

Speech
Presented by Rotarian Chris Brooker
at the opening of the
Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Rainforest Discovery Centre
on 29 February 2017



Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman.

I congratulate Sunshine Coast Council for their foresight in upgrading the facilities here to the magnificent structure in which we are and thank you for inviting me to talk as recognition of Rotary's involvement in what is one of the longest running projects involving Rotary in Australia. 58 years.

Unfortunately, sometimes the history of our contribution to the Reserve gets lost in the annals of time and records.

Photos of the original opening show Sir Henry Abel Smith escorted by two Rotarians, Norm Tesch as Past President and Vic Waddell current President.

I have relied heavily on the book Rotary in Maleny, written by Jack Wilcox OAM and my own recollections.

In October 1959, after the Club had discussions with Landsborough Shire Council and in consultation with Elizabeth Thynne, it was agreed that the new Rotary Club of Maleny would create and maintain the Reserve and Sanctuary as the Club's first major project.

Without Rotary, this Reserve wouldn't have happened and we have been involved with the Reserve in various capacities since then.

The Charter President, Norm Tesch, wished to have the Reserve open in October 1960. Thousands of hours of volunteer work over the next two decades by Rotary members, wives, their children and friends turned the 100 acres of Natural Scrub into an enduring tourist attraction. .

Almost every weekend, most of the members worked to clear dead trees and lantana, clear and establish walking tracks from the original snigging tracks, dig toilets, remove rubbish (no wheelie bins in those days) identify and name trees, erect shelter sheds, water tanks and toilet blocks, tables and fireplaces and mow the grass. Imagine 12 Rotarians with old Victas in a line mowing grass in summer every weekend.

The Cairn at the front was erected as a memorial to Mary Williamina Cairncross in 1964; Sir Henry Abel Smith again did the honours.

In 1968 the small bridge over the creek was another Rotary project.

1985 saw the replacement of tables and perimeter posts and in 1987, the Rixon Burnett walk was declared. Rixon was a past Rotarian and Shire Councillor and probably pivotal in the original talks between Rotary and Landsborough Council.

1989 . . Rotary funded and constructed a children's playground and Apex built the fence along the side of the park track and in 2002 we donated 5 hardwood seats and we today maintain representation on the management committee of the Reserve.

As a Rotarian, I am very proud of our history and continuing participation with Mary Cairncross. Another Rotarian, my dad, Bert Brooker, was involved right from the start and I was one of the kids who spent countless hours playing on the grass here, catching leeches in the creek and honing my driving skills, at 15, by taking Bert's Falcon for a spin down to Landsborough Rd cnr. Only did that once though.

Mayor Jamieson and Councillor McKay, once again my sincere congratulations.

Thank you.

