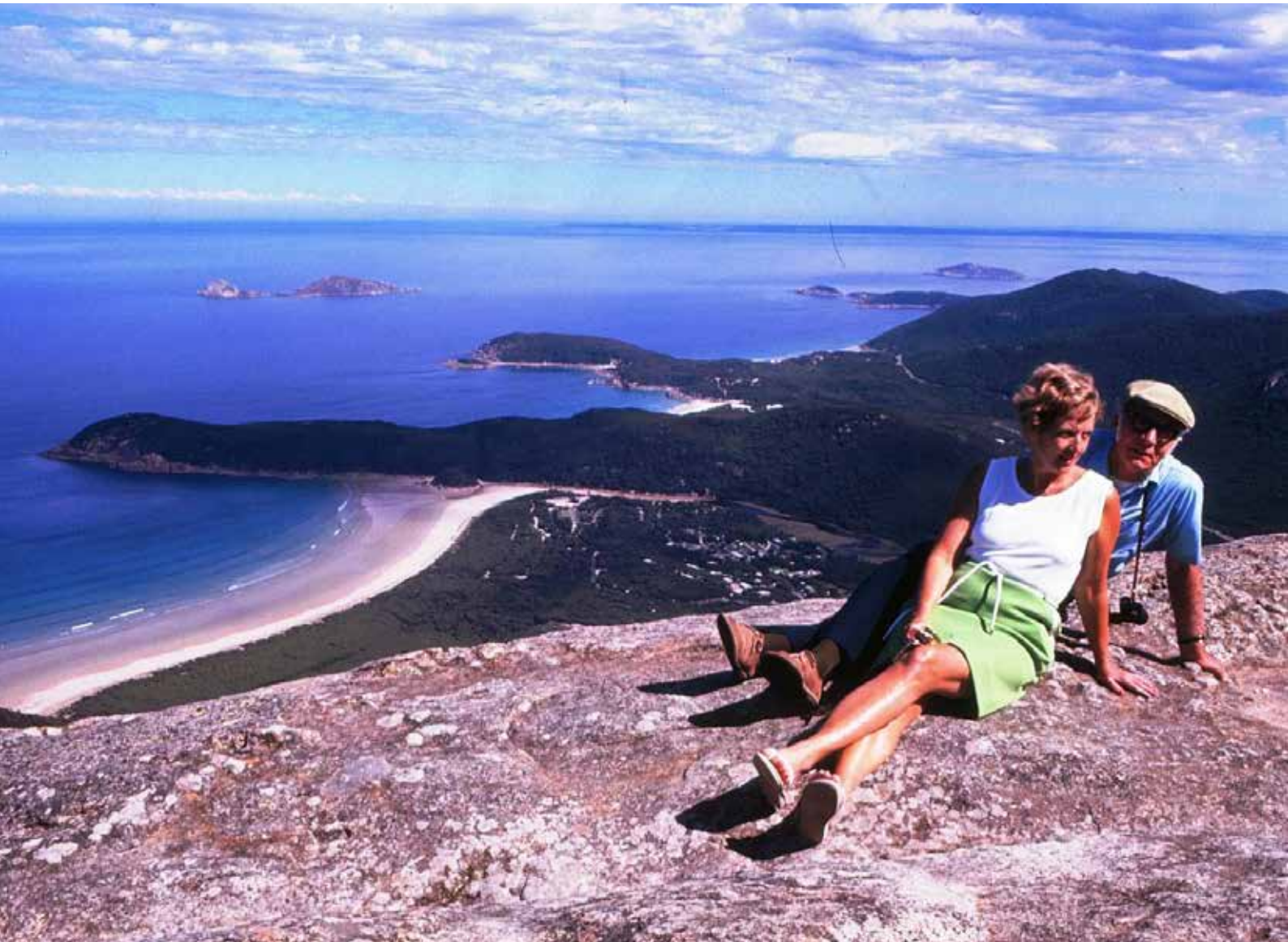


Building a National Parks Service for Victoria 1958 – 1975



L. H. Smith



Norman Bay, at the mouth of Tidal River, looking back to Mt Oberon, where the cover photo was taken, and showing many campers enjoying their holiday.

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Photos: All photos, except where mentioned, are by Dr Leonard Hart Smith. A selection from his extensive 35mm slide collection has been scanned for use in this book.

Note: This book is not complete. Dr Len Smith intended to revise it further and add chapters about the other Victorian national parks created during his time as director, 1958-1975, but was unable to complete this work. We have published the book as it was written, with only minor corrections. Dr Len Smith was a keen photographer and took thousands of black and white photographs and colour slides. All photos in this book, unless otherwise credited, were taken by Dr Smith.

Cover photo: Wilsons Promontory National Park 1973. Hikers at summit of Mt Oberon with Tidal River Campground, Norman Bay, Pillar Point and Tongue Point in background.

Disclaimer: The opinions and conclusions in this publication are those of the author, the late Dr Leonard Hart Smith, Director of National Parks in Victoria 1958-1975. The Victorian National Parks Association does not necessarily support or endorse such opinions or conclusions, and takes no responsibility for any errors of fact or any opinions or conclusions.

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Preface

Dr John Hart-Smith

Each Christmas time for many years before he became Director of National Parks for Victoria, my father Dr Leonard Hart Smith drove his family – my mother, my brother and sister, and myself – for a camping holiday at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park (known to Victorians as 'the Prom'). Our first visit was in 1949.

After he had been appointed to his new post, we all went back again each Christmas for several years, and later with grandchildren too. By then, some of us were too old to live in tents, so we stayed in various lodges. There were many more lodges by that time than the few officers' buildings left by the Commandos who trained there during World War II.

Significantly, we were not the only families who went back year after year; the Prom had (and still has) a special allure. Those Christmas holidays were wonderful times, never to be forgotten.

By the time I was 12, my father had walked me to the top of every mountain and to every bay and cove in the southern half of the Prom – and to the Lighthouse and back.

In those days, there were few tracks; we had to follow wombat trails when we could and bash through the scrub when we couldn't. He knew the park like the back of his hand. The Prom that exists today is far more accessible to a much greater number of people.

This is not a manuscript about the scenic beauties of Victoria's various national parks, or of the animals and birds that abound there. Instead, it deals with the behind-the-scenes activities that enabled so many visitors to enjoy the parks, and ensured that



Dr Leonard Hart Smith OAM (1910–2004), Director of National Parks for Victoria 1958–1975. Photo taken about 1960.

there would be landscape and wildlife attractions in abundance to make people want to visit them.

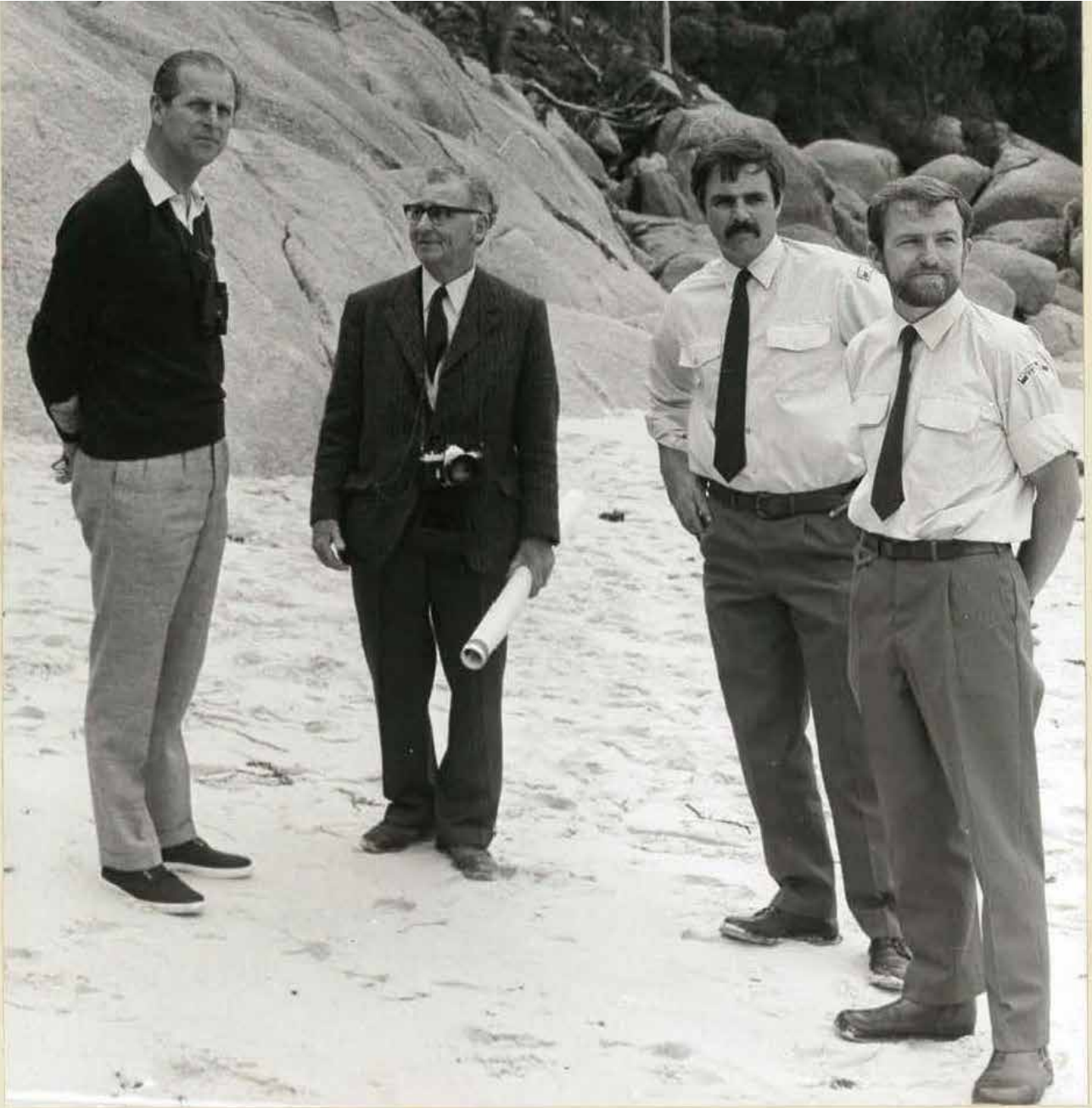
There had to be roads and tracks, camp sites, water, food, electricity, sanitation, garbage collection, fire protection, rangers and other staff to look after the parks, and a whole host of things that most people take for granted and expect to be fixed whenever something goes awry. This is the legacy he and his colleagues left for future generations.

My father's manuscript covers many of Victoria's national parks, but

necessarily focuses on the Prom. That is where most of the support services were needed, since that is where most of the visitors went.

It would seem to be appropriate to close by reminding readers of the two aspects of my father's assignment with the National Parks Authority. He didn't choose them; an enlightened government of the day assigned them. Neither involved exploitation on behalf of private enterprise or special interest groups.

One was to facilitate tourists and researchers alike to visit, learn from,



*Wilson's Promontory National Park
North Waterloo Bay
17th March 1973.*

Victoria's National Parks Service was less than 20 years old when Prince Phillip (left) visited Wilsons Promontory NP with Dr Smith in March 1973. Rangers at right are the late Steve Watkins, and Jeff Davies.

and enjoy the beauty, the flora and the fauna in the parks. The second was to preserve those assets, so that our children and grandchildren could also enjoy them. My father's

manuscript tells the story of how that philosophy drove the development of the collective individual national parks in Victoria into a coordinated enterprise that everyone could enjoy

and benefit from – and they did, and still do! But for how much longer?

Helen Kosky (nee Hart-Smith)

Victorians love their national parks. They understand that the parks belong to all people for all time.

Following the passing of the National Parks Act in the Victorian Parliament in 1956, the first Director of National Parks for Victoria, Philip Crosbie Morrison, was appointed in May 1957. My father was appointed in 1958, following Crosbie Morrison's untimely death in March that year. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1975, serving under Liberal and Country (National) Party governments. Before he retired he oversaw the drafting and subsequent passing of the very important National Parks Act of 1975.

The beginnings of the National Parks Authority were very humble. In his manuscript my father describes how, arriving at his office on his first day, he found it to be a single room with two desks, four filing cabinets and two phones. His entire staff comprised a Secretary and a junior typist, who worked in another room.

Over the years he built a team with Technical Officers, park rangers, planners and scientists, all committed to the task at hand. They were all instrumental in 'Building a National Parks Service'. My father always acknowledged the valuable contribution and commitment each of his staff gave. It was a different time then, and the parks service was more like a large family than a bureaucracy. My father was known as 'The Doc'.

Building the National Parks Authority (which became the National Parks Service in 1971) was not straightforward or quick. For many years before and after my father became Director of



Dr Smith's son John looks towards the lighthouse on South-East Point, Wilsons Promontory NP, about 1951.

National Parks, the parks were controlled by individual Committees of Management. Establishing the working relationships and responsibilities between the committees and the Authority required significant time and diplomacy.

During his time as Director many changes occurred. Governments changed, the Departments the National Parks Authority worked within changed, and, the working relationship with the Committees of Management changed, before the National Park Service was created.



Dr Smith's son Neil, daughter Helen and wife Margaret in the early 1950s at Squeaky Beach, Wilsons Promontory NP.

My father commenced writing this manuscript ten years after he retired. He wanted to give Victorians a record of the development of our National Parks Service under his directorship. I approached the Victorian National Parks Association in 2012 hoping it would accept his manuscript for inclusion on the VPNA website.

My brothers and I appreciate the VPNA's support and assistance in helping develop the manuscript into the format in which it appears here. Our special thanks go to VNPA Publications Officer Michael Howes.

On reading my father's manuscript I began to appreciate how large and difficult a task he had been given. I now understood why, most work nights, his tea remained heating

on the stove, late into the night. He wanted to give Victoria a well-run National Parks Service, and national parks that would endure for all future generations.

The creation of a National Parks Authority

As I write [around 1986-87], Victoria's national parks system embraces 30 areas of land designated 'national parks', along with 15 state parks and 19 areas of other categories. The annual budget is some \$10 million and the number of people employed is around 400.

The identity of the body which controls these areas is obscured by its incorporation in the new Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Once there was a body known as 'the National Parks Service'; but in 1983 the political pen descended like the executioner's sword upon the National Parks Service, the Forests Commission of Victoria, the Fisheries and Wildlife Service, the Soil Conservation Authority and the Lands Department, and the shattered fragments were restructured to form the conglomerate known as the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

All too soon, the fact that Victoria once had a National Parks Service will be forgotten, sunk in the quicksands of political ideology, lost in the Orwellian memory hole; and future generations may not even be aware that it was once a flourishing enterprise. The same may well be said of the other government agencies mentioned; but it is not my purpose here to dwell on their demise but rather to give an account of the events which

led to the birth of Victoria's National Parks Service and of the work of the organization during the period 1958-1975.

However, if readers are to have a proper appreciation of the development of the Service and of its frustrations and successes, and of the climate in which it strove to grow, it is essential that they understand the origins of the national parks concept and how, over the years, Victoria acquired its national parks, how they were managed and the circumstances which resulted, ultimately, in the creation of Victoria's National Parks Service.

The National Parks concept

The national parks concept is of American origin. There have been other accounts of the events which gave rise to the national parks concept and the creation of the first national park, but none, I think, surpassing that of Hiram Martin Chittenden, in his book *The Yellowstone National Park*, first published in 1895.

The first white man to visit the Yellowstone Country was John Colter, who had accompanied Lewis and Clark on their epic journey of exploration of the wilderness between

the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean during the period May 1804 to September 1806. Colter, with the blessing of his leaders, left the expedition on the return journey, in order to trap beaver. His experiences during the next few years, especially his miraculous escape from a band of Blackfoot Indians, make compelling reading; but his first-hand knowledge and descriptions of the country which he had explored and knew so well were not accepted by his fellow Americans. He became a subject of jest and ridicule, and the region of his reputed discoveries was long known as 'Colter's Hell'.

Nor were the stories told by that redoubtable frontiersman James Bridger any less remarkable or acceptable. Yet the 'rumours' persisted and, in 1879, a party of three private individuals, Messrs Folsom, Peterson and Cook, decided to risk the promised dangers of extermination by Indians, and duly completed a 35 day journey of exploration and discovery. However, it is said that these explorers were so astonished at the marvels of Nature which they had seen that (no doubt influenced by recollections of the ridicule and disbelief to which Colter and Bridger had been subjected) they were "unwilling to risk their reputations for veracity by a full recital of them" to the welcoming party which had been arranged to mark their safe return.



Eugene von Guérard's 1857 painting 'Ferntree Gully in the Dandenong Ranges' encouraged visitors to the area to see its tree-ferns and other plants. In 1882 it became Victoria's first official protected area, a 'site for public recreation', but was not made a national park until 1927. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Gift of Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, 1975. Image courtesy National Gallery of Victoria.

In 1870, a Government-sponsored expedition led by General Henry D. Washburn, Surveyor-General of Montana, along with eight other men who were willing to face the risks and privations of the journey, set out to assess the truth of the amazing stories of the earlier explorers. Along the way, they were joined by a military escort led by Lt Gustavus C. Doane. The complete party, which included two 'coloured cooks' and two packers, numbered nineteen persons; in addition, there were thirty-five horses and mules. Fain would I linger, to gaze once more at the incomparable scenery of the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone and the beautiful Yellowstone Falls, but we have a long way to go and I must leave it to the reader to pursue the details of their amazing discoveries, which included the famous 'Old Faithful' geyser which spouted water and steam to a height

exceeding 150 feet as the explorers stood in awe. There were geysers to the right of them, geysers to the left of them, there were mud geysers, mud volcanoes, waterfalls, mountains, vast silent forests, rivers ... it was as if Nature's wonders had all been assembled in the one place.

On the evening of 19th September, almost two months after they had set out, the party camped near the junction where the Firehole and Gibbon Rivers unite to form the Madison River and, after their evening meal, the party fell into a camp-fire discussion on the question of what might be done to bring the Yellowstone wonders to the attention of the world. There were some who saw the prospects of exploiting the beauty spots for personal gain, but the conversation had not proceeded far before Judge Cornelius Hedger

expressed the view that private ownership of any part of the Yellowstone country ought never to be countenanced, but that the land ought to be set apart by the Government and reserved forever for the use and enjoyment of all the people. This view was accepted by the entire party and, even before the official reports had reached the Government, the 'National Park' concept was being widely proclaimed.

Legislation to have the Yellowstone National Park declared was introduced in the Congress on 18th December 1871 and simultaneously in the Senate. The Bill was duly passed and signed by President Ulysses S. Grant on 1st March 1872.

Following this, other areas of land were reserved as national parks, but it must not be assumed that the Government recognized the need to

provide the finance and manpower required to protect and manage the national parks which had been reserved "for all the people for all time". Nathaniel Langford, who had been a member of the Washburn-Doane expedition in 1870, was appointed first Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, but served for eight years without salary or financial assistance for park improvements.

The problems which beset those responsible for the management of the national parks in America are admirably described by John Ise in his book *Our National Park Policy* (1961).

Although consideration of these matters is beyond the scope of the present work, it was some comfort to me to learn that, even in the U.S. national parks, administrators had their problems, illustrating the old adage 'fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind'.

National parks in Australia

It is common knowledge that almost every country in the world now has some form of national parks system. It was only a few years after the Act of Dedication (1872) that national parks began to be reserved in Australia. The first was Royal National Park, about twenty miles south of Sydney, in 1879. In 1866, an area of 597 acres at Tower Hill, near Warrnambool in south-western Victoria, was reserved as a public park and, in 1892, was raised to the status of a national park by a special Act of Parliament, to become Victoria's first national park, but the Act was never promulgated. Other reservations were made, as public reserves or as sites for national parks; these included a reservation of 412 acres at Fern Tree Gully in 1882, but it was not until 1927 that an area of 512 acres (including the original



Mr Henry Bolte, Premier of Victoria when the National Parks Authority was created in 1956.

412 acres) was permanently reserved as a national park. Over the years, other areas were reserved as national parks, including Wilsons Promontory (1898), Mount Buffalo (1898), Bulga Park (1904), Tarra Valley (1909), Wingan Inlet (1909), Mallacoota Inlet (1909), Alfred (1925), Lind (1926), The Lakes (1926), Kinglake (1928), Wyperfeld (1921) and Churchill (1930).

Control of national parks in Victoria

Until 1956, national parks in Victoria were reserved under the Lands Act and managed by Committees of Management appointed by the Lands Department. Such committees were required to submit a statement of receipts and expenditure at the end of each financial year, but otherwise functioned as autonomous bodies. Committees were free to produce their own regulations and to raise funds to provide whatever services they could in the way of Park Rangers and developments. There was no unified approach to national parks

management, no organized inter-park communications and no direction by any government agency.

The foregoing should not be construed as a criticism of the Committees of Management. The wonder is that the Committees were prepared to undertake their tasks without the necessary government support; but it should be recognized that, in the early years of this century, the population of the State was relatively low and the economy as a whole was hardly in a strong condition. National parks were not recognized as functional units within the economy, but as a kind of luxury and, although dedicated in the name of 'all the people', could be 'enjoyed' by only a relatively small percentage of the population. This was partly because of the remoteness of most of the parks from centres of high population and partly because transport was not freely available. Nevertheless, the Committees 'held the fort' and, had it not been for their efforts, the status of national parks would have been even lower than it was.

It has to be remembered also that reservations of areas of land as national parks were almost invariably made by governments in response to persistent lobbying of groups of people or organizations dedicated to the cause of Nature. Governments generally are reluctant to take any initiative without first feeling the public pulse, and it was necessary for any natural history organization to demonstrate that it was in the interests of the Government of the day to accede to the requests. The reservation of Wilsons Promontory as a national park is a good example of this; had it not been for the persistent lobbying of the Field Naturalists led by Sir Baldwin Spencer and others, the boundaries of that park would most probably have been very different from what they are.

However, over the years and especially after World War II, the Government was persuaded to investigate the possibility of creating a central body to co-ordinate all aspects of national parks management. In 1949, the Government requested the State Development Committee to investigate and report on national parks in Victoria. In 1951, the Committee submitted its report which, inter alia, recognized that “the (present) system of administration of national parks by honorary committees of management gives results which may be described as mainly unsatisfactory”, and recommended the creation of a constituted authority having the necessary powers to “advise and co-ordinate the work of the committees”, but recommended against a continuance of the (present) system under the guidance of a Government Department. The report stated that “the existing policy on national parks lacks cohesion and has no sound basis of development”.

Recommendations of State Development Committee

The State Development Committee recommended as follows:

1. That early legislation be introduced providing for the reservation in perpetuity and for the control and management of National Parks and Monuments in Victoria.
2. That a National Park and Tourist Authority be created under the responsibility of the Minister for Tourist Development, such Authority to consist of
 - (a) a full-time Director who, in the absence of the Minister, shall be Chairman
 - (b) the Secretary for Lands

- (c) the Secretary for Public Works
- (d) the Director of Finance
- (e) the Secretary for Health
- (f) the Chairman of the Forests Commission
- (g) the Manager of the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau.

The State Development Committee set out the basic functions of the Authority and recommended the creation of three advisory committees, to advise the authority in regard to matters relevant to their respective spheres, namely, national parks, alpine areas and tourist resorts. It was further proposed that representatives of the Fisheries and Game Department, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the State Electricity Commission, the Victorian Railways Commission, the Country Roads Board, the Soil Conservation Authority and the Police Department be on each advisory committee, along with an equal number of representatives of public bodies. The Director of the National Parks and Tourist Authority was to be Chairman of each of the advisory committees.

Perhaps the task of implementing so grand a scheme proved too daunting for the government of the day. Certainly, the Director would have needed to possess the wisdom of Solomon and the endurance of an Olympic marathon athlete. At all events, nothing seems to have come of all that effort. These were days of political instability, as governments followed one another in and out of office. Between 1943 and 1955, Victoria had no fewer than nine different governments.

Dawn of a new era

In June 1955, Mr H. E. Bolte began his long reign as Premier of Victoria, retiring from office in August 1972. This was an era of unprecedented

development in Victoria. The significant events which led to the passing of the National Parks Bill in October 1956 were as follows:

1. On 27th September 1955, Mr Dewar Goode, as Chairman of the Land Use Committee of the Australian Primary Producers Union, in conjunction with the Victorian National Parks Association, convened a public meeting, attended by representatives of State and Federal bodies, as well interested bodies and individuals. The meeting resolved that arrangements be made for a deputation to wait on the Premier to press the cause of national parks.
2. On 17th November 1955, a deputation led by Mr P. Crosbie Morrison, President of the Victorian National Parks Association, and supported by seven other delegates, waited on the Premier. The Premier was asked:
 - (a) to bring down legislation to provide for a National Parks Authority;
 - (b) to authorise a land-use survey of the State with a view to having appropriate areas reserved for future scientific investigation and national parks;
 - (c) to make an immediate grant of £20,000 to the Tourists Resorts Committee to be expended in preparing the following places for the enjoyment of the Olympic Games [in Melbourne 1956] visitors, namely The Grampians, Wilsons Promontory National Park, Healesville Sanctuary, Mount Buffalo National Park, Warburton - Healesville - Marysville area, Kinglake National Park, Sherbrooke National Park and the Snowy Mountains Region.

The Premier promised that legislation would be introduced during the Autumn of 1956 to provide for a land-use survey and for the setting up of a National Parks Authority, and expressed the opinion that the proposed Authority should be completely independent of various government departments then involved in matters pertaining to Land-use and in various aspects of the control of national parks. He was less forthcoming in regard to the request for the £20,000.

The National Parks Bill

At the deputation, the Premier invited the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and allied bodies to submit their ideas on draft legislation, and the views of every relevant government department were sought. A study was made of relevant legislation in New Zealand and other Australian States, Great Britain, South Africa and the United States. Only after the closest consideration had been given to all available information was the Bill drafted.

The Honorary Minister, Mr A. J. Fraser, delivered his 'second reading speech' on 30th May 1956, and the Parliamentary debate began. If national parks had suffered in the past because of a lack of competent administrators and field workers, the Parliamentary debate revealed a wealth of knowledge which, if it could only have been harnessed to the national parks themselves, would surely have carried Victoria's national parks to a position of world leadership.

As I wrote this, the third heat of the America's Cup Yacht Race was in progress off the coast of Fremantle [1987] and the thought occurred to me that, if only a fraction of the hot air generated during the debate could

have been directed into the sails of Iain Murray's Kookaburra III, it would have lifted the yacht out of the water and carried it to a resounding victory. But I digress, and remind myself that, in this narrative, it is not going to be possible to examine the Hansard reports in detail. I had not read them until long after I became Director of National Parks, but I commend them to the careful study of everybody interested in national parks.

The Bill, as presented by Mr Fraser, was severely criticized by the Opposition and the Country Party. Mr Clive P. Stoneham (Midlands) led the charge from the Opposition; he found the Bill "frankly disappointing" and accused the Government of 'fumbling'. He warned that, unless the Government was prepared to accept substantial amendments, it was going to lose "a glorious opportunity of doing something worthwhile for Victoria" concerning national parks. Mr Stoneham described the definition of a national park as the "most miserable definition of a national park" that he had ever read. The Bill defined a national park as follows: " 'National park' or 'park' means any area proclaimed under this Act to be a national park". Mr Stoneham offered, instead, a definition of a national park preferred by a certain John Dower, in his report on national parks in England and Wales, namely, 'an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which for the nation's benefit and by national decision and action:

- (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved,
- (b) access facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided,
- (c) wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historical interest are suitably protected, and
- (d) established farming use is effectively maintained.'

Now, to my mind, the definition of a national park contained in the Bill, for purposes of legislation, was unequivocal, while Mr Dower's definition was a grand mixture of rhetoric which included a vague description of the sort of country comprising a national park along with a management prescription. It does not say how 'extensive' the area was to be or how 'beautiful'; yet it was not to be 'too wild' but merely 'relatively wild', and so on. Yet this was the definition preferred by the Member who had been chosen to lead the Opposition's reply.

However, there are certain aspects of the Hansard reports on the debate which should be considered; because, in effect, they provide the background against which every action of the body which was ultimately created to administer national parks would be projected and because they indicate very clearly the sort of climate in which the controlling body was going to work.

It has to be understood that, at the time the Bill was before Parliament, there was no established body, government or private, which had the necessary knowledge or expertise based on practical experience which the Government could have appointed to administer Victoria's national parks system. Nor, indeed, was there a national parks system, but merely a number of areas which had been reserved under the Land Act as national parks. There was no co-ordination of management practices; this in fact was the reason why the Government at the time was endeavouring to establish some form of managing body to develop a system and provide a National Parks Service, even though these concepts might not yet have been recognized.

Now, it would have been possible to incorporate the new body (whatever its nature) in either the

Lands Department or the Forests Commission; but the Government had decided to create a National Parks Authority and incorporate it in the Premier's Department. The reason for this is somewhat obscure; but Mr Fraser, in response to comments by Sir Herbert Hyland (Leader of the Country Party) referring to the 'jealousy between departmental heads' which Sir Albert Lind said had been responsible for legislation of this kind not having been placed on the statute book for the benefit of the State, previously. Mr R. T. White (Ballarat North) threw further light on the matter, saying that he thought that "this Bill represents a compromise by Cabinet to settle a fight between the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Public Works." Mr White further confided to Parliament that the Premier was reputed to have told both of these Ministers "to step aside, as he would take charge of the Bill". At a later stage of the debate, Mr White added a little colour to this statement, saying that the Premier had told them to "Sit back, shut up" and he would "take charge of the Bill". It would seem that national parks were regarded as gems worthy of many a crown.

The Government's intention of transferring control of national parks to the Premier's Department was criticized by several speakers, including Mr L. M. Fennessy (Brunswick East), Sir Albert Lind (Gippsland East) and Mr C. P. Stoneham, who considered that the Lands Department was better qualified for the purpose.

An earlier draft Bill

In the course of the debate on the National Parks Bill (1956) several Members made nostalgic references to a bill which had been introduced by Mr A. E. (later Sir Albert) Lind in

1952, following receipt of the report of the State Development Committee. It is not proposed to discuss that Bill; but its title, 'A Bill to make provision with respect to the development, improvement, maintenance, protection and management of tourist areas, alpine areas and national parks, and for other purposes' seems unduly long. In the light of the doubts and fears revealed in the debate on the 1956 Bill, it is hardly surprising that the 1952 Bill did not proceed very far; but Sir Albert expressed regret that the two aspects – national parks and tourism – were not joined in the one Bill, because he considered them to be complementary to one another. However, not everybody saw national parks and tourism in the same light, and Mr Fennessy drew the attention of the House to an article written by the Director of Fisheries and Game in Victoria, Mr A. D. Butcher, who was to have been a member of the National Parks Advisory Council to which reference is made below. Mr Fennessy informed his Parliamentary colleagues that "the Victorian National Parks Association wants no intrusion whatsoever into national parks". The article, inter alia, contained the following remarks:

"Perhaps I might interpret the Service philosophy as one which has as its basic objective the retention of the park areas in a completely natural state. Here lies, I feel, the outstanding unsolved problem of the National Parks Service. The people obviously have the right to visit the parks and to enjoy them – this in turn requires the provision of at least certain basic facilities. However, every facility provided takes away something of the natural conditions which the Service is endeavouring to maintain. Popularity can contribute a serious threat to continued preservation.

"A policy which holds that national parks are not resorts can go a long

way towards achieving the Service's basic philosophy. There is no necessity to develop the parks as resorts – there is plenty of space elsewhere."

This is a remarkable statement in many ways; at that time, there was no National Parks Service and one can only assume that the statement embodied Mr Butcher's personal views at the time. I feel bound to add that, in my long years of association with Mr Butcher, I was totally unaware he held such extreme views. On the contrary, during that period, he demonstrated a full appreciation of the need for proper conservation practices in providing for visitors to national parks. But the authors of Hansard had before them only the published words and did not hesitate to use them to discredit national parks in so far as the tourist aspect was concerned.

The National Parks Bill (1956)

It is difficult to imagine how anybody who had survived the perils of adolescence could have been so naive as to present such a Bill to Parliament. The 1956 Bill, as presented, provided for the creation of two bodies, namely a National Parks Advisory Council, consisting of the following members ex officio:

- (a) the Premier of the State of Victoria, or such other Minister as the Premier from time to time appoints in that behalf, who shall be chairman,
- (b) the Secretary for Lands,
- (c) the Chairman of the Forests Commission of Victoria,
- (d) the Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority;
- (e) the Chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission

- (f) the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria,
- (g) the Secretary of the Public Works Department.

and a National Parks Authority having the following membership:

- (a) the Director, ex officio, who shall be the chairman of the Authority,
- (b) one member appointed by the Governor in Council who shall be the deputy-chairman of the Authority,
- (c) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing organizations concerned with the protection of native fauna and flora,
- (d) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing organizations concerned with outdoor recreation,
- (e) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing persons having a special interest in national parks,
- (f) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing the Country Women's Association of Victoria,
- (g) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria,
- (h) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau,
- (i) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as being a zoologist who is a member of the Royal Society of Victoria.

It will be seen therefore that the body consisting of the heads of the various statutory authorities most likely to provide the necessary scientific and technical knowledge, expertise and management skills was to act in an advisory capacity to serve the

National Parks Authority, which was to consist of non-government bodies (except the representative of the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau) whose qualifications and experience in matters relevant to national parks were, to put it mildly, minimal or non-existent. Above all, the Premier of the State was to be the leader of the advisory body.

These proposals were the subject of heated debate in Parliament. Among the most outspoken critics was the Member for Benambra, the Hon. T. W. Mitchell MLA, who warned the Honorary Minister (Mr Fraser) that "if he and his Government were not co-operative, the Bill would be hammered out of existence in another place". The 'other place', of course, was the Legislative Council, where the Government did not have a majority.

Mr Mitchell was renowned for the enjoyment he derived from participating in Parliamentary debates and took full advantage of them. His famous speech, in which he categorised those who had aligned themselves with the cause of Nature as 'butterfly boys' constitutes a fine heritage of hyperbole for posterity. It appears to have been an open secret that the person most likely to be appointed Director was Phillip Crosbie Morrison. Mr Morrison had for many years been the Editor of that excellent magazine 'Wildlife', and his Sunday evening broadcasts on natural history had been enthusiastically awaited by thousands of listeners, for many years. This well-known and respected public figure was also President of the Victorian National Parks Association and a member of the Wilson's Promontory National Park Committee of Management. But Mr Mitchell, with the adroitness of Mark Anthony in his celebrated speech after the assassination of Julius Caesar, informed the House that "if Crosbie Morrison or any other dictator

from among the butterfly boys were to gain control over national parks, he could lock up an area of Victoria – for the upkeep of which the community would pay – and members of the public would not be allowed access to what is really their property."

The Bill was attacked by several other Members. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr John Cain) expressed concern at the intent of the Bill to place the control of national parks in the hands of a number of private citizens while the long-serving officers of the Lands Department and Forests Commission were to be placed in inferior positions, while the Director was to be ex-officio Chairman. He argued that "the sensible course is to have an Authority containing a blend between the well-meaning dreamers and departmental experts". Mr Cain said it was ridiculous for this or any other government to present legislation which proposes the Premier as Chairman of any 'advisory body'. He made it very clear that, even if the Bill were amended (as proposed by Sir Albert Lind), to enable the Premier to appoint another Minister as Chairman of the proposed National Parks Authority, he would "not be happy if the Honorary Minister (Mr Fraser) were to be so appointed". Naturally, Mr Fraser did not appreciate this.

Sir Albert Lind regarded the draft legislation as an 'insult', while Mr Stoneham said that it was 'a legislative monstrosity' and that nothing could be more absurd than to suggest the complex task of controlling the national parks of this State should be undertaken by part-time enthusiasts, under the 'domination' of the Director. Mr Mitchell rose to even greater heights in his oratory and asked the House whether "the butterfly boys would be required to account for the money spent if these broad acres were handed over to them". In a vain attempt to bait the unfortunate

Honorary Minister, he averred that “the Government will give them ducats and let them buy butterfly nets and go after yabbies with fish traps”. In fairness to Mr Mitchell, when called to order by the Chairman (Mr Vernon Christie), he claimed that he was “only a bushman - just a peasant” and that he “did not know anything about big business”. Such modesty must have taken his Parliamentary colleagues by surprise, but he revealed his further doubts by asking whether “if bug hunters are to comprise the controlling body of our national parks, where are they likely to be - anywhere from Balwyn to Bullioh. They are likely to be up a hollow log looking for bandicoots.” All this under privilege of Parliamentary debate!

There were others of a more serious turn of mind who, while highly critical of the Government for its ineptness, nevertheless offered constructive comment. Sir Albert Lind and the Leader of the Country Party made valuable contributions to the debate, although Sir Albert seemed determined to combine tourism and national parks in the one Bill. Mr Fraser expressed a willingness to discuss the Bill with Members of the Opposition and Country Party and ‘the House went into Committee for further consideration of the Bill’. The result was that, on 3rd October, Mr Fraser submitted an amendment which proposed that “For the purposes of this Act there shall be a National Parks Authority consisting of:

- (a) the Premier of Victoria or such other Minister as is for the time being nominated by the Premier who shall be the Chairman of the Authority;
- (b) the Director;
- (c) the Secretary for Lands or his nominee;
- (d) the Chairman of the Forests Commission of Victoria or his nominee;

- (e) the Secretary of the Public Works Department or his nominee;
- (f) the Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority or his nominee;
- (g) the Director of Fisheries and Game;
- (h) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing organizations concerned with the protection of native fauna and flora;
- (i) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing persons having a special interest in national parks;
- (j) one member appointed by the Governor in Council as representing the Ski Club of Victoria.

The Governor in Council shall from time to time appoint one of the members to be the Deputy Chairman thereof.”

The debate continued, enlivened by some heated exchanges between the Government Members and those of the Opposition and Country Party. Matters of particular concern were those dealing with the granting of leases and permits under the Mines Act, finance, the conduct of visitors to national parks, and so on. Despite its most unpromising start, the Bill was “reported to the House with further amendments and passed through its remaining stages” and introduced into the Legislative Council, on 9th October 1956, by the Hon G. L. Chandler (Minister for Agriculture). The debate in the Upper House was resumed on 17th October, when a number of amendments were made, including one to have the skiing fraternity represented by a person nominated by the Victorian Ski Association, instead of the Ski Club of Victoria.

The debate in the Upper House proceeded more smoothly than it had

in the Assembly, no doubt because, by the time it had passed through the Assembly, it had been ‘hammered into shape’. It seems that, in the end, common sense and a genuine desire to place some worthwhile legislation in the statute books eventually triumphed over the pride and prejudices which, at different stages of the debate, had threatened disaster for the Bill.

From my reading of the Hansard Reports, it appears that it was almost entirely due to the penetrating insight of the Hon. I. A. Swinburne, MLC (North-Eastern Province) that the Parliament eventually escaped from the quicksands of confused thinking and abusive rhetoric, and produced a Bill which contained the necessary elements for the establishment of a National Parks Authority on a practical basis. In essence, the Swinburne amendments replaced the two bodies mentioned on page 7 by a single body having the composition set out above, with item (j) amended as mentioned on the same page.

The National Parks Act 1956

The principal aim of the National Parks Act (1956) was create an Authority - the National Parks Authority - having the responsibility of administering the national parks of Victoria. To this end, the Authority was established as a body corporate and its composition was defined so that it would have continuity of membership. The Act defined its objectives and the duties of the National Parks Authority and embodied appropriate statutes, which enabled the Authority to pursue the objectives defined by Parliament. These and other relevant aspects are examined hereunder.

The Act in detail

Section 3 of the Act reads as follows:

1. The objects of this Act are
 - (a) to provide for the establishment and control of national parks;
 - (b) to protect and preserve indigenous plant and animal wildlife and features of special scenic scientific or historical interest in national parks;
 - (c) to maintain the existing environment of national parks;
 - (d) to provide for the education and enjoyment of visitors to national parks and to encourage and control such visitors.
2. The Premier of Victoria shall be the Minister administering this Act.

The objects of the Act, as defined, constitute the broad framework within which the Authority was to work and,

in effect, represented a commitment by Parliament to those ends.

Section 4 of the Act stated that:

For the purposes of this Act there shall subject to the Public Service Acts be appointed a Director of National Parks.

The Director shall be the executive officer of the National Parks Authority.

This statute created the office of Director of National Parks and amounted to an instruction to the administering body (the Premier's Department) in accordance with normal public service procedures, and defined precisely the relationship of the Director to the Authority.

Section 5 of the Act stated that 'for the purposes this Act there shall be a National Parks Authority' and listed the membership thereof. This has already been given in Chapter 1, along with the statutory provision for the appointment of a deputy chairman. Section 5 (3) stated that "the Authority shall be a body corporate under the name of the 'National Parks Authority' and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and shall be capable in law of suing and being sued and, subject to and for the purposes of this Act, of acquiring holding and disposing of property and of doing and suffering all other acts and things as bodies corporate may by law do and suffer".

The remaining provisions of Section 5 need not concern us here; but Section

5 (1) will surely be recognized as a most important piece of legislative machinery which gave the Director direct access to the heads of the relevant government departments and others, and enabled all those bodies and persons mentioned to be involved in the moulding of the National Parks Service. I personally consider that this was the most effective (if not the only) manner in which the Authority could have functioned at the time.

Secretary and other staff

Section 6 of the Act provided that

1. subject to the Public Service Acts there may be appointed a Secretary to the Authority and such other officers and employees as are required for the administration of this Act, and
2. for the purposes of this Act the Authority may with the consent of the Minister administering the Department concerned make use of the services of any officer or employee in any Government Department.

It will be seen that the appointment of a Secretary and 'such other officers' etc. is not a legal requirement imposed by Parliament, because the use of the conditional ('may') makes it clear that such appointments are not mandatory. Although there does not appear to have been any problem in regard to the employment of a Secretary and a typist/stenographer (junior), it was extremely difficult



Wyperfeld National Park in the Mallee was established in 1909.

for the Authority to obtain approval to employ 'other officers'.

The intention of Section 6(2) was no doubt laudable, but such a provision could have had the effect of preventing the Authority from building up its own team of specialists. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether any Permanent Head would be prepared to admit that his department was so over-staffed that it could afford to service another department.

Power to proclaim National Parks

Section 7 of the Act stated that:

1. The areas of Crown land which have already been reserved under the Land Acts, and which are referred to in the Schedule to this Act, are hereby declared to be national parks under this Act.

2. Any area of land declared by this or any subsequent Act to be a national park may be declared to be subject to such conditions (including responsibility for fire protection) restrictions and reservations as the Governor in Council having regard to recommendations of the Authority thinks fit and prescribes by proclamation published in the Government Gazette and such conditions restrictions and reservations shall have effect accordingly: and the Governor in Council may having regard to any recommendation of the Authority revoke amend or vary any such condition restriction or reservation or impose any new condition restriction or reservation by a subsequent proclamation published in the Government Gazette.

3. The Governor in Council may by

regulation prescribe classifications of national parks and any proclamation under this section may proclaim land to be a national park of any such classification.

4. Any declaration of any other land as a national park under this Act shall be made by Act of Parliament and not otherwise.

Sub-section 1 clearly defined the areas of land over which the Authority had jurisdiction, while sub-section 2 enabled the Authority, through the Governor in Council, to impose conditions on the management practices to be adopted in regard to land under its control. Sub-section 3 appears to have been the dream child of some individual; but, under the conditions which prevailed from 1956 to 1975, had little relevance. Sub-section 4 was of the utmost significance, as it meant that national parks could not be created or



Whisky Point and Norman Island, Wilson's Promontory NP.

destroyed by the Governor in Council, but only by Parliament, the supreme body.

Powers of the Authority

Section 8 of the Act stated that:

1. Every national park shall subject to this Act be under the control of the Authority which shall exercise such control subject to the objects of this Act and to any condition restrictions and reservations prescribed by any proclamation under this Act in relation to the park.
2. In the exercise and performance of its functions under this Act the Authority in respect of any national park may subject to this Act -
 - (a) carry out permanent works for the establishment, protection (including fire protection), development and improvement of the park and (without limiting the generality of the foregoing) may erect buildings for the accommodation or convenience of the public, set apart and establish camping places,
 - provide conveniences amenities and attractions and provide roads and tracks in or into the park;
 - (b) permit any person or body of persons approved by the Authority to manage or occupy any such accommodation or camping place at such rent charge or fee for such periods and subject to such conditions as the Authority specifies;
 - (c) carry out works of maintenance in the park;
 - (d) subsidize any person or body carrying out any works of permanent improvement in the park with the approval of the Authority.
3. The Authority shall not itself undertake any constructional works but shall arrange for any such works, and may arrange for any works of maintenance, to be undertaken by private contractors or by any public Authority at the expense of the Authority.

This section had very important implications; it placed the national

parks under the control of the Authority, subject to the constraints of the Act, and it empowered the Authority to do all those things which were necessary for the fulfilment of the objects of the Act; but it precluded the possibility that the Authority might endeavour to become a construction authority in its own right. Section 8 (3) was, in my opinion, a very wise provision; the involvement of the Authority in the acquisition, control and maintenance of a range of, for example, vehicles and heavy equipment and a work force to suit, would have seriously impaired its ability to devote itself to those aspects of park management for which its collective expertise best suited it. At the same time, I always maintained (and still do) that it was imperative for the Authority to have on its staff officers who were competent to assess the needs of the parks and the quality of the work performed by others. I never saw the Authority or its staff as a kind of rubber stamp, and evidence of this will be found throughout this work.

Duties of the Authority

Section 9 of the Act defined the duties of the Authority, viz:

- (a) unless inconsistent with any special purpose for which a national park has been proclaimed, to maintain every national park in its natural condition and to conserve therein ecological associations and species of native plants and animals and as far as practicable to exterminate exotic plants and animals therein;
- (b) to encourage and regulate the use of national parks by the public and to provide for the enjoyment thereof by the people in such a way as to leave the parks unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations;
- (c) to protect national parks from injury by fire.

This section was of the utmost importance; section 9(a) makes it very clear that, in undertaking or in authorizing any works for any purpose, the Authority's role as a conservation body was paramount, and placed the responsibility for 'exterminating exotic plants and animals' in national parks fairly and squarely on the Authority's shoulders. Section 9(b) required the Authority to encourage visitors to national parks (thus dispelling the doubts expressed by Mr Fennessy) and to provide for their education and enjoyment, but in such a way as not to impair the quality of the park, and to make regulations governing the conduct of visitors to parks, to that end. Finally, Section 9(c) makes it the responsibility of the Authority to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the national parks against injury from fire.

Mining Leases or Permits in National Parks

Section 10 of the Act provided that "no lease or licence shall be granted under the Mines Acts in respect of any part of a national park except with the consent of the Authority; provided that if any person is aggrieved by any refusal of the Authority to give any such consent he may in writing to the Minister appeal to the Governor in Council whose decision shall be final".

I could only hope that nobody would suspect the presence of oil in one of our national parks!

Committees of Management

As explained earlier, at the time when the Authority was formed national parks were controlled by committees of management. The transfer of power from the Committees to the Authority was a very contentious matter, and required very special legislative provisions for its accomplishment. Section 11, dealing with this matter, reads as follows:

1. Where at the time when a national park is proclaimed there is in existence a committee of management under the Lands Acts or the Forests Acts in respect of the whole or part of the land comprised in the park (whether or not in addition to any other land) the Governor in Council, after considering any recommendations of the Authority and of the committee of management, may -
 - (a) decide to leave the committee to function subject to this Act; or
 - (b) by Order published in the Government Gazette revoke the appointment of the committee of management so far as relates to the whole or part of the land comprised in the park.

2. Insofar as there is not at any time such a committee of management in respect of a national park the Authority may appoint a committee, representative of local interests and of national park interests, to manage the park on behalf of the Authority and may delegate to such committees such of the powers and functions of the Authority as it thinks fit.
3. Subject to any general or special directions given by the Authority, any committee to which any powers have been delegated may exercise those powers in the same manner and with the same effect as if they had been directly conferred on that committee by this Act and not by delegation.
4. Every committee purporting to act under any delegation under this section shall, in the absence of proof to the contrary, be presumed to be acting within the terms of the delegation.
5. Any such delegation may at any time be revoked by the Authority in whole or in part, but such revocation shall not affect in any way anything done under the delegated authority.
6. No such delegation shall prevent the exercise by the Authority itself of any of the powers and functions conferred on it by this Act.

Section 11 was a veritable minefield. Several important aspects of the section need to be explained if the reader is to have any clear understanding of the relationships between the committees of management and the Authority.

The first obvious question is why Parliament, in passing the Act, did not take the bold step of making the committees directly responsible to the Authority, just as it placed the Authority in control of the thirteen

national parks under Section 7(l). The answer is that the committees would never have agreed to such an arrangement and it is certain that the Country Party would have opposed such a proposal. And there would have been good grounds for doing so. Firstly, until the National Parks Authority had actually met and demonstrated that it had the capacity to administer national parks, the committees would have felt very insecure; there was in fact a good deal of nervousness in evidence. Secondly, until the Authority had produced a set of regulations under the National Parks Act and had had them proclaimed by the Governor in Council (under Section 15), the committees of management (and the Authority) would have been without regulations to enable them to control human and other activities within the national parks. Until the appointments of the committees of management had been revoked, it was feasible for them to continue to function under the Lands Act. Clearly, if these conditions had been allowed to perpetuate themselves, the situation would have become untenable; but sub-sections 1 and 2 of Section 11 embodied the legislative machinery for dealing with the problem.

The legal implications of sub-sections of Section 11 are, of course, very proper; but let's look at sub-section 3. This means that, once, a particular power had been delegated to the committee by the Authority, the committee had the same power in regard to that function as the Authority had under the Act! Sub-section 4 was potentially fraught with great danger for the Authority; because, if the Authority wished to question a particular committee for having breached any agreement with the Authority, unless the Authority could prove that a breach had occurred, it was to be assumed that the committee had acted within the

powers delegated. Clearly, any act of delegation had to be very carefully worded.

As it turned out, the Authority did not deem it necessary to revoke any delegation of powers to any committee, but it would have been political suicide for the Authority to have any such plans. The same applies to sub-section 6; if the Authority had felt the need to exercise this power, the political repercussions would have been explosive. Fortunately the Authority recognized that these trails were loaded with land mines, and was careful to avoid using them.

Powers of public authorities

Section 12 reads as follows:

"Nothing in this Act shall derogate from the powers authorities and functions of any public: utility except that any such power function or authority shall (except in case of emergency) in relation to any national park be exercised subject to the conditions restrictions and reservations in any proclamation under this Act relating to the park unless the Governor in Council otherwise directs whether generally or in any particular case after considering any representations of the Authority in relation thereto."

I do not know whether Parliament had anything of a specific nature in mind when it made this provision, but I think that the intent is clear. If the Authority had acted strictly in accordance with the provisions of this section, it would have been necessary to determine what restrictions or reservations should be imposed in any particular park and have such restrictions or reservations proclaimed by the Governor in Council. This would have entailed preliminary consultations

with the relevant committee and, of course, with the Parliamentary Draughtsman, and also with the public utility concerned. Frankly, the Authority did not have the resources (i.e. manpower) to become involved in this sort of activity and it became one of my functions to bring the existence of the Authority to the notice of the relevant public utilities and set up the necessary consultative machinery to deal with any problem which might arise. This approach served as the basis of many fruitful discussions between the Country Roads Board and the Authority concerning roads which lay close to the boundary of a national park or where, in the interests of public safety, a realignment of the road encroached on part of the park or, in some cases, resulted in a small addition to the park. Without such a provision, there could have been chaos.

The National Parks Fund

Section 13 of the Act reads as follows:

1. There shall be established and kept in the Treasury a fund to be called the 'National Parks Fund'.
2. There shall be paid into the Fund -
 - (a) any gifts or bequests made to the Authority;
 - (b) any moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of this Act;
 - (c) any other money received by the Authority.
3. There shall be paid out of the Fund -
 - (a) costs and expenses incurred by the Authority in the exercise of any functions powers or authorities or the performance of any duties conferred or imposed upon the Authority by this Act;
 - (b) any costs and expenses, as certified by the Minister, of the

administration of or arising under this Act.

4. A separate account shall be kept in the Fund in respect of each national park and any tolls fees rents charges or other moneys received by the committee of management of any national park shall be used by such committee for the purposes of such park.

The provisions of this section ensured that all moneys pertaining to national parks were kept separate from other Government moneys and that effective accounting procedures could be adopted so that it was readily possible to ascertain the financial position of the Authority or of a particular committee of management.

Section 13 (4) ensured that revenue derived from park services provided by a particular park could not be used except in regard to the park in question. The Authority did not interpret this section as implying that each committee had complete autonomy in regard to the use of 'park revenue', and required that consolidated budgets be prepared for each park, embodying details of works programmes and financial aspects, with disclosure of the source of finance (i.e. from park revenue or from Authority allocations). This was very proper, I think, because park revenue was generated very largely by financial investments in the park made by the Authority or by its forerunners (e.g. Tourist Resorts Committees), acting on behalf of the government. Committees were inclined to regard 'park' revenue as 'their money', but this constraint enabled the Authority to ensure that there was an equitable distribution of the money made available by the government for use in the parks. Government allocations were never adequate and it is important to remember that the wages of Rangers

and other park personnel were not covered by 'Vote' money, but had to come from the 'Works Allocation', which came from Loan Funds. This was because park personnel were not public servants and not subject to the provisions of the Public Service Acts.

Annual Report

Section 14 of the Act read as follows:

1. As soon as may be after the thirtieth day of June in each year the Authority shall cause to be prepared and delivered to the Minister a report setting out -
 - (a) the activities of the Authority and the results thereof during the year ended on such day;
 - (b) the condition of each park;
 - (c) a statement of accounts, with separate accounts for each park, showing the moneys received and expended and the purposes to which the moneys so expended have been applied;
 - (d) estimates of the work proposed to be undertaken by or under the supervision of or on behalf of the Authority and of the moneys likely to be required for the financial year then ensuing for carrying into effect the purposes of this Act.
2. The Minister shall cause such report to be laid before both Houses of Parliament within twenty-eight days after it is delivered to him or, if Parliament is not then sitting, then within twenty-eight days after the next meeting of Parliament.

The wisdom of Parliament in imposing such a duty on the Authority was never in question; but, considering the staff provided by the government to accomplish the entirety of duties prescribed by the Act, it must be

seen as a 'tall order'. The relevant information had to be collected from the various committees of management and it took some time to develop the machinery to ensure that there was some degree of uniformity in the form of these reports, to facilitate the extraction of the relevant data and incorporate them in a consolidated report. It was never possible (for me, anyway) to produce the annual report as expeditiously as I would have liked, but the early reports do, I think, convey some idea of the problems confronting the Authority and the National Parks Service and of our endeavours to promote the cause of national parks.

Regulations

Section 15 of the Act enabled the Governor in Council to make regulations with respect to the classification of national parks, their protection, preservation and care, etc., the conduct of the several categories of visitors to national parks and their safety, the fixing of tolls, fees and charges, etc., the proceedings of the Authority and of committees under the Act, the prescribing of penalties for breaches of the regulations and, generally, with respect to all those matters or things deemed necessary in the implementation of the provisions of the Act.

It will be seen therefore that the National Parks Act provided for the creation of a specialist Authority and set out the legal framework required to enable the Authority to function under the Act. Later, it became necessary to amend the Act in the light of the Authority's experience and to meet the exigencies of the time. These matters will be discussed at the appropriate stage.

The National Parks Authority

The first National Parks Authority consisted of the following members:

Chairman: The Hon. A. J. Fraser, MC, MLA, Assistant Minister of State Development and Decentralization.

Deputy Chairman: The Hon. C. E. Isaac OBE, representing persons having a special interest in national parks.

Members:

Mr W. T. Long, Secretary for Lands

Mr A. O. P. Lawrence, BSc (Adel.), Dip.For. (Oxon), Dip.For. (Canberra), Chairman, Forests Commission of Victoria

Mr J. H. Aldred, AFIA, Secretary for Public Works

Mr G. T. Thompson, AMI E Aust, Chairman, Soil Conservation Authority

Mr A. Dunbavin Butcher, MSc (Melb), Director of Fisheries and Game

Mr Dewar V. Goode, representing organizations concerned with the protection of native fauna and flora.

Mr E. H. R. Burt, representing the Victorian Ski Association

Mr J. C. Dickson, representing the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau

Mr Crosbie Morrison, Director of National Parks

These men were about to venture into uncharted waters; they virtually had to make their own maps to guide themselves and others who followed.

The Authority held its first meeting on 30th May 1957. The Premier, the Hon. H. E. (Henry) Bolte MLA, presided and explained in general terms the functions and responsibilities of the Authority, and urged 'caution and deliberation' in planning. The second meeting was held on 4th June, when certain procedural matters were discussed. It was determined that the Authority would meet monthly and that, as quickly as possible, visits should be paid to every national park in the 'schedule'. Thus, Departmental Heads were required to devote the necessary time to attend a meeting of the Authority once a month and to visit the national parks, some of which were a considerable distance from Melbourne. Wyperfeld, in the north-west, was about 450 km distant, and Mallacoota Inlet National Park lay some 550 km to the east. Similarly, non-government members found it necessary to arrange their business interests to attend meetings and inspections. One such member, Mr Dewar Goode, resided at Brim Brim, about 400 km west of Melbourne...a long way from Mallacoota.

The Authority lost no time in launching itself into its work. The first park (Kinglake) was visited on 20th June and, during the next few months, visits were paid to Churchill, Fern Tree Gully, Sperm Whale Head (The Lakes), Tarra Valley, Bulga Park, Wilsons Promontory and Mount Buffalo National Parks. Naturally, the Authority was accompanied by the committees of management, thus

beginning the close collaboration between the two bodies which played such an important part in future years.

Because the Authority did not begin to function until almost the end of the financial year, no works programmes were developed during this period, and no financial allocations, either to or by the Authority during the 1956-57 year. Prior to the creation of the Authority, individual committee of management had received grants towards the cost of maintenance and works from the Tourist Resorts Committee, and this body undertook to continue this system until the end of the 1956-57 financial year, so that the transition from the old to the new system proceeded smoothly.

General policy of the National Parks Authority

The Authority very quickly began to examine its charter and plot its course. Its first Annual Report stated that it was preparing a general plan for the entire system of national parks of the State, but clearly such a plan could not be completed until all the parks had been inspected and the Authority had gained first-hand knowledge of their particular features and management requirements.

The first Annual Report, covering the year ended 30th June 1957, one month after the first meeting, was naturally brief, but it affords a broad view of the course which lay ahead, especially in regard to the following:



Philip Crosbie Morrison (left) with Committee of Management members at Mt Buffalo National Park, 1957. Photo courtesy DSE Historic Places.

1. Fire protection: It was planned to make a careful survey of the individual fire hazards peculiar to each park and to take appropriate protective measures without delay.

2. Public access: The Authority recognized the importance of providing public access to the national parks; but, in order to preserve the parks' features, felt that motor roads should be limited to the 'functional minimum', while walking tracks should be developed to standards enabling them to be negotiated by 'all able-bodied visitors, not only the young and nimble'.

3. Flora and fauna conservation: The Authority considered that species surveys of flora and fauna should be undertaken, either through the Fisheries and Game Department or the Forests Commission and the National Herbarium. Later, it was hoped to be able to have one or more biologists on its own staff for conservation management.

4. Public relations: The Authority recognized the importance

of employing the press and broadcasting services to promote the cause of national parks, and proposed to publish, from time to time, bulletins and brochures to provide for 'the education of visitors to national parks'.

Condition of the national parks

The first report also gave the Authority an opportunity of presenting Parliament with a statement - an inventory - on the condition of the national parks, and of drawing attention to the deficiencies in regard to amenities, roads, walking tracks, water supplies, informative notices, introduced animals such as deer, foxes and rabbits, and the prevalence of vandalism and illicit shooting in some parks. Obviously, the Authority also recognized some of the problems that lay ahead. This statement of 'assets and liabilities' provided a useful reference against which to project future developments.

Proposed National Parks

Even before the Authority had begun to function, it had before it a list of areas proposed as national parks, including Tower Hill, Werribee Gorge, the Brisbane Ranges, the lower Glenelg River, Mount Richmond and the Daylesford and Hepburn spa resorts. While the Authority appreciated the need to extend and diversify Victoria's national parks system, it decided, in general, "to focus attention first on bringing the national parks under its control to the desired pitch of efficiency" before involving itself in other desirable additions.

Staff and office accommodation

The position of Secretary was not filled until 7th October 1957, when Mr R B (Ron) Newson took up his appointment. Miss June Bloomfield was appointed as a typist/stenographer, but resigned later; she was succeeded by Miss Joy Barker

(aged 16 years) as a junior typist/stenographer.

The staff was initially housed in the 'Conference Room' in the Public Offices in Treasury Place, but later moved to the Observatory Building in the Domain, South Yarra. The Authority's first annual report referred to this as the 'permanent home' of the staff.

Role of the Director

The Director of National Parks was the only member of the Authority who was engaged 'full time' on the Authority's work, the other members being fully occupied with their duties as heads of their respective government departments or in their private vocations. It therefore fell to the Director to harness the resources of the Authority and, later, of the committees of management, in mapping out areas of national parks management (in the broad sense) where their collective endeavours should be directed. It is difficult to conceive that any particular member of the Authority could or would have been able to find the time to prepare a plan of management for any or all of the national parks which would embrace all the relevant functions. This, surely, was the task of the Director, employing all the resources available to him. I am not aware whether the first Director ever received any specific instructions in regard to his work, except those embodied in the minutes of the Authority; I certainly did not.

The first Director: Phillip Crosbie Morrison

The untimely death of the first Director, in the early hours of 1st March 1958, was a sad blow for the National Parks Authority and all those who knew him well. He had visited Fern Tree Gully on

Friday 28th February for discussions with the Committee of Management, so it may well be said that he 'died in harness'. His death undoubtedly had an effect on the course of the Authority; but, because he had been in office only a few months, it is not possible to say what form the later National Parks Service might have taken under his directorship.

I personally had been acquainted with Crosbie Morrison for many years and valued his friendship; he was warm and cheerful, always alive and interested in what one had to say. He was very knowledgeable and had a good sense of humour. I can still see the twinkle in Crosbie's eyes as we talked. For the purposes of this narrative it may be worthwhile to record some of the details which appear to me to be relevant to the subject of this book, because those who have 'inherited the kingdom' will, for the most part, have little or no knowledge of the first Director (or of the second, for that matter).

Phillip Crosbie Morrison was born in 1900. He attended University High School and was later a brilliant student at the University of Melbourne, where he was awarded his MSc degree for studies on the Great Barrier Reef. His interest in biological research won him a place in the expedition to Central Australia and later across the Nullabor with Sir Russell Grimwade. In the late 1930s, when Sir Keith Murdoch was seeking a young man to produce a nature magazine, Sir Russell persuaded him that Crosbie Morrison was the 'man for the job'. The first issue of *Wild Life* appeared in mid-October 1938 and, for many years, it enabled Crosbie Morrison to spread the gospel of conservation across the State and beyond. Even more effective perhaps was his Sunday night broadcast through 3DB (the Herald radio station), which within three months

embraced some 70 per cent of local listeners, including the present author. Crosbie Morrison had the scientific knowledge to understand the world of nature, and the sensitivity to explain its mysteries to his listeners in language which could easily be understood.

But his activities were not confined to his editorial office (where I often met him), and he enjoyed 'camp-outs' with fellow naturalists, among whom he assumed a position of leadership in espousing the cause of conservation. In 1952 he was elected President of the newly-formed Victorian National Parks Association, and continued his crusade for a specialist administration for national parks in Victoria. He was also a member of the Wilsons Promontory Committee of Management.

When, in 1956, the National Parks Bill was finally passed, he was already being referred to in the House as the Director of National Parks, and was appointed to that office in May 1957. The first meeting of the Authority was held on 30th May 1957; but, without a permanent home or staff, his task was daunting. Along with the other members of the Authority he had to meet the several committees of management and 'persuade' them to join the Authority on its uncharted course, and visit the national parks in order to be able to make informed assessments of what was needed to accomplish some measure of compliance with the objects of the Act. No easy task! Yet his interest in the use of the media to gain access to a wider audience remained undiminished and, at the time of his death, he was preparing a series of television programmes to the same end.

Appointment of new Director

The death of the first Director created a vacancy, which was duly advertised. Shortly after Crosbie's death, I began to wonder whether an application from me might be considered. I decided to call Mr A. O. Lawrence, Chairman of the Forests Commission, to inquire whether there was any reason for hope, and was informed that my name had already been mentioned to the Minister. I was not told by whom, and must now inform the reader why I had called Mr Lawrence.

In 1956, the Commission found itself under attack from certain conservation bodies, especially over the erection of a 'hut', obtained from Camp Pell in Royal Park by Melbourne High School, in that part of Sherbrooke Forest which had been allocated to the school in the mid-1920s as a consequence of the adoption of a plan known as 'The Schools Plantation Scheme'. The details of the scheme and the pros and cons of the introduction of the Camp Pell hut into Sherbrooke Forest need not concern us here; but the Commission was brought to realize that it needed some body of private citizens to 'advise' it on matters pertaining to the management of Sherbrooke Forest. Mr Lawrence (whom I had not previously met) had apparently heard of my interest in Sherbrooke Forest and did me the honour of inviting me to form a committee to advise the Commission.

Now, although I had spent much time in the forest studying its lyrebirds and other features, I had not concerned myself with management aspects. However, after discussing the matter with Mr Lawrence, I set about the task of selecting a committee of local residents who were interested in the welfare of the forest, and the

Sherbrooke Forest Committee of Management was duly appointed by the Governor in Council. Later, when the former Monbulk State Forest and Sherbrooke Forest were amalgamated to form Sherbrooke Forest Park, the name was changed to 'advisory' committee. I had made it clear to Mr Lawrence that I did not wish to become involved in the 'management' of the park, but was happy to assist in the way of advice from the committee of which I was appointed Chairman.

Thus it came about that, along with the other members of the Advisory Committee, I found myself taking an ever-broadening interest in such matters as 'general policy' in regard to management, reforestation, public relations exercises through press releases and informative notices designed by the committee, destruction of foxes (which were causing much harm to the lyrebirds and other fauna), provision of visitor facilities such as fireplaces, picnic tables and shelters, water supply and walking tracks, etc. The committee was also concerned with fire protection aspects.

I was aware that the work of the committee was very pleasing to the Commission, even though it placed additional pressure on certain officers whose tranquillity had been disturbed; but I was a little surprised that my name had already been mentioned to the Minister as a possible successor to the late Director. However, I decided to seek an interview with the Minister, the Honourable A. J. Fraser, and in the hope of creating a favourable impression I took along with me a number of journals in which my articles on various aspects of natural history and national parks had been published. I think he was impressed, perhaps even a little surprised, because he invited Mr A. G. Coulthard (then a senior officer of the Department of State

Development and later Secretary to the Premier's Department) into his office to examine my publications. I gained the impression that he, too, was pleasantly surprised. Naturally, the Minister did not offer any encouragement that an application from me would receive any special consideration, but I left his office feeling that it might be worthwhile to apply.

The terms of appointment of the first Director required that the applicant possess a degree in the biological sciences, but this restriction did not appear in the advertisement for the second director, who was required to have, *inter alia*, a degree in science. I learned much later that some 28 other people had also applied, and in due course interviews with a special committee were arranged. I cannot remember the names of all of the members of the selection committee, but I do recall that the following gentlemen were present: Sir John Jungwirth, Secretary to the Premier's Department; The Hon C. E. Isaac, OBE, Deputy Chairman of the National Parks Authority; Mr A. O. Lawrence; Mr A. D. Butcher, Director of Fisheries and Game; and Mr G. T. Thompson, Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority.

I had, of course, submitted a formal application, setting out in detail my academic qualifications, experience and achievements in the literary and photographic fields, which the members of the selection committee had studied. After the usual round of interrogation had been completed, I inquired whether the committee would be interested to see copies of my published work.

At the committee's invitation I began to hand out copies of *Walkabout Wild Life*, *The Argus Week-end Supplement*, *The Age Literary Supplement*, *The Argus Wild-Life Section*, *The Illustrated London News*,

Country Life, *Sphere*, *The National Geographic Magazine*, and finally *Life* magazine. From the remarks of the panel of interviewers, I was led to think that not many of the other applicants had offered such conclusive evidence of their ability to combine literary and photographic skills in so many diverse fields. Some time later I was informed by Sir John Jungwirth that the Authority wished to nominate me for appointment by the Public Service Board, but that there was a problem. It is a Public Service Board rule that, if there is a public servant who is judged capable of performing the duties required by a particular position, that person must be appointed. Sir John said that there was such a person, namely Mr John McNally, who was at that time a senior officer with the Fisheries and Game Department; but he (Sir John) and the Authority did not want Mr McNally; they wanted me. So Sir John persuaded the Public Service Board to create a new position at the same salary level as that of the Director of National Parks, namely a Deputy Director of Fisheries and Game, and the new position was duly advertised. Mr McNally was a clear winner in this field and was duly appointed, leaving the way open for me to be appointed Director of National Parks. So Mr Butcher obtained a Deputy Director, and John McNally obtained the job he really wanted, and so did I.

Autobiographical note

It may help the reader to understand what follows if I give a brief outline of the principal events which led ultimately to my appointment. I was born on 25th January 1910 at Tarnagulla, in Central Victoria. Tarnagulla was once a rich gold-mining centre, with several large mines; it was also the business centre for a fairly large farming district. After the 1914-1918 World War, the town

declined. I attended the Tarnagulla State School, where I was fortunate in having several very fine teachers. I always feel especially indebted to Mr. William P. Carroll, who was my headmaster for three years (1921-23) and inculcated in me an enduring love of English literature, and assisted me to win a junior scholarship in 1923.

My father was one of those pioneers who never had the opportunity of learning a particular trade, and earned his living by working on farms, helping with the harvest during the summer months and shearing sheep in the spring. Winter was always a hard time for him, but he worked where he could. His work took him to various parts of the western and north-western districts, and even as far as Deniliquin in New South Wales. He carried his few necessities in a blanket roll across his back, and rode to work on a bicycle. It was a hard life.

I had four older brothers and a younger sister; my mother looked after us as well as any mother could. She was an excellent cook and baked her own bread, and made her own jams, as well as practically all the clothes of the younger children. She had a beautiful voice and I have clear recollections of her as she stood ironing the clothes while singing one of the many songs she knew. She also recited poetry and prose, and I have no doubt that she influenced me as I grew up.

We lived on the edge of the forest and I often accompanied my father on his hunting trips through the bush and, when I was older, I was often in the bush alone or with my sister. I was drawn to the bush and keen on observing birds, and eagerly awaited the arrival of the spring with its annual displays of acacias, orchids, flame heath, calytrix and other wildflowers.

But it was becoming more difficult

for my father to obtain work in the country, and so in 1922 he somehow found a position in Melbourne. My mother remained in Tarnagulla with my sister and me, the older members of the family having dispersed to other parts; but in August 1923 she moved to Melbourne with the two youngest children, and the family became re-established in Surrey Hills. I attended the State School for several weeks under the headmastership of Mr Herbert Maroney, who kept me in training for the junior scholarship examination which was held at Dunolly in the third week of December. It was necessary for me to return to the country because the syllabus for country pupils differed somewhat from that for city pupils, and there was insufficient time between August and December for me to cope with the changes in syllabus. I was fortunate in winning one of the twenty junior scholarships awarded to country schools.

I have mentioned these events of the early parts of my life because I have come to realize that my interests and inclinations, and my ability to survive under harsh conditions, were established during those formative years, and that my early training equipped me to meet the challenges encountered in later years.

I spent four years (1924-27) at Melbourne High School, the first two years (up to Intermediate Certificate) at the Main School, which was at the corner of Nicholson Street and Victoria Parade (where the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons now stands). The last two years were spent at 'The Branch', situated in Victoria Street near Lygon Street; but the final term of 1927 was spent at Forrest Hill, South Yarra [where the present Melbourne High School still stands]. At Melbourne High School, in 1926 and 1927, I was a member of the school lacrosse team which

won the premiership and the Fearon shield in D grade. In the class room I showed a preference for chemistry, physics, mathematics and English, and in 1927, at the Leaving Certificate Honours examination, I was awarded a first class honour and the Exhibition in Chemistry.

In 1928 I achieved my youthful ambition and joined the Education Department as a junior teacher. At the beginning of 1929 I was awarded a Secondary Teacher's Studentship and commenced a science course at the University of Melbourne, completing my BSc degree in 1931. I was granted an extension to continue my studies in chemistry and was awarded my MSc degree. I was granted a further extension to undertake research in chemistry in 1933 and sought a further extension in 1934 in the hope of winning an 1851 Exhibition Scholarship. Two of these scholarships were awarded annually to science students from the six Australian States (not each State) and in July it was announced that I had been successful. Earlier in the year I had been awarded one of the four 'free passages' granted annually by the P&O Orient Shipping Companies to senior students from the University of Melbourne. On 21st August 1934, I embarked for England on the Orama and arrived at Tilbury on 26th September.

I spent the next two years at Oxford on research in organic chemistry, under the direction of Professor (later Sir) Robert Robinson, FRS, and was awarded my D. Phil in 1936.

During the vacations I enjoyed several cycling tours, notably through England and North Wales, where my companions and I walked to several mountain peaks. During the long vacation of 1935, after a 1000 km cycling tour through Cornwall and Devon, I visited the Continent and completed a cycle tour from Cologne

up the Rhine through Switzerland, over the Great Saint Bernard Pass, through northern Italy to Savona (on the coast), before turning westward along the Italian and French Rivas as far as Nice. From here I travelled partly by train to the foothills of the High Alps, in the south of France and, from a village called Gap, I began a cycle tour in quest of the relatives of my maternal grandfather in the surrounding district before resuming the train journey to Paris. In the long vacation of 1936, I returned to Germany where I made myself familiar with Munich (including an accidental intrusion into Hitler's 'Brown House' and a non-accidental hasty departure from there), before embarking on mountaineering excursions in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps. On all of these trips, I travelled alone to develop my self-reliance, but took every opportunity to converse with others travelling in the same direction.

Before completing my studies at Oxford, I accepted a position with Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd. (APM – now Amcor) as head of the Company's Research Laboratory; but, before doing so, I made it clear to my prospective employers that I knew nothing about the industry and requested permission to learn something about it before returning to Australia. The Company agreed and I was privileged to work at the Forest Products Research Laboratory at Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, where I learned from those who were competent to teach me how to analyse woods and pulps, and I practised until I was competent to teach others – an essential step in developing the APM Research Laboratory. I made working drawings of the equipment required, so that later I was able to call on the resources of the Engineering Department of the Fairfield Paper Mill to have the necessary equipment constructed. Whilst still at Princes

Risborough, under the auspices of the Company, I visited numerous pulp and paper companies in England and Scotland, in order to see at first hand how wood is converted into paper and to learn from men of experience about the problems likely to be encountered in the process.

After leaving Princes Risborough, I spent six weeks working in the laboratories of Sir Norman Haworth, at the University of Birmingham, learning something of the mysteries of cellulose chemistry. From here I moved to Canada, where I spent some time at McGill University, Montreal, learning from some of the leaders in wood and pulp technology and actually engaging in my first pulping experiment and producing a sheet of paper made from Australian hardwood. While in Montreal I visited one of the major pulp and paper companies in Quebec, along with a senior officer of APM who happened to be in North America at the time and who had had considerable experience in the pioneering work on the use of eucalypts in the manufacture of pulp and paper in Australia.

From Canada I proceeded to the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison (Wisconsin) where, under the guidance of experienced men, I spent some three months extending my knowledge of pulp and paper technology. Before leaving America, I visited a number of pulp and paper mills along the west coast, in Washington State and Oregon, observing the operations in those companies and gathering pearls of wisdom from those very friendly men who guided me through their respective 'plants'. Over a glorious weekend, I seized the opportunity to walk in one of Oregon's magnificent forests skirting the mighty Columbia River. When I returned to Australia in July 1937, to take up my duties at the APM Research Laboratory, I was

enabled to set about my tasks with enthusiasm and confidence because of the opportunities I had enjoyed whilst 'learning the trade'.

There were already several well-qualified chemists and assistants at the laboratory. They, of course, were better informed on the local scene than I, but we combined our knowledge and experience to develop the laboratory into an efficient organization which, over the years, provided employment for additional scientific and supporting staff. Even in 1937, the Company had begun work on the establishment of a large pulp and paper mill at Maryvale [near Morwell] and, in preparation for this, a 'pilot' mill was built at Maryvale, capable of producing ten tons of pulp per day. The Research Laboratory provided the necessary testing facilities for these operations. It is a matter of history that the country was at war during 1939-45 and, during this period, both the Company and the Research Laboratory had important roles to play in regard to the war effort.

In 1946, I was appointed Chief Technical Officer of the National Gas Association of Australia. The Association consisted of all the gas utilities throughout Australia and all the major gas appliance manufacturers. The major part of the Association's technical interests was the development of appropriate standards to govern the quality of all types of gas appliances and to police the observance of such standards of safety, efficiency and durability in the various factories. The Association had its own testing laboratory in Melbourne, while the Australian Gas Light Company and the South Australian Gas Company acted as agents in the testing of appliances in New South Wales and South Australia respectively. I was assisted by a staff of competent officers and a team of Appliance Inspectors who inspected

appliances in the factories, and submitted their reports to me. If the appliances complied with the relevant standards, the Inspector affixed a 'badge of approval' to every such appliance; if not, the manufacturer was required to rectify the faults.

So that I could adequately play my part, I put myself through a course of instruction by the staff; I learned how to determine the calorific value of town gas, how to test water heaters for thermal efficiency, and so on. I visited the factories where I observed the multifarious processes involved in the manufacture of appliances. I found myself in a new world where I saw moulds being made and used in the manufacture of castings; I saw men sand-blasting rough castings, and worked my way through the enamelling processes. I saw metal guillotines in use, machines producing hot pressings, and so on. I met the men engaged in these operations, from the engineering workshops to the managing director's office.

Every Wednesday afternoon for the first six weeks, I visited the West Melbourne works of the Metropolitan Gas Company where I donned a pair of overalls, tied a handkerchief around my neck and protected my head with an old hat, while I was slowly conducted through the works from the point where the coal was delivered to the point from which the gas was distributed to the consumer. I followed the coal to the hoppers, to the retorts, and so on; I saw the gas being washed and purified while, through the kindness of the Assistant Works Manager, Mr W. (Bill) Mathieson, I learned something about the manufacture of gas. Later, I extended my knowledge by visits to the South Melbourne works under the guidance of Mr Roy Pethebridge, and to the Footscray Gas Works, where the Manager, Mr Roy Parsons, skilfully guided me through the works.

The purpose of these activities, of course, was to enable me to understand the processes involved in various aspects of gas manufacture and utilization of gas, and to meet the people involved, so that I could play a more useful role in my particular sphere. It was not good enough to sit in my office handling correspondence and reading about the world of gas in text books and journals. I had, in so far as it was possible, to be a part of it.

One important aspect of the work was to organize and conduct meetings of various committees dealing with the relevant standards for the several types of gas appliances. These committees were composed of senior officers of the gas utilities throughout Australia whose responsibilities covered design, testing, servicing, etc., and representatives of appliance manufacturers concerned with the manufacture and sale of gas appliances. After a short period, by invitation, I acted in the dual capacity of Secretary and Chairman, and the experience thus gained was invaluable in later years, in my work in the national parks field.

My work with the National Gas Association required me to travel interstate and, from time to time, I was enabled to visit some of the national parks and equivalent areas. On several occasions I undertook long walks in the Blue Mountains (New South Wales), the Royal National Park and Stanwell Tops (NSW), and in the Lamington National Park in south-eastern Queensland. The knowledge gained from these excursions (which were often prolonged) may be likened to mileposts along the track leading to national parks in Victoria.

After World War II, my wife and I, along with our three children, began to take camping holidays. After two fortnight-long visits to Phillip Island in 1947 and 1948, we journeyed in

1949 to Wilsons Promontory, where we walked, fished and swam for three weeks. We returned to the Promontory every year thereafter and, as time passed, my elder son and I extended our walks to Mount Oberon, Sealers Cove, Refuge Cove, Waterloo Bay, the Lighthouse, the southernmost point, Tongue Point, Mount Wilson, Mount Ramsay, etc. It will be seen therefore that, by the time I was appointed Director of National Parks, I had demonstrated an interest in the world at large and had acquired a little knowledge of it, which was likely to serve me in good stead in my new position. If I have tested the reader's patience, I have done so deliberately, because there were some (notably certain politicians) who were unaware of my background and seemed to have been taken by surprise at my appointment. They were probably unaware that I had played an active role in the establishment of APM's Research Laboratory and in breathing fresh life into the Technical Section of the National Gas Association of Australia, and seemed to have no knowledge, of my interest in the world of nature.

Literary and photographic activities

I think that my interest in photography was inspired by [Melbourne University] Professor [of Chemistry] E. J. [Ernst] Hartung, who occasionally gave his senior students a glimpse of his magnificent photographs, and by my old school friend Jock Andrews, who was a very competent and versatile photographer. I did not acquire my first camera until early in 1933. I took numerous photographs whilst overseas and after returning, but fear that I did not always do justice to my subjects.

In September 1938 I found my first lyrebird nest in Sherbrooke Forest and



Dr Smith was a keen photographer and an authority on lyrebirds.

later described my experiences with the lyrebird family in an article which was published in the Argus Week-end Magazine on 31st December 1938. This auspicious beginning brought me a reward of two pounds and two shillings (\$4.20) and inspired me to greater efforts. I gradually extended the range of my work. With my wife's help I built my own dark-room, thus enabling me to undertake my own developing and enlarging services. At the time of my appointment, I had had some 80-odd illustrated articles published. By permission of the Public Service Board I was enabled to continue these interests, though, as my involvement in national parks increased, at a slower rate.

Now the reader may feel tempted to ask, "What has all this to do with the development of a national parks service?" Let me explain. I have presented a brief outline of the training and experience of two directors. The first was a marine zoologist with extensive experience in journalism and the broad field of natural history, and one whose proficiency in broadcasting, especially in the field of nature, had

brought him wide acclaim. It is not known what direction the National Parks Service might have taken had he been afforded the opportunity of fulfilling his great promise. In a report on policy, written towards the end of 1957, Mr Morrison intimated, inter alia, that the Authority's policy should be to give the committees of management 'as much autonomy as possible'; it is known also that he had it in mind to employ his talents in exploiting the audio and visual arms of the media in promoting the cause of national parks. Had this course been followed, the Director would obviously have had less direct involvement in the more mundane aspects of park management.

The Annual Report for 1957 refers to the Observatory building in South Yarra as providing a 'permanent home' for the staff. Even if it had been intended that the Authority should function as kind of secretariat, the 12 feet x 15 feet (about 4m x 5m) space occupied by the Authority's staff would hardly have sufficed.

It will be seen from the resumé of my training and experience that I had been concerned with the more practical aspects of management and with the training of staff. I had been involved in the development of teams of people whose purpose was to provide a service. I recognized the value of publicity, but had not had experience in that field. However, I was not greatly concerned; I had a feeling that what visitors to national parks needed was a supply of good drinking water and toilet facilities, and the other ancillary services. I hoped that my long years of experience in diverse fields where 'things had been made to happen' would stand me in good stead.

Learning the trade

The sun was shining brightly out of a blue sky when I arrived at the Observatory Building near Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, where the National Parks Authority had become established, on 1st September 1958. I was met by the Secretary, Mr R. B. (Ron) Newson, and our typing assistant, a delightful young lady of sixteen years named Joy Barker. Ron showed me where I would sit – it did indeed feel strange to be sitting in the chair previously occupied by my old friend Crosbie Morrison. After a few minutes, I began to take stock: the office, about 12 ft wide x 15 ft long, contained two ample desks with comfortable chairs, and there were two four-drawer filing cabinets, two teledexes (one each - I inherited Crosbie's) and two telephones. There was a bench about 18 inches wide running the entire length of the western wall. We had two tall metal cabinets for hanging coats in. Our typist shared an office with two other ladies employed by the Weights and Measures Department, about 20-30 ft away.

I hardly noticed that, apart from Ron and Joy, there was no welcoming committee or any instruction regarding my duties. Ron explained that an Authority meeting was scheduled for the following day and that the meeting room was in the grounds of the herbarium, nearby. He handed me a copy of the agenda, which did not mean much to me at the time. After a while, I began to study the National Parks Act (1956) and began to understand the structure of the Authority, its duties and powers, how it was expected to function, and various other aspects of the legislation.



Rudd Campbell, appointed as first ranger at Wyperfeld National Park in 1958.

I understood, of course, why there had been no welcoming committee; the Minister was always occupied with Cabinet on Monday mornings, and the several Permanent Heads were occupied with the affairs of their respective departments. In any case, we would all be meeting on the following day.

The first meeting

My first meeting with the Authority was on 2nd September, 1958. The Minister, the Hon. A. J. Fraser M P, was present and welcomed me warmly, and the Deputy Chairman also added a few words of welcome. I responded (suitably, I hoped), saying that I was aware that I had much to learn about Victoria's national parks, but that I hoped in due course to prove worthy of a place in the national

parks team. Then the business of the meeting began, and I still recall how lonely I felt - they talked about works programs in parks and areas of which I had no knowledge, and it seemed to me that it would be years before I could even begin to comprehend the enormity of the task ahead of me. However, I think that I managed to conceal my embarrassment and asked a few questions from time to time and, by the end of the meeting, was feeling a little easier in my mind.

The departmental heads all promised their support and invited me to use the resources of their departments, and it was arranged that I should be introduced to the various committees of management as soon as possible. A visit to Tarra Valley and Bulga Park was arranged and duly took place. At the meeting I made the acquaintance of Mr E. J. (Ern) Edwards, a District Engineer employed by the Public Works Department, who acted as a liaison officer and consultant to the committees of management. This was the beginning of a very fruitful collaboration which extended over many years.

Office management

One could almost be forgiven for thinking that there could be no problem in organizing the work of an office as small as ours. I hesitate to use the word 'management', but it did not take long for me to realize that some fundamental matters needed attention.

Minutes of meetings

Although I was anxious not to appear critical, after I had studied the minutes of the early meetings I concluded that the method of recording the minutes was unsuitable for the Authority. When I joined the gas industry in 1946, I was immediately impressed by the

manner in which the Secretary, Mr James Harrison, prepared the minutes of meetings of the Council of the National Gas Association and of other meetings, which he arranged. On making inquiries, I was introduced to a little book entitled *How to Conduct Meetings: a Textbook for Chairmen, Secretaries and Conveners of Meetings*, by John P. Monro, B.A. In conducting meetings and preparing minutes of the numerous meetings which I organized during the twelve years I spent with the Association, and in conducting the affairs of the Sherbrooke Forest Park Advisory Committee, I had used the methods recommended by Monro.

I decided that Monro's methods were ideally suited to the Authority's needs. All relevant details of the meeting (date, venue, time of commencing) were recorded in the heading, and the minutes were numbered consecutively (as were the respective meetings) and were identified by key words. The minutes were not in narrative form, but contained relevant references to any supporting material, which was appended. As some of the matters dealt with by the Authority extended over several meetings, in subsequent meetings it was only necessary to refer to 'Minute x' (of a previous meeting) and the development of the particular matter could readily be traced. This was the method adopted from my first meeting with the Authority.

Filing system

During my pre-National Parks days, I had learned the value of an effective filing system – that is, one which enables the required information to be stored yet readily available. No doubt because of the unfortunate train of events which had preceded my arrival at the Director's office, such a system was lacking; hence it was necessary to devise one. I had had a similar

experience when I found myself in charge of the research Laboratory at Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd, without previous experience. I developed a system largely based on the letters of the alphabet; but, as we were virtually self-contained, and as reports, etc., were largely concerned with functional matters (Bleaching, Pulping, Sizing, etc.), the system worked satisfactorily. However, when I moved to the gas industry, I found myself dealing with a wide range of different subjects (domestic gas cookers, various types of water heaters, space heaters, refrigerators, commercial and industrial applications) and with numerous appliance manufacturers and gas utilities throughout Australia, as well as various aspects of the manufacture of gas, etc. In addition, there were standards for the various types of gas appliances, and the records of numerous meetings of the several committees with which I was associated. An alphabetical system would have been inadequate.

Fortunately there were two people on my staff who came to my rescue. Alan King Martin had been a contemporary of mine at the university and had been a Flight Lieutenant in the RAAF in World War II, and Miss Marie Coleman, who had become my first secretary, had served with the WRAAF. These two fine people collaborated enthusiastically in the preparation of a filing system based on the decimal system, which enabled us to file papers quickly and find them again without delay. An index to the files was essential; but, although extensions (to cover new appliances, new manufacturers, etc) could be made very easily, it was important that there be only one controller of the files and that the index be kept up to date. It is to the great credit of those mentioned that, after twelve years, the system still worked efficiently.

The situation now confronting me was in many ways similar to that which faced me in the gas industry in 1946. Instead of being required to deal with members of the Association (gas utilities and appliance manufacturers) and the various functional arms of the gas industry, I was now concerned with some thirteen national parks, government departments and committees of management, as well as the Authority itself. In addition, the various functions of the Authority committees and parks had to be identified and covered by the system, which also had to be designed so as to provide for later developments such as new parks and changes in legislation, etc.

I no longer had the services of Alan Martin and Marie Coleman, and had to grapple with the problem single-handed. It took me over six weeks, including a great deal of after-hours work, to produce the system, which was still in use after 16½ years.

Identification of items of correspondence etc

One of the chief reasons why correspondence and reports are often difficult to find, I think, is that such items are filed in the wrong place. I therefore adopted the practice (which I imported from the gas industry) of numbering each item of correspondence consecutively and incorporating the file number in the reference. Two copies of each letter were retained on the Authority's files; one (yellow paper) went on the 'consecutive file', and the other (pink copy) on the subject file. There was a reference number on each letter, e.g., 'Reference No. 123 - 3/3/16', so that it was not left to the discretion of a junior clerk or typist to decide where to file a particular item. Those officers (when we had been fortunate enough to acquire some) who were in a

position to initiate correspondence or reports were provided with up-to-date indexes to the files, and the senior typist was responsible for records of 'consecutive numbers'. The value of the consecutive file was that, if the main subject file was not available, the relevant item of correspondence could readily be located in the consecutive file.

The method described proved satisfactory for the years 1958 to 1975, but some modification would have been necessary to cope with the changes which occurred in the National Parks Service after 1975.

Now there will perhaps be some who will wonder why I have gone into such detail about matters which appear to be so fundamental and obvious. It is precisely for those reasons that I have done so, because my experience has made me realise that all too often these matters are neglected. It must not be supposed that my various activities occurred in sequence; almost every day was different from the previous one. I had the benefit of frequent discussions with the Minister, Mr Fraser; there were telephone calls and letters to be dealt with, discussions with officers of other departments, and so on. And records of these matters had to be kept on file. Some exercises ran over several months or longer; but, for the purposes of this narrative, the manifold functions with which I was concerned are treated, in so far as this is possible, as if they were discrete.

Introductions

Shortly after my appointment, the Hon. Cyril Isaac very kindly took me on a tour of the Houses of Parliament and introduced me to a number of Members. Our discussions were cordial and served to dispel the feeling of being isolated from the heart

of the Public Service. I was especially pleased to meet some Members who were familiar with Wilsons Promontory through their commando training during the war years, and we shared reminiscences of our experiences in remote parts of 'the Prom'.

In due course I was invited to meet the committees of management for Wilsons Promontory, Mount Buffalo, Fern Tree Gully, Kinglake and Churchill national parks. Whilst such meetings were pleasant, the committees seemed a little apprehensive about their future and made it clear that they were looking to the Authority for financial support, but they obviously placed a high value on their independence.

It was one of the highlights of this part of my life to visit Tarra Valley and Bulga Park. The Alberton Shire Council, with its office in Yarram, was the Committee of Management for both parks and, over the years, I developed a close liaison with the Shire Secretary, Mr A. E. (Arthur) Curry, who was always enthusiastic and co-operative. I also met Mrs K. M. (Kara) Healy, who had succeeded her late husband Jim as Park Ranger at Tarra Valley. Her love of the parks, especially Tarra Valley, which adjoined her own property, and her knowledge of the botanical and faunal features of the parks, were an inspiration.

This was a time also when I made the acquaintance of a number of the officers of the various government departments and paved the way for valuable collaborations in later years. Before the creation of the Authority, there had been no central body responsible for national parks to which other organizations could refer. When the Authority became aware that the PMG's Department had bulldozed a strip of forest adjoining the Princes Highway through Lind National Park, I was asked to bring the Authority's interests to the notice



Wonga Hut was built in 1958 and became the Authority's headquarters for meetings and for overnight stays in Wyperfeld NP.

of the Department, with a request that it confer with the Authority before undertaking works which, by their very nature, detracted from the amenity of any national park which might be involved. Thus began, through the good offices of Mr K. Smith, Director of Engineering, an agreeable association with the PMG's Department. I provided Mr. Smith with a list of the national parks and details of their location, and he duly informed the relevant Divisional Engineers of his department, who thenceforth co-operated very well with the Authority. In the preparation of the list of parks and their location, I had the assistance of the Lands Department.

First visit to Wyperfeld

The Authority had postponed its first visit to Wyperfeld National Park because of the death of the former Director, but arrangements were made at the second meeting following my assumption of office for a visit in mid-October 1958. On 14th October, the Authority travelled by train, in the Commissioners' carriage, to Wail (near Dimboola), where a visit was paid to the Forest Commission's nursery. On the following day, the Authority proceeded from Dimboola through Rainbow to Wyperfeld National Park, where it was met by the Committee of Management. The road was little more than a sandy track, with several very treacherous stretches both within the park and along the approach road. After a brief discussion at Wonga Hut, the party proceeded in Land Rovers (kindly provided by the Forests Commission, Lands Department and Fisheries and Game) to Black Flat and Lake Brambruck, where a picnic lunch (prepared by the Dimboola Hotel) was taken.

My reactions to this visit were very mixed. I had heard a great deal



Don Saunders joined the NPA in 1963 and was Director of National Parks from 1979 to 1994. Photo by Jenny Lau.

about Wyperfeld, Victoria's largest national park, and had looked forward to the visit. But it was a dull day, rather miserably cool during the morning, with periods of light drizzle which restricted visibility, and the country was SO flat. I was, of course, delighted to see a number of Regent Parrots, Mallee Ringnecks, Mulga Parrots, Major Mitchell and

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos, some flocks of Galahs and a few Emus, but I was disappointed at seeing so few kangaroos. I was to learn that Wyperfeld does not embrace the temporary visitor with open arms, but gradually reveals her secrets and charm only to the persistent and faithful courtier.

Appointment of Park Ranger

Hitherto the park had not had a Park Ranger, although for many years a neighbour whose farm was situated about 6 km south of the park had devoted a great deal of time to caring for the park in an honorary capacity. He was present during the Authority's visit and it was a great moment for all concerned when the Deputy Chairman announced that the Authority had acceded to the Committee's request that Mr Albert Edward George ('Rudd') Campbell be appointed Park Ranger, on a 3-4 days per week basis. It was left to the Director to make the necessary arrangements. At the conclusion of the visit, I was called upon to make the Authority's response to the Committee's expressions of pleasure at the Authority's visit and interest in the welfare of the park, and I can still remember the nervous tension I experienced at the time. I had to speak with confidence to a group of men who so obviously knew so much more about national parks than I did. However, I think that I managed to conceal my nervousness.

The Authority spent the night at Dimboola and, during the evening, I visited the local radio station, where I was interviewed concerning the Authority's impressions of Wyperfeld and its plans for the park's future. The interview was broadcast during the reading of the news on the following morning, and was heard by members of the Authority.

On the return journey, the Authority resumed the official meeting, which had begun two days earlier; the main item on the agenda was National Parks Regulations, which at the time were in draft form only. The irregular vibrations of the train, and the noise, made it difficult to conduct the meeting, but full marks must be

given to the Deputy Chairman for his persistence and determination to make the best use of the time. We arrived back in Melbourne at mid-afternoon and I immediately proceeded to the office, where I prepared a press statement for release by the Minister.

From the discussions between the Authority and the Committee, and from my own observations, I learned much from the visit to Wyperfeld concerning such matters as roading, water supply, soil erosion, conservation, vermin control (rabbit destruction), fire-protection, etc. The 'follow-up action' which it was necessary to take in consequence of the visit was also a new learning experience for me. I felt that I was beginning to learn the trade.

Of course, the learning process never stopped; the more often I visited the parks and talked to the rangers and committees, the more I observed and the more I learned. Naturally, as time passed, I found myself discussing park matters with the local Shire Councils. I hesitate to mention any of them by name, because I learned that all Shire Councils are interested in the various aspects of their districts, and I found them very helpful. My problem, of course, was to find the time to visit them, but it was essential to develop friendly relations with Shire Councils and their officers; to do otherwise could lead to misunderstandings and such situations are not resolved by remaining 'aloof'.

In due course I enjoyed the privilege of 'dropping in' on men like Jack Collins (Secretary of Karkarooc Shire Council), Roy Livingstone (Secretary of the Shire of Dimboola), Keith Lovett (Lowan Shire Secretary), the Secretary and Engineer of the South Gippsland Shire Council, the officers of the Orbost Shire Council, and others, whenever I happened to be in their respective districts.

Throughout my entire period of service I found it highly beneficial to discuss park matters and national park philosophies with the Park Rangers. The exchanges were two-way, like a reversible chemical reaction; but I doubt whether we ever reached an enduring condition of equilibrium, because we were always dealing with dynamic situations.

Committees of Management

It must be very clear to anyone who has closely studied the events and circumstances which culminated in the creation of the National Parks Authority and the appointment of the Director(s) that the new Authority, with all the good will in the world, had little if any detailed knowledge of the day-to-day problems encountered in managing national parks. The only reservoir of such knowledge resided with the respective committees of management, which had been appointed many years before the advent of the Authority, under the Lands Act. I recognized this; but, at the time, was unaware that the Hon. I. A. Swinburne MLC, when contributing to the debate on the National Parks Bill, on 23 October 1956, said, *inter alia*, "We do not want to under-rate the efforts of the local committees over the years, because the Authority will not be able to function without their assistance".

When the Bill was being debated by the Legislative Assembly on 28th August 1956, Mr Olive Stoneham MLA (Midlands) suggested that the sum of £500,000 be provided for use by the new Authority to enable it to meet the needs of the parks. It is just possible that Mr Stoneham, whose party was in Opposition at the time, was 'flying a kite'. I did not learn of this until much later, but I do not think that, under any circumstances, the government would provide money on that scale to a body which had not yet demonstrated a capacity to manage national parks. The Authority would have been at

the mercy of every national park committee of management in the State, and would not have had the experience in its new field to enable it to make proper judgments. It would have been like throwing a baby into a school of piranhas.

In speaking on this aspect in the Legislative Council on 23rd October 1956, Mr Swinburne said: "I do not submit that a sum of money should be set aside which will be disproportionate to what is required, but an amount should be specified which is sufficient to enable the Authority to meet its obligations under the measure. There can be no doubt that the success or failure of the Bill will depend wholly and solely on the enthusiasm of local committees. If they do not work effectively, the Authority will be unable to function. Under this Bill there will be established committees of management for those parks that so far have had no such committees, but the committees concerned will be unable to achieve anything worthwhile unless finance is available to the Authority so that it can say to a local committee, 'It is your job to develop this park in such and such a way, for which purpose you will be provided with a certain sum'".

Although I was unaware of Mr Swinburne's views until long after he had expressed them in Parliament, I always recognized that it was one of my most important and urgent tasks to devise the machinery which would ensure that the Authority and

the several committees would co-operate in the attainment of their common objectives. The Authority certainly needed the assistance of the committees, and vice versa. Achieving such an understanding with the committees was no easy task; and, in those cases where the committee had been able to generate a sizeable amount of park revenue, this was more difficult than it was in those cases where the committee had little or no money. The richer committees clung tenaciously to their autonomy and were inclined to look to the Authority as a provider of money. I saw the Authority as the supreme controlling body and the committees as the Authority's agents working in their respective fields (parks). I wanted to develop a national parks service which would ultimately replace the committee of management system; but, clearly, this was a long-term objective. However, equally obvious was the fact that, if the Authority encouraged the committees to look upon themselves as autonomous bodies, the task of ultimately creating a national parks service would be so much more difficult. One major difficulty was the fact that neither the Authority nor the Director initially had knowledge of the parks to match that of the respective committees. That was the challenge; that gap could be bridged only through hard work and the active involvement of the Authority and the Director in park management.



Fraser NP committee of management, circa 1965.

Taking the committees on board

It has been explained in Chapter 2 why the National Parks Act did not revoke the appointment of the several committees of management which had been made under the Lands Act and re-appoint them under the National Parks Act 1956. Negotiations between the Authority and the committees had commenced even before I took up my appointment, and I continued the consultative processes whilst devoting as much time as possible (with the full co-operation of the Parliamentary Draughtsman, of course) to producing a set of Regulations acceptable to both the Authority and the committees of management. This entailed a great deal of liaison with both bodies and voluminous correspondence; but the Regulations were promulgated by the Governor in Council on 17th November 1959.

However, the anxiety of certain of the committees regarding their future roles under the 'control' of the National Parks Authority culminated in a

meeting, on 26 February 1959, of the executive members of the committees of management of Wilsons Promontory, Mount Buffalo, Fern Tree Gully and Kinglake National Parks, in the office of the Hon. G D Chandler, MLC, who was Minister for Agriculture and Chairman of the Fern Tree Gully Committee of Management. Those present pre-empted any decision which the Authority might have been contemplating (as a matter of fact, the Authority was not contemplating any action) and, when they had concluded their deliberations, they summoned the Minister, Mr Fraser, to Mr Chandler's office, where they presented him with the committees' ultimatum. The Minister acceded to the demands of the committees and confirmed his decision in a letter dated 12th March 1959, which read as follows:

"Dear Mr...

This note will serve to confirm advice conveyed during a discussion with representatives of your Committee of Management, which took place in the office of the Minister of Agriculture (the Hon G L Chandler, MLC), on

Thursday, 26th February, when it was agreed –

- (a) that immediately subsequent to the cancellation of your Committee of Management from office under the Land Act, they would be appointed as Committee of Management by the National Parks Authority under the same terms and conditions they now enjoy. However, appointments to fill vacancies occurring from time to time would be for a period of three years. Notice of cancellation under the Land Act and notice appointing the Committee of Management under the National Parks Act would appear in the same gazette.
- (b) works programmes would be prepared by the Authority and the Committee of Management in joint consultation; and, when agreement had been reached between the Trustees and the Authority, the work would be carried out by the Public Works or some other appropriate Department - otherwise the work would be carried out as arranged

by the Trustees subject to the Authority's approval.

- (c) Developmental funds: efforts will be made to provide funds for the purpose of carrying out developmental works agreed upon in accordance with the foregoing, and discussions would be entered into immediately with the Tourist Development Authority for the purpose of endeavouring to arrange for funds to be made available from the Tourist Resort Fund on the same basis as in previous years.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) A J FRASER

Minister of State Development and
Chairman, National Parks Authority"

Copies of this letter were sent to the Secretaries of the several committees of management concerned and to the Hon. G. L. Chandler, Chairman, Committee of Management, Fern Tree Gully National Park, (for his information), and to the Director of National Parks for transmission to the National Parks Authority. This was done without delay. The Authority was very concerned that the Chairman had acted without consultation with the members, but perhaps even more concerned that one of the Chairman's ministerial colleagues should have so actively collaborated with the dissident committees of management in their endeavours to undermine the Chairman (and, thereby, also the Authority itself). However, after discussion, the Authority agreed to do the only thing it could have done, namely 'accept the situation and learn to live with it'. But I doubt whether Dale Carnegie would have endorsed the action of the committees concerned.

Before leaving the matter, it seems worthwhile to examine briefly the significance of the 'agreement'

reached between the Minister and the committees. The words 'under the same terms and conditions as they now enjoy' meant that the members comprising the committees of management at the time (26th February 1959) would be appointed for life; that is, the Authority could not dismiss them. This was an additional thorn in the Authority's side; but, in fact, the whole proposal amounted to a hollow victory for the committees and the manoeuvre merely reflected the nervous state of the committees' collective mind. The Authority had no intention of dispensing with the committees of management and the political climate of the day was such that, even if the Authority had proposed this course of action, the Government would not have supported it. The Government relied on the support of the Country Party in the Upper House, and the Hon I A Swinburne was deputy leader of the Country Party in the Legislative Council, as well as being a strong member of the Mount Buffalo National Park Committee of Management. And there would have been strong opposition from the Liberal Party itself, because the Hon. Gilbert Chandler was Chairman of the Fern Tree Gully National Park Committee of Management.

The committees' actions served to reflect the bewildered state of their minds and, in seeking to demonstrate their strength against the Authority, they had merely succeeded in revealing their weaknesses. If the committees had sought a meeting with the Authority their fears could have been dispelled, because the members of the National Parks Authority were very practical and understanding men of considerable experience. But the committees chose to exercise their political clout and endeavoured to isolate the Minister from the Authority of which he was Chairman. What the committees

had done, in fact, was to create two classes of members of committees of management, namely those with gold passes, appointed for life, and a second class of members whose appointments were to be limited to three years, with the option of renewal.

The provision (c) regarding developmental funds was hardly the result of mature thought. The whole purpose of creating the National Parks Authority was to co-ordinate the management and development of national parks, and the Act embodied the necessary provisions to enable the Authority to devise appropriate administrative machinery and make financial disbursements to the committees for works in national parks. At about the same time as the National Parks Act was passed, the Tourist Development Act created a Tourist Development Authority, with appropriate funding for the special purpose of providing for works, etc., in areas other than national parks. Only a very naive person could imagine that the Tourist Development Authority would heed a cry of anguish from the committee of management of a national park.

What the committees were endeavouring to establish was that the National Parks Authority would be obliged to make financial allocations to the committees which were not less favourable than they had been when the committees had been funded by the Tourist Resorts Committee. The National Parks Authority noted this with interest, but did not permit itself to be intimidated. It must be remembered that the matters under discussion took place before the committees concerned had become responsible to the National Parks Authority; but, after this had been accomplished, the committees soon found that they were not being disadvantaged under the new system.

Getting to know the Committees of Management

Clearly, it was essential for the members of the Authority and the Director to make the acquaintance of the members of the committees of management as quickly as possible. An exchange of correspondence was not adequate; those concerned had to meet vis-a-vis and develop the means of continuing the liaison. This was no easy task, because the members of both the Authority and the committees, in the main, had full-time jobs to occupy their time. Nevertheless the Authority did make a point of visiting as many national parks as possible to meet the committees and discuss park matters 'on the ground'. But there were other times when it was possible for the Director to meet the Chairman of a committee alone, or a group of members. I recall paying several visits to Strathmore to confer with Mr W. J. Northey, Chairman of Wilsons Promontory National Park Committee of Management. As Mr Northey had long since retired from his position with the Lands Department such meetings were held in the daytime; but Mr Harold Tarr, Chairman of the Wyperfeld Committee, was a master-builder and was not available during the day. On numerous occasions, therefore, I drove out to Nunawading in the evening and I have pleasant recollections of my evening visits to the home of Mr and Mrs Tarr.

Probably the best way of forging the bonds of co-operation and understanding was through joint visits to the parks. I recall my second visit to Wyperfeld, along with members of the committee, in September 1959. Among those present were Harold Tarr, Hugh Wilson, Ros. Garnet, E J ('Ernie') Hanks, Bill Middleton and John Landy [later Governor

of Victoria], who had just recently been appointed the Authority's first Technical Officer and was, I think, visiting Wyperfeld for the first time. In the course of our walks and talks, I learned about the fire which had swept through the park in 1946, and I saw how the cypress pines had suffered and how the mallee had recovered, and, of course, I gathered much information about the native birds and wildflowers. I saw the bare sand dunes and an abundance of rabbits. I was thrilled at seeing mobs of kangaroos and emus. The committee may not have been aware of it, but I was back at school, learning as fast as I could. I slept on a camp stretcher in the Wonga Hut where there had been a warm fire during the evening. We sat around a rough wooden table on long stools, beneath a kerosene lamp hung from a beam in an unlined roof, while insects in their thousands zoomed in from outside. But there were no complaints from the pioneers who shared these rude comforts with me.

One morning Hugh Wilson presented me with a glass of crystal-clear water which he said had come from the bore at the western end of Lake Brimin, not far from Wonga Hut. At his invitation I drank it; it was salty, but not too salty for a thirsty man. But I did not ask for a re-fill. The committee used that water to give the birds and kangaroos a drink in the evenings. Later in the visit we explored the possibility of developing a bore to provide potable water for visitors; we will return to this subject later.

Even before a committee of management had been appointed for Mallacoota Inlet National Park, there was a great deal of controversy regarding the ultimate fate of Lake Barracoota, situated among the sand dunes about 9.5 km east of Mallacoota. Along with John Landy and George Thompson (a member

of the Authority), I accompanied several others on an excursion which began in a boat trip across the Lower Lake at Mallacoota and continued in a walk along the telephone line to Lake Barracoota. The party included Jack Fitzgerald, Norman Wakefield, Tony Wilson (whose parents owned the Gypsy Point Hotel) and a few others. Jack Fitzgerald was the Lands Department's Eastern District Surveyor; Norman Wakefield was a well-known naturalist and a member of the teaching fraternity. We had lunch near the lake and discussed the pros and cons of having the lake included in a Game Reserve under the control of the Fisheries and Game Department or, possibly, in an extended national park, should the boundaries of Mallacoota Inlet NP ever be extended to include the Howe Ranges and, hopefully, to the New South Wales border. I was seeing things – first hand!

During that first year, I visited Churchill National Park on several occasions, initially at the invitation of the Chairman, Sir George Knox, and later with other members of the committee. We walked around the park as I listened to the committee's plans, and in due course I helped to make some of their dreams come true. To be honest, my first reaction was that Churchill was not worthy of a place in the national parks system; but, after discussing the matter with the deputy chairman, I decided that, as Parliament had placed it in the Schedule, it would be wiser to accept the situation as it was. So I took a more positive view and recognized that Churchill afforded scope for the development of a very useful recreational area close to Dandenong and the surrounding district. I supported the committee's request for a Park Ranger and, before long, had found young George Sharpe, who had had some experience in Kruger National Park in South Africa. There



The NPA's first Technical Officer, John Landy, surveys Lake Barracoota at Mallacoota Inlet NP (now part of Croajingolong NP), in 1957. Famous as an Olympic athlete, Mr Landy was Governor of Victoria 2001-2006.

was no house for him to occupy, so we arranged for the committee to hire a caravan, which was hidden away in a quiet corner of the park. Sir George and Lady Knox showed their interest by frequently inviting George to their home for a meal.

During my visits to the park, I often stood beneath those mighty SEC power lines and enormous towers, trying to reconcile their presence with national parks philosophy as I

gazed across the wide open space toward Doveton and Dandenong. I supported the Committee's proposals for improvements to the dam with the object of attracting water birds. Although the park was only sparsely forested, we were frequently entertained by the warbling of the Golden Whistler and the Grey Thrush. Occasionally in the course of our rambles we disturbed a wallaby, especially in the tea-tree, which was

so dense that Sir George had had no compunction in selling some of it to the racing fraternity for use in brush fences. Naturally, we discussed the matter of fire protection and, in due course, we began to talk about a house for the ranger. I investigated the possibilities of having Stockdale and Leggo provide one and, with the Authority's concurrence, construction was well under way before 30 June 1960. The 'standard' house was

modified to incorporate an office, so that the ranger would not have to conduct national parks business in the dwelling. The standard house provided for the use of cement tiles on the roof, but Mr. Gordon Wright, who was the committee's spokesman on the project, insisted on using glazed earthenware tiles; because, he said, "We must have the best for our ranger's house." As Engineer to the City of Dandenong, he was obviously accustomed to dealing with a larger budget than that of the infant Authority, and this incident serves to illustrate the sort of problem which frequently confronted the Authority. Compromises had to be made and accepted in other parks such as Kinglake and Wilsons Promontory, but not in Churchill.

As I have already mentioned, it was not always possible for the full Authority to accompany me on my visits to the parks to meet the committees of management. I suppose that on such solitary missions I was somewhat vulnerable, and I cannot honestly say that I was received with open arms at my first meeting with the Fern Tree Gully committee. The committee was very apprehensive about its future under the control of the Authority, and I was aware that there had been some unpleasantness at the last meeting of my predecessor with this committee, a few hours before he succumbed to a massive heart attack. The Authority had requested me to discuss with the committee the advantages of coming under the control of the Authority, but the committee seemed determined to make a show of strength and was initially very aggressive. But I felt like a salesman who knew that he had a good product to sell and managed to retain my composure.

After the archers had fired all their arrows, we settled down to a more rational discussion. I pointed out

that the Authority was in a difficult situation in endeavouring to deal with committees and make financial allocations of public money to bodies over which it had no legal control. I said that the Act had made provision for the transfer of control from the Lands Department to the Authority and that it was surely a natural expectation of Parliament that this course would be followed; otherwise the provision would not have been made in the Act. The committee had so long enjoyed an autonomous existence that it had difficulty in recognizing that the future success of the Authority and the committee, in achieving their common objectives, required the close and active co-operation of the two bodies. The committee did not give me the assurance the Authority had sought, but I had given them a new light on the matter and, in due course, the committee did come under the Authority's control. We had made a start, but there was a rough road ahead of us.

So the process of liaison continued, as I learned the trade and the committees and the Authority moved towards a working relationship. Prior to the advent of the Authority, the committees of management had enjoyed almost complete autonomy. Now the division of responsibility between the two bodies in the management and development of the parks had to be worked out.

Responsibility of members of committees of management

It will be appreciated that the Authority, in its efforts to develop a national parks service, was likely to become involved in a range of issues which required delicate

handling. It is conceivable that the Authority, either alone or in consultation with a committee, could find itself involved in matters which might affect other parties, and it was considered essential that the subject under discussion should not become a political football at either the Parliamentary level or at that of local government before the Authority and/or the committee had reached a decision. When such a decision had been announced by the Minister or the Authority, other interested parties would have something definite on which to comment.

It had come to the Authority's notice that, where Shire Councils had a 'representative' on a committee of management, it was the practice of that representative to 'table', at meetings of the Council, the minutes of meetings of the committee concerned. Such minutes might well refer to matters raised by the Authority with the committee, or they might refer to matters being considered within the committee. Apparently, it was the practice of the local news reporters in attendance at meetings of the South Gippsland Shire Council, which had a 'representative' on the Wilsons Promontory Committee of Management, to extract items of interest from the minutes and publish them. The Authority did not have a specific item in mind, but deemed it advisable to take a cautious look before embarking on a trek over what might prove to be a minefield.

The Authority determined that, henceforth, members of committees of management who were affiliated with Shire Councils or other non-government bodies would be appointed as 'nominees' of the affiliated body; because, as such, they were not obliged to table the minutes of committee meetings as they had formerly. To avoid any misunderstanding over the change in

procedure, arrangements were made for me to be invited to a meeting of the South Gippsland Shire Council, when the matter was discussed amicably.

To obviate the possibility of the inadvertent divulgence of Authority or Committee business by a member of committee who was unaware of the Authority's policy on the matter of confidentiality, the Authority requested me to prepare a statement for distribution to the committees of management. The draft of that statement was very carefully examined, paragraph by paragraph, before being finalised. In particular, the Authority's attention was drawn to the final paragraph, and it was recognized that it was unequivocal and that it might offend some people. That was not the intention; the Authority was anxious to get on with its work and had already suffered an indignity at the hands of certain committees (see above). The action of those committees who sought to isolate the Chairman from the Authority could hardly be described as an expression of loyalty to the Authority. The Authority needed to ensure that those serving on its committees of management understood their obligations, of which loyalty was supreme.

In that final paragraph the Authority provided an opportunity for anybody who did not feel competent to serve the Authority loyally to withdraw his services. This did not mean that he was expected to agree blindly with every decision the Authority made, and the statement provided for the airing of grievances through the process of consultation. The position of the Authority may be likened to that of a new owner of an estate who was endeavouring to form a productive herd out of a number of sacred cows which had been grazing contentedly for many years without regard to one

another and without the care of a shepherd.

The statement read as follows:

"NATIONAL PARKS AUTHORITY

276 Collins Street, Melbourne, C I

12th May, 1960

MEMORANDUM to Members of
Committees of Management

RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF
COMMITTEES OF MANAGEMENT

Now that the Committees of Management of the various National Parks are all under the control of the Authority, it seems desirable to set down, for the guidance of members of such Committees, certain matters concerning their relationships with the Authority.

What follows will no doubt be regarded by members of Committees of Management as being in accordance with well-established practices so far as procedures in Committee are concerned, but the Authority is frequently confronted with problems arising from the difficulty of maintaining a sufficiently close liaison with its Committees of Management, and it is hoped that this memo will be helpful to members in resolving any doubts which may possibly arise in regard to the particular matter under discussion.

For ease of management of national parks, it is convenient to have appropriate departmental officers as members of Committees of Management. Such members are able to provide valuable assistance on technical aspects of management (e.g. botany and fire protection, fauna management, soil conservation, etc.). Other members will have been appointed because of their special knowledge and experience in the field of natural history or national parks; while others again may provide valuable links

with public bodies such as Shire Councils, etc.

It must be presumed that the Committee will be working in accordance with the terms of reference agreed upon between the Committee and the Authority and that their freedom to act will be restricted in all cases to the national park with which they are associated.

In general, it is not anticipated that Committees will be dealing with matters which could involve any controversy between departments, because all such matters will be dealt with by the Authority and the departments concerned. It is not likely that a departmental officer would agree in Committee to any proposal which was contrary to the policy of his department; but, if such a problem arose, it will be apparent that the Authority should be consulted before any action is taken. Otherwise, it could happen that a particular Committee had acted in a manner prejudicial to the policy of a particular department, and this would embarrass the Authority. The Authority clearly must be given an opportunity of examining the problem before being committed by one of its Committees of Management. The terms of reference, which are elaborated in the plan for the division of responsibilities between the Authority and Committees of management, are designed to preclude such misunderstandings. Copy of the plan is attached.

At the same time, members of Committees of Management should feel free to express their opinions within Committee, even though those may be at variance with some of their colleagues, or even with those held by the Authority.

However, in order to ensure that members of Committees will have the necessary freedom to express their views and develop plans

as they see fit, it is essential that discussions which take place at meetings, and the minutes of such meetings, be treated as strictly confidential to members of the Committee. Loyalty to the Committee and to the Authority should guide members in their discussions outside meetings of the Committee. It could very well happen that a Committee of Management, or some of its members, could discuss matters which were beyond their immediate terms of reference. In such a case it is clear that consultation with the Authority would be necessary before any action could be taken and, if such matters were not held in strict confidence, the Authority's position (and that of the Committee) could be prejudiced, quite possibly without any real cause.

It is recognized that members of Committees may, because of their particular interests, have some affiliations with other organizations; but, in order to obviate the problems which could arise because of their varied interests, the Authority has resolved as a matter of policy that all members who are not government employees be appointed as individuals and not as representatives of organizations, and it is a condition of appointment to Committees that appointees agree to serve on that basis. Public service regulations necessitate the appointment of government officers to Committees of Management as representatives of their respective departments. It will be clear from the foregoing that there is no need to discuss the Committee's business outside the Committee's meeting room and the minutes of such meetings may not be made available to any body or person outside the Committee.

It is hoped that all members of Committees will find it possible to reconcile their own views with the

Authority's policy on this matter. If any member feels that he cannot conscientiously do this, he should feel no compulsion to remain a member of the Committee.

(Signed) L. H. Smith
Director"

The document, The Division of Responsibility Between the Authority and the Committees of Management, consisted of a preamble embodying the relevant sections of the National Parks Act, for the convenience of members of committees who might not have had a copy of the Act immediately available, and a statement of the division of responsibility between the two bodies. Because the relevant sections of the Act have been included in Chapter 2, they have been omitted from this narrative. Thus, for present purposes, the document may be taken as reading as follows:

Introduction

For some time the Authority has had under consideration the desirability of defining the relationships between itself and the Committees of Management of the various national parks. The formulation of such a plan, it was thought, would greatly facilitate the management of the parks and promote liaison between the two bodies. The Authority after due consideration has adopted the plan set out below."

Management of Parks

From the foregoing it is clear that the Authority is responsible for all details of the management of national parks, but the Act provides for the Authority to delegate its authority to committees of management under certain conditions. It is this aspect of the problem with which we are here concerned.

The successful management of a national park requires:

- (a) the formulation of a master plan for the development of the park;
- (b) the clear definition of the fields of responsibility of the Authority and the committee of management;
- (c) the devising of machinery to ensure close liaison between the two bodies;
- (d) adequate finance.

It will be readily appreciated by all that the two bodies will require to work together as a unified team and the committee should feel free at any time to refer to the Authority any matter on which it feels that consultation would be helpful. Such discussions would promote a two-way flow of ideas and undoubtedly redound to the good of the park.

The Authority has not the staff to participate actively in the detailed management of the individual parks and must therefore rely on the committees of management for such work. On the other hand, where matters of policy are involved, the Authority feels that consultations are essential and the plan set out hereunder is based on these fundamental principles. The matters listed may require modification in the light of experience, but would appear to be a reasonable starting point.

It must be presumed that there will be regular consultations between the Authority and the committees of management in regard to works programmes, in order that appropriate allocations may be made for such purposes, and to ensure that the proposed works programmes conform to the Authority's policy requirements. When agreement has been reached on such matters, it will be the Authority's responsibility to see that suitable arrangements are made for the execution and supervision of the work. The mutual responsibilities

of the two bodies in regard to such works would, it is felt, be most appropriately determined at that time. Both the nature of the works and the contracting body will vary, and it would seem advisable to make this provision.

Matters which require consultation with and approval of the Authority

1. The master plan for the park.
2. The works programme. It is envisaged that most committees will draw up a programme of works covering a number of years and that this will be broken down into stages to be accomplished within each year. To ensure a satisfactory working arrangement, it is essential that the committee prepare and submit a budget detailing all expenditure projected for the particular financial year. The Authority will gladly assist in the preparation of this budget, and the procedure for execution and supervision of works can be determined by consultation. When the budget has been approved, it becomes the committee's 'operations budget' for the particular financial year.
3. Communications with Ministers of the Crown.
4. Negotiations with other parties involving leases of building or land.
5. Development of new camping areas or extension of existing ones (see item 1 above).
6. Provision of water supply and reticulation of water through camping area.
7. Siting of buildings (including toilet blocks).
8. Construction of roads and tracks and the siting thereof.
9. Sign-posting of roads and tracks.

10. Fees for campers, caravans, occupants of lodges, and day visitors.
11. Standard uniform for park rangers and other employees.
12. Introduction of birds, animals or plants into the park.

Matters for which Committees of Management should be directly responsible

It is not proposed that a committee of management should handle all matters listed hereunder without assistance from the Authority (e.g., fire protection, vermin control, soil erosion), but the responsibility for taking the initiative in such matters clearly rests, it is felt, with the committee.

1. Direction of work of ranger and other staff.
2. Control of moneys received by the Committee from various sources (See Regulation No 40).
3. Protection of the park itself, its contents and facilities against damage (including fire) and theft.
4. Maintenance
 - Buildings and installations
 - Roads and tracks
 - Toilets
 - Vehicles
 - Plant and equipment
 - First aid centre
5. Records of visitors to parks.
6. Collection of any fees payable by visitors.
7. Control of visitors to park.
8. Instruction of visitors to park regarding their privileges and responsibilities.
9. Dissemination of information concerning the park and its contents to visitors (hand-out literature, sale of booklets, lectures on park, etc.)

10. Control of campers to ensure that they do not camp in unauthorized places.
11. Control of campers and day visitors so as to minimize risk of fire and to promote an orderly evacuation in the event of a fire in any particular area.
12. Prevention and control of fires within the park.
13. Prevention and control of erosion of land due to misuse by visitors or any other cause.
14. Collection and disposal of rubbish within the park, and general cleanliness of park.
15. Control of vermin within park.
16. Negotiations with persons or organizations interested in visiting or exploring the park for scientific purposes.
17. Control of vehicles in park from aspect of erosion and track maintenance.
18. Organizing search parties for lost hikers, etc.
19. Ensuring that the Regulations made pursuant to the National Parks Act 1958 are observed and enforced.

(Signed.) L H Smith, Director
8/3/1960

Director under fire

Early in June 1960, Parliament had before it a Bill to amend the National Parks Act 1958, for the purpose, inter alia, of declaring certain new national parks (Mount Eccles, Mount Richmond, Hattah Lakes) and to enable leases to be granted for major developments in national parks.

Now, among those who had received a copy of the documents referred to above was the Hon. I. A. Swinburne, MLC, who was a member of the Mount Buffalo National Park Committee of Management.

There is little doubt that he had been appointed to that Committee because he was a prominent leader in the affairs of the north-eastern district who could conceivably assist the Committee in its endeavours to 'develop' the national park. However, he had not been appointed a member of the committee by Parliament, but by the National Parks Authority. It was the Authority's view that his first responsibility in regard to matters pertaining to national parks was to the Committee and the Authority and, if any member of a committee had a grievance, the proper thing to do was to seek clarification from the Authority, not to ventilate the matter in Parliament. Instead, Mr. Swinburne by-passed the Authority and, according to the record of Parliamentary debates on the Bill referred to above, on 1st June 1960, made a number of observations regarding the two documents which had been sent to members of committees of management and concerning other matters.

In response to a member of the Opposition who had criticized the Government and the Authority, ending with a gloomy prediction regarding the future of national parks in Victoria, Mr Swinburne referred to the Authority's Annual Report for 1958/59 which, inter alia, stated that "the over-all problem of controlling national parks under the conditions prevailing today is an extremely complex one, and it has proved greatly to the advantage of the Authority to have the heads of the relevant departments – Forestry, Lands, Public Works, Soil Conservation and Fisheries and Game – working together as members of one team, rather than as consultants whose advice might have been sought on an interdepartmental basis". Mr Swinburne congratulated the Minister (Mr Fraser) on "having the courage to include that conclusion in the Report" as "it is an

acknowledgement of the fact that the principle which we enunciated was the correct one for a very difficult task ... I also congratulate the Minister and the members of the Authority for the very good work carried out by the Authority. I have often been critical of matters affecting national parks, but I believe that the Authority has laid solid foundations, which will ensure ultimate success. I hope that Mr Machin will realize that the National Parks Authority of this State is on sound and solid foundations". Now this, I think, was a very proper response to the critical remarks made earlier by Mr Machin. I was unaware until much later that Mr Swinburne had been responsible for the composition of the National Parks Authority and I have given him full credit for this in Chapter 1.

However, Mr Swinburne then referred to the two documents which had been distributed to members of committees of management. The Hansard report reads as follows: "The Director of National Parks, Dr L H Smith, is a most enthusiastic officer. If one fault can be found with him possibly it is that he is over-enthusiastic in carrying out the functions entrusted to him. I wish to read a memo, which, I consider, is not in the best interests of the people who make up this great organization. In the main, members of the National Parks Authority consist of departmental officers and other interested persons. These people give their services in an honorary capacity, as do members of the committees of management of national parks and up to date they have not been able to collect expenses. I should have thought that any officer of a department would be loath to cut across principles applied by his senior officer, who might be a member of the Authority. I cannot visualize this happening. Members of Committees of Management recently received a circular, dated 12th May, signed by

Dr L H Smith. After giving a lot of advice on the duties of the Authority and the Committees of Management, how members of committees should conduct themselves and so on, the memorandum finished in this way:

"It is recognized that members of Committees may, because of their particular interests, have some affiliations with other organizations; but, in order to obviate the problems which could arise because of their varied interests, the Authority has resolved as a matter of policy that all members who are not government employees be appointed as individuals and not as representatives of organizations, and it is a condition of appointment to Committees that appointees agree to serve on that basis. Public Service regulations necessitate the appointment of government officers to Committees of Management as representatives of their respective departments. It will be clear from the foregoing that there is no need to discuss the Committee's business outside the Committee's meeting room and the minutes of such meetings may not be made available to any body or person outside the Committee. It is hoped that members of Committees will find it possible to reconcile their own views with the Authority's policy on this matter. If, any member feels that he cannot conscientiously do this, he should feel no compulsion to remain a member of the Committee."

Mr Swinburne continued: "Probably this is the result of inexperience. Dr Smith has been brought in from outside into a departmental atmosphere. I ask the Minister to look into this matter, which has a great bearing on the future relationship of committees of management and the Authority. Directions of this type are not in the best interests of the National Parks Authority.

The Hansard report continues:

"The Hon P V Feltham: 'Who is this marshal who is taking over from Krushchev?'

The Hon I A Swinburne: 'This gentleman's name is Dr L H Smith. Any member of a Committee of Management who read that would consider that it was something that would have been better left unsaid. The Government should take the matter up with the Director and say that whether a member of a committee is appointed as an individual or as a Government representative of a Department, he is serving in an honorary capacity for the development of the State. Dr Smith might just as well have said, 'If you don't agree about what we want to do, you can get off the committee'. Full co-operation between the Authority, the Director, the various committees of management and the people is necessary. The committees have done very good work over the years and the new committees to be appointed will continue to work in the interests of the State.'"

The debate continued. The Hon V O Fulton (Gippsland Province) congratulated Mr Swinburne and, referring to the composition of the Authority, *inter alia*, said, "How important it is that the Chairman of the Forests Commission be consulted by someone like the gentleman who is director of the Authority and whom Mr Swinburne quoted, probably after a decision has been made, but should express his views at first hand." Mr Fulton, speaking under Parliamentary privilege, made two serious errors in that remark. Firstly, he appeared not to understand that the designation 'Director of National Parks' merely described the office of the incumbent, and the person concerned was not the 'Director of the Authority', but

the executive officer who acted in accordance with instructions issued by the Authority, not on his own behalf. Mr Fulton's second mistake was that he implied that discussions between the Director and the Chairman of the Forests Commission took place "probably after a decision has been made". In fact, the Chairman of the Forests Commission, like all other members of the Authority, contributed actively to the discussion and was a part of the decision-making process.

Mr Fulton then referred to the memorandum and, in particular, to "the instructions issued by the Chairman of the National Parks Authority, Dr Smith". The Authority did not regard the document as a set of 'instructions', but as a statement of a *modus operandi* which it considered would define the working relationship between the Authority and its committees of management. And, of course, Mr Fulton caused further confusion by referring to Dr Smith as 'the Chairman of the National Parks Authority', implying (perhaps inadvertently) that the Director was not only 'taking over' from the President of the USSR, but also usurping the position of the Minister.

Mr Fulton continued: "I did not think I would live to see the day when such a memorandum would be written to any man, whether he was acting in an honorary capacity or otherwise. I did not think it would happen. I would like the Minister in charge of the Bill to have the memorandum withdrawn". (The Bill was in relation to the declaration of Hattah Lakes National Park and other matters, which do not concern us here.) "I do not think a more damning document would have been sent out at the height of the regime of Hitler or Goering".

Well, as the reader will readily perceive, that memorandum had stirred up a hornets' nest. That was

not its purpose, and there are several aspects which ought to be considered in order to make the record more complete.

Firstly, the document dealing with the division of responsibilities between the two bodies had been prepared at the Authority's request and submitted to all members prior to being examined in detail at a regular meeting of the Authority. The procedures detailed in the document were recognized by the Authority as being necessary to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the manner in which the duties prescribed by the Act were to be shared by the Authority and the Committees. Prior to the creation of the Authority, the committees had functioned autonomously, but the Act provided for a new form of park administration. It is difficult to imagine that Mr Swinburne and his Parliamentary colleagues were not fully aware that the Director of National Parks was the Executive Officer of the Authority and that any document bearing his signature had been composed in the name of the Authority and carried the approval of that body. It is inconceivable that the Director would act independently of the Authority and everybody concerned knew that. None of the Committees of Management expressed any objection and, by 1960, they all knew the Authority and the Director well enough to know that, if they wanted to discuss any matter, all they had to do was to pick up the telephone and call the Director, or write a letter.

There was nothing in the Act to suggest that members of Parliament were different from other members of the committees in relation to the Authority and, indeed, not every committee included a member of Parliament. When Mr Swinburne says, "After giving a lot of advice on the duties of the Authority and

the committees, how members of committees should conduct themselves, etc....."one detects a note of derision in his remarks, as if to say, 'We know all that'. But it must be remembered that the Authority was, for the first time, setting down the guide-lines for the future administration of national parks and it was essential that the details be clear to all and that there be a proper record of the plan.

Mr Swinburne's comments on the last two paragraphs of the second memorandum, headed 'Responsibility of Committees of Management' are worthy of closer study. Unfortunately, despite what Mr Swinburne had to say, it was necessary to distinguish between departmental officers serving on committees of management and non-government members, for the reasons given, and the Authority deemed it essential that other members be appointed as individuals who could contribute on the basis of their personal experience and intellectual capacity, without the need to consult outside bodies with which they might happen to be affiliated. The Authority was endeavouring to put its affairs on a business-like basis; but, if it were necessary to have every decision debated and approved by Parliament before it took action, it was going to make slow progress.

If Mr Swinburne had really wanted to give the Authority and the Director the benefit of his long experience, or even offer constructive criticism, all he had to do was arrange for a discussion, just as other members of committees did, but he elected to communicate with the Authority by way of the Hansard Reports. As time passed, I think that, happily, the more orthodox avenues of communication were adopted, and a feeling of mutual respect developed.

One can only express amazement at Mr Fulton's participation in the debate.

I had not received any benefit which might have flowed from a personal discussion with him, on any subject, as we had never met. Yet he was apparently happy to contribute to the debate on hearsay evidence from an unknown source.

His reference to the Chairman of the Forests Commission and the suggestion that he was consulted only 'after a decision had been made' was sheer innuendo. I always presented members of the Authority, well in advance of the monthly meeting, with a full analytical report on any subject under consideration, or which I wished to bring to the attention of the Authority, along with a recommendation, but I always made sure that the decision to act was made by the Authority and that such decision was recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The Authority very quickly came to recognize that I regarded them as the decision-making body and learned to trust me. Some members even went so far as to say that there was no need for me to consult the Authority on many matters, but I responded by saying that, while I appreciated the vote of confidence, I thought that the Authority should be the first to learn of any proposal I had in mind, and that I was not going to act on contentious matters without prior consultation.

Mr Fulton's suggestion that Marshal Krushchev's job was under threat might, for all he appeared to care, have precipitated an international crisis. If the matter had come to the attention of the KGB, my life could have been in danger! But, when he confessed that "he never thought that he would live to see the day", etc, surely he was pulling a long bow. I was of course greatly concerned at what certain members of Parliament had said on that day and quickly learned to watch for flashing amber lights as I traversed the sand dunes

and endured the dust storms that lay ahead. But it takes a considerable amount of intestinal fortitude and determination to ride a bicycle over the Great Saint Bernard Pass, and I did not intend to be blown out of the saddle at such an early stage. The authors of Hansard were unaware of my ride over the Pass!

There were other occasions when the Director of National Parks came under fire from Parliament House, and I propose to deal with these matters later.

Water for visitors to national parks

The need for a reliable supply of drinking water for national park visitors is obvious; probably the first thing most people do when they arrive at a park is to set about preparing a cup of tea or having a drink of water. Most people take the water supply for granted, accustomed as they are to a plentiful supply of water in their own homes. Of course, it is not the business of the visitor to concern him or herself with any problems which may have been encountered in providing the water – that is properly the function of management. In this chapter it is proposed to give an account of the steps taken to provide for 'the enjoyment of visitors to national parks' with particular reference to the water supply and some of the problems encountered in so doing.

National parks are invariably situated in areas remote from the main population centres, and the climatic conditions and availability of water vary greatly from park to park. For example, Wyperfeld is situated in flat mallee country and has an annual rainfall of 150-480 mm (6-19 inches), while Wilsons Promontory is a mountainous area, mostly surrounded by sea, and has an annual rainfall of about 1500 mm (63 inches). It is proposed to describe the manner in which a water supply was developed in some of Victoria's national parks during the period 1958-75, commencing with Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Wilsons Promontory National Park

The choice of a site for the development of tourist facilities in Wilsons Promontory National Park was pre-empted by the events of World War II, which necessitated the establishment of a commando-training camp. Obviously such a camp needed to be isolated from the community at large and to be in close proximity to rugged terrain and the sea, so that suitable environments were available to the trainees. There had been a chalet at Darby (where the granite ends and the sand begins) for many years, but this was hardly remote enough to serve as a base for the training of commandos.

A study of a map of Wilsons Promontory will show that Tidal River was the ideal site; perhaps Oberon Bay would have been satisfactory, but apparently it was considered that the problems which would have been encountered in providing access to Oberon Bay were too great. We can be grateful for that because, in my opinion, Tidal River is much better suited to the provision of tourist facilities than Oberon Bay would have been, and the construction of a road to Oberon Bay would have had an adverse effect on the environment.

The tidal effect in Tidal River is considerable and it is safe to assume that the water for the commando camp was drawn from a site remote from the place where the present road crosses the river. The road

alignment near Tidal River has not changed since the commando days. Unfortunately, from the aspect of developing a water supply, the Tidal River basin is comparatively flat. It is served by two small streams, Lilly Pilly Creek and Titania Creek, which meet at some point north of the road. During the commando occupation and for many years thereafter, the road was lower than its present level and, at high tide, the water frequently burst the banks of the river. Even as late as 1960, I have seen the camp in the vicinity of the Vereker and Lilly Pilly lodges flooded, with water flowing down the several 'avenues'. At such times, the water which was pumped from the upper reaches of the river was contaminated with salt. This entered the reticulation system and corroded the water pipes, and was quite unsuitable for drinking. After the high tide had abated it took a considerable period to flush the entire system (storage tanks and water pipes) free of salt.

Naturally, the Committee of Management urged the Authority to provide a better water supply, but there were so many variables in the equation that it took some time to arrive at an acceptable solution.

For some years after the creation of the Authority, the Government made no special financial provision for roads in national parks. Any roads considered necessary to enable the Authority to "provide for the education and enjoyment of visitors to national parks" had to be paid for

out of the Authority's very meagre allocation. In 1958/59, the allocation from Loan Funds was £35,003 (\$70,000), and an additional £950 from the Tourist Development towards road improvements in Mount Buffalo National Park. This dependence on the Tourist Development Authority was to put it mildly, irksome to the Authority. In order to effect improvements to the water supply at Tidal River, it was necessary for the Authority to borrow £6000 (\$12,000) from its sister Authority; this enabled a small weir to be constructed, which had the effect of providing a little more 'head' and affording some protection from salt contamination at high tide.

However, the full benefit of this was not obtained until the Country Roads Board declared the road to the Promontory to be a 'tourist road', to be known henceforth as 'The Promontory Road', thereby enabling the Board to undertake major construction works on that road, without cost to the Authority. A very significant part of this work was the raising of the level of the road, on both sides of the Tidal River, by about 1.3 m, and the construction of a new bridge. However, it was not until the 1965/66 year that 'flap valves' were installed beneath the bridge, on the down side, enabling fresh water to flow downstream but preventing tidal water from flowing upstream and contaminating the camp water supply. The higher banks and road acted as a barrier to the tidal water, but did not prevent it from spreading outwards in the valley below the bridge.

Another major problem was the lack of an adequate filtration system. Water was pumped from the weir through a six-inch (15cm) fibro cement 'rising main', over a distance of about three-quarters of a mile (1.2 km) to a large concrete storage tank (80,000 gallons or 360,000 litres) situated on high ground, from which it was distributed



Toilet in Wyperfeld NP, 1950s. Committees of management had very limited funds to build or maintain facilities in parks.

through the ever-extending reticulation system to the various outlets in the village and camping area. The lack of a suitable filter resulted in the accumulation in the rising main of large quantities of silt, which settled out during periods of quiescence, and in the service pipes, especially in the bends and elbows. This resulted in loss of pressure and poor flows. Prior to the installation of LP gas and instantaneous hot-water services in

the shower blocks and houses, silt had accumulated in the bottom of the copper cylinders in the coke-fired 'boilers'. Later, when the boilers were replaced by instantaneous water heaters, the presence of silt in the water led to the clogging of the water filters in the heaters, which impaired the performance of the water-operated valve which was an essential component of the instantaneous gas water-heaters.



Iron-clad catchment Wyperfeld NP, installed Jan-Feb 1968 to supply water for visitors to the park by collecting rainwater.

The introduction of a bronze screen filter system between the weir and the inlet to the pump ameliorated conditions to some extent, but the filters required considerable maintenance, which was not always forthcoming, and the problem remained.

The next step was to interpose a small galvanized holding tank between the filter system and the pump, so as to regularize the feed to the pump, but this did not compensate for the lack of a suitable filter, which was the subject of frequent discussions between the Director and Mr Harry Bates, the Public Works Department Engineer who devoted much of his time to the

affairs of the Authority. To Mr Bates belongs the credit for proposing that a 'Kinney' filter be installed. This filter consists essentially of thirty Gooch-type filters, arranged at the circumference of a circle, through which the water is pumped. The filter is designed so that one of the Gooch units is back-washed every cycle, so that the filter unit is self-cleaning. The adoption of the Kinney filter in 1968/69 resulted in a great improvement to the quality of the water supply, but it took some time to flush out the detritus which had accumulated in the reticulation system over the years.

The provision of the holding tank on the northern side of the road was

not without its disadvantages. Of course, the tank was fitted with a cover, which was provided with a manhole complete with lid; but, on one occasion (at least) the lid was not closed. Several days later, Park Ranger Brian Greer pulled a dead fox out of the tank. This caused a few stomachs to 'turn over'!

While the introduction of the Kinney filter has greatly improved the quality of the water supply at Tidal River, it is well to remember that the successful operation of the Kinney filter, under the conditions which obtain at Tidal River, still requires the support of a primary filter, which itself requires regular maintenance. I understand

that, a few years ago, the stainless steel wire mesh primary filter was stolen from the site and had not yet been replaced (as at January 1988). The effect is clearly visible when a 'slug' of black silt is blown out of the standpipe in the camping area when the tap is turned on.

The relatively limited water supply at Tidal River has very serious implications. After the disastrous bush fires early in 1951, the stream flows were good; but, as the vegetation recovered, the run-off from the catchment areas was reduced, and the resultant flow available for distribution within the camping area was also reduced. This factor, combined with the very dry conditions which occasionally prevail, imposes severe limitations on the type of 'development' which may safely be undertaken at Tidal River.

During the Christmas-New Year period of 1967-68, the water flow fell to a dangerously low level which threatened to close the camp. I happened to be at Tidal River at the time and, as a result of a conference with the Head Ranger, notices were posted requesting campers to restrict the use of water in the showers, even to the extent of doing without that second or third shower during the day. The campers responded very well and, fortunately also, there was some useful rain early in January, which helped considerably. However, the matter of water supply was a major 'bone of contention' with the 'developers' who were endeavouring to establish themselves at Tidal River. This matter is discussed in Chapter 18, but the matter of water supply needs to be kept in sharp focus always, in case the ugly dragon ever raises his head again.

Wyperfeld National Park

My introduction to the water supply at Wyperfeld was made during the first visit of the National Parks Authority to the park in mid-October 1958. There was a small galvanized-iron tank which collected the run-off from a galvanized-iron building graced by the name of 'Wonga Hut', which had been built many years previously, when Sir James Barrett was Chairman of the Committee of Management.

The publicity attending the creation of the National Parks Authority, and the Authority's first visit to the park, which led to the appointment of a part-time ranger, resulted in an increase in the number of visitors and, consequently, in an urgent need for larger supplies of drinking water. However, progress was slow. The low rainfall and the lack of any natural source of water other than rainwater made it impossible to divert water from a stream to a storage system.

Early in September 1959, I again visited Wyperfeld to confer with the Committee of Management. Among those present was Hugh Wilson (BSc, NME), who was employed by the Commonwealth Department of Works in the capacity of an Hydrologist and was very enthusiastic about the possibility of obtaining water by boring, and persuaded members of the committee, along with John Landy and myself, to join him in a water-divining exercise. I still have vivid memories of those present performing with long 8-gauge wires in the vicinity of a large sand dune near Wonga Hut. Fortunately, everybody obtained positive reactions at about the same spot, even when blindfolded. Hugh argued that some of the rain which fell on the sand dune percolated through the sand and, over the years, had accumulated to form an aquifer on a clay pan, at an unknown distance below the surface.

The urgent need for water for drinking, and to enable flush-operated toilets to be constructed to replace the derelict 'thunder boxes' which had served the park for many years, led to the first major 'improvement' for tourist purposes in the park. The plan included a modern toilet block, with flush-operated toilets connected to a septic tank, and showers for the convenience of workers (park staff, members of the committee working in the park and others whose duties required them to live in the park). On several occasions I found it necessary to spend the night at a hotel in Rainbow, sometimes accompanied by Mr Landy, and it was our opinion that the accommodation was definitely not 'Five Star'.

The key to the development was an assured supply of potable water. Bores seemed to be the only hope, so tenders were called for, but the response was hardly encouraging. I therefore drove to Nhill to discuss the matter with Mr. Keith Oldfield, a well-known boring contractor, and, on his advice approached Bill Munro. There was not much incentive really for anyone to undertake boring operations in Wyperfeld, because of the remoteness of the place and because the conditions were so primitive. In addition, the roads were treacherous and, in any case, it was a very small operation. It took some time to kindle Mr. Munro's enthusiasm, but eventually I persuaded him to accept the contract. He subsequently told me that, after a few days in the park, he was so unhappy that he almost decided to abandon the project; but, by the end of the first week, he had succumbed to the charm of Wyperfeld and could hardly wait to get back to the park, after spending the week-end at home!

The contract was for four bores: the first was to be at the base of the sand dune near Wonga Hut, the others

being near Eastern Lookout, adjacent to Lake Brambruk, and at Black Flat. The latter had been under about six feet of water during the flood of 1956, and it was hoped that good water might still be lying somewhere below the surface. The work was done during the 1960/61 year.

Boring was conducted to a depth of about 100 ft; at the Wonga Hut sand dune, water of good quality was found at a depth of 40 ft, the total solids content being 216 ppm, as compared with 1040 ppm for the town supply at Hopetoun. At greater depths the salt content rose sharply, and the bores at Eastern Lookout and Lake Brambruk yielded water suitable only for fire-fighting purposes. The bore near Eastern Lookout became known as the 'Coca Cola' well, because of the colour of the water, which contained 20,000 to 30,000 parts per million of solid matter. The bores at Eastern Lookout and Lake Brambruk were not developed, being capped for later development should the need arise. The bore at the Wonga Hut sand dune supplied 60 gallons per hour.

Under the direction of Hugh Wilson, screen analyses of the sand samples, at different depths, were conducted by Bethunes (Auburn) and, on the basis of these data, Hugh recommended a slot width of twenty thousandths of an inch for the bore casing, which was duly installed and capped off at 40 feet. A small Southern Cross windmill was erected above the bore, thereby enabling the Authority to proceed with the construction of the toilet block referred to earlier, then in the 'conceptual' stage. The water pumped by the windmill was stored in a 2000 gallon tank adjacent to the toilet block, and the run-off from the roof of the toilet block was also delivered to this tank. From here water was pumped to a head tank to service the showers and toilets.

The new facility, of course, attracted considerable interest and, in addition to providing a measure of comfort for visitors from afar, soon brought some of the local people with their children, who greatly enjoyed the experience of having a shower on a hot day. This, of course, was not the purpose of the showers, but the persuasions of the visitors often proved too great a temptation for the kindly ranger to share the novelty with the 'locals'. Some even resorted to cleaning their cars with the park's hard-won water supply, causing the ranger to exercise his authority over his friends, to their mutual embarrassment. This abuse of a park facility was not confined to Wyperfeld; in other parks one often found water taps running freely or not completely turned off. Providing for the 'education' of visitors to national parks often proved to be more difficult than providing for their enjoyment. The adoption of spring-headed taps wherever possible helped to reduce water wastage.

It was recognized that the water from the roof of the toilet block and Wonga Hut, supplemented by that from the bore, would not suffice for the anticipated increase in the number of visitors. An inspection of the spouting on Wonga Hut revealed major defects, which had resulted in serious losses of water over the years. The spouting was promptly repaired by a local contractor who also installed two 2000 gallon tanks in which to store the augmented supply. But this did not solve the major problem.

In mid-January 1962 I visited Hattah Lakes National Park to introduce Mr R. G. M. (Bob) Yorston to the Park Ranger and the park, and from Hattah we proceeded to Wyperfeld. During the night, a thunderstorm struck the park and there was very heavy rain. Bob, who seemed much better qualified to judge the extent of the rain, said it was raining at the rate of

ten inches to the hour! The noise on the roof of Wonga Hut was deafening. As we stood at the door watching the lightning, a torrent of water began to rush past us and the natural slope of the ground diverted it towards the western end of Lake Brimin (which was, of course, dry).

Next morning, the beginning of a fine day, we saw that a deep channel had been cut, extending from somewhere east of the Hut to Lake Brimin. "If only we could harvest that water", I said to Bob, "we would have an abundant supply". On returning to Melbourne, I began to dream of building a large shed which would provide shade for visitors' cars and a water supply as well, but the cost was prohibitive. I discussed the matter with Ern Edwards, who drew my attention to the practice adopted (especially in Western Australia) of constructing a 'roaded catchment' or an 'iron-clad catchment' to collect water. The idea of using a roaded catchment did not appeal to me because of the problems associated with purifying the water, but the iron-clad catchment was much more attractive. It was such an obvious answer to the problem. If you think, "Well, this was no big deal", remember that I was still learning the trade and that the Authority's funds were very inadequate. In the course of my inquiries, I found myself talking to Sir Ronald East, Chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, who was very enthusiastic about the concept and informed me that he had been responsible many years earlier for the construction of an iron-clad catchment at Nowingee, in the Mallee. On my next visit to the district, I inspected this installation, which was still functional, though in some disrepair. Still, it was a clear demonstration which encouraged me to promote the idea. However, it was not until 1967 that severe drought conditions and a diminished rainfall



Picnic shelter erected near Wonga Hut, Wyperfeld NP, 1965-66, with a 5,000 gallon tank to collect water from the roof.

combined to accelerate the Authority's plans to construct a suitable catchment at Wyperfeld to make the best use of the rain which does fall there. The plan was simple enough, really, but the several aspects required co-ordination.

As part of the Authority's plan of improving tourist amenities and water supplies, during the 1965-66 year a large picnic shelter incorporating tables and seats was erected near the Wonga Hut sand dune, and the roof water was stored in a 5000 gallon tank. This supplied the picnic shelter, and the overflow was connected via plastic pipe to two 30,000 gallon concrete tanks (complete with lids), connected in series, which had been erected in Lake Brimin. Nowadays large concrete tanks are readily available in various parts of Victoria;

but, in 1965-66, it was necessary for the Authority to employ a South Australian contractor. From one of these concrete tanks, water was pumped to the head tank at the toilet block and to other outlets.

The task of designing the catchment and having it erected was placed in the hands of Mr C. F. Hutchinson, under the supervision of the Chief Technical Officer, Mr T. E. Arthur. The catchment is 75 ft wide and 120 ft long and stands on a frame of treated pine about 30 inches above ground level at the high end and 12 inches high at the lower level, the slope being such that water would not be lost due to 'overshoot' in times of sudden downpour. The water is collected in a wide galvanized iron channel which empties into a strainer (to remove bark and sticks, etc.) from

which it flows via plastic pipes into the concrete tank(s).

The work was executed by Mr George Easterbrook, a local contractor, and Colin Hutchinson, during January-February 1968. At times the shade temperature reached 113 degrees Fahrenheit, so the work was performed mainly during the early morning and late afternoon. It was a pioneering effort which deserves the gratitude of us all, but most visitors would be totally unaware of what was entailed in providing this water supply.

To the great joy of all concerned, the work had hardly been completed when a downpour of 68 points (17 mm) provided about 3000 gallons of water for the tanks. With the breaking of the drought, further rainfall augmented water storages and one

of my happiest memories was the sight of water actually pouring out of the second concrete tank into Lake Brimin. The success of the first ironclad catchment encouraged the new administration to construct a second one in 1977 and to install two more concrete tanks.

There were some interesting sidelights to the provision of the new water supply at Wyperfeld. While a fence around the entire structure served to exclude animals, the bright surface of the catchment proved to be an unexpected hazard for night-flying birds, especially on moonlight nights, when some of the birds made heavy landings.

The provision of modern toilets also had an interesting side effect. The water in the toilet bowls, and especially in the leather washers in the taps and in the urinal in the male section, proved a great bonus to the wild bees that established in the park many years earlier. Users of the new facilities often found them selves confronted with a swarm of bees, so that answering a simple call from Nature (however urgent) became a hazardous experience. To reduce the hazard, a counter-attraction was provided in the form of a small shallow pond close to the toilet, the margins of the pond being plastered with clay. Bees prefer to suck their water requirements from a spongy surface, and there were in fact some casualties among the bees, which slipped into the toilet bowls. The clay pad proved to be popular with the bees, but they still persisted in drying out the leather washers. Of course, the pond attracted birds also, and the spectacle of a family of emus walking quietly out of the timbered areas to the pond became a regular tourist attraction. Sometimes, however, an unfortunate emu would trap a bee in its wide-open beak, with very unhappy results.

A small windmill was erected at Black Flat to pump water from the bore to a pond, for the benefit of the kangaroos and birds; but, again, the competition from the wild bees was intense.

Fraser National Park

'Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink'. Coleridge, of course, was not among those whose destiny led them to Fraser National Park, but the anguished cry of the Ancient Mariner might well have been in the minds of those whose responsibility it was to provide for the 'education and enjoyment' of visitors to that park.

Fraser National Park [now part of Lake Eildon NP] was not among the original thirteen parks included in the schedule to the National Parks Act (1956), but even before the Authority had been appointed, the Government was moving towards this end, and Fraser National Park was declared during the 1957-58 year. The area was 6,600 acres. In the Authority's first Annual Report, it was stated that an early visit to the park was planned to facilitate the preparation of a management plan. The first step was to provide road access, and this aspect will be dealt with in Chapter 11, but is mentioned here to emphasize the interdependence of the many factors involved in national parks management. In his report on the Authority's first visit, Crosbie Morrison referred to the only road access then available, namely the Devil's River Road, as one which 'one may use at some peril'. Today's visitors to the park can have no concept of just how hazardous that road was!

Despite the lack of road access, visitors, including campers, obtained access by boat. The urgent need for toilet facilities in the early stages of the park's development led to the construction of a number of 'dry

pit' toilets surrounded by timber frames with Masonite cladding. These 'thunder boxes' had to suffice until towards the end of the 1959/60 financial year, when a start was made on the construction of a modern toilet block on the southern side of Collier Bay – but not too modern, because initially, it was not flush-operated. It was not until 1962/63 that they were converted, the water being pumped from Lake Eildon by means of a portable pump and stored in tanks erected near the toilet block.

One of the major problems in regard to water supply was the fact that, during the summer months, the water level in the Lake falls considerably, necessitating the extension of the pumping line to the storages in the park. The pump was mounted on a raft which followed the water over a distance of several hundred metres, so that the intake was at a suitable depth to avoid pumping mud, yet deep enough to avoid pollution. Altogether, the problem of taking water from Lake Eildon for the convenience of tourist in Fraser National Park was (and no doubt still is) a formidable one.

Consideration was given to the construction of a dam in a suitable gully on the eastern slopes above the Ranger's house. However, this plan was eventually abandoned because of anticipated construction difficulties and maintenance problems. It was decided to develop water storages in the form of 30,000 gallon concrete tanks erected in close proximity to the areas designated for tourist development, and to pump water to them from the Lake. The concrete tanks were situated on the slope above the road, at a sufficient elevation to ensure good pressure throughout the entire system. At a later date, a camping area was developed at Devil Cove and a 30,000 gallon concrete tank was

installed there, being connected to the concrete tank above Collier Bay near the Lakeside camping area by means of plastic pipe. The deeper water towards the eastern end of Collier Bay made it easier to 'follow' the water during the summer months. The central concrete storage tank also supplied water to the Lakeside camping area and the ranger's house.

Mount Eccles National Park

One of the most striking features of Mount Eccles National Park, which was declared in 1960, is the beautiful little emerald-green Lake Surprise, cradled in the lap of an ancient volcano. The park had previously been reserved under the Land Act and was in the care of a Committee of Management. The improvements consisted of a galvanized iron shelter shed, the spouting of which was in disrepair, rendering it difficult to collect drinking water in the 500 gallon galvanised iron (GI) tank near the shed. The Authority had the spouting renewed and installed a 2000 gallon GI tank. There were no toilets.

The water in Lake Surprise was unsuitable for drinking, but served admirably to provide a supply of water for the toilet block which the Authority had built in 1963. The water was pumped a height of about eighty feet and stored in a head tank above the toilet block. Although the number of tourists increased steadily each year, this simple system proved adequate.

Tarra Valley National Park

The 'improvements' at Tarra Valley National Park consisted of a large shelter situated at the edge of a car park. Water for tourists and to serve a toilet block was taken direct from the stream which flows through the park, and conveyed through a galvanized

iron pipe to the ball valves above the cisterns, with intermediate 'tees' to provide drinking water for visitors. It was an ingenious system, but not very satisfactory. The toilet was situated below the level of the car park and within a few metres of the stream into which, from time to time, the overflow from the septic tank discharged.

The Authority recognized that the water supply and toilets needed a major overhaul and relocation of the latter. Physically, it would have been relatively simple to build a new toilet block at the level of the car park and ensure that the stream was not polluted by septic tank effluents. It was planned to pump water to an elevated tank on the high ground on the western side of the car park (approximately opposite the existing system), so as to service the picnic area and toilets, but lack of funds precluded this development. Occasionally, the lack of a filter caused the water pipes to become choked with silt, necessitating their disconnection and flushing, but this cosmetic treatment was no substitute for a well-designed system.

Bulga Park

Water for tourist purposes was pumped from a small dam on Macks Creek, by means of a ram, to an elevated galvanized iron tank from which it flowed to a toilet block and to several taps near a large picnic shelter on the western side of the short entrance road on the rim of the fern gully which runs through the park. The tank was prone to leaking and the water was often muddy. The Authority was instrumental in having a small car park constructed on the western side of the entrance road, and a 10,000 gallon concrete tank was erected in the car park, so that water could be pumped into it from the ram. However, the low stream flows during

most of the year, and the lack of a filter, resulted in a water supply that was generally unsatisfactory.

In an endeavour to provide a simple means of filtering the water, the Authority provided a 'centrifugal filter', which is designed so that the water enters tangentially to the circular upper part of a conical-shaped container. The denser particles of silt are thrown outward by centrifugal action and slide down to the bottom of the cone. The latter is extended in the form of a pipe which is fitted with a full-bore cock for flushing purposes. The water swirls around in the bowl, shedding its silt, and eventually overflows through a pipe at the centre of the upper part of the bowl, where the velocity is lowest. As silt accumulates at the bottom of the cone it is flushed out and runs into the stream on the downside of the intake.

This filter could have materially improved the quality of the water, but I was informed, after an intolerable delay, that the result was unsatisfactory. A considerable time later I learned that the filter had been connected to the inlet and outlet pipes in the reverse order to what the pump manufacturer had prescribed.

L.P. gas in national parks

The numerous aspects of national parks management are so inter-related that it is virtually impossible to consider them in isolation. The management functions involved are concerned mainly with people and the provision of the various services which need to be provided 'for the education and enjoyment of visitors to national parks'.

The provision of a reliable supply of potable water is the prime requirement; it has long since become a part of the Australian way of life to wash regularly, and access to showers and baths, and to flush-operated toilets, is now taken for granted. There is a demand for such amenities even when people are 'on holidays'.

When the commando unit was established at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park during World War II, a water supply and related amenities were provided by the Army for those concerned. These were no doubt adequate, even if somewhat primitive by today's standards. At the conclusion of the War, the Committee of Management acquired the houses and other facilities, and gradually developed a tourist service. The ablution blocks had been designed for a relatively small number of men and soon proved inadequate for the large number of visitors who began to find their way to the Promontory, especially during the Christmas-New Year holidays.

My personal experience of affairs at Tidal River began with the Christmas - New Year period of 1949. I was there as a camper and in no way concerned with management. I soon became accustomed to the practice of



Riverview Flats, Tidal River Campground, Wilsons Promontory NP, built 1962-63. First use of LPG in national parks in Victoria.

taking a cold shower, but sometimes I was fortunate enough to enjoy a warm one. The most popular units were the 'Shower Block', the 'House Block' and 'Windsor Castle'.

Where hot water was provided, it was derived from coke-fired 60-gallon storage heaters and the coke was replenished, I understand, about three times daily. The need to remove ash from the furnace was hardly known to the staff whose job it was to regularly 'stoke up', a fact which was brought home to me during our usual Christmas-New Year visit in 1953. On this occasion we were accompanied by a friend from Adelaide (he was the Assistant Chief Engineer of the South Australian Gas Company) who was kind enough to demonstrate to me the importance of proper stoking of the furnace. We used to 'stoke up' at night-time, just before going to bed, and visit the 'House Block' at about 4am, when we were assured of a good warm shower. The operative in charge of the boilers must have been

puzzled by the remarkable increase in the quantity of ash in the tray during this period!

After I became involved in national parks management, towards the end of 1958, I soon learned that there were many inter-related aspects of the problems of providing water for tourists at Tidal River and of disposing of the waste products (effluents from ablution blocks and toilets). The water supply itself was improved by the construction of a small weir below the confluence of Lilly Pilly Creek and Tristania Creek, to meet the needs of the additional toilet blocks which had been provided by the Committee. The new units incorporated toilets, showers and laundry facilities, the latter being especially helpful to parents with young families.

However, certain basic problems remained. Septic tanks overflowed, effluent lines 'broke out' delivering waste products in various places, thereby creating unpleasant smelling



LPG tanker at Tidal River Wilsons Promontory NP 1965. A continuous supply of LPG for the Riverview Flats built in the early 1960s was assured by installing a 1 ton tank for LPG nearby.

pools of liquid. The maintenance staff were constantly involved in digging up 'absorption trains' and relocating them in soil which had not yet become saturated. These activities put great strain on the limited staff, but did not solve the problem of effluent disposal.

In 1961, when the Authority became involved in the problems arising from Mr. Unger's application for a lease in Wilsons Promontory (see Chapter 18), I suggested that the time seemed opportune to demonstrate that, even with its limited resources, the Authority itself could do something to counter the criticism that insufficient was being done to provide accommodation for visitors to Wilsons Promontory National Park. I proposed that a small motel-type unit be built on a small sand dune which did not appear to be used for any other purpose. The plan was adopted and Mr Dale

Fisher, a progressive young architect, was engaged to design the unit and supervise its erection. He and his wife had recently returned from the United States where they had made a special study of the design and equipping of domestic and commercial kitchens. The result of this exercise was 'Riverview Flats', which consisted of four two-bed units and two six-bed units, incorporating individual showers and toilets, modern kitchen facilities including a refrigerator and a cooking range, and heaters.

In proposing this development in the first place, I had a clear concept of the benefits which would flow from the adoption of LP gas for heating, cooking and refrigeration. At this time, the electricity supply was not continuous; therefore, only by using LP gas could a refrigerator be maintained in continuous operation, while the availability

of cooking and heating facilities at any time visitors required the service was a powerful argument in favour of LP gas. Furthermore, by installing instantaneous gas hot-water heaters in each unit, it became possible to meet the needs of individual users at any time such services were required.

A continuous supply of LP gas was assured by installing a one-ton tank of LP gas near the flats; supplies could be replenished at short notice. A meter was installed at the inlet to the block of flats to enable records to be kept of gas consumption; but, to reduce the work-load on the local staff, and to reduce installation and maintenance costs, meters were not installed on each unit. Knowing the thermal input rates for the different gas appliances, it was not difficult to estimate the probable cost of providing this service for each of the six units. After

making a generous allowance for 'contingencies', a figure was arrived at which was simply added to the tariff for the separate units.

A private contractor was engaged to build 'Riverview Flats' and he and his staff lived in caravans while construction was in progress. This experience highlighted the problems associated with building in remote areas, because he was the only contractor we were able to persuade to help us. I have forgotten his name but not the fact that we owe him and his staff a debt of gratitude for suffering the inconveniences they had to, in order to help us.

Since the Riverview Flats were built, many visitors have enjoyed the services provided, which is a tribute to both architect and builder. The cost of this service was far beyond the capacity of the Authority's budget, so I proposed that a loan be sought from the Treasury, to be repaid out of revenue from the flats. It was easy to demonstrate that this was a viable proposition and the money was eventually borrowed from the Rural Finance Corporation. Once the concept of using LP gas had found acceptance, it was not difficult to persuade the Committee of Management to substitute LP gas water heaters for the coke-fired boilers.

It so happened that, among the different types of water heaters available, there was an instantaneous heater manufactured by Pyrox Ltd, having a 'normal input rating' of 37,500 BTU [British Thermal Units] per hour. Now, this sort of 'jargon' probably means nothing to the average reader and the mystery which appears to have been associated with the BTU may well have something to do with the fact that LP gas had not been used in national parks prior to 1962. It is not proposed here to embark on a discourse on this subject; but it is important, as I hope to demonstrate.

In tackling this problem, I first asked myself how long a person needed to spend under the shower to do all that was necessary. I am aware that many city people, including some members of my own family, like to spend a considerable time under the shower. So, without attempting to influence the result unduly, I conducted some tests on myself at home. I had my wife record the time I spent under the shower; I found that I could complete my shower in two minutes and that, thereafter, I was simply going over old ground. At the end of four minutes I was simply wasting time and water. I concluded that, for the purpose of the exercise I had to perform at Tidal River, a shower of four minutes' duration was satisfactory.

Now, it just happens that four minutes is one-fifteenth of an hour and, during this period, the Pyrox heater would consume 2,500 BTU. This is very close to 1 cubic foot of LP gas and, assuming a figure of 78 per cent for the thermal efficiency of the heater, would be sufficient to raise the temperature of four gallons of water from 55°F to about 104°F. This is a comfortable temperature for shower and has the great advantage of providing only four gallons of effluent. Of course, if a slightly higher temperature were required, it is possible to control the flow of water through the heater, thereby further reducing the volume of effluent.

The question now was how could a park visitor be provided with 1 cu ft of LP gas? The answer, of course, was in the coin-operated gas meter. I had my introduction to this novel device in 1923, when my family moved from the country to Surrey Hills. I decided to call my friend Hugh Jack, the Manager of the Parkinson-Cowan (P-C) Meter Factory at Footscray. I had met Hugh soon after I joined the gas industry in 1946; he was then a draughtsman employed by the Briar

Heater Company. Fortunately, P-C had a supply of slot meters and Hugh was kind enough to test a number of them in order to ascertain whether it would be possible to control the supply of such a small quantity of gas. The result was positive!

Thus, we now had available the means of providing each individual with a warm shower, whilst at the same time reducing the time occupied in the shower and the volume of effluent which had to be disposed of. The Authority and the Committee collaborated in replacing the coke-fired boilers with instantaneous water heaters and slot meters which accepted sixpenny (5 cent) coins. The older blocks were converted first and all new toilet blocks were provided with the new type of service, as they were built. For individual showers in the toilet blocks, the small heaters, having an NTI rating of 37,500 BTU per hour, were used; but lodges, staff houses and laundries were fitted with larger appliances.

The LP gas service was not entirely trouble-free. Not every visitor to the park was honest and some operated the meters with substitutes for the sixpenny coins, such as leaden discs, washers and buttons and, on several occasions, the meter boxes containing the money were robbed. It always disappointed me to learn that, although the management literally 'fell over backwards' to provide a better service for park visitors, there were a few people who, even in such a beautiful place as Wilsons Promontory National Park, abused their privileges and preyed on their fellow men and women.

There were also two physical problems which caused much inconvenience; especially in those cases where provision had not been made for the heaters in the original design of the toilet blocks, the pilot lights were sometimes blown out by draughts,

and water filters in the heaters became choked with fine silt because of inadequacies in the filtration system in the main water supply. This latter problem was greatly ameliorated later, by the introduction of the Kinney filter, which is further discussed above. On the whole, though, I think that the LP gas system provided a valuable service for park visitors and staff. It also provided some very useful revenue; the returns from the meters at Tidal River eventually exceeded \$5,000 per annum.

In other national parks, such as Fraser, Mount Buffalo, Port Campbell, etc, as toilet blocks and shower facilities were provided, it became standard practice to incorporate an LP gas service for hot water and heating. The disposal of sanitary napkins had caused much inconvenience over the years because, although special bins were provided for them, some women disposed of them in the toilet bowl, frequently causing blockages. The installation of LP operated disposal units did much to alleviate this problem, but some women just did not seem able to cope with this example of modern technology.

At the end of 1974, the total consumption of LP gas in all national parks in Victoria was of the order of 50 tons per annum.

Vermin control

Prior to the creation of the National Parks Authority, the control of 'vermin' in national parks, as well as in Crown Land, was the responsibility of the Lands Department, which acted through its agency the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board. This was a natural consequence of the fact that the committees of management controlling the national parks were appointed under the Lands Act and were therefore responsible to the Lands Department.

The term 'vermin' was generally understood to refer to rabbits and foxes, but could be broadened to include any other animals or birds declared by Parliament, for the purposes of the Act, to be vermin. In the early days of the Authority, wombats were protected; but, at a later stage, were declared to be 'vermin' and, as such, liable to be destroyed. Emus, while generally protected, were also possible candidates for the executioner's gun.

The Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board acted through a number of district offices headed by District Inspectors who were provided with the necessary manpower and equipment to perform their duties. The passing of the National Parks Act 1956 made the National Parks Authority responsible for this function.

Section 9(a) of the Act reads as follows:

"It shall be the duty of the Authority

- (a) unless inconsistent with any special purpose for which a national park has been declared, to maintain every national park

in its natural condition and to conserve therein ecological associations and species of native plants and animals and protect the special features of the park and as far as practicable to exterminate exotic plants and animals therein."

Now, the Authority had neither the manpower nor the resources to undertake such work directly, but the Act further provided that the Authority could request the services of other bodies, including other Government agencies, in the execution of its duties and responsibilities. It is clear therefore that the initiative for taking action in regard to the control of noxious weeds and vermin rested fairly and squarely with the National Parks Authority; but, during the first year and a half, there appears to have been some confusion concerning these and other matters.

The first Director, Crosbie Morrison, was busy 'doing the rounds' and becoming acquainted with the committees of management and the parks themselves, and in finding 'permanent' accommodation and establishing procedures in regard to the Authority's work. His untimely death caused a deferment of the Authority's direct involvement in park management, including the control of noxious weeds and vermin.

Problems at Wyperfeld

An account of the Authority's first visit to Wyperfeld has been given above; at present we are concerned with vermin control, but no member of the Authority was prepared for what transpired on that day. The

Committee of Management was there in force and had long been anxious to facilitate the visit, in order to bring a number of interesting exhibits to the notice of the Authority.

The Authority was informed that, in August 1958, officers and employees of the Ouyen-based Lands Department District Office had conducted a vigorous poisoning campaign against rabbits in Wyperfeld National Park. At that time, it was the practice to construct a furrow in which baits (oats), poisoned with 1080, were laid. There is no need to explain here why it was necessary to destroy rabbits in the park, and there is no doubt that the latter, like most other Mallee districts, was carrying a large rabbit population. Nor need it be doubted that, in so far as rabbits were concerned, the campaign was highly successful, because no less than 238 miles of trail had been laid with poison!

Unfortunately, rabbits were not the only victims, and the Committee was at some pains to show the Authority the remains of 19 kangaroos and 11 emus which had been discovered following the poisoning. There is no certainty that this was the total number of casualties and, in the light of our subsequent experience, it is surprising that no mention was made of possums which must surely have suffered.

The Committee was in an angry mood and there were heated exchanges between the Chairman of the Committee and the recently appointed Secretary for Lands, Mr George Wood. Because of the circumstances explained earlier, there had been



Wyperfeld NP, from Rye Hill, 1965. Young trees growing in 25-acre conservation plot.

no consultation between the Ouyen District Office and the Committee, and I was not the only member of the Authority who felt utterly bewildered by the unhappy turn of events. The Committee took full advantage of the Authority's presence to condemn the field staff of the Lands Department for their alleged carelessness and callousness in the conduct of their work. It was stated that it was the practice, at the end of the day, to simply dump the unused poisoned oats at the end of the furrow, rather than transport them back to the depot. This practice virtually ensured that any itinerant kangaroos or emus would gorge themselves and die. So the first visit of the National Parks Authority

to Wyperfeld was a memorable one, and it was clear that farmer Schmidt's fence was not the only one in need of repair. The Committee was somewhat mollified by the action of the Authority on that day of taking steps to appoint a part-time Ranger in the person of Mr A. E. G. (Rudd) Campbell who, along with his brother Bill, had for many years kept a 'friendly eye' on the park and its precious contents.

On returning to Melbourne, the members of the Authority dispersed and resumed their normal duties while the Director continued his education in relation to the management of national parks.

The consultative process begins

Towards the end of January 1959, the Authority's Secretary, Ron Newson, drew my attention to a notice in the Victoria Gazette announcing that, on 8th February, the Lands Department proposed to enter Wyperfeld National Park and undertake a rabbit-poisoning campaign. Notification of such impending events in the Gazette was a legal requirement, but there had been no consultation with either the Committee or the Authority. I pondered the matter for a while before deciding on a course of action.

The former Superintendent of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds



Wyperfeld NP from Rye Hill, 1974. Note slow growth resulting from desert environment.

Destruction Board had recently retired; he was succeeded by Mr R. W. (Ron) Tully. I had not yet met him, but decided to call him on the telephone. After introducing myself, I said, "I see from the Gazette that your officers propose to conduct another poisoning campaign in Wyperfeld, commencing on 8th February". "Yes", he replied, "that is correct". "I must say that I am a little surprised", I said. "I would have thought that, after having laid 238 miles of trail last August, you would have had difficulty in finding enough rabbits in Wyperfeld to justify another campaign at this stage. Why is it necessary?" "Well," replied Mr Tully, "my Inspector tells me that there is a large rabbit population in Wyperfeld and that we should get

rid of them". I then suggested that we should meet to discuss the matter and that I would confer with him after the next meeting of the Authority, which was to be held on the Tuesday following our telephone conversation.

I hope that those who read this will recognize that we were in the process of devising new machinery to deal with the matters consequential to the imposing by the Parliament of certain duties on the National Parks Authority. For the first time, there was a particular body, appointed by Parliament, to which matters could and should be referred by other Government Departments before action was taken to carry out any necessary works in national parks.

This was to be the pattern adopted during the ensuing years, and the collaborations between the Authority and other bodies, in various fields, laid the foundations for the building of a National Parks Service.

A plan of action

But 'retournons à nos moutons'; or, to put it another way, let us return to the matter of the rabbits (often referred to in the country where I grew up as 'underground mutton'). At the next meeting of the Authority, I put forward the following plan:

1. That there be formed within the Authority a Fauna Protection Committee, for the express purpose

of devising ways and means of protecting native fauna. I avoided the use of the words 'Vermin Destruction' because of their negative implications.

2. That an early meeting of the Fauna Protection Committee be held to which Mr Tully should be invited to discuss the proposal to lay poison in Wyperfeld.
3. That, before any further poisoning was carried out, the Lands Department should be requested to send an independent officer (i.e. one not connected with the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board) to the park to investigate the reported presence of large populations of rabbits, in collaboration with the Park Ranger, and that the Lands Department advise the Authority of the outcome and, in particular to identify the areas within the park where such rabbit populations existed.

Fauna Protection Committee

The Authority adopted these recommendations and appointed Mr A. Dunbavin Butcher (Director of Fisheries and Game) and Mr G. T. Thompson (Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority) to serve on the Committee along with the Director (Convener). The Committee met soon after this and Mr Tully attended the meeting. Proposal 3 was adopted and the Lands Department co-operated by despatching an independent officer to investigate and report. In due course he reported that, in his opinion, there were insufficient rabbits in Wyperfeld to justify the expense of a poisoning campaign, and the gazetted plan was abandoned.

As time passed, as was to be expected, the rabbit population in the

park did increase, and a year later it became necessary to undertake control measures. During this period, with the approval of the Public Service Board and the Treasury, the Authority had acquired its first Technical Officer. This was Mr John Landy, BAgr.Sc., who possessed not only the necessary qualifications but also considerable practical experience, including farming experience. Also, during the past year, I had had further discussions with the members of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, of which Mr Tully had been appointed Chairman. The other members were Mr G.W. Douglas (Deputy Chairman) and Mr Reg Borbidge.

Our discussions had resulted in the adoption of an important change in procedure: henceforth, carrots and not oats would be used as bait in poisoning campaigns and, following a practice shown to be successful in New Zealand, the carrot was to be dyed green with Malachite Green. In this form, the carrot lost none of its appeal to rabbits, but was less attractive to native fauna. The reason is not clear. The poison to be used was 1080.

In preparation for the inevitable poisoning campaign, arrangements were made for Mr Landy and Mr Bruce Woodfield, M Agr.Sc., with the assistance of Lands Department field staff and the Park Ranger, to carry out certain preliminary investigations. The first step was to construct a furrow in the usual manner and provide 'free feed' (i.e. carrot, dyed green, without poison), so that the behaviour of rabbits and native fauna could be observed. This programme extended over about ten days, the carrot being replenished as necessary to sustain the interest of the rabbits and to afford the native fauna full opportunity to reveal any behaviour which might militate against the success of the

plan we were developing. It was duly reported to me that, after the first night, rabbits could be seen coming to the trail from considerable distances (up to a quarter of mile), while kangaroos and emus showed no interest in the carrot, which proved also to be lacking in appeal to the odd Sulphur-crested Cockatoo which 'happened upon' a piece of carrot. It seemed therefore that it would be safe to introduce poison into the bait; but it was agreed that, if a few kangaroos or emus were sacrificed in the next stage of the programme, the Authority would not react harshly towards its collaborators.

Controlled poisoning begins

In order to test the efficacy of the plan agreed upon, it was decided to use strychnine instead of 1080, because it acts more rapidly than 1080 and it was anticipated that any rabbits killed would be found within a short distance of the poison trail. It was further agreed that the poison trail should be left 'open' for two nights, so that any bait not taken on the first night would be available for any rabbits which had survived, and that the trail should be covered on the third day by ploughing another furrow alongside it. This was to ensure that there would be no poison left exposed, possibly to be collected later by a non-target species.

So the poison was laid, and the results were awaited with a mixture of anxiety and optimism. They were spectacular; from the 3.5 miles of trail laid, 429 rabbits were collected. No emus or kangaroos were found then or later, but two possums had been killed.

The decision was made to continue with a normal poisoning programme using 1080, but with all

the precautions mentioned in the foregoing, the poison being laid only in areas which had been found by prior inspection to be infested with rabbits. Hitherto, poisoning had been unplanned and indiscriminate.

So successful were the procedures agreed upon that, as occasion required, based on reports from the Park Ranger as well as the District Inspector, and subject always to the prior approval of the Director of National Parks, poisoning campaigns became a matter of routine. Within a very short period, the whole complexion of the problem had been changed; it had been demonstrated that rabbits could be poisoned in Wyperfeld National Park, using 1080, without necessarily destroying kangaroos and emus. However, it has to be admitted that the loss of a few possums was a matter of concern. Several years later, on the suggestion of Mr Geoffrey Edwards, who had been given the task of monitoring the 1080 poisoning programmes, steps were taken to exclude the Black Box areas, which appeared to be the favoured homes of the possums.

Other parks

The method described was successfully applied in other national parks, including Fraser, Mount Buffalo, Wilsons Promontory, Hattah Lakes, Mount Eccles and possibly a few others. In some cases, the results were not always as satisfactory as in Wyperfeld; but, because the Authority had ensured that the Rangers were always directly involved in every programme, it was usually possible to determine the reason for any unsatisfactory results.

For instance, because of the undulating nature of the country in Fraser National Park, the Lands Department personnel adopted the practice of dispensing with the furrow

(made by a single blade) and had adopted the practice of broadcasting the bait from the back of a Land Rover. This resulted in very irregular distribution of bait, which was often concentrated in small areas, and predictably unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of the Authority. This practice was not permitted in national parks and other methods had to be devised.

In general, the Authority, in consultation with the Board (usually Mr Ron Tully or Mr Geoff Douglas), examined the conditions obtaining in individual parks before authorizing any particular course of action. The essential objective of any approved programme was the destruction of rabbits without harming the non-target species. Some of the investigations made by the Authority and the methods used in different parks are described hereunder.

Hattah Lakes National Park

In addition to the trail method of poisoning which had been so successful in Wyperfeld, in Hattah Lakes NP large rabbit warrens were destroyed by 'ripping' with a tractor equipped with a ripping blade. The destruction of 'harbour' was an effective means of controlling rabbit populations, but it did not necessarily destroy many rabbits directly. It also caused ugly scars on park land and, in some cases, ripped warrens were re-opened by rabbits, which seem to have the knack of recognizing their traditional homes.

Much more positive results were obtained by inserting cyanide pellets in the entrances of rabbit burrows; but the dryness of the soil made it necessary to apply water at the entrance, so as to release the hydrogen cyanide. Clearly, this method was more labour-intensive

than the poison-trail method and made heavier demands on the limited park staff.

Wilsons Promontory National Park

In the late 1950s and early 60s, the large rabbit population at Wilsons Promontory was of great concern to the Authority. Not only did the rabbits cause damage to the vegetation, but they also evoked unfavourable comment from many of the visitors to the camping area at Tidal River. It was all very well for the Authority to talk about the successful rabbit poisoning campaign at Wyperfeld, but it was decidedly embarrassing not to be able to obtain similar success at Tidal River. The Committee of Management did not appear to share the Authority's concern; or, at least, they did nothing to reduce the rabbit population.

There were certain conditions in Wilsons Promontory, especially at Tidal River, which made it difficult to adopt conventional methods of destroying rabbits. Firstly, there were no kangaroos at Tidal River, but there were wallabies. At Wyperfeld the kangaroos virtually protected themselves, because they prefer to eat grass and were not attracted to small pieces of green carrot. Wallabies, on the other hand, were much less selective in their diet and would certainly have eaten carrot if they had been given the opportunity. In addition, there were wombats in Wilsons Promontory and, although these animals also show a preference for grass, there was always the danger that a wombat might fall victim to a poisoned carrot bait.

Further, Tidal River was renowned for its numerous gaily-coloured Crimson Rosellas, which had become accustomed to park visitors who had introduced them to a variety of

foods. The possibility that rosellas might become casualties in the Authority's war against the rabbit was a strong deterrent to the adoption of conventional methods of poisoning. Meanwhile the rabbits appeared to be enjoying themselves, and the deterioration of the vegetative cover of the sand dunes, especially at the southern end of Norman Bay, was becoming a matter of increasing concern.

There was another aspect of the matter; many years ago, Hog Deer had been introduced into Wilsons Promontory National Park and were now [1960] widespread throughout the park. I had often seen them in the area east of Oberon Bay on my regular walks to the lighthouse, during the early 1950s, and the large open 'tip' between Tidal River and the western foothills of Mount Oberon was a great attraction for the deer. In the quieter months of the year, deer were often seen walking or running along the main road, in the vicinity of the old store.

Deer shooting in the Yanakie Run, which had not yet been incorporated in the park, was a popular pastime of deer shooters from far and near, and the Authority was mindful of the consequences which would surely flow from the destruction of even one of these exotic animals in the course of a rabbit-poisoning campaign. It was one thing for members or non-members of the Sporting Shooters' Association to shoot a deer deliberately, but Heaven help the Authority if it should accidentally destroy one in the execution of one of the duties prescribed in the National Parks Act!

In my childhood, like many other country boys, I had often set traps to catch rabbits. I recall that, in 1921, I used to earn a little pocket money by setting traps and selling rabbits to the townspeople in Tarnagulla. In good



Rabbit killed by myxamatosis in Fraser NP.

times, rabbits were worth sixpence (5c) each; but, under less favourable conditions, they brought only 4d (pence). However, in the summer of 1921, rabbit skins were worth 7 shillings and 6 pence per pound and, in the winter, the price was as high as 11 shillings and 8 pence per pound (this is about \$2.60 per kilo).

I was satisfied that rabbits could be trapped without causing excessive harm to the native fauna, so I proposed that an experienced trapper be authorized to set traps in Tidal River. The Authority (not having had my Tarnagulla experiences) was hardly enthusiastic about the proposal, nor was Geoff Douglas, but eventually the necessary agreement was reached. An experienced trapper was installed in Tidal River; the results were very good but, within a few days, he departed. He had harvested the cream of the rabbit population and could no longer sustain the yield, and trapping became uneconomical for him. So, other methods had to be devised.

It so happened, that, at about this time, Imperial Chemical Industries Australia Ltd. was investigating the possibility of destroying rabbits in their warrens by pumping foam plastic into the warren. In due course, the foam plastic set into a hard honeycomb sort of structure in which any entrapped rabbits would be entombed. By a curious coincidence, the ICI scientist who was leading this investigation was Mr Peter Temple, who had been a member of Barnes Wallace's team when the latter was developing the bombs and techniques which duly destroyed the Mohne and Eder Dams in the Ruhr Valley during World War II.

I recall that Mr John Landy and Mr Dewar Goode were at Tidal River while these investigations were in progress, and we actually participated in locating the rabbit warrens in preparation for the experimental run. The foam plastic was pumped out of a special machine into the warrens, and in due course emerged at another opening. This was sealed and pumping continued until the

foam emerged from another opening which was likewise sealed, and so on until all openings had been sealed. The reader will no doubt share my own scepticism and will hardly be surprised to learn that this very novel method was not adopted.

However, the problem remained. I therefore designed a cage-like structure consisting of a number of hoops of one-quarter-inch steel rod joined by horizontal rods and covered with fine chicken wire. The cages had legs which could be pushed into the ground, providing a clearance of about four inches (10 cm). These special cages were fabricated by R. and J. DeCoite of Fern Tree Gully and delivered to Tidal River. The plan was to place poisoned carrot on a tray within the cage, the tray being covered during the day but opened for the rabbits, after dusk. Short furrows led to the cage, and it was hoped that this method would result in the destruction of rabbits without causing harm to native fauna. The method worked, but the weakness was that it relied on the availability of park staff to perform these extra chores after their normal day's work. It is of some interest to me personally that the cages are still [1985] in use at Tidal River, almost thirty years after I had them installed.

The rabbits really were a menace and something had to be done to control their numbers. After considerable soul searching and numerous discussions, it was finally agreed that a poison trail, using 1080, should be laid at Tidal River, with strict observance of all the safeguards discussed earlier. The exercise was placed in the hands of Mr Geoff Douglas and his staff, in close collaboration with the Park staff. It was recognized that there might be a few casualties among the wombats and wallabies, and that a few deer might be destroyed; but we all hoped

that Providence might be on our side.

The programme was duly carried out and, as a special precaution to protect the deer, generous helpings of unpoisoned carrot were distributed around the tip area in the hope that the deer would be kept away from the poison trails. The results were spectacular; numerous rabbits were destroyed but two wombats and three or four wallabies appear to have been victims. Unhappily, no fewer than thirteen deer were destroyed. It was recognized that this method could never again be used at Tidal River. There were loud and prolonged protests from the Sporting Shooters' Association. On the positive side it has to be said that the grass on the sand dunes recovered magnificently.

Some years later, with the object of protecting the habitat of the Mutton Bird, a 1080 poisoning programme was executed on Rabbit Island, during the period when the Mutton Birds were absent. The results justified all the care and effort expended in implementing the programme and the regeneration of the vegetation has arrested the erosion caused by the rabbits and, of course, improved the stability of the Mutton Bird rookery.

Aerial baiting in Fraser National Park

I have mentioned earlier that the rugged nature of the terrain made it extremely difficult to adopt the conventional method of trail poisoning in Fraser National Park. The problem was acute; so, after much deliberation, it was agreed that the method of aerial baiting should be tried. The proponents of this method claimed that the bait could be dropped within the target area and that the native animals would not be harmed. I recognized that

the National Parks Service could not hide its head in the sand over the rabbits in the 'high country', but had reservations about the ability of the pilot to control the 'drop'. The area to be poisoned was clearly marked on the ground with 40-gallon drums painted white. The programme began, but an alert Park Ranger observed that there had been a drift of bait outside the target area into certain gullies which provided a home for wallabies. Several wallabies were destroyed and, as soon as I learned of this, with the none-too-enthusiastic concurrence of the Chairman of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, I issued instructions for the immediate termination of the aerial baiting campaign.

In summary therefore I would say that the work of the National Parks Authority/Service, in collaboration with the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, had demonstrated that, where the terrain is suitable, and provided that the prescribed conditions are strictly observed, trail poisoning using 1080 may safely be used for the destruction of rabbits in national parks (or elsewhere). However, in areas where wallabies are present the method is not appropriate. Wallabies are much less selective in regard to their diet than kangaroos.

Myxomatosis

While poisoning with 1080 remained the principal method of controlling rabbit populations, the Authority co-operated fully with the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board in a vigorous campaign based on the mosquito-borne virus myxomatosis. In Wyperfeld National Park, by using spotlights and nets with long handles, rabbits were caught alive at night-time. The rabbits 'froze' under the strong lights and catchers simply walked up



Vermin were not the only cause for the loss of vegetation. Here at Darby Beach, Wilsons Promontory NP, in January 1987 it was caused by sand dune instability.

from the rear and dropped the net over them. Often, it was possible to pick the rabbits up by hand.

The rabbits were inoculated with the 'myxo' virus and released in the area where they had been caught. Where Rangers were available, they were instructed in the use of the virus and thus helped extend the work. This method had the great advantage that it was specific for rabbits, but it depended on the availability of mosquitoes to act as carriers. Many rabbits were ear-tagged in the hope that some of them might be found later, thus affording information about the movement of rabbits during a given period. One rabbit was found 48 km (30 miles) from the point of release.

Myxomatosis was used successfully in Wyperfeld, Hattah Lakes and

Fraser national parks and a vigorous on-going campaign using the method most appropriate to the park was conducted by the NW and VC Board acting in close collaboration with the National Parks Authority.

Other methods

The Authority/Service was always prepared to use other methods of destroying rabbits which did not involve 1080. Fumigants such as calcium cyanide or 'Phostoxin' (aluminium phosphide) were placed in rabbit burrows, to avoid destroying native animals; but experience showed that lizards, snakes, echidnas and even possums sometimes used rabbit burrows in certain areas, which placed these agents under some restriction.

Fire protection in national parks

The need to protect national parks from damage by fire would appear to be so obvious as not to warrant special consideration; but the subject of 'fire protection' in relation to national parks has always been highly controversial.

Prior to the passing of the National Parks Act 1956, fire protection works were the responsibility of the Forests Commission. It was customary for most committees of management to include an officer of the Commission who advised the committee on fire protection works and arranged for any necessary work to be carried out in the national park by Commission personnel. In the event of an outbreak of fire in a national park, the Commission was responsible for suppression works. As far as I was able to observe, the only park in which any pre-suppression works were ever carried out was Wilsons Promontory, where some 'protective burning' was done. There was no provision for the Commission to be reimbursed for such work.

Section 9(c) of the National Parks Act 1956 made it the responsibility of the National Parks Authority to protect the national parks from 'injury by fire'. This was a very significant change from past practices, because it left the initiative with the Authority, as well as the responsibility for meeting the cost of fire protection works. It also made the Authority very vulnerable, because areas of Crown land (which were for fire-protection purposes

the responsibility of the Forests Commission) that were proposed for national parks suddenly became, in the view of the anti-national parks lobbyists, potential national disaster areas of the highest degree of inflammability. The Authority however was far from inactive in the matter of fire protection, as the following resume will show.

Wilsons Promontory National Park

Bushfires were no novelty in Wilsons Promontory National Park but, no doubt because of its isolation, the general practice appears to have been to allow the fires to burn themselves out.

During World War II the road was extended from Yanakie to Tidal River to enable an army camp to be established there for the purpose of training commandos. The cessation of hostilities enabled the committee of management to acquire a number of buildings and a road. The buildings varied in quality, but with appropriate modifications served to provide accommodation (some are still [1980s] in use) along with toilets and ablution facilities for tourists. The narrow road was unsealed and heavily corrugated in parts and sandy in others. Cars were often bogged in sand, and more than one caravan was overturned or suffered a broken axle.

The increase in tourist intake attracted attention to the need for fire protection works to protect the park, the buildings and the tourists.

On 27th January 1951, a fire began in the northern part of the Promontory, near the aerodrome in the Yanakie area (which was outside the park), and was allowed to burn for several weeks, during which period it waxed and waned according to the weather conditions. It has been alleged that the presence of the fire was reported to the local police officer at Foster who, however, omitted to alert the Proper Officer. The casual attitude of those responsible for fire-suppression works is difficult to comprehend, because the smoke from that fire must have been clearly visible from Foster and other towns along the coast to the north of Corner Inlet.

On 12th February 1951, a change in weather conditions caused the fire to develop into a major conflagration which swept eastward and southward, racing through the Vereker Range, the Latrobe Range, Mount Ramsay, Mount Wilson, Sealers Cove, Refuge Cove, and over the Boulder Range right down to the lighthouse on South-East Cape, where all the vegetation was destroyed, along with some Commonwealth buildings. Miraculously, the houses were saved. Further west, the fire swept through the various land masses comprising the west coast and engulfed Mount Bishop and the Oberon Range, and then proceeded through the area east



Wilsons Promontory NP in about 1952. The dead trees were burnt in the 1951 fires.

of Oberon Bay to Mount Norgate and thence to the south coast.

It appears that only the heroic efforts of the Park Ranger, Mr Jack Sparkes, saved the Tidal River camp from total destruction. Somehow, he managed to get a 'back burn' going successfully before the fire attacked from the north.

It is not necessary here to describe the 1951 Promontory fire in detail, but an extremely interesting account of it was given by Crosbie Morrison who wrote, as Editor of 'Wild-Life' and as a member of the committee of management, in the June 1951 issue of 'Wild-Life'. He concluded by arguing persuasively for the creation of a competent authority to administer Victoria's national parks, but he could hardly have foreseen that six years later he would be the Director of that Authority!

I have some personal knowledge of the effects of that fire, because I was at Tidal River during the Christmas-

New Year period (1950-51). I saw the Promontory before the fire and, during the corresponding periods of succeeding years, I walked over many of the affected areas. I learned that the slopes of Mount Wilson and Mount Ramsay were strewn with large dead trees which had fallen as a result of fires which had preceded the 1951 fire.

Following the 1951 fire, no doubt at the request of the committee of management, the Forests Commission prepared a plan consisting of a series of 'fire access' tracks and areas where 'protective burning' was to be carried out, and this was presented to me when I joined the Authority in 1958. This formed the basis of the fire protection plan adopted by the Authority and work apparently began towards the end of 1958. At all events, during my usual Christmas-New Year vacation, I observed that some protective burning had been carried out in the vicinity of area 'D' in the accompanying plan; but it

appeared that the 'protective' works had not been adequately 'controlled'.

The Authority had been unaware of the intention of the local forestry officer to undertake such work. On returning to Melbourne, I brought the matter to the attention of the Chairman of the Forests Commission, Mr A. O. Lawrence, who, at the next meeting of the Authority, proposed that a Fire Protection Committee be formed to examine the matter of fire protection in all national parks and to serve as a liaison unit with the Commission. The Authority appointed the following members to serve on the Committee: Mr A. O. Lawrence (Chairman), Mr Dewar W. Goode, Mr G. T. Thompson and the Director (Convener). It was agreed that the services of the Chief of the Division of Fire Protection of the Forests Commission (then Mr R. T. Seaton) be co-opted, to ensure maximum liaison. The creation of this committee put the Authority's fire protection work on a firm basis, but it needs to be understood that the



A major fire burnt much of Wyperfeld NP in 1959.

committee reported to the Authority through the proper administrative channel (i.e. through the Authority's office), which then gave effect to the Authority's determinations, including the allocation of finance.

If I may be permitted to describe my reaction to the [fire protection] plan, I must say that I was amazed and alarmed. Although I could hardly claim to have any great knowledge of fire protection procedures, I felt that I could claim to know something about the Promontory. I had walked over much of the southern part; in 1954 and again in 1957 I walked across the sand blow at Oberon Bay to Waterloo

Bay. I had been at the summit of Mount Ramsay and on Mount Wilson on five occasions; I had found my way from the lighthouse track to the southernmost point and beyond to the west, and I had enjoyed rare views of Fenwick Bight from the high land to the west.

The idea of having that magnificent park criss-crossed by fire protection tracks did not appeal to me. The suggestion that a track be constructed from the southern end of Corner Inlet along the foothills of the Vereker Range to the Darby Saddle, and that tracks be constructed across to Waterloo Bay left me aghast, as

did the proposed track from Waterloo Bay to the vicinity of Oberon Point. I felt also that the treatment of the northern part of the park represented an over-reaction to the 1951 fire. That fire should never have been permitted to occur. It seemed to me that the implementation of such a plan as that proposed would destroy the integrity of the park and throw it open to vehicular traffic ostensibly for fire protection purposes but ultimately for tourist purposes. I had always felt that we should try to preserve a few places where walking was a recognized means of locomotion, and Wilsons Promontory was one of them.

It seemed to me that the tracks had been placed to suit the convenience of the bulldozer operators and were not necessarily based on statistical data on the outbreak of fires. There were no such data.

The Fire Protection Committee did not endorse the plan, but agreed that steps should be taken to isolate the park at large from the Yanakie area (which was the seat of most fires) by constructing a track from a point north of Darby in the general direction of Corner Inlet and ultimately to Five-Mile Beach. Later, extensions were made from this track within the Vereker Peninsula. There was to be no track from the main road to Waratah Bay.

It was agreed that 'protective burning strips' about five chains wide should be prepared and that burning should occur every two or three years, to keep the vegetation relatively short.

Construction work began in the autumn of 1959. Mr Alan Galbraith, an Overseer from Mirboo North, was in charge of the work and Mr R. T. Seaton, Chief of the Division of Fire Protection (Forests Commission) maintained a close watch on progress. The work proceeded from year to year in an organized manner, until several tracks had been completed in the northern part of the park.

Such work, of course, included proper drainage and batter stabilization. In the main, the tracks were located by having Mr Galbraith walk ahead of the bulldozer to define the track and obviate excessive disturbance of the soil, although some interference and side-cutting were necessary. Until the Authority had been able to appoint a scientific officer, I maintained a close association with the work, partly for the purpose of self-education. Later, Mr R. G. M. (Bob) Yorston represented the Authority in fire-protection work in Wilsons Promontory.

The Authority had not approved the proposal to construct fire protection tracks to Leonard Bay, along Pillar Point or to the southern end of Oberon Bay, on the grounds that such tracks were unnecessary and that they would have resulted in the despoliation of beautiful natural areas. There were no buildings or people at risk, so that the cost of such work hardly seemed justified.

When the tracks in the northern part of the park had been completed, work was begun on a track extending from Telegraph Saddle to the east of the Oberon Range along the western footfalls of Mount Wilson, in the general direction of Fraser's Hut. This work was performed under the supervision of Mr R. T. Seaton, who was also a member of the committee of management. Certain parts of the track were very steep and of doubtful value should it have been necessary for a fire-tanker full of water to be driven along it. In a short while, due to bad location, parts of the track degenerated into erosion channels, with only narrow tracks on which to drive a vehicle, even a Land Rover. Later, when the Authority had become more firmly seated in the administrative saddle, the track was re-routed, under the direction of Mr Bob Yorston, to eliminate these disabilities. But erosion, once begun in that sort of terrain, is very difficult to arrest.

Further difficulties were encountered in the sandy area east of Oberon Bay; here a bulldozer became bogged, as did a second 'dozer' sent out on a rescue mission. Eventually, the bulldozers were retrieved and the track continued to a point about half a mile north of Fraser's Hut. It is possible that the track would have ended here or at Fraser's Hut, but for a set of circumstances which could hardly have been foreseen.

Commonwealth Department of Shipping and Transport

In 1967, the Authority was approached by the Commonwealth Department of Shipping and Transport with a request that a four-wheel-drive track be constructed to the lighthouse on South East Cape. It was argued that the rough seas which sometimes prevail made it difficult to transport supplies to the lighthouse and that, in the event of an emergency (sudden illness or an accident) the lighthouse personnel could be at risk and that, in any case, such personnel were virtually isolated from the rest of the community without such a provision. The Department offered to pay approximately 90 per cent of the cost of construction beyond the existing terminus of the fire protection track.

Some members of the Authority were not impressed by the proposal, it being argued that, in the event of an emergency, a helicopter could quickly transport any personnel required to be evacuated and, if necessary, a helicopter could be used to transport supplies. It seemed most likely that the real reason why the track was needed was to facilitate the mobility of the lighthouse personnel and any friends who might wish to visit them.

However, the Authority was under almost constant pressure from the committee of management and others to extend fire protection works in the southern part of the Promontory. There had been a fire in the southernmost part in December 1962 and the committee was quick to assert that the absence of a track had hindered the fire-suppression work. It was fruitless to point out that it was quite impossible to predict exactly where fires are likely to occur and that it was not possible or even necessary to build tracks to every part of the park. But fire protection is a very emotive

issue on which all sorts of people had offered their expert advice and, more under duress than as a result of reasoned judgment, the Authority eventually agreed to the Department's request.

A suitable alignment for the track was established between Fraser's Hut and Roaring Meg Creek; but, thereafter, the terrain proved to be very unfriendly. I personally was greatly concerned that the track would be visible from Bass Strait and I did not want any scars on the magnificent southern coastline. In December 1968, I walked with Mr Whatmore (Engineer in the Department of Shipping and Transport) and Mr Yorston along the proposed alignment of the track in the vicinity of the northern end of the peninsula on which the lighthouse stands, and was persuaded that the track could be constructed without undue damage to the environment. So the work was set in train.

In the early stages of the work, for the first few miles, the operation was carried out by the Forests Commission, with Mr Yorston exercising an over-view on behalf of the Authority.

Wyperfeld National Park

During its first visit to Wyperfeld in October 1958, the Authority saw ample evidence of the disastrous effect which bushfires had had on the park in previous years. The most recent major fire apparently occurred in 1946 and destroyed numerous Cypress Pines (*Callitris* spp), Mallee, Banksias and Red Gums, in the western part of the park, extending beyond the Wonga Hut. Numerous Malleefowl mounds were destroyed. The Committee explained that, even after regeneration begins, a period of about fourteen years must elapse before there is an assured supply of

organic matter in the form of leaves, bark and sticks, etc., for the birds to incorporate in their mounds below the incubation chamber, before they can successfully breed again. The Authority was therefore fully appraised of the need for fire protection works in the park.

However, before anything could be done, a wildfire, which was said to have begun near Yanac, some 80 km south of the park, and which had been burning (seemingly unchecked) for several weeks, entered the park on 23rd November 1959. By the time it had been extinguished by the Forests Commission and Country Fire Authority personnel, and the Park Ranger, it had destroyed the vegetation on 57,000 acres of parkland. The area affected consisted of almost the whole of the western part of the park, with tongue-like tracts where the fire had extended beyond Outlet Creek.

I had made strong representations to Mr R. T. Seaton for a bulldozer to cut a swathe along the western boundary of the park, while there was still a chance of saving the park, but was informed that the Commission was unable to release either a bulldozer or the necessary manpower for this purpose. Observations made by different people after the fire indicated that, in many parts, the fire was travelling so slowly that it 'petered out' on the wheel ruts along the existing rough tracks – for example, along the track from Black Flat to Pine Plains. A few weeks later I was able to confirm this by personal observation.

The Authority lost no time in implementing the first stages of a fire protection plan for the park, by having a private contractor (A. Hillgrove, of Mildura) cut a track about 50 miles in length around the perimeter of the western part of the park, and another, which ran approximately diagonally from the north to the south-east corner

of the park. In addition, about 125 miles of ploughed breaks were made round the dry lakes, to prevent the spread of a possible conflagration caused by a lightning strike.

Grass was slashed in other areas. This work was completed during the year ending 30th June 1961. In subsequent years, as scientific staff became available, this work was extended and the track surface was improved where necessary by capping with clay, and eventually the park was provided with a good network of fire protection tracks which also facilitated ranger patrols and park protection. This work was carried out by Mr Bob Yorston, Mr T. E. Arthur and Mr D. S. Saunders, who were thereby enabled to obtain first-hand knowledge of the park and practical experience with local conditions.

One of the problems at Wyperfeld is that, during winter and spring, the grass grows to a considerable length, and dries out in the late spring and summer, thereby creating a serious fire hazard. To enable the Ranger to slash the grass where necessary, a rotary slasher was purchased and operated off the power take-off fitted to the Land Rover.

Shortly after he joined the Authority's staff (under secondment from the Forests Commission), Mr Yorston designed a tanker-trailer unit which was capable of holding 150 gallons of water and of being transported to the scene of a fire. One of these units was provided at Wyperfeld in 1962/63. The Authority was at great pains to increase the volume of water stored in the park, by collecting water from the roofs of buildings, to the fullest possible extent. Such water was useful not only for tourists but also for fire-fighting purposes.

Another valuable adjunct to the fire protection facilities was a look-out tower constructed by the boys and

masters from the Ararat High School, at Eastern Look-out, in 1964/65.

The fire protection tracks having been constructed, it was essential of course that they be properly maintained; this was assured by having the Ranger make regular patrols along the tracks and by his close liaison with the scientific officers of the National Parks Service.

Mount Buffalo National Park

The Authority recognized the need for a soundly-based plan to protect Mount Buffalo National Park. Situated on a plateau, with timbered slopes on all sides, it was vulnerable to bush fires which began at lower levels as well as any which might have their origins within the park. The park suffered badly during the 1939 national disaster, and many dead trees still standing in 1958 provided ample testimony of the ravages of earlier bush fires and of the need for protective measures.

Acting on the advice of the Fire Protection Committee, the Authority, in collaboration with the Committee of Management and the Forests Commission, adopted a comprehensive plan which embodied a system of access tracks and the provision of fire-fighting equipment such as rake-hoes, knapsack sprays, tanker-trailer units and, as in all other national parks, the training of park staff in fire protection procedures.

Tracks for fire-fighting purposes were constructed beyond the Reservoir area to the western edge of the plateau, around Lake Catani and in the North Buffalo area.



Wyperfeld NP, 1964-65. The Lookout Tower was constructed by boys and masters from the Ararat High school at Eastern Lookout.

Relations with the Forests Commission

As has been mentioned elsewhere in this narrative, prior to the creation of the National Parks Authority the national parks had been in the care of committees of management which enjoyed almost complete autonomy. Most committees included an officer

of the Forests Commission who naturally provided the necessary advice on fire protection matters and arranged for any pre-suppression works to be carried out. This usually entailed some 'protective burning' to reduce the amount of forest litter. The officers of the Commission appeared to enjoy the same sort of autonomy as did the committees.

The advent of the Authority and the gradual involvement of the Director and other members of the Authority and, later, of Authority staff, was not always welcomed by some officers of the Commission. There was a feeling that all the necessary knowledge and expertise on fire protection matters resided within the Commission, and there was some resentment as the Authority appeared to intrude. This feeling was not shared by the Chairman of the Commission, Mr A. O. P. Lawrence, who recognized that it was essential for the Authority, which carried the statutory responsibility for protecting the national parks from injury by fire, to play an active role in the preparation of fire protection plans and in their implementation.

I personally made it my business to acquire as much knowledge of the subject as I could, so that I could more easily understand the philosophy and practice of fire protection activities in regard to national parks. Similarly, when the Authority did acquire a small scientific staff, I endeavoured to ensure that such officers were fully involved in fire protection matters so that, among other things, they could assess the merits of plans prepared by officers of the Commission. The Authority (and, later, the National Parks Service) made a practice of requesting the Commission to prepare a plan covering the fire protection aspects of park management and of having such plans examined by the Fire Protection Committee before final decisions were made. I saw to it that the scientific officers were fully involved in these matters. Thus, Bob Yorston, Trevor Arthur and Don Saunders all gained experience in this field and actually took part in supervising the work of contractors (private or otherwise) in the parks.

Perhaps to test the strength of the Authority, or perhaps to demonstrate

the strength of their own positions, a senior officer of the Commission would throw out a challenge. If one looks at the sky-line of Mount Latrobe and its neighbour Mount Ramsay, from Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park, one might fancy that it might be feasible to construct a sky-line road for fire protection or other purposes. At all events, when the Chief of the Division of Fire Protection, Mr E. Gill, proposed that a fire protection track be constructed along this alignment, he had to be taken seriously. I objected on the grounds that such a road or track would despoil the mountains and also that it was impracticable. But seniority won the day and Trevor Arthur and Bob Yorston were duly provided with tents and ruc-sacs, along with other necessities, and despatched on an investigation of the relevant slopes to obtain information on the possibility of constructing a fire protection track along the southern slope of the Vereker Range towards Mount Ramsay.

After several days, our two heroes, both well-trained former officers of the Forests Commission, were in a position to report that a track could be constructed on the southern slopes, but at great cost; but they considered that it was not practicable to continue the track over the saddle between Mount Latrobe and Mount Ramsay. Mr Gill had never been in the area, but had used his position to frustrate the Authority. So the area in question remains inviolate, which is vitally important, because much of the water supply for Tidal River comes from that catchment.

Reference was made above to the extension of the fire protection track between the Oberon and Wilson Ranges, running north to south, which, under the persuasions of the Commonwealth Department of Shipping and Lighthouses, the

Authority had decided to extend. After investigation by Mr Yorston, it was agreed that the best alignment for the extension was to follow a suitable gradient along the northern face of Martins Hill and thence, in a generally southward direction, towards the head of Roaring Meg Creek before turning eastward towards the slope lying to the north of South-East Cape on which the lighthouse is situated.

After the Commission had constructed the track to within 4km of the lighthouse, it withdrew its support. The Authority endeavoured to persuade the Commission to honour its contract, because the alternative would involve the establishment of the Authority's construction crew and either buying or hiring a bulldozer and other ancillary equipment. I made strong personal representations to Mr Gill, but he insisted that the Commission was unable to make the necessary resources available. The Authority had never had any desire to enter this field and had always recognized the advantages of having one strong well-equipped department from which, under the provisions of the Act (Section 8 (3)), it could obtain the required service. However, the Authority found itself obliged to embark on an extremely difficult project which I deemed it necessary to terminate before the track had been completed.

As a consequence of the disbandment of the National Parks Authority in March 1971, the Fire Protection Committee was no longer able to function as it had formerly. However, meetings were arranged between the Commission and the National Parks Service, at which the Chief of the Division of Fire Protection and the Fire Protection Officer represented the Commission, while the Service was represented by the Chief Technical Officer and the Fire Protection Officer along with the Director.

It seemed to me that this was a satisfactory arrangement; but, in 1974, the Commission sought absolute control of fire protection matters in national parks, although it expressed a willingness to continue the work of the Fire Protection Committee. It was proposed that the Commission be represented by a Commissioner and the Chief of the Fire Protection Division, with power to co-opt the services of the Commission's Fire Protection Officer, and that the National Parks Service be represented by the Director, the Chief Technical Officer and the Fire Protection Officer. I demurred; I declined to accede to the Commission's proposal that it assume complete control of pre-suppression works, leaving the Service to act in an advisory capacity. Numerous meetings were held between the parties, but I remained adamant that the National Parks Service should continue to be responsible for 'the protection of national parks from injury by fire', as prescribed by the Act (Section 9(c)).

I had several discussions with Dr R G Downes, Director of Conservation, who, perhaps in desperation, or perhaps because he deemed it wise to carry an olive branch to the Commission, made an arrangement with Dr F. R. Moulds, Chairman of the Forests Commission, that the Chairmanship of the Committee should alternate, that is, the senior member of the Commission should be Chairman for a year following which the Chairmanship would fall to the Director of National Parks. I did not consider this a wise decision, because it seemed inevitable to me that this would result in lack of stability in regard to policy. I felt that the Act (1956) was clear in making it the duty of the (Authority) National Parks Service 'to protect the national parks from injury by fire', so that the Director of National Parks should be Chairman

of the Fire Protection Committee. It appeared that the Commission was thinking in terms of the conditions which had obtained in 1958, but this was 1974. The National Parks Service had come a long way in that period and I was not about to see it relegated to a junior position. However, I accepted the decision, but the Commission still pressed for absolute control, to which I continued to object. The matter remained unresolved when I retired.

In my Annual Report for the year ending 30th June 1973, I wrote, "It is a matter of great concern to the Service that in some quarters so much attention is directed to the high fire risk associated with national parks. National parks, it is said, are a fire hazard. The Service believes that the whole situation should be reviewed and that the truth of the matter should be revealed in a clear light. It is not the parks which are a fire hazard; it is the people who abuse them. Yet when a fire breaks out (or, as in most cases, is deliberately lit) in or near a national park, there is more than a fair chance that the country will be severely damaged either by the fire itself or by back burning or by the devastating action of bulldozers, all of which are considered to be essential steps in controlling the conflagration. In some cases, the park takes years to recover.

"The blame almost always seems to fall on the National Parks Service for not having done sufficient fire suppression works or on the park for being so inflammable. The real truth is that nobody knows just what is sufficient pre-suppression works, and that during the past sixteen years the Service has spent several hundred thousand dollars provided by the Government on fire protection works in national parks.

"The wastage of valuable park assets will continue until it is brought home

to the fire-brands that they will receive the same ruthless treatment as they would inflict on the parks themselves and some way is devised of 'making the punishment fit the crime'."

As an indication of the attitude of the Authority and the Service to the matter of pre-suppression works, the expenditure by those bodies over the previous six years was included in the Annual Report. The relevant figures are as follows:

Year	Expenditure (Australian pounds)
1972-73	59,351
1971-72	38,945
1970-71	41,664
1969-70	36,421
1968-69	19,591
1967-68	11,608
Total	217,580

I was at a loss to understand why the Commission appeared so reluctant to recognize the role of the National Parks Service in fire protection matters. I personally recognized the valuable role played by the Commission in this field, but could never agree that the Commission was the only body with expertise in this area or that it was desirable that it should be. In my view, it was essential for the National Parks Service to have a nucleus of highly-trained personnel capable of presenting the national parks viewpoint at the conference table.

Walking tracks

Walking in national parks is a traditional activity; yet very few of the parks under the control of the National Parks Authority in 1958, and for some time thereafter, appeared to attract many walkers.

The best known, of course, was Wilsons Promontory National Park, which had several much-used walking tracks; but Mount Buffalo also had a few recognised tracks, mostly leading from the Chalet to points of interest such as the Monolith, Bent's Lookout, the Gorge, etc.

Because the Authority did not 'control' the Committees of Management it was unable to direct field staff; nor did it have funds for such work. However, after the Committees became responsible to the Authority, the latter body was in a stronger position to encourage the Committees to undertake the task of improving existing tracks and constructing new ones considered desirable. Eventually, walking tracks were constructed, often by the Rangers of those days, in most of the national parks, and 'nature trails' were constructed by the Rangers in association with the Technical Officers in such parks as the Little Desert, Fraser, Wyperfeld and Wilsons Promontory.

It would require much more space than is available to describe development of walking tracks in every national park; but, because the numerous walking tracks in Wilsons Promontory still attract hundreds of bush-walkers every year, some account will be given of the involvement of the Authority

and National Parks Service in their construction.

My experience with many of these tracks pre-dated my appointment in 1958 and provided me with the detailed knowledge required to generate a proper appreciation of the need for such tracks and of the problems to be overcome in constructing and maintaining them.

Mount Oberon Track

In 1949 and 1950, when I walked to the summit of Mount Oberon at Wilsons Promontory, there was a very rough road leading from the park's main entrance road to a point somewhat west of Telegraph Saddle. Many people who attempted to drive along this track became bogged in the sand between Tidal River camp and the end of the PMG [Postmaster-General's Department] road before it turned right along a narrow track which followed the ridge, up to the summit. It was very steep in many parts and badly eroded; but it was the only way of getting to the summit. The return journey from the summit to the road was even worse, because one was inclined to slip on the steep track. It was really only a goat track!

The gradual improvement of the road to Telegraph Saddle and, finally, the extension of the road to the PMG Department's land to the north-east of the summit led ultimately to the abandonment of the old walking track, of which nowadays there is little trace. The new PMG road made it possible for national parks employees to transport equipment by park vehicles to the PMG base

and construct a walking track to the summit. This track was gradually improved and made safer by the provision of hand-rails and wires.

Track to summit of Little Mount Oberon

In the early 1950s, and for many years previously, there existed a rough narrow track along the western face of the Oberon Range, which led ultimately to the summit of Little Mount Oberon, and another track which led over the 'Bad Saddle' to Little Oberon Bay. The Bad Saddle was used by cattlemen who ran their cattle in the broad flat valley east of Oberon Bay.

After the 1951 fire, it was possible to walk through the scrub from the southern end of Norman Bay up the western slope of Mount Oberon, and 'pick up' the old track to the summit of Little Mount Oberon and to Little Oberon Bay, and I frequently did this. However, the gradual growth of the vegetation eventually made it too difficult to climb up from Norman Bay to the walking tracks, which have now fallen into disuse.

It was also once possible to approach the summit of Little Mount Oberon, from which superb views may be obtained, by walking eastward through the scrub along the spur leading from the Oberon Range to Norman Point. I endeavoured to persuade the Committee of Management and 'track men' to construct a track along this route, but to no avail. I last used this approach to the summit of Little Mount Oberon in December 1985.



The track network in Wilsons Promontory NP was extended during Dr Smith's time as Director. This is the track to Tongue Point in 1973.

Track to Oberon Bay via Norman Point

One of the most popular walking tracks in the park is that along the western slope [of Mount Oberon] overlooking Norman Bay, which continues on to Oberon Bay. I had walked along this track on innumerable occasions between 1949 and 1958, having spent every Christmas – New Year vacation of 2-3 weeks, except in 1955, camping at Tidal River. The track was in very poor condition – narrow, heavily eroded, badly drained and overgrown in parts with scrub – but it was the only track leading to Oberon Bay.

As a tourist, I was obliged to accept the track as it was, but as Director of National Parks, I soon realized that this track, like the others in the Park,

needed attention. The Committee of Management seemed fully occupied with problems associated with the Tidal River complex and were disinclined to release any of their small labour force to repair the tracks. I recognised the need to employ a man (several men, if possible) exclusively on the construction and maintenance of the walking tracks.

One day early in 1960, there walked into my office on the 9th floor of 276 Collins Street, Melbourne, a young man who said he wanted a job as a national park ranger. He had recently returned from New Zealand where, for several years, he had been employed as a deer culler. I was very favourably impressed by his appearance; he was a handsome young man with a strong jaw and a good chin, and he had a good

well-built figure. He was a fitter and turner by trade but had decided that he wanted an outdoor job in the conservation field.

I had no ranger's job to offer him, but immediately recognised that here perhaps was an opportunity to appoint a man to work on tracks at Wilsons Promontory. I proposed to the Authority that it should provide the funds for the work and that an approach be made to the Committee of Management to ascertain whether it would be prepared to co-operate on that basis, i.e. that the Committee employ the track man and find accommodation for him at Tidal River, and that he be employed exclusively on the Norman Bay - Oberon Bay track, the expenses to be met by the Authority. The Committee agreed, and so Ronald Stanley Turner became the first 'track man'.

Ron Turner set about his work with enthusiasm and dedication; his experience in New Zealand, together with his adequate fund of common sense, stood him in good stead. Those who walk along that track today could hardly be expected to know that it was necessary for Ron to carry all the materials of construction such as timber, drainage pipes, nuts and bolts, etc, along with working tools, by hand, because there was at that time no mechanical vehicle available to him.

He realigned the track at the south end of the Norman Bay Beach, cleared the scrub and widened the track, paying due attention to the gradient and drainage, and gradually (rather quickly, I thought) laid the foundations of the track as we know it today. Where the track crosses the brow of the slope which runs down from Little Mount Oberon to Norman Point, he made a substantial realignment in order to improve the gradient; and, even on the steeper section which runs down to Little Oberon Bay, he improved the gradient as well as widening the track to make walking less arduous.

While he was thus engaged he was also improving his knowledge of the park's flora, and I recall that, on one of my visits to inspect his work, he introduced me to a magnificent spider orchid. He continued to extend his knowledge of the flora and fauna of the park, thereby enhancing his value as an interpreter of nature. In those days Rangers (he was not yet a Ranger, but was 'in training') were expected to perform a wide range of functions, including helping park visitors to better enjoy the beauties of the park, and although there was considerable variation in their abilities, they performed their various duties cheerfully.

The Committee of Management was so impressed with Ron Turner's work

and his other attributes that, on the completion of his work on the track, he was appointed to the position of Ranger in the Park. In his place, Brian Greer was appointed Track Man and served in that capacity for several years before also being appointed to a position as Ranger, but he later returned to the position of 'Track Man'. This enabled work on tracks to be maintained at a steady, if somewhat inadequate, pace.

As everybody who has walked along the track to Little Oberon Bay knows, the track loses itself in the steeply-sloping white sand of the Bay, but one soon learns that it continues parallel to the Beach, a short distance east of the latter. This track used to be linked to the track over the Bad Saddle, and I used it both to descend from the Saddle and to ascend to it, but this part of the track seems to have faded into disuse. In 1958 the track from Little Oberon Bay to Growlers Creek was very overgrown and eroded, but was improved in later years, though not to the standard of the Norman Bay Track.

The track from the present 'Ring Road' to the southern end of Norman Bay was cleared during the 1960s, to obviate the need to walk along the beach in order to reach the Norman Bay Track and to add to the interest of the walk. There had been a rough track in that area for many years, but it had fallen into disrepair.

Tidal River to Sealers Cove

It was not my good fortune to walk from Tidal River to Sealers Cove before the 1951 fire, so my knowledge of the area prior to this is hearsay and does not really form part of this story. I first walked to Sealers Cove in December 1951; the damage caused by the fire was

all too apparent, but even then there were signs of revival. The track was strewn with litter and cluttered with fallen trees.

As the years passed, the debris was removed and the track became more accessible; but, for lack of maintenance, it had fallen into disrepair. In parts it was difficult to follow, and once, in 1953, I actually misread the trail and found myself in a jungle of scrub and bracken.

After my appointment, I endeavoured without success to persuade the Committee to improve the tracks; but in February 1961, accompanied by Mr John Landy, I walked from Tidal River to Sealers Cove, with a view to preparing an up-to-date report on the condition of the track for consideration by the Authority. By now, the track was badly overgrown and it was necessary to protect one's face with the hands to force a passage through the spear grass, which had grown to a height exceeding five feet.

The track to Sealers Cove, like that to the Lighthouse, was one of the classic walks on the Promontory. In those days, the track to Sealers Cove left the PMG road at a point considerably west of the present car park at Telegraph Saddle, and by a series of zig-zags reached a certain level down the northern slope of the Oberon Range from which it continued around the slope to Windy Saddle. From here it continued, with many a twist and turn, to Sealers Cove. The Sealers Creek crossing consisted of a large tree which had fallen across the creek at some time in the past, and there was a wire stretching from one side to the other which, if properly used, assisted in keeping a balance on the log. More than one hiker, complete with heavy rucksack, found that wire treacherous, and fell into the creek.

Mr Landy and I planned to spend the night there; but were dismayed to find that the water supply, from a small stream towards the northern end of the Sealers Cove beach, was a mere trickle. We found a narrow piece of steel which we shaped into a little trough before inserting one end into the soil where the 'stream' ended. From the free end, drop by drop we coaxed a cup of water, over a period of ten minutes. Obviously there was not a satisfactory supply for camping purposes, but it was possible, by walking a few hundred yards back to the creek, to obtain adequate supplies of fresh water.

We duly submitted our report to the Tracks and Conservation Committee, which endorsed our recommendation that steps be taken as quickly as possible to improve the track. Because of the Committee's inability to undertake such work, it was decided to endeavour to secure the services of a contractor, and the job was advertised; from memory, only one person responded. This was a matter which continually frustrated the Authority in its efforts to improve conditions in the national parks: they were too remote from 'civilization' and there was always a shortage of accommodation for temporary and permanent employees.

However, Mr Douglas Paine, an enterprising resident of Foster who had obtained a permit from the Committee of Management to show moving pictures at Tidal River prior to the formation of the Authority, undertook to clear the track and render it usable, during the off-peak season, i.e. when he was not operating the 'movies'. His contract price was £800. So Doug Paine cleared the track and widened it to four feet [1.2m]. Where possible the track was cleared of fallen trees, but one particular tree was too large. There was no way



Tea-tree cover on the track from Norman Bay to Little Oberon Bay, Wilsons Promontory NP. The track was constructed by Ron Turner in his role as first track man appointed at the Prom in the early 1960s. His wage was raised by the NP Authority but he was engaged by the Wilsons Promontory Committee of Management in early 1960s for this specific track.

around it, so the movie-man-turned-trackman excavated beneath the log and graded the track immediately before and after it. It was a long and arduous task, but Doug Paine's work made it easier for those who followed to maintain this important track. Whereas it had previously taken about five hours for the walk, it now took 3½ hours. One international athlete completed the round trip from Telegraph Saddle to Sealers Cove in less than four hours!

There still remained the problem of the crossing of Sealers Creek, but a group of Scouts, by arrangement with the Committee, volunteered to construct a new bridge across the Creek. Unfortunately, at a critical moment, one of the long poles near the centre of the stream slipped sideways, and the bridge 'went askew'. One had to exercise great care in using this crossing, but it

served for several years before being washed away in a very heavy flood. Thereafter there was no crossing where there had previously been one, however risky, and it was necessary to follow the creek towards the mouth where, at low tide, crossing was possible.

In February 1970, the Victorian Government generously permitted me to accept an invitation from the New Zealand National Parks Service to visit New Zealand to study national park management in that country. I was fortunate enough to be at Tongariro National Park at the precise time when the Service was building a bridge over a very steep gorge rather wider than Sealers Creek. To construct the bearers for the bridge, the New Zealanders made laminates from treated pine (6 inches ["] x 1", or 8" x 1") bolted together and over-lapping, which were then

hailed across the gorge by winches. The number of planks and their depth (6" - 8") depended, of course, on the length of the span and the estimated load. The bearers having been secured to suitable concrete abutments, the decking (6" x 1" x 4 feet) was bolted to the bearers, and safety rails attached.

I was greatly impressed by the simplicity of the design and relative ease of construction, and by the enterprising manner in which the New Zealanders set about their work. But I was disappointed at being unable to persuade the Authority's engineer to adopt this method, and Sealers Creek remained without a crossing for several more years. Finally, Major-General K. Green, who was at that time Secretary to the Premier's Department, volunteered the services of the Army Construction Corps to construct a bridge. He himself was a civil engineer and I gladly accepted my friend's offer, but a great deal of water flowed down Sealers Creek before he was able to disentangle the numerous strands of red tape and complete the assignment. However, the bridge remains a monument to his spirit of co-operation.

Sealers Cove to Refuge Cove

When I first walked from Sealers Cove to Refuge in December 1951, there was no track. However, a few days before I was due to depart from Melbourne for the Prom, I had the good fortune to meet my old friend John Bechervaise. To my delight I learned that he was a devotee of the Prom, having made no fewer than seventeen visits! He informed me that the best way was to go from Sealers to Refuge was to proceed straight up the middle of the three spurs which run towards the southern

end of Sealers Cove and, having reached the top, to gradually work one's way around to the left (veering south-east) and eventually reach Cove Creek from the south. I hoped that I could follow these rather general instructions, but had some misgivings.

After my son John and I arrived at Sealers Cove, one day later in December 1951, we established a camp near the remains of the old hut, which had suffered severe damage in the fire of the previous February. The fireplace was usable and we shared this facility with a group of Rover Scouts from Geelong. The day following our arrival was fine and warm, so John and I decided to make a reconnaissance of the route recommended by John Bechervaise. We found it not too difficult to reach the crest of the 'middle spur', then we cut across to the east along a ridge from which we could look down into Refuge Cove. The comparative sparseness of the vegetation afforded us reasonably clear views, and we were attracted to a large granite tor, which we reached by travelling first north-east and then eastward. From here we had a commanding view of Refuge Cove and of the devastation wrought by the fire.

The following day was rather cool with a grey sky; we spent the time fishing off the rocks and caught ten fish, which we shared with the Scouts. Several of the group were anxious to walk over to Refuge Cove, so we led them along the route of our previous walk. We crossed a very beautiful gully which had somehow survived the fire; we also encountered a large patch of stinging nettles over a metre in height, but in due course we reached Cove Creek and followed it directly to the beach. Shortly after this it began to rain; so, after a quick lunch, John and I headed for Sealers Cove.

Our first objective was the large granite tor referred to above; but by the time we reached this, the rain was pelting down and we were wet to the skin. My camera gear was wrapped in plastic and the large rucksack was almost waterproof. Having reached the rock, we followed our previous route in reverse and duly came to Sealers Creek. The tide was in and we were already soaked, so we simply held our rucksacks above our heads and waded through the creek.

After a very meagre 'tea' (because we were almost out of food) I set about the task of drying our clothes in front of the fire which one of the Scouts (who preferred not to risk his leg on an uncharted course) had lit earlier. At 11.30 pm I slid John into his sleeping bag in our little tent, and two hours later I crawled into my own sleeping bag while the wind howled and the rain continued to pelt down outside. It had been a long day; I was tired and the sound of the rain and wind and the eternal dumping of the waves on the beach combined to create a lullaby which soon had me fast asleep.

When I woke at 5.30 am, the wind and rain had ceased and I could see a few white clouds hung out to dry against a blue sky. The urge to return to the rock, to take the photographs denied to us by yesterday's rain, was irresistible; so I set off up the hill again, leaving John to tidy up the camp. From the rock I gazed down on Refuge Cove, where five ships were at anchor - having run into the Cove overnight, to shelter from the storm.

Apparently the story of our experiences was 'spread around'; certainly we gave directions to a number of groups of walkers who were interested in visiting Refuge Cove. One day, several years later, John and I fell into conversation

with a group returning from the Lighthouse, and were amused to learn that “a few years ago there was a fellow called Smith who was running a ‘shuttle service’ from Sealers to Refuge Cove”. Fortunately, we had not revealed our identity, but were pleased to learn that others had apparently enjoyed the trackless walk.

However, not everybody was aware of this approach to Refuge and, over the Christmas – New Year period of 1956, a group of some thirty-odd Scouts from the Brighton District Troop decided to clear a walking track from Sealers to Refuge Cove. They opted for a direct ascent along the most easterly of the three ridges referred to above. No attempt appears to have been made to find a gentle gradient by constructing a series of zigzag tracks around the slope; but eventually the track does follow an easier gradient, which eventually leads over a north-south ridge downwards in the direction of the mouth of Cove Creek.

This activity pre-dates the formation of the National Parks Authority; but, so far as I am aware, there had been no consultation between the Scout leaders and the Committee of Management. This may not have made any difference, because I doubt whether any of the members had had any personal experience in this area. However, in later years when I had responsibility for national parks, I asked Bob Yorston to endeavour to locate a track with an easier gradient, to facilitate the climb out of Sealers Cove. In the end, lack of resources (manpower and money) caused us to abandon the plan, and, when I walked to Refuge in December 1969, with a full pack on my back, I followed the original ‘scout track’, and endured all the agonies which attend such an exercise.

The Lighthouse Track

The most celebrated walking track on the Promontory, I think, was and probably still is the track to the lighthouse, built in 1859 by contract labour from granite blocks cut on site. The lighthouse stands on South-East Cape, gleaming white [later, the white paint was removed and the Lighthouse is now (2012) the grey colour of its granite] in the sunlight – the Mecca of all Promontory hikers.

Until the Authority began to construct a fire-protection track from Telegraph Saddle along the western slope of the Wilson Range, the walking track from the Saddle was a very narrow, badly-eroded track which led southward, initially through the timber but then through the heath country, to the ‘Half-way Hut’ on Frasers Creek. The hut, erected by the PMG Department many years previously, provided shelter for many a tired walker.

From Frasers Hut the track proceeded southward and then straight over Martin’s Hill. It was steep, rough, very heavily eroded – even dangerous. It seems that it had never been repaired, but, as it became unusable, walkers moved a few feet to the west, while erosion of the main track proceeded apace.

Once over Martin’s Hill, the track continued over the heathland past certain famous rocks known as ‘Mother Siegel and Daughter’ and on to Roaring Meg Creek. From here it turned sharply to the left, and after several descents and ascents one passed South Peak on the left – a mass of enormous granite tors – and on and on until, after flanking the southern shoulder of South Peak, one began the long descent, followed by the long cruel pull up-hill to the lighthouse and its associated buildings.

The extension of the fire-protection track beyond Frasers Hut, around the western slope the Boulder Range and finally to the vicinity of Roaring Meg Creek (as described in Chapter 8) eliminated the arduous struggle over Martins Hill, but at the price of missing some of the other features of the walk so much enjoyed by those who knew the track in the ‘olden days’.

Alternatively, one could reach the lighthouse by walking along Norman Bay beach to the south-east corner, ascending to the walking track overlooking Norman Bay from the southern shore and proceed over the southern slope of Norman Point to the south-east corner of Little Oberon Bay. This is a very rewarding walk because the view changes constantly, the branches of the banksias and sheokes providing numerous vignettes of the blue-green sea and mountains.

The track loses itself in the sand of Little Oberon Bay, but may be located back from the edge of the cliff and followed around to Growlers Creek and along the Oberon Bay Beach to the point where one turns left and begins the long and fascinating trudge over the great sand blow. At the eastern end of the sand one finds a track which leads eastward for about a kilometre, where it joins the main track to the lighthouse. It was always difficult to maintain this track along Little Oberon Bay to Oberon Bay, but the overhanging scrub was occasionally trimmed and the marginal heath plants slashed, so as to present a clear track. Walking tracks do need regular maintenance.

The new era

This heading may appear a little provocative; but it will serve to draw attention to a number of factors which

were combining to have an effect. The advent of the National Parks Authority and its gradual involvement in the management and development of the national parks resulted in a number of innovations which, over a period, began to interact with one another. Thus the recognition of the need for improved walking tracks and the appointment of a Tracks Man at Wilson Promontory resulted in such remarkable improvements to the Norman Bay – Oberon Bay track that, even when that man was appointed to a position as Park Ranger, the need for the man to devote himself exclusively to track construction and maintenance had been established. Of course, one man was inadequate to cope with all the tracks in Wilsons Promontory NP, but it was a start.

So when a decision was made to construct a bridge across Tidal River to enable walkers to gain easier access to Pillar Point and Leonard Bay, there was an immediate need to construct a new track from the western end of the bridge to the brow of the ridge which culminates in Pillar Point. Consequentially, the need to facilitate the transportation of men and their tools became more apparent.

The Authority had been unable to persuade the Public Service Board/ Treasury combination that it needed additional scientific staff; but, in 1962, the Forests Commission generously offered to second one of its trained Forest Officers to the Authority for a period of two years. The officer appointed was Mr R. G. M. (Bob) Yorston, who had a practical approach to the Authority's problems. When he suggested that the Authority purchase a rugged 'track vehicle' and produced details of the 'Cushman Trailster', I had no hesitation in supporting the proposal. The Cushman Trailster cost £226 (\$450), and proved to be a worthy work-horse which served in many areas.

Later, when improvements to the PMG road to Telegraph Saddle encouraged the CRB to yield to the Authority's persuasions to construct an enlarged car park, the opportunity to re-align the Sealers Cove track presented itself. One of the discouraging features of the track from Tidal River to Sealers Cove had always been the long haul up from the walking track to the PMG road, at the end of the walk. One learned to understand what the wise men meant when they referred to the breaking of the camel's back by the addition of that fateful 'last straw'.

The availability of a road, plus a car park, enabled visitors to reduce the length of the walk by about three miles [5km], so the Authority saw the opportunity to re-align the track to provide a more direct link between the car park and the track to Sealers Cove. This of course entailed a good deal of investigational work on the part of Bob Yorston and the park staff. The need for a narrow-tracked vehicle was apparent, and Bob's inquiries resulted in the purchase of a 'Holder' tractor. This enabled tools, earth and gravel to be transported along the track.

Sometimes it was necessary to blast rocks along the selected alignment; consequently those concerned were given the necessary instruction in the use and care of explosives.

The passing of the years saw the walking tracks, which had suffered in earlier days, systematically upgraded and extended. Tracks in this category included the following:

1. The track from Darby Saddle to Tongue Point, with a new track around the slope overlooking Darby, to enable walkers to reach the Tongue Point track
2. Rehabilitation of the track from Darby Saddle to Tongue Point meeting the track from Darby, so

as to complete the 'round trip'

3. A track from No. 2 to Sparkes Lookout
4. A new track from Tidal River to Tidal Overlook
5. A new track from Tidal River which meets the track to Pillar Point and Tidal Overlook and to Squeaky Beach
6. A track from the Promontory Road to Tidal Overlook linking with the tracks to Pillar Point, Tidal River and Squeaky Beach (Leonard Bay)
7. A track from Tidal River to the southern end of Norman Bay
8. A track from Refuge Cove to Kersop Peak and on to North Waterloo Bay
9. A track from Waterloo Bay to the lighthouse track
10. A re-alignment of the greater part of the track from Tidal River to the lighthouse, via Telegraph Saddle.

In addition to the foregoing, as the number of walkers increased the need was recognized for closer supervision of human activities in the remote areas such as Sealers Cove, Refuge and Waterloo Bay. Accordingly, small huts, equipped with facilities for overnight stopovers, were built at the southern end of Sealers Cove and at Waterloo Bay.

These huts were built not by the customary authorities but by the staff of the National Parks Authority/ Service, in association with the park staff, but the drive came from Head Office. Mr Stephen Martin was very active in the design and creation of the huts, under the direction of the Chief Technical Officer.

It was not easy work – materials had to be transported to the construction sites and those directly concerned deserve a vote of approbation. The construction of the hut at Waterloo

Bay narrowly escaped causing a disaster. The materials were being rafted in from a boat and a freak wave almost capsized the raft, but the quick thinking of Graeme Williams saved the day. If funds had been available, the materials of construction could have been dropped on site by helicopter, but in those days we were always in financial straits.

The summit of Bishop Rock (or Mount Bishop) had long given promise of fine views but, for many years the lack of a track was discouraging. I made my first ascent early in January 1963 using a 'goat track' which ran from the Promontory Road straight up the southern face of Mount Bishop.

The severe drought conditions of 1967-68 resulted in the proclamation of the South Gippsland District as a drought area. The Commonwealth Government allocated funds to the States for use in 'Rural Relief Work', and the Victorian Government made a special grant to the National Parks Authority to enable some of the South Gippsland farmers who had suffered from the rural depression to be employed on approved projects in Wilsons Promontory National Park.

This made it possible for a walking track to be constructed from the car park on the northern side of the Promontory Road to the summit of Mount Bishop, with a link to the track to Lilly Pilly Gully, which was also improved. This work was planned by the Chief Technical Officer and other Authority staff, in association with the Rangers and 'Track Man' (Brian Greer) at Tidal River. Unfortunately, in the course of this work one man was killed by a falling tree.

It seems odd that it required a drought and a rural depression to make it possible for a walking track to be constructed leading to the summit of Mount Bishop, but that's the way it was!

The Round Trip

In the fullness of time, a walking track was constructed to link the Lighthouse Track to Waterloo Bay and thence via Little Waterloo Bay (at the northern end of Waterloo Bay) to Kersop Peak and Refuge Cove. This made it possible for walkers to undertake the 'round trip'; that is to walk from Tidal River (or Telegraph Saddle) via Sealers Cove to Refuge Cove, and then via Waterloo Bay to the Lighthouse Track. From here it was possible to return to Tidal River either by way of Telegraph Saddle or by walking across the Oberon Sand Blow to Oberon Bay, and thence, via the Norman Bay – Oberon Bay track, back to Tidal River.

The walk from Oberon Bay to Waterloo Bay was of special interest to me, as I had first walked across the Oberon Sand Blow to the lighthouse track in December 1951. In 1954, my son John and I walked over the sand blow to the lighthouse track and then, by keeping to the high ground where possible, we traversed several rugged spurs of the Boulder Range to reach a point near the southern end of Waterloo Bay. On the following day, we walked from the northern end of Waterloo Bay across several ridges before ascending to the summit of Mount Wilson from the east.

In those days, it was possible to pick one's way along the ridges, because the vegetation had not fully recovered [from the 1951 fire]. However, when we repeated this walk in 1957, we found that the forest of hakea on the slopes of the gullies between Waterloo Bay and the foot of Mount Wilson had grown much denser and was very difficult to penetrate. Still, we accomplished the task and once more stood on the summit of Mount Wilson before descending to Windy Saddle. The

scars from the holocaust were slowly healing, but the slopes were littered with grim reminders of the majestic forests which had once covered this mountain.

Someday perhaps a walking track will be constructed to enable walkers to reach the summit of Mount Wilson from both Windy Saddle and Waterloo Bay.

Other national parks

There is not the space to give a full account of the work of the Authority and the Committees of Management in providing walking tracks in all of Victoria's national parks, but the foregoing will serve to demonstrate that the need was recognized.

Whether you are walking along Ron Turner's Candlebark Gully Nature Trail in Fraser NP [now Lake Eildon NP] or quietly ambling along Keith Hateley's trail in the Little Desert, or Ken Morrison's tracks in Wangan or Mallacoota Inlet National Parks [now parts of Croajingolong NP], or Alan Gould's track around the margin of Lake Surprise in Mount Eccles National Park, or admiring the wildflowers and watching the birds at Mount Richmond as you walk quietly along Fred Davies' track, perhaps you will pause and spare a thought for the men who constructed those tracks to help 'provide for the enjoyment of visitors to national parks'.

They deserve a cheer!

Roads within & leading to national parks

Today's visitors to national parks such as Wilsons Promontory, Wyperfeld, Fraser and Port Campbell, to mention but a few, would no doubt find it difficult to visualize the state of the roads and walking tracks at the time when the National Parks Authority was created [1957].

Nor could they be expected to imagine the difficulties which confronted the Authority in its endeavours to improve conditions.

It is hoped that what follows will convey some idea of the problems which daily confronted the Authority and of the manner in which that body sought to improve conditions.

Wilsons Promontory National Park

Those well-sealed wide freeways and four-lane highways along which one drives nowadays to reach the entrance to Wilsons Promontory NP are just a part of the total road system which various governments and road-constructing authorities have been developing over a long period in all parts of the State. And we should all feel grateful for these improvements and share them sensibly and safely with other road-users.

But these were not the direct concern of the National Parks Authority, whose responsibilities began at the boundary of the park.

In 1958, the road from the cattle grid at Yanakie right through to Tidal River

was a narrow gravel road, with (all too often) stretches of loose sand in which vehicles frequently became bogged. I once had this experience myself!

The road was heavily corrugated and driving was difficult and hazardous. Not infrequently a caravan would capsize and, on more than one occasion, Keith Blunden's truck went over the side of the road, loaded with supplies for his store at Tidal River. (Keith Blunden held a lease on the general store at Tidal River for many years.)

Roads within the Tidal River camp were also unsealed and pot-holed, and full of water after rain. Broken axles were not uncommon.

During its early years the Authority was greatly restricted, in its efforts to improve the roads within the park, by lack of funds. The Authority's sister organization, the Tourist Development Authority, in association with the CRB [Country Roads Board – later VicRoads], had a Tourist Road Fund of £100,000 and generously assisted the Authority by making grants on a one-for-one basis; but this imposed severe strains on the Authority's meagre financial resources and impeded progress in its other works programmes. Nevertheless, improvements were made to the roads within the camping area and to the beaches at Leonard Bay (Squeaky Beach).

Financial relief came in 1962-63 when the Government established a special

Road Fund of £50,000 (\$100,000) per annum to be administered by the CRB in consultation with the NPA, for the construction of roads leading to and within national parks. This grant was supplementary to funds provided by the Government to the CRB for use on declared tourist roads, the Promontory Road having been placed in this category in 1960. It was no longer necessary for the NPA to borrow money for roads from the Tourist Development Authority.

The upgrading of the Promontory Road by the CRB continued according to the Board's plans, a section of the road being improved by widening, realignment and re-grading each year.

The Darby Saddle had presented a challenge to many small cars pulling trailers, and the improvement to the gradient was welcome. The gradual widening and realignment of the road through the Yanakie Run (which was not incorporated in the national park until 1969) and its associated batter stabilization extended ultimately towards the aerodrome area. The Board's Divisional Engineer, Mr Graham Marshallsea, proposed that the road should be realigned so as to proceed across the aerodrome area and gradually run up to and join the present road south of 'Red Hill'; but the Director raised objections.

This was an interesting point; it was recognized that the proposed alignment, from a road-construction point of view, had much to commend



Wilsons Promontory NP, 1964. The Whisky Creek gravel pit was an environmental problem before the Authority persuaded the CRB to grass the area and convert part of it to a much-needed car park and picnic area.

it; but it was argued that this was a road within a national park and therefore had to be subservient to the needs of the park. It was considered essential to preserve the integrity of the aerodrome area, because it could serve as an emergency landing area and because it was predictable that the adoption of the proposed alignment would result in the loss of habitat for kangaroos and emus and in the death of many of these animals. Mr Marshallsea proved amenable to these persuasions and adopted a less ambitious alignment. Notwithstanding this, there have been several collisions between cars and cattle on this road and, on one occasion, there was a collision between a car and a truck emerging from the lime quarry. The Chairman of the Wilsons Promontory NP Committee of Management, the

late Mr R. P. Cooper, had a serious accident on this road.

The improvement to the Promontory Road required a supply of gravel for surfacing, and this resulted in the stripping of gravel from an area just east of Whisky Bay. At the conclusion of this work the Whisky Creek gravel pit was a hideous blot on the landscape. Every time it rained, large quantities of light gravel were washed into the creek and the whole area was a series of eroded channels. However, the Authority persuaded the CRB to co-operate with the Soil Conservation Authority and, after the area had been carefully graded and sown down to grass, the erosion was arrested and converted into a much-needed car park and picnic area. The grass proved to be a great boon to the wallabies and

wombats, which became an evening attraction for park visitors.

The CRB was at first reluctant to recognize the internal roads within the camping area as being eligible for funding, but I argued persistently that the fund had been provided for precisely that purpose and, moreover, the car parks were a necessary adjunct to the roads. Eventually the Board recognized the merits of these arguments and the fund was used to improve and seal the Tidal River 'Ring Road' and the ancillary roads. Later, the 'special road fund' was used to finance the construction of an enlarged car park at Telegraph Saddle, so that park visitors wishing to walk to the summit of Mount Oberon and Sealers Cove or the Lighthouse could park their car at the Saddle, thus making the walk less arduous.

Initially the Board seemed reluctant to stabilize the road batters, arguing that the estimates of road construction did not allow for such work. I countered this by persuading the Board to include 10% of the estimated cost of the construction work in the total cost. I think that my personal representations to the Chairman, Mr I. J. (Ian) O'Donnell, during early morning discussions in his office, were very helpful in achieving this objective. This co-operation continued with his successor Mr E. (Ted) Donaldson.

Gradually, through the collaboration of the Country Roads Board and the Authority, the access roads to the beaches and associated car parks, and the roads leading to Leonard Bay (Squeaky Beach) and Picnic Bay, as well as to Whisky Bay, were improved and sealed, and the necessary conservation measures implemented. Bob Yorston played an important part in the Authority's liaison with the Board, especially in the selection of 'borrow pits' and the subsequent restoration of them.

At one time, it was the practice to drive one's car along a rough track leading westward from the Darby Saddle to a very makeshift car park, before embarking on the long walk to Tongue Point. However, this track was eventually closed and the associated unofficial car park graded and restored, while a more suitable car park was constructed just north of the Darby Saddle.

Wyperfeld National Park

The Entrance Road

When the Authority assumed 'control' of Victoria's national parks, the roads to Wyperfeld were in very poor condition. They were little better than bush tracks, and the one from Rainbow to the park was usually



Wyperfeld NP, 1973. Along the Ring Road with barrier restricting access to protect the park and the safety of visitors, although not always respected.

covered by deep accumulations of sand caused by over-grazing of farmland to the west of the road. It was always hazardous trying to drive through this sandy stretch and cars sometimes became bogged.

The Soil Conservation Authority, with the co-operation of the owner of the farm (Mr E. Schmidt), undertook remedial measures by sowing the land with cereal rye; but the sight of all that beautiful green feed proved too much of a temptation to the farmer, who promptly turned his sheep on to it! While such frugality is always to be commended, on this occasion the practice had to be discontinued and the conservation work repeated. Eventually the hazard was brought under control.

But the condition of the road in the park itself, leading to the Wonga Hut, was appalling. Originally, it had served as the track along which wool from Pine Plains Station to the north had been transported to Portland. It had followed the creek beds, emerging here and there to shorten the route and, while the sand had consolidated in most places, in others it was loose and the track across the clay pans was full of treachery. When I began to use this road, in the

early years of my association with the park, I always heaved a great sigh of relief when I emerged from the park travelling south.

One morning in 1960, when John Landy was returning home after having spent the night at Wonga Hut, it began to rain and, when he came to a certain long flat clay pan, renowned for its treachery, he suddenly found himself hopelessly bogged. The rain continued all day and there was nothing the unfortunate Technical Officer could do but sit and wait until Rudd Campbell, the Ranger, came to his rescue, on his way home (to Yaapeet) in his Land Rover.

The provision of a good road was an urgent necessity and, as soon as possible after the Special Road Fund had been established, the Authority requested the Country Roads Board to survey a suitable route from the entrance to Wonga Hut. The surveyors duly produced a plan which was submitted to the Authority for scrutiny. I thought it prudent to have a closer look at the proposed alignment and visited the park, accompanied by Trevor Arthur, who had joined the staff in July 1962, following the resignation of John Landy in the previous May. I think that Don Saunders (who had

joined the staff in January 1963) and several members of the Committee of Management were also present.

There was general satisfaction with the proposed alignment, but I personally was greatly concerned at the threatened destruction of a number of cypress-pine trees and the side-cutting which would be necessary if the road were to be constructed as proposed. It was a difficult situation; none of the group other than the CRB surveyors could claim to have any professional expertise in road construction, although some of those present had had more experience than I had. But I was uneasy and finally turned to Trevor Arthur and said, "Come on, Trevor, let's go and have a closer look at the proposed route". I had considerable faith in Trevor's judgment and we both recognized that cypress-pines take a long time to grow. They are easily destroyed but not easily replaced.

We spent several hours examining the surveyors' plans and seeking practical alternatives along those parts where the trees were threatened. Finally we agreed on certain variations of the proposed plans and duly presented our views to the surveyors. They were decidedly not impressed, but I was not prepared to recommend acceptance to the Authority without further discussion with the Country Roads Board.

The Board decided to send the Chief Engineer, Mr Harry George, to examine the two alternative proposed routes and possibly find a compromise. I recall that Mr George was much inclined to favour the more direct approach of the surveyors, but I pleaded on behalf of the trees. Finally, Harry, possibly in a moment of exasperation, said, "Well, Len, if that's what you want you are going to have a bloody silly little road". I replied, "Okay, Harry, we will have a bloody

silly little road, but we'll save those 10 or 12 cypress-pines". So the bloody silly little road was constructed during 1963-64, as agreed, and the cypress-pines were saved.

At the conclusion of our discussion, I turned to the Chief Engineer and said "Now come with me, and we'll have a look at the park". We visited the Wonga Hut area, inspected the conservation plot, drove along the road to Black Flat and had a brief look at the Eastern Look-out area, and yet he lingered. The evening light had faded into the dusk and the stars were shining before I could persuade Harry George that all good things must end, and we set out on our separate ways to our homes, 287 miles [460 km] away.

The Ring Road

The construction of a good entrance road at Wyperfeld and the provision of other facilities such as water supply, toilets, picnic shelters, fireplaces, etc., naturally resulted in an increase in the visitor intake. However, not everybody was prepared or able to walk beyond the available roads and there were murmurings that the park was being 'locked up'. The Chief Resources and Planning Officer (Mr D. S. Saunders), in association with the Country Roads Board, examined the possibility of extending the road system. In due course, a 'ring road' was constructed in the southern part of the park, leading from the Wonga Hut area to the east, then gradually north and finally in a westerly direction back to the starting point.

The provision of this road enabled the observant visitor to see stands of red gum, mallee and cypress-pine (*Callitris verrucosa*), and afforded a means of improving his acquaintance with a variety of native flowers (including a fine display of Golden Pennants (*Loudonia behrii*). Those so

inclined were also enabled to park their cars by the side of the road and explore the world of the Malleefowl.

There were objections from certain conservation groups that foresaw the ultimate destruction of the park (a calamity which thus far has been averted), but the response to the new facility was encouraging. However, there were some motorists who mistook the purpose of the new road and saw it merely as a means of testing their driving skills to the utmost. Some of these over-enthusiastic speedsters found themselves in court, explaining matters to the magistrate!

Other roads

Improvements were gradually made to the roads in various parts of the park, for the dual purpose of improving access for fire-fighters in case of an outbreak and also to enable as many visitors as possible to share the Wyperfeld experience.

Wyperfeld proved to be a good training ground for the Authority's scientific staff. At different times Bob Yorston and Don Saunders were involved in selecting alignments for fire-protection tracks and supervising the work of contractors. I recall that Don brought work to a halt on one occasion, because the contractor's tractor did not have a spark arrester. The Technical Officers were not the only ones involved in the learning process, and the fault was soon rectified.

In the interests of public safety and to protect the park, barriers or signs were erected at certain points beyond which access to tourists was not permitted. However, this did not prevent certain people from 'testing their arms', as it were.

On one occasion Trevor Arthur and I were visiting the park as part of our

regular inspection programme and, on returning to Wonga Hut, at about 4 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, we found a ten-year-old boy waiting for us. He explained that his father and mother and one or two other children were somewhere to the north-east of Eastern Lookout where their car was bogged in the sand. This is far beyond the 'No Vehicles Beyond This Point' sign; but we decided to see what assistance we could render.

We duly found the offender, who turned out to be a painter from Rainbow. He had been working on Saturday morning and decided to take his family for a 'spin' through the park. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm for driving through the bush, combined with his unwillingness to observe the rules, clouded his judgment, and he had found himself well and truly bogged in the sand. The fact that the boot of his station wagon was loaded with 1 gallon (4 litre) tins of paint had not helped, either. However, he was a resourceful individual and had not hesitated to tear branches off the mallee trees in order to form a mat along which he slowly worked his way forward; but eventually his luck ran out and he was unable to get the car over a large sand dune.

The trail of devastation which greeted our eyes when we reached the scene of disaster was almost unbelievable. It was as if a hurricane had struck. We unloaded the paint, dug the car out of the sand trap and let some of the air out of the tyres and, while Trevor and I lifted and pushed from the rear, the hapless painter slowly drove the car up the slope to firmer ground. We helped him gather up his paint and watched him drive off into the sunset! It seemed fair to assume that he would think twice before he ventured beyond the warning notices again.

Roads leading to the park

The National Parks Authority, through the Special Road Fund, played an important part in a collaborative effort involving also the Karkarook Shire Council and the Country Roads Board. The main purpose of the road system in the Rainbow-Hopetoun-Wyperfeld triangle was undoubtedly to serve the farmers in the district, but the roads were also used by visitors to the national park. The Authority contributed substantial funds to meet the cost of improving the roads beyond the points where they were of direct value to farmers and others in the district, and the Authority's willingness to co-operate with the other bodies was much appreciated.

Fraser National Park

When this park was declared in December 1957, the Authority was presented with a remarkable opportunity for displaying its collective ingenuity, for the park consisted of 6,600 acres of almost barren grazing land surrounding a portion of the enlarged Lake Eildon (Eildon Reservoir).

The greater part of this land was steeply sloping, but there was a broad flattish valley between the steep hills which marked itself for the future camping area. There was no natural water supply apart from that from the lake, which was subject to pollution from boat users. There was no development, no ranger and no Committee of Management – and there was no access road! This is not quite correct; in a report on his first visit to the proposed park, the first Director, Crosbie Morrison, explained that one descended from Haines Saddle to the Lake via the Devil's River Road, but 'at some peril'.

I made my first descent in L. B. (Lin) Cuming's 'bee truck' which he

precariously balanced on the knife edges of gravel which represented the highest points of the erosion channel that had become established over the years. This was my first drive with Lin and I had not yet learned to trust his driving implicitly; I confirmed Crosbie's assessment of the state of the road, but also took the first steps in a new career. Not only was my heart constantly in my mouth, but on several occasions it jumped out on to my lap and had to be massaged before it was returned to its proper place. I think I could honestly claim to be a pioneer in the heart-transplant business. But I survived!

The potential of the park as a tourist resort was recognized, even if it failed to meet most of the tests for a national park, and the Authority decided to press ahead with plans for an access road from Haines Saddle. Clearly there could be no development around the lake without a good road.

Out of the Authority's meagre allocation of £45,000, it voted £5,000 to augment funds available to the CRB (no doubt from the Tourist Development Authority Special Road Fund), which enabled the Board to improve the Devil's River Road to the head of Collier Bay and to construct about 0.5 km of new road from Haines Saddle to connect with an old road shown as the 'Rural Relief Road', which had been commenced in the 1930s but which ended in a steep cliff!

In the following year, the Authority spent a further £6,000 (matched by an equal amount from the Tourist Development Authority), to enable the road works to be continued, and a temporary bridge across Devil's Creek enabled the circuit to be completed. In 1962-63, the Authority spent further £2,750 to match a grant from the Tourist Development/CRB Special Road Fund, enabling the Board to extend the road westward towards 'Stone's Hut'.

The provision by the government in 1963 of a special road fund of £50,000 per annum enabled the Authority to continue the road-construction programme, which included a road to and beyond the boat harbour and a ring-road around the camping area at the 'entrance' to Collier Bay.

Naturally, as roads were improved and extended, other developments proceeded. These included reliable water supplies, improved toilet and picnic facilities, camp development, a house for the ranger and so on.

Port Campbell National Park

The spectacular coastal scenery of Victoria's south-west coast, especially in the vicinity of Port Campbell, has long been a great attraction for tourists. I was first awakened to the beauty of that coast in 1934, when I made the acquaintance of some other guests at the guest-house 'Clovelly' at Cowes [Phillip Island] who had just visited Port Campbell. However, I was to wait for over 25 years before I had my first visit to the district.

This occurred in 1959 when, guided by Councillors Frank Ford and Cecil Bergin, I inspected the coast between Peterborough and Gibsons Steps, a short distance east of the Twelve Apostles, to assess the potential of an area which had been proposed as a national park.

Shortly after this, the Country Roads Board began to re-align the coast road and I was informed (by Dewar Goode, I think) that the construction engineers had bulldozed a considerable amount of earth over the edge of the Loch Ard Gorge, and had excavated a substantial area almost directly above the Blow Hole which extends northward under the road!

This was possibly my first encounter



Erosion of unsealed roads was always a problem. This scene shows the erosion in Fraser NP, with the unrepaired road blocked with logs and a detour created.

with those remarkable people the road construction authorities. As experts in the art of manipulating the environment and building better roads they had long since achieved wide recognition, but their spelling lists did not appear to contain the word 'conservation'. Under the circumstances, I thought it might help if I photographed the results of the engineers' bulldozing activities and, shortly after this, I sought a conference with Mr Darwin, Chairman of the Country Roads Board.

At this time the Board was housed in the Exhibition Building. I found Mr Darwin to be a kindly man, sympathetic to my pleas in the name of conservation, and he was even good enough to provide me with a projector and a screen so that we could better study the vandalism under notice! He undertook to bring the matter under control promptly; that was the beginning of a very fruitful liaison with the Country Roads Board which extended over my entire period of service.

The Board was engaged in this project on its own behalf, not at the request of the National Parks

Authority; but later, the Board agreed to construct feeder roads and parking areas to enable visitors to enjoy the spectacular scenery in the vicinity of the Loch Ard Gorge, the Apostles and other points of interest. The cost of this work was charged against the Special Road Fund.

General

It would become a tedious exercise to catalogue the development of all roads leading to and within the numerous national parks. Each park posed its own special problems and required appropriate and careful attention.

Today's visitors to our national parks, as they speed along those well-graded and well-constructed roads, may not always be conscious of the pioneering work which made it possible for them to do so. We are all very much inclined to 'take things for granted'.

National park rangers

At the risk of being totally misunderstood, I want to try to present a picture of the development of the national park ranger service in Victoria during the period 1958 to 1975. I have to accept the risk of being 'misunderstood', because it is so very difficult to describe all the circumstances associated with the ranger service and the interplay of forces which influenced the whole development.

It is regrettable that I have to begin with an apology, but it must be made clear that nothing that follows is to be construed as a criticism of either the park rangers or the committees of management who employed them.

It is important to remember that prior to the creation of the National Parks Authority, there had been no attempt at co-ordinating the needs of national parks; in some cases, after the reservation had been made, Committees of Management were appointed, but with little or no guidance from the government. In most cases, many of the members of the Committees had had no special training in the management of national parks or 'equivalent areas', and had other interests which of necessity occupied most of their time. Further, the parks were remote from the homes of most committee members, so that visits to the parks were at best infrequent. Before the Authority had the Act amended in 1960, it was not possible for Committee members to be reimbursed for travelling expenses.

We frequently indulge ourselves by criticizing the government of the

day for not doing more in whatever sphere of public administration we happen to be concerned with at the moment, but governments are somewhat circumscribed by the economic and political demands of the day and it is generally recognized that it does not pay for governments to move too far ahead of public perceptions. Our early governments were very much preoccupied with such matters as education, health, public transport, roads, water supply, etc., and the amount of money available from taxes from a very small population was not adequate to meet the needs of peripheral matters like national parks and recreation.

The depression of the 1930s was hardly an ideal time to launch major developments in national parks, and the depression was not far behind us before the country was at war. But, as the country began to recover after the outbreak of peace and the wheels of industry began to turn once more in meeting the needs of a nation no longer under threat from without, there came a wider recognition of the need for improved recreational facilities. The development of Australia's first car – the Holden – gave a great impetus to travelling further afield for holidays, creating a need for better facilities. Various bodies began to urge the cause of national parks, and 1956 saw the passing of the National Parks Act which provided for the creation of the National Parks Authority (NPA) and completed the other legal requirements to enable the Authority to function.

But the mere act of creating the NPA did not in itself solve all the

problems of the national parks. It is true that some of the committees of management and members of Parliament gave the impression that they expected instant action, but the services required in the national parks could not and cannot be generated overnight. Even the provision of a Director of National Parks and, later, of a Secretary and a typist, was not enough. It is perhaps difficult for some, when they look around the national parks today and see such magnificent visitor centres and rangers and other park personnel in attractive park uniforms, and the numerous vehicles with which they are provided to carry out their duties, and the sophisticated audio-visual aids which enable them to present the story of the park to their visitors, to comprehend that thirty years ago, there was just the one person, who at that time did not even have 'control' of the Committees of Management or the people they employed.

There was no member of the NPA who had had any training or experience in the management of national parks. Neither of the first two Directors could or would have made that claim. I cannot really speak for Crosbie Morrison, but feel sure that he would have felt the same as I did.

Here for the first time, through the members of the Authority generally, there was an unparalleled opportunity to draw on the collective experience and skills of a number of men who had risen to the top of their respective departments, and of the other members, and to couple that knowledge with one's own training



In this photo, participants in the 1973 course, held at Little Desert NP, are on a field excursion to Wyperfeld NP.

and experience in developing an understanding of the needs of the parks.

There was no standard text book on the subject and I knew that I had to undergo a course of on-the-job training, largely on the strength of my own initiative. That meant learning all I could about national parks in general and visiting the parks in Victoria, as quickly as possible, as well as discussing park matters with members of the Authority and Committees of Management. I knew that this would take time; but meanwhile many other matters required attention.

Park rangers

During the first year of the life of the National Parks Authority (1957-58)

only four national parks had rangers, namely Wilsons Promontory, Mount Buffalo, Kinglake and Fern Tree Gully, while two of the smaller parks (Tarra Valley and Bulga Park) had part-time rangers (weekends). Wilsons Promontory NP had one or two park assistants and a 'maintenance man', while Mount Buffalo employed a 'park assistant'. The remaining parks had no rangers. Fraser National Park was declared in 1958, but a ranger was not appointed until 1962-63.

The subject of ranger training was mentioned at my first meeting with the Authority in September 1958; but as the Authority had no jurisdiction over the rangers at the time and as I was not anxious to act the principal role in the 'Blind Leading the Blind', I deemed it prudent to defer such plans. However, it was generally

recognized that there was a need for the Rangers to be trained when we had some to train and somebody competent to do it.

Restrictions

The Committees of Management were very restricted in their selection of rangers. Usually, it was a case of finding someone who lived not too far away from the park and had an interest in the preservation of our natural heritage. If he had a vehicle, he was halfway there. Few committees were able to finance the building of a house, and this proved to be a major obstacle for the Authority, also.

The Wilsons Promontory Committee of Management had inherited a house and other buildings from the Army

at the end of World War II, and by 1957-58 the former ranger, Mr Jack Sparkes, had retired, making way for Mr R. C. (Bob) Turner, who had practical experience as a carpenter. As far as I can remember, the ranger at Mount Buffalo had had no experience as a tradesman and had very indifferent health, causing him to retire shortly after the Authority began to function. He was replaced by a younger man who had enjoyed a good education at a well-known college and had spent much of his adult life on a cattle farm. He had not demonstrated much interest in botany or ornithology even in their most elementary forms; but the fact that he lived near the foot of the mountain was a factor in his selection.

The recruitment of park rangers was impeded by lack of funds, and progress was slow. After the Committees of Management had become responsible to the Authority, it was the practice of the senior body to appoint a 'selection committee' consisting of several of its own members (along with the Director) and a representative (usually the Chairman) of the Committee, to interview applicants for a position as Park Ranger.

The advantage of this method of selection was that the successful applicant was aware from the beginning of the existence of the National Parks Authority and of the relationship between the Authority and the Committee, and this assisted in having the ranger relate to the Authority and the Director, instead of creating a situation in which the Authority might have seemed like a very distant 'Big Brother'. Essentially it was a process akin to 'imprinting' in the animal kingdom.

For practical reasons, after the Authority had made the appointment, the ranger was seconded to the relevant Committee of Management,

which directed his work through a designated member. It was essential for the ranger to know to whom he was responsible and from whom he should receive day-to-day instructions.

In those cases where there was no committee of management, especially after the Authority had acquired a Chief Technical Officer, that officer and the Authority's Secretary were included in the selection committee. This established a link between the rangers and the officers of the Authority and facilitated communications and understanding.

The fact that Park Rangers were not appointed as Public Servants was, of course, a disincentive to the recruitment of rangers having even reasonably high educational backgrounds and, while the Authority always recognized the importance of practical experience and aptitude, the fact that so many of the rangers had been out of the classroom for a long time (in some cases, a very long time), made it difficult for them to resume the learning process, which was an essential prerequisite to their effective participation in any Ranger Training Programme.

In June 1963, the Authority's scientific staff was augmented by the creation of the position of a Chief Technical Officer, and Mr T. E. Arthur, B.Sc. Forestry, who had joined the staff in July 1962, was duly appointed to that position. This created a vacancy for a Technical Officer, which was filled by Mr D. S. Saunders, B.Agr.Sc., in January 1963.

In order to assist the Authority in developing the national parks, towards the end of 1961 the Forests Commission very generously volunteered to second a qualified officer to serve on the staff of the Authority on the understanding that,

at the end of two years, the officer concerned could decide whether he wished to remain with the Authority or return to the Commission, without loss of seniority. On this basis, Mr R. G. M. Yorston, B.Sc. Forestry, joined the Authority's staff in mid-January 1962. At the time of the writing this document (1988), Mr Saunders has been Director of National Parks since 1979. Mr Yorston remained with the Authority and the National Parks Service and still serves in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

These officers, along with Trevor Arthur, of course, have played an important part in ranger training and may be regarded as pioneers in that field.

The first ranger training course

By 1963, the Authority felt that the time was opportune for the inauguration of the Ranger Training Programme, and the scientific staff of the Authority and the Secretary collaborated in preparing a syllabus which was approved by the Authority.

In preparing the course the Authority sought the assistance of a variety of 'outside' bodies, which all co-operated enthusiastically. Because this inaugural programme is seen as a 'Big Leap Forward' in this field, it is reproduced here, as it was presented in the Annual Report for 1962/63.

The course was very appropriately held at the headquarters of the Victorian Conservation Resources League at Springvale, which had been established some years previously by the Hon. C. E. Issac OBE, who had played such an important role in the drafting of the National Parks Bill and who had served on the Authority as its first Deputy-Chairman. It was opened by



Participants in the first Victorian Ranger Training Course, held in 1963. From left to right, back row: Alan Gould (Mt Eccles NP), Ron Turner (Fraser NP), Kevin Attridge (Mt Buffalo NP), Claude Oliver (Bulga NP), Alex McGregor (Ferntree Gully NP), Rudd Campbell (Wyperfeld NP), Eric Macdonald (Hattah Lakes NP), Bill Garner (Churchill NP); front row: Reg Tyson (Ferntree Gully NP), Bob Turner (Wilson's Promontory NP), George Thompson (National Parks Authority), Trevor Arthur (CTO/NPA), 'Johnno' Johnston (Kinglake NP), Fred Barton (The Lakes NP)

the Minister, the Hon A. J. Fraser MP, and Mr G. T. Thompson, Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority and member of the National Parks Authority since its inception, was Chairman of the course. The rangers, twelve in all, lived in residence at the VCRL, along with the Course Manager, Mr T. E. Arthur. Many of the rangers were infrequent visitors to the City and Mr Arthur's presence as their 'guide, philosopher and friend' did much to facilitate their enjoyment of and participation in the course.

The morning of the first day of the course was, in a manner of speaking, inductive, the aim being to give the rangers a broad overview of the concept of a national parks service and of the origin and significance of the National Parks Act, in order to prepare them for the more practical aspects of the course.

Regulations

There is no doubt that when a set of National Parks Regulations is first placed in the hands of a ranger, the latter feels somewhat at a disadvantage. The legal language used in the Regulations is hardly calculated to evoke spontaneous enthusiasm; yet, without such Regulations, the Authority and its agents (Authorized Officers) would be powerless to protect the parks. Hence the need to explain the 'whys

and wherefores' of the Regulations and, through direct discussion, dispel the doubts of the rangers and pave the way for further discussion on the interpretation and application of the Regulations.

One important aspect of course was that, although the Regulations provided stiff penalties for any infringements, it did not necessarily follow that every minor offence should lead to a court case. In most cases, a polite word of explanation from an Authorized officer to any offender would suffice and the ultimate penalty would be applied only when other means had failed. Whilst on this point, those people who were empowered by the Authority to function as 'Authorized Officers' under the Regulations, were required to submit full details in the form of a brief to the National Parks Authority/Director who, after careful consideration decided whether a prosecution should be launched or not. The files contain numerous letters to offenders explaining the nature of the offence they had committed and placing the onus on them for close observance of the regulations in the future. The responses from those concerned encouraged this line of approach; but certain offences could not be condoned.

Hence the session on "The National Parks Regulations", led by Mr T E Arthur was an essential prelude to what followed, and we were all very grateful to Mr W H Pascoe (the City Coroner) for making his court available for the purpose of conducting a number of mock trials, so that rangers could actually participate, under the learned but benign guidance of the City Coroner himself, along with Mr Tom Chettle of the Forests Commission and Mr Bill Lynch. The experience of Mr Lynch in particular, as the Chief Inspector

of the Fisheries and Wildlife, was invaluable in guiding the Rangers and the Authority's officers.

It is not considered necessary to discuss in detail the various aspects covered by the course, but careful study of it indicated the range of the course and the calibre of the people who assisted in its presentation. It must be emphasised that the active participation of the rangers themselves in all discussions was encouraged and promoted, and it has to be said that, especially considering that this was the first time that most of the rangers had met one another and that it was certainly the first time that any of them had participated in such a course, the results were very encouraging. It will be seen that, towards the end of the course, a session was devoted to topics proposed by the Rangers themselves, which assisted the administration in preparing of the syllabus for the next course.

Later Ranger Training Courses

The 'Ranger Training Course' was repeated on a biennial basis and, with the growing experience of all concerned, including that of the rangers, grew in importance. It is not proposed to examine further the syllabuses for the later courses - they are on file and may be consulted, if necessary - but the Authority was gratified by the attendance at the second course, held in September 1965, of two rangers from Kosciusko National Park (New South Wales) a Field Officer from the Wildlife Reserves of South Australia, the Secretary of the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park Trust (Tasmania) and a Technical Officer from Queensland, in addition to thirteen of Victoria's national parks rangers. The exchange of views

between our own rangers (and scientific staff) and those of our sister States was not only very helpful but emphasised the growing recognition of the need for a trained ranger service.

The second course was again held at the National Resources Conservation League at Springvale, but 'fire-protection' exercises were conducted in Churchill National Park. Succeeding courses were held in the major national parks, to broaden the rangers' experience of Victoria's National Parks.

The venues for the later courses were as follows:

1967 - Wilsons Promontory National Park

1969 - Wilsons Promontory National Park

1971 - Mount Buffalo National Park

1973 - Little Desert National Park

These courses were also attended by rangers from other states and included "lectures" by specialists in the fields of ecology, entomology, botany, safety, track location, equipment and vehicle maintenance, fire protection, regulations and so on. The word "lectures" appears in inverted commas because the lectures were designed to promote maximum discussion involving the rangers. To ensure maximum involvement of the rangers they were divided into groups and required to examine selected subjects, after which they returned to the "class room" to present their findings. A valuable "spin-off" from these courses was that they brought in academics like Dr Malcolm Calder of the Botany Department of the University of Melbourne and Dr E. H. M. Ealey of Monash University, which had the effect of extending the range of influence of Victoria's national parks service.

Ranger participation

While the courses were organized by the Authority's own staff, especially Mr T. E. Arthur, Mr D. S. Saunders, Mr R. G. M. Yorston, the Secretary (Mr J. T. McDonald) and the Director, the value of the course was enhanced by having representatives of the rangers themselves in the persons of Mr R. S. Turner (Fraser National Park) and Mr Ron Cooke MBE (Lakes National Park) and Steve Watkins (Wilson's Promontory) involved in the preparation of the syllabus. This ensured that there was a good feedback of the ranger experience into the courses.

The 1973 course was held near the recently-created Little Desert NP. Discussions were held and visits paid to Little Desert NP and Wyperfeld NP, thus promoting and extending the sense of 'belonging' to the National Parks Service.

No longer were national parks rangers living in isolation from one another; it is certain that they felt that they belonged to an organization with which they could identify, just as the officers of the Authority themselves did. Many years previously, in another context, I had heard the Minister, Mr Fraser, refer to the 'free-masonry' of the Public Service. We were now seeing the 'free-masonry' of the National Parks Service at work.

Houses for rangers

It has been mentioned that a serious limiting factor in the recruitment of park personnel was lack of suitable housing. The Authority used every opportunity to either build houses in the national parks or purchase houses on land close to the parks. The following table shows that during the period 1958-1975, the Authority provided some 20 houses for park rangers, and also indicates how

Park	Rangers		Houses		Assistants	
	1958	1975	1958	1975	1958	1975
Churchill	0	1	0	1		
Fern Tree Gully	1		1			
Wilson's Promontory	1					
Mount Buffalo	1	2	0	2		
Wyperfeld	0	1	0	1		
Mallacoota Inlet	0	2	0	2		
Wingan Inlet	0	1 P.T.	0	0		
Lind	0	1 P.T.	0	0	0	0
Alfred	0	1 P.T.	0	0	0	0
Tarra Valley	1	1 P.T.	0		0	0
Bulga Park	1 P.T.	1 P.T.	0	1		
Kinglake	1	2	0	2		
The Lakes	0	1 P.T.	0	0	0	0
Mount Richmond	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mount Eccles	0	1	0	0	0	0
Hattah Lakes	0	1	0	2	0	1
Port Campbell	0	1	0	2	0	1
Little Desert	0	1	0	1	0	0
Fraser	0	2	0	2		

Number of Rangers, Houses, and Assistants. Provided by National Parks Authority. Blank entries indicate that some data had yet to be found to complete the table. P.T. denotes Part Time.

the number of rangers and park assistants increased over the years.

Garbage collection & disposal

I think it would be fair to say that the collection and disposal of garbage in national parks prior to the creation of the National Parks Authority did not receive the attention it should have done. The obvious excuse was that lack of funds made it difficult for committees of management to provide sufficient litter bins in which to collect the various forms of rubbish resulting from an influx of visitors to the parks and of providing the necessary labour.

In so far as disposal was concerned, in some cases, e.g. Fern Tree Gully National Park, the garbage was collected by the Shire garbage collectors; but in most cases it was necessary to do this locally. A prime requirement, of course, is a Park Ranger or other employee to perform the necessary work. In some of the more remote parks such as Wingan Inlet and Mallacoota Inlet, there was no Ranger until the NPA appointed one in February 1965! One of his first assignments was to erect rubbish bins for the use of park visitors and dig deep-pits into which to empty the bins preparatory to burning. The provision of these facilities helped greatly in keeping the parks tidy but, regrettably, it is part of the Australian way of life that there are some people who are either too lazy or too anti-social to co-operate, and the 'litter problem' still persists, especially in remote areas.

However, my purpose in this chapter is to relate how the problem of

garbage collection and disposal was dealt with in the major national parks. By major I mean those with the largest tourist intakes, i.e. Wilsons Promontory and Mount Buffalo.

Wilsons Promontory NP

The accumulation of garbage was naturally greatest during the busy camping season, and no matter how many garbage bins were provided in the camping area, there never seemed to be enough. In those early days when the [Tidal River] camp was much more crowded than it is nowadays, it was quite impossible to provide one bin for each campsite. Many campers found the short walk to the rubbish bin too far and appropriated a bin for their own use, causing great inconvenience to other campers and frequent complaints to the Rangers. Some thoughtless campers, intent on their own pleasure, misappropriated garbage bins for use as 'wickets' in a friendly game of cricket, and often forgot to return them to their rightful places. This caused management to secure garbage bins to posts in fixed locations, but campers were often too lazy to replace the lids. The problems associated with the collection of garbage in public places are endless and national parks are no exception, but there are other aspects I want to examine.

At Wilsons Promontory, during the holiday season, it was the practice to employ a number of young men

(boys, really) who were interested in earning a little money to assist them during their school or university year. These 'garbo boys' collected the bins and emptied them into an open truck which was driven by one of their number with some of the boys hanging on to the truck as it moved from one campsite to the next, and others running behind. If papers blew off the truck, they were usually chased and retrieved, but the whole spectacle was hardly inspiring. However, the 'garbos' enjoyed the 'fun', and there was no shortage of applicants for vacation jobs on the garbage run.

In the early years of the Authority's life, the 'garbos' were accommodated in a galvanised iron shed equipped with beds and bunks and elementary cooking facilities. The boys shared the public toilets and cold showers, comprising the 'shower block', with the public. Later, after the lodge 'Wombat' had been erected, they lived in comparative luxury with a reasonably well equipped kitchen, showers (hot and cold), interior toilets and even fly-proof doors!

In earlier days, garbage was transported to a 'remote' area, about 400 metres east of the main camp, and dumped into a large bowl-shaped area, where it was allowed to accumulate until favourable weather conditions permitted its being burnt. When it was found that papers, often ablaze, blew up the hill

towards the scrub, a cyclone wire fence was erected to trap the 'fliers'. Occasionally, the fire escaped and caused damage to nearby scrub; but on one occasion (October 1965), some ashes from a fire in one of the houses were dumped in the tip and, after smouldering for many hours, under the influence of a gentle breeze, at about 10.30 p.m. 'took off', causing a major conflagration which might well have destroyed the entire camp (at least the southern part of it), had not the wind suddenly turned round, blowing the fire back on itself!

It so happened that the National Parks Authority and the Committee were holding one of their 'annual meetings' in 'Northey' lodge at the time, so they had first-hand experience of the event. There were valiant efforts by many of those present, along with the park staff, who did their best to beat the fire out, but they were ill-equipped at that hour of the night to engage in such work. I recall that the park staff and the Authority's officers (T. E. Arthur and D. S. Saunders) battled heroically against the blaze which, fortunately, eventually burnt itself out. Saved by the wind!

The Committee of Management decided thereafter to abandon the 'open tip and fire' method, and adopted the familiar 'sanitary land-fill' method. After clearing an area of scrub, a large deep trench was constructed with the aid of a bulldozer, and garbage was dumped therein until the pit was full, when it was covered with earth and another pit was constructed. The destruction of vegetation with consequential scarring of the landscape became a matter of great concern.

For many years I had been advocating the installation of an industrial incinerator. In other parks, such as Fern Tree Gully, Fraser, Churchill, etc, the Authority



Wilsons Promontory NP, Tidal River Campground, 1972. Vacation students and others were employed to collect campers' rubbish at holiday times. Today the policy in most parks is 'please take your rubbish home', or else it is recycled.

had provided small incinerators, manufactured by Macdonald Industries, and they had performed well, but the cost of a large incinerator was of the order of \$40,000, which seemed beyond the Authority's financial grasp. But, over the years, the Authority had demonstrated that national parks were not merely a luxury to be enjoyed by a few but an important 'functional unit' within the range of services provided by the State. The Treasury was eventually persuaded to make a special grant and, by spreading the construction over a period of two years, it was found possible to install an incinerator.

Naturally, the proposal was examined by the PWD Engineer; but the Authority's Chief Technical Officer, Mr Trevor Arthur, played a major part in the negotiations with Warren Industries Pty Ltd and in supervising the installation.

There was considerable discussion within the Authority concerning the height of the stack; obviously it was important that it should be of minimum height in order to reduce its visual impact, but it was essential that the 'draw' be adequate to ensure that garbage of fairly high moisture content would burn satisfactorily.

In the course of our investigations we inspected several industrial incinerators, one of which handled large loads of hospital waste of high moisture content. It was decided to erect the incinerator at a low point in the bowl which had previously been used as an open tip, thereby minimising the projection of the stack above the skyline. The design incorporated an LP gas-fired burner to start the fire and, if necessary, to evaporate some of the moisture to facilitate burning; but it seldom proved necessary to use the LP gas for the latter purpose.

One of the features of this incinerator which impressed me (and others) was the manner in which the 'fly ash' was prevented from escaping from the stack. I had had some previous experience with the destructive effects which ash can produce, before I joined the Authority. There used to be an electricity-generating station at the western end of the City of Melbourne, and the ash from that stack, (several times the height of the stack of the Tidal River incinerator) used to descend in a shower over the western end of the City. I was therefore especially interested in the provision made in the Warren incinerator to trap the



The need for the incinerator is made very clear by this photo of the 'open tip and fire' method used at the Tidal River camp.

ash and prevent it from escaping into the surroundings. In the Warren incinerator the flue gases were directed horizontally over a large tray full of water which served as a scrubber. The high velocity of the gases set up a wave action in the water which trapped the ash, thereby reducing the particulate matter to a very low level. Of course, the ash tray required to be emptied frequently and the water level had to be maintained by means of a ball valve.

The residue from the burning, which was scraped out every morning, consisted of a little clinker and numerous burnt-out tins. These were stored in a pit and subsequently used as filler in the fire-protection tracks.

The incinerator began to operate in 1969 and is still performing very satisfactorily (1989).

Another major service was the collection of numerous empty bottles, the contents of which had helped to quench the thirst of the thousands of visitors to Tidal River. Statistics for bottles are not available, but if each visitor had consumed the contents of only one bottle, the total would be staggering. The bottles were (and



Wilson's Promontory NP 1970. Incinerator for Tidal River Camp Ground.

still are in 1989) collected regularly by a bottle merchant and, in earlier years anyway, the park staff very generously donated the substantial collections from their enterprise to the local (Foster) hospital.

Other national parks

Similar problems in regard to the collection and disposal of garbage and bottles were encountered in other national parks. At Mount

Buffalo NP the garbage from the Chalet was dumped in a large open tip at the rear of the Chalet, and burnt from time to time. The Authority endeavoured to persuade the Railways Department to install an incinerator of adequate capacity, and the Department eventually provided a small unit such as the Authority was using in picnic areas in parks such as the Fern Tree Gully, Kinglake, Wyperfeld, etc.

The Committee of Management adopted the sanitary land-fill method of garbage disposal in a part of the park not frequented by human park visitors, and a similar method was adopted in Fraser National Park, where the rubbish collections were culled for bottles, the sale of which produced revenue for the Boy Scouts of the Alexandra district.

Educating the public

It is one of the sad facts of our democratic way of life in Australia that too many people are habitual litterbugs. Drive along any road leading to the beach and before long you'll see some happy family, at the conclusion of their 'take-away meal',



The reason why so many bottles had to be collected for recycling was that it greatly reduced the amount of waste buried under the 'sanitary landfill' method adopted at Fraser NP. The profits from the recycling were donated to the Boy Scouts in the Alexandra district.

throw the paper bags, etc, out of the window of the car. Tram tickets are all too frequently dropped in the street – even by pretty young girls and well-dressed women and, sadly, by men. Our streams and beaches and even the forests are defaced by empty beer and soft drink cans, cigarette packets and plastic bags, deposited by people of all ages who seem to have no respect for the environment or perhaps even themselves. The work of the Keep Australia Beautiful Council has of course done much to ameliorate the problem, but the cost of the trying to educate people to be tidy is tremendous and never-ending.

The national parks are no less vulnerable to defacement by litterbugs than the cities and countryside generally. In those far-off days when the store at Tidal River

(Wilson's Promontory National Park) was situated on the northern side of the main road, it was a matter of great concern that too many park visitors dropped their ice-cream containers or drinking straws or paper bags – or whatever they were carrying at the time – on the ground, even though garbage bins were provided near the exits from the store and cafe.

With the object of controlling this nuisance, the practice was often adopted of having an employee with a loud-hailer stand near the exit. When some person dropped rubbish on the ground, he or she was brought back to the world of reality by hearing a message from a loud-hailer – "Would the person who just dropped that ice-cream wrapper please pick it up and put it in the rubbish

bin?" Or, "Would the gentleman in the blue shorts who dropped that empty can please place it in the garbage bin?" Sometimes, it would be a lady in a red dress who had to be called to order. The method was certainly effective, but it immobilised an employee who might have been better employed elsewhere.

Littering of our beauty spots, wherever they may be – on beaches, sand dunes, ski fields, forests, nature strips, wherever men and women are – still persists. Perhaps there is a case for 'on the spot fines' for littering. In Hitler's pre-war Germany, the streets were litter-free; otherwise there was a tap on the shoulder from one of Hitler's men, who simply said, "One mark, please".

The Yanakie Run

The circumstances which culminated in the reservation of Wilsons Promontory National Park make a fascinating story, reflecting the conflicts between the various groups of people who sought to establish themselves there, but the following brief summary of the discovery of Wilsons Promontory and of some of the events which followed must suffice for present purposes.

In 1798, when George Bass discovered the Promontory and the strait which was subsequently named after him, the islands of Bass Strait abounded in seals. In the years that followed, sealers plundered the islands relentlessly, so that, by 1826, some authorities estimated that 'the industry was done'. However, it is clear that some seals remained on the islands comprising the Anser Group, which lies just off South West Cape; for it was here that Mr Ulric Doome, along with a number of other sightseers, made a voyage in *The Victoria* in 1874. Mr Doome gives an exciting if bloody account of the destruction wrought by the 'sportsmen' who landed on Anser Island with their guns and clubs, and attacked the bewildered seals.

While the sealers took their toll of the seals, Cape Barren Geese and mutton birds, the timber-getters were busy on the east coast of the Promontory, in the vicinity of Sealers Cove (which had been so named by Bass).

The loss of ships along the south coast led, in 1859, to the erection of a lighthouse on South-East Cape. The tower and cottages for the lighthouse keepers were built from granite hewn

out of the natural slabs by contract labour. The lighthouse proved to be a great attraction for walkers and, in 1884, J. B. Gregory, along with Arthur Lucas and George Robinson, walked from Yanakie, about 50 km to the north, to the lighthouse. They were probably the pioneers who began the tradition which persists even today.

I can still remember the thrill of standing high above South-East Cape, alongside my 11-year-old son, in December 1951, towards the end of the 22 km hike from Tidal River, as we gazed beyond the brilliant white lighthouse across the deep blue waters of Bass Strait. I could well understand why Gregory recommended that the Promontory should be declared a national park.

Only three years after Gregory's celebrated walk, a Mrs Gordon Baillie began to press the Government for a grant of 40,000 acres of the Promontory on which to settle 1000 crofters from the Isle of Skye and establish a fishing industry. Even as late as 1904, it appears that there were plans to subdivide the Promontory into 1000 acre blocks, but the Field Naturalists Club mounted strong opposition. Led by Sir Baldwin Spencer and supported by the Hon. Frank Madden, Speaker of the House, the members of the Club pressed their claims upon the Government. A public meeting was organized in the Athenaeum which spilled out into Collins Street, and a strong committee was formed to wait upon the Government. The Lt. Governor, Sir John Madden, presided, and Professor Baldwin Spencer led the 'attack'. Other speakers, prominent in their day,

followed. On 7th December, 1904, a strong deputation waited on the Hon. John Murray, and a few days later it was announced that the Cabinet would permanently reserve the Promontory.

As the years passed, the popularity of the Promontory grew, but there was much concern among the naturalists (there were no 'conservationists' in those days) that the national park did not include an area of about 20,000 acres known as the 'Yanakie Run' lying to the north of Darby River. One feels tempted to examine the reasons why it was considered so important to extend the park in this manner; but the geological aspects of the Yanakie Isthmus and the Promontory were determined thousands of years before the Authority was formed and space considerations preclude adequate treatment.

When the last Great Ice Age came to an end, about 12,000 years ago, the resulting waters engulfed the land bridge which had existed on and off between the major land mass to the south and the mainland of Australia, thus creating the island State of Tasmania and leaving only the highest parts projecting beyond the surface of the water. Thus were formed the numerous islands of Bass Strait, and the Promontory itself was a large mountainous island. The gradual accretion of sand eventually produced the Yanakie Isthmus some 6000 years ago and, as time passed, a cover of vegetation eventually developed which differs greatly from that of the main part of the Promontory. From the conservation aspect the union of these two widely-



Cattle at Cotters Lake Wilsons Promontory NP, 1989. Cattle grazing continued in the Prom's Yanakie area until the early 1990s.

different ecological systems made the reservation of the Yanakie Area most desirable; but the very nature of the isthmus made it all the more difficult to achieve this objective.

Nor is this the place to describe the numerous excursions by celebrated botanists and nature lovers who, despite the difficulties posed by lack of proper access, somehow found their way to then Promontory and even walked from Darby or Yanakie to the lighthouse, but it must be said that the naturalists never missed an opportunity to bring their wishes to the attention of the Government. Even as late as 1954, just two years before the National Parks Act was passed, the Victorian National Parks Association made strong representations for the incorporation of the Yanakie Run in the park, but to no avail.

Towards the end of 1958, at the October meeting of the National Parks Authority, one of the members with strong leanings towards

conservation (by then a popular term) proposed that the Authority seek to have the Yanakie Run incorporated in the park. It so happened that the incumbent of the office of Secretary for Lands had recently changed and I was delighted to hear the new Secretary, Mr G. L. Wood, say that he would be pleased to 'look into the matter' and report back to the next meeting. I am sure that the other members of the Authority shared my enthusiasm and optimism at the prospect of having the Yanakie area added to park.

The Yanakie Agisters

Our hopes were short-lived. In a letter dated 17th December 1958, Mr Wood informed the Authority that in 1906 agistment rights had been granted to the 'hill farmers' of South Gippsland near Fish Creek and Foster to graze their stock on the Yanakie Run during the winter months, thereby giving their farmlands an opportunity to

recover. The hill farmers had formed the Yanakie Agisters Association so that members could treat with the Lands Department on matters pertaining to the use of the land for the agistment of their cattle. Stock numbers (upwards of 2000) were controlled, stock were admitted and taken off on agreed dates, and a herdsman was appointed to manage relevant matters in consultation with the Lands Department. Under the circumstances, Mr Wood felt that it would not be politically feasible to terminate the agisters' occupation of the Run, and the matter was allowed to rest.

The South Gippsland Shire Council

Prior to the creation of the National Parks Authority, the South Gippsland Council had two representatives on the Committee of Management for Wilsons Promontory National Park. One of these, Mr J. G. Jones,



1988 view of Wilsons Promontory from Yanakie Lookout.

had originally been appointed as a member of the Shire Council; but, when he ceased to be a member of that body, for some unknown reason, he continued to serve on the Committee. The other 'representative' of the Council had either recently resigned or otherwise ceased to be a member of the committee. When the committee of management finally came under the control of the Authority, Mr Jones was appointed to the committee under the National Parks Act, but as a private member, not affiliated with any other body. The Shire Council requested the Minister to appoint a second 'representative' to the Committee of Management.

This raised an interesting question: as 'representatives' of the Council, such members of the Committee of Management were responsible to the Shire Council and therefore 'obliged' to present to the Council as a whole a report on the transactions of the committee. It was therefore standard practice for the minutes of the meetings of the committee to be tabled at meetings of the Council and thus made available to all members of the Council and to the press.

As negotiations between the Committee of Management and the Authority on various matters were frequently in a state of flux, this

meant that the press had access to business which had not yet been finalized. The Authority had no intention of permitting this practice to continue and required that members of committees of management who were not representatives of Government departments be appointed by the Authority as 'nominees' of the particular non-government body, and that all such nominees should serve in a private capacity and not as representatives of the relevant body.

When the Authority's decision was conveyed to the Shire Council, there was, understandably, some reaction, but the Minister requested the Shire Council to submit a panel of three names so that the Authority could make a choice. I was asked to arrange a meeting with the Shire Council to explain the relationship between the Authority and its committees of management.

Here let me explain that the members of the Authority, including the Director, always had a clear concept of the role of the Shire Councils in relation to the management of national parks, and always sought to establish cordial relations between the two parties. In some cases this took a little longer than in others; but, after 16 years of experience in this

field, I cannot recall any case where I could not walk into the offices of a Shire Council without being made to feel welcome. The Authority (and, later, the Service) received a great deal of co-operation from Shire Councils throughout the State.

I therefore welcomed the opportunity of attending a meeting with the South Gippsland Shire Council, on 12th August 1960. Various aspects of national management were discussed and cordial relations established. The concept of nominees instead of representatives was understood and accepted. In due course, Cr. J. H. Macdonald was appointed as the Council's nominee on the Committee of Management. Of course, before this was done, the nomination had to receive the blessing of the Committee of Management. All this may seem a little tedious, but it was recognized as being essential.

At the meeting with the Council, I met Crs. W. (Bill) Gale and E. (Ern) Thorsen and learned that they were both influential members of the Yanakie Agisters Association. Cr. Thorsen was the Secretary and, like his colleague, regularly agisted several hundred head of cattle on the Run.

Plans of the Soldier Settlement Commission

In the light of the advice from the Lands Department, the Authority felt unable to take further action, but other forces were at work. It came to public notice that the Soldier Settlement Commission was developing plans to use some 20,000 acres of Wilsons Promontory National Park for farming. At a meeting of the Council in 1960, Cr Gale strongly denounced this proposal, which was concerned with an area lying to the east of Oberon Bay, another on Chinaman's Beach (in the Vereker Peninsular) and 3000 acres out of the Yanakie Run. The Minister for Lands, the Hon. Keith Turnbull, in a letter to Sir Herbert Hyland dated 3rd August 1960, expressed surprise "that the Council considers that giving an opportunity to young farmers to settle on land in the Shire as of secondary importance to the attraction of tourists to the Promontory." Mr. Turnbull went on, "the Soldier Settlement Commission has indicated to me that *two or three isolated areas* (the italics are mine, L.H.S.) on the Promontory would be suitable for subdivision into 50 to 60 farms and that the plan would certainly not interfere with the beauty spots or the availability for tourists or campers."

I recall that grim day when I watched from a distance as Mr Simpson, Chairman of the Soldier Settlement Commission, conducted interested parties on a visit of inspection. I can still see the group standing on 'Red Hill', at the southern end of the aerodrome area, pointing out the farming potential of the area. I felt utterly miserable and engulfed in despair. It seemed that there was nothing I could do to avert the impending disaster.

However, there is a man for every occasion; in this instance it was Mr (later Sir) Henry Bolte, Premier of Victoria, whose Cabinet rejected the proposal, on 'a matter of principle'. In its editorial on the matter, The Age (26/10/60) sounded a warning: "Principles, however, are all too frequently left out of the picture when public opinion fails to reinforce them".

There followed a period of seeming calm, but the matter could not be allowed to rest there.

Lack of control

There were other aspects of the management of Wilsons Promontory National Park, not previously mentioned, which were matters of grave concern. The Authority had no means of knowing who entered the Yanakie area at the 'cattle grid' situated at the north-western corner of the Run, and it was common knowledge that shooters entered the Yanakie area in pursuit of deer. Once they were past the grid, there was no way of preventing them from travelling into the Vereker Peninsula, or even into the Oberon-Ramsay saddle area and beyond. I was informed at my meeting with the Shire Council in August 1960 that, on one occasion, a 'prime beast' had been shot in the Yanakie area and actually traced to a butcher's shop in Foster! On another occasion a member of the park staff had found a wallaby which had been shot, on the Sealers Cove track - well inside the park. Further, there were too many bushfires in the Yanakie Run for the good of the park. Reference has been made earlier to a fire which began in the Yanakie Run and devastated most of the park in 1951.

Lack of control led to the establishment of a very cosy 'fishermen's camp' on the east coast,

near the Five Mile Beach. The camp was equipped with cane furniture and comfortable beds, and littered with empty ammunition cases as well as fishing gear. There was no indication of ownership, nor did a polite request for the removal of the goods and chattels evoke any response. Finally, it was necessary to instruct the park staff to dismantle the camp, but I do not recall having received any requests for the return of the materials.

Had it been possible to gain control of the Yanakie area, it would have been feasible to develop a residential area near the cattle grid and establish a control point there. I raised this aspect with the Authority, which supported the idea, but there appeared to be no way of achieving this most desirable objective.

Now, I had long ago reached the conclusion that most of the misunderstandings between people arise from the lack of effective communication. I had had a good deal of experience in this area in the gas industry, in particular, and had come to recognize that there is not much chance of having one's viewpoint recognized and understood if one is unable to see the other party's point of view even if one disagrees with it.

A plan for incorporation

It had become clear to me that, under the conditions prevailing at this time, cattle agistment and the Yanakie Run were inseparable. I therefore formulated a plan on that basis. But, without support from other parties, I could make no progress. I decided that the time was opportune to improve my acquaintance with Crs. Thorsen and Gale, and had several discussions with them. The climate for progress improved with each meeting until we were in agreement.

It was essential of course that the Committee of Management and the Lands Department should be kept informed of developments, and I had frequent discussions with senior officers of the Department and with the Chairman of the Committee of Management. It would have been disastrous if they had learned of my plans from reports published in the press. In due course I received a letter (13-11-61) from the Committee of Management giving the Committee's reasons for wishing to have the Yanakie Run added to the park. Clearly, everybody concerned was being kept informed and there were good prospects for a successful outcome.

I therefore proposed to the Authority that further efforts be made to have the Yanakie Run incorporated in the park. The value of having a Yanakie Agisters' Advisory Committee was recognized and was supported by Mr A. O. Lawrence, Chairman of the Forests Commission, who referred to the benefits derived from the operations of the Barmah Forest Advisory Committee in regard to cattle in the Barmah State Forest. The Authority endorsed my proposals and I proceeded to arrange, through the Executive of the Yanakie Agisters' Association, to meet all members at a public meeting to be held in Foster.

Meeting with Yanakie Agisters

The meeting took place on 9th February 1962 and, after some introductory remarks on the role of national parks and the significant aspects of the National Parks Act, I presented the meeting with details of my plan. Up to this point only the Executive of the Y.A.A. knew of the Authority's plans and the mood of the meeting had been somewhat sombre, if not sullen; but, when it was

realized that the Authority would not terminate the agisters' grazing 'rights' if granted control, the meeting came alive. It really was positively electric. I had prepared for this and, with the object of forestalling any possible misunderstanding on the part of the press, I distributed printed details of the plan. Briefly, these were as follows (always with the proviso that the Yanakie Run be first incorporated in the park and come under the control of the Authority):

1. That agistment rights would continue for at least twenty years; after that the situation would be examined in the light of experience gained during that period.
2. That the Authority would form a Yanakie Agisters' Advisory Committee consisting of a suitable number of properly-elected representatives of the cattlemen using the area, one member of the Committee of Management and one Technical Officer of the Authority, who would be the Executive Officer of the committee. The Director of National Parks was an ex-officio member of all committees formed by the Authority. The Authority undertook to provide the necessary secretarial services.

The meeting had been carefully planned and many of the questions asked had been anticipated. The following summary indicates the lines along which the discussion proceeded.

"Yes, the agistment of cattle would continue along the lines at present followed by the Lands Department. If any variations were found necessary, these would arise from the work of the Agisters Advisory Committee."

"Yes, agisters would be permitted to use their dogs and horses in connexion with their authorised work."

"Yes, the Authority would be responsible for providing mustering yards, stock ramps, water, fences, etc., as required, to enable agistment activities to be conducted efficiently. The cost of such facilities would be met by the agisters, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Advisory Committee."

"Yes, the Authority would appoint a Herdsman having appropriate experience and aptitude, who would be required to manage the agistment activities. In particular, during agistment periods, he would be on duty to protect the cattle."

"Yes, as soon as possible, the Authority would erect a house near the entrance to the park, close to the main road, to control entry to the park."

"Yes, the Authority would immediately request the Forests Commission to prepare a fire protection plan for the area and the plan would be discussed with the Agisters' Advisory Committee before being finalised." It was pointed out that the Authority could not spend money on fire protection works on land not under its control - a telling point.

The meeting unanimously adopted the proposal and I was enabled to report good progress to the Authority. A meeting of that body was held in the Director's office on 4th July 1962, to finalise details of proposals to be discussed with representatives of the Yanakie Agisters' Association on the following day. This was a successful meeting, which enabled negotiations with the Lands Department to be continued.

There were various minor details to be considered which need not concern us here, and it was not until 12th May 1964 that the following letter was received from the Secretary for Lands.

"12th May, 1964,

Ref: Misc. 247

Melbourne.

Dear Sir

re Wilson's Promontory National Park

With reference to your letter of 26th February last, and previous correspondence, (No.6547- 23/5/4), in regard to Yanakie Run, which comprises about 16,000 acres of Crown land located between the south boundary of Yanakie Settlement Area and the present north-west boundary of Wilson's Promontory National Park, I desire to inform you that, subject to the following provisions, the Honorable the Minister has approved of the reservation of the Run area as an extension of the above National Park:

- (a) That the agistment rights of the adjacent hill country Dairy Farmers be preserved.
- (b) That it be the responsibility of Authority to make the existing fence on the south boundary of the Settlement Area, Kangaroo and Vermin Proof to the satisfaction of the Settlement Commission.
- (c) That the National Parks Authority be responsible for the costs of any necessary survey works.
- (d) That a small area be excluded from the reservation to meet the requirements of the South Gippsland Shire Council, for a Rubbish Depot.
- (e) That the matter of whether the Tourist Road is to be included in the reservation, be further discussed.

In passing I would like to bring to your attention that a departmental report has disclosed the existence of two graves in an old cemetery located on the right side of the road

to the National Park and just south of the Yanakie Settlement boundary adjoining the Run.

Further south along the road, and on the left side, nearer to Darby River, an Emergency Aircraft Landing Ground was established during the war years, and in 1962 advice was received from the Director-General of Civil Aviation, that his Department considered that this Aerodrome should be preserved. The view was also expressed that it appeared that the site could function equally well as an Aerodrome, whether included within the Park boundaries or not.

In regard to items (d) and (e) above it would be appreciated if you would furnish my Department with the views of the National Parks Authority as to location of the proposed Rubbish Depots and also as to whether the Tourist Road, which will be 3 chains wide, should be included in the reservation.

Yours faithfully,

(sgd.) L. W. Birch

SECRETARY FOR LANDS

"The Director,
National Parks Authority,
276 Collins Street,
MELBOURNE C. 1.
201

On 12th May 1964, the Minister for Lands, the Hon. K. H. Turnbull, wrote to the Minister for State Development, the Hon. A. J. Fraser, M.P., informing him inter alia that "subject to certain conditions which have been conveyed to the National Parks Authority, I have now given approval to the area of about 16,000 acres of Crown Land known as the Yanakie Run being reserved as an extension of Wilsons Promontory National Park".

The Sporting Shooters' Association

Of course, before the Yanakie Run could be incorporated in Wilsons Promontory National Park, it was necessary to have draft legislation prepared and to have the Bill passed by Parliament. However, that was not the last hurdle to be crossed in the Yanakie Stakes, because suddenly the Authority found itself assailed by a stream of letters from the Field and Game Association which wanted to have the Yanakie Run converted into a Game Reserve so that their members could shoot the deer which roamed there. It was a full-scale attack, directed at the Government, the Premier, the Minister and, of course, at the National Parks Authority.

Dealing with the correspondence and meeting every challenge thrown at us consumed considerable time and energy, and imposed great strain on the filing system. Finally, the Director was requested to appear before the Chairman of the Wildlife Reserves Committee, Mr A. H. Tisdall (Chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission), along with Mr A. Dunbavin Butcher, Director of Fisheries and Wildlife, to plead the cause of national parks. It was an experience I did not relish and one I would gladly have forgone, but the meeting duly occurred. I could not help recalling the last time that Mr Butcher and I had found ourselves in competition for a potential national park (in relation to Tower Hill). I had lost the last round of that encounter; however, on this occasion, the decision was in our favour and prepared the way for the drafting of the enabling legislation.



Lime quarry, Yanakie Run, established to provide lime for South Gippsland farmers following requests in 1964 (photo taken 1989). A condition of the approval given by the National Parks Authority was that when the land was 'worked out' it was to be returned to its natural state.

Management of the Yanakie Run

In due course, Mr Percy Gilbert was appointed as Ranger-Herdsman, and a fire-protection plan was prepared by the Forests Commission and implemented by the Authority and its successor the National Parks Service. The agistment arrangements proceeded satisfactorily, even to the extent of reaching agreement on an increase in agistment fees. When additional money was required to provide new mustering yards some two miles south-west of the old mustering yards, the Service met the

costs and recovered the money from the agisters by levying an additional one cent per head of cattle per week.

The matter of the fence along the northern boundary merits special comment. Soon after the National Parks Authority began to function, the Committee of Management for Wilsons Promontory National Park proposed that a fauna-proof fence be built across the narrow neck of the isthmus, over a distance of about four miles, to keep kangaroos, climbers such as possums and koalas, and burrowers such as wombats, in the park, but to exclude foxes and rabbits. In a letter dated

16th September 1957 to Mr Frances Ratcliffe, Officer in-Charge of the Wildlife Section of the C.S.I.R.O., the Authority's first Director, Mr P. Crosbie Morrison, seemed to be expressing his personal doubts when he wrote "Given such a fence, they (the Committee of Management) then face the herculean task of eliminating rabbits, foxes and deer from the 102,000 acres of the national park".

Mr Ratcliffe's reply (1st October 1957) did little to dispel Mr Morrison's own doubts, and pointed especially to the destructive behaviour of foxes in relation to smaller native animals and ground-dwelling birds.

He offered a practical suggestion to the effect that poisoned fowl heads or offal, buried a few inches below the surface along the beaches above high-water mark, might help to reduce the fox population. It was recognized that some seagulls might fall victim to this method, but Mr Ratcliffe thought that "in the circumstances these birds should be considered expendable". In passing, let me add that in 1957 I instituted a very successful fox-destruction campaign in Sherbrooke Forest, using 4-6 week old chickens impregnated with 1080 or strychnine and suspended from low branches, in areas known to be infested with foxes. Later, rabbits' heads were used, similarly treated with poison and buried beneath the surface with only the ears showing. Several years later, in The Lakes National Park, fish heads impregnated with poison were lightly buried along the beaches, to destroy scavenging foxes.

Even if it had been possible to train wombats and rabbits not to burrow under the fence (from either side), and if it had been possible to prevent foxes from moving round the ends of the fence at sea-level, and if it had been possible to construct the fence of material which would not corrode in sea-water, the phenomenal cost of erecting the fence and maintaining it would render the concept untenable. Frankly, I had sufficient confidence in the Government's capacity to recognize that the scheme was both unpractical and impracticable, and I felt that the Government would never provide money for such a scheme. It was however necessary for the Authority to accept the conditions laid down by the Minister for Lands and therefore the Authority agreed to do so. To date, the fence has not been constructed.

The Council Rubbish Depot

The proviso (item (d) page 105) that a "small area be excluded from the reservation to meet the requirements of the South Gippsland Shire Council, for a rubbish depot" caused great concern to the Authority. I had not been aware of any such plans during the early stages of the negotiations and I doubt whether any other member of the Authority had anticipated this 'last minute' request.

The development of the rubbish depot, of course, would have entailed the construction and maintenance of a road connecting the Promontory Road to the depot, and the clearing of several acres of land to ensure that the depot would not become a fire hazard. Further, the installation of a second land-managing body within the national park was not a matter for the Authority to enthuse over. One would have thought that the despoliation of a part of the national park for that purpose was the last thing that a caring Shire Council would wish to do; but I well remember that day when representatives of the Authority and Committee of Management accompanied representatives of the Council on an inspection of the proposed area. But, somehow, Fate intervened and ultimately the plan was abandoned, though not, I fear, on grounds of principle.

Lime quarry

The Authority was soon to receive yet another set-back. Although not mentioned in the Lands Department's letter of 12th May 1964, suddenly, 'out of the blue' came a request from farming interests for an area of about 10 acres, to provide lime for the farmers of South Gippsland. There was little that the Authority could do

but agree; so, after the area (to the south of the main road, opposite the aerodrome) had been inspected by the Director and a senior officer of the Mines Department, provision was made for this. It was a condition of the Authority's approval that, as areas were 'worked out', appropriate conservation work would be carried out.

Enabling legislation

The Bill was passed by Parliament on 16th December 1969, thereby adding some 17,900 acres of Crown Land, formerly known as the Yanakie Run, to the park. At the same time, Parliament passed legislation adding a number of off-shore islands (Great Glennie, Ramsbotham, Dannevig, McHugh Islands, and Rabbit Rocks) having a total area of 588 acres, to the park, along with an area of 8 acres at Refuge Cove which had been omitted from the original reservation.

The battle for Mount Oberon: SEC power

The outstanding feature of the Tidal River camping area in Wilsons Promontory National Park is, I think, Mount Oberon.

Oberon is not the highest mountain on the Promontory, being some 630 feet lower than Mount Latrobe and even Mount Wilson. But Latrobe and Wilson are remote, lost in the hinterland; Oberon towers majestically above the village in an all-pervasive manner, rewarding the eye from wherever one may be – in the camp, on the Norman Bay beach or even when quietly fishing in Tidal River. Oberon is always there, holding the village in a warm intimate embrace, watching over all, listening to the song of the sea as the great waves roll in and wash the silver sands.

Gazing upwards from the northern slope of the mountain to the rounded summit, those with an eye for such fancies may imagine that they see the head of an Aborigine, sculptured by Nature in granite. Once, the rugged outline of the mountain stood unbroken, though rising and falling in a hapless manner as if the hand of the Great Artist had trembled while he worked.

Oberon has many visitors; every year countless people of all ages (and there is no sexual discrimination here) laboriously plod their way to the top, to rest in the sunshine (and sometimes to shiver in the freezing cold) to gaze westward to the eternal sea and watch the waves roll in to die upon the shore.

I still remember my first visit, in December 1949. There was no road to Telegraph Saddle; one walked from Tidal River. The walking track led from a place near the car park at Telegraph Saddle straight up the slope to the summit. This was one of the traditional walks, the others being to Sealers Cove and the lighthouse on South-East Cape. Refuge Cove was beyond the reach of most.

The summit of Oberon afforded a magnificent panoramic view; one could observe the entire camping area slumbering quietly below, or allow the eye to linger on the succession of wide blue bays and long dark peninsulas, from Oberon Point in the south-west to Tongue Point in the north-west. Turn about, and one could gaze over the deep valley to the Wilson Range and perhaps wonder how the view would be from there, and over Wilson's southern shoulder one could see Waterloo Bay, with the Boulder Range running back to Mount Norgate, standing guard over beautiful Oberon Bay. Surely this incomparable work of nature would never be sullied. So I thought.

But I was blissfully unaware that, many years ago, before the National Park Act of 1956 had been passed, the Commonwealth had obtained leasehold over two small areas of land near the summit of Mount Oberon.

The first signs of the approaching storm came into view in 1960, when

the Post Master General's (PMG's) Department began to improve the sandy track which joined the road to Tidal River to the 'Telegraph Saddle', and to construct a road to the leased areas just below the summit. On 30th June 1961, the PMG's Department sought the permission of the Lands Department to occupy an area of land (18.3m x 12.2m), in order to erect an 'aerial' 7.9m in diameter, to investigate the possibilities of expanding the existing Mount Oberon–Tasmania telephone link. The Lands Department, of course, no longer had jurisdiction, so referred the matter to the National Parks Authority. The Authority, dismayed at this development, referred the matter to the Crown Solicitor's Office, and then learned that the leases had been granted by the Governor in Council to the Commonwealth of Australia pursuant to the provisions of Section 6 of the Commonwealth Lands Acquisition Act 1906-1936, which provide as follows:

"6. Where the Governor of a State agrees with the Governor General for the sale or lease of any Crown land to the Commonwealth, any instrument or assurance executed by the Governor for granting conveying or leasing to the Commonwealth accordingly shall (by force of this Act, and notwithstanding anything in the law of the State) be valid and effectual to vest the land in the Commonwealth according to the tenor thereof."



Wilsons Promontory NP, 1983. Tidal River with Mt Oberon in background. View from Tidal Overlook.

The Crown Solicitor advised that, at the time the leases were granted, there was no power to do so under State law, as the land had been reserved under the Land Act 1928. The land was now under the control of the National Parks Authority, which was not empowered under the National Parks Act to grant the leases required by the Commonwealth. The relevant provisions of the Land Acquisition Act 1955 are as follows:-

“6. (2) The Commonwealth shall not acquire either by agreement or compulsory process land which, under the laws of the State or Territory of the Commonwealth, is dedicated or reserved, or is vested in trustees, as a public park or otherwise for the purposes of public recreation.”

The Authority had consulted the Committee of Management, which

(rather surprisingly, I thought) had raised no objection to the Commonwealth request, and the Crown Solicitor expressed the opinion that “notwithstanding the Authority’s present lack of power, it might be wise to consent to the Commonwealth’s use of the site, until such time as power to grant an appropriate lease is obtained”, (i.e. until the National Parks Act had been suitably amended by Parliament). The Crown Solicitor continued, “If this course is not followed, the inconvenience to the PMG’s Department might cause the Commonwealth to review the restriction imposed on its acquisition powers by the Land Act 1955”.

Tower on Mount Oberon

On 27 November 1962, the Chief Property Officer of the Department of the Interior informed the Authority that “last year a large-diameter aerial (7.9m) had been erected on Mount Oberon for propagation tests between that station and Flinders Island”. The same letter conveyed a request for permission to provide a temporary mast for a period of approximately twelve months, for making additional tests to obtain information for the development of a high-capacity radio relay system between Victoria and Tasmania. The proposed mast was to be 18.3m high and of lattice construction, using steel members. If the experiments were successful, the next step would be the erection of a tower 106.7m high, to carry an aerial 7.9m in diameter.



Mt Oberon is always there, rewarding the eye even when fishing in Tidal River. January 1993.

It was always my practice to provide the Authority with full information on agenda items in advance of the regular meetings and, despite the shortage of time, this was done in the present case. The Authority considered the matter at its meeting on 5th December 1962, recognizing that any decision then reached had to be based on the final objective, namely a tower 106.7 m high. I was instructed to inform the PMG's Department that the Authority "reluctantly found itself unable to accede to the request because it was felt that the erection of such a structure on Mount Oberon would destroy the character of the mountain, while it was the clear duty of the Authority to preserve such natural features". The PMG's Department was duly informed to this effect.

On the morning of 25th January 1963 I had a visit from the Chief Engineer and the Supervising Engineer of the PMG's Department, who explained that the preliminary research conducted at the lower level, in the existing permissive occupancy, had indicated that a tower 106.7m (350 feet) high would be required to give 'line of sight' communication between Mount Oberon and Mount Tanner on Flinders Island (in Bass Strait). I was informed that the tower would not be built on the summit itself but at a lower level, so that only about 57.9m (190 ft) would project above the skyline. The tower was to have a base of 7.6m (25ft).

SEC power

If your head is still reeling from that blow, you'd better take an aspro and prepare for the next shock-wave. I was informed that the Department "had under consideration" a plan to provide SEC power to operate the relay station, and that this might "provide an opportunity for SEC power to be made available at Tidal River. The power could be brought in on steel towers and possibly wooden poles, but it would entail cutting a swathe through the vegetation from, say, Darby to the Oberon site."

It seemed ironic that these disquieting potential developments should occupy my mind on the fifty-third anniversary of my birthday. What a gift!

I deemed it prudent to inform my visitors that, before they built

their hopes too high, I thought that the Authority would be less than enthusiastic about these proposals and that I regarded it as a fundamental duty of the Authority to protect scenic views and skylines. This caused consternation, and one of my visitors exclaimed that he could understand that the Authority might well be concerned at any threat to the birds or animals, or even the native plants; but skylines!!! Beauty indeed may well be in the eye of the beholder, but that one must have had cataracts!

PMG application refused

On 6th March 1963, representatives of the PMG's Department attended the Authority's monthly meeting, when the matter of the application was fully discussed.

On 22nd March 1963, I submitted a memorandum to the Minister, the Hon. A. J. Fraser MP, conveying the relevant details of the PMG's application and the Authority's decision. The Minister wrote to the Department saying that "this note is to say that the application cannot be approved".

The matter however was not allowed to rest there. On 24th September 1963, the PMG's Department wrote to the Authority saying that "since the meeting on 6th March, a great deal of thought has been given to our proposed development for Mount Oberon", and that "the new proposal involves the use of a parabolic reflector, 8.6 m (28 ft) in diameter, mounted at the ground level together with a tower 45.7m (150 ft) high carrying three 3.6m (12 ft) diameter aerials ...". The tower would be erected at the rear of Mount Oberon and would not be visible from Tidal River, but one-sixth of it would be visible from the road at the Squeaky Beach (Leonard Bay) saddle and

Windy Pass, and half it would be visible from the Telegraph Saddle car park. A further significant fact was that the new proposal would not necessitate the leasing of additional land to the PMG's Department, but merely minor adjustments to the boundaries of the two areas already occupied.

The PMG's Department officers arranged for the proposal to be examined at the site by representatives of the Authority and the Committee of Management. A joint inspection was held on 8th November 1963, and, on 1st May 1964, the Authority informed the Department that it had approved the plan to erect a tower 45.7 m (150 feet) high on the eastern side of Mount Oberon and to the retention of the 7.6 m (28 feet) 'dish' reflector on the road below the repeater station, "subject to consultation on soil conservation aspects".

The significance of the foregoing should not be underestimated. Had the National Parks Authority not been created in 1956; or, if the Authority had taken a soft line in dealing with the PMG's original request, there could now be an excrescence projecting 57.9m (190 feet) above the summit of Mount Oberon. Whether the Minister would have accepted such a recommendation from the Authority is by no means clear; but in the light of the Crown Solicitor's opinion, it seems very probable.

As it was, the Authority had demonstrated that it had a very proper understanding of its obligations and responsibilities in the preservation of the 'environment of national parks'. It also demonstrated that the Authority was not to be intimidated by the heavyweights of a large Commonwealth Department, but it has to be said that the Officers of the PMG's Department, whilst arguing their case with great

persuasiveness at all times, showed a willingness to co-operate, and it was this spirit of co-operation which led ultimately to a successful outcome.

This is perhaps not the place to inquire why they had not done their sums properly in the first place, because the later proposal represented a tremendous saving in taxpayers' money. The Authority, of course, would have preferred not to have any engineering structures in the vicinity of Mount Oberon, but recognized that sometimes compromise is the answer to the seductive persuasions of modern technology.

SEC power again

No sooner had the Authority tranquilised one dragon than it found itself confronted by another.

An essential item in the implementation of the proposal to develop a radio-telephone service between Tasmania and the mainland was the provision of electric power. The PMG's Department had two choices: it could use SEC [mains] power (subject to the approval of the National Parks Authority) or it could use diesel power generated on the site at Mount Oberon.

The provision of SEC power would have meant constructing a 22,000 volt overhead supply line, supported on posts (or steel towers) at intervals of about 184m (200 yards). In the interests of safety, it would have been necessary to clear a swathe along the entire length of the line and to provide access from the main road to the base of every pole, for maintenance purposes. The supply line would have crossed the Promontory Road seven times between Darby River and Bishop Rock and four times north of Darby

River, based on the SEC plan. After Bishop Rock, the line would have followed the road to the summit of Mount Oberon.

Alternatively, power could be supplied by installing 'twin' diesel engines (suitably housed) connected so that, in the event of the failure of one, the other would automatically take over. In any case, as a contingency measure against failure of the SEC supply, it would be necessary to install an equivalent diesel engine, set to cut in automatically.

The Authority of course recognized the advantage of having SEC power available at Tidal River; although I must confess that I personally have always had grave reservations about the advisability of introducing SEC power there. However, after mature consideration, the Authority resolved not to acquiesce in the PMG's request, and the Department and the SEC were informed accordingly. In coming to its decision the Authority had concluded that the construction of the 22,000 volt electricity supply line would have had an adverse effect on the park environment.

Committee of Management disapproves

The Authority's decision was duly conveyed to the Committee of Management, which lost no time in expressing its disapproval of the Authority's action.

The Committee "did not consider the reason for refusing the application, viz: that the pole line would seriously detract from the natural beauty of the area, is a sufficient one, and strongly objects to the fact that the requirements of the Tidal River village were not given sufficient consideration."

One could be forgiven for wondering which was the controlling body – the National Parks Authority or the Committee of Management. But there is more. The letter went on to say: "We cannot agree that the alternative source of power (namely diesel engines) available to the Post Master General's Department compares favourably with the SEC services". So the Committee, in addition to condemning the Authority for making a decision in the light of its collective wisdom, went so far as to question the ability of the PMG's Department's officers to make their decision. The Authority, on the other hand, had sufficient confidence in the PMG's engineers to accept their word that diesels would be satisfactory. The Department proceeded with the installation of the diesels, which have now been in service for over twenty years.

But the Committee of Management was not yet finished with the Authority. It then proceeded to demonstrate its strength still further by saying: "There is already in existence a far greater detraction from the natural environment of the Park, in the presence of the main access road, and it is presumed that normal practice would be followed in routing the pole line to a large extent along the roadway. A line so located is almost a natural accompaniment and in the opinion of the Committee would not detract from the scenery.

"In a letter to you dated 30th September 1963 concerning the electricity requirements at Tidal River it was made clear that the Committee favoured SEC supply owing to the difficulties associated with the running of a diesel generating plant.

"The Committee was extremely disappointed at your decision, as it had looked forward with confidence to the availability of SEC power to relieve it of some of its fears, and it is

earnestly hoped that in the interests of the Committee's work, your decision will be reviewed."

All this raises the question of just how far one may go in the process of interfering with the environment and who decides when 'enough is enough'. In retrospect, taking into consideration the events of Ash Wednesday (14th February 1983) when the rubbing of overhead SEC wires against trees is alleged to have caused an horrendous conflagration, it seems that the Authority's decision might well have been wise beyond all possible predictions.

The Council laughed

Apparently, however, there was a lighter side to the Authority's decision, even though the Committee of Management disagreed with it. It was reported in [the local newspaper] the Foster Mirror that, when Cr Jack Macdonald told the members of the South Gippsland Shire Council that the Authority had not agreed to the PMG's request, the members laughed. It is always very pleasing to know that one can raise a laugh; many people are paid large sums of money for doing just that.

It would perhaps lead us into the realm of conjecture but one would be very naive not to wonder why the South Gippsland Shire Council (of which Cr Macdonald was a nominee on the Committee of Management) should have deemed it necessary to become involved in the SEC proposal. The Council wrote to the Minister of State Development, the Honourable Vance Dickie MLC, on 14th March 1965, in effect, pleading the cause of the Committee of Management. The Minister requested me to report on the matter and on 29th March I replied as follows:

"8542-35/5/3

29th March, 1965

Dear Mr Dickie

WILSON'S PROMONOTORY
NATIONAL PARK

Proposal for SEC Power

I refer to the letter dated 14th March 1965, from the South Gippsland Shire Council, regarding the matter of SEC power supply for Tidal River and the PMG installation at Mt Oberon. In response to your request for comments, I would offer the following:

The Authority has been in close collaboration with the PMG Department for approximately 12 months in regard to the possibility of extending the SEC supply to Mount Oberon. Briefly the proposal was for a 22,000 volt pole line to be erected, to extend the supply from Yanakie to the PMG installations at Mount Oberon. The PMG was prepared to meet the full cost, including a spur line to Tidal River, but reticulation within the camp would be at the expense of the Committee of Management or Authority.

The Authority has a very clear appreciation of the advantages of having SEC power at Tidal River. The advantages are so obvious that it is not considered necessary to detail them here. At the same time the PMG Department, from the outset, was aware of the problem confronting the Authority, namely, that the construction of a pole line would despoil certain parts of the Park. The attitude of the PMG Department officers has been consistently courteous and understanding. They have endeavoured to facilitate a favourable decision, but have not applied any pressure to the Authority or expressed any resentment at its inability to accede to their request.

The Authority's decision not to acquiesce in the proposal to take

in SEC power was not lightly made. In the early stages officers of the Authority discussed details of the proposal with officers of the SEC and PMG, following which I gave an account of the negotiations to the Authority on 2nd September 1964, when the Authority resolved not to approve the proposal.

Following representations by the Committee of Management, negotiations with the PMG were re-opened towards the end of last year and a joint inspection was made of the area between Yanakie and Mount Oberon. The party consisted of Mr G. T. Thompson and me (representing the Authority), along with senior officers of the PMG Department and SEC. The purpose of the inspection was to find a route which would make it possible to erect the pole line without detriment to the scenic features of the Park. It was found that between Yanakie and the Darby River, there was no real problem; and, despite certain difficulties, it appeared that an acceptable solution could be found between Darby and Darby Saddle. From this point on, it was clearly not possible to erect the pole line without serious impairment of the scenic features of the Park.

Consideration was given to the possibility of having the line constructed underground over the 'difficult' sections, a distance of 1½ to 2 miles in all. However, on the figures supplied, this was considered to be too costly, being some £16,000 to £20,000 per mile.

The Authority was aware when it made its decision that there would be criticism from some quarters, but felt that the construction of a pole line (which it was agreed by all concerned would mar the scenic features of the park) south of the Darby Saddle, was incompatible with its duties under the National Parks Act.

In making this decision the Authority was guided also by the following considerations:

1. The PMG Department officers made it clear that the provision of SEC power at Mt Oberon was not essential to their operation and that diesel engines could be used without impairment of the technical service.
2. Even with SEC power, it would have been necessary to install a diesel engine as a standby coupled to the other engine so as to come on automatically in the event of an SEC power failure.
3. For the first five years, the cost of the diesel installation would be somewhat lower than that of the SEC installation. Thereafter the use of the SEC power would be more economical.
4. It is entirely possible that within a few years, new sources of electric power will be in operation which would render the SEC pole line obsolete. While the power plant could be replaced, the scenic features of the Park, once destroyed, would be lost forever.
5. So far as Tidal River is concerned, the Authority recognises that there is need for an efficient power plant and has directed me to seek a report on the matter from the Public Works Department.
6. Should a motel/hotel be constructed in the Park, the position would be no different in principle from what it is at the Mt Buffalo Chalet, where power is generated locally.
7. The Authority's resolution to protect the assets with which it has been entrusted finds a counterpart in other countries e.g. England and America, where the importance of preserving the natural beauty of the landscape is becoming increasingly recognised.

It seems likely that it is not generally recognised that it would be necessary to provide access to every pole along the route; thus, in addition to the effect on the skyline, there would be many tracks leading off the main road to the individual poles.

I need hardly point out that the Authority is the body charged with the responsibility of administering the national parks and that it was appointed for the specific purpose of protecting them in every way as well as providing for the use of the parks by the people. The evidence of the past few years demonstrates that increasing numbers of the people are using and enjoying the national parks and there is nothing to suggest the lack of SEC power at Tidal River or Mount Oberon will adversely affect either the people who use the Park or the operations of the PMG Department. It is therefore difficult to understand the concern of the South Gippsland Shire Council over a matter which it is so clearly the duty of the Authority to determine.

Yours faithfully,
(signed) L. H. Smith

Director

The Honble V. O. Dickie, MLC
Minister of State Development
State Public Offices
Treasury Place
MELBOURNE C2

cc The Secretary, Wilson's
Promontory National Park C/M220

On 6th April 1965, Mr Dickie sent a letter to the South Gippsland Shire Council embodying these sentiments and I thought that the giant might have been permitted to slumber while I was in North America participating in a course on the administration of national parks. No such luck.

On Tuesday 1st June 1965, the Minister received a deputation from the Shire of South Gippsland, which pressed for an extension of the SEC electricity supply to Tidal River. The deputation consisted of Cr F.L. Hobson, Cr J.H. Macdonald, Cr J.D. Lester and Mr J. Rennick (Shire Secretary), and was introduced by Sir Herbert Hyland MP (Member for Gippsland South). Also present were Mr T. E. Arthur (Acting Director) and Mr J. T. McDonald (Secretary, NPA).

Cr Lester outlined his thirty years' experience with Wilsons Promontory, pointing out that there already existed a camping area at Tidal River, along with a road and a telephone. All of these had had an effect on the environment, he said, and the extension of the SEC power-line should be regarded in the same light. In 4-5 years, he argued, no damage would be evident. Presumably he was referring to the damage which would be caused to the vegetation and not to the permanent installations of poles, overhead wires and access tracks to the individual poles.

The Minister responded by saying that the road was a basic necessity to provide access to the camping area. He could, of course, have added that the road had been constructed during World War II, to meet a national emergency and that it had been greatly improved during the past few years. The camp at Tidal River had likewise been a development of the Commando Training Camp served by the road. There had been a telephone link with the lighthouse on South-East Cape for many years, even before the national park was reserved in 1910. However, the Minister promised that he would ask the Authority to have another look at the matter in the light of the Council's submission.

The Authority was under pressure from another source to have the SEC powerline extended from

Yanakie to Tidal River. As discussed in Chapter 18, the Authority was engaged in negotiations with Mr R. E. Unger concerning the building of a hotel/motel near Tidal River, for which power would be necessary. In a sense, the Authority was like a beleaguered army conducting a war on two fronts. Mr Unger and his colleagues were 'sure' that it would be possible to find a route by which the power-line could be extended without detriment to the environment.

It is perhaps very difficult for those not directly involved to comprehend the sort of pressures to which government organizations can be subjected. It was not sufficient to say that the Authority had examined the matter and reached a certain conclusion; it was necessary to demonstrate physically that the investigation had been made. It seemed that, somehow, the members of a Shire Council or a group of developers were uniquely endowed with powers of apperception which, by the very nature of things, were denied to senior public servants possessed of high qualifications and experience.

Searching for a powerline route

In the hope of finding more convincing answers to the questions being asked by the Committee of Management and the developers, I requested the Chief Technical Officer (Mr T. E. Arthur) to accompany me on a more detailed search for a possible route for a power-line from Yanakie to Tidal River. To ensure that the practical aspects of the plan were adequately covered to the satisfaction of the SEC, we were accompanied by a senior officer of the SEC from Sale. The basic idea was to select a route south of the Promontory Road, using the sand dunes and natural vegetation to screen the installation

from the view of visitors as they proceeded to Tidal River; but, at same time, providing access to each pole for maintenance purposes.

Commencing at Yanakie, we walked through the dunes and vegetation for a certain distance, to obtain a view of the next possible pole site, and then returned to the road and drove to a point which gave suitable access (on foot) to the selected pole site. The process was repeated until we reached Darby. I need hardly add that it was an arduous task.

Frankly, I think that we compromised ourselves to a considerable degree, but we persuaded ourselves that it might be practicable to run a power-line from Yanakie to Darby without causing unacceptable damage to the environment. There would, of course be permanent damage, especially in the construction and maintenance of the access tracks to the individual poles and in keeping the power-lines clear of vegetation along the route. This was the price we had to pay to for the benefits which were generally recognized. But we could find no way of extending the line from Darby to Tidal River without causing unacceptable damage to the environment.

When this decision was conveyed to Mr Unger and his colleagues, the architect, Mr Tribe, asserted that it should be possible to by-pass the main road by going across the Darby flats to the north-eastern face of Mount Leonard and proceeding via Lilly Pilly Gully to Tidal River. This proposal revealed, though not for the first time, how desperate the developers were for a solution to their problem and how little they understood or cared for the basic elements of conservation. But I had clear recollections of the nature of the terrain in question as revealed in all its starkness after the 1951 fire, and I was confident that the bulldozers had

not yet been built that could blast their way through that country!

I therefore arranged for a party consisting of the SEC Divisional Engineer from Sale and others to accompany Mr R. G. M. ('Bob') Yorston on an exploratory investigation along the south-west slope of Mount Leonard, to the summit, so that the SEC Engineer could see the sort of terrain he would be dealing with. I was in no way surprised when it was reported to me that the SEC Divisional Engineer reached the conclusion that the plan was not feasible – a decision taken even before the summit had been reached. Those granite rocks might appear fairly benign from a distance, but they are in fact massive tors unwilling to yield to even the most powerful bulldozer. So the possibility of providing Tidal River with SEC power by that route was rejected on physical and economic grounds. The Mount Oberon skyline had been saved and the environmental damage which would have been caused by extending the SEC power line had been averted.

This left it with Mr Unger and his architect to provide power on the site of their proposed development and to cope with all the concomitant problems such as the impact on the environment, abatement of noise, etc. Of course, it meant also that SEC power was unavailable for Tidal River. But, then, Tidal River had long since demonstrated that it could survive without SEC power, and the steady increase in the number of all categories of visitors indicated that the lack of SEC power was no deterrent. It also saved the Government a considerable sum of money, the estimated cost of the installation being about \$180,000.

Tidal River continues to be supplied with electricity generated by diesel engines which were housed in a

building situated near the present bank of telephone boxes. In 1973, as part of a major re-development programme, a much larger generator was installed on the site of the present generator, the building being partly surrounded by a sand dune to reduce noise. The enlarged supply was needed among other things to cope with the extra load of pumping effluents from the main collecting tank to the sewage lagoon, a distance of some 500-600 m.

Mallacoota Inlet National Park

In 1909, an area of 11,225 acres (4,544 ha) of land, being all that public land within 60 chains of the high-water mark of Mallacoota Inlet, was reserved as a national park. Even at that time there were several private holdings encompassed by public land, but the declaration of the national park was a praiseworthy attempt to preserve the timbered slopes and shoreline of one of Victoria's most beautiful inlets.

Not far away, some 30 km south-westward, was Wingan Inlet National Park, notable as the first landing place of George Bass, in December 1797, in the course of his epic journey of discovery [from Sydney to Western Port].

Mallacoota Inlet National Park, 528 km (330 miles) east of Melbourne, remained splendid in its isolation until its inclusion in the Schedule to the National Parks Act 1956 made it the responsibility of the National Parks Authority. This raised the expectations of the local people and those interested in conservation, but it was not until May 1959 that the Authority was able to visit the park for the first time. Hitherto there had been no Committee of Management and the Authority spent some time consulting local people during the visit, regarding possible membership of such a committee.

Eventually the formalities were concluded and arrangements were made for the inaugural meeting of the Committee to be held at Gipsy Point,



Mallacoota Inlet, NP1959. Proposed extension to park. Looking across sand dunes at Lake Barracoota.

early in September 1959. Along with Mr G. T. Thompson I visited the park for the occasion. We were accompanied by Mr John Landy, who had recently been appointed to the Authority's staff.

Proposed extension of park

In its report to the Government in 1952, the State Development Committee had recommended that the land between the eastern border of the park and the New South Wales border, which includes the Howe Ranges, be included in the park, to preserve, inter alia, a number of epiphytic orchids and the rare Ground Parrot (*Pezophorus wallicus*). During our visit, Mr Thompson and I, along with a number of others

including Mr Jack Fitzgerald, took the opportunity of walking from the eastern shore of the Inlet to Lake Barracoota, a fresh-water lake in the sand dunes.

The Authority's interest in Lake Barracoota, a very important feature in the proposed extension, brought the Authority into conflict with the Fisheries and Game Department, because the latter body wished to control the lake as a Game Reserve. The local people, of course, were anxious to preserve their ancient rights to shoot ducks around the margin of the park (including the mouths of the many small streams which run into the Inlet).

What had begun as an apparently simple exercise in conservation was on the verge of developing into a



Mallacoota Inlet NP, 1973. Looking across Mallacoota Inlet to the Howe Range.

major political controversy at the local and departmental level, and the Authority's battle-front was soon to be extended.

On the walk to Lake Barracoota, it was interesting to observe how the movement of sand under the strong winds and gales which sweep that area had almost covered the telegraph poles along the sand dune, so that it was often possible to touch the wires.

Inaugural meeting of the Committee of Management

The inaugural meeting was attended by the Chairman-Elect (Mr Lionel Wallace, a resident of Gipsy Point) and other members of the Committee, along with Mr G. T. Thompson (a member of the National Parks Authority), Mr J. M. Landy and myself. Among the members of the Committee present were Mr Jack Fitzgerald (Lands Department Eastern District Surveyor) and Mr Norman Wakefield, a noted naturalist.

At the conclusion of the formal business of the meeting, Mr Fitzgerald rose and announced

that he was of the opinion that the boundaries of the national park should be changed. He proposed that the western part of the park should be exchanged for the Crown land lying between the eastern boundary and the Victoria-New South Wales border. He stated that there was 'nothing' of botanical interest in the western part of the park which would not be found in the proposed addition, citing Mr Norman Wakefield as the authority for this claim.

The meeting was stunned by this announcement. A few minutes earlier I had been explaining the significance of the National Parks Act and the role of the Committee of Management – its relationship with the Authority and its duties and responsibilities under the Act. I had been at some pains to explain that only Parliament had the power to declare national parks or to alter the status of any area of land declared to be a national park. Until Jack dropped his bombshell, I had no inkling of what he now proposed. I never did understand why he chose to announce his plan at the inaugural meeting of the Committee instead of using the customary inter-departmental channels of communication. Perhaps he had

hoped that the Committee, taken by surprise, might have yielded to his persuasions and that it might have framed a recommendation to be conveyed to the Authority that the plan proposed by Mr Fitzgerald be adopted.

The announcement created a delicate, possibly dangerous, situation. Apart from Mr Wakefield, no member of the Committee was competent to express an opinion on the relative botanical merits of the two areas involved in the proposed exchange; but, if the proposal were not challenged, it might have been assumed that 'silence means assent'. As Deputy-Chairman of the National Parks Authority and as Director, I feel obliged to dispel any doubts on the issue and stated that Mr Fitzgerald's announcement was the first time that the Authority or any of its members had heard of the proposal and that I felt quite sure that the Authority would not endorse any plan to excise the western part from the park. I added that the Authority did not have comprehensive data on the floral and faunal content of the park and that the Director and Mr Landy planned to examine the western part of the park during the remainder of their visit.

This work was to be part of a more comprehensive plan, because I had determined to ask Mr Landy to prepare a report embodying the relevant details of the entire national parks system. Only when such information had been assembled and studied by the Authority would it be possible for that body to make proper decisions on the development and management of any of the parks.

Mr Landy and I proceeded with our planned examination of the western part of the park and concluded that, if it were not outstanding for its floral and faunal content, it was nevertheless an area of great beauty. Every inlet varied in form from the next and had its own magnificent reflections of the densely-wooded slopes, producing a series of scenes of peace and tranquillity – surely an ideal place for man to contemplate and re-create himself. In our minds there was every justification for protecting this land and retaining it in the national park. The Authority adopted this recommendation.

So this particular crisis passed, but the exchange plan was raised on numerous occasions over the next few years and required the Authority to be alert at all times.

During our visit, Mr Lionel Wallace had kindly transported Mr Landy and me to the northern shore of the park so that we could examine this section. We walked a considerable distance above Smellie Inlet, but of course the boundary of the park was not marked on the ground.

Far above the shoreline, on the ridges, we found that the forest had suffered badly from human intrusions. Many fine trees (*Eucalyptus sieberiana*) had been felled; some had obviously provided merchantable timber, but others had been left where they fell because the heartwood had decayed. Numerous

trees had been cut half-way through but allowed to stand, because the heartwood had decayed. It was a scene of utter desolation, reflecting the ruthless and illegal behaviour of those responsible. On returning to Melbourne I reported our findings to the Chairman of the Forests Commission, but was informed that the desecration we had observed was probably the work of a contractor from New South Wales. The Forests Commission was quite unable to supervise adequately every part of the forests of Victoria and still less those within national parks. I have little doubt that the evidence of the depredations of those forest plunderers is still there for those interested to examine.

Controversy

The controversy concerning the desirability or otherwise of exchanging the western part of the park for the eastern extension (subject always, of course, to the approval of Parliament) continued, and in February 1962 several members of the Authority visited the area for the special purpose of endeavouring to 'finalize' the matter.

I had made preparations to be present at the inspection; but, two days before the departure date, I learned that my wife had to have an urgent operation and I was obliged to withdraw from the inspection party. There were rumours that a well-known entrepreneur had been quietly exploring the possibilities of establishing a major resort in the western part of the park. I understood that there was no unanimity one way or the other among the members of the Authority and the 'exchange plan' became a matter of public controversy. This resulted in a visit to the park by the Minister for State Development

(The Hon. V. O. Dickie MLC), who was also Chairman of the National Parks Authority, and the Minister for Lands The Hon. Keith Turnbull MP, along with other government officers. Following this, the whole matter was carefully reviewed by the Lands Department, which decided not to make any changes in land status in this area for the time being. Thus, another dragon was tranquilized and the status quo was maintained, pending a comprehensive study of the land comprising the coastal region of far-east Gippsland.

The Land Conservation Council, in the 1970s, recommended that the Mallacoota Inlet National Park be extended to the New South Wales border and that this park, along with a large coastal strip extending from Wingan Inlet, be incorporated in a new park to be named Croajingolong National Park. However, these developments do not form a part of the present narrative.

Boundary problems

The original reservation of Mallacoota Inlet National Park did not include the foreshore reserve. This meant that the National Parks Authority had no jurisdiction over such land, and was therefore not empowered to take action against visitors who inflicted damage by destroying trees and dropping litter in the foreshore reserve. The Crown Solicitor ruled that the Authority could not spend money to provide landing jetties at selected points or to provide picnic facilities and rubbish bins, which could have assisted in improving public relations and in reducing vandalism.

The first ranger

The appointment of Mr K.V. (Ken) Morrison as full-time Park Ranger



Members of the National Parks Authority explore Mallacoota Inlet, May 1959.

in February 1965 was seen as a big leap forward; but as he was required to patrol and control Lind, Alfred and Wingan Inlet National Parks in addition to Mallacoota Inlet National Park, it can be seen that his time was heavily taxed. One of the major problems, common to all parks, was to find and purchase a suitable house for the Ranger, who was usually not a local man. In 1965 a house was purchased to accommodate the Ranger and his family, at Fisheries Point.

Acquisition of private property

Another problem confronting the Authority in its control of this park was the fact that, prior to the original reservation in 1909, a number of blocks of land had been sold to

private owners. These privately owned blocks were surrounded by the national park, so that there was a potential boundary problem in all such cases; moreover, the private land abutted the foreshore reserve. The Authority used its opportunities, as finance permitted, to acquire any of these blocks which became available.

In 1969, the Authority (with government approval) was able to purchase from Mr J. South an area of 38 acres, situated on the eastern side of the Inlet. The house, after having been suitably improved, enabled the Authority in October 1973 to provide accommodation at 'Lakeview' for a Park Assistant (Paul McDiarmid) and his wife, thereby facilitating control of the eastern part of the park. The house was not perfect, but it was better than the caravan they had previously been occupying.

Adjoining the Lakeview property of 38 acres purchased in 1969 was an area of 63 acres owned by Mr P. O. Coke, who saw the opportunity to provide good quality tourist accommodation on the eastern side of the Inlet. This created a very serious problem for the Authority, which had been hoping to be able to find the means of gradually acquiring most (if not all) of the privately-owned land with frontages on the Inlet, so that, ultimately, the greater part of the Inlet would be in public ownership. The advantages of this arrangement are obvious – boundary problems would be reduced and the beauty of the shoreline and its backdrop would remain inviolate.

I became aware of Mr Coke's plans through the Park Ranger, Ken Morrison, and immediately initiated discussions with Mr Coke in the hope of persuading him to

sell the land to the government for incorporation in the park. Of course, if he had agreed, I would then have had the (possibly) more difficult task of persuading the government to buy the land. As it turned out, Mr Coke was not interested in selling the land; but proved to be very co-operative. I discovered that, although he had a very responsible position in the City, and was a qualified professional engineer (by sheer coincidence, he was in one of my son John's classes when the latter was a Senior Teaching Fellow at Monash University), Mr Coke wanted to undertake development on his property as a means of providing a new vocation for himself when he retired from professional work, and he wanted the satisfaction of being personally involved in the construction programme. One can only admire a man of that calibre.

We continued our discussions and began to make real progress when Mr Coke suggested that the Authority should purchase the land and pay off the capital and interest (at the prevailing bond rate) on a reducing principal over a period of thirty years, and that he should be authorized to proceed with his development (subject to the general approval of the Authority in regard to such aspects as environmental and conservation works) and occupy the land, until the expiration of the thirty years. At this time, his occupancy would cease and all the improvements would pass to the Crown.

I had no difficulty in persuading the Authority to adopt this proposal and the Crown Solicitor prepared the necessary agreement. Peter Coke proceeded with his development; there was naturally some disfigurement of the landscape as the slope was 'benched' for the buildings, but Mr Coke planted



Mallacoota Inlet NP, 1974. House on property previously owned by Archer family provided accommodation for rangers.

suitable shrubs and trees on the exposed slopes and, as time passed, the impact was softened. Water was collected from the roofs of the buildings and stored in a large galvanized tank. The development consisted of a number of self-contained units and was well patronized.

Another block owned by Mr and Mrs Archer, in the Refuge Cove area, was initially not for sale, as the owners wished to develop a passion-fruit farm there; but apparently this was not successful and the property was acquired in 1973. The house on this property provided accommodation for a Park Ranger, thus improving control of the park.

Situated on the northern shore of the Inlet, towards the western extremity of the park, was an area of about 184 ha owned by Mr George Duke who had cleared a relatively small area on which he built a home, where he lived after his retirement from business in Melbourne. The remainder of the land was clothed in natural forest,

apart from a small area on which a house was built for Mrs Barbara Triggs and her husband.

Through the good offices of the Park Ranger, Mr Ken Morrison, I duly made the acquaintance of Mr Duke and visited his house on several occasions. To visit Mr Duke was quite an experience; he was well read and had a very full library. He also had a number of large free-ranging pet goannas which had learned how to open the rear door of his house. Sometimes one or more would enter the house and wander around for a time until curiosity was satisfied or until their host tired of their company.

Mr Duke had made it known that he wished the land to remain permanently in its natural condition as he was very sympathetic to the cause of conservation. He lived alone, his wife having died several years previously, but shared his isolation with a housekeeper and the occasional visitor. He had a son and a daughter, but they appeared to be

very infrequent visitors. Contact was maintained by Mr Duke's occasional visits to Melbourne.

In due course I initiated discussions on the possibility of Mr Duke's selling the land to the government for incorporation in the national park; but there was the obvious objection that Mr Duke wished to live out the remainder of his life on his property, free from any form of government control. I understood this and discussed the matter with the Crown Solicitor's Office and the Valuer-General's Office in Melbourne. Mr Duke himself seemed eager to co-operate, even to the extent of accepting payment over a period of (I think) twenty years. He stated that he was not in need of the money and he assured me that his family did not need his financial support.

Our negotiations were protracted, but eventually we reached agreement that he would sell the land to the Government for an agreed price (set by the Valuer-General), payment to be made over a period of twenty years, and that he would be authorized to occupy the house and land as he had in the past, 'free from molestation' of any sort, during his life-time. It was agreed that the National Parks Service would accept responsibility for fire-protection work of the entire area, but in consultation with Mr Duke. Arrangements were made for our agreements to be incorporated in a formal legal document.

It so happened that I was in Mallacoota during the Australia Day weekend in January 1974 for the special purpose of meeting Mr Brian Dixon, who was at that time an Minister for Youth Sport and Recreation and who had expressed an interest in establishing a Youth Camp of some sort in the Refuge Cove area using the Archer house as a base. We met at the Archer house

where we discussed the pros and cons of the proposal. I had to inform him that I did not favour the granting of special privileges in any national park to any group, because of the danger of establishing a precedent. In the event, the Dixon plan did not come to fruition; but, during the week-end, Mr Duke visited us at the Archer house, where we confirmed our arrangements and agreed to meet in the office of his solicitor in Melbourne, a few days later.

We both proceeded separately to Melbourne; but shortly after this, I received a message from Mr Duke's solicitor to the effect that all negotiations had been terminated and that the agreement which we had reached after so many exhaustive discussions would not be confirmed. I persuaded the solicitor to permit me to call on him at his office, but his instructions were iron-clad and negotiations ceased. I was offered no explanation of Mr Duke's change of heart; but this was probably my greatest disappointment during the 16½ years I spent with the National Parks Service.

The 'Fairhaven' problem

Among the areas of land in private ownership at the time the national park was created was a property known as 'Fairhaven' owned by Mr and Mrs Hansen, who had developed a dairy farm there. In due course, their son Michael decided to build a house near his parents' home, but for some reason encroached on the foreshore reserve, which had remained in public ownership. The Authority became aware of this and requested him to cease building and to remove the house stumps from the reserve. The Hansens demurred and pleaded their cause with the Minister, Mr Fraser. The Authority requested a report from the Lands Department

and the matter was investigated by Mr Jack Fitzgerald, the Lands Department Eastern District Surveyor. Mr Fitzgerald in his report gave all the relevant details, and recognized the transgression, but stated that no public inconvenience would be caused by granting the favour sought by the Hansen family. The Minister requested me to visit the area and examine the problem in consultation with the Hansens. It was apparent to me that Mr Hansen Snr had effectively occupied the foreshore associated with his dwelling and that no member of the public could traverse the foreshore abutting the two house blocks without trespassing on private property. In the light of Mr Fitzgerald's observation, I recommended, somewhat reluctantly, that Mr Michael Hansen be permitted to continue with the construction of his house.

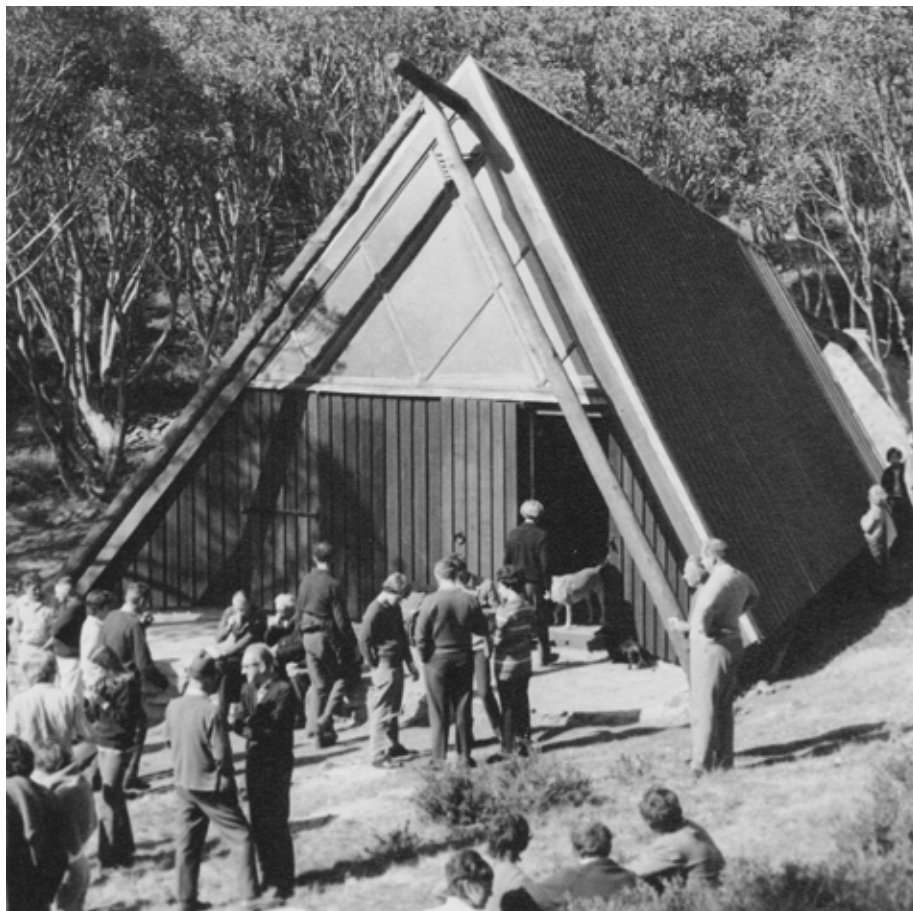
I soon learned that my inexperience in this area had caused me to make a serious mistake. The Minister and the Secretary for Lands, Mr Frank Klenner, had a heated altercation over the matter, and my own personal relations with Mr Klenner suffered in consequence. The lesson I learned from this was that no matter how plausible the arguments might seem in favour of alienating a small parcel of public land, it is most unwise to accede to such a request! Once a precedent has been established, the whole system is open to the process of 'white-anting'.

Mt Buffalo National Park

At the time when the National Parks Authority began to function (i.e. held its first meeting), in May 1957, Mount Buffalo National Park was under the control of a Committee of Management which had been appointed under the Lands Act. The Committee did not become responsible to the Authority (under the National Parks Act 1956) until towards the end of 1959; therefore the Authority had not been involved in the provision of facilities, including a water supply, prior to that time.

In effect, the park consisted of two parts: the Victorian Railways Chalet, and the national park. The Chalet had developed out of earlier pioneering-type guest houses and was established as an adjunct to the promotional activities of the Railways Department, under the inspiration of the dynamic Mr Harold Clapp, who was Chief Commissioner of Railways for many years. The Railways Department had a very strong influence on the developments which had occurred in the park both before and after the creation of the Authority.

The presence of the Chalet in the park, of course, relieved the Authority of the need to provide overnight accommodation. To provide water for the Chalet, a reservoir had been constructed on Crystal Brook, about 5 km upstream from the Chalet, to which water was piped. The effluents from the flush-operated toilets were delivered to a large septic tank at the rear of the Chalet; sullage was discharged directly over the edge of



Mt Buffalo NP, 1961-62. As part of the development plan for Dingo Dell, the Authority financed the construction of an A-frame steel shelter at the carpark for day visitors.

the Gorge into Crystal Brook, which eventually joined the Ovens River. In addition, Lake Catani had been constructed on another stream which rises at the foot of Mount Dunn, to provide a venue for aquatic sports in the summer and ice-skating in the winter, when the surface of the lake became frozen.

In my student days, as I travelled by train to school and later to Melbourne University, I often cast envious glances at the lucky skaters whose exploits were depicted in the excellent photographs which adorned the spaces above the seats in the separate compartments of the railway carriages of those times.



Mt Buffalo Chalet in 1964. The chalet was opened in 1910 and was run for many years by the Victorian Railways.

The gravel road enabled Chalet guests and others to drive to the foot of the highest peak, 'The Horn', passing en route such interesting features as the Dingo Dell skiing field, the Leviathan Rock, the Cathedral and the Cresta. The Authority was soon to become involved in developments associated with these features.

Another activity initiated by the Railways Department was the hiring of horses to Chalet guests to enable them to ride along the numerous riding tracks within the park.

I was never able to ascertain whether the Railways Department had any legal entitlements to its occupancy of the Chalet site and its surrounds, or to any of the other activities mentioned; but these practices had been established long before the National Parks Act had been passed. At a very much later stage, I sought to put the Railways Department's occupancy on a formal basis, through the provision of the National Parks Act (Amendment) No. 6642 (Section 8 (5)), but without success.

I propose now to give a brief resumé of some of the Authority's activities in various parts of the park.

Lake Catani

One of the Authority's first collaborative efforts with the Committee of Management was to have a safe bathing area enclosed within the Lake, with a special section for children. As an adjunct to this, an amenities block containing changing rooms, toilets and showers was provided. Water was pumped out of the Lake to a head tank which supplied the amenities block.

Improvements were also made to the road from the Chalet and from the lake to the main road; this work was done mostly by the park ranger and his assistant.

A camping area was developed near the lake and provided with showers and toilets. Warm water was provided for the showers and washing by LP gas instantaneous water heaters, as at Tidal River (Chapter 7).

Conservation

The Authority's inspections of the park revealed the need for conservation works in many areas, especially near roads and along the riding tracks.

The initial remedial works were begun by having an officer of the Soil Conservation Authority direct the work of a number of University and Dookie College students, who began systematically to repair eroded areas, especially along the tracks, and sowing appropriate grass seeds. After their appointment to the Authority's staff, Trevor Arthur and Don Saunders continued this work, in collaboration with Mr Ken Terry of the Soil Conservation Authority.

Those concerned were accommodated at the A. W. Keown Lodge at Dingo Dell. This was very useful experience for the Technical Officers, because they were required to organize the provisioning of the group, cooking and 'house cleaning' and the work in the field, as well as keeping the 'rookies' happy. The

success of this work is evident today and is a tribute to the industry of those concerned, especially the Technical Officers.

Dingo Dell

The Committee of Management lost no time in encouraging the Authority to provide funds for some much-needed improvements on the Dingo Dell ski run. Initially the work of clearing the scrub and blasting certain large rocks was carried out by the park staff; but later, the Authority's Technical Officers, especially Don Saunders, became heavily involved. There were frequent consultations with members of the committee, especially Mr R. A. (Dick) Rollason, who was an active skier. Mr Eric Burt and Mr Dewar Goode (members of the Authority) were also involved in the discussions. The main run was widened and the 'wood run' was enlarged; also a run was created on the western side of the main run. Particular attention was paid to the conservation aspects of the work, with due regard to drainage of the slopes.

The Committee had resolved that there should be no further development of the skiing facilities at Dingo Dell, and that any further development should be at Cresta. However, the Authority considered that Dingo Dell had considerable potential for learners and intermediate skiers and eventually persuaded the Committee to accept this point of view.

The Public Works Department was requested to prepare an estimate of the cost of developing a ski run and a chair lift at Cresta; but the Authority considered that the price of £25,000 (\$50,000) was beyond its budget and continued with the development of Dingo Dell. As part of the development plan the Authority financed the construction

Rope Tow		Poma Lift	
Year	Revenue \$	Year	Revenue \$
1958	2,030	1966	8,308
1959	1,566	1967	9,771
1960	3,110	1968	12,549
1961	3,562	1969	4,392
1962	1,430	1970	10,848
1963	3,696	1971	13,701
1964	4,687	1972	20,846*
1965	3,030	1973	3,874
		1974	28,928

Notes: The table shows how the revenue from the ski tow increased when the Poma lift replaced the rope tow, but the figures are not strictly comparable, because the charges for the rope tow were lower than those for the Poma lift.
* The rates were increased by 50 % at the beginning of the 1972 Snow Season; the charges for adults were then \$3.00 for an adult daily ticket and \$1.50 for children under the age of 15 years. The 1973 season was exceptionally poor for snow; the following year's was outstanding.

of an attractive A-frame steel shelter at the carpark, especially to suit the convenience of day visitors. The building, which incorporates barbecue facilities and a water supply, was available for the 1961-62 snow season. During 1966-67 the toilet block at the Dingo Dell carpark was modernised and changing rooms were incorporated to suit the convenience of visitors wishing to avail themselves of the skiing facilities.

Poma Lift

For many years before and after the advent of the Authority the Dingo Dell skiing slopes had been served by a rope tow. Primitive as this may seem to the modern skier, the rope tow did nevertheless serve its purpose. It was, of course, much slower than other tows and maintenance was more troublesome; but all hail to the pioneers - it worked!

However, the improvements which the Authority/Committee had made to the ski run and services continued to attract even more skiers, and the Authority decided to finance the



Mt Buffalo NP, 1966. A.W. Keown Lodge at Dingo Dell prior to redevelopment by the Authority. The enlarged lodge was the venue for the 5th Ranger Training course, held in 1971.

installation of a Poma ski lift. There were appropriate consultations between the relevant experts, Mr Eric Burt and Mr Dewar Goode (foundation members of the Authority), along with officers of the Authority, and members of the Committee combined their knowledge and expertise in working out the details of the scheme in collaboration with Mr Ron McCallum. The Poma lift was officially declared "open" by the Honourable J. W. Manson MP, Minister for State Development, in August 1966.

In consequence of this, the Dingo Dell skiing fields became even more popular, as the following figures for the revenue from the tow will show:

'Nothing succeeds like success' - an old saying, but the installation of the Poma lift and the improvements in the Dingo Dell skiing fields resulted in increased demand for the product, and the Annual Report for 1972-73 stated that the National Parks Service proposed to install a second lift at an estimated cost of \$28,000. Assuming an average annual revenue

of \$12,000 and operating costs of \$5,000, the return on the investment is seen to be (conservatively) of the order of 25 per cent.

The A. W. Keown Lodge

The developments at Dingo Dell had their origins in a desire to provide winter recreational facilities for the guests of the Chalet. Provision was made for Chalet guests to be supplied with a hot meal in lieu of the one which they would have enjoyed at the Chalet. This imposed some strain on the Chalet management and the staff, because there were some guests who remained at the Chalet for lunch. The management had to arrange for staff and hot meals to be transported to Dingo Dell at the appropriate time, and the arrangements were reminiscent of the standard railways refreshment services - a quick meal at a long counter, then a hurried packing up by the staff and a return to the chalet. No provision was made for day visitors who were not Chalet

guests; indeed, at the time when the Authority became responsible for national parks, day visitors did not have access to the A. W. Keown Lodge.

As the Authority continued to provide more and more public money for developments at Dingo Dell, the need for some more equitable arrangements became increasingly apparent. The Authority was not in a strong position: the Committee was much disposed to support the Chalet management, possibly because one of the members of the committee was the Superintendent of Railways Refreshments Services. The Authority, of course, recognized the difficulties of the management.

Consideration was given to the possibility of building a separate small kiosk at Dingo Dell and endeavouring to persuade some entrepreneur at the foot of the mountain to provide hot midday meals and other items for day visitors, but the impracticability of such a scheme soon became apparent. The extreme variability of



Mt Buffalo NP, 1966. Skiers on Dingo Dell slopes using the poma lift provided by the Authority in 1966.

the weather made it impossible to predict the daily volume of business and, in any case, it would have been very costly to transport hot meals (or even cold meals which could be heated on site) to Dingo Dell. The highly variable length of the season was another inhibiting factor.

The toilets which served the A. W. Keown Lodge were of a primitive thunder-box design, consisting of a small fortress-like structure erected over a deep pit; but only those in dire straits could find the motivation to endure the discomfort of the odours emanating from the facility. The need for flush-operated toilets was urgent.

After much deliberation, the Authority decided to replace the existing A. W. Keown Lodge with a greatly enlarged structure, but incorporating as much as possible of the original building. The plans and specifications for the new building were prepared by Mr Dale Fisher, ARIAA, and the resultant works programme was carefully supervised by the Chief Technical Officer, Mr T. E. Arthur. Provision was made in the new development

for hot meals to be available to day visitors as well as Chalet guests, and patrons were afforded the additional comforts of chairs and meal tables, in place of the long counter of earlier days. Hot water was provided by an LP gas water heater, which entailed the installation of a 1-ton LP gas tank outside the building, and electricity for lighting and power was provided by a generator housed near the building. The new building incorporated an enlarged water supply and internal toilets, with the usual safeguards. The opportunity was taken to replace the old rusty galvanized water pipes with PVC pipes.

A very important innovation was the interpretative displays of the geological features and the flora and fauna of the park. The enlarged lodge served as the venue for the fifth Ranger Training Course held in November 1971 and there was a certain glow of pride in the minds of those who had made it possible for the course to be run in the Service's own building. The cost of the new facility was approximately \$61,000.

The official opening of the enlarged A. W. Keown Lodge afforded an opportunity for the many people who had been involved in the project. Among the guests were members of the Committee of Management, the Chairman of the Victorian Railways Commission, Mr George Brown and Mrs Brown; Mr and Mrs Dale Fisher, Mr and Mrs T. E. Arthur, Mr Frank Kennedy, Superintendent of Railways Refreshments Services and Mrs Kennedy. The ceremony was made all the more memorable by the happy circumstance that made it possible for Mrs Keown to be present.

The Director acted as master of ceremonies and, on behalf of the Minister and Government and the National Parks Service extended a warm welcome to guests, and expressed appreciation of the co-operative efforts of all those who had contributed to the success of the project. He then called on the Honourable I. A. Swinburne MLC, Chairman of the Committee of Management, to declare the A. W. Keown Lodge officially open. After taking morning tea in the new Lodge,

guests repaired to the Chalet for lunch, to conclude a most enjoyable function.

Log fires for the Chalet

Winter visitors to the Chalet in Mount Buffalo National Park during the 1950s, and no doubt much earlier, will have very happy memories of the cheery warm fires in the various public rooms. There is something very special about a log fire. The wood used in these fires came from the national park and it is presumed that some arrangement existed between the Committee of Management and the Victorian Railways or Chalet management regarding the provision of the wood. No royalties appear to have been paid. Wood from the park was also used to fire the boilers used in the generation of electricity for the Chalet. A total of about 3,000 tons of wood per annum is thought to have been consumed.

This practice was in place when the National Parks Authority became active, and inquiries revealed that the contractors who were authorised to procure the timber were instructed to take only dead trees (resulting from bushfires, especially that in 1939), or damaged or dying trees. In the course of visits to the park, the Authority's observations indicated that there appeared to have been notable breaches of the 'contract arrangement' and, not long after my appointment, the Authority requested me to examine the possibilities of finding alternative sources of fuel and to discuss the matter with the Railways Department with a view to terminating the practice of taking timber from the park. The Committee of Management resented this because it implied that that body had been negligent in not having prevented the contractor from taking good quality trees. However, investigations proceeded.



New facilities at A.W. Keown Lodge (1969) included a dining room with provision for hot meals to be available for day visitors as well as Chalet guests.

There were two obvious alternatives, namely, to use oil or briquettes in place of wood. The use of oil would have necessitated major modifications to the fuel system, although there was nothing novel in the idea of using oil to generate electricity. I discussed the matter of using brown coal briquettes with officers of the State Electricity Commission, the idea being that the Railways Department could transport the briquettes from Morwell to Porepunkah by rail; and thence to the Chalet by road.

The calorific value of brown coal briquettes is about 9,500 BTU per lb., which is not very different from that of wood, so the total quantity of brown coal briquettes would be about the same as that of wood from the park.

My discussions with Mr H. L. (Bert) Kennedy, Superintendent of Railways Refreshment Services (who controlled the Chalet) proceeded amicably, but there was a natural reluctance to introduce the changes desired by the Authority. The problem was solved when the Forests Commission offered to supply the Chalet with

firewood from the forests under the control of the Commission in the relevant district. It was agreed that the practice of using timber taken from the park would be phased out over a period of three years, after which the Forests Commission would be the sole supplier.

This practice continued for a few years, but it was then found that the technical difficulties associated with the use of oil, which had precluded the adoption of oil when first proposed, were not too difficult to handle after all, and oil-fired burners were installed to heat the boilers used in generating electricity for the Chalet. However, wood (from outside the park) continued to be used for the log fires so much enjoyed by Chalet visitors. So the National Parks Authority was able to achieve its objective without too much pain for the other parties. This example serves to illustrate the value of having such a body as the Authority to 'control national parks' and 'maintain the existing environment of national parks', etc.

Private enterprise in national parks

The original National Parks Act of 1956 made no provision for the granting of leases or permits to occupy areas of land in national parks. Why this was so is not clear; but perhaps the Parliament of the day deemed it advisable for the new controlling body - the National Parks Authority - to gain some experience in dealing with the mundane aspects of park management before embarking on such hazardous adventures.

Only two parks, Wilsons Promontory and Fern Tree Gully, had any form of private enterprise at the time, with a kiosk at Fern Tree Gully and a general store at Tidal River.

Some time prior to 1958, the Wilsons Promontory National Park Committee of Management had authorised a private citizen to establish and operate a store, to provide campers' supplies to visitors at the Tidal River camp. To most campers this was a very welcome development; there are probably not many present-day visitors to Tidal River who can recall the conditions which existed during the late forties and early fifties. At the time of my first visit in December 1949, the 'store' consisted of a building which had once been a private house, and was operated by a former park employee and his wife, who had presumably had a vision of the fortune to be made by providing stores to the campers, like the store-keepers who had provided for the needs of the gold-miners in the pioneering days of yesteryear.

The store-keeper collected orders from the campers and visited Foster, 30-odd miles distant, twice a week, where the necessary goods were bought. The campers queued up to collect their orders, paying at the rate of 6d (5 cents) per parcel, in addition to the cost of the goods. The queue was often 100 yards long or longer, and the system was far from ideal, but it was a great boon to the campers who would otherwise have found it necessary to make the long journey themselves over a very rough track.

Later, the Committee of Management and Mr Keith Blunden established a somewhat more sophisticated store where campers could purchase supplies at any time during the day. Over the years the store was extended and a large, well-insulated shed was constructed nearby where large supplies of ice could be stored, and made available to campers at regular times each morning. The ice was transported in large blocks from the freezing works at Foster.

Café

As the new store began to prosper, an enterprising butcher, Cec Hobson, who had a butcher's business at Foster, saw the possibilities of supplying meat direct to the campers and so, by arrangement with the Committee of Management, plans were set in train to establish a butcher's shop at Tidal River. However, before this was done, the

plan was extended to enable cooked meals to be supplied also, and a café and milk bar were incorporated in the building. The enterprise was growing!

This led to complications; because, hitherto, the storekeeper (Keith Blunden) had had sole rights to supply milk; but as both businesses began to prosper, the two lessees found themselves in competition with one another, not only in regard to milk but also in regard to bread and other perishable goods. The original plan, formulated without much regard to what was likely to be involved, envisaged each service as being complementary to the other. The two businessmen took a somewhat different view! In their desire to provide a better service for the campers, the Committee of Management had acted in good faith; but in neither case did the 'lessee' have a legal occupancy permit.

Overnight accommodation

In addition to the provision of campsites, and along with a reticulated water supply, showers and toilets, the Committee of Management had acquired several 'houses' and other buildings which had accommodated the officers and men engaged in Commando training activities during World War II. These buildings had been furnished and converted into 'lodges' which were



Pillar Point at the Prom was the site for a proposed hotel and golf course development in the 1960s which Dr Smith steadfastly opposed.

let to holiday makers who preferred not to camp in tents or caravans.

The lodge accommodation was always in great demand; the letting arrangements were controlled by the Victorian Tourist Bureau, which found it necessary to run ballots for lodge accommodation, especially during the Christmas – New Year period. Over the years the standard of lodge accommodation has been improved, and many of the original commando houses such as Lilly Pilly, Kershaw, Norgate, Mattingley and Vereker still provide for visitors to Wilsons Promontory. This subject will be discussed in more detail below.

Amendment of the Act

It was never made clear why; but in the autumn session of 1960, Parliament amended the National Parks Act to enable the National Parks Authority to grant leases to private individuals or companies to provide accommodation for visitors

to national parks. It seems very likely, I think, that some individual with an entrepreneurial flair saw the possibilities of establishing a commercial enterprise in the national parks to reap a harvest from the burgeoning tourist industry, and encouraged the Government to take appropriate action.

The Bill, of course, was the result of close collaboration between the Authority, the Parliamentary Draughtsman and the Crown Solicitor's Office. I was actively engaged in all these consultations and negotiations, although my knowledge of legal matters was limited. I think I may claim to have been an apt pupil in the hands of some good teachers, with an eye to the interests of the people and the parks.

In due course, the Act was amended by Parliament, the relevant clauses reading as follows:

"8. In section 9 of the Principal Act

after sub-section (3) there shall be inserted the following sub-sections:

- (4) The Authority may with the consent of the Minister grant to any person or body of persons a permit to occupy any portion of a national park for a period not exceeding thirty-three years subject to such covenants terms and conditions and to the payment of such rent fees or charges as the Authority determines.
- (5) The Authority may with the consent of the Minister grant to any person or body of persons a lease of an area of land within a national park for a period not exceeding seventy-five years for the purpose of erecting a building thereon the cost of which must be not less than One hundred thousand pounds subject to such covenants terms and conditions and to the payment of such rent fees or charges as the Authority determines."

The Authority soon found itself negotiating with two separate parties for leases governing major developments in Wilsons Promontory and Mount Buffalo national parks respectively. The former is described here, and an account of the leasing of the Cresta area in Mount Buffalo National Park is given in the next chapter.

Hotels International

Shortly after this (about mid-November 1960), I was summoned to the office of the Minister, the Honourable A. J. Fraser NC MP, to meet Mr R. E. Unger and Mr Stanley Ridley, who had recently retired from the position of Director of the Institute of Management. Mr Unger submitted a detailed application for a lease in Wilsons Promontory National Park. He had had considerable experience in managing hotels in Central Europe and in the Republic of Dominica. Since arriving in Australia he had established the 'Children's Paradise' in Canterbury, Victoria.

The application was for permission to provide a chalet of international standard to accommodate 200 guests, along with a motel-type establishment adjoining the chalet, to accommodate 400 guests. The main chalet would incorporate convention facilities for professional and business men, conference rooms and a cinema, and there would be 'wide terraces to facilitate circulation and leisurely conversation'. As an adjunct to these facilities there would be a Chapel for all denominations, to hold 200 worshippers. In addition, there would need to be accommodation for executives and permanent staff of approximately 200 people. Provision was to be made for the parking of cars (for guests and staff), 'preferably under cover. 'Naturally', due consideration was to

be given to such matters as water supply, soil mechanics, extension of services and road-making.

The site selected was Pillar Point [just north of Tidal River], and it was recognised that this would entail the construction of a road from the main Promontory Road, following the contours of the land along the southern face of the Pillar Point. The application stated that the land required for fixed installations including swimming pools and 'other amenities' (but excluding roads) was not expected to exceed 50 acres in area; but it was recognised that the lease would need to be of sufficient duration for the syndicate which Mr Unger represented to recoup its outlay, and that provision would need to be made for the inevitable expansion which would occur during the period of the lease.

In answer to my inquiries, Mr Unger said he had in mind a total area of about 350 acres, and that this would enable him to construct a golf course of international standard in the Yanakie area, naturally with suitable accommodation for the green-keeper and staff, as well as a club-house and parking facilities. As a further amenity, Mr Unger had it in mind to construct a mini-railway service around the magnificent cliffs of the western coast of the Promontory.

Mr Unger presented a copy of a report from his architect, Mr Horace J. Tribe, FRAIA, who recognized that the designers would be "faced with an unusual and exciting challenge to create buildings of an indigenous character with a minimum of disturbance to natural rock formations, and with a humility proper to nature's superior design".

Mr Unger stated that, while it was assumed that the total capital costs involved would exceed £1,000,000, it was intended to proceed in stages,

the first being estimated to cost approximately £200,000.

The architect's report had referred to the incorporation in the proposed development of a recreation centre providing for squash and table tennis, tennis courts, a gymnasium, a billiard room, a bowling alley, an indoor tennis court, heated swimming pools, and a lending library. In discussion, it was learned that hair-dressing facilities and tourist shops were also to be provided. The report envisaged the extension of the SEC power line from Yanakie to the development site and the provision of PMG facilities (telephones) for executives, guests and others. It was encouraging to be informed that the applicant recognised the importance of protecting the park and the proposed buildings from damage by fire and was prepared to train at least six members of the permanent staff in fire-fighting duties.

I sat in silent wonder as Mr Unger unfolded his plans. Mr Ridley made appropriate comments from time to time and expressed the hope that "it might be possible for Dr Smith to join the Board and give it the full benefit of his vast experience in commerce and industry". This brought a discreet cough from Mr Fraser, who explained that Public Service Regulations precluded any such arrangement, while I assured both gentlemen that they would have all the co-operation I could give them.

I did however feel obliged to point out that 350 acres of land was a very large area – in excess of 35 times that of the Melbourne Cricket Ground – and that I did not think they could feel confident about getting a satisfactory return on an outlay of £200,000, let alone £1,000,000. I explained that the sort of development which the Authority had in mind would be restricted to ten acres and that there would be



Site of the proposed hotel development (1960-70) on the northern end (left of photo) of Pillar Point.

difficult problems to be overcome in regard to such matters as water supply, disposal of waste products (sewage and sullage), avoidance of contamination of Tidal River, erosion problems, etc. I could foresee problems in regard to the provision of educational facilities for the children of the permanent staff, and the prospect of building a school and the provision of housing for teachers and recreational facilities for the children raised great doubts in my mind. The application – very wisely, I think – did not refer to these matters.

I thought it wise to point out at this stage that it was unlikely that the Authority would approve of such a development on Pillar Point. Without wishing to appear too presumptuous, I anticipated strong opposition to the proposal from the Committee

of Management. At the end of the long discussion, the Minister left it in my hands to bring the matter to the attention of the National Parks Authority and to continue negotiations with Mr Unger and Mr Ridley.

The struggle for a site

The Authority did not approve of the Pillar Point site and, after a long discussion, instructed the Director to pursue the matter with Mr Unger, with a view to producing a more modest development in keeping with the Authority's perceptions of the needs of the park and its visitors. The Authority did not deem it necessary or desirable to provide the numerous ancillary tourist services envisaged by Mr Unger: what overnight visitors

needed, it was felt, was comfortable accommodation and good food, leaving them free to enjoy the beauties of the park at leisure. Above all, genuine lovers of the park did not want expensive accommodation. The Committee of Management expressed its opposition to the plan in unequivocal language, and the applicant was duly informed.

Mr Unger was naturally disappointed, as was the architect; but they then proposed that the site be moved to the western slope of the northern end of Pillar Point. It was argued that this would give users of the facility commanding and spectacular views of Leonard Bay and the entire west coast.

The change in site did not allay my fears that the proposed development

would result in hideous scars to the landscape and create a whole range of insoluble problems arising from the development of tourist facilities on the scale envisaged, especially in an area which was ecologically very sensitive. During the years preceding my appointment as Director, I had become familiar with many parts of the park and had observed that the vegetation on the western slope of Pillar Point was very stunted, because of the action of the prevailing winds. The proposed development would have necessitated an extensive 'cut and fill' operation, in order to create a suitable building site, or a series of terraces based on the 'cut and fill' principle, and I was concerned that any such works would necessitate a great deal of soil stabilisation on a never-ending scale.

Now, while I had very serious reservations about the granting of any sort of concession to private bodies, I was well aware that on my own I would be quite unable to resist the impending invasion. As one enters Parliament House at the head of Bourke Street, Melbourne, one is greeted by an impressive message, tastefully presented in attractive tiles in the floor. The message reads as follows: 'Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety'.

I was aware that, while the National Parks Authority was not favourably disposed to the plans presented by Mr Unger, there were some members who felt that there ought to be scope for private enterprise in national parks, even though they recognized that there were pitfalls along the path of 'progress'. The problem was, of course, that the members of the Authority, including the Director, had had no real experience with the sort of development proposed by Mr Unger and were therefore seemingly

at a disadvantage in coping with the matter.

The Authority, as a body, was responsible to the Government, and the National Parks Act made the Authority answerable to the Minister responsible for administering the Act, and the Minister so appointed by Parliament was the Premier of the State. The Act also provided that the responsible Minister could delegate his powers under the Act to another Minister. The Crown Solicitor had ruled that in so doing he still carried the responsibilities imposed by the Act. The Premier had appointed the Hon. A. J. Fraser as Chairman of the Authority and had delegated to him his powers, so the Authority was always mindful of the fact that, in the ultimate analysis, they were responsible to the Premier. Clearly, the Government wished to see private enterprise providing the services required by tourists, because of the financial relief such an arrangement would bring; on the other hand, if the Authority authorised a development which turned out to be a disaster or which attracted adverse public reaction, the Authority (and the Director) would be answerable to the Premier.

It is this fear of being held responsible for programmes that 'go wrong' which tends to destroy the initiative of so many public servants, and the usual practice is to have an appropriate committee examine matters of contention, so that the individual does not become a target for criticism. This process naturally is time-consuming and does not always produce the desired result; but sometimes it is very convenient to resort to the device of having a committee make a decision which under other circumstances an individual might well be qualified to make.

Therefore, on the morning of a very memorable Saturday, I met

representatives of the Committee of Management at Tidal River and led the way to the proposed site. I remember that Charles Brazenor and I were ahead of the others and had an interesting encounter with a large Tiger Snake which slithered along the track ahead of us, pausing at one stage to raise its head menacingly. We made no attempt to interfere with it, and it eventually disappeared into the tussocks.

Presently, we left the track and proceeded towards the proposed site; we were delighted to see five wallabies bound away as we pushed through the low scrub. I was concerned that Dr Balcombe Quick, who was older than most of the other members of the group, might have a heart attack; but we duly reached our destination without incident. There was unanimous agreement that the proposed site should not be sacrificed to tourism; it was demonstrably the home of some precious wildlife and formed a perfect backdrop to Leonard Bay, when viewed from the northern arm of the Bay. It was thought also that the prevailing westerly winds would wreak havoc on the developed area, once the natural vegetation had been destroyed.

The Authority endorsed the decision of the Committee, and Mr Unger was duly informed. Mr Unger and his architect 'returned to the drawing board', and some time later proposed that a site at the foot of Bishop Rock would be ideal. This area was conveniently situated with respect to the Promontory Road and, being less steep than the Leonard Bay site, would, it was argued, entail much less damage to the environment. It included a fine view of Leonard Bay and was in relatively close proximity of the renowned Squeaky Beach.

There still remained the matter of a water supply, but Mr Tribe had the

answer to that! He had observed a small creek running between the north-western slope of Mount Bishop and the south-eastern slope of Mount Leonard. No measurements of the stream flow had been made, but he was “confident” that it would be adequate. It was recognised that it would be necessary to construct a dam across the gully, but “the details including the cost could be examined later”.

This was the basic philosophy of the lessee’s approach to the securing of a lease – first obtain the lease, and then attend to all the fundamental aspects later. I argued strongly against this approach, pointing out that it was essential for all concerned to have a clear picture before them of every aspect of the development. The idea was never expressed in so many words (for what I considered then (and still do now) to be obvious reasons) but I had the impression that, if the Authority could be persuaded to place itself in a position where it could be claimed by the lessee that, in so doing, the Authority had committed itself to the enterprise and should therefore share in the responsibility of solving the problems which had been left unsolved, the applicant’s own responsibility would be so much the less. I wanted to be sure that such problems as water and power supplies, sewage and garbage disposal, environmental impact factors and financial aspects, etc, were properly covered before I was prepared to recommend that a lease be granted.

I argued strongly that the existing water supply in the Tidal River basin was not adequate to meet the demands of any commercial enterprise in the area. Mr Unger was so desperate for a lease that he proposed to pump the water from the Darby River. He could not understand that the environmental

damage which this would cause was unacceptable.

When details of the latest plan became known, there were continued outcries from various conservation bodies, especially the Victorian National Parks Association, and private citizens. The Committee of Management was unanimously opposed to the granting of a lease on any site, and the Authority was not convinced of the wisdom of proceeding, with so many basic aspects under a cloud of uncertainty. But, apparently, the Minister (Mr Fraser) was under some pressure from his Cabinet colleagues, and requested me to accompany him on a visit of inspection to the Mount Bishop site. His colleagues, he said, had chided him that he supported the Authority in the rejection of the proposal, though he himself had not seen the area and “knew nothing about it”.

So the Minister and I visited the area, and I must say that I admired him for his determination as he pushed his way through the dense scrub, often leaning on me, as he struggled uphill over the rough terrain. I could not help thinking at the time, “This is Alex Fraser, the man who was awarded the Military Cross for outstanding courage in France, during the First World War”. That was nearly fifty years earlier. I explained to him, on site, the problems that had to be overcome in meeting the basic requirements – a reliable water supply, electric power, the disposal of waste products, road construction, car parking, soil conservation, etc. I do not know what recommendations he made to the Cabinet, but the lease remained unsigned.

It is probably hardly necessary to explain that while these ‘activities in the field’ were in progress, the Authority was engaged in very close collaboration with the Crown Law

Department, which had prepared a draft lease, in anticipation of the agreement between the Authority and Mr R. E. Unger, which it was thought might occur in due course. The draft lease, in so far as this was possible, embodied the provisions necessary to protect the rights of the two parties and financial considerations. In this work, the Director and Chief Technical Office (Mr T. E. Arthur) worked in close association with Mr John Secomb, a senior officer of the Law Department. Of course, the Authority and Committee of Management were kept fully informed, and it must be emphasised that the Authority was the body which had to make the final decision, subject to the approval of the Minister.

It should be mentioned also that, while the negotiations with Mr Unger and the Crown Law Department, and with the Authority and the Committee of Management, were in progress, the matter of a power supply and, in particular the possibility of extending the SEC supply from Yanakie to Tidal River and other possible consumers, was also under investigation. This subject is dealt with in Chapter 14.

A new site

During the next phase of the quest for a site for the proposed hotel/motel, there were several important changes. There was a new Minister for State Development, in the person of the Hon. V. O. Dickie MLC, who thus became the Chairman of the Authority under powers delegated by the Premier. Also, Mr H. J. Tribe withdrew from the project, and Mr Ernest Fookes and Associates became the new architects.

This meant, of course, that the several parties had to become acquainted with one another again. In addition, the ‘chosen site’ moved



Wilsons Promontory 1971. Café and store at Tidal River Campground.

from the base of Bishop Rock to the northern end of Pillar Point. In this position, the buildings would have faced essentially southward towards Norman Bay and would have overlooked the entire Tidal River village. Neither the Committee of Management nor the Authority was happy about this, and no solution to the other basic problems was in sight. There were no firm proposals before the Authority regarding the treatment of effluents, and it seemed very probable that any 'escape' would find its way into Tidal River. Although the camp water supply would not be affected, the possible effect on the river, where

numerous children and adults disport themselves, was a matter for concern.

Liquor licence

At the outset of the negotiations Mr Unger had stated that he represented a group of business men who were eager to invest their money in his proposed enterprise, but I was never aware of the identity of those concerned. However, in 1965 (possibly in the latter part of 1964) I frequently found myself in conference with Mr J. Carroll and Colonel A. Kemsley who, I was informed, had joined the Board of

Hotels International, a company with a paid-up capital of £2.00.

Mr Carroll had at one time been Minister for Housing in the Cain Government and was for many years manager or owner of Hosie's Hotel. He therefore had a background in hotel management and, as Mr Unger had made it abundantly clear that the success of the enterprise depended on the granting of a 'full licence' by the Liquor Control Authority, was able to lend his weight in support of this argument. I had consistently opposed the granting of a full licence, because I was concerned at the effect this would have on the Tidal River camp and

because of the predictable littering of the park, especially in the vicinity of the beaches near the proposed site, with bottles. Those who supported the granting of a licence argued that campers already took considerable quantities of liquor into the camp and pointed to the 'vast' number of bottles regularly collected by park staff. I discussed the matter with the Chairman of the Licensing Authority, Mr F. J. Field, who said that the Authority would make a decision as to the type of licence, if any, when the application was made. I personally had grave fears that a full licence was inevitable.

It was an interesting experience to be conferring with these gentlemen, but sometimes discussions and annoyance became animated. Colonel Kemsley expressed surprise that "one man" could "hold up such an important development". I was careful to point out that I merely represented the National Parks Authority and it would not be proper for me to grant concessions which were not in accordance with the Authority's wishes. Mr Carroll let a little wind out of his colleagues' sails on one occasion by saying that he was 'far from satisfied' that the proposed development was financially viable. Nevertheless, discussions continued; I argued that any buildings and other developments (car park, water storage tanks etc.) should be confined to an area not exceeding 10 acres, and that only the land covered by structures directly associated with the development should be under the control of the lessee. I considered it essential that the Authority retain full control of the 'open spaces', thereby precluding *inter alia* the opportunity for the lessee to engage in 'real estate activities'. The Minister did not appear to be sympathetic to this concept.

On 1st May 1965, I left Melbourne for the USA to attend a course on the administration of national parks, organized by the US National Parks Service, the US Forests Service and the Department of National Resources. Mr T. E. Arthur was appointed Acting Director. During my absence, the Authority decided to sign the lease, which contained provisions for dealing with financial arrangements and the termination of the lease if construction had not begun within a period of two years from the signing of the lease.

I returned from abroad in August 1965, and soon became involved in further discussions with Mr Unger, and his colleagues. It was apparent that he was having difficulty in raising the necessary finance and, on one occasion, I was invited to have lunch with Mr Unger and a few others, including a gentleman with interests in Gippsland and whose addition to the Board would, it was thought, strengthen Mr Unger's position. It was a nice lunch and, at its conclusion, the prospective Board member drove me along St Kilda Road and Swanston Street to Collins Street, where I alighted. On the way, I answered his questions regarding the problems associated with the proposed development ... and that was the last I saw of him.

It would weary the reader if we were to attempt to review in detail all the discussions which took place and the voluminous correspondence which was exchanged regarding the lease. Not only did I have to confer with Mr Unger, alone or with his colleagues, but it was also essential to keep the other members of the Authority and the Committee of Management fully informed, and apprise the Minister. I was always at some pains to ensure that any information concerning this or any other matter came direct from me, before the Minister

received such information from some other source, in order to avoid the possibility of any misunderstandings, and this kept us all very busy.

At the conclusion of the two year period, Mr Unger found it impossible to raise the money to proceed with the development and the lease was terminated by mutual agreement in November 1967, under the seal of the National Parks Service, with neither party having any claim on the other.

I think it appropriate for me to add that in the light of the experiences described, and even after a lapse of over twenty years, I am still strongly of the opinion that private enterprise has no place in national parks. Entrepreneurs have one objective, namely, to operate at a profit, and the environment is the inevitable victim of the pursuit of money.

Leases for Tidal River Store and Café

When the Authority began to draw up a lease to cover the occupation of the Tidal River store and café, under the provisions of the National Parks Act 1958, it soon found that it had no legal entitlement to do so. Section 9 (2) (b) of the Act (No. 6326) reads:

"(2) In the exercise and performance of its functions under this Act the Authority in respect of any national park may, subject to this Act:

- (b) permit any person or body of persons approved by the Authority to manage or occupy any such accommodation or camping place at such rent charge or fee for such periods and subject to such conditions as the Authority specifies."

This provision permitted the Authority to authorise a person or persons to

occupy the lodges or campsites at, say, Tidal River, but did not apply to the store or café (which had been functioning for several years).

It was therefore necessary to amend the Act; but when the provisions of Act No. 6642 (7th January 1960) were examined, it was found that they did not apply to such enterprises as the store or café at Tidal River. It was necessary therefore further to amend the Act. This was done in Act No. 7190 (9th December 1964), Section 2 of which reads as follows:-

“2. For paragraph (b) of sub-section (2) of section nine of the Principal Act there shall be substituted the following paragraph:

(b) grant to any person or body of persons a tenancy of or a permit to manage or occupy any building camping place convenience amenity or attraction so erected set apart or provided or any other building convenience or facility in the park at such rent charge or fee for such periods not exceeding seven years and subject to such reasonable conditions as the Authority determines.”

So third time lucky! Well, not quite. You see, this still did not cover such thing as a store or café. A further amendment was made in 1965 to Act No 7275. The relevant section reads as follows:-

“Section 7

(4) Subject to this Act the Authority may from time to time

(a) grant to any person or body of persons a permit to occupy or a lease of not more than three acres of land in any national park to be used only for a purpose authorized by the Governor in Council

Number of Visitors	EPV \$	Takings \$	EPV \$	Takings \$	EPV \$	Takings \$	EPV \$	Takings \$
60,000	1	12,000	2	24,000	5	60,000	10	120,000
70,000	1	14,000	2	28,000	5	70,000	10	140,000
80,000	1	16,000	2	32,000	5	80,000	10	160,000
90,000	1	18,000	2	36,000	5	90,000	10	180,000

Note: EPV = Expenditure per Visitor

either generally or in any particular case for a term not exceeding three years subject to such covenants terms and conditions and the payment of such rent fees and charges as the Authority thinks fit;

(b) with the consent of the Governor in Council grant to any person or body of persons a permit to occupy or a lease of not more than three acres of land in any national park to be used only for the purpose of a kiosk cafe or store or of scientific research or a purpose authorized by the Governor in Council for a term not exceeding thirty-three years subject to such covenants terms and conditions and to the payment of such rent fees and charges as the Authority thinks fit;

(c) with the consent of the Governor in Council grant to any person or body of persons a lease of any area of land within a national park for a term not exceeding seventy-five years for the purpose of the erection thereon by the lessee of a building costing not less than One hundred thousand pounds subject to such covenants terms and conditions and to the payment of such rent fees and charges as the Authority thinks fit.”

This amendment clarified the matters under notice and the Authority had leases prepared for the cafe and store, by the Parliamentary Draughtsman. The upper limit of 33 years for the tenure of such leases was considered much too high and the term of the lease was fixed at three years. The granting of a lease for a period of seven years (Act No. 7190; Section 2) was somewhat restricted; the intention to issue the lease was required to be advertised at least once in a newspaper circulating in the relevant district and in a daily newspaper in Melbourne as well as in four consecutive issues of the Government Gazette.

The store had developed from a very small base, largely on the initiative of Mr Keith Blunden (the lessee) and the Committee of Management. However, as the Authority did not have access to the lessee's books, it had no idea of how profitable the store was or what constituted a fair rent. This had been determined by the Committee, but (in about 1968, I think) the Authority resolved that, on the expiration of the current lease, public tenders should be called. This resulted in a challenge to Mr Blunden's long occupancy; but, after careful investigation had been made, he remained in occupation. However, the annual rental rose to about \$5,000, as compared with a figure less than one tenth of that, a few years earlier.



The mouth of Tidal River is the proposed site in 2016 for a commercial venture for sight-seeing boats to the islands and coast. But this has been and remains the most popular swimming location for campers.

Assuming an 'expenditure per visitor' (EPV) of 1, 2, 5 or 10 dollars, and an average profit of 20 per cent (P), the table shows the relationship of 'takings' to the number of visitors.

After making allowance for wages, operating costs, maintenance and incidental costs, it would appear that the store was profitable to the lessee. In fact, the store was generally regarded as a 'gold mine' for the lessee, and from time to time some people grumbled at the 'high prices'; but there were few, if any, complaints about the service which Keith Blunden provided. Frankly, I admired him for his willingness to work hard for what he earned and for his readiness to co-operate. I argued that so long as Keith Blunden was happy to continue to operate the general store, I had one fewer problem to worry about.

Café – milk bar

The cafe/milk bar business had its vicissitudes. When Mr Hobson found it necessary to relinquish the business for family reasons, it was taken over by Mr and Mrs Colin Crawford. Mr Crawford had been employed in the park as a Park Assistant and later as a Ranger for several years. Unfortunately, after a period Mrs Crawford's health deteriorated and the Crawfords sold their business to Mrs Amelia Unger. Mr Unger was at the time engaged in negotiations with the Authority regarding the lease to construct a hotel/motel, etc, as described earlier in this chapter. Mrs Unger operated the cafe business over the Christmas-New Year season for 1965-66, but was unable to continue beyond the Easter season of 1966. The acquisition of the café/milk bar by the Ungers, assuming that the

hotel/motel proposal eventuated, had caused some members of the Authority, including myself, considerable disquiet; because, if they controlled both enterprises, they would virtually have a monopoly on this segment of the tourist business at Tidal River. It seemed likely, I thought, that the store might be next in line for a takeover. This prospect filled me with grave apprehensions.

One of the major problems of this business was finding accommodation for the temporary staff required during peak periods. The Ungers had housed their temporary staff at Yanakie and used a minibus to transport them to and fro, but this was too costly. I therefore devised a scheme, the essential elements of which were as follows:

1. That the Authority purchase the business from Mrs Unger, and

lease it to some person as in the case of the store, thereby eliminating the 'goodwill' factor. The asking price was \$28,000.

2. That, having purchased the business, the Authority have the building enlarged and renovated and the food-preparation section improved by installing, among other things, an adequate ventilation system.
3. That a new block of flats consisting of five 4-bed units be constructed at the rear of the cafe/milk bar, one unit to be reserved for temporary staff and the other four units to be let to the public.
4. That permission be sought from the government to borrow \$70,000 to finance the acquisitions referred to above, the loan to be serviced by the revenue from the flats and repaid over a period of ten years.

The Authority endorsed the proposal, subject to the approval of the Chairman of the Rural Finance Corporation. So I made my pleas to Mr Ian Morton, who agreed that the scheme was viable, and the necessary legal arrangements were set in train. To ensure that the café/milk bar could operate during the peak periods, a temporary lease was granted to Mr Keith Blunden to cover the period 2nd December 1966 to 2nd April 1967.

The plan proceeded and the Annual Report for 1967-68 stated that the work on the café/milk bar had been completed at a cost of \$19,300, and that a start was soon to be made on the five flats at a contract price of \$20,500. The building programme was duly completed and a lease was issued, under the seal of the Authority, to Mr and Mrs A. R. Miller for the operation of the cafe/milk bar, for the period 28 August 1968 to 30 September 1971. Mr Miller had been Park Manager for several years.

Kiosk at Fern Tree Gully

There had been a kiosk at Fern Tree Gully National Park for many years prior to the advent of the Authority. I have somewhat hazy recollections of one in the 1930s, but was never a patron.

After the Authority became legally responsible for the park, it took some time to develop cordial relations with the Committee of Management, and this naturally did not encourage the Director to visit the park as often as might otherwise have been the case. The Committee always regarded the Fern Tree Gully National Park as being in a different category from other national parks and tended to hold itself aloof from the Authority. The Committee adopted a rather aggressive attitude, suggesting that it was apprehensive regarding the Authority's intentions towards it. And the fact that only a few months after my appointment I was incautious enough to 'let it slip' that my ideas on the role of committees of management did not precisely coincide with those of the Hon. G. L. Chandler MLC, who was a member of the Committee, did not help the cause. Mr Chandler, who was Minister for Agriculture and sat in the no. 3 spot in the Cabinet, informed me "if that's the way you feel, you'll have to go". A threat like that had to be taken seriously, and thereafter I did my best to evade the flak.

The kiosk was a very "mixed bag". To increase the financial success of the business, the range of services included pony rides for children, and there was several large cages near the kiosk containing birds. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos of course gave great delight to the patrons by issuing a general invitation to 'scratch cockie' and by calling 'cockie wants a drink'.

Early in 1959, the Fern Tree Gully Rotary Club sought permission to install a miniature railway on the site of the old tennis courts near the kiosk and, in the ensuing negotiations between the Authority and the Committee, the Authority lost a few 'brownie points'. The train was installed and operated under the name of 'Little Toots'.

The kiosk was incorporated in a house which did not appear to have had the benefit of any architectural design. The lessee was a gentleman named Cox who, after several years, decided to relinquish 'the lease'. Inquiries revealed that his tenancy rested on some sort of understanding with the Committee of Management; but, as the Committee, in doing whatever it did, always acted in good faith, this had to be accepted. The Authority decided that it would be advisable to acquire the business, but found itself engaged in negotiations over the 'goodwill'. The Public Works Department Chief Property Officer was requested to assess the value of the goodwill and, in due course, the Authority found itself the owners of the enterprise. For a variety of reasons, the Authority decided to re-organise the service by eliminating the 'pony ride' and dispense with the bird cages, the cockatoos being released to the adjoining forest. The kiosk was then leased to a new lessee.

New kiosk

The year 1970 brought a realization that the existing kiosk was unduly remote from the main picnic area and, with the object of obtaining information regarding a more desirable site, a mobile kiosk was installed in the 'lower picnic ground' to test visitor patronage. However, lack of finance delayed plans to construct a new kiosk in a more favourable position.



The view from Cook's Point in Fraser NP, February 1964.

There had been a great deal of discussion between the Committee of Management regarding the nature of any new development. The advantages of having a resident lessee were recognized; but, in the absence of information regarding any potential lessee's family, it was difficult to determine the sort of accommodation required. Further, the provision of a house imposed constraints on the specifications of the kiosk and thus on the sort of service which could be provided. It was finally decided to plan for a 'lock-up' kiosk. This was a disappointment to Sir Gilbert Chandler, who was very keen to build a restaurant to which he could proudly bring his friends from Melbourne to enjoy a sophisticated lunch in a forest environment, while the bell miners sang merrily nearby. I think I might have dropped a few more brownie points over the debate, but he was eventually persuaded that it was not necessarily the best policy to enter into competition with the local shopkeepers, whose livelihoods might be threatened.

Plans for a new kiosk took a big leap forward when, in 1972, a special joint committee consisting of officers of the National Parks Service (Mr T. E. Arthur, Chief Technical Officer; Mr D.

S. Saunders, Chief Resources and Planning Officer; and the Director) and members of the Committee of Management was formed for the purpose of formulating a master plan for the development of the lower picnic area and the Janesleigh Dell area. After consulting the Public Works Department, a private architect-planner was engaged to collaborate with the joint committee. The plan provided for a new kiosk, to be built on the western side of the lower picnic area.

Fraser National Park

At an early stage in the planning of developments in Fraser National Park, there were discussions within the Authority and Committee of Management regarding the possibility of 'inviting' private enterprise to provide accommodation for tourists, on Cook's Point. This would have necessitated the construction of a road and the provision of a water supply and other essential services. When the lake is full, the mental image of a well-planned structure on Cook's Point seemed very pleasant; but, when the water-level fell during dry seasons, the prospect lacked appeal. In the end, the dream faded.

During the first few years of its life, the Authority had before it an application from a Mr Fred Smith, of Chadstone, for the leasing of an area of 200 acres above the southern shore-line of Collier Bay to enable him to establish a camping area and sites for caravans, most of which would remain in position permanently (on payment of an annual rental). The sites were to be 20 x 30 feet. As I recall, the Authority was not enthusiastic about the plan.

I personally had strong objections to it, for the following reasons: the area was excessive; I had serious doubts as to whether it would have been possible to find 200 acres in the locality proposed; the irregular nature of the land would have necessitated extensive benching to obtain level sites for camps and caravans; further, if such a lease were granted, it would stifle any plans which the Authority might later wish to develop in the way of tourist services; and, I argued, the creation of a village permanently occupied by caravans would "make the place look like 'Shanty Town'". The concept of such a development was inimical to national parks philosophy. Fortunately, the plan was eventually abandoned; but, for a time, it seemed likely that a lease would be granted.

Mt Buffalo National Park: developments at Cresta

I explain in Chapter 15 that the National Parks Authority lacked the resources to develop the skiing potential of the Cresta slopes in Mount Buffalo National Park.

The amendment of the National Parks Act to provide for the granting of leases to private entrepreneurs was soon followed by an application from Tatra Development Pty. Ltd. for permission to undertake a major development at Cresta. The principals of this company were Sir Rupert Clarke, a well-known Melbourne businessman with interests in a number of major Australian companies, and Mr Oldrich (Ollie) Polasek. The latter, who had a business base in Melbourne, had emigrated from Czechoslovakia after the Second World War and had been regularly employed as a skiing instructor by the Victorian Railways Chalet at Dingo Dell for several years.

He therefore had an intimate knowledge of the skiing potential of the park, although only the Dingo Dell slopes had been developed for skiing. Ollie Polasek had (and no doubt still has) tremendous enthusiasm for life and its challenges, and was endowed with great mental and physical resources. He is a graduate in economics from Prague University – the name ‘Tatra’ is that of the highest mountain in Czechoslovakia.

Mr Polasek had recognised the potential of the Cresta slopes and it

seems reasonable to assume that he had sought the collaboration of a partner who had the financial resources to translate his concept into a reality. However, over the years, I recognised that Sir Rupert Clarke also had great enthusiasm for the project and a very good understanding of what was required in regard to the development of Cresta.

Negotiations begin

Negotiations between the applicants and the National Parks Authority were protracted. Initially, they requested a larger area of land than the Authority was willing to approve, but eventually it was agreed that the lease should be based on an area of 10 acres. The main development occupying about 9 acres was to be on an area known as the ‘Egg Knoll’ so named because of the existence thereon of a feature known as Egg Rock, a large rock balanced on a very small base, similar to the much larger Logan Stone in Cornwall [England].

The power plant and ancillary services were to be constructed in an area of about 1 acre on the eastern side of the road to the Horn. The ancillary services were to incorporate a service station where visitors could purchase petrol (there were no such public facilities at the Chalet), public toilets, shelters and picnicking tables for public use. Provision was to be made for the accommodation of the staff required to operate the facilities.

In addition, the Authority agreed to consider an area of about 1 acre to enable stables to be built, to provide for horse-riding, following the precedent long since established at the Chalet operated by the Victorian Railways Department.

The applicant initially requested an area of 15 acres (an area one and a half times the size of the Melbourne Cricket Ground), on which it was proposed to establish a riding school. It was agreed that water could be drawn by means of a ram from a stream which ran along the western slope of the Egg Knoll, the ram being installed upstream of all other proposed developments to avoid pollution. In addition, with very great reluctance, the Authority agreed to the construction of a lake (which would inundate the Bogong Plain) to provide scope for aquatic sports (but NOT water-skiing and power boats). The area of the proposed lake was about 35 acres.

In so far as public accommodation was concerned, agreement between the Authority and the applicant was reached that the buildings would take the form of cabins distributed among the snow gums on Egg Knoll so as to minimize the impact of the development on the environment. It was felt that sewage could be disposed of through septic tanks, but I was never convinced that this would be satisfactory, even with a chlorination plant, because of



Mt Buffalo NP, August 1966. Cresta Valley ski runs, numbers 5, 4 and 3 from left to right.

the low temperatures, especially during the winter. There were numerous inspections of the area by members of the Authority and the officers (mainly the Director and Mr T. E. Arthur, but later Mr Don Saunders was involved), frequently in the company of one or both of the applicants, and gradually the point was reached at which it was agreed that the formal lease should be prepared by the Crown Solicitors Office. However, as this was likely to take some time, the Authority agreed that the Company should be authorised to proceed with the first stage of the development on the northern side of the road, during the summer of 1963-64.

The Company urged that building should commence as soon as possible, because of the relatively short building season in alpine areas. It was agreed that the 'loose ends' such as the precise location of the stables and any other 'minor' matters could be finalised later.

A change of plans

No sooner had agreement been reached than the Authority was requested to consider a new plan. This was that a building complex incorporating accommodation for 36 people, a dining room, café-restaurant (for guests and the general public), along with toilets and a double chair lift to serve No. 1 ski run, should be provided as a first stage, in order to test the potential of the whole development. The building was to be on the 1 acre site, not on Egg Knoll.

The Authority agreed to this and the work began. An area selected by the Company had been surveyed and pegged on the ground. The long axis of the development was roughly along a north-south line; at the southern end the Country Roads Board had some time ago bulldozed an area to obtain road-making material used in the improvement of the road to the Horn, and the 'borrow pit' provided limited car parking for visitors, along with vehicular access

to the rear of the proposed buildings. The CRB had realigned the road, which now crossed the lower (southern) end of the Cresta Valley and served as a northern bank for the proposed lake. The now disused 'old road' ran along the bottom of the ski run(s) towards the west before turning south to join the new road, via the borrow pit.

Unfortunately, it was found that the area designated for the first-stage building development did not provide proper foundations, so Mr Polasek on his own initiative moved the eastern boundary to the west by an unrecorded distance. Subsequent searches by the Director and other officers of the Authority failed to locate the survey peg which had originally marked the south-eastern corner of the area designated the 'first-stage development'.

Building commences

The building programme and the erection of the chair lift proceeded while the Authority undertook the

clearing of the No.1 ski slope. The building incorporated toilets, which of course were an essential service for resident guests and staff, and the Company argued that the provision of this facility fulfilled its obligations to the travelling public. It was only after persistent efforts by the Authority that the Company was persuaded to erect a notice intimating to astute travellers that toilets were available for their use.

Franchise

Meanwhile the Crown Solicitor's Office had prepared a lease document incorporating the agreements reached between the Company and the Authority, but a further delay was caused when the Company raised the matter of a franchise over a large area of the park. The Company requested that a franchise be granted over the area between the Leviathan Rock and the Horn (with suitable extensions 'north and south' of the Rock) so that, if the Authority at any time in the future determined to grant a further lease, the Company would legally be entitled to the first option.

As the Authority had by this time decided that no further leases would be granted, it agreed to this proposal in principle, but resolved that the franchise area should be based on the Cathedral – Hump area; and the boundary running along the ridge of the Cathedral – Hump Range, which extended across the road roughly in a south-easterly direction, was duly agreed upon. The agreement was signed on 14 July 1964, but the location of the stables had not been determined, nor had the Authority authorised the construction of a lake. Approval of the latter was finally dependent upon the approval of the State Rivers Water Supply Commission (which controlled the



Cresta ski slope, August 1968.

water resources of the State) and the Soil Conservation Authority, which controlled developments in Alpine areas having an elevation of 4,000 ft and over. During the

1964-65 summer season, with the Authority's approval, the Company built an additional 12 self-contained motel-type units, each capable of accommodating four people.



Cresta Lodge, mid 1960.

Stables for horses

The Company requested the Authority find another site for the stables on the grounds that, if they were located on the western end of Egg Knoll, they would attract flies and be offensive to guests in the Egg Knoll development. The site proposed by the Company was inspected by Mr Arthur and the Director, but was found to be based on a moss bog which would soon have become a quagmire and would have resulted in the contamination of water further down the gully. Consideration was then given to a site to the east of the north-eastern slope of the Bogong Plain; this would have necessitated the construction of a road to provide access from the main road, which would have not only scarred the landscape but would also have entailed expensive construction and maintenance costs. The Authority of course had never been eager to promote horse-riding in the park, but had been the victim

of circumstances beyond its control. The location of the stables remained unresolved while developments proceeded in other areas.

The unsatisfactory quality of the effluents from stage 1 of the development necessitated the installation of a chlorination plant to treat them before they were discharged into the creek. This required close monitoring.

Ski runs

As the financial investments of the Company increased, the Authority found itself under increasing pressure to clear even more of the Cresta slopes, and there were almost endless discussions between the parties in regard to the extent to which clearing should proceed, which trees and rocks should remain and which should be removed, and how the desired objectives were to be achieved. The Authority soon became aware that its earlier concept of a relatively small

change in the face of Cresta was inadequate to meet the insatiable demands of the entrepreneur, who made it clear that he required ski slopes of a standard which would attract experienced skiers and lend themselves to competition skiing to be sponsored by other business interests. The volume of correspondence exchanged by the Authority and the lessee grew rapidly and imposed very heavy burdens on the Authority staff, and especially on the Director.

The cost of clearing the Cresta slopes was imposing increasing strains on the Authority's finances. Eventually the Authority found itself unwilling to spend any more of its 'normal' works allocation on the development. This resulted in a special meeting attended by the Premier (and Treasurer) Sir Henry Bolte, the Minister and other members of the Authority, along with Sir Rupert Clarke. The meeting was held in the old Cabinet Room of which the special feature was the Round Table. I could not refrain from making a mental comparison with the meetings of a certain legendary King of medieval England and his celebrated Knights.

After our two knights had exchanged reminiscences about the relative performances of their particular fancies at the race course on the previous Saturday, the meeting was under way. Sir Rupert outlined his plans for no fewer than six ski runs, which entailed the clearing of trees and rocks across the entire Cresta slope, together with appropriate conservation works to protect the slope against erosion and ensure the safety of the skiers. It was recognised that the work would require several years for its completion, because of the relatively short 'work season' in the particular environment. It was agreed that trees

and rocks to be removed would be marked so as to avoid confusion, and, to obviate unnecessary or undesirable clearing, that under these circumstances it would be possible for the Authority to accept the lessee's offer to participate in the clearing and conservation work. The Authority indicated that it lacked the financial resources to undertake further work. The Premier turned to me and inquired how much money was required and I said that if an additional \$5,000.00 were provided for the coming season, I thought the Authority could make a substantial contribution to the clearing work. The Premier agreed to this and we set about organizing the work.

Arrangements were made for Mr Don Saunders to supervise and direct the work of several temporary workers. The lessee provided accommodation at Tatra Inn, which saved considerable time in travelling and in the performance of camp chores.

In the general conservation works programme, which had been undertaken on a regular basis, especially during the University/school long vacation in the summer, Don Saunders had gained valuable experience in directing and supervising the work groups of senior students, but had also been responsible for the provisioning and related chores. These latter groups had used the rather limited facilities of the A. W. Keown Lodge at Dingo Dell, and had performed a great deal of useful work in grooming and draining the ski slopes and in the restoration of numerous tracks.

The work at Cresta was continued on a regular basis every summer, sometimes extending into the autumn, using the special funds provided by Treasury for the purpose. In this way, the developments planned in consultation by the lessees and the National Parks

Service proceeded. It was hard work for those concerned, especially because, after large rocks had been blasted, the fragments had to be collected and transported by hand to the gullies and depressions which needed to be filled. The nature of the work and the steep slopes precluded the use of mechanical equipment. Those who subsequently used the slopes or merely admired the spectacle could have little idea of the debt they owed to those pioneers who virtually built the skiing slopes.

By the end of 1974 the lessee was operating a chair lift, a T-bar and a Poma lift at Cresta, servicing six slopes.

Public rights

There is one important aspect of the lease in regard to the skiing fields which is perhaps not well known. The Authority had been at some pains to ensure that the lessee's 'entitlements' did not extend beyond the land required for the several lifts, thus making it possible for skiers to use the slopes without charge, if they so desired. They were obliged to pay the lessee only for the use of the facilities (lifts, etc) which he provided. Not many visitors availed themselves of this right, except sometimes those who had disported themselves on the lower part of Run No 1, generally to the annoyance of those skiing down from the top of the run.

Transgressions

Two incidents occurred during the period when the skiing slopes were being constructed. Whilst recognizing that this work inevitably entailed considerable alteration (I hesitate to use the word 'destruction') of the environment, the Authority nevertheless always endeavoured to keep such changes to a minimum.

To this end, as already mentioned, rocks and trees destined for removal were clearly marked with paint, so that if the lessee wished to assist by removing rocks and trees while the Authority's officers were absent from the park, he could do so.

Unfortunately, there were some departures from the agreed procedure, which in due course resulted in an exchange of correspondence between the Director and the lessee, with the object of ensuring that there be no repetition of the transgression. However, in one instance, during the construction of Run 4 or 5, the lessee committed such blatant offences against the agreement that I decided to take action to prosecute.

I had received so many assurances that there would be 'no further' transgressions that I felt obliged to handle the matter personally. I therefore travelled to the park and met Mr Polasek at Tatra Inn whence we proceeded to the scene of the alleged offence. I had been fully briefed by the Crown Solicitor's Office on the procedure to be followed during the interrogation of the alleged offender, but felt a little sheepish as I announced myself to Ollie Polasek and duly requested him to identify himself. He was completely co-operative and answered all the questions I was required to ask, and fully admitted that he had removed certain trees from the national park without having first received a written permit. It was an 'open and shut case' and I informed Ollie that I intended to take steps to have him prosecuted. He was quite happy and friendly, but unrepentant. I duly prepared a brief and recommended to the Minister, Mr Dickie, that a prosecution be launched.

Ollie had naturally informed his partner Sir Rupert Clarke of the matter and Sir Rupert called me

expressing regret for his partner's transgressions and offering me an assurance, to be confirmed in writing, that there would be no repetition of such incidents. I remained firm in my resolve, but frankly I was not looking forward to appearing in Court to give evidence against the lessee(s). Shortly after this, I received a message from the office of the Minister to the effect that he would prefer not to proceed with the matter and, after some consideration, I brought myself to the conclusion that the more peaceful way of achieving the desired result was preferable. I think that Ollie was more conforming henceforth.

An unfortunate incident

While the various senior government officers serving on the National Parks Authority were fully occupied with the affairs of their own departments, they nevertheless made substantial contributions to the affairs of the Authority, but were content to leave it to the Director, as the Executive Officer of the Authority, to implement the decisions reached by the full body of the Authority at its regular monthly meetings. However, some of the non-government members of the Authority, and in particular Mr Dewar W. Goode, often sought to play a more active role in translating the Authority's decisions into action. To this end, it was Dewar's practice (with the concurrence of the Authority) to visit the national parks and inspect works in progress or assess the need for any particular activities.

Dewar took a very active interest in the preparation of the skiing slopes at Cresta (and Dingo Dell). On such 'visits of inspection' he would usually be accompanied by one or more officers of the Authority, including the Director. Now it sometimes happened that, in giving effect to the Authority's

decisions, the Director deemed it advisable to adopt a slightly more liberal interpretation of the Authority's intentions than Dewar had in mind. I took the view that, as all concerned (the Authority and the Committee of Management, and the lessee) had agreed that the Cresta slopes were to be 'developed' for skiing, clearly a considerable number of rocks and trees would need to be removed and that any consequential conservation works would follow. Dewar was inclined to adopt a more conservative line in regard to the clearing of the slopes and, on one particular inspection, concluded that more clearing had been done than he would have preferred. That is putting it mildly! He was utterly frustrated, largely I suspect because somebody had done something for which he, Dewar, had not given specific approval.

In the presence of several other officers of the Authority and park staff, he exclaimed (I was going to say 'bellowed', but discretion took control of my pen) in a very loud voice, "This is a disgrace - you ought to be ashamed of yourself". Then becoming more formal, he continued, "Mr Director, you ought to resign". As I made no response, he exclaimed, "You have a hide like a bloody rhinoceros". I walked across to him and said, "Yes, Dewar, I have; I need it to be able to stand up to people like you". Dewar remained decidedly formal towards me throughout the remainder of our visit to Mount Buffalo and, during the next six months, at meetings of the Authority, was very cool and formal. For my part, I put the incident behind me and treated him just as I had during the past few years. I have never been able to bear a grudge against anyone and had no intention of destroying the friendly relationship which I had established with Dewar, from my first meeting.

One afternoon, about six months later, Dewar was at my door (we were in Treasury Place in those days) and I beckoned him in. He expressed regret at what he had said to me at Cresta, explaining that he had been very upset at the time. He hoped that we could put the matter behind us and get back to our former happy relationship. I responded by saying that we could accomplish much more by working together than otherwise and that I had missed his advice and company for too long. We shook hands, smiled at one another and 'got on with the business'. We worked together for several more years before the demise of the Authority, and later when Dewar was a member of the National Parks Advisory Committee we generally, but not always, found ourselves in agreement on matters under consideration, and we remain good friends to this day (1989).

I mention this incident because I feel sure that I am not the only person who has found himself in a similar situation. Over fifty years ago I acquired a picture of two donkeys and, at about the same time, my mother gave me a framed copy of Kipling's immortal poem 'If', which since then has usually been within sight of my desk. The relevant lines here are:-

'If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on
you ...'

The messages conveyed by these items were long ago 'received and understood' and have stood me in good stead over the years.

Sporting activities

While the preparation of the skiing slopes was in progress, there were also other matters to consider. The



The Horn from Cresta before clearing and the beginning of the Tatra Inn. March 1964.

lessees requested permission to construct a tennis court on the flattish area in front of (i.e. east) of the main building; but almost before the Authority had had time to refuse this on the grounds that the proposed site was unacceptable on environmental grounds, the lessee stated that what was really required was a general sports ground where other sports such as volley ball, badminton, etc. could be played, especially during the periods when skiing was not possible. The Authority did not agree to this request. A fish pond was constructed in front of the main building; it was never clear whether it was the lessee's plan to grow fish 'for the table' or whether it was merely a kind of diversion for the entertainment of guests.

High-level restaurant

One Saturday morning when Don Saunders and I were at Cresta (Don was supervising work on the ski runs) Ollie told us that he wanted to show us something special. So the three of us walked up between slopes No. 4 and 5 and then clambered over

the rocks to a flattish area on the south-western face of the Hump. From here [there was a] magnificent panoramic view embracing the Bogong Plain (site of the proposed lake), the Egg Knoll (site of the major building development), the Horn and the whole Cresta Valley and beyond. "This," said Ollie, "is where we want to build the restaurant." This was the first time there had been any mention of a restaurant. Presumably, guests would be transported to the restaurant by means of a new chair lift or gondola-type lift, or by a track from the head of the existing chair lift. I assured Ollie that there was no possibility that the Authority would approve of such a proposal. Nobody who knew Ollie Polasek would ever accuse him of being short of ideas.

Principal development

As the construction of the six ski runs proceeded, discussions on the principal development assumed greater prominence. The original plan to build 'cabanas' on the Egg Knoll site had been abandoned in favour of a multi-storey hotel at the northern

end of Egg Knoll, overlooking the lake, but until the Authority had given its unequivocal approval to construct the lake, building remained in abeyance.

The proposal to inundate the Bogong Plain was strongly opposed by conservation bodies, notably the Victorian National Parks Association. The Committee of Management was opposed to the plan, but appeared to overlook the fact that it was the Committee's insistence that the Cresta area be developed for skiing that had contributed substantially to the granting of the lease in the first place, and that permission to construct the lake was part of the price the Authority had had to pay to secure the lessee's signature to the lease. The lessee had engaged engineering consultants (Haskins, Gutteridge and Davies) to survey the lake area and test the ground for its suitability for the purpose and were asked whether it was feasible to construct a dam based on the feature known as the 'Chinamen's Wall'.

In 1899, a dam had been constructed across the south-eastern

'corner' of the Bogong Plain in order to store water during the spring, to be used during the summer for mining purposes at lower levels, but the dam had soon been breached and it was argued by some that it would not be possible to construct a dam on that site. However, the engineers appeared satisfied and the onus was on the Authority to approve; but the Authority could not advisedly accede to the request until it had received the approval of the Soil Conservation Authority.

Numerous meetings were held on the subject, attended by representatives of the Authority, Soil Conservation Authority and the lessee, but the latter was never able or willing to produce a plan embodying all relevant details required by the Soil Conservation Authority to enable that body to evaluate the proposal. This was always the stumbling block - the lessee had indicated during the development of the motel area and the ski runs that it was unwilling or unable to present a co-ordinated plan embodying all the relevant details, and the Soil Conservation Authority was not prepared to give what would have amounted to blanket approval of the proposal.

The lake at Cresta

The lessee had made the lake the focal point of future developments - no lake, no development. I recall a very pleasant Saturday afternoon when I accompanied Sir Rupert Clarke on an excursion which culminated in a discussion on his plans for the construction of a five-storey hotel at the eastern end of Egg Knoll. I pointed out that this would destroy the panoramic view from the 'turntable', as the hotel would stand almost in line with the Horn; but, whilst recognizing that, he clearly had his mind set on the hotel - after

the lake had been constructed. I was always apprehensive that, following this, there would be proposals for strata developments on the remainder of Egg Knoll, but this was not a major "talking point" at that time.

The construction of a hotel on Egg Knoll, of course, would have necessitated the construction of a large parking area for cars. Sir Rupert pressed for the bulldozing of an area on the northern side of the road about 100m long and 30-odd metres deep (extending into the slope). Naturally a bridge across the creek would have been necessary also. I opposed this and sought an assurance from the Country Roads Board that no such development would occur, and was fully supported by the Board. It had been expected, of course, that the Government would bear the cost of building the car park.

Negotiations over the lake proposal dragged on. The volume of correspondence grew, meetings were held, but no progress was made. After the disbandment of the National Parks Authority, I continued the negotiations alone, keeping the Minister (Mr Dickie) and the Permanent Head (Mr P. W. Merrett) informed. The Minister despaired of reaching finality (which meant receiving a favourable recommendation from the Director) and dropped into my office one afternoon to say that he was anxious 'to get on with things' and that, to this end, he had decided to place Mr Merrett in charge of negotiations concerning the lake and that henceforth I would not be directly involved. So Bill Merrett picked up the torch and waved it valiantly in the hope of creating a more enlightened approach to the problem. Further meetings were held, but Dr R G Downes (Chairman

of the Soil Conservation Authority) remained resolute in his request for a full statement of the lessees' plans for the ultimate development of the Cresta area and declined to give his approval. The stalemate continued throughout 1971 and 1972, and when the change in government saw the transference of the National Parks Service to the newly-created Ministry for Conservation, the problem remained unsolved.

A matter of legalities

The new Minister for Conservation, the Honourable W. A. Borthwick MP, soon found himself involved in the controversy over the lake at Cresta. Two courses were open to him. He could instruct the Director of Conservation to set aside his principles and accede to the lessees' request for permission to construct the lake, forgoing the required statement embodying plans for future development; or he could investigate the legality of the lease agreement which (purportedly) conferred the right to construct the lake.

The Minister, not surprisingly, chose the latter course and requested the Crown Solicitor's Department to examine the matter. Accordingly, a senior officer of the Crown Law Department was assigned to the task and, in order to give him a proper perspective of the matter, I accompanied him to Mount Buffalo National Park where the relevant areas were inspected and their mutual relationships assessed.

This officer's report led to the appointment of a learned Queen's Counsel who was required to examine the lease agreement and determine whether there were any legal grounds for denying permission to construct the lake. I accompanied the learned Counsel (along with his charming wife and daughter) on yet

another visit to the park, a visit not without incident.

The entire party was accommodated at the Chalet; but in order to gain some personal experience with the nature and quality of the service provided at Tatra Inn, the legal gentleman and his party decided to have dinner at the Inn. As I thought it would hardly be politic for me to forgo the comforts of the Chalet to sample the Tatra fare, I dined at the Chalet and then accompanied my friends in their Rolls Royce to Tatra. The Inn was full; the air thick with the buzz of conversation competing vainly with the overpowering din of the piped music, and clouds of smoke filled the air; but it was warm in there and the patrons seemed happy. The food was pronounced excellent and the wine flowed freely. The service was good and time seemed to fly. Ollie established himself as a fine maitre d'hôtel.

It was approaching midnight when my host began to move towards the door. While we were enjoying the hospitality of the Inn, Nature had been creating mischief outside. A heavy frost had descended upon the light covering of snow on the road, turning it to glass-like ice. It needed great skill to coax the heavy car up the hill to the turntable and providential guidance to keep it on the road as we negotiated the several bends in the road to Dingo Dell. Here Disaster struck with a heavy hand: the car began to slide across the face of the large smooth car park and could not be brought under control. As it neared the edge of the deep drop into the gully below, I could only hope for a miracle. The car came to a halt against a snow pole, with its front left wheel hanging in space, but the other three wheels were on firm ice. We clambered out of the car and began the long walk back to the Chalet, about 2¼ miles distant. The ladies of course were worst affected;

their shoes unsuitable for walking on the icy surface, but they bore their ordeal with great fortitude. I found it necessary to walk in a crouched position to lower my centre of gravity. We endeavoured to comfort one another by singing, but there was no great joy in our hearts! The learned Counsel was all for waking the ranger and persuading him to pull the car back on to the road with his Land Rover, but I declined to disturb him and his wife from their slumbers. So we trudged back to the Chalet and were soon enjoying the warmth of our respective beds.

Next morning the RACV came to the rescue. The sump of the car was resting on the ground and, had the ranger attempted to pull the car back on to the road, the Rolls would have suffered severe damage. The RACV mechanic winched the front of the car clear of all obstructions before pulling it back on to the road, and, apart from a few minor scratches, the car was undamaged and driven away safely.

In due course the learned Counsel submitted his report, and indeed the opinion was that the lessee had failed to fulfil certain legal obligations under the terms of the lease and therefore had no claim on the government in respect of the lake. The lessee of course protested and no doubt sought legal advice, but the development of Cresta now entered a new phase when negotiations were begun with a view to having the lease terminated, with all assets reverting to the Crown, in exchange for appropriate compensation to the lessee. Negotiations were at an advanced stage when I retired in January 1975, but were continued by my successor Mr J. D. Brookes, and satisfactorily concluded shortly thereafter for the sum of \$993,000.00. The government had acquired six very good skiing slopes along

with the equipment necessary for their use, and a building complex providing overnight accommodation and meals, but now had the responsibility of devising an efficient means of using and maintaining it. But the Egg Knoll, the Bogong Plain and the Egg Rock were intact and remained in public ownership.

There is a lesson to be learned from this sad experience. In my opinion, private enterprise has no place in a national park. The controlling body must at all times be in complete control of every aspect of any developments which are designed to provide for the education and enjoyment of visitors to national parks and must be sensitive to the needs of the environment. The following excerpts from the Annual Report of the National Parks Authority, which I wrote in 1964, seem apt.

“The Authority has come to recognize that ‘private enterprise’ means what it says – ‘private’ and ‘enterprise’. To be successful, from the viewpoint of those providing the capital, restrictions must be minimal, and the task of controlling the development so as not to despoil the park is a continuing one for the Authority, nor will it end soon. It is the very essence of a commercial enterprise that success must ultimately be expressed in financial reward and all activities must be hastened and promoted to that end. It is difficult, if not impossible, under these circumstances for the welfare of the park to be kept in sharp focus at all time and, indeed, it is too much to expect that a commercial enterprise will even understand the factors which need to be controlled in order that the park may not suffer unduly.

“Australia is a young country in which our way of life has proceeded not by the slow process of evolution underlying the development of the English and European cultures, but



The Cresta and the Cathedral at Mt Buffalo NP, April 1962.

by a series of explosions along the high roads of commerce and industry and education. We tend to follow the lead of the younger countries of the world, notably the U.S.A. whilst still having access to the best of British and European practices. This ability to select what seems best for our conditions is surely the essence of our progress as a nation. Yet, in the field of national parks we appear to have been reluctant to follow the lead so clearly given by British and American authorities. In these countries there has been and still is a continuous effort to preserve the national parks as such. A natural heritage cannot be manufactured and, once destroyed, can never be remade. The preservation of the small fragments of our natural heritage is a task which calls for patient understanding and an abiding love of the country itself."

The message was repeated in 1965 when the following statement was published in the Annual Report for that year:-

"The Authority feels that there is a limit to which an area within a national park should be modified (if at all) to improve the financial climate of a commercial enterprise over which the Authority has no control. Commercial considerations within a national park should be subservient to the needs of the park itself."

Although I have expressed strong opposition to the participation of private enterprise in resort development and its ancillary activities in national parks, and did my utmost to protect the environment in Mount Buffalo National Park, I must say that my relationships with the lessees were not unpleasant. Sir Rupert Clarke argued persuasively but always courteously, and Ollie Polasek, although he caused me considerable anguish, was always polite and usually cheerful. I admired both of these gentlemen for what they had accomplished in their own lives and for their persistent efforts to achieve their objectives. It was just unfortunate that they wanted

something which I didn't want to give them because I thought that it was not in the best interests of the park. I felt especially sorry for Ollie's wife Betsy who strove so hard to help her husband. But the preservation of the integrity of the park remained paramount.

Footnote: The lease at Cresta was terminated and the lessee compensated, soon after Dr Smith's retirement in 1975, and reverted to the Crown. A bushfire in December 2006 resulted in the loss of Cresta Valley Lodge, along with the Day Visitor Centre, the restaurant and the motel.

The status of national parks in the government service

The various organs of government function under the provisions of the relevant Acts of Parliament and are responsible to the Government through a Minister of the Crown who is appointed by the Government to administer the particular organ of government.

Before the National Parks Authority was created under the National Parks Act 1956, national parks were administered by the Lands Department under the Lands Act. The National Parks Act 1956 transferred control of national parks to the National Parks Authority of which the Chairman was the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. (later Sir) Henry Bolte MP, who was also Treasurer and Minister for Conservation.

The Act provided that the Chairman of the Authority be the Premier or "such other Minister as is for the time being nominated by the Premier". In 1957, when the Authority began to function, the Chairman nominated by the Premier was the Hon. A. J. Fraser MP, who was then the Assistant Minister of State Development and Decentralization. In 1959, the Division of State Development was created and Mr Fraser was appointed Minister of State Development, whilst still remaining Chairman of the National Parks Authority. In 1959-60, Mr Fraser was appointed Minister of



National Parks Authority farewell party for Joy Barker, typist, 1965. Left to right: Jim McDonald, Diane LeBrun, Bob Yorston, Joy Barker, Neville Telfer, Sue Grey and Graeme McKenzie.

Forests while still remaining Minister of State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority.

Mr Fraser retired from the Cabinet in July 1964 and the Hon. Vance Dickie MLC was appointed Minister of State Development and Chairman of the Authority. On 30th June 1965, Mr Dickie became Minister of Health, and the Hon. J. W. Manson MP became Minister for State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority as from 1st October 1965, serving in that capacity until 11th June 1970, when Mr Dickie again became Minister for

State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority. Mr Dickie was appointed Minister for Housing on 22nd August, 1972, and the Hon. Murray Byrne, MLG became Minister for State Development on 23rd August, 1972. The National Parks Service remained as a Division of that Department until 23rd January 1973.

Pursuant to the proclamation of the State Development Act 1970 (No. 8081), the National Parks Authority was abolished on 15th March 1971. Thereafter the National Parks Service functioned



Bill Borthwick (Minister for Conservation) and Sir Rupert Hamer (Liberal Premier) were strong supporters of the environment and national parks in the early 1970s.

as a Division of the Department of State Development. The passing of the State Development Act had the effect of replacing the National Parks Authority by the Minister for State Development and making the Director "subject to the general direction and control of the Minister (of State Development) responsible for the control and management of national parks", in accordance with the State Development Act 1970.

For administrative purposes, the National Parks Authority had been a branch of the Premier's Department from 1957 to 1971, but the passing of the State Development Act 1971 created the Department of State Development with its own Permanent Head (Mr P. W. Merrett). The National Parks Service functioned as a Division of the Department of State Development from March 1971 to 23rd January 1973, when it passed into the Ministry of Conservation which had been created under the Ministry for Conservation Act 1972.

The Hon. W. A. Borthwick MP was appointed Minister for Conservation. The new Permanent Head was the Director of Conservation, Dr

R. G. Downes, who enjoyed an international reputation in the field of conservation. He had been Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority and a member of the National Parks Authority for several years. The new environment for the National Parks Service seemed very appropriate; but neither the State Development Act 1970 nor the Ministry for Conservation Act 1972 had affected the role of the committees of management in regard to the control of national parks in Victoria.

Staff

The National Parks Act 1956 created the National Parks Authority, and Section 4 (1) of the Act read as follows: 'for the purposes of this Act there shall, subject to the Public Service Acts, be appointed a Director of National Parks', and Section 4 (2) stated that 'the Director shall be the executive officer of the National Parks Authority'.

Section 6 of the Act read as follows:

"(1) Subject to the Public Service Acts there may be appointed a Secretary and such other officers

and employees as are required for the administration of this Act.

(2) For the purposes of this Act the Authority may, and with the consent of the Minister administering the Department concerned make use of the services of any officer or employee in any Government Department".

It might well seem that the use of the imperative mood in Section 4 (1) automatically cleared the way for the appointment of a Director of National Parks (subject to the usual procedures of advertising the position, etc) and this indeed may have been the case, as the appointment of the first Director does not appear to have been unduly delayed.

The use of the conditional mood 'may' in Section 6 (2) has been designed to give the Public Service Board a stronger role in the appointment of the Secretary, but perhaps there was a kind of gentlemen's agreement that the necessary finance would be forthcoming to enable a Secretary to be appointed as soon as practicable, and this was done. And, as typing is recognized as a natural consequence of the holding of the meetings of the Authority, along with the need to maintain records, the provision of a junior typist/stenographer was probably not expected to provide any major recruitment problems for the Authority.

If any attempt had been made in the Act for the appointment of other properly qualified officers to perform the duties imposed on the Authority by the Act, it is highly improbable, I think, that the Bill would ever have been passed. As it was, the Parliamentary debates on the Bill, as recorded in Hansard, make it

very clear that some members of the Country Party were highly critical of the Bill; although, ironically, it was a member of the Country Party who eventually moulded it into a functional form.

It seems very likely to me that the Government was playing a very cautious hand and felt that it would be prudent to see how the new Authority performed before it committed itself to a programme of expansion in national parks. However, after the Authority had demonstrated that it was adopting a highly responsible attitude in regard to the control and management of national parks, it might have seemed reasonable to hope that additional staff would have been provided to enable the Authority to deal with the manifold duties prescribed by the Act.

The first Technical Officer, Mr J. M. Landy [later Governor of Victoria 2001-06], was appointed in August 1959, and this naturally proved very helpful. But appointments under the Public Service Act require Treasury approval, and this was not forthcoming. To assist the Authority to cope with its ever-increasing workload, the Chairman of the Forests Commission, Mr A. O. Lawrence, a foundation member of the National Parks Authority, in 1961 very generously offered to second an officer of the Commission for a period of two years, with the proviso that if, at the end of that time, the officer wished to return to the Commission, he could do so without loss of seniority. However, if the Authority were able to persuade the Public Service Board and Treasury to create a new position, the officer concerned, if he so wished, could be appointed to the new position. Of course, the Authority gratefully accepted the Commission's offer and, in due course, was successful

in its negotiations with the Board and Treasury. So, about the middle of January 1962, Mr R. G. M. Yorston, B.Sc. (Forestry), was seconded to the Authority, bringing with him several years of experience in the field.

In May 1962, Mr Landy resigned to accept a position with ICIANZ Ltd, and the resulting vacancy was filled by Mr T. E. Arthur, B.Sc. (For.) in July 1962. Mr Arthur had had several years' experience with the Forests Commission and, later, with the Commonwealth Department of Works as Horticulturist. He had been a member of the Wyperfeld National Park Committee of Management for several years.

Later, Treasury clearance was obtained for the creation of a new position that of Chief Technical Officer, to which in due course Mr Arthur was appointed. The consequential vacancy was filled by Mr D. S. Saunders, B.Agr.Sc., in January 1963. By June 1963, the Authority's staff consisted of three Technical Officers (Scientists), one being on secondment, an Administrative Officer and a Clerk, along with three typists/stenographers, the Secretary and the Director. I will not weary the reader with further details of the Authority's struggle to obtain staff, but the Annual Reports show how the staff grew over the years.

Frustrations

These Reports show how reluctant the Government was, during the first thirteen years or so, to provide the National Parks Authority/Service with the necessary staff; but they fail to convey any idea of the frustrations of the administration during that period. Every year submissions were made to the Public Service Board, setting out the need for staff and finance, and the necessary consultations

were held with the Public Service Board Inspectors in an attempt to justify the requests for staff; yet almost every application achieved nothing. All the work of the Director, Secretary and other senior officers of the Authority or Service, and of the typists, went for nothing and next year we had to endure the same frustrations.

When we did manage to obtain an approval, it seemed like a miracle; but one of the major stumbling blocks was the Board's practice of recruiting new scientific officers at the junior level of SO-1. This may have been reasonable in the early days of the Authority; but, after ten years, it was no longer appropriate. Obviously, the attitude of the Treasurer of the day towards a particular arm of government was critical. The fact that, for some time, the Government depended on the Country Party for a majority in the Upper House made it difficult for the Government to appear too generous to the National Parks Authority/Service, because, as Hansard relates, the Country Party was generally opposed to the development of a National Parks Service.

Status

In a paper entitled 'The Role of Committees of Management in National Parks Administration', which I presented at the third Ministerial Conference on National Parks, held in Brisbane in June 1969, I examined the reasons why the Government of Victoria had been so slow in providing the resources (finance and staff) to enable the controlling Authority to accomplish the objectives so clearly expounded in the National Parks Act 1956. It seemed to me that, as an arm of the government service, national parks had not yet

achieved a status comparable with that of the State's other agencies such as forestry, water supply, agriculture, etc. Whatever difficulties these services may have had in establishing themselves in the past, the governments of the period 1956-69 recognized their economic value. These arms of the government service had demonstrated their value and had thereby achieved status, whereas the national parks, which necessarily had to compete with other government departments for financial support, had yet to be recognized for their place in the economy of the State. National parks (or those responsible for their control) were subjects for derision in Parliament; they were assigned to relatively junior Ministers; and the day-to-day management of the parks was placed in the hands of committees of management.

The role of committees of management in national parks administration is discussed elsewhere, but here we are concerned with the reasons why the Government was so reluctant to provide the necessary finance for national parks. Because of the relatively low population, the slowly-developing economy, the isolation of our island continent and the general lack of men (and women) having the necessary training and experience, it was not customary to appoint the members of committees of management on the basis of any particular qualification. If they showed interest and a willingness to undertake some of the responsibility of protecting the park, they were strong candidates for appointment. There were of course some outstanding men who served on the committees, and it is a tribute to them all that the areas were preserved and in some cases 'developed' for the benefit of visitors. Certainly they were pioneering days, but the status

of national parks was not greatly enhanced by their efforts.

The lack of definition of the national park concept and of the principles of management in those early days led to some strange practices. For example, the first committee of management of Wilsons Promontory National Park saw the park not as an ecological entity but as a repository for all the native plants, birds and animals which at that time existed in Victoria. Introductions were made of various plants and numerous birds without any regard to or knowledge of the particular requirements of the species or of the effects which such introductions might have on other species. Malleefowl, lyrebirds, bower-birds and many other species were introduced into the Promontory. How many of them survived is not the point at issue - what is important is that such practices did little to enhance the status of national parks in the minds of the public or the Government.

Shortage of funds and perhaps other factors sometimes caused committees of management to issue grazing licences (e.g. Wilsons Promontory and Mount Buffalo), to strip the bark off wattle trees and sell it (Spermwhale Head - later The Lakes National Park) or to open a quarry and sell forest products (Churchill). Such practices did not enhance the status of national parks.

Thus the National Parks Authority inherited a system of national parks which had yet to achieve status comparable with that of other government agencies concerned with resource management. Worse still, some of the committees of management included Members of Parliament (and, in one case, a Member of the Cabinet), who did not hesitate to use their positions of privilege to frustrate the Authority in its endeavours to create avenues

of communication between committees of management and the Authority and establish workable relationships. It was customary for the Hon. Gilbert Chandler MLC, Minister of Agriculture, to make direct approaches to the Chairman of the National Parks Authority, the Hon. A. J. Fraser. I protested that, as Chairman of the Churchill National Park Committee of Management and as a member of the Fern Tree Gully National Park Committee of Management, it was not proper for him to approach the Chairman as his ministerial colleague, but that he should discuss matters pertaining to those parks with the Authority - in the first place with the Director. I am afraid that I lost a few brownie points on that issue, but the example illustrates the 'freemasonry' of the Cabinet.

These negative influences reduced the bargaining power of the National Parks Authority and delayed the recognition by the Government of the importance of national parks and of the National Parks Service as a functional unit within the economy of the State. For many years, National Parks remained the Cinderella of government services.

But there were other factors working in favour of the National Parks Service. The passing of the State Development Act (1970) resulted in the abolition of the National Parks Authority on 31st March 1971 and the assumption of the powers and duties of the Authority by the Minister. This should not be seen as a reflection on the National Parks Authority, because it was only through its persistent endeavours over the years that the embryonic concept of a national parks service had developed to this point.

The new Act made the Director of National Parks directly responsible to the Minister, which surely indicated

that the Government felt that the stage had been reached when the Director (with his supporting staff) could function without the direct involvement of the members of former Authority. The long association of the several Departmental Heads who comprised the major part of the Authority and of the officers of those departments with the Director had laid the foundations of what was to follow. One immediate consequence of the new arrangement was that there was much closer liaison between the Minister of State Development (the Hon. Vance Dickie MLC), the Permanent Head (Mr P. W. Merrett) and the Director than had hitherto been possible.

The debate on the Bill provided an opportunity for the Member for Benambra, the Hon. T. W. Mitchell, MP to launch another attack on the Director of National Parks. In addressing Parliament on the Bill to establish a Department of State Development and abolish the National Parks Authority, he is reported in Hansard (9 December 1970, p. 3193) as saying that "the only two persons who will now administer the Act will be the Minister and the Director, Dr Smith. They will be dictators." He continued, "With all due respect to Dr Smith, although I have always admired his scientific ability, I have taken strong objection to his complete inefficiency and inability to grasp even the first principle of administration. He has not shown that he can administer. A Director of National Parks should first and foremost be an administrator."

There was more: "Dr Smith has treated the Country Party and other parties in this House cavalierly. He has never once approached a member of the Country Party or invited a member to his office to explain why the situation may have been misunderstood by the

Party. In fact, from reports, he has done nothing but cast aspersions on members of Parliament. This is disappointing, because he has a great deal of ability." And there was more; but surely, that was enough to dampen the enthusiasm of most people.

However, despite Mr Mitchell's gloomy forebodings, the National Parks Service continued to perform well and to grow in stature, in preparation for its incorporation in the Ministry for Conservation in 1973. This did not destroy the identity of the National Parks Service, but enhanced its status and afforded greater scope for those concerned to improve the service which had been developed over the years in fulfilment of the objects of the National Parks Act 1956.

The Land Conservation Act 1970

Over the years there had been a growing recognition by the Government of the need for a specialist body to examine the Crown lands of Victoria with the particular object of making recommendations to the Government on the balanced use of land in Victoria. The Land Conservation Act (1970) established the Land Conservation Council (LCC) for this purpose.

The LCC's first Chairman, Mr S. L. Dimmick, was a man of great experience and an outstanding administrator, and a man of strong character. He was duly afforded the necessary resources to undertake the work. Above all, he was provided with a very competent staff of highly qualified scientists who set about the Council's task in a systematic manner. The membership of the LCC included the Heads of the various government departments concerned with land management, including the

Director of National Parks, and three non-government members.

The Act provided inter alia that "in making any recommendation, the Council shall have regard to the present and future needs of the people of Victoria in relation to:

- (a) the preservation of areas which are ecologically significant;
- (b) the conservation of areas of natural interest beauty or historical interest;
- (c) the creation and preservation of areas of reserved forest;
- (d) the creation and preservation of areas for national parks;
- (e) the creation and preservation of areas for leisure and recreation and in particular of areas close to cities and towns for bushland recreation reserves;
- (f) the creation and preservation of reserves for the conservation of fish and wildlife;
- (g) the preservation of species of native plants; and
- (h) land required by government departments and public authorities in order to carry out their functions."

The new Act required that all Crown land in Victoria be examined systematically with a view to ensuring that it was ultimately used most appropriately. The work of the Land Conservation Council proceeded apace and still goes on. A comprehensive record of its work would be of inestimable value for future reference, but the matter which is relevant here is that the Government – and the Parliament – recognized that the growing status of the National Parks Service entitled it to a place on the Council which was empowered to make recommendations on land-use, and that the selection of areas for reservation as national parks was a



Victoria's Parliament House. Photo: Widhi Rachmanto (Flickr | Creative Commons Licence Attribution 2.0 Generic)

matter for investigation by specialists, instead of being determined on emotive issues or an ad hoc basis.

Ministry for Conservation

The creation of the Ministry for Conservation, which came into operation on 23rd January 1973, had further beneficial results for the National Parks Service. New positions for a Planning Officer and a Research Liaison Officer were created, but the appointees, Mrs Jane Lennon MA, and Mr M. D. Watson, BSc (Hons) (Monash), MA (Princeton) respectively, did not take

up duty until after 30th June 1973.

It is important to appreciate that the passing of the three Acts of Parliament referred to above had a profound effect in raising the status of national parks in Victoria, but it should also be recognized that the National Parks Service had been growing in stature over the previous twelve years or so and this had contributed to the enactments referred to above.

A word of praise

Other events occurred during 1971 which gave a great boost to

the National Parks Service and to national parks. A Bill was being drafted to amend the National Parks Act by incorporating certain provisions which experience had indicated to be necessary. There was really nothing controversial about the Bill, but one day I received a telephone call from the then Minister of Lands, the Hon. J. C. M. (Jim) Balfour MP. "Tom Mitchell would like to have a word with you regarding the amendments," said Jim. "Would you be willing to meet him and have a chat?"

Now, over the years, the Hon. T. W. Mitchell MP had used every



A sand blow inland from Oberon Bay is already extensive in December 1952. John Hart-Smith stands in the foreground.

available opportunity to discredit me before Parliament, but I had always thought that it would be in our mutual interests for me to seek an interview with him to ascertain just why he appeared to take such delight in attacking me in Parliament, knowing that I had no redress. However, my 'advisors' had consistently said that 'it would be a waste of time'. So, when Jim Balfour (with whom I had cordial relations) 'opened the door' for me, I decided immediately that it was time to enter and meet Tom Mitchell.

My recollections of our meeting are still crystal clear. I went around to Parliament House to meet him; he

came toward me, smiling, with hand outstretched. "Hello, Len", said Tom, "very nice of you to come; I've been wanting to have a chat with you about the new Bill." "My pleasure, Tom", I replied, "I've been wanting to talk to you, too." So we sat down and talked about the new amendments, which I was able to explain to Tom's satisfaction. Not a word was said about the past and, when we parted, Tom said, "You know, they want me to say something about the Bill in the House".

It so happened that I was in the Visitors' Gallery when the Assembly was debating the Bill. In due course, Tom Mitchell rose and addressed the

House as follows: "This Bill is of great significance in the administration of national parks because it carries on an old policy and implements a new one on national parks which are now under the control of the Minister of State Development and the Director of National Parks, Dr Smith. I am grateful to the Minister for making Dr Smith available to go through the Bill with me. In the past I have been critical of Dr Smith but now find I was mistaken. I had a satisfactory and friendly chat with him on this Bill and I am sure that we can co-operate successfully in the future.

"At the same time, however knowledgeable Dr Smith may be,

or however efficient any man may be in that position, members of my party consider that the control of national parks is an unfair burden to place on one man. The Minister has other irons in the fire and the control of 23 national parks must fall to one man. There should be a small controlling body consisting of perhaps three people. Dr Smith should not be asked to carry the full burden that was formerly carried by a comparatively large body." Mr Mitchell concluded on the following note: "It is too much to ask one man to carry so much responsibility and the Minister should consider giving additional assistance to Dr Smith."

On a later occasion (11th September 1974), when speaking in the Address in Reply to the Governor's speech at the opening of the Spring Session of Parliament, Mr Mitchell had this to say: "His Excellency referred to a proposed new National Parks Bill. The former Premier, Sir Henry Bolte, broke his word and instead of reforming the National Parks Authority, he put the whole work load on to Dr Smith's shoulders. It is too much for one man. I have changed my mind considerably about Dr Smith. He has done a good job and he has stuck to his guns."

So there was Tom Mitchell, the same person, in the same place, who many years earlier had *inter alia* informed the House that "It (the [1956 National Parks] Bill) shows that the Government will give ducats to the 'butterfly boys' and let them buy butterfly nets and go after yabbies with fish traps" and who had referred in disparaging terms to my predecessor, Mr Crosbie Morrison, and virtually crucified me during the period 1958-1971, telling the Parliament that I was 'doing a good job' and castigating the Government for not giving me more money to pursue the objects of the Act.



Marram grass was used at the northern end of Oberon Bay to stabilise sand dunes. January 1986.

Tom was looking straight at me as he made his speech, and I happened also to catch the eye of my former Minister, Mr Manson, in the House. He raised his hand in salute! A thousand thoughts flashed through my mind; at that moment I thought I understood just how relieved Odysseus felt when he finally succeeded in steering his frail craft past Scylla and Charybdis. Changing the metaphor, I knew that, somehow, I had run that second mile and that my torch was still burning brightly.

So a new era began; there were no more attacks from Tom Mitchell. I am sure that the status of national parks and the National Parks Service rose a goodly number of points on the Parliamentary Stock Exchange in consequence of Tom Mitchell's address to Parliament on that day.

Chapter 21

Ranger issues



Wyperfeld NP, 1959. Neil Hart-Smith and Rudd Campbell at the old whim, Lake Brambuck.

I was not alone in sometimes being a candidate for the executioner's block. At least two of the National Parks rangers had similar problems.

I have mentioned elsewhere that the appointment of a ranger, even on a part-time basis, at Wyperfeld National Park in October 1958 marked the beginning of the development of that park for tourist purposes. The appointment of Albert Edward George Campbell – known universally as 'Rudd' – received wide acclaim in the district. Rudd was an active and enthusiastic supporter of the Yaapeet Football Club and popular with the farming community. He and his brother Bill had for years associated themselves with the park. When the Committee of Management paid a visit, Rudd's Land Rover was always available to assist in

transporting the members along the very low-grade tracks throughout the park.

After his appointment as Ranger, Rudd played a valuable part in the area of public relations and escorted visitors or directed them to special points of interest. He was a mine of information on park matters and I have seen numerous letters written by visitors, including many from America, expressing their appreciation of the favours and good fellowship which Rudd bestowed upon them. Rudd was a popular escort when the Governor of Victoria, Sir Rowan Delacombe and Lady Delacombe visited the park, as they did on several occasions.

No one could pretend that Rudd had been over-educated at school but

he was well endowed with wit and good humour, and with the kind of sagacity which is acquired by long association with the land and the bush. When the Minister, Mr Fraser, and Mrs Fraser and her sister visited the park with me in 1960, Rudd won all their hearts.

When a mob of kangaroos bounded across the track ahead of us, Mrs Fraser could not conceal her delight and exclaimed, "How wonderful, aren't they graceful!" Rudd responded laconically, "Woman, you ain't seen nothin' yet". I am sure that I saw a smile steal timidly across the Minister's face, and the two ladies, surprised perhaps but obviously enjoying the moment, inclined their heads in my direction. Rudd led the party to his favourite features – the giant red gum, the Malleefowl



Rudd Campbell and his Land Rover in Wyperfeld NP, ca 1962.

mound, the stand of cypress pines (*Callitris spp*), the red gums at Black Flat, the old whim at Lake Brambuck – and drew attention to the Smoker Parrots (*Polytelis anthopeplus*), Major Mitchell cockatoos, Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*), Mallee Ringnecks (*Barnardius barnardi*), etc. as we proceeded from one high point to another. It was a wonderful experience, and all due to Rudd.

When the park was threatened by bushfire, Rudd (a member of the Rural Fire Brigade) was always at the forefront of those who strove to arrest the fire and save the park. At one time he had a serious difference of opinion with the local Forest Officer who, in Rudd's opinion, adopted the wrong strategy in attacking a fire which threatened the Wonga Hut area. Rudd loved that park.

In the early days, especially 1959-60, Rudd used to entertain the members of Committee of Management and me by demonstrating his prowess with his pea-rifle in reducing the rabbit population. He must have had eyes like a hawk, because he could see a rabbit at fifty metres and shot many of them from his seat in the Land Rover. Jokingly, he would ask "which eye do you want?" This practice might seem a little strange to the ardent conservationist; but it was much more selective than any other method I know of and it did destroy rabbits, which the Act required us to do!

And then, on 8 November 1970, quite suddenly, Rudd died. He had spent the day working in the park, but died of a heart attack shortly after reaching his home. He had served

the park and the community well and it was recognized that he would be sadly missed. Rudd's death left Wyperfeld without a ranger.

In due course, the position was advertised, in order to afford all those interested an opportunity to apply and to ensure that the successful applicant could be seen not to have received favoured treatment. After careful consideration by the officers and Director, it was agreed that the situation could best be met by appointing Mr Gary Anderson as Acting Ranger. Gary had been serving as a Park Assistant under Eric McDonald at Hattah Lakes National Park since December 1965 and had acquired considerable experience in national parks management. He had attended two Ranger Training Courses (1967



Victorian Governor Sir Rohan Delacombe (centre) and party visited Wyperfeld NP in April 1964.

and 1969) during that period and had, on his own initiative, developed an authoritative knowledge of entomology. His advice was often sought by officers of the CSIRO.

The appointment of Gary Anderson as a Park Ranger at Wyperfeld immediately posed problems for the National Parks Service. Rudd had lived at his own house near Yaapeet; there was no house in the park, so Gary had to find lodgings in the district. This was a difficult period for him and the Service and arrangements were set in train for a house to be built in the park, as soon as possible.

After examining the various alternatives, the Public Works Department and officers of the National Parks Service collaborated in the preparation of plans and specifications of a house to suit the rather harsh conditions of Wyperfeld.

The house was prefabricated by Phelan's of Maryborough and was ready for occupation by September 1972.

Gary's appointment as Ranger at Wyperfeld National Park was soon followed by expressions of dissatisfaction from some of the park visitors. The general complaint was that the ranger did not bestow sufficient attention on the visitors and was not available to drive them to the special points of interest such as the Big Red Gum, etc. Then there appeared to be some misunderstanding between the ranger and a reverend gentleman who complained that he was not permitted to conduct a religious service in the park. When this matter was publicized through the local paper, I decided that the cause of the dissatisfaction should be investigated.

I was aware that there were many visitors to the park who were loud in their praise of Gary Anderson and that he had established the practice of giving illustrated lectures on natural history subjects in the Wonga Hut. I am not sure, but I think that Mr Ian Maroske (a very active member of the Committee) had somewhat miraculously produced a projector which could be worked off a 12-volt battery. At all events, the Hut was always crowded when Gary gave a talk, and it has to be mentioned that this activity was entirely voluntary and undertaken at the end of a normal day's work.

Because the local people had always taken a special interest in Wyperfeld, I decided to invoke the aid of Mr Jack Fisher, who had played a prominent part in any public functions in the park and 'automatically' (often in association

with Rudd's brother Bill) in acting as chef at the barbecues which were organised to mark special occasions such as a visit by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe, and Lady Delacombe, and the Mallee Regional Committee, etc. I asked Jack if he would be kind enough to arrange a meeting between half a dozen of the 'elder statesman' of the district and myself, to discuss the management of Wyperfeld National Park and Gary Anderson's role as Park Ranger. Jack and Mrs Fisher very generously offered me the hospitality of their home for the occasion. I left it to Jack to select the members of the 'discussion group'.

While these arrangements were proceeding, I discussed matters with Gary Anderson so that I could provide the meeting with appropriate responses to the questions I presumed they would ask.

The meeting duly took place. The reasons for the meeting have already been given, but I took the opportunity to explain certain aspects of the matter which had not previously been discussed. I explained that, when Rudd Campbell had been appointed Park Ranger (part-time) in October 1958, it had seemed a very satisfactory solution to the problem of protecting the park. The National Parks Authority had little knowledge of the park, having only just recently begun to address its duties as defined in the Act. Rudd had unparalleled knowledge of the park; he lived in close proximity, thereby rendering it unnecessary to provide a house for the Ranger, and he was strongly recommended by the Committee of Management. The appointment of a local man of good standing in the Community provided the Authority with a very useful link with the people of the district.

It is doubtful whether any other person could have served the



Wyperfeld NP ranger, Gary Anderson, focused on controlling pest plants and animals in the park and researching native species.

Authority's purposes better than Rudd Campbell did in those early years. I personally found him of the utmost help in becoming acquainted with the various features of the park and with its problems. As I gained an understanding of park matters I was able to extend the range of our discussions and many of the decisions reached were based on our mutual assessment of the problem under consideration. I was

aware also that, as the Authority's scientific staff grew (as it did, very slowly), the several Technical Officers like John Landy, Trevor Arthur, Bob Yorston, Don Saunders and Colin Hutchinson, who became involved in various aspects of park management, also found Rudd helpful and a veritable mine of information.

As mentioned earlier, as a public relations officer Rudd was in his



The new house for the ranger built in 1972 near the entrance to Wyperfeld NP.

element. He conducted many visitors from overseas and different parks of Australia on guided tours, and Rudd's commentaries, if sometimes lacking in scientific basis, were always entertaining. Over the years, the park had been visited by groups of schoolboys and their teachers from such schools as Carey Grammar, Geelong Grammar, and several Technical and High Schools, and Rudd had been most helpful in the implementation of the different conservation projects in which the boys and their teachers were involved.

Initially, I informed the meeting, the Authority had been confronted with the need to tackle certain basic problems: to develop a water supply, and to provide amenities such as toilets, picnic shelters and safe fireplaces, improved roads

and signposting. The Authority had found it necessary to develop safe and reliable methods of controlling the rabbit population, and a fire-protection strategy.

Over the years, these problems had been tackled and the relevant procedures had become woven into the fabric of park management. Rudd had played his part and, had he lived, he would have continued to do so. But he died. I pointed out to the meeting that when Rudd died, the mould in which he had been cast had been destroyed with him. It was not likely that his replacement would be similar in interests or background or in personal characteristics. These were the facts of life.

Gary Anderson had not been cast in Rudd's mould. He was much younger; he had spent five years in Hattah Lakes National Park, where

he had been actively concerned in conservation matters and in the destruction of noxious weeds and vermin (rabbits). At Wyperfeld he found that park visitors were already fairly well provided for in regard to the basic necessities – water, toilets, shelters, roads, signs and fire-protection tracks – but that rabbit and noxious weed problems abounded. Only Gary Anderson could sustain the fight against these invaders. It was inevitable under the circumstances, I argued, that park visitors should receive less favoured treatment than they had hitherto. But, I pointed out, as if to compensate for his seeming neglect of park visitors, Gary Anderson had, in his own time and under very difficult conditions, instituted an educational programme in the form of his illustrated lectures. It was really not possible to compare the

value of the two services provided by Rudd Campbell and Gary Anderson: they were both appropriate to the condition of the park at the times of their appointment. I did not believe that either the park or the visitors had really suffered by the change.

I am not sure that the local residents had hitherto perceived the matter of park management in the broad perspective in which I presented it to them, but it was obvious from their comments that they felt that they had a better understanding of the problems of national parks management than they had before the meeting began.

There remained the matter of the complaint from the minister that Gary had not permitted him to conduct his religious service. When I explained that Gary had not objected to the holding of the meeting, but only to the use of loudspeakers to broadcast the service over the entire camping area at Wonga Hut, there were looks of incredulity and annoyance on the faces of those present. There was complete support for Gary Anderson.

We were all reluctant to leave the comfort of the warm glowing fire in the Fisher lounge; but, as I stepped out into the frosty night air, preparatory to driving back to the motel at Hopetoun, I reflected on the importance of maintaining a close relationship with the people in the district in which our national parks are situated.

Gary Anderson spent several more years at Wyperfeld and was the first ranger to occupy the fine house built near the park entrance in 1972, but his problems with the local residents were not yet over. For many years prior to the creation of the Authority it had been the custom of the residents in the district to hold an annual picnic in the park. The fact that, in days gone by, there had been no water

supply or toilets or safe roads had not deterred them; but a problem arose when it became known that it was planned to hold a football match in the park as part of the day's entertainment.

Gary declined to give permission and there was local resentment which culminated in my agreeing to meet the Shire of Karkaroc to explain why it was not considered appropriate to hold football matches in national parks. I decided that Gary should be present so that he could meet the individual members of Council and meet the Council as a body, but that he should not be involved in the formal discussion between the Council and me. He would be free to talk to individual Councillors after the formal business.

When it came to meeting the Council, of course, I could only inform them of the obvious. Yet, if it were obvious, there would have been no need for any discussion. I thought I recognized the crux of the problem and endeavoured to explain matters as I understood them. In the more distant past Wyperfeld, although declared a national park under the Land Act in 1921, had 'always' been regarded as belonging to the people of the district, who felt free to do virtually whatever they wished. The annual picnic had become part of the folk-lore of the district and was an occasion for conducting foot races in which the local champions, young and old, demonstrated their relative skills, and even a 'greasy pig' race. The latter seemed to have temporarily fallen out of favour.

I explained to the meeting that national parks were areas in which the emphasis in management was the protection of the land and its associated flora and fauna in such a way that the parks could be used and enjoyed by the people without impairment to the features which

the Act of reservation was designed to protect. This was achieved by restricting human activities to various forms of passive recreation such as walking, swimming (where appropriate), picnicking, photography, etc. I drew the attention of the Council to a fact which was well known to them all that, in areas like Wyperfeld, there was a very delicate balance between the soil and its sparse vegetative cover. The impact of thirty-six pairs of heavy boots, complete with football stops, on such soil was fraught with danger to the surface, and repairs took a long time to effect. For the more active forms of human recreation, other areas of land had been reserved from private ownership so that they could be used for various forms of sport, including football.

I pointed out that the Yaapect football ground was available to the local people, who were free to use it without any of the constraints imposed in a national park, and that nobody was being deprived of the enjoyment of the game of football. It was simply a matter of venue.

While I personally had enjoyed playing football in my younger days, it was clearly very important not to establish a precedent which could have repercussions in the future in other national parks.

I concluded by saying that the National Parks Service had been given the task of establishing management practices for Victoria's national parks, that it was still in the process of 'phasing out' certain practices which had become established in the past and that I always welcomed the opportunity of discussing matters with those interested.

I think that the Council understood, and the football match was not held in Wyperfeld.

Port Campbell National Park

The spectacular coastal scenery of the Port Campbell district was first brought to my attention in February 1934 by some fellow visitors to Phillip Island. Their enthusiasm prepared me gladly to accept an invitation in November 1958 from the Heytesbury Shire Council to accompany Councillors Frank Ford and Cecil Bergin on a visit of inspection with a view to having a national park declared in the district.

At the end of a very full day I had been captivated by the coastal scenery, ranging from Peterborough in the west to Gibsons Steps in the east. A few months later, the National Parks Authority visited the area, commencing at Moonlight Head. Investigations made in collaboration with the Lands Department Western District Surveyor, Mr Dan Madden, revealed that there were a number of problems in the eastern part of the proposed national park, and the eastern boundary was set near Gibsons Steps. The Authority investigated the possibility of including the Waarre Pine Plantation, because of its excellent potential for camping purposes, but there were problems with the local pony club, which used the plantation for riding exercises.

The Country Roads Board undertook a fairly major road realignment of the Great Ocean Road between Port Campbell and Princetown and, since it had been decided that the new road would mark the northern boundary of the park,

this caused some delay. Of much greater concern was the stripping of limestone for road-making purposes, creating an unpleasant scar. Reference has been made in Chapter 10 to the damage caused by Country Roads Board bulldozers in the vicinity of Loch Ard Gorge and the vandalising of the cave below; but eventually these activities ceased, though the scars remain.

Proposal for golf course

Just when the boundary problems appeared to have been settled, I was approached by representatives of the golf lobby in the district with a request to construct a golf course within the proposed park, to the east of Port Campbell. I demurred, and persuaded the proponents of the scheme, led by Cec Bergin, to examine the possibilities of the area near Peterborough and, with the co-operation of the Lands Department (through Mr Madden), this suggestion was adopted.

Surf Lifesaving Club

Further delay was caused by a last-minute application from the Port Campbell Life-Saving Club for permission to build a club house in which to house the lifeboat, and to construct a launching ramp. This was a highly emotive issue and eventually it was agreed to accede to the request.

Loch Ard Cemetery

On 1st June 1878 the sailing ship Loch Ard struck a reef and sank with the loss of 52 lives, near the gorge which now bears the ship's name. There were only two survivors, Eva Carmichael and Tom Pearce. Only four bodies were recovered and these were buried in a small cemetery near Loch Ard Gorge.

Declaration and development of the park

The Port Campbell National Park was declared under Act No. 7148, which received the Governor's assent on 5th May 1964. Provision was made in the Act for the National Parks Authority to be appointed sole trustee of the Loch Ard Cemetery, thus enabling the Authority to undertake the protection and maintenance of the historic cemetery.

As an interim measure, the Heytesbury Shire Council agreed to continue to manage the park through the agency of their local employee, Mr Cyril Couch, who was appointed Park Ranger when the Authority assumed control on 1st July 1965.

One of the features of the park was a camping area situated between the township and the Port Campbell Creek. This had been established some years previously by the Heytesbury Shire Council with the assistance of the relevant government tourist organisation of the day. The amenities consisted of a



The coastal formation London Bridge, Port Campbell NP, in the late 1950s. In 1992 the left hand arch collapsed, leaving two visitors stranded on the right hand section until rescued by helicopter.

toilet block and a large picnic shelter. There was also a large amenities block on the foreshore, incorporating toilets, showers and changing rooms.

The Authority was soon brought to a realisation of the problems attending the management of the park. When higher-than-usual tides caused a flooding of Port Campbell Creek, the camping area became inundated and, after the flood had subsided, remained a quagmire for some time.

The Authority's first action was to prepare a plan of management for the park, including the camping area. The plan was completed by early 1966 and no time was lost in commencing essential works. A levee bank was constructed to prevent tidal waters from inundating the camping area, and the Ranger

installed a flap valve on the drain leading from the park to the margin of the creek to enable surface water to be discharged from the park, but to exclude tidal waters.

In the construction of the levee bank the ranger showed a considerable amount of ingenuity. His local knowledge gave him access to information not so readily available to Head Office, and he seemed to have an uncanny knack of knowing where to obtain 'fill' at the right price for the levee bank. He and the Chief Technical officer worked very closely on this project and their calculations of the amount of fill required were not far out. When additional allocations were needed to meet some contingency to take advantage of an unexpected windfall in the availability of an additional supply of fill, I gladly

acquiesced to their requests, so that delays were minimal.

Several years previously, there had been a recognition of the need for a levee bank at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park to prevent flooding of the northern part of the camp during periods of 'king' tides; but the administrative machinery was too cumbersome to set in motion. There is still no levee bank at Tidal River!

A new toilet block was constructed at the western end of the camping area, incorporating hot and cold showers, toilets and changing rooms. The camping ground was levelled and campsites demarcated in an orderly manner, and a tree-planting programme was begun, to provide shade for campers during the

summer and to beautify the area. These works were well under way during 1966.

At the request of the Authority, the Country Roads Board commenced reconstruction and sealing of the access roads to Loch Ard Gorge, London Bridge, The [Twelve] Apostles, The Arch and The Grotto. This involved a total estimated cost of \$34,500 which was covered by the special road fund (see chapter 11).

It is interesting to note the relative speed with which developments proceeded in this park; in addition to the Director, the Authority now had three very energetic Technical Officers (Trevor Arthur, Don Saunders and Bob Yorston) whose experience in other national parks was directed to the development of the new park.

Naturally, suitable signs and notices were prepared and erected in various parts of the park to assist and advise visitors.

Committee of Management

The Authority had shown no great eagerness to appoint a Committee of Management for the park, and this led to some uneasiness in the minds of a few of the local people. The problems associated with the management of a camping area on the fringe of a small township were coming to the surface. In particular, the ranger was experiencing a backlash from some of the local people who were finding it difficult to come to terms with the fact that one of their fellow residents, whom they had known for many years, had now been appointed a National Park Ranger and provided with a uniform. It was not the elegant ranger's uniform of today, but it was a uniform, which set him apart from his fellows.

It had come to my ears 'via the



Rock stacks, Port Campbell NP, in 1959. The stack on the left is Mutton Bird Island, where the ship *Loch Ard* was wrecked in June, 1878.

grapevine' that there were just a few who would be pleased to see him dismissed. The disquiet of the local people apparently reached the Council, with the result that I was invited to meet that body with a view to discussing the matter of the appointment of a Committee of Management. It was thought that if a committee of management controlled the park, the 'ranger problem' could be quickly resolved. Of course such clandestine thoughts were not openly canvassed, but I was aware of them.

The meeting with the Heytesbury Shire Council, in March 1966, was very cordial. I expressed my personal appreciation of the enthusiastic assistance I had received towards the end of 1958 from Councillors Bergin and Ford, who had nearly run me off my legs on that memorable day. It transpired in fact that I had been under a delusion in that regard, because they said that it was I who had nearly run them off their legs! I thanked the Council for having assisted the Authority by acting as manager during the first year after the declaration of the park, while the Authority was 'taking stock', and I gave a resume of the Authority's plans for the development of the park, as outlined above.

Naturally, I informed the Council of the Authority's achievements in the way of vermin control and fire protection, provision of facilities for visitors, etc.

Then I paused, hoping that someone would ask a few questions, and I did not have long to wait. Councillor John Younis asked when the Authority proposed to appoint a Committee of Management for the park. I informed Councillor Younis that the matter of a committee of management had been very carefully examined by the Authority. I pointed out that before the advent of the Authority, the appointment of a Committee of Management under the Land Act was the only course open to the Department and such committees as were in existence when the Authority was created had come under the control of the Authority. That was several years previously and, at a time when the Authority had no scientific staff, such an arrangement had proved very helpful. However, the position was now very different; the Authority had several experienced officers with appropriate scientific qualifications and, in any case, the Act did not state that the appointment of a committee was mandatory.

Moreover, servicing committees of management occupied a great deal of the Authority staff's time and, after consideration, the Authority had decided not to appoint a Committee. Councillor Younis was not entirely happy with this explanation, so I explained that the services provided in national parks these days were somewhat more sophisticated than they had been previously. As an example, I described the LP gas installations in the parks and the use of instantaneous LP gas water heaters to provide hot water in the showers and laundry. The regular servicing and maintenance of these appliances called for particular skills and, if the committee were appointed to manage the park, it would naturally be expected to manage the various services.

"Did Councillor Younis have any particular person in mind who could relieve the Authority of that function?" I asked. "Well, no", replied the Councillor. I wound up the discussion by saying that I thought I understood the problem and the Authority welcomed the interest of the Council in the affairs of the park. "However, instead of having a committee of management of which only, say, two members would be councillors, I think it would meet the Council's need better if the Director himself met all members from time to time, for open discussions on park matters," I said. I offered to call on the Council 'at any time' and there was unanimous agreement on that proposal. So the Committee of Management crisis passed and the Authority proceeded as hitherto.

The Fishermen's Tracks

Fishing from the high cliffs around Port Campbell was a popular pastime for many anglers and there were unofficial tracks, in varying

degrees of disrepair, from the main track to favourite fishing spots along the cliffs. There is nothing to compare with the enthusiasm and dogged perseverance of the fisherman, and the numerous trenches and large pot holes provided ample testimony of the wide range of driving skills (and of their lack) among the fisher folk.

Hitherto it appears to have been nobody's responsibility to maintain such tracks and vehicles often became bogged in the quagmire. The owners had to dig them out but did not feel called upon to repair the damage caused in the process. Naturally, when the National Parks Authority was placed in control of the area, it was expected to shoulder the burden of repairing and maintaining the tracks. Clearly, it would not suffice for the Authority merely to place a ban on fishing from the cliffs.

The ranger had difficulty in 'controlling the traffic' and it became apparent that a solution had to be found for the growing problem. Arrangements were therefore made for me to meet representatives of the Western District Anglers' Association to examine the matter 'in the field'. In preparation for the meeting, I made a detailed inspection of the tracks, in the company of the Park Ranger, Cyril Couch. Cyril knew the area well and I relied very heavily on his judgment, which was based on years of practical experience, and a plan was agreed to before we met the fishing fraternity. The joint inspection proceeded smoothly and it was agreed that certain tracks should be closed permanently, some reserved for dry weather use and others should be repaired and used responsibly. In some cases, it was agreed that anglers should not drive to the cliff top, but should walk if necessary to their favourite fishing spots.

I think that the representatives of the Anglers Club were a little surprised to learn that they could meet the representatives of the Authority and talk to them in language which everybody could understand and I am certain that our meeting had very beneficial results for all concerned. I have always found that when there was a misunderstanding with people or the possibility of such, it is essential for the parties to meet and discuss the matter vis-a-vis. Subsequently the Western District Anglers' Club invited me and the local officers of the Fisheries and Wildlife Division to address the Annual Meeting on our respective roles, and this further enhanced our pleasant relationship.

Local problems

Some problems arose in connection with human activities on the beach, in the camping area and in the township of Port Campbell. The regulations relating to the presence of dogs and cats in national parks were not always understood by people who regarded such pets as a natural complement to family life and occasionally, potential campers were requested to 'move on'. The ranger had clear instructions on that matter.

It was recognised throughout the National Parks Service that once an exception was made, the consequences would flow through to other parks. On more than one occasion the Service was informed by disappointed (would-be) visitors that they had had no problems with their pets in other parks (not under the Authority's control); but the rule was strictly applied. At the same time it was recognized that people in transit who were travelling along the coast road, accompanied by their pets, required special consideration. Permission was granted for them to

exercise their pets and allow them their freedom in the more remote parts of the park for toilet purposes. In the main, there was a good understanding between travellers and the park management.

However, a very small number of the residents of Port Campbell township found it more difficult to co-operate with the Park Ranger. One person in particular seemed reluctant to prevent his dog from running at large in the camping area and along the beach, resulting in exchanges between the dog's owner and the ranger. There is a matter of principle involved here which may not immediately be obvious to the reader. The fact is that there are Regulations which preclude the presence of dogs in the campground and on the beach and it is the ranger's duty to see that the regulations are observed. If he turns a blind eye to one resident, it can safely be assumed that other dogs will soon appear in the park, and visitors from other districts may find it difficult to understand why there is one law for local residents and another for visitors. This can only lead very quickly to a total breakdown of the whole system of control.

When it was brought to my attention that one of the local residents had a problem with the ranger, I wrote to him seeking his co-operation, but to no avail. I therefore decided to approach the Secretary of the local Progress Association with a view to arranging a visit to meet the local people. The Progress Association, which presumably represented the majority of the residents, had voted in favour of having the area declared a national park; but although the Authority had visited the park and met the representatives of the committee etc, and although I had visited the park on several occasions, I had not yet met the residents as a body.

I decided to spend two nights at Port Campbell; on the first night I proposed to give a general illustrated talk to explain more fully the purpose of national parks and the principles and philosophies underlying their management, and to demonstrate how Port Campbell National Park fitted into a system of national parks, instead of standing in isolation. The meeting was duly held in the local hall and was fairly well attended, though the discussion was limited. The people seemed reluctant to talk.

The second meeting was held on the following evening, the owner of the Port Campbell Motel having very generously made his large dining room available for the occasion. The purpose of this meeting was to afford the local residents the opportunity of expressing their views on national parks generally and on the conduct of the Park Ranger in particular. I had decided against having Cyril Couch present, because I wanted those present to feel free to let me know what their problems were, if indeed they had problems. They were invited 'to lay their problems on the table, without fear or favour'; but, although initially it seemed to me that they were unhappy about 'something' it proved difficult to determine precisely the real cause of their concern.

Most of the questions asked related to matters of no great moment, but it became apparent that the fullness of the answers which I gave had an encouraging effect and the tension which was evident at the beginning eased, and the atmosphere became more relaxed. Of course questions were asked about dogs in the campground and on the beach, but the answers dispelled any lingering doubts. It seemed that the long list of regulations and the legal jargon made the residents apprehensive; but, when the purpose of the

regulations was explained they seemed satisfied.

One particular item concerned the mothers of Port Campbell who had been in the habit of taking their small children and babies in their prams across the campground to the river beach, which was much safer than the ocean beach. I was informed that since the levee bank had been constructed it was no longer convenient for them to take their children to the beach. I was asked whether it would be possible to construct a track for mothers with prams to facilitate access to the river beach. This was a real bonanza for me, because I had no hesitation in saying that, if those interested would meet me and the Ranger at 10 am on the following morning, we would mark out the track to suit their needs and construction would commence immediately.

As the meeting proceeded it became apparent to me that the real cause of the antipathy which the residents felt towards the park management was that they felt excluded from a reserve which they had previously looked upon as their own, and that there had been insufficient discussion with them. It is true that the National Parks Authority had visited the area and had met several members of the Heytesbury Shire Council before the area was declared a national park, but the people themselves had felt isolated and deprived. The meeting had bridged the gap between the people and the administration and had provided a basis for a healthy relationship in the future.

There remained one other very important aspect of park management which I thought it advisable to discuss with the residents. It concerned the ranger who had served as the representative of the National Parks Authority and, in recent years, of the National Parks



The Twelve Apostles, looking west, with Margaret Smith in the foreground, December 1959.

Service. Prior to the declaration of the national park in 1964, Mr Cyril Couch had been employed by the Heytesbury Shire Council, his principal duties relating to the maintenance and control of the campground and of the township of Port Campbell. During this period he had acquired considerable knowledge of local conditions and, since his appointment as Park Ranger, this had enabled him to play a very important part in the improvement of conditions in the park.

I had personally observed that, during times of heavy tides and westerly winds, the campground became inundated, but it was Cyril Couch who had proposed that the levee bank be constructed, and it was he who, in collaboration with the Chief Technical Officer, had seen the job through to a successful conclusion. I pointed out that the

establishment of a really good camping area was bound to help the Port Campbell business community. His knowledge of the numerous tracks favoured by fishermen had contributed greatly to the creation of cordial relations between the Authority and the fishermen. His considerable practical experience in matters pertaining to park management were very valuable to the Authority and its officers and, I informed the meeting, life would be much easier for us all if we could persuade one or two people to keep their dogs out of the park. I mentioned that Cyril himself, when I first met him in 1964, had been accompanied by his little dog, but recognised that the dog should not be permitted in the park and had co-operated fully by ensuring that it did not enter.

I concluded by thanking the residents for the opportunity of

meeting them and suggested that, if they wished, I would be happy to return next year. The residents endorsed this proposal, and the meeting duly took place. However, they no longer had any major problems, but several of the local residents expressed their appreciation for the service being provided for park visitors with consequential benefit to the town, especially those providing stores, food services, etc.

The Authority and all officers of the Service recognised the importance of establishing and maintaining cordial relations with the 'local residents' concerned with particular national parks, but sheer lack of staff made it difficult and often impossible to do to keep them fully informed. However, the meetings at Port Campbell served to demonstrate the need for close liaison between the controlling body and the local people.

The head hunters

In various parts of this narrative reference will be found to expressions of concern from individuals who have felt moved to criticise the Director of National Parks, either because they thought he had failed to do something or because he had actually done something which displeased someone.

The Director was really in a 'no win' situation. Some people had access to reports on matters under consideration by the Authority and, if they felt that they could make political capital out of it, they didn't hesitate to address Parliament on the subject, in the hope of discrediting the Director. At other times, local people might have felt that they had a grievance and, whether they had their facts right or not, they exercised their "democratic rights" after the manner of Don Quixote. Such a case is the one I am about to describe.

The story of the 'Three Jacks'

On 9 March 1962, there were violent electrical storms throughout the State and a fire broke out in the northern part of Wilsons Promontory National Park. Before it had been brought under control, by a combination of natural processes and the valiant efforts of Forest Commission employees and national park staff, an area of 20,000 - 25,000 acres of forested land had been burnt.

Shortly after the fire had been subdued, the Minister, Mr Fraser, received a letter from Sir Herbert Hyland MP, Member for Gippsland

South, requesting the Minister's comments on a letter he had received from three gentlemen from South Gippsland. The letter read as follows:

"Sir Herbert Hyland

Dear Sir,

The Wilson's [sic] Promontory National Park serves the dual purpose of a sanctuary for nature flora and fauna, and one of the State's leading holiday places, capable of being developed into a tourist resort of world standard.

Its future requirements and development in the above roles lie broadly along similar lines. More roads and tracks are necessary and, above all, the controlling authority must provide efficient and adequate fire protection for visitors and animal life, as well as preserving the timber and beauty spots which clothe its rugged backbone.

Fire Protection is the biggest and most important problem confronting those in authority and, from our knowledge and experience, we local men feel that this can be adequately provided; but, before discussing how, we wish to make the following comments:

(a) The National Park consists broadly of two types of country, low lying country covered with light scrub growth, which is very inflammable and has a long burning season, and high, mostly timbered, mountain ranges in the centre, which will only burn under dry conditions for a very limited time each year. The former area is

the home of the larger animals of the Park; the latter contains most points of interest to tourists.

(b) The Park has a very bad fire record, with three major and many smaller fires since 1938. This latest fire (March 1962) which we consider was the most disastrous of them all burnt out approximately 25,000 acres. Burning under very dry conditions from South to North on a full face across the peninsula it must eventually have destroyed the great bulk of animal life on the northern end, as well as burning the vegetation far too hard.

In the above mentioned period no fire has proved to have been wilfully started by human agency, carelessness and natural causes are blamed, and in the last two years there have been two fires directly attributed to lightning.

It will be readily realised that with the rapid increase in visitors, both to the Tidal River Camp and the beaches on the Northern and Eastern sides, the fire risk will become proportionally greater.

As everyone is aware, a fire travels fastest when fanned by a northerly wind, consequently the scrubby Northern areas of the Park are vitally strategic in fire control. Also as the only access road to the Tidal River Camping area runs roughly north and south through some of the above-mentioned country, the danger to human life and property, and the camp itself, in the event of fire, should be more fully realised by those in authority.



Fire management in national parks has always been a contentious issue. This 1973 photo shows fire protection tracks in the northern part of Wilsons Promontory NP.

(c) From practical experience we know that either in the Spring or Autumn it is possible to carry out light burning on the lower scrubby land, such protective burning serving the dual purpose of providing adequate fire breaks and the very necessary fresh feed to support healthy animal life. At these times the mountain areas would not burn and so protective burning apart from a small area near the Tidal River area would not inconvenience visitors.

FIRE PLAN

We are aware that a fire protection plan for the National Park has been drawn up, but it is far from complete, and in fact the part completed already, was definitely not

satisfactory in the case of the March 1962 fire.

The fire road already built, was well done and satisfactorily aligned but its value as a fire break was negligible as the officer in charge of it had been refused permission by the Director of National Parks, to carry out the protective burning along the road, which he considered necessary for adequate fire control. With the nearest Forestry Commission office approximately 60 miles away at Mirboo North we have no hesitation in stating that had the recent fire started with a northerly wind, it would have crossed this road and gravely endangered the whole Park before the Forestry Commission could get there. As the length of this fire road across the northern portion of the

Park is 10 miles, everyone will realise that it is a dangerous and foolhardy policy to await the outbreak of fire before burning the requisite break along the road.

Attached we enclose a rough plan of a fire protection scheme which we know would give maximum protection. We have chosen an easy and cheap terrain for fire roads which generally traverse sound country and from which it would be possible to readily carry out the necessary protective burning. Such a scheme would have the effect of containing any outbreak of fire, in its own area, and allow a safe getaway for human beings or animals.

May we add that the recent fire, burning about the time when fire restrictions were lifted in our Shire,

was at no time controlled by the Forests Commission. They could only contain it in the area north of the fire road, such area ultimately being completely devastated.

It must be fully understood concerning the enclosed plan, that the fire road system itself does not provide fire protection, protective burning from these roads is vitally necessary for adequate protection of the whole Park.

Now we would like to ask if the Minister concerned and through him the Government is aware:

- (a) That the Forestry Officer in charge of developing the fire plan and roads on the ground at the National Park, has been constantly criticised by the Director of National Parks.
- (b) That this Forestry Officer was ordered by the Director of National Parks to confine fire break burning, on the fire road mentioned in the recent fire, to 6 feet on either side (a ludicrous and impossible feat) when this Officer knew from long practical experience, that such action was useless and hopelessly inadequate.
- (c) That this action of the Director of National Parks has cost the Government and through them the taxpayer thousands of pounds, to contain a fire along a road where an adequate break should have been provided last spring for a trifling cost.
- (d) That the Tidal River camping area, at the moment of writing, is wide open to fire approaching from the North, this being due to the Director of National Parks refusal to [countenance] burning in this area.
- e) That in the opinion of sound local knowledge the state of the country

around Tidal camping area is such that a fire there could result in the greatest loss of human life through burning and suffocation of any tragedy in the history of Victoria.

In conclusion may we state we are reliable and practical men, who know the area concerned very well and some of us have been at every major fire during the period discussed in this letter. Our opinions are unbiased, and our qualifications for presenting them are as follows:

J. H. McDONALD Shire President, Shire of South Gippsland, and Council Nominee on Wilson's Promontory National Park Committee.

J. G. JONES Ex Councillor and Ex Shire President, Shire of South Gippsland and member of Wilson's Promontory National Park Committee.

J. LESTER Councillor, Shire of South Gippsland, Captain of Rural Fire Brigade nearest to National Park. Holder of the agistment rights on the Wilson's Promontory National Park from 1939-60, War years exclusive.

(sgd) J. H. McDONALD, J. G. JONES, J. LESTER"

Some observations on the letter

The letter concludes on this note: "In conclusion may we state we are reliable and practical men, who know the area concerned very well and some of us have been at every major fire during the period discussed in this letter. Our opinions are unbiased and our qualifications for presenting them are as follows ..."

There are certain aspects of the foregoing which invite comment. Firstly, I do not question the sincerity of the gentlemen concerned, but I doubt whether the qualifications [or positions] listed comprise a sound reason for assuming that the authors

were competent to comment on the matters raised in the letter. As to their lack of bias, the history of fires in the Yanakie area, long before my appointment as Director, must raise some questions about this aspect. Also, the three signatories describe themselves as 'reliable and practical men'; as we shall see, if they had been a little more practical, they could have saved many people a great deal of trouble and could have appeared to be more reliable.

In their opening paragraph, they state (categorically) that "Wilson's Promontory national park serves the dual purpose of 'sanctuary for native flora and fauna' and as an area 'capable of being developed into a tourist resort of world standard'".

Now, in looking at the whole range of questions raised in the letter, it must be remembered that, just a few years previously, the Government had established the National Parks Authority under an Act designed to enable the Authority to carry out the duties described in Chapter 2. But the Three Jacks appear to have ignored this and, in paragraph two of their letter, proceed to give their own prescription for achieving the aims set out in paragraph 1. In fact, the whole tenor of the letter amounts to the usurpation of the Authority's mandate.

They state categorically that 'those roads and tracks are necessary'. A moment's reflection will reveal that the flora and fauna had been surviving very well long before the advent of even the first track, and that the problem of protecting the flora and fauna was exacerbated by the development of roads and tracks. The major problem confronting the National Parks Authority was always to strike some sort of a balance between the provision of access (roads and tracks) for tourists and the protection of the flora and fauna.

And, with some bias, I feel bound to suggest that the qualifications, training and experience of the members of the National Parks Authority put them in a category of 'reliable and practical men' somewhat ahead of that of 'The Three Jacks'.

In their third paragraph, they identify the 'biggest and most important problem confronting those in authority' and state that as local men they feel that 'this can be adequately provided'. Here let me explain that the members of the National Parks Authority, including those with extensive experience in the field of fire protection, were never of the opinion that any fire protection plan, however carefully implemented, could ever be considered 'adequate'. Access tracks could be provided, protective burning could be carried out, water points could be developed; but nobody could predict exactly where a fire was likely to break out or what the weather conditions would be at the time.

We need not comment on their next three paragraphs; but it is not immediately apparent how increasing numbers of visitors to the Tidal River Camp and the beaches on the northern and eastern sides would make the fire risk 'proportionally greater'. Such considerations were, in any case, irrelevant to the main purpose of the letter to Sir Herbert Hyland.

In paragraph ten, the real purpose of their letter becomes clear. The letter acknowledges the existence of a fire-protection plan prepared by the Forests Commission and, after appropriate amendment, adopted by the National Parks Authority; but considered to be 'not satisfactory in the case of the March fire'. The 'Three Jacks' conveniently overlooked the fact that it was the track constructed prior to that fire which afforded the

only access there was for fire-fighting purposes, and that it was the nature of the terrain in which the fire had begun, due to lightning, which impeded the fire fighters.

In paragraph ten, the three authors commend the road builders on the quality and alignment of the road, but state (being 'reliable and practical men') that "its value as a fire break was negligible as the officer in charge of it had been refused permission by the Director of National Parks to carry out the protective burning along the road which he considered necessary for adequate fire-control".

The fact is that when the Fire Protection Plan was approved by the Authority, provision was made for a 5-chain strip to be burnt every two or three years (depending on the condition of the vegetation at the time) and this was the basis of my discussion in the field with Mr R. T. Seaton. The track was constructed under the supervision of Mr Alan Galbraith, an Overseer of the Forests Commission, based at Mirboo North.

At a later stage, the letter gives details of the fire-protection plans prepared by the three 'reliable and practical men', and then goes on: "Now we would like to ask if the Minister concerned and through him the Government is aware:-

- (a) That the Forestry Office in charge of developing the fire plan and roads on the ground at the National Park, has been constantly criticised by the Director of National Parks.
- (b) That this Forestry Officer was ordered by the Director of National Parks to confine firebreak burning, on the fire road mentioned in the recent fire, to 6 feet on either side (a ludicrous and impossible feat) when this officer knew from long practical

experience, that such action was useless and hopelessly inadequate.

- (c) That this action of the Director of National Parks has cost the Government and through them the taxpayer thousands of pounds, to contain a fire along a road where an adequate break should have been provided last Spring for a trifling cost.
- (d) That the Tidal River camping area, at the moment of writing is wide open to fire approaching from the North, this being due to the Director of National Parks refusal to allow protective burning in this area.
- (e) That in the opinion of sound local knowledge the state of the country around Tidal camping area is such that a fire there could result in the greatest loss of human life through burning and suffocation of any tragedy in the history of Victoria.

Let us examine these matters in turn, viz:

- (a) The Forestry Officer was not identified by name; but as I had not met any other than Mr R. T. Seaton and Mr Alan Galbraith, it must be assumed that one of these was the officer referred to. In any case, my recollections are and were that our discussions in the field had been very cordial. There had not been any argument about the five-chain strip for protective burning; the need for it had been recognised by all concerned, and dated back to 1959 when the track was first being constructed. It is possible that the 'Three Jacks' were referring to my criticism of the burning done in November/December 1958, without any prior consultation with the Authority; but it was not the burning which

was in question: it was the lack of consultation. To make matters worse, the fire, like the colt from Old Regret, had 'got away'. There was also an incident south of the main road in which the bulldozer operator appeared to have allowed his enthusiasm to carry him beyond the approved plans, to the great annoyance of Mr Seaton.

The statement by the 'Three Jacks' that the Director of National Parks ordered the Forestry Officer "to confine break burning on the fire road mentioned in the recent fire, to 6 feet on either side", was, as the authors said, 'a ludicrous and impossible feat', and should have been sufficient to cause even the most enthusiastic graduates of the Don Quixote Academy to make further inquiries before embarking on their witch hunt.

As the final accusation, regarding the situation at Tidal River, has been covered by the response of the Committee of Management, no further comment is called for.

Minister's reaction

The Minister (Mr Fraser) was naturally concerned and invited my comments. I read the letter carefully and then said to him: "I have never discussed fire-protection matters with any of these three men; in fact, I have never met Jack Lester. I don't know where they obtained their 'information', but I deny their allegations categorically. I regard their statements as libellous and think that I should take legal advice".

The Minister then became even more concerned, because he knew as well as I did that if they had obtained any 'information', it could only have come from an officer of the Forests Commission and, as Minister for Forests (and State Development)

he certainly didn't want any Forest Commission officers involved in libel proceedings.

I informed Mr Fraser that one of the first decisions made by the Authority's Fire Protection Committee was to adopt the basic fire protection plan prepared by the Commission's officers in 1954 (no doubt in consequence of the 1951 fire), which made provision for various tracks and 'firebreaks' consisting of strips of land along the tracks about 5 chains wide, which were to be subjected to 'fuel reduction burns' in alternate years more or less, according to the prevailing conditions. That work had begun in 1959 and was making good progress; moreover, the track which was being constructed across the Vereker Peninsula had provided the only access for the fire-fighters during the 1962 fire.

I personally was perplexed by the contents of the letter from the 'Three Jacks'. I was at a loss to understand their reference to my 'criticism' of the Forestry Officer, referred in (a) above, and could only imagine that they might have been referring to the objections I had raised with Mr Seaton when, in the early stages of the work, considerable damage was done in an area south of the Promontory Road in the Cotters Lake area. Mr Seaton had agreed that he himself was concerned because the bulldozer driver had 'run amok' (his words) and he agreed to exercise tighter control. It is possible also that Mr Seaton might have harboured some resentment because I had complained (privately) to the Chairman of the Forests Commission because, towards the end of 1958, 'protective burning' had been carried out in the Vereker foothills without any consultation with the National Parks Authority. Unfortunately the fire 'got away', causing more damage than had been anticipated.

However, these two incidents had merely served to ensure a closer liaison between the Authority and the Commission, and hardly formed a basis for paragraph (a).

As to item (b), this has been covered earlier, and I can only repeat that the reference to the '6 feet on either side' was somewhat of a mystery, but mysteries are sometimes solved, as we shall see later.

I drew the Minister's attention to item (c), and intimated that I did not consider it likely that the Forests Commission would have allowed the three signatories to the letter to have access to the Commission's financial records, so that here the complainants had been guessing; alternatively, an officer of the Commission had supplied them with the details of costs. I doubted whether this had happened.

With regard to (d) and (c), I informed the Minister that the Authority and the Committee of Management had examined the risks of an outbreak of fire within the Tidal River Camp and taken such action as they could to reduce the risk.

The Minister persuaded me not to proceed with legal action and promised to 'bring me before my accusers' in the presence of all members of the National Parks Authority, the Committee of Management and the three signatories to the letter. However, he was making preparations for an overseas trip and would be unable to convene such a meeting until his return in early spring; but he assured me that he would arrange the meeting as soon as he returned. After he returned he became fully occupied with Parliamentary duties and the meeting did not take place.

The letter was referred to the Committee of Management for comment and to the Authority's Fire

Protection Committee at its meeting on 31 July 1962. The relevant minute of the Fire Protection Committee's meeting reads as follows:-

"Wilson's Promontory National Park

A. Fire Protection

Further to discussion at the meeting of the Fire Protection Committee on 5th June, a report on the communication from Councillors J. H. McDonald and J. Lester, and Mr J. G. Jones, had been received from the Wilson's Promontory Committee of Management. The Committee's report was as follows:-

- '1. The letter to Sir Herbert although signed by two members of the Committee was written without the knowledge or consent of the Committee.
2. The Committee expresses confidence in the Director of National Parks and has no knowledge that, as stated in the letter, he has hindered the work of fire protection by any instructions he has issued.
3. The danger from fire to the Park can hardly be overstated and being fully aware of this, the Committee has made every effort for its protection, such effort being limited by lack of funds to carry out the work.
4. The Committee is very fortunate to have as one of its members Mr R. T. Seaton, for many years Chief Fire Protection Officer of the Forests Commission, whose experience and advice are constantly used in the work on fire protection. The approved plan which has been prepared is being carried out as far as funds will permit, and Mr Seaton and the Committee are pleased at any time to receive and consider any constructive suggestions for the work of fire protection.

5. The Committee does not consider that a fire in the vicinity of the Tidal River Camp would result in the loss of life, as the precautions taken, together with the immediate proximity of the ocean beach should provide adequate protection against this danger.'

The Fire Protection Committee resolved

- (i) that the Committee take due note of the commendation of the Director and Mr R.T. Seaton;
- (ii) that it be recommended that the Authority acknowledge this letter with appreciation.

B. Letter from Foster Development Association

The Director reported to the Fire Protection Committee that a letter from the Foster Development Association to the Hon. A. J. Fraser MC, MP, regarding fire protection at Wilson's Promontory, had been forwarded to him for consideration and reply direct in the absence of the Minister overseas. He had sent a preliminary reply regarding work done in the park."

It was clear therefore that the Committee of Management dissociated itself from the charges laid by the 'Three Jacks', but their letter remained as an indictment of the Director. I resented it and felt that they should be required to recant, but this did not occur. As Mr Seaton was a member of the Committee of Management, he would have had an unequalled opportunity of securing the Committee's support in substantiating the claims of the letter writers, but this did not occur. It must have made Jack McDonald wonder what was going on when Bob Seaton did not avail himself of this opportunity.

In October 1965, the National Parks Authority and the Committee of

Management held their annual joint meeting at Tidal River. This practice had become established since the Authority's inception, as a means of promoting good relations between the two bodies and of reviewing progress already made and laying plans for future developments. At the conclusion of the agenda items, I sought leave to raise the matter of the letter from the 'Three Jacks'. Two of them were present, namely Mr Jack Jones and Mr Jack Macdonald. Mr R. T. (Bob) Seaton, was also present.

Briefly, I ran through the allegations contained in the letter, and asked the two Jacks to explain why they had written the letter and where they obtained the 'information' on which their allegations were based. I informed the meeting that the only officers of the Commission with whom I had had discussions at the time in question were Mr Alan Galbraith, the Commission's Overseer based at Mirboo North, and Mr Seaton. I had visited the park several times during the period 1959-1962 to meet Mr Galbraith 'on the job'; sometimes Mr Seaton had also been present. The discussions had always been amicable. But, I said, I was curious to know how the 'Three Jacks' had obtained their 'information'.

The discomfiture of the two Jacks was very apparent, especially as some members of the Authority pressed their inquiries concerning the involvement of Alan Galbraith in the matter. It was difficult to imagine that Alan Galbraith, living at Mirboo North, had accidentally or otherwise 'run into' the 'Three Jacks' and provided them with the motives for writing the letter. Finally, the strain was too great for Jack McDonald, who exclaimed "Who is this Alan Galbraith? I've never heard of him". The look on Bob Seaton's face was something to behold! The two Jacks

finally agreed that they had been misled (they did not say by whom) and that they regretted having written the letter.

I asked them if they would be prepared to write another letter withdrawing their allegations. To this they agreed, but said that they would first have to consult the third party, Jack Lester. (Unfortunately Mr Jack Jones died before the agreement could be fulfilled.) I turned to Bob Seaton and was about to ask him what further light he could throw on the matter; but, at that very moment, the back door of the lodge flew open and one of the park staff burst in, saying "There's a fire in the park - escaped from the tip!" The meeting broke up in disorder as everybody raced out to see what could be done to extinguish the fire. The script-writers of 'Dallas' could not have timed things better. So Bob didn't have to answer the question; but there really wasn't any need for him to do so.

Several years later I had occasion to call on Mr E. D. (Ted) Gill to seek assistance in regard to the continuation of the construction of the 'Lighthouse track' which was the subject of a joint exercise by the Authority and the Commonwealth Department of Lighthouses and Shipping. The discussion moved from my formal request to a general chat about relations between the Authority and the Commission. At that time Mr Gill was the Chief of the Division of Forest Protection.

It so happened that Ted Gill and Bob Seaton were related by marriage, each having married the other's sister, so Ted had some understanding of the workings of Bob's mind. I took the opportunity to let Ted know of my concern over the letter from the 'Three Jacks' and pointed out that it was very clear from the 'conference' in Northey lodge

in October 1965 that the letter had its origin in a discussion between Bob Seaton and one or more of the Three Jacks. "It sounds to me," said Ted, "as if they were having a drink in the bar and Bob was a bit peeved at being answerable to the National Parks Authority in regard to fire protection matters". Previously, there had been no restrictions on 'protective burning' and the limitation of the five-chain strip of roadside firebreak caused Bob to indulge in a little exaggeration - hence the reference to the '6 foot wide' strip. It probably did not occur to Bob that his drinking companions would take him seriously; at least that was what Ted Gill suggested. Obviously I am unable to comment on the correctness of his explanation; but it sounds plausible.

Perhaps the surprising thing is that Bob Seaton and I found a way of working together without too much stress. Bob confided in me that he "liked to have a little bit of a niggle to stir things up" (his words, not mine). It is one thing to start a hare running; but it is sometimes very difficult to run it down.

Before leaving this subject, I feel that I ought to make some comment on the attitude of Sir Herbert Hyland. If he had been so inclined, he could (and, I believe, should) have recognised the serious nature of the allegations being made and requested the authors of the letter to justify their statements. But, clearly, he did not. He was apparently quite willing to support the three members of his constituency in their attack on the Director of National Parks, but not particularly concerned with protecting a public servant, who had been appointed pursuant to an Act which he had supported in the House, against unfounded criticism.

Churchill National Park Committee of Management

In the early days of the Authority, there was a tendency to question the wisdom of having Churchill National Park included in the schedule. The park had an area of 477 acres, mainly grassland with comparatively small areas of forest, and it was traversed by an SEC powerline with several large steel towers occupying prominent positions and detracting from the appeal of the skyline. A quarry had been operating on the north-west corner, and by no stretch of the imagination could it be seen as prime national park country. It is true that Bulga Park, of only 91 acres, and Tarra Valley (318 acres) were smaller, but they stood out like jewels in the surrounding forest.

I discussed the future of Churchill with the Deputy Chairman of the National Parks Authority, the Hon. C. E. Isaac. He had been a member of the Committee of Management of Churchill National Park before the Bill was passed, but had resigned from the committee to avert a conflict of interests. After a very full and frank discussion, we arrived at a common viewpoint; firstly Parliament had given the Authority a job to do and we should get on with it; secondly, Churchill was strategically placed and, if it could be developed, could serve as 'lungs' for the surrounding districts which were not well served with comparable parkland. We recognised that it might be possible to demonstrate to the Government that the Authority could meet the challenge and thereby boost confidence in the new body. We therefore proposed to the Authority that efforts should be made to promote the well-being of the park.

Sir George Knox MP had been Chairman of the committee of



Churchill NP, noted for the power lines running through it, caused Dr Smith some grief. Photo: Geoff Durham

management since 1946; he was a kindly, modest man, yet persuasive in his efforts to improve conditions in the park. Vandalism was rife and, during one weekend, no fewer than 40 trucks and utilities were observed loading timber in the park. The appointment of a Ranger was a first priority and, in 1959-60, George Sharpe was appointed.

As no house was available, George was accommodated in a small caravan and, because he was a young man without a family (having recently arrived from Africa, where he had been employed as an assistant in a national park in Kenya), Sir George and Lady Knox took a personal interest in his welfare. In the meantime the Authority had supported me in my proposal that a house be built in the park; but, when the house was ready for occupation, the Committee had pressed for the appointment of a married man in order to achieve a 'more stable arrangement'. It was alleged that the young man had been 'seen with a girl' in or near the caravan, although it was not clear that any major crime had been committed

against society! So George Sharpe went and 'Bill' Garner (who had been found redundant to the Forest Commission's requirements in the Healesville District) was appointed Ranger, in his place.

In order to protect the park against vandalism in its various forms, the Authority had found money to erect a cyclone wire fence about 6 feet high around the park. This took several years to complete, but eventually made it possible to close the park after dark, which gave much-needed control over the dumping of old cars and rubbish. The Authority continued to support the Committee in its work by providing money for revegetation, construction of fire protection tracks, development of water supplies, picnic facilities, toilets, etc.

There were two important matters which the Authority had to deal with in those early stages. Many years prior to the creation of the Authority, the Lands Department had granted a 'permissive occupancy' to the Boy Scouts Association over an area of 30 acres in the park. The Scouts had engaged in the usual range of activities, including

camping, and had built an open-air Chapel! The Authority determined that it was not appropriate to grant a lease for 30 acres of land, but agreed to allow the scouts to retain 'exclusive occupancy' of one acre of land, including the Chapel. This displeased the Secretary of the Committee, Mr R. W. McKellar, who was Chief Commissioner of Scouts in Victoria, but eventually a subdued reconciliation was effected.

However, relations between the Authority and the Committee were impaired when, between visits of the Director, a large building for scouting purposes was erected in the park. Inquiries revealed that not one member of the Committee had any knowledge of the building or when it was erected, by whom and with whose authority, and Mr McKellar did not enlighten the Director or the Authority. The upshot of this was that the Committee extracted a promise from the Authority that no officer of the Authority would in future visit the park unless he was escorted by a member of the Committee. I gave up visiting the park, except on official visits with the entire Authority.

It should be explained that the Authority was not really in a very strong position in relation to the Committee because, on the death of Sir George Knox, the Hon. (later Sir) G. L. Chandler MLC had been appointed Chairman of the Committee of Management. I had endeavoured to dissuade him from taking this appointment, pointing out that I did not consider it appropriate that a Minister of the Crown (he was Minister for Agriculture) should serve on a Committee which was responsible to an arm of the Government, but he deemed it politically advantageous to be seen as the Chairman of the Committee of Management of a National Park, so he proceeded with his plan.

As the development of the park proceeded, the Dandenong City Engineer, Mr G. W. Wright, became increasingly involved in construction works in the park. The Authority and I welcomed the participation of Councils generally in national park affairs and were at some pains to foster cordial relations with them. I recall that we received a great deal of assistance from the Dimboola and Karkaroor Shire Councils in the western part of the State, but other Councils also helped in many ways.

As can be imagined, when the Authority required a construction body to perform a particular job in a national park, it obtained an estimate of the cost of the work and allocated finance accordingly. In the case of Churchill National Park it very frequently happened that the cost of work performed under the supervision or at the instigation of Mr Wright exceeded the allocation; and, to compound the problem, the Authority did not learn of this until the account had been received from the Council. I requested that the Committee exercise adequate control over its spending, so as not

to exceed the budget allocations. I pointed out that the Government granted the Authority a certain sum of money annually and it was the Authority's responsibility to 'live within its income' and that the Committees had the same obligation. However, the situation did not improve and the Committee prevailed upon the Minister, Mr Manson, to convene a special meeting of the Committee of Management and the National Parks Authority so that the Committee could air its grievances and, presumably, put an end to the Director's attempts to control their activities.

The meeting was duly held, with the Minister in the Chair. The Committee's spokesmen were principally Mr McKellar and Mr Wright, with supporting remarks from the Committee Chairman the Hon. G L Chandler MLC. The 'trial' continued for at least an hour and a half. Step by step the Committee expounded my crimes, seemingly gaining confidence as they proceeded. Somehow I managed to remain silent until, when all seemed lost and the Committee had virtually run out of stones to throw at me, the Minister turned to me and said, "Does the Director have anything to say?" He might have added, "Before I pronounce sentence", but he did not. I simply said, "Thank you, Mr Minister. Yes, I would like to say something. I am surprised that the Committee should have condemned me for what I have done.

"I am even more surprised that they seem to have forgotten so soon how conditions were in the park when I first became involved in its affairs. I wonder how many of you can remember those early days when I used to visit the park to talk to Sir George Knox about plans for the development of the park. We had to sit on large rocks, because there was nothing else to sit on. There

was no money available; yet, slowly, we began to formulate plans and make progress. We found a ranger; we built a house for the ranger; we provided him with a vehicle; we began to build a fence around the park; we worked out a fire-protection plan and saw it put into practice, we made great improvements to the water supply, and so on". Step by step I took the meeting through the long list of developments which had brought Churchill National Park to its present state, when it was providing a valuable service for thousands of people every year!

I continued, "I hope you can all remember these things which have come about since the Authority became involved, because I too was involved in every one of these activities and helped in every way possible". I added, "The hand that was held out to the Committee during all those years is still extended, willing to help; but there is one thing we must all remember, and that is that the Authority cannot spend money it does not have and the Committee can't either. The Authority is accountable to the Government and the Committee is accountable to the Authority. Subject to those limitations, Mr Minister, I am always ready to assist any Committee in the achievement of our common objectives".

I had not attacked any individual; I had simply defended a principle. I don't know what the Committee had hoped to achieve; if they were after my head, they must have been disappointed. There was no censure then or later from the Minister, but I think that the Committee did exercise better financial control thereafter.



Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) in Bulga NP, a favourite lyrebird haunt. Circa May 1959.

Battles for survival

The National Parks Act provided that the Authority should not itself engage in construction activities but that it should avail itself of the services of private contractors or government agencies.

If such services had always been available when the Authority needed them, and if the Government had provided sufficient funds, this arrangement might have been satisfactory. As it was, the Authority was not always able to perform up to the expectations of the Committees of Management and, in some cases, because of the particular circumstances, was not always at the top of the popularity polls with certain committees.

Relations with the Fern Tree Gully National Park Committee of Management had always been rather fragile. Prior to 1957, the Committee had enjoyed a long period of autonomy and sometimes found it difficult to accommodate itself to the Authority's policies.

For many years the Committee had exhibited a number of birds in cages, especially Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, whose antics provided amusement for visitors. At one time, the Committee had created a miniature Whipsnade Zoo by fencing off an area of the park, but this had fallen into disrepair and had been abandoned before the advent of the Authority. Negotiations between the Committee and the Authority regarding the abandonment of the practice of exhibiting caged birds were protracted and not always cordial; but eventually the birds won their freedom and their progeny may

still be heard in the environs of the park.

Chapter 19 has a brief account of the difficulties encountered by the Authority in its endeavours to meet its obligation regarding the kiosk at Fern Tree Gully National Park. One could hardly escape the conclusion the Committee seemed not to understand why it was deemed necessary or desirable for the Authority to conduct its affairs in a business-like manner. The lessee of the kiosk had extended the range of park 'attractions' by purchasing a number of small ponies which provided rides for children, reminiscent of the celebrated donkey rides at Clovelly in North Devon but for a different reason. Then the Authority found itself confronted with a request for permission to install a miniature train on the site of the old tennis court, under the auspices of the Fern Tree Gully Rotary Club. Against its better judgment, the Authority was persuaded to agree to the installation of the train, which became known as 'Little Toots'.

The Committee was extremely disappointed when the Authority found itself unable to acquiesce in a proposal that a miniature golf course be developed in the Janesleigh Dell area and was initially lacking in enthusiasm for the Authority's counter-proposal that the area be tidied up and developed as a picnic area, in order to relieve the pressure on the main picnic area and, at the same time, provide an escape for those visitors who did not derive full enjoyment from their exposure to the raucous screeching of the cockatoos and the tooting of 'Little Toots'. In

the event, the golf course did not materialise and the Committee felt that it had been deprived of a valuable source of revenue. However, the two bodies eventually combined to develop a very attractive picnic area at Janesleigh Dell.

The Committee's entrepreneurial ambitions suffered another setback when the Authority declined to endorse a proposal that a private developer be permitted to build a chair-lift to transport patrons from the vicinity of the kiosk to the high point of the Tremont section of the park. This would have entailed clearing a swathe through the park beneath the lift, thereby destroying numerous native trees. It would have also have been necessary for the chair-lift to go over the Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, exposing both users of the lift and vehicles using the road to possible dangers. I thought it prudent to discuss the matter with the Chairman of the Country Roads Board and felt comforted by his assurance that the Board would oppose any such proposal, but the refusal of the Authority to support the Committee's plan imposed a further strain on the relations between the two bodies.

It was unfortunate that the Authority was thus placed in the position of appearing to curb the Committee's aspirations. On the other hand, the Authority had been responsible for considerable improvements in tourist facilities in the way of fireplaces, picnic tables and shelters, walking tracks, conservation works, toilets and water supply. The Authority had had the lookout tower at One Tree Hill repaired, financed the



Masons Falls picnic area in Kinglake NP, north of Melbourne. This chapter covers a 1970 proposal for the Forests Commission to take over the management of Victoria's national parks.

construction of a scenic bridge over one of the fern gullies (which had also been beautified), and undertook fire-protection works in the more vulnerable parts of the park.

Offer of partial takeover

There is a popular belief that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, but experience has shown that this is not always the case.

It is not known what prompted the Forests Commission to intervene; but apparently the time seemed opportune for the Minister of Forests to write to the Minister of State Development offering to take Fern Tree Gully National Park under its umbrella. In its letter, the Commission pointed out that the Authority was lacking in resources and especially in the equipment required to execute the very necessary fire-protection works. The park had suffered from no fewer than 17 fires in one season, deliberately lit by a pyromaniac who was later identified as a member of the local rural fire brigade.

The Commission was at some pains to emphasize the benefits which would accrue to the proposed change, and the Minister (Mr Manson) appeared to look favourably on the proposal. However, he was

kind enough to invite my opinion.

I responded by saying that the Commission's arguments were indeed very persuasive, but there were other aspects to be considered. I pointed out that Fern Tree Gully National Park was the first area in Victoria to be reserved for public purposes, in 1882, and that successive Governments had spent considerable public money in purchasing additional land to add to the park and in its development for the enjoyment of the people. In addition, I said, after very comprehensive debate in 1956, the Parliament had passed the National Parks Act creating a National Parks Authority for the express purpose of controlling Victoria's national parks, and had entrusted Fern Tree Gully National Park to the care of the new Authority. I suggested that it might not sit too well with the Parliament if the Authority suggested that Parliament had made a mistake and that it (the Authority) did not feel competent to fulfil the duties entrusted to it.

I pointed out that the lighting of the fires in the park was in no way related to the identity of the controlling body and that, in performing fire-protection duties, the Forests Commission was merely acting in accordance with the

provisions of the National Parks Act and of the Forests Act. The Minister pursed his lips and said, "Hmm - I had not thought of that." So he informed the Minister for Forests accordingly, and the proposal for a 'takeover' was not pursued.

Offer of complete takeover

However, the Forests Commission did not remain idle. On 27 January 1970, the Minister for Forests wrote to the Premier in the following terms:

"The Hon. Sir Henry Bolte, KCMG, MP

Premier and 'Treasurer
New State Public Offices
MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Sir Henry

In view of the recent upsurge of interest in Land Conservation, I think it is opportune for the Government to give further consideration to a change in the administration of national parks. In this connection, I have examined the situation which exists in Queensland where the Forests Authority is entrusted with the administration of the national parks as well as the forests. I believe that this is an efficient and economical

administrative arrangement and one which has been well accepted by the public of that State.

The Queensland Forestry Acts, 1959 to 1964 as amended in 1963 and in consolidated form are entitled:-

'An Act to Provide for Forest Reservations, the Management, Silvicultural Treatment and Protection of State Forests, and the Sale and Disposal of Forest Products and Quarry Material, the Property of the Crown on State Forests, Timber Reserves and on Other Lands; to make Provision for the Management of National Parks and for other purposes.'

Part V of this consolidation is entitled 'Management of National Parks' and contains Sections 40 to 43 which set down the purposes and procedures in management. Section 40 states:

'The cardinal principle to be observed in the management of National Parks shall be the permanent preservation, to the greatest possible extent, of their natural condition and the Conservator of Forests shall exercise his powers under this part of this Act in such manner as appears to him most appropriate to achieve this objective.'

Sections 41 and 42 give the Conservator of Forests power to carry out works in national parks and to grant or recommend special leases. He may also, within any national park, subject to such provisions and conditions as he thinks fit, grant grazing permits for up to seven years and permits for apiary sites. Section 43 provides for permits to be granted by the Conservator of Forests, to obtain forest products from within national parks for scientific purposes only.

I have ascertained that the Queensland situation providing for

the control of national parks by the Forest Authority is not unique. In many countries, advanced in so far as forest management is concerned, the national parks are administered by the Forest Authority. Examples are Finland, Federal Republic of Germany, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Brazil and India.

In keeping with the growing public interest in State forests for recreational purposes, and from the viewpoint of overall economy, it appears to me that a very good case exists in Victoria for national park administration to be consolidated with administration of State forests.

At the present time the Forests Commission is responsible for fire suppression in national parks and is actively associated with pre-suppression measures and hazard reduction. It provides advice and assistance to the National Parks Authority in relation to financial matters, internal accounting procedures and negotiations for land purchases for extensions to national parks. For many years the Commission has been active in the provision of roads and general engineering services, and has arranged for aerial spraying against insect pests and for the installation of fire protection equipment and facilities in national parks. Furthermore, the Commission has auxiliary services already set up and staffed with professionally competent people to deal with such aspects of forested lands (which comprise the great bulk of national parks) as entomology, pathology, hydrology, and general silvicultural research, together with nurseries for the raising of native trees and shrubs suitable for planting in forest areas and national parks.

The Commission, of course, has an established network of forest districts and field divisions staffed with

professionally-trained foresters, with the necessary office, clerical and transport facilities, and who already in many cases have under their care large areas of State forest adjacent to or in the vicinity of national parks. In fact, Forest Commission district or divisional foresters are active members of almost all of the Committees of Management of national parks.

The Forests Commission has also set aside within reserved forests under the provisions of Section 50 of the Forests Act, eighty-three forest parks, alpine reserves, scenic reserves and other special purpose reserves. Most of these are at present administered by district foresters, with the assistance of some specialist officers and in co-operation with Committees of Management. The Commission proposes to establish a Division of Recreational Forestry to formalize and re-organize this administration, as well as cater for the recreational aspects inherent in reserved forests throughout the State which are already widely used by the public, and the Chairman of the Commission, Dr F R Moulds, has approached the Public Service Board with proposals for the setting up of such a Division. A copy of his letter to the Public Service Board is attached hereto. If the Government agrees that national parks and forests could be most efficiently managed under the one Authority, then I believe that this new Division of Recreational Forestry could readily be re-named to be the Division of National Parks and Recreational Forestry.

To accomplish the objective of unified control of State forests and national parks in the interests of efficiency and to avoid present and future duplication of services, some relatively simple amendments to the Forests Act would be required along similar lines to those mentioned

above in the Queensland Forestry Acts.

I have also discussed with the Chairman of the Commission, some aspects of the future of the School of Forestry at Creswick and believe that a real contribution towards efficient and sound management of our national parks could be achieved by broadening the scope of the courses on general resources management and national parks administration. Victoria would then have a training ground for administrators and technical staff in the broad field of forested land management. This move should receive the support of the various conservation organizations in the State.

In this connection, a move has been made by the new Canberra College of Advanced Education (brochure attached herewith) to establish a full-time 3-year course in conservation administration, recreational planning, ecology and pollution. It has been claimed by the sponsors that the course will meet a demand, particularly from Victoria and New South Wales. It would seem unnecessary for Victorian Government Departments and organizations to send officers to Canberra for this purpose when suitable arrangements can be made at an established centre in Victoria which enjoys a high reputation in such a closely related field as forestry.

Summarizing, it is recommended that:

- (1) the Government agree in principle to incorporate national park administration within that of State forests. This would be achieved by expanding the Commission's proposed Division of Recreational Forestry to a Division of National Parks and Recreational Forestry. A part-time Advisory Panel

representative of additional public interests could be constituted under the Forests Act to advise the Minister and the Commission, from time to time, on aspects of forest and park management;

- (2) the necessary amendments to the Forests Act 1958 be prepared which would follow similar lines to the Queensland Forests Acts;
- (3) the scope of training at the School of Forestry, Creswick, be broadened to include training for administrators and technical staff in the broad field of resources management and park administration.

In a subsequent submission, I will suggest an extension of the above principles to establish a Ministry of Conservation to further streamline the administration of the natural resources of the State and the above proposals, whilst capable of standing alone, could then be merely a first stage towards creation of the new Ministry.

I have sent a copy of this letter to our colleague, the Hon J W Manson, Minister of State Development, for his information.

Yours sincerely,
(Sgd) E. R. Meagher
Minister of Forests"

The Minister (Mr Manson) was, to put it mildly, shocked by this new proposal for a complete takeover. Perhaps he had thought that his refusal to negotiate on Fern Tree Gully National Park had quenched the fire of the Commission, but the smouldering ambitions of that body had suddenly flared into a conflagration. Possibly the threat from Canberra had provided the Commission with the motive to take the offensive as the best form of defence. The amalgamation of

the National Parks Service with the embryonic Division of Recreational Forestry would provide a good reason for strengthening the Creswick School of Forestry and, at the same time, add to the prestige of the Commission. And, of course, there was always the possibility that the Treasurer might be dazzled by the Commission's altruism and the prospect of saving money.

The Minister summoned me to his office and passed the correspondence across the table, saying, "What do you think of that?" After reading the letter, I said, "If you can give me twenty-four hours, I'll tell you." Next day I presented Mr Manson with the following statement.

"Queensland National Parks

The Queensland system of national parks is no doubt appropriate to the needs of that State, but the general economy of the State of Victoria is much more sophisticated than that of Queensland. The Queensland national parks are not developed to the same extent as those of Victoria (or New South Wales) and it is very doubtful whether the Queensland parks could or would be developed under the aegis of the Forestry Department to provide the same sort of service as is provided by the Victorian national parks.

There are no camping developments or lodge accommodation in Queensland national parks comparable with the facilities provided at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory, or at Fraser or Mount Buffalo. The Queensland national parks are best known for their walking tracks, day-visitor facilities and sign-posting. The parks themselves, of course, are very beautiful.

Control in other countries

The fact that in some other countries national parks are administered by the Forest Authority does not prove anything. The important question is: how do such national parks fare under these systems?

It is significant that in many countries the national parks are not administered by the Forest Authority. In the United States and Canada the national parks enjoy independent status, and it is noteworthy that the national parks are not administered by the forestry Authority in New South Wales. This was a step which could have been taken when the national parks system was re-modelled in that State two years ago; but, instead, the position of the national parks service was enhanced by giving it independent status. There is no doubt that New South Wales leads the way in national parks administration in Australia.

Training in National Parks management

There may be some advantages in broadening the scope of the training course at Creswick to embrace the broader aspects of conservation including national parks management, but it would seem premature to suggest that the national parks system should be absorbed into the Forestry Service before the Creswick Course has been broadened. And, even if the course were broadened, it would be feasible to train national parks personnel there whether the Commission controlled the national parks or not.

What has retarded the training of national parks personnel up to the present time has been the lack of finance and, unless additional finance is forthcoming, the necessary service cannot be provided on the

scale desired.

The Canberra College of Advanced Education

If the Commission is to provide a course of training comparable with that envisaged by the Canberra CAE, some major changes would be necessary, including the appointment of specialist staff. It might prove to be more economical in the long run to watch the developments at Canberra for a period before embarking on an expensive programme in competition with the Canberra school. Experience might well demonstrate how to operate the two schools on a complementary basis.

The Commission's Division of Recreational Forestry

The Commission now has 83 recreational areas of various categories and proposes to establish a separate Division of Recreational Forestry. There may be much merit in the proposal; but, until such a system has been firmly established and it has been demonstrated that the new Division can cope with the numerous problems of recreational services, it would seem unwise to merge the 23 national parks with such a system.

The mere fact that the Commission has announced its intention of creating such a Division does not in itself crystallize the policy decisions which will need to be made before enduring working plans for such areas can be established and implemented. It would be unfortunate if, while the new body was establishing itself, the undoubted progress made by the national parks in Victoria should be impeded in any way.

Until the management policies for the recreational forestry areas have been clearly enunciated, it will not be clear whether there will be major or

minor differences between the forms of management of national parks and recreational forest parks respectively. The management policies for national parks are already well established and have enabled a great deal of progress to be made in Victoria's national parks service.

What have the National Parks accomplished?

It should be recognized at the outset that a considerable amount of progress has been made in developing a national parks service since the National Parks Authority was established. The Authority has enjoyed excellent co-operation from the other Government Departments and organizations and has made full use of the resources in trained personnel and finance made available by the Government. Some of the Authority's achievements are described below.

Provision for tourists

The Authority has been at some pains to provide appropriate facilities for tourists in every national park under its control. Owing to the remoteness of some of these areas and the harsh climates of such places as Wyperfeld and Hattah Lakes, it has not always been easy, but good progress has been made nevertheless.

Water supplies, etc

Water supplies have been developed, picnic facilities have been provided, nature trails have been devised, modern amenities have been provided, literature describing park features has been prepared, and numerous letters of appreciation from the visiting public attest to the general approval which has attended these efforts.

Day visitors

Many of the national parks, because of their size and close proximity to large towns, have been developed as day-visitor parks. The attendance at Kinglake National Park is now of the order of 100,000 visitors each year; some 30,000 to 40,000 people visit Tarra Valley and Bulga Park yearly. Many thousands of people visit Fern Tree Gully and Churchill National Parks each year. And the number of people visiting Mount Eccles, Mount Richmond, Hattah Lakes, Mallacoota Inlet and, indeed, all of the national parks, is growing each year.

Overnight accommodation

Other parks provide overnight accommodation as well as day-visitor facilities. Without doubt, Wilsons Promontory is among the leading resorts in Victoria, if not Australia. The camping area at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory has been developed so that it now caters for some 4,000 visitors at the one time. In addition, a variety of lodges at Tidal River provide modern accommodation with in-built amenities for 160 people. As an indication of the development of Tidal River as a resort, it may be stated that the annual consumption of LP gas for water heating, space heating, refrigeration and cooking exceeds 50 tons. The peak daily consumption of water is of the order of 80,000 gallons.

Master Plan for Tidal River

To ensure that the development of Tidal River over the next 10 to 30 years is enabled to proceed on the correct basis, a master plan is being prepared by a firm of architects and town planners working in close



Tarra Valley NP, 1971. Margaret Smith and Nell Spencer at entrance to Tarra Valley NP.

association with the Authority and Committee of Management. The experience gained in this field will set the pattern for other parks.

Revenue from tourists services at Wilsons Promontory

The sustained tourist interest in Wilsons Promontory has justified the establishment there of a modern cafe to supplement the services provided by the Camp Store. The value of these services to the visiting public may be judged from the fact that the annual rent paid by the lessee of the cafe is \$1,960 and that paid by the lessee of the store is \$3,900. Total revenue from park services is \$109,000.

Mount Buffalo National Park

Wilsons Promontory is not the only national park to attract great numbers of visitors for extended periods. Thanks to the excellent accommodation provided by the Victorian Railways at The Chalet and by Tatra Development Pty Ltd at Cresta, some 50,000 people are

able annually to enjoy the attractions of the Mount Buffalo National Park. During the summer, numerous walking tracks and the fine road to The Horn provide for the visitors, who may be up for the day or who may be camped at Lake Catani, or staying as guests at The Chalet or at Tatra Inn.

In the winter, the excellent skiing facilities at Dingo Dell and Cresta, which have been developed by the Authority over the years, attract thousands of skiers. In 1966, the Authority had a modern Pomalift constructed at Dingo Dell and the skiing fields have been greatly enlarged. So popular has Dingo Dell become that last year the Authority had the A. W. Keown Lodge enlarged and modernized at a cost of \$75,000, and plans are well advanced for the installation of a second Pomalift.

The revenue from the Dingo Dell skiing field nowadays ranges between \$8,000 and \$14,000 per annum, depending on the season, as against \$4,000.00 before the Pomalift was installed in 1966.

There is also a growing public appreciation of the improved camping area at Lake Catani where

the Authority has installed hot showers and other amenities.

Cresta Valley development

Reference will be made below to the development of tourist facilities at Cresta by Tatra Development Pty Ltd, under the terms of a lease granted by the Authority, but it should be stated here that this development has led to great improvements in the skiing fields at Cresta. The Authority has retained control of the slopes for the people, but the developers have installed three lifts to provide for the needs of skiers.

Lease at Cresta in Mount Buffalo National Park

As mentioned above, the Authority has granted a lease to Tatra Development Pty Ltd, to enable tourist facilities to be provided at Cresta. This enterprise, which began in 1964, has resulted in the expenditure of approximately \$400,000 by the developers, and is now in a satisfactory financial position. There are 84 beds available for the public and further high-grade accommodation is planned. The Tatra Inn itself provides a very good service for visitors and guests.

The Authority has assisted, with the aid of special grants from the Government, in the improvement of the skiing fields of which there are now six, serving the needs of different grades of skiers.

The rent paid by the lessees is at present \$1,000 p.a. The formula for the rent ensures that in 1974, the rent will rise to not less than \$2,000; in fact it will almost certainly rise to \$3000 shortly after 1974.

Fraser National Park

The facilities provided by the Authority at Fraser National Park attract 17,428



Fraser NP, 1974. Camping and boating area.

day visitors and 4,898 campers annually, and produce revenue at the rate of \$9,564 per annum.

Ranger recruitment and training

When the Authority was formed in 1957, there were four full-time and two part-time Rangers employed in national parks. There are now thirteen full-time Rangers and six part-time Rangers. In addition there are about 20 other field personnel employed in the national parks.

The Authority has run four Ranger Training Courses to supplement the in-service training which the Rangers receive, and these training courses have proved very successful.

The Director visited North America in 1965 to attend a short course in the administration of national parks and equivalent reserves and the Chief Technical Officer spent several months at the US Ranger Training Course in 1966. The experience gained by these officers has been of great value to the Authority in improving and extending the Service.

It is a matter of some pride to the Authority that one of its officers has recently been awarded a Churchill Fellowship, under the terms of which he will be enabled to make a study of national parks planning in North America and England during 1970. The additional experience he will thus gain will be of considerable value to the Authority.

Public support for the Authority

Recognition of the value of the service provided by the Authority has come from several sources:

- (a) In response to overtures by the Director, the Chairman of Conzinc Riotinto Australia, Sir Maurice Mawby, approached a number of large business organizations which joined his own Company in contributing \$3,000 to enable the Authority to purchase a very beautiful natural area of 270 acres adjoining Alfred National Park, for addition to the park.
- (b) A private citizen has informed the Authority that he has made provision in his will for a very attractive area of land adjoining

the Kinglake National Park to pass to the Authority for addition to the park.

- (c) The Bird Observers Club donated funds to the Authority to enable 115 acres of land adjoining the Tarra Valley National Park to be purchased for addition to the park.

It should be noted that in the cases (a) and (c) mentioned above, it was the owners' express wish that the land be added to the park, but in neither case could they afford to actually donate the land.

Fire protection work

The Authority has been very active in having fire protection plans prepared for every national park under its control and to date approximately \$40,000 has been spent in implementing such plans. The Forests Commission has greatly assisted in this work.

Vermin and noxious weeds

Since its formation the Authority has developed a vigorous collaboration with the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board in the extermination of rabbits and noxious weeds in national parks. It has been found possible to destroy rabbits by any of four methods, namely, trail poisoning (using 1080 and carrot), hand broadcasting in areas where trail poisoning is not practicable, fumigation of warrens and, where other methods are not suitable, by aerial baiting. In addition, where necessary, park staff play an active part in vermin and weed control. All care is taken to ensure that the native animals do not suffer.

General

Over the past thirteen years, the National Parks Authority has

overcome many difficulties to develop a valuable and growing national parks service in Victoria. It has demonstrated that it has the capacity to meet difficult situations and there is no doubt that, given the necessary support and encouragement, it will continue to apply the experience gained during past years.

The Forests Commission will make a valuable contribution to the development of Victoria's total requirements in the field of outdoor recreation, through the creation of the new Division of Recreational Forestry. However, until its management policies in regard to the 83 areas currently reserved have been defined and tested, and until the new Division has acquired the necessary staff, finance and experience to cope with its own particular problems, and has demonstrated a capacity to do so, it would seem unwise to endeavour to absorb the national parks system which has already demonstrated its ability to provide a valuable service, despite the difficulties which it has had to overcome.

It should be possible to develop the two services – the national parks service and the recreational forest service – on a complementary basis, each retaining its independent character but co-operating wherever necessary in the best interests of the State, as is the case with other Government Departments."

The Minister (Mr Manson) lost no time in conveying these views to the Premier and (for information) to the Minister for Forests. At the same time, he pointed out that he would be putting up his own ideas (on the administration of national parks) within the next week or so for consideration by the Premier as part of the Government's new policy. I do not know how the

Premier responded, but Mr Meagher replied on 24 February, saying that "there was no intention on his part of denigrating the National Parks Authority or its administration of national parks". His only concern had been to "bring about a streamlining and co-ordination of effort". There the matter was allowed to rest; apparently another dragon had been slain or at least chased away for the time being.

Now it should not be assumed that the offer of the Forests Commission to absorb the national parks service was the result of open hostility of the one body towards the other. There had always been some difference of opinion over certain aspects of fire protection philosophy and practice, but the Commission and its officers and the Authority had developed many avenues of co-operation. I personally had a very pleasant relationship with Mr A. O. (Alf) Lawrence and his successor Dr F. H. (Frank) Moulds.

While the Ministers were exchanging letters, Frank had invited me around to his office to explain his plans for the 'takeover'. I wasn't at all clear about my own role or future in the proposed re-organization; but, as I thought that the 'Chief of the Division' had already been 'lined up', I did not see my future through rose-tinted spectacles. But I explained to Frank that, while I had always appreciated the need for a vigorous and efficient Forestry Service and recognized the outstanding contributions which the Commission had made to the well-being of the State, I held the view that the people of Victoria were entitled to their own national parks service with its own identity and independence. Accordingly, I did not regard the proposed takeover as either desirable or necessary.

There was no rancour; after all, we had to keep on living in peaceable

Plans for reorganisation

In the previous chapter we saw how the national parks service survived a threat from without. But while that dragon had been laid to rest, even if only temporarily, another was bestirring itself.

There is no doubt that, after thirteen years of strenuous endeavour, the National Parks Authority had achieved a great deal, but the pressure on the members had grown considerably. By 1970, there were nineteen national parks and other proposals to be examined by the Authority, which entailed inspections and long periods of absence from their offices of the various heads of the relevant government departments as well as of the private members. There were committee meetings (within the Authority) to be organised, which placed additional burdens on the Authority's staff and on the members themselves.

From time to time one heard suggestions that the size of the Authority should be reduced, and especially that the involvement of the senior government officials should be reduced because their own departments had grown since 1957 and because their continued membership of the National Parks Authority imposed excessive burdens, but I was not yet aware that change was imminent. At a meeting early in 1968, attended by the Minister (the Hon. J. W. Manson MP) in his capacity of Chairman, the matter of reconstituting the Authority was raised.

My first intimation of impending developments came from Mr Dewar Goode, who 'dropped into'

my office one afternoon to 'have a chat' about national parks matters. Dewar had always involved himself in the details of the Authority's administration and management more than anybody else. His free-lance sort of existence afforded him much greater scope for this than was possible for his colleagues who were already fully stretched in their own departments, but who nevertheless always found time to give me their fullest co-operation and support. Dewar informed me that the Minister was considering the creation of a Commission consisting of a number of executive members. In a burst of confidence, he explained that I would probably not be the Head of the Commission, but 'probably' the deputy-head, while the Chairman would probably be 'part-time'.

Quite frankly, I felt devastated. From the day I assumed office, I had worked unceasingly and had been well supported by every member of the Authority and by the staff who had served far beyond the call of duty. It was immediately apparent that Dewar was riding his old hobby horse; this was not his first attempt to restructure the Authority. In November 1965, he had written to the Minister (Mr Manson) as follows:

"Hon. J. W. Manson, MLA
Chairman,
National Parks Authority,
State Public Offices,
Melbourne C2.

Dear Mr Manson

re RECONSTITUTION OF NATIONAL
PARKS AUTHORITY

In confirmation of our discussion this morning, I wish to submit the following matters for your consideration.

You are aware that the key personnel of the National Parks Authority who are technical men and heads of departments are not always available for either inspections or for attendance at all meetings; and in fact they are unable to devote adequate time to National Parks business. It is too much to expect them to attend all inspections and all meetings because they have full time jobs as departmental heads.

In my own case I do attend all meetings, am a member of most of the subcommittees and have attended almost every inspection. In the several years that I have been on the Authority I would estimate that I spend one-third of my time on National Parks business. Although this is more than would be required from someone such as the Chairman of the Forests Commission, it is clear that to have a full appreciation of all the problems of National Parks a person of such high qualifications as Mr Lawrence might need to spend perhaps one-fifth of his time on inspections, meetings and other Parks business. If the departments are to be represented by someone other than the head of the department, it would still mean that several State departments would still have to provide a senior officer for a substantial part of his time on National Parks affairs.

Clearly the time is opportune to re-examine the position in regard to National Parks and at the same time



Mt Eccles NP in western Victoria was established in 1960. It features volcanic formations, including Lake Surprise nestled in the crater of the former volcano.

re-assess the position regarding the Land Utilisation Advisory Council. In regard to the latter I would suggest that the Council should have additional personnel, at least in the person of Mr A. D. Butcher, head of the Fisheries & Wildlife Division, who would represent on the Council the fauna and other wildlife implications of National Parks. Mr Lawrence, of course, would represent flora implications.

The newly constituted Council would need to be in fact a Land Use Authority, and would define land use in Victoria. The method of this decision would be by joint ecological investigations by appropriate departments represented on Council. These ecological and indeed economic surveys would indicate clearly broad land use principles.

This body would then make the ultimate determinations in regard to future areas to be set aside for National Parks.

I would envisage that the newly

constituted. National Parks Authority would have the right to ask for reconsideration of a decision of the Land Use Advisory Council in the light of the special requirements of a national Park, but the LUAC, as the chief body for land use, would have the final decision. The National Parks Authority, therefore, could be reconstituted in the following manner:

The government would nominate a Chairman who would be a retired officer of the Civil Service, preferably with some knowledge of the natural sciences. There are a number of such Civil Service men who are retired periodically, and who are still perfectly capable of taking a part time job and whose knowledge of departmental procedure and of administration would be of particular value to the National Parks Authority.

The Director and Executive Officer of the Authority would be deputy chairman and, of course, full time; and in addition there should be two members to be appointed by the

Governor-in-Council from a panel of names submitted by organisations or persons interested in the preservation of flora, and fauna and natural history.

Such constitution of the Authority would ensure that the Government nominee in the form of the Chairman with a casting vote, and the Director, could override the non-departmental representatives on the Authority.

This would mean that the Authority would be a small one. It would be able to keep close contact with all the National Parks and attend all meetings necessary. It is my opinion that the Chairman should receive a salary for his part-time work, and that the two other members appointed by the Governor-in-Council should also receive a lesser stipend.

I have discussed this matter, as I told you today, with a number of members of the Authority and with members of the Cabinet; and I feel that this is a matter which should be brought to the notice of the Premier. Might I

suggest that you, as Chairman of the Authority, and Mr G. T. Thompson, who was previously head of the Soil Conservation Authority and is now a member of the National Parks Authority, and myself, should wait on the Premier to have a discussion on these two matters.

In a previous letter to the Premier I did suggest the reconstitution of the Land Use Advisory Council. This letter has not been answered, and I have had no opportunity of discussing it with the Premier, so I feel at this stage that this present letter to you should precede the letter to the Premier of a couple of years ago.

I will be in Melbourne from Monday afternoon November 22 until Friday morning November 26. Although I have a National Parks Authority meeting on the morning of November 24 and a Natural Resources meeting after midday on November 25, I would be available at any other time. Mr Thompson has indicated that he would be pleased to attend such a meeting, and, I suggest that you fix a time with him convenient to the Premier, yourself Mr Thompson and myself.

Yours sincerely
(Sgd) Dewar V. Goode"

I do not know how Mr Manson reacted to Mr Goode's proposals; he did not discuss them with me. Perhaps, having been in office for only six weeks (his first promotion to the Cabinet), he deemed it imprudent to go to the Premier and tell him that he thought that the National Parks Authority should be reduced in size in order to ease the workload of senior public servants and, at the same time, recommend that the Land Utilization Advisory Council be enlarged by taking on board another public servant. It is possible that

Mr Manson was a little confused by Mr Goode's reformation package and, after mature consideration, had decided to acquaint himself with the *modus operandi* of the National Parks Authority before recommending such drastic changes. He might have recognised that it was not so much the size of the Authority which determined its rate of progress in the development of national parks, but rather the extent to which trained manpower and money could be provided. At all events, the Authority remained intact for several years.

Before leaving this item, I want to refer to certain aspects of Mr Goode's proposals. Firstly, the Chairman of the new Authority was to be a retired public servant (preferably with some knowledge of the natural sciences). Unless the Chairman had already acquired a great deal of useful knowledge of the *modus operandi* of the national parks service, there would predictably be a period of slow progress while he was 'learning the trade'. Unless, of course, he was the sort of person who didn't want to learn the trade but wanted to direct matters or change direction in regard to important matters. If he were to be a former member of the National Parks Authority, the only person who could meet Dewar's specifications was Mr G. T. Thompson, who had retired as Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority in 1961 but who had remained a member of the National Parks Authority as 'a person having a special interest in national parks'.

One would not need to venture too far into the realm of conjecture to assume that one of the non-government members would be Mr Goode himself. No doubt the Minister had someone in mind for the other non-government member. I was very apprehensive about the proposed arrangement. It was not

that I had reservations about George Thompson as an administrator; the Soil Conservation Authority stands (or stood) as a monument to his endeavours and ingenuity. But he was a strong personality and, although we were good friends, we didn't always agree on what should be done in national parks. George was prepared to accept the 22,000 volt powerlines in Wilsons Promontory; I did my utmost to protect the environment against this intrusion. George was less concerned about the Unger invasion than I was, and even considered the possibility of constructing a dam across Lilly Pilly Gully or Tristania Creek [in Wilsons Promontory NP] to supply water [to Tidal River]. I would not entertain such a scheme.

But Dewar's idea that giving the Chairman a casting vote "would ensure that the Government nominee in the form of the Chairman with a casting vote, and the Director, could override the non-departmental representation on the Authority" was nothing short of a field of land mines. Obviously, it would be desirable for decisions of the Authority to be unanimous, but Dewar would remember that he not infrequently dissented from majority decisions of the National Parks Authority.

If, however, the success of the Authority depended on unanimity between the Director and the Chairman, it clearly meant that the Director would be placed in the position of having to endorse the Chairman's proposals. And what would happen if the Chairman and the two non-government members did not agree with a proposal from the Director? Clearly, the proposed arrangement required that the Director be a man devoid of initiative and pride - a plastic man. Perhaps that was the idea - whatever it was, it filled me with apprehension.

At the meeting of the Authority early in 1968, I volunteered to examine the matter of the proposed reorganization and, in a report dated 17 April 1969, I reviewed the circumstances which had given rise to the creation of the Authority and gave a resume of its achievements. The report was duly considered by the Authority and the matter was allowed to rest; but the proponents of the smaller Authority remained active. In January 1969, the Minister requested me to let him have my thoughts on the proposal. I prepared a report dated 9 January 1969, in the course of which inter alia I made the following observations:

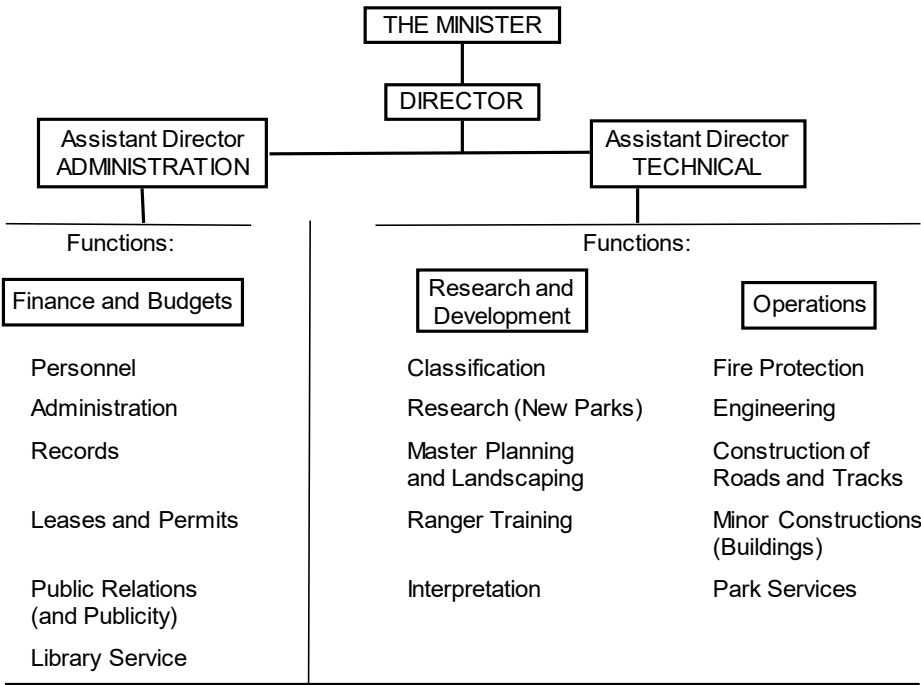
“It has been said that the National Parks Authority has ‘been a failure’ and that it is to be reconstituted. I do not agree that the National Parks Authority has been a failure. No criteria have ever been defined to enable the Authority’s success or failure to be determined and I believe that such judgments are the judgments of men. Man is not infallible and is not always impartial. I am certain that, if the full story of the Authority’s achievements and of the obstacles which have had to be surmounted were placed before a competent judge, the verdict would be a resounding commendation of the Authority.

“There is no doubt that more could have been achieved in the development of a national parks service for Victoria over the past eleven years, if the Authority had been afforded the resources necessary to accomplish the task, in the way of trained manpower and adequate finance. The Authority began from scratch and every moment has been a continuing struggle for manpower and finance.

“Some of the results which have been achieved in national parks since the Authority was formed are set out hereunder:

Year	1958	1969
No. of National Parks	14	21
Ranger Service	4 Full-time Rangers + 1 Part-time Ranger	11 Full-time Rangers + 6 Part-time Rangers + 8 Park Assistants
Ranger Training	Nil	3 Courses held; a 4 th planned for 1969

Year	1958/59	1969/70
Visitor Use:		
Wilson’s Promontory	28,000	85,000
Mount Buffalo	Not Recorded	45,000
Wyperfeld	1,000 (ca.)	8,030
Kinglake	16,000	71,600
Park Revenue:		
Wilson’s Promontory	\$23,772	\$95,299
Mount Buffalo	\$2,947	\$10,796
Kinglake	\$310	\$4,617



My report continued: "It has come to be recognised that the control of any enterprise, commercial, industrial or of the service type, requires a competent professionally-qualified staff, whose energies are united in the pursuit of the defined objectives.

"It is inconceivable that the Forests Commission, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Soil Conservation Authority or Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd, or ICIANZ Ltd, could successfully manage its affairs if the power to plan and make decisions, and translate such decisions into action, were not vested in competent fully-employed professionally qualified executives. The principles underlying the development and management of a national parks service for Victoria differ in no way from those of involved in any other enterprise and success will come only when this irrefutable fact is clearly recognised and the necessary resources are provided."

I concluded by proposing two possible alternative structures for a new Authority, viz:

1. One in which the super-structure consists of a Director supported by two Assistant-Directors, with a direct line of responsibility to the Minister. The various functions to be performed are listed in the chart below, and it will be appreciated that appropriate staff would be required, to augment the existing staff.
2. A three-man Authority, consisting of a Chairman and two other members, with appropriate staff to carry out essential functions. The Authority would be responsible to the Minister as in 1. above.

The report concluded as follows: "It will be seen that these systems do not embrace either representatives of government departments or private organisations. It is felt that

the assistance of government departments could be obtained on a departmental basis and that, where necessary, liaison with local bodies such as Shire Councils and citizen bodies could be developed at the discretion of the Authority. It is recognized that such liaison is valuable, but there is no reason to suppose that it could be less effective because the Authority itself was the active body. In many cases, this liaison already exists."

I am not sure what effect these 'thoughts' had on the Minister. I didn't know it then, but a game of poker was in progress and I wasn't being dealt any cards. The Minister proceeded with his plans, no doubt in consultation with his advisors. It so happened that a general election was scheduled for later in 1970 and the Minister deemed it appropriate to make a policy statement on the subject of national parks, in strategic areas. The rough outline of 'what might be said in a press statement' scheduled for release by the Minister at Doncaster on 20th May, at Lorne on 21st May and at Port Fairy on 22nd May 1970, ran as follows:

"It is the Government's intention to reconstitute the present National Parks Authority. In place of the present 11-member authority we are looking carefully into a proposal that this should be reduced to either a 3- or 5-man commission. Such Commissioners would be assigned specific duties covering administration, scientific study, new park investigation, general publicity, day to day operations of existing and future parks.

"Greater emphasis would be placed on increased ranger service, information centres in each park, and proper classification of parks between areas to be retained in their natural form and areas suitable for tourist activities.

"We will, to assist in this work, divide the State into three 'regions', namely (a) Western, (b) Central and North Central (c) Eastern and, with the assistance of the Land Utilization Advisory Committee, each of these sub-divisions will be carefully examined for particular potential.

"Foreshadowing a much greater demand and use of our National Parks system it may be necessary in the future for Committees of Management to re-examine their role so that they can cater for the new demands which will be placed upon them.

"All of these detailed matters will be examined between now and the next session of Parliament, with a view to producing legislation as early as possible."

No doubt this was considered appropriate for election purposes: Sir Humphrey Appleby and Jim Hacker [of the TV program 'Yes Minister'] could hardly have done better. "Looking carefully into a proposal...." "reduced to either a 3 or 5 man commission" "Always advisable to have a choice."

"Such Commissioners would be assigned specific duties covering administration, scientific study, new parks investigations, general publicity, day-to-day operations of existing and future parks." Very encouraging that "... the only people competent to do such work were already employed by the National Parks Authority." "...increased ranger service....information centres...." and so on and so on.

Not a word about how all this increased activity was to be financed! "Foreshadowing a much greater demand ... it may be necessary for the Committees of Management to re-examine their role so that they can cater for new demands which will be placed upon them." What does this

mean? That the 'new demands' would increase the input of the Committees of Management or that they would become advisory bodies? What did "...with a view to producing legislation as early as possible" mean?

One detects an interplay of political forces in this burst of electioneering journalism. The Land Conservation Act was passed on 24 November 1970, the Bill having been debated in Parliament during the spring session, and it is difficult to believe that the Minister was unaware that such a Bill was in course of preparation. The policy statement almost pre-empted the objectives of the LCC Bill.

The policy statement was apparently approved by the Deputy Premier, Sir Arthur Rylah MP, but its credibility was hardly enhanced by the fact that, after the release, the Premier Sir Henry Bolte MP, is said to have disclaimed all knowledge of the proposals embodied in the release!

But, as so often happens, Fate intervened and, after 11th June 1970, Mr Manson ceased to be a member of the Cabinet. He was succeeded by the Hon. Vance Dickie MLC, who had been Minister of State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority from 15th July 1964 to 30th September 1965. There was fresh hope.

Another try

Mr Dickie hardly had time to arrange his office furniture before Mr Goode wrote to him proposing major changes to the form of the National Parks Authority. His letter of 13th August 1970 read as follows:

"COPY

3 Mandeville Crescent.

Toorak Vic. 3142

August 13 1970

The Hon Vance Dickie, MP

State Parliament House
Melbourne 3002

Dear Mr Dickie,

It was 15 years ago that I chaired the public meeting in Melbourne which resulted in the formation 13 years ago of the National Parks Authority.

The control and development then of national parks and other natural reserves was in the hands of dedicated local citizens whose interests and urgings resulted in their development, and possibly the reservation itself. It was not then realized that many special skills had also to be developed to preserve the area for posterity, yet enable present use to be fully developed.

There is a problem to maintain the flora, fauna and scenic values on the one hand, and on the other to develop the national parks in such a way that the public get full continuous enjoyment from them. This seeming conflict of interests, however, is being overcome. The Authority and its technical staff have developed these special skills and know-how. In this they have been guided by the several specialists on the Authority. Conversely, it can be said that the Authority and its discussions have had an impact on the specialist departments. It is of interest to see some of the modified activities of some departments which have evolved over the decade, for example:

(a) Roadworks in and to National Parks have been specially designed by the CRB and the Authority. The associated conservation work at Mount Buffalo and Wilsons Promontory National Parks and the modified road design in these and other national parks have set a pattern of which we can be proud.

(b) Conservation work in national

parks has a very special significance, and the Soil Conservation Authority and the National Parks Authority have designed and used conservation measures which I referred to in the previous paragraph. In particular, the excellent dunal [sand dune protection] work done at Wilsons Promontory has set a pattern for dunal conservation work elsewhere.

- (c) The Lands Department controls vermin and noxious weeds in National Parks, and again the Department and the Authority have evolved special techniques which destroy vermin but which have little or no impact on wildlife or at most a modified impact.
- (d) Fire protection is a responsibility of the Authority, but under the Forests Act the Forests Commission of Victoria is responsible for fire suppression. Here again special fire preventive measures have been designed by the very active Fire Protection Committee which comprises both senior officers of the Forests Commission and Authority members.

There is abundant evidence of close, cordial and fruitful collaboration between the Departments mentioned, also the Fisheries & Wildlife Department, Public Works, State Rivers, and others.

The great problem has been that the Authority has not kept the public informed of what it is doing. Its annual reports are not widely read and it has no spectacular successes which have hit the headlines. The work done by the Authority and its technical staff has been solid, and a base has been built upon which the development and conservation of National Parks can be assured. I am convinced, after seeing national

parks and reserves in many countries overseas, that our programme is modern and effective, but we most certainly need more trained staff and finance.

Earlier I mentioned that prior to the Authority many National Parks and reserves were controlled by committee of management, and this has continued throughout the years. These committees have local knowledge of value, and some have departmental officers with special skills; however, this does create some problems.

There is no doubt that members of the Authority and its scientific staff have acquired considerable skill and expertise in the conservation, development and management of national parks. However, there are limitations in which this knowledge and experience can be directed because the Authority does not have direct control of the field staff in many national parks. In fact, in some parks, this is a major problem.

Whilst recognizing fully the value of the 'Committee of Management' system, there is no doubt that, in the evolution of a modern national parks system, the point has been reached when the implementation of the Authority's policies in regard to national parks would be more effectively achieved if the executive powers now held by the Committees of Management were transferred to the Authority, to be exercised by professional officers under the direct control of the Authority.

It is recognised, too, that in many cases the growing demands of national parks (as the tempo of their development has accelerated to meet the needs of a more sophisticated public) impose heavy burdens upon members of Committees of Management. Moreover, liaison with committees

is becoming more difficult to accomplish because it is necessary to organize the affairs of the Authority or of its administration so as to fit in with the needs of the Committees of Management. Consultations which ought to be held are sometimes deferred or take place too late and, all in all, the outcome is unsatisfactory.

If the Committees were to function in an advisory capacity, with the Authority remaining in control of rangers and field staff, the management of the national parks would be simplified and progress would be more rapid.

It is my opinion that Committees of Management should be appointed as advisory committees, and that the active management of rangers and other staff should be under the Authority.

Those with a close knowledge of what has been done will not dispute the foregoing. However, another problem must be faced at this stage of the development of our State – that is the design and planning of adequate areas for outdoor recreation, other than national parks or parklands which are under governmental control.

In most countries of the world which have reached a standard of living as high as ours, there is positive design and planning of recreational facilities for the future. Outdoor recreation in open space other than national parks and parkland is required near to large centres of population. Major recreation areas must be located, designated and managed to cope with the increasing population shorter working periods, and greater mobility. If this is to come about, and the sooner the better, then a new body needs to be formed to serve the needs of the people. The question follows, should this be a new body or

should the Authority staff be increased to deal with this management/development problem, which is also a conservation problem?

If the management of bush areas of recreational value is to be carried out by the Authority, it would probably be desirable that it continue in its present form for three more years. It would most certainly require an increase in technical staff and would also benefit from the appointment of a full-time or part-time Chairman. To look still further into the future, I would envisage that in three years there should be an Authority with three full-time members like the Soil Conservation Authority, Forests Commission and other departments.

The Authority has had a beneficial impact on nature conservation generally, national parks in particular, but it does need a skilled administrator with public service experience. It requires reorganizing along similar lines to the State Rivers & Water Supply Commission, Forests Commission or Soil Conservation Authority with full-time or part-time and full-time members.

A great deal of good work has been done by the Authority in the past 13 years, but unfortunately its public relations work has been almost non-existent.

In summary it can be said:

1. There has not been adequate publicity or public relations.
2. The Authority has not made use of voluntary specialist organizations.
3. Departmental representatives on the Authority (6) having large departments could not devote as much time to meetings and inspections as some of the private members (3).
4. Committees of Management have served the State and National Park ideals magnificently, but



Hattah Lakes, December 1959.

management and development today requires highly specialist skills, and the demands on Committees of Management are so numerous and diverse that these Committees should now be appointed as advisory committees, with professional officers of the Authority as secretaries.

5. There is a most urgent need for classification of National Parks under a system which would ensure the best use for recreation and for scientific study.
6. Equally is there need for development of open-space areas for outdoor recreation - along the lines of the English pattern. Such open-space recreation areas (outside municipal areas) could well be managed by a newly constituted Authority with additional technical staff. Techniques for such management and expertise have been developed in Churchill, Fern Tree Gully and Port Campbell in particular.
7. The constitution of the new Authority should comprise a full-time Chairman and 3 part-time members, which in time could end up in all being full-time members.

Yours sincerely,
Dewar W Goode

I was unaware of this proposal until quite recently [1988]. The reader will readily discern that no mention was made of the role of the Director; it is hardly likely in the light of Mr Goode's 1965 proposal that the Director would have become the Chairman and it does not seem likely that he would have become one of the part-time members. Presumably Mr Goode had in mind an Authority of four members which would have employed the Director and other members of the staff. Even now, fourteen years after I retired, I can find no enthusiasm for such a scheme.

Department of State Development

Mr Goode's dissertation did not find favour with the Minister, who had other plans in mind. I was aware that he was apprehensive that, as Minister and therefore (by delegation from the Premier) Chairman of the Authority, he might find himself committed to the decisions and policies of the Authority with which he might not agree. He did not rush his hurdles, but proceeded with his plans to abolish the Authority. The State Development Act was passed on 22nd December 1970; it established the Department of State Development, abolished the National

Parks Authority (as from 15th March 1971) and provided for the Minister to become the successor-in-law of the National Parks Authority. The Director became directly responsible to the Minister.

Section 17 of the new Act read as follows:

"Subject to the general direction and control of the Minister the Director of National Parks shall -

- (a) be responsible for the control and management of national parks;
- (b) exercise any powers and carry out any duties conferred or imposed upon him under the National Parks Act 1970 or under this Act or delegated to him by the Minister;
- (c) report upon any matter in relation to national parks as required by the Minister.

The National Parks Authority held its last meeting on 15th March 1971. The Authority's Annual Report for 1970-71 contains an appreciation of the pioneering work of the Authority. The Report inter alia stated that "the enactment of the new legislation marks the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. It seems appropriate here to record the Director's appreciation of the invaluable assistance rendered by

his colleagues, the members of the former Authority, over the years. The sharing of the individual and collective training and experience of the members of the Authority was a vital part of the Director's own preparation for the responsibilities now placed upon him under the new legislation. In addition, through the members of the Authority, the Director and staff of the Authority were able to secure the co-operation of the various Government departments concerned, and of others, without which there could have been no real progress."

New Permanent Head

The Permanent Head of the new Department was Mr P. W. (Bill) Merrett, who had for many years been a senior officer in the Treasury. Soon after his appointment was announced, I called on him in his office. It was a very different situation which existed then from the one when I crossed the threshold of the NPA office in 1958. Then I had my hopes and enthusiasm to offer, but no experience in national parks administration. Now I had twelve years' experience in that field, added to my previous experience in industry, supported by a small but dedicated and competent staff. I offered all of this to Bill Merrett in his new enterprise and we immediately established a very cordial and fruitful relationship.

It was an interesting situation. I recognised that both the Minister and the new Permanent Head would be eager to demonstrate that they were worthy of the confidence the Government had placed in them in creating the new Department and, I felt sure, could be relied upon to provide support for the Service which had demonstrated, under the guidance of the National Parks Authority, that it could 'deliver'.

Shortly after assuming office Mr Merrett accompanied me on a week-long visit to several of our national parks. We travelled to Hattah Lakes National Park on a Sunday, in order to gain an extra day, and after a day there we proceeded to Hopetoun, in order to be able to make an early start on our visit to Wyperfeld; then we made our way to the Little Desert and, finally, to Port Campbell and Mount Eccles. At the end of the week, Bill Merrett had seen some of the work done under the previous administration in a variety of areas - fire protection works, development of water supplies, provision of tourist amenities, roadworks, conservation and regeneration of native species, etc. He had seen some of the wide range of features of the different parks; he had met the rangers and talked to them about their work and their problems. We talked almost incessantly about national parks matters and, by the end of the week, we both felt that our 'batteries' had been recharged. This happy collaboration continued throughout the entire period during which the National Parks Service remained a part of the Department of State Development.

Bill Merrett found the time to 'open' the Ranger Training Course held in Mount Buffalo National Park in November 1971 and was instrumental in achieving a reorganisation of the Service's staff by the creation of the new positions of Chief Resources and Planning Officer, Fire Protection Officer and Secretary for the Fire Protection Committee, as well a Personnel Officer.

Mr Dickie remained Minister of State Development from 12th June 1970 to 23rd August 1972, during which period he gave me very encouraging support. With the retirement of Sir Henry Bolte as Premier on 23rd

August 1972, the Honourable Murray Byrne MLC, became Minister of State Development and Mr Dickie became Minister for Housing.

The National Parks Advisory Committee

One of the provisions of the State Development Act 1970, which appears to have resulted from overtures from the Victorian National Parks Association to the Minister, was that there should be formed a National Parks Advisory Committee, to serve as a link between the Department and the community at large, and to advise the Minister on any matters which he might wish to refer to it. The Minister and the Permanent Head sought my advice on the personnel of the Committee and, after discussion, the following composition was agreed upon:

One person to serve as a link with the former Authority: Mr Dewar W. Goode

One person to be a zoologist: Dr E. H. M. Ealey

One person to be a botanist: Dr D. M. Calder

One person representative of Municipal Shire Councils: Mr S. Cooper

One person representative of industrial and commercial organizations: Mr J. D. Brookes.

The Director of National Parks was appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee. It was not intended that the Committee should serve the same purpose as the former Authority had, and the appointment of the Director as Chairman was considered a prudent measure to ensure that the Advisory Committee had the full benefit of his experience over the past fourteen years. To ensure that any advice offered by the Advisory Committee to the Minister was of a practical nature

and based on first-hand knowledge of the national parks, it was essential for members of the Committee to visit the national parks. Because members of the Committee were fully occupied during the week with their professional vocations, such visits entailed long week-end excursions to distant parts of the State.

Visits were paid to Mount Buffalo, Lower Glenelg, Little Desert and Wyperfeld National Parks and to the proposed national park in the Mount Worth district in the Strzelecki Ranges. Meetings were held, though not on a regular basis, simply because no additional staff had been provided to cope with the extra workload. However, meetings were attended by the Chief Technical Officer and the Chief Resources and Planning Officer, so that there was a strong liaison between members of the Committee and senior staff. As it turned out, this was particularly valuable experience for my successor, Mr J. D. Brookes, although this could not have been foreseen at the time the Advisory Committee was formed.

Early in the life of the Department of State Development two events occurred which seem worthy of recording.

The National Parks Service

Although I had regularly referred to the body controlling the national parks as the National Parks Service, there was in fact no official recognition of the title. All correspondence was conducted under the title 'National Parks Authority'. When the Authority was abolished, it was proposed that the organisation be known as the 'Division of National Parks'. The designation 'Division' seemed to me to be most inappropriate;

accordingly, I pleaded the case for a 'National Parks Service', arguing that this was the designation adopted by the United States and that the term 'Service' had very desirable connotations. After due consideration, the Permanent Head agreed to this proposal and so, at last, we had official recognition as a 'National Parks Service'.

Uniform and emblem

In the early days of the Authority, there was no official uniform which would serve to identify park rangers. The Authority was unable to meet the cost of a uniform designed especially for rangers, but adopted a uniform used by certain other (commercial) organizations. The addition of shoulder flashes carrying suitable wording enabled the rangers to be identified by visitors. At about the time the transfer to the Department of State Development occurred, it was found possible to upgrade the rangers' uniforms, which were manufactured by the Commonwealth Clothing Company. Details of the new uniform were determined by the officers of the National Parks Service and the rangers in consultation.

It had long been felt that the Service should have an emblem and several discussions were held between the Director, the officers and representatives of the Ranger Service. Among the designs, considered, were, the lyrebird, the wedge-tailed eagle, the koala, the mallee fowl and a few others. Finally, it was agreed that the kangaroo, depicted in action, embodied the spirit of the National Parks Service better than any of the others, and had the advantage of being easier to reproduce, because of its bold profile. The addition of the floral component, in the form of two crossed gum leaves, was made after 1975 and, I think, gives better

balance than the original design.

Ministry for Conservation

In December 1972, the Ministry for Conservation Act was passed. The Hon. W.A. Borthwick MP became the Minister for Conservation, and Dr R. G. Downes was appointed Director of Conservation and Permanent Head of the new Department. With the promulgation of the Act on 23 January 1973, the National Parks Service passed into the Ministry for Conservation. Here at last the Service had found itself in an environment best suited to its own aims and aspirations. For years the National Parks Service had been the Cinderella of the Public Service; but finally she had found a golden slipper!

There are several not very well-known aspects of the new arrangement which seem worthy of comment.

The creation of the Ministry for Conservation, under the Hamer Government, heralded a new era for national parks administration. The new Premier, the Hon. R. W. Hamer MP, had a personal interest in conservation. Some years prior to this, when my Minister (Mr Manson) was temporarily indisposed, Mr Hamer had become my Acting Minister. I always made a point of discussing the agenda for meetings of the National Parks Authority with the Minister before posting it out to the members, because the Minister was the Chairman of the Authority and I wanted to make certain that he knew 'what was going on' in his Authority. The last thing I wanted to happen was for the Minister to learn of some important development by way of the grapevine. In preparation for my meeting with Mr Hamer, I seized the opportunity of presenting him with a summary of the principal developments which had taken place in national parks since the inception of the Authority. This

became known as 'The Hamer Report', and included details of annual financial allocations from the government, park revenue, visitor statistics, etc.

Mr Hamer was greatly impressed by the progress which had been made and said that he had 'no idea' that, for example, the park visitor intake had grown so remarkably or that park revenue was making such a substantial contribution to the overall developments. I personally was greatly encouraged by his kind remarks; it was in fact the first occasion that any of the several Ministers (permanent and acting) under whom I had served had made any comment on the Authority's work, although I had not been aware of any dissatisfaction either. My liaison with Mr Hamer was brief because Mr Manson was soon back on duty.

In the latter part of 1972 there were rumours in the air that Sir Henry Bolte would be retiring from politics before the end of the year and that his successor would be Mr Hamer. I was present at the annual meeting of the Keep Australia Beautiful Council in October 1972 and, during the 'party' which always follows such functions, Mr Hamer approached me and inquired whether it might be possible for him and Mrs Hamer to occupy the lodge 'Northey' in Wilsons Promontory over the [Melbourne] Cup weekend early in November. This was the first occasion when any of my Ministers had shown such interest in the national parks, and I was delighted. With the co-operation of Roy Cooper, Chairman of the Committee of Management, I soon made the necessary arrangements and decided that it would be helpful if I also were in the park during Mr Hamer's visit, so that I could render any assistance that might be required. While I had complete confidence in the park rangers, Steve



Wilsons Promontory NP. Conservation work to stabilize the foreshore at Norman Bay.

Watkins and Jeff Davies, there were certain aspects of park management which I wanted to bring to the notice of the Premier-elect and I doubted whether there would be another such opportunity.

Mr and Mrs Hamer were not slow in demonstrating their interest in the park. I had no desire to be unduly obtrusive, but the fact is that there was nobody else who possessed the knowledge concerning the developments which had taken place in the park in recent years. I had been a regular visitor since 1949 and had been involved in every development which had occurred since 1958, whereas the rangers had been in the park for relatively short periods. So I gave them the grand tour of Tidal River Village, explaining the when, why and how of the major points of interest such as the construction of Riverview Flats, the growth of the store and the acquisition of the Cafe by the Authority, the construction of Lorikeet Flats, the conversion of an unplanned camping area into an organised

camp, the problems associated with the water supply and the disposal of effluents and garbage, the construction of walking tracks and the need for maintenance, fire protection activities, the conservation work on the Norman Bay foredune and so on. I pointed out to him the various sites on which Mr R. E. Unger had proposed to build his hotel-motel and took the opportunity to explain to him why I was so concerned about keeping private enterprise out of the national parks. We visited the summit of Mount Oberon and (while I remained discreetly in the background) I observed Mr Hamer in conversation with several other visitors who were enjoying the thrill of viewing the west coast of the Promontory and parts of the east coast for the first time.

I particularly wanted Mr Hamer to see the 'sand blow' to the east of Oberon Bay, which had for many years been extending in the direction of Waterloo Bay for about 1.5 kilometres. So I persuaded him and Mrs Hamer and their friends to accompany me on



Wilsons Promontory NP. Oberon Bay Sand Blow, which in 1972 had extended 1.5km towards Waterloo Bay.

the long walk along Norman Bay and Little Oberon Bay to Oberon Bay. After lunch I had some anxious moments, because Mr Hamer wanted to return by the way we had come; but, eventually, he agreed to undertake the long and arduous walk across the vast stretch of sand and then along the walking track on the main track from Telegraph Saddle to the lighthouse. Here, though not fortuitously (because I had arranged matters with Steve Watkins) we were met by the park ranger who transported us back to Tidal River, thus saving us the long haul up to Telegraph Saddle.

During the visit the opportunity was taken to introduce the Premier-elect and Mrs Hamer to the park rangers and their wives informally at 'Northey', and I am certain that our visitors were very favourably impressed by the quality of our rangers and their partners.

All too soon the visit was over, but I received information later, from a very reliable source, that the business of the Cabinet was held up on the following Monday morning, while Mr Hamer gave an account of his peregrinations on the Promontory over the previous weekend!

There is no doubt that the change

in the leadership of the Government had a profound effect on the future of the National Parks Service and on the parks themselves. However, it is not my purpose to detract in any way from the contributions of Sir Henry Bolte and his colleagues to the cause of conservation in Victoria. Among other things, they created the Soil Conservation Authority and the National Parks Authority and, although the Authority never had the resources it required, to do all that it wanted to do or could have done, it was the events of those years between 1956 and 1972 which laid the foundations on which the new architect was to build. It is just possible that the cold winds of adversity which had threatened to extinguish the glowing embers of enthusiasm of the officers of the National Parks Service had made the latter more innovative and had developed within them a resilience and powers of perception which might not have been acquired in a more benign environment. It has been my purpose to demonstrate that Mr Hamer had a personal interest in conservation and that through the creation of the Ministry for Conservation he had an opportunity of enhancing the cause of national parks and related services.

The Minister of Conservation, the Honourable W. A. Borthwick MP, also had an abiding interest in conservation matters and from his personal experiences was able to receive and understand the messages transmitted to him by the very able officers of the new Department. The new Ministry provided a home for the National Parks Service, the Soil Conservation Authority and the former Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The Director of Conservation, Dr R. G. Downes, had for many years been Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority and had served as a member of the former National Parks Authority, so that he was very familiar with the needs and problems of these bodies. His incisive mind and dedication to the cause of conservation had won him respect and acclaim throughout Australia and abroad. His work was recognized in 1973 by the conferring of a Doctorate in Agricultural Science by the University of Melbourne. His deputy was Mr A. D. Butcher, who had been Director of Fisheries and Wildlife for over thirty years and had also been a foundation member of the National Parks Authority. They were supported by a very competent staff and by the Government, and the future of the National Parks Service in its new environment was full of

The rock painters of Refuge Cove

Refuge Cove lies between Sealers Cove and Waterloo Bay, on the east coast of Wilsons Promontory. To my mind, it is the most beautiful cove around the Promontory, being shaped like a horseshoe which opens on to Bass Strait to the east.

Almost directly opposite the entrance is a small beach of golden sand, at the southern end of which Hobbs's Creek discharges. There is a second small beach tucked away in the south-eastern corner of the Cove, where Cove Creek enters. The land between the two beaches is relatively flat, gradually rising to the south, east and west to forested slopes, but the remainder of the shore is rocky and is overlooked by steep timbered slopes.

Ever since I first became aware of it, Refuge Cove has always held a special fascination for me. Before I joined the National Parks Authority, I often visited the magnificent Mitchell Library in Sydney and recall having read, in an early account of the Promontory, that Refuge Cove was capable of accommodating a battleship, while the reflections of the forested slopes in the still deep waters were said to be a joy to behold.

My personal recollections begin in December 1951, when I stood on a rocky platform alongside a large granite tor which rises above the western slope, like a sentinel guarding the Cove. In the years that

followed I made regular pilgrimages to that eminence, which we named John Hartley's Rock, just for the sheer joy of experiencing the deep silence and tranquillity of the place and to gaze down once more upon that beautiful cove. The placid waters of the Cove reflected the mood of the sky; sometimes it was China blue, while at other times it was deep shades of amethyst. The fire of February 1951 had so damaged the vegetation that one had little difficulty in picking a way through the trackless scrub to my viewing point; but by 1963 this was becoming more difficult.

On that morning in December 1951, as I looked down on the five ships which had run in to escape the wrath of the storm which had raged over Bass Strait on the previous day, it was apparent that the Cove had been aptly named. Fortunately, from my remote vantage point, I could not see 'the evil that men do' which I was later to learn had indeed 'lived after them'.

The rock painters

On 17 February 1969, the Honourable Vernon Christie MP, then Speaker in the Victorian Parliament, wrote to the Minister of State Development as follows:

"Some days ago I sailed down to Refuge Cove and sheltered there for a couple of days from a gale. This unique place, which can only be

got to by sea or by foot track, must have been outstandingly beautiful once. Now it is marred with a great example of vandalism about which I think your Park Authority should do something.

The great granite boulders surrounding this cove are for the main part disfigured by lettering, mainly in red, white and blue, announcing the names of boats and yachts which have called there in recent years. The effect is startling and distasteful and ruins the place. Someone has even painted white a very rare and unusual pillar of rock on the mountainside at about 700 feet elevation. On shore there is some untidiness on the southern beach, bottles, cans and other lack of care which further mars this beautiful spot.

I suggest that you may care to ask the Park Authority to send someone down to Refuge Cove with a wire brush, some acid and some paint remover and get these names off the rocks and try to restore the place to somewhere its former beauty. I think that there should be some publicity given to policing this in the future, and I hope that your Authority would have power to proceed against the owners of any boats whose name was used to disfigure the place in future.

I wonder how you can expect the community at large to respect the great beauty of our parks if vandalism by people who ought to



Refuge Cove, on the eastern side of Wilsons Promontory, in 1951.

know better is not condemned and prevented.

I do hope something can be done about this.

Yours very sincerely,
Vernon Christie, MP
Speaker”

The Minister referred the matter to me, but events proved that it was not easy to remove the paint from those rocks. There were many strands which had to be identified and woven together before a clear picture of the problem could be formed.

In the days preceding the creation of the Authority, practically all of the management functions related to Tidal River, and the east coast was visited only by members of the hiking

fraternity and a variety of sea-faring folk who sought safe harbour there.

I recall the feeling of revulsion I had towards that bronzed young mariner who, during my visit to the Cove in 1951, had busied himself by transporting kerosene tins full of native plants (including the Fleur-de-lis or Tall Lobelia) on his shoulder, along a plank which connected the shore of the Cove to his yacht. But it is a long walk from Tidal River to Refuge Cove and, in the succeeding years, I had to content myself with regular walks to the Rock.

As the national parks service developed under the guidance of the Authority, it became possible to employ ‘Temporary Rangers’ some of whom were deployed to the outposts of the park. The temporary

rangers were usually university students, some in the later years of their courses, who, after a period of briefing at Head Office, were posted to such places as the northern and eastern parts of the Promontory. They performed useful services there, gathering rubbish and burying it, establishing rough toilet facilities and ‘keeping an eye’ on visitors.

The conditions in those remote parts were hardly romantic. There were usually two temporary rangers in each group; they had perforce to transport their camping gear on their backs; there were no comforts in the camps and the lack of even a Coolgardie safe meant that one of them had to walk from Sealers Cove to Tidal River for fresh supplies every three or four days. But they were cheerful in their work and, I

think, enjoyed themselves, whilst at the same performing well in the public relations arena. It was good training for the temporary rangers and provided the Authority with some useful information.

One such report was that prepared by Mr Peter Pridmore, who had been stationed at Sealers Cove during December 1963 – January 1964. Among other things, Peter reported that 'painting of the rocks (at Refuge Cove) was rife'.

Complications

In addition to the painting of the rocks at Refuge Cove, it transpired that there were a number of 'permanent camps' there. I asked Mr R. G. M. (Bob) Yorston to investigate the matter. It so happened that the Authority had recently purchased a boat for Mallacoota Inlet National Park; so, while this was in transit from Melbourne to Mallacoota, the opportunity was taken to investigate conditions at Refuge Cove, with a view to instituting remedial measures.

During his visit, Bob Yorston endeavoured to remove the paint from some of the rocks by means of an LP gas blow torch and a wire brush, but more effective was a paint stripper used in conjunction with a wire brush and a jet of water. Removing the paint from even one rock proved to be very tedious and not completely satisfactory, because the removal of the paint also destroyed the lichens on the rocks and exposed bare areas in the form of the offending messages.

Bob Yorston's report included the following: "I can see no easy solution to the problem of removing the names and paint from the rocks. It can be assumed fairly accurately that visitors to the Cove will follow the practice of painting notices on the rocks as previous visitors have done.

Removing the names will probably involve 20 man hours labour at least, plus one dozen wire brushes, 4 paint brushes of various sizes (2"- 4") and 44 gallons or more of paint stripper and other miscellaneous items (water-carrying receptacles, etc). Even this will not erase the names unless irregular areas of lichen growth adjacent to the names are also killed and removed."

I think, without wishing to appear too critical, that Bob under-estimated the task, rather than otherwise. Clearly, without a boat to transport camping gear and the materials of destruction, it was not going to be easy to clear those rocks! In addition, there were no launching or landing facilities at Refuge Cove or at Sealers Cove.

For some inexplicable reason, when Wilsons Promontory National Park was originally declared, an area of about 8½ acres of land at the southern end of Refuge Cove, approximately westward of Cove Greek, was excluded from the reservation. There were numerous opportunities after 1956 to amend the National Parks Act, but it was not until the rock painters attracted the interest of the Hon. Vernon Christie that any concerted effort was made to rectify the omission.

Towards the end of March 1969, Mr J. W. Manson, Minister for State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority, wrote to Sir William McDonald, Minister for Lands, proposing that this small area of land be added to the National Park. In June 1969, the Lands Department, by Order in Council, took steps to have the land temporarily reserved for a national park. Legislation was duly prepared and, on 16 December 1969, the land was incorporated in the national park under Act No 7928. However, while the Authority now had jurisdiction over the land, it still lacked the resources to enforce the law.

More frustrations

Although the Authority lacked the resources to undertake the task of removing the paint from the rocks, I felt encouraged by Mr Christie's frequent inquiries regarding progress; I felt pleased that somebody outside the Authority was taking an interest in our work. I was personally disposed towards Mr Christie's suggestion that the paint be removed from the rocks and that the damage to the lichens be 'accepted'. However, the Authority did not really control park staff, and the Committee of Management, along with some others, had reservations about taking drastic action to remove the paint, so we were confronted with an impasse. I repeatedly requested that a ranger be despatched to Refuge Cove for the express purpose of compiling a list of the names painted on the rocks, but co-operation was not forthcoming.

Towards the end of 1969, I decided to write to the Victorian Yachting Council expressing the Authority's concern and requesting that members of the Association be asked to desist from the practice of painting the names of their vessels on the rocks. The Secretary, Mr Percy Fraser, proved eager to co-operate and agreed to place our submission before the Executive Council at its next meeting, on 9th December 1969. I also wrote to the Australian Yachting Federation, along the same lines. The Honorary Secretary, Mr Garth W. Sweeney, circularised the members of the Federation and placed the Authority's letter on the agenda of the meeting of the Executive to be held in Adelaide on 30-31 January 1970.

It had been my practice ever since 1949 to spend the Christmas – New Year period, with my family, at Tidal River. Because there appeared to be no other way of obtaining the

required information, I decided to get it myself. I was not entirely happy about undertaking this exercise on my own; but, despite the heavy load (consisting of sleeping bag, tent, spare clothes, food and photographic gear) the trip proved uneventful and I established camp in a secluded area along Cove Creek during the afternoon of 26th December 1969. I must say that I found the first stage (the ascent above Sealers Cove at the south-eastern end) rather steep, and resolved to examine the possibility of relocating the track on an easier gradient as soon as I returned to Melbourne.

Before settling down on that first night, I had the joy of hearing butcherbirds singing in the dense timber above the south-east corner of the Cove.

The weather was kind and I spent the next two days compiling a record of the graffiti on the rocks. This was no easy task, as many of the rocks are difficult of access; I also found that many names had been painted on rocks high above the shore, among the scrub above the eastern shore. It seems certain that the list I compiled was incomplete, because I could not observe the seaward side of many of the rocks.

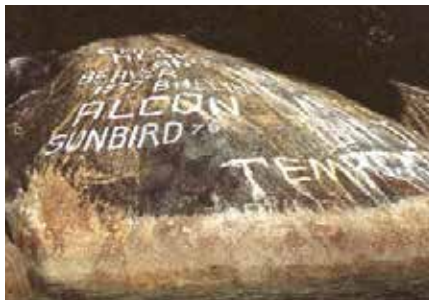
The graffiti artists

The list of names painted on the rocks at Refuge Cove which I prepared between 26 and 28 December 1969 was as follows:

This information, under cover of my letter of 5 January 1970, was conveyed to Mr Percy Fraser, Honorary Secretary of the Victorian Yachting Council. Relevant passages of the letter read as follows:

"Some of these names have been painted on the rocks several years

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. P. AND V. DAVIDSON | 20. FIREFLY | 40. FIONA |
| 2. KIRRIBILLI – EDEN 1969 | 21. JACOMA OCT. '62 | 41. ROAMA |
| 3. KIRRIBILLI – PORT | 22. HADRIEN (Indistinct) | 42. A. DAVIS |
| ALBERT & EDEN | 23. 66 JAN 64 WAYWARD | P. SIWELL |
| (Very recently) | H.B.Y.C. JAN JAN 64 | 43. ILEOU |
| 4. TASMANS | 24. J. FORRY | 44. ARANUICA |
| 5. COGNAC JAN.'60 | 25. ??ESSE | 45. EAST WIND |
| 6. ALAN | 26. VENTURA H.B.Y.C. | 46. MANSAIL |
| 7. MIAMA -- JOHN | JAN 67 | (or MAINSAIL) |
| 8. MICHELLE | 27. MERELE | 47. ICOLA (or NICOLA) |
| 9. SHEARWATER 1968 | 28. TICKING WOG | 48. LUCIENNE 67 |
| 10. MARIO'S R -- SOVER | 29. RAHNA 65 | 49. A. JONES 1-3-65 |
| 11. MIE DESIRE Dec. 1961 | 30. COLIBAN ? | 50. ? DIVERS |
| 12. INDI | 31.ARO | BALLARAT 1966 |
| 13. JOHN FRANKLIN '66 | 32. BEVERLEE | 51. EXODUS JAN 69 |
| (Cove Creek Beach, | 33. NOMAD | 52. SARINA |
| Eastern End) | 34. ASCANIUS | 53. MARY NORLING |
| 14. JOHN FRANKLIN | 35. HELEN | NOV '66 |
| (Cove Creek Beach, | 36. LUCIE TOO | 54. TACOMA |
| Western End) | 37. YOUTH | 55. FAVALORO |
| 15. INVICTA | 38. ZITA | 56. JADRAN |
| 16. LEENA | 39. HOLLOWEEN | 57. ROBYN |
| 17. MINTAG | 40. FIONA | 58. JOHN 66 JOHN II |
| 18. MINTA '67 | | 59. DEANNE 66 |
| 19. STELLA RMW01 | | |



Graffiti removal at Refuge Cove, Wilsons Promontory NP, circa 1974. Photos courtesy Jim Whelan

ago while others were of recent origin. The colour of the paint used included white, light blue, dark blue-green, yellow, red and pale green. The letters varied in height from 30 cm to 38 cm (12-15 inches) and 5-6 cm (2 - 2½ inches) in width. In some cases, several coats of paint (or a

very thick coat) appear to have been applied.

"Those responsible had, in many cases, gone to a considerable amount of trouble to achieve their objective, and it would seem that ladders or ropes and bosuns' chairs may have been used. In some

cases the rock faces carrying the inscriptions were practically (and, in some cases, quite) inaccessible by foot. It almost seemed that painting one's mark on the rocks at Refuge Cove was a feat of some merit in the eyes of the world. The Authority, charged with the responsibility of protecting the beauty of our national parks, is at a loss to understand why those who are so fortunate as to be able to avail themselves of the shelter of the Cove should feel privileged to desecrate this superlatively beautiful area which was dedicated, along with the remainder of Wilsons Promontory National Park for the 'benefit of all the people for all time', so many years ago.

"...the Authority hopes that, with the information furnished herewith, it may be possible for you to identify those concerned and, through the good offices of your organization, bring them to a proper sense of their responsibilities and persuade them to abandon what can only be described as a barbarous practice.

"The Authority has carefully considered the steps which might be taken to remove the paint from the rocks, but the task is beyond the Authority's resources. It has occurred to the Authority that it might be possible for your organization to persuade a number of volunteers from among your members to undertake the work of removing the paint. This could be a means of demonstrating a genuine regret which it is felt the responsible elements of your organization must feel that the good name of the sea-faring fraternity should have fallen into such poor repute. There is little doubt that the great majority of your members would share the Authority's concern; but, so long as those names remain painted on the rocks at Refuge Cove, however unfairly, they constitute an indictment

of the seafaring fraternity using these waters."

The Authority, of course, did not overlook the possibility that "some of those responsible might not be members of your organization".

The same letter was sent to the Australian Yachting Federation and, naturally, to the Minister (Mr Manson), Mr Vernon Christie, the Committee of Management and the Park Manager (Mr Don Yorke). I was later informed that, when the letter was placed before the meeting of the Executive Council of the Victorian Yachting Council, on 20th January, there were 'a few red faces around the table'. The Council passed the following resolution:

"That the attention of all VYC. Member Clubs be drawn to the fact that persons apprehended in defacing National Parks areas are liable to prosecution and heavy fines."

The resolution was conveyed to all Member Clubs; but, in a letter dated 27th May 1970, the Council conveyed regretfully 'its inability to help'. In other words, the rock painters had indicated that they had no intention of cleaning up the mess they had made.

After Mr Manson left the Cabinet in June 1970, the Hon. Vance Dickie MLC became Minister of State Development and Chairman of the National Parks Authority (for the second time). Mr Christie lost no time in sending him a note of 'encouragement' to get on with the job of cleaning up the rocks at Refuge Cove. Whilst acknowledging our own efforts to improve conditions, he informed Mr Dickie that he didn't "know how you can expect people generally to take much care about vandalism and pollution if they don't get a lead from those who ought to know better". He was of course

referring to the privileged section of the community who can afford yachts to transport them and their tins of paint to Refuge Cove. Mr Dickie expressed regret that there had not been more publicity regarding the action taken by the Authority.

The ensuing correspondence suggests that relations between the two players were becoming strained. Mr Dickie proposed that Mr Christie discuss the matter of the rock painting with him and the Director; Mr Christie responded by saying that he "could see no point in talking. The writing has gone on for almost two years. It is a matter of whether you will or will not do something to restore the place. If you will do something, I suggest your Director come and see me, and I will tell him how to do it."

Apparently the two gentlemen discussed the matter by telephone; I was not involved. Whilst relieved in one way, I was a little disappointed at never learning what particular genie Mr Christie had in his bottle.

Interstate involvement

On 2nd December 1971, a New South Wales visitor to Refuge Cove reported to one of our rangers that he had seen a boat's crew painting the word MANANA on one of the rocks at the Cove and that the boat's crew had "behaved in a disorderly manner, causing concern to other campers in the area". The boat was said to have been en route from Sydney to Melbourne.

I immediately wrote to our informant in Sydney, requesting further details, because the available information was very sketchy, with a view to launching a prosecution. But I could hardly have foreseen the turn of events which ensued.

Our NSW contact apparently took a deep dive; at all events there was

no response. In the meantime, my inquiries had led me to believe that the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia might be able to throw some light on the subject. Accordingly, on 14 December 1971, I wrote to the Secretary of that body, seeking information. On 11 January 1972, I received a letter from the Victorian Yachting Council informing me that the Secretary's inquiries had led him "to believe that the owner of the yacht MANANA was a Mr G Swinbourne". The Secretary of the VYC sent me a copy of a letter he had sent to Mr Swinbourne, conveying a copy of my letter of 14 December; his letter concluded with these words: "If it was your boat involved on this occasion, would you please make this complaint known to the crew members on board at the time".

The matter became more complicated when a report was received from the Wilsons Promontory Committee of Management to the effect that the Park Manager (Mr Don Yorke) had seen a boat on a trailer in Fish Creek bearing the name MANYANA. The Transport Regulation Board had informed him that the owner of this boat was a gentleman living in Morwell. Now the big question was, was the boat MANANA identical with the MANYANA? My limited knowledge of Spanish leads me to believe that the word means 'tomorrow'. I do not know why such a name should seem appropriate for a yacht.

Mr Swinbourne was outraged at the suggestion that his yacht and crew had been involved in the incident at Refuge Cove and demanded an apology. To make matters worse, a copy of Mr Swinbourne's letter of 31 January 1972, addressed to the Australian Yachting Federation, did not reach me until four months later!

It appears that much of the confusion arose because three different but similar names were involved. The initial report referred to a yacht named MANYANA, the crew of which were alleged to have painted the name on the rock. Yet the Secretary of the Australian Yachting Federation, in writing to Mr Swinbourne, referred to the yacht MANANA. Perhaps this was a typing error, perhaps not. Mr Swinbourne acknowledged that his yacht was in Refuge Cove on 2 December 1971 and stated that, when rowing ashore, he had noticed the name MANYANA painted on a rock in red paint. Whatever the name of the yacht originally reported in the painting incident, it is certain that, when it sailed away into the sunset, it took its secret with it. A great deal of time was expended on this matter and numerous letters were written, but the mystery remains unsolved.

Despite the fact that the Victorian Yachting Council and the Australian Yachting Federation repeatedly circularised their members requesting them to desist from defacing the rocks, the practice continued.

In January 1973, we were informed that a large rock at Sealers Cove had had the following inscriptions painted on it:

ANNE MARIE III in letters 1.35 m (4ft - 6ft) high, S A 1973 extending over 4.5 m (15ft) and J R ANTONEY'S ROCK in letters 45 cm (18 inches) high, extending over 3.6 m (12ft).

We sought assistance from the South Australian Yacht Racing Association, but to no avail. On advice from Russell Street Police Station, we requested the Superintendent of Police at Leongatha to make inquiries to ascertain whether a Mr J. R. Antoney of Eltham, Victoria, could throw any light on the matter; but, after six months we were informed that "the detective conducting the

investigation was unable to obtain evidence that could establish who wrote the name J R Antoney" on the rock.

If only I could have invoked the aid of Mr Hercule Poirot or Mr Sherlock Holmes, it might have been possible to follow the clues to a successful conclusion, but the culprits proved to be more elusive than the Scarlet Pimpernel.

Visitors book

The Port Albert Yacht Club appears to have been the only group which showed any concern over the painting of the rocks. In May 1972, the Club wrote to the Victorian Yachting Council proposing that a large board be erected at Refuge Cove so that visiting yachtsmen and others could 'sign the visitors book', as it were, to inform other members of the boating fraternity that they had been at the Cove at a particular time. Perhaps it was hoped that this achievement would elevate them a rung or two on the social ladder. The idea of providing a scribble board for people of childish mentality made little appeal, but I proposed that a real visitors book, suitably housed and discreetly located, be provided at the expense of the yachting clubs. This offer was not accepted.

Publicity

In January 1974, plans were made for an attack to be made on the graffiti on the rocks at Refuge Cove. The matter came to the notice of the newspaper *Truth*, which published the following report on 12 January 1974. The records do not show how successful the rangers were in their clean-up operation, but the problem persisted.

Following a lead from the Ministry for Conservation, I made arrangements with the *Sun News Pictorial*

So down come the names the sailors left behind

THE biggest graffiti clean-up in Victorian history is about to commence.

The offensive daubings are not on buildings or walls — but boulders, at a popular hideaway for big cruising yachts.

Three National Parks Service rangers have the task of removing decades of marine graffiti from the rocks at Refuge Cove, Wilson's Promontory.

The rangers will use blow torches to blast off the names of hundreds of yachts which have visited the peaceful cove.

A Truth reporter who visited the cove was told by a yachtsman that leaving a boat's name on a rock was an established tradition among the sail-set.

ATMOSPHERE

"It adds to the atmosphere," the man said.

Refuge Cove is recognised by yachtsmen around Australia as the perfect holiday spot.

Many Sydney-Hobart racers call there to relax after the competition.

The yachtsman who spoke to Truth said the graffiti-for-posterity tradition would not die, despite the National Parks Service clampdown.

Prosecutions could follow. Truth was told by a NPS spokesman that many letters had been sent to yachting clubs complaining about the graffiti. He said: "We will certainly prosecute if the daubers can be apprehended.

"Our big worry is the damage that paint causes to lichen on the boulders."

Article from the *Truth* newspaper on 12 January 1974.

newspaper for a journalist and a photographer to accompany me and the Head Ranger (Mr S. J. Watkins) to the east coast of Wilsons Promontory. As there was no suitable boat available from the Public Works Department or the Fisheries and Wildlife Division, it was decided to hire the services of Mr Harry Bronstein and his 9.6 m (32 ft) boat to transport the party from Toora to Sealers Cove and Refuge Cove, on Thursday 28 March 1974. The cost was to be \$48.00.

The party was to consist of Mr Lester Howard (Pictorial Editor of *The Sun*), Mr Barry Acres (photographer), Mr Watkins and myself, and plans were made to spend the night at Port Welshpool with a view to making

an early start (7 a.m.) and reaching Refuge Cove at 10-10.30 a.m. Unfortunately, the weather conditions deteriorated to such an extent that the visit had to be cancelled at short notice. We had kept in touch with the Weather Bureau for several days and were full of apprehension as the weather reports became more and more discouraging. I had unhappy recollections of an attempted visit to the east coast of the Promontory some years previously, when I accompanied the South Gippsland Regional Committee on an excursion on a PWD boat which eventually had to turn back because of the rough seas which buffeted the hapless boat. It seemed as if the very Fates themselves were in league with the painters.

Epilogue

When I retired in January 1975, the problem was still there, but I understand that, following the acquisition of a suitable craft, the National Parks Service engaged in an attempt to remove the paint from the rocks. However, a recent report (April 1989) confirms the determination of the yachting and other seafaring fraternity to exercise their God-given rights to despoil the beauty of Refuge Cove.

This account of our efforts to protect the nation's treasures and beauty spots against the irresponsible actions of a class within our society, who set themselves above the law and show their contempt for their



South East Cape on east coast of Wilsons Promontory National Park, December 1974.

fellow citizens, will illustrate the complexities and difficulties inherent in the task. The arrogance and hypocrisy of those concerned has to be seen to be believed, yet many of them sit in high places and ought to be setting an example to others.

Let the records show that we tried.

The Organ Pipes National Park

Shortly after the announcement of my appointment (in July 1958) I received an invitation from the Deputy Chairman of the National Parks Authority, the Hon. C. E. Isaacs, to accompany him and some other members of the Authority on a visit of inspection to the 'Organ Pipes' [near Sydenham, north-west of Melbourne].

Although not due to assume office for several weeks, I was anxious to become acquainted with the national parks scene. I had not previously visited the Jacksons Creek area and knew nothing of the Organ Pipes but what I had been told, namely, that they were an important geological [columnar basalt] formation which was visited regularly by geology students from the University of Melbourne. The Pipes rated a mention in Professor Sherbon Hill's book [*The Physiography of Victoria*].

Unfortunately, the Organ Pipes were on privately-owned land, but the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and other bodies were endeavouring to persuade the Government to purchase an adequate area to preserve the formation.

I was hardly prepared for what I saw. The slopes above Jacksons Creek were densely covered by boxthorn, artichoke thistle and horehound. The 'Pipes' seemed insignificant in the mass of noxious weeds and boxthorn which had established themselves on every ledge and crevice in the formation. Jacksons Creek was a narrow shallow stream and access to the area was a rough track along

which walking seemed safer than driving. But the Deputy Chairman assured me that the Organ Pipes were a desirable addition to the national heritage and I did my best to muster a little enthusiasm.

Proposal to purchase

Shortly after I took up office, the Authority had before it a proposal to purchase the Organ Pipes. After some discussion, one member moved that it be recommended to the Minister that "half an acre of land be purchased facing Jacksons Creek and containing the feature known as 'The Organ Pipes', because that was all that was necessary to preserve the geological feature". I am not sure, but I think that the motion was passed; what I am sure about is that my heart sank into my boots, as the implications of that motion struck home. Half a bloody acre!

Shortly after this, I met Mr J. Ros Garnet, Secretary of the VNPA, who was very enthusiastic about the idea of acquiring the Organ Pipes. Ros invited me to accompany him and some of his VNPA friends on a week-end visit to the area. Somehow we managed to manoeuvre our cars down the rough track and parked them in the shade of a large peppercorn tree. We were accompanied by our wives, who made preparations for afternoon tea while we men struggled up through the artichoke thistles and horehound, whilst keeping a sharp lookout for snakes, as we measured out an area

of about 10 acres, allowing 'adequate' protection of the central feature above and on either flank. It was a hot day in January (or was it February?) and the slopes were treacherous as large rocks hidden beneath the thistles often caused us to stumble, but we finally had the area pegged out.

This excursion with Ros Garnet and his friends (including Jim Quirk) gave me a different perspective on the whole concept of a 'national monument' incorporating the Organ Pipes. Perhaps the boxthorn and noxious weeds could be removed, thereby exposing the Pipes more impressively, and perhaps it would be possible to develop the creek flat area (then submerged in boxthorn, star thistles and horehound) into a picnic area. There was no similar area close to the City of Keilor.

I resumed my negotiations with the owner, but it was like a game of poker in which he held all the aces. I did not as yet have the Government's approval to purchase the land, but endeavoured to persuade the Minister, Mr Fraser, that the effort was worthwhile. The owner kept the pressure on by informing me that he could easily sell the gravel from the creek, whilst still retaining the land. I observed that some gravel had already been taken, which strengthened my resolve to persuade the Minister.

But Fate was already re-shuffling the cards and, on the very morning that the Minister called me to say that he had obtained Cabinet approval to



The Organ Pipes are an unusual formation of columnar basalt. August 1958.

purchase 10 acres of land, including the Organ Pipes, I was unable to communicate with the owner to 'clinch the deal'. At the time I called him on the telephone, he was visiting the Organ Pipes in the company of a Mr E. A. Green and two of his company executives and, when I caught up with him by telephone at 6 p.m., he told me that he had accepted a deposit of £1 [one pound or \$2.00] from Mr Green, who had purchased his entire holdings. I thereupon called Mr Green and inquired whether he would be prepared to sell the Government the 10 acres we had selected, but he declined to sell. It seemed that those Organ Pipes were destined never to play a tune for the National Parks Authority.

Another attempt to purchase

Sometime during April or May 1960, accompanied by Mr John Landy (who had been appointed the Authority's first Technical Officer in August 1959 [and who later became Governor of Victoria, 2001-2006]), I again found myself at the Organ Pipes, discussing the possibility of purchasing the 10 acres with Mr Green and his associate Mr Stanley S. Payne (Company Secretary). It was a bleak day and the cold wind did little to cheer us, but my reception by Mr Green, although hardly encouraging, was more cordial than I had anticipated in the light of my first telephone conversation. We were just going have to 'wait and see', while the Company pursued

its interests in land and property development.

Keilor City Council

Now, it so happened that there was a lady living in our street in Kew whose brother Fred Kiellerup (a very fine athlete) had been in the Teachers' College while I was there in the early 1930s, and this fortunate circumstance served as an introduction to his brother, Mr Arthur Kiellerup, Mayor of the City of Keilor. Through his good offices, I was privileged to address the Keilor City Council one evening in the winter of 1960. So far as I was aware, this was the first occasion on which a representative of a government department had endeavoured to

promote the interest of the Council in having the Organ Pipes secured on behalf of the general public. It was a miserable night, and I had to wait until 11.30 pm to address the Council, but I thought the time was well spent.

The tide begins to turn

As time passed, I kept the Authority's interest in the Organ Pipes before the owner, but did not seem to be making any real progress. But, apparently, Mr Green had been softening towards the concept of a national monument or park and, just before he died (of a heart attack), he remarked to his Secretary, "You'd better see that 'they' get the Organ Pipes for a national park", and his will made provision for this.

When I became aware of this (initially through Mr Jim Quirk), I communicated with Mr Payne with a view to giving effect to Mr Green's wish. It transpired that he had formed the 'Edward A. Green Charitable Foundation' in 1960, and had appointed Mr Payne sole trustee of the Foundation.

Initially, Mr Payne and I discussed the possibility of reserving an area of 35 acres, which seemed much more appropriate than the 10 acres which had been the Authority's objective. However, after several discussions, Mr Payne suggested that we should visit the area and 'review the matter on the ground'.

I recall the events of that day very clearly; we proceeded separately along the Calder Highway to a point on the southern side of the road opposite the present entrance to the Organ Pipes and, from the shelter of our cars, changed out of our office suits into clothes and boots more appropriate to the exercise ahead of us. Perhaps the few motorists who passed us as the changing process was in progress wondered what was

going on, but nobody stopped to inquire! Perhaps it was one of those passers-by who was later inspired to make the TV commercial in which a celebrated actor had his pants ripped off by a passing Volvo.

Mr Payne and I walked from the Calder Highway along the rough track to the rim of the Jacksons Creek valley, where we surveyed the entire area, and then picked our way cautiously down to the floor of the valley. From here we wended our way through the boxthorns and thistles up to the top of the slope, above the Organ Pipes. En route we encountered two tiger snakes, but did not invite them to join us.

It was a fine day and Stan and I stood there, gazing up the valley. It was a moment to remember. Then Stan said, "Thirty-five acres is no good, Len; you ought to have the whole bloody lot." This amounted to 162 acres. That is why, in June 1965, legislation was passed dedicating the Organ Pipes as a national park. However, because of a technical error, a minor amendment was necessary before transfer of land from the Estate to the government could be finalised (Act No 7928, 16-12-69).

Stan Payne and I descended from our elevated vantage point to inspect the 'tessellated pavements' and the 'rosette rock', [other volcanic features] on the northern slope of Jacksons Creek which were to be included in the 162 acres. We were thrilled to see a platypus swimming in a pool near the tessellated pavements; and we still reminisce about this as we recall the events of that eventful day so long ago.

Access

The gift from the Estate included a strip of land connecting the Calder Highway with the principal area, thereby enabling a public road to be

constructed along the same general alignment as that of the track which had hitherto provided access over private property. With the co-operation of the Keilor Shire Council, the road was duly constructed, the cost being borne by the Special Road Fund.

The first ranger

Mr Jack Lyale was appointed ranger in 1970 and, under direction from the National Parks Service and with the valued assistance of a group of volunteer workers led by Mr Don Marsh, began the arduous task of destroying the infestations of rabbits and noxious weeds. This work continued after my retirement and it must be left to others to pay the richly deserved tribute to Don Marsh, Barry Kemp, Carl Rayner and their helpers, and to all those responsible for removing the boxthorn from the face of the Organ Pipes and restoring the area's original vegetation [a task that continues to the present day].



The volunteer group, Friends of the Organ Pipes, has been largely responsible for revegetating the formerly weed-infested landscape with local indigenous vegetation. Here members engage in a working bee in the late 1970s.

Some statistics

In an article published in the bulletin of the Division of State Development in 1959, I drew a parallel between the running of a business enterprise and the administration of national parks. I presented the National Parks Authority as the Holding Company, and the individual parks, along with their respective committees of management, as the subsidiaries.

The cardinal factors in a commercial enterprise are production, distribution and finance. Unless these key functions are maintained in balance, the result will be unsatisfactory. I saw the national parks as 'factories' in which it was the responsibility of the Authority (alone or in collaboration with the committees of management) to ensure that the appropriate 'products' were produced and made available to the public (tourists). The products, of course, were diverse in character and included the native flora and fauna, the landscapes, seascapes, skylines...all those things which collectively comprise the park. Distributing them to the public consisted of providing appropriate access roads and walking tracks, protective and educational notices, developing camping areas and/or overnight accommodation to suit the needs of the particular case, providing water for drinking and ablutions, providing toilet facilities ... all those services which are necessary to meet the needs of the tourists.

So much for production and distribution. I argued that, provided that we (the Authority and its committees) looked after the parks by protecting them from fire-damage

and vandalism, soil erosion and contamination of water supplies, the park (factory) could be relied upon to go on producing its natural products.

But considerations of the financial aspects of the enterprise were more involved. Finance had to come from external sources, that is, from the Government and park users. I saw it as a very important public relations exercise, as well as a means of survival, to endeavour to persuade the Government to increase its investment in the national parks and, at the same time, to draw as much revenue from the park users as was possible without causing hardship.

Keeping financial records was relatively easy, through the government's accounting services (although keeping track of moneys expended by the Public Works Department on the Authority's behalf was sometimes more difficult). Committees of Management were requested to provide the Authority with records of their financial transactions.

Obtaining reliable information on the number of people using the parks was more difficult, and quite impossible where there was no ranger or committee of management. However, in the major parks such as Mount Buffalo and Wilsons Promontory and, later, Fraser, park rangers were provided with Veeder Root counters so that they could immediately record the number of visitors each day, instead of making notes on scraps of paper or in a book. At the end of each day, it was a simple matter to look at the 'rev counter' and record the

score. The same method was used to obtain records of the number of cars, boats, etc, using separate counters. In this way the Authority was able to obtain the necessary information for inclusion in the Annual Report and to draw the Parliament's attention to the growing importance of national parks in the economy of the State.

Preparation of budgets

Those familiar with the modus operandi of a government department will be aware of the budgetary procedure adopted. For any readers not au fait with these procedures, the following explanation may provide some enlightenment.

To assist the Authority in making its submissions to the Premier's Department for the coming year, it was the practice to circularise the committees of management asking them to submit estimates of the needs of the parks. The adoption of standard headings related to the various functions to be performed in the parks enabled the committees to make their submissions in a form which facilitated the preparation of the consolidated budget to be submitted to the Premier's Department. Thus, in due course, the Authority would receive estimates of the committees' proposals for such items as ranger service, park maintenance, transportation costs, water supply, fire-protection works, garbage collection, campsite development, construction of toilet blocks, picnic shelters, fireplaces, houses for rangers, construction of roads and tracks, signposting, etc.



Picnic group at Mt Eccles NP, 1972. Keeping accurate visitors' statistics was, and is, an important task for national park rangers.

As the Authority grew in experience and its liaison activities with the committees improved, the need to plan on the basis of a three-year programme became more apparent; but, because the parks were generally so lacking in basic requirements, and because finance was always inadequate, ad hoc development was often inevitable.

The committees always erred on the generous side and requested much more than was likely to be available, so that the Authority found it necessary to scale down their budgets before making its submission to the Department. Treasury allocations were invariably lower than those requested, which necessitated a careful re-appraisal of the entire works programme and further discussions with the committees before final agreement was reached. It was a tedious and laborious process, but it was unavoidable.

Some parks, such as Wilsons Promontory and Mount Buffalo (and, later, Port Campbell and Fraser) generated useful amounts of park revenue which the committees were initially inclined to regard as 'their own', to be spent at the committee's discretion. This attitude was a relic of days when the committees were virtually autonomous. The Authority, in planning expenditure in a particular park, adopted the practice of preparing 'consolidated budgets', so that park revenue was coupled with financial allocations from the Authority to cover the year's expenditure. Park revenue was paid into the National Parks Fund and then reallocated for use in the relevant park. The Treasury understood that it was not always possible to complete works programmes on 30 June and 'carried forward' any unexpended allocation so that the parks and the Authority were not penalised. This was a great help.

Finance

Section 13 of the National Parks Act 1956 reads as follows:

- (1) There shall be established and kept in the Treasury a fund to be called the 'National Parks Fund' (hereinafter called 'the Fund').
- (2) There shall be paid into the Fund -
 - (a) any gifts or bequests made to the Authority;
 - (b) any moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of this Act;
 - (c) any other money received by the Authority.
- (3) There shall be paid out of the Fund -
 - (a) costs and expenses incurred by the Authority in the exercise of any functions powers or authorities or the performance of any duties conferred or

imposed upon the Authority by this Act;

(b) any other costs and expenses, as certified by the Minister, of the administration of or arising under this Act.

(4) A separate account shall be kept in the Fund in respect of each national park and any tolls fees rents charges or other moneys received by the committee of management of any national park shall be used by such park committee for the purposes of such park.

Pursuant to this requirement, records were kept of the allocations made by the Government for salaries and general administration costs (ex 'Vote' or 'Revenue') and for Works and Improvements in the national parks (ex 'Loan Funds'). Until 1975-76, national parks rangers were not employed under the Public Service Act and it was therefore necessary to pay their wages out of the Authority's 'Loan Fund' allocation and park revenue. In addition, special grants were made from time to time for designated purposes such as the purchase of land or properties.

Later, when the Authority had demonstrated that it had a capacity for spending money wisely, 'establishment grants' were made to enable necessary developments to proceed in selected national parks, in order to avoid delays and inefficiencies which would otherwise have been inevitable. In addition, in response to proposals from the Authority, permission was given to borrow money to enable the Authority to engage in revenue-producing activities, the loan to be repaid from such activities. This practice was adopted to ensure the speedy construction of 'Riverview Flats' in 1961-62 and to enable the Authority to gain control of the Tidal River Cafe and to carry out the necessary

extensions and renovations thereto, and to construct a block of flats ('Lorikeet') to generate revenue with which to repay the loan.

Revenue generated from park services was paid into the National Parks Fund and re-allocated for incorporation in the consolidated budget.

Statistical records

It would occupy more space than is available to cover every aspect of the work of the National Parks Authority/Service and the committees of management during the period 1957-1975, but statistical data for certain aspects are presented in tabular form, viz:

Table 1 Financial allocations from the Government covering staff and improvements, and expenditure on fire protection.

Table 2 Special loans and Government grants for designated purposes.

Table 3 Wilsons Promontory National Park: Visitor Statistics

Table 4 Wilsons Promontory National Park: Expenditure on Development Works and Wages, and Revenue from Park Services.

Table 5 Mount Buffalo National Park: Annual Expenditure, Wages and Revenue from Park Services.

Table 6 Port Campbell National Park: Revenue from Government and Park Services, and Total Expenditure.

Table 7 Fraser National Park: Visitor Statistics.

Table 8 Fraser National Park: Grants from National Parks Authority/Service,

Park Revenue and Total Expenditure.

Table 9 Staff (Head Office).

Discussion

Although, when I joined the National Parks Authority, I did not claim to have any particular knowledge of national parks administration, there were certain principles which I always kept in mind: namely that the national parks belonged to all the people for all time; that in order to be able to produce evidence of the Authority's performance, it was going to be necessary to demonstrate to the Government that the people were using the parks; and that, while it could never be expected that national parks could be self-supporting, they could, if properly managed, produce substantial revenue.

In the Hansard record of the debate on the National Parks Bill 1956 (page 3768) the Hon T. W. Mitchell MP, Member for Benambra, is reported as having said, "The Government has made no provision whereby the public, shall have right of entry to their own parks. If Mr Crosbie Morrison or any other dictator from among the 'butterfly boys' were to gain control over national parks, he could lock up an area of Victoria - for the upkeep of which the community would pay - and members of the public would not be allowed access to what is really their own property". Those antagonistic towards the national parks concept have often advanced similar arguments and I have always been conscious of the need to produce evidence to refute such dogmas.

It is proposed now to comment briefly on the information presented in the several tables which follow.

Table 1: Financial Allocations

The allocations from Vote (Revenue) - Column A increased very slowly. These figures should be studied in conjunction with those in Table 9 which shows how the Head Office staff increased from three in 1957/58 to 27 in 1973/74. It was not until 1974/75 that the impact of the change in organizational control resulting from the creation of the Ministry of Conservation and the incorporation therein of the National Parks Service became manifest. The Annual Report for 1974/75 states that, at 30th June 1975, the Head Office staff had increased to 50. This included a number of senior appointments. The relatively slow increase in the number of national parks and the long periods of stagnation are apparent; but the paucity of funds would have made it impossible to cope with more parks.

During the first sixteen years (1957/58 - 1973/74), the allocation from Loan Fund - Column B advanced very slowly, at a compound rate of 14.8 per cent. The total government allocation over the first 16 years increased, on average, at a compound rate of 17.7 per cent. Expenditure on fire protection increased, on average, at a compound rate of 21.2 per cent. Fire protection has always been a highly emotive issue.

Table 2: Special Loans

In a previous chapter it was explained how, in 1961, the Authority was authorized to obtain a special loan of £25,000 (\$50,000) from the Rural Finance Corporation to finance the construction of the "Riverview Flats" and, in Chapter 18, an account was given of the circumstances which gave rise to a "special loan" of \$70,000 to purchase the Tidal River

Cafe and construct the "Lorikeet Flats".

The smaller "non-revenue-producing" loans from the Tourist Development Authority were made in the early life of the National Parks Authority, when the latter body was "finding its feet" and simply did not have sufficient funds to enable certain urgent works to be undertaken.

Table 3: Wilsons Promontory National Park - Visitor Statistics

The number of visitors to Wilsons Promontory National Park increased from 28,000 in 1958/59 to 156,000 in 1973/74; there; were some fluctuations, but the overall increase amounted to a compound rate of 11.4 per cent. This was due a number of factors such as the increased mobility of the people, increase in population, better distribution of wealth, etc. But the increase also reflects the improvements in the facilities provided in the park during the relevant period. These have been detailed elsewhere, but it is important to recognize that it simply would not have been possible to cope with the increased numbers had the improvements not been made. The reader is encouraged to study the figures carefully - for example, there has been a steady growth in visitor intake during both the Christmas-New Year and Easter periods, the totals amounting initially to about 77 per cent of the total number, but falling in later years to 61 per cent. This indicates that people are spreading their visits over the remaining months of the year. The month of July can be very bleak in Wilsons Promontory, as perhaps the 36 visitors in 1960/61 would have testified; but, in 1973/74, the corresponding number had

increased to 2500. The peak visitor intake always occurs in January; in 1958/59 it was 8,842, while in 1973/74 it was 38,774.

Table 4: Wilsons Promontory National Park - Expenditure and Revenue

Table 4 gives details of total expenditure on park improvements and wages, and of park revenue, and shows that allocations from the National Parks Fund advanced from \$23,877 in 1958/59 to \$50,488 in 1974/75, while the total expenditure over the same-period increased from \$52,382 to \$334,313. Disregarding fluctuations, this corresponds to an average compound rate of 13.4 per cent.

The wages bill increased from \$9,754 in 1958/59 to \$147,615 in 1973/74. The inclusion of "general expenditure" in the figure for 1974/75 makes it unclear just how much of this was due to wages, but it would have been much greater than the \$147,615 for the previous year.

The period covered by this narrative effectively ends on 24th January 1975 (when I retired); but, because certain events which occurred after that date were consequential to those of the 1958-1974 period, it is necessary to refer to one in particular, here Until the passing of the National Parks Act 1975 on 1st December 1975, the wages of park rangers and other park personnel were paid out of the 'ordinary' Loan Fund allocation to the National Parks Authority/Service and park revenue combined. The 1973 Annual Report stated that the ranger service and maintenance costs absorbed 43 per cent of the government 'Works and Services' Account. This naturally impeded progress in other fields. The new Act provided for Park Rangers to be appointed under the Public

Service Act, thus relieving the 'Works and Services Account' of this burden.

An aspect of Table 4 which would have been of particular interest to the authors of Hansard who dealt so harshly with the National Parks fraternity in the early days was the revenue derived from park services. This rose from \$26,489 in 1958/59 to \$266,130 in 1974/75, which corresponds to a compound rate of increase of 14.2 per cent per annum. "The annual park revenue, expressed as a percentage of the total expenditure in the park, fluctuated considerably, but ranged from about 42 per cent to 93 per cent. This is a very good return in anybody's language and suggests that rather more time was devoted to the provision of services for the people who use the parks than in the pursuit of butterflies, thereby allaying the fears of one leading authority.

Table 5: Mt Buffalo National Park - Expenditure and Revenue

The figures for visitor intake are somewhat less reliable than those for some other parks, but the Committee of Management estimated that the number of visitors to the park rose from about 40,000 in 1961/62 to about 87,500 in 1974/75. The figures for park revenue and expenditure have been audited and show that park revenue rose from \$2,947 in 1958/59 to \$33,453 in 1974/75; although, because of seasonal variations in snow conditions, it fluctuated considerably. The total park revenue over the seventeen years was \$171,155, averaging about \$10,000 per annum. The total expenditure over this period amounted to about \$457,389, so that the average return on the investment over that period was about 37 per cent per annum.

Table 6: Port Campbell National Park - Expenditure and Revenue

Data are not available for the annual visitor intake, but Table 6 shows that, during the ten-year period 1965/66-1974/75, allocations from the National Parks Authority/Service ranged from about \$4,000 to about \$24,000 (a total of \$110,447 or about \$11,500 pa), while park revenue rose steadily from about \$2,800 to \$17,000 p.a. (a total of \$81,212). This amounts to a return of about 73 per cent on the government investment. However, the total expenditure from government funding and park revenue amounted to \$182,937, so that the average return on the average annual investment was about 44 per cent - still a very good return.

Tables 7 and 8: Fraser National Park - Visitor Statistics, Expenditure and Revenue

Table 7 reflects the growing public interest in Fraser National Park and the value of the developments made by the National Parks Authority/Service and the Committee of Management. The park is within two-and a half hours safe driving of Melbourne and the provision of good roads leading to and within the park has encouraged increasing numbers of day-visitors, campers, boating enthusiasts and caravanners to avail themselves of the services provided.

Table 8 shows that the revenue from park services, in 1974/75, amounted to 10.8 per cent of the total expenditure in the park since its dedication. The total revenue from park services over the three years 1972/73 to 1974/75 amounted to 67.4 per cent of the total expenditure over the same period. This, I think, justifies

the view so often expressed that, given adequate support, the National Parks Authority/Service could provide a very good service at a price which many people can afford within the national parks. Had the proposal to lease some 200 acres in the Collier Bay area been allowed to proceed in the early 1960s, there is little doubt that Fraser National Park would have developed along very different lines and with no benefit to the people who own the park.

However, it was becoming clear that more houses were required in the park to accommodate park personnel and more sophisticated methods of disposing of garbage and of controlling water quality were likely to occupy higher positions on the agenda.

Table 1
Financial Allocations from Government
and Expenditure on Fire Protection in All Parks

Year	Number of Parks	"Vote" (Revenue) A \$	"Loan Fund" A \$	Total A + B = C \$	Expenditure on Fire Protection \$
1957/58	14	8,600	40,000	48,600	4,300
1958/59	14	10,960	70,000	80,960	11,500
1959/60	14	19,300	90,000	109,300	2,200
1960/61	17	20,000	100,000	120,000	5,876
1961/62	17	38,660	124,000	162,660	8,866
1962/63	17	40,492	116,000	156,492	11,870
1963/64	18	52,000	157,000	209,000	16,094
1964/65	19	55,300	170,000	225,300	12,424
1965/66	19	68,215	170,000	238,215	13,701
1966/67	19	74,500	181,800	256,300	12,053
1967/68	20	84,500	190,500	275,300	11,608
1968/69	21	97,500	218,000	315,500	24,531
1969/70	23	108,500	213,200	321,700	61,407
1970/71	23	117,000	218,250	335,250	49,164
1971/72	24	145,000	246,750	391,750	42,945
1972/73	24	204,000	301,000	505,710	57,443
1973/74	24	300,000	362,500	662,500	72,809
1974/75	24	878,015	320,000	1,198,015	116,607
Notes on Table: cpd. = compound interest rate		16 Increments 1957/58 to 1973/74			17 Increments 1957/58 to 1974/75
		Growth	14.8 %, cpd.	17.7 %, cpd.	21.2 %, cpd.

Table 3
Wilsons Promontory National Park Visitor Statistics

Year	A Mar-Apr. Including Easter	B Dec-Jan. Including Xmas- New Year	A + B	C Total for Year	% of Visitor Intake during Mar-Apr plus Dec-Jan, $\left(\frac{A+B}{C}\right) \times 100$	Increase in Visitor Intake over Previous Year %
1959/60	6,339	17,063	23,402	27,935	77	57.0
1960/61	10,932	19,315	30,247	38,566	78	30.6
1961/62	11,405	24,585	35,990	47,010	77	21.9
1962/63	13,438	29,195	42,633	58,615	73	24.0
1963/64	13,438	36,086	49,524	71,936	69	22.4
1964/65	11,232	35,641	46,873	64,700	73	-10.1
1965/66	15,580	39,802	54,382	71,621	76	+10.7
1966/67	15,572	42,021	57,593	78,482	73	10.8
1967/68	19,886	43,937	63,823	84,658	74	8.5
1968/69	18,432	44,014	62,446	83,696	75	-1.1
1969/70	18,635	46,483	65,118	93,977	70	+12.0
1970/71	25,082	43,411	68,493	103,703	75	10.4
1971/72	27,051	49,491	77,542	120,008	65	16.2
1972/73	32,146	49,699	82,845	130,431	65	7.7
1973/74	34,755	57,722	92,477	153,087	61	7.3
Percentage increase in visitor intake, 1959/60 to 1973/74: 14 increments				11.4 % compound		

Table 2
Special Loans or Government Grants for Designated Purposes

Year	Purpose	\$
SPECIAL LOANS:		
1958/59	Tourist Development Authority Road Construction, Mount Buffalo N. P.	1,900
1960/61	Tourist Development Authority Water Supply, Wilsons Promontory N. P.	12,000
1961/62	Rural Finance Corporation Construction of "Riverview Flats, Wilsons Promontory N. P.	50,000
1967/68	Rural Finance Corporation Purchase of Tidal River Café, Renovation and Extension of Café and Construction of "Lorikeet Flats"	70,000
SPECIAL GRANTS:		
1969/70	Dandenongs Fire Protection Plan, Ferntree Gully N. P.	25,000
1970/71	Dandenongs Fire Protection Plan, Ferntree Gully N. P.	24,200
1971/72	Dandenongs Fire Protection Plan, Ferntree Gully N. P.	25,000
1972/73	Dandenongs Fire Protection Plan, Ferntree Gully N. P.	25,000
1973/74	Dandenongs Fire Protection Plan, Ferntree Gully N. P.	25,000
1969/70	Fraser N. P.	20,000
1970/71	Fraser N. P.	19,400
1971/72	Fraser N. P.	20,000
1972/73	Fraser N. P.	20,000
LAND PURCHASES:		
1969/70	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	150,929
1970/71	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	42,352
1971/72	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	34,428
1972/73	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	50,000
1973/74	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	160,495*
1974/75	Addition to Fern Tree Gully N. P.	110,832
1969/70	Addition to Mallacoota Inlet N. P. ("Lakeview")	10,500
1972/73	Addition to Mallacoota Inlet N. P. (The Archer Property, Refuge Cove)	5,785
1972/73	For proposed National Park at Cape Schanck	151,000
1973/74	Kinglake National Park	20,000
1974/75	General	124,583
1974/75	Cape Nelson	86,000
1974/75	Rotamah Island	295,000
*The 1973/74 Annual Report shows that the expenditure on land purchase for the Fern Tree Gully National Park in that year was \$160,495 and, in 1974/75, was \$110,832.		
ESTABLISHMENT GRANTS:		
1973/74	Lower Glenelg N. P.	25,000
1973/74	Brisbane Ranges N. P.	20,000
1973/74	Mornington Peninsula	8,000
1973/74	(No location cited)	28,000
RURAL RELIEF FUND:		
1972/73	Amenities Block, Port Campbell	22,000
SEWERAGE SYSTEM:		
1971/72	Wilsons Promontory N. P. – Stage 1	56,000
1973/74	Wilsons Promontory	1,205
TATRA INN:		
1974/75	Deposit on Purchase of Tatra Inn, Mt. Buffalo N. P.	296,000
1975/76	Purchase of Tatra Inn, Mt. Buffalo N. P.	691,000
TOTAL:		(Σ = \$987,000)

Table 4
Wilson's Promontory National Park
Expenditure on Development Works and Wages,
and Revenue from Park Service

Year	Total Expenditure from National Parks \$	Total Annual Expenditure in Park (T.A.E.) \$	Wages \$	Park Revenue, (P.R.) \$	Percentage Return on Total Annual Expenditure, $\frac{P.R.}{T.A.E.} \times 100$
1958/59	23,877	52,382	9,754	26,489	50.7
1959/60	11,641	43,987	12,203	29,394	66.7
1960/61	23,642	62,738	15,592	33,734	52.2
1961/62	53,250	69,640	18,954	46,570	67.0
1962/63	35,400	94,422	23,488	62,874	66.6
1963/64	27,746	76,146	26,598	70,822	93.0
1964/65	28,698	111,114	35,502	72,416	65.0
1965/66	28,604	84,213	36,001	78,587	93.0
1966/67	50,504	119,478	38,783	95,463	80.0
1967/68	82,741	212,281	45,598	93,903	44.0
1968/69	85,028	245,334	52,444	103,797	42.3
1969/70	67,000	158,676	59,692	138,400	87.0
1970/71	47,216	210,545	77,301	120,299	57.0
1971/72	89,006	290,462	85,523	192,073	66.0
1972/73	42,592	259,704	112,822	199,172	77.0
1973/74	45,165	315,748	147,615	217,634	69.0
1974/75	50,488	334,313	277,972	266,130	80.0
Compound rate of increase 1958/59 to 1974/75 16 Increments					
			19.9 %		

Table 5
Mount Buffalo National Park
Expenditure, Wages and Revenue from Park Service

Year	Expenditure		Revenue on Park Services
	Total \$	Wages Only \$	
1958/59	14,570	4,690	2,947
1959/60	19,884	4,574	2,367
1960/61	21,326	4,184	3,908
1961/62	20,704	5,040	6,284
1962/63	35,158	5,622	2,408
1963/64	48,282	5,450	4,644
1964/65	25,268	7,072	5,922
1965/66	47,198	5,734	4,563
1966/67	50,015	7,485	9,603
1967/68	37,622	9,085	11,039
1968/69	93,321	10,906	14,052
1969/70	26,863	13,412	6,328
1970/71	32,504	15,631	12,327
1971/72	47,935	18,912	16,222
1972/73	39,843	23,390	23,464
1973/74	52,372	22,376	6,938

Table 6
Port Campbell National Park
Revenue from Government and Park Services, and Total Expenditures

Year	Revenue		Total Expenditure, Including Wages C \$	Return on Investment % $\left(\frac{A}{C}\right) \times 100$
	Park Services A \$	N. P. A. Grants B \$		
1964/65	2,142	1,432	3,574	
1965/66	2,755	11,696	14,451	19
1966/67	4,066	23,547	29,753	14
1967/68	4,302	12,379	16,681	26
1968/69	4,779	6,145	10,924	44
1969/70	5,480	5,406	10,866	85
1970/71	6,627	3,935	10,562	63
1971/72	10,657	4,127	14,784	72
1972/73	11,598	23,210	34,808	33
1973/74	13,924	4,299	18,223	76
1974/75	17,024	15,703	32,727	52
Total, 1965/66 to 1974/75 (10 Years)	\$81,212		\$193,799	42 %

Table 7
Fraser National Park – Visitor Statistics

Year	Campers	Camps	Day Visitors	Cars	Boats	Caravan
1962/63	1,824	469	4,923	1,366	490	33
1963/64	2,495	664	6,622	1,802	609	41
1964/65	3,608	964	7,095	1,877	809	63
1965/66	4,148	1,188	10,088	2,758	1,065	124
1966/67	7,618	1,874	11,140	3,040	1,257	249
1967/68	3,100	924	11,637	2,862	N. R.	86
1968/69	4,898	1,341	17,528	4,219	1,162	289
1969/70	6,710	1,936	25,742	6,651	1,879	487
1970/71	9,867	2,583	34,944	8,922	2,621	588
1971/72	9,739	2,387	30,710	8,899	2,369	564
1972/73	8,533	2,454	28,998	7,438	1,109	495
1973/74	12,814	2,957	43,301	12,022	3,372	643
1974/75	13,091	4,007	48,089	12,472	3,336	546
(Average) Compound Rate of Increase from 1962/63 to 1974/75 (12 Increments)	17.9	19.6	20.9	20.0	17.3	26.4

Table 8
Fraser National Park – Revenue and Expenditure

Year	Revenue		Total Expenditure, including Wages \$	Notes
	Park Services	N.P.A. Grants		
1960/61	-	15,310	15,310	Includes \$12,000 for roadworks Includes \$5,650 for roadworks
1961/62	288	6,240	6,240	
1962/63	626	7,186	5,306	
1963/64	660	32,894	32,894	Incl. \$17,150 for Ranger's house
1964/65	760	28,234	28,234	
1965/66	2,035	25,766	25,766	Incl. \$14,300 for an amenities block
1966/67	4,184	13,399	13,399	
1967/68	5,003	32,002	32,002	
1968/69	6,878	14,902	20,922	
1969/70	10,572	15,752	17,712	
1970/71	14,503	18,134	28,398	
1971/72	25,795	24,217	43,089	
1972/73	26,623	17,655	43,355	
1973/74	35,676	24,089	57,324	
1974/75	43,233	43,817	55,466	
Rate of Increase in revenue from park services, 1967/68 – 1974/75 (7 increments) = 36.1 % (Compound)				

Table 9
Staff: National Parks Authority/Service

Year	Scientific (incl. Director)	Administrative (incl. Secretary)	Typists / Stenographers
1957/58	1	1	1
1958/59	1	1	1
1959/60	2	2	2
1960/61	2	2	2
1961/62	2	2	3
1962/63	3	3	3
1963/64	4	4	3
1964/65	5	4	3
1965/66	5	4	3
1966/67	5	5	3
1967/68	5	6	3
1968/69	5	7	3
1969/70	5	8	3
1970/71	5	9	5
1971/72	6	9	5
1972/73	11	10	6
1973/74	11	10	6

Notes on Table:

1959 – 15/3/71 The National Parks Authority functioned as a Branch of the Premier's Department.

15/3/71 – 23/1/73 The National Parks Service functioned as Division of the Department of State Development

23/1/73 – 24/1/75 The National Parks Service functioned as Division of the Ministry of Conservation (and later)



Plum Pudding Rock at Waterloo Bay, Wilsons Promontory NP, February 1973.

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