

# PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the  
Otatara Landcare Group*

**Issue 63, Winter 2021**

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*Excited about the bike and scooter pump track!  
James and Rory McCarthy inspect the site for  
the Gostelow legacy. Full story next page.*

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# THE GOSTELOW LEGACY

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By Penny Ivey

**Editor's note: I asked Penny Ivey to summarise the story of the Gostelow legacy, recognising with deep appreciation Penny's work with others on behalf of the Otatara community to see that the legacy benefited Otatara.**

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Mr Derek Gostelow passed away in July 2019 and made a very generous bequeath in his will to the Invercargill City Council, to be spent on a project within the Otatara area. Mr Gostelow had lived in Otatara most of his married life and was a well known figure in our community. Most people won't be aware, that as a seven year old child in south London, he was one of 3.5 million children in Britain who were taken away from their homes to avoid the air raids of WW2. He had survived three air raids before the decision was made to get him out of London. He went on to serve in the Merchant Navy where he made a stop in Bluff, met and later married a local woman, eventually residing in Black Road.

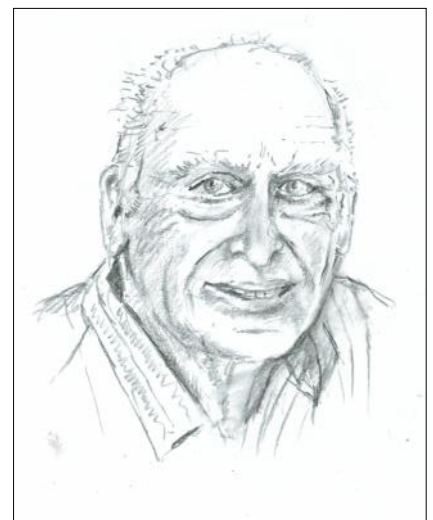
A community meeting was conducted by Councillors Nobby Clark and Alan Arnold early in 2020 where a list of suggestions on how best the money could be spent, was discussed and prioritised. However, these suggestions were ignored by the City Council who decided it should go towards an electric BBQ, CCTV and some extra seats and plantings at Fosbender Park. This decision was opposed by both Nobby Clark and Alan Arnold. Following a lot of opposition from the community I arranged for flyers to be distributed to all Otatara households to gauge their responses. Within five days more than 1000 responses were returned with 99% strongly opposing the Council's decision and asking that it be revisited. Following this a group of us presented a petition to Mayor Sir Tim Shadbolt.

The Council's decision was overturned and further consultation took place to understand the community's preferences. After many meetings and a lot of work by Parks and Recreation staff, especially Sheryl Ashton and Lesley McCoy, two options were prepared and put forward at a further community meeting in May 2021.

The first option was to develop the Taiepa Dune Reserve, including an extended gravel walk and bike track close to the bus stop, some additional playground equipment and seats and a small concreted area with a basketball hoop.

This option posed some challenges however, including the fact that the reserve would need to be redesignated as a recreational area, the swampy nature of the ground which would mean extra drainage expenses, car parking and visibility challenges and opposition from some neighbouring residents.

*Derek Gostelow*



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## Disclaimer

As with any community newsletter, the articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor and are not representative of the Otatara Landcare Group as a Society.

It is the diversity of views and opinions that make a community so interesting. So if you have something you'd like to share, email it to [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com), attention **Editor of Pigeon Post**, and watch out for it in our next edition.

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The second option was to develop the triangular section at the corner of Dunns Road and Oreti Road into an asphalt pump (bike) track for bikes and scooters, a small asphalted area where children can learn to ride their bikes, and a small informal play area. There will also be some form of acknowledgment of Mr Gostelow's bequeath. In addition to the legacy fund, the council will put forward a further \$48,000 towards the project which would be used for landscaping and a contingency fund. This site would be a more central location, visible from the road and with no immediate neighbours.

After some great discussion and feedback, including from Glenys Hawkes, Mr Gostelow's niece and pupils from Otatara school, the majority supported the Dunns/Oreti roads location and the concepts provided. The Council is putting together a Request for Proposal out to the market in the next two to three weeks. Detailed design will be part of this package.

This whole process certainly educated me in how slowly the wheels of local body politics turn and how many hoops have to be jumped through. In my naivety I had presumed a decision would be made, quotes would be gathered and the work would go ahead! Fortunately Nobby was always available to pass on valuable knowledge and advice. Hopefully our amazing community, which I was fortunate enough to join two years ago, will benefit and enjoy the fruits of Mr Gostelow's legacy and his generosity will be remembered forever, with immense gratitude.

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## BLISS AT BUSH HAVEN

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By Kathy Morrison

Kathy Morrison, from Bush Haven, with Rua, a Tui, who was brought to Bush Haven with his head off to one side and could not stand up. Kathy discusses with Rua her imminent transfer into an outside cage where she could practise flying.

It's been a busy time at Bush Haven, writes Kathy. "We've had Tuis in one corner, puppies in another.

Neighbours visiting to hold and name puppies also getting to meet and greet recovering Tuis!

"One dear wee boy thought our house was the best—like living in a sort of special garden inside, he said, cuddling two puppies in his lap and looking up at a newly-fledged Tui looking down at him.

"Bliss being the hosts of 10 pups, two Tuis, Moana, Skye, Anna, Max, Jack, Harry, Jamie and Ryan. Thanks for gracing our home, you all!"







## From the chairperson of the Otatara Landcare group—Barry Smith

The 22nd AGM has now passed and we have roughly the same committee. Bronwyn Graham has retired but isn't lost from the cause as she is still doing an immense amount of work down at the Southland Community Nursery. The other person to officially go off the Committee was Glenda Graham who passed away last year. Lloyd Esler has again accepted the reins of Treasurer, only the 4th in our 22 year history, and has the support of Chris and my wife (Robyn) for any of the technical stuff. Our committee as usual has a wide range of experience and expertise which we have always put to good use and will do so this coming year too.

At the end of February and through March I took a month off and went to the North Island (creating greenhouse gasses unfortunately). Robyn joined me up there and we toured from New Plymouth (where I'd attended the NZ Masters Track and Field Championships) through the Central Plateau, to Whangamata, to East Cape and Napier/Hastings for the NZ Pipe Band Championships.

After winning the Grade 2 Championships for the previous 2 years, the ILT City of Invercargill Highland Pipe Band competed very well in Grade 1. However, beaten by the perennial Canterbury and Manawatu bands, they were basically 3rd equal in points. Watch this space next year! However our Grade 4A band was a clear winner and is now in Grade 3. Our 4B Band was 2nd in the 4B section. Our Juvenile Bands also did well. Juvenile bands are players aged 18 & Under, although they are allowed one player over that age. The Juvenile A won their section with the B band eighth out of 11 bands. It was great to watch and Napier put on a really cold SE wind with no sun. It was kind of funny sitting around watching all the Southlanders whinging about the cold.

During the last month or so I have spent some time upgrading 87.7 metres of track near the entranceway to Bushy Point. It is hoped that this may encourage more people, who are less than agile on their feet, to come into the area and have a look around. We may extend the track hardening at a later date as finances become available but we won't be doing the whole 3km as this would be sublimely ridiculous, not to mention horrendously expensive.



**MATATOKE VIADUCT**  
On the North Island Main Trunk Line

Since our last Pigeon Post we have had our mower over at the Oreti Totara Dunes Reserve a couple of times and we have cut a couple of kilometres of track through tall grass, cutty grass, up embankments and through rushes. This will make it much easier for people getting around the area as previously it wasn't always easy determining exactly where the route was. If you haven't been out there it is more than well worth a visit. There are a

*Continued on next page*



number of viewing spots around and it is right on the eastern banks of the Oreti River. It gives a whole new perspective on the Oreti River and Sandy Point.

In May I took a group of Southland Tramping Club people to the site. The STC has given some funding for the planting of native trees in the area. Funding this year was for 100 trees of which I added a further 25. Next year the STC is celebrating its 75th anniversary and to offset all that carbon created during the event they have set aside \$3500 for plants. The STC is currently gathering names and contact details of former members and if anyone knows of any, tell them to contact us at: [stc75jubilee@gmail.com](mailto:stc75jubilee@gmail.com) The more people we get to the event then the easier it will be to get next year's quota of plants in the ground.

Look out for this year's Planting Day, in September. Although we will be operating under Covid Rules, exactly how tightly we control this will depend on where New Zealand is at with Covid, our vaccinations programme and what we will be required to do through DOC and Government policy at the time.

*Barry Smith, Chairperson*  
[hjsrdms@gmail.com](mailto:hjsrdms@gmail.com)

## Totara Seedlings wanted

If you have Totara seedlings coming up in your garden the Oreti Totara Dune Forest project can use them. Please put seedlings into a pot with some soil and drop off at Southland Community Nursery – entrance just past rapid number 185 Grant Road. They will be used by farming brothers Rory and Cody who are farming the Oreti farmland with the regenerative agriculture system.

**Otatara Landcare Group**

**NOTE: Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September**

**BUSHY POINT PLANTING DAY – 2021**

**DATE & TIME: Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – 10:00 am ~ 1:00 pm**

**ACCESS ADDRESS: No: 5 Bryson Rd, Otatara 9879**  
(When coming from town, turn left off Marama Ave South)

**BBQ afterwards**



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# OTATARA SCENIC RESERVE

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By Brian Rance

If you live in Otatara nobody lives more than 20 minutes walk from a publicly accessible reserve. The four largest are Otatara Scenic Reserve (ICC), Bushy Point (DOC), Oreti Totara Dune Forest (NZFRT) and Otatara South Scenic Reserve (DOC) as well as seven other smaller environmental reserves (ICC and QE2).

Oreti Totara Dune Forest is a new addition to our playground and Bushy Point has been managed by the Otatara Landcare Group for the past 20 years.

Otatara Scenic Reserve is the jewel in the crown of Otatara reserves. At just over 40 hectares most people in Otatara will have walked its well formed tracks and its accessibility to the Otatara School means that the next generations are all able to enjoy its treasures. If you go into the reserve, you'll notice that it is very diverse – more so than the other areas mentioned above. Because of its different soils (from sandy to peaty wet gullies) and landforms, in different areas of the reserve it supports a range of forest types.

These forests support all of the big notable trees found in Otatara – Totara, Matai, Miro, Rimu, Kahikatea and Pokaka. Other reserves generally have a predominance of one or two of those species. The understory comprises a varied mix of shrubs, climbers, and ground cover ferns (of which there are at least 25 different species). In the spring season look out for orchids. In the wet swales you can find a rare shrub, *Coprosma pedicellata*, a small-leaved *Coprosma* with seeds on a stalk (or pedicel – hence its name). It is a relatively new find and likes the wet runnels that go through the reserve. Another notable shrub most common in moist areas is Rohutu (*Neomyrtus pedunculata*) which is a member of the myrtle family. Rohutu is now listed as Critically Endangered because of predicted impacts of myrtle rust.

The reserve has a number of landforms – namely undulating dunes, moist flats and wet swales. On the dunes Totara forest dominates, on the moist flats Kahikatea and Pokaka dominate, in other areas Matai dominates. These are the ancient forest of the reserve containing some impressive mature trees. Parts of the reserve have been modified in the past. In these areas the forest is shorter but continues to regenerate strongly.

Invercargill City Council has managed the reserve since 1931. Previous to that it was vested as an Education Reserve, then a Recreation Reserve and finally in 1985 designated a Scenic Reserve. In 1999 an ecological survey identified the native forests of Otatara and Sandy Point as Nationally Significant for the following reasons:

Nationally sand dune and sand



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## Otatara Scenic Reserve continued

plain ecosystems have been altered by human activities resulting in the high rates of loss of indigenous vegetation cover, especially forest. Otatara has some of the best remaining examples of coastal Totara-Matai sand dune forests in New Zealand. Otatara Scenic Reserve has the only example of a sequence of Totara-Matai and mixed Podocarp forests on differently aged sand dune and sand plain surfaces in New Zealand.

Although fragmented, the forest remnants are large enough and connected enough to ensure their future viability/survival. We all have a duty to protect and enjoy such important national treasures.

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# AT HOME

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By Geoff Dembo

At home over a winter weekend, nursing myself through a persistent heavy cold, I've found the ideal spot to park myself: on a sofa in the lounge next to a window giving a view over the garden.

As I loll through the day, reading books and surfing the internet, my mind wanders over many subjects, such as the benefits of a house with large north-facing windows and no buildings or trees blocking the sun. A heat pump for instant heat and a woodburner for cosy ambience, both near to hand, are a real blessing too.

Looking out of the window, the garden is in its winter colours: drab greens and browns, with the odd splash of brightness where calendula and sweet pea plants have survived the recent frosts. Overhead the cloudscape changes while the sun slowly passes across the sky.

Otatara is a good place for watching birds, thanks to local people who deal to the pest animals which eat the adult birds and raid their nests. From my window I see Mr and Mrs Blackbird, industriously working their way around my (or their!) garden. On top of the powerpole at the roadside, my neighbour Weedeep the Thrush goes through his songbook.

Tuis and Bellbirds, attracted by sugarwater feeders, take a break from singing and squabbling to dash backwards and forwards between here and who knows where. Perhaps tomorrow I may see a native pigeon or a harrier hawk, flying high.

On the coffee table is a leaflet about the annual NZ Garden Bird Survey. The public are asked to make a note of birds they see over the course of an hour, and then upload the list to a website. Worth a go, I think.

I feel very lucky to be able to live here.







## Happy times at the community nursery and in the bush

### Otatara – Special places and a community that cares about conservation

In this wonderful suburb there is no shortage of opportunities for children to learn about the places, flora and fauna that is special to this place, and to become involved in conservation.

So far in 2021 the Otatara School has had many opportunities alongside the Southland Community Nursery, with visits to the nursery at 185 Grant Road; Bronwyn Graham visiting the school, and discovering together in other special places around Otatara.

In March Pōkākā (Year 5/6) and Miro (NE/Year 1) classes visited the nursery for the day with a focus on noticing the seasonal and lifecycle aspects of the plants and the ngahere/bush. Putting on scientific thinking hats, the students wondered, inquired and answered queries. Tree identification knowledge was also put into practice, noting which species had seed ready to collect at that time of year. The different size, shape and type of seeds and the different ways these are dispersed around the environment were studied. For more information on knowing your seeds and when to collect your seeds, head to the website, [southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](http://southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz), and head to 'restoring-your-patch/get-growing/seeds'.

In March the nursery also welcomed the staff from Otatara School to showcase the education centre floor map and how it can be used to tell the stories of Otatara - from early settlement and access,

whaling and sealing, the bush and sawmilling, flaxmilling, the New River Estuary shipping and reclamation, the moving school site, Sandy Point, recreation, and places we value today. The history of the Otatara environments and the people and places is amazing and intriguing.

Also in March the Mataī and Kōtukutuku classes visited to notice and nature journal all about leaves, trees and seasonal changes, before taking a strong interest in the roles of birds with their classroom trees - from drinking the nectar of the flowers and pollinating these plants, eating the berries, to pooping the seeds out!

March finished with Bronwyn visiting the Tōtara trees at the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest with the Tōtara class of Otatara School How special to have this significant Tōtara forest in Otatara

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# Otatara School discoveries



where the Native Forest Restoration Trust is restoring an historic treasure. Maurice Rodway the honorary ranger led a fascinating journey through this remarkable area.

In April Bronwyn's visits with the Tōtara class of Otatara School continued with another outing to the adjacent Otatara Scenic Reserve learning all about the significance and use of Tōtara, and how this tree grows from a tiny seed.

Throughout May and June Bronwyn has been exploring and discovering with the Tōtara and Kōtukutuku classes. Exploring and learning in the adjacent Otatara Scenic Reserve had led to telling the story of where the bush used to cover Otatara, with the students now having a sense of how truly special the bush in the reserve is and how they need to protect and look after it when we visit this special place.

The development of a Care Code and putting the Care Code into action has shown a growing sense of kaitiakitanga for this place. Noticing and learning about all the different living components of the bush – fungi, plants, birds and insects – has started wonderful wondering about our natural environment in Otatara.

For more, visit [www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/news-and-events](http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/news-and-events)

*Left, exploring the bush walk.*

*Below, learning about seed collection from the forest canopy.*



## Legacy of the Kowhai tree

*“Ehara taku toa, i te toa takitahi, Engari he toa takitini.”*

*“My success is not from the work of one, but from the work of many”*

At the end of 2020 an initiative between the Southland Community Nursery and Otatara School began with the gifting of Kōwhai trees to those families whose youngest or only child was leaving after having completed their primary schooling.

In April the Kōwhai (New Entrants) and Tarata (Year 5/6) classes visited the Southland Community Nursery to contribute to this legacy that Otatara school gifts to leaving families.

These classes began the growing of these special taonga for subsequent years gifting. Seed that had been collected was prepared and sown, and seedlings growing from previous seasons were potted up to allow them to grow into bigger plants ready to be gifted.

It was great to see the New Entrants start alongside the tiny Kōwhai seedlings – they will both grow through to leaving at the end of Year 6. Many of the Year 6 students were excited to find out that their family would get a kōwhai tree to plant at home on their leaving of Otatara School.

# HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?



By Chris Rance

That's probably the most common question we get asked when people visit our property or buy plants from the Otatara Community Nursery. At our place on Grant Road we are able to show people different ages of planting from our latest "lockdown" planting last year to 20+ years ago.

No matter when you aim to plant there is no better time than now! After as little as three to four years you will have made a habitat for yourselves and the creatures we share the planet with and there is nothing more satisfying or meaningful than planting trees.

We are so lucky in Otatara that most of us have some space in which to create something beautiful and useful and often both. We have some distinct areas on our place – the beautiful old growth Kahikatea forest – and how lucky are we to be custodians of something so magnificent - it has been here for hundreds of years.

A vibrant restoration area (previously paddock) protecting the edge of the old-growth forest and being home and feeding ground to all manner of birds. Ponds and vegetation that bring in rare Fernbirds, Herons and Kingfishers, to name but a few. Vegetable gardens that produce most of our fresh veggies throughout the year (supplemented by the produce from the one thing Southlanders must have – a Morrifield tunnelhouse!), fruit bushes, nut trees and fruit trees. All add to the diversity on the property. Get some ideas from <https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/>

Start planting this spring – you won't regret it!

*Below and right, the pond before—and after.*

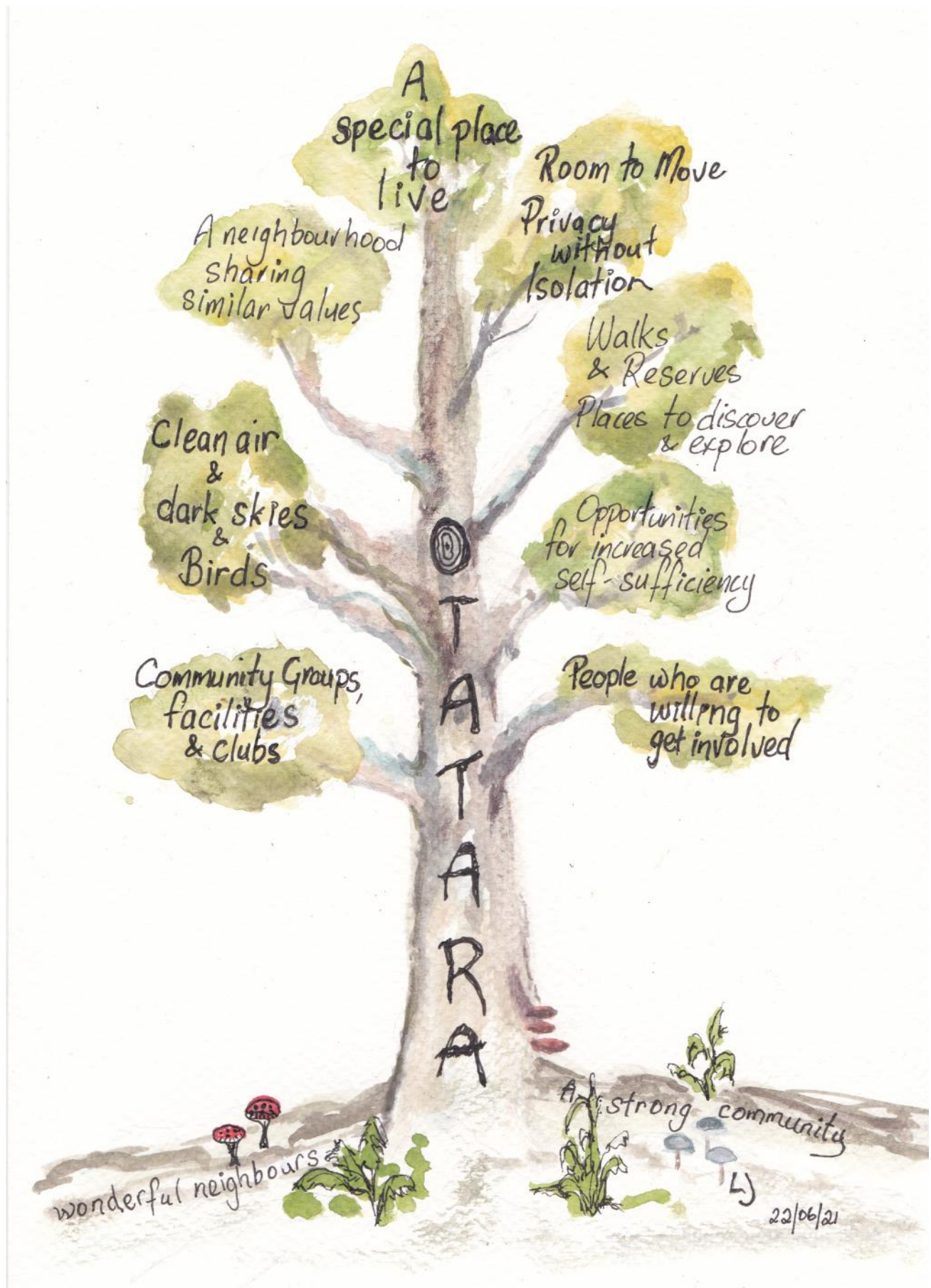




# THOUGHTS TO SHARE



By Linda



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# PEST CONTROL AT BUSHY POINT

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By Chris Rance

It is now over 15 years since Otatara Landcare Group volunteers started animal pest control at Bushy Point. It is also 20 years since we started the wider Bushy Point Restoration project – planting, tracks, weed control, interpretation signs etc.

If you are a resident who adjoins Bushy Point we are particularly interested to let you know what has been achieved so far and to answer any questions you might have. You will have been originally consulted prior to the project beginning in 2015 or you may have moved in since. Animal pest control targeting stoats, rats and possums is in place to protect native birds particularly vulnerable when on nests where eggs, chicks and occasionally adult birds are killed. This control has been particularly successful with Otatara displaying some of the best native bird populations in Southland. Monitoring of control areas indicates we have pest animals down to low levels.

For your information, traps for possums and rat bait stations containing poison bait are placed at 100 metre and 50 metre intervals along lines that are 100 metres apart. This spacing is recommended for the control of rats and possums. Stoat traps are spread over a wider area as the home range of stoats is larger. Traps are humane kill traps and are baited specifically to catch the animals targeted. Possum traps are mounted on trees and stoat traps have small entrances to avoid harming domestic pets.

Rat bait is contained within bait stations which are not accessible to other animals or people. There are poison warning signs at the entrance and within the reserve and signs that dogs must be kept on leads within the reserve. The pest traps and bait stations are checked every two weeks by a dedicated band of local volunteers. This pest effort is part of the thousands of volunteer hours spent in Bushy Point over the last 20 years.

We would be particularly interested to hear from you if you want further information or have any concerns about the work at Bushy Point. If you are happy with the work being done then there is no need to respond. Contacts for the Otatara Landcare Group are Barry Smith 213 1500 or Chris and Brian Rance 2131161 evenings.

If you want to assist with saving native birds by controlling rats, possums and stoats on your own property then contact the “Otatara Pestbusters” and you will be able to receive subsidised traps and bait to use yourself – Contact Dallas Bradley - [amberg2@gmail.com](mailto:amberg2@gmail.com)

For more information about the Otatara Landcare Group or Bushy Point see [www.otataralandcare.org.nz/](http://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/) or email [otataralandcare@gmail.com](mailto:otataralandcare@gmail.com)





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# CHANGES TO THE ESTUARY

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By Lloyd Esler

An estuary is a changeable beast, much maligned and mutilated but essential for fish breeding, bird feeding and the dissipation of floodwaters. The combined influences of humans and nature are constantly altering its shape and health, the pattern of water flow and the range and number of species that live in it. Invercargill Estuary or Oreti Estuary or New River Estuary is much changed from its first brush with humanity. There are signs of early Maori occupation here and there with middens of shell and fish bones exposed where the tide eats into the banks, and a known village – Oue – near Hatches Hill. The first European involvement was a whaling station established at the Maori village as water was essential and the only stream flowing into the estuary from Sandy Point is Cooper's Creek which flows from Silver Lagoon. A deep manmade ditch on the west side of Hatches Hill was probably the former course of the creek which now flows on the other side of the hill. This possibly marks the site of the village, the whaling station and a later farm.

Rabbits were liberated at Whalers Bay in 1863 and within a few years sand, loosened by the burrowing bunnies, poured into the estuary pushing the shoreline out by perhaps 100 metres in places. An island in the estuary, known as Tuft Island, disappeared, perhaps carried away by a flood.

As the port of Invercargill developed, the estuary was modified further. A dredge called Alpha was built in Dunedin and it scraped away ineffectually at the channel. It struck lignite at no great depth, limiting its use. Harrows were dragged up and down the channel by a fishing boat on the outgoing tide to stir up the sand but this didn't work either. There was a proposal to build a breakwater or mole at the estuary mouth to direct the tidal flow against the Omaui side in order to keep a deep channel open but it was never built. It would not have worked; nature does its own thing with harbour mouths.

A long wharf was built at the mouth of the Mokomoko Inlet at what was to be the township of Stanley. The railway was extended to here from the Bluff line. It was barely used and the works bankrupted the province of Southland. The wharf was demolished and the rock was used to build the Stead Street embankment. Reclamation was a once-popular way of pinching a bit more land from an estuary or wetland. The massive New River Estuary reclamation gave us the airport and a lot of low-lying farmland but the threat of a rising sea level and more frequent storms are beginning to make these a liability rather than an asset.

A final factor – Spartina or Cord grass. This plant thrives in tidal mud, trapping sediment and spreading quickly. It was planted to reduce the size of the intertidal zone, converting what was regarded as useless and unsightly mudflat into useful grass. Repeated spraying with herbicide eventually eliminated it. You can see from this tale that the human influence on the estuary is far from benign. What to do? Good to see the estuary getting attention. Cycleways and walkways, the conversion of the old dump into the Sutton Lagoon and recent attention to water quality are positive moves.

**Beach Patrols:** There is a nationwide citizen-science project which has been going for 65 years. We are recording birds washed ashore. This gives a picture of bird distribution and numbers, seasonal movement and glitches in the foodchain. A leg band is particularly valuable as it tells us how long a bird has lived and how far it has travelled. Please inform me if you see large numbers of dead birds or collect any corpses and drop them off.

*Free bamboo for garden stakes and flight bags used for helicoptering gravel, \$10, available from Lloyd Esler 213 0404. These have handles and are ideal for garden purposes.*

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# OTATARA PEOPLE

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By Kathy Morrison

We are planning to regularly include a new piece in Pigeon Post to welcome newcomers to Otatara.

I am kicking this off with a little glimpse of Sue and Richard Johnson who moved into their lovely home in Rakiura Parade last year. This couldn't be more appropriate as Richard has taken over the task of editing Pigeon Post since our previous editor Lesley Catterall shifted out of the area, actually off the mainland, to the Kapiti Coast, north of Wellington.



I imagined that coming from living in Rhodesia through its transition to Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, to happily settling into the bush and birdlife in Otatara must have been quite a culture and climate shock. But reading some of the history of that very troubled African nation they would have already experienced so much culture shock in their homeland that the peace and tranquility here must have felt like a welcome haven. And the climate is far better than Southlanders realise, or let on. Both Richard and Sue were born in different parts of Africa but then lived and worked through all the changes and upheaval Zimbabwe went through - Richard as a journalist and public relations manager, while Sue trained as an horticulturalist in England and worked for the Parks Department in the then Salisbury before starting her own garden centre with two friends. Sue and Richard met and married in Salisbury/Harare and have two daughters, Lucy and Claire.

Deciding to leave Zimbabwe in 2001, Richard, who was also an ordained but volunteer Anglican minister, put aside his business life to become the Vicar of Invercargill's All Saints Anglican parish which included Rakiura, much to his delight. Sue bought the Winton Garden Centre which she ran for some years before becoming manager for Nichols in Invercargill, but now specialises in consultancy and garden design with Nichols.

We are very happy to formally welcome these lovely people to Otatara, which they have been discovering for themselves is a beautiful and significant area of remnant dune forest, plentiful birdlife and pretty friendly people. Do say *Hi* when you see them out and about. It makes such a difference to the temperature.

If anyone knows of new neighbours or people they would like to see highlighted in this quarterly column please contact me at [grannyisland@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:grannyisland@yahoo.co.nz) by the end of August

## Did you know..

That Otatara was clothed in dense forest until milling and fire replaced the forest with farmland. The two main types of forest are Totara forest on sand dunes and mixed forest on flat land, dominated by Matai, Kahikatea and Miro. Kahikatea swamp forest once covered the wet, low-lying areas with the best remaining example at the end of Grant Road. The largest tracts of remaining forests in our area are the Otatara Scenic Reserve, Bushy Point, Kilmock Bush, the Otatara South Scenic Reserve and the forest at Daffodil Bay. (*Natural Otatara*, published by the Otatara Landcare Group).



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# LOOK AFTER YOURSELF PLEASE!

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By Barry Smith

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Apologies everyone, but I'm going to have a bit of a whinge and a moan here. Hopefully everyone will understand why. I find it really important that people are kept really safe whilst out and about walking, walking the dog, biking or running. I am somewhat alarmed at the number of people who are out in the early morning and the evenings giving their pooches a bit of an airing with their clothing choices

## HOWEVER

Whilst it is a bit cold these days and to rug up nice and warm is really good, It seems that a lot of peoples' clothing choice is dark grey, dark green, dark blue or black. To cap it off they are wearing the same coloured trousers and hats!

## WE CANNOT SEE YOU IN THIS ATTIRE WHILST WE ARE DRIVING TO WORK

Fluro vests are available from everywhere from the Warehouse, all the safety shops, E Hayes and sons. I think the last lot I got were about \$8~\$9, so they are not expensive, but they are really priceless. Also when out walking or running, walk or run on the other side of the road so that you are facing oncoming traffic, then if they can't see you at least you can see them so you can get out of the road if necessary.

BE SAFE, BE SEEN, GET A FLURO VEST OR SIMILAR PLEASE!



While the sycamore tree is  
an invasive pest plant in Otatara,

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Where quality matters

# PEST CONTROL SUCCESSES



By Dallas Bradley



Otatara is pretty much surrounded by a ring of reasonably large pest control projects that to a large degree, ‘book end’ pest control on private properties and smaller reserves within the central Otatara area (see map below).

The Otatara Landcare Group (OLG) and the Otatara Pestbusters (OPB) are responsible for much of this pest control work but there are some significant private efforts as well including the 40 hectare Invercargill Golf Club and most recently the 80 hectare NZ Native Forest Restoration Trust property (Oreti Totara Dune Forest).

Significant pest control areas managed by the OLG and the OPB include the 90 hectare Bushy Point Reserve off the east end of Bryson Road, the 40 hectare Otatara Reserve on Dunns Road and the 20 hectare Otatara South Reserve at the south end of Huruhuru Road.

Some of the significant public and private pest control areas are adjoining. Where they’re not, quite a bit of effort goes into undertaking pest control on the intermediate properties to form or extend a boundary ring of sorts. Within this perimeter community based pest control on private properties and small ICC reserves is undertaken to further protect and enhance Otatara’s birdlife.

The value of the collective effort on small (some not so small) privately owned properties is not to be underestimated. Over the past 10 years, approximately 300 property owners have signed up under the “Otatara Pestbusters banner” to control rats and/or possums and stoats on their properties. While the level of effort may vary and wax and wane, even if it is only 2 or 3 hours a year, collectively it adds up to a significant effort.

Some areas are very strong, particularly where there is bush but pests are definitely not limited to bush – anywhere with trees, hedges and cover will host rats from time to time, and it is surprising how many possums can be found in local hotspots.



## Pest control update continued



While I am talking about effort, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous pest control effort put in by the 20 or so pest control volunteers in the various reserves. Some are relatively new while others have been doing it for years. They provide a great platform for the community-wide efforts.

Recent pest monitoring and anecdotal evidence suggests that rodent numbers are as low as they have been for a long time. This is a wonderful outcome but we can't afford to rest on our laurels. It's a good time to hit them while they are down. Persistence is required at the very least because rodents, rats in particular, have the ability to breed 4 or 5 times a year, producing 5 or 6 young at a time. With the first litters having the ability to breed themselves within the breeding season, it doesn't take long for numbers to rise again.

Despite the widespread nature of rats, many landowners never see live rats (myself included), but believe me, virtually everyone has them from time to time - if you haven't got rats, you've got your neighbours! So if you are already pestbusting, keep it up, try harder even - make your place a 'predator free zone'. If you're not doing it, give it a go - it can be fun, challenging, rewarding and much more.

If you want some advice or wish to purchase some inexpensive and well proven pest control supplies, contact me (Dallas Bradley) on 021 784962 or [amberg2@gmail.com](mailto:amberg2@gmail.com).

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## LINKING FOREST WITH WETLAND



By Cathy and Andy Macfie

Andy and I live on a piece of paradise overlooking the Oreti River. From our bedroom window we watch Marsh harrier/Kahu circling the wetlands below. Our farmlet's western boundary is the Otatara South Scenic Reserve. We feel a close connection to both.

Between forest and wetland was a paddock with pasture not much favoured by our sheep. For a variety of reasons including a large carbon footprint left over the last few years, we decided to replace paddock with a natural succession of native plants ...just short of 1000 plants to be precise, from jointed rush and sedges to Manuka, Broadleaf and Totara. A big 'thank you' is due to Chris Rance's guidance and the quality of plants sourced from the Southland Community Nursery.

Our three-phase planting plan started in September 2019 with a big social gathering of family and friends. As with Otatara Landcare Group planting days, we finished with a BBQ. It was a lot of fun, if slightly chaotic. We picked up the plants for the second session in March 2020, just days before lockdown. This time, planting was woven into the fabric of Andy's and my daily routine, spread over a couple of weeks. It was one of the pleasures of that strange time. Finally, in June 2021, we finished planting. What a milestone! Every time we walk down there, we feel a great sense of satisfaction, especially that most plants are growing well.

Actually, planting has been the easy part. Maintenance is an on-going challenge. Our first lesson was to leave sufficient space between plants for a lawnmower to negotiate. We ended up using a combination of mowing, weed eater (the plastic combiguard plant protectors provided reasonable protection from this) and good, old-fashioned shears and hand weeding. Very time consuming. Hopefully most of the first season's planting is now sufficiently well established to flourish without further help. Some of the middle section and all of the newest planting will need to be maintained next spring and summer. But the excuse to spend time down there, serenaded by Tui and Bellbird/Korimako - it's no great hardship!



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# WINTER—THE SEASON TO DIG

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## Caring for your soil, by Sue Johnson

Otatara soils are varied but mostly more the sandy type. This type of soil has comparatively large grains. The smaller, silty grains tend to wash through the soil and form a pan underneath the top soil. This can cause the top soil to become very dry during summer but poorly drained in the wetter months. Waterlogging in low lying areas is quite common. The water squeezes the air out of the soil and consequently suffocates the roots of the plants. Raised beds and deep cultivation when planting will improve the situation.

All soil types are improved by the addition of compost. This helps to hold the soil together in 'crumbs'. As compost breaks down, it creates sticky humus, organic material which holds the soil grains together. The more frequently compost or mulch is added, the better your soil will become. Covering exposed soil with mulch will work wonders. It keeps the temperature of the soil even, allowing the good bugs in the soil to remain active during the colder or hotter months, and improves fertility. Pea straw is an ideal mulch, but leaf mould or dry grass clippings are also a good choice. The easier it is for roots to grow through the soil, the more nutrient they are able to source.



*Pea straw is an ideal mulch to improve your soil.*

Winter is a good time for making compost. Collecting material for composting need not be too scientific! Ideally, a mixture of soft green and dry brown material makes a good combination. Manure is an added bonus. Wood ash can be spread throughout the heap. I simply pile it all into a heap. Turning it over will speed up the breaking-down process. When it is not convenient to dig compost into the soil, it can be spread on the surface as a mulch.

The care of your soil is the key to successful growing!

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## News from the Oreti Totara Dune Reserve



*Maurice Rodway, honorary ranger, and the reserve entrance.*

The Invercargill City Council has delivered 1000 eco-sourced plants which are being distributed around the reserve for planting over the winter. The Southland Tramping Club has planted 125 native trees in the area to the north of the Matai Grove.

The Knight sisters have made a significant donation, to be used for new panels. The panels will cover European historical, forest ecosystems, and the Oreti River pre European. The design of the European historical panel has been completed and will be printed and installed on the wall of Neil's hut about 100 metres in from the car park.

# Otatara Landcare Group Membership



If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

## Membership Form

Please complete form for membership or if you require a receipt for any donation and email to [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com).

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☐ I give permission for my contact details to be retained exclusively for the purposes of communication in relation to the activities of Otatara Landcare Group.

### Subs:

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Alternatively, send completed form with cash payment to our treasurer

**Lloyd Esler – 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara**

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