

West of the Blue Gums - Background ...

It's tempting, when writing a book such as this, to romanticise pioneering women, to make them bolder and stronger, and more adventurous than their contemporaries. There's a stereotypical image of robust squatters' wives who washed and cleaned, ironed and cooked on temperamental stoves. They dealt easily and without complaint with a bushfire, an invading snake, the sudden death of a child. In the outback they lived in slab huts with dirt floors. Their babies were born in those same primitive surroundings.

However, not all of these women were made "of sterner stuff". Many hated the bush, the loneliness and the hardship. Many also lived in fear – of inevitable childhood illnesses of possible attack from Aborigines, of their own death during childbirth. Some went mad. Many, such as Jenna, died.

The characters in this book are not based on any people I know. Also, the property known as Diamantina Downs in this book does not exist. It is merely a compilation of several properties I visited along the river's route during the course of my research.

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- Staff at the Stockman's Hall of Fame, Longreach

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Cheers ...

Robyn Lee Burrows

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