



Evelyn Maunsell (? – 1977)

Audio transcript

Another woman, was a North Queensland pioneer, Evelyn Maunsell. She left England for a trip round the world. She actually stays in Australia because she fell in love with, and married a handsome Queenslander called Charlie Maunsell, who was the property manager on Mount Mulgrave Station, near Mareeba. She married in Cairns.

She had absolutely no idea what she was going to. She thought she was going to a lovely English farmhouse surrounded by apple orchards, what she got was a tin shed with a concrete floor out at Mount Mulgrave. Evelyn battled isolation, oppressive heat, and the big wet, in that corrugated iron homestead.

She was very kind to the Aboriginal children on the property - she ran a little school to teach them to read and write. But unfortunately for her, the previous owner had raped Aboriginal girls, and he had a terrible reputation among the tribal Aborigines, and when Charlie Maunsell is away mustering, they invade the property, and Maggie, the mother of these Aboriginal children, hides Evelyn under the bed, because they've come in with spears, and they would've speared her. And so she escapes by hiding under the bed.

She also survives malaria, several miscarriages, and she proves to those around her she was no English rose. Later, she and her husband set up their own dairy property on the Atherton Tableland, and then when they retire, they go to Brisbane, and she becomes very active in the Country Women's Association, which does a great deal to improve the lives of women in the bush, as I'm sure you all know.