

CHAPTER FIVE – ON THE FARM

The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms ... But none of them owns the landscape. There is property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title. – Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature and Selected Essays

A report from the Land Commissioner at Atherton on 19 July 1935 mentions an old lady living in abject poverty on a 255 acre dairy farm at Glen Allyn. The house and the property are described as being in a condition of disrepair, and there is a concern on the part of the officials that the conditions of her selection holding are not being met. The report concludes that the ageing Miss Raymont is utterly 'dependent' on the 'natives' working on the property and that should they leave, the Land Commissioner would have no alternative but to dispossess Miss Raymont.

Tales of dependency and dispossession constitute familiar stories in Aboriginal Australia, though I would imagine less so in Australian Settler society – the society that the spinster Laura Raymont and her two bachelor brothers, Ernie and George, were very much a part of at the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 15)¹⁶.

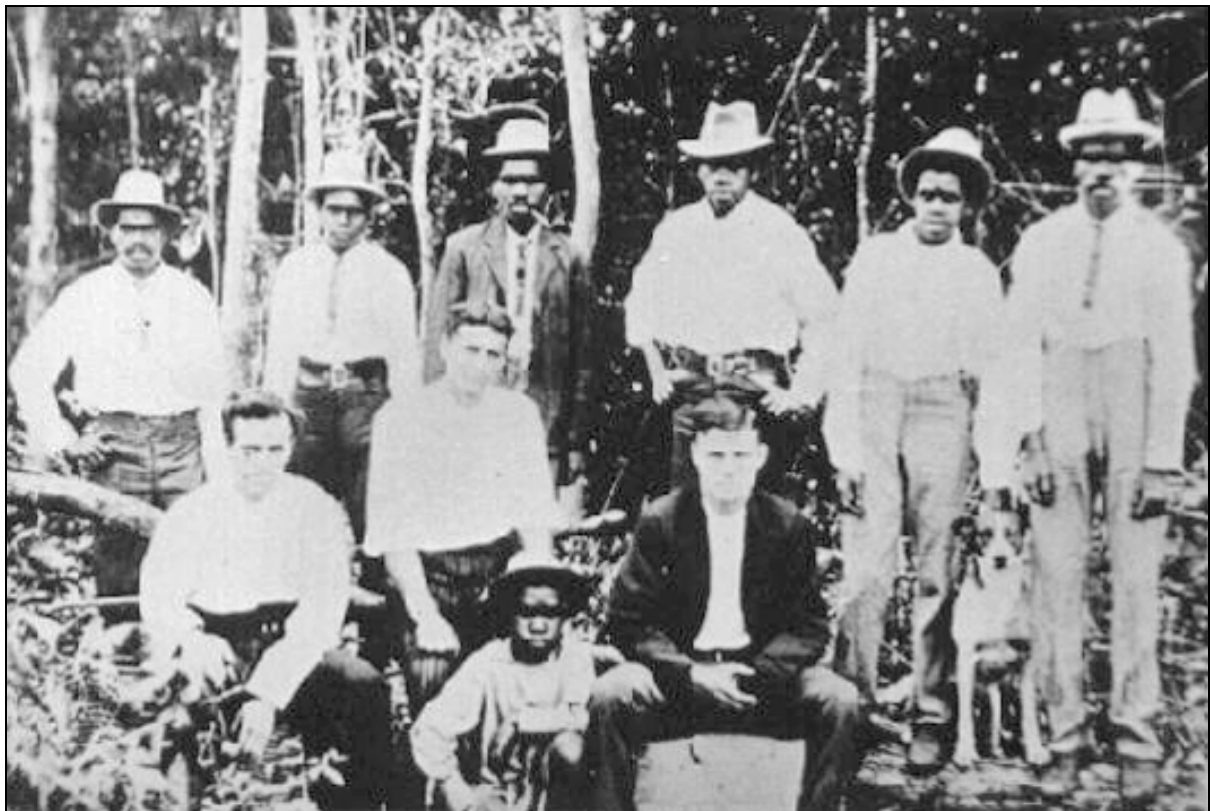
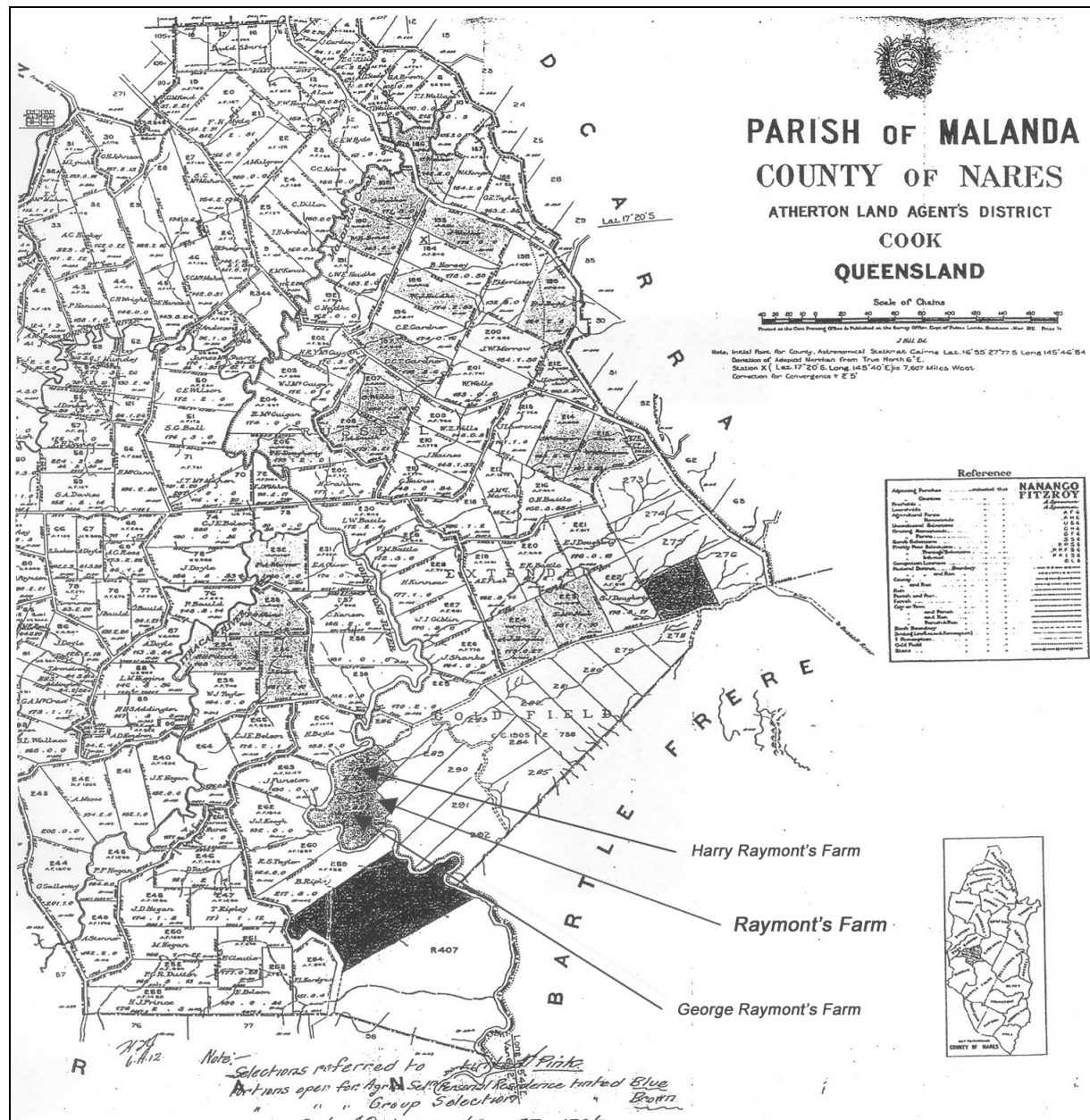


Figure 15: 'The Raymont Brothers with Aboriginal workers, ca. 1920, Malanda' (Photo courtesy of the Eacham Historical Society).

¹⁶ Edgar Short reports that George, Ernie and Laura Raymont were originally from Devonshire and were "among the first settlers in the district" (Short 1988: 39). According to Short, "Ernie returned to his native Devonshire and opened a shop ... but George stayed to become a timber dealer, and Laura worked their farm for many years until her death" (loc. cit.).

These three siblings were among the first Europeans to take up land in the Parish of Malanda when the area was proclaimed open for selection in 1907 (Map 2). As indicated in the previous chapters, these selectors weren't the first Europeans in the area though – timber cutters after 'red gold' or red cedar had gone through the 'scrub' in the early 1880s, while the Russell River Goldfield had been operating since 1886. So by the time the first selectors arrived, a generation of Ngadjon-Jii people had already had some form of interaction with Europeans. However, by 1911 gold mining was on the wane and Boonjie was no longer a thriving settlement. The push was on to clear the 'scrub', "considered useless once the cedar trees were cleared" (Birtles 1982: 39), sow pasture and stock the land with dairy cattle.



Map 2: Allocated selections in the Parish of Malanda, 1911 (Map: Survey Office, Department of Public Lands, Brisbane; Graphics: Birgit Kuehn).

European accounts of settlement of this area rarely mention Aboriginal involvement in the creation of these grassy, pastoral landscapes. To some extent, this silence can be explained by prominent narratives of the day that spoke of widespread Aboriginal dispossession and 'dispersal', as extermination was euphemistically known. Or allied discourses, which portrayed a dejected and acculturated Indigenous population, which by the turn of the twentieth century was the subject of government surveillance, intervention and control known as 'protection'. I would also suggest that after thirty years of contact with Europeans, and in light of official removal policies, Aboriginal people had developed a way of maintaining a certain 'strategic invisibility' in what could still be considered a frontier zone. Yet, a number of photographs from the period (Figure 16) indicate that Aboriginal men and women were used as a "cheap and readily available source of labour" (Birtles 1982: 5) in the production of 'Agricultural Farms', as the selections were destined to become (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 9). Aboriginal involvement in 'land improvement', as selection clearing was officially designated, transformed their status as a "source of menace and danger" to the Europeans to one of being "practically valuable assistants" (cited in Birtles 1995: 24). In the early 1900s, these 'valuable assistants' could still be found living a traditional subsistence lifestyle in the rainforest.

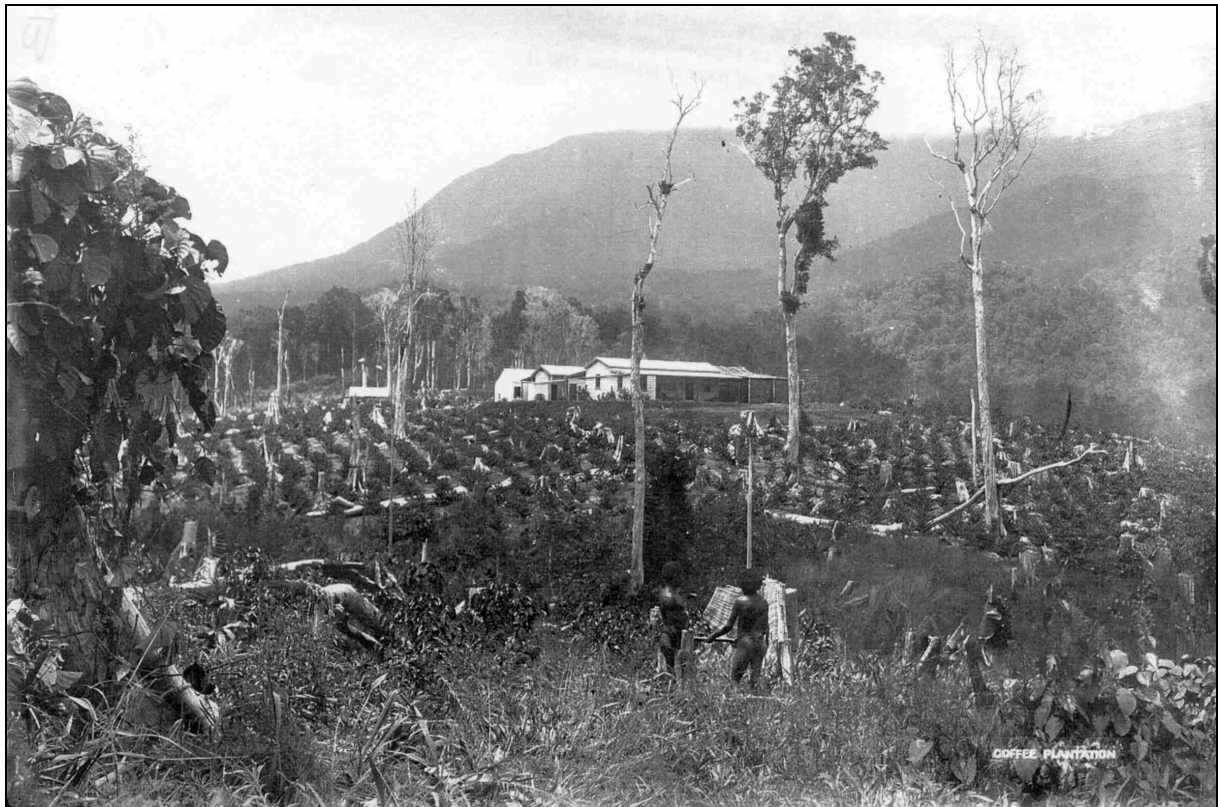


Figure 16: 'Coffee plantation 1900, Russell River' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

INTO THE CLEARING

As the Europeans breached what seemed to them to be an impenetrable 'jungle', they regularly came across Aboriginal encampments. In the words of one cedar cutter in the Atherton area upon encountering a 'native track':

There are roads off the main track to each of their townships, which consist of well-thatched gunyahs, big enough to hold five or six darkies. We counted eleven townships since we came to the edge of the scrub ... At certain seasons this must be a crowded place with blacks ... (Mulligan 1877: 399).

In the Malanda area, selectors didn't have to travel to Atherton to secure a labour force. In his memoirs of the early years of European settlement in the Malanda area, Edgar Short recalls that across the river from their block at Glen Allyn was "the home of a small family group who had been trying to maintain their tribal way of life..." (Short 1988: 56). In 1912, the year the Short family arrived in Malanda, their selection abutted Raymont's Farm along the North Johnstone River.

Another settler in the Malanda parish, Henry Tranter, points out that:

[S]ome early settlers, in order to retain the services of an aboriginal family on their property, provided a few sheets of iron and perhaps some timber to help them with a slightly better shelter than could be made from leaves and bark (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 5).

The Swedish naturalist, Eric Mjöberg, who was in the Malanda area in 1913-1914, describes a number of similar arrangements where European settlers, usually single men, lived with a group of Aborigines. For example, he talks of 'Watson' from London whose shack in the scrub at that time constituted an "outpost of civilisation". Watson apparently led "a simple life in the company of three Aboriginal boys, whom he looks after with paternal care" (Mjöberg 1918: 49) (Figure 17). Mjöberg's other descriptions of the residential conditions of the settlers point to less avuncular situations. For example, describing the living arrangements of a German settler, Mjöberg writes:

He lived with a group of Aborigines in a shack ... He harboured an obvious passion for one of the dark-eyed beauties, and did not keep this a secret (Mjöberg 1918: 57).

The German and his group of Aborigines, and Watson and his three 'boys', were busy clearing the 'scrub' on their selections, creating what Mjöberg would later describe as a smoking "battlefield" (ibid: 58) (Figure 18). While Mjöberg's account gives the impression that large numbers of young Aboriginal men were involved in 'scrub-clearing', Henry Tranter, local pioneer and one time president of the Eacham Historical Society, records the names of only two Aboriginal men who worked with Europeans in felling the scrub (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6). In his account of the pioneering achievements of the English family in Malanda, Peter English only mentions an "aborigine by the name of Jacky Cow" as assisting in the dismantling of the Tolga sawmill and its transport to Malanda in the early 1920s (English 1964: 48). Apart from this brief reference to a later period of European settlement, local Aboriginal people do not feature in Peter English's account of the settlement of Malanda.

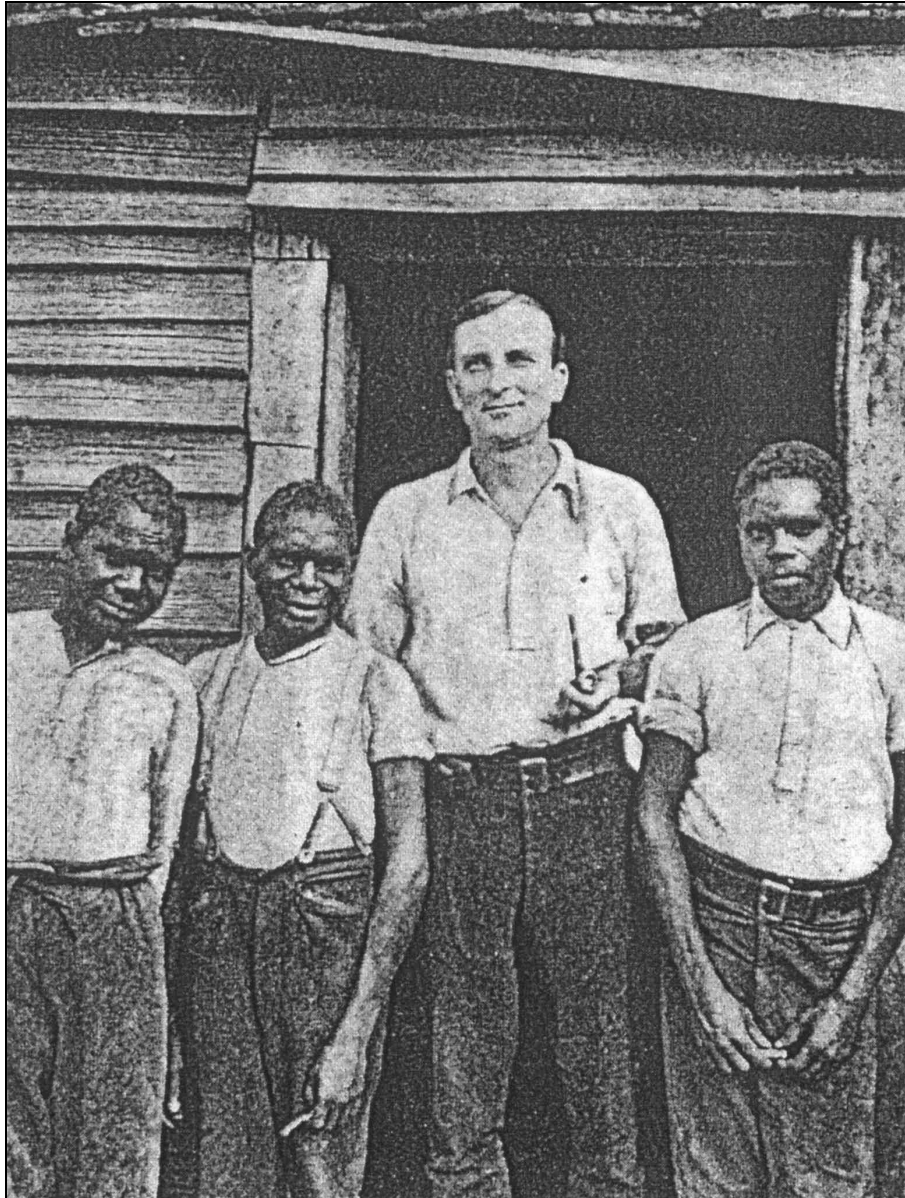


Figure 17: 'Charlie Watson, 1912-14, outside his Malanda hut posing with three Negroid men' (from Mjöberg 1918. Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Auntie Jessie Calico recalls that her father, Billy Calico, also worked for a number of settlers, timber cutting:

My father did timber cutting at Tarzali for the Wharton family. My father cleared Wharton's block. Billy Calico also worked for the Haines family timber cutting along Haines Road. We were living at the camp on the Ithaca Creek, myself, Granny Polly, and Grandad Mick Calico. They were scrub felling for Mr Wharton.

Terry Birtles suggests that the short-stature of rainforest Aborigines limited their use as labourers in European tree-felling activities. Speaking of the red cedar timber cutters, Birtles states that the "pit sawyers depended upon Kanaka axeman ... and taller Aborigines from coastal areas further south" (Birtles 1968: 123).

The Europeans, sensitive to their own “landscape taming practices”, sometimes, though not often, comment upon the technical skills of axemanship wielded by their Aboriginal workers supposedly as a result of European tutelage. For example, Barlow Thomas who ‘helped’ Jack Prince fell “the first 30 acres of scrub [in the Malanda area] on his block” in 1907, is described by Tranter as “an expert axeman” (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6).

Barlow Thomas’ axemanship is perhaps not so surprising given that prior to the arrival of Europeans, rainforest Aboriginal people used stone axes and other implements to prepare the cleared space of local bora grounds and cut shields and swords from the buttresses of trees. As Christie Palmerston observed, in the post-contact period rainforest Aborigines used steel tomahawks to obtain grubs from the woody depths of these trees and to also keep native paths clear of vegetation.

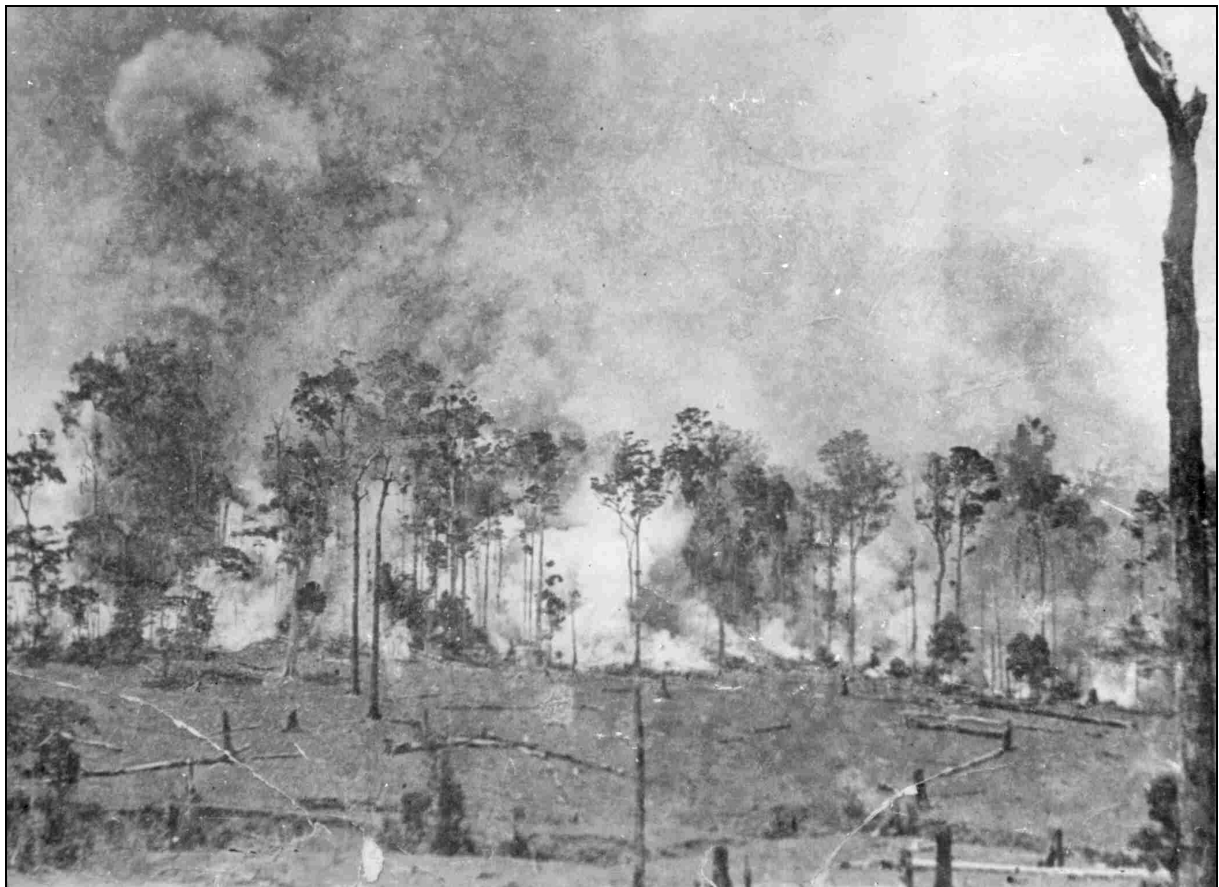


Figure 18: ‘Burning off scrub, Malanda 1907 at G. Plath’s farm’ (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

The clearing activities of Aboriginal people were, however, pale in comparison to those of the early settlers. Selectors were required to live on their block and make ‘improvements’, or else forfeit their selection. As Tranter notes, ‘improvements’ were “interpreted as falling, burning, grassing and fencing” (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 38). The early settlers of the Malanda district set to improving the land with an unbridled vigour and determination. Tranter records that some selectors cleared hundreds of acres in the first couple of years. In ‘North to the Timbers’, Peter English, a member of the pioneering English family, describes the day-to-day work of the men of his family and the other selectors in the Parish of Malanda:

All this time the boys were busy clearing the land, burning off the logs in the paddocks, erecting fences, making roads in the property, and erecting yards and other necessary buildings (English 1964: 32).

English recalls that at the peak of clearing in the Malanda district (Figure 19), there were thirty-five bullock teams, with an average of twenty-four beasts in each team (English 1964: 46).

Indeed, in the four years from 1907 when the first blocks were allotted, to 1911 when the remaining selections were taken up, Europeans had almost single-handedly cleared large swathes of the rainforest, torched the newly-felled scrub, set up sawmills to process the selected timbers removed from their blocks, built their homesteads and the Malanda Hotel from this timber, established the first dairy farms, and sown the cleared and burnt landscape with a mixture of imported grasses (notably *Paspalum* and *Rhodes* grass).

While most pioneer accounts celebrate this rapid transformation of the environment as an outstanding accomplishment in the face of unimaginable hardships, Edgar Short recalls some of the destruction and loss also associated with this period:

In the first few years after we arrived great columns of smoke could be seen in every direction as soon as the weather remained dry for a couple of months, each one meant that thousands of dollars worth of valuable timber was going up in smoke (Short 1988: 14).



Figure 19: 'Large felled tree, Malanda, ready to be transported to the sawmill' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

As Short remarks, in the early years of settlement the Forestry Department “left all the timber standing on the original blocks” (ibid: 23)¹⁷. Only later did the Forestry Department sell all the ‘first-class timber’ before opening the blocks for settlement.

With the exception of Edgar Short perhaps, few settlers in their recollections of the ‘early days’ comment upon the disruption, and in some cases, loss of Aboriginal people’s livelihood with the destruction of their rainforest home. Walter E. Roth, Protector of Aborigines, reports upon the effects of clearing and the fencing of blocks as early as 1901:

Atherton forms a case in point. Here there are some 250 aboriginals occupying from time immemorial some 64 square miles of rich scrub, which was full of native food, both animal and vegetable. Unfortunately for the autochthonous population this land is rapidly being felled and cleared, and the blacks have accordingly to travel further and further afield to find a sufficient supply of their natural food (cited in Birtles 1982: 62).

While clearing was seen as a necessary ‘improvement’ in the establishment of ‘agricultural farms’, as Paul Carter observes, “it cannot be explained simply as a mistaken theory of agriculture” (Carter 1996: 9). Certainly, one of the effects of ground clearing was to “erase the common ground where communication with the ‘Natives’ might have occurred” (ibid: 6). It could be argued that European clearing of the rainforests expressed an “overwhelming need to clear away doubt ... to silence the whispers” (loc. cit.), to enact an environmental amnesia about the original Indigenous occupiers of the land. In place of the unique rainforests and a distinctive Indigenous spatial history, Europeans erected houses, fences, hotels, railways, roads, and so on, physical look-alikes of another world, some twelve thousand miles away in Britain. In smoothing and enclosing the ground to create these monuments to the idea of civilisation, the settlers effectively desecrated an already cultured and memorialised space – the ancient landscape produced by Ngadjon-Jii people and other rainforest Aboriginal groups. As the many commemorative accounts of European settlement attest, scrub felling cleared the land of its other cultural histories (Figure 20).



Figure 20: ‘View of Malanda, 1934’ (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

¹⁷ As Birtles (1995: 23) points out, the *Land Act* of 1898 “transferred to the selector all rights to timber on a selection as a means of financing land “improvement” (a term which embraced rainforest removal)”.

In many ways reflecting the environmental transformations taking place at the time, the cultural memories of Ngadjon-Jii people regarding the widespread scrub-felling that took place on their country after the area had been opened up for selection under *The Group Settlement Act* of 1907 are both fragmentary and sparse. Ngadjon-Jii recollections appear more focused upon their survival and adaptation to their rapidly shrinking rainforest homelands.

LIVING WITH MISS RAYMONT

It was around the time of Mjöberg's visit that Molly Raymond, her Aboriginal husband, Jim Brown, and her children Harry and Alice, were sent by the local police officer, Sergeant Seary, to work on 'Raymont's Farm' and thus they came to 'look after' Laura Raymont. Molly's daughter, Emma, was born on the property soon after their arrival, in 1918. The fact that Molly and her family stayed on the property until the late 1930s reflects the Eacham Shire Council's 1920 request to the government of the day to amend the 'Act' to "allow aborigines to remain in [the] Malanda district instead of being removed to Missions" (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 61).



Figure 21: Aerial photograph of Glen Allyn, indicating the location of the Raymont Farm and *Nabanaba* (Photo: Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Graphics: Shannon Hogan).

In late 2003, we visited Raymont's Farm at Glen Allyn (Figure 21), and Auntie Emma recalled her days living with and working for Miss Raymont:

I used to play around here. It's terrible. Make you cry. It makes me feel sad to see how it's tumbled down. This was the room for the boys. We were here. An old English woman, single, she had a dairy farm, Laura Raymont, lived here. That's where I got me name from. I sort of grew up here. Mum was here, my brother. My sister, Alice, was away working, she would come back here for holidays. Miss Raymont had boys working for her, Pommy boys, they slept here. We slept out there. My mother did the cooking. Mum did housework and in the dairy too. My brother used to help. Miss Raymont had a brother named Ernie, that's where Ernie got his name from, and also George. They didn't live here. They got married and went away. I think Ernie went back to England. Her brothers built the house, Ernie was the carpenter. I was just a little one here. I went to school at Glen Allyn.

As we step through the front door of the now derelict Raymont's Farmhouse, we can see a patch of remnant rainforest, less than a hundred metres away. On one side of this rainforest pocket are cleared paddocks, on the other side, the ordered rows of a tea plantation. Auntie Emma calls this relic rainforest, *Nabanaba*:

You go inside there, there's a lot of white stones around and that's why they call it that, Nabanaba. They had camps up there in the scrub. My grandmother was living up there. Grandma Sally [Gungudja]. She lived in a midja. Made out of grass, palm leaves and ginger leaves.



Figure 22: 'An Aboriginal camp, Atherton Tableland, showing *mia mia* [midja] and *dilly bag*' (Photo courtesy of Cairns Historical Society).

Old Granny Emily and another old woman who lived out in the bush all her life, she came here and she had a little camp out there, her name was Midji. She couldn't speak English, just talk language. My mum used to live up there too. Old Pop lived there, Grandad Jim, and Ernie's dad, Harry Raymond. We used to come down here [to the farmhouse] everyday and work. Mum did. Mum used to come and milk. We had to pull our weight and milk too and work around the farm. When we finished work we went back to the scrub. We lived in there. We used to go looking for mungara [turkey] and djaban [eel] there. We ate bibiya [edible heart of the Alexandra Palm], yabalum [Calamus australis], galadja [edible tree-fern] and wait-a-while berries. We lived on djambun [grub], my granny used to make me eat that. Murri used to do a lot of walking. My granny [Gungudja] used to take me looking for turkey eggs [bumbu] and turtle.

As Auntie Emma recalls, on the dairy farm at Glen Allyn, the Aboriginal Raymont family lived in gender-segregated *midja* or traditional leaf and palm frond dwellings (Figure 22), near an area of remnant rainforest known in the local language as *Nabanaba*. Ngadjon-Jii people collected their water from the nearby North Johnstone River. At this point in time, settlers employing Aborigines were not required to provide "satisfactory sanitary conveniences". Indeed, it wasn't until 1962 that Malanda residents "who have aborigines living on their land" were instructed by the Eacham Shire Council to provide such facilities (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 63).

While given rations in return for their work, Molly and her family continued to exploit traditional food sources such as scrub turkey from the remaining forest tracts and catch fish and eels in the nearby North Johnstone River. In between household chores on the farm, Molly and a number of older women who were also camped at *Nabanaba*, collected *gungi* (yellow walnut) and other rainforest nuts, producing an edible flour from the grinding and leaching processes associated with the preparation of these foodstuffs.

Living under the 'Act', Molly and her family worked on Raymont's Farm (Figure 23) until the late 1930s. Laura Raymont moved to Mareeba after World War II and later died there in the 1950s. This long and intimate association with the property and the Raymonts is reflected in the acquisition of the family's European surname¹⁸. While Auntie Emma and Ernie are also named after the Raymont siblings, there is little in these names to locate them in the world of the European Raymonts. Emma and Ernie, like many other Aboriginal people so named, bear no resemblance whatsoever to their English namesakes. The specificity of these English names clearly signals to others in this close-knit community the status of the Ngadjon-Jii people so named as having a connection with Raymont's Farm. In this sense, the names 'brand' people as the Aboriginal 'workers' and 'dependents' of white land-owners as effectively as any physical marker. These English names may place Aboriginal people in settler history and locate them in a white space, but only for a very short period of time, and only at a cost in terms of their identity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the naming of Aboriginal workers in this way was not an isolated custom and today, while their European namesakes may have disappeared, many of the names of these early settlers persist in an Indigenous form. In this respect, one

¹⁸ To clarify the situation regarding the spelling of this surname, it appears that government authorities referred to Molly and her children, Harry, Alice and Emma, by the surname 'Raymond', suggesting a mis-hearing of the final consonant. In time, Molly and her immediate family came to be known by the surname Raymond. Molly's descendants, however, notably Ernie and his sister Margaret, use the original spelling of the surname, Raymont.

could say that the social history of settler society is inscribed as much onto Aboriginal bodies as it is onto early maps depicting a landscape of Anglo-European names and geometric spaces.



Figure 23: Auntie Emma Johnston at Raymont's Farm, August 2005 (Photo: Sandra Pannell).

From Auntie Emma's account of going to school in the region in the 1920s, it seems that other names were also part of this landscape and the regional lingua franca:

When I went to school at Glen Allyn and Butchers Creek, I had some fights with those white kids. They used to call me names. We'd get stuck into them. They'd call me "black gin" and "nigger". That's what we used to fight over. Reckon you don't call us names. Elsie Battle used to help me fight those kids. We had to win. They'd call us some awful names you know.

As Auntie Emma's response to these racist taunts and slurs demonstrates, the act of naming is a struggle about, and for, power. For Auntie Emma and other Ngadjon-Jii people, fighting back and against these accusatory names is about reclaiming their own history and identity.

The act of naming, however, was not the sole preserve of Europeans. Ngadjon-Jii people applied Indigenous terms to some of the Europeans who employed them:

We called James English bulbul [old man] and his wife wulbin [old lady]. Our people were working for the Englishs. All the lady folk worked for the Englishs. We were scared of them. – Auntie Jessie Calico

The use of these terms point to a linguistic and social history suppressed by the imposition of European names. For Ngadjon-Jii people, an important element of personal and group identity is the possession of an Indigenous name. These names can refer to faunal or floral species, natural phenomena such as stars, named places in the Indigenous landscape, or cultural artefacts. Auntie Jessie Calico explains the meaning of her Ngadjon-Jii name, *Bududji*:

*That's an old blanket made out of fig tree. Used to cut bark from top to bottom.
Take it to the river and smash it with rocks.*

Ngadjon-Jii people see their role as bestowing but not creating new 'tribal' names. The names derive from individuals in previous generations. Names are not acquired automatically at birth. Rather, adults observe the behaviour and physical characteristics of a child and consult amongst themselves before an appropriate name from a Ngadjon-jii predecessor is ascribed.

Speaking of the acquisition of a personal name, the anthropologist, Lauriston Sharp, reports that:

Among the Ngatjan a personal name, whether derived from a place or other totem, is given by the father who then 'puts the name under a rock or in a cave' in the child's own country which is part of the larger clan territory (Sharp 1939: 445).

In addition to an Indigenous name, Ngadjon-Jii people are also accorded a personal totem. These may include; scrub turkey (*mungara*), tree-climbing kangaroo (*mabi*), yellow walnut (*gungi*), native bee (*djubawuda*), and swamp eel (*gunadjawa*).

Unlike the European names they possess, which do not bind people to the "cultural genealogy" (Carter 1987: 330) suggested by the name, the naming system of Ngadjon-Jii people serves to affirm a number of important social, spatial and environmental connections. Socially, 'traditional names' not only link individuals to Ngadjon-Jii predecessors, but they are also regarded as an important expression of tribal identity. Spatially, many of the names link individuals to culturally and historically important places within Ngadjon-Jii country, and establish a custodial role in relation to those places. Environmentally, personal names derived from the names of faunal and floral species establish a duty of care towards these species resulting in personal prohibitions against consumption or use.

Some hint of the existence of this system of naming is given in a local newspaper article. In 1961, Patrick English, James English's son, published a piece in the *North Queensland Register* on the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Malanda region, "Our Aborigines". In this article he lists the 'aboriginal names' of a large number of Ngadjon-Jii people, many of who worked for him and his family. The names appear stripped of their meaning, preserved out of context like museum specimens, and probably to most of the European readers, totally unpronounceable. The names stand awkwardly as curiosities from a by-gone era, as meaningless to Europeans as the many Indigenous place names that form the linguistic contours of this settled landscape.

While key indices of settler social identity were reproduced in the Aboriginal community through the ascription of 'English' names, key elements of Indigenous identity were maintained in other exercises of linguistic colonisation. In the Parish of Malanda, and indeed throughout the Atherton Tableland, sidings, stations, and towns, together with a number of geophysical features, retained or were accorded an Aboriginal name. For example, Malanda

(‘name for the Upper North Johnstone River’)¹⁹, Tolga (‘red mud’), Kairi (‘Mazlin Creek’), Kulara (‘fig tree’), Yungaburra (‘enquiring or questioning’), Peeramon (‘name of a nearby hill’), Tarzali (‘water gum’), Minbun (‘brown possum’) (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 25; Birtles 1995: 25), to name just a few places, have their linguistic origins in a different cultural geography than the one that commemorates European individuals and events.

While the Atherton Tableland constitutes an entangled linguistic landscape, as Birtles suggests, “the passage of time has dimmed the meaning of these and other Aboriginal words adopted by the invading culture” (Birtles 1995: 25). Perhaps it is not so much a dimming of memory but an issue of understanding. As one settler account states, “all attempts to interpret their [the Aboriginal names] meaning end in confusion (May 1969: 3B).

While settler accounts of the history of the Eacham Shire state that the remaining Aborigines “are rapidly adopting the life of the white man” (May 1969: 3C), the ethnographic evidence suggests the existence of two different cultural worlds which at times intersect, collide, but never really overlap. It is clear that Europeans remain remarkably ill-informed about the history and cultural complexities of Ngadjon-Jii society. Most of the settlers know little about the story places and the social meaning of the lands they control. At the same time, Ngadjon-Jii people find whole areas of white culture closed to them. Perhaps the widest divisions lie in Ngadjon-Jii people’s maintenance of many pre-colonial values and ways of interacting with each other and the environment. For as Europeans strove to create culturally comforting and familiar vistas of deforested, agrarian landscapes, Ngadjon-Jii people went about their own everyday rituals of producing locality and the structure of sentiments associated with country and kin.

For Molly Raymond and her family, life on Raymont’s Farm wasn’t altogether an alienating experience. The farm was part of their traditional lands, on which, as R. M. W. Dixon observes, Molly had been brought up in “a totally tribal way” (Dixon 1983: 175). Until her death in 1992, Molly maintained and instilled in her children Ngadjon-Jii beliefs and values about her tribal lands.

For Ngadjon-Jii people, these lands are more than just an economic resource that requires ‘improvement’. Country is regarded as a conscious entity that generates and responds to their actions. The sentience of this landscape is manifested in numerous ways.

Unbeknown to the white Raymonts, the river that fronts their property contains a number of story-waters. Some, like the ‘gubi hole’, a stretch of the river just below the homestead, are considered so powerful that they pose a real threat to strangers, and need to be spoken to by the traditional occupiers of the land. Auntie Emma explains the danger of living with the snake:

Gubi hole down there [in the North Johnstone River]. Granny used to tell us never to go near it. “Never go fishing there”. Story water there. Can’t go down there, you’ll never come back. They call that place Milgabudji, it’s a real rainbow serpent that’s there. Yamani there. If you go there it will swallow you up. He lives in that water. He protects that water. We’d go down there but they would tell us, “don’t go in the water”, so we’d never go swimming. It’s a funny place.

¹⁹ In ‘North to the Timbers’ Peter English states, “the name Malanda is an aboriginal word and was chosen by the Railway department. There is some doubt as to its meaning but some said it meant waterfalls” (English 1964: 33). According to Ngadjon-Jii people, the name Malanda derives from the term ‘malan’, meaning “near the river”.

This belief in a sentient country, a cosmological landscape permeated with ancestral presence, highlights the culturally-saturated nature of place. While the settler, Laura Raymont, and the Ngadjon-Jii woman, Molly Raymond, and her family, may have occupied the same space and shared the same land out at Glen Allyn on Raymont's Farm, they certainly weren't in the same place.

From Raymont's Farm, Molly and her family would regularly walk to *Buluba Burrguna* or 'Top Camp' near Lamins Hill, to visit relatives camped in the rainforest and to also tend the graves of those kin buried nearby. Sometimes they travelled to 'Top Camp' to attend regional ceremonies at the nearby bora ground. Here, men from the area were initiated and fights over women were resolved.

At other times, they would walk into Malanda itself. Here they would spend time with kinsmen and women living in *midja* in the scrub at the bottom of the Malanda Falls ('Bottom Camp') and at the 'Malanda Jungle', a patch of remnant rainforest in the township owned by the English family, the pre-eminent pioneering family in the town.

In Malanda, Molly and her family also went to the police station to obtain the blankets and rations owing to them from their work on Raymont's Farm. Auntie Emma explains what happened on one such visit in the late 1930s:

We went to the police station to get blankets and things like that. We went in one day and he locked us up. He said, "you're going to Mona Mona tomorrow". But we didn't go there. Mum and Dad and my brother were sent to Stuart Creek [prison in Townsville] for fighting the policeman. He needed that hiding. Anglim was his name. It was a twisted looking turn out. The police weren't fair with us. All he wanted to do with us was batter us around. He was all right in a way, but I didn't like him. When they had that fight at the gaol house in Malanda I ran off to 'Top Camp'. Then I was sent to Mona Mona. Mum and Pop and my brother were sent to Palm Island. I was there until I got married. I was sent there when I was fifteen or sixteen. I got married when I was nineteen or twenty. They were on Palm Island for a while. When I went to Mona Mona, I got the superintendent on the mission where I was to bring them up, I asked him one day if he could bring my parents up from Palm Island. They were there with me then. Miss Raymont wanted all the Ngadjon-Jii to come back and work for her, but after Mona Mona we went to work on Johnston's Farm.

And so, Molly and her family left Raymont's Farm at Glen Allyn to spend several years effectively incarcerated at Mona Mona, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission near Kuranda. After a brief marriage to a Kuku Yalanji man at Mona Mona, Molly's daughter, Emma, returned to Glen Allyn as a widow after World War II, and went to work on the farms of Lance and Cyril Johnston. But that is another story.

CONCLUSION

As we drive around the Malanda district, Auntie Emma and Auntie Jessie together with the other Ngadjon-Jii people present in the vehicle, point to the other farms where they've worked and camped. After World War II, Ngadjon-Jii people continued to work on the various dairy farms at Glen Allyn, as well as pick potatoes, peanuts and corn on Beattie's and Gallo's Farms. Auntie Emma and Jessie talk about the "big" Aboriginal camp along Lesley Creek on Beattie's Farm. They recall how Granny Maggie Anning camped at the Curtain Fig Tree (now a national park), when the tree was small. Even though it was before their time, they are able to recall the people who lived there and what happened to them. They also name the

Europeans who ‘owned’ the various farms we pass and talk about their children, and who took over the farm when the original owners left. As we travel around the country, a different kind of landscape emerges from the back seat of the Toyota. It’s a dense forest of Aboriginal memories and European names, supporting a tangled undergrowth of deeply personal experiences enmeshed in broader historical events. While all around us, the physical landscape is a smooth planisphere of paddocks, fence lines and bitumen roads, a more uneven surface is apparent in the stories people tell. Out of these stories comes a history of the lie of the land, a bicultural narrative, where the pasts and the destinies of Ngadjon-Jii and settlers are at times woven together so tightly that now and then they seem impenetrable.

They also talk about the changes that have occurred since living on Raymont’s Farm. Raymont’s Farm today is surrounded by tea plantations, paddocks of planted bamboo and, of course, the cleared pastures of the remaining dairy farms in the Malanda area. The patch of rainforest on the Glen Allyn Road known as Docherty’s Scrub, where Emma’s family looked for turkey eggs, has gone. Down Gourka Road and Boonjie Road they note the rainforest that has been cleared since the 1970s. Around Butchers Creek there is more talk about the recent plantings of bamboo and the cessation of peat mining at Lynch’s Crater, a *Yamani* place. Out near Peterson’s Creek, Auntie Emma’s grandson, Warren Canendo, points out the revegetation work undertaken when he worked for a brief time with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), while the old women talk about the bora ground at Dingo Pocket and the corroborees held along the creek at Chumbrumba. As we drive towards Yungaburra, Auntie Emma’s son, Trevor Johnston, recalls “how sugar cane has just come in the last ten to fifteen years”. Trevor’s comments point to the shifting and fickle nature of the agricultural landscape on the Atherton Tableland in the past thirty years or so. Traditional farming pursuits, such as dairying, and old-time settler crops, like corn, peanuts and potatoes, have been gradually replaced by avocados (1975), tea (1977), sugar (1981), macadamias (1981), and in last couple of years, bamboo shoots (see Eacham Historical Society 1995).

This kind of agricultural diversification appears to have had some effect on the environment, for as we cross the Barron River, Uncle Ernie Raymont talks about how polluted the Barron and North Johnstone Rivers are these days. Everyone talks about the time in 1978 when effluent from the milk factory in Malanda killed fish, eels, turtles and crayfish along a three-mile stretch of the North Johnstone River (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 65). As we pull into Lake Eacham National Park for lunch, Auntie Jessie recalls the time when the rainforest around the crater lake was much thicker than it is now. She suggests that increased tourism and car fumes are to blame for the reduction of the rainforest and the loss of the cassowaries and tree-climbing kangaroos that once were a part of this place.

Throughout the Atherton Tableland, the rainforest that Auntie Jessie was born in and speaks of as gradually disappearing is largely contained within areas designated as ‘protected’ – World Heritage areas, conservation parks, national parks, reserves, and so on. Such is the fate of the last remaining stand of rainforest in the township of Malanda.