



Photo Arkin Mackay

He left his Mark on the Conondales

Back in February a few days after what would have been his 57th birthday, we unveiled three seats erected in the Conondales to commemorate and celebrate the work of long-time CRC Vice-President Mark Ricketts who passed away suddenly on Good Friday last year.

Mark had been a member of the Conondale Range Committee for over twenty-five years and it was his involvement in the Conondales that lead him first to SCEC where he became a project officer, and then later to the Department of Environment and Heritage, and later to Brisbane City Council, as Environment Advisor to the Lord Mayor.

Mark always said that he felt his most satisfying achievement was the expanded National Park in the Conondales (the reason the Conondale Range Committee had been set up in the first place).

It was Mark's persuasion and nurturing that led to an historic consultative process that involved timber industry, Forestry Department, Department of Environment, and conservationists. The Conondale Range Consultative Committee initiated detailed flora and fauna studies that would see the new, greatly expanded National Park, decided on sound scientific principles.

Mark was delighted to be at the opening of the Conondale Range Great Walk back in 2010. It was something he'd always hoped might eventuate "one day" and it was wonderful to see it move from thought, to plan, to on-the-ground reality.

Mark's connection with the Conondales and his inspired and energetic advocacy for their protection against both logging and mining, needed lasting recognition.

With this in mind, the Conondale Range Committee sought, and received, permission to construct a seat and plaque at the Summer Falls campground. As well as this, two seats were constructed by CRC member and local builder Des King and installed by CRC members and Ashley Gillis of QPWS on Melbourne Cup Day last year. The seats are located at the start of the Great Walk, in Booloumba Area 2. The seat for Summer Falls campground was hewn from a hefty log by Dino Pozzibon of QPWS and installed by him along with members of the CRC earlier this year.

Many of Mark's dear friends, particularly those from the environment movement, gathered at Bellbird Tea Gardens before making the pilgrimage firstly to Booloumba 2, then by 4WD and walking track to the Summer Falls campground.

A short film "The Conondale Range Committee remembers Mark Ricketts" was shown and was again screened recently as part of EcoFlicks at world Environment day.

Presidential Ponderings

Since our last newsletter there's been a decisive handing over of the reins of power in George Street and we watch from the sideline with some trepidation. It's fair to say that some of the greatest wins for conservation in the Conondales occurred under Labor governments, the expanded national park had been a Wayne Goss pledge, the RFA that would morph into the SEQFA had strong support (eventually) from Peter Beattie's government. That said, there's no debating that the two major parties came to look more and more similar, and it was Labor that was doing most of the changing. When Bob Katter referred to them as "Woolworths" and "Coles", maybe he wasn't far wrong. Many long-term Labor voters felt that coal seam gas, and the Bligh government's apparent support, nay enthusiasm, for it, was the "straw that broke the camel's back".

The Labor Party, they felt, quite simply and literally needed some time in the wilderness and this came through deafeningly as the votes were counted on election night.

Every new political term seems to be accompanied by an apparently mandatory rearrangement of the deckchairs but this one sees more than most. DERM would appear to have been drawn and quartered, if not actually hung, and only time will tell how this will work or not work out for the environment.

The careful excision of National Parks away from the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and placing them, as strange bedfellows, in Stephen Dickson's portfolio of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing would seem a curious call, apart from creating some logistical nightmares.

What will it mean in the Conondales, for example where QPWS staff look after both National Park and State Forest areas although these now are handled by two totally separate departments?

What will the change in government mean for the land still in state forest that under the SEQFA, was to have one more logging operation before converting to national park?

Are we perchance a tad too late to go back to a Department of Forestry (and Agriculture and Fisheries) when our state forests have been privatised up to their eyeballs.

We look on with some uneasiness, not just at how the Can Do government treats the environment, but also at whether the Labor Party shows signs of having learned lessons. In this neck of the woods, the disillusionment set in with the unblinking determination to build the now-defunct Traveston Crossing Dam, "feasible or not" as Peter Beattie said, and it only went downhill after that.

One thing's for sure though, the magnificent forests of the Conondales have seen a lot more change than a mere handing over of power in George Street, and they'll still be there, naturally, long after the names and deeds of any of our politicians have faded into the mists of time.

Big Bob stands tall in the Conondales

Queensland's tallest standing tree has been located in the Conondales and has been named "Big Bob" after the recently-retired Sunshine Coast Mayor Bob Abbot.

At 73 metres in height, the Blackbutt is understood to be the tallest tree on record in the state and was discovered by Sunshine Coast Council staff using cutting-edge GIS technology. Rumour has it that the tree has been located on foot but that dense surrounding forest has made it difficult to obtain a good photograph or even to verify the height.

Bob Abbot told Sunshine Coast ABC that he was delighted to have the gargantuan Eucalypt named in his honour.

"It could have been a sports field or a backstreet somewhere," he says. "It's just honourable, I think, in the sense that my history in local government, and the way that I've moved towards sustainability and tried to take the community towards sustainability, to have a tree like this named after me. I'm chuffed. I think it's a wonderful thing and I'm very happy that it's happened and I'm treating it as quite an honour." The Conondale Ranges are home to a diverse range of forest types and were the scene of a protracted conservation battle going back to the mid-sixties when much of the area was earmarked for clear-felling for the establishment of hoop pine plantations. Long-term Conondale Range Committee President Ian Mackay says he heartily endorses naming the tree after the Mayor Bob particularly due to his advocacy of the importance of protecting and retaining the area's natural features. He adds that much of the earlier conservation history of the area can be found in the group's book "Walking on the Wilder Side... in the Conondales".

2010 saw the completion of the Conondale Range Great Walk, a four day walk that explores much of the ecological diversity of the area.

The Conondale Range Committee continues to champion conservation causes in the Conondales and can be contacted through its website



Creek Crossings prevent 4WDs visiting Conondales

Fancy a visit to the Conondales? Forget it unless you happen to be driving a 4WD or at least a vehicle with high clearance.

The steadily deteriorating condition of the two crossings over Booloumba Creek before you even get to the entrance to the campgrounds and the Great Walk has necessitated their being signed as "4WD Vehicles Only".

Would-be visitors in 2WD vehicles are faced with unenviable choices, parking by the first crossing and walking the several kilometres in to the park, turning around and heading for home or defying the sign and risking the crossing.

Considerable work had been carried to both crossings just before the heavy Easter visitor influx yet signage still advises against 2WD usage and the depth of the water bears this out. It is understood that before these repairs were made, the crossings had been not far from impassable.

Apart from the inconvenience and the discriminatory nature of allowing only those in 4WDs to enter and camp, the quality of the exceptionally clear water of Booloumba Creek is being compromised by the muddy backwash sluicing back into the creek as each vehicle exits. The repeated washing of

car underbellies also introduces oil and numerous weed seeds to be carried off by the creek.



Creek crossing

Judging by the rather gung-ho driving tactics of many drivers making the crossing, it would appear to be often viewed as something of a challenge.

This whole state of affairs is plainly unacceptable.

The road is a Sunshine Coast Council responsibility and services only one property (after the crossing) before it reaches the State Government

controlled campgrounds and Conondale Range Great Walk. QPWS Rangers are keen to see the crossings improved but thus far have had little success with Council, save for some repair jobs.

The Conondale Range Committee calls on both the Council and the State Government to resolve the

situation, to provide an entry to the Conondales, Great Walk and the recently installed 'Strangler Cairn', that does not discriminate between types of vehicle used and does not compromise the quality of the water in Booloumba Creek.



cars parked in ad hoc roadside carpark just before first crossing



Glossy Black-Cockatoo

The regional Glossy Black Conservancy began monitoring birds in south-eastern Queensland in 2010 and 2011 and another count planned for October 2012. There has been considerable interest from volunteers within the community

to participate in these surveys. The highest numbers were seen in the Sunshine Coast, Scenic Rim, Gold Coast and Tweed areas.

Over time the surveys will provide some useful insights into the regional population demographics. There appears to be larger proportion of males (1.38 males for each female) and small proportion of juveniles. Only one hollow was recorded in the 2011 count. www.glossyblack.org.au/

Mike and Sue Jess hand over reins of Off Beat Tours

For the past nearly fifteen years, Mike and Sue Jess, aka Offbeat Rainforest Tours have been conveying, informing and entertaining visitors to the Conondales.

Between Mike's natural talent as a quick-witted raconteur and Susie's ability to provide first-class refreshments under all conditions, countless tourists from all parts of the globe have gone away with more than favourable memories of the Conondales.

More than this though, Mike has, on many an occasion, made himself and his vehicle available for CRC projects.

Whether it be ferrying CRC members to Jimna on a photo shoot for the book (Mike adorns the back cover), taking a tour to the Agricola mine or conveying the group to Summer Falls for the seat unveiling, Mike's willing assistance and his local knowledge of the state of the ever-changing road network have proved totally invaluable.



Wyn Boon & Mike Jess

Seats at Booloumba Creek, the start of the Great Walk, that were donated by the Conondale Range Committee Installed by Ashley Gillis from QPWS and CRC volunteers



First films take out EcoFlicks awards

First-ever films by a mother and daughter duo have taken away the trophies at this year's EcoFlicks. Sarah Pye's film "Food Miles Challenge" shared the People's Choice Award with her daughter Amber Grant's film "Habitat Destruction". Sarah's film also took out Best Film while Amber's won the Best Student Film. EcoFlicks is coordinated and organised by Noosa Int cat Ass NICA and is now in its third year with all entries being screened at WED recently. Organiser Maree Prior said that both the number and the quality of the entries had increased each year; this contest saw 20 films entered. One of this year's EcoFlick films demonstrates the power of community film-making. Two years ago when Paul Nicholas read about the EcoFlicks competition organized by NICA for World Environment Day, he went out and purchased a camera and a computer for editing and he hasn't looked back since. He produced several entries for that first EcoFlicks and has since made over three hundred short films, most of which he's put up on YouTube. Paul's filmed this year's entry "Charley beats the drum" while he and his wife were on holiday on Christmas Island, visiting their daughter and grandkids, and were appalled by the amount of plastic they found washed up on the beaches there. This in itself was enough to have Paul reaching for his camera, but as they filmed among the flotsam and jetsam of cast-off thongs, plastic bags, bottles and discarded fishing nets, they noticed a number of newly-emerged turtle hatchlings fighting their way through the debris, endeavoring to make it to the shoreline. Being on the spot, at just the right time and armed with a camera plus the skills to convert it from "holiday footage" into a short YouTube film has meant this sorry spectacle has now been viewed the world over. Indeed it came to the notice of the makers of the recent film "Plastic Shores" who have included some of Paul's Greta Breach footage into their excellent, though disturbing, film. "Plastic Shores" had its premiere in London and has since been screened across the world. All EcoFlicks films (Including our "Remembering Mark Ricketts") can be viewed on YouTube via the NICA website.

Mary River Festival looks for volunteers

The Mary River Festival organising committee is well underway with preparing for the fifth annual Mary River Festival to be held at Kandanga on Saturday 10th November. Festival organiser Joolie Gibbs said the committee is excited about making this year's event a great celebration both for the river and the communities that live along it. The festival will feature a great program of music, dance, food, workshops and information as well as a heap of children's activities. "Each year we keep putting more and more exciting options into the festival," says Joolie. "This year will see the introduction of a film venue as well as a speaker's forum." "We keep getting such wonderful feedback about last year's festival," she says. "It really was a fitting celebration not only of our river and its unique denizens but also of the resilience and friendship of its human communities." And she said the committee would love a hand with this year's event; beforehand with fundraising, sponsor recruitment, marketing and website management, as well as with setting up and dismantling, not to mention assistance on the day itself. The committee meets in Kandanga once every three weeks. If you can help in whatever way, please phone Joolie on 54 810 732, Jane Davissen on 54 855 273 or email to maryriverfestival@gmail.com And don't forget to strongly pencil Saturday November 10 into your diary.



Sunshine Coast Environment Council is proud to announce that former President and Honorary Life Member Des Ritchie was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List, announced Monday 11th June. He was recognised for more than 30 years for service to the performing arts, conservation and the environment in Queensland.



Tirelessly this dynamo has personified what environmentalists should aspire to by accommodating the broadest range of issues with studied alternatives, orated in cocooned silken words and for no personal gain.

Inaugural President-The Meeting Place: in the mid 1980's
 Coordinator SCEC: 1989 -1991
 President SCEC: 1991-1993; Vice-President: 1994; Hon Life Member:1994

For Des joining SCEC began, "the most satisfying and productive part of my life; doing something to preserve life in its many forms on this planet".

Maroochy Waterwatch; volunteer water quality tester: 1994-2007;

Former Manager, Sunshine Coast Landcare Environment Action Program (LEAP);
 Participant South East Queensland 20/20 Planning Program – representing the environmental and community sector
 Community Representative: Maroochy 2025 Community Visioning Project: 2003-2005
 Former member Ethics Committee: University Sunshine Coast.

The number of committees and meetings (including Government ministers, politicians and bureaucrats) in which he represented the Environment Movement is simply staggering.

Des has received many awards including:
 Sunshine Coast Environmentalist of the Year-Froggy Award: 1997

Champion of Conservation, Queensland Conservation: 2009

Des's commitment covers virtually every facet of

the issues enveloping community activism and awareness, including Maleny, now Woodford Folk Festival. Des has been President of Queensland Folk Federation, QFF producers of The Woodford Folk Festival since 1996. He has been a catalyst for this festival's major environmental initiatives – the planting of 100,000 trees and the six day GREENhouse venue at this annual Folk Festival. The GREENhouse, commencing in 1992 at Maleny, was not only his initiative but he considers it his finest achievement.

The environment and the community of the Sunshine Coast have much to thank Des Ritchie for. He has always been and continues to be an incredible advocate for the environment and sustainability. Des is one of those people whose personal and community actions reflect the true meaning of sustainability – that we humans must live within, protect and enhance the bounty that nature has provided us with, for if we don't, we are robbing from future future generations.

Congratulations Des we are all very proud!



Des Ritchie recognised with OAM

Des Ritchie's long and passionate involvement with both conservation and the performing arts has been recognised with an Order of Australia Medal. Des has been a key figure in environment and peace movements on the Sunshine Coast for decades and has been heavily involved with the Woodford

folk festival, much of the time as President of the Queensland Folk Federation.

Hundreds turned out to celebrate "80 years of Des" at a special birthday party at Woodford last year and the OAM just adds to the tributes that flowed that night.

Des is an absolutely unique blend of individual who manages to combine passion, Irish humour, optimism with a great love of people and culture. When Des had a lung removed due to cancer, well over ten years back, it was quipped that it was really to create extra room for his big heart. Whatever, Des's commitment and zeal have shown no signs of abating; he was recently re-elected as President of the Folk Federation.

It was his drive to see the Woodford festival take on environmental issues that has seen the Greenhouse program firmly implanted in the annual Woodford line-up accompanied with his strong drive for tree-planting and sustainability on the site.

This is a wonderful honour. It would be hard to think of anyone who's played a greater sustained role in the matters dear to our hearts than Des.

Ian Mackay



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 PO Box 150 KENILWORTH 4574
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- *Bellbird Teahouse, Kenilworth
- *Coop bookshop Sunshine Coast University
- *Qld Museum Bookshop, Brisbane
- * McGinns of Kenilworth
- * QPWS Office, Kenilworth
- * Maple St Coop, Maleny
- * Barung Landcare, Maleny
- * Rosetta Books, Maleny
- * Gympie Landcare
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www.exploreconondales.com

*A must for any visitor to the Conondales,
 this book includes history, a comprehensive bird
 list, description of walks, recreation and maps of the
 area.
 Plus lots of great photos.*



Memorial Seat Summer Falls Walkers Camp