

PRACTICALITIES

FIRE FREQUENCY CAN CHANGE VEGETATION COMMUNITIES



Malcolm Gath standing on the roadway which stopped the progress of the second fire. The sheoaks, which were regenerating on the right hand side of the road, were killed

DURING the 1960's when lighter soils in upland areas were cleared for farming, clearing fires often escaped into the remaining vegetation. In the case of a property now owned by the Gath's of Cuballing, this caused a complete change in vegetation communities.

Prior to the fires, the area had been a mixed woodland of wandoo and sheoak around a granite outcrop and adjacent to that, powderbark wandoo and sheoak around a laterite breakaway.

After the first clearing fire in 1960, the surrounding arable land was put into crop for several years and not grazed. Multiple cropping helped eliminate poison bush (*Gastrolobium* sp.), which readily regenerated within the crop and was toxic to stock. This lack of grazing allowed dense sheoak thickets to regenerate around the rocky areas outcompeting other species.

Four years later another clearing fire came from a different direction, this time Malcolm Gath helped the owners to stop it at the road. The fire killed the regenerating sheoaks which had not set seed. This left room for mature powderbark wandoos at the top of the ridge, which were not affected by fire, to recolonise the

Awil Baxter