: Margaret Chetwin, Sandra Clarke, Jock Fleming, Gordon Purdie,
Athol Swann, Helen Waugh, Bill Winstanley.

SUBSCRIPTIONS will be due for the new year in April.
\$10 single, \$15 double/family, \$5 unwaged or student.

ADDRESS OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST
160 WILTON ROAD
WILTON
WELLINGTON 6005

NOTICES

CALL FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST BOARD.

The Annual General Meeting is not too far off-- April 30. We are keen to have a good range of candidates for election to the Board, so, if you have ideas about how our wonderful Forest Reserve and Botanic Garden could be made even better and would like to be involved in the developments over coming years, this is your chance.

You will need to be nominated and seconded by two members of the Trust and should also provide background information about yourself, including why you are interested in Otari-Wilton's Bush and information about any qualifications or skills which could be useful for one or more of our varied activities.

If you would like to discuss this before making a decision my phone number is 479 7369 or you could contact any other member of the Board.

John Dawson

To obtain nomination forms, please apply to

The Secretary, Margaret Crimp Ph 475 3263

Or

John Dawson, Ph 479 7369

CHAMPAGNE AND STRAWBERRIES IN THE BEGONIA HOUSE

Thursday February 21st at 5.30-7.0pm

You and Your Friends are invited to a party to launch the

BOTANIC GARDEN VIDEO

AND TO CELEBRATE THE NEW BOTANIC GARDENS BOOKLET

AND ENJOY A SUMMER EVENING IN THE ROSE GARDEN

Cost \$12 per person

We will have order forms for the spring bulbs

PROFILE

We welcome Tony Williams who has been appointed Curator/Manager, Wellington Botanic Gardens in place of Mike Oates. We wish Mike well in his new position in the Council.

I greatly appreciate this opportunity to say a few words on my background and what I would like to achieve at Otari Wilton's Bush. In terms of background, I grew up in Kenya and then completed my education in England with a focus on environmental planning and design. After that I moved to the U.S. and spent 16 years there working in the private and public sectors on a wide variety of environmental planning projects. I moved to New Zealand in 1996 and worked in development review for the Environmental Control Business Unit prior to becoming manager of Wellington Botanic Gardens in June 2001.

Although my role is a new venture for me, I am finding that some of the work relates strongly to my previous environmental planning and design experience. Despite this connection there is also a lot of new knowledge and ground to explore. I am especially interested in expanding environmental awareness and education, improving accessibility, improving existing assets, enhancing the existing plant collections and supporting staff. So far, the knowledge and commitment shown by staff and the volunteers has been most impressive and I look forward to working with them all in the New Year. Otari-Wilton's Bush is a nationally significant resource that deserves support that is commensurate with its reputation and standing.

REPORTS

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH HOSTS

The Hosts have been doing a much appreciated job during the Christmas-New Year period, and during January when the weather has been so patchy. The services they have performed have varied widely, and include redirecting lost travellers, attending to blocked toilets, updating the bus timetable, helping provide information for school projects, and rescuing stranded stick insects. Their main function is to provide a friendly presence at the Reserve during the weekends.

Welcome to Beverley Melchior and Chris Davis who have joined the host group. Best wishes for the future to Pamela McGeorge, who is moving to Wanaka, and to Chris Morey who is concentrating on being a guide at the Karori Sanctuary and at Otari-Wilton's Bush. Gail Lewis is not available at the moment.

A Host Get Together and Catch Up is being held on Wed 20th February at 7 pm at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane. Tea/coffee and biscuits provided.

OTARI STAFF REPORT

We have had many wonderful comments from visitors to Otari-Wilton's Bush over the past few months. The gardens and the bush are looking great, benefiting from all this rain. Even though the weather may not have been that reliable we have still had brave people holding weddings here and have averaged 2100 visitors per week, according to our canopy counter. Tours have been also going strong and many cruise ship visitors have been fortunate to visit here, a credit to the Guides who were able to fit in with the unpredictable timetables.

A contract has been let for the painting of the Troup Picnic toilets, and also for their commercial cleaning! Much to the pleasure of our staff and the people who need to use those loos!

A contract is being let to continue retaining some of the track above the Kaiwharawhara Stream along the circular walkway and define the track edges in places. More work to is planned on the Circular walkway for next financial year.

Staff member Rose Walker who was the supervisor of the Fernery and Generic Collections has moved into an asset maintenance role within Parks and Gardens. We have interviewed candidates to fill her old position and hope to make a decision soon.

Some of our signage around the cultivated collections has suffered some vandalism. There has been a significant delay in getting it replaced. The manufacturers no longer make that material as it hasn't performed as they had hoped. We are now waiting and hoping that a suitable alternative can be found, a frustrating exercise!

In March we are launching into the trial of a new database called BGBase for our record keeping. I used an earlier version of this at Dunedin Botanic Garden, it was a marvellous tool. The trial will involve a considerable time commitment from myself as staff both enter and use data from Botanic Gardens and Otari. The IT people will be making sure that this software is compatible with all the WCC systems. If BGBase meets our needs it should be installed here before June and will mean we get another work station here and three more at the Botanic Garden, all networked. It will be a significant step forward in our record keeping.

GUIDED TOURS: Boxing Day 2001 to Feb 7th 2002

The Otari volunteer guides have been involved in eight guided tours over this period, four of them involving groups from overseas cruise ships. The Trust stands to benefit by more than \$1000 from the efforts of the guides with these tours.

The overseas cruise ship tours are a new venture for Otari. The first of those took place on Boxing Day and the feedback from the tourism company involved was very favourable. The two tours on 12 January were blighted by bad weather but the participants were keen to make the best of the occasion and appeared to thoroughly enjoy their visits.

The overseas cruise ship tour scheduled for 9.15 to 10.30 on 3 February seemed doomed to disaster. The tour company had originally intended two tours, the first to visit Otari and then travel to the Botanic Garden for an unguided walk, the second to do the reverse. Inadequate bookings forced the organiser to cancel one of them. He thought he cancelled tour number two but the bus company cancelled tour number one instead. Unfortunately, the tour company representative at the wharf did not ensure the driver had the correct itinerary as was supposed to happen and the bus went off for the wrong first destination. The nominated guides had left by the time the bus arrived after 11 am. Luckily, volunteer guide Sandra Clarke was hosting at Otari that morning and was willing to step into the breach and save the day. Well done, Sandra! The tour organiser is taking steps so that situation does not arise again.

The other tours have been done for the Department of Conservation (Wanganui), the Morris Arboretum (USA), a Victoria University Summer School, and a horticulture class from a Palmerston North technical college.

Trust walks have again met with mixed success. The two walks advertised for 13 January were washed out. The morning walk on 27 January drew two participants and there were 10 for the afternoon walk. The Trust walks are now being advertised in the "Feeling Great" leaflets and may reach a wider audience.

I am grateful to all the volunteer guides who have contributed to the success of the tours in this period.

Bill Winstanley,
Volunteer Guide Coordinator

BOOK REVIEW

By Sandra Clarke

Otari-Wilton's Bush/Wellington Botanic Garden.

Wellington, 2002. Price \$13.50

An eye catching booklet with stunning photos and general descriptive text covering Otari-Wilton's Bush in one half, and the Wellington Botanic Garden in the other. It would have helped if the date of publication had appeared somewhere. In the Otari-Wilton's Bush half it is a little unfortunate that the conversion of the Pipitea Maori Reserve to a scenic reserve in 1904 is not mentioned nor the ownership of Wilton's Bush by Martin Chapman for almost 20 years. In the Botanic Garden section a description of the James Hector Pinetum would have highlighted the strength of the exotic tree collection. Gardeners need to be able to go and look at tree specimens for their own edification.

WELLINGTON'S OUTER GREEN BELT

The Trust's Board recently received a copy of the W.C.C.'s Management Plan Discussion Document, and David Clelland, a senior officer from the W.C.C.'s Planning Division, kindly came up to a recent Trust Board meeting and discussed this recently published document, asking us, as neighbours to the proposed scheme, to submit comments by the 25th. of January 2002.

Bill Winstanley collated the Board's comments in an excellent paper, and this has been submitted, as David Clelland requested **Grant Preston Thomas**, a member of the Trust, also sent in substantial pertinent comment, as an individual

The broad concept is for 'a continuous spine of open space following the ridgelines that flank the west of the urban areas from the south coast at Hawkins Hill, through to Polhill, Karori Sanctuary, Wrights Hill, Makara Peak, Johnston Hill, Mt Kaukau, and on the hills west of Tawa running towards Colonial Knob'.

This spine of 'open space' along our western ridge-line will provide a 'natural' backdrop to this edge of the city. It will also provide space for recreational activities -- walking, running, mountain biking, horse riding, scenic enjoyment, picnicking and other informal recreational activities.

For those of us who have an interest in the restoration of Wellington's original native vegetation, the development of the *Outer Green Belt*, can be seen as an important contribution to the city's ecology. Healthy native bush along, or adjacent to this spine of 'open space' along the skyline, will allow the movement of plant and animal species within the wider city ecosystem, resisting the effects of weeds and pests.

At the moment the W.C.C. are merely stating an intention to develop a management plan for the *Outer Green Belt* under the **Reserves Management Act 1977** process. In the second part of the process they will hold a series of workshops. At the present time, they are simply seeking our initial thoughts and response, so they can prepare a draft plan that would be available for comment. This step by step development of a management plan seems to be most democratic.

Jock Fleming.

BOOK REVIEW

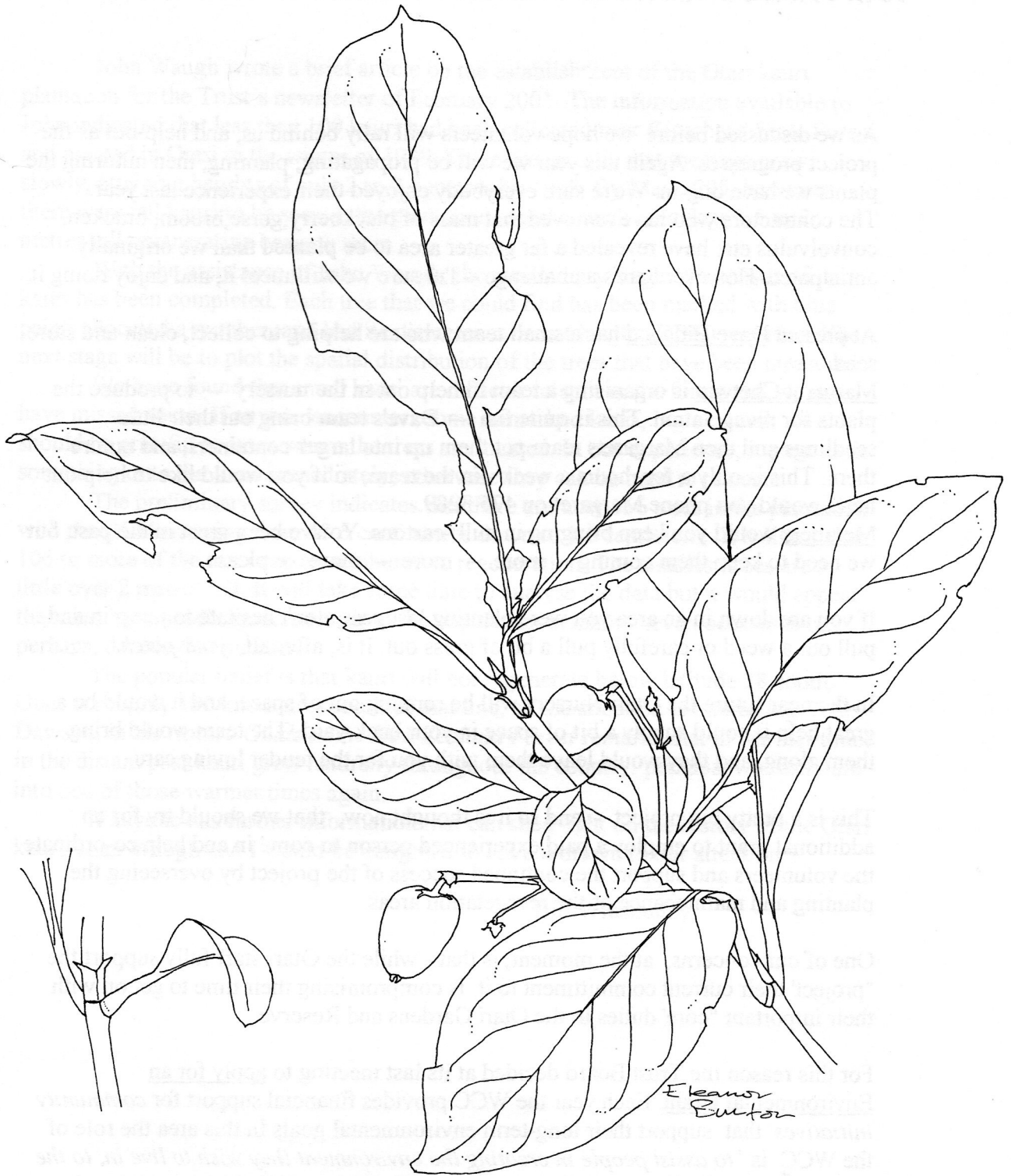
By Sandra Clarke

Eadic, Fiona

100 best New Zealand native plants.

Auckland, 2001. Price \$39.95

Each of the 100 plants described in this book is given at least a full page of text and for a high proportion, a coloured photograph is included. Much of the information is available in earlier texts such as Matthew's Growing native plants or Metcalf's books but a pruning guide is a definite improvement on the former. There is a distinct emphasis on landscape use of plants which is aided by the colour photographs. This book is a significant addition to the literature on N.Z. plants for gardeners.



Coprosma macrocarpa

This *Coprosma* is a small tree, growing up to 10m. It is found on the Three Kings Islands and in Northland, its southern limit being the Kaipara harbour. It is mostly notable for the very large fruit.

In cultivation it prefers good light and an open situation, but is doing well as an understory plant in the Wild Garden. I have unfortunately been unable to find much more information than this!

KAINUHARAUHARA STREAM REVEGETATION PROJECT

As we discussed before, we hope volunteers will rally behind us, and help-out as the project progresses. Again this year we will be propagating, planting, then nurturing the plants we have dug-in. We're sure everybody enjoyed their experience last year. The contractors who have removed that mass of blackberry, gorse, broom, bracken, convolvulus etc. have revealed a far greater area to be planted than we originally anticipated. However here's a challenge -- I'm sure we will meet it, and enjoy doing it.

At present Dave Bidgood has a small team who are helping to collect, clean and store seed.

Margaret Chetwin is organising a team to help out in the nursery -- to produce the plants for revegetation. This is quite fun -- Dave's team bring out their little seedlings and then Margaret's team pot them up into larger containers, and nurture them. This is only a few hours a week - in the team, so if you would like to help out here, would you phone Margaret on 475 3289.

Members would you keep bringing in milk-cartons. You've been great in the past, but we need to keep them coming -- more -- more -- more -- please.

If you are down in an area you were planting last year, don't hesitate to jump in and pull out a weed or carefully pull a bit of grass out. It is, after all, *your patch*.

In the near future the Otari Nursery will be running out of space, and it would be a great help if could supply a bit of space in your back-yard. The team would bring them along, and they would leave them with you for the tender loving care

This is a pretty big project - and so it is thought now, that we should try for an additional grant to employ a paid experienced person to come in and help co-ordinate the volunteers and support the continued success of the project by overseeing the planting and maintenance of the revegetation areas.

One of our concerns, at the moment, is that - while the Otari staff fully support the "project" their current commitment to it, is compromising their time to get on with their important "core" duties in the Otari Gardens and Reserve

For this reason the Trust Board decided at its last meeting to apply for an Environmental Grant. Each year the WCC provides financial support for *community initiatives* that support their long-term environmental goals. In this area the role of the WCC is '*to assist people in creating the environment they wish to live in, to the betterment of all!*'. We strongly feel that our application qualifies to be considered seriously. We'll have our application in, by closing date on the 28th Of February..

Jock Fleming - project co-ordinator

REGENERATION IN THE OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH KAURI PLANTATION

John Waugh wrote a brief article on the establishment of the Otari kauri plantation for the Trust's newsletter of February 2001. The information available to John indicated that less than 100 kauri had been collected near Riverhead State Forest and planted in Otari in the winter of 1929. There are records that the trees grew slowly, attaining heights of only 2 to 2.5 metres by 1948. By May 1995, however, there were tall kauri to be seen in the plantation together with seedlings 1.5 to 2 metres tall regenerating beneath them.

With the assistance of John Waugh, the preliminary stage of a census of the kauri has been completed. Each tree that we could find has been marked with blue paint, allocated a number, and had its diameter at breast height (DBH) recorded. The next stage will be to plot the spatial distribution of the trees that have been measured.

We have found that small kauri are difficult to spot in the forest and we may have missed some. If anyone encounters some unmarked kauri, big or small, we should be grateful to learn where the trees are located. In our experience, it pays to tie something onto the trees immediately, otherwise they can be hard to relocate.

The preliminary survey indicates that there are now 156 trees in the plantation with the DBHs ranging from 48.5 centimetres down to 1.0 centimetre. It is likely that 106 or more of the trees can be attributed to regeneration. The smallest trees are a little over 2 metres tall. It will take some time to analyse the data but it would appear there has been seedling recruitment to the population on about seven occasions or, perhaps, double that number.

The popular belief is that kauri will not regenerate below latitude 38 south. Otari is roughly 350 kilometres south of that line, so the situation is interesting. John Dawson, in his *Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest* remarks that in warmer times in the distant past kauri grew naturally throughout the country: perhaps, we really are into one of those warmer times again.

If anyone has further information that can shed light on the history of the Otari kauri, John Waugh and I would be delighted to have it drawn to our attention.

Bill Winstanley

HISTORICAL SPOT

THE WITTONS OF OTARI FARM

John Witton and his wife Martha came to New Zealand from Wolverhampton on the "Alma", arriving in Wellington on the 15th May, 1857. With them came their children, Thomas, Mary Jane, Sarah, John and Elizabeth. William Witton, their second son, also came to New Zealand but he was not mentioned on the "Alma's" passenger list. Two more children were born, Ellen in 1862 at Porirua, and Frederick Stephen in 1865 at Otari. John's occupation on the birth certificates was Edgetool Maker. John, the third son died at Otari in 1871. "Witton" family history records that John, a forger, worked for E.W. Mills in Aurora Terrace before buying land in Wadestown, and naming the farm Otari, as it was under Otari Knob. The farmhouse stood near where Chartwell School is now.

John Witton purchased Lots I to VIII in the Kaiwarra District in 1876 for £700. In early directories he was listed as a blacksmith, so perhaps he kept working at his trade whilst the sons developed the land. At the time of Frederick Witton's death in 1916 mention is made of his father taking up land when the hills were bare of roads and covered in bush. One only needs to look southwards from where their farm was to Otari-Wilton's Bush to see how it would have looked in the late 1800's.

John died in May 1891 and the farm was leased to his son Frederick and daughter Sarah, then after Martha's death in 1893 the farm was advertised for tender, but it did not sell. It was finally bought by Frederick and Sarah Archibald in 1899 and Elizabeth Lomas, Thomas Witton, Mary Swede and Ellen Gregory were paid the sum of £2040 – earlier William Witton, a blacksmith in the Wairarapa was paid £450.

Sarah Archibald and Frederick Witton ran the farm for many years until Frederick's death, then Sarah employed a manager. This was unsuccessful and Robert Archibald, Sarah's son, returned from the Wairarapa and took over the running of the farm, carrying on the tradition of his grandfather, mother and uncle delivering milk to Wadestown, Ngaio, and Khandallah areas. When Robert died his daughter Linda carried on managing the farm and kept it going until her ill health forced it's closure in 1954.

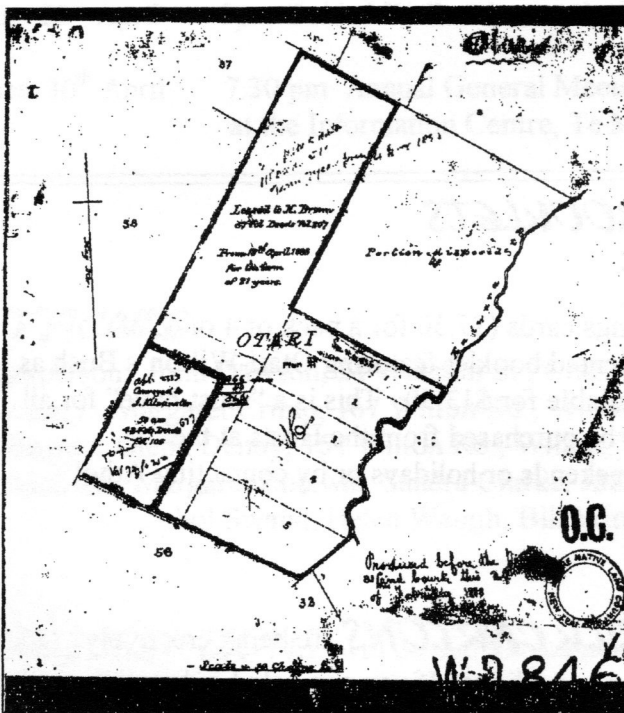
At that time part of the land was taken for Churchill Drive, a badly needed second road exit from the City, and the rest was subdivided for housing, the area now being known as Chartwell, and Otari. Acknowledgment of the Wittons is made in street names, John Witton Drive and Martha Place.

Ann Moffat.

Sources:

Witton Descendants
 Registrar General
 Evening Post
 Lands and Deeds
 National Archives

Map WD846 from Lands and Deed showing the Witton Farm (portion disposed) and the area of Native Land leased by the Wittons.



Advertisement for the
 Sale by Tender of
 Otari Farm 1893

FOR SALE BY TENDER.
 TENDERS addressed to the undersigned will be received up to the 15th July, 1893, for the purchase of a Farm of 164 Acres (more or less), securely fenced, situated at Otari, near Wadestown, three miles from Wellington, known as the property of the late John Witton; seven-roomed House; twenty-stalled Cow-shed, loft and concrete floor; six-stalled three-stalled Stable, loft; Hay-shed, Brick Dairy, and Outbuildings; 189 Acres Native Reserve, leasehold, rent £15 per annum (14 years to run), about three-quarters fenced; 80 head cattle (more or less), 6 Horses, 1 Trap, 1 Cart, and 2 sets Harness. Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted. For terms and particulars apply to
 JAS. BIDDICK, Auctioneer,
 Moleworth-street, Wellington.

WE NEED YOUR HELP URGENTLY

- Because of lush growth this summer, the revegetated areas planted last year badly need weeding. Please ring Margaret Chetwin Ph 475 3289 if you can help. Details of work parties will also be posted on the noticeboard outside the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane.
- Volunteers are urgently required to help with work in the plant nursery for 2 or more hours a week on a regular basis.
- Volunteers are also needed to cut tops off milk cartons.

Please ring Margaret Chetwin Ph 475 3289 if you can help with any of these tasks.

GREETINGS CARDS AND BOOKLETS

In addition to our excellent range of greetings cards (\$7.50 for a pack of 4 or \$2 if purchased singly) we now have a well presented booklet featuring Otari-Wilton's Bush as well as the Wellington Botanic Garden available for \$13.50. This is a "must have" for all interested in Otari-Wilton's Bush and may be purchased from the Hosts at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane at weekends or holidays or by contacting Athol Swann, Phone 472 8417.

WASHED UNSQUASHED MILK CARTONS are being creatively recycled. They are ideal for planting out tree seedlings. If you can help by donating used cartons, please leave them in the bins under the deck at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane.