

.....Exploring The Hiddenness Of Life

... In the Mulch and Earth of Life ...

...The Story of Ken Aitken's
Growing up in Northern New South Wales in the
1950's and 1960's and
Brisbane in the 1970's to 2006

Ken's Memories and Impressions

Chapter 4: Blackbean Rd.

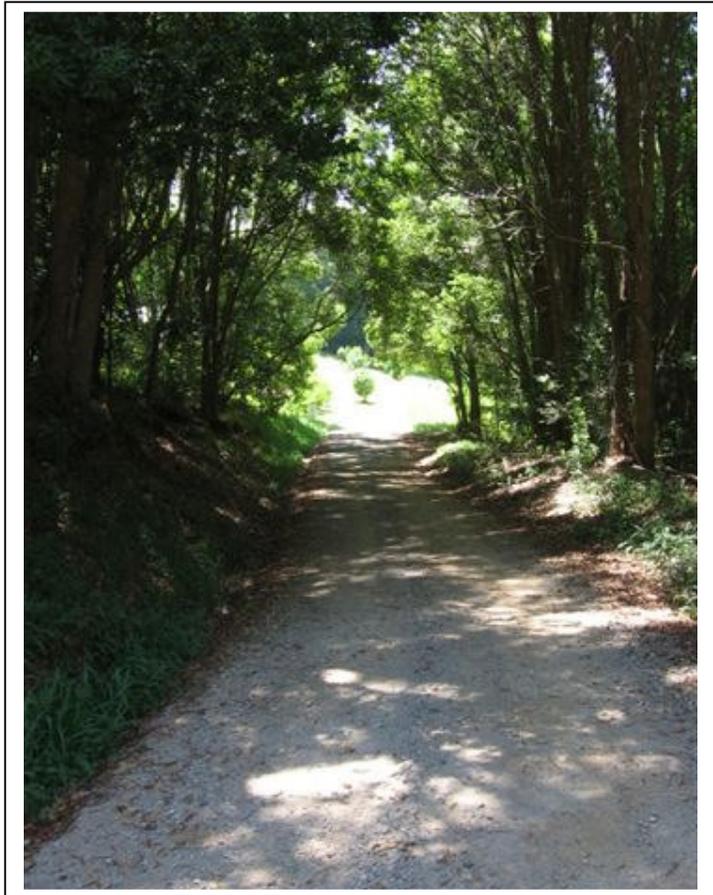




Where Blackbean Rd, comes out onto the main Wilsons Creek Rd., there was a well built timber mailbox. This was on the opposite side of the road. In the 1950's and 1960's everyone had a well built timber mailbox to receive mail and bread from the town bakery every day. If the farmer sent cream cans to the nearest Butter Factory, the mailbox was built as a sturdy cream box. A cream carrier (who was Frank Sigley from up the Creek), ran his covered cream carrier truck in and out every day for the daily mail and bread.

Browns always had a sturdy mailbox built on the opposite side of the road which was the righthand side for outward bound mail carrier,. We would always walk from Wilsons Creek Primary School around the corner from Whipp's property, down the hill and over the small creek to the left and up to the Primary School. In the afternoon we would walk as a group and do the same thing (see Chapter 5). We would collect the bread for Mr. and Mrs. Brown on the way home.

Brown's Road now called Blackbean Rd.



Brown's Road as we called it in the 1950's and 1960's was a gravel road into neighbourhood properties with their respective houses: Brown, Butterini, Graham and the Knight's property. There was even an access track that we Aitken's could use which cut through the Knight's property into the back of our property. It was a bit hilly at the end but it was accessible in a Land Rover.

It was a communal road with open cow paddocks on either side of the road. There was an understood principle of a right of passage across anyone's land. In the 1970's and onwards the land was subdivided into smaller allotments which meant that cows didn't keep the grass down and the open paddocks began to be planted with original rainforest species. Camphor laurel trees grew in abundance in the 1990's and 2000 and beyond which meant the original grass disappeared altogether.

Plovers Egg: as we walked down Mr. Brown's road now called 'Blackbean Rd.' there was a large open cow paddock below the road. A plover used to get very aggressive and attack us in the nesting in September we would have sticks swinging around our heads to ward them off. I knew it must be guarding a nest so one afternoon I gradually appeared over the bank and watched the plover land and settle on its nest out in the paddock. I marked the spot with my eye and began steadily walking to the spot. Of course the bird became very agitated and started attacking me. Walking steadily to the spot I came a grass lined depression the ground with cluster of olive speckled 40 mm long eggs. The one in my collection is from that time.

Blackbean Rd. with the big Crows Ash Tree



The Crows Ash Tree and my Birds Egg Collection: in the 1950's and 1960's, I was still in Primary School going to Wilsons Creek. Every day we walked home from school with the three Graham boys. In the paddock opposite Brown's mailbox there was a big Crows Ash tree. Fig birds were small birds with olive plumage and red cheeks which would build their nests right out on the ends of far out branches. They would build finely woven nests on a small forked branch with several dark olive eggs in the nest. I would use my egg stick with its wire loop and a toe of one of Mum's old stockings sown in the loop, to reach right to a nest and dip an egg out. I would then draw the stick in and put the egg in my mouth and climb down the tree.

This photograph in January 2006 is of this particular tree still there since 1960 when I used to climb up it and get fig birds eggs. The tree is now crowded by Camphor Laurel trees.

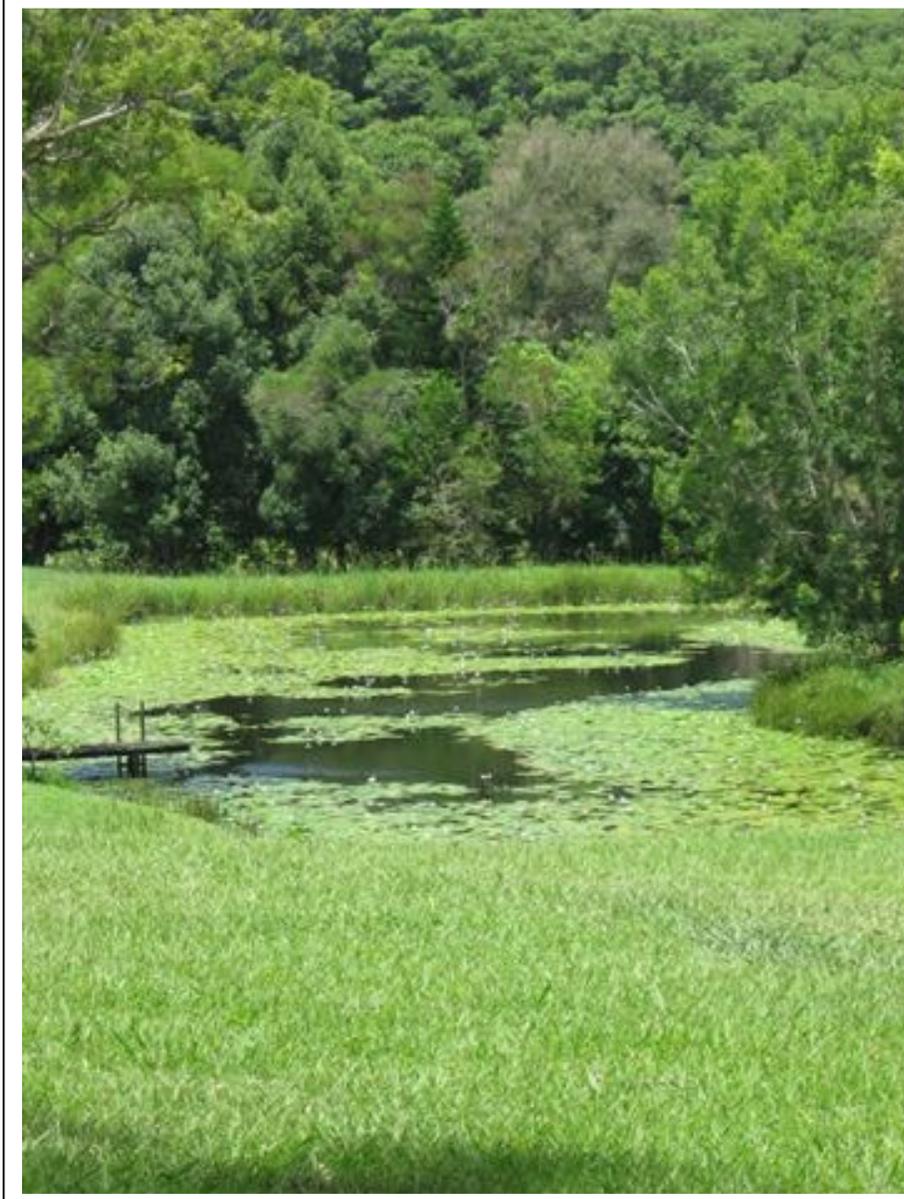
Birds Egg Collection:



Birds Egg Collection: This is my birds egg collection forty five years on from 1960. See the arrow for the fig birds eggs as discussed above. The eggs were kept in two shoe boxes with cardboard dividers and cotton wool. The first box was for small eggs and the second box was for larger eggs. Each egg has a story and represents hours of identifying the bird, the nest and collecting the egg. I would only take one egg from a nest.

The pale blue egg in the second bottom row of the second box is quite significant. It is blue crane's egg but it has a large hole in the shell. The egg fell out of a nest when Johnny Greentree and I where exploring the open paddock below Whipp's house (see Chapter 5 on the Wilsons Creek School). We were walking along the little creek that flows down to the main Wilsons Creek and we came to this big open teak tree. A blue crane flew off her nest on a high branch and this particular egg fell down it had hatched already. I kept the egg as blue crane's nests were very rare.

The Waterhole:



The Waterhole: the new owners of this allotment had dug out a large waterhole on which were growing many blue waterlilies. In the 1950's this area was a swampy area full of bulrushes. The new owners have taken advantage of this major soak beside the creek and have dug it in a more prominent way with grassy banks. A large red apple tree (remnant rainforest tree) used to be by the road going in and down towards the crossing. Yearly it would drop the small red 50 mm fruit in abundance on the grass beneath the tree.

The Creek



The Creek ... Browns Crossing: In the mid 1900's this creek would be turned into a tossing brown sea of water with the yearly cyclones. A wire flying fox on the topside of the crossing enabled everyone to get out to the other side when the cyclone was on. As primary school children, we would walk across the crossing as the water went down in varying depths of water. On the topside of the crossing was a fascinating phenomena that was the swirling water whirlpools on the topside as water funnelled down into the pipes under the crossing.

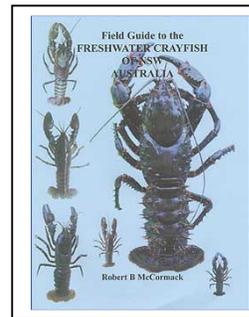
A very large Hoop Pine tree was just up the bank on the left hand side of the crossing in the open cow paddock. It had radiating branches around a 1.50 metre wide trunk and I would climb tree on the branches like a ladder to twenty metres above the ground. I understand was cut down and milled for its timber in the 1980's.



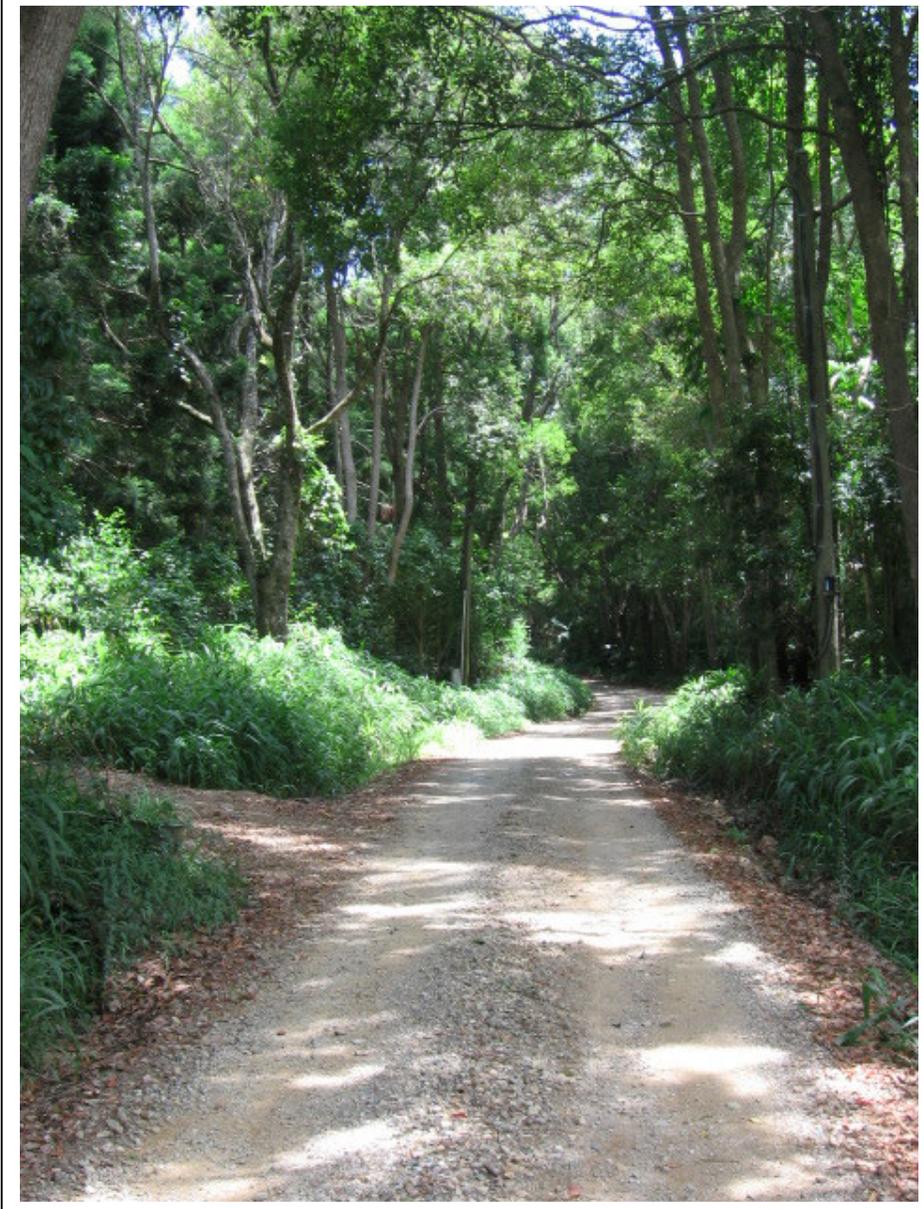
Pool Above The Crossing: This pool was wide and deep when we knew it the 1950's. The regular floods kept it flushed out and grassy banks came right down to the waters edge. Now sedges and trees have grown up and obscure the pool. It was in this pool that Warren Brown's children (Mr. Browns grandchildren) would swim and play in summer time. He even made them a red painted canoe out of soldered galvanised iron sheeting which was a real luxury in the 1950's for anyone. In later years of the early 1960's, this tin canoe was washed by a cyclone far down the creek to our top swimming pool.



The Creek Below the Crossing: was a series of open water channels bordered by tussocky lomandra grass. In one of these small pools I found a large dark coloured freshwater crayfish. See the website: www.rbmaqua.com.au/australian-crayfish-project.shtml



The Road In



The Road In: The road in going up from the crossing with the branch that went up to Butterini's house in the 1950's. Now in 2006, that branch is the main road in. The road to Brown's house veers to the left. The road used to be in open cow paddocks but now trees have grown up which now crowd the road in to make it very enclosed.

Brown's House



Mr. & Mrs. Brown on the Hill: ...Their house was quite a significant house set on a hill. Browns had come out to Wilsons Creek in the bullock trail days of the early 1900's to clear their land, grow bananas on the slopes and build their big house with its cream painted weatherboards, tin roof and big wide verandas.

Mum had gone over to see Mrs. Brown to have a cup of tea and socialise. I was very small About six or seven ... I was eating an Arnott's milk biscuits and drinking a cup of milk I was dipping the biscuit in the milk I still occasionally dunk my biscuit in my hot drink to this day. I was swinging and climbing in the frangipani trees out the back of Browns the few frangipani trees planted down our driveway at Chambers Flat are a reminder of these experiences.



Mr. Mrs Brown very dressed up . photographed in a Park in the mid 1960's.

The Garden around Brown's House



The track past Brown's House that led to the Banana Packing Shed and Avocado



In recent years trees have planted all around the back garden so it is very closed in now.



The road coming up to Brown's house from the creek crossing. Now it is all overgrown with bamboo and palms.



The original frangipani trees out the back of Brown's are still there. Hoop Pine trees have grown up around the back of the property.

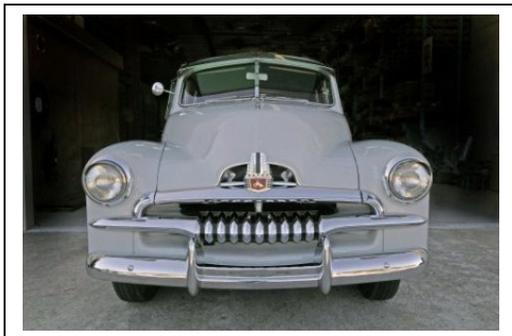


In the past there was just frangipani trees out the back growing in a sea of grass which looked out over the hills



Frangipani trees: as I remember them with their big green leaves and white scented tubular flowers and swinging in the smooth barked branches

Brown's Car:



Brown's Car: was a light blue FJ Holden car which was housed in a wooden weather board garage out in the back of their property. For years after they had bought it, it had a very low number of kilometres on it as they only ran into Mullumbimby when they went to town.



Aboriginal camp by the lower pool: as told by Mr. Brown this was where I knocked the owls nest down. In early 1900's when the Browns came to Wilsons Creek, there was a tribe of aboriginals who camped by this lower pool

Graham's House at The End of Blackbean Rd.:

Brown's Road as we called it in the 1950's and 1960's was a gravel road into neighbourhood properties with their respective houses: Brown, Butterini, Graham and the Knight's property. There was even an access track that we Aitken's could use which cut through the Knight's property into the back of our property. It was a bit hilly at the end but it was accessible in a Land Rover.



This photograph shows Graham's house overlooking the main Wilsons Creek. The creek is in flood from a past Cyclone which has just gone through. The creek is slowly going down. To the right of the photograph there two grey weatherboard timber buildings with grey roofing iron hidden behind the trees:

- The Knights had a carport for their car (a Holden Utility) which provided

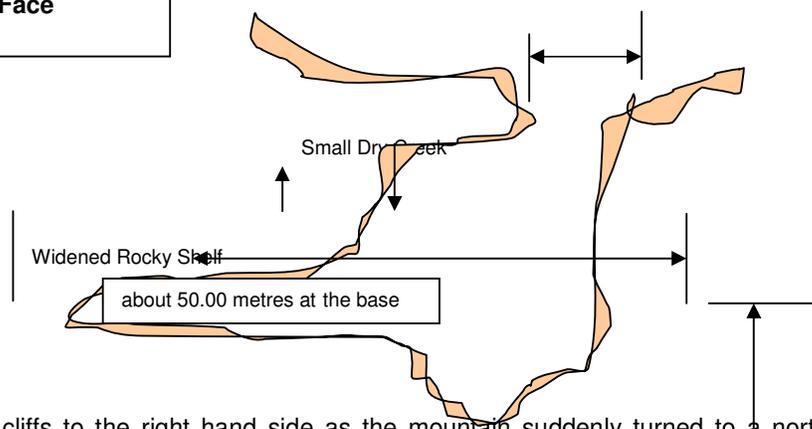
The Cliffs



The exposed Volcanic Tuff Cliffs in the far top right, always had a sense of mystery about them. The photograph is taken after a cyclone Water is everywhere and the place is green. Jim Cox had his plantation right underneath the cliffs and Brown's was even further to the right of the photograph. Graham's plantation is the main plantation to the left of the photograph. In the early 1960's I was going to High School at Mullumbimby. As I was often exploring the mountains around our home, I decided to explore the cliffs in the above photograph. I began by walking up through Brown's bananas and across through Cox's bananas and came to the cliff see the notes below of what I found.

- **The Bat Cave:** In the early 1960's I was going to High School at Mullumbimby. As I was often exploring the mountains around our home, I decided to explore the cliffs in the above photograph. I began by walking up through Brown's bananas and across through Cox's bananas and came to the cliff (see the diagram of the banana plantation layout in the 1960's). I found the following very interesting things:
- The cliffs faced in an easterly aspect (which is the photograph above) then suddenly turned in a northern aspect on the righthand side. At the juncture of this cliffs was the beginnings of a small deep gully about 20 metres deep, dropped downwards to a small creek which eventually flowed down the slopes into the main Wilsons Creek
- The deep gully went right back into the cliff on the far southern side of the cliff Mr. Cox and Mr. Brown had built a small dam about 75 metres back with about 1.75 metre high rock wall. It backed up a small body of water up to 20 metres in length which went back into the hillside. Water could then be siphoned down to water their bananas in dry times
- The gully itself was a whole world in and of itself which I spent time exploring then and on future occasions. The gully began as a narrow defile at the dam about 20 metres deep by about 5.00 metres at the base. It continued for about 75 metres out towards the cliff face. The gully came to be progressively unevenly widened out in front to be deeply undercut on the lefthand side to be a wide overarching irregular triangular space of cliff overhangs which came nearly together at the top. The irregular triangular space was about 50.00 metres at the base and 20 metres at the top. The wide rocky creek bed widened on the left hand side into a flat 2-3 metre ledge which then fell down on the right-hand side as the creek bed. This then fell out to the front of the cliff and over the edge. In wet times, this would have become a small waterfall. You reached a point whereby you could look out at mid-cliff height on the lower adjacent cliffs on the right hand side ...150 – 200 metres in height.

Crosssection of the Gully on the Cliff Face



- The cliffs to the right hand side as the mountain suddenly turned to a northerly aspect. There was dry eucalypt bush above the cliffs. As I walked along exploring the wide rock shelf, I came upon an interesting discovery. In the middle of the shelf, there were various pits cut out of the rock. A creek cut down through the soft volcanic rock and eroded the walls. In one of the pits, was a 500 mm long * 300 mm wide length of white petrified tree trunk. It had been exposed by the eroding water. I deduce it was a product of burial as volcanic ash had covered whole former forests in a layer of fine ash. The wood under pressure had quickly turned to stone. There is much evidence today to show this can happen with our life time and doesn't need millions of years. I still have a sample of this stone at our house at Chambers Flat in 2006 forty years on.



- At the base of the volcanic tuff cliffs above the bananas, I found a large cave 50 metres * 100 metres * 2-3 metres high as a water-cut cave. Volcanic tuff is a soft rock consisting of rocky fragments cemented together by a fine grained cream coloured matrix which easily erodes. The cave had been cut by the periodic stream descending from the gully above.

The cave was of uneven height initially with a dry shallow 300 mm deep x 1-1.5 metres wide creek bed swirling through in the foreground. In the foreground the cave could easily be explored by the light coming through a two and half metre high opening under the cliff base. In the back it was a bit dim with some roof recesses as smaller cave vaults that were carved out unevenly. I needed a box of matches to explore more fully at a later time.

On the roof of the cave I found something very interesting. There was a fine-furred alive carpet of small black bats hanging upside down in thousands of bats. They covered the whole cave ceiling. I reached up and cupped my hands around many bats. With the disturbance, bats began flying in the cave space. Before long bats were flitting everywhere and were beginning to stream out the entry of the cave.

One other day I came back with a box of matches to explore the back of the cave more fully. The flying bats were so thick that they knocked out the lighted match each time. It was fruitless to explore with matches.

In 1995, my parents were packing up the house to move out as they had sold the property to new owners after forty five years. I took the opportunity with my two children to walk up where the old banana plantation had been till the late 1980's. We walked through the dry eucalypt forest, along the northern facing cliffs tops to the eastern facing cliff tops above the bat cave. I scrambled down to the gully with the dam and down to reexplore the bat cave. I have some memorabilia from that time at our house: an old bicycle wheel from one the flying foxes we sent bunches of bananas down the slope, one of the carriers which had two wheels on the top side for running on single wire in the flying fox and a length of rusted water pipe from the cliff dam.

View of the volcanic tuff cliffs from Brown's House. Camphor Laurel trees have taken over the slopes where the bananas were thirty years ago. In behind the cliffs, is deep gully with a small dam in the gully to the far left of the cliffs. There is also large water cut cave filled with small bats at the base of the cliffs



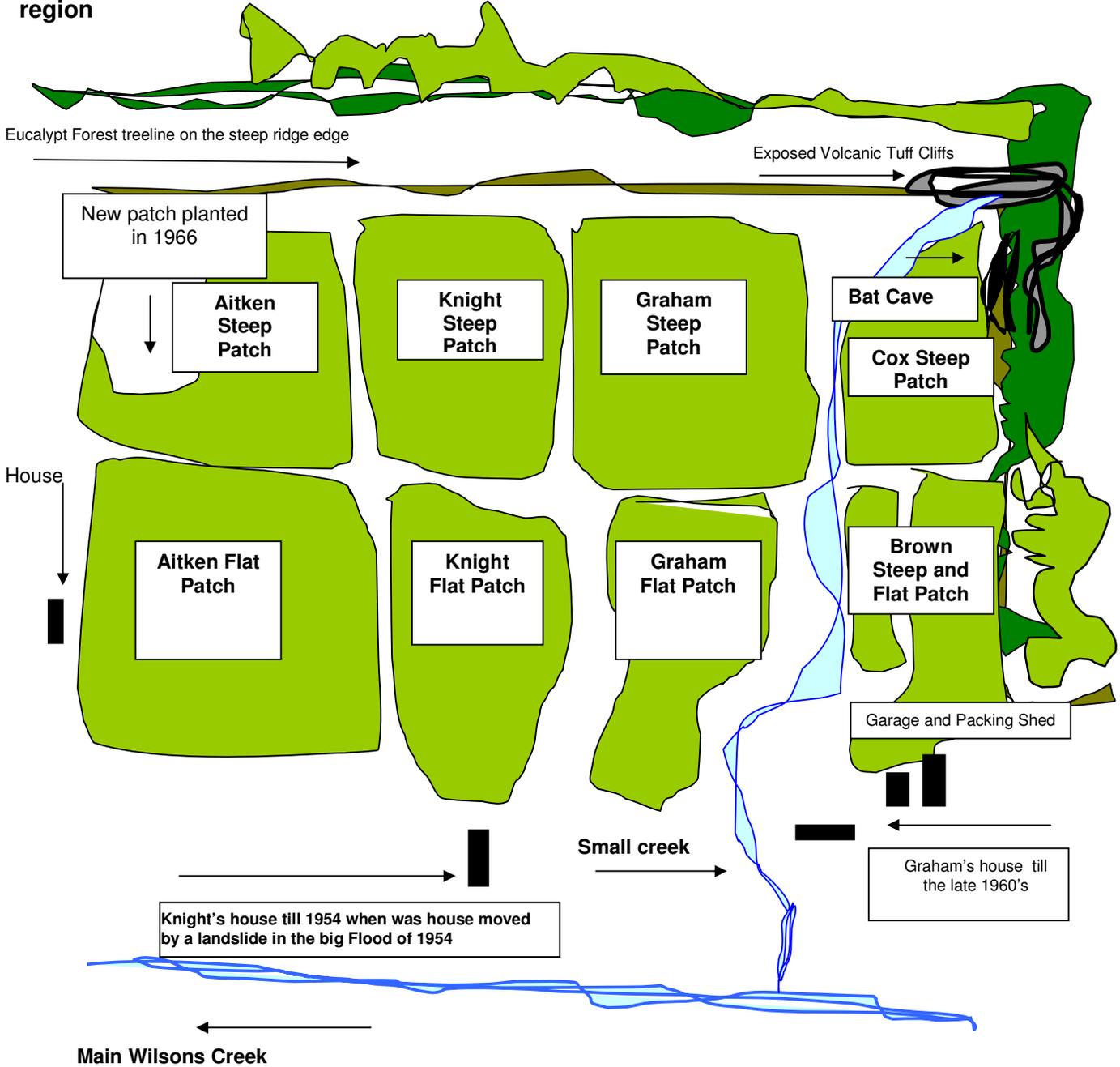
The End Of Black Bean Rd.



At the end of Black Bean Rd. was a house built on the former land owned by Pat Knight who lived there in the early 1950's. Some of my memories of the experiences with the Knights are these:

- **Knight's house:** Playing with Knight's kids they had three children at the time Eating fallen pecans off the big pecan tree near the house Walking below the house after the Big Cyclone in 1954 the house had been swept off its stumps by the landslide in the middle of the night nearly into the flooded creek below the story of the Knights all out under a blanket in the pouring rain under a macadamia nut tree in the middle of the night seeing Pat Knight's kerosene soldering iron in a bathtub down the hill from the house afterwards Mum milking their cow one evening ... the cow charging Gerald my brother and lifting him up in her horns and knocking him down the hill the nut plantation up on their top flat ... there were also other trees such as guavas, limes and lemons collecting nuts with children ... Mum and Dad ploughing a piece of Pat's land with the little Land Rover ... to put in a crop the plough hitting an underground stump

Layout of Banana Plantations from the 1950's to the 1970's in the Aitken Farm region



The End