

Newspaws

Autumn issue

For, of and by Q.NPWS staff

March 1988

Vale, Graham

Graham or Dr Saunders, it didn't really matter. He made friends with all staff from the newest, youngest assistant to senior officers welcoming us all into 'his' national parks family.

While in recent years, as the family of which he was the original member grew into the hundreds, he still tried to remember all our names and have at least a personal word or two when he could.

His cheery smile generally 'disarmed' those who sought to raise a fearsome argument and also eased the tension for those called to task for taking some action he did not approve.

Cconciliation and co-operation was the name of the game

that he played in many fields for the Service from its inception, and he played so well as to have lasting effects for nature conservation in Queensland.

We can only guess at the number of times he chose to cover his anger and disappointment when soundly-based proposals from the Service were rejected at political and other levels.

At his desk, he was the management executive with papers in neat, small heaps awaiting his attentive consideration and initialling in purple ink.

In the field, he was never without his broad-brimmed hat. He was the property owner able to discuss matters



of the land on equal terms with others.

Only at the end of the day or around the billy fire would he take a break from matters of work, perhaps enjoying a drop or two of Glenfiddich from his hip flask as he chatted among friends.

We of the Service, like many hundreds of other people, will remember Graham Saunders.

Advantages in our new department

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Tourism was created within the portfolio of Environment, Conservation and Tourism on 9 December last with Mr Geoff Muntz as Minister.

The portfolio provides for two departments — the existing Department of Forestry and the new Department of Environment, Conservation and Tourism.

The nucleus for the new body is staff responsible to Mr Muntz before the portfolio change, headed by Under Secretary Mr Stan Wilcox.

Much thought has gone into how the new department should be organized. Cabinet recently approved a submission to make three divisions.

These are Corporate Services, Environment, and Conservation.

In brief, Conservation includes the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, Brisbane Forest Park, Fraser Island Recreation Board (administered jointly with Forestry), and kindred areas.

Environment includes the Division of Noise Abatement and Air Pollution Control and the Division

of Water Quality, Environment Co-ordination (from Premier's Department) and the Brisbane River Committee.

Corporate Services is the support and administrative arm supplying services to all sections.

The aim is to reduce duplication and to present to the taxpayer an authority to cover matters which have become an important and sensitive to the community.

At the same time, opportunities for greater nature-based recreation and tourism are being examined.

The scope is such that every move being taken by the fledgling department is under scrutiny from other states to see how effective it might be.

Some Q.NPWS Head Office administration and technical services staff are likely to become part of the Corporate Services Division.

An outline of ideas and progress to date was given to a meeting of 90 staff in Brisbane recently.

St Helena comes alive



Costumed warder relating the point of view of warders in St Helena's history.

Tough critics — Q.NPWS staff — have praised the trial of a dramatic new form of interpretation and education on Queensland national parks.

About 50 staff, wives, and friends were guests at a 'sound and light' presentation at St Helena Island National Park on 12 February.

Entrepreneur Steve Henry supported for 12 professional actors plus support staff to relate and act a potted history of the island amid the jail ruins.

Not only were costumed guests ordered around by a Yorkshire-speakin' warder, they had the distinction (in a national park) of riding in a wagon drawn by two Clydesdales.

Scripts and other matters are being revised before a commercial venture is considered.



Convict Trevor Vollbon and his lady Alison during drinks at the new staff building.



Annette Bartsch and Tracy Clarkson dressed for the special occasion.

Working groups

A dozen working groups have been formed initially to look at challenging areas for a new department such as accounts, records, computing, word processing, accommodation and library services.

Service staff are included in many of these.

Many decisions have to be taken and the aim is to create an effective department as soon as possible. A conservative estimate is one year to complete implementation.

The change will have little direct effect on most Q.NPWS staff away from Head Office. The Service's role will remain.

For those involved, there will be new opportunities and challenges

to come with a much closer involvement with the department and the Minister.

Service staff will bring the expertise gained over 12 years in many fields to greatly influence the department's operations and in turn leading to a better parks system.

No one pretends the task will be an easy one. Co-ordinators wish to hear the views of many people. Please take the chances when they are offered. Don't leave the task to others and complain later.

The better the department the better the chances of improving the environment and conservation in the short and long term for all Queenslanders and that includes you!



Chris Lahey, Graham Hudson and wife and Noel Dawson waiting for steak and kidney pudding.

Many new faces for old

Welcome to Emma Gyuris (Pallarenda), Sandra Coleborn (Proserpine), Michelle Wigan, Donna Coggins and Karen Goeldner (Head Office), Raelene Johnstone (Head Office), Darren Wood (Moggill), Lucy Rickert (Toowoomba), Jodie Sullivan (Maryborough), Joanne Wilson (Charleville), Karen Richardson (Rockhampton), Megan Williams and Michelle Smith (Townsville), and Carolyn Pratt and Judith O'Brien (Cairns).

Farewell to Brian King, Heather Zeppel, Mark Simmons, Merv Parker, Syd Curtis, David Locke and Theresa Campbell.

Secondments confirmed include Clive Hughes (NORMA), Jennifer Hawes (Head Office computing), Bob McTaggart (special duties, Head Office), Dr Jim Davie (special duties, Rockhampton), and Yvonne Reynolds (historic sites, Moggill).

Wage changes Stamp of success to Lew held over

In December last, the Executive Management Group endorsed the proposal for a new wages award which includes a nine-level classification structure to provide career paths for wages employees.

EMG members have expressed their appreciation to all who contributed in workshops and who provided information through survey questionnaires.

They have also thanked members of the wages award working party — Lester Harth, Ric Natrass, Lyn Pullen, Lyn Gough and Gary Selwood — for their work on this segment of the project.

The proposal is now with the Minister for his consideration.

As announced recently, a complete review of the portfolio is under way.

The outcome could have an effect on the new award.

No decision on its implementation is likely before the review is completed.



Congratulations to Head Office despatch officer Lew Thompson for his selection as Australia Post's Brisbane Customer of the Month.

What is Gosuper?

Well you may ask what is Gosuper? Gosuper (Government Officers Superannuation Scheme) is a 3 per cent 'productivity award' superannuation scheme for all Queensland Government employees to be introduced from 1 July this year.

Gosuper is a simple contribution accumulation scheme with an employer contribution equivalent to 3 per cent of salary paid to an account maintained for each employee.

Employing authorities will be responsible for the fortnightly remittance of the 3 per cent contribution on behalf of their employees to the State Service Superannuation Office which will

undertake the record keeping for the scheme.

The 3 per cent contribution will be invested under the direction of the trustees of the scheme and interest earned will be credited to members' accounts.

Also from 1 July, as part of the amended superannuation package, there will be a reduction of 1.5 per cent in the rate of employee contributions to the State Service Superannuation Scheme, and a reduction in the rate of benefit accrual to offset the level of benefit provided under the 3 per cent scheme.

For further information contact the assistant personnel officer (07) 227 5324.

Regions to pay out

Accounts Branch is gearing up for the long-awaited regionalization of expenditure payments. A comprehensive user manual is in final production.

On completion, assistant accountant Tony Ward and systems development officer Tony Hall will commence a pilot implementation at Moggill. All regions should be in production by the end of April.

A number of benefits will accrue from the program.

Payments will be able to be made more promptly thus improving the

image of the Service with our suppliers.

Greater efficiencies will be achieved through a reduction in the use of the cash credit account.

Regional offices will be able to deal with suppliers in all aspects of the supply and payment of goods and services.

We anticipate this initiative will enhance the corporate image of efficiency enjoyed by the Service.

C.I.Nicolson
Accountant

Senior Mail Officer Bill Timmins (left) and Senior Postal Officer Bill Cornwall presented the award.

This is part of Australia Post's Towards Excellence program which seeks to reward a State Mail Centre customer for presentation of mail, courtesy, quality of wrapped articles, and accuracy of accounting documents.

The Service was most pleased Lew was selected for December 1987 was the inaugural award and Australia Post had a wide range of customers from which to make a choice.

Fax is not cheap

New electronic 'toys' are now in operation in 16 Service offices. Facsimile machines though are not to be treated as toys but as a means of sending written material required urgently.

Routine letters and memos for example should continue to be sent by post.

Regional administration officers will be checking on use which is the equivalent of an STD phone call — most expensive during the day, time taken, and distance covered.

Comprehensive cover sheets based on practical use by other departments and private industry are being distributed.

Jim McKittrick at Head Office (07) 227 5337 will answer queries.

Here is your check list of fax numbers:

Head Office	(07) 221 5718	Mackay	(079) 57 2036
Moggill	(07) 202 8844	Emerald	(079) 82 2568
Toowoomba	(076) 36 1672	Gladstone	(079) 72 1993
Charleville	(074) 54 1418	Townsville	(077) 74 1464
Maryborough	(071) 22 1742	Mt Isa	(077) 43 9800
Rainbow Beach	(071) 86 3335	Airline Beach	(079) 46 9540
Fleay's	(075) 35 8623	Ingham	(077) 76 3770
Rockhampton	(078) 27 9808	Caimes	(070) 51 4732

Each centre will soon have an Australian facsimile directory to aid contact with the growing army of users.

Interleaves

Interpretive staff explored future options for Service public contact activities at their annual workshop at Bunya Mountains in February.

Topics discussed included new approaches to regional and sub-regional public contact planning interpretive skills training workshops, rural nature conservation, tour operator training, production of local displays and brochures, marketing of Service brochures, posters and other items, and evaluation of Service interpretive activities.

Information displays are being prepared for Bunya Mountains National Park office and the Binna Burra information centre.

New brochures in the pipeline include Heading bush (a code for bush behaviour), and The park next door (for neighbours clarifying park management strategies).

The Hook Island diving guide, Maroochy Shire parks, revised Wildlife in your backyard, and Orpheus Island VIS are now available.

The final communications skills training workshop was held at Wacol this month for Central and Southern Region staff. The next step is a series of park-based workshops focusing on interpretive skills and public contact needs.

A fourth accreditation course for tour guides at St Helena Island National Park was held this month. Almost 100 people are now trained to take tours here.

Farewell to Dave Batt, Moreton sub-region regional interpreter. He has kept us on our toes by pursuing grass-roots issues like public attitudes to firewood collection on national parks, and retention of koala habitat in urbanizing areas.

Dave is taking his valued experience and dedicated enthusiasm to his new and most important role as Queensland Agricultural College liaison officer.

Pamela Harmon-Price

Psssssst . . .

Stuart James (ex-Q.NPWS, Kingaroy) honoured with an MBE recently for services to soil conservation.

★ ★ ★

Cooloola staff proud to remind us the part spouses of Service staff play in looking after the estate and so on.

The effort of Mary Powell, wife of Stan, in spotting a woman missing in the park for 11 days deservedly rated a mention in the local press.

★ ★ ★

Moggill staff plan ahead! Dianne MacLean is taking bookings on 202 0239 now for their Christmas break-up at Silk's on 21 December.

★ ★ ★

What is so great about the US? Annette Bartsch not long back from one trip is planning another.

★ ★ ★

Sue Green (ex-Library) proud mother of a son, Samuel.

Lenore Wedgwood hobnobbing with the Premier and Sir Lew Edwards in practice before she charms VIP visitors to Expo for six months.

★ ★ ★

She managed not to spend the vast clothing budget they gave her in one place.

★ ★ ★

Paul Kummerow beat Guy Thomas to get back to Moggill after tonsillectomies.

★ ★ ★

Ringtail editor Don Marshall embarrassed by the extent of requested staff contributions to the feature topic for this Ringtail.

A number have been held for a second dose next issue.

In contrast, contributions to Newspaws and Australian Ranger Bulletin were almost negligible.

★ ★ ★

Zina Dinesen is at home recovering after an operation.

Aviculture humour — 'Can you tell me how to become an aviary?'

'Where did you get the birds?' 'I bred them myself.' (Wonder whether it was uncomfortable).

'I found a canary with a band around its leg.'

'What are you going to do about it? Are you trying to find the owner?'

'No. It's dead!'

Yve Reynolds has forsaken St Helena for eight weeks for a more exciting 'dig'.

She was invited to join a University of Sydney archaeological expedition working near the Sea of Galilee.

Peter Milne also wed this month. He won't be living in a glass house but in an almost new house included in a gift of land at Mooloolah, now environmental park.

Crafty interpreter Marc Hockings tied the knot at last this month with former staffer Dianne Charles.

Newspaws correspondents were forced to fail their assignment to provide a picture of the happy couple for the date selected was the day after this edition was made up for printing. You win, Marc!

★ ★ ★

Colin O'Keefe (Lawn Hill) will never know how lucky he was not to be on the telephone.

Damian McGreevy (Head Office) had planned to include him on a talk-back program heard on ABC regional radio on Thursdays.

Ron Teece (Lakefield) was the substitute talker about his park. You could be next (though you normally get some warning).

★ ★ ★

Regional Director Southern Noel Dawson off on a month's leave.

Yes, you guessed. First stop was Fraser Island. Then he planned to visit national parks over the border.

Last Newspaws failed to record all the Head Office girls recently engaged.

To make amends, plans were made for a group photograph for this issue.

Alas, two of our ladies declined so all five dropped out! The best made plans . . .

★ ★ ★

Change of task from wildlife to Mike Pople who did holiday relief in the Whitsunday national parks.

★ ★ ★

Bill Lavarack enthused about the possibility of his discovery of a new orchid in the Hinchinbrook area.

★ ★ ★

Dave Locke resigned to take up seminary study but doing graphic arts and cleaning in his spare time.

★ ★ ★

Change of scene for Rob Hughes (Marine Parks, Townsville) to Beerwah, Shamus Conway (Toowoomba to Rainbow Beach), Lyn Puller (Rainbow Beach to Toowoomba) and Guy Thomas (Mt Isa to Moggill).



Assistant Director (legislation and policies) Syd Curtis retired from the Service on 12 January. His departure was marked by several functions attended by his many friends in and outside of the Service. None so sincere a tribute came from the Director. He was in pain from the side effects of his terminal illness but took time to make sure he had this message to be read at the Head Office morning tea function:

Syd set our foundations

Apart from Bill Wilkes (whom I didn't know, to my knowledge there is no government person in Queensland (living or dead) who is more entitled to the honour of being called 'Mr National Parks' than is Syd Curtis.

The great National Parks and Wildlife Service we have today is built upon the sound foundations laid by Syd in his Forestry days.

It must have been very hard for Syd in 1975 to see so many outsiders come in and erect a new building on the foundations he had laid.

He probably had a totally different superstructure in mind.

Can I say something that only the Director can say. To his great credit Syd has always refused to compromise in any way the cardinal principle of national park management as enshrined in the legislation he helped draft.

To his great credit he has consistently refused to play the politician. He has never accepted the philosophy that the end could justify the means.

Had Syd been of a nature to be more flexible and discretionary he would probably have been retiring today from the position of Director of the Service.

But would those of us who have the privilege of getting to know Syd so well want him to have been anything other than what he has been? I think not.

Syd, I would like to thank you for all you have done for me personally over the past 12 years. You have often disagreed with me and told me so to my face.

Nevertheless you have with total loyalty implemented my policies some of which have been an anathema to you.

I respect you enormously for that. I want to thank you for all you have done for the Service but above all thank you for all you have done for nature conservation, particularly national parks.

I wish you a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Graham Saunders



This excellently-drawn cartoon was part of a retirement card for Syd signed by staff at the Northern Regional Centre, Pallarenda, and reflects some of his interests.

Did Syd work till the very end? On his final morning on the job he received this telex:

'Have positive sighting of liarbird adjacent to NRC. Possibly new species. Description follows:

Grey with grey-brown legs and red head, bill and crown olive-

green, back silver-grey with slight brown wash.

Have provisionally named it as northern greater grey liarbird.

Suggest you delay retirement and investigate.'

It was signed Bill Fisher!

Syd's unique farewell gift was a

special microphone which (when he can tear himself away from his friendly computer) he intends using to record the calls of lyrebirds at Tamborine and sundry unnamed places.

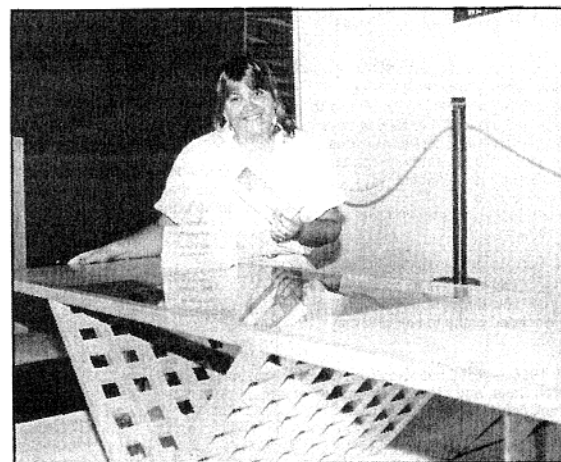
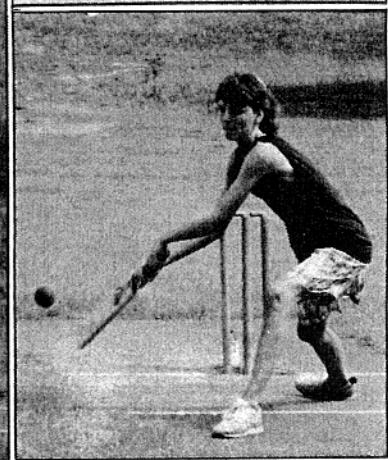
We look forward to reading the results of Syd's long-term study into their calls and some of the surprising things he has found.

Appearances can be deceptive

In post-Australia Day fever, Head Office 7th floor staff had the audacity to challenge staff of the 5th and 6th floors to a game of cricket.

The match was reported IN ADVANCE by the supply of an 80-line piece of doggerel with remarkable resemblance to a Thomas Spencer poem.

The result was never made clear for this edition but these pictures indicate certain participants were in fine form on a fun day.



Technical Services Branch drawing office aide Shelley Jones is off for a week to Milan, Italy, in September because of a coffee table.

Her entry won the Queensland Furniture Guild's furniture design award this month with a prize of a trip to the World Furniture Fair and \$500 to spend.

Shelley is in her fourth year of an Associate Diploma in Arts and Interior Design at the Queensland College of Art.

She drew the coffee table as part of a three-dimensional design subject

Shelley's off to Milan

last year, and had it built by furniture maker Ron O'Neill in silver ash, glass and acrylic.

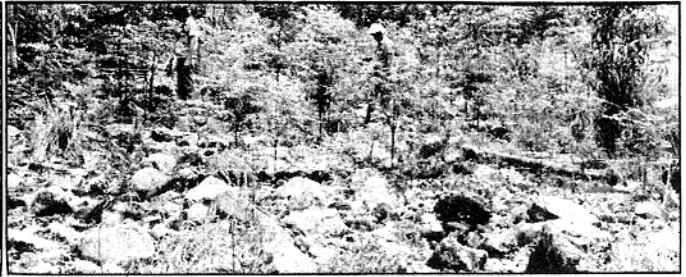
The competition was open to students and the industry. No award was made in last year's inaugural competition.

The table? It's yours for \$1600 if it hasn't been snapped up already.

Sprayed chemical firebreaks prove effective



General view of the firebreak test area showing the extent of guinea grass adjacent to rainforest.



White cedar regrowth on a sprayed trial area of Mt Jukes National Park, near Mackay. Growth rate exceeded 2 m in 10 months.

The December Newspaws statement that the Service seemed split into a hundred chips over a firm policy on the supply and use of firewood on national parks has not been challenged by any written contribution for this issue. Here is an observation by an experienced Service officer held over from last issue.

Hard work up in smoke

Firewood is a pain. It's hard work and you see nothing for your efforts. It's all gone up in smoke!

We supply firewood at Dundubara for cooking, the wood-burning hot water system, and the communal campfire. When Dundubara campground is full — 100 camps — visitors can burn two tonnes of wood a day.

The cost is high. Our round trip to the Forestry area to cut wood is 40 km plus two men for two hours plus wear and tear on chainsaws.

Splitting of firewood in the campground is a big problem. Apart from the mess, you have the hazard of splinters in feet, and pieces flying and hitting \$40,000 vehicles or other campers.

A sign at the woodheap, a short distance from the campground, states that all wood must be split there and why but it is the most disregarded sign on the park.

We do get dockings from the Maryborough sawmill at times which is not as messy as bush wood but cartage is the problem.

I think the alternative is gas barbecues, even if we supply gas free. This is done in the Northern Territory.

It must be cheaper than the present system and cleaner. I don't think the average camper has enough room to carry his own firewood.

I love a fire at night when I am camping and would not camp in an area if I could not have a fire.

Ron Walk



Another barrow load of concrete for a walking track in Royal Arch Cave. Cave work can be very tiring. Sunshine may be missing but conditions are always humid.

Most rainforest plants are susceptible to damage by fire. They do not possess the thick bark suckering habit or other specialized adaptations to fire-prone environments that dry forest plants have.

In coastal Queensland, a major rural activity is growing sugar cane. Traditionally, most surrounding countryside is burnt regularly (usually every one or two years).

The purpose is to reduce the risk of accidental fire spreading between adjacent blocks of cane during the harvesting season. Also, long grassy areas surrounding cane paddocks are seen as sources of diseases and rats which could affect cane crops.

In the Mackay district, the traditional farming practice has been to drop a match at the season's end and let it go!

Generally these fires occur in November and early December.

Consequent hot fires race up adjacent hill slopes damaging rainforests.

The effect has been to cause rainforest to recede. Mature trees have been weakened and finally killed by successive fires.

Once trees die they are replaced by vigorous tropical grasses which can grow to 2 m in one season.

Such recession is affecting several national park areas. An effective control program was needed.

In most cases, park boundaries are

Forest saved

high on steep, rocky slopes. Conventional firebreaks are not suitable.

Our first approach was to co-ordinate burning programs with adjacent landholders. Where possible we encouraged early season burns (May or early June) when fire intensity was much lower.

We also experimented with lighting a fire on the edge of rainforest and letting it burn downslope away from the forest.

While this reduced intensity, the forest was still damaged. Lighting such a fire was slow and potentially very dangerous with many hidden obstacles!

A decision was made to use chemical weed control methods to attempt to produce a firebreak adjacent to the rainforest edge.

The chemical selected was glyphosate (Round Up), a chemical with no residual effect. Use elsewhere had shown it had little effect on rainforest trees and seedlings when used at low concentrations to kill grass.

The technique was to spray the emerging grass as soon as practicable after the annual burn.

A strip about 10 m wide was treated

using 10-litre compression sprayers.

A new technique used by the Forestry Department involves the use of small irrigation sprinklers mounted on the end of a fibreglass rod.

This provides a low volume spray application capable of covering large areas in a relatively short time. One operator can cover a strip 5 m wide and 30 m to 50 m long in a minute.

Results have been very encouraging. Grass growth has been removed from the firebreak area and natural rainforest regeneration is occurring on the treated area.

Rainforest seedlings and suckers grew to more than 2 m in eight months and now we have an easily negotiable firebreak from which to back burn without causing forest damage.

Following early successes, it is hoped to extend the trial area to protect more rainforest areas.

This type of control program would be applicable to many areas of Queensland where fire is causing damage to sensitive vegetation. It is particularly relevant to rainforest vegetation.

For treatment of larger areas, it may be practicable to treat grass growth in strips leaving areas of grass enclosed to be surrounded by rainforest.

Fine shade from the developing trees will reduce grass vigour. Slowly the enclosed areas will be re-colonized by rainforest species.

Peter Thompson
Seaforth management area

Closure helps Chillagoe projects

The driest January in 45 years this year changed the usual February closure plans of Chillagoe-Mungana Caves staff. Less than 40 mm of rain fell compared with the average 300 mm.

The amount of mud build-up on tracks needing removal was limited thus giving time for other projects such as familiarisation and management of different park areas.

February is traditionally the wettest month at Chillagoe. The caves are closed to the public due to limited demand, eroded roads, a threat of flooding and, at best, slippery tracks.

In 1981, the Donna entrance cavern had 5 m of water. In many years water could stay over paths till Easter and often need pumping out.

February closures started in 1983. These have enabled many regular maintenance planned park development projects to be carried out.

Closures mean no visitor

interruptions to tasks such as concreting or cleaning (often two to four staff working two to four days in Royal Arch Cave alone). Besides, without a guide commitment, an extra hand is available.

Major tasks undertaken have included:

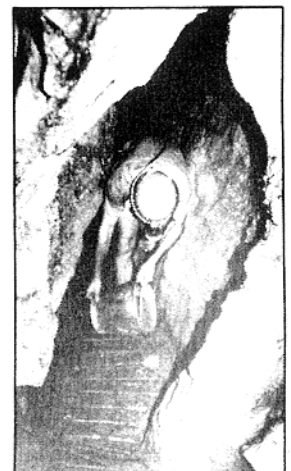
- 1983 — Spiral stairway at the rear of Donna Cave to permit a visitor flow-through, and concreting associated paths to link with car park.
- 1984 — Feral cat trapping, Royal Arch Cave, and lookout walking track construction.
- 1985 — Concreting Market Garden path, Royal Arch, painting, signage, ordering materials for Trezinn Cave lighting.
- 1986 — Wiring Trezinn Cave lighting, inspected swiftlet colony, serviced hand-held lights.
- 1987 — Installing metal grids, Royal Arch, survey of caves and Chillagoe Smelter site.
- 1988 — Aboriginal site recording, fencing, resources familiarisation, incidental fauna survey.

Regular park closure is a practice capable of producing good results

from a conservation management view.

The public must be given adequate notice and the reasons for closure.

Most would-be visitors accept in the knowledge their visits in future are likely to be enhanced.



Pouring a concrete pathway in a restricted space in Royal Arch Cave. The task is made easier by the absence of visitors.