

## Drought in Maleny

History has recorded that in 1918, there was a drought in Maleny. The Obi Obi Creek stopped flowing.

The late Fred Porter wrote an account of this drought in his “John Porter Family In Australia” in 1985.



Fred Porter

*The 1918 season was very dry and 1919 much worse. The greatest drought Maleny has known. The Obi-Obi was dry, except for a large water-hole just below the present dam site (then Gibson's land). At “Wongabel”, the only available water was obtained from several springs which had to be cleared and deepened constantly. The drought broke in the last week of 1919 with three days of cyclonic wind and pouring rain. Cattle were poor and literally froze to death; they stood in creeks, gullies and water courses until they dropped as the running water was warmer than the wind and rain. We hunted them out, but they immediately returned. We got our two work horses and slide and transferred them one at a time into bails, barn, several small sheds and even under the tank stand at the house. They were so frozen we rolled them off at shelter and thus saved many. I think*

*our total loss on all farms was 65 head of grown cattle. Of course, we had already lost some from weakness and in bogs etc, and at the Coast where we had sent dry stock. One farmer lost 105 head from a herd of 110 after having spend £2,000 on drought fodder. George Quince on the property later purchased lost heavily in stock from the cyclone. I recall that the little creek running through the farm was lined on both sides by dead cows after the rain cleared.*

*A curious feature of the latter months of this drought were the extremely heavy dews experienced. Every morning at sunrise you would feel sure rain must have fallen overnight, the fog was so dense and the place so wet. I believe there is a simple scientific explanation but it was none-the-less remarkable and must have contributed to keeping plant life in existence.*

*Another observation worthy of note is that while cattle starved, horses thrived as they pawed and bashed up paspalum root clumps to eat, apparently they were very nutritious.”*

Porter Family Farm was “Wongabel”, North Maleny, where Cloudwalk & Stephen Porter are today.

The Obi stopped running in 1951 and farmers suffered stock losses and tanks became empty in town. Neilen's supplied the town and farmers with water from their 2 wells at Balmoral. It wasn't until 1963 that the Maleny town centre got a reticulated water supply when an intake weir was built above Flagstone Crossing, near the showgrounds.

Photos below at the Showgrounds during the 1951 drought when the Obi Obi stopped flowing again.



Flagstone Crossing, near the showgrounds