

National parks in Queensland were the children of the Forestry Department, which established and managed them post-1906. In 1975, a new government department, incorporating national park and wildlife management, was established. This amalgam became the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Dr Graham Saunders was appointed Director of the QNPWS, with the difficult task of bringing together Forestry and wildlife staff and incorporating new personnel such as myself. I found him easy to like and a pleasure to associate with. In the political context of the time, his leadership was exemplary.

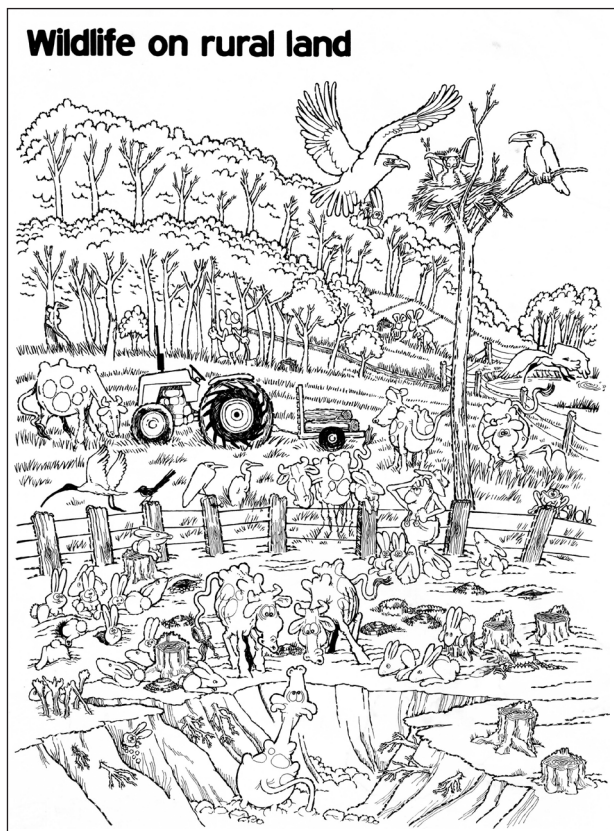
Prior to 1975, the Forestry Department's national parks branch was managed by Syd Curtis. He is credited with modernising national parks by developing picnic areas and encouraging people to explore on well-graded walking tracks. Syd and I had previously met at a ranger training course in Western Victoria, and I felt privileged to associate with him. He was a leader and a gentleman, charismatic, pleasant, and easy to get on with. His knowledge of conservation issues and national park history was fascinating. After being passed over for the Deputy Director's position in favour of Clive Price, a former Forester at Yarraman, Syd became Director of Field Operations.

The new QNPWS had an active and creative interpretive section, under the control of Peter Ogilvie. The standard of their brochures, maps, coloured posters, and even a record, *Nature Songs for Children*, was far in advance of Victoria at the time, and superior to the professional New South Wales NPWS. The coloured posters of animals and birds were always popular – and free, even when they were incorporated into a thirteen page annual calendar. The calendar became increasingly hard to obtain, but we frequently handed out coloured posters as a gesture of good will, until they became a saleable item a few years later. Steve Parish was our world-class official photographer, while Simon MacLean was the ever-popular artist, putting out conservation messages in his many cartoon sketches.

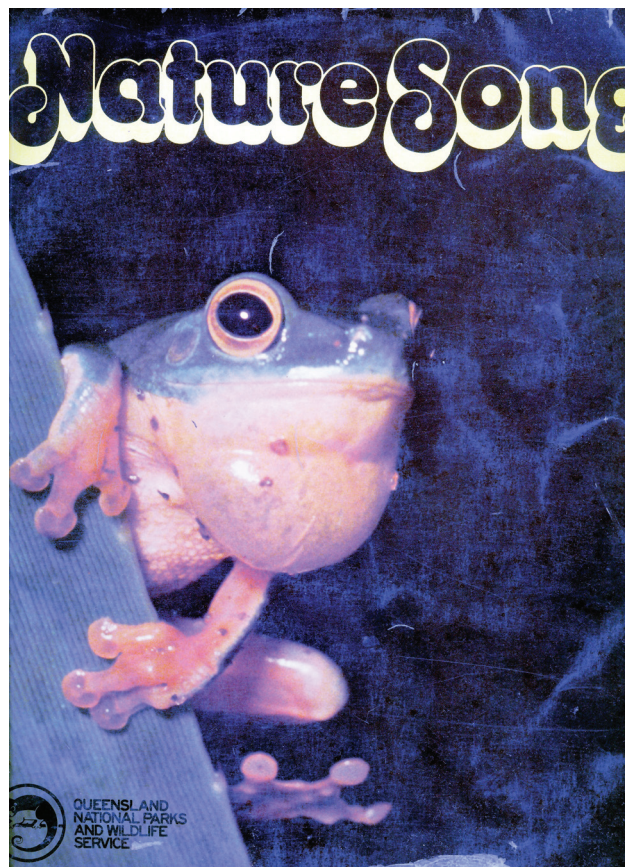
Children were encouraged to colour the free handouts.



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Encouraging children to realise the benefits of working with nature.



Songs for Children.

Administration across the State was based on four regions: Brisbane, Maryborough, Rockhampton and Cairns. Although appointed to the smaller Maryborough Region, I moved to Gympie to fulfil a promise Director Saunders had made to the Gympie City Council to establish an office there. The region may have been small, but it included the controversial Cooloola, Fraser Island and Noosa National Parks.

Moving with my family to Gympie in 1978, I became part of this infant organisation. My first home-cum-office was our caravan, followed shortly afterwards by a high-set government house in suburban Gympie. Initially we thought that trains were passing through our back yard, such was the noise from the North Coast railway line and the railway station a few hundred metres away. The nearby line had the second steepest gradient in Queensland, and we would often hear the trains grinding their way up the incline, like 'Thomas', the little tank engine. Then there was the vehicular traffic from the Gympie City Council depot, moving slowly – seemingly reluctantly – off to work early in the morning past our front door. After the quiet and solitude of living on an island in Victoria's Gippsland lakes, this was downright awful! Although living in a house was better than living in a caravan park in Gympie, we started thinking of life out of town.

After three moves in eighteen months, we sought a place to put down roots and purchased a 14 hectare property outside Gympie. We built a house and developed the land for orchards and cattle grazing, eventually planting hundreds of native trees and 500 macadamias. Our property became a temporary store place for materials in transit to parks around the region. At our new home, we couldn't hear a single vehicle, and it became a haven from the incessant noise

of Gympie. Back closer to nature, we lived with kangaroos, wallabies and echidnas and listed 150 native birds.

At work, I was second-in-charge to recently appointed Regional Superintendent Tom Ryan, who lived in Maryborough. Our district included 35 national parks and encompassed Bundaberg, Cania Gorge, Bunya Mountains, Glasshouse Mountains and Bribie Island. Our initial responsibilities related entirely to national parks, with little involvement in wildlife matters. Once my home phone was connected, Tom and I maintained close contact. After an initial settling-in period and introductions to parks and staff, his directions tapered off. He would ask me to attend to some issue around the region, and I kept him informed about what was going on.

In the early period of my tenure in Queensland, I seemed to be always reacting to emergent issues around the district. Many and varied were the requests from councils, Forestry, other government departments and park neighbours across the region. It was three or more years since Forestry had exercised any control over national parks in our area, and visits to parks from our head office were rare.

I was aware of wildlife rangers only by reputation and not by presence. I kept hearing of incidents involving these men and an associated gun culture, but they were almost wraith-like. Fortunately, complaints about wildlife were few, and these were passed to head office for action. Exciting my curiosity was an instruction from Tom to have nothing to do with wildlife and as little to do with wildlife rangers as possible.

The new QNPWS was not well off for money. As I travelled the district, I would stop on the highway and collect fertiliser bags to use for rubbish collection. Staff, including myself, sometimes scrounged local rubbish dumps for usable items. Whenever I made a trip to Brisbane, I would call at the government garage at Zillmere and top up fuel, both in the vehicle and into spare jerry cans. That supply did not then come out of our regional operations budget.

In contrast, seemingly endless Commonwealth money was being poured into Fraser Island to offset unemployment caused by the cessation of sand mining, and these funds were used for plant, equipment, and eventually housing. We were not allowed to use this equipment in other parks, but sheer necessity due to lack of funding occasionally forced the issue. At times, surreptitious use was made of a large 4WD tractor for special purposes along the Freshwater Road and for the excavation of rubbish dumps at Freshwater. An early 4WD truck, purchased to carry materials for housing and camp ground development on Fraser Island, was, on rare occasions, used in Cooloola.

My seventeen years with Victorian National Parks and their annual, week-long training courses had resulted in a close knit service with burgeoning professionalism. The training courses imbued us with a sense of the importance of national parks in a world of rampant devastation. Rangers were the custodians of the nation's treasures. We were the shop window, and how we appeared was important. We had a uniform, which was to be worn correctly at all times. We were discouraged from wearing dark sunglasses – particularly the reflective types – and if we couldn't talk to a visitor immediately, we should at least acknowledge their presence. In contrast, many of the Queensland field staff appeared to have no sense of pride in either their parks or the national park concept. The job was merely a residual part of Forestry operations – or it was 'just another job'.

3

AROUND THE REGION

Most national parks field staff in 1978 were ex-Forestry employees. On Fraser Island, some were ex-sand mining workers. The person in charge of a park was called an Overseer, who, in the old Forestry system, tended to be an autocrat. Beneath the Overseer were Gangers of different grades. I did not like these terms, for they seemed to demean the principle of national parks.

Another matter I considered strange was the custom of referring to parks by number rather than name. This was a carry-over from Forestry Department management. QNPWS had inherited many small national parks, of which our staff had vague knowledge. An early task was to locate these parks and their boundaries.

Boundary changes were frequent, as extensions were added to original parks. While many of these parks may be considered pocket handkerchiefs, size does not equate to the necessity for manpower or supervisory visits. Whenever I was on the road, which was almost daily, I visited various parks in my area, taking pains to be seen by the neighbours, to call on them to assess their opinions, and to let them know where they could contact me if required.

No park was well off for equipment. Worn out small plant, of which there was a considerable amount, could not be written off unless it was really bad. The emphasis was on constant repair to keep that plant operational. For example, we were not allowed to cannibalise two damaged identical motors or pumps to obtain one reasonably reliable unit. It took QNPWS some years to retire this antiquated system.

The Gympie Office

Paper work was minimal in the early days, and was initially handled at our suburban home. Months later I was allocated a room in the Court House in Channon Street. This was a sensitive matter, for Magistrate Peter Hardcastle wished to install his mining staff there. In 1980 I moved to a large room at the Lands Office, and in 1986 to a purpose-built QNPWS building beside the Bruce Highway at Lake Alford.

Cooloola (NP 1238, 23,030 ha.) management area

Little control existed across this park when I arrived in April 1978, thirty months after its gazettal. Two staff and a vehicle were based at Freshwater, but these men could do little more than try to cope with camping activities on the north-eastern beaches, and they rarely visited other sections of the park. Cooloola was in such desperate need of assistance, I could have spent most of my time there. However, there was a region to cover, with staffed management areas based on Noosa,

Mapleton, Kondalilla, Ravensbourne, Bunya Mountains and Fraser Island. Additionally, there were 27 unmanned parks to care for.

Pipeclay (NP 1101, 2 ha.)

Included in the Cooloola management area, this park, south of Tin Can Bay, had been gazetted in 1974 to protect an Aboriginal bora ring. Although legally protected, it was subject to people driving over it, and there was a threat to its future existence from the expansion of a neighbouring subdivision.

Fraser Island (NP 16, 49,000 ha.) management area

Tom Ryan looked after Fraser Island NP, the Sandy Strait islands and Woodgate and Burrum River national parks, but I visited Fraser Island and Woodgate frequently. On one occasion, Tom asked me to join him in shooting feral goats that were grazing on *Woody Island* (NP 1072, 660 ha.). I also visited this island with an official Order to remove an illegal hut.

Fraser Island staff were flown from the mainland each shift, landing on the eastern beach north of Eurong, near what became the Dundubara headquarters and camping area. A second house was nearing completion and plans were in hand for a third.

Tom successfully presented an economic argument in favour of obtaining a larger boat to transport staff across Great Sandy Strait instead of chartering an aeroplane. Sometimes I flew for special purposes from either Hervey Bay or Maryborough airport, landing on the beach or at Orchid Beach Resort and staying overnight. The resort had recently suffered the effects of a cyclone, and half the concrete swimming pool was on the new beach terrace below its original site.

I tracked down the owners of an illegal hut at Moon Point on the western side of Fraser Island and called on them in Murgon. They were a little tardy with removal, necessitating further visits.

On one occasion, at Waddy Point, I saw what I thought was a magpie lark, feeding on the edge of a lagoon. Closer inspection revealed a bird that had only been recorded on the Australian mainland once previously, in the Kimberleys. My contact with the Queensland Museum led to its listing as the black-tailed wagtail (*Motacilla lugens*). Ron Walk, the Overseer-in-Charge, had also noticed this bird.

Noosa (NP 340, 392 ha.) management area

Noosa National Park had a very high day visitor usage. In 1980 we estimated about one million visitors per year, making it the most visited park in Queensland, more even than Burleigh Heads. By 1988, visitation was believed to be 1.25 to 1.5 million people.

The early Noosa Shire Council was far from easy to deal with. Councillors were hostile towards national parks, particularly in relation to closing road reserves. In Noosa NP, they had strong, ongoing objections to various pieces of Crown Land being added to the park. When I arrived in 1978, Council had been given permission to install a new water main inside the park from Laguna Lookout southerly to the highway. This was starting to wash out and I had to direct Council to carry out remedial work.

The struggle to achieve protection across Noosa Headland was fought by Dr Arthur Harrold and the Noosa Parks Development Association. This influential group, formed in 1962, was later renamed the Noosa Parks Association. While I was generally aware of what was going on after 1978, neither Tom Ryan nor I had any direct input into their activities.

The first declaration of Noosa National Park occurred in 1939 to protect two areas of rainforest and the Noosa Hill. The threats to Noosa Headland were daunting, because the area was seen by both Council and developers as having potential for a major tourist resort and a subdivision serviced by roads around the foreshore.

The current coastal walking track beyond the picnic area was constructed by Forestry in the 1950s. It was built on an esplanade, along which Council wanted to build a road, initially to Hell's Gates, to open up an area of Crown Land at Alexandria Bay. The proposed road would then continue southerly to an area owned by T M Burke, the development company that opened up much of the Sunshine Coast after the Second World War. Adjacent to this land was a Water Reserve, which was seen as a source of fresh water to support development.

The Noosa Parks Association fought a public awareness campaign to block Council from building a road to Hell's Gates. Closure of the esplanade in 1964 demonstrated the efficacy of this campaign, which had often seen members of the NPA personally denigrated. The NPA then fought to have the Alexandria Bay Crown Land revoked and added to the park, and this was achieved in 1967. The NPA were then successful in having the Water Reserve added to the park in 1972. However, mining leases granted along the beach section of Alexandria Bay were current when I arrived in 1978.

Against all odds, the NPA had achieved a stunning victory, brought about mainly by the dogged perseverance of Dr Harrold. Additions to the park caused the T M Burke holdings to be landlocked, and the company eventually accepted a compromise swap of other vacant Crown Lands further south. Their former land was added to the park in 1984.

The Council persisted with efforts to open a road along the northern foreshore of the park in 1978, and again from Sunshine Beach to Alexandria Bay in 1981. This development pressure certainly inhibited any thoughts Tom Ryan and I might have had to allocate finance towards the much needed improvement of park infrastructure.

Under the Chairmanship of Cr Ian McDonald and later Cr Bert Wansley, the Council continually sought to create car parks within Noosa NP. At one stage they announced the concept of extending McAnally Drive (the old Water Reserve) to create a large car park within the park. From this lightly vegetated and dominant site, it was possible to see Mooloolaba, far to the south. Following QNPWS's refusal of that site, Council unsuccessfully applied to clear bushland in the park adjacent to Park Edge Road for an alternative car park.

Two Honorary Protectors living nearby asked my opinion about Council's development concepts. I responded conversationally, 'I'm not exactly jumping up and down with joy at the idea.' To my horror, the comments were reported in the *Noosa News* and retribution was swift. Director Saunders reprimanded me through Tom Ryan, saying, 'The Noosa Shire are temperamental at the best of times and difficult enough to deal with without these unhelpful comments from the District Ranger'. Ouch! Still, it was a lesson in being careful talking to friends who were also reporters!

Neighbours living adjacent to this park created problems with their dogs and cats, garden rubbish, plant 'escapees', and perhaps a personal pad connecting with our internal walking tracks. But the Noosa area contained many conservation-minded residents, and I established a close friendship with some, including Dr Harrold, Jim and Cecily Fearnley and Michael and Glen Gloster. Eventually, I met Denis Gittoes, the cartographer who had drawn a popular Cooloola Coast map. When I pointed out minor errors in his early work, including his showing a section of the Upper

Noosa River as 'Not Navigable', I was intrigued to hear him express his desire to 'not encourage visitors into every last corner of Cooloola'.

The Overseer-in-Charge at Noosa was close to retirement. A stern but likeable ex-Forestry man, Fred Lamont was really set in his ways. In 1978, one of the Gangers and his wife lived in a private caravan adjacent to the barracks, and when their new baby arrived, bringing pressure on the facilities, Fred acted to move them on.

Park staff would drive slowly along a narrow track to access Alexandria Bay and empty the 200-litre rubbish bins there. I discussed with Fred my proposal to remove these bins, predicting that, although there would be objections and rubbish would be left at the former bin sites, misuse would soon diminish. Fred wasn't entirely sold on my concept, but he was from the old Forestry school, and if the Ranger said to do something, then it was done. My predictions proved to be entirely accurate. I had cut the time for the odious task of removing rubbish from outside the national park – for Alexandria Bay was not then in the park.

Park maintenance finished at mid-day on Friday, at which time staff would maintain equipment, and I think Fred would quietly drink his one bottle of beer for the week. With its weekly clean and polish, the Noosa vehicle and its diesel motor looked immaculate. Tom Ryan and I both thought it a disgrace that we were forced to trade the vehicle in at two years with just 20,000 kilometres recorded. It wasn't even run-in, but rules were rules and flexibility could not be entertained!

Tom Ryan was critical of Fred for allowing nudism to proliferate at Granite Bay. Fred told me he didn't want to be involved, and anyway nudism was occurring outside the park boundaries. In this he was quite accurate. The matter was legal rather than moral, and we had no powers outside the park. A change of ocean currents suddenly removed all the sand from Granite Bay, and the nudists gravitated to Alexandria Bay, creating many foot tracks. There were sand mining leases along the beach, so, when Noosa Shire Chairman Wansley asked me to control this 'undesirable activity', I was able to point out that the activity was occurring outside the park and I had no legal rights. If Council would add their weight to revoking those sand mining leases, well ...?

The problem for management wasn't so much the nudists but the perverts who inhabited the scrub lands behind the beach. They were the source of much rubbish left behind. They were also responsible for using small screwdrivers or the points of pocket knives to drill away at the walls between toilet cubicles to form peep holes. As often as Fred closed these holes, new ones would appear.

After Fred Lamont retired, problems involving a lack of pride became evident at Noosa NP. The picnic area was often untidy and an unsightly heap of bottles was accumulating at the barracks. I directed staff to collect litter as and where it was encountered – not just once a day in the mornings – and to get rid of the bottles.

The car park at Noosa was an untidy area, situated on the edge of the ocean with eroding edges to the sealed road. Visitors in the picnic area viewed the lovely seascape over the top of a mass of cars and humanity. Dogs were common, and I encouraged staff to make an issue of removing them.

An allowance was paid to staff to lock the gates at the park entrance at either 7pm or 8pm each night, depending on the season. They were reopened when work commenced at 7am each day. We replaced the old entrance gates, and Chief Management Officer Chuck Wilder provided finance to have an island station built in the centre of the road, just inside the park. This was constructed by Lindsay Pringle from Kondalilla NP.

The station was manned each day up to 4pm by uniformed staff, and during 1987, 264,000 cars were recorded in the main car park. The number of dogs and undesirable activities such as vandalism fell away dramatically. The station also provided a vital first point of contact with visitors, who could see a well-presented Ranger and have an opportunity to ask questions.

Then we received a bitter complaint from a visitor, who likened the control point to 'Checkpoint Charlie' between East and West Berlin, demanding its removal. Council also complained at the occasional traffic jam caused by cars waiting to enter the park. When the traffic jams became serious, the station was removed.



Former entrance station Noosa National Park.

There was an old, tired playground in the picnic area, and on inspection I was alarmed to see wear on the chain links supporting the swing. Condemning it, but not having money to consider replacements, I gave instructions for the swing and an old metal slide to be removed before an accident occurred. Then the heavens opened up! The local Member of Parliament, Gordon Simpson, wrote to our Minister complaining bitterly. He enjoyed taking his grandchildren to the playground, and if the equipment was in poor repair, we should replace it, not remove it! Scarce money was cut from another area and the equipment was replaced.

In a period of drought in 1986, a Commonwealth grant of \$3000 was provided to extend the water supply within Noosa NP. This enabled me to install underground piping to provide a sprinkler system for grassed areas, and a bore pump at the edge of the picnic area. We also extended water to Ti Tree Bay, with an outdoor shower along the way.

At an early stage, we borrowed a motorised 'Willy built' unit from Lamington NP to re-gravel the surface of the walking tracks, instead of using wheelbarrows.

Built by Bill Whitehead, it was a narrow, home-made unit with a high centre of gravity, and it came with an unenviable reputation for tipping over when the bin behind the driver was filled with gravel. It was a machine for the adventurous, and at Noosa it earned the name 'Puff the Tragic Wagon'. We used it effectively to cart decomposed granite along the original, 1.2 metre wide, Forestry walking paths. This resulted in a good standard of track, but finance to extend the work was scarce.

Later, the walking track from the Noosa picnic area to Hell's Gates was sealed. I confess I resisted the sealing, saying the track had been vastly improved each time money was made available to extend the gravel topping, and gravel looked better than tar seal. Denis Massoud, a local resident, collected over 1000 signatures objecting to the proposal to seal, but this was ignored. Senior staff wanted the track sealed, and extra money became available. Fitness proponents started to run the track, and I became concerned about potential conflict between runners and walkers. Then Premier Wayne Goss gained publicity from running the track, and I turned my attention to more pressing problems.

In January 1979, the Queensland State Surfing titles were held at Ti Tree Bay. This event led to a huge influx of visitors, who left litter on the ground and trampled the vegetation as they vied for a better view from above or below the walking track.

A few years later, the Surf Life Saving Association demanded the right to drive to Alexandria Bay because 'someone was going to get drowned and they wouldn't be on hand'. When this was refused, they requested 20-metre high towers, on which to erect their radio equipment. Their dogmatic attitude meant that we did not concede to their demands, but we did allow emergency lifesaving equipment to be stationed at both ends of the bay.

Each year I agreed to allow the RAAF to erect a tent near the high point of the former Water Reserve, giving their personnel a temporary overnight base to use radio equipment to report on the Brisbane to Gladstone yacht race. However, the local State Emergency Service group was not permitted to practise rock climbing near the Boiling Pot, an activity that obstructed pedestrian access and endangered visitors below.

In March 1985 I received an unusually courteous telephone call from Noosa Shire Chairman Bert Wansley, asking me to call on him when next down that way. Inter-departmental relationships at this time were not good, but I scheduled an early meeting. All became clear. Noosa Shire needed a major water reservoir, and Laguna Lookout, within Noosa NP, was the only suitable, elevated site. That council would approach me directly on the matter caused me unease; something was up!

I accompanied Chairman Wansley and the council engineer to Laguna Lookout, where their proposals were outlined. The engineer favoured a site where the current large reservoir is now in place. Finding it strange to be discussing a proposed construction site in a national park, I advised the new Regional Superintendent, Kevin Bade, of this inspection.

Soon afterwards, Noosa Council town planner Johann Holdytz asked me to visit and explained that his concept favoured a site just above the quarry, where the new tank would have a restaurant on top. By 'pruning a few trees' in the park, the view down the Sunshine Coast could be expanded to include Lake Weyba, benefitting the restaurant's patrons.

The engineer was not keen on building a major structure near the edge of an old quarry. For safety, the reservoir would have to be at least 20 metres away. Also, the structure necessary to support a restaurant would greatly add to overall costs.

All this was far above my level of decision making and responsibility, so I advised senior staff of Council's controversial proposals for the reservoir and possible of conflicts of interest. The reservoir went ahead on the site chosen by the engineer.

Noosa River (NP 1161, 469 ha.)

The Noosa River NP, upstream from Lake Cooroibah, was subject to pressure from neighbours. One land owner sought permission to drive across the national park. Chuck Wilder from head office defused the situation temporarily by issuing a Permit to Traverse, but the land owner, hoping to subdivide a property beside the river, wanted to excise a road reserve and was furious to learn that the permit was merely for personal use. Fred Lamont was responsible for this area, but had no time to visit it beyond suppressing almost annual wildfires.

Mt Pinbarren (NP 399, 64 ha.)

Mt Pinbarren was a tiny, 358 metre high volcanic plug, surrounded by farmland. It was remote from Noosa and Fred had never visited it. I went there on two occasions, once with botanist Philip

Sharpe to compile a plant list, and once with Noosa Shire Deputy Chairman Charlie Piggott, who lived nearby, to explore the possibility of extensions. The change in vegetation resulting from fires lit on adjoining properties and burning up the slope of Mt Pinbarren is starkly obvious.

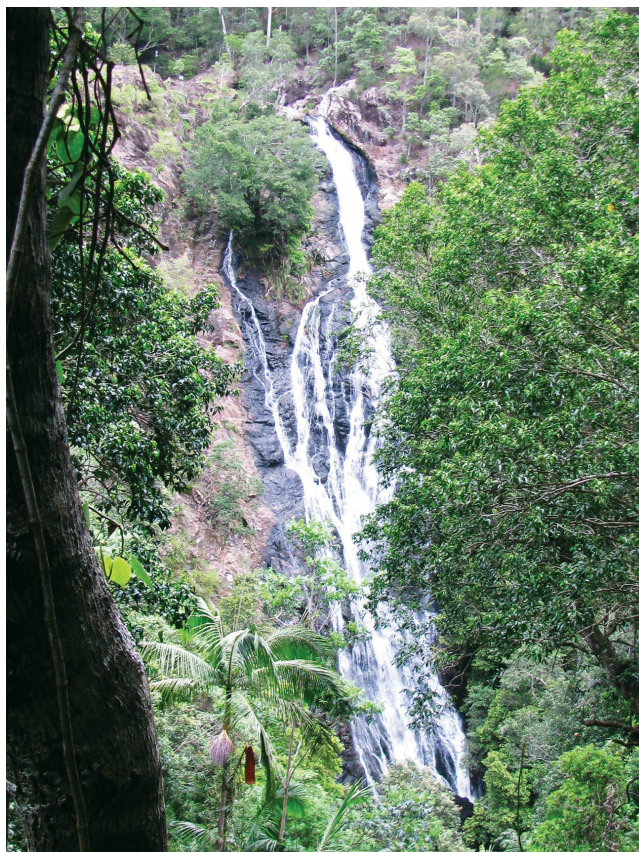
Blackall Range management area

Kondalilla (NP 546, 75 ha.) and Mapleton (NP 290, 26 ha.). Kondalilla and Mapleton national parks reflected traditional Forestry park management, with large picnic areas, fireplaces, and toilet blocks made from stone near the entrance. Walking tracks led off into the depths of the forests.

Les Gomersall, a likeable, elderly man, was in charge at Kondalilla. Initially no government 4WD vehicles were available in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, and both Les and Lindsay Pringle, the Mapleton Overseer, received an allowance for the use of their own vehicles. Les would make a weekly rubbish run to the Glasshouse area, occasionally checking on the Railway parks. He was reluctant to part with his well-worn, paint-splattered uniform shirts, so I unstitched their official shoulder patches and issued him with replacement shirts for contact with the public.

There was a large, open, grassed picnic area extending from the edge of the car park at Kondalilla, and at times this was used by enthusiastic ‘grass surfers’, careering down the slopes. Les was quite indignant at this activity on his well-cared for grass and would order these people to leave.

He told me of the operation to concrete the paths near Kondalilla Falls. Lengths of 50 mm polythene pipe were unrolled down the near-vertical slopes to the tracks below. Fine gravel and sand, poured through a funnel into the pipe, were collected and used for the concreting, scores of metres below. The fine gravel is still to be seen on the surface of the concrete path near the falls. Along the



Kondalilla Falls.

route to the falls, scores of old ‘toe’ stones can be seen, denoting the outer edge of the standard, 1.2 metre wide, Forestry walking track.

Les Gomersall retired in February 1980 and Lindsay Pringle moved his headquarters from Mapleton to Kondalilla to better manage both parks. I considered myself lucky to have him working for me. He was an extraordinary person with an unassuming manner. His work and attitude were always exemplary, and in 1980 he received a 4WD vehicle and took responsibility for Kondalilla, four Glasshouse parks, five Railway parks, Mooloolah River, Freshwater, Obi Obi and the two Conondale parks, all in addition to Mapleton. This became the best managed area right across the region.

All Lindsay’s work was conducted in a professional manner. A toilet block at Mapleton, which he constructed, was the first in Queensland parks to be built to wheelchair standards. He dismantled an old council picnic

shelter and rebuilt it, using pipes through the dividing wall, making it easier to clean. He realigned an old walking track to pass a large fig tree frequented by numerous fruitiverous birds, especially wompoo pigeons, and named the walk 'Wompoo Circuit'.

An early cantilevered lookout beside the Mapleton Falls was of his design and construction, as were the existing toilet block and picnic shelters at Kondalilla. The pipe safety rails along the track to Kondalilla Falls were built on-site, using his own pipe-benders, and without the privilege of safety fencing during construction. He treated the pine safety rails

beside the entrance track in a home-made chemical bath. He revegetated the bank beneath the Kondalilla car park, and thickly replanted a gully to break up the large old picnic area.

When a request came from Jim Campbell, the pilot of the emergency rescue helicopter, Lindsay did a minor amount of vegetation trimming. Collecting stones nearby and carrying gravel and cement from above, he made an emergency helipad on top of the Kondalilla Falls, where many fool-hardy climbers had slipped and come to grief over preceding years. Forced to resign due to ill health, Lindsay passed away in 1985. As I wrote in the staff magazine *Brushtale*, 'He needed no supervision'.



Emergency helipad on top of Kondalilla Falls.

Five Railway National Parks

Located between Landsborough and the Big Cow just north of Nambour, these parks had been set aside in the 1920s in a far-sighted declaration. In 1941, according to Director of Forests Victor Grenning, the travelling public could still enjoy 'peeps at pretty patches of forest and palm jungle along the railway line.' My management input into these long-suffering areas was totally out of proportion to the land area protected.

I borrowed head office files and, at night, while in Brisbane, wrote a resume of their collective history, which I gave to the Landsborough Museum. The files contained frequent requests from applicants wanting to clear the park for banana plantations, a rifle range, or logging, with one request to take flooded gum (*Eucalyptus grandis*) down to 150 mm diameter. The notated answers by Syd Curtis were invariably, 'No, it is a national park.'

Dularcha National Park (NP 295, 138 ha.)

The most interesting park along the line was *Dularcha*, just north of Landsborough. This park was bisected by the North Coast railway line, and contained a superseded railway tunnel. In 1978, I was called upon to resolve an existing Stock Grazing Permit issued by Forestry. My task related to how many stock the park could carry and whether to extend grazing under national park legislation. Unimpressed with stock grazing in this area, I declined to extend the permit. On this visit, I apprehended plant thieves, and subsequently represented QNPWS in the Landsborough Court, where the Magistrate recorded a conviction and determined a penalty. I was somewhat embarrassed to have to point out to him that there was a minimum fine for the offence, and this was more than he had imposed.

On many occasions, Forestry applied to log the park. Prior to 1975, Forestry had the legal responsibility for national parks, but, in the Beerburum District, such areas were seen as a fire hazard. The imprimatur of Syd Curtis can be seen in consistent responses: 'No, it is a national park'. Another application would follow, describing the area as having much lantana and a few good trees, seeking to log it and dispose of the land. Another notation: 'No, it is a national park.' A review of the files reveals the deception used by some Forestry employees, who found trees that were non-existent in the last application – perhaps they grew quickly in this area! Forestry were also relying on logging access across the national park to reach State forest lands to the west.

There were many incursions by neighbours into Dularcha. One neighbour drove his bulldozer into the park to clear a fire break. Motor cycle and 4WD vehicle use was common and a nearby horse riding school was making good use of the park. I found marijuana plants established here, as in other parks. Telecom (now Telstra) was slashing a swathe up to 20 metres wide through the park to prevent timber regrowth near their underground fibre optic cable. I was able to limit this slashing to a much narrower strip. Then they wished to clear another 20 metre strip to protect overhead telephone wires on the eastern side of the railway line. Railway staff used these parks as shortcuts to access the railway lines for maintenance work and left their rubbish behind, even cutting light timber to use as props for their temporary shelters.

Two severe storms in the post-war period caused extensive damage in Dularcha. On each occasion, Forestry made demands to log the damaged timber. On the first occasion, the request was denied with the usual, 'No, it is a national park', but on the second occasion, salvage logging was permitted. In February 1982, another severe storm damaged Dularcha, but the fallen timber was left on the ground.



The forests of Dularcha NP were dissected by the North Coast Railway line. View from near the abandoned tunnel (photo Ian Bevedge).

Eudlo National Park (NP 286 and 476, 43 ha.)

There were two parks here, one on each side of the railway line. The area on the east presented me with a quandary. I reviewed the file records, and our surveyors used the most up to date property plans. The main north-south road appeared to have been cut through the park without any formal excision. As staff quipped, 'We could set up a toll station and charge fees.' A local builder had stored tonnes of building materials and waste on this park, and it took many visits before it was removed. The strip of national park on the west of the line was about a kilometre long and 50 metres wide.

Ferntree Creek (NP 298, 20 ha.) and Tucker's Creek (NP 74, 479 and 720, 53 ha.)

Adjacent farmers had cleared part of *Ferntree Creek* and *Tucker's Creek* national parks, near Nambour, for farming purposes, such as growing papaws or sugar cane. They would either use chemical spray or burn the park edge to hold the vegetation back. The file records showed that previous attempts to rectify these problems had not been successful as a result of political involvement.

The Nambour Golf Club, adjacent to Ferntree Creek NP, sought approval to extend their course by clearing part of the rainforest in the park. Our early survey showed that they had already perpetrated such an illegal intrusion – and now they wanted more. Land swaps were negotiated. A quarry owner had marginally intruded onto the park, and sought to extend his excavations and obtain approval to truck his rock across the park to the nearby railway line. A later application was made to batter back the quarry face into the park to 'improve safety'. These requests were denied.

Motorcycle usage in the Railway parks was widespread. Someone had even used a tractor in *Tucker's Creek* NP, to prepare a track a kilometre long, with jumps. Confiscating two motorcycles was one way of gaining control. I told the riders their bikes would be locked in a fenced compound, subject to the weather, which shocked them. I drove up and down the roads adjacent to these parks for neighbours to see the bikes in a government vehicle, then called at a small service station near the Big Cow, where I had previously noticed gatherings of youngsters on motorcycles. It must have worked. There were no more incursions for some years after the parents had collected the motorcycles in Gympie and the lads had received my verbal reprimand.

Glasshouse Mountains

Mt Beerwah (NP 750, 245 ha.), *Mt Tibrogargan* (NP 233, 291 ha.), *Mt Coonowrin* (NP 749, 113 ha.) and *Mt Ngungun* (NP 127, 49 ha.). These geologically and visually important Glasshouse Mountains in the Sunshine Coast hinterland had been protected as national parks. However, Forestry continually refused requests to extend the existing parks or reserve other peaks as national parks. Forestry and the local Rural Fire Brigade both wanted to burn the parks to protect their own interests. The practice of the fire brigade volunteers had been to light the bottom edge of the mountain and let it burn up the slope. While I denied their requests for the usual type of burn, Lindsay Pringle and I carried out a controlled burn of *Mt Ngungun* in collaboration with the Brigade, on condition that we burnt from the mountain top down to achieve a milder fire.

A volunteer rescue group near the Glasshouse Mountains had to be dissuaded from using Main Roads 'Cataphos Yellow' paint to mark the route up *Mt Beerwah*.

Freshwater (NP 2492, 156 ha.) on Deception Bay Road, suffered from the effects of the illegal removal of grasstrees and the stripping of paperbark for hanging baskets. There was little I could do here but show the flag by driving slowly along roads adjacent to the park whenever I was in the area.

Mooloolah River

Mooloolah River (NP 800, 678 ha.) had been created as the result of political pressure to rescind the previous 708 hectare, Maroochy NP 711, bordering the ocean, which is now the Sunshine Coast Airport. This location was said to have been the best wildflower site along the whole coast. To his credit, Forestry Director Grenning voiced his objections.

SEQEB issued an early demand to clear trees along the northern boundary of Mooloolah River NP for a proposed high voltage electricity line. Their demands included measuring three metres from the proposed line, then taking a sight-line up at 45 degrees. Initially they wanted any tree, the head of which came within that sight-line, to be clear felled. At least I was able to have many trees lopped instead of felled. At the time of construction, someone ‘borrowed’ a bulldozer and took it for a joy-ride across swampy land in the park, before getting it bogged. I then had to approve a second bulldozer going across the park to rescue the first.

Maroochy Shire Council helped themselves to bloodwood trees for bridge works, even brazenly Crown branding the stumps. At least I received an apology from the Council engineer, who said there was nothing he could do to stand the trees back up.

A landholder from Sippy Downs telephoned late in 1981 to advise of undesirable activities. People camped in the park were making forays into the surrounding neighbourhood and stealing various items, even horse riding saddles. The complainant knew of thefts from the outermost reaches of suburbia on the southern side of the river, and asked me to rid the area of ‘those decadent layabouts’! I borrowed a four metre aluminium boat from Maryborough, and, together with Lindsay Pringle and Ian Steele, manhandled it into the Mooloolah River downstream from the Bruce Highway, and headed towards the unknown.

Motoring slowly downstream was a surreal experience. We were metres below the flood plain of the surrounding countryside, which was often cleared. Yet we felt we were travelling through a rain forest. On occasions, there would be stream bank damage where cattle were permitted to access the water, and we might obtain a glimpse of the farmland behind.

Nosing gently into and exploring side creeks, we came at last to signs of habitation within the park. Large paper bark trees had been cut by chainsaw and felled to span a five metre gap. The chainsaw had been used to roughly level the logs, and a platform of marine ply provided the base for an expensive, continental-type tent, complete with floor and mosquito-proof windows with zip-up flaps. This impressive tent had recently been flattened by a flood. Close by, there were signs of small gardens, enclosed with bird wire. Trees had also been cut with an axe, which was nowhere to be found. There were no signs of marijuana in the vicinity.

I let the complainant know I had found the camp. Lindsay and I visited the area again, this time with an official Order addressed to the unknown inhabitants to remove their equipment and leave. The continental tent was lying in the same position and was rotting away. A third visit, in February 1982, saw us demolish and destroy what we could. Presumably the ‘decadent layabouts’ had decamped when they were about to be overwhelmed by the flood.

Obi Obi

Even tiny *Obi Obi* (NP 1202, 80 ha.) was subject to some issues. A local bushwalking club wished to construct a walking track into the gorge. While this was initially denied, I was invited by Maroochy

Shire Chairman Fred Murray to link tracks from the carpark at the proposed Baroon Pocket Dam down into the gorge. I extended this track into the national park.

A downstream land owner was strident in his complaints that persons who had enjoyed a float-hike down the creek (outside the park) had then sought egress by walking across his private land to access the car park at Kondalilla, high above. This was an unresolvable issue beyond park boundaries, but the pressure was eased when land was acquired to link Obi Obi and Kondalilla Parks in 1989.

Conondale (NP 477, 386 ha. and NP 1100, 1999 ha.). It was a few years before I received a 4WD vehicle and could traverse the Conondale parks in relative safety. (I was once stuck alone for three hours in a table drain in a Holden one-tonne utility.) Wide-scale plant removal was taking place, particularly within the smaller NP 477, with the obvious evidence of felled brush box and casuarina trees. A cache of salt spoke of deer hunters salting skins or capes. A through road led me to where Forestry had used herbicide on rainforest in an area adjacent to the park, in an effort to alter the environment in favour of hardwood timber.

Forestry had been 'top dogs' in the Conondales for many years, continually disallowing requests to establish national parks, even when supported by a petition from citizens of Kenilworth. Four years later the Kenilworth Branch of the National Party submitted a national park proposal. A lot of scientific research had taken place in the ranges, which were shown to contain many rare and threatened plant and animal species. During the previous 80 years, Forestry had logged 18 million cubic metres of timber, virtually eliminating extensive stands of ancient hoop and bunya pines. There were reports of illegal deer hunting in the ranges, but I had been told to have nothing to do with wildlife.

The larger NP1100 in the Conondale Ranges was a lovely area. It remained nameless until I erected Conondale Range National Park signs many years later. Along Peters Road, there was a huge bunya pine tree. When an invitation was extended to nominate select trees for heritage recognition, I had no hesitation in nominating it. Regrettably, it died a few years later.

One Easter weekend, I apprehended a plant thief along Peters Road whilst en-route back home from the Bunya Mountains. Later, a small group of Gatton students accompanied me to the Kilcoy court hearing for legal experience. In Court, the Magistrate questioned my tinted glasses, which had become shaded in the bright sunlight outside. He asked if it was necessary for me to wear them inside, because he couldn't see my eyes. I explained that they were prescription glasses. Although still not comfortable, he allowed me to continue.

Acquaintances in Forestry let slip how a clerk in their Department had made a small error. This clerk had omitted a figure 0 (zero) from the estimated loss of hardwood should an area be transferred to become NP1100. Instead of reading, for example, 100,000 super feet, the proposal showed a mere 10,000 super feet, and on that basis Forestry approved the transfer, and a new national park was created. I floated the idea of a swap with Forestry of this hardwood resource in favour of a lot more rainforest, but Syd Curtis wouldn't have it. Back in 1970, as Officer-in-Charge of national parks under Forestry, he had approved a submission for a mere 2,000 hectares to become a national park. When Forestry refused this, he was offended. He considered that the diversity of vegetation in the existing NP 1100 should remain.

One of the early issues affecting park management in the Conondales was Forestry's approval for

rally driving to occur on roads within the ranges. Illogically, they then insisted that QNPWS pay some of the maintenance for Forestry roads, as they afforded tourist access to the national parks!

I had little involvement with the Save the Conondale Ranges group, but I recall one interesting meeting between their representatives and QNPWS at NP 1100 in November 1983. The group were objecting to our proposed closure of Peters Road through the park, and Syd Curtis told them they could walk, like everyone else! Another excursion with their members related to a new road that Forestry was proposing across Booloumba Creek. Sadly, this proposal became a reality.

Ravensbourne NP management area (NP 492, 91 ha.)

Archie Zroph was another ex-Forestry Overseer, with obvious pride in his well-maintained, traditional Forestry national park. He also checked on *Crows Nest* (NP 629, 476 ha.) and the 12 ha. *The Palms National Park*. An extra 12 ha. had been added to Ravensbourne in the 1950s, and Archie was employed in 1960 as Overseer to help clear a new picnic area. During the next five years, seven kilometres of track were dug with pick and shovel, sometimes with the help of explosives. Archie then enlarged the picnic area where extra amenities were built. I remember him most vividly for his construction of a walking track at The Palms NP, where he had cut his way through the buttress roots of a large fig tree.

Tom Ryan employed an Overseer at Crows Nest, and we started to develop a small camping ground with a water supply. With the loss of the Ravensbourne barracks by fire in November 1982 and the creation of the new *Perseverance National Park* (NP 666, 473 ha.), Crow's Nest became the district base.

Bunya Mountains (NP 603, 11,700 ha.) management area

Established in 1908, this was the second oldest national park in the State. Les Rice was another ex-Forestry autocrat. I rather liked him and eventually realised he was a personal friend of Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who owned a private retreat nearby. The park was well-managed, although we needed to expand the camping area and replace aged toilets with their flooding septic lines. A colony of endangered insectivorous bats had roosted in the ceiling of the office, and, despite the installation of a false ceiling, the stench was awful.

During my first visit, I observed that Les's relationship with the Bunya Mountains Natural History Association was somewhat strained. The Association was operating popular guided walks and talks, and wished to have a focal point for their activities. Their request to be allowed to use part of the office during weekends (when it was normally closed) had been reluctantly accepted by Les, and a partitioned area had been set aside for their use.

Once, on the way to the Dandabah Camping Area to assist control and limit camping numbers, I chanced upon a man and woman collecting epiphytic plants from the forest beside the main road. The man claimed the plants in their car and on the ground came from his home. It was a situation of 'caught red handed' and I duly collected the evidence, confiscated the plants and sent the couple on their way. Legal action was approved, but many months later, Tom Ryan advised me that police had gone to the address given to find it was incorrect. They followed the lead of the car registration number to a different address, where they found a nervous woman. Tom and I accompanied two police officers from Toowoomba to the new address. Recognising the woman, I addressed her by the

name she had given me in the Bunya Mountains, and we then called the police to handle the false name and address.

The man was also there and, when we entered the rear of the premises after the police, I was staggered to see hundreds of ferns and orchids of all sizes and many varieties on boards and on damp bags laid out on the ground, indicating recent collection. There were plants mounted on boards on the wall, on posts, and right around the property fence. The man, however, was a professional and had well rehearsed answers. He claimed he had bought plants from nurseries and markets, and had swapped many. He also claimed purchase from New South Wales and produced a quantity of receipts issued by the NSW NPWS. Many of the receipts were soiled and appeared genuine. However, others were in mint condition and consecutively numbered and had never been stapled to a plant as legally required at point of sale. These receipts fell far short of the mass of plants. There was a *prima facie* case against the man but in reality there was nothing we could do about suspected illegal plants. At least the additional charge of false name and address was now pending.

Both Chuck Wilder and I had previous experience of the controlled sale of firewood at camping areas, and we instituted such a system at the Dandabah Camping Area about 1980.

Woodgate (NP 1001, 5498 ha.) management area

The Woodgate headquarters was reasonably well established with a dwelling and workshop. The Overseer also had responsibilities for 570 ha. Burrum River NP, with occasional visits. The two parks were separated by the Burrum River, and travel via the highway took much of the day.

At Woodgate we started to develop a modest camping area at Burrum Point, near the river, with toilets and a windmill to pump water. The Overseer lived in a house on the park and maintained strict religious scruples including being home by sundown on Friday. He refused to work on weekends in any circumstances, even for emergencies. I recall the distress of this man and his wife when I was obliged to use the official telephone inside the park house to respond to an emergency. He was transferred to Noosa, where Fred Lamont soon implored me to get rid of him.

In May 1981, this Overseer was transferred to Gympie and I was instructed to provide close guidance and supervision. Once, when I sought his assistance to attend a wildfire at Cooloola, he wouldn't refuse to go, but kept stone-walling, insisting he had to be home by sundown and could only go if I would guarantee his return by then. Of course I could not, so he was left in the office. On another occasion, although told of my planned movements, he thought it inappropriate to have my government vehicle left in the street outside our office after hours and drove it to his home, where there was no telephone. When I arrived back at the office, well after dark, I first reported the missing vehicle to police, then got a taxi home. The Overseer said he 'didn't know' and 'hadn't thought' how I was to get home, or back to work next day.

Perhaps the kindest thing I could say about this man was that he had entered some state of religious nirvana and just excluded others, not of his religion, from his thinking. He wanted petty cash to repair his shoes and money to have the telephone connected to his house. He would post mail without stamps, then say postal staff made the mistake and gave him too many stamps. Even the simplest instruction went over his head, and I couldn't believe I was dealing with an adult! I was most grateful when he eventually resigned.

Remote Parks

Mt Bauple (NP 453, 505 ha.)

An early visit here was to hike across some neighbouring private land that had been offered for sale and QNPWS wished to purchase. My task was to establish the width of visibility in the forest, then count all epiphytic ferns and orchids along a traverse. These counts were to estimate the quantity of plants under and over one metre in diameter. This established the royalty value of these plants, as they were part of the purchase price of the land. Otherwise, it was another relatively quiet park, with minimal visitation but with occasional reported removal of ferns and orchids. There was an early request from police to have a radio antenna installed on a high peak, but the old track to the top had become heavily overgrown and action lapsed.

Late in 1979, a former dairy property and house were included in the north eastern corner of the park. My on-going visits to assist with the removal of the house indicated that the boundary fence kept being lowered, encouraging cattle to graze the lush kikuyu pasture within the park. Not long afterwards, police informed me of a suspicion that a neighbour was putting stolen stock into the park, out of sight, out of mind. While the animals were in the national park they were not on private property, so legal action was more complicated!

Little was going on at *Mt Walsh* (NP 862, 2987 ha.), except that Forestry wanted us to allow logging access across the park. At *Auburn River* (NP 81, 389 ha.), there was a local who would visit the park to collect rubbish, but I made few visits there.

Cania Gorge (NP 233, 346 ha.), was declared a national park in 1977. There was a testy Honorary Protector who was making no secret about how the area was being mismanaged. Tom Ryan and I addressed the Monto Shire Council, advising that we had no funds to employ anyone or do any improvements in the foreseeable future. There was no management at all, apart from our reliance on local Forestry to carry out fuel reduction burning.

Some of these remote areas, such as *Coalstoun Lakes* (NP 94, 26 ha.) got little more than a cursory visit when I was passing. *Fairlies Knob* (NP 336, 40 ha.) had been a gift from the Maryborough timber milling Fairlie family in 1910.

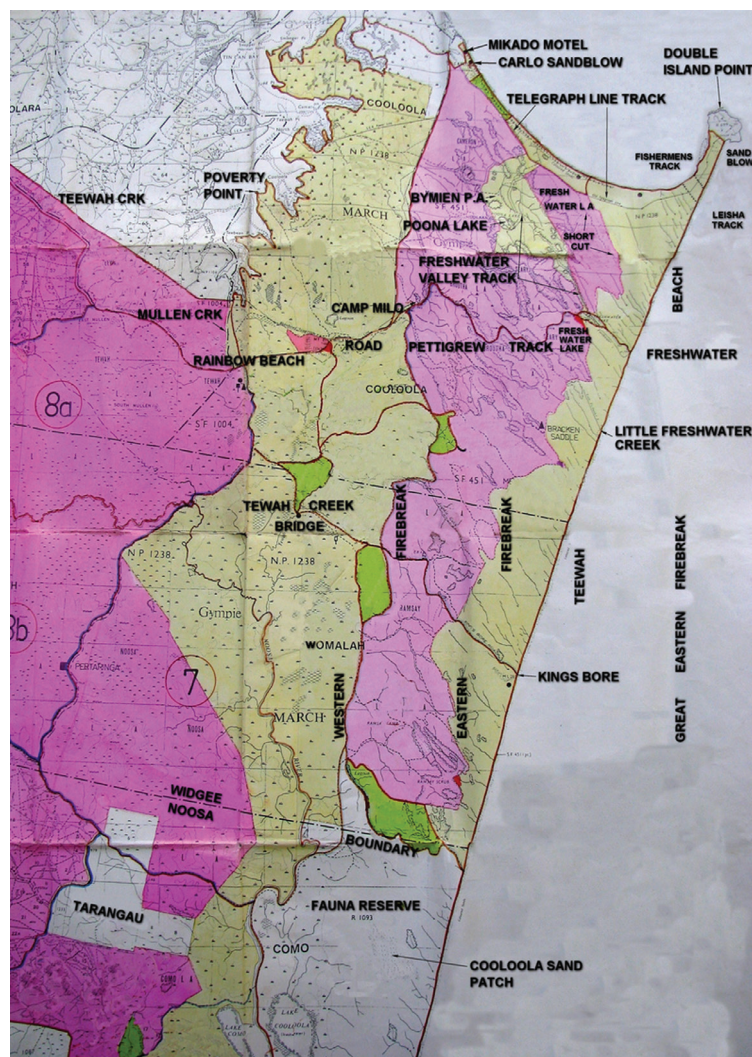
There was even a 'Jowarra NP', located near Daisy's Restaurant, west of the Bruce Highway at the Caloundra junction, and defined by the normal brown entrance and track signs. I recalled pulling in for a rest stop in 1975 and thinking that, although it contained a lovely forest, it was a poorly maintained example of a national park. QNPWS head office had a mapping section, which provided me with many different kinds of maps and particularly the old cadastral plans, so vital to locate boundaries. In relation to 'Jowarra', I was told it was not a national park, so I removed the signs. I noticed that in 2014, signs beside the highway again indicated 'Jowarra National Park'.

4

COOLOOLA NATIONAL PARK

North: Widgee Shire

Cooloolo National Park was administered in two sections. The northern section, in Widgee Shire, was based on the Freshwater camping area and appealed to visitors attracted to a fishing, drinking and 4WD culture. The southern area, in Noosa Shire, was based on the Sir Thomas Hiley Information Centre and Harrys Hut, and attracted a more passive form of visitation based around canoeing and walking in natural landscapes.



Yellow = Cooloolo National Park; pink = state forest.

The lynch-pin for the northern end of the sandmass was Double Island Point, with its beaches and dunes. In the south, the focal point was the Noosa River, with its tributary creeks and lakes. The Como escarpment formed the river's western watershed, while the Cooloola Sand Patch, 225 metres above sea level, was a dominant feature in the high coastal dunes.

Cooloola National Park had a turbulent beginning. In 1962, Dr Arthur Harrold and Max Walker formed the Noosa Parks Association and sought protection for the sandmass. In 1963, Fauna Reserve 1093 was gazetted, and in the same year Cudgen Rutile Pty Ltd sought leases over 6,000 hectares of the high dunes. A protest of 3,000 signatures was sent to Brisbane and the application was withdrawn. Cudgen Rutile and Queensland Titanium Mines Pty Ltd continued prospecting and found rutile, zircon, monazite and ilmenite within the sand mass, with rich deposits near Double Island Point.

The stage for early confrontation was set in 1969 when the Noosa Parks Association, supported by the Caloundra Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, campaigned to send 15,000 postcards protesting against mining to Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

A sister group of the NPA, known as the Cooloola Committee, was formed in Brisbane in 1970 under the guiding hand of Bill Huxley. This group targeted marginal electoral seats, which caused a revolt of sorts within government ranks. Nervous back-benchers demanded opposition to sand mining and over-ruled the cabinet. Premier Joh used his casting vote to keep his position, and sand-mining was blocked.

The previous issuing of an Authority to Prospect was seen by the mining companies as tacit acceptance that mining might proceed if a sufficient resource was located. Cudgen Rutile and Queensland Titanium Mines issued writs against the Queensland Government, alleging non-performance of contract and seeking compensation of over \$28 million for loss of profits.

The issuing of writs stifled public discussion and prevented the government from declaring a national park in the area. As a State Forest, fresh applications could be made to mine it in the future. The matter was heard in the Full Supreme Court in Queensland, then proceeded to the Privy Council in London, where it was again rejected in 1974. This was the last Australian matter to be heard in England. From then on, all such matters would be determined in Australia.

One month before Cooloola National Park was gazetted, Widgee Shire Council was granted perpetual water mining leases from 'Tewah'^[1] and Seary's Creeks, sufficient to supply 20,000 people at Tin Can Bay, Rainbow Beach and the newly approved development at Bayside Village (now Cooloola Cove). Proponents of this scheme included the Shire Engineer, Don Clarkson, and the Shire Chairman, Neil Buchanan.

Within the national park, the better commercial forests had been retained as State Forest 451, and Cooloola became known as 'the park with a hole in its heart'. When I arrived in 1978, there was only a minor staff presence, and any attempt at control was handicapped by a lack of knowledge of precise boundaries.

Forestry officers, having lost 23,030 hectares of their empire, were off-side. This was exacerbated when our ex-Forestry staff, without any discussion with QNPWS or Forestry, cut down pine plots on the Noosa Plains and at Camp Milo in the newly gazetted park. These plots had been established for Forestry research, and foresters saw the felling of the trees as a spiteful action. As a result of political interference, the electricity line to enable Widgee Shire Council to pump water from Tewah Creek was placed overhead instead of underground.

The creation of Cooloola NP had not been greeted with district acclaim or local enthusiasm, but as I met more people, I was introduced to the treasures of natural, Aboriginal and European history that the park held. To me, this park appeared to have had more completed and on-going research than any other I knew of, and I quickly came to respect and care deeply for Cooloola.

My first vehicle was a Dodge utility from head office, followed by a Holden one-tonner. In those early years, it was possible for me to drive onto and along the beach from Freshwater to inspect huts. Once, while driving Tom Ryan's Holden Commodore station wagon south from Freshwater, I became lightly stuck while exiting the beach near Teewah Township.

Within Cooloola I had little difficulty traversing the tracks down to the Noosa River at Camp Site 3, up towards the Cooloola Sand Patch and from Teewah Creek northerly to Mt Bilewilam and Poverty Point. I normally travelled alone, so for safe travel I needed knowledge of recent rainfall and potentially dry or boggy areas. With the advent of cheaper 4WD vehicles, such as the Hilux and Suzuki, there was a rapid increase in vehicular use of internal tracks, which damaged their soil structure, perhaps irreparably.

Freshwater

With improved public access along the Freshwater Valley, undesirable activities began to occur, and, in November 1979, *The Gympie Times* reported that 700 marijuana plants had been discovered at Lake Freshwater.

Staff at Freshwater were housed just behind the present amenities block in an ugly old box caravan, with a more or less outdoor shower. A camping allowance was paid, but despite the primitive conditions, I had occasion to draw attention to substandard cleanliness. This camp was the starting point for the 7am to 4pm workday.

Northern Cooloola had a rapid staff turnover. It was an awful place to work, with poor accommodation and inadequate equipment. Staff attitudes were abrasive, and construction of a 2WD boarded road to Freshwater made matters worse. Union unrest surfaced when some of the Gatton graduates, stirred on by ex-Forestry staff, became vocal. Until the disgruntled ex-Forestry staff moved on, we were not able to break out of the prevailing negativity.

None of the early staff liked taking direction. While I could sympathise with their conditions, they were not complying with work priorities. Their treatment of equipment was harsh, maintenance was not being carried out, and there were many complaints, even from Forestry. In 1979 Tom Ryan decided enough was enough, and he replaced them.

In 1980 a new Overseer-in-Charge was appointed to Freshwater, and, not being ex-Forestry, he was an exception to the rule. However, he made life difficult by constant questioning – whether parks are really for people, why we weren't bringing in seed for plant regeneration rather than collecting it locally, why we weren't looking after Poverty Point, and why we were using ReIn pipes for absorption trenches.

Dissatisfaction increased when incorrect pays started to arrive and the problem was traced back to the Overseer. Tom Ryan, aware of staff resentment, called a meeting of regional staff at the Kilkivan show grounds. He explained his finances and what could and couldn't be done. He outlined the union rules for working hours, overtime and time in lieu. Soon after this meeting the Overseer resigned.

Approval finally came through to build a house at Freshwater, where QNPWS had started to

develop the park headquarters. The site was pegged late in July 1980. My attempt to obtain the old lighthouse dwelling at Inskip Point was refused. Despite my belief it could be modified and modernised, I was told it would be inappropriate on a national park.

Doug Reinke, the next Overseer, had naval service. I was told you could set your clock by him, such was the regularity of his truck driving for the Dillingham sand mining company. He was a good supervisor and worker, and at last things started to go better at Freshwater.

We were encouraged to employ Gatton graduates, many of whom saw themselves destined for immediate managerial roles, despite little work or life experience. Some had worked at Cooloola previously, and I saw some good potential. However on one occasion I was appalled to see a female student checking camping permits at Double Island Point wearing only a bikini.

The early 4WD vehicles at Cooloola were not roadworthy. A Toyota Landcruiser should have been put off the road, but no replacement was forthcoming. Its mudguards were eaten away as a result of driving the vehicle through salt water, which was the employees' way of forcing the issue. Its exhaust system had been obtained from the 'supermarket', as staff called the Rainbow Beach dump. A head office instruction was circulated, advising all staff to cover the QNPWS logo on the door if they were going to the dump.

Some graduates who had joined the staff made an issue of the Toyota, and Tom Ryan and I were instructed to attend a union meeting in head office. Despite our previous pleading for assistance, Secretary Bill Chadwick reprimanded us, saying that if he had known how bad the vehicle was, he could have done something. Deputy Director Clive Price merely grunted, 'Start a file on that [Gatton] man.' Clive, who had survived as a gunner in bombing raids over Germany in the Second World War, was clearly unhappy.

The rubbish trailer at Cooloola was just as bad. It had a wider wheel base than the vehicle towing it, which created problems in the soft sand, and mesh on the broken floor allowed small objects and broken glass to fall through. This unit was parked permanently at the Rainbow Beach dump in October 1979.

QNPWS also had a yellow 4 tonne Bedford 4WD truck for use on Fraser Island and sometimes Cooloola. In poor condition, it was sold by tender to Bob Elmer, a local identity, who stripped it and rust-proofed the metal parts. Handled with care that was not forth-coming from QNPWS staff, it was still operating thirty years later.

A change-over system was instituted, whereby a vehicle from either Bunya Mountains or Noosa would be transferred to Cooloola after twelve months. This gave Cooloola a run-in, well-maintained but second-hand vehicle annually. The system had a lot going for it – until an Overseer at Freshwater complained that they never got a new vehicle!

Ron Walk, the friendly Overseer on Fraser Island, had previously worked for Dillingham sand miners and knew where rutile, zircon and other minerals had been buried when world prices collapsed and the government revoked export licences. Ron would strip down a new vehicle, exposing any rusty metal surfaces, use the hard rutile to sand blast the rust away, then apply a preservative oil. In this way, he could keep the vehicle for its two-year period before change-over.

Feral dogs were common throughout the park, particularly near camp-grounds, tips and water supplies. These animals would enter camps – even tents – at Freshwater, seeking food. They would also remove footwear and items of clothing left lying about. In September 1980, I noted a pack of

seven pups at our Freshwater dump. An Honorary Protector advised that he had counted 27 feral dogs at the Teewah dump, and a 1080 poisoning campaign took place there.

When a light aeroplane passed overhead, one or more dog packs in nearby bush would set up an eerie and prolonged howling. I noticed the same cause and effect on Fraser Island, and once at home on the outskirts of Gympie. The dogs would not howl when low-flying F111s or helicopters flew along the beach.

A small girl was bitten by a feral dog at the mouth of Freshwater Creek, resulting in unfavourable publicity for QNPWS. One of the senior head office staff made an unannounced visit and used a .22 rifle to shoot some of these dogs. Local staff were incensed, as wounded animals were encountered later. I continued to apply for a permit to shoot feral dogs, and when this arrived, I eliminated some of them.

Freshwater staff issued camping permits, for which no fee was taken. Camping took place on the present picnic grounds and another clearing to the south, with toilet blocks at each site. With overuse evident, couch grass from Little Freshwater was transplanted to Freshwater to restore bare areas. No defined area had been set aside for day visitors.

Rubbish was taken from 200-litre drums, emptied into the back of our long-wheel base vehicle and taken to the Rainbow Beach dump. The turn-around time soon overwhelmed staff, especially when a 2WD vehicular access road was provided to Freshwater. When Ned Kelly, the local Widgee Shire Councillor, insisted that QNPWS pay to dump rubbish at Rainbow Beach, we were forced to dig holes to bury rubbish, then to install an incinerator.

Located 1.5 km west of Teewah Beach, the reed and paper-bark fringed Lake Freshwater was formed as the result of wind moving sand inland to form a barrier across the valley. Although a few hundred metres in length, the water level has been subject to wide fluctuation. Cliff Thompson, the lead CSIRO scientist involved with the Cooloola sandmass, told me the lake level may be coupled to rainfall events 50 years earlier, the time taken for water to percolate vertically and horizontally through the sand.

During my first visit to the area in 1975, a small section of the eastern end of Lake Freshwater was badly eroded due to visitors swinging from ropes and dropping into the water. Forestry maintained the Eastern Firebreak vehicular track around this end of the lake.

In 1975, water was over-flowing from the lake, providing a supply for the camp ground a kilometre down the valley. In 1978, I noticed the water level in the lake falling and in January 1980, I recorded only 30 metres of water flowing above the ground. (Heavy seasonal storm rains in following years did not noticeably influence the falling lake level). We were able to maintain water to the toilets and camping areas, but the flow and volume in the creek fell away. The water level at the draw-off point adjacent to the camp remained constant.

In the early 1970s, Freshwater Creek ran strongly across Teewah Beach and had been vital to the operations of the sand miners who established their treatment plant on the creek in 1972. A popular feature nearby was known as the Bubbler. This was an upwelling of fresh water onto the beach. Many visitors liked to stand in this and sink slowly into the quicksand. As Freshwater Lake started to go down, the Bubbler started to shrink and eventually disappeared, suggesting a direct underground connection.

I became concerned at a scum occurring across the surface of Lake Freshwater, and a head office staff member came to investigate. We had been receiving criticism from Rainbow Beach, accusing

QNPWS of polluting the lake, which often smelt of sunburn lotions, stale beer and urine. The scum was found to be a naturally occurring algal bloom.

Teewah Beach

Uncontrolled camping and dune driving occurred along the length of Teewah Beach. Large numbers of people camped on the foreshores, invariably leaving rubbish and sometimes fires that had not been extinguished. Motor-bikes, 4WD vehicles and home-made beach buggies drove everywhere possible.^[2] The foreshore dunes were a favourite place to test these vehicles, with drivers even changing tyres to rate the better brands.

North from Teewah Village, along the full length of the beach, were two sand mining leases, 20 metres and 10 metres wide. Closer to Double Island Point, a third lease had been granted to cover a broader area of beach terrace. A question immediately arose: Where was the legal boundary of the national park? No one in QNPWS could state definitively, and even licensed surveyors would roll their eyes, as if seeking inspiration from the heavens. Our gazettal map merely showed a theodolite surveyed boundary along Teewah Beach, abutting the western boundary of the mining leases. Since these leases were gazetted as part of State Forest 451, it appeared that most camping was occurring on State Forest and was not ours to control.



The Bubbler on Teewah Beach
(photo B. Thomas).



Double Island Point lighthouse (photo T. Turner).

Double Island Point

Jutting into the ocean, the sandy isthmus of Double Island Point is capped by a headland of hard volcanic rock. The stupendous views from the Point reveal how fundamental this rocky area was in the formation of the Cooloolooloo sand mass.

Ocean currents have transported sand along the coastline from major New South Wales rivers. Flowing around the headland, the currents have slowed, sand has accumulated, and then been shaped by wind into high dunes. Two beautiful surf beaches have been created – Rainbow Beach to the north and Teewah Beach, formerly known as Noosa, Laguna, Forty-mile or Cooloolooloo Beach, to the south.

The Double Island Point lighthouse was built by the Queensland Government in 1884. In 1919 a 355 acre (144 ha.) area was surveyed as Lighthouse

Reserve R699 to facilitate its transfer to Commonwealth control. This area included almost the whole of the isthmus south to the Fishermen's Track. In 1968, the Lighthouse Reserve was reduced in area to leave just the headland.

The lightstation has a history of its own. The lighthouse was constructed using a design where a wooden frame was bolted to a concrete base and clad with light iron. This design was used along the coast because of poor foundation material such as sand or coral, and was relatively cheap and quick to build. A telegraph line was connected from Inskip Point to the station in 1904 and some old telegraph poles can still be seen along the access track.



Double Island Point: Fishermens Track at left; lighthouse at far right (photo B. Thomas).

The Wide Bay coastline of Double Island Point, with its salt and freshwater lagoons, is more sheltered than Teewah Beach. Many eucalypts grew along the foreshore behind the freshwater lagoon at the base of a steep dune, and I heard complaints that early campers were ring-barking these trees to provide firewood when they returned. Despite earlier Forestry, then QNPWS, regulations stating it was an offence to camp without a permit, few people complied and serious over-use was occurring.

Heavy volumes of 4WD vehicles crossing the isthmus at Double Island Point led to the rapid deterioration of the sandy tracks. Tempers flared when radiators boiled or vehicles became bogged in the deep, dusty sand. The Leisha Track – named after a nearby 1954 wreck – was generally wide enough for two vehicles to pass, but the Fisherman's Track was even worse. It was narrower, and

presented a problem if vehicles encountered each other. This track became very soft, and most people avoided it. Vehicles towing trailers across the isthmus in drought conditions were bad news. In 1984, I closed a third, wider, and badly eroding sand blow crossing and commenced regeneration by planting trees. A fourth crossing, the Swamp Track, had already become impassable.

Commercial Tourism

Commercial tours operated along Teewah Beach, the Freshwater Tracks and the Western Firebreak to reach the Noosa River. These came mainly from Tewantin and Rainbow Beach, and occasionally from Fraser Island. No fees were charged.

A Volkswagon vehicle fitted with wide tyres and known as Yum Yum, provided campers along the beach and tourists at the wreck of the *Cherry Venture* with food supplies, icecreams and drinks, but was not allowed to operate within the park. Captain Hook, who wore a black tricorne hat and had a white cockatoo perched on his shoulder, drove a tourist truck along the beach from Tewantin.

In 1984 the results of a study into the beneficial effects of 'Recreation and Tourism in Cooloola' to surrounding communities was carried out by McDonald, Wilks and Morrison from Griffith University. They reported that 'tourism and recreation resulted in visitors spending almost \$3 million annually, more than half of which was spent in the vicinity of the park'.

Rainbow Beach

A dramatic change of landscape occurs at the area known originally as Mudlo or Eight Mile Rocks. Here, the high dunes fall to a low coastal zone, which extends many kilometres towards Fraser Island and is fringed on the southwest by low-lying, boggy ground and Tin Can Inlet. Known as Inskip Peninsula, it was named after George Hastings Inskip, Second Master of the *Rattlesnake* on its 1847 voyage under Captain Owen Stanley.

In 1938 a rough, corduroyed Back Track was opened from Carlo Point, providing access to the Mudlo rocks on the Back Beach, as the Wide Bay beach was known locally.

Rainbow Beach township owes its existence to sand miners, who in 1964 provided \$116,000 – almost half of the cost – to build an access road to this area with an extension along the Inskip Peninsula, parts of which were then mined. Queensland Titanium Mines also provided \$35,000 towards the cost of a power line between Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach township.

The township was formerly part of State Forest 451. A Widgee Shire engineer argued that QNPWS should establish fire breaks on the bushland at the rear of the developing township, but this concept called for a fire break on land that wasn't ours to do anything with, even if we had machinery or money.

Vehicles were able to drive the length of the old Telegraph Track from Rainbow Beach to Double Island Point. Near Rainbow Beach, the advancing edge of the Carlo Sand Blow was several metres from this track, and I estimated that the approaching sand was moving at the rate of at least a metre a year. The track self-closed to vehicular traffic in the early 1980s.

There was an active Rainbow Beach Progress Association, and I established a long-term friendship with the Secretary, giving me opportunities to discuss various issues. The understandings we gained of each other's point of view did much to minimise criticism from this group. The disapproval that emanated from Rainbow Beach came from a few vocal individuals, who stridently projected their own business interests. From my quiet conversations with the Secretary, I got to know some

of the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring within the township. At an early meeting I attended, a member called for QNPWS to provide a large 'Welcome to Rainbow Beach – Gateway to Cooloolo National Park' sign. This was a Council and tourist matter which we could do nothing about.

The Mikado Motor Inn was established on the ocean side of Cooloolo Drive. A one tonne gas tank was located at the rear. With bush land on three sides, the steep hillside below, and the management's absolute lack of preparedness, this tank was a potential hazard. A rotted, untreated-pine fence was located two metres inside the park in front of the building, beyond which two smelly, 100 mm waste-water pipes exited into the park. Cans, bottles, and a well rusted, 200-litre drum stood nearby.

Motel staff were not pleasant to deal with, particularly when I insisted on closing a track that went directly from the building down a steep slope to reach a ladder giving access over bare sand cliffs to the beach below. The Progress Association had requested that the ladder be removed before a serious accident occurred.

Recognising the South African bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides monolifera subsp. rotundata*) growing at Rainbow Beach, I became alarmed. (Bitou bush, a native of South Africa, was widely used by sand mining companies in coastal New South Wales to stabilise bare sand. It rapidly spread across disturbed areas, smothering native dune vegetation, then spread into undisturbed bushland.)

At a meeting of the Progress Association, I asked if anyone knew what the plant was. Even the Department of Primary Industries and the Widgee Shire engineer didn't know. Finally, I approached the manager of the sand mining company, who knew it well. 'Yes, it's bitou bush,' Dick Kirschner said. 'We planted it on Inskip Point, where the sea had almost broken through, and on Fraser Island to stabilise the bare sand, but you won't find it there now. We recognised it was becoming a problem and removed it.' Since that time, the mining company has steadfastly denied any knowledge of the plant and therefore any associated liability.

A few volunteers from Gympie's Permaculture Group accompanied me to Rainbow Beach one Sunday on a hand-pulling exercise, and the weed was removed from the foreshore in front of Phil Rogers Park. A few years later I introduced Carolyn Sandercoe, a recently graduated botanist working for QNPWS, to bitou bush. After inspecting mined areas in New South Wales, she was alarmed and raised the issue with the Weed Society. This became the first plant not a threat to farmland to be declared a noxious weed in Queensland.

Tom Anderson and staff from the Alan Fletcher Research Station in Brisbane worked hard to eradicate the plant on Crown Land on the frontal dunes along the Inskip Peninsula and on Fraser Island. Tom developed a rotary micro sprinkler, mounted at the end of a long, hollow fishing rod, to effectively reach over the many large plants for spraying. (I purchased two of these units for spraying groundsel at Elanda.)

During peak holiday seasons in 1979 and 1980, QNPWS operated an information centre, based in a caravan at Rainbow Beach. This was provided and staffed by members of the head office Interpretive Branch, including Ross Blick and Fiona Davie. It was our first attempt to mount a public relations exercise, giving members of the public a chance to ask questions or raise issues. *The Gympie Times* of 20 December 1979 reported loud cheers and applause from councillors when they were told by Shire Chairman Adrian McClintock that a QNPWS courtesy officer would be stationed at Rainbow Beach during the Christmas holidays.

Illegal felling of trees and picabeen palms was taking place in both national park and State

Forest, especially in the area within a kilometre of what is now the Bymien Picnic Area. This felling was used to obtain the ferns and orchids high up on the trunks. I located an illegal vehicle track leading through the forest to a feature I termed 'Hidden Swamp'. (I had noticed this feature on an Orthophoto map, and my wife Yvonne and I, curious, followed a compass bearing from Lake Poona to locate it.) I spent much time after hours in the forests, exploring alone or sleeping in my vehicle, in an effort to apprehend these plant thieves.

On another occasion, I was traversing State Forest 451 along what is now called the Pettigrew Track, when I came across a person collecting hundreds of fox tail ferns, which were used in dried flower arrangements. I was surprised when he stated that he had a permit from Forestry to collect them, but a radio call to Toolara Forestry quickly verified his claim.^[3] I was aware of a difference between Forestry districts towards issuing permits to collect ferns and orchids, but was unaware that any such permits were issued from Toolara. Viewing the hillside later – denuded of these lovely plants – caused me to raise with Forestry the question, 'Do you check the number of plants collected?' There were no checks, and this confirmed what I already knew of other districts.



Fox tail 'fern', *Caustis blakei* (photo K. Johnson).

getting closer. Then this magnificent, brilliantly coloured bird hopped into the clearing and I got my first look at a bird one occasionally hears but rarely sees.

Tom Ryan told me that large numbers of Christmas bells had been collected almost annually from the heathlands of the former State Forest, now national park. *The Gympie Times* would print excerpts taken from papers 25 or 50 years earlier, and these gave accounts of scores of thousands of Christmas bells being picked and sent to Brisbane where they were sold for charities. They weren't picked to total extinction, but it was rare to see even a localised mass flowering. Cars parked on the side of the road in season would lead to a chat with flower pickers, as reports were received of these plants on sale at the Brisbane flower markets. (Cooloola wasn't the only source of such collecting.)



Christmas Bells, *Blandfordia grandiflora* (photo B. Thomas).

Many undesirable activities were occurring along the Seary's Creek track, at Poverty Point, and at the head of Carland Creek. There was evidence that the Army had been using the park for

training exercises. There were a multitude of vehicular tracks across the Noosa Plains, leading to waterholes used for bass fishing. (Sir Thomas Hiley, a keen fisherman, told me there were no more than 100 people who fished for bass in this area.)

An interesting anecdote related to the use of explosives in the Black Hole in Cooloola Creek, when a person swimming about collecting dying fish encountered a shark, which took a fish held in his hand. Another tale related to a person who, being a little slow to throw gelignite into the water, lost a hand.

I moved campers from Harrys Hut one night and next morning confiscated two fishing nets strung across the river. As my contact in the Boating and Fisheries Patrol had recently been transferred and the culprits never claimed ownership, the matter lapsed.

Early People

An 1874 map showed the notation 'tracks to the outer beach used by natives and working bullocks'. In the 1980s, archaeologist Ian McNiven researched the Aboriginal occupation of Cooloola and Fraser Island. He found evidence which indicated that Aboriginal people collected estuarine shellfish such as mud whelks from Tin Can Bay, leaving the shells in the western forests. Travelling away from the ocean, they left their discarded pippis and other beach shells at camping points along the way. In central forest areas, there would be a mixture of estuarine and ocean shells.

Ian's research showed that original logging tracks followed Aboriginal routes connecting coast and bay. An enthusiastic teacher, he demonstrated the relationship between Aboriginal shell middens along the beach and nearby pandanus palms and fresh water. His work inspired me to observe Cooloola's environment more closely.

An old Lands Department file concerning bora rings in the Cooloola area was handed to me. It contained a letter from Ben Mark, a bullock-driver who extracted timber from Cooloola's forests for Maryborough sawmiller Lambert Hyne. Ben Mark was concerned about the future of three bora rings near Tin Can Bay. His letter was eventually passed to District Forester Reg Doggrell. The two hectare Pipeclay National Park was gazetted to protect one bora ring and a fence was erected around a second bora ring near Poverty Point to shield it from Forestry operations. The third bora ring is yet to be found.

Cooloola Management Plan

Trevor Volbon and Bob Spiers of the planning section in head office commenced a management plan for Cooloola, the first such plan for the QNPWS in Queensland. In January 1980, shortly after the Cooloola Draft Management Plan was released, it was discussed at a public meeting at the Gympie City Council offices. Basically, it called for a scaling back of camping within the park in favour of establishing a major camping area on Crown Lands adjacent to Rainbow Beach, which had sealed road access, water, sewage, electricity, shops, a school and emergency services. This, it was argued, would have the added benefit of increasing economic activity in the township.

We were lucky that our concept of a major camp on vacant Crown Land at Rainbow Beach was rejected. In 1984 the former Rainbow Beach sand-mining treatment site was checked for radioactivity. Health Department officers withheld this reading, but I was given to believe it was quite high. During 1986–87, the radioactive sand from Rainbow Beach was trucked away for treatment at Southport.



Rainbow Beach 1978. Sand treatment site at lower right (photo B. Thomas).

When the Health Department checked on radio-activity at the mouth of Freshwater Creek, where a dump of illmenite had been left and the site had not been rehabilitated, I was told that the Freshwater site was safe for sunbathing visitors up to 2,000 hours per year, but that ‘no permanent, occupied structure should be built there’.

While recognising that the beaches were controlled by Widgee Shire Council, the Draft Management Plan recommended the closure of Teewah Beach north of Freshwater so that visitors could ‘experience a wider range of natural environmental experiences free from the sight and sound of vehicles’, but allowing permitted commercial tours. (Even Dr Harrold thought beach closures were a step too far!) The plan, recognising that some existing activities within the park were not compatible with preservation of the environment, was too far-sighted for the community – and especially the Councils – to absorb at this time.

The response of Widgee Shire Council went straight to the point. Councillors, already hostile at losing influence over an area of their Shire, condemned the plan, stating that QNPWS should confine its expertise to land under its control and do more to open up the park for tourism. 4WD clubs loudly condemned the plan, sending 500 identical letters to QNPWS. Bass fishermen were also unhappy.

The Noosa Parks Association and the Cooloola Committee were very active in the fight to add Crown Lands to both Cooloola and Noosa National Parks. They were quietly supportive of our management, even if they did not agree with our actions. They never criticised or demeaned us, as was often the case with Widgee Shire Council, and, to a lesser extent, Noosa Shire Council.

The NPA had a long-term strategy, while QNPWS was forced to react to various pressures. I established and maintained a close relationship with Dr Harrold and other NPA members, accompanying them on outings and volunteer days in various parks. I was present when Private

Secretary Allan Callaghan gave his Minister an introductory briefing before a meeting with Dr Harrold and Bill Huxley: 'They are good, and they do their homework well. They are well connected and very effective.'

I neither advertised nor hid my relationship with members of the NPA. From them, I learnt about the natural history of Noosa National Park, Lake Weyba to the south and the Cooloola sand-mass to the north. This politically influential group of people never waved banners or sat down in the streets. Their success was based on community support and direct contact with decision makers. At the time, it was inappropriate for me to formally join these groups, but the exchange of information was two-way.

I often led a group of keen bird-watchers from the NPA for camp-outs in Cooloola at Neeb's Waterhole, Teewah Creek and Camp Site 3, to listen each evening and at dawn for the high pitched, plaintive calls of the rare ground parrot. These activities were co-ordinated by Cecily Fearnley, acting on my recommendations. As a result of our observations, it was considered that a major population of the elusive ground parrot has its stronghold in Queensland – and perhaps Australia – within Cooloola National Park.

The Forestry Department had semi-active barracks at Como, near the Wolvi-Kin Kin Road junction with the Cooloola Way, and at Camp Milo, off the Rainbow Beach Road. It was near Camp Milo, named, it was said, after a pile of Milo tins, that members of the Gympie Field Naturalists' Club introduced me to the delightful flowering vine, *Tecomanthe hillii*. I purchased two of these spectacular beauties for my home, where, despite frosts, they survive. In the early 1980s, Forestry closed and sold the barracks, and constructed an all-weather road southerly from Toolara to provide management access for logging and fire control.

Forestry strategists must have known that their tenure of SF 451 was drawing to a close. There seemed to be a sense of urgency to log heavily, taking smaller diameter logs. In 1983 Noosa Parks Association accelerated their campaign to add Cooloola's central forest core to the national park. The fight to save the forests from further logging was on, and Dr Aila Keto, a noted rainforest campaigner, became involved. I met her only once in the Cooloola forests. She had a personal charisma, combined with a fluent command of her subject.

In 1982, I wrote to the Forester at Toolara, asking whether any formal agreement existed between Forestry and QNPWS about logging trucks driving across the national park. This initiated a flurry of activity, as Forestry searched for a formal basis on which to continue logging operations in the remnant of State Forest 451 that they still controlled.

The issue of the public use of roads within Cooloola was, at best, uneasy. Forestry had retained control of most roads and had shown concern at QNPWS proposals to upgrade the Freshwater Track to Bymien, which was almost entirely located on SF 451. They finally conceded that this road would be wide enough to handle both tourists and the relatively light logging traffic expected.



Tecomanthe hillii.

South: Noosa Shire

The Noosa River

In 1978, it was possible to drive my government 2WD utility, with care, along the rough track past Lake Como to Harrys Hut on the Noosa River. Here, the erosion from previous logging, unrestricted camping, boat launching and cattle crossing the river, was bare, ugly and sad. A Council controlled esplanade ran along the river's edge. Camping was taking place at Harrys Hut and at the Eurubbie Road, a fire break track along the northern side of the cattle property *Tarangau*.

It was also possible to drive to Fig Tree Point on northern Lake Cootharaba. A Gympie local, Jim Lawrence, gave me photos of this point showing Salmons Hut and flood waters extending across the lake towards the ocean. Unfortunately, these photos disappeared into the depths of head office, never to be seen again. Another track, known as the Service Road, connected Harrys Hut Road with Kin Kin Creek.

During my early years at Gympie, I often heard folklore about Salmons Hut, which was never locked and was used by many district people, who sheltered in it and enjoyed the ambience of the area.

Richard (Dick) Salmon obtained a 99 year lease on 3 acres at Fig Tree Point in 1929. He and his brother Gordon built the hut from timber that was cut at the Wolvi sawmill and taken to the site by bullock team. In the early years, Dick, his wife Linda and their family would ride horses from their home at Wolvi to the hut, leading a house cow and a pack horse carrying food essentials such as flour, salt and tea. They relied on catching fish, crabs and waterfowl for other food. All that remained at Fig Tree Point when I arrived were some house stumps and small fig trees.

Of interest were two tracks marked on an 1874 map, which agree with information from Ailsa Schwenke, who described Aboriginal tracks which led northerly from the point when she spent her honeymoon at Salmons Hut before the Second World War.

Harrys Hut

The son of a blacksmith, Harry Spring became a chemist at Cooroy. He loved the outdoors, often camping, fishing and shooting along the Noosa River. In the late 1950s, he purchased a hut formerly owned by Sam McKinnon, who drew timber from the Ramsay Scrub in the Cooloola Sandmass and



Harrys Hut (photo E. Brown).

transported it to his mill at Tewantin. Most of the hut was situated on the Council esplanade, while the attached chimney and galley was on the national park.

Many people used the hut and initially Harry never locked it. After various items and the water tank were stolen, the hut was locked. Harry allowed QNPWS staff to use it as a working base during holiday periods. As more visitors came to the area, staff erected a fence to establish a degree of privacy.

When I first met Harry he lived in a house with frontage onto his beloved Noosa River. I became

used to the tirade of abuse Harry heaped onto public servants and politicians every time I met him. After a few minutes of polite listening without offering a response, I would be invited in for a cup of tea and a chat. Harry was a good raconteur, and I may have been a good listener. His wife, Gladys, a lovely person, would busy herself filling a pot of tea and preparing scones or biscuits.

When the esplanade on the Noosa River was about to be closed, I discussed with Harry the future of his hut. It was subsequently included in the national park and he retained exclusive use during his lifetime.

As early as 1960, Harry had been concerned when mining pegs were installed across the Cooloola Sandmass. He often told me he was the instigator of Fauna Reserve 1093, the first protection of the high dunes against sand-mining. Gazettal of the Fauna Reserve in 1963 blocked an ambitious plan by Widgee Shire Council to build a north-south road through the area.

Harry often invited influential people to camp in the hut with him. These included the Queensland Governor, Sir Henry Abel-Smith and his wife Lady May, and Sir Thomas Hiley.

Sir Thomas was an accountant who became the Member for Logan in 1944. He served as Treasurer and Deputy Premier and was recognised as a man of integrity and a competent administrator. Although he was knighted, he always preferred to be called 'Tom'. A boating enthusiast who loved duck shooting and fishing, he retired to Tewantin.

By the time I met them, Sir Thomas and Harry Spring had changed their outlook. Like many outdoor lovers of their era, they had seen the bushland being cleared, the wildlife diminishing and hunting regulations being flouted.

Other Influential People

Cliff Thompson (OAM). I was fortunate to associate with researchers such as Cliff Thompson of the CSIRO, a pleasant man with a great knowledge of Cooloola's geomorphology and history. As the pre-eminent researcher in Cooloola, he motivated other CSIRO staff to undertake research in the area. On one occasion, I joined his team to hand-drill a deep bore hole to determine the depths of soil horizons beneath the surface of the high sand dunes.

Cliff showed me 8000 year old grass trees buried in the Noosa Plains. He also showed me the stranded shore-line below the Rainbow Beach lifesavers' clubhouse, demonstrating a former, higher sea level. He told me that the Cooloola coastline was once situated some 12 kilometres east of its present location.

I was always curious about the naming of his research sites until, one evening, sharing a meal and a drink, the secret was revealed. He and his colleagues were connoisseurs of fine wines, and the names of the research sites in Cooloola, such as Chalambar, Kabali and Pertaringa, were given for wines they had enjoyed.

Noel and Diana Playford. When Noel and his wife Diana operated Cooloola Cruises along the Noosa River system in the 1960's, they leased a small area at the eastern end of Kinaba Island complete with jetty and picnic area.^[4] After the



Cooloola Cruise boats (photo B. Thomas).

business was sold, I discussed the future of the now dormant lease with Noel. He generously offered to rescind it as long as the whole island was included in the national park, and this happened in 1983.

Supported by Diana, Noel^[5] went on to become a Noosa Shire Councillor, Shire Chairman, and Chairman of the Queensland Local Government Association. In 1998, he was awarded a well-deserved Order of Australia for his contribution to Economic Development in South-east Queensland.

Cooloola National Park was fortunate to have the sympathetic support of the Noosa Shire Council during the period of Noel's stewardship. QNPWS had been frustrated by the efforts of previous councils, who wanted to prevent critical land areas from being added to Cooloola and Noosa National Parks.

With Council support, solutions to our management problems were facilitated, with a positive effect on the environment. Development pressures were minimised when environmental parks were declared in the council area. The need for a bridge across the river was avoided when parcels of land on the North Shore were added to the national park.

The Sir Thomas Hiley Information Centre

The first task I was given on arrival in Gympie was to assist Planning Officer Trevor Volbon to peg the site for a proposed information centre near Kinaba Island on Lake Cootharaba. Sir Thomas Hiley represented a Bird and Waterfowl Society that had donated a large sum of money for this purpose. Society members had been impressed by bird observation hides and interpretive centres overseas, and wished to establish a similar building at the northern end of Lake Cootharaba.

I became aware of friction between two sections in head office regarding this proposed building. Was it to be an interpretive centre/control point, or should it be a control point/interpretive centre?

Peter Ogilvie, who headed the Interpretive Section, felt strongly that the primary function of the building should be interpretive, and it should therefore be sited at Fig Tree Point, where abundant waterfowl could be seen on occasions. Chuck Wilder, of the Operations Section, saw the building as a control point that housed staff, but with an interpretive function. He argued that building at Fig Tree Point would result in a loss of control over the Kin Kin Creek area.

From my point of view, Fig Tree Point had vehicle access, but it was also home to every imaginable biting insect, particularly mosquitoes and sandflies.

Robertson Brothers of Gympie were the successful tenderers for the proposed structure, and work commenced in 1978. The builders travelled daily from Gympie, and crossed Elanda Plains to Mill Point. From there, the building materials were conveyed by barge to the site, sometimes with the workers pushing the heavily laden craft across the shallow waters. Construction proceeded rapidly.

On the official opening day, 16 September 1978, scores of invited guests were conveyed on tour boats across Lake Cootharaba from Boreen Point. After the guests were on the water, I transported QNPWS Director Graham Saunders and his wife to the new centre. A large, temporary



Sir Thomas Hiley Information Centre (photo D. Batt).

platform, on which the guests were to assemble, had been erected across the water in front of the building.

Shortly after, Tom Ryan, in his larger boat, conveyed Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, his wife and his bodyguards. With the eyes of visitors on the strange new building, few people saw the last boat arrive. As the Premier came along the boardwalk, whispers went round within my earshot: 'There's Joh. He wasn't on the tour boats. He must have walked on water to get here!', or, 'He must have come down from the clouds.'

I recall Sir Thomas Hiley raising concern, during his opening speech, about plans to plant pine trees in the Western Catchment of the Noosa River. He also warned against the removal of increased volumes of water from Tewah Creek by the Widgee Shire Council, which could lead to the closure of the Noosa River mouth during dry years.

Within a few years the 'Sir Thomas Hiley Information Centre' became known as 'The Kinaba Centre', or just 'Kinaba'.

Early Kinaba staff

A few months before the opening, two Overseers had been appointed to operate the new centre, but a question of morality was raised between head office and field staff. There was only one bedroom for the appointed male and female officers, but they solved the problem by finding temporary accommodation at Boreen Point.

We now had the *Darter*, a 5-metre, planing-hull motor boat, which was the sole means of transporting stores and equipment to Kinaba, including 45kg gas cylinders. This small boat enabled us to make an appraisal of the waterways, where degradation of the river banks by campers was appalling, particularly in the area known as The Narrows.

Tour boat operators began to complain that our staff were not as helpful as desired. The Overseers felt that tourists should not be allowed into the area – it was too special. But we were trying to gain public support, and their negative attitude resulted in an instruction that they were to be present, in uniform, when tour boats arrived. They were to assist in securing boats, and to talk to visitors at the jetty and in the Information Centre. One Overseer resigned shortly thereafter and the other obtained a transfer to an interpretive role.

Jack Edmondstone then worked at Kinaba for a short time. He left due to family issues, and I was sorry to see him go. He was a surveyor, and used his theodolite to give precise metres and bounds for a proposal I was considering to extend the park southerly and take in Kinaba and other newly forming islands.

The next Overseer quickly became dissatisfied. During a period of frugality, expensive damage occurred to the *Darter*'s motor, and Tom Ryan replaced it with a smaller unit. I once noticed this



Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen (right) with Harry Spring. Lady in blue suit unknown, Flo Bjelke-Petersen, Sir Thomas Hiley and G Simpson (obscured), Mrs Saunders, Dr G. Saunders, Director QNPWS (photo B. Thomas).

Overseer ram the throttle open in shallow water, putting the propeller into the sand and mud. He then told me the new motor was inadequate, and, if this motor broke down, he would have to get a bigger one!

Dave Batt, the incoming Overseer in 1982, was ably supported by Stan Powell, and at last QNPWS began to benefit from a visible presence and a positive public image. A tourist explosion was about to hit us, and QNPWS was fortunate to have Dave and Stan on hand during this period. Dave and I would hold long discussions about park management, and I would run past Tom Ryan our proposals for the southern Cooloola area and the Western Catchment. We formulated a local plan of operations and managed the area accordingly.

Dave Batt was good value in the formative years of southern Cooloola, and I was very sorry to see him return to Gatton as an instructor in 1986. When the lead instructor became ill, Dave became responsible for teaching nine subjects and developing the entire academic program.

Early Management Issues

There were no detailed recommendations for the Southern Cooloola-Noosa River area in the 1978 Cooloola Draft Management Plan. Having received a hostile reception from the Widgee and Noosa Shire Councils, 4WD enthusiasts and bass fishermen, it was never formally adopted by QNPWS.

I took an early decision not to install rubbish bins at the Harrys Hut camping area. Our department was too poor to buy or cope with rubbish drums anyhow. Staff asked campers to take their rubbish home, and after visitors had left, would wander around, bagging any litter in the fertilizer bags I had collected while travelling along the highways. Rubbish was taken to Boreen Point by boat for disposal.

A problem relating to national park boundaries soon manifested itself. The movement of silt down the Noosa River and Kin Kin Creek saw changes right before our eyes. Waters across which I loved to canoe were becoming shallow, vegetated, and difficult to traverse. Early maps showed that QNPWS did not control the land over which the Kinaba Centre had been constructed, and the peninsula on which we had built our boardwalk to Shark Bay was shown as an island.

It had been possible to canoe from the Cooloola Overflow into a small inlet, where ironbark trees on a hill had been stripped to obtain tannin to colour fishing nets. An 1874 map showed that the main course of the Noosa River had once flowed directly into Lake Cootharaba. Within a few years of my arrival, both these waterways had become overgrown and difficult to traverse.



Upper Noosa River delta; information centre at lower right; Kin Kin Creek at left (photo B. Thomas).



Noosa River (right) flows into Lake Cootharaba; Cooloola overflow lower left.

We decided to try to have the whole estuarine area, including Kinaba Island and the Kinaba Centre, included in the park. I had previously negotiated with professional fishermen at Tewantin to restrict their netting in the Fig Tree Lake section of Lake Cootharaba, pegging and surveying no-netting zones around bird resting shallows. This agreement was confirmed in writing.

Publicity associated with the new Kinaba Centre increased the popularity of the southern Noosa River. Early in 1980, 274 people visited the centre in one day. In 1981, 17,000 visitors were recorded. This rose to 60,000 visitors in 1985 and 10,000 campers up the river. (These are not absolute figures, for staff were not at the centre all day, every day.) By 1987-88, the figure had climbed to 85,000, but staff were not working most weekends to fully record visitation.

Newer and faster tour boats, sometimes making two trips per day, started to operate. A race was on to be the first to travel up the river to see the reflections. Dave Batt tried to convince the operators of the benefit of staggering their tour times, but to no avail. It took 30 minutes for the wash and froth of a passing boat to disappear. Then we noticed residual oil slicks from the smelly, two-stroke, outboard motors of the tour boats and smaller, private craft. Complaints flooded in from canoeists, offended by the noise and fumes.

Perhaps the greatest mistake QNPWS made at the Kinaba Centre was to use linseed oil in an effort to protect and preserve its timbers from the weather. This led to an ugly mould which blackened the timber. After detailed research by the Works Department, the linseed oil was scrubbed away.

The dramatic increase in visitation to the Kinaba Centre caused issues with the septic tank. The problem was found to be the outfall pipe, which, instead of gradually falling, was nearly level and even had a slight rise at one point. Dave and Stan checked to ensure there were no tour boats

due, and set about disconnecting the pipe. Then a diesel motor was heard. A tour boat company had taken an unexpected booking, and fifty elderly people came ashore from two boats. It had been nearly two hours since they last saw a toilet!

Dave, Stan and I agreed that the river and its catchment should be managed as a wilderness area, focussing on passive activities, such as canoeing, walking and wilderness camping. I had previously closed all camp sites downstream from Harrys Hut. Dave erected 'Closed for Regeneration' signs and stressed with tour operators that our actions were designed to enhance the wilderness experience of their guests.

Upstream from Harrys Hut, we spaced campsites to maintain wilderness camping values. In this context, a good site opposite Camp Site 3 was ruled out. We worked our way up the river, expecting that, in future, some sites would need a spell, and we could then use the ones we had closed. We deliberately left gaps in the numbering, so we could fill in with more sites if demand warranted it.

There were differences of opinion between senior and regional staff over development of the Harrys Hut area. According to my diary notes, decisions about toilet and jetty sites went on for weeks and delayed the project. The best option for toilets – in accord with the finance available – was for a raised mound and closed pit system. The pits were excavated and 300 mm high concrete well rings were inserted down to the water table. I obtained log timbers from a old bridge in Gympie to stabilise the mounds, on which turkey nest toilets were built above flood level. These toilets eventually failed because irresponsible campers forced bags of rubbish down the chutes.



Noosa River at Harrys Hut (photo B. Thomas).



Former camping site, Noosa River narrows.

In 1985, money from a Commonwealth Employment Scheme was used to improve the camp ground. Noel Dawson, the new Regional Director, decided to locate a new toilet near Harry Spring's hut. Harry wasn't impressed and asked for a visit from Director Graham Saunders. After Harry, Sir Thomas Hiley and the Director of Wildlife, Dr Hugh Lavery, inspected the Noosa River area with Director Saunders, the toilet site was abandoned, despite our having made a start on construction.

A tour boat operator, who had financed picnic tables adjacent to a proposed new jetty, offered to build a picnic shelter at the same site. This offer was rejected, and he was asked to build it at Fig Tree Point, where his tours

never landed. Four years later the shelter was built where the tourist operator wanted it.

My enquiries to Forestry to obtain gravel from their pit on the northern side of the Harrys Hut Road were rebuffed, because they had limited road making material for their own purposes. Importing gravel to form tracks in a new Harrys Hut camping area was too expensive, so it was regrettably decided to open a new pit in the park.

Impressed with the concept of Clivus Multrum toilets using fibreglass tanks, I proposed that one be built at Fig Tree Point, and the planning officer designed the long ramp necessary for wheelchair access. The Regional Director then alternated between my suggestion and a septic system with a concrete tank on a different site. I was acting in accord with prior approvals, signed by senior staff, and if the site was changed, the planning process would have to start again. Delays in reaching a decision impeded construction, but finally, Cooloola became the first national park in the State to use the Clivus Multrum system, in the Fig Tree Point toilet and on the site I had chosen.

Withdrawal of finance meant that some projects did not achieve the original planning goals, or were not completed. On 22 May 1985 the allocation for works in the Noosa River area was \$34,000, but on 4 June this was cut to \$18,000, and I was instructed to commit only two-thirds of this. Money for an elevated boardwalk across a swamp on the wilderness trail north of Fig Tree Point was withdrawn completely.

Walking Tracks

In 1979, Sir Thomas Hiley provided extra finance to build an elevated walkway through the mangroves to a bird hide overlooking Shark Bay. This short walk became very popular with visitors.

Hikers trying to reach Lake Cooloola and the Cooloola Sand Patch were losing their way and floundering through impenetrable swamps, so I suggested to Dave that he and Stan check all the unofficial tracks east of the Noosa River. I was disappointed that I never had the time to become involved in this exploration, but my confidence in Dave was not misplaced. He and Stan checked all tracks and reported that a longer route via Camp Site 3 was the only viable option. They marked this route for my approval, and it became the official access track.



Harrys Hut camping area lower left; Noosa River and Lake Cooloola (photo B. Thomas).

Outdoor Education

Different school groups were using southern Cooloola, including, from the late 1970s to the 1990s, Craigslea State High School. Both Dave and I were keen to capitalise on outdoor education opportunities to promote leadership, adventure, and natural history studies.

Captain Hook was a colourful character, who ferried students from different schools along Teewah Beach in his 4WD truck. He would take Craigslea students to a drop-off point along Teewah Beach, where there was only one way to go – up a gully to the shifting sands of the Cooloola Sand Patch, with its spectacular views of ocean, river and lakes. The students then descended to Camp Site 3 beside the Noosa River, with time to swim and use waiting canoes.

Another group from this school would canoe from Elanda Point upstream to Harrys Hut and camp overnight. The next day they would paddle to Camp Site 3, where a changeover took place, the hikers travelling downstream to Elanda Point, while the canoeists walked over the sand patch to Teewah Beach.



Craigslea High School students above Teewah Beach (photo K. Johnson).



Cooloola Sandpatch (photo B. Thomas).

Other Craigslea groups would commence at Freshwater and hike along Forestry tracks to the Noosa River for a change-over, camping along the route in a bushland setting. Initially there was only one adult in charge of twenty-four students, but for safety, this became two adults per sixteen students. Dave and I were uneasy about the risks associated with the low adult to student ratios.

Sometimes, student groups – mainly inexperienced primary school children – would leave Elanda Point, canoeing towards Kinaba on a beautifully calm morning, only to find themselves tiring while battling a strong headwind and rough waters on the return trip.

The Sporting Wheelies were a truly inspirational group, who used the Fig Tree and Harrys Hut camping areas. Seeing these amazing people paddling their canoes across the lake and up the river made me reflect on the strident demands made by unthinking people that we should provide roads so the elderly or less mobile could see the park.

Elanda Point

From 1870 to 1892, Elanda had been a sawmill settlement, drawing timber from surrounding forests. It was later broken up into dairy farms, but these did not prosper. The early settlers discovered that, due to trace element deficiency, which they called ‘wallum ill thrift’, cattle did not do well. In 1967/68, various parcels of land were purchased and amalgamated into a 978 hectare property eventually owned by Cambridge Credit, a southern developer. Fertiliser containing trace elements was added to the soil, the land was planted with pasture grasses and tropical legumes, and a cattle property was developed on the site.

Cambridge Credit went into liquidation in 1974. Following its collapse, the Commonwealth Government^[6] purchased Elanda in 1975 for \$420,000 to forestall development by the Queensland

Government. A lengthy legal dispute between the two governments followed. QNPWS considered that Elanda would eventually be added to Cooloolo National Park, and in 1983 I was instructed to take over management of the area. I was appalled. On what legal grounds could we operate?

I would occasionally drop in for a chat with Brian Mays, our park neighbour at Elanda Point. As a teacher, Brian had driven into Elanda and liked the area. He had obtained a lease, on which he established a camping area and kiosk. This complemented our management strategies, because the majority of campers were located on a less sensitive area on the edge of the park.

Groundsel

Groundsel, a noxious weed, was a highly visible and serious problem on Elanda. Huge areas of State Forest, national park and coastal areas were severely infested. Each Autumn, clouds of white seed would drift across the district like snow, drawing terse criticism of departments that controlled government lands. On Elanda, access to low-lying, swampy areas by vehicle was impractical, and we did not have the resources to tackle the problem.

My enquiries about liability for activities such as aerial spraying on this Crown Land were never answered. I wanted to spray a large outbreak to the west, adjacent to private property. On such actions, good or bad neighbours are established. The allocation of money to hire a helicopter spray unit shifted the onus from myself onto the department. The helicopter operated from the land of a co-operative neighbour and sprayed the infested areas.

Noosa Shire was trying to control groundsel by spraying in Council areas. A 1983 meeting with weed inspector Keith Garraty went well, and we developed a long-term friendship. Also present were Tom Anderson and Alan Thomley, research scientists attached to the Alan Fletcher Research Institute in Brisbane, and Geoff Cummings of the Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Board. As a group, we decided to use the old sawmill site for biological control. Gall wasps and plume moths had been released in the Moreton Bay area and had proved to be effective. Their introduction at Elanda gave me an answer to concerned or critical visitors: 'We are managing the area by leaving it undisturbed for necessary biological, scientific research'. The eradication of groundsel throughout the district has been a resounding success for biological control methods.

In 1984, QNPWS cleaned up the old Cambridge Credit manager's house near the existing canoe launching site. There were huge groundsel bushes growing along the foreshore. I was given some Alan Fletcher Research Station 201 chemical to mix with diesel. I crawled around under the plants, spraying the basal areas, and was very impressed with the results, although it initially gave me headaches and I could still smell the chemical on my clothes after two washes.

Stock Grazing

Brian Mays had sub-let Elanda Plains for grazing, and hundreds of cattle were inhibiting regrowth. In 1986, a DPI stock inspector toured the area and agreed it was over-grazed, saying there should be no more than one beast per hectare. Brian did not extend the lease, but the owners of the cattle refused to remove them, a stalemate developed, and I had no power to act.

The cattle owners claimed they had been told their lease would be extended. QNPWS insisted that, if grazing was to continue, public tenders must be called. I was told to prepare a plan on which a Stock Grazing Permit might be issued, and I interviewed neighbours of Elanda to canvass their interest. I then prepared two Strategic Development Plans for the area, one with and one without a Stock Grazing Permit. (Such was the nature of politics and lobbying!)

In July 1986, the cattle owners – who had ceased paying agistment to Brian Mays – unsuccessfully approached the local Member of Parliament to get an extension on their lease. They then challenged QNPWS, stating they were going to burn the plains to promote the growth of grass. Burning took place in September without notice, and the fire escaped.

In August 1986 I was told that Elanda Plains would be added to the national park, on condition that Brian Mays's lease for his camping area was continued. I surveyed an area that would give him room to expand and on which he could install a sewage disposal system. Brian didn't get entirely what he wanted, but I thought the result was a fair compromise!

Developments

Brian Mays was unhappy when the public entered his lease area to launch canoes without paying fees. Overseer Denis Dray and I set about developing an alternative canoe launching site near our headquarters on the national park. The new planning and design officer was not immediately available, and we had lengthy delays waiting for her arrival with time to expend money running out!

Another development, which got to the concept-costing stage, was to extend the Elanda Point entrance road north across Elanda Plains to an elevated area on the southern bank of Kin Kin Creek. My idea was to develop a site where visitors could launch their canoes and paddle down the sheltered waters of Kin Kin Creek to Kinaba without venturing onto moody Lake Cootharaba. This concept called for a gravel road, which we could close when conditions became too wet. Noosa Shire engineers costed an all-weather road, but the idea was vetoed without further discussion.

Neighbours

We had some interesting neighbours to the west of Elanda, one of whom kept 27 dogs. When I visited his home to discuss our proposed groundsel spraying and the horde of dogs had quietened somewhat, a late-arriving mongrel came round the corner, saw my leg and latched on. The lass there chuckled, thinking it quite a joke. 'It always bites people who come here, that one!' Council by-laws staff became involved, and always sought a police presence when they visited.

This neighbour told me he had introduced wombats and rabbits to the area, as he thought they would do well. (A wombat had once wandered into Brian Mays's building area.)

I visited Elanda early one long weekend and walked the boundaries before my appointment, checking fences and looking for signs of insect damage to groundsel. A group of people were picking beans nearby, and the neighbour walked over, jiggling something in his pocket. He was taken aback at my presence. 'What are you doing here this early on a holiday? Public servants don't work on weekends!' I made the point that I could be around any time, any day. He then explained the problems he was having with ducks, and produced a handful of shotgun cartridges from his pocket. He had never sought advice on shooting protected wildlife.

Revegetation

The Gympie Forestry Training School responded to my enquiries to involve their trainees at Elanda by setting an assignment on how to re-vegetate the area.

Developing this concept, I was offered an initial 2,000 seedling trees by Forestry, and I put out an urgent call for volunteers to assist with the planting. The trees were planted along the west side of the entrance road, mainly by members of the Noosa Parks Association and my volunteer group, Friends of Parks and Wildlife.

Endnotes

- ¹ In 1975, this creek was spelt 'Tewah'. Soon after this, the spelling on maps changed to 'Teewah'.
- ² The 1978 Annual Report of the Noosa Parks Association mentioned that Cooloola was the focus for off-road beach-buggy and motor cycle usage.
- ³ The fox tail 'fern' (*Caustis blakei*) is not really a fern at all. In May 1991, the Forest Service issued a permit to collect fox tail 'fern' across SF 451, which 'had been picked over previously'. Conditions included paying a royalty of 49 cents per kilogram green weight.
- ⁴ The report of a 1971 inspection by the Gympie and District Chamber of Commerce and Development mentioned Noel and Diana Playford's *Cooloola Queen* tourism operation on Kinaba Island. This was held to be a model which might be successfully copied on other nearby islands.
- ⁵ In addition to the roles of wife and mother, Diana's high standing in the community allowed her to become an energetic campaign manager for Noel who was elected as a councillor between 1982-1985, and 1997-2004, and for election as Mayor 1988-1997, and again in 2014-2016.
- ⁶ The Commonwealth also purchased 470 hectares of Cambridge Credit land in the big bend of the Noosa River, where it exited Lake Cootharaba.



Canoeing on the still waters of the Noosa River in southern Cooloola NP were my first choice for international friends (photo T. Turner).