



Dr. E.O. Marks, the late Mr. R.W. Lahey, the late Mr. Geo Gentry.

**"THE R.W. LAHEY MEMORIAL LECTURE" ON THE 14TH NOVEMBER, 1969 –  
BY R. ALLEN CLELLAND.**



R. Allen Clelland.

When I was asked to give a talk on the early days of the National Parks Association of Queensland, I did not anticipate that it would become the first "Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture". Indeed, I feel greatly honoured that this is so, and hope that I can make some small contribution to the progress of Romeo's ideals of service to future generations through National Parks. He was a devoted, unselfish idealist, and my years of association with him enriched my own life.

Let us resolve that nothing shall deter us from fulfilling the objects of the Association.

Now, briefly, I shall outline some historical details and then cover, as well as I may, some personal activities of members in the early days of exploring for parks, present and future.

**NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND**

The inaugural meeting of the Association was held in the Lord Mayor's Reception Room of the Brisbane City Hall on 15th April, 1930. About 90 people were present, including the Governor of Queensland, Sir John Goodwin. Professor Richards was Chairman. First officer bearers were:—



**Patron:** Sir John Goodwin, K.G.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., F.R.C.S.;  
**President:** R.W. Lahey;  
**Vice-Presidents:** James Duhig, D.D., C.M.G., L.L.D.; Archbishop of Brisbane, Professor E.J. Goddard;  
**Hon-Secretary:** Arthur Groom;  
**Hon-Treasurer:** G.H. Barker;  
**Committee:** Colonel F.W.G. Annand, H.A. Longman, J.A. Watson, J.E. Young, M.P. Campbell, C.J. White, H.L. O'Reilly, Dr. E.O. Marks.

The aims and objects of the Association as expressed at that first meeting were:—

- (1) To preserve intact in their natural conditions the existing National Parks of Queensland; and to secure the reservation of all suitable areas before it is too late.
- (2) To educate public opinion to a fuller appreciation of the necessity and value of National Parks.
- (3) To form a link between the public and the administration, and to secure legislation dealing with the National Parks.
- (4) To co-operate with persons or bodies having the same or similar objects.
- (5) To assist in the enforcement of protective regulations concerning National Parks.
- (6) To raise and administer funds for furthering the objects of the Association, and to take all other steps necessary thereto.

Details of the first activities are concisely set out on Page 40 of the booklet issued by the National Parks Association of Queensland in 1955.

Some highlights recorded in the minutes of the early meetings are worth recording:—

1. On the 13th May, 1930, membership fees were fixed at 5/- p.a.
2. As early as June, 1930, Warwick residents were interested and there is recorded receipt of a letter from Mr. C.P. Barnes expressing interest in National Park matters.
3. In July, 1930, there is reference to the visit to Cunningham's Gap during that month. Later, I shall make further reference to this area.
4. In July, 1930, discussion on a visit to the Bunya Mountains and the major problem of whether trains or car would be the most suitable way.
5. In August, 1930, discussion took place concerning including the Glasshouse Mountains as a National Park.
6. In November, 1930, further reference to adding 4,000 acres to the Cunningham's Gap National Park.
7. Interesting to record that in November, 1930, there was a discussion about using the new Kyogle line as a starting point for visiting Lamington National Park.

8. In January, 1931, first reference to the Mount Mistake area. Further reference will be made to this area later.
9. In January, 1931, Arthur Groom suggested that all members of the committee should be appointed voluntary rangers, and Gazettals were made on 30th January, 1936, and 28th February 1936 – copy attached.
10. It was at the same meeting when Stradbroke Island and Hinchinbrook Island were discussed as National Parks proposals.
11. In February, 1931, Mr. M.P. Campbell gave an address on the recent visit to Mt. Mistake and George Barker recorded interesting events on a recent trip of some of the members to Cunningham's Gap.
12. On the 17th March, 1931, it is interesting to record the report that the Institute of Engineers' Room was available for the Annual Meeting at a cost of £ 1/-/-.
13. In April, 1931, a proposal was submitted by Mr. Ian Wood, the Mayor of Mackay, about declaring an area of 90,000 acres as a National Park on the Bungella Range. At this meeting, it was decided to hold the first Annual General Meeting on the 16th June 1931.
14. The first Annual General Meeting was actually held on the 21st April, 1931, and the following were elected:—

**President:** R.W. Lahey, M.E., A.M.I.E., (Aust);

**Vice-Presidents:** Professor E.J. Goddard, D.Sc., Mr. M.P. Campbell;

**Hon-Secretary:** Mr. Arthur Groom;

**Hon-Treasurer:** Mr. G.H. Barker;

**Committee:** Dr. E.O. Marks, Miss Winifred Moore, Miss D.T. King, Mrs. N.M. Mayo, Mr. J.E. Young, Mr. C.T. White, Mr. H.L. O'Reilly, Mr. J.A. Watson, Mr. J. Nebe.

15. On the 1st July, 1931, it was suggested that the Hon. Secretary convene a committee meeting, and on the motion of Arthur Groom, seconded by Mr. J.E. Young, it was agreed to call for representation from The Barrier Reef Committee, The Field Naturalists' Club, National Parks Association, Central Queensland Bird Protection Society, c/- M. Maloney, c/- Munro & Coy., East St., Rockhampton, and Ornithologists Union. The date of meeting to be the first Tuesday in August: Business – Reservation of coastal islands of Qld.

At the committee meeting on the 4th August, 1931, there was representation from The Barrier Reef Committee, The Field Naturalists' Club, The Ornithologists' Union and The Central Queensland Native Birds' Protection Association.

16. On the 21st April, 1932, the second Annual meeting was held and reference made to the gazettal of the new National Park south of Stanthorpe, making a total of 171,000 acres, and reference was also made to the probable reservation of an area in the Carnarvons.
17. At the meeting on the 29th June, 1933, Colonel Stodart, Dr. W.H. Bryan and Mr. A.A. Salmon were invited to join the committee.



18. At the meeting on the 29th August, 1933, Arthur Groom spoke on National Park administration overseas, Mr. A. Salmon on the Glasshouse Mountains and Miss Mavis Wallace gave an interesting address of her first camp experience, and Allen Clelland, George Barker and James Allan spoke on various subjects.
19. One far reaching and wise move by the Association in the second half of the 1930's, was made in response to a request from the Minister for Lands. He asked for an opinion as to the future of the islands off the Queensland coast. After careful consideration, the Council of the National Parks Association of Queensland asked the Minister to declare all of the islands off the coast as National Parks. After careful investigation by Mr. P. Grenning and his officers, the Government in the early 1940's gazetted most of the islands as National Parks, the main exceptions being the islands with existing pastoral leases, Curtis, Percy and Great Keppel.

Other requests of the 1930's for National Parks made by the Association included Mts. Barney and Ballow (gazetted in 1947) and Blackdown Tableland (just east of the recently established Blackwater Coalfield). We missed out on Blackdown Tableland which became a State Forest. The gorges of Springbrook were reconnoitred on field outings and subsequently became National Parks. These are but a few examples of the 1st ten years work of the National Parks of Queensland in seeking out and extending the National Parks system in Queensland.

Except for a period of seven months in 1937, when Murray Cox was secretary, my brother, Wallace, was Secretary to the Association from 29th July, 1935 until his enlistment in the A.I.F. in 1940. He died a few years ago from war disabilities. **Lamington and the O'Reilly family:** No reference to Lamington is complete without the O'Reilly family, and one has only space for a limited reference here, but their history is fully recorded elsewhere. In those early days, the only approach to O'Reilly's Guest House was by train to Beaudesert, and then by car to the foot of a narrow and very steep riding track. The visitor mounted a horse and loaded his gear on to a pack-horse for that rugged ride up the mountain, but hospitable indeed was the welcome at the top by the O'Reillys. Later, when Romeo Lahey had the road from Canungra extended up the Cainbale Spur, one could use this route if prepared to walk the last nine miles or so. On one Easter trip, we took the train to Canungra, slept on the verandah of the local bank, and next day, walked the whole way to O'Reilly's from Canungra.

**Government Co-operation:** The National Parks Association owes much to the co-operation and understanding of The Department of Forestry, which, fortunately indeed, embodies the National Parks Section. This co-operation and understanding is amply illustrated by a letter from the Secretary of Department of Forestry, Mr. W. Wilkes, and which I shall now read. This letter is attached.

In the early days of National Park Association activities, apart from the necessary administrative and Government contact work, there was much field work, which could be described as exploration.

In pre-war days, roads which, today, would be described as tracks, were often impassable in wet weather. The general procedure was for a small group of members (always operating as a private party)



to do some preliminary exploration, locate the best means of getting to an area and then organise an outing based on this information. Sometimes we arranged for a newspaper photographer and reporter to attend as guests to ensure publicity for the official outing, which was helpful in having areas reserved as National Parks.

The road to Cunningham's Gap was sometimes impassable, and several times we could not get there. It was often easier to go to the Glasshouse Mountains by rail and walk out instead of using a car from Brisbane. Maps were not always useful because they were mainly property maps and natural features recorded haphazardly. The original map of the Cunningham's Gap area was obviously inaccurate and when I complained to Peter Grenning, the then Director of Forestry, his reply was "Don't worry about that — recently, we had to shift the main range two inches on the map".

**Equipment:** We rarely took tents, but normally, had a brush-hook, rope, binoculars and the usual camera, but, frequently, had to carry heavy glass photographic plates not film.

On exploring trips, we always ensured that there were two men in the party for every girl, i.e., we never asked the girls to carry anything other than a very light pack. In turn, they responded by doing most of the cooking.

#### **Some Early Trips:**

**Mt. Barney — West Peak.** On our first outing, the track was so poor that some cars could not proceed so we walked the rest of the way to the camp site. The first ascent was in the middle of a cold winter and 100 feet or so of the last crevice near the top was sheeted in ice — an unusual experience for us.

**Glasshouse Mountains.** There were a number of trips by members to the Glasshouses before we had an official outing — in fact, before the National Parks Association was formed. Incidentally, Crookneck was climbed in the moonlight one night by Bert Salmon, Marjorie Parkinson (now Mrs. Clelland) and Jean Easton. Bert Salmon and myself made the first ascent of the eastern side of Tibrogargan in 1927, and like all first climbs, it was extremely difficult and both of us nearly lost our lives. I will refer to this episode again later.

**Mt. Mistake.** We were greatly indebted to Sam Crosby and his family for generous hospitality on our early trips to this area. Sam was a mighty character physically and in every other way. There was a tractor track part of the way, and then a foot pad to the top. We did a good deal of work in this area prior to the war period, but were unsuccessful in having the mountain reserved as a National Park. However, it did become a State Forest. A small party spent the night on Mt. Mistake to see the magnificent glow-worms.

**Cunningham's Gap and the Main Range.** This area was a particular problem for exploration because road was poor and there were no foot tracks in the area at all. The Maddox family, then resident below the Gap, were generous in help and hospitality. Myself and Wallace, organised a number



of exploring parties, and discovered and named Morgan's Lookout. We intended to blaze a line from Cunningham's Gap to the Laidley Valley. In one week-end, we blazed the line from the Gap to Cordeaux shoulder, and on succeeding week-ends extended as far as possible in the time limit of week-ends. We then switched to the Laidley Valley end and took the line in from the head of Laidley Valley over the area where the Little Liverpool Range, the Mt. Mistake Range and the Main Range join. Here again, time beat us, and we could not connect the two trails. We then worked in from the Warwick side and followed up Dalrymple Creek and extended the line further, but this still left the trail unconnected.

In September, Marjorie and myself decided to spend our holidays completing the trail. It meant carrying our gear up the trackless Mountain until we reached the end of the blazed line where we camped, and then continued camping on the trail until we connected with the blazed line in from the other end. This enabled us to then form a fairly rough and accurate idea of the whole area. Subsequently, for publicity purposes for National Parks, we organised an Easter walk from Cunningham's Gap along the top of the range to the junction of the Main Range with Mt. Mistake and the Little Liverpool Range. Thence down the Valley to Sam Crosby's homestead. The next section was over the Mistake Mountains and to and under the Big Falls to Blackfellow Creek and well down the Valley. The cars, having gone around via Gatton, met the party, and so back to Brisbane. There were no tracks — only our blazed line. At a later date, and now knowing our way, we made a trip in one day from the Gap along the top of the range to the "Hole in the Wall" and down to the Valley by 4.00 p.m. where Danny Top had the old Hudson (known as "Snowball") waiting to take us back to Brisbane.

**Yabba Falls.** The first trip to Yabba Falls was most interesting, and beyond Jimna the track was so bad in places we frequently had to stop the car and walk ahead to find out where the road was, but we got there and back safely.

**Binna Burra.** Queensland Holiday resorts was established on 3rd March, 1934, by members of the National Parks Association for the sole purpose of giving the public access to that end of Lamington. The approach was by car to Beechmont and then pack horses to a spot called the "dump" and we camped on the creek below the site for Binna Burra Lodge. Later, when Binna Burra was established, supplies were brought from the "dump" to the first guest house by flying fox, and the motive power was a large capstan turned by a horse driven by "Old Bill".

There was no road access, so to encourage the authorities to extend the road, Romeo Lahey organised our own road building party. It included, amongst others, Arthur Groom, myself and Wallace and Phil Day. Our Engineering friend provided technical advice, and also peeled the oranges.

Having started the road building, there was relatively prompt response, and the road was taken to the "dump" and then, of course, in the years to come, right to the very top. Later, I will show some photographs of this episode.

A quotation from an old leaflet records that the tariff was £2/15/- per week and that Binna

Burra was easy to reach from Brisbane because it took only half a day by car. Accommodation for one night only for casual visitors was 3/6, plus 2/- for breakfast.

Our old home at Greenslopes, which was a large place with ample verandah space, was much used for organising trips, and as a pick-up place for gear, etc., and members of the party sometimes stayed overnight as there was plenty of room on the verandah. It involved a lot of work but it was good fun.

**Moreton Island.** One very pleasant memory is that in June, 1937, in appreciation of the work of myself and my wife, Marjorie, we were given a complimentary week-end trip to the sandhills of Moreton Island. We sailed on the "Ivanhoe" leaving Brisbane at 12.45 p.m. on Saturday, and we spent most of the time on Moreton skiing down the sandhills. Unfortunately, a very strong westerly wind blew on Sunday, and it took over three hours to get everyone from the shore to the "Ivanhoe". I was on the sandhills again a few years ago, and they seemed to have changed but little.

**Mt. Greville.** This was one of our early and interesting trips, and a few comments from the circular are of interest.

Reference was made to Mr. Wallace Clelland always being available at the tea meetings on Friday night in the Palm Lounge of the Cozy Dell Cafe, which was in the basement of the then Harrington's Building, and now owned by Penneys.

The cost of transport for the return journey was 12/6 per person, and for an additional 2/-, a member could be driven home from the Town Hall.

By luck, I still have in my possession, some scribbled notes regarding the food to be purchased for some outings, and the costs are rather interesting:

Tin of crab	—	1/6
Tin of salmon	—	1/3
Bread	—	4d. a loaf
Condensed milk	—	8d. a tin
Sugar	—	4d. a lb.
and so on .....		

From the Yabba Falls trip, I still have a scribbled memo written at Marjorie's dictation, who could not come that weekend. One part of the instruction says — "In basic, mix cornflour into paste with milk and break in two eggs and belt with fork".

#### SOME AMUSING EPISODES:

(A) Returning late one night near Nerang, the driver missed the bridge, and we were heading down



the bank into the creek. Doug Jolly in the front seat said — "Hang on everybody — we are going down for a drink".

(B) On one trip up Beerwah, one of the party led by Arthur Groom was extremely nervous. Arthur did not want to delay the party, so he tied the nervous one to a tree and picked him up on the way down.

(c) On one exploring trip, a party of men only went over the border and stayed at Murwillumbah. There was a fair on and somebody thought we looked like bank robbers. The police were notified and dug us out of bed at 2 o'clock one morning so that we could be identified — with the help of the publican, we remained free.

(D) The first time we arrived at Sam Crosby's was early one Easter morning. 6'4" Sam walked out in a long, white nightshirt and said — "I heard you coming all the way from Brisbane". Wallace said to Mr. Crosby — "Do you live here all alone. Mr. Crosby?" and Sam replied — "Yes, all alone with the wife and eight kids".

(E) In the early days of Binna Burra, June, 1933, we presented Arthur Groom with a quarter-plate Reflex Camera, complete with solid leather case, as an appreciation of his work. He accidentally dropped it over the main lookout into the Coomera Gorge. Two weeks later, Romeo Lahey on a trip up the bed of the Gorge found the camera suspended by the case strap from a tree. It was not damaged.

#### NATIONAL PARKS AND BUSHWALKING

I think it is appropriate to comment on the relationship between bushwalking, mountain climbing and National Parks. It is worth quoting the following from the National Parks leaflet of over 30 years ago relating to Mt. Greville outing:—

"ONCE AGAIN it is desired to remind members that the objects of the Association are the protection and preservation of our existing National Parks and the reservation of areas which, owing to their particular geological, botanical or scenic interest, should be kept intact for all times.

The outing and mountaineering activities of the Association are only a means of educating the public to the necessity and value of National Parks, and are a secondary consideration to the real work for which the Association is in existence. It is not desirable that the Association should be looked upon as a hiking organisation".

Whilst bushwalking is as old as man himself, it only developed in Queensland as an organised recreation over the last 40 years. It received great stimulus with the formation of the National Parks Association of Queensland, and those members or groups who formed the exploring parties for National Parks were, unknowingly, forming the first bushwalking groups and which, of course, in the fullness of time developed into club organisations.

Before this period, bushwalking was not called anything — people just walked for enjoyment. Mountain climbing as a serious organised general recreation started about 1925, and there were early climbs on the Glasshouse Mountains, which were ideal for rock climbing and rich in orchids and wild flowers. The normal approach was by rail and then walking. In 1926 or 1927, Bert Salmon, Marjorie Parkinson and Jean Easton, climbed Crookneck in the moonlight.

Do not separate bushwalking from mountain climbing, because they are one and the same even though there may be dangers associated with climbing. Never climb mountains for thrills or risks, but simply because you love the hills and being at one with nature. It builds health, self-reliance, peace and basic courage. The bush, and particularly the great rain forests, possess at their best, a Cathedral atmosphere, and will mellow all but the most insensitive and the top of a mountain, particularly if the way has been hard, imparts courage and serenity.

National Parks provide an essential reserve for many purposes, including the Botanist and Entomologist and general study of the balance of nature. The existing parks are of considerable economic value because they return rich dividends in tourism, apart from the essential pleasure and healthy recreation of thousands of people.

Attached are some brief notes on the value of tourism extracted from "The Current Affairs Bulletin" of November, 1967, which was published by the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney.

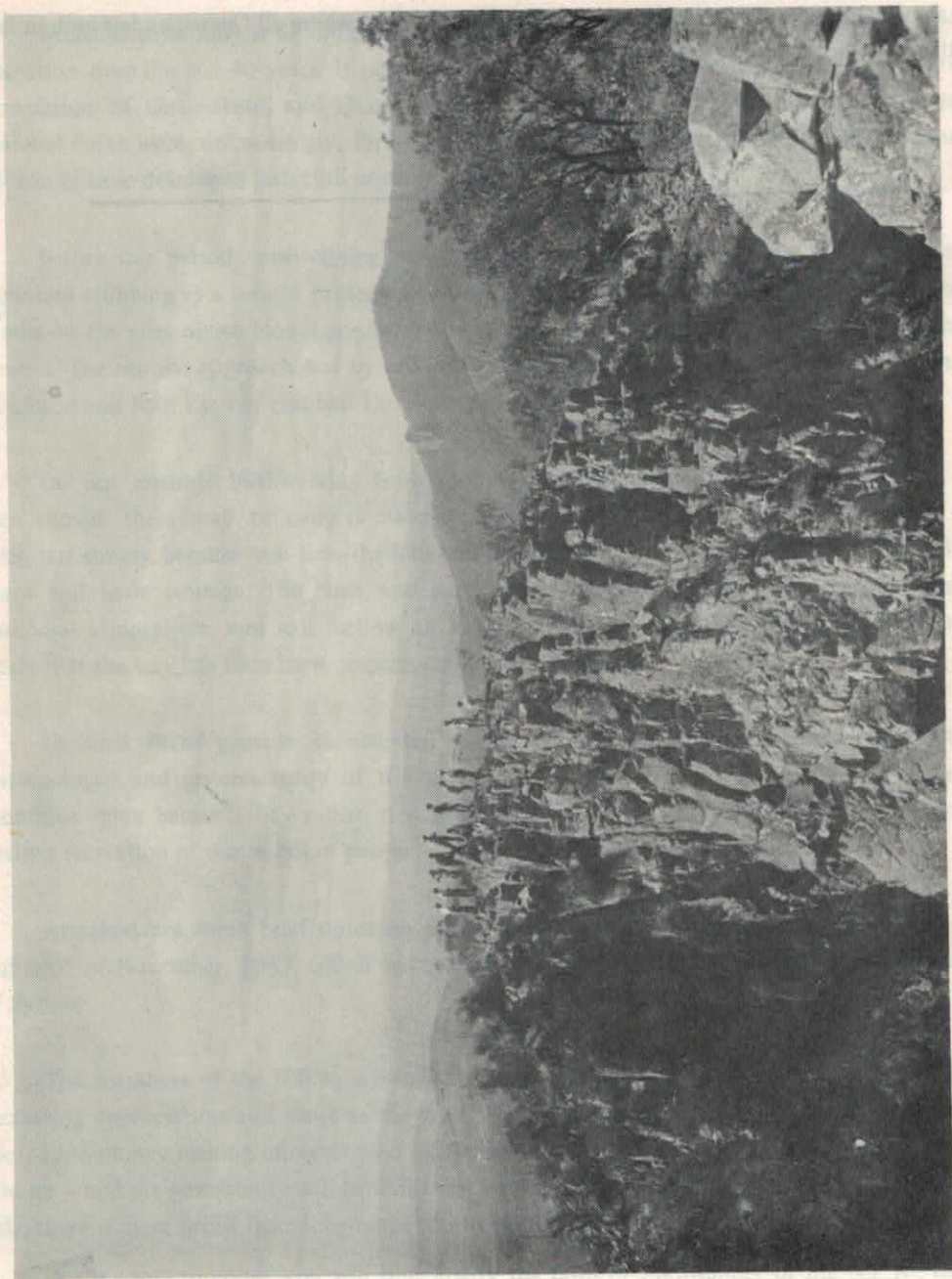
The members of the N.P.A. are engaged in an essential community job for which there will be increasing appreciation and value as the years slip by. You will frequently have to fight hard against short-term-money-making interests who misrepresent exploration as development and progress. **Never give up** — and the community will benefit from your work in richer living and, on the purely mercenary side, there is more profit from long-range tourism and health benefits than short-term exploitation.

In the years to come, you will thus justify the faith of the founder of the N.P.A., the late Mr.



Romeo Lahey, whose practical idealism enriched our lives, and to whom all Queenslanders and, in fact, all Australians should always be grateful.

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First N.P.A. outing to Mt. Greville.

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