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David Williams.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY + OPEN FOUNDATION.

THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN AUSTRALIA.
(WITH REFERENCE TO BARRINGTON TOPS NATIONAL PARK).

LECTURER - Marg Henry.

Wed. 7.00 - 9.00.

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"Australia's like a poor prostitute and the Australian just bullies her to get what he can out of her and then treats her like dirt." ¹

This comment by D.H. Lawrence in "Kangaroo" is a wry summation of what appears to typify European Australia's attitude to the natural environment since colonisation. Only in recent times has there been any notable change in outlook.

The reasons for this disrespect and lack of concern stem from the fact that, to the early white inhabitants, the Australian bush seemed "grotesque and weird" ² when compared with the ordered green countryside of Britain: "the fear and loathing (of the bush) of the convicts, the distaste and disappointment of high officials, the disgust and despair of minor explorers". ³ The flora and fauna appeared, through anglicised eyes, strange and unfamiliar and of little value; so much so that "Acclimatisation Societies" were formed with the expressed goal of introducing exotic species to "stock our waste waters, woods and plains with choice animals, making that which was dull and lifeless animated.... and lands before useless become fertile with rare and valuable trees and plants." ⁴

The bush seemed to do its utmost to hinder European settlement and was seen more as an adversary than something to delight over. Furthermore, the seemingly inexhaustable supply of timber and land reduced the bush's apparent value even more. If, as it appeared, the natural environment offered limitless natural resources, then there was little need to apply the values of conservation. This lack of forest husbandry is, according to Bolton, is due to the fact that Britain had very little left in the way of forests and therefore had little appreciation of forest management. ⁵

Moreover, the poorer British immigrants, who in Britain has no legal access to game and forests, they being the preserve of the aristocracy, now found themselves with no such limitations. They now saw it as their right to kill and fell as much as they pleased; in a sense making a physical statement to illustrate their freedom from the restrictive influences of what was formerly home. Myles Dunphy wrote in 1934 that "There were no half measures about the way our forefathers dealt with the landcover, or the creatures thereof". *

The change in attitude towards the environment came very gradually and was probably precipitated by the increasing awareness of the colonial born Australian, as opposed to the British born immigrant, that there was in fact something distinctive and of value about the local flora and fauna. Australia, and being Australian, was becoming more acceptable and the need to ape anything British was slowly starting to diminish. The idea that the Australian ⁷ landscape was "not only acceptable, but good and beautiful" was initially introduced by early Australian poets such as Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon. Artists like Piquenit, Roberts and Streeton, with their authentic non-anglicised scenes, further reinforced this attitude.

The concept of a national park was introduced to Australia in 1879 with the establishment of the Royal National Park south of Sydney. This was probably due to the influence of the United States with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park some seven years earlier. Royal National Park was, however, more a park in the English sense, than a preserved area of wilderness: which was Yellowstone.

In 1880, a field naturalists club was formed in Victoria and by 1891 every mainland colony supported such a society.⁸ Through these societies pressure was increased to organise the forming of flora and fauna sanctuaries.

Furthermore, a stronger need was felt to preserve certain widely acclaimed and well known areas, such as Jenolan Caves. This was, however, more a "beauty spot" approach than the preservation of wilderness for its own sake.

Similarly, walkers of the period were more ramblers than bushwalkers, tending to restrict themselves to quiet country roads and staying in inns rather than venturing off into the bush itself. Total acceptance of the bush had not yet evolved.

It was in the early Twentieth Century that a more intellectual and spiritual attitude crystallised with Myles Dunphy and the consequent formation of the Mountain Trails Club. Dunphy's philosophy, through bushwalking, was "to reach and enjoy the tops, ranges and canyons of the wildest parts of the country, establishing a definite regard for the welfare and preservation of the wildlife and natural beauties". Groups with similar aims and philosophies started forming and in 1932 an umbrella organisation, The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalkers was set up.

At around this time, there was increased public awareness of the effects of environmental degradation. Dust storms of the 1920's and 30's showed the results of over-stocking and clearing while the rampant spread of introduced species, such as Prickly pear and the rabbit, illustrated the folly of trying to "improve" the Australian environment. The concept of conservation was at last starting to become an acceptable premise.

The hostile, or at best, indifferent, attitude of most white Australians was exemplified by the news of the impending destruction of the Blue Gum Forest in the Grose Valley. This prospect galvanised the various bushwalking clubs and conservation-minded individuals to combine in order to save the forest. The eventual protection of the forest was the result of the first of many such fights and it precipitated the concept that the natural Australian

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environment was something to preserve and enjoy and not simply there to be plundered. Old attitudes can tend to die hard, and even in the 1980's a Tasmanian Premier can still be taken seriously when describing the Franklin River, a World Heritage Area, as "nothing but a brown ditch, leech ridden, and unattractive to the majority of people".¹⁰

Fortunately, a more mature attitude is evolving, where the natural environment is seen as being necessary for our own spiritual and aesthetic well-being. European Australia appears to be finally gaining something of the environmental spirituality that was and is such an intrinsic part of Aboriginal culture. To quote Myles Dunphy: "As we destroy our bushland, we destroy something of ourselves".¹¹

little clearing, could be made into great agricultural land". Furthermore, there were serious suggestions of using all the principal rivers in the area to form "the biggest hydro-electric scheme in the world".¹²

The Barrington Tops State Park Development Trust was formed from representatives of various Hunter District Councils and in 1950 submitted plans to develop Barrington Tops "along the lines of Katoomba", retaining only 10% of the park as wilderness. It called for road construction, land for guest houses, farms, orchards and private use and the introduction of water, electricity, and sanitary and garbage services. The stated goal of the trust was to "open up the District to tourists and settlement and afford access to markets for the wealth produced consequent upon settlement". Had these plans come to fruition the wilderness quality of the Tops would have been lost forever.

As a contrast, the Northern Parks and Playground Movement and the Barrington Club saw "conservation as being the main consideration" with some tourist development contemplated. These two groups, along with the Wildlife Preservation Society, the N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalkers,

BARRINGTON TOPS NATIONAL PARK.

The various moves to establish Barrington Tops National Park typify the conflicts in attitudes and changes in attitudes towards the environment that White Australian society is undergoing.

As early as 1924 the Chichester and Wangat Valley was declared a Bird and Animal Sanctuary, as was the south-west portion of the Barrington Plateau in 1925. However, it wasn't until 1969 that the Barrington Tops National Park was gazetted after years of dissension.

In 1933 it was stated that the Barrington Tops consisted of "one hundred square miles of plain, which, with very little clearing, could be made into great agricultural land". Furthermore, there were serious suggestions of using all the principal rivers in the area to form "the biggest hydro-electric scheme in the world".²

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FOOTNOTES.

and the Caloola Club, saw the retention of "primitive areas" as being of major importance. There was now (1955) awareness of the differing needs of the "bushwalker/nature lover" as compared to the tourist: "This type of reserve (wilderness area) has increased in importance in recent years, both here and abroad".⁶

The plans for the development of Barrington Tops did not eventuate. However, proposals for a national park met opposition from the Forestry Commission who "who claimed most of the rich escarpment forests and also the Northern part of the plateau"⁷ which they saw as being suitable for pine plantations. The park was eventually declared in 1969 when "some 14,000 hectares of non contentious land (was) gazetted".⁸ Due to the increasing awareness and consequent concern about the destruction of rainforest in the area, Barrington Tops National Park was in 1984 increased in size to 38637 hectares in conjunction with the decision by the Wran government to "end rainforest logging and nominate the rainforests of northern N.S.W. (including Barrington Tops) for World Heritage listing".⁹

11. Ibid p. 26.

(Barrington Tops).

1. Specialist Working Herald, 11 October, 1933.
2. Ibid.
3. The Barrington Tops and Gloucester Tops Park Project, 1955. p. 6.
4. Ibid.
5. Barrington Tops Development. Proposed formation of a National Park, 1950. p. 2.
6. The Barrington Tops and Gloucester... p. 5.
7. Princess, Wild... p. 186.

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FOOTNOTES.

1. E. Wheelwright & K. Buckley. Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism, Brookvale, 1979. p. 153.
2. P. Thompson, ed. Myles Dunphy. Selected Writings, Sydney, 1986. p.25.
3. Prineas, P. Wild Places, Chatswood, 1983. p. 11.
4. G. Bolton. Spoils and Spoilers, North Sydney, 1981. p. 97.
5. Ibid, p. 46.
6. Thompson, Myles Dunphy.... p. 25.
7. Prineas, Wild.... p. 28.
8. Bolton, Spoils... p.99.
9. Prineas, Wild... p.29.
10. Thompson, Dunphy... p. 25.
11. Ibid p. 26.

(Barrington Tops).

1. Newcastle Morning Herald, 11 October, 1933.
2. Ibid.
3. The Barrington Tops and Gloucester Tops Park Project. 1955. p.6.
4. Ibid
5. Barrington Tops Development. Proposed formation of a Trust. 1950. p. 2.
6. The Barrington Tops and Gloucester... p. 5.
7. Prineas, Wild... p. 196.

FOOTNOTES (cont.).

8. Ibid on, G. Soils and Spoilers, North Sydney, 1981.
9. The Barrington Wilderness Area. Hunter Region Community Library. 1968.
3. Pringas, P. Wild Places, Chetwood, 1983.
4. Thompson, P. Nyles Dunony. Selected Writings.
(ed.) Sydney, 1986.
5. Wheelright, B. Essays in the Political Economy of
Huckley, K. Australian Qualities. Vol. one.
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Documents.

1. The Barrington and Gloucester Tops Park Project.
(Outline and plan for the future development and
conservation of Barrington and Gloucester Tops).
Northern Parks and Playground Movement, 1959.
2. Barrington Tops Development. Proposed formation of
a trust. 1950. W.F. Macken, (Dungog Town Clerk).
3. Newcastle Morning Herald. 11/10/51.

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2. Clark, M. A Short History of Australia, Ringwood, 1963.
3. Prineas, P. Wild Places, Chatswood, 1983.
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INTERVIEW WITH SELBY ALLEY.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH SELBY ALLEY.

Selby Alley was born in Nowra in 1902. The son of labourer, he and his family moved to whatever areas his father could find work. These places included: Sunny Corner, Portland, Yeranderie, Glenbrook, Gorehill and finally Bankstown, where Selby's father died from the effects of T.B..

At this time, 1920, Selby moved to Newcastle where he worked in the Chemistry Dept. at Newcastle Technical College. In 1928 he qualified as a high school teacher and taught in Moree, teaching chemistry, physics and geography.

While teaching at Fort Street Boys High in 1933, Selby was introduced to bushwalking by one of his students. Through this introduction, Selby became a keen and committed bushwalker, walking in many varied areas. After his return to Newcastle, Selby, in 1943, commenced walking in the Barrington Tops and consequently became intimately associated with the area.

Through his bushwalking, Selby became far more environmentally aware than most Australians of the time and has been able to witness the change in attitude of large sections of the Australian population.

He was very much aware of the push to declare Barrington Tops a National Park, and was able to witness a conflict of values; between those who saw the area there to be exploited and "developed", and those who saw it as wilderness that should be saved for its own sake.

We took a very big step and bought three acres of ground out at Bankstown, over on the west of Sydney. That three acres had on it a place, you could hardly call it a cottage, it was a large hut with a small shed outside. We paid £310 for that at the rate of ten shillings a week for 620 weeks I suppose. Yes, 620 weeks. And there again, my father, I don't think he carried bricks then, oh he might've, but mainly worked as a navvy on road construction, or something like that. Between all those efforts he was gradually catching T.B., gradually developing it, and so he died there of that kind of work. About that time, or just before that I got a job in Newcastle at the Technical college in Hunter Street, the present red brick Technical College.

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Q. That was your father's story?
A. Yes, that was my father's story. We took a very big step and bought three acres of ground out at Bankstown, over on the west of Sydney. That three acres had on it a place, you could hardly call it a cottage, it was a large hut with a small shed outside. We paid £110 for that at the rate of ten shillings a week for 520 weeks I suppose. Yes, 520 weeks. And there again, my father, I don't think he carried bricks then, oh he might've, but mainly worked as a navvy on road construction, or something like that. Between all those efforts he was gradually catching T.B., gradually developing it, and so he died there of that kind of work. About that time, or just before that I got a job in Newcastle at the Technical college in Hunter Street, the present red brick Technical College.

INTERVIEW WITH SELBY ALLEY.

Introduction.

Q. I'm interviewing Selby Alley on the 28th September, 1989. Selby, can you tell me where you were born?

A. Yes, that's one of the few things I still remember: Nowra, on the South Coast of N.S.W., on the mouth of the Shoalhaven River in 1902.

Q. What areas did you grow up in? I understand that your father was a labourer.

A. That's right. Places where there was construction work going on or quarries or mines. Sunny Corner where there was a copper mine, somewhere out near Bathurst. A vague memory of a limestone quarry at Portland, which is near Kandos and where they were making cement, so they needed limestone for that. I only have the faintest memories of those things. I feel the only clear memories begin when I was about 6 or 7 in Yeranderie on the upper part of the Burragorang Valley, which was a rich silver mining place, shortlived, but a very rich ore deposit there. My father worked in a mine there, chopping the ore out of the ground. And so we lived there for about two years, I think. I began school there when I was seven years old and that would have been the day I was seven, or something like that, the 24th June, 1909. And at some time at school, I don't know how much because the rest of my memories there just disappeared. And then we went to Glenbrook on the Blue Mountains where they were making a deviation to the railway line that goes over the mountains to avoid a lot of the tunnels that were such a bad feature of the climb up to Mount York on the mountainside. And then after that, I think this would be right, to Gore Hill, near where the Broadcasting Corporation's studios and aeri~~als~~ are, and my father carted bricks there. He bought a horse and dray and carted bricks for a colliery known as Lancley's -not a colliery, a brick-making firm, Lanceley's. Carted bricks.

Q. Where was the brick-making firm located?

A. Oh, very close there, right on Gore Hill, probably on the side of Gore Hill, you know. I can't remember very clearly but it was very close to where the, those great aeri~~als~~ are now. Those great things that stick up in the air. And then we took a very big step and bought three acres of ground out at Bankstown, over on the west of Sydney. That three acres had on it a place, you could hardly call it a cottage, it was a large hut with a small shed outside. We paid £310 for that at the rate of ten shillings a week for 620 weeks I suppose. Yes, 620 weeks. And there again, my father, I don't think he carted bricks then, oh he might've, but mainly worked as a navvy on road construction, or something like that. Between all those efforts he was gradually catching T.B., gradually developing it, and so he died there of that kind of work. About that time, or just before that I got a job in Newcastle at the Technical college in Hunter Street, the present red brick Technical College.

Q. What year would that have been.

A.

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A. 1920, when I was 18. I worked in the chemistry department there as a sort of technical officer almost, you'd call it today but they didn't in those days. And I was there until 1928, and in some various strange ways I'd qualified to become a high school teacher and the Department of Education employed me then. Previously I'd been employed by the Dept. of Technical Education. The Dept. of Education employed me and I was given my first appointment at what was called a District School, I think, in Moree. A combination of primary school and high school and there I taught chemistry, physics and geography for a while.

Interview with Selby Alley.

Bushwalking.

Q. You have been a keen bushwalker for many years. When did you first start?

A. It was about 1933, when I was about 30 years of age.

Q. What originally got you into bushwalking?

A. Well, at that time I was on hold while the Dept. of education looked for a nasty place to send me in the country because they had allowed me to be in Sydney to take a degree part-time and I was on hold at Fort Street Boys High School and one member of that class, a lad named Trevor Crock, a lad aged about 16, he was in 5th year at the time. He asked me if I'd like to try bushwalking. Well I said I would, so he organised a bushwalk. He couldn't have organised a better one and I don't suppose I've been on a better one since, though I've been on many as good. That took us by car, my car, to Katoomba, where we parked the car and caught a bus to Jenolan Caves and from Jenolan Caves walked to Kanangra Walls and from there, after we camped on the way to Kanangra in the Dancing Cave with the dancing floor. Then next day went down to the Kowmung River and I think turned left and walked down the river - I can't remember whether we went up the river to Yeranderie or not--- to where it joins the Cox's. Then down the Cox's just a very short distance, half a mile or so and then up the Black belt track back to Katoomba. That was my first bushwalk and I was very much sold on it. I was in the most wonderful country with the most excellent instructor. Trevor, although he was 16 or so was a most adult youngster. He fixed up the menus and he planned the whole thing, the maps and so on. We didn't have any maps; he had a few references from other bushwalkers about blazes on trees, and so we followed blazes.

Q. Were many other students interested in bushwalking or were they just a very select group?

A. No, there were a lot of bushwalking people there. Keen people like Trevor Crock and much older. I think Ninian Melville and people like that who became the great names, were walking then. Anyway, there were at least three bushwalking clubs. The one we know best these days is the Sydney Bushwalkers (Sydney Bushwalking Club), and there was also the Coast and Mountain Walkers - they had a badge with a big boot on it; that was Trevor's club. And also the Kamerukas. There was at least three clubs and I think the Catholic club, and I think they had between them five or six hundred total members. I don't know for sure, I didn't ever meet them. But bushwalking was well in action, although it was still regarded as a somewhat odd sort of thing to do. The general public didn't know much about it. Probably had a lot of the silly ideas that they still have: That we go and suffer terribly and do dangerous things. No, it wasn't known to the public anything like it is today

and the bushwalker regarded himself, I think, as a bit special because of that fact, that the general public didn't know about it like they do today. Today, I suppose we have a bushwalker killed every year, so that gets into the news. At least the general public knows about that. Most of those people who get killed are not bushwalkers anyway; they're inexperienced people who shouldn't be in the bush.

Q. What do you think was the public's attitude to the environment at that stage?

Was it a caring or uncaring or indifferent?

A. Well, we know pretty well of course. I don't think at the time I knew much about it and I don't think I was very concerned myself. I would, quite frankly, pick wildflowers in all directions and pick big bunches. And if I wanted a branch or something for a tent pole, I'd take a green one. Much after that one would never take a green branch off, even in the wild bush. It was a symbolic thing, it didn't do any harm I suppose. So that was pretty well the careless way I felt about it, and the general public, they didn't even know about it because they were as ignorant of the bush as they are today. In the main, they don't go into the bush, except to sit in their motor cars and read their Sunday papers on a bush road. Their concern, as we know was to clear the bush in the 1930's and 40's; to get rid of the stuff - it was dangerous. It made you feel good if you chopped it all down.

Q. Were you aware of the controversy of the intended cutting down of the Blue Gum Forest?

A. I don't think I knew at the time. Of course we all know about it ever since and there was not much of a controversy there. The story is that a few keen bushwalkers went in there for a walk in the upper end of the Grose Valley down below Blackheath and met the chap who owned the Blue Gum, and yarned with him and he said "I've got to get rid of these things", or something like that, you know, to clear the spot. And it was a magic place and still is. Those people negotiated with him and got a bit together, about three or four or five or six hundred pounds, something smaller than seven hundred, I think.

Q. Still quite a bit of money in those days, though?

A. Especially for a "silly" idea like that. No, I don't think there was much controversy. It was done by keen people who simply said "Well, it's got to be done, we've got to save it". And of course, it was a wonderful save, because the Blue Gum Forest is still a place where people go to just to be in it. It's only a little place of course.

Q. But these days it seems outrageous that such a thing could even happen?

A. Well, I think it's happening down on the South Coast now, and but for hard work it would have happened on the

Eastern bank of the Williams River above Rocky Crossing. That wasn't logged, and the only reason it wasn't logged was that people like Rod Earp and a few other brave people here in Newcastle fought hard to see that some sort of delay was placed on it and then it was finally added to the Park, and saved. No, that can still happen and still is happening. When there's a dollar in it.

Q. Do you think that over the years that there has been a general shift in the public's perception of wilderness and environment?

A. Well, of course there's been an enormous, almost unbelievable shift, to me. I didn't think the change in attitude would grow so rapidly and that so many people, the bulk of the population knows something about the value of wilderness now. Even if they don't know much. But there's a great mass of people who know a great deal and are prepared to fight hard and to, well, hurt themselves in their endeavours to save some of it. Yes, there's been an enormous change: One of the changes that I have noticed is in engineers. When an engineer these days plans a new substation in a bit of scrub out at Killingworth or near Awaba, or somewhere. He plans to leave a great screen of trees between the substation and the road. And, of course when they put in that enormous power station down there at Erraring, well, they couldn't hide it with trees, they erected great enormous bald hills so that from the road you'd see very little at all of it. Well that's the sort of change which has been converted into stuff that costs an awful lot of money. Then, in the schools there's continuous teaching and so I find 14 and 15 year olds who are very sensitive to the bush. They weren't ten years ago.

Q. When did you first start walking in the Barrington Tops area?

A. 1943, I think, David, it was. I can date that year.

Q. At that time was the Barrington used by many other walkers?

A. No, very few others. A dozen, half dozen very enthusiastic people who went up the Williams ridge, Williams Spur, I mean, and camped up there and talked about it and pleaded that it should be developed and things like that. But as for bushwalkers, well they were bushwalkers too,, they liked the place a lot, there weren't very many. There were a few though, and some were, about that time I think, a group known as the Barrington Club was formed. Mainly of fairly middle class, really fairly well off people -business people, professional people formed a club with the main idea of fishing. But they got to know Barrington very well and one or two of their members, especially a chap named Ashley Pulver, a surveyor. He knew the Barrington Tops probably better than anybody since, or as well as anybody since. Though some people know it very well now. So they

were bushwalkers, and then there were the two that I know best; two metallurgy trainees, Max Hatherly of Ryelands and Frank Worsnop from Lysaughts, who were going up there a great deal and really loved the place and took good photographs of it and things like that. So there weren't very many, you see and I can only name a few like that. In the 1925's there were people, you could hardly call them bushwalkers, and they were taken up onto the mountain, up onto the tops, by a man who lived down there at Eccleston, one of the early settlers there, and he loved the place. He would take parties up and they would go up because they wanted to see the place, just to visit and because they had an interest in the beetles. He was a beetle man. Or the birds, that was Gould, and the orchids -that was Ruff. These are the great names in those things, he took them up in about the 1924, 25, 26's. He'd take them up on horses and take food up to them or take food up with them and if they stayed long like Professor Harrison from Sydney University who stayed with students for nearly a fortnight. He brought food up to them, even brought a pair of boots or two when they wore their boots out. (Undecipherable).

Later bushwalking developed all over the country and so you would find parties up there from anywhere in Australia pretty well. Certainly from Melbourne bushwalkers and Adelaide bushwalkers.

Q. You were involved in the fight to get the Barrington Tops declared as a national park. What sort of obstructions did you come up against? It obviously took a long time because it was first discussed back in the 1950's.

A. I don't know whether you can use the word "obstruction". I don't know much about it, I wasn't involved in it very much, I was more a spectator than anything else. I don't think you can use the word obstruction so much as "inertia". Governments weren't, and still are not too keen on declaring great areas of land for that kind of purpose and so it took along time. The Parks and Playgrounds association of New Newcastle, which is still there, under a chap named Doug Lithgow, was a very active group, and I think you'll find that in some of your histories up-town. The man who put most money, time and effort and, I should say, skill into fighting for it was Mr Rod Earp, a very prosperous, wealthy businessman. He devoted a great deal of time on trips to Sydney to see members (of Parliament) and that sort of thing and so on. I don't know, I suppose that maybe down underneath the forestry was obstructing it. And towards the end of it there was real obstruction from the people who owned the mill at Upper Allyn. That was Pender & Fosters Mill. The foothills and valleys were the source of timber to keep their mill going. So they weren't one little bit keen about it and openly expressed their dislike of bush walkers and all that type because they were the sort who were there to steal their living from them. So they did manage to work up

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in the village an atmosphere of real hostility to the greenies, though the term "greenie" hadn't been invented then, to the "bushies", there was real hostility to them. But I think that's all I can say, because I don't know what was going on in the corridors of power, or the corridors of weakness really, who were fighting for it.

Q. What was the attitude of the general public towards Barrington Tops in the 1940s and 1950s?

A. I should say in the 1940s and 50s, to most of the people it was a pretty distant sort of place. You couldn't get there by road, you had to walk to get there. You could take a road out over the back but that wasn't anything like the typical Tops so you saw nothing of the views, the cliffs, the gullies, the gorges and ravines. The road over the back to Tomalla Station, a sheep and cattle station in very early times, was at 4000 ft. It wasn't the part that is now the park. It's over the back in the grazing country, so high but different country. So to the general public it was a distant place that certain hardy people and bushwalkers went to by walking from Dungog, and some went around that back way and then walked south, pottering along what is a spectacular part. The general public, in those years, wasn't much. Now today, I suppose most people imagine that one day or another they'll go up there. Most people feel that way I think because it's so well known.

Q. It's surprising that Cavalier, who had those big plans for the Barrington Tops, for the hydro schemes and the development and settlements, could also appreciate the area's beauty. Why do you think that was?

A. Well, I'm not too sure that I haven't given you the wrong idea there. I don't know that he did appreciate its beauty very much. Even more than today, I think, people were seeing places like that as places to be exploited, and being much more blatant about it. They saw the place as wonderful because you could go there and see views and you could see the views much better if you had a good hotel to see them out of. I'm pretty sure that's the way it was you know. How much he really thought it was a lovely place, I don't know. He might've too, I just haven't read anything to that.

Q. So you think he didn't see the development as affecting...

A. No, I don't think so. No I think if you if you put it that way, that he didn't see the development as damaging the aesthetic side of it. He was probably with a great many more people than there are today who felt that the best way to enhance the beauty of a place was to put some nice buildings on it. There are people today who put that argument up. There are a lot more who don't agree with it.

Q. What can you tell me about the development plans of the 1950s and 60s?

A. Well, I only have odd memories of that. I wasn't involved in it very much. I was doing other things, like bushwalking, brainlessly. But I do recall bits in the Newcastle paper; there'd be a meeting at Dungog attended by the local member and by various interested people concerning the desirability of building a road up to the Tops. And they felt that if a road were built, well then this very beautiful place, which they did feel in the 50's and 60's was, would be available to people. I remember that sort of thing. I remember also the Trades Hall proposing the building of accomodation up there, cheap accomodation, so that workers could go up there and they'd own the accomodation and they could go up there and have their holidays. Those are two things I do recall about what was proposed then. The road up the Williams Spur, where the foot track was, made partly by people taking cattle up in the 20's and partly by people riding horses up from Barrington House, which was built in 1928, riding horses up for the day just to get the views, a very strong track, a two foot track I suppose, something like that. Well with this talk about a road, the mill owner, or one of the mill owners, a chap named Foster, allowed his foreman to use the machinery, excavators, graders and so on to make a strong jeep track up to the Tops and saying "Well, there you are, we've nearly built a road", and that came out of the talk of the time. That how good it would be to have to have a proper road up for two wheel drive vehicles.

Q. So the place could become more developed?

A. Yes, and more and more accessible to people who couldn't get there any other way. After all, bushwalkers are only a small percentage of the population and lots of other people would have loved to have got up there, but they couldn't.

Q. What do you think, Selby, of the state of the park now?

A. Well, let's look I suppose, at the natural state of things. The river is still there and untouched. I don't think I'm risking anything saying that. Those rivers are still there sending beautiful pure water down in six or seven wonderful little wild rivers off the Tops. The surface of the Plateau is very badly damaged by the awful weed, the Yellow Broom, which is in such a state that nobody knows whether it's going to be manageable at all, or that the Tops won't be engulfed by it. I think I'm right in saying that but there's patches of the Tops now that are completely covered by it and pretty considerable patches too. The unique plants and animals of the place are still there and there's patches where they haven't been overwhelmed by the Broom, good big patches I suppose. Then let's have a look at what man has done to it. Well, he's put in quite a length of 4WD track on top of it, built a couple of huts, put in years and years ago before 1940, a stream recorder - they're all there, some of the huts have been gone since the National Park came in, and well and truly deserved to go too. And the jeep tracks, or these 4WD tracks, a good length of them have now been closed to

public access despite 4WDers and any other sort of vehicles, but some remain open. Its political state so to speak, is in a pretty fluid state, what will be done to the park, or how much money will be spent on it, what development will take place, what camping areas will be put in, what roads if any will be built, are still undecided and of course, that indecision has reached a kind of high point in the issue of the development plan, which is an elaborate way of looking at the park, and I hope it's a good one. I don't know. Some object to it, so its future is fairly fluid.