

WATERLOO

THE BENEFITS OF RETAINING NATIVE VEGETATION ON YOUR PROPERTY

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When Bert Barnes came to Waterloo back in 1951 he was a happy man. The property actually had timber. And that, he says, was something, considering he grew up on his father's 700 acre property closer in to Hay with a grand total of 11 trees.

The problem was the native shrubs and trees weren't regenerating.

Wandering through his paddocks one year, Mr Barnes noticed numerous small Murray Pine seedlings coming up through the pasture. And that, he says, was the catalyst for what is now perhaps a unique block of native country.

In December 1958 a 16 hectare block was fenced off and virtually no stock have been run in the paddock for the last 34 years.

The result is one of the last purely native areas left in the Hay district, abundant in virtually all the trees, shrubs and grasses which once thrived on the Hay Plains.

The 15,000 acre Waterloo, around 100 km south-east of Hay was once part of the Willura station, and has had only two owner's since 1896.

But as Mr Barnes says, the property, like virtually all the others on the plains, had been run with only one thing in mind, profitability and the need to run as many stock as possible.

"All this country was cut back in the 1902 drought," Mr Barnes says.

"Chinese with axes were brought in and the boree was cut to feed the stock. That's what they thought of the shrubs and trees. It fed the Sheep at the time but there were no more trees after that."

While natural regeneration in the 381mm rainfall district is unusual at the best of times, the diversity of the regeneration on Waterloo is unique. For a start, over 200 species of native grasses have been identified.

Bill Semple of the Department of Conservation and Land Management at Orange has identified a vast range of plants in the Waterloo regeneration block. Things like saltbushes, bluebushes, pine, bull oak, wattles, umbrella bush, cooba, native willow, hakea, butter bush, emu bush, sugarwood, hop bush, rolypoly, copper burr, pea plants, myall, boree and a host of others.

The project has become a lot more than a passing interest and with his impending retirement and the possible sale of Waterloo, Mr Barnes is becoming increasingly concerned over the fate of his regeneration block. As he says "we'll just have to find the right buyer, someone who'll take care of the block".



Waterloo: soil crusts rule

Back in 1958 Bert Barnes of 'Waterloo' fenced off a 40 hectare block to promote regeneration. Today more than 200 species of plants can be found there and the area is a focus for community and conservation groups. Bert also created ideal conditions for the re-establishment of mosses, lichens, and liverworts. biological soil crusts, once common on sandy rises over large areas of the Riverina, are now only well represented in exclosures like 'Waterloo'.

Lichens like the yellow leafy (foliose) *Xanthoparmelia bellatulum* found only within the exclosure. Soil inhabiting lichens are thought to spread mainly when small fragments break away from the thallus (body). Low rates of trampling produce more lichens for spreading to new sites, but excessive trampling completely destroys the lichen. Consequently, they are often an indication that the soil is well managed. Large mosses such as *Barbula Crinita* and *Bryum Campylothecium* often form dense clumps on the soil, protecting it against erosion, recycling nutrients and providing a home for small important soil organisms. These mosses remain apparently dormant for many years, yet respond within seconds to rainfall.

SOME PLANTS SEEN AT WATERLOO

Trees

Bull oak, white pine, black box, mallee box, sugarwood

Shrubs

Hakea wattle, miljee, boree, cooba, narrow leaf hopbush, emu bush, hooked needlewood, butter bush, punty bush

Herbs

Flannel cudweed, bogan flea, desert sneezeweed, needle leaf goosefoot, stonecrop, scarlet sundew, ruby saltbush, crowfoot, peppergrass, catsear, hoary sunray, mudwort, slender fissure weed, nardoo, woolly burr medic, thorny saltbush, small white sunray, buck bush, short winged copper burr, fuzzweed

Grasses/Sedges/Lilies

Club rush, hoary rush, native leek, swamp wallaby grass, brush wiregrass, red brome, windmill grass, curly windmill grass, golden top, spear grass, foxtail fescue

Climber

Desert jasmine

