

## **Life Along the Tully River - Cattle Grazing**

### **Early Days**

The origins of Cardwell Shire are linked with the grazing industry. In 1873 Henry Stone, Manager of the Valley of Lagoons Station on the Upper Burdekin on behalf of Dalrymple and the Scott Brothers, stocked the station with 25,000 head of sheep and cattle. They soon decided to concentrate on cattle. Cardwell itself was developed as a port to serve the rich new pastoral lands of the Kennedy region.

By 1889 settlers on the Upper Murray were raising cattle for beef and dairying. A network of stock routes grew up between the back country and the coast. A meat works commenced processing at Five Mile Creek, south of Cardwell, in 1895 and in 1900 employed 600 men. However, the tick plagues at the end of the century decimated the local herds as there were no dips or effective chemicals in those days. The Perkins brothers of Murray Upper were left with 70 out of 700 beasts.

### **Tully River Lands**

Walter Hill, in 1865, had described the Tully River lands in glowing terms for agriculture but isolation kept the area unoccupied by white settlers for many years. Tyson controlled large parcels of the lands which were managed by men such as Ernest Brooke, and he did bring in some cattle but the area was not developed until after his death.

### **Droving**

The stockmen who worked in the district and the drovers who moved cattle regularly from the tablelands down the stock routes to the coast for butchering were vital to the early economy.



The new Davidson Stock Route was opened in 1937. Arthur Collins of Kirrama brought the first mob of cattle down this track for trucking from Brice Henry's yards at Euramo, with the help of veteran stockman, AW Blackman.

### **Coastal Fattening Scheme**

Isaac Henry had married Tyson's niece Barbara and obtained extensive land in the Tully River Valley during the nineteenth century. Isaac's son, Brice, put a lot of time and effort into a grazing scheme dedicated to improving the stability of the local cattle industry. By planting artificial grasses or improved pastures and innovations in cattle breeding, increased stocking became possible.



*Experimental cattle, Riversdale, 1938*

*Cattle in the stockyard at Bilyana siding, 1940s*



### **Dairying**

There was continuing interest in dairying along the Tully River. Various schemes for development included improvements in the dairying industry. In the 1930s cream went to the Silkwood Butter Factory from the district but it did not operate for long. Travelling Dairy Creek remains as a reminder of the early days of dairying.

### **Tully River Station**

In 1963 Tully River Station was developed by Bob Klegburg, a descendant of the King family of Texas, USA, the property became known as King Ranch. Other King Ranch properties were in Cuba, Florida and South America. Klegburg was offered a lease by the Queensland Government on 21,501ha for £5 per acre if all pre-development conditions were fulfilled within 5 years with the option of a freehold lease. A huge programme to clear the natural vegetation commenced. Within 5 years the conditions were met. Livestock numbers increased from nil to almost 30,000 within 10 years. This was then the largest tropical cattle property in Australia. King Ranch's Australian operation was sold off in the late 1980s after the death of Klegberg. Tully River Station was divided up and sold; the area now supports banana and cane farms.

### **Cattle Industry Today**

Cattle are still raised in areas of the region but not in large numbers, with fluctuations in herds relative to market prices and other variables.