

Chapter Fifteen

Moore's Bush

A study in ecological evolution

Notes

Percy and Ellie Moore bought 4ha in the upper Leith Valley in 1945. The property was largely a grassy cow paddock either side of the Water of the Leith but had a number of rimu and other emergent trees still standing.

Moore's ahead of their time. Ellie would show us the progress of their bush restoration. In many ways they were ahead of their time as amenity planting of natives was the thing at the time.

Ellie Moore was a committee member of the Otago Branch of Forest and Bird when Bruce and I joined up and started doing field excursions in late 1959. She and her husband Percy Moore bought the 10 acre property, now named after them, in upper Leith Valley in 1945. They holidayed in the little cottage at the south end and set about restoring a native bush cover in what was largely a grassy cow paddock along the banks of the Water of the Leith. It was fortunate that many of the original large rimu and other emergent trees were still standing.

From 1960 Forest and Bird were trying replant a flat piece of land further up valley and adjacent to the motorway over-bridge. Bruce and I cycled from South Dunedin to help on the work days. The site was flat hard undrainable clay. Everything was tried before the project was abandoned in 1969. Nothing like a failure to learn from regards site selection.

Moore's Bush and its weekend cottage became a calling in place for Bruce and I on our forays into Leith Valley. Percy would often be putting in sets of potatoes and Ellie would show us the progress of their bush restoration. In many ways they were ahead of their time as amenity planting of natives was the thing at the time. Both were life members of the Otago Tramping Club. (In the 1970's Bruce promoted the 'and Mountaineering' bit to be added to the Club name). Percy was a skilled pattern maker. He was apparently the first magician to perfect the illusion of catching a bullet in his teeth.

The Moores had tramped widely with the Otago Tramping Club beginning in the 1930's. When Dr Orbell rediscovered Takahe in Fiordland in 1949, the Moores recalled seeing similar flightless birds at Sandrock Bluff on the coast of lower South Westland some seven years earlier.

The Moores soothed and assured our parents when Bruce and I Made our first overnight foray into the local Silverpeaks. Percy died and left Moores Bush to Forest and Bird. It was largely out of respect to them that I took over management to the property in 1973. I joined Ellie Moore on the then Otago Branch of Forest and Bird committee in 1965.

One of my other mentors was Jock Tyson a fellow Branch committee member who lived in the last house in Malvern Street, Leith Valley. Jock let me set up a tree nursery at his place for planting in the valley. Initially everything was operated from a non geared bicycle ride from St Clair. One of the well established Mountain Cedars at the north end of Moores Bush had been collected pre road to the top of Mt Cargill and cycled on the handle bars to my home where it was on grown for several years before its final growing place. Other cedars and silver beech had similar backgrounds. Ecological appropriateness had not been invented yet. The sizable coning kauri at the north end was germinated at my home glasshouse from seed collected in Northland in 1973. Other than two kauri non local sourced plantings have been quietly removed. After Ellie died two West Coast kamahi were quietly removed. They were only 200 metres pollination distance from some very rare local kamahi at Morrisons Creek.

In the forty plus years since 1973 I put in several thousand hours fencing, sycamore, broom and blackberry removal, grass mowing and grazing as well as planting and work days. Today much of this effort would be seen as unnecessary as ecological restoration ideas have changed. Refer to section on evolving ecological restoration.

From 1989 I used the kids and parents of Forest and Birds juniors the Kiwi Conservation Club, then my Dunedin Teen Conservation group. For the last 16 years the tertiary group Students for Environmental Action (SEA) have assisted me.

In 2015 I'm still involved in the property with my personal emphasise on helping emergent canopy trees and rare local species get through to seeding and beyond.

In 2016 I resigned in disgust from the Dunedin Forest and Bird Management Committee. I had had my fill of the nasty small-minded politics that occurs at times in committees. I was even banned from working at Moores Bush. The committee didn't know that the top hectare of flats is public road reserve. That's where I work with students today. As J Wallace Ramsey a distinguished former branch chairman once said in my support "You don't treat your best worker like that."

Evolution of Ecological Restoration as Seen in Context of Moores Bush

Beautificaion and ammenity planting



The failed 1960-69 planting site beside Dunedin's Northern Motorway in 2016.

Patsy Mason with our son Brett in the almost manicured grass bush clearing. Grass cutting, originally with a sythe then a rotary mower. Pulling rocks out of ground and levelling. Looking good for the occasional visitor. - little help/interest from others but they expected it to look pretty and judged everything by this.





Felling the big macrocarpas. December 1983



May 1997 Plantings established on the above site. Two main plantings took place in 1990 and 1993 after waiting two years or so for the ground around the macrocarpa stumps to weather and soften. The use of protective 220L drums enhances the establishment of rimu and matai.

MOORES BUSH

RESTORATION

Ken Mason 1997

Moores Bush Restoration

FOREWORD

In 1945 Mr and Mrs P. L. Moore were visionary in their purchase of this much modified property in the upper Leith Valley. Despite much of the property being in pasture they saw the potential in restoring a forest ecosystem under and around the good number of large original native trees that remained. An added attraction was that of the Leith Stream flowing the length of the property.

By the time Percy Moore died in 1973, the many years of work put in by the Moores had resulted in much of the property being restored to young bush and the up to 800 year old rimus back in a forest environment. In 1974 the property was bequeathed to the Forest and Bird Protection Society to ensure that the protection and restoration of Moores Bush would continue.

In 1974 I took over the voluntary management of Moores Bush on behalf of the local branch of Forest and Bird. There were two reasons for doing so. The first was out of respect to the Moores for the help and encouragement they gave to me as a youth developing a commitment to conservation and the outdoors during the 1960's. The second was to continue the Moore's dream of restoring the bush for future generations to enjoy.

Ken Mason 1997.

Moores Bush June 1946



**The Dunedin Naturalist Field Club visiting Moores Bush June 15 1946.
Mr Percy Moore (left) with Mrs Moore the sixth adult from the left.**

**When the Moores purchased the property for restoring the bush on
November 8 1945, the property was a dairy farm with most of the bush
cleared to grass but with a good number of the original rimu, miro, totara,
mountain cedar and pokaka still standing.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the vision shown by Percy and Ellie Moore in starting the project, and handing it onto the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, none of this would have come about. I acknowledge the vital support and encouragement given by the late Messers J. Wallace Ramsay and Jock Tyson. I am much indebted to the ongoing Dunedin Forest & Bird's moral and financial support. It is invaluable having such good neighbours as Jack and Shelia Thomson and their son Michael. Finally, thanks to all those helpers, young and old, who came to Moores Bush.

Moores Bush Restoration - Project Description

Objectives.

- # To restore a mature native forest structure on the 4ha property and the adjoining 2ha reserve.
- # To plant only local genetic forms of native flora and remove inappropriate forms.
- # To assist species such as the large rimus which are failing to naturally propagate.
- # To remove as many exotic plant forms as practical.
- # To removing as many introduced browsing animals and predators as possible.
- # To monitor effects of the above total animal control with a view to promoting this approach.
- # To provide a safer haven for native birds, small animals and invertebrates.
- # To maintain some open areas for passive recreation and appreciation the forest edge forms.
- # To encourage the use of the property by all people with an interest in our native flora and fauna.

The project started in 1945 when Mr and Mrs P. L. Moore bought the largely deforested property with the objective of restoring a native forest sequence amongst the surviving large trees. In 1974 the property was bequeathed to the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. Ken Mason then began the long commitment to continue the Moore's work on behalf of the Forest & Bird.

The Project Today and the Results.

The post 1974 plantings are now forming their own forest canopy along with a developing understory. The younger plantings and specimen plantings are becoming equally impressive. Many former grass clearings are now fully part of the forest. Planting is ongoing. In the 1970's you could not easily view the big rimus etc from the tracks because of the density of young regeneration. Today the tracks are merged into the more open structure of an older canopy with the big trees readily visible and once again part of the true forest.

The total animal control programme, started late in 1996, will lift the whole project to a higher plain. With the possums and rats largely gone there has already been a proliferation of regrowth and a flush of seedlings on the forest floor. For years rats had been eating the seeds and so preventing many species from regenerating. The recovery is being monitored by use of a series of photo points. It is hoped that the results will encourage others to implement similar programmes elsewhere.

There would have been a secondary kill of predators during the early stages of using bait stations. Trapping of predators is also under way. Today, after only 7 months of this programme, there are already sightings of native birds that had not been noticed for a number of years. The yellow-breasted tomtit is one of these. It is hoped that more successful wood pigeon breeding will occur next spring with extra food and safer nesting available to the birds.

Environmental Management Contribution to Otago

In 1945 the Moores were visionary in their starting the restoration of Moores Bush and the creation of a quiet haven. Twenty-nine years later Percy Moore died and bequeathed a much enhanced forest asset to the Forest and Bird. It was still to be open to interested members of the public. Since then another twenty-three years of enhanced regeneration and considerable planting has taken place. As well as the bush plantings there are local native specimen plantings in the open. Here people can compare tree forms and foliage with trees often hidden in the forest.

Nearly 1km of a sparkling, gently flowing Leith Stream flows through the property and its flats. The stream and its banks are in superb condition having been ungrazed for 52 years. This is now excellent habitat for the generally declining freshwater crayfish and other aquatic life. The property is rich in insects and new species have been described from here.

The Department of Conservation has vested control of the, formally neglected, adjoining scenic reserve to Forest and Bird. This has enabled more effective stockproofing of both properties as they form the one unit of bush. It has also allowed the proper development of a total animal control programme in 1996. Already there is a noticeable enhancement of the vegetation and bird life.

An increasing number of lifestyle blocks now overlook the property nestled in the valley. To their owners the property is a valued scenic gem that considerably raises the aesthetics of the upper Leith Valley.

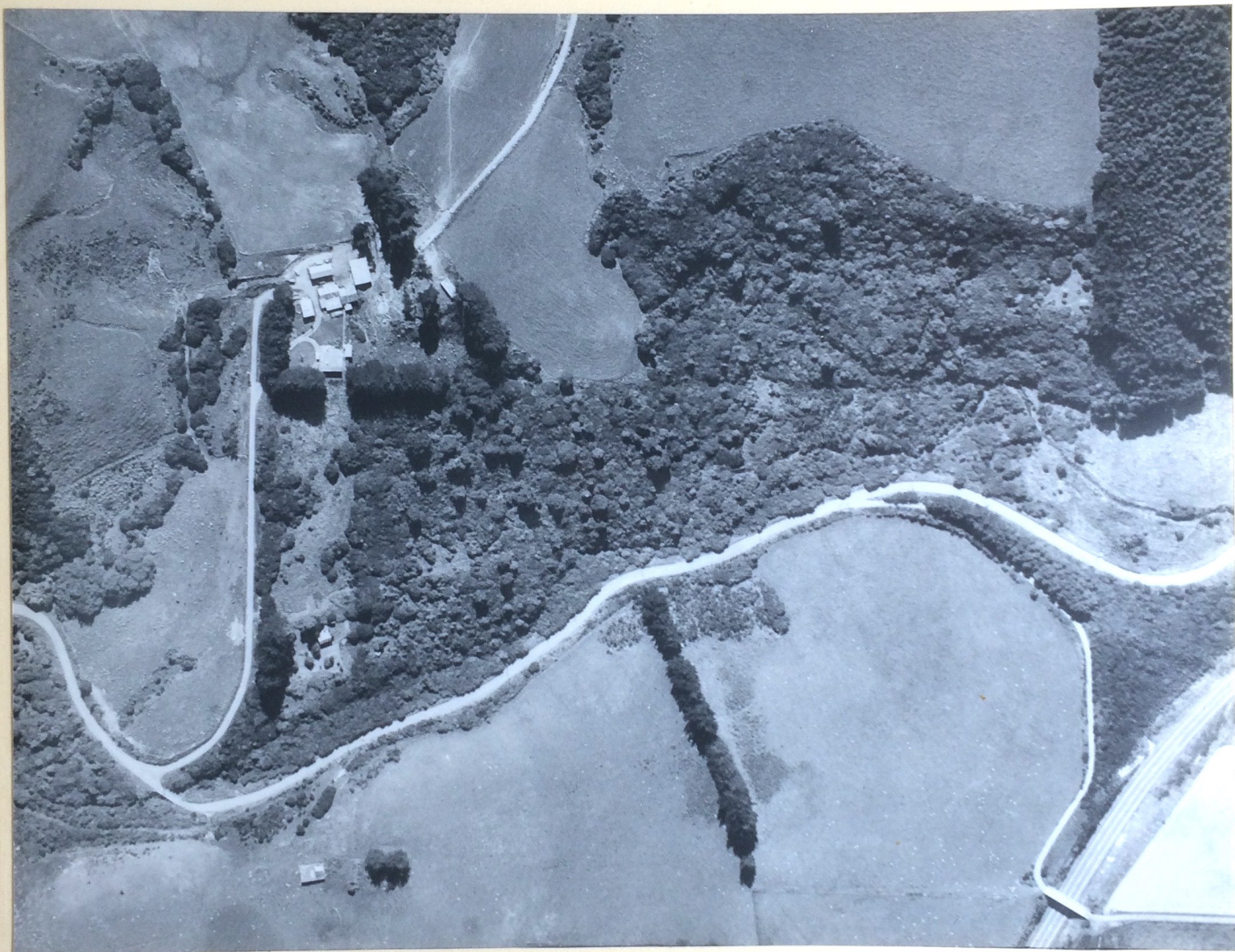
For me Moores Bush has been my apprenticeship and a big learning curve for subsequent projects. Much was learned, some lessons the hard way. However, the outcomes have been considerable. As a direct result of my work at Moores Bush since 1974, I was invited in 1989 to give restoration advice to the St Martins Community on Quarantine Island. In 1996 I became the voluntary manager/co-ordinator of the Island's ecological restoration programme. My own family's bush project followed. In 1990 I had enough background to tackle a major flora and fauna restoration project at the Tomahawk Lagoons using, in part, the children of the Kiwi Conservation Club. My partial or advisory input into other projects has been extensive.

Flora and fauna restoration groups have come from as far afield as Christchurch to study the advanced techniques that my experimentation and experiences have developed. All these projects, plus a few others, have been used to teach and promote restoration skills to adults, children and teenagers. The Dunedin Teen Green members especially, are seen as future leaders in conservation, resource management and the natural sciences.

The aspect that gives me the greatest pleasure today is repeating the process that happened to me when I took on the Moores Bush project. Older people helped me, as a youth, to get started with their encouragement and knowledge. Today I am the older person passing on my experience to young people.

Moore's Bush & Adjoining Scenic Reserve

1970 Air Photo



Leith Valley Road runs from left to right as it heads towards Sullivans Dam. At the bottom right is the Northern Motorway with a farm overbridge. Immediately below the overbridge road turnoff is a clear paddock. 0.4ha of this is part of Moore's Bush. On the left Rimu Road passes the old cottage and Moore's Bush entrance before reaching the Thomson Farm. Immediately to the right of the farmhouse is the line of the boundary between the Scenic Reserve and Moore's Bush.

MOORES BUSH RESTORATION.

- Ken Mason

CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Purchase of the Property by the Moores.

- 8 Nov. 1945 Percy Leonard Moore purchases the 10a 3r 17p Section 32, Block VIII, North Harbour and Blueskin District.
- 15 June 1946 A Dunedin Naturalists Field Club party of 18 has an excursion to Moore's Bush. The Field Club and later, after its formation in the 1950's, The Otago Branch of Forest and Bird make regular visits to the property. Mr. and Mrs Moore are keen members of both with Mrs Moore being a longterm F&B committee member. Both Moores became Hon. life members of the Otago Tramping Club.

The Moores use the cottage as a weekend retreat. They remove exotic plants and actively encourage the regeneration of the native bush.

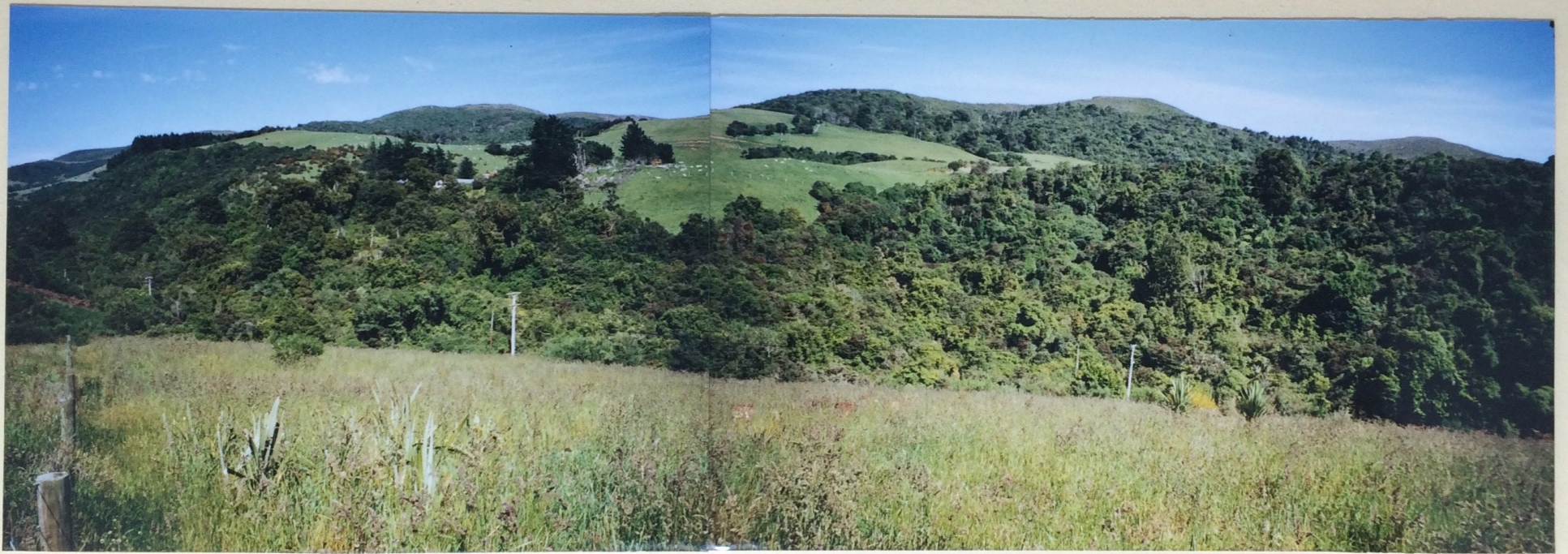
Early Visits to Leith Valley By Ken Mason .

- 1959 Fifteen year old Ken joins the Forest & Bird Protection Society and immediately becomes an active member of the then Otago Branch. In 1965 he becomes the youngest committee member and continues to serve this committee today..
- 13 Aug. 1960 Ken catches bus from St Clair to Duke Street to go on the F&B planting project beside the motorway overbridge near Sullivan's Dam , upper Leith Valley. Unfortunately he is late and misses the trip.
- 3 Sept 1961 Ken makes his first F&B motorway planting. (date transferred from 12 Aug.)
- 1963-1969 Ken attends (often on bicycle) the annual motorway tree planting at the motorway site in 1963, 1966, 1967 and possibly the last in 1969.

The project was a total failure. The site was flat hard clay created by motorway construction. There was no soil and poor drainage. The trees stagnated and died despite loads of soil being brought in. In all a good exercise to learn from.

- 1961 onwards Ken was making regular 'one speed' bicycle and tramping trips to explore the whole Leith Valley catchment. He often went by himself. On other occasions his younger brother Bruce or friends accompanied him. As well as keeping native bird records he was collecting native seedlings. He was getting to know the history of the area through locals like the late historian Bill Davidson and Jock Tyson.

**Moores Bush & Adjoining Scenic Reserve
From the Eastern Boundary.**



First Associations With Moores Bush.

28 Jan 1963. Ken and Bruce Mason visited Moores Bush after bush bashing Morrisons Creek.

May 1964 Ken and Bruce join the Otago Tramping Club, become very active members and later life members.. This further strengthens connections with the Moores.

Ellie Moore speaks to a worried 'Mum' Mason and reassures her over Bruce and Ken's first overnight tramping foray into the Silverpeaks.

30-31 Jan '64 Ken and Bruce cycled to Moores Bush from St Clair. From they walked back down to the old Pineapple Track and over Swampy Summit to Green Hut for the night. Visited Silverpeak and Possum Hut before returning in rain to the bicycles at Moores Bush via the Burns track. "Dad" Mason gives them a ride home from Jock Tyson's in Malvern Street.

1964- 1973 Ken makes regular visits to the Moores both at Moores Bush and their home , next to Ross Creek Reservoir and the last house in Cannington Road. He is often accompanied by his younger brother Bruce.

1973 Percy Moore dies. Mrs Moore resigns from the Forest and Bird Committee and later retires to Hawea . Ken makes makes contact with her until about 1990. She is still alive in 1996.

Forest and Bird Era.

1974

21 Jan 1974 Moores Bush is transfered to Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. as set down in the will of Percy Leonard Moore. The Otago Branch of the Society becomes the local administrators of the property.

24 Aug 1974 Ken Mason starts his long management association with Moores Bush by sorting out a calf and horse grazing agreement (electric fenced) in the grass area above the cottage with neighbour Jack Thomson. Jack and Shelia Thomson share a love of the bush and their whole family become personal friends.

11 Dec 1974 Ken starts cutting the grass around the cottage and along the tracks, initially with a sythe. Fellow committee members ,and mentors to Ken, the late Messers Wallace Ramsey and Jock Tyson give ongoing advice and support.

There were two main reasons for Ken committing himself to and taking charge of the Moores Bush project. The first was out of personal respect to the Moores. The second was to carry on the bush restoration work that the Moores had started in 1946.

1975

Dec '74 6 visits made to cut grass plus 2 personal inspections and one sub-committee visit.
June '75 Mower and tools put in shed.



August 1977. Clearing the sizable areas of sycamore, broom, and blackberry on the north end flats. Sadly this area had got away on the Moores as age took its toll.