

16

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Dave, Stan and I were pleased to see many school groups using the park, and Dave and Stan took opportunities to talk to students about Cooloola. However, reports from Southern Cooloola relating to hikers getting into difficulties were increasing. Police and the State Emergency Service had never checked our emergency procedures, or contacted us.

Various school groups began to explore the river from Elanda or Harrys Hut in canoes. Students traversed the national park from the river to Teewah Beach via the Cooloola Sandpatch, or northerly to Freshwater or Kings Bore. Campsite 3 was the main interchange from canoeing to hiking.

The area of greatest alarm concerned the ratio of adults to students and the question 'What if'? We were worried about a situation where a leader might become incapacitated or separated from the group. We were also aware of hiking groups leaving defined tracks and 'going bush'. The reaction time in case of emergencies such as snake bite was a real concern. (Cooloola contains deadly snakes, such as the taipan, eastern brown, death adder, tiger and rough-scaled snakes.)

On one occasion, an exhausted person, swimming down the Noosa River, incoherently revealed that he was one of a small group who had left the Cooloola Sand Patch to walk directly to the river. Unaware of the swampy terrain, they had found the going extremely heavy. Becoming dehydrated, the party split and had to be rescued.



Track to Cooloola Sandpatch skirts around extensive swamp-lands (photo B. Thomas).

Another group, consisting of three staff and forty students, set off to hike from Elanda to Harrys Hut with a good briefing on the route to follow. They missed the Kin Kin Creek crossing and headed west before realising their error. Turning back, they again went too far, reaching Kinaba, where they received further guidance. Returning to Kin Kin Creek, they headed north along the Service Road, but at Harrys Hut Road they turned west instead of east and had to retrace their steps. They must have been very tired when they finally reached Harrys Hut!

Next day, despite warnings, they crossed the river and headed directly towards what seemed to be the tantalisingly close Cooloola Sand Patch. Up to their waists in swamp water, the party had a disagreement and split, leaving one adult with twenty students. Fortunately they had marked their route with coloured tape and all were able to return to the river.

Initially, we advised visitors wishing to hike to the Sand Patch not to go directly, due to the difficult swamplands. Seeking a constructive solution, I asked Dave and Stan to check all tracks leaving the Noosa River and heading towards the Sand Patch. They reported that the only viable option was to start at Camp Site 3. They flagged a route for my approval and proceeded to construct the present walking track.

As a result of various debacles, Dave suggested producing a 'Teacher's Guide to Southern Cooloola', to give teachers and students information about what to expect when they arrived in the park and what was expected of them. This guide was keenly sought by many schools.

Dave was once woken at Kinaba at 1am. Two men from Camp Site 2, north of Harrys Hut, had paddled down the river to advise that two hikers, who had headed for the Cooloola Sand Patch earlier in the day, were missing. Dave boated upstream to Camp Site 2 to find that the missing hikers had returned. These intrepid explorers, having reached the top of the Sand Patch, had decided to descend to the beach for a swim. Too late to traverse the sand mass again, they hitched a lift north to Rainbow Beach. Another kind person drove them to the police station in Gympie. Police lent a hand, driving the happy wanderers along a circuitous route to their campsite.

There was a happy conclusion when a primary school group in canoes became scattered across wind-swept Lake Cootharaba. Two children were posted missing and a helicopter was called to search for them. Unable to paddle against the wind, the missing children had decided to walk around the lake's perimeter outside the search zone, towing their canoe. Walking in the lake is always risky, as the warm shallows are popular with basking stingrays. I thought of the ex-convict John Graham, who walked a similar route in August 1836 to rescue the castaway Eliza Fraser.

On a mid-afternoon in March 1984, Grade 11 and 12 students from a Brisbane high school were practising capsize and rescue techniques on Lake Cootharaba, when a sudden 30 to 40 km westerly wind arose. Students, teachers and boats were scattered across the lake, and it was dusk before all the students were rescued. This shallow lake is not to be underestimated.

Even the normally placid Noosa River can be a hazard when in full flood. In The Narrows, south of Harrys Hut, strong currents, eddies, and mini-whirlpools occur, and debris moves rapidly downstream.

In May 1985, I flew to Melbourne and on to the Counter Disaster Organization training centre at Mt Macedon for a week's instruction in emergency situations and procedures. This course was attended by various government employees from across Australia.

I subsequently invited Jim Campbell, the helicopter pilot, to advise us of his requirements for emergency landing sites. Dave and Stan cleared and prepared two sites by hand. The first was

near Harrys Hut for land and water access, the second further north along the Log Landing Road. We also formulated an emergency plan, containing essential information such as the names, addresses and telephone numbers of QNPWS staff, our radio frequency and grid references for the two helicopter landing sites.

The response to my enquiries about police and SES liaison came in the form of a police officer who, with breath smelling of a liquid lunch, would sprawl across my front counter and try to convince me to 'take it easy, everything's under control'. In our many discussions, he would use legalese and pure obstructionism, always telling me he was in charge and I should mind my own business. It was not that I pushed hard, for I had too many other matters to attend to, but he kept wandering into my office. My diary shows that on 15 February 1984, I asked him – for the fourth time – if I could peruse his yellow emergency procedures book. Once again, he just couldn't locate it right then!

In September 1985, this officer surprised me by saying he had prepared an emergency exercise in the national park. The SES intended to launch their trailer boats at Log Landing or Camp Site 3. I pointed out that liaison in advance would have avoided foreseeable problems. Log Landing Road was temporarily closed due to wet conditions, and it was not possible to launch trailer boats into the river at either point because the steep river banks rose almost three metres above the water. In any case, access to the river at Log Landing was obstructed by a dump of old logs. He blustered, telling me he had the power to proceed regardless, but the exercise did not go ahead.

The SES then began to take an interest in the park. Complaints were received about their boats speeding along the Noosa River in the 4kph zone. The matter came to a head when I was invited by Alderman Col Chapman, their District Controller, to a meeting at their King Street headquarters.

In my talk, I outlined my experience with the SES in Victoria, going back to the days when it was known as Civil Defence. Some SES units were commenting on the difficulty of getting co-operation from government departments, and I was offering co-operation. We had good liaison with the SES in the Noosa and Maroochy Shires, and I had given the Tin Can Bay SES approval to conduct an exercise in Cooloola.

Revealing his antagonism towards national parks, Col Chapman stated that he had been to the police and all he had to do was send a letter to QNPWS outlining an exercise, and QNPWS could participate if they wished! However, Widgee Shire Chairman Adrian McClintock, who was present at the meeting, commented that there should be discussions and liaison between QNPWS and the SES. It was also clear that the SES members were upset by Col Chapman's aggressive attitude. One said they 'must have QNPWS on-side', and a motion was passed 'that the SES get liaison from national parks and approval from national parks prior to exercises'.

A breath of fresh air arrived when Cavill Heywood was appointed police-SES liaison officer in Gympie. He listened to my concerns and asked whether he could carry out an exercise involving a crashed aeroplane in the national park. I suggested a site that might meet his ideas and we drove



School group camping at Log Landing (photo K. Johnson).

to bushland along the Eurubbie Road. This suited Cavill's operational exercise admirably, and he proceeded with the planning. At this time I was a member of the local Recreation Council, which met at night. Another member, Cr Noel Ellis, said he had been told by Col Chapman that the SES was not allowed to have an exercise in Cooloola, and asked if this was true. I told him that Cavill was planning an exercise, which would take place within days.

While I was not privy to the details, Cavill was happy for me to be present at Harrys Hut on the day of the exercise. Not once did an SES volunteer approach me at my government vehicle, though it had national park stickers on the doors and I was dressed in uniform. Invited to a review of the operation back at headquarters, I put my point of view that a lot of volunteer time and effort could have been saved if they had sought advice from a 'local'. If asked, I could have pointed out easier routes to walk or drive. Perhaps that was just Gympie in 1986!

Alone in the forest

In January 1988, Brian Mays drew our attention to an unattended vehicle at Elanda that no-one had been seen near for some days. I alerted the police, and they advised me that the vehicle was owned by 'Monika'. Stan Powell took a boat up Kin Kin Creek, then walked upstream along the southern bank.

In the context of searches, which are often futile for participants, the drama ended next day when Stan came across a woman sitting naked on a log in Kin Kin Creek. He ascertained that she was 'Monika', and she was 'Quite all right, thank you'. Fortunately for Stan, his wife Mary was at Elanda, and she was able to coax the woman ashore.

I could think of better places to commune with nature than the mosquito and leech infested rain-forests of Kin Kin Creek in summer, even if I were fully clothed and liberally supplied with insect repellent. The last I heard of 'Monika' was a newspaper report of her sitting naked beside the Wide Bay Highway near Kilkivan.

Attempting co-operation with the SES had been unpleasant and frustrating. While it reached a good stage with Cavill Heywood at Gympie and with my attendance at Disaster Planning meetings at Noosa and Nambour, effective liaison was not carried forward for Cooloola. After I left Gympie in 1990, a contact in the Noosa SES advised that the emergency plans Dave Batt and I had initiated were being re-submitted from the Gympie office. My name and home telephone number were still listed as the initial emergency contact two years after I moved to Moggill!



Kin Kin Creek empties into the shallows of Lake Cootharaba (photo B. Thomas).

17

THE ARMY BRIDGE – COOLOOLA WILDERNESS TRAIL

The Cooloola Wilderness Trail had been built in such a hurry that, when walkers reached Kin Kin Creek, they had to swim about 10 metres across or if the water level was low, detour a short way upstream to a ford and scramble across logs or wade.

Local staff began to receive comments bordering on complaints about the Kin Kin Creek crossing. Some hikers were poor swimmers, or could not handle a pack while swimming, or the pack wasn't waterproof, or the creek might be too high to use the ford.

Chatting with my Army officer son about his training, in particular building bridges, I posed a question about the results: 'Are they dismantled, blown up, or left in place?' From this discussion came the concept of the Army building a bridge across Kin Kin Creek to link both sections of the Cooloola Wilderness Trail.

Citing the recent example of the use of Army personnel to clear rubbish on one of Brisbane's off-shore islands, my son felt there was general dissatisfaction among enlisted people in that type of work. Building a bridge, however, would be constructive training, and if it had a post-construction community use, that was even better.

Clarrie Millar, the Member for Wide Bay, lived in Gympie at this time. In August 1987, he and his wife Dorothy accepted my invitation to visit Kin Kin Creek. The day went well, although next day I noticed a small amount of dried blood on the floor of the vehicle. Clarrie later told me his wife had collected a leech, and he had decided to call on the Army to 'drop napalm on the place and wipe it off the map'. He said he would speak to his friend, the Minister for Defence, and a short time later I received a call from Army engineers to arrange an inspection.

Having flown in helicopters previously, I was interested to be a passenger in an Army helicopter. This was combat flying. We overshot Kin Kin Creek, hidden in the forest, before the pilot realised he had reached it, and he banked sharply, skidding around at speed, before looping back for a landing. My stomach then settled back to where it should have been.

My concept was to have a bridge wide enough to enable a small tractor to cross for maintenance of the Cooloola Wilderness Trail from our southern base at Elanda. The site chosen for the crossing was at the end of the old Service Road, and a short time later the Army moved in with trucks, equipment and manpower.

There had been 575 mm of rain in the lead up to Easter, and the plains south of the creek were still saturated. The Army earned good experience in driving vehicles in wet conditions and in the recovery of bogged units. Some of the bridge material then had to come down the old Service Road, which became impassable. I flagged plants of the rare Keys boronia (*Boronia keysii*) that Dr Harrold had rediscovered in 1971 on the north bank of the creek, and asked the Sergeant in charge to try to protect them.

Two of the troops were tasked to camp on-site to guard the stores and repel the heavy mosquito infestation. The mosquitoes did not unduly concern them, but visits from ‘bush rats’ disturbed their sleep. It was a terrible time to be working in the Kin Kin Creek area, for on-going rain made conditions almost impossible.

With my daughter Tracey and youngest son Mark, I travelled by boat into upper Kin Kin Creek. Rounding the last bend, we were startled to hear a distinct crash, and there, in front of us, was a sad looking bridge. Clamps at the end of one of the two suspension cables had slipped. The Sergeant was furiously shouting instructions. Soon after, he commented, ‘I looked around to see the bridge falling and the second thing I saw was a female. It’s bad news to have a woman in the camp – that’s why the cable slipped.’ (Tracey was fourteen.)

A few days later, Tracey and I visited the temporary Army base at Elanda. I informed the Sergeant, ‘You have offended my daughter. She would accept being called a tomboy, but not a woman.’ Offering him a chocolate cake she had made, Tracey said ‘My older brother is in the army and he likes my cakes. I thought about putting poison in this one, but I didn’t.’ We left, to the amused expressions of the troops within earshot, and the Sergeant holding the cake.

The bridge was constructed during June 1988, and in August, Clarrie Millar returned for its official opening, together with QNPWS Minister Geoff Muntz and local member Gordon Simpson. The 32 Army sappers of 20 Divisional Engineering Support Squadron were represented by Lt Col Brown and Major Mackay. A plaque recording the occasion was mounted on a bollard on the north side of the creek. Not long afterwards, I visited the bridge with volunteers to paint the timbers with oil and carry out maintenance on the new Boronia walking track to the Harrys Hut Road.



Replacement bridge across Kin Kin Creek (photo B. Mahoney).

Forestry staff and local residents spoke of ‘big floods’ in the Kin Kin-Noosa River, but data to establish rainfall and river heights was elusive. Not long after the bridge was constructed, a ‘big flood’ came down Kin Kin Creek and undermined the bridge supports. The bridge was closed, rebuilt, and re-opened by Minister Muntz in 1991, after I had left the district. Floods again damaged the site, which was finally abandoned in favour of a concreted causeway a short distance upstream.

I had frequently used cable bridges, flying fox cages or two and three plain wires to cross high above flooded rivers in New Zealand and loved the sense of challenge and adventure. By contrast, using the new causeway across Kin Kin Creek is a cheap and disappointing – but functional – expedient.

It is easy to say that the engineering aspects of the bridge were the responsibility of Army engineers. In my enthusiasm and haste at the time, the choice of site was mine alone. Neither the engineers nor I had solid data on which to base flood heights. However, I give great credit to the Army personnel who constructed the original bridge under atrocious conditions, and to Clarrie Millar, who facilitated the ‘training exercise’.



Kin Kin Army bridge (photo M. Bannah).



Wire rope bridges are common in New Zealand.

18

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

I enjoyed many volunteer activities with groups and individuals, spanning many years. Contact with people who cared about the environment was stimulating, and kept me motivated in the face of some staff negativity, even hostility.

My first involvement with volunteers took place at Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory National Park. In that park, in 1961, a chained-together series of 100 mm by 50 mm boards was delivered in a large roll. They were intended to form a ramp over the frontal dune to protect the area from erosion and make it easier for visitors to access the beach. About thirty students who were camping in the area volunteered to space themselves along the unrolled ramp, lift in unison, march over the dune, and lower it to the ground. Job done – simple!

I had little need for volunteers whilst at Fraser NP at Lake Eildon. With a Committee of Management controlling fees collected from visitors, I was adequately supplied with casual staff, particularly at peak periods. On one occasion, a group of scouts were keen to earn ‘brownie points’, so we set off across the bay like Hiawatha in a small flotilla of Canadian canoes. Rubbish not readily accessible by other methods was bagged and returned to bins.

In Queensland, prior to the creation of the QNPWS, members of the public had been able to gain legal standing in environmental issues, through the *Forestry Act*, *Fauna Conservation Act*, *Native Plants Protection Act* and *Land Act*. All these Acts provided for Honorary Rangers or Honorary Protectors, but the powers for each Act were specific. For example, a person holding powers under the *Land Act* had no powers under the *Fauna Act*, and vice versa.

A number of people sought to be involved in the care and protection of national parks and wildlife, and this was possible under QNPWS legislation. These honoraries possessed legal powers to enforce the laws pertaining to both national park and wildlife management. In 1977, a small yellow booklet, *Powers of Honorary Protectors*, was prepared to define their role and assist them.

When I arrived in 1978, south-east Queensland had an operational system of Honorary Protectors. They were seen by QNPWS as having an authoritative, educative responsibility, rather than an enforcement role, and the Department would not allow them to be called Honorary Rangers. The 1977 booklet clearly stated that it was an offence, attracting three years’ imprisonment, to ‘personate’ a Public Servant, such as a Ranger. Regional Superintendent Tom Ryan was not enthusiastic about Honorary Protectors, having had negative experiences with them at Lamington National Park. Despite Tom’s misgivings, he occasionally sent me letters from citizens wishing to become Honorary Protectors.

One such applicant had wide experience in international wildlife. I became interested when he spoke of setting up a legitimate trade in butterflies for the governments of Papua New Guinea and

India, and went on to talk of hunting man-eating tigers that had eaten his tea plantation workers. He proved to be a fascinating person, and, unlike others I met, he had genuine conservation interests.

Most applicants were well motivated and were accepted. Applicants not favoured were those who showed undue insistence on using the legal powers to prosecute. Two such unsuccessful applicants had been broadcasting strident directives via loud hailer from a helicopter to move illegal campers from Alexandria Bay at Noosa NP. Most Honorary Protectors seemed content to hold the power, but not to use it!

At the Bunya Mountains, one of the QNPWS staff, who was also Secretary of the local Natural History Association, was writing to the Premier, criticising the management of the Park. In effect he was undermining his own supervisor. After being transferred, he resigned. Members of the Natural History Association, many of whom were Honorary Protectors, angrily gained television and newspaper publicity, claiming that QNPWS was harassing 'one of the best men they ever had'.

In November 1979, I attended a meeting of Sunshine Coast Honorary Protectors at the home of their Secretary, Jacqui Fortey. In attendance was the head office co-ordinator responsible for their activities, and I could see that he wanted to dump them on me. I was encouraged by the Protectors' enthusiastic response to my tentative enquiries about assistance with specific projects, and came to see them as advisors, with eyes and ears to keep me abreast of local events. This, of course, involved me in an active support role, calling on them when in their vicinity, or responding if they had some problem or request.

My first use of volunteers in Cooloola was to invite members of the Gympie Permaculture Club to pull out bitou bush from the national park in front of Rainbow Beach township. On another day, an Honorary Protector couple helped verify a weekend count of the traffic that was using the new Freshwater Track. This operation was designed to disprove Widgee Shire's statements that visitors were not using this alternative route to access Freshwater.

I desperately needed assistance to open a walking track through the Cooloola rainforest to link my proposed Blackbutt and Quandong picnic areas, and challenged Honorary Protectors to make this track. A select group of Protectors and their families turned up, and, once I had moved an energetic, machete-swinging person well out in front of the others, the new track developed along the line I had flagged. Other people followed, pruning vines and lighter vegetation with secateurs.

Formal involvement with volunteers meant that I was working in my own time, in an extension of what I was already doing during weekends. QNPWS instructions regarding insurance were to have volunteers sign in as they arrived. The insurance cover included most conditions, with the exception of hernia or pregnancy!

Regeneration of the sand mining mill site in front of the camping area at Freshwater was going no-where, with the mining company claiming it had been completed. In October 1983, I invited members of the Gympie Field Naturalist's Club to plant beach she oak trees (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) and beach spinifex grass (*Spinifex hirsutus*) on the northern side of the creek. The seedling trees had been grown by Ron Walk, the Overseer at Dundubara on Fraser Island. Twelve months later, the same group returned and did further tree and grass planting on the southern side of the creek. Today,



Hon Prot badge.

a casual observer would not realise how this area has changed, but a careful appraisal will reveal the even-age growth of the casuarinas.

Reviewing what had been achieved on these outings, I found much satisfaction among the volunteers at doing something constructive. A sense of fellowship developed, there weren't too many problems, and I was happy to work with them as a volunteer. Importantly, I was also motivating people to become better informed on park operations.

On the Noosa North Shore, two Honorary Protectors with the additional powers of Council Rangers had a peripheral impact on Cooloola NP. Occasional complaints came to our office about an offensive 'park ranger', affected by alcohol, telling campers on the beach close to Teewah Village to move. I spoke to the individual I believed responsible, to no avail. He didn't want campers going into the village, stealing firewood and water, and leaving litter on the beach.

In the Bundaberg area, two Honorary Protectors sought my assistance. Both were also Honorary Inspectors for the RSPCA, and their blurring of native wildlife protection and animal cruelty was not helpful. This related to the bleeding of greyhounds using live possums, kangaroo meat or chickens. If possums were being used, it was a QNPWS matter. If their claws and teeth had been destroyed, it was an RSPCA cruelty issue. If the bait was a chicken, it was not a QNPWS matter. I spent many hours on different days and nights swatting mosquitoes in the cane fields near greyhound racetracks, watching and waiting.

When one of these matters went to court, a local magistrate adjourned the case, and I had to return to Gympie with my evidence – two kangaroo carcasses – for storage in a local freezing works. This magistrate had been given the title of 'Bring your toothbrush Jack', because of his frequent warnings: 'I'll let you off this time but don't come back. If you do, bring your toothbrush. You'll be going to gaol.'

At the four Glasshouse Mountains NPs, a highly motivated Honorary Protector operating two farms took it upon himself to collect rubbish and mow the grass. He was also doing this work on Bribie Island.

While most of the Protectors seemed to lead a quiet life, Col Bryant, a very active farmer at the edge of the Conondale Ranges, would traverse the area on his motorbike, and frequently sought my assistance with shooting and plant theft matters. Col strongly disliked plant thieves who were active in the ranges. These plant collectors would be left in the forest by an accomplice, who then drove off. They would pull down the ferns and orchids and put them into heaps close to the track. It only took a few minutes at night to retrieve each collection. The land in this area was mainly State Forest, which was automatically a sanctuary, and two national parks. However, land tenure was of no concern to the thieves, and their chances of being caught were negligible.

On one occasion, Col advised that a rental vehicle used to collect plants from the Conondales was parked outside a commercial nursery at Mooloolah. I sought advice from our head office, but this merely confirmed that nothing could be done. The laws were just too weak, and collectors needed to be caught in the act.

A Forestry officer once caught a plant thief in the Conondales and confiscated the vehicle, which he was entitled to do. Forestry employees normally started work at 7am but on this occasion, the officer had started earlier and caught the thief red handed. This created an interesting legal issue. The vehicle had been hired in Victoria, and profit from the sale of the ferns was to be used to defray Queensland holiday expenses. The vehicle was returned to the hire company some months later.

Col's complaints often found me half sleeping across the back seat of my twin cab Toyota. On one of these camp-outs, I received a message relayed through the Forestry radio network. My Gympie office had been burgled, and would I attend the police station promptly for finger printing to eliminate me as a suspect!

When he arrived in 1983, Regional Director Noel Dawson directed that we should use volunteers in all districts, but not neglect normal work. There was no funding to support the volunteers, and he considered they should provide their own equipment. In 1986, he wanted to see volunteers in all NPs. Regional Superintendent Kevin Bade was unhappy with this instruction because we were struggling with current works. Funding for operations continued to be cut, and field staff were losing the weekend penalty rates they relied on to receive an appropriate wage. There was widespread resentment, leading to union unrest.

Accepting the directive, Kevin acceded to my suggestion to call a public meeting at the Cooroy RSL Club, to judge interest in forming a group of volunteers to assist with national park management. As a preliminary step, I inserted notices in newspapers.

Following an enthusiastic meeting late in April 1986, a Friends of Parks and Wildlife (FOPW) group was formed with Jacqui Fortey as Secretary. The meeting requested better information about what was going on within parks around the district, so I started producing a monthly FOPW Newsletter. This was distributed to eighty people, from whom we sought a membership fee to cover costs of production and postage. Distribution was handled by a volunteer. The first page of one of these newsletters (attached) gives an over-view of the content, with general activities and items of interest.

In the Gympie office, Gerri Kluver and I had established an indexed dossier of practices for rearing different native fauna. There was enough wildlife work for a full time employee, but this work had to be absorbed within existing district staff. Care of injured and orphaned wildlife was an area where we were often swamped, but we could not afford to show lack of interest, even when the kindest action might be to quietly put a bird or mammal down.

Following the success of the FOPW group, and again with the grumbling acceptance of Kevin, I set up a network of volunteers to take over some of this load. Later events caused me to wonder whether I had done the right thing in starting this group.

Many of the Honorary Protectors who had been actively helping me became enthusiastic supporters of the FOPW group. Wanting to do something to help the environment, they would appear at monthly working bees in various parks around the region. In addition to achieving maintenance works, I was keen to ensure that they knew where the park boundaries were and understood the law involving their powers.

In August 1986 FOPW and the Noosa Parks Association joined forces to clean up the mainly tidal rubbish on Goat Island Environmental Park in the Noosa River at Tewantin. I borrowed our light truck from Elanda and removed two truck loads of rubbish. This operation was repeated 12 months later on nearby Keyser Island. In February 1988 these two groups planted 2000 trees along the entrance road into Elanda.

Lindsay Pringle was one Overseer who saw the benefits of volunteers. On two occasions, at Mapleton NP, he organised wheelbarrows and loads of gravel. One volunteer pulled and another pushed a loaded wheelbarrow across the valley, up the hill and along the track, where the gravel was spread by other volunteers.

On many occasions I accompanied Cecily Fearnley and a group of Noosa Parks Association members to record ground parrots. We camped at Neebs Waterholes, Camp Site 3, or Teewah Creek in Cooloola, and visited Sunshine Coast environmental parks, spreading out in pairs along suitable habitat to listen for these rare parrots in the evening and in the morning before sunrise.

One of the important tasks FOPW and I tackled was the eradication of feral pines from a strip of native forest along the Como Scarp, our 35km common boundary with Forestry pine plantations. Trees up to 200 mm in diameter were growing there, and our operation was aimed at preventing their spread into the national park. With permission from Forestry, the volunteers and I would camp beside the still, dark Yards Creek waterholes. This was a great spot for a swim after a hot day cutting pines, and a yarn in the quietness of the evening. Occasionally, we were visited by flocks of beautiful black cockatoos arriving for a drink. We had noticed them carrying pine cones across the wide firebreak.



Self-established feral pines in native bushland.



Black cockatoo.

September 1987 saw FOPW at Boat Mountain Environmental Park, near Murgon. This scientifically important park was a modestly popular hiking spot with locals, but access to the plateau was difficult. Some of us camped overnight, and I slept in my mosquito proof hammock in a very windy saddle, ready for an early start. We moved old railway sleepers up the steep approach to form steps and stabilise the track. Councillors from Murgon and Kilkivan were impressed that volunteers would come from the Sunshine Coast and join locals for this work.

The following month volunteers cut pines in the obsolete Experimental Plot 135 in the Upper Noosa Catchment. Logs were loaded onto the Fraser Island truck, taken to Maryborough for treatment, and returned to Cooloola for use as vehicle control barriers.

A peripheral use of volunteers involved persons on whom the Courts had imposed Community Service Orders. QNPWS could not use these people directly at the time, but members of the Noosa Parks Association agreed to supervise them in Noosa National Park, where park staff allocated beneficial work. When government rules were relaxed, we used these CSO people around the new park headquarters at Lake Alford in Gympie, under our direct supervision.

Some staff from head office (in particular Dot Finch and Fiona Davie) would occasionally attend volunteer outings. With their support, we obtained a specially designed cap and tee shirt marked 'Friends of National Parks'. A sandwich board sign was erected to show the public that the FOPW group was working there.

The only accident on volunteer days occurred when we joined members of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council to cut groundsel in Peregrian EP. While removing tidal flotsam from an estuarine waterway, my teenage daughter Tracey gashed her foot underwater when leaving a canoe. I can still recall her distress when a local doctor cleaned the wound with a toothbrush. There was no thought of claiming insurance.

I was aware of a degree of resentment among some staff at the use of volunteers. A common belief was that additional staff would not be appointed if volunteers were being used. Some saw their own jobs threatened and viewed volunteers as scab labour. I wondered whether my funding would be cut, and this actually happened.

A staff meeting was held to discuss budget cuts and the insufficient wage allowance for weekend work. It had been mandatory for staff to be on duty at Noosa and Kinaba each weekend. Acting Regional Superintendent Paul Sheehy instructed me: 'You know Cecily Fearnley well. Have her come up on the tour boats and talk to the visitors.' When I demurred, I was told to use other volunteers if she was not available! I didn't raise the matter with any volunteers at all.

In August 1987, I called a meeting of Management Area Overseers. Head Office had withdrawn money for new projects and further cut penalty rates for weekend work. I was again instructed to scrounge the tip for equipment, and also to use volunteers to operate the Gympie office for handling our day to day work. There was no money for volunteers, who it was thought should be self-funding. New forms were to be completed for each volunteer, and I was to complete a form evaluating the activities of each volunteer day.

It was suggested that I visit Fleay's Fauna Sanctuary on the Gold Coast to evaluate the operations of its volunteers. I didn't like what I saw at Fleays, where a chief volunteer drew up rosters and supervised activities. I objected to handing the operation of any QNPWS facility to volunteers. To me, their use meant leading, liaison and education about parks, even though this had led to an increase in my workload. My concept was always for hands-on involvement, and never for a Fleay-type model.



Logo on Friends of National Parks tee shirt.

With the inane directions for increased use of volunteers, compulsion undermined my previous willing enthusiasm and my health became affected. As a result, I decided to take time off in lieu of the volunteer days worked. Field staff then complained that I was unavailable during their working week, and Regional Superintendent Bade became increasingly unhappy at my actions.

During 1984, management of Cooloola had been split into northern and southern zones. Mark Johnston, the newly appointed District Ranger for northern Cooloola, was stridently anti-volunteer. He had previously been involved in union agitation at Cooloola, and argued against Head Office's directions. He asked for extra full-time staff, saying he couldn't cope with existing works. He closed the Blackbutt and Quandong picnic areas and the Dundathu Circuit Track I had developed, and removed all signs of their existence. When compelled to use volunteers, Mark accepted a group of RAAF personnel and asked them to collect rubbish along the beach. He boasted to me that he only had to deal with one person – the officer in charge.

In February 1987, Noel Dawson bluntly told me, 'You are to be transferred to Moggill as a Wildlife Ranger. How do you react to that?' I was dumb-founded, and responded 'I am not interested', but nothing happened, and the threat of an unwelcome transfer hung over me and my family for the next two years.

In January 1989, I returned to work after annual leave and found I had been relieved – without notice – of all field work in favour of the Noosa Overseer. As a result of this action, many volunteers and conservationists wrote letters of protest, but to no avail. My replacement wanted nothing to do with volunteers, and the Friends of Parks and Wildlife, as a group, ceased to function.

For the next eighteen months, I worked in the Gympie office but had no official duties. However, I was asked to write articles for the departmental magazines *Brushtale*, *Ringtail* and *The Volunteer* and gave myself the task of writing a report on my use of volunteers. In this, I commented that the most important result to come from their involvement had been a change to a more favourable attitude from at least three local councils, which previously had little contact with QNPWS. One council had offered to purchase land to add to a park and persisted with the matter even when QNPWS 'didn't have sufficient funds'. Another council had passed on to FOPW their sincere congratulations for the great work they had carried out, and enclosed a cheque for \$5.00 to help defray postage costs.

While I was keeping a chair warm in the Gympie office, my feelings of impotence were exacerbated when a volunteer reptile catcher advised that he was resigning, due to the negative way he was being treated by QNPWS. Another volunteer, who had been boating from Tewantin to Fig Tree Point and Harrys Camping Area weekly to clean toilets and collect litter, was made to feel unwelcome and finished up.

My transfer to Moggill finally took effect in July 1990, and in June friends and colleagues honoured me and my wife Yvonne with a testimonial dinner in Gympie. A hundred people either attended or sent an apology, and many volunteers travelled long distances on the night. Len Stephan, the Member for Gympie, was present, and Cooloola Shire Chairman, Adrian McClintock, officiated. Kilkivan Shire Chairman Alex McIntosh said that he rarely ventured out on a winter's night, but he had 'come tonight for Ron'. Alderman Joan Dodt of the Gympie City Council presented my wife with a bouquet of flowers. Jim Buchanan and Irene Christie, Presidents of the Gympie and Cooroora Historical Societies, and Cecily Fearnley of the Noosa Parks Association also spoke.

Volunteers Peter and Bevly Hughes of the Gympie Field Naturalists Club presented us with a

watercolour of our favourite Cooloola wildflower, *Tecomanthe hillii*. Professional photographers Tero and Julie Sade donated a sitting for a family photograph.



Chester the wedge tail eagle: release back into the wild.

Pat Comben, the Minister for Environment and Heritage, sent an apology through Acting Director Noel Dawson, who lauded my achievements in the Gympie area, saying I had the best performing group of volunteers in Queensland. He stated that the Department had a need for my skills at Moggill and he knew that everyone present would like to see me expand the role I had done so successfully here. He praised my relationships with local government, tour operators, and community and conservation groups. His speech was recorded, and, for those present, who knew the way I had been treated, its hypocrisy was breath-taking.

But now, he stated, the Department had ‘a need for Ron’s skills at Moggill ... the reason we wanted Ron down in Brisbane was because of the relationships he has been able to build with the different community groups ... Not only the Shires but he’s had good relationships with the conservation groups and achieved a lot ... He has built good relations with the tour operators operating in the area ... we wanted someone with a lot more experience, someone with Ron’s quality to come down and take that up ... I know everyone here would like to see him expand that role that he’s done so successfully here.’

Notes From and about Gympie District Friends of Parks and Wildlife by Ron Turner

A highlight of the ¹⁹⁸⁸ year was the receipt of a congratulatory letter from the Murgon Shire Council in relation to the 38 ha. Boat Mountain Environmental Park. Volunteers have been to this park on a few occasions now to install several signs, steps up the escarpment, and make some 2 kilometres of walking track. A start has been made on a bird list, and two botanists have compiled a flora list of the "semi evergreen vine thicket".

Other Notable Activities include

Cooloolo National Park

The on-going control of exotic pines infesting the edge of Cooloolo N.P. has continued. Local Forestry officers have assisted by allowing us to camp beside a delightful waterhole which is good for cooling off in, and for watching the flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos drifting lazily overhead.

There are some 35 kilometres of common boundary between Cooloolo N.P. and exotic pine plantations and volunteers have now walked and pulled and cut their way along some 18 kilometres of this. In some areas opposite long-established plantations there appeared to be several generations of pines spreading insidiously into the natural forest helped, unfortunately, by those magnificent cockatoos.

Kondalilla National Park

A new walking track was opened up from the Obi Obi Creek across land purchased (for addition to the national park) linking into the existing tracks within Kondalilla N.P. This track defines a route between the ever popular Obi Obi Gorge "float/hike" trip and the easiest exit point (up hill all the way)

Goat Island Environmental Park

We joined with the local Noosa Parks Association members in a litter clean up of this Noosa River estuary park. The rubbish is all "flotsam and jetsam" which lodges in and around the mangroves and other tidal areas. Almost three packed utility truck loads of rubbish were removed from this 20 ha. island; rather staggering when one considers the island was cleaned up 12 months previously.

Community Service Order Offenders

While we, as a government department, cannot make direct use of people ordered to perform community service the Noosa Parks Association and Gympie and District Field Naturalists Club are to be congratulated in using these people on our behalf to perform a myriad of tasks within national and environmental parks. There have been of the order of 2000 hours worked by these people during the year mainly at Noosa N.P., southern Cooloolo N.P., and Gympie District Office.

Friends of Parks and Wildlife Newsletter

Gerri Kluver and I have put out 10 issues of this newsletter during the year. It generally consists of three double sided pages of news and information of happenings in the district.

An objective of the newsletter is to communicate with volunteers to help keep them informed and involved, especially by seeking their input. The popularity of the newsletter has grown and many non active persons subscribe; about 80 copies are distributed.

Topics selected from the newsletter include

- reports on various outings/activities
- new Army bridge in southern Cooloolo N.P.
- national and environmental park inspections/gazettals
- reports on the unusual and or rare, e.g., magpie geese breeding in district, quoll sighting, ground parrot surveys, increase in top-knot pigeons, bristle bird in the Conondales, etc. I have also serialised an account of John Gilbert's early exploration of Queensland, and of the development, operation and demise of

The Pettigrew Railway.

19

OF GOLDMINES AND FEEDLOTS – MY SECOND DAY WITH PREMIER JOH

My involvement with the Kilkivan Shire Council was both pleasing and welcome. Chairman Alex McIntosh and Shire Clerk Ray Currie were easy to deal with, as were other councillors and staff. This was a laid-back council, and I liked their ‘Come and have a cup of tea and a biscuit, Ron, and tell us what you think’ attitude. The Council wanted a national park or similar land tenure in their area to encourage passing tourist traffic to stay overnight in Kilkivan.

I travelled with them, visiting the different areas they considered had potential. The best by far was the Mudlo Beauty Spot, just to the north of town. It was under Forestry control and said to contain virgin hoop pine forests. I spent an interesting day there with Phillip Sharpe, a retired botanist living on the Sunshine Coast and another botanist, Paul Forster. They soon compiled a list of plants, including rare and threatened species (the first list for the area), advising that these semi-evergreen vine thickets or ‘dry rain forests’, as they were known locally, were not well known botanically. (They also accompanied me to Boat Mountain and compiled another list.) Similar vine thickets to the north and south of Gympie were well known. Acquisitions Officer Gordon Wilkinson came from Brisbane for a formal assessment of the area, and it was a pleasure to accompany him to this and other areas which I considered should be added to the park estate.

My night time spotlighting at Mudlo revealed the answer to a mystery. Locals had been telling me of ‘tree kangaroos’ in the district, describing how they occasionally saw them ‘in trees or shrubs’. Spotlighting revealed a brush-tailed rock wallaby, and in daylight I saw another bound down the roof structures of an old copper smelter near Mt Clara. The main drawback to the Mudlo area becoming a national park was the existence of small non-operational gold mining leases in the north-west. Forestry tenure over the Beauty Spot did not present a huge obstacle, especially as the Council and local Forestry were supportive.

Kilkivan Councillors were also keen to have the Boat Mountain Reserve formally preserved as an environmental park, and I suggested some adjacent lands be purchased for addition to the reserve. Boat Mountain was eventually declared an environmental park in collaboration with the Murgon Shire Council, as a common boundary had been surveyed across the reserve. The Councils became joint trustees.

From my contacts with Alex McIntosh, I was aware of his friendship with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and I broached this friendship with him on one occasion. He was curious at my asking, but when I explained that Sir Joh was scheduled to officially open a gold mine along Rossmore Creek, then travel by helicopter to open a feedlot at Cinnanbar, he readily accepted my suggestion that he encourage Sir Joh to fly over the Mudlo Gap en-route. ‘Leave it with me,’ he said, ‘I’ll see what I can do!’



Looking towards Mudlo Range (photo B. Hughes).

Shortly afterwards, I was surprised but pleased to be instructed to present myself for the official opening of the gold mine on 2 September 1987, then to accompany Sir Joh and Chairman McIntosh. I felt uncomfortable in the presence of miners and other invited guests, but eventually couldn't avoid meeting Sir Joh. I said to him, 'Nice to see you again, Sir Joh', and briefly reminded him of our day together at Cooloola. He responded with some warmth, 'That's nice!' Tea and sandwiches filled the loneliness of wearing a national park uniform and tie in this definitely non-conservation company.

Strapping myself into the helicopter, I gave the pilot directions to the Mudlo Gap, soon clearly visible. From the ground, this was an impressive stand of hoop pine, overtopping the semi-evergreen vine thicket below. From the air, it was stunning and spectacular. Sir Joh, sitting in the front of



Hoop pines.

the helicopter was again childlike in his enthusiasm, saying, ‘This is just beautiful. We’ve got to have this area protected. Have you got a map, Alex? Get me a map of the area you want.’ He instructed the pilot to circle back for another look.

There are times when I confess to pleasurable, work-related moments and landing at the Cinnanbar feedlot and alighting from the helicopter after Sir Joh is one of them. My feet barely touched the ground. Alex and I had gained the enthusiastic support of Sir Joh for the area to become a national park.

There were friendly faces from the Kilkivan Council, and many Widgee Shire Councillors, including Cr Ned Kelly. Local Member, Len Stephan, was there, and by this time I had got to know him better. People from grazing families were keen to meet Sir Joh and were soon shaking his hand. My presence did not go unnoticed, particularly as I wandered around the farming fraternity and greeted the Widgee Shire councillors, wearing that uncomfortable tie and enjoying another cup of tea and more sandwiches.

Sir Joh resigned from Parliament a week later, as he became embroiled in the debacle which led to the Fitzgerald inquiry. The mining leases and his resignation delayed declaration of Mudlo as a national park for some years. Still, it was good that others had the pleasure of developing the walking tracks I had expected to construct with volunteers. I certainly enjoy taking friends to the area to see its natural beauty and learn its recent political history.



Mudlo Range Beauty Spot.



Fig trees and ferns in Mudlo NP.



Plant growth is so rapid the green chlorophyll has not had time to develop in the leaves.

20 ENVIRONMENTAL PARKS

It was somewhat ironic that, having recently disparaged environmental parks (EPs), I now found myself spending more time on them than national parks. My geographical area of responsibility was reduced further as others took control of parks in the Ravensbourne and Bunya Mountains district. Environmental park management quickly assumed major proportions, with multiple meetings and liaison with councils, individual councillors and council staff.

I was tasked to inspect many areas of crown land across my district to ascertain their value to become environmental parks. Perhaps the largest of these proposals was the former Paradise Waters development near Bli Bli. The Maroochy Shire Council had become aware of so many problems associated with this proposed development beside the river that Council had purchased the land. After inspections with different interest groups I saw potential for QNPWS to join with the Education Department for joint management of a proposed environmental park. However, I was instructed to forget it, without explanation. The area was developed by others for environmental education as the mangrove fringed Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary.

According to the *Environmental Parks of Queensland* booklet, (ca. 1980):

Environmental Parks preserve areas that have local and regional environmental significance but may not meet the standards of size, national significance and low level of disturbance normally required for a national park ... [they] are often a relatively small area, with most existing parks averaging less than 50 ha. They are areas where the natural landscape is permanently preserved for passive public enjoyment ... [and] are created under the Land Act 1962-1974 ... Generally Local Authorities are the trustees ...

Most of these environmental parks occurred along the Sunshine Coast. Mr. H. E. Corbould apparently kept a sharp eye open for lands which had reverted to the Crown due to the previous owner defaulting on rate payment. While some of the better land was split off and sold, much of the land in these parks was subject to – or close to – inundation by very high tides. This remaining land was then gifted back to the Crown to be preserved as an environmental park, with the local council as trustee. Much of the vegetative cover of the coastal parks was swamp she-oak, (*Allo-casuarina glauca*), with dense stands of the noxious weed groundsel, and were a breeding place for hordes of mosquitoes.

Mr Corbould bought and gifted so much of this type of land that the parks were designated by number, for example, HE Corbould Environmental Park (EP) No.1, or HE Corbould EP No 2, or 3, and so on. There were environmental parks along Martins and Eudlo Creeks, and Eenie and Keyser Creeks further north.

A relatively new area was set aside in the Sunrise Beach area by T. M. Burke, the property developer who opened up the Sunshine Coast. This was touted as an example of environmental responsibility, but in fact it was a sink hole into which heavy storm rains would pond before soaking away. A tiny, residual piece of land that could never be developed, it was closely surrounded with housing. More interesting lands surplus to the Department of Primary Industries research station in the Coolumb-Peregian area became environmental parks.

Many islands along the Noosa River were likewise given environmental park status and protection. All were heavily littered with flotsam and jetsam, while on the Noosa north shore, another park had scores of old, abandoned and wrecked cars left in bushland. In her book, *A Living River – The Noosa* Kathleen McArthur wrote of them ‘... all those skeletons of cars suggest that they died of starvation on the long wait to get on the ferry coming home’. Most of these vehicles were not registered ... ^[1]

Boat Mountain EP, north of Murgon, was an interesting variant from the norm. The Rev. Stuart James, a QNPWS soil scientist based at Kingaroy, had recommended protection for scientific reasons. The area was a plateau along which the boundary of the Murgon and Kilkivan Shires had been surveyed. I needed to consult and obtain agreement from both councils prior to using volunteers to develop access and walking tracks. Jack Smith’s EP was also located north of Murgon, while further west there was a problematic Gueena Lagoon EP, north of Wondai. Some local resident had gone into this park with his tractor and hay baling machine. It appeared the lagoon had been a vital source of public water in the past for the district. My last visit here with council coincided with the accidental death of our son Neale.

I had to locate and inspect each of these environmental parks, assessing their contents and establishing boundaries as a prelude to considering management strategies. An early task was to release gall fly into each of the coastal parks to rid them of the noxious weed groundsel. These insects were a relatively new method of biological control, just released after trials in the Moreton Bay area, and they almost eliminated these undesirable plants.

I considered the management input for these small areas often outweighed their environmental value, but council staff began to view environmental park status positively. As trustees, council controlled the land, and this status forestalled the difficult development ideas of private individuals, should the land be freeholded. The possibility that council might obtain financial assistance from QNPWS was an added bonus. The role of QNPWS was to maintain an over-view of council activities, and this was best ensured by personal liaison with local councillors.

Maroochy Shire

Late in April 1985, Regional Director Des Boyland telephoned, advising of a public meeting scheduled to be held on the Sunshine Coast and that it would be better if I not attend! This directive invited my curiosity. An issue had blown up in relation to Peregian Environmental Park – a former Department of Primary Industries research area – and the Maroochy Shire Council trustees. An area within the park was badly infested with groundsel, and Council were proposing to aerial spray the area with herbicide. The Maroochy weed inspector, Bruce Main, and I had previously discussed this issue, but QNPWS had no money available at short notice. The Sunshine Coast Environmental Council (SCEC) was waging a very public campaign against aerial spraying, and the public meeting with Council was expected to be lively.

The basic objection of the SCEC was the indiscriminate nature of aerial spraying. They believed they could do better themselves! I met officers of the Maroochy Shire Council and reached an agreement. The cost of aerial spraying was \$3700. If the SCEC wished to be involved, they would need to satisfy Bruce Main and myself that they had achieved a 95% kill by December. I relayed this offer to the SCEC as a challenge, and they accepted.

I assisted the SCEC during the working bee weekends while they battled the groundsel, asking them to leave one small area in which I had placed gall fly infested plants. Finally, they asked for an inspection by Bruce and myself. We weren't quite satisfied, and refused to accept the work as completed. A month later, we again inspected the work and approved final payment.

In August 1985, Regional Superintendent Kevin Bade and I were invited to attend a Works Committee meeting of Maroochy Shire Council to discuss Peregrine Environmental Park. I had done a little homework with Cr Tom Watkins in advance, but expected Kevin, as the senior officer, to talk formally to the Committee, and briefed him accordingly. Walking into the meeting, Kevin suddenly passed the presentation onto me.

I outlined my concepts for a car park, a small picnic area and an elevated boardwalk across the swamp, which would allow access to the drier heathland. A boarded track across the frontal dune would give access to the beach. A second walking track could traverse the hind dune to the carpark at Stumer's Creek. If Council agreed to this plan, we believed money could be made available via a Commonwealth Employment Program. I also asked the Committee to maintain the picnic area.

This was another period of austerity, and we had recently received instructions to scrounge in tips for equipment, or con it off other departments. But QNPWS was saved by new CEP grants, which included \$12,500 to build a carpark, picnic area, boardwalk and two walking tracks across Peregrine EP.



Along the track in Peregrine Environmental Park.



Boardwalk in Peregrine Environmental Park.

Steve Johns and Peter Shirley, staff members from Kondalilla, helped me line a route through the tough, stunted swamp vegetation at Peregrine. Hoping to find a foundation beneath the swamp, I was horrified to push a rod into the mud for four metres without reaching a firm base. Now what? We cut 200 litre drums into three rings which were backfilled with concrete. These formed weight-bearing pads into which a metal stirrup was fixed to support the above-water boardwalk.^[2] Materials for the boardwalk were stored at the nearby police station, and unemployed men were put on the payroll. This

amateurish approach was tested a few months later when two horses were walked across the boardwalk without any apparent damage to the structure.

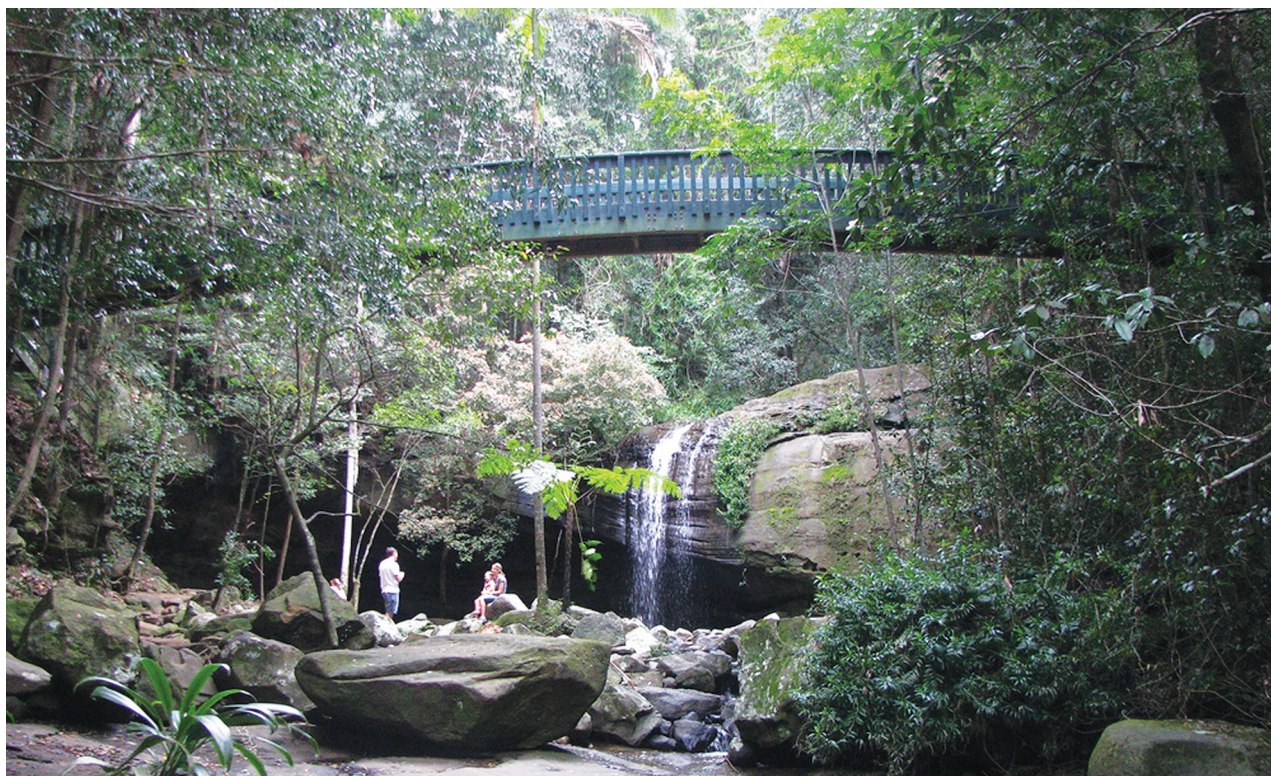
April 1986 saw the development at Peregian opened by Shire Chairman Fred Murray, who spoke in glowing terms of the new found liaison between QNPWS and Council. Our Director, Dr Graham Saunders, a former DPI employee who had been involved with the previous research area, was present.

After the opening, Cr Tom Watkins and Shire Clerk Kleinschmidt invited me to drive around Mt Coolum, to discuss acquiring it as a national or environmental park. They asked for a letter from QNPWS to have this area preserved. I forwarded a positive recommendation to Kevin Bade, who initially reacted negatively, because of the red airport navigation light on top of Mt Coolum. QNPWS sent a letter to local Member Gordon Simpson, seeking his support. He rejected the request, saying that 'Crown lands should be kept as sporting fields.' This response led to an internal QNPWS joke about how far it might be possible to kick a football from the top of Mt Coolum. (Mt Coolum has since been gazetted as a national park.)

Other benefits flowed from my association with the Maroochy Shire Council. Cr Watkins suggested that QNPWS might be interested in extending Peregian EP by acquiring an adjacent area of vacant crown land, and this eventuated.



Banksia robur.



Council bridge in Buderim Forest (Lindsay) Park.

A request from Chairman Murray followed, asking for advice on Lindsay Park on Buderim Mountain, where Council's initial development proposals had drawn the ire of conservationists! Obtaining approval, Steve Johns and I appraised the area that Council controlled. There were many foot tracks leading down to a creek under a lovely waterfall. When I outlined my ideas to Cr Murray, which included a bridge over the creek, I knew he saw the answer to a problem. Shortly afterwards, a council engineer asked about the type of bridge I considered appropriate. I explained I was not an engineer and the idea was merely a concept. With fresh memories of the Peregian swamp debacle, I left the choice where it rightly belonged – with an engineer. The bridge was constructed, and we then saw a television advertisement featuring a woman singing 'We Still Call Australia Home' while standing on it.

When Cr Murray asked me to assist with possible walking tracks near the Baroon Pocket Dam, then under construction, I was pleased to become involved, for it allowed me to recommend walking tracks into the nearby gorge, with extensions into Obi Obi NP.

Noosa Shire

Within the Noosa Shire, I maintained a close relationship with Cr Olive Macklin. We would occasionally discuss matters of mutual interest, including ideas for converting areas of crown land into environmental parks. I was always made welcome, and I kept her informed about cleaning up existing EPs.

Harry Spring had been considering the future of a forested area he and his wife owned north of Tewantin. He was getting older, and he was worried about the future of this land, for which he had great affection. Occasionally, he would express scepticism of churches or Boys Town as possible beneficiaries, citing cases where donated lands had been sold. Developers had suggested to Harry that the land was worth \$1 million, but he wanted it to be preserved.

Harry was unaware of the Environmental Parks, and became interested, until I said Council were normally the trustees. He exploded: 'Councils are like churches and I wouldn't trust them either.' He was pacified, however, when I suggested the power of trust could be vested in the Director of the QNPWS, in this case, Dr Graham Saunders. As I explored Harry's land to ascertain its values, I was impressed with its diverse vegetation, and the buffering value of the adjacent native State forest. There was even a koala in residence.

I knew that Harry was vehemently opposed to the site chosen for a toilet near his hut on the Noosa River and that Dr Saunders was scheduled to visit the hut with him a short time later. Briefing Dr Saunders prior to this meeting, I outlined the quandary Harry had with his land and my enthusiasm for the environmental values of the area. During the visit, Harry raised the problem and transfer proceedings soon commenced. I was pleased to later witness the trust and integrity between these two men, when Harry Spring accepted one dollar and a handshake from Graham Saunders, as full and final payment for land worth one million dollars.

I was apprehensive, however, at Harry's suggestion the area be named the 'Harry and Gladys Spring Environmental Park', for we had to make the sign on one very long crow's ash board, a difficult task for the routing equipment at Noosa NP. Still, that was a small price for such an environmentally diverse area.

My relationship with Keith Garraty continued to develop. As Noxious Weeds Inspector with the Noosa Shire Council, Keith discussed the environmental parks within the Shire. We planned

that, if I could get money to cover the costs to spray groundsel, he would use council labour for the job. This suited me as it didn't tie up my time, our scarce manpower or the boat we kept at Kinaba.

Endnotes

- ¹ I later reported that the Noosa Shire Council had buried 160 car bodies on or adjacent to EP 450 beside the ferry crossing, with QNPWS sharing the cost. Noxious Weeds Inspector Keith Garraty handled the removal and burying of these car bodies.
- ² This highlighted a deficiency of early QNPWS. Engineers never designed, checked, verified or commented on our concepts for there was insufficient money.



Cloud shadows over the unspoiled wilderness of the Noosa River. This area was scheduled to become a major tourist interchange. Lake Cooloola (left), Lake Como (right) and Lake Cootharaba at rear. (photo B. Thomas)