

# Burns Park Scenic Reserve

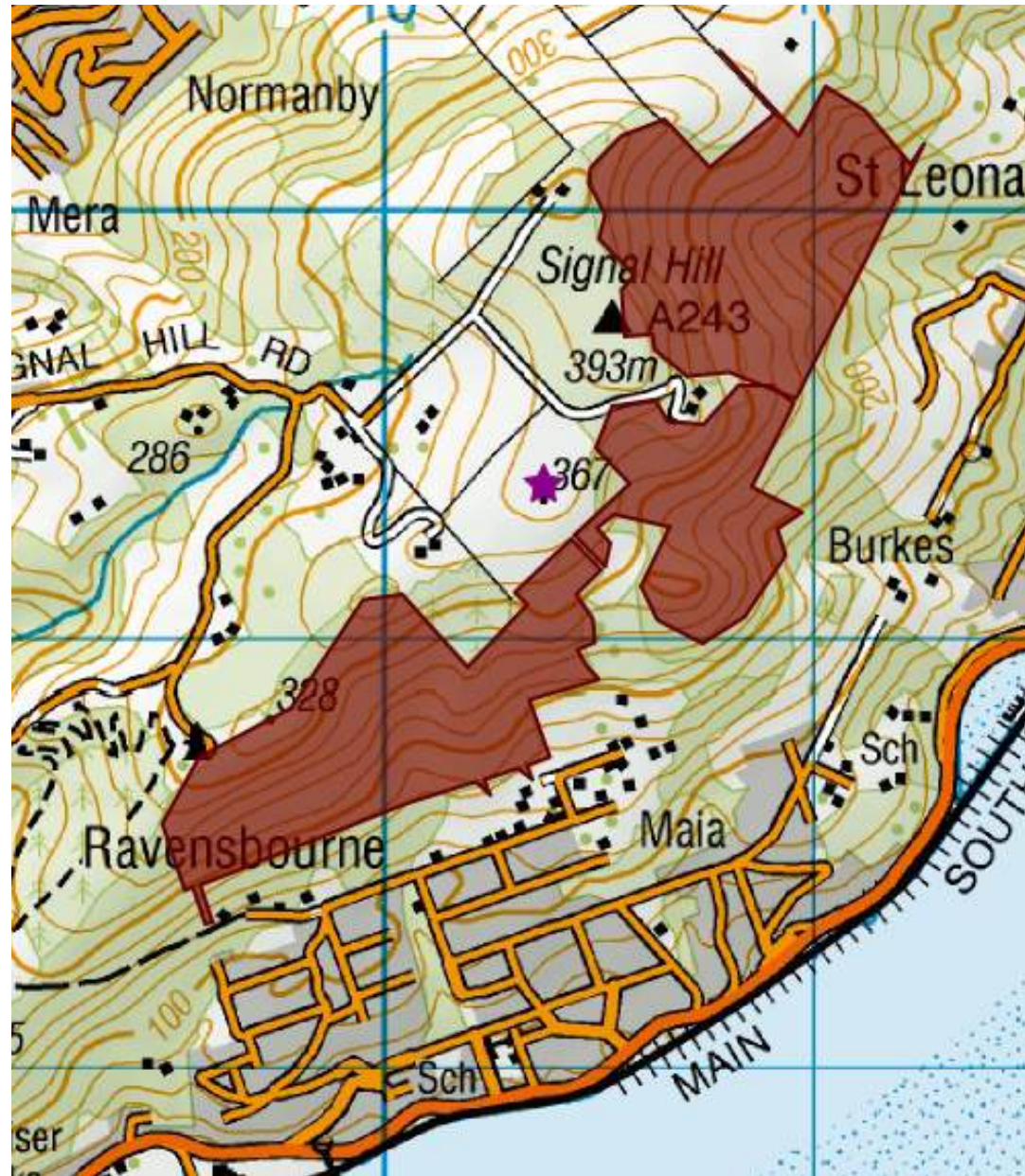
87 hectares of regenerating native bush in DOC estate  
above Ravensbourne, Maia, Burkes, St Leonards



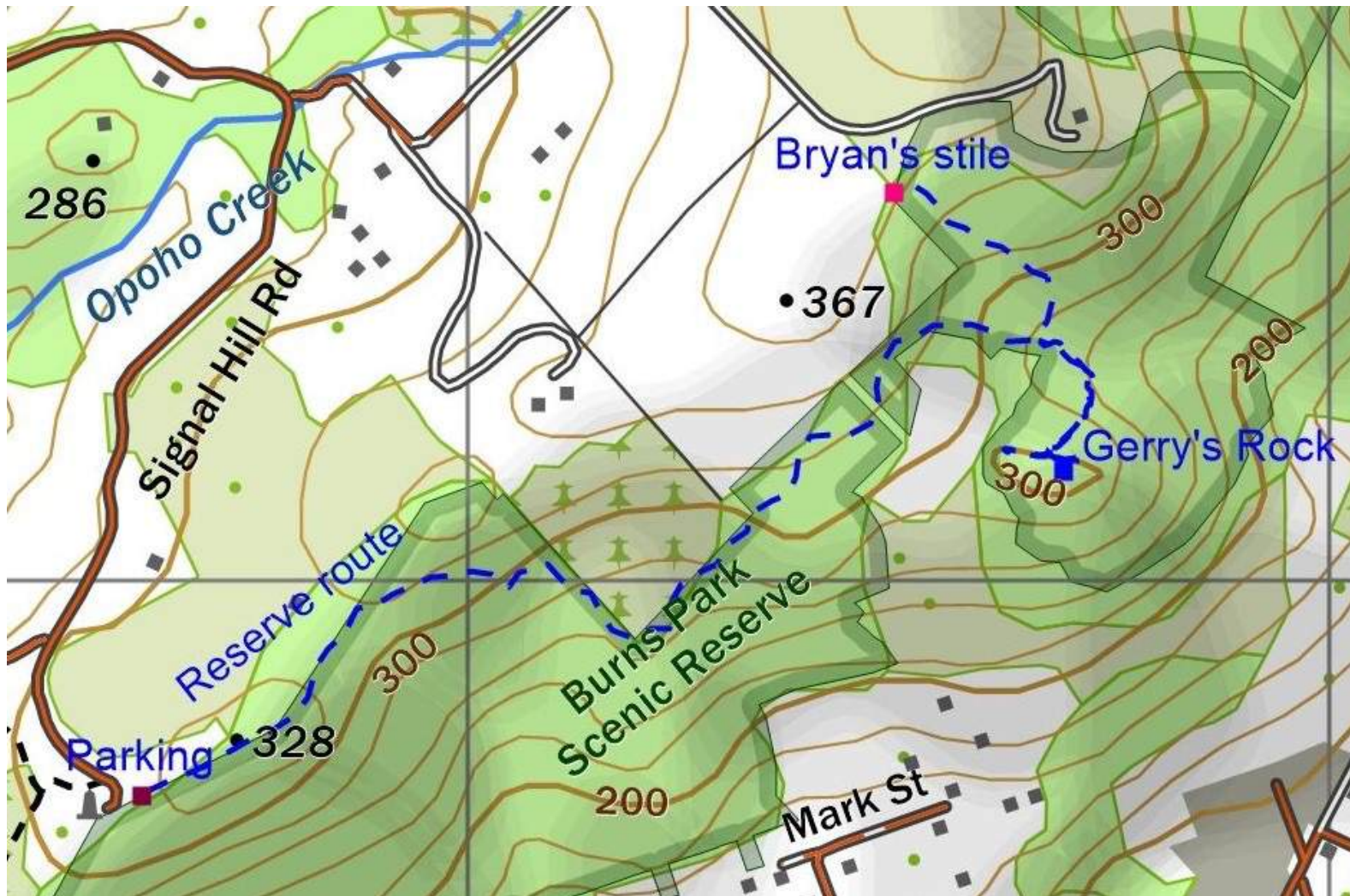
- Location and Reserve features
- Chequered management history
- Current challenges to *Friends of Burns Reserve Trust*



# Where is Burns Reserve?



## Current walking routes



**Ellen (Valpy)  
Jeffreys**  
1827-1934

Dunedin 1850  
view from  
Forbury Hill  
above Allandale

Hocken accession  
7764



# NE Valley



(Photo David Wall)

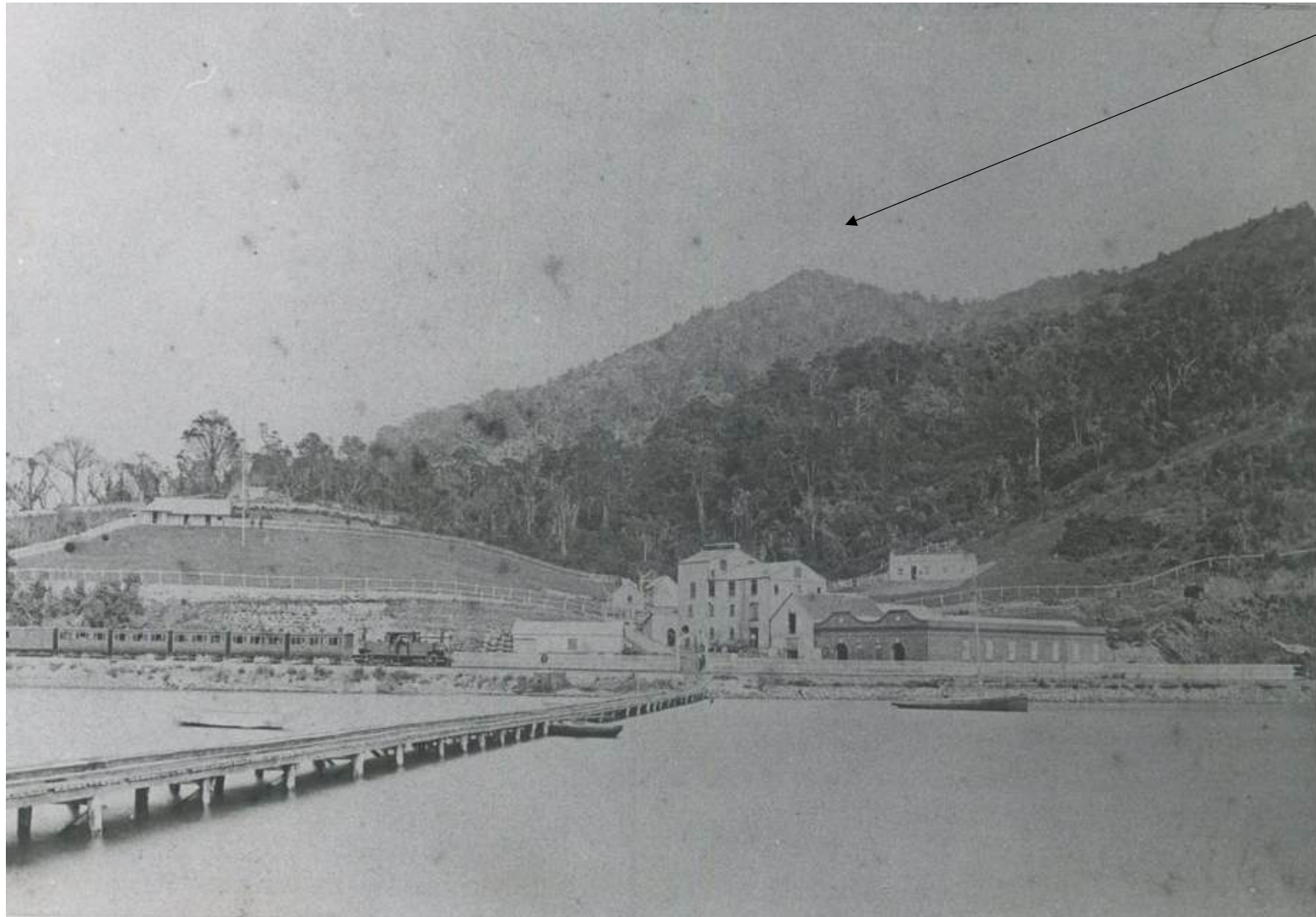
# Reserve view from Highcliff Road, other side of harbour



(graphic Mat Patchet ODT)



# Burkes Brewery ca. 1873 with Josephine



Gerry's  
Rock

Several  
kiwis  
killed here  
by dogs in  
1872



# **Podocarps in Burkes Gully below Gerry's Rock**



# Gerry's Rock from Signal Hill



# On Gerry's Rock

**Easter Orchid**  
*Earina*  
*autumnalis*

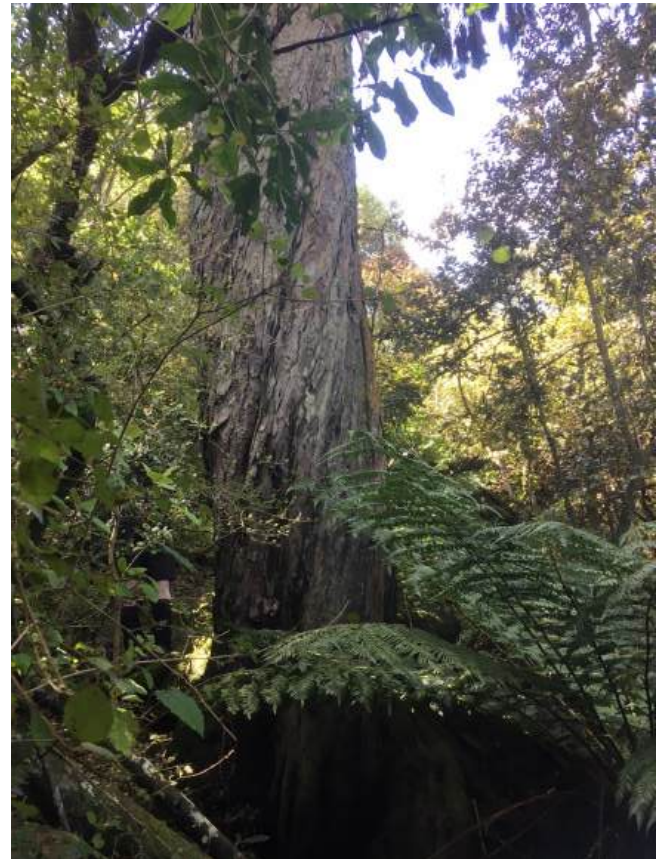


(Photo Sandra Dalziel)

**100 years+ inscriptions**



# Rimu in Burns Reserve



(photos Brian Langley)

## Some History of the Reserve

- Originally proposed in 1905 after lobbying by West Harbour Borough citizens. Gazetted in 1907 as *Signal Hill Scenic Reserve*.
- Named *Burns Park Scenic Reserve* in 1910
- Newspaper reports 1930s from Dunedin Naturalists Field Club of damaging incursions of cattle into the Burkes Gully rare fern area. Poor fencing and lack of WH Borough Council oversight
- Daily truckloads of firewood taken from reserve in 1932. Transfer of control to Dunedin City Council
- DCC in 1981 authorised bulldozer clearance of upper slopes leased for grazing. Furore erupted with Native Forest Action Council and conservationists

# Otago Daily Times 17 August 1981



Les Cleveland walks up the steep slopes of the harbour side of Signal Hill, where the bulldozing of established native bush, and gorse and broom sheltering forest rejuvenation, has angered local conservation groups.

*continued next page*

## **History continued**

- DCC Reserve control relinquished 1982 to Lands and Survey Department, became Department of Conservation (DOC) in 1987
- Considerable discussion 1980s on revising reserve boundaries
- 1985 land swap of some quality private native bush in Burkes Gully into Reserve with freeholding of some bulldozed Reserve land on upper slopes into private ownership
- Gerry's Rock brought into Reserve 1986
- Since that time, DOC has done little, except goat control

## *Forgotten Wilderness*

Bruce Munro's fine article  
in the ODT Weekend Mix  
20 August 2022

Created interest and raised  
questions about public  
access and engagement so  
close to the city

Friends of Burns Reserve  
formed August 2022

(Photos from Friends of Burns  
Reserve)





## *Friends of Burns Reserve*

Now 130 members who receive *Burns Reserve News* quarterly

### **Aims**

- to act as non-profit guardians or kaitiaki to fulfil Scenic Reserves purposes as specified in the Reserves Act 1977
  - “for the benefit, enjoyment and use of the public”*
  - “exotic flora and fauna shall as far as possible be exterminated”*
- to develop access points for public use and linked by walking routes.
- to survey existing flora and fauna for discussion with DOC of protecting and preserving measures
- to remove exotic flora along walking routes and where possible throughout the Reserve in consultation with DOC.

## **Charitable Trust formed, Community Agreement with DOC**

- *Friends of Burns Reserve Trust* formed October 2023.  
Essentially same aims as those of the *Friends*  
Trustees  
Jim McQuillan (Chair), Jane Adams, Robyn Bridges, Clare Ridout,  
Bronwen Strang, Brian Langley, Rick Mains
- Community Agreement (5 yrs) with DOC, November 2023.  
Agreement addresses only some of the Trust's wider aims
- Public meeting Ravensbourne Hall 18 February 2024

## **Work Proposed in 5 year DOC Community Agreement**

- Complete removal of broom, gorse, and barberry from top 10 m of Gerry's Rock, the iconic central viewpoint in the Reserve
- Elimination of isolated invasive trees, dispersing seed throughout the reserve by wind or birds. Sycamore, notably above Ravensbourne, also barberry, holly, and hawthorne. Barberry is the greatest challenge.
- Improvement of route from Signal Hill to Gerry's Rock to facilitate Community Agreement work.
- Workdays at Gerry's Rock to date: 16 March, 4 May, 6 & 27 July, 17 Aug, ....every 3 weeks.

## **Gerry's Rock 100 m summit ridge**



## Scenes from 16 March workday



AAPES Students



# Gerry's Group

6 July  
2024

(photo  
Clare Ridout)



## ***Other Friends of Burns Reserve Trust Activities***

- ORC ECO fund 2024 sycamore control \$24,874 grant  
To kill sycamores spread by wind into Reserve and Signal Hill environs from Ravensbourne and harbourside since 1880s.
- Halo project trapping of rats, stoats, possums
- Botanical Society of Otago visits
- Quest to obtain convenient public access from harbour side of Reserve
- Darwins barberry has been in Reserve for decades and is spread by birds – a huge challenge

## **Are we wasting our time?!**

Is our Burns Reserve quest just folly?

Can the Trust's project be sustainable?

### **Positives**

- Gerry's Rock is a wonderful harbour viewpoint in a Scenic Reserve very close to the City which deserves to be better known by the public
- A walk in the bush (forest bathing therapy), free from the threat of being overrun by a downhill cyclist, is valuable so close to the City
- Walking access to the Reserve from the harbourside suburbs will open up new possibilities for the City tramping community



Join *Friends of Burns Reserve* (no fee)  
with an email to

[burnsreserve@gmail.com](mailto:burnsreserve@gmail.com)

Donations to fund herbicide gels (~\$30/stick) for Gerry's  
Rock work to

<https://givealittle.co.nz/org/friends-of-burns-reserve-trust>