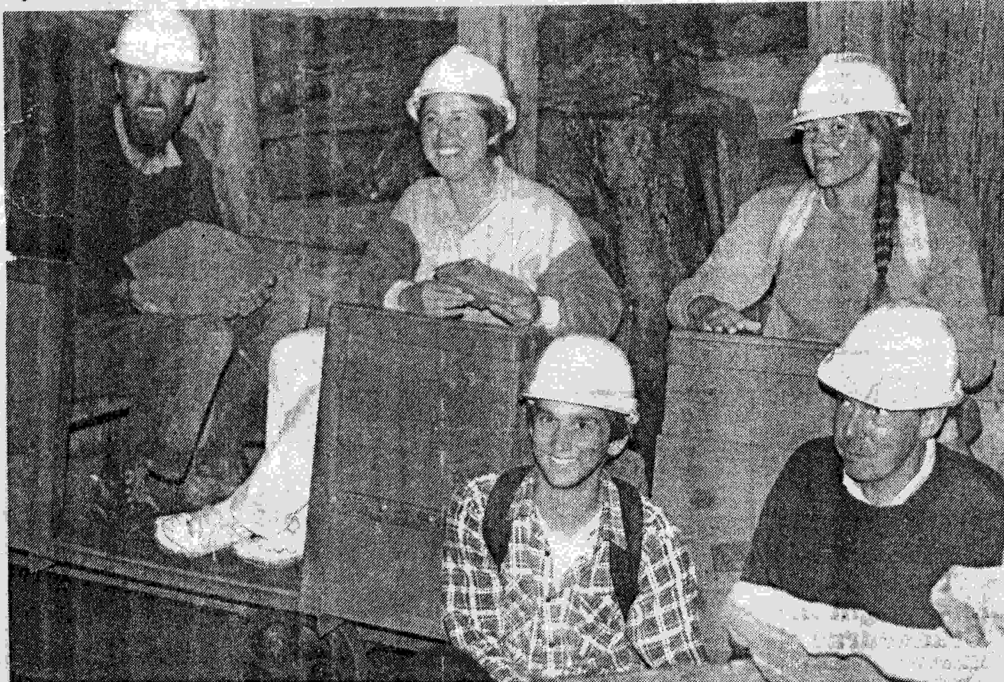


# Dinosaur dig draws visitors

The dinosaur dig on a beach near Inverloch attracted a large gallery of spectators; locals during the week and visitors at weekends.



Palaeontology students from Monash University were in their element down among the ancient coalfields near Wonthaggi.

Coal is not just fuel for burning to these students, but the fossilised forests which once existed millions of years ago.

They visited the State Coal Mine historic reserve in Wonthaggi last Friday with (left) university research assistant, Mike Cleeland, and Lesley Kool, who have been working at the prehistoric site near Inverloch.

Students are Andrew Kos, (kneeling) and Sanja Van Huet.

The dig finished last week and several hundred pieces of bones and teeth have been taken back to Monash University.

Here, palaeontology research assistant, Lesley Kool, will begin the delicate task of preparing and removing bones from the surrounding rock so they can be identified.

The fossil dig was carried out in an ancient riverbed and many fragments of primitive turtles, some 120 million years old, were found embedded in the rock.

Mrs Kool said that fragments of small dinosaurs were also found, including skull bones, isolated teeth and well preserved small limbs.

"We were particularly pleased that so many school children were involved in our dig.

"We hope the experience will be of lasting value to them," she said.

"We would also like to thank all the people who, through their enthusiasm and interest, supported and contributed to our very successful fossil dig."

She said that it was of vital importance that local residents maintained their vigilance of this site, a valuable part of the country's coastal heritage.

"As the site becomes more widely known there is the risk that unauthorised collectors may attempt to remove rock and cause irreparable damage to scientifically valuable specimens," Mrs Kool explained.

Any such activity should be reported as soon as possible to the Inverloch depot of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, on (056) 74 1236.

"Local support will ensure that the Inverloch dinosaurs remain in Australia in good care and available for study or display."

The dig was a joint venture of the Museum of Victoria and the Department of Earth Sciences at Monash