

Summary of historical land use of Wooroora and Glen Gordon Stations.

Date	Event
@31,000 BP	Earliest evidence for human occupation on the rainforest fringe at Murubun Rockshelter near Blunder Creek.
@8000 - 2500 BP	Intermittent Aboriginal occupation of the rainforest by groups of people living for most of the year to the west of the rainforest region.
2500 - European arrival	Intensive Aboriginal rainforest occupation with use of both rainforest and open forest landscapes and resources continuing.
1880s	First contact between Jirrbal people, Scientific explorers, European pastoralists, and gold miners.
1883	Stubley's Evelyn Station divided up into smaller stations, including Wooroora and Glen Gordon Stations.
1883	The Robinson's arrive at Kara Creek (on Wooroora Station) after driving cattle up from Beaudesert. Weather conditions and Aboriginal resistance drives him further west and he builds Wooroora Homestead on Blunder Creek believing he is on the headwater of the Herbert River.
Mid-1880s	Jirrbal people are forcefully taken by Fred Robinson from Cedar Creek (Ravenshoe) campsites to work for him on Wooroora, some were brought back in chains.
1889	30 Jirrbal people are living on Wooroora Station working for Robinson's clearing land and building gardens around the Homestead. Kara Outstation is established with vegetable gardens, fruit trees and a mustering camp. Many local Jirrbal people are living at Kara Outstation and the bora ground is frequently visited by neighbouring groups participating in ceremony.
1889	Robinson supplies local Jirrbal people along Blunder Creek with food in response to cattle stealing and killing.
1890	95 Jirrbal people are living on Wooroora working for Robinson, many of them at a fringe camp near the Homestead and others at Kara Outstation.
1890	Wooroora Jirrbal fringe camp burnt down (opposite Wooroora Homestead) and two of Robinson's 'boys' are killed by the local Blunder Creek people, leading to a massacre.

Date	Event
1890	Massacre at Kara Outstation and other locations on Wooroora Station.
1890-1903	Regular complaints from Robinson about cattle spearing on Wooroora.
Late 1800s-1960s	Jirrbal people working mustering on Wooroora for various land owners.
1919	Fred Robinson dies and Wooroora is sold.
1920s	<p>Bryce-Henry's become new owners of Wooroora Station, numerous Jirrbal people remain camped near and around the Homestead.</p> <p>In 1924, Willie Massina sees human skeletal remains at Kara Creek which are remains from one of many massacres that occurred on Wooroora Station.</p>
1943-1945	Some of the ridges in the Project Area (including Black Mountains) were used in artillery practice by Australian soldiers. Remains of bombs and pieces of artillery remains on site (RK pers. comm.)
1948	The Kelly family buys Glen Gordon Station. Roger Kelly ran the Station until the early 2000s and also worked mustering cattle on Wooroora with many local Jirrbal men. Mustering camps and tracks were established, including at Kara Outstation, across Arthurs Seat and Black Mountains, and elsewhere.
1960	Original Wooroora Homestead was demolished and replaced in the early 1960s with a house from the Koombaloo Dam construction camp. It replaced the two older houses as the primary residence for the property.
Horsfall 1988	The graves of George and Fred Robinson are located on Wooroora Station near the homestead. The two graves and their headstones are enclosed by an iron picket fence.

By the time European scientists, explorers and Government appointed Aboriginal Protectors began to document aspects of traditional Jirrbal culture and society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Jirrbal traditional lifeways had already started to change from earlier European settlement on the coast pushing neighbours onto their lands, and from the spread of pastoralism in the adjacent dry country to the west and north. After a period of 'dispersal' (killing of Aboriginal people) and conflict between the Jirrbal people and European settlers in the late 1800s, many Jirrbal people ended up living and working on pastoral stations such as Wooroora and Glen Gordon over the following decades.

Roger Kelly, previous owner of Glen Gordon, shared many stories related to the Project Area during a recent interview with ÅF. RK described the local oral history of father and son, Georg and Frederick [Fred] Robinson, who took up Wooroora Station on the southern boundary of the original Evelyn Station in 1883. The Robinson's drove a large herd of cattle up from Beaudesert by foot. Like many explorers in the rainforest before them, the Aboriginal walking tracks would have guided them to large open grassy campsites dotted along the edge of the rainforest. On arrival at Kara Creek, they decided to set up camp. Fred Robinson saddled up at Kara and chased the Aboriginal occupants away from their campsites and bora ground. The Robinson's did not stay long at Kara due to extreme weather conditions and ongoing problems with the local Aboriginal people. The family packed up their belongings and moved their cattle to what they thought was the headwater of the Herbert River. History shows that they made a blunder, and the creek got its name Blunder Creek.

Kara Outstation became a permanent location used by the Robinson's to grow vegetables, plant fruit trees and for cattle grazing. Kara Creek was named after one of the local Jirrbal men. The Grants of Woodleigh often found their 'boys' over at Kara Outstation participating in important ceremonies and various rituals (Toohey 2001). This suggests that traditional use of the Kara Creek bora ground continued despite European settlement on traditional sites. The vegetation of Kara Pocket described by Roger Kelly (Kelly pers. comm. 2022) is similar to the REs of the 'pockets' described earlier, it reportedly consists of *casurina*, *corymbia* and various *Eucalyptus* spp. The rare King Orchid grows in the area, expelling a smell like nothing else when flowering, if removed from Kara Creek, they always die (Kelly, pers. comm. 2022).

Wooroora Homestead was built on Blunder Creek, a tributary of the Millstream, the Robinson's mistakenly thinking they were on the headwaters of the Herbert River (Toohey 2001). The station quickly developed into a substantial cattle property. The original homestead was built on Blunder Creek in 1883, and in 1911, a second smaller house was built near the first one. Both houses had an extensive English Garden, which was enclosed by a stone wall constructed from basalt boulders cleared from the surrounding paddocks. Robinson was known in the area for his beautiful 'English gardens'. The original homestead was demolished in the 1960s and the timber used to construct cattle yards. The second house and the stone wall are derelict but several piles of basalt boulders at various locations around the original homestead site remain of the stone wall. A few exotic trees and shrubs also remain (Horsfall 1988).

The Wooroora Homestead on Blunder Creek was built in a large clearing on a mail track that extended from Cardwell on the coast, to stations west of Wooroora and Glen Gordon (Duke and Collins 1994). This same track is also thought to have been used by explorer Edmund Kennedy when he emerged from the rainforest on the Upper Tully River on his journey to Cape York in 1848 (Ferrier 2015). Landscape reconstruction based on historical maps and oral history demonstrate how explorer's tracks and mail runs, typically followed the existing walking tracks used by Jirrbal and other rainforest people (Ferrier 2015).

Oral traditions show that some of the occupants were Jirrbal people who Fred Robinson 'collected' from the South Cedar Creek campsites. During ÅF's doctoral research in 2003, Jirrbal Elder Aunty Maisie Barlow (born 1922) and Aunty Lizzie Wood (born early 20th century) recalled stories told how Fred Robinson went to Cedar Creek to 'gather' Aboriginal workers from campsites along the creek soon after he settled at Wooroora (Barlow pers. comm. 2003; Lizzie Wood pers. comm. 2003). A large Aboriginal settlement (referred to as 'the Aboriginal Camp' in the Police Records) developed on Blunder Creek opposite Wooroora homestead. Descendants of the Wooroora Jirrbal people still live in the Ravenshoe area, some were interviewed in this current study. It is well known amongst the Jirrbal community that Fred Robinson, as well as other station owners, used forced Aboriginal labour to clear land and work market gardens at three places along Blunder Creek, two of them close to the homestead, the third at Kara Outstation. Police records show that by 1890, Robinson had 95 Jirrbal people working and residing on Wooroora Station. Police records also indicate that Blunder Creek and Kara Creek, as well as the wet sclerophyll and rainforest areas east of the Project Area, were occupied by Jirrbal Aboriginal people at the time Wooroora Station was taken up by the Robinson's.

Kara Creek Outstation was named after a local Jirrbal man from the Blunder Creek region, who worked on Wooroora and elsewhere in the area (Tom Murray, unpublished manuscript). The location of Kara Outstation has been established in the current study through interviews with Jirrbal descendents, maps and observations from the air. The outstation is mentioned in F.S. Grant's [of Woodleigh Station] diary in October 1889 (May 1983:61), referring to local Aboriginal station workers attending to their social and cultural obligations, occasionally leaving their stations to attend ceremonies at Kara Outstation.

### **Massacres and other contact sites**

Historical records show that a number of state-sanctioned and pastoral led killings of Aboriginal people took place in and around the Project Area in the early years of European contact. Sub-Inspector Keenan, of the Barron River Native Mounted Police detachment led the Wooroora and Mount Garnet killings between 1898 and early 1900s (Richards 2008:238). Historian Timothy Bottoms (2013: 140-144) and Jirrbal Elder Ernie Grant recorded murders of Jirrbal, Warungu and Girramay people at Horse Swamp Creek, Jirin (Michael Creek), Mumbay Flats, Jilgaring Rock (now near Koombooloomba Dam) as well as Kara Outstation and Blunder Creek in the Project Area.

The history of Wooroora and Glen Gordon describes a typical pattern of settlement in north Queensland. European pastoralists arrive on the frontier and establish homesteads in existing clearings that had been occupied by Aboriginal people. The clearings, known as 'pockets' in the Wet Tropics, were typically near permanent running water with established cleared paddocks that were perfect for the European settlers' horses and cattle. Fortified homesteads were built on these clearings, followed by a period of extreme violence against local Aboriginal people. Eventually, an informal truce was negotiated which for Aboriginal people, meant some working for the pastoral industry in return for a place to live for the and their families that provided protection from the frontier violence.

The exact circumstances around the Blunder Creek massacre, as with so many massacres that were carried out in Queensland and across Australia, are not known, but historical documents and oral

traditions shed some light on the events that took place one day at Wooroora Station in 1890. Fred Robinson is reputed to have returned to the homestead to find two of his 'boys' [from South Cedar Creek] killed by local Blunder Creek Aboriginal people. Fred Robinson declared war on the Blunder Creek people for the killing of the boys and for the ongoing spearing of his cattle. He rode around the boundaries of Wooroora Station shooting any Aboriginal person he could see. Peter Axford, son to a previous owner of Wooroora Station, supplied information in the 1980s on the location of a massacre taking place at Wooroora Station that was linked to the Jirrbal historical settlement opposite Wooroora Homestead Horsfall 1988). News items from the 1890s (Herberton Advertiser 1890) confirm that the Aboriginal Camp at Wooroora Homestead was burnt down in 1890 and that two of Robinson's 'boys' had been killed by local people.