

## Te Ara Pataka (Summit Walkway) formal opening Press Release

On Saturday 26 November over a hundred people braved strong nor'west winds ascending Mt Herbert, the highest point on Banks Peninsula, to celebrate the opening of Te Ara Pātaka, a 35km long tramping track linking the Lyttelton and Akaroa craters. "The track represents several years of successful partnership between Department of Conservation and Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust", says Andy Roberts, the Department's manager for the Eastern south island. "Work has included upgrading, signposting and waymarking a network of existing farm and bush tracks into a cohesive and easy to follow route".



The event also served as a centenary for Christchurch's visionary MP Harry Ell. Among the walkers were several Ell descendants, including his great granddaughter, plant scientist Paula Jameson. "Ell was instrumental in pushing the Scenery Preservation Act through parliament," says Paula,



"enabling precious remnants of native forest to be protected. When the road he used to access Kennedy's bush was threatened with closure, he developed an interest in public access and this grew into his grand vision of a recreational route connecting Christchurch to Akaroa via the spectacular crater rims and long high ridges of

Banks Peninsula. He envisioned rest houses along the way, and building work on the Sign of the Packhorse Hut, then known as Kaituna rest house commenced in 1916. The opening of Te Ara Pātaka has brought my great grandfather's vision to fruition 100 years later."

The name Te Ara Pātaka, chosen by the four rūnanga of the area, references Banks Peninsula's traditional name Te Pātaka o Rakaihautu, and its role as a great storehouse of food and resources. The secondary name Summit Walkway honours Harry Ell and the Summit Road Society founded by Paula's father, John Jameson.



Six connecting tracks link to Te Ara Pātaka from the valleys below. "I'm delighted that the years of voluntary work of brothers Colin and Ben Faulkner is recognised in the naming of Faulkner Track", said publisher Philip King, whose land is crossed by this track connecting Orton Bradley Park to the Sign of the Packhorse. King added another layer of dignity to the occasion by transporting elderly Peninsula historian Gordon Ogilvie to the site in a farm vehicle.



Trampers wishing to try out Te Ara Pātaka (Summit Walkway) will find more information on the DOC website, and a new brochure is out in visitor centres. Overnight users must book their bunks in the two huts, Sign of the Packhorse and the new Rod Donald Hut. The idea is to make it easier for families to get out tramping. “Rod Donald Trust only opened its new hut last year, and we’ve already exceeded our initial target of a 1000 nights in each hut”, said Andy Thompson, manager of the local Mahaanui office.

“Like Harry Ell, the Rod Donald Bank Banks Peninsula Trust seeks to protect and promote biodiversity, and grow public knowledge of Banks Peninsula through public access on well-marked walking tracks,” said Trustee and Christchurch Deputy Mayor Andrew Turner, “and we thank the many landowners who have welcomed the public across their land. We are delighted that so many people support this work in so many different ways”.

