

*.... One Spot Secure From Change...*

**WILLIAM CROOKE**

**(1845-1920)**

**THE 'FATHER OF MT FIELD',**

**TASMANIA'S  
FIRST NATIONAL PARK.**

*THE LIFE OF A FEDERALIST,  
SOCIAL REFORMER,  
JOURNALIST & CONSERVATIONIST*

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1995/2001/2018

## Introduction

The bluestone obelisk at the start of the path to Russell Falls, Mt Field National Park, is dedicated to the Park's founder, William Crooke. The memorial is in a dark and obscure corner, near the original entrance to the Park, and close to the place where, in 1917, an official ceremony was held to declare open Tasmania's first National Park. Like the half hidden memorial, William Crooke's role as an early conservationist is all but forgotten, yet he was responsible for the 1915 Scenery and Preservation Board Act, Tasmania's first heritage and wilderness protection legislation, which has been described since as 'the most advanced park legislation in Australia' for its time, and held rank for over 40 years.<sup>1</sup> He lobbied for the formation of 'a People's Park' at Mt Field, supervised by its own Board. Three years later, in 1920, with the Park's management undergoing acrimonious change, William Crooke died aged 75.

Mt Field National Park is Crooke's most visible legacy, but few people know of his influence on early conservation. He needs recognition for this and many other humanitarian social reforms he worked for in the Edwardian era. Included was a concern for the housing and working conditions of low income earners, and the plight of deserted wives. But his interests extended further; he was a member of the Australian Natives Association, an active Federalist, a supporter of women's rights and promoter of railway branch lines. Most of all, he loved the outdoors and the conviviality that came with recreational fishing, and supported the establishment of parks based on overseas examples.

In 1924, Crooke's obelisk was unveiled by Premier J. A. Lyons, who praised Crooke for his '... unselfish interest in the creation of this great national reserve in Tasmania known as National Park...'.<sup>2</sup> Special guests at the unveiling were 600-700 Hobart school children, whose appreciation and enjoyment of the Park was a major concern of Crooke.

The eulogy repeated the sentiments made at the time of the Opening Ceremony in 1917. The *Weekly Courier* on September 2, wrote

...He was in many matters years ahead of current thought and had to fight his way through many obstacles erected by stodgy minds. He was intensely patriotic, wonderfully progressive, and courageous. He was one of that type that will not admit defeat ....where the public .(interest).. is at stake, and his tenaciousness carried him very often to a wise success where a weaker nature and less fearless man would have given up in disgust.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mosley, P.39

<sup>2</sup>Daily News 20/6/1924 P.3

<sup>3</sup> Weekly Courier, 2 September, 1917.

Hobart’s *Mercury* and *Tasmanian Mail* repeated similar feelings. The papers lost their fishing correspondent of 20 years who wrote under the pen-name of ‘Jollytail.’ These and other articles by Crooke were read in ‘mainland, English and American journals...’ Many of these articles went further than just fishing articles, advocating conservation controls, public involvement and education, all delivered with an assertive, almost cocky confidence.

All his ideas will for ever be a monument to his zeal and energy as a citizen. But for his dogged advocacy we should not have had that magnificent playground and sanctuary for our native flora and fauna....

Crooke also lobbied for regional railway lines to Tyenna. (successfully) and the Huon. (without success). The editor also praised his organisation of ‘Children’s Excursions’ to the new Park.<sup>4</sup>

Tasmania was the last of the Australian states to proclaim a national park, but in 1915 passed the strongest and most far-sighted legislation in the country.<sup>5</sup> Although in the late 19th century, Tasmania had several nature reserves selected under the Waste Lands Act, Mt Field National Park was the island’s first ‘national park’, with all that implies.

Despite the area covered by the Park being explored by naturalists and scientists for at least 50 years before the Park’s establishment, other forces were required to bring about the formal creation of such an innovative idea as an area protected from all development. These forces included the lobbying power of the influential intelligentsia of southern Tasmania, and the influences of mainland and overseas examples of conservation management.

The move towards establishing the National Park evokes constant reminders of recent conflicts over conservation, including failed attempts at park reservation before success at Mt Field, such as proposed Freycinet and Mt Wellington Parks in the Edwardian era, and later conflict over Mt Field West in 1950 and Lake Pedder in the 1960’s. Each case is typified by the dominance of the urban middle class intelligentsia, a lack of consultation and effective dispossession of the local settlers, small farmers or timber workers.

Local organisations included the Field Naturalist’s Club, the Royal Society, the Southern Tasmanian Anglers’ Club, the Fisheries Commission, the Australian Natives Association, the Workers’ Educational Association and former members of the defunct Tasmanian Tourist Association. Members from these bodies were initially represented on the National Park Board.

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<sup>4</sup>Tasmanian Mail, 2/9/1920, p 22 c 3

<sup>5</sup>Hall, 1994, p. 98-9

The *Mercury* newspaper added weight to support for conservation of forests and reserves. Their influential editor from 1884 was H. R. Nicholls, whose name is now given to a conservative ‘think tank’<sup>6</sup>. Nicholls - a former Chartist radical and recalcitrant republican - was a strong advocate for conservation, arguing for the creation of a national park on the Gordon River in 1908 to preserve the vanishing Huon pine. His interest in conservation was continued by his son, Herbert Nicholls, who became a National Park Board member, and later Chief Justice of Tasmania. The new editor continued the *Mercury*’s strongly worded support for conservation after Nicholl’s death in 1912.

Acting as the catalyst and lobbyist, William Crooke activated the proposal by his establishing the National Parks Association (NPA) in 1912, which co-ordinated the varied interest groups into a united front. A vital coincidence was the election of the Earle Labor government who supported Crooke’s moves. World War I assisted in acceptance and passage of the legislation, giving the state government some positive news in otherwise sombre years.

At first glance, William Crooke was an unlikely political activist who had spent much of his life in dispute with authorities, a trait perhaps learnt from his father. He was born at Saltwater River Convict Probation Station on Tasman Peninsula in 1844, the eldest son of a Dublin university graduate, the Rev. Robert Crooke, the station catechist. His mother was Caroline Drew, daughter of the Superintendent<sup>7</sup> of the nearby Impression Bay Station. (now Premaydena.) To avoid the taint, his birthplace was misleadingly given as Franklin, where his father was transferred in 1853, and while there, ordained an Anglican minister.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. Robert Crooke was not averse to controversy. Robert’s convict experience of the Tasman Peninsula convict stations, resulted in an unpublished fictional novel, *The Convict*<sup>9</sup>, William Crooke’s later interest in politics was probably influenced by his father, who ‘was an active speaker at public meetings, a prominent member of the local lodge and ... by instinct and interest attracted to colonial politics.’ He acted as Huon correspondent of the Hobart newspaper *The Tasmanian Daily News*. Rev. Crooke used the newspaper columns to push his points of view, as his son was later to use them to promote his ideas on fishing, politics, wilderness management and other issues.

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<sup>6</sup> The HR Nicholls Society, named for Henry Richard Nicholls, editor of the Hobart *Mercury*.

<sup>7</sup> George Drew of the Royal Navy served during the Napoleonic wars and married Caroline Fulford (nee Goode) before taking on the post at Impression Bay Invalid Convict Station. Their son, William Drew (Uncle of William Crooke) was a senior and influential civil servant in Queensland, including being auditor general. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/drew-william-leworthy-12894> accessed 6 Jun2018..

<sup>8</sup> ADB Biographical Register, Vol. 1 p 151

<sup>9</sup> Crooke, R. *The Convict*, p. vi, U/T

The Crooke family moved to Victoria in 1858 following ‘an acrimonious public controversy’ over claims of impropriety involving Rev. Robert Crooke’s comments on and behaviour toward young women in the Huon district. (also known then as Victoria.) With his wife Caroline, Robert became a teacher, starting at Creswick Church of England school in 1860. In 1861 the couple moved to Emerald Hill, South Melbourne where they remained until her retirement in 1884, and his death in 1888. He was described in 1873 as not teaching very much and ‘confining himself to supervision and punishments.’ As Robert Crooke neared 60 years of age, a visiting inspector described him as feeling himself above his work, and inclined ‘to take things very easy,’ and commented dryly, ‘I do not think the cause of education would suffer much if he were superannuated.’ But he was still listed as teaching until his death, aged 65. The year before another inspector commented more kindly, ‘A headmaster of more than ordinary literary attainments.’ Caroline was described as a careful teacher. (who ) manages the classes with ability and zeal.’ By 1879 she was ‘a little past her best’, but continued to teach. (She died in 1896.)

In 1861, William Crooke, aged 17, started as a junior teacher with his parents at Emerald Hill Primary School, South Melbourne.<sup>10</sup> William’s teaching career continued in Victoria for 27 years where, with increasing criticism, he was moved to a number of schools across the state. Official correspondence reveals that William developed an interest in conservation and public issues over this time. Crooke served briefly over the next 10 years at Melbourne city state schools, including George Street in Fitzroy, Duneed, Chapel Street Prahran, and rural schools at Seafeld and Amherst.<sup>11</sup>

In 1873 he established a small one teacher school at Costerfield, a new mining town near Heathcote and Bendigo in central Victoria, and continued to teach there until 1884. Before moving to the central Victorian village, William married London born Ellen Alston in 1872.<sup>12</sup>

When he arrived at Costerfield in January 1873, the school was held in a bark hut, and Crooke explained that he had a 100 pupils ... and a ‘complete absence of all furniture and school requisites.....The great prosperity of the place renders everything expensive. I lodge at the local hotel which is very noisy.... no house of any kind is obtainable, not even a bark hut.’ The school lacked all facilities, and Crooke asked that ‘blackboards, books etc. be sent per Cobb and Co coach via Kyneton and Heathcote.’<sup>13</sup> Costerfield,’ William explained;

... is a small township near Heathcote depending upon the rich antimony mine here... and consists of a store, two public houses, the residence of the mine manager and the local storekeeper....scattered about are a few score of bark huts all of them fully occupied. There is no accommodation for the teacher.

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<sup>10</sup>His brother Charles also began his brief teaching career there.

<sup>11</sup>Personnel File, Education Dept. History Section, Melbourne

<sup>12</sup>Victorian Pioneer Index, No. 4553

<sup>13</sup>VPRS 795/ 3295, 19/1/ 1873 ff.

In February, the Inspector objected to the school house, and instead the Wesleyan chapel was to be used as ‘the sides and roof are of bark, weather-tight,. (with a) good pine floor and pleasantly situated, 30 feet by 20 feet’.

Mrs Crooke was to arrive and act as teacher of needlework. William and his wife were living in an old schoolroom, which became uninhabitable in a few weeks with the arrival of winter rains.

Edward Field and the chairman of the Board of Advice urged construction of schoolroom as ‘it is not good for the children to be so closely packed together, and on fine days the headmaster often teaches in the bush.’ Later that month, rain flooded the temporary structure erected for infants, and came through the roof of main building. ‘.... The children are all of them damp and many wet, while there is no fire at which to dry their clothes.’

Activity at the school was complicated by the need to remove desks every Friday for the church services, replacing them on Monday morning. The school house was erected later that year, and a house for the Crookes. William wrote in trademark hyperbole,

‘The new residence is absolutely alarming; Mrs Crooke and myself - we are afraid that the rooms are so small that we will be taken for turtle doves or canaries and the rooms for birdcages. The ‘Parlor’ 12 by 10 with a huge chimney...

During 1879, William complained of the impact of the furnaces of the antimony mines on the children, a concern that was to be reflected in a similar stance taken years later over the value of the new national park for children. He referred to the :

... suffering endured by children .....during the past few days from the intense heat and want of suitable water.....The school is built on the summit of a hill bare of shelter, and right in front of it are large smelting works. (antimony) (sic) establishments where several large furnaces are constantly going and from which quantities of heated air, oxides and gases are being exhaled.... On such days Costerfield is perhaps the hottest place in the colony.

In addition, the oxides on the roof carried into the school water tanks, which became heated in the summer sun, making the water undrinkable.<sup>14</sup>

Crooke’s experiences were probably typical of many Victorian country school teachers. He demanded a fence around the school to prevent goats and cattle camping against the building overnight, and had to explain damage done to furniture by a meeting of 300 miners.

While he was at Costerfield, inspectors reported on his inability to keep records and manage the school. Eventually he was formally censured and fined 2 pounds for this and neglect of out-offices. Ellen

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<sup>14</sup>ibid

meanwhile was ‘removed’ from duties after failing an exam. In 1882 he was again censured for sending articles on school business to the editor of the ‘*Leader*’ newspaper, and using franked stamps in the process. His energy waxed and waned, but Inspector Gamble commented favourably on his intelligence, and his ‘zeal which sometimes flags.’<sup>15</sup>

In 1885 he was transferred to Wodonga near the NSW border. Here Crooke is recorded requesting leave from school to attend a meeting of the local Athenaeum and Free Library Society ‘of which I am secretary’ to wait on the Chief Secretary.<sup>16</sup>

Other school appointments followed in quick succession, including across the state to the coastal town of Portland, before being moved back to urban Melbourne in 1890. While at Portland, Crooke indulged his passion for angling in both Victoria and South Australia. This passion nearly cost his life, an experience he recounted later in his newspaper column in the *Mercury*, describing how, when sea fishing near Portland, he was washed off the rocks, and sucked under a sea shelf before being thrown back up on the stones again.<sup>17</sup>

His final school was Prahran West, where Crooke was embittered by an effective demotion, and galled by being junior to a younger female teacher. His affection for children caused Crooke much personal anguish, and his physician described the stress which occurred when giving the cane to pupils. Dr J. Carnegie MacMullen. (surgeon) concurs; ‘... (When punishing a boy) unless he desists. (he experiences) a sensation as though he were about to die.’ With increasing periods of sick leave, William, aged 50, after 28 years’ service, was superannuated out of teaching in August 1894, on 140 pounds per annum.<sup>18</sup>

During his work-life, Crooke developed a love of angling, a passion for which he later became a newspaper columnist in Tasmania and Melbourne. In Melbourne he was a member of the Victorian Fish Protection and Anglers Society. From within this organisation he first became active in arousing concern for Victoria’s dwindling fish stock, becoming a letter writer and lobbyist. A month before he retired, Crooke sought a day’s leave from teaching to appear before the Minister for Customs responsible for the Fisheries Board, as a member of a delegation from the Protection Society. This Society consisted of recreational sportsman -mostly ‘gentleman’ anglers- who were concerned about the devastation caused to fish in the bays and waterways of Victoria by pollution from industrialisation and over-fishing for Victoria’s markets. Under the new Victorian Fisheries Act of 1890, a Board had been constituted to administer the legislation, but without a policing agency.

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<sup>15</sup>ibid

<sup>16</sup>VPRS 640/41, 22/9/1885

<sup>17</sup>Merc 4/1/1906

<sup>18</sup>VPRS 640/1903

Shortly before his retirement, William Crooke was appointed the Society’s delegate on the Fisheries Board, the first of many official position he was later to hold which enabled him to lobby for legislation.<sup>19</sup>

In 1893 the Fisheries Board held a Select Committee enquiry into the state of Victorian fish stock and marketing. Crooke and three other members of the Victorian Fish Protection and Anglers Society drafted a 12 page list of recommendations in a small report to present to the enquiry. Three members of the Victorian Fish Protection and Anglers Society also gave evidence before the enquiry. Members of the Select Committee included L. L. Smith, MLA, who was a patron of Crooke’s Society. During the enquiry, the Society’s representatives outlined its aims and voiced the concerns which still motivate conservationists today.

The issues aroused by the management of fish stock were closely related to those which arose from the establishment of the Mt Field National Park 20 years later. In both cases, (and in the recent Franklin River debate), the immediate interests of working classes clashed with those who believed that conservation of unique natural phenomena was in the long term - and short term - interests of the activists, and of society.

Membership of the Victorian Fish Protection and Anglers Society gave Crooke experience in drafting recommendations on behalf of a lobby group, and dealing with a range of political figures from senior public servants to members of parliament. In addition, there was the direct experience of acting as a member of a lobby group. Later, in Tasmania, these skills were to be invaluable in working with other interested parties, and resulted in Crooke drafting initial rules on the management and protection of National Park.

In 1894, the Fish Protection Society’s delegates told the Select Committee on Victorian Fisheries,

.... our object is to increase the supply of cheap fish, to protect our spawning grounds, and protect the mouths of the rivers to allow the fish to go up the rivers to spawn; also to have the number of the fishing boats ....(and) undersized fish sold at markets. (controlled.).<sup>20</sup>

With no public service to police the regulations, the Society offered rewards to catch offending fishermen, all of whom were trying to make a living by selling in the various Melbourne fish markets. The Society’s members contrasted the former availability of fish in the 1860’s with the shortage, and revealed how members enforced the Fisheries Act by acting as appointed honorary Fish Inspectors for the Fisheries Board, with over half the group’s membership of 200 acting in this role.

...Years ago our Bay was swarming with fish, and our streams too. Where are they gone? We have been working day and night to bring this before you to

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<sup>19</sup>VPRS 1166/12, 2936, Secretary of State index, 22/11/1893.

<sup>20</sup>Evidence to the Select Committee on Victorian Fisheries, 182-3, Latrobe Library.



show you that the fish are being destroyed. This last season we spent time and money and trouble and paid money for rewards for capture in nets and people, night and day, to protect our streams. There is trout in the streams which is being continually shot, (with dynamite) and no one to protect it...

The committee highlighted the impact of 19th century industrial pollution on fish life. Later, Tasmania must have seemed Eden, as in Victoria they found

..... fish dead in rivers due to pollution of the rivers from the various factories, and slaughterhouses, and boiling down places, and chemical places, and tanneries, and wool-washing establishments. In the summer months when there is no fresh water coming down the river, the water becomes almost stagnant, ..... and the fish cannot live in bad water.<sup>21</sup>

In December 1892 Crooke visited Tasmania as a delegate to the Australian Natives Federation League, with instructions to confer with the Tasmanian branch of the ANA ‘on the subject of Federation.’<sup>22</sup> He returned in February 1894 as a council member of the Australasian Federation League. The issue aroused his democratic spirit. While fully in favour of Federation, he thought epic decisions were being made by too few delegates, resulting in misinformation and apprehension among the colonies. Crooke argued for 700 (sic) not 70 delegates, who due to ‘the paucity of numbers ... had failed to influence an adequate constituency.’ He criticised the Convention for not adopting the one man - one vote principal.

‘.... it seems cruel, when the great subject has to be decided upon, that any man, because of his poverty or because he may not be on the electoral roll, should not be treated as a citizen. To every male adult of the population should be allowed the opportunity of having a share in founding the new and great Australian state.’<sup>23</sup>

This principal should be adopted as ‘we know that the working classes have a passionate desire for the single vote, and that ..., if we desire them to go to Federation with whole heart the concession would have to be made.’ Crooke went further;

Personally I would wish that every woman in Australia could cast a vote for national unity, but such an advanced proposal could scarcely be expected from responsible heads of Government.’<sup>24</sup>

(These suffrage principles were adopted at the 1894 Warrnambool Conference.<sup>25</sup>)

Crooke’s interest in the effects of Federation on the island state continued well after his move to Hobart. In 1912, as secretary of the Citizen’s Committee he sought and obtained support from the Queenborough

<sup>21</sup> op cit., p. 157

<sup>22</sup> Mercury 18/2/94, p 4 AOT Thanks to Michael Roe for this reference.

<sup>23</sup> ibid

<sup>24</sup> op cit.

<sup>25</sup> Australian Encyclopaedia, Vol. 1 p327

Town Board in ‘obtaining the full amount of £900,000 awarded by the Royal Commission appointed to determine the losses to Tasmania under Federation.’<sup>26</sup>

By 1894, William had moved to Tasmania, living at Pirie Street, New Town, and a year later, Ashfield Street, Sandy Bay.<sup>27</sup> From 1898 he advertised himself as principal at Derwent College, a private school located at St George’s Church, Cromwell Street, Battery Point.<sup>28</sup>

From at least 1903 until his death, William and Ellen Crooke lived with their son William Bayard. (sometimes Baynard) Crooke, a chemist, at 9 Fitzroy Garden Crescent, South Hobart.<sup>29</sup>

Why William Snr, chose to return to Tasmania is unclear, particularly given his father’s controversial departure. The pollution of the Victorian waterways, plus the earlier move of P. S. Seager to head the Tasmanian Fisheries Commission may have been contributing factors. Crooke’s interest in angling resulted in him buying a ‘.... prettily situated country residence’ on the banks of the river near Russell Falls, where he and his wife entertained visitors.’<sup>30</sup>

Crooke’s interest in angling continued in Tasmania. In August 1903 the foundation meeting of the Southern Tasmanian Anglers’ Club was held at the Masonic Rooms. Present were Brent, Alexander Morton (Director of the Tasmanian Museum), Kermode, Phillip Seager) Atkins, and Cook. William Crooke seconded the motion which gave the immediate aim of the group: to ‘assist the Fisheries Commission as there was a good deal of poaching going on.’<sup>31</sup> Crooke was a member of their social club which met at the Rialto, on the corner of Liverpool and Elizabeth Streets, Hobart. Fishing trips were organised, under Fishing Committee, of Mr Gibson, and Messrs Edridges, E. E. Gifford- while the social committee was in the ‘capable hands’ of J. Cook, W. Crooke, E. V. Harcourt.... (including) trips to Mountain River or the Russell Falls River.’<sup>32</sup>

Crooke wasn’t afraid to criticise his fellow club members;

Now that the holidays are over, the Southern Tasmanian Anglers’ Club should wake up a bit or the first year of its existence will close and they will find difficulty in collecting the next subscription. One of their duties the North

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<sup>26</sup> AB 311/2 Queenborough Town Board Minutes, 16/1/1912 p 131.

<sup>27</sup> POD 1895-6, p 222

<sup>28</sup> POD 1899-9, p 66

<sup>29</sup> Denison Electoral Roll 1915, AOT. (There is no record of their son’s birth in Victorian records, so he may have been adopted. William jnr gained accreditation as a chemist in March 1900 which suggests that the family may have arrived then. (One of his examiners was Leonard Rodway.) (1902 POD, p ??\*) }

<sup>30</sup> Merc 24/10/1911, p. 5

<sup>31</sup> Merc 29/8/03 p2

<sup>32</sup> Merc Mar 5 1904, P8

Tasmanian Angling Club never neglects , they have been strangely apathetic in the distribution of trout fry.<sup>33</sup>

Crooke was a supporter of the introduction of trout and other fish into Tasmanian waterways. The only occasion where Crooke referred to the conflict between the impact of introduced fish on native species was in the Victorian Fish Protection Society era.

In 1904 Crooke began his column on angling in the *Mercury* newspaper using the pen-name 'Jollytail', which ran until shortly before his death in 1920. The first columns give a sense of the thrill anglers and others receive from relaxing in a natural setting. His direct writing style was to be characteristic, as was his ability to ruffle feathers. In his first column, he sought and later received regular reports from fellow anglers from all over southern Tasmania.

How am I to fulfil my allotted task and report the exploits of this great but scattered company? Evidently not well, unless the noble army members of this gentle craft come individually to my assistance and act as their own reporters.....I hereby invite all anglers at all times to freely communicate to this address, 'Jollytail, Mercury Office, Hobart', relating their own and their friends' experiences.... and occasionally such interesting and amusing fish stories as will not too strongly tax public credulity.

For it must be remembered that the sport means more than catching fish. It means hours in the open air under the canopy of heaven... To the trout fisherman especially, it means intimate access to nature's heart, and to all lovers of the human kind it gives many opportunities otherwise denied for social friendship with their fellow men and women.<sup>34</sup>

His arrival was also acclaimed by the *Mercury's* opponents. *The Critic* newspaper described Jollytail as 'a ray of joyousness over the bleak and dreary columns of the *Mercury*.'<sup>35</sup> For 17 years his column gave detailed reports covering inland and sea fisheries, sent in by fishermen and anglers from all over southern Tasmania. Reports were received from Scamander, Southport, the Huon, Channel plus the trout -stocked lakes and streams of the interior. His own experiences as an angler and raconteur guaranteed a regular audience. As indicated, his column was read by other papers. He travelled to northern Tasmania to see how the northern anglers were managing their fishery.

In the acclimatisation of trout and later the introduction of the lyre-bird to the Park, the intelligentsia were in reality acclimatising themselves to their new habitat. Were they unwitting exploiters or just genteel 'hunter-gatherers'? To see a conflict between reserving a national park, and introducing fish to

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<sup>33</sup>Merc Feb. 6 1905

<sup>34</sup>Merc 4/1/1906

<sup>35</sup>Critic 23/2/07

their streams was a reversal of the process of history. (The place of huts and ski lodges in these areas is also part of this wider debate.)

Crooke's favourite fishing locality was the Russell Falls (now the Tyenna River) adjacent to the future Mt Field Park. He regularly fished in and around the Lady Barron and Russell Falls. In 1905 he fished the Broad River with W. H Hudspeth<sup>36 37</sup>.

Tasmania had long appealed to the aesthetic visitor. While the intelligentsia of southern Tasmania were exploring the high country around Mt Field, the eastern foothills near Ellendale were being settled by small holders who relied on snaring wildlife for income. The naturalist and anglers' appreciation of flora and fauna, and spectacular scenery contrasted with the pragmatic demands of the timber millers and trappers who saw crown land as a resource to be tapped. Despite this, the educated visitors used the local knowledge of the snarers who acted as their guides into the high country of Mt Field.

Appreciation of Mt Field went back much further. In February 1837 Surveyor James Calder's party camped at Tyenna on the Russell Falls River in the vicinity of National Park village.<sup>38</sup> They were guided by a shepherd by courtesy of Capt. Michael Fenton. Noticing Fenton's Gap in the ranges, they climbed until a lake now known as Fenton appeared, which he called Lake Barker. (?). In 1869, eminent botanist Von Mueller<sup>39</sup> spent a week collecting plants in the region of Lake Fenton. Mueller was guided by two bushmen from Ellendale, Messrs Rayner who recalled later that, despite the summer heat, von Mueller 'persisted in wearing his two flannel scarves, a habit the Baron always adopted, both in town and country life'. (see below).

Access to Mt Field was at this time always via Ellendale -then known as Monto's Marsh, where the Rayners and other trappers lived. Excursions into the area by these families were common. In April 1880 Edward Rayner, his daughter Eliza, plus Kate Irvin and her brother, John Dodd, left for Mt Field east on Good Friday. After camping overnight they walked to Lake Fenton, and the next day reached the Flagstaff on the top of Mt Field East, put there by an earlier survey team. These girls were the first women to climb the mountain.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wilfred Hugh Hudspeth (1874 – 1952) was a lawyer and historian. He was The Crown Solicitor, a member of the Royal Society and of the Australian Natives Association, a trustee of the Tasmanian Museum and involved in many aspects of the cultural life of Tasmania.

<sup>37</sup> Merc 12/1/1905 p 3

<sup>38</sup> Love, Tasmanian Tramp, ??, 11

<sup>39</sup> Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von Mueller was a noted botanist who served as Government Botanist in Victoria and researched widely across Australia.

<sup>40</sup> Merc 3/4/1880, P.3 c 4

The scientific intelligentsia of Hobart were also discovering the attractions of the area. Around 1887 Leonard Rodway<sup>41</sup>, Herbert Nicholls and Eustace Maxwell walked in from Ellendale to Lake Fenton and followed the creek leading to the Russell Falls.<sup>42</sup> The general nomenclature -the Rodway Ranges, Lake Nicholls etc.- reflects the influence of the intelligentsia. These names are in contrast to the folk names around the Ellendale area where the small settlers farmed, giving names such as Ransley’s Grass, Dog Valley, Manny’s Marsh, Trap Valley to local features.

*The Clipper*, the paper of the Labor movement, reported satirically on the bush exploration of the urban intelligentsia.

.... Herbert Nicholls and a party of kindred enthusiasts. (who) violently assaulted Mt Field West over the Xmas holidays and several blizzards and so forth came down and assaulted the enthusiasts with extreme severity. Needed tone after the arduous monotonies of the silly season and he got it in large lumps. The snow came down in masses and blotted out the sun; the cold pierced bone and marrow. The enthusiasts sat around in a fog of ice and told each other how enjoyable mountaineering was. Towards the nightfall a buck bunyip yelped in the distance.<sup>43</sup>

Lakes of the high country gave a perfect location for the acclimatisation of trout for the recreational angler. The introduction of these fish went hand in hand with development of late 19th century tourism. In 1898 trout were released into Lake Webster, the Rayners accompanied by Rodway, and his friend Clive Lord, carrying the two cans of fish fry.<sup>44</sup> The influence of recreational fishing on the Mt Field plateau is recalled in the names of Webster, Seager) and Matthew Seal - all members of the Fisheries Commission - being given to its lakes.

After 1893, Henry Dobson’s Tasmanian Tourist Association promoted tourist attractions throughout the island. These were aimed at the affluent traveller, and fishing trips to remote localities were advertised. As part of this drive, around 1906 a corrugated iron hut was built at Lake Webster, and tracks more clearly cut from both Ellendale, and from the Russell Falls River while a series of tracks enabled walkers to enter Mt Field from Ellendale and leave from near the present entrance. Tracks further inland were also cut to K Col where shelters were built.

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<sup>41</sup> Leonard Rodway was a dentist in Hobart with a wide interest in Botany. He presented papers frequently to the Royal Society and published three botanical reference books. Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rodway-leonard-8252>. Accessed 08 Jun 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Merc extract, 1917, PWH Library

<sup>43</sup> Clipper 3/1/03 p 7

<sup>44</sup> Tas Mail, 3/12/1898, P.19-20

In 1910 a track was cut from Russell Falls to Lake Fenton, and a hut was erected.<sup>45</sup> With the extension of rail to nearby Westerway in 1910, the Russell Falls access to Mt Field was to take over from the Ellendale approach. Mr W. (Bill) Belcher, a local small farmer, was employed for the work. He was later to become the ranger for the new National Park, and the state’s first. These tracks were ‘managed’ by the Public Works Department.

Despite growing interest, Mt Field had no protection or status. As Crown land, there were no controls. The only section protected was a small area around the Russell Falls. This was purchased privately by Louis Shoobridge in 1885 to prevent encroachment from logging. The reserve was lodged under the Waste Lands Act. The various interest groups who shared an appreciation of the Park could not coalesce to form a united approach.

Formation of Tasmania’s first National Park in 1916 was preceded by a slow but consistent build-up of pressure from a number of interest groups and individuals who represented them. Influential movements included the 1904 formation of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists’ Club. Visiting speakers echoed the concern for the destruction of wildlife. In 1910 for example, Dudley Le Soeuf of Adelaide’s Australian Ornithological Union was reported in Hobart as stressing the need for bird sanctuaries in Australia. Their existence here was ‘insignificant’ compared to Canada’s Rocky Mountains Park and Jasper in Alberta, while the U.S.A. had 22 parks and reserves totalling 7 million acres. These sentiments were also echoed by Prof. Thomas T. Flynn. (later a member of the National Park Board) in an address to the local Field Naturalists Club.<sup>46</sup>

These active personalities were drawn from professional, tourist and amateur bodies. Most were influential members of a southern Tasmanian intelligentsia, reflecting both local and international trends. Individuals who contributed to the push for the National Park included the following key figures. Except for H. R. Nicholls, all became members of the inaugural National Park Special Board established to implement the concept in 1916.

Key figures in the southern intelligentsia were Leonard Rodway. (1853-1936), a British born scientist who arrived in Tasmania in 1880. He became a scientist for the Agricultural Department, honorary Government Botanist and Royal Society member. He published numerous articles on Tasmanian botany, corresponded with Von Mueller; an explorer/bushwalker, often with Clive Lord.<sup>47</sup> Rodway had been strongly influenced by the American-born director of the Tasmanian Museum, Alexander Morton.<sup>48</sup> Clive Lord (1889-1933) was co-founder and Secretary of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Society,

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<sup>45</sup>Merc 15/9/1910, p 2

<sup>46</sup>Merc 18/1/1910 P.4 C.8

<sup>47</sup>*Australian Herbarium News* No. 6 April 1949 pp 1-4. PW & H

<sup>48</sup>ADB Vol. 10 P596-7

secretary of the Royal Society, and Secretary of the new National Park Board from 1917 until his death.<sup>49</sup> In the 1920's he lobbied with Gustav Weindorfer and others for the creation of Cradle Mountain Park.<sup>50</sup>

Prof. T. T. Flynn (1883-1968) was lecturer in zoology at the University of Tasmania, 1911-1930; an active conservationist, a member 1912 Australian Antarctic Expedition, trustee of the Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens, member of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists, the Workers' Educational Association, founding member of the National Park Board, and father of Errol Flynn.<sup>51</sup>

An influential promoter of the aesthetics of Mt Field was John W. Beattie (1859-1930), the Scottish-born professional photographer, who became a member of the Tasmanian Tourist Association, the Royal Society, Field Naturalists and the early National Parks Association.<sup>52</sup>

A key figure was lawyer Henry Dobson (1841-1918), a Tasmanian MHA and Senator from 1901-1910. A small ‘L’ liberal/conservative and philanthropist concerned with the under-privileged, Dobson was first Chairman of National Park Board.<sup>53</sup> In 1907 Dobson- with Wettenhall- had tried to persuade the state government to establish the Mountain Park, the first reserve proposed for Mt Wellington.

As indicated, H. R. Nicholls, (1830-1912) was a key player in the move to an acceptance of conservation as a legitimate public issue. Although his name is now recalled by the conservative ‘think tank’ which bears his name, Nicholls began his political life in Victoria as a radical political activist, Chartist and republican. He edited the Hobart *Mercury* from 1883 to his death in 1912.<sup>54</sup> He advocated a strong conservationist line in the *Mercury* in the formative years leading to the National Park Association. (see below). For example in 1910, in an editorial he argued for a Park on the Gordon River to protect Huon pine.<sup>55 56</sup> Like Crooke, Nicholls jnr Nicholls, Herbert" was a member of the Australian Natives Association, a ‘progressive’ conservative group which gained representation on the 1917 National Park Board.<sup>57</sup> A keen bushwalker,

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<sup>49</sup> Lord was a Fellow of Linnean Society of London and the Tasmanian Institute of Architects; ex-president of the Royal Australian Ornithological Soc.; one of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Commissioners; state secretary of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science; from 1918, Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; Fauna and Sea Fisheries Board; explorer, yachtsman and bush-walker, and foundation member of Hobart Rotary. (*Examiner* and *Mercury* 17/7/1933)

<sup>50</sup> ADB Vol. 10 p 144-5

<sup>51</sup> ADB. Vol. 8 pp 534-5

<sup>52</sup> ADB. Vol. 7 P.232 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Bennett, p. 46

<sup>54</sup> On arrival in Victoria in 1853, Nicholl's edited the. (short-lived) *Diggers Advocate*, and later *The Ballarat Times*.

<sup>55</sup> ADB. Vol. 5 P.334 ff.

<sup>56</sup> His son, Herbert. Nicholls. (1868-1940) was a Hobart barrister and MHA, later Chief Justice and Acting State Governor.

<sup>57</sup> ADB. Vol. 5 p. 334ff

he explored the Mt Field plateau around 1900. His interest in the Tasmanian bush may have influenced the editorial approach of his father.

While the background of the above personalities has been documented, the motivations for Crooke’s interest have been ignored. He appears an essentially political activist and lobbyist, active by 1892 in the movement toward Federation through membership of the Australian Natives Association as well as a conservationist. His political beliefs moved from democratic arguments for the vote for working class men and women advocated through the leftist newspaper, *The Clipper*, to gentleman fishing correspondent and conservationist who attacked the dominance of the left wing unions who used strikes as industrial weapons.

His experiences in Victoria appear to be a paramount influence in his approach to conservation. In 1909 he wrote on the need for a bird sanctuary at Risdon’

I am asked to say a word upon the subject by a gentleman who wished to have shooting prohibited above Risdon. He would like to see the water surfaces once again populated with duck and swan. I rather like the idea. At Wodonga, Victoria, Lake Pertobe, a Murray River overflow is protected. It is delightful sight to see the wildfowl every evening making for this sanctuary.<sup>58</sup>

He believed property owners had responsibilities toward the vegetation and access for recreational sportsmen and women.

A week ago I saw timber felled into Mountain River, Huon, and near Hobart the creek above the Cascade Brewery is filled with fallen boughs and leaves. This whole question needs legislation. The rivers should be declared national property, as indeed they already are in an ill-defined sort of way. The right and privileges of the riparian owner which I do not wish to reduce or destroy should be specified. But it is not a legal right of the riparian owner to take all the water....<sup>59</sup>

A Romantic idealist, on the outbreak of World War I he advocated a redistribution of land to overcome unemployment, recommending that... ‘interested settlers should be lent 50,000 pounds interest free by the government, and under the supervision of local landowners, the bush could be cleared to make way for scenes of grazing livestock and fruitful gardens.’<sup>60</sup>

In his Jollytail column, periodically, short verses of his own poetry were given, with occasional quotes from Henry Kendall, such as this end of season references.

*But down in the dark green dale*

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<sup>58</sup>Merc 13.1.1909 p 7

<sup>59</sup>Merc 24/2/09

<sup>60</sup>in Lake, M p. 18



*Of moss and myrtle and the barby streams,  
 Her flavour soft name makes language alter. All  
 Her paths are soft and cool, and runnels fall  
 In music round her, and the woodlands sing  
 Forever more with voice and wing  
 Because this is the month of beauty- this  
 The crowning grace of all the grace that is.*<sup>61</sup>

Crooke was attracted to the idealism of the new worlds: In 1910 he quoted from the American poet and philosopher, Walt Whitman, and also referred to the ideas of Henry Thoreau.<sup>62</sup> But his conservatism also showed with references to economist Edmund Burke, and eventually turned against organised labour.

He described himself as a ‘journalist’, and argued strongly for the right of access by the press to the 1909 hearing into the Public Works Commission. In this he was supported by Dr Crowther, and Hon B. S. Bird.

<sup>63</sup> In 1907 ‘that man of multifarious reforms’ as *The Critic* described him, offered advice to educator, W. Neale, on the training of teachers.<sup>64</sup>

In 1903, *The Clipper* newspaper had a jocular rivalry with Crooke, reporting that at the start of a new fishing season he had been seen with his ‘war paint on, making for some quiet stream’, and visualising the new super salmon which were being acclimatised from Canada, ‘towing Kirk or Crooke or Sandy Morton out to sea.’<sup>65</sup> While attracted to wildlife conservation, he did not extend this to porpoises which he saw as a plague on fisheries.

Crooke was drawn temporarily to the idealism of the Workers' Political League (WPL) and its outlet, *The Clipper* newspaper.<sup>66</sup> In 1904 he became involved in political meetings in Hobart where his views were initially quoted in *The Clipper*. This paper glorified the work skills of its working class readers, and included poetry on felling giant trees, reports on the duck shooting, and a record catch of 5 & 1/2 ton of (barra)couta - all in sharp contrast to the aims of the intelligentsia who were to be the main advocates for the early conservation legislation. Perhaps Crooke sensed, as recent conservation conflict attests, that the labour movement was not likely to be supportive of conservationist aims.

<sup>61</sup>Merc 21/4/09 P2

<sup>62</sup>Merc 24/10.1910, p 2 c 5

<sup>63</sup>Merc 29/1/09 p 2

<sup>64</sup>Critic 18/5/07 p 7

<sup>65</sup>Clipper 3/1/03 p 5

<sup>66</sup>News, 20/6/1924, p. 3

Initially though, Crooke became a strong pro-Labor reformist, writing biting descriptions in *The Clipper* of the anti-Labor National Association led by G. P. Fitzgerald. These articles give an idea of his political make-up.

The Australian Liberal Party with which I have been identified all my life is non-existent in Tasmania. The Labor Party programme contains much of which I heartily approve and some proposals I do not believe in. Hence, not with much faith, I went to hear what Mr G. P. Fitzgerald and his National Association had to say last Tues evening. ....I looked to Mr Fitzgerald and Miss Chapman -and I have found negatives. The Labour Party has a message- these folks have none.<sup>67</sup>

He attended a noisy meeting of 60 people at South Hobart of the National Association, organised by Fitzgerald. The Association, a conservative but ethically inclined body, criticised the aims of a centralised arbitration system. Crooke described them as being supporters of the ‘ranked Tories in the community, backed up by the Tory press....fighting the workers for dear life.’ While the Association was against the socialistic ideals of the Labor Party,

... he believed the sort of socialism which meant that the Government should undertake what it could do better than individuals (could).... but he did not believe in Government ownership of property and management of all industries. ... Under our present arrangement the prizes of life often went to those who had done nothing to deserve them. (Applause.) ....It was a natural right to strike (and) arbitration was a more humane way to settle disputes than either national or industrial war. He knew an estate where certain hideous sheds where used for pigs for the greater part of the year, and used later on for hop pickers’.<sup>68</sup>

He referred to the workers in Russia who were then ‘seizing the moment .... for better wages and shorter hours. (Cheers)’ Crooke then concluded by warning the workers to have nothing to do with the National Association as its members were their ‘natural enemies.’ The whole meeting, (except for the organisers, including Mrs Henry Dobson), left the building and held a meeting outside, and ‘passed a resolution in favour of the Arbitration System, and gave three ringing cheers for the Labor Party.’

The same year Crooke wrote a strongly worded article entitled ‘The Society Women and the Workers’ in which he warned working women to beware of the Women’s National Association, and praised the industrial legislation which gave guaranteed wages. He then quoted weekly wages from Victoria at length, and contrasted these with wages in Tasmania and continued (patronisingly), ‘The National Association dames enjoy themselves. They talk -and whisper- sip afternoon tea, and crow over the ‘ignorant’ Labor Party.’ He asked men who read the column to read it out to their wives, sisters and

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<sup>67</sup>Clipper 18/6/04

<sup>68</sup>Clipper 11/3/05 p 2

daughters’, and added humorously, that he would not expect them to read it to their sweethearts as ‘there would not be light enough.’ Finally Crooke offered to help ‘if the working women of Hobart like to meet together and form a league to fight for humanity and justice at the next election.’<sup>69</sup>

Crooke lambasted the National Association at WPL meeting held at the Franklin Wharf, scene of regular rallies. He was the main speaker, and ‘delivered a fluent address on ‘The National Association-Its Aims and Method,’ where he described it as ‘a secret organisation’ which

.... only held meetings for men in quiet corners like Southport, Sorell, and Hollow Tree, the cities being avoided, evidently because the National Association feared discussion. At the same time pernicious politics was being pushed among the unthinking housewives by the cohorts of the National Association women, who, being of the privileged class had plenty of time on their hands. ...The speaker quotes facts and figures utterly refuting the statements of Miss Chapman and others re the brothel vote, the drink vote, the Federal capital bogie, the Canadian banking bogie, the cost of Socialism bogie, the marriage tie bogie, driving capital out of the country and the ‘old and slow worker’ tarradiddle.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time Crooke was attracted to an alternative middle-class social lobby group the Citizens Moral and Social Reform League, (CMSRL) led by reformist Bishop Mercer. The fact was noted by *The Clipper*, which wasn’t sure of Crooke’s loyalties.

Fisherman Crooke, the angler who never told a fib.... speaking at Sandy Bay last week for the Citizens Moral and Social Reform League... said certain papers were sent into this state, ‘papers written by blackguards for blackguards’ and he would deal with such rags.<sup>71</sup>

At a Labor League meeting addressed by Archdeacon Whittington, Crooke and other speakers challenged the church’s support of the worker.<sup>72</sup>

Growing disillusionment with the politics of the WPL appeared in a letter by Crooke to *The Clipper* in December 1905, following the municipal elections where he stood as a candidate for South Hobart. In an article with his own by-line, Crooke commented on Hobart’s social and political life and the difficulties of gaining publicity ‘without a long purse.’ In the election, voters were ‘content to take their information from the capitalistic press (where) the most telling parts of the Labor candidate’s address were always omitted.’ Reports of a meeting were not reported in the morning paper (i.e. the *Mercury*.)

For the capitalistic candidates this presents little difficulty. The agents locate all likely voters. Employers grant their men ‘time off’ and cabs drive them down in

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<sup>69</sup>Clipper 22/7/05 p 7

<sup>70</sup>Clipper 7/10 /05 p 2

<sup>71</sup>Clipper, 20/5/05 P7

<sup>72</sup>Clipper 30/9/05 p 2

state to the polling booths. But for the independent candidate who goes ‘on his own’ and does not spend money the case is widely different. As the poll is taken from 9am to 6pm, the worker has only one opportunity to record his vote- during dinner hour. Sometimes the mere fact of wishing to leave to vote discloses his sentiments to his employer. ... Not being cleaned up. (he) does not desire to exhibit himself in his working clothes to all the ‘toffs’ outside the Town Hall. The cure for this is an alteration in polling hours...There should also be more polling places.

Crooke also advocated fines for not voting, and objected to the plural voting system where property owners but not tenants could vote. He then outlined his dilemma as a socially conscious activist but who wanted to operate independently of the Labor Party.

I do not come under the auspices of any political organisation, but I am convinced that that is the only way ...A candidate who advocates payment of a living wage, municipalisation of trams, light, and the provision of public baths, local halls and other modern conveniences, would have shown.<sup>73</sup>

A month later he again stood as a candidate for the seat of the North Hobart, this time without the backing of the Labor movement. The Clipper was miffed by the apparent about-face:

Our old friend Crooke has resigned from the Workers' Political League the other night, giving as his reason his intention to contest as Assembly seat as an ‘Independent.’ That’s all right; but what has become of Mr Crooke’s alleged Labor principles?<sup>74</sup>

Why did he leave the Labor movement? Its pro-development and pro- alcohol stance possibly effected Crooke’s opinion. A major reason for his dislike of the National Association was its alliance with the liquor trade.<sup>75</sup> Crooke’s commitment to the temperance movement appears to lie behind his change of heart, and may explain why he was unable to win a seat in South Hobart, or the next election he contested, in North Hobart. Temperance newspaper *The People’s Friend* records his attendance at several meetings at Temperance Hall, (Melville Street)<sup>76</sup> and the Town Hall, where he advocated the ‘Local Option’, which involved attempts to control liquor outlets. He advocated better licensing laws and urged lobbying for a new commissioner of police.<sup>77</sup>

Despite this plea for votes, he lost the temperance support to Alderman Paton.<sup>78</sup> He argued against Tattersalls lottery, but was ambivalent against the Nicholl’s ministry.<sup>79</sup> On the eve of the election he

<sup>73</sup>Clipper 16/12/1905 p 6

<sup>74</sup>Clipper 13/1/05 p 2

<sup>75</sup>Robson, Vol. 2, p 225

<sup>76</sup> Later the Avalon Theatre and now Danny Burke's Emporium.

<sup>77</sup>People’s Friend, 1/3/06 p 4

<sup>78</sup>Clipper 24/2/06 p 2

<sup>79</sup>ibid, 3/2/06 p 2

produced a pamphlet against Labor candidate Woods. The Clipper was not sorry to see Crooke lose the election.<sup>80</sup> The paper referred to ‘old man Nicholls, who is still nominal editor of the *Mercury*, (and) was induced to take a holiday during the election...’<sup>81</sup>

The change of heart appears to have cost Crooke dearly. Having severely criticised the social programme advocated by the liberal reformers which neglected the under - privileged, and failed to put funds into public amenities, he turned his back on the emerging Labor Party. Advocating temperance restrictions to the North Hobart electorate appears an unwise move also. His later uniting of interest groups - many members of which he must have offended - under the National Park Association appears all the more remarkable. In that organisation, and the subsequent National Park Board in 1918, the interests of the worker were only given de facto membership of the WPL, whose representative was Prof Flynn.

Crooke took a continued interest in the theory of politics, attending a debate organised by the WPL at the Working Men’s Club, where Herbert Nicholls addressed those present on the Tasmanian Constitution. Crooke asked a question from the floor.<sup>82</sup>

Crooke continued his interest in the CMSRL and chaired several meetings. The League met the Hobart City Council over the erection of cottages for people ejected from the ‘unsanitary hovels’ demolished by the council for the protection of civic health. The League also asked that owners should not raise rents of the poor by destroying cottages.... and doing nothing to replace them. Crooke’s response was to convene a conference of charities.<sup>83</sup> In 1905, with Crooke as chairman, the CMSRL lobbied for ‘better protection and provision for poor widows, and the strengthening of laws covering wife deserters and the ill-treatment of wives and families by fathers and husbands.’<sup>84</sup> In the same year in a letter to the *Mercury*, he urged ‘The Better Protection of Women’.<sup>85</sup> The League also opposed the granting of licence in Mt Wellington Park in 1907, a development proposal sponsored by Henry Dobson.

In 1905 William was ‘taking up a selection on the North West Bay River,’ and deplored the effect the Hobart Waterworks was having on the flow of that stream. In evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee, Crooke responded to questioning.

Occupation: Newspaper proprietor I was last.

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<sup>80</sup>ibid, 7/4/06 p 2

<sup>81</sup> ibid, 7/4/06 p2.

<sup>82</sup>Daily Post 16/6/08 p7

<sup>83</sup>Critic 27/4/07 P.4 c 3

<sup>84</sup>Merc20/8/1905 p 7

<sup>85</sup>Merc 21/12/05 p 8

You area a capitalist? I was once.<sup>86</sup>

At a meeting in 1909 chaired by Bishop Mercer, Crooke supported CMSRL standing their own candidate. He ... 'did not think they would return more than one candidate. He thought they should decide on one man and give as much help as possible to the candidates who were favourable to the League's platform.' He recommended a committee be formed from the meeting to 'negotiate with (other) candidates'. This was agreed to, and consisted of Mercer, Revs Boredom, Ladle, G S Crouch , and W G Murchison. Crooke promised financial help on behalf of the Independent Order of Good Templars for a local campaign.<sup>87</sup>

During his 1905 election campaign, Crooke was severely critical of the Hobart City Council, which was unrepresentative, and met in the day time in an inaccessible room; its committees were too large and council employees were underpaid. The Council, he concluded, was 'unworthy of the city.'<sup>88</sup>

By 1908 Crooke had turned against the unions and labour movement he had so actively supported. By 1909 he was distrustful of 'radical' trade unions; this surfaced at the time of the Broken Hill Strike, and perhaps reflected the influence of H.R. Nicholls. He hoped the miners would go bush, and trap rabbits and fish; '..... far better fishing the Darling than picketing at Broken Hill'.<sup>89</sup> A month later Crooke was strongly critical of the apparently contradictory claims of the labour movement. While sympathetic to the ideals of Prime Minister Fisher - old age pensions, and arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes - Crooke contrasted the tactics of sabotage and intimidation used at Broken Hill by miners. He criticised MHA Woods who spoke at The Domain , describing policemen as 'sons of cockies. '

...If the strikers had been trained national guards or were Parisian workmen at the time of the commune- and were in possession of arms and ammunion, who can doubt that they would have taken their way by force?

The Melbourne Maritime strikers were also chastised: while the Government's posters were torn down, 'those from the Trades Hall, significantly printed upon red paper, were untouched.' Crooke believed the Labor Party was ruled by the militant unions.

Thus the Labor-revolutionary party is not simply a radical political organisation, but a force which means danger in every civilised community, and should not be allowed in power for a day.<sup>90</sup>

About this time he unsuccessfully contested a seat in the Legislative Council.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Select Committee, Evidence on the Hobart Water Bill, 1905, No 18 (Act no 25) Parliamentary Papers 1905.

<sup>87</sup> Merc 12/2/09

<sup>88</sup> Merc 6/2/1905 p 7

<sup>89</sup> Merc Jollytail, 3/2/09

<sup>90</sup> Merc 12/3/09, p. 7

<sup>91</sup> News 20/6/24 p 3

The Domain, then the forum for social comment of all views, was an outlet for the emerging Labor Party. Crooke decried Labor tactics in the 1913 street campaign. ‘There is not a Labor meeting. in The Domain or elsewhere that is not taken up with abuse, class hatred, and vilification on their Liberal fellow citizens.’ His views were summed up in his couplet;

Worth makes the man,  
The want of it the fellow.<sup>92</sup>

Turning away from socialist movement, Crooke threw his energy into other progressive community projects. Extending railways into the Tasmanian hinterland became a major passion, and he and others formed several Railway Leagues, particularly the Southern Tasmania Railway League, chaired by G.P. Fitzgerald<sup>93</sup>. The only successful branch line was the upper Derwent Valley line to Russell Falls and beyond. When the line was opened, Crooke instigated the Children’s Excursion Association to co-ordinate trips to the new National Park. To William Crooke, railways were the logical extension of municipal responsibility toward the citizen. In 1910 he pointed out that ‘from a tourist standpoint’, the new Derwent Valley line gave access to ‘the grand Humboldt-Mt Field Range. At its foot runs the beautiful Russell Falls River; its slopes are adorned with magnificent vegetation, through which fall several streams.... the Russell Falls and other waterfalls are known. At Junee are limestone caves...’. All were less than 10 miles from the Russell Station and within a few hours of Hobart.<sup>94</sup>

As secretary of the Southern Tasmanian Railway League, Crooke initiated tourist tracks into the future Mt Field Park, well before it was formally established.<sup>95</sup> In June 1910, Crooke wrote to the Minister for Lands,

As requested by you I have obtained tenders for cutting tracks from the Russell Falls;

1- to the adjoining valley and falls and

2- to Lake Fenton and Mt Field.

Crooke recommended Mr Hitchin’s tender for the neighbouring waterfall’, as ‘he has been working at the saw mills in the vicinity and knows the locality well.’ He also recommended Loveluck and Chaplin’s tender from Lake Fenton track, as ‘Chaplin is the best bushman in the district.’<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup>WC 3/4/13 p3.

<sup>93</sup> George Parker Fitzgerald (1843-1917) founded the Fitzgerald Department Store chain in Tasmania. Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fitzgerald-george-parker-3524> accessed 07Jun2018

<sup>94</sup>Merc 4/1/1910 p 3

<sup>95</sup>G. P. Fitzgerald was chairman, and his name was given to the village that was later established at the head of the line.

<sup>96</sup>PWD 24, AOT.

Later in the year, William wrote to Minister Hean recommending acceptance of William Belcher’s tender of 18 pounds for cutting a track from ‘Mill Falls to Lake Fenton.’

While the Railway League was supervising tracks into the southern end of Mt Field, the Tasmanian Tourist Association was performing the same function with tracks into the eastern approach to Mt Field plateau. In March 1910, Wertheimer<sup>97</sup> recommended flooring the hut already erected with the Association’s funds. James Clark of Ellendale, offered the services of his son George Clark ‘who is the mountain guide’ to do the work;

....It would be a hard job to get the stuff...(as) the would have to carry it a long way over the rocky mountain. I think there (sic) is five of the bunks want to be made a little wider.<sup>98</sup>

Before the establishment of Mt Field as a reserve, there had been two unsuccessful attempts at creating formal Parks in Tasmania. In 1906, Crooke appealed to the Hobart City Council to take the lead after the meeting and form a group to lobby for a Mt Wellington National Park.<sup>99</sup> Action and lobbying for a National Park on Mt Wellington, driven mainly by Dobson’s Tasmanian Tourist Association, drew criticism from several quarters. The experience, and the earlier Freycinet Reserve debacle, may have acted as a precursor to the formation of the National Park Association (NPA).<sup>100</sup>

Crooke's interest in conservation paralleled his love of angling. He continued to fish and write for the *Mercury*. His Jollytail column was used to press for improved amenities at Russell Falls and Mt Field. In 1910 he noted several visitors had made the trip to Lake Fenton up the new pack track, but complained of the lack of facilities.

We do not properly arrange for the mountain climbing business’, and complained of the loss of rest (sic) and the great desire of the majority of walkers to get back to civilisation. ‘Bunks at tourist huts should be provided with spring mattresses’, as the tourist, a townsman, was not used to roughing it.<sup>101</sup>

The issue of wildlife generally attracted his attention. In June 1908 he reported on the Transvaal Game Reserve, and the (white) warden and black assistants, who were trying to prevent the ‘annihilation of fauna’ which were at one time ‘seriously threatened.’<sup>102</sup> His interests in the philosophy of conservation is

<sup>97</sup> Arnold Wertheimer, Secretary of the Tasmanian Tourist Association at the time. He was involved in organising the first tourist bushwalk into the area of Mt Field National Park.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Merc* 20/8/1905 p. 7

<sup>100</sup> During this period, many of these concerns were echoed in the *Mercury* editorials of H H Nicholls. Just how much who influenced whom is worth pursuing.

<sup>101</sup> *Merc* 2/10/1910 p 6.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Post* 11/6/08, p 8.



indicated by a detailed article on Walt Whitman.<sup>103</sup> In October 1910, Crooke argued for control over angling and other game to ensure its preservation. He noted that legislators in the ‘States of America’ ‘pay much more attention to these matters’ than local politicians, believing them to be matters ‘of an essentially British character’. ‘In Nebraska in a single session, the Lower House dealt with 8 bills dealing with hunting and fishing’. In North Carolina, Oregon, Alabama and New York, similar controls were being introduced, and Crooke argued for their introduction here.

By January 1912, the walks to Russell and Lady Barron Falls were well established. Crooke warned visitors that ‘stout boots are necessary’, and regretted early vandalism, when signs erected by the TTA were ‘defaced by writings, and one on the Mt Field track, firmly nailed to a tree, .... torn down.’ He advised excursionists that ‘To see the various falls and ascend Mt Field through the magnificent scenery it opens up, a stay of some days in the locality is required.’<sup>104</sup> An interstate visitor complained of the slippery track to Horseshoe Falls, and suggested walking sticks be available for hire at the accommodation shelter.<sup>105</sup>

During 1912, Crooke, acting as a catalyst for like-minded but disparate groups interested in conservation, formed the National Parks Association. His motivation appears to be to secure an area free from the threat of development, where flora and fauna were protected, and where anglers could fish unmolested by property owners.<sup>106</sup>

His supporters consisted of those previously involved in the abortive moves for Freycinet and Mt Wellington parks around 1906. These included the Royal Society, Field Naturalists Club, University of Tasmania, Hobart City Council, Fisheries Commission, New Norfolk Council the Australian Natives Association and the Southern Tasmanian Railways Association.<sup>107</sup> With Crooke as Chairman, the NPA was the genesis of the Scenery and Preservation Board Act (1915) and the later National Parks Act and Board. (1916)

Unlike the later formation of the Cradle Mountain—Lake St Clair Reserve in 1922, achieved only after public pressure and lobbying, the push for the Mt Field National Park succeeded with little public disagreement, assisted by direct approaches to the Minister.<sup>108</sup> Although supporters held public meetings and gaining press support, final acceptance of the Park with its own Board was relatively easy. This

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<sup>103</sup>Daily Post 27/6/1908, p 5.

<sup>104</sup>WC 10/1/1912 p5 c 8.

<sup>105</sup>Merc 8/1/1912 - A. Hornemann, letter to the editor

<sup>106</sup>The exact steps followed in the lobbying government are unclear as the documents have been removed from the archival file concerned.

<sup>107</sup>Shackel, p. 21.

<sup>108</sup>Shackel, p. 22.

desire to preserve something pristine needs to be set against Europe then destroying itself and Australians in the trenches of World War I.

In 1912 writing about the Tyenna district, suggested reservation of Russell Falls, Lady Barron Falls and Lake Fenton track, suggests these be reserved and vested in the Railway Department. He urged reservation be made from the selection of lands near Russell Falls at Tyenna and in the Florentine Valley.

<sup>109</sup>

In 1913 Crooke wrote to the Minister for Lands, urging the establishment of a National Park at Mt Field. His persistence eventually overcame three changes of government and the outbreak of W.W.I to lobby successfully for a legislated park.

Following an initial approach by Crooke on 4 December 1913 to the Minister for Lands. (Edward Mulcahy), resulted in a reserve of 500 acres and a grant of £500 resulted, with the Forestry Commission acting as caretaker.<sup>110</sup> This was extended to 22,000 acres, as the tourist potential of the proposal was realised, and was followed by the extension of the Derwent Valley Railway line to the proposed area. The new Labor Government promised to extend the Park to cover 50,000 acres.<sup>111</sup>

In March 1915, the *Mercury* extolled the virtues of;

... a permanent Park dedicated to nature .... not a mere wilderness, yet a sanctuary .... providing opportunity for communing with the spirits of the trees and the brooks'.<sup>112</sup>

With the outbreak of war and anti-German sentiment, Crooke replaced Fritz Noetling who was forced from the Fisheries Commission.<sup>113</sup>

By late 1915 the efforts of the National Parks Association resulted in the Scenery and Preservation Board Act which co-ordinated the earlier reserves under a single piece of legislation, covering historic, scenic and wildlife areas.<sup>114</sup> The efforts of the NPA contributed substantially to the establishment of the Scenery and Preservation Board Act of 1915.<sup>115</sup> Due to his uncompromising ascerbic criticisms, and perhaps also due to his non-establishment background, Crooke was not invited onto the Scenery & Preservation Board panel.

<sup>109</sup>loose note, 23/8/1912 WC to Sec Lands, PWD 24/9, New Norfolk.

<sup>110</sup>op. cit. p. 22

<sup>111</sup>Robson, p. 292

<sup>112</sup>Shackel, p. 22

<sup>113</sup>Robson, Vol. 2, p.340

<sup>114</sup>Shackel, p. 23

<sup>115</sup>ibid, p. 23

Apart from the establishing of the S & P Board, the second major achievement of the National Parks Association was the introduction of a separate Board to manage the National Park. Ready acceptance by the government was apparently hastened by ‘the 1914 fiasco’ involving the finances of the quasi-private Tasmanian Tourist Association. Another outcome was the establishment of the Government Tourist Bureau under E. T. Emmett<sup>116</sup>, as the government was much more favourable to the preservation of scenic reserves because of their tourist potential. As Shackel wryly observed;

... the direct appeal of the National Park as an accessible tourist attraction may account for the difference in financial treatment of National Parks, and the (later conflict over) Cradle Mountain Reserve’.<sup>117</sup>

The Scenery and Preservation Board Act of 1915, was a unique experiment in conservation legislation. Mt Field, part of Port Arthur and Freycinet Peninsula and later, Lake St Clair - Cradle Mt were included under the Board's control. (Recent research however described the Board as ‘hand-cuffed volunteers’ starved of funds and resources, while its public servants were easily muzzled by government. In fact the broader cross-section of private bodies represented on the Mt Field's Board gave them greater freedom, until quashed by the determined Cosgrove government during the 1950 acquisition of 5000 acres of western Mt Field for ANM.)

The government appeared content to let the idea of a separate body for Mt Field to lapse. Crooke lobbied the new conservative premier, William Lee, for the establishment of a special Board to manage the Park, and led a high -powered deputation which addressed the new Scenery and Preservation Board on the merits of the idea. The deputation consisted of the President of the Legislative Council, and member for Buckingham, Tetley Gant, William Crooke, (NPA and Fisheries Commission), R. M. Johnstone, (Royal Society), W. J. T. Stops<sup>118</sup>, and M. Ansell<sup>119</sup>, Henry Dobson, (Scenery & Preservation Board), Alderman A. C. Davis, (Hobart City Council ) Messrs A. L. Butler<sup>120</sup> and Clive Lord, (Tasmanian Field Naturalists) .

Because of changes in Ministry, William Crooke argued for the permanent status of the National Park, so that ‘this park should be secured as an example of Tasmanian wild conditions for centuries to come.’ He pointed out that the new train line to Russell Falls would be opened soon so local people as well as

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<sup>116</sup> Evelyn Temple Emmett was a tourist director, bushwalker and writer. Starting as a teacher, he worked for the Tasmanian railways and then the Government Tourist Bureau. He established the Hobart Walking Club and was a foundation executive member of the Scenery Preservation Board and the National Park Boards. Australian Dictionary of Biography. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/emmett-evelyn-temple-6113>. Accessed 08Jun2018.

<sup>117</sup>Shackel,. p. 20

<sup>118</sup> William Joshua Tilley Stops was Vice chancellor of UTAS at the time.

<sup>119</sup> Montagu M. Ansell was the Registrar of the University of Tasmania from April 1916 to 1922

<sup>120</sup> Arthur Larchin Butler was a foundation member of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists and of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

tourists would see the beauty of the Park. Such numbers would destroy the present tracks. New paths were needed and proper shelter sheds. They should be rustic like those in the Cascade Valley. (i.e. Mt Wellington), and several were needed. A traffic bridge over the river was needed and metalled road to the entrance to the park. Later a vehicular road to the lakes and plateau would be needed. An accommodation house like that at Great Lake was required, as was a fire fighting corps and a park ranger. A separate Board would carry out policy with a ‘singleness of purpose.’<sup>121</sup>

Henry Dobson, a member of the S & P B, endorsed these remarks, pointing out that Mr Crooke, not the Government, was responsible for the park. The ideas were endorsed by the new editor of the *Mercury*. Despite some wavering by E. A. Counsel<sup>122</sup> - whose department would lose control of Mt Field - in the end virtually all of Crooke’s ideas, including the separate Act, the aims of the Board, the make-up of the National Park Board and even nominees were accepted almost in their entirety.

Through all this, Crooke was still writing the fortnightly or monthly fishing column. In 1916 he gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Tasmanian Fisheries conducted by Prof. Flynn. When the findings were released, he was critical of Flynn for his refusal to publish the individual submissions made by commercial fishermen and anglers from around the state as had been done in the Victorian enquiry in 1893 - and published some extracts in his Jollytail column. Crooke was concerned with the same issues as the 1893 Victorian enquiry - over-fishing, loss of fish resources, encroachment into Tasmanian waters of Victorian boats the lack of control and policing of the fishing grounds.<sup>123</sup> He published at length findings from the New Zealand Fishing Commission.

The proclamation for the new Park was listed on 30th January 1917.<sup>124</sup>

Initial members of the National Park Board were:<sup>125</sup>

- The Chairman of the Scenery Preservation Board (Mr E.A. Counsel)
- The Engineer in Chief (Mr. T.W. Fowler)
- The Government Botanist (Mr. L. Rodway.
- The Royal Society. (Hon. Henry Dobson))

<sup>121</sup> Merc 20/7/1916, p. 3

<sup>122</sup> Edward Albert Counsel was the Tasmanian Surveyor-General and also a member of the Scenery Protection Board. Australia Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/counsel-edward-albert-5789> accessed 07Jun2018.

<sup>123</sup> Merc 4/7 & 21/7/1916

<sup>124</sup> the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* under that for the S & P B Section 13, on the 30th January, 1917, P.273

<sup>125</sup> Lord, Clive E. “The Foundation of the National Park. Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania”, 1918, p 78-75. <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/16398/1/lord-foundation-national-park-1918.pdf>. Accessed 07Jun18

The Field Naturalists Club. (Clive Lord)  
 Tourist Branch, Railway Department. (E. Emmett)  
 The Fisheries Commission. (P. S. Seager)  
 The University Council of Tasmania. (sic). (Prof Thomson Flynn)  
 The Hobart City Council. (W. E. Bottrill)<sup>126</sup>  
 The New Norfolk Council. (Henry W. Shoobridge)  
 The National Park Association. (William Crooke)  
 The Australian Natives Association. (V. E. Wettenhall)<sup>127</sup>

Under the same proclamation, 27,000 acres were set aside as a ‘National Park Reserve’. Later additions included 100 acres around Lady Barron Creek.<sup>128</sup> An additional 11,400 acres were added, then 90 acres. (originally selected by H. E. Dawes) added near Lady Barron Creek.<sup>129 130</sup>

With the Park established, the formal opening aroused great public interest. The new Board worked strenuously to prepare for opening day. With William Crooke as Acting Secretary, the new National Park Board, (located in the first Tourist Association offices in Hobart), held its first formal meeting on 5 February 1917.<sup>131</sup> By then Bill Belcher had been confirmed as Ranger by the Scenery and Preservation Board. Plans were underway for a number of works, including:

- (i) an avenue of native trees at the entrance;
- (ii) a new track to Russell Falls from the Rest House;
- (iii) a public meeting called by Crooke to initiate children’s’ excursions to National Park; and
- (iv) the Board’s photograph was taken by J. W. Beattie.

The first four years resulted in tracks and features which give the Park many of its characteristic features today. Apart from tracks cut by the Tourist Association and the Fisheries Commission, by 1917 other features were in place. These included :

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<sup>126</sup> William Evans Bottrill was a barrister who served on the Hobart City Council from 1917 to 1919.

<sup>127</sup> Victor E. Wettenhall was for many years the manager of the Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance Co. Ltd and supported the Australian Natives Association, the Tasmanian Wattle League and the Tasmanian Sanatorium. *The Mercury*, 29May1950, p5, ‘Prominent A.N.A. member dies’

<sup>128</sup> *Tasmanian Government Gazette*, February 18, 1919 p. 351

<sup>129</sup> *ibid* P.352

<sup>130</sup> In 1920 the complete Park was re-gazetted in its entirety, and totalled ‘38,490 acres or thereabouts’. The same edition announced additions to the Board including Mr C. H. Carroll for the Workers’ Educational Association Membership changed over the first 3 years, but with the core trio of Rodway, Lord and Emmett in control.

<sup>131</sup> National Park Board Minutes, 5/2/1917. AOT

- (i) A corrugated iron hut at Lake Webster, c1906.
- (ii) A slab hut at Lake Fenton, 1911
- (iii) The Rest House at the Park entrance 1916;.
- (iv) Naming of chief features in the highlands.
- (v) Tracks from. (a) Ellendale to the high country,. (b) pack-track from the Falls to Lake Fenton.<sup>132</sup>

Commenting on the official opening the *Mercury*'s editorial and report reveals a strongly conservationist approach. Reports on the various speakers involved with the Park's creation give an understanding of the motives driving each individual.

By this reservation, a typical example of Tasmanian forest will be retained in its natural state, in order that generations yet unborn may see for themselves what virgin Tasmania was like. To many people of the present generation, accustomed as they are to seeing on all hands the wild scenery of the State in these early days of its settlement, the full significance of the act of setting apart this national area may not be apparent. It is not difficult, however, especially for those who have visited or lived in older and more thickly populated countries of the earth to imagine that Tasmanians hundreds of years hence, when the progress of civilisation and industry in the State has transformed large areas now lying idle into busy centres of population and activity of all kinds, would bless those of their forbears who possessed the wisdom and foresight to reserve such a magnificent specimen of early Tasmania as the National Park. Nor is this the only object of the formation of the park. It is also to serve as a sanctuary for flora and fauna, so as to guard against total extinction in some cases threatened. What a boon this in itself would be to the Tasmanian botanist, ornithologist, and zoologist of the future. Again, the park will be a scenic and pleasure resort not only for Tasmanians themselves, but for the countless thousands of tourists who will visit our island as time goes on, and its charms become more widely known and appreciated. In this respect it may truly be said that the park will be 'a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

The opening took place in front of the newly-erected white timber gates after a picnic lunch. The formal address by the Governor, Sir Francis Newdegate, was preceded by a particularly grovelling welcome by the Warden of New Norfolk, who assured the Governor of 'the sincere devotion and loyalty to the Throne and person of our Most Gracious Sovereign, King George V'. The Governor's interest in the state will, he felt, 'advance the interests of our glorious Empire', and he further hoped that Divine Blessing would grant His Excellency 'health and strength to perform his important duties'.

Acting on behalf of the absent premier, Hon. J. B. Hayes, he thanked the National Park Board for their work, hoping they would receive every assistance in 'their scenery preservation work, which had as its

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<sup>132</sup>J. W. Beattie, notes on lecture to Royal Society, 27/3/1917, T L

objects the benefit and pleasure of the people and the encouragement of tourists’. Hayes believed Tasmania needed both settlers and tourists, and he realised that tourists benefited every part of the state.

Hon. Henry Dobson, on behalf of the Board welcomed the vice-regal couple. He paid tribute to ‘the efforts of Mr William Crooke’ as it was due to him that they were that day opening a peoples' park. (Applause).’ Via the National Park Association, Crooke had ‘put his usual energy and ability into the movement and had obtained a promise of one Minister to proclaim an area of 5,000 acres, which had subsequently been increased by another Minister. (Mr Belton<sup>133</sup>), to 27,000 acres’. Dobson ‘heartily congratulated Mr Crooke on the success of his labours’.

Dobson, (formerly head of the defunct Tasmanian Tourist Association), then acknowledged the contribution over the last 25 years of a number of people, including P. Seager and J. W. Beattie. He believed that;

‘the possibilities of the tourist traffic and its value to the producers and to the Government were appreciated, and that the tourist work performed by volunteers had progressed so well that the late Labor Government had taken it over, and had appointed Mr Emmett to take charge’.

In an accurate prediction, Dobson hoped that Emmett ‘would make splendid success of the movement’.

Using a silver key designed and presented by Clive Lord to the Governor, His Excellency felt it a great honour ‘to unlock the door to the Peoples' Park’. (Edith Marriott). The rest of the afternoon was spent in watching a series of wood- chopping matches, with no apparent sense of irony.

Without Crooke's private papers, the only clear indication of Crooke's aims are given in newspaper accounts including the speeches at the official opening of the National Park on 13 October 1917, while the newspaper editorial reflected the approach taken by Crooke. Henry Dobson. (in asking Governor Newdegate to formally open the Park) acknowledged the contribution of William Crooke in establishing ‘a People's Park’. Dobson then emphasised the tourist potential of the area and the efforts of those interested in the future of tourism. Likewise J. B. Hayes MHA had ‘never under-estimated the value of tourist traffic to Tasmania’.<sup>134</sup>

Crooke (who was only allowed to second the vote of thanks to the Governor) put his priorities differently:

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<sup>133</sup> James Belton was a Labor Minister in the Tasmanian Parliament from 1909 and then from 1917 to 1931. He was Minister of Lands and Works at the time the National Park was opened, and was directly responsible for the increase in size. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Belton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Belton) Accessed 8 Jun 2018

<sup>134</sup> Tasmanian Mail 15/10/1917

‘The idea of the Park was not originally conceived simply for tourists. Only by preserving a Park in this way would the people of Tasmania in the far future be able to see what primeval Tasmania was like. That was one of the objects. Another was the preservation of the native flora and fauna, and still another, the recreation of the people of Tasmania. The tourists, to his mind, come last, although they were always pleased to see them’.

The aims of Crooke’s National Parks Association adopted by the new Park Board were outlined. (and supported) by the *Mercury* editorial on the opening. Crooke, like the *Mercury*, did not envisage National Park as an ‘intended wilderness’, but agreed with his ‘excellent suggestions’.

The Park should reflect ‘intelligent care, guided by loving knowledge, and assisted with enough filthy lucre to make the Park attractive and convenient for everybody’. The editorial then outlined a number of Crooke’s management proposals, many of which were implemented by the time of Crooke’s death in 1920. Others. (e.g.. bushfire control) are still unresolved.

The editorial continued :

‘It would not take much to make the Park accessible from the Ellendale side, to connect the Russell Falls with the Lady Barron Falls by an easy walk, to bring into reach by coach Lake Fenton and the others, to clear properly an area for camping; to maintain a suitable water supply to the Falls; to keep an asylum for native creatures; and. (to) adequately pay a ranger, to prevent bush fires from outside by fencing and clearing the borders; to erect rest-houses near the Russell and Lady Barron Falls; to put up somewhere a big accommodation house from which the lakes, caves, falls, fern gullies, glades, mountain tops ..... and all beauty spots can be visited with ease and comfort’.<sup>135</sup>

The editorial concluded in the hope that light trains would be able to carry ‘constant relays of happy people in two hours either way from Hobart, to see ‘one of the finest haunts on God’s beautiful earth, Tasmania’s National Park’. Taking the military symbolism, the *Mercury* had earlier aggressively defended the sanctity of the Park in words that would have appealed to W G Crooke:

The only creature to be driven out of the Park and kept out with flaming swords is the Utilitarian, who would indiscriminately chop trees, spoil waterfalls, dig up rare plants, kill live things, and spoil and ravage and destroy everything for a money profit. If there ever come to exist legislators who cannot see the value of such a place we hope it will become a recognised custom to shoot them on sight whenever seen within three miles of the park. But that does not mean that the whole place should be an untended wilderness. Mr. William Crooke, to whose foresight and energy the public really owes the whole idea of the Park, has offered excellent suggestions. Intelligent care, guided by loving knowledge, and assisted with enough of filthy lucre to make the Park attractive and convenient for everybody is what is needed. It would not cost much to

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<sup>135</sup> *Mercury* editorial 15/10/1917



make the Park accessible from the Ellendale side, to connect the Russell Falls with the Lady Barron Falls by an easy walk, to bring into reach by coach drive Lake Fenton and the others, to clear properly an area for camping, to maintain a suitable water supply for the Falls, to keep an asylum for native creatures and adequately pay a Ranger, to prevent bushfires from outside by fencing and clearing the borders, to erect rest-houses near the Russell and Lady Barron Falls, and to put up somewhere a big accommodation house from which the lakes, caves, falls, fern gullies, glades, mountain tops. (with their view of the unexplored West), and all beauty spots can be visited in ease and comfort.

(The editorial then continued with a description of the ‘muddy fighting’ in France).

During the first four years - 1916-1920 - amenities at the entrance were installed, and new tracks were cut, including an improved pack track to Lake Fenton.

An immediate start was made on providing better facilities and access for visitors. By August 1917, a decision had been made to erect an accommodation house at Lake Fenton, construct a new track to the top of the Russell Falls from the Rest House and erect gates at the park entrance. An official opening was organised.<sup>136</sup>

These improvements were implemented with great haste as were new huts at Lake Fenton, which became the focus of attention of bush-walking and skiing on the plateau. With the growth in interest in the park and Crooke’s organised school parties, the need for better facilities on 28 March 1917, over 1,200 pupils visited the park i.e.. before the official opening.<sup>137</sup>

The Rest House was approved on 12 February 1918, ‘with structural work done by the ranger, and the rustic (work) by an (un-named) expert. Cost 25 pounds’.<sup>138</sup> Board Minutes for its second meeting in March 1917 refer to this structure as already planned. In October 1918 Beattie on his second photographic expedition noted:

It was a pleasure to mark the altered appearance of things at the Park entrance since my last visit 12 months ago. A rustic rest house within the entrance has just been completed by Mr Belcher from the design of Mr Clive Lord, the energetic Secretary of the Park Committee, and is a substantial, practical and most artistic addition to the Park ‘furniture’.<sup>139</sup>

Hot water and fireplaces were to be provided for children’s excursions in summer.<sup>140</sup> Toilets and a playground for children were added near the river along the Lady Barron track.<sup>141</sup> An entrance avenue of

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<sup>136</sup> National Park Association (NPA) Board, Minutes, AA 593 vol. 1

<sup>137</sup> NPA Board Minutes, 3/4/1917

<sup>138</sup> Minutes, 12/2/1918

<sup>139</sup> Mercury, 4/10/1918

<sup>140</sup> Minutes, 10/12/1918

<sup>141</sup> Minutes 8/4/1919

trees (although proposed earlier) was not planted until mid-1920 when the secretary reported ‘that at last the avenue of trees was being provided from the railway station to the bridge over the river. The ranger ..... was digging the holes and the trees had been sent from the Botanical Gardens’. <sup>142</sup> The next month the paper reported over thirty of the new sugar-gums were severely frost-affected and needed to be replaced.

<sup>143</sup>

Huts were erected at Lake Fenton. On the Old Track to Fenton, Beattie noted that he and Ranger Belcher ‘went up the old track’ taking four hours to reach Lake Fenton, with ‘my mate carrying a very heavy swag’. <sup>144</sup> In April 1918, the Board agreed to remove the galvanised iron walls of the Lake Webster Hut and to replace them with slabs, with the iron to be used for the roof of the hut at Lake Fenton. <sup>145</sup>

(The huts now at Lake Dobson are those built in 1941 on the transfer of accommodation following the Lake Fenton water scheme. The surviving hut at Lake Fenton appears to be one left for the Ranger for use in emergencies. (see below). The boat-house built log-cabin style on the edge of Lake Fenton appears in early photos loaned to the author.)

When Beattie stopped at Lake Fenton for his second visit in 1918 he reported:

At Lake Fenton another sign of progress was manifest in the shape of a substantial and commodious wooden hut, quite lately erected but not yet completely finished. When this hut is floored and the walls lined inside it will be most comfortable, and supplies a much needed want. Twelve months ago I camped on this spot with my tent, amidst a howling tempest of wind and rain.....

Returning in a snow-storm which continued all night, Beattie slept although ‘the snow was driving through the weather side of the hut. (it had not yet been lined. I found on emerging from my wallaby sleeping bag in the morning, it was white with snow’. <sup>146</sup>

Other shelters were erected on the plateau and included a shelter-hut at the turn-off to Lake Nicholls. <sup>147</sup> In 1919 the ‘Lake Webster hut to be moved to Lake Dobson, and part of this was to be used to erect a small shelter hut at Mt Field West’. <sup>148 149</sup>

Beattie’s lecture notes also record the names given by him to key features photographed. These were labelled by Morton, Rodway and other VIP’s who visited the lakes area pre 1916. These names apparently

<sup>142</sup> *Mercury*, 10/8/1920

<sup>143</sup> *Mercury*, 13/9/1920

<sup>144</sup> *Mercury*, Oct./4/1917

<sup>145</sup> Minutes, 9/4/1918

<sup>146</sup> *Mercury*, 4/10/1918

<sup>147</sup> op. cit.

<sup>148</sup> Minutes, 8/4/1919

<sup>149</sup> The latter is probably the shelter at K Coll.

superseded names given by the early snarers e.g.. ‘White Cliffs’ had become ‘Seager’s Lookout’. (see earlier). These are still in use today -. (apart from Lake Nicholls which he then called ‘Jollytail’).

In September a quote for a construction of the pack-track to Lake Fenton was received from the Ranger as follows:

‘Rest-house to turn-off to the tarn : 80 or 90 pounds. Turn-off to Lake Fenton : 40 pounds.’

This was accepted, and Beattie, in late September 1917, noted after struggling up the old track, ‘I am glad to notice that a good house track is now under construction, and is well on towards a point which brings it within 12 miles of Lake Fenton’. <sup>150</sup> The pack-track was completed by late 1918. <sup>151</sup>

Additional tracks included a route from Lake Fenton to Lake Dobson. <sup>152</sup> On his visit in late September, Beattie noted a new track along the south and west side of Lake Fenton. <sup>153</sup> A new track was recommended. (and implemented) from Mt Field East to Lake Fenton. <sup>154</sup>

Tracks were constructed from Seager’s Lookout to Beatties Tarn to connect to the ‘old track’; a low level track from Lake Fenton to Lakes Belton and Belcher. <sup>155</sup> The Ranger was to stake out a route from Lake Dobson to Mt Field West while the pack-track was to be completed to Lake Fenton. A notice board for these routes was to be erected.

One immediate responsibility of the new Board was the care of wildlife within the Park, a role not defined under the Scenery and Preservation Board Act by which the National Park Board was administered. The new authority was thus the first Tasmanian body to have to contend with the dual responsibility.

Prior to the consolidating of previous legislation in the Animals and Birds Protection Act 1919, a number of measures to protect native game existed. <sup>156</sup> Conflict existed between those who wished to hunt in the bush, and those who wanted wildlife and plants protected. Fauna was covered by various Gaming Acts covering the shooting and breeding seasons. They were later guarded by the Animals and Birds Protection Board, a body separate from the Scenery and Preservation Board (SPB) and not united until the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970.

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<sup>150</sup> *Mercury* 4/10/1917

<sup>151</sup> Minutes, 5/11/1918

<sup>152</sup> Minutes, 5/11/1918

<sup>153</sup> Minutes, 4/10/1918

<sup>154</sup> Minutes, 3/11/1917

<sup>155</sup> Minutes, 8/4/1919; Minutes, 5/11/1918

<sup>156</sup> Wettenhall, p. 178

The National Park Board had therefore a unique role and problem in protecting both flora and fauna under the one body and the Board had a major educational problem on its hands. In June 1918, four men were caught shooting by the Ranger.<sup>157</sup> The Animals and Birds Act was amended to allow seizure of fire arms and destruction of dogs by the Board.<sup>158</sup> The importance of the Park as a breeding ground for animals was emphasised by Clive Lord when discussing the combined value of the Park’s timber raising the spectre of future dilemmas. The last thing should be done in a national sanctuary was to interfere with the breeding grounds of the animals, Lord insisted.<sup>159</sup>

From the visit of von Mueller in 1869 on, the unique vegetation of Mt Field attracted botanists. In 1912- 14, Miss L. S. Gibbs<sup>160</sup> analysed alpine vegetation<sup>161</sup>. Lord and Rodway concurred with Crooke in the importance of the Park as an educational and scientific experience. In June 1917, the Park’s formal scientific sub-committee consisted of Rodway, Prof. T. T. Flynn and Clive Lord. In April 1918 the sub-committee drafted a map of the area, and of the July meeting agreed to ‘provide labels to be placed on the trees near the entrance’. Two months later, the scientific committee discussed establishing a botanical garden of 300 species.<sup>162</sup> The *Mercury* reported this was to be ‘a representative collection of Tasmanian flora’. ‘A netted reserve, wherein specimens of Tasmanian flora could be kept’, was agreed on.<sup>163</sup> The paper quoted Lord claiming that ‘native fauna were beginning to take advantage of the protection afforded them on the National Park’.

In November 1920, Rodway ‘spoke of the possibility of clearing an area of level country beside the pack-track, about half way up to Lake Fenton, and starting a reserve of native trees, flowers and shrubs’.<sup>164</sup> It was hoped the proposed area, about 1,200 ft above sea-level would be of much interest to tourists.

‘..... How grateful we visitors feel ..... to the kind thoughtfulness of the distinguished Tasmanian Botanist Mr Leonard Rodway for having all the principal types of flowers and forest trees clearly named at numerous conspicuous points along the track. The names are painted in black on a white background on suitable pieces of galvanised iron. This is a practice which other

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<sup>157</sup> Minutes, 11/6/1918

<sup>158</sup> Minutes, 16/7/1918

<sup>159</sup> Minutes, 13/9/1921

<sup>160</sup> Lilian Suzette Gibbs (1870 1925) was an intrepid botanist who collected in many parts of the world including New Guinea and Iceland. Her particular interest was plants of high altitude. She was in Tasmania from September 1914 to March 1915.

<sup>161</sup> Gibbs, L.S. “Notes on the Phytogeography and Flora of the Mountain Summit Plateaux of Tasmania”, *Journal of Ecology*, Vol.8:No.1 (Mar 1920), pp- 1-17.

<sup>162</sup> Minutes 11/9/1918

<sup>163</sup> *Mercury* 14/8/1918

<sup>164</sup> *Mercury* 17/11/1920

States of the Commonwealth would do well to imitate in other National Parks’.

<sup>165</sup>

One month later the ranger reported having obtained young silver wattles, blackwoods, sassafras, waratah, laurel and grass trees from the Park highlands, although it is not clear whether these were for the entrance avenue or the native garden which Rodway proposed later.<sup>166</sup>

The reputation of the park was growing: the first visiting governmental/ professional group visiting being delegates from an interstate forestry conference.<sup>167</sup>

In the last three years of this life Crooke fell out with the Park Board and resigned, devoting his energy to organising large scale excursions to the Park for school children via yet another committee. His unexpected death in 1920 brought many eulogies. These hid the ill-feeling which had developed between Crooke and the Board, caused chiefly by their refusal to allow a lake to be named ‘Jollytail’ for Crooke, preferring instead ‘Lake Nicholls’, in honour of a Board member, Chief Justice and senior member of the Hobart establishment.. Crooke refused to accept defeat, using the newspaper to criticise the Board, and refusing to accept alternative natural features.

(Rodway had apparently visited the lakes in Mt Field with Herbert Nicholls. (later knighted Chief Justice), ‘when on a camping trip to the locality’ about 1900.<sup>168</sup> The article claimed that, ‘In fact, this trip really began the opening up of the present National Park’. These and other early visitors were the ‘early pioneers of the Mt Field Range’

Endorsing the name of ‘Lake Nicholls’ rather than ‘Lake Jollytail’ for that lake in 1918, several m<sup>169</sup>embers of the Board claimed familiarity with the lakes in the early 1900s. These men were H. W. Knight, (Fisheries Commission), W. H. Hudspeth. (Australian Natives Association), B. Maxwell and W. F. Dennis Butler<sup>170</sup>).

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<sup>165</sup> *Mercury*, 24/1/1923, p. 10

<sup>166</sup> Minutes, 3/7/1917

<sup>167</sup> Minutes, 11/5/1920

<sup>168</sup> Minutes, 1918

<sup>169</sup> Harrington Wedge Knight (1859 – 1932) co-founded the Derwent Sailing Boat Club in 1880 and built the yacht *Terra Linna*. He was secretary of the Fisheries Commission for a time and listed as an ‘Insurance Advisor’ for the National Mutual Life Association of Australasia Ltd. at the time of his death.

<sup>170</sup> William Frederick Dennis Butler was a bushwalker, lawyer and on the Council of the University of Tasmania. ADB, accessed 12 Jun 2018. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/butler-william-frederick-5452>

Were other factors at play in Crooke’s opposition to naming the feature ‘Nicholls’? After all, several years earlier, Nicholl’s ministry had refused to accede to a bill for an arbitrated wage system which Crooke advocated.

Behind this issue was the wider debate over park nomenclature. The Board tried to compromise and for a few years the Russell Falls River was called Crooke’s Creek. The Board reflected the war years and its scientific pedigree, naming the Park’s two main peaks Monash and Bridges, and the tarns near Lake Seal, Backhouse<sup>171</sup> and Walker.

Crooke appeared to dislike the new Director of the Government Tourist Bureau, E. T. Emmett, who was starting to promote the Park as a major tourist attraction. Crooke refused to attend the 1917 Annual Meeting, claiming the report was ‘all wrong’. Emmett had moved a motion preventing Board members from publishing comments without their approval.<sup>172</sup> At the next meeting Crooke ‘went to walk out of the room’ on seeing Emmett entering, but was persuaded to stay.

Emmett’s strong emphasis on the physical qualities of the Tasmanian landscape, and advocacy of a healthy life-style -. (he was a keen cyclist as well as bush-walker) - excluded all reference to Tasmania’s convict past. This became the predominant official trend from the 1920s onwards.<sup>173</sup> This exclusion perhaps irked Crooke, who, like other Tasmanians, remembered the recent past all too well.) After all, he wanted Mt Field to be a People’s Park, not a tourists’ park. Emmett was initiating photographs and other promotional material to attract tourists to the National Park. Beattie produced a set of 60 lantern slides to help, and Emmett pointed to the potential of winter sports as an attraction.<sup>174</sup> In 1921 a colour brochure was produced by Emmett’s Tourist Department to promote the Park.

William threw himself into organising children’s excursions to the Park. In February 1917, 1200 pupils travelled by train (on the line he had lobbied to extend) to visit the National Park, which Crooke had helped to nurture.<sup>175</sup> By July, 5,213 passengers had travelled by train to visit the Park, and more by Webster-Rometch’s coaches.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Both named after James Backhouse Walker, F.R.G.S. and former member of the Royal Society and vice-chancellor of the University of Tasmania. <https://www.placenames.tas.gov.au>, accessed 12 Jun 2018.

<sup>172</sup> Board Minutes, 2/10/1917

<sup>173</sup> Emmett later wrote a ‘Short History of Tasmania’. This does not refer to the convict past, concentrating instead on the explorers and industries.

<sup>174</sup> Minutes, 8/6/20

<sup>175</sup> Minutes, AA 593, 3/4/1917

<sup>176</sup> op cit.

Crooke failed to attend the Board’s meeting, and continued to attack its members from the press.

Chairman Dobson said that, ‘as the father of the Park, the Board would be glad to have his assistance.’<sup>177</sup>

In the end, the Board ridiculed Crooke's obsession with ‘Lake Jollytail’, chiding him publicly. Then in his seventies, Crooke was also shocked by the destruction by fire of his fishing cottage on the river at Tyenna in 1919. He died a year later.

By 1922, Mt Field National Park was the centre icon of Tasmania’s tourist and scenic attractions. Near National Park at the entrance, three boarding houses operated, *Park House* (Charles Marriott), *Falls View* (C. Browning) and *Park View* (Mrs Cuthbertson.)<sup>178</sup> Skating was the new attraction for visitors, heavily promoted by E. T. Emmett’s new Tourist Department.

Despite their differences, E. T. Emmett was the Board member who pushed most strongly for a memorial to Crooke, particularly after a public appeal failed to produce any funds.

Given his impact of early 20th century Tasmania, the lack of acknowledgment of William Crooke’s efforts -he’s not in the ADB- is to be regretted- but perhaps is not surprising. Like a good journalist, he managed to offend his admirers as well as his detractors. His death, rather than cause anguish probably allowed many a sigh of relief!

Why did he come back to Tasmania which his father had left in disgrace? Was it aesthetics or defiant revenge? Being anti -establishment and anti-union, he has been revered by few. But someone who valued the freedom of the press, and used it so effectively, saw the need for conservation and the need to give children early experience of the beauty of the natural world, galvanised others into establishing the Scenery & Preservation Board and our first national park is worthy of remembering. There was no personal gain, only service to the common good, on which all concurred.

Managing a reserve with a board of dedicated specialists became redundant in 1970 with the ending of the Scenery & Preservation Board under the new National Parks & Wildlife Department.<sup>179</sup>

After all the writing and lobbying, William Crooke’s passion was still to fish in a clear mountain stream.

His sense of empathy with the bush still attracts visitors to Mt Field and other Tasmanian national parks.

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<sup>177</sup>Merc 14/5/1918

<sup>178</sup>Hotel & Boarding House Directory. 1922, TL.

<sup>179</sup> In the 1990’s the administration of Port Arthur Historic Site and Ben Lomond Reserve and ski field under boards of management saw a return to an old system- but with the dominant position being held by business interests rather than scientists and naturalists- let alone historians.

In a reflective column in 1910 he makes a brief reference to Henry Thoreau, and follows with this poem;

THE RIVER  
There is a river in the range  
I love to think about  
Perhaps the searching feet of change  
Have never found it out. .  
Ah! Oftentimes I used to look  
Upon the banks and long  
To steal the beauty of that brook  
And put it in a song.  
I wonder if the slopes of moss  
In dreams so dear to me  
The falls of flower and flower-like floss  
Are as they used to be.  
I wonder if the waterfalls  
The singers far and fair  
That gleamed between the wet green walls  
Are still the marvels there.  
Ah! let me hope that in that place  
The old familiar things  
To which I turn a wistful face  
Have never taken wings.  
Let me retain the fancy still  
That, past the lordly range,  
There always shines in folds of hill  
One spot secure from change.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Merc 1/9/1910 p 2 c 5



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