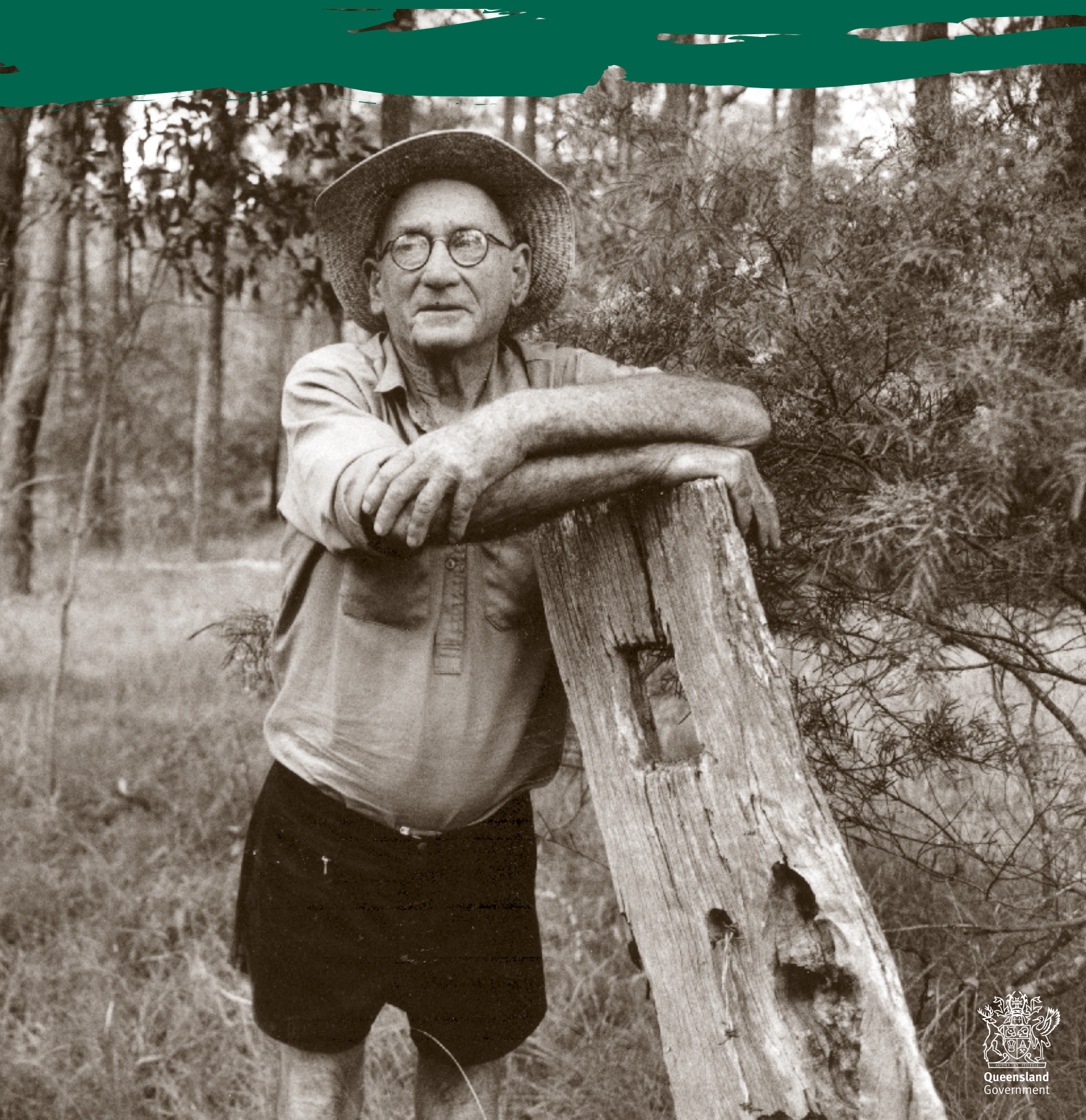


The story of *Jack Venman*



Venman Bushland National Park

Jack's place

Venman Bushland National Park is the legacy of John (Jack) Burnett Venman—a bushman with a dream.



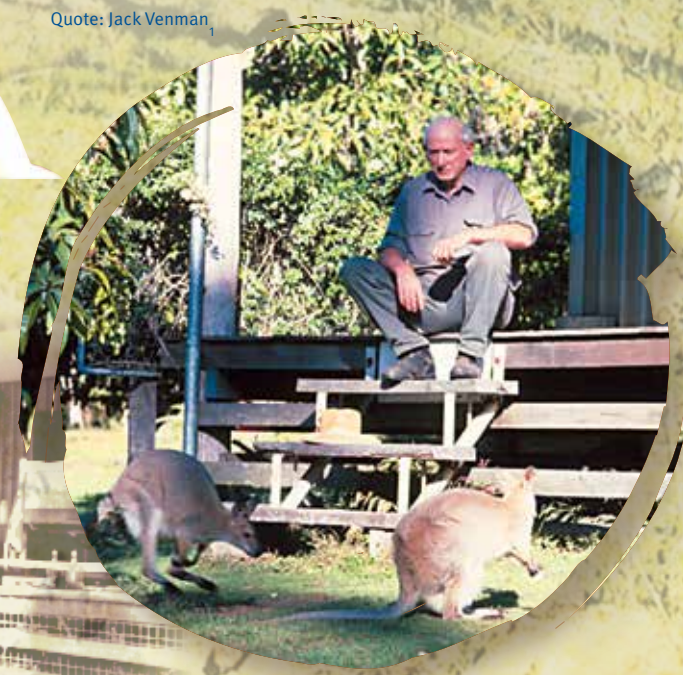
“ I bought 255 acres for two pounds an acre. I put the humpy up and fenced about 200 acres of it. I planned to clear the scrub and turn the land into a farm where I could support myself for the rest of my life in the solitude of the bush. Money was running low so I went out west to keep the tucker bag full. I was away from the place most of the time. **”**

Quote: Jack Venman¹

To many who knew him, John (Jack) Burnett Venman was a strong and hearty bushman. His dream was to conserve this park for visitors to enjoy the tranquillity of the bush. Despite hardship, Jack possessed the determination to make this a reality.

“ I knew I had to do something to make the land secure from any future development. It had to become an environmental reserve. That way they could never cut it up. **”**

Quote: Jack Venman¹



Follow Jack's journey and discover the influential factors in his life that lead to Venman Bushland National Park being protected for future generations.

1. Walding, Richard. 1992. A True Tale From the Bush, Jack Venman's Story as told to Richard Walding. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane.

Jack of all trades



Jack's parents (top right) and Jack's grandparents

Born on 13 August 1911, Jack spent his early years in Kingaroy. His parents, Sarah and George Venman, also had four other children, three of whom died from disease.

Jack attended the Brisbane Boys Grammar School on a State Scholarship, finishing in 1927 at the age of 16.



Follow this journey through Jack's life and his travels...

Northern Territory



Above: Humpy built by Jack while he worked in Tennant Creek

Right: Shipbuilding at the Commonwealth Marine Engineer Works

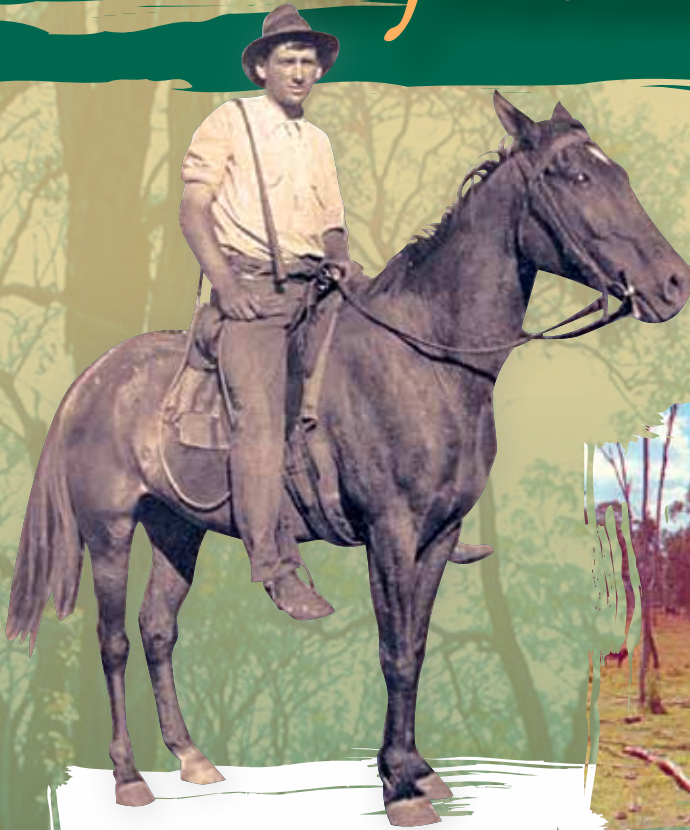


Queensland

- Kingaroy—1911 (born) to 1924.
- Bundaberg—mid 1924 to mid 1925. Attended Bundaberg State School.
- Brisbane—Late 1925 to 1927. Attended Brisbane Boys Grammar School on a State Scholarship.
- Aughatella—Early 1928. First job as a station hand on a large sheep property.
- Ubobo (Boyne Valley)—Late 1928. Worked on his aunt's property 'Clifton Station'.
- Brisbane—1929 to 1934. Five-year apprenticeship as a fitter and turner for the Australian United Steam Navigation Company.
- Mundubbera—Late 1934. Stockman on a cattle station.
- Anthony's Lagoon—1935. General hand on a 2000km² pastoral run.
- Tennant Creek—mid 1935. Mechanical work.
- Mt Isa—Late 1935. Fitter and turner.
- Tennant Creek—1936 to 1939. Started an engineering workshop repairing all forms of machinery.
- Brisbane—1939 to 1940. Worked for AUSN ship repairs.
- * England—1941 to 1942. Ship's engineer upon British Merchant Vessel 'Themistocles'.
- Rocklea (Brisbane)—1942 to 1945. Shipbuilding at the Commonwealth Marine Engineer Works.
- Upper Mt Gravatt (Brisbane)—1945 to 1954. Began an engineering workshop.
- Mt Cotton (Brisbane)—1954 to 1994. Bought 255 acres of land at the age of 43.

Jack's work played an important role in the realisation of his dream. He was a man who spent a lot of time moving about, which allowed him to take note of the many properties he saw with bad farming practices and land degradation. It was this constant reminder and his love for the bush that led Jack to want to make a difference.

Laying the foundations



“ After I closed my business at Upper Mt Gravatt, I got tired of it ... living in town ... and came up here, and then of course I run out of tucker, and instead of going back to the trade, I went back to my old love—working on the cattle station. ”

Quote: Jack Venman³



Jack's vision to run a cattle farm on his newly acquired Mt Cotton land lasted five years before he was forced to find work elsewhere. During his search, Jack noticed that many of the pastoral properties he had once worked on had become seriously degraded due to bad farming practices.



“ After two or three years of poking around the bush, I got to know the bush and I could see the results of over-burning or not burning and ring barking and all the rest of it. They've ruined half the country. And so it gave me a different appreciation of the country. ”

Jack's 255 acres of bushland were a valuable asset. After making enough money he returned to his Mt Cotton property. As the area was logged in the early 1900s, Jack was determined to see the land return to its natural state.

“ I wanted to preserve the vegetation as it is. As it was 200 years ago. Anything that is not right has to be brought back into line. ”

Quote: Jack Venman³



Photo: © Old Govt

Described as a 'man with a vision', Jack began laying the foundations of his dream...



³. Griffith University, Institute of Applied Environmental Research, 1992. Venman Bushland Reserve: an Historical Outline. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane.

A place to call home



Jack Venman lived by himself in a simple house of fibro, timber and iron. While building his home, he lived in a tent on the property using a gas lantern for light and rainwater to drink. He drank only billy tea and cooked himself stews on the open fire.



Jack's house took many months to finish, and when completed it had a kitchen and lounge area, bath, shower, sink, modern toilet and one main bedroom.

Water to the house was supplied through four large water tanks that collected rainwater from the roof. Rather than having taps, Jack invented a gravitational device that would pump water from the outside tanks, by pushing a metal pedal on the floor. Hot water was later supplied from solar panels that Jack attached to his house.



The house's lighting was suspended from a pole and operated via a pulley system, where Jack was able to adjust the height and direction of light. This pole, set in the middle of the main living area, was actually erected to mark the site in which Jack would begin building his house. It took a total of 28 poles to build the house.



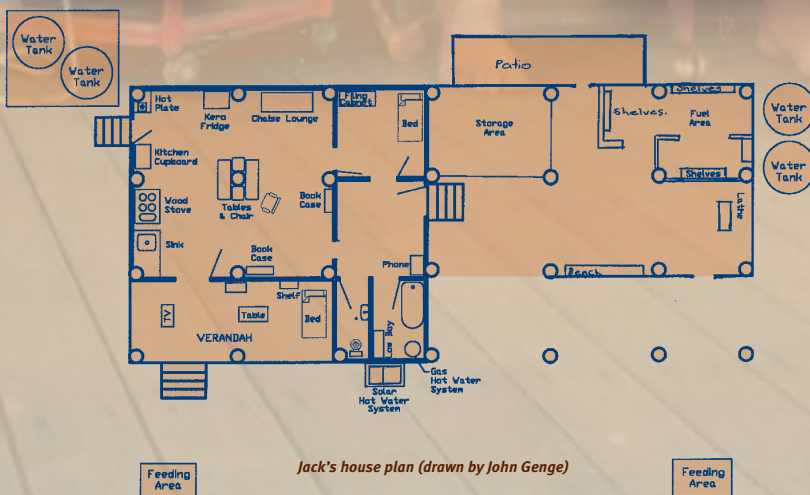
Workshop inside the work shed



Above: Storage room, which was originally Jack's bedroom



Bathroom



Jack's love for the bush could not keep him confined within the comfort of four walls. His bed was located on the front verandah, where he would sleep, listening to the sounds of passing wildlife and the bush. Even the mud hornets had their place in Jack's home, as he would not let anyone remove them.

Jack's work shed was connected to the side of his house. This is where he stored his car, tractor and tools.

The cost of a dream

When a company that planned subdivisions offered Jack 48.6 acres of land at Tallebudgera in exchange for his land, Jack soon realised that if his property was to remain undeveloped for future generations to enjoy, he would need to act quickly.

“ The speculators started chasing me. Estate agents hounded me over at Rocklea where I was working at the time. They kept saying ‘put a price on it, put a price on it’ and I refused. I wasn’t going to put any price on it. We were arguing for months. I knew I had to do something to make the land secure from any future development. **”**

Quote: Jack Venman¹



Plaque erected in 1976 for the first opening of the park as Venman Bushland Reserve



During 1971, at the age of 60, Jack sold his land to the Albert Shire Council for one dollar.

“ One dollar was the smallest amount the land could be sold for to make the deal official. It was an excellent proposition for them—they were getting the land for nothing and I was going to develop it into something worthwhile. **”**

Quote: Jack Venman¹

Jack put a great deal of work into the property to make it a parkland that people could visit and enjoy. He created walking tracks that also acted as firebreaks and dammed a small section of Tingalpa Creek so during the dry season, there was still a fresh water supply for animals.

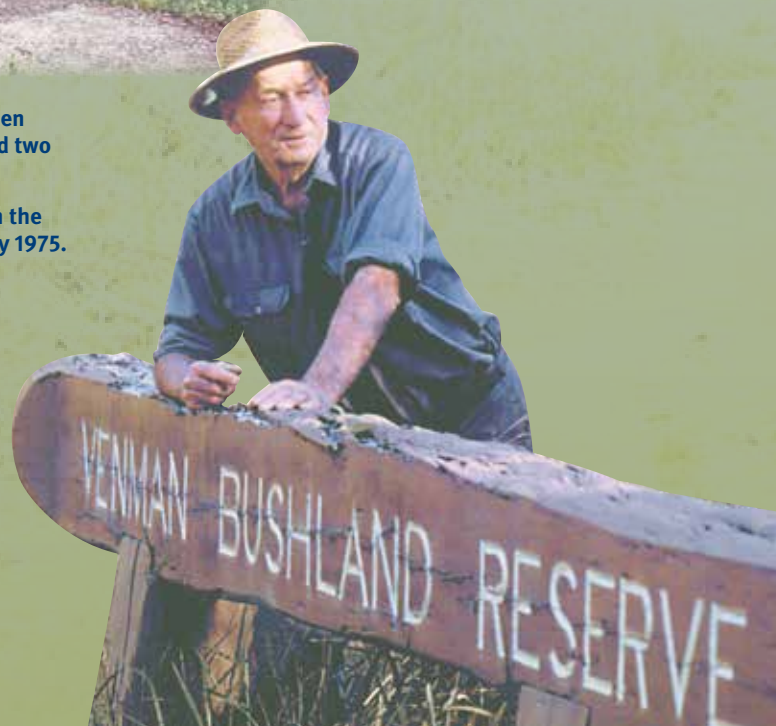


He constructed wood-fired stone barbecues and built wooden chairs and tables for park visitors. The council also provided two septic toilets from Hope Island as visitation increased.

Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, along with the Redland Shire Council, helped to manage the park after May 1975. At the age of 73, Jack Venman resigned as caretaker.

“ For the first 10 years things were going well. As a matter of fact I wore myself out doing it. A person at that age should have been retired. That was the start—that’s how it got created. **”**

Quote: Jack Venman²



1. Walding, Richard. 1992. A True Tale From the Bush, Jack Venman's Story as told to Richard Walding. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane.

2. Griffith University, Institute of Applied Environmental Research. 1992. Venman Bushland Reserve: an Historical Outline. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane.

Maintaining the dream

Jack Venman dedicated 40 years of his life to building a dream. Although there was much controversy over the naming of the park, it wasn't until after his death that the park bore his name. It was officially opened as Venman Bushland National Park in 1995.

Today, the park is managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.



Jack died at the age of 83 in 1994, 10 years after he retired as caretaker.



Koala
Photo: © Ross Naumann



QPWS Rangers
Photo: © Qld Govt

The ridges of open eucalypt forest, patches of lowland rainforest and paperbark-lined Tingalpa Creek provide an ideal habitat for a large diversity of wildlife. Be enchanted by the playful tunes of birds, inquisitive wallabies or even spot a koala nestled amongst the tree tops.

But please remember, these animals are able to find their own food. Feeding wildlife can result in sickness, aggression towards humans and over population.



Red-necked wallaby
Photo: © Qld Govt

If you enjoy walking, there are a number of walking tracks that meander through the park. Shady picnic tables and barbeque areas set amongst towering eucalypts create the perfect setting to sit back and relax. Water and toilets with disabled facilities are also provided.

“ The place has generated a peace and tranquility all of its own. People come here to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere—the tranquil bush. ”

Quote: Jack Venman¹

1. Walding, Richard. 1992. A True Tale From the Bush, Jack Venman's Story as told to Richard Walding. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane.



Further information



qld.gov.au/NationalParks



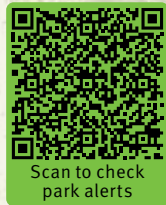
qld.gov.au/ParkAlerts
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park alerts

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Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service,
Department of Environment and Science.
Bp2304 February 2022.

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