THE HISTORY OF THE BRISBANE RANGES NATIONAL PARK;
An Historical exploration of land utilisation in the area which
is now incorporated in the Brisbane Ranges National Park

by
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Thesis for the completion of Bachelor of Arts Degree, Honours Level, 1992
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9 November 1992
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SYNOPSIS

This thesis explores the land utilisation of the present Brisbane Ranges National Park. It examines the human and natural forces which have shaped the present environment in the Brisbane Ranges National Park. However, it does not merely present a local history illustrating the changes that have occurred but delves deeper, examining the reasons behind these changes and their impact on local residents, the environment and future land utilisation of the Brisbane Ranges.

The thesis illustrates the environmental, political and social history of the area, with a particular focus directed towards the political factors contributing to and delaying the creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park in 1973. The thesis concludes with an examination of present and future uses of the park and what significance this has for the future of this area and other such areas and how this will reflect the history of the area.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a very busy year, which has been made easier by the support of my family and friends, in particular, my mother and Justin for their ability to encourage me to keep going after each draft had been returned to me. I would also like to thank the Department of Conservation and Environment for their co-operation and for allowing me access to their files, in particular, Paul Barker in Melbourne, Des Peters, at Geelong Regional Office, Wayne, Chris and Dave Lawrence, rangers at Brisbane Ranges National Park.

I am also grateful to the Hon. W A Borthwick, Nola Haines, Trevor Prescott and Stan Thompson, who allowed me to interview them.

Thanks must also go to my supervisors, who have patiently endured screeds of handwritten drafts, Tom Griffiths and Chris McConville. Thank you also to Patti for typing the thesis, which proved to be more difficult than she expected.
INTRODUCTION

The first stage of the Brisbane Ranges National Park was gazetted in 1973 and an extension added in 1975, creating an area of seven thousand four hundred and seventy (7,470) hectares. Situated only eighty (80) kilometres west of Melbourne, thirty (30) kilometres north, north west of Geelong and forty two (42) kilometres south east of Ballarat, it is an important natural corridor in the midst of three (3) rapidly expanding cities. The park provides a recreational area which is easily accessed by residents of each of these cities, but despite its close proximity receives surprisingly minimal use.

The Brisbane Ranges National Park houses four hundred and seventy five (475) native plant species, providing excellent examples of rare species in Victoria and endemic species. (1) The park also contains native fauna, such as the grey kangaroo, koalas, swamp wallabies, phascogales, possums, sugar gliders, echidnas, platypus and over one hundred and seventy (170) species of native birds. (2)

The infertility of the soil limited the level of pastoral and agricultural activity, allowing other activities such as, mining and timber production, water catchment and slate quarrying, to alter the environment dramatically, from when the Wathaurong Aboriginal people occupied the area.

Footnote:

(1) Department of Conservation and Environment Information Sheet, Brisbane Ranges National Park, October 1989

(2) Department of Conservation and Environment Information Sheet, Brisbane Ranges National Park, October 1989
This thesis is not a local history, but rather a more complex study, examining the entire life cycle of the area, beginning with the geological formation of the Brisbane Ranges and surrounding area and continuing through time, to present day use of the area as a National Park.

The dissertation will examine the land utilisation of the Brisbane Ranges beginning with the area's first inhabitants, the Wathaurong Aboriginal tribe, and continuing on to assess the impact of European settlement and subsequent activities, including the issuing of grazing licences, pastoral activities, discovery of gold and subsequent timber harvesting, water catchment area, slate quarrying, the infestation of Phytophthora cinnamomi and current status as a National Park.

After due consideration has been given to these issues, the question will be asked why this area, which has been altered considerably by human interference, should be made a National Park?

Each chapter of the thesis will examine a unique form of land utilisation and questions will be asked as to what the impact of these activities were and the historical ramifications of them upon the present day landscape of the area, now serving as a National Park.

The key forces responsible for the creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park will be closely examined and their real power will be evaluated. Questions will be raised as to the power of the National Parks Service and its ability to dedicate an area as National Park, without popular support and government backing.

Given the concentrated lobbying for the creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park by the National Parks Service, Bert Boardman and other assorted community groups, clubs and Shire Council support, the question must be asked, as to why it took over nineteen (19) years for these
plans to come to fruition? The thesis will thus, discuss the opposing political forces working against the formation of the park and the contrasting attitudes, resulting in an increasing environmental awareness, culminating in the park's creation in 1973.

Throughout this dissertation, the changing attitudes towards land utilisation will be discussed and it will be asked, why there is a trend away from utilitarian attitudes towards resources, in favour of a more sustainable form of development and the conservation of natural resources?

This thesis will question the area's suitability for a National Park and explain why this unusual area was in fact declared a National Park, rather than remaining as Crown Land under the control of various government departments? It will also pose questions as to the park's status as a National rather than a State Park examining the differences between the two?

The final aspect of the thesis will be to examine current trends in land utilisation and predict future uses of the area, completing the historical progression of the area from geological formation to current recreational use as a National Park.

The aim of this dissertation is to prove that by 1973 the traditional concept of a National Park was no longer appropriate. The creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park supports this hypothesis, as is illustrated throughout the dissertation.
CHAPTER 1

GEOLGY

At first glance, the Brisbane Ranges National Park appears to be an undulating region, bisected by valleys and gorges and occasionally small streams. The dominant vegetation being, eucalypt. The view from the ranges overlooks the fertile plains of Mellon, the You Yangs and the Werribee Plains to Ballarat and the surrounding dormant volcanoes of Mt Wallace, Mt Egerton and Mt Anakie.

Despite appearing initially to be of little geological consequence, a closer examination proves this to be incorrect. Clues as to the area's geological history, can be found in exposed cuttings, as a result of road construction.

The topography and geology of the park attract many visitors, as the park contains many fascinating natural features, such as Anakie Gorge and is bordered by the Rowsley Fault Line.

The oldest rocks found in Victoria are from the Cambrian period and are Five Hundred and Fifty (550) million years old (1). Following the deposit of these rocks there was a great deal of accretion, erosion, folding faulting, uplifting and volcanic eruptions, all responsible for creating Victoria. (2) The Brisbane Ranges were formed only fairly recently in geological time spans, approximately one point eight (1.8) million to five (5) million years ago during the Pleistocene period.

Footnotes:


(2) J S Duncan, Atlas of Victoria, p11
The ranges were the result of an elevation of the Western Highlands and subsequent movement along the Rowsley and Spring Creek fault lines. Prior to this, the land had been hidden under the Werribee Plains and Ballan Graben. (3)

While the elevation of the ranges is relatively recent, the composition of the soil illustrates earlier activity within the area and more generally in Victoria. The base rock of the ranges is composed of siltstone, slate and sandstone deposited four hundred and sixty (460) million years ago during the Ordovician period. (4) Similar deposits are found in the Stawell, Bendigo and Ballarat region, with a few other scattered outcrops. (5) Some 80 million years later, magma which had been deposited earlier, mineralised during the Devonian period leaving gold. These gold reefs were discovered during the 1850's and in the Anakie Hills, which border the end of the park. They continued to be exploited for nearly a century.

Volcanic activity in particular in Western Victoria during the Tertiary period, approximately twenty five (25) million years ago, created the highly fertile basalt plains of the western district. Despite the presence of nearby Mt. Anakie, Mt. Egerton and Mt. Wallace, the ranges were deprived of rich soil and instead developed unproductive, acidic soil with a high clay content, ruling out successful agriculture.

Footnotes:
Because of this composition, the soil is easily eroded as is illustrated within the park by several of the popular picnic areas, for example Anakie Gorge. (6)

The park also exhibits a rare incidence of a fossil shore platform located on the boundary of the park, (one kilometre west of the junction between Anakie-Bacchus Marsh road and the Ballan-Geelong road). This platform indicates the possibility of either salt or fresh water once inundating the area. (7) Thus, while creating a habitat for an abundance of native flora and fauna, the park also contains diverse geological formations, making it a valuable educational and resource area.

Footnotes:


Figure 3
The view from Quarry track, Brisbane Ranges National Park illustrates the elevation of the ranges and the view towards Melbourne.
CHAPTER 2
THE WATHAURONG

The Brisbane Ranges have a long history of settlement, including Aboriginal occupation by
the Wathaorang tribe and more specifically the Wathaurong sub-tribe. (1) The Wathaurong tribe
occupied extensive tracts of land ranging from the Cape Otway coastal region to Sorrento and inland
extending north as far as Ballarat. (2)

Despite little surviving information about the Wathaurong Aboriginal tribe, they are
renowned for their adoption of escaped convict William Buckley. Buckley lived with the
Wathaurong for thirty two (32) years and had several aboriginal wives. (3)

Although the area has not been systematically surveyed by the Victorian Archeological
Survey (VAS), five sites have been recorded within and adjacent to the park, confirming the
occupation of aboriginal people in the area. (4)

Footnotes:

(1) Department of Conservation and Environment, Park Notes, Brisbane Ranges National Park,
October 1989. S Bardwell, also Gregory's National Parks of Victoria, Rigby 1977

(2) L Lane, The Wathaurong, Geelong's Earliest Inhabitants, text of an address to the Geelong
Historical Society, 2 March 1988

(3) S Bardwell, National Parks of Victoria, p41

(4) A Storey, Victorian Agricultural Society, correspondence to S Boland, 18 June 1992
Prior to European settlement of the area, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the area was "a natural Garden of Eden" for its aboriginal inhabitants. (5)

The vast supply of native edible plants present in the park today, indicates that the ranges provided a reliable food supply, as many of the plants found in the park, are traditional aboriginal food supplies. (6) Many of these plants also had medicinal uses such as the black wattle, which was used as a cure for a skin disease called tubburum, which only affected aboriginal people, (7) illustrating their use of nearby resources.

Footnotes:

(5) L. Lane The Wathaurong, Geelong's Earliest Inhabitants, p12.

(6) Examples of traditional food supplies include; Xanthorrhoea australis (Austral grass tree), whose flower was soaked to create a sweet honey flavoured drink, the stem was consumed and the stalk used as the butt piece of light spears and to ignite fires.


Other plants found in the park most likely to have been used by the Wathaurong include

Exocarpus Cupressiformis, (Cherry Ballarat or Native Cherry), Acacia Mearnsii, (Black Wattle, Orchidaceae, (Native Orchids), and Pteridium esculentum, (Austral Bracken).

The park boasts sixty (60) species of orchids, attracting many plant lovers to the park, for the Wathaurong people the orchid was a food source. (8) Bracken, considered a curse by European agriculturists, who later occupied the area, was an important medicinal plant for aboriginal people, used for relieving the pain of stings. (9) Its roots were also baked and eaten as a type of bread. (10) As well as a vast supply of plant food native animals also provided the Wathaurong with food and clothing.

Today the Brisbane Ranges National Park has twenty-four (24) native mammals, nearly all of which would have been used for eating, medicinal, clothing and ritual purposes. The exception to this is the koala, (Phascolarctos cinereus) which was treated as an object of reverence, not merely a food supply. Rituals surrounded its preparation, cooking and distribution throughout the Kulin tribes, the two tribes (Wathaurong and Kulin) intermarried and are thought to have had similar beliefs. The aboriginal people’s respect for the Koala is illustrated by the Kulin people’s refusal to use its pelt, despite it having superior insulative qualities than any other marsupial. (11) Aboriginal mythology told of the Koala’s dislike of being skinned and of their wisdom and great powers. William Thomas, the Assistant Protector of Aborigines, experienced great difficulty in trying to convince a young aboriginal man to skin a Koala, when he finally succeeded the tribe was fearful of the repercussions and urged Thomas to put the pelt back on the carcass and bury them both. (12)

Footnotes:

(9) S Ferrier, p41
(10) Gates and Seaman, p20
(11) Lee and Martin, The Koala A Natural History, NSW University Press, 1988, p80
(12) Lee and Martin, The Koala A Natural History, NSW University Press, 1988, p80
For the native people, European treatment of the Koala was unacceptable and highly offensive. Although Aboriginal people had killed Koalas in the ranges they had not skinned the animals and had carefully monitored the culling to ensure a breeding population remained. G A Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, claims the Koala population declined, as the Aboriginal population declined, but this was a short lived phenomenon as Europeans discovered the value of Koala pelts and disregarding Aboriginal traditions, harvested the Koala for its pelt. (13) This European massacring of a sacred animal, was seen as immoral and sinister by the Aboriginal people, helping to broaden the already vast cultural gap, between the local Aboriginal people and European settlers.

The popularity of Koala skins throughout Australia, indicates that it is likely to have occurred, wherever Koalas could be found and the decline in the Koala population in the Brisbane Ranges, indicates it most probably occurred there.

Partly as a result of this activity, and over crowding in other areas, the Brisbane Ranges has been participating in a Koala relocation programme since 1944. Koala's from Quail, Phillip and French Islands, have been relocated, up until 1977, when the area reached a stable population. (14)

Footnotes:

(13) Lee and Martin, The Koala A Natural History, NSW University Press, 1988, p83

The Wathaurong were envied by other tribes because of their excellent resources and subsequently were popular trading partners. Mulvanny believes that the Geelong tribes had the best stones for making axes. (15) Today, remains of stone workshops can be found in the area. Evidence of the Wathaurong people stone flints, was first discovered, when the Durridwarrah reservoir, built in 1875, dried up, exposing chipped stone and blackened rings of stones, possibly the edge of a fireplace. (16)

Surface scatters of stone artefacts, probably representing the remains of campsites or tool making and manufacturing areas, have been reported along the eastern side of the Brisbane Ranges near Stoughton Vale. (17) Not surprisingly several slate quarries are also located in this region, illustrating that the European settlers took some notice of the Wathaurong land utilisation.

The Moorabool river flows to the west of the area, as do several smaller rivers and surrounding swampy areas. This is utilised by the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust as a water catchment area. It borders the park and provide a year round source of water and alternative food supplies, such as waterfowl, blackfish, and eels, making it possible to establish a permanent camp if required. (18)

Footnotes:

(16) Wildlife, "Storied Stones", May 1945, p123
(17) Victorian Agricultural Society, Letter, A Storey to S Boland, 18 June 1992
(18) S Ferrier, Wathaurong Medicine, p13
Although there would have been only very limited use for canoes in the area there is a scar tree located south of the Durldidwarrah Reservoir and several unofficial scar trees in the vicinity of the national park. (19) These scars are more likely to be from timber used for shelters and containers, but such evidence is "uncommon as most of [the] park was cleared of timber during the gold-rush" (20).

The Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip District did not record seeing any Aboriginal people through the Wathaurong territory. (21) Possibly the tribe was visiting a neighbouring tribe for trade or ceremonial purposes. It is unlikely that the Wathaurong would have hidden as unlike most Europeans, Robinson was a friend to the Aboriginal people, earning him the nickname 'Black Robinson'. (22) Robinson's diaries however, do make mention of Wathaurong tribes in other parts of their vast territories, confirming their existence.

The European occupation of the area was responsible for the decline and near extinction of the Wathaurong Aboriginal population. As grazing licences were granted and Europeans moved into the area in the 1830's, the Wathaurong people found themselves faced with diminishing tribal lands and increasing competition for resources. New settlers in the area, such as Robert Von Stieglitz cared little about the indigenous people. Stieglitz' diary illustrates this attitude, "then it

Footnotes:

(19) Victorian Archaeological Survey, correspondence, A Storey to S Boland
(20) Victorian Archaeological Survey, correspondence, A Storey to S Boland
may be questioned by some featherbed philanthropists whether we had any right to
take the country from the blacks, but I believe the general rule is that if people
cultivate or graze the land they have a claim to it. These creatures did neither.”
(23) This animosity felt towards the Wathaurong people was expressed violently by graziers and
goldminers in the district in the 1830's. Settlers like Charles Wedge admitted to poisoning
Wathaurong people by mixing arsenic with flour they distributed among the tribes people (24)
and “much of the admitted massacring of aborigines occurred in the Geelong
district”. (25)

Stieglitz described the Wathaurong people as about “the most uncivilised people in
the whole world and the least intellectual, being in fact as was afterwards proved,
incapable of civilisation, the providence seems to decree that such should give
way to the more intelligent race surviving in proportion to their intelligence ...
and I believe that providence has so ordered it that white man should have
pre-eminence”. (26)

With the predominance of Social Darwinism among Europeans, it is difficult to imagine
Robert Von Stieglitz and his fellow pastoralists, having any hesitation in removing Aboriginal
people from their land permanently, or avenging the loss of stock, by whatever means they found
necessary!

Footnotes:
(23) K. James, Aboriginals in Werribee District, Campbell, Wilson Pty. Ltd. 1978, p.31
(24) K. James, Aboriginals in Werribee District, Campbell, Wilson Pty. Ltd. 1978, p.28
(25) Investigator, Vol.7 No. 2, p.58
(26) K. James, Aboriginals in Werribee District, Campbell, Wilson Pty. Ltd. 1978, p.31
The discovery of gold in the 1850's signalled the end for the remaining Wathaurong sub-tribe and Wathaurong Aboriginal people. Although initially estimated at a population of four hundred and twenty five (425) (27) by 1850 the tribe was reduced to a "remnant population" (28) approximately fifty seven (57) in the Geelong region, (29) in sharp contrast to the rapidly growing European population of over twenty thousand. (30) By 1860 only nine (9) Aboriginal men and two (2) Aboriginal women remained in the area. (31)

Despite the declining numbers the remaining Aboriginals were placed in a six hundred and forty (640) acre mission, on the north bank area of the Little River. Originally the area was listed as two separate missions, Moorabool and Werribee Reserve and Beremboke Reserve, but later became referred to as Steiglitz Reserve (despite being in the Parish of Beremboke). (32)

The mission was gazetted on 26 June 1859 and operated until 1901, when it was revoked. (33) The aim of the mission was to keep the Aboriginal people out of the gold mining town of Steiglitz and unlike other missions had no religious basis.

Footnotes:

(27)L Lane, *The Wathaurong*, p21
(28)K James, *Aboriginals in Werribee District*, p28
(29)L Lane, *The Wathaurong*, p22
(30)L Lane, *The Wathaurong*, p2
(31)K James, *Aboriginals in Werribee District*, p28
When discussing the creation of the Reserve, the Surveyor Generals of the Melbourne District were "unanimously of the opinion that it would be advisable to grant an Aboriginal Reserve for the Moorabool and Bacchus Marsh tribes". (34) Such comments illustrate a distinct lack of knowledge about the local Aboriginal tribes, particularly the failure to identify the tribes, by their Aboriginal tribal names, depicting the division between the first and second occupants of the area.

The use the Reserve received was likely to have been minimal, due to the rapidly declining local Aboriginal population and the restrictions upon activities within the Reserve. For example, the lighting of fires was prohibited, thus removing an integral part of the peoples daily life, and an important facet of cultural and social behaviour.

The limited use the reserve received by local Aboriginal inhabitants, can be inferred by examining the lists of blanket distribution in the Reserve. In 1859 only fourteen (14) Aboriginal people in the Steiglitz reserve, were issued with a blanket. Five (5) were from the Moorabool tribe and one (1) from Staughton's Brisbane Ranges property, most likely a member of the Watheng sub-tribe. (35)

Footnotes:


(34) Victorian Public Records Office series 242, box 466, correspondence between Melbourne Surveyor Generals, circa 1859, Public Records Office, Laverton

The mission order was revoked in 1901, surprisingly late considering the last member of the Wathaurong tribe died in 1885. (36) If there were still Aborigines living in the Reserve between 1885-1901, then they would have been members of neighbouring tribes. This would not have been unusual, as Reserves often forced warring tribes to live together.

The contact between Aboriginal and European people in the area, seems to have been typical of contacts throughout Victoria, although possibly slightly more violent in the Geelong region. The diary of Von Stiegliitz illustrates attitudes that led to the rapid decline of what, prior to European occupation, was a thriving Aboriginal population, in an ideal environment. The totally different lifestyle of these two groups, helped to alienate the Wathaurong people and the European attitudes, towards a different culture also helped to create animosity. The European hunting of Koalas, purely for their skins, an activity which was strictly taboo among the Wathaurong people, indicates this animosity.

The creation of a mission in the area also indicates that Aboriginal people were viewed as nuisances, who needed to be removed from society and isolated. Although they were not held by force in the mission, their ability to move around the area was severely restricted by the rapid development of the area, and the attitudes of the new occupants of the region, that is, settlers total disregard for the value of an Aboriginal person's life. The notion of a mission into which the people could be herded in like animals and removed in the same way as a feral animal, meant that like the rest of Aboriginal Victoria the Wathaurong people, had little chance of living in their traditional manner, or of survival.

Footnotes:

(36)L Lane, The Wathaurong, p7
Today the Wathaurong co-operative operates in Geelong as a lasting reminder of the tribes early inhabitation of the area. The Wathaurong co-operative and Department of Conservation and Environment work together to care for the park via the operation of an Aboriginal employment scheme. This enables the Aboriginal people to learn new skills and educate the Department of Conservation and Environment about Aboriginal culture. In 1989 the Wathaurong co-operative held a corroboree at Little River picnic site in the Brisbane Ranges National Park, which was once part of the land reserved for their tribe, illustrating the cultural ties still felt by the descendants of the Wathaurong tribe. (37)

Footnotes:

Figure 5
A plaque at Little River picnic site commemorating the area's first inhabitants the Wathaurong tribe, members of the Kulin Nation.
CHAPTER 3
EUROPEANS MOVE IN

Prior to its formation as a National Park in 1973 the land within the boundaries of the Brisbane Ranges National Park had been extensively utilised for a variety of activities, including grazing, timber production and slate quarrying. Due to its relatively close proximity to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, it is not surprising that the area began to develop soon after the settlement of Melbourne, in 1835.

Despite the area's infertile soil and unsuitability for agriculture, eight (8) grazing licences were issued. Those whose licence incorporated areas of the Werribee Plains, had more success than their counterparts in the Brisbane Ranges. Charles and Robert Von Stieglitz (this is the correct spelling, the place name spelling was altered most likely by accident and today is spelt Steiglitz) squatted in the area in 1847, and obtained grazing licences on several properties. In 1846 Robert had a run of six thousand (6,000) acres called Ballan on which he ran eight hundred (800) cattle and his brother Charles had a grazing licence in 1841 called Ballan Gap. Their father J Von Stieglitz held a grazing licence in 1854 on Station Peak, a three thousand, two hundred (3,200) acre property on which approximately seven hundred (700) sheep were run.

Footnotes:
(1) Department of Conservation and Environment, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Draft Interim Management Plan, p4
(2) Victorian Public Records Office, Laverton, Pastoral Holdings Crown Land Licences, 1851-55, County of Grant
Others such as Francis M Atkinson, selected sixteen thousand (16,000) acres in Beremboke in 1839 and held a joint licence with John H Pepper in Ballan, from February 1854 to January 1857. (3) The property 'Beremboke' was later run by his son Captain Francis Morton Atkinson and after his death run by his wife Elizabeth Caroline (nee Von Stieglitz) until 1857. (4)

Those who had successful grazing licences in the area remained there, diversifying their activities from simply grazing, to agricultural, including raising stock and cultivating the land for crops or pasture improvements.

In contrast to the busy town of Steiglitz, Beremboke and Durdiswarrah were much smaller communities, dominated by agriculturalists. From all accounts this area seems to have been a typical farming area. The local correspondent for the 'Steiglitz Miner and Meredith Shire Advertiser', summed the area up well in June 1893 with this comment, "In a district like this there is little exercise but milking cows and digging potatoes, and amusements are wholly confined to a periodical dance in some schoolroom." It continued, to say "life is a routine piece of mechanism, nothing to disturb the dormant faculties of inventiveness or suggestion." (5)

Footnotes:


(4) Bicentennial historic places marker, Beremboke Reserve

(5) Steiglitz Miner, Saturday 24 June 1893, "Mt Wallace Correspondent"
Much of these farmers' time, would have been occupied with clearing timbered paddocks, milking cows, planting crops, such as potatoes, building fences and conducting any other pastoral improvements they found time for. Despite their close proximity to Geelong, Melbourne and Ballarat, it was still a fairly isolated community.

The Durdidwarrah and Beremboke farmers were also fortunate, due to the generally poor quality of the land, to have access to the Beremeboke and Coolebarghurk Farmer's Common. The local farmers petitioned for the creation of a common in September 1872. The common incorporated land which had previously been held under grazing licence, held by farmers dating back to 1865. The common was proclaimed on 11 November 1879.(6) In January 1880, ninety (90) acres of the common was deducted to be used for other purposes.(see figure 6)

Farmer's commons, such as this were quite popular throughout Victoria in this period and each had its own set of regulations, managers and a herdsman who supervised the stock. Throughout its existence, the Beremboke Farmers Common ran a variety of animals, united under the title of large cattle, including horses, mules, asses, oxen, steers, heifers and cows. (7) Access to the common was granted to rate payers, holders of miners rights, business licences or carriers licences and farmers residing within five (5) miles of the common. The aforementioned were entitled to run four (4) large cattle or the equivalent in small cattle. Farmers with a minimum of one tenth of land under cultivation were permitted to depasture one additional head on the common. (8) Thus, giving farmers the opportunity to run stock while clearing their heavily timbered land and conducting other pasture improvements, a contrast to the grazing licences held earlier.

Footnotes:
(7) The Geelong Advertiser, p.3, "Beremboke Common Regulations", 10 May 1888
(8) The Geelong Advertiser, p.3, "Beremboke Common Regulations", 10 May 1888
In April 1879 a petition was circulated to add four thousand (4,000) acres to the common and was signed by thirty three (33) farmers from Beremboke. (I have been unable to find evidence to suggest this petition was successful). As the population of the area was rising the need arose for a school and Beremboke Primary was built in 1870 and located on twenty four (24) acres of land. Alongside this, in 1871, an area was reserved for a Presbyterian Church, indicating the dominant religion of the tenants of Beremboke and surrounding regions. (9)

The Beremboke Farmers's Common operated for twenty five (25) years and was abolished on the 25 February 1897. The land was tendered out in two (2) blocks of two thousand (2,000) acres and one thousand, one hundred (1,100) acres as grazing licences. (10) These blocks caused a great deal of debate as the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust maintained that seven hundred and forty (740) acres of the land belonged to them, and could not be tendered out as grazing licences. However, the situation was further complicated by the fact that it had previously been tendered out (the resolution of this problem is unclear).

A possible reason for closing the common was mismanagement. Several Managers had been accused of running stock and only paying half of the fee. A further reason may be that a number of people had left the area, following the decline of the nearby Steiglitz gold fields. Today this area is composed of farms, the Beremboke reserve tennis courts, a dilapidated primary school, unused and the area around it is still used for grazing stock. There is no evidence remaining of the Presbyterian Church.

Footnotes:
(9) Victorian Public Record Office, series 242 box 438, Laverton “Land Board Schedule”, No.7 of 1875 2-3.70
(10) Victorian Public Record Office, series 242 box 213, Laverton “Beremboke Common”
The closure of the common would have meant that farmers in the areas may have had to reduce stock levels or put an end to their policy of diversification. Alternatively they may have adopted a three crop rotation programme, growing potatoes in one paddock, oats in another (which after harvesting they could run stock on) while resting the other paddock for a year, each season rotating the uses of the paddocks.

The farmers are likely to have continued running dairy cattle due to the relatively close proximity to the creamery at Wallace. (11)

Little seems to have changed from this period to the present day in the type of farming conducted. Beef instead of dairy cattle are run, as well as sheep. Horses are also kept, but as stock horses for pleasure purposes, not work horses, as these have been replaced by machinery. Crops of oats are grown instead of potatoes. The major change has been the reduction in the size of the properties, illustrating a change from business properties to small, often ten (10) acre hobby farms.

The agricultural activities of the early settlers had a major impact on the land and resulted in a great clearing of timbered land. In 1973 the farming activities of the area were dominated by cattle and sheep breeding with a few properties raising crops. In the 1990’s this balance is still maintained. Today stock grazing along roadsides unsupervised, are considered a nuisance and can be impounded by National Parks Officers, due to the damage they can cause in the National Park, an area which they freely grazed, over one hundred years ago.

Footnotes:

(11) Steglitz Miner, 8 July 1893
CHAPTER 4

THE UTILISATION OF TIMBER RESOURCES IN THE

BRISBANE RANGES

Following the issuing of grazing licences in the region a great deal of clearing of timber occurred. Further clearing also occurred in the 1850's to service the nearby gold town of Steiglitz and continued to occur up to 1973 when only limited timber collection was available. As mentioned in the previous chapter pastoralists were the first to clear the heavily timbered ranges, although predominantly removing the timber so paddocks could be cultivated, the timber was also utilised for fence posts, housing, shedding and fuel for heating. The effects of this clearing can still be seen today with young coppice growth dominating the park. (1) (see figure 7).

Today the park is composed of a very young eucalypt vegetation due to the harvesting of timber since the 1850's. Evidence of the timber cutting is obvious with large tree stumps to be found throughout the ranges, but particularly at Boar Gully (see figure 7) and the land surrounding Steiglitz. The National Park Service maintains that these timber cutting "operations have not had a major impact on the character of the forest, although they have removed most of the remaining larger trees"(2) This is due to the relatively fast growing eucalypts which dominate the forest.

Footnotes:

(1) D Lawrence, Acting Ranger in Charge, Brisbane Ranges National Park

(2) Department of Conservation and Environment, Park Notes, Brisbane Ranges National Park, March 1984
Figure 7
This photo illustrates the youth of the forest today. Note the larger tree stump in the centre front of the picture, illustrating this area was once an older forest.
The young forest lacks aspects which it once possessed. Prior to timber cutting activities its older trees served as homes for many animals. Today the park lacks these natural habitats. Now if a tree falls down it is left to decay with the hope that animals will move into it, a further reason for prohibiting the removal of fallen timber for firewood from the park.

The other dominant type of vegetation in the park is *Xanthorrhoea australis* the blackboy or grass tree. This plant is renowned for its longevity, but debate surrounds the method of estimating the plants growth rate and consequent age. Many of the larger grass trees are thought to be hundreds of years old and the oldest known grass tree is approximately six hundred and fifty years old and is to be found in Western Australia.(3) The grass trees in the Brisbane Ranges are one of the few remaining relics from Aboriginal occupation of the area. The environment for grass trees is ideal in the Brisbane Ranges as the Aboriginal practice of regular burning, "fire stick forming", as Rhys Jones has labelled it, would have encouraged their growth as they occur in fire prone areas and their dominance is enhanced under certain fire regimes(4) and in well drained soils with eucalypt and woodland forests. Since the 1970's these plants have been threatened by the pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* for further information on this threat to one of the dominant vegetation types of the park see Chapter 7.

Man's impact on this area has been substantial, altering the density and type of vegetation from Wathaurong occupation to 1973 when the area was gazetted as a National Park. Since then attempts have been made to restore the vegetation to as close as possible to its original state.

Footnotes:
The discovery of gold in the nearby Anakie Hills resulted in further serious forest clearance in the ranges, while the town of Steiglitz prospered with a peak population of two thousand (2,000), the surrounding timbered land was rapidly devegetated in order to meet the mining town's needs. The impact of the clearing is illustrated by an extract from the Steiglitz Miner, "on entering the Beremboke common and, thence onward to Steiglitz the friendly shelter of timbered country attests its warmth to the dispensation of the overcoat". (5) In contrast however, the passage continues describing fine views of the Geelong Water Works, only possible because of clearings in the forest and tells of "thickly timbered country of stringybark saplings and a stunted growth of gums, messmate, buloke and cherry trees. Here the woodman's axe is busily engaged plying its decimating work in obtaining fuel". (6)

The demand for timber from the Steiglitz community was high and to the miners delight there was an abundant supply nearby. The timber was required for fuel, housing, fences, churches, hotels and mining props and was serviced by the reserved forest which now forms part of the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Steiglitz had its own timberyard as did the near by town of Meredith, illustrating the vast requirements. (7) Concern was expressed at the rapid depletion of the forests resources being removed from Crown Land, although it was acknowledged that "the timber growing on the ranges surrounding the gold fields is of no special value, only fit for mining props and firewood" (8) and the level of waste was declared unacceptable. In order to prevent

Footnotes:
(5) Steiglitz Miner, 22 July 1893
(6) Steiglitz Miner, 22 July 1893
(7) Steiglitz Miner, 27 January 1894
(8) Blackburne, 20 August 1894, Department of Crown Lands
the total destruction of the forests, Section 127 under the Land Act of 1890 was gazetted on 5 October 1894, one month after the earlier observations. Section 127 stated that "no person, although duly licensed or otherwise authorised, shall, unless he be specifically licensed under the authority of the Minister of Lands, cut or remove timber for mining purposes, (which at the height of two (2) feet from the surface of the ground is of less diameter than twelve (12) inches) on or from the Crown Lands comprised in the Parishes of Durdidwarrah and Moreep". (9)

These restrictions seem to have reduced the rate of removal, as advertisements appeared in the 'Steiglitz Miner' offering a reward for information leading to a conviction of people responsible for cutting timber and young saplings on four (4) mines; The United Albion Company, The North Albion Company, The Waterloo Company and the Steiglitz Syndicate. (10)

By 1900 however, Steiglitz was reduced to a near ghost town with the closure of the last mine 'The Dreadnought' in 1940. The forest was only to have a short break to revegetate before the Forest Commission of Victoria set up a timber cutters camp in Boar Gully (presently a camping area in the Brisbane Ranges National Park). The camp ran from 1949-51, employing fifty (50) men and was part of an employment scheme for recently arrived migrants from the European Balkan States. (11) Thus, even though Steiglitz demand for timber resources was

Footnotes:
(9) Victorian Government Gazette, 5 October 1894
(10) The Steiglitz Miner, 1 July 1893
almost completely reduced, local farmers and the Forest Commission of Victoria's harvesting of its resources continued in the Brisbane Ranges Reserved Forest. The result of this almost continuous clearing has been the very limited occurrence of mature trees, which are an integral part of the eco-system, necessary for animal habitat and decomposition.

The Forest Commission of Victoria's desire to utilise the land in the Brisbane Ranges, under their control, as Reserved State Forest, is expressed once again between 1965 - 70. During this period a limited timber supply was provided for the CSR Chipboard Mill in Bacchus Marsh. This partnership was short lived however, due to the poor quality of the timber being supplied (12).

When the National Parks Service took over stewardship of the area from the Forest Commission of Victoria, the local residents found themselves facing a body which was hostile to activities which the previous managers had considered acceptable, such as, collecting timber for fence posts and firewood.

To claim that the Brisbane Ranges National Park is an accurate representation of Victorian forests, would be incorrect, as it represents young growth, in a forest which has been considerably altered by human activities. This raises the question of its suitability for a National Park, and whether or not the area would be more beneficial if it was used for timber growing and harvesting.

Footnotes:

(12) C Dickie, Department of Conservation and Environment, Bacchus Marsh 26 July 1992, interview
One of the current management problems facing the park is controlling the quantities of timber which are removed. When the park was formed, many of the local residents objected to no longer being able to make use of a free and readily available timber supply, as they had done in the past. Several residents of the area contacted the National Parks Service, querying their right to remove timber. When they were told that this was contrary to National Park Service regulations, they became distressed, and there was even the suggestion of violence. Some pursued the matter further, such as those who had cut timber in the area and sold it as firewood, in order to earn a living, and the Anakie Brickworks, who require one thousand (1,000) tonnes of wood per annum, and whose private supply had run out. (13)

The feeling on this issue was strong, and roused several people to contact their local MP, who in turn wrote to the National Parks Service, asking that special consideration be given to them, because of their past unhindered access to this resource. (14) In order to strengthen their case, the author often stated that, the timber collected was only that fallen on the forest floor. This did not aid their case for two (2) reasons, firstly the validity of the statement was seriously questioned, and secondly, it is essential to the forest that debris is allowed to collect on the forest floor, to create new habitats and to decompose, enriching, in these circumstances, a highly infertile soil.

Whether or not they knew it the residents had a right to complain about their loss of this resource, because in 1979, the Final Recommendation for Melbourne Study Area had stated that

"Due to their past use the forests in the Brisbane Ranges are not in a natural

Footnotes:

(13) National Parks Service, file 55 31 16
(14) National Parks Service, file 55 31 16
condition, it is envisaged that, to change the vegetation to a form and composition closer to the original condition of the forests, some timber harvesting will be necessary and minor forest produce will be available". (15)

When the local MLC for Ballarat (Mr Thomkin) wrote to the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, (Mr W A Borthwick), in 1979, he quoted the above passage in an attempt to persuade those, income dependant upon the resources, that there was nothing to be concerned about. Thus, residents were offered some hope, but the letter continued on to say that after 26 March 1979, when the park extension was gazetted, removal of firewood would only be permitted, if a permit had been obtained from the National Park Service ranger, and then only be removed, from areas deemed appropriate by the ranger. (16)

After much debate between the local timber cutters, and the National Parks Service, it was concluded that the collection of firewood, and cutting by commercial operators would be allowed to continue until 31 December 1983, when it would cease, due to its incompatibility with the aims of a National Park. (17) Today the ranger spends weekends patrolling the park, looking for illegal collectors of firewood. These are generally people who live within a thirty (30) kilometre radius of the park. Such patrolling ensures those with permits are collecting the correct amounts from the correct areas. (18)

Footnotes:

(15) Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Melbourne Study Area 1977, p13

(16) Minister for Conservation, W A Borthwick to D G William MLC for Ballarat.

(17) National Park Service, file 31 15

(18) S Boland, Field Work with D Lawrence, Acting Ranger, Brisbane Ranges National Park.
CHAPTER 5

STONY CREEK RESERVOIRS

The Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust have been using land in the Durridwarrah area since 1866, when they took over land which had formerly been occupied by the Von Stieglitz family, called 'Burnt Station'. This was a grazing licence on Crown Land, the homestead burnt down, and the land was passed on to the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust, but the Victorian water supply survey, did not peg the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust boundaries, until 1897. (1)

Stony Creek Reservoir number one (1) built in 1875, now occupies the site of the old homestead, which was drowned as a result of the dam building. (refer to figure 9) The catchment and drainage area for this reservoir, incorporated much of the land now contained within the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

There were in fact two (2) drainage areas for these reservoirs, one which drained naturally toward the water course, and one which did not. The first area was five (5) miles north of the upper dam, consisting of seven thousand, three hundred and eighty eight (7,388) acres. This area drained into "Wallace's" swamp, which was initially the "only efficient water supply" (2) for the town of Steiglitz, and was eight hundred and fifty eight (858) acres. The water was then conveyed by open air channel into the reservoir, this is still the method used today. (3)

Footnotes:


(2) Steiglitz Miner, 8 July 1893

(3) A W Cooke, Supply of Water to Geelong. 100 Years of Water, Engineer in Chief, Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust, July 1973
The second drainage area was for the Lower Stony Creek dam, and consisted of a much larger area of three thousand, four hundred and sixty-two and a half (3,462.5) acres, and four (4) swamps. This was the least preferred area, as the drainage had to be diverted for it to drain towards the swamp, and the water was "unexceptional in quality" (4).

The building of the two (2) Stony Creek dams was responsible for creating a small town, called Mooreep, today the area, although located in the parish of Mooreep, is called Duridwarrah. The town consisted of workers, who were building the nine hundred and fifty million gallon dam, today the area is occupied only by the dams and reservoir keepers house.

Over one hundred and twenty (120) years later the reservoir still serves the people of Geelong, but is no longer considered a catchment area, rather a storage and protection area due to the unreliable rainfall, and the inclusion of a substantial portion of land into the Brisbane Ranges National Park. Today the total catchment area of the Moorabool storages, including, Bostock, Korweingunboor and Stony Creek reservoirs totals one hundred square kilometres (100Km²). (5) (Unfortunately the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust was unable to supply me with an individual figure for Stony Creek's catchment area).

It is difficult to work out exactly how much land the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust now has in the Beremboke, Mooreep and Duridwarrah Parishes, as the gazette of the land in 1875, 1925 and 1978 does not provide a total of the land incorporated in the Stony Creek catchment areas. (6) In 1978 two thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven (2,567) hectares of land was proclaimed around the catchment area.

Footnotes:
(4) A W Cooke, Supply of Water to Geelong
(5) A W Cooke, Supply of Water to Geelong
(6) Victorian Government Gazette 1875 - p1195, 1925 - p2859
Figure 9
Stony Creek reservoir built in 1875 has utilised the Brisbane Ranges as a water catchment area since then.
The utilisation of the area, in and around the Brisbane Ranges National Park, as a water catchment area, is an important part of the history of this area, as the Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust control over the land, made the creation of the National Park a very difficult process. For further information on this see Chapter 8.
CHAPTER 6

SLATE QUARRYING IN THE BRISBANE RANGES

The Brisbane Ranges National Park is an area with rich deposits of Ordovician slate, which is of high quality and very decorative, (refer to figures 10 & 11) and has been quarried on varying scales, for over one hundred (100) years.

The National Parks Service believes that slate quarrying within the Brisbane Ranges National Park, is inappropriate, because of the impact it has on the environment, and the processes required to extract the slate, such as blasting, a highly inappropriate activity, within or alongside a National Park.

In 1973 the Forest Commission of Victoria, had issued five current quarrying licences, but only two of these quarries were being worked, when the area was declared a National Park. These licences were not renewed after the creation of the park. This indicates a growing environmental concern, amongst people and government, represented by the Land Conservation Council, which preferred the long term benefits of conservation, in contrast to the short term economic gains, of slate quarrying.

Mr Stan Thompson operated a slate quarry on land which, extended beyond his land into Crown Land, now, part of the Brisbane Ranges National Park. His licence to quarry on this Crown Land, which his father had also quarried, was not renewed after the decision to create the

Footnotes:

(1) National Parks Service file 86/923, Department of Conservation and Environment, Geelong Regional Office
Figure 10
Stan Thompson's slate quarry adjoins the Brisbane Ranges National Park. The above photograph illustrates the high quality of the slate.

Figure 11
The lower photograph illustrates the scarring resulting from quarrying one of the many reasons the National Parks Service do not permit quarrying operations within the park.
Brisbane Ranges National Park, was announced. The example of Stan Thompson's slate quarry, is not only primarily evidence of past uses of the land, but also provides us with an insight into changing attitudes towards land utilisation, and will be used as a case study.

According to the Land Conservation Council, the operation of slate quarries within a National Park has "severe detrimental effects on the environment from both ecological and aesthetic points of view" (2) In accordance with these recommendations, the Department of Conservation and Environment, represented by the Melbourne Study Group, sent notification to all licence holders that their licences would not be renewed. Consequent upon this revocation, all slate quarrying in the proposed extension of the Brisbane Ranges National Park, ceased.

The National Parks Service maintains, that the operation of a quarry, within or alongside the National Park, is in direct conflict with the aims and objectives of a National Park; that is, "providing for recreation not only for people today but for future generations as well". (3) For Mr Stan Thompson and his family, the regulations brought an end to a generations-old family business.

On the 21 February 1977, the Melbourne Study Group notified Mr Thompson's father that he would no longer be permitted to operate his slate quarry. According to Stan Thompson there was no explanation attached to this letter, as to why the licence would not be renewed, (4) but he had heard of the proposal to create a National Park in the area.

Footnotes:
(2) Land Conservation Council of Victoria Final Recommendations, 1977, Melbourne Study Area, p10
(3) Department of Conservation and Environment, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Park Notes, October 1989
(4) Stan Thompson, Interview, 4 August 1992
The Thompson family were forced to cease quarrying, because, although they owned part of the land, the quarry also extended into Crown Land (which they had leased and paid royalties on) this was to now become part of the Brisbane Ranges National Park. For Mr Thompson and his family, the park boundary is arbitrary. Stan Thompson maintains, if it had been one kilometre further away, he may have been able to continue his quarrying operations, as it was, it was no longer possible to effectively quarry for slate in the limited area he owned, so the family business was closed down.

The National Parks Service carried out an inspection of the area on 28 May 1976, and the Senior Investigations Officer concluded that "quarrying for slate is seriously reducing park values". In particular, the investigations officer pointed to the scarring of the hillsides, a direct result of previous slate quarrying, and the level of environmental damage, for example, erosion and waste stone disposal, as a result of the Thompson's quarrying operations.

Despite Stan Thompson's claims, that the operation of his slate quarry does not have any long term ramifications for the vegetation and wildlife in the park, the National Parks Service believes that quarrying is detrimental to the park "affecting an area of undisturbed high environmental value". (6)

Footnotes:

(5) National Parks Service, Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne, file 1/27/4, letter to Chief Resource Planning Officer from the Senior Investigations Officer, 16 June 1977

(6) National Parks Service, Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne, file 7/24/4, letter 16 June 1977
The National Parks officers were concerned as to the high levels of waste extracted from the quarry, which they estimated to be approximately twenty (20) times the production level, although this rate is disputed by the Thompsons.

According to Andrew Thompson, (son of Mr Stan Thompson) if the rate of over burden (soil, rock and sandstone amalgamated with the slate, but not utilised) in any mining operation, including slate quarrying, is above one quarter of the material being mined, then the operation is not economically viable. He maintains that in their quarry, there was only ever a maximum of one quarter over burden of the total production. For the Thompsons, the cost of earthmoving equipment and other machinery required to extract the slate ensures, that in a family run company the level of waste must be only "one quarter bad out of three quarters good".

There is a solution to the Thompson family's problem, but they are unwilling to adopt it, as a result of past experiences. At present the only way to gain permission to mine in the park is to put forward a bond of ten ($10,000) to fifteen ($15,000) thousand dollars, which Stan Thompson refuses to do. Stan definitely says that even if he did have the money, he is doubtful that it would be returned to him, when quarrying was completed.

Footnotes:

(7) National Parks Service, Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne, file 7/274

(8) Andrew Thompson, interview, 1 September 1992
Stan's doubts are a reflection of his earlier experiences with the bond system. Under a bond system, the quarry operator places in trust a sum of money, determined by the National Parks Service, which is returned, upon evidence of appropriate restoration to its natural state of the area after the cessation of mining activity. Mr. Thompson entered into such an agreement, allowing him to quarry one acre of land, in return for a bond of one thousand dollars ($1,000), to be returned only if the condition of the land was agreeable. Mr. Thompson argues that he abided by these conditions, ploughing and sowing native grasses as agreed, and was "left to watch the native animals enjoy the fruits of his toil" (9). Upon inspection of the land the National Parks Service refused to return the bond, as in their opinion, the land had not been appropriately restored to its natural state.

The aforementioned example illustrates that the bond system is not always successful. In this instance a lack of communication, possibly a difference in standards of revegetation, and a time delay between planting, and the authorities visiting the area, meant any revegetation work had been destroyed by local animals before the National Park Service officers had a chance to view it. Although theoretically a good system, perhaps tighter conditions need to be imposed, regarding exact dates of inspections, and some provision to prevent animals dev egetating an area under regeneration. The onus for fulfilling such conditions should probably be placed on the licence holder.

Footnotes:

(9) Stan Thompson, Interview, 1 September 1992
The Thompson's battle with the Conservation Department has been constant since his licence was revoked, as has local farmers, who maintain it is their right to collect timber from the Brisbane Ranges, for their personal use. Both of these examples illustrate the conflicts raised, when an area which has been Crown Land, and served as a free for all, is reserved as a National Park. Such conflicts are not unique to the Brisbane Ranges National Park, but are evident throughout Australia, and the World, for example mining in Kakadu National Park, and Brazil's Amazonian rainforest devegetation.

The rising popularity of conservation movements, has led to an increase in conflicts over resource use, dividing communities on the basis of economics versus conservation. To many, looking away timber, slate and gravel resources, and grazing pastures in a National Park is wasteful, when they could be providing employment and manufacturing opportunities. Stan Thompson, and many of the Brisbane Ranges National Park residents adopt this attitude, but they are obviously only a minority group, as the park went ahead.

This illustrates a full circle of events, from the initial proposal to create a park in 1954, by an individual, with the support of several small conservation orientated groups, battling against the rest of the state, to gaining the support of the majority, and forming the park, leaving the early users of the area as the dissatisfied minority.

The issue of conservation has been over simplified by its opposition, as placing the needs of trees above the needs of people. Such comments reflect short term thinking, which is slowly becoming less prevalent in the community. However, the task of the National Parks Service is further complicated, when preserving the environment results in ending somebody's livelihood, and consequently a great deal of bitterness is felt between the two parties, as in the case of Stan Thompson. The National Park Service is forced to accept the responsibility of creating
unemployment, in order to preserve an area for the future, and often have few alternative sources of employment to offer those once employed in the area.

The fact that the majority of people are willing to accept these new conditions, represents the development of a new environmental consciousness, which has the confidence to place conservation above the immediate economic value of the area. For Mr Thompson and others like him, these changing attitudes mean that the battle for resource utilisation is becoming, more of a losing one each day. Even in times of severe economic hardship resources are being locked away in wilderness areas, such as South Gippsland, illustrating that conservation is becoming more than just "trendy" or politically advantageous.
CHAPTER 7

PHYTOPHTHORA CINNAMOMI

The Brisbane Ranges National Park is infected with the root rot disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (cinnamon fungus). The disease is potentially devastating to a forested area, such as the Brisbane Ranges National Park and "has been identified as a major threat to many fragile eco-systems in National Parks in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia".(1)

While the origins of the disease are uncertain, it is thought to be a H₂O borne fungus, newly introduced) the consequences of it are more widely acknowledged. The fungus attacks the roots of the plant and decays the roots, gradually reducing the plants ability to absorb water, and minerals leading to sudden dieback and gradual death. (2)

The symptoms of the disease could easily be mistaken to resemble the effects of a drought as the leaves on the plant will turn yellow, and then brown, branches will die and gradually the entire plant dies. The rate of impact can be varied, thus the tree may die after only having visible symptoms for 3 months or may take much longer. (3)

Footnotes:

(1) Marks and Smith, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Victorian Forests, p19
(2) The Herald, 3 December 1979, "Sapurge of the Forest"
(3) Marks and Smith, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Victorian Forests, p1
In grass trees (Xanthorrhoea australis) which are prevalent in the Brisbane Ranges, and have a very slow growth rate, the symptoms of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* are obvious to the botanist and layperson. (see figures 12 & 13) The normally erect grass is droopy and discoloured and the plant will crumble if pressure is applied. The grass tree is particularly susceptible because the pathogen thrives on its sponge roots, which are easily infected and the plant succumbs totally to infection.(4)

In eucalypts, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* also affects the roots, but the eucalypts response is slightly different. Once the fungus has infected the major roots the tree develops a pale to dark brown discolouration, which is hidden under the bark. This, however, does not identify the fungus, as this symptom is a common response to injury among eucalypts.(5)

Evidence of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in the Brisbane Ranges was first observed in 1969, and the source of infection is thought to be gravel used in road construction.(6) The spores of the fungus are capable of living in gravel heaps, dormant for up to a period of five years in dry conditions, maintaining the ability during this period to infect vegetation.(7)

Footnotes:

(4) Marks and Smith, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Victorian Forests, p2


(6) D Peters, Thesis, *The Impact of Phytophthora cinnamomi* on Rare Plants at Steiglitz, p1

(7) The Herald, 3 December 1992, "Scourge of the Forests".
Figures 12 & 13
These two photographs illustrate the damage Phytophthora cinnamomi has upon Grass Trees in the Brisbane Ranges demonstrating the very real threat it poses to the rest of the park.
This means that gravel removed from other areas of the State, may have been responsible for the infection of the Brisbane Ranges National Park. After the roads were constructed with infected gravel, rainfall was responsible for its spread, washing the spores into the healthy forests. (8)

The conditions within the Brisbane Ranges National Park are almost ideal for *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, as the soil is of low fertility with little organic matter, is often subject to heavy rainfall which saturates the soil for short periods of time, and has poor internal soil drainage and runoff, and an average soil temperature of sixteen (16) degrees. (9) The combination of all these soil conditions, plus the high level of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* susceptible plants in the Brisbane Ranges, and human and animal activity aiding the spread of the disease, means that the Brisbane Ranges National Park is one of the oldest, and worst *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infestations in Victoria. (10) with thirty (30) percent of the park found to be infected by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. (11)

Footnotes:

(8) Marks and Smith, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Victorian Forests, p3

(9) G C Marks, B A Fuhrer, N E M Walters, Huebner (ed), *Tree Diseases in Victoria*, p8, Forests Commission Victoria

(10) National Parks Service, file 55/3/2, 5 February 1974, from the Director of National Parks, Mr Smith to the Minister for Conservation, Mr W A Borthwick, Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne

Since its discovery in Victoria in 1935, (12) individuals have been researching Phytophthora cinnamomi, but there are still a lot of questions which remain unanswered about the disease.

At present there are no real practical methods to stop the spread of the disease within the park, despite good intentions. Methods of treatment which have proved successful in treating the infection, such as, chemical treatment, steam aeration, cultural controls, use of various techniques already mentioned, (for example, avoid excessive watering in nurseries, prevent soil drainage in forests, establish mixed crops of disease sensitive and tolerant species) and biological control are only suitable in small areas, which can be carefully monitored and controlled, such as a nursery.

In a National Park which has a constant stream of human and animal traffic, the ability to restrict the spread of the disease is greatly reduced, while the cost of implement chemical treatments both environmentally and financially can be high. (13)

The disease can be spread very easily by visitors to the park, who, during their visit, travel to a number of sites within the park. The infected soil is transported on the sole of their shoe or car tyres. Similarly, animals are also responsible for the spread of the disease on their bodies and internally, as in the case of birds and termites who carry the disease in their intestinal tracts. (14)

Footnotes:

(12) Marks and Smith, Phytophthora cinnamomi in Victorian Forests, summary
(13) KM Old, Phytophthora cinnamomi Forest management in Australia, p80
(14) Marks and Smith, Phytophthora cinnamomi in Victorian Forests, p2
The management problems associated with a disease such as this are vast, as once the pathogen is established it cannot be eliminated (15).

Attempts to manage the spread of the disease have been made by closing down off-road tracks to public vehicles, and an education campaign alerting park users of the problem. Experts in the field, such as G. Weste, encourage walkers to wash their shoes after walking in the park, while others believe a car wash should be provided to hose vehicles and earth moving equipment down after travelling or working in the area. Theoretically these are solutions, but are highly impractical, resources required to enforce them could be better utilised in other areas, for example, further research into *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

The effects of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infestation in the Brisbane Ranges National Park will not be known for a long time, although initial repercussions, such as, reduction in dry sclerophyll shrubbery forest to an open forest with an understory of grass or sedge, and the appearance of dead and dying plants, (16) indicate a pattern for the future, with a prediction of species loss and possible species extinction of rare plants found in the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Footnotes:

(15) Marks and Smith, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Victorian Forests, p2

(16) Dawson, Weste & Ashton, Regeneration of Vegetation in the Brisbane Ranges after Fire and Infestation by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, p15
Despite the guardianship and management of the National Parks Service who strive to protect the vegetation, the composition of the Brisbane Ranges National Park forest will again be altered. Not by timber cutting as it has been in the past, but by the infestation of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. The infestation of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is likely to speed up the rate of change, with the possibility of vast changes in the Brisbane Ranges National Park forest.
CHAPTER 8

THE CREATION OF THE BRISBANE RANGES

NATIONAL PARK

The Victorian National Parks Association was formed in 1950 and only had a limited support base. The Victorian National Parks Association was designed to help preserve areas of Victoria, which they considered to be of particular natural beauty and value. Bervell maintains that “the history of Victoria’s National Parks can be broadly described as the emergence, albeit often shadowy, of a type of conservation ethic, towards the land and natural resources in general, and specifically of the appearance of a ‘preservation’ branch of the conservation movement, which sought the reservation of Crown Land for non-economic purposes”. (1) While aiming to do this, the Victorian National Parks Association experienced conflict, as many of these areas contained resources which were very valuable, but the National Parks Association prohibited their utilisation.

In 1973 the State Government of Victoria in accordance with the Land Conservation Council Recommendations, reserved an area of seven thousand, four hundred and seventy (7,470) acres between Anakie and Bacchus Marsh, although the Land Conservation Council proposed a State Park the area was in fact gazetted as a National Park, with a further extension in 1979 (see figure 14).

Footnotes:

(1) Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Final Recommendations, South Western Area District, pp9–10, May 1982
The park was created to preserve an area which contained a diversity of flora including rare and endemic species such as *Grevillea Steiglitziana* (Brisbane Ranges Grevillea) and to "primarily provide public enjoyment, education and inspiration in natural environments" (2) (see figure 15).

The idea of developing a National Park within the area was first proposed in 1918 illustrating that even then the area's environment was regarded as valuable and worthy of preservation (3) (for further information see Chapter 8).

A second proposal was initiated in 1954, by a local resident, Mr Bert Boardman, to have the area reserved as a National Park, but the nineteen (19) year delay illustrates that a successful proposal for a National Park requires more than one man's enthusiasm to preserve an area. Although to Boardman the Brisbane Ranges was biologically very diverse, and well deserving of the title National Park, it took a lot more than community groups and the National Parks Association, lobbying the government, to have the area declared as a National Park.

There were however, many opposing groups who objected to the formation of the park, and the restrictions that its creation could pose on their use of the region, as land holders and visitors to the area. A combination of opposing groups, complex land tenure problems and a lack of a conservation ethic, and organisational government department with the power structure to propose and enforce decisions, meant that it took nineteen (19) years to have the Brisbane Ranges gazetted as a National Park.

**Footnotes:**


(3) Victorian Naturalist 1918, Vol. 35, p88
Figure 15
The photograph illustrates three of the many wildflowers to be found in the Brisbane Ranges National Park. Front Grevillea Steiglitziana, pink heath and wattle. The diversity of wildflowers was one of the reasons in favour of preserving the area as a National Park. Today many visitors are attracted to the park in October to view them.
Despite a general lack of interest in conservation within the community, there were several groups supporting the creation of the park, ranging from local residents such as Bert Boardman, who was also a member of Bannockburn Shire Council and Barwon Regional Committee (both of whom supported the park) to the Country Women’s Association, Geelong Field Naturalists Club, Geelong Historical Society, Professor of Botany at Melbourne University J.S. Turner, Botanist at the Botanical Gardens J.H. Willis. (4) These groups were critical to the formation of the park.

Councillor Boardman’s proposal for the park was for the reservation of six thousand (6,000) acres in the Brisbane Ranges as a National Park, a smaller area than the park now is.(5)

Councillor Boardman wanted the area to be protected as a natural reserve, and as a landholder and nature lover, he had first-hand experience of the habitat within the Ranges. He first put the proposal to the National Parks Service in 1954, and continued to promote the idea amongst local groups and botanical experts, with the aim of gaining increased support. Boardman however, was really the driving force behind the proposal. It was his membership on the Bannockburn Shire Council and Barwon Regional Committee which led to the initial involvement of these two groups. The Country Women’s Association and the Geelong Field Naturalists became involved as a result of Boardman’s daughter, who was a member of the Country Women’s Association and was Secretary of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club. The Geelong Field Naturalists Club had also been involved in a series of individual representations, aimed at preservation of areas including the You Yangs, Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, Mount Cole, Edwards Point and parts of the Otways.(6)

Footnotes:

(4) National Parks Association, file 24/7

(5) Geelong Advertiser, 14 June 1966, “Delayed National Park Project"
The Barwon Regional Committee took the proposal very seriously, and held numerous meetings and forwarded a great deal of information about the area, including detailed plants, birds, reptiles and mammal lists, and eagerly presented the Service with any other information it requested.

In July 1956 at a meeting of the Barwon Regional Committee, the Chief Botanist of the Botanical Gardens expressed strong support for the proposal, claiming "the locality was of great interest botanically" (7)

This was in fact one of the reasons the committee wished to see the area preserved as a National Park. Other points in favour of the area being declared a National Park, according to the Barwon Regional Committee, were the excellent opportunities to observe four hundred and twenty (420) native plants and animals in their native habitat, while examining their behaviour in relation to a variety of conditions, for example, seasonal weather cycles. (8) The area also provided a unique opportunity to study vegetation associations "to a degree which is possibly unique in Victoria", for example snow and swamp gums. (9)

Footnotes:

(7) National Parks Service, file 24/7 meeting of Barwon Regional Committee at Anakie, July 1956

(8) B C Henshaw, Secretary of the Barwon Regional Committee to the Chairman of the National Parks Association, 30 April 1968

(9) B C Henshaw, Secretary of the Barwon Regional Committee to the Chairman of the National Parks Association, 30 April 1968
The Forest Commission of Victoria also agreed to exchange two thousand, six hundred and ninety nine (2,699) acres on the 11 April 1973, (only 4 months prior to the gazettal of the area as a National Park) for unoccupied Crown Land in other areas, which would be dedicated as reserved forest. (20) The Forest Commission of Victoria, however, was not the body with whom the real battle took place.

The Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust had exercised control over land in the area since 1872, when it constructed the Upper and Lower Stony Creek Dams; the Duridwarrah Reservoirs. In 1956 the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust informed the Barwon Regional Committee that it supported the proposal for a National Park in the area, provided it maintained its rights over water supply areas. (21) By July 1963, however, it had changed its tone decidedly. Their opposition to the National Park can be understood after having dominance for nearly 100 years previously.

While claiming to support the park's creation and wishing "to co-operate as fully as possible with the Authority (National Parks Association) in regard to the project" (22) the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust formulated ten (10) conditions which were to be abided by.

Footnotes:
(20) Victorian Government Gazette No. 23, 11 April 1973
(21) National Parks Service, file 24/7
(22) National Parks Service, file 24/7, K A McAllister, Secretary for Lands, memo to Acting Assistant Secretary for Lands, 26 June 1967, p2
Figure 16
Map illustrating control over land to be incorporated into Brisbane Forests National Park

Private Land

Crown Land

GWST (area 5)
2620 acres

GWST
1450 acres

Reserved Forest
900 acres

School Plantation

GWST
130 acres

Private Land

SCALE: APPROX 1" = 40 CHAINS
Despite the rhetoric of the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust, these conditions clearly illustrate their opinion about the National Park, and their regulations helped to further complicate the park's formulation. The Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust divided the area to be included in the park into eleven (11) areas, (refer to figure 16) nominating specific land utilisation which would be acceptable. The conditions ensured that the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust maintained control over the area. Condition No. 10 epitomises the feeling which dominates the conditions: "In the event of any disagreement between the Trust (Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust) and the National Parks Association the Trust shall have the final say". (23)

Other conditions indicate a strong desire to maintain control over the area, leaving little or no room for compromise. For example, condition No. 7 prohibits camping in area No. 5, two thousand, six hundred and twenty one (2621) acres which had been noted as an ideal animal breeding habitat, including "any person or persons who may be making a scientific study of the area or an native species inhabiting the area". (24) (Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust conditions). Thus, even research was prohibited due to political wrangling between government departments.

The National Parks Service is likely to have respected the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust's responsibility to provide a clean and reliable water supply to the residents of Geelong. The level of animosity is such that neither party acknowledged the aims of the other, failing to recognise the benefits of sharing a boundary and surrendering land to be incorporated in a National park.

Footnotes:

(23) National Parks Service, file 24/7/PT3, Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust conditions, 8 July 1963

(24) National Parks Service, file 24/7/PT3, Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust conditions, 8 July 1963
The benefits may have included close monitoring and inspection of the area, reducing the threat of fire, preventing damage to aqueducts, fences and flora and fauna. The area could not be sold to private parties, therefore eliminating the risk of clearing the land, which would have been highly detrimental to water catchment capabilities. Shared boundaries between a semi-government utility, that is, the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust, and a government department, most likely would have made maintenance of fences immediate and uncomplicated.

The Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust and the National Parks Association, were determined to ensure that the needs of their cause were met, and so staunchly defended their behaviour. For example, the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust’s role was to provide water to the residents of Geelong, and the National Parks Association’s desire to create a National Park was in no way going to affect their primary concern of water supply. Thus, the authorities’ strong commitment to achieving their aims led to conflict between the two groups. For example, the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust’s plan to replace native gums with non-indigenous pines, as they believed a needlebed would increase levels of water catchment and reduce water discolouration. The genuine intention to carry out this proposal must be questioned as they received advice from the CSIRO stating the soil was “unsuitable for growing pines” and would not prevent discolouration of the water. (25)

This project was in direct conflict with the National Parks Association’s aims for the area, but the Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust maintained it was only fulfilling its responsibilities to the water users of Geelong. The Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust fought strongly against the creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park because it threatened their autonomy within the area. As a result of this Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust’s opposition the project was delayed considerably.

Footnotes:
It is ironic that in 1977, when the Land Conservation Council made its final recommendations, it declared that the area National Parks Service, "consult and co-operate with the soil conservation authority and water supply authority regarding the location, timing and type of management activities in the catchments, and that it supply water and protect the catchments."(26)

The Minister for Lands in 1970, Mr W A Borthwick, observed a great deal of bickering between government departments, such as, Water Boards and the Forests Commission. This bickering inhibited progress on a number of issues, including the formation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park, while placing the Minister in the position of settling the disputes. Such a system was declared inadequate by the new Minister, so he suggested the creation of the Land Conservation Council, which is still used today. The Land Conservation Council Act was drafted in 1970, with the aim of solving land use disputes, and providing for the balanced use of land in Victoria. As Borthwick himself puts it, "the moment I took office I stopped all the arguments, you will all have your turn, but we will do it in a planned process".(27)

The Land Conservation Council's role was to research an area and present their findings, without making any recommendations for utilisation of the area. The study was published, and then tentative recommendations were tabled in parliament, (not to the Minister) and publicised. Huge submissions were received both in favour of, and against the recommendations. For example, the Land Conservation Council received one thousand and fourteen submissions, commenting on the proposed recommendations. (28)

Footnotes:
(26) Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Melbourne Study Area 1977
(27) W A Borthwick, Interview, 28 September 1992
The Land Conservation Council was composed of members of the present day Department of Conservation and Environment, for example, Forests Commission, Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation etc. The council also had a representative from the chemical industry in John Landy, a botanist and a farmer, and was headed by an independent chairperson, Sam Dimmock. It was on the whole, conservation orientated, with the possible exception of the Forest Commission of Victoria, who still strongly believed in utilitarian resource use. The Land Conservation Council obviously could not stop all the bickering but it did mean that the representatives from the department were forced to sit down and discuss the problems together, rather than behind each other's backs. (29)

The Land Conservation Council is an independent body with a chairperson, and subsequently not responsible to any government department. They report their findings directly to the Minister. Prior to October 1992 this had been the Minister for Conservation, but they are now responsible to the Minister for Planning. This system of direct reporting means that the Land Conservation Council does not have to go through the traditional departmental bureaucracy. The creation of the Land Conservation Council meant that any lobbying and negotiations regarding a particular area, for example, the Brisbane Ranges, that had occurred prior to it's introduction were ignored. Thus, the Brisbane Ranges became a National Park initially because the Land Conservation Council recommended it, no other reason. (30)

Without the Land Conservation Council, the National Parks Association, Geelong Water Board and Sewerage Trust, the Forest Commission of Victoria and lobby groups, may still be bickering about the possibility of forming the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Footnotes:

(29) W A Borthwick, interview, 28 September 1992
(30) W A Borthwick, Interview, 28 September 1992
While bickering between government departments frustrated the formation of the park, the slow progress also reflects community attitudes, although there were groups, such as, field naturalists clubs, established 1889, bird observers and bush walking clubs, who were interested in the environment and possessed a basic motion of conservation, they formed only a very small portion of the population.

The conservation ethic, that is, preserving the environment for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, was slow to develop in Victoria, and did not really develop until 1967-70, and in particular in 1969 with the Little Desert dispute.

This is really the first example of conservation on a public scale in which people became very involved. While other environmental groups in the past had been labelled hippies and disregarded, this group SOBAC (Save Our Bush Action Committee), involved a variety of people and could not be ignored. This was the first issue to gain popular support despite the National Parks Association being established fifteen years before, in 1952.

Prior to the Little Desert conflict which brought environmental issues to the fore, conservation had been a low profile issue which most of the population did not consider. This is hardly surprising, after all, they had grown up with the notion of maximum resource utilisation and such utilitarian notions left no room for considering long-term effects, of a particular activity, upon the environment. The Forest Commission of Victoria is an excellent example of utilitarian conservation, which throughout the 1940’s to the 1960’s attempted to raise the conservation consciousness about the importance of wise use of forest resources.

Footnotes:

The Little Desert Dispute politicised environmental issues, setting a precedent which continues today. Borthwick believes that an environmental awareness developed in the late 1960's as this was the first time Victorians had time to think of other values such as conservation and did not have to concentrate on sustaining themselves. This is a valid explanation considering Victoria had participated in three (3) wars and had experienced two (2) depressions, giving them little time to pursue conservation.

The parks creation was inhibited by it's past uses, and the natural resources currently being utilised, for example, slate quarrying, in an area which was to become National Park. Other uses included timber collection, gravel extraction, gold mining, aboriginal lands and pastoral activity, (refer to the individual chapter on past land utilisation), but also by traditional bureaucratic holdups, and compounded by complex land tenure problems.

It can be concluded, that in order to create a new National Park, such as, the Brisbane Ranges, it was necessary to have government support, a broad appreciation of a particular area's environmental value and a conservation ethic present, in at least a minority, of the Victorian population. The support of small conservation orientated groups, and individuals such as Bert Boardman was not enough.

Footnotes:

(32) W A Borthwick, Interview, 8 September 1992
CHAPTER 9

SHOULD THE BRISBANE RANGES BE A NATIONAL PARK?

The Brisbane Ranges National Park is certainly not what could be considered a wilderness area, due to its past uses. The impacts of Aboriginal occupation, European grazing and pastoral activities, slate quarrying, gold and gravel mining, timber harvesting, water catchment and the infestation of Phytophthora cinnamomi is clearly evident when visiting the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

The question must be raised as to why the Brisbane Ranges were proposed, and subsequently declared as a National Park in 1973, by the National Parks Service? Although containing an abundance of native flora and fauna it does not present itself as "an extensive area of public land, of nationwide significance because of its outstanding natural features and diverse land types,"(1) the definition the Land Conservation Council uses for a National Park.

Throughout Victoria, there were numerous areas with outstanding natural features, which had not yet been preserved as National Parks. Many of these areas such as, the Alps, and present day Lower Glenelg National Park had obvious physical features which were far more aesthetically pleasing, upon initial observation, than the Brisbane Ranges. To the untrained eye the contrast between areas such as these and the Brisbane Ranges is vast, which may help to explain why the creation of the Brisbane Ranges was not an urgent priority for the National Parks Service.

Footnotes:
(1) Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Final Recommendations (Melbourne Study Area)
The creation of the Brisbane Ranges as a National Park illustrates a change in popular attitudes. The most important change being that a National Park does not have to contain a pristine environment.

Its formation as a National Park also illustrates that by 1973 the majority of Victorians acknowledged the long term worth of a resource in conservation value. They recognised the benefits it could offer in the future, rather than the immediate profitability that could be gained from a resource such as this.

There were however, and still are, numerous groups who believe in resource utilisation and are angered by what they see as the waste of resources. Stan Thompson, a slate quarry operator bordering the National Park maintains that conservation of the area has resulted in unemployment, and the closure of a family business.

A disgruntled minority continue to fight against the area's preservation, but there are many more people who visit the area and get great pleasure out of their surroundings, and others who help maintain the park. (for further information refer to Chapter 10).

Despite its past uses the Brisbane Ranges were declared a National Park by the Land Conservation Council in 1973. However four (4) years later the Land Conservation Council wished to exchange this title, in favour of the title 'State Park'. They believed this was a more appropriate classification of the area, considering its past uses and the unnatural state of the forests in the ranges. (2)

Footnotes:

(2) Land Conservation Council, Final Recommendations (Melbourne Study Area) 1977, p13
The difference between a National Park and a State Park being, that the area is not of "nationwide significance because of its outstanding natural features and diverse land types" but contains "one or more land types". (3) A State Park is more orientated towards recreation and education, lacking wilderness zones which are present in a National Park, but conservation is still an essential feature of management. The Minister for Conservation at the time, Mr W A Borthwick, stated that many botanical experts doubted the suitability of the area for a National Park, declaring it was not sufficiently significant to be a National Park. (4) His personal belief was that the area had already been significantly damaged and so it would meet the needs of a State Park well, with little potential for further damage as a result of recreational activities. (5)

This fails to recognise the impact Phytophthora cinnamomi can have on an area. High levels of recreation in the area has the potential to wipe out numerous rare, endemic and other species growing in the Brisbane Ranges. The restrictions that can be imposed under the National Parks Act can reduce, and where possible prevent, the spread of Phytophthora cinnamomi. The ability to enforce these restrictions would be greatly reduced if the area had been declared a State Park.

A possible explanation for the Land Conservation Council's change in status for the area may be their level of experience. By 1977 they had been operating for seven (7) years and had studied a variety of areas, and the notion of a State Park had been developed, in contrast to 1973, when the National Park was declared. By 1977 the Land Conservation Council had the benefit of hindsight, and may have questioned their earlier estimation of the area's level of nationwide significance.

Footnotes:
(3) Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Final Recommendations, Melbourne Study Area, 1977, p13
(4) W A Borthwick, interview, 28 September 1992
(5) W A Borthwick, interview, 28 September 1992
Despite the final recommendations of the Land Conservation Council in 1977 to declare the area a State Park, the Brisbane Ranges remained a National Park. It remained so because many considered it worthy of the title, and the National Parks Service was able to provide the stringent control over the natural resources, in particular timber, slate and plant species, (threatened by Phytophthora cinnamomi) required to preserve the area for the benefit of future generations.
CHAPTER 10
RECREATION IN THE BRISBANE RANGES
NATIONAL PARK

Since the early days of settlement of Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong, the Brisbane Ranges have provided an area for recreational activities, but have received only limited use. The Victorian Naturalist Club commented in 1910, "Situated almost in the middle of the triangle formed by Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat and though fairly accessible, the Brisbane Ranges is unknown even by name to the majority of people". (1)

Despite the development of the area for pastoral, water catchment, mining and timber production by a large number of people, the Geelong Field Naturalist and Victorian Field Naturalist Clubs were the first groups to record their use of the area for recreational purposes, rather than in pursuit of financial gains. The Victorian Naturalist Club have regularly visited the ranges when the wildflowers are blooming, since 1910. Several of these excursions involved spending one or more nights in the area so that the observation could be thorough, as there was a large area to traverse and a great deal to see. A visit on 6 November 1925 included spending the night in a deserted house in Steiglitz, using chaff bags for bedding. (2) Other visits included a three (3) day tour in the area with accommodation provided by Geelong Water and Sewerage Trust reservoir keeper. (3)

Footnotes:
(1) The Victorian Naturalist 1910 vol 26, p151
(2) The Victorian Naturalist 1925 vol 42, p160
(3) The Victorian Naturalist 1910 vol 26, p151
The Victorian Naturalists were visiting the area to observe the plants of the region, and their reports provided detailed descriptions of the vegetation observed, for example, a visit in 1910 revealed "a wealth of flowers and flowering shrubs" with "orchids particularly in evidence". (4) The wildflowers, in particular the orchids, have continued to attract people to the area, as a result of this "the Brisbane Ranges are particularly noted for their wildflowers". (5)

Not surprisingly, the Geelong Field Naturalists also enjoyed visiting the area. In October of 1911 they visited the Anakie Gorge, and their report gives a detailed description of the ranges as "thickly timbered" and the Gorge as "well wooded" continuing on to list the large variety of plant species to be found. (6) The groups enjoyed the area so much that, in 1918 the Victorian Field Naturalist Club announced their intention of proposing the Brisbane Ranges as an area suitable for reservation as a National Park. (7) This idea seems to have been discarded, as there is no further mention of it in the Victorian Naturalist after the initial suggestion in 1918. (the ‘Victorian Naturalist’ is the Victorian Field Naturalist Clubs official publication).

However, the group continued to visit the area admitting that "there was nevertheless some latent charm about it (the ranges) which gratified our natural instincts while wandering through its solitary waste". (8)

Footnotes:

(4) The Victorian Naturalist, 1910 vol 26, p152

(5) Department of Conservation and Environment, Park Notes, Brisbane Ranges National Park, March 1984

(6) The Geelong Naturalist, vol iv No. 4, March 1911, p100

(7) The Victorian Naturalist, 1918 vol 35, p68

(8) The Victorian Naturalist, 1910 vol 26, p157
After every visit they returned home "thoroughly pleased with the outing, and firmly resolved to repeat it next spring". (9)

Today the Geelong Field Naturalist Club conduct bird counts in the park, and view the orchids in Spring, maintaining their early ties with a park which they lobbied to have created, from 1954-73. (10)

The Brisbane Ranges provide an area where people can experience nature, located only a short drive from Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. The park offers a variety of activities, ranging from passive recreation such as picnicking, scenic drives, bird observation and flower observation, to more active pursuits such as bushwalking, orienteering, military exercises of Laverton and Point Cook RAAF and abseiling in an ideal setting. (11)

Although the aforementioned activities may not appeal to everyone, the variety is broad enough and the park large enough, to accommodate a combination of recreational activities. The rangers provide a unique service in the holidays, conducting midnight and dawn walks, allowing visitors to truly observe the area with expert advice. The provision of this activity illustrates a relatively new desire on behalf of visitors to learn about the environment and truly experience it, rather than merely superficial observation.

Footnotes:

(9) The Victorian Naturalist, 1925 vol 41, p165

(10) T. Prescott, Interview, 18 July 1992

Historically the park has provided excellent scenery for those interested in bushwalking, providing for both casual and the more energetic bushwalkers. For those visiting the park in the early twentieth century, bushwalking was a necessary part of the visit, due to a lack of transport and poor roads. In stark contrast, today access is easily obtained by car and management tracks help guide walkers to interesting sites. For example, Stony Creek grass tree track and quarry track direct walkers to their destination. (see figures 17 & 18)

Due to the close proximity of the park to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, unpredictable weather conditions limited facilities at the two camping sites within the park, and camping is not a particularly popular activity amongst most visitors.

The reservation of the area as a National Park has marginally increased its profile as a recreational area, but it has also resulted in increased restrictions on the type of activities that can occur in the park. Prior to the area's dedication as a National Park, trail bike riding and shooting were both popular recreational pursuits in the region, they are no longer permitted under the Brisbane Ranges National Park Regulations.(12) The regulations also affected local farmers, if they wished to shoot kangaroos which were damaging their farmlands, they must apply for a permit from the ranger.

A further impact of the regulations involved the ban on bringing animals into the park. Many visitors had enjoyed bringing their dog with them on picnics as company and an opportunity

Footnotes:

(12)"Victorian Government Gazette", No. 17, 20 February 1974
Figure 17
A family spends time at the Little River picnic area Brisbane Ranges National Park, once land incorporated in the Steiglitz Aboriginal Mission.

Figure 18
Campers at Boor Gully, one of only two camping sites within the Brisbane Ranges National Park. The area was a timber cutters camp in 1950's.
to exercise them in the open spaces. They disapproved of the restrictions, although understanding the basis for the ban. (13)

Today many groups use the park for recreation and as an educational resource, for example, Victorian Field Naturalists, Geelong Field Naturalists, Melbourne University Botany Departments, Monash University Koala Research Project, Girl Guide and Scout Associations of Geelong, Melbourne University Mountaineering Club, Society for Growing Australia Plants, School Groups who stay at nearby camps bordering the National Park, local residents for horseriding and friends of the Brisbane Ranges National Park. The diversity of groups using the park illustrates its value as an important educational and recreational resource.

The Brisbane Ranges National Park is fortunate and privileged to have a voluntary group who play an active role in caring for the parks environment on a regular basis. The Friends of the Brisbane Ranges began ten (10) years ago, when there were very few friends groups in Victoria. Today the State of Victoria, which has the most friends groups. The first friends group in Victoria developed in 1972 as the Friends of the Organ Pipes National Park. This group was in fact the result of one very dedicated individual’s efforts to ensure that fascinating geological formations were preserved and accessible to other people. The second friends group formed was Friends of Wilsons Promontory National Park, which also was the result of several peoples determination to care for an environment. The access to "The Prom" was very restricted and vehicle access was nearly impossible and so in order to pursue their aim they had to use their initiative and be serious in their quest for preservation. They approached a local fishermen with a request to borrow his boat to sail and land on the Prom, he agreed and was eager to help participate in the project. Thus, another friends group was successful.

Footnotes:

The Brisbane Ranges Friends Group was established by Ian Cooper and John Hastie in 1982, as a result of their admiration for the Brisbane Ranges National Park. Then being only one of fifteen (15) friends groups. Today there are over one hundred (100). Nola Haines the current co-ordinator of the friends groups was motivated to join the group out of an enjoyment and affinity with the environment, the basis for the organisation, it was also an activity she and her six (6) year old daughter could participate in.

The formation of Friends Groups illustrates a new desire within the community to actively participate in the preservation of the environment, rather than passively supporting the National Parks Service. The Friends Group is composed of approximately thirty (30) members, from all walks of life, including locals from nearby Geelong and even members who travel from Footscray in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne to participate. They meet once a month with "the aim of having a good time, enjoy each other and the bush, and learn". (14)

Nola Haines insists that they are a group of unskilled people, who are united by their common interest in the environment. The existence of voluntary groups such as this illustrates an historical trend of people enjoying the environment by bushwalking, bird observing to name just a few activities. From membership in clubs such as the Field Naturalists, which began in 1880 to the more recent groups (only the last 3 decades) is a feeling (although only amongst a minority) of wanting to "put something back into the environment" (15). The last thirty (30) years have seen a rising awareness amongst populations that it is necessary to care for the environment, to protect it for future generations and that every individual can play a role, one that counts.

Footnotes:

(14) Nola Haines, Interview, 21 September 1992

(15) Nola Haines, Interview, 21 September 1992
Participation in a friends group provides individuals with an opportunity to achieve results in a practical manner, rather than merely offering a financial contribution to the cause, as is becoming increasingly popular. While both activities are necessary, it is important for the future of National Parks to encourage hands-on support, which is often more rewarding than simply enclosing a cheque, but involves a bigger commitment.

The Friends Group participate in activities such as rubbish collection, track maintenance and removal of exotic species in the area. The group works closely with the National Parks Service ranger and meets at the beginning of each year to plan an agenda aimed at meeting the needs of the park, which would otherwise not be met. The existence of the group strengthens the National Park Service resource which, due to lack of manpower and finance can not always complete projects which they would like to. While support for the National Parks Service is broad throughout the community, practical assistance is greatly valued by the service. For example the Friends Group participates in annual Koala counts in the ranges, monitoring the population and observing the breeding rate and effects of Clyamidae in the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

The Brisbane Ranges Friends Group, and others like it provide an important voluntary and personal link to the National Park, while ensuring that it is aesthetically pleasing to visitors and a suitable habitat for the animals living in the area.
CONCLUSION

The Brisbane Ranges National Park is one of the new style of National Parks. In 1973 its creation helped to redefine exactly what constituted a National Park. The park establishment illustrates a movement away from traditional National Park, that is, from areas of obvious outstanding beauty, to areas such as the Brisbane Ranges, which are worthy of conservation, but are not aesthetically as pleasing. This trend is illustrated by the fact that other regions of Victoria containing significant or unique environments were passed over, indicating that Victoria had developed a new style of conservation based on more than just aesthetics.

The creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park illustrates a growing trend away from land exploitation, towards an increasing desire to preserve particular areas which are of high conservation value while also serving to provide a recreational area with vast educational potential.

The park serves as an important reminder of its past uses and the destruction, that was a consequence of utilitarian style management. In 1973 conservation orientated guardianship, combined with management was introduced by the National Parks Service, resulting in a very different style of land utilisation.

The Brisbane Ranges represents a new era in National Parks. It challenges people's perceptions of a National Park and is an important step in training the population that areas which have experienced a considerable amount of human interference are also important. It reminds Victorians that the history of an area can not be ignored, and the actions of today's generations will carry vast implications for the future.
Although the Brisbane Ranges are infested with the potentially devastating pathogen, Phytophthora cinnamomi, the new style conservationists were willing to accept this as simply part of the habitat they wished to preserve. This is a stark contrast to the older style conservationists, who may have declared the area unsuitable for a National Park. This new approach opened up other areas of Victoria as potential National Parks, which previously would have been discarded as inappropriate.

The delays associated with the formation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park illustrate the truly limited power of the National Parks Service prior to the formation of the Land Conservation Council. The land Conservation Council is an independent body who strengthened a weak authority, which was plagued by bickering between government departments, and strong opposition from other parties supporting the maintenance of the area as Crown Land, with few restrictions on its use as it had been since its geological evolution.

It is more than likely that the efforts of individuals, such as Bert Boardman, the Barwon Regional Committee, the Country Women’s Association, Geelong Field Naturalists and Bannockburn Shire Council may have been further frustrated without the Land Conservation Council’s recommendations for the Brisbane Ranges.

The Little Desert land use conflict also helped to raise public awareness about the choices of land utilisation. It showed Victorian’s that utilitarian uses no longer had popular support, nor were they the only alternative, opening up the way for the declaration of such areas as the Brisbane Ranges as new National Parks.

Notwithstanding these forces acting in favour of the preservation of the area as a National Park there were still many problems to be overcome which determination alone could not solve. From the initial proposal and still continuing today the area has been the centre of a battle not
unique to this park, but prominent throughout the world, of economy versus environment. While in this instance, the longevity of a significant habitat outweighed the desire to extract resources such as timber, slate and gravel, it was not an easy victory.

A major obstacle inhibiting the development of the park was individuals and government bodies desire to pursue their immediate needs from the area, above the long term requirements of the National Parks Service. The ability of these groups to compromise was alien and hindered negotiations, reminding the National Parks Service that not everyone was in favour of conserving the area, especially if it required altering their behaviour.

The establishment of the Brisbane Ranges National Park provides a realistic outlook on conservation. The rapidly diminishing natural resources of Victoria mean that increasing pressure is placed on the remaining resources. The preservation of areas such as the Brisbane Ranges prevent further declination and provides protection for the few natural areas left in Victoria. To have an area altered by human activities as a National Park is more preferable than having nothing, is the lesson learnt by the Brisbane Ranges National Park formation.

Finally, the areas close proximity to Geelong, Ballarat and Melbourne means that its potential for recreation is very high. In an increasingly urbanised environment with increased leisure hours and high stress levels the demand for National Parks is rising. The growing desire amongst the community to experience nature and participate in leisure activities which fulfill this need is clearly represented, and no doubt this trend is partly responsible for the creation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Since the areas geological formation thousands of years ago it has undergone a range of uses each varying considerably but with the common link in most cases of exploiting the land. The Wathaurong Aboriginal occupation of the Brisbane Ranges, pastoral activity, timber resources,
water catchment area, slate quarrying, Pytophthora cinnamomi infestation and the current conservation and recreation use all provide an historical account of land utilisation in the Brisbane Ranges, while serving as a lasting reminder of human impact upon the Brisbane Ranges.

The preservation of the Brisbane Ranges National Park affirms that by 1973, society was willing to accept responsibility for past mismanagement and to look to the future with the twin aims of conservation and recreation by utilising the area as a National Park. These aims are likely to continue on into the future and as the number of areas worthy of preservation decline, the value of National Parks, such as the Brisbane Ranges will increase substantially. The Brisbane Ranges National Park illustrates the difficulties involved in creating a National Park and how the history of an area can influence current and future land utilisation decisions.
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