

'DAD AND DAVE'

(Stories from 'On Our Selection')

by

STEELE RUDD

Adapted by

Peter Howard & Graeme Wilson



**Illustrated by
Penelope Wilson**

DAD AND DAVE

Chapter 1 : Starting the Selection.

It's twenty years ago now since we settled on the Creek. Twenty years! But I remember the day well. There were eight of us piled up on a borrowed dray with all our things - beds, tubs, a bucket, the two cedar chairs with the pine bottoms and backs that Dad put in them, some pots, and old Crib, the dog. It was a scorching hot day, too - talk about thirst! At every creek we came to, we drank until it stopped running.

Dad didn't travel with us. He had gone to the **selection** some months before to put up the house and dig the water-hole. The house was a **slab** house with a **shingle** roof so we called it Shingle Hut. It had space enough inside for two rooms.

The floor was made of dirt, but Dad had a mixture of wet sand and fresh cow-dung that he used to keep it level. About once a month he would put the mixture on the floor, and everyone had to keep outside that day till it was dry. There were no locks on the doors. Pegs were put in to keep them shut at night. This didn't matter much because the slabs weren't very close together. We could easily see anybody coming on horseback by looking through the cracks in the wall. Joe and I used to play at counting the stars through the cracks in the roof.

The day after we arrived Dad took Mother and us out to see the paddock and the flat on the other side of the gully that he was going to clear for cultivation. No mistake, it was a real wilderness - nothing but trees, **goannas**, dead timber and bears. And lonely, it was lonely. The nearest house, Dwyer's, was three miles away!



Dad soon talked about clearing a couple of **acres** of land and planting corn. It was great to talk about it - until the work started. How we worked and worked clearing those four acres, where the haystacks are now standing, till every tree and sapling was down. We rolled thundering big logs together and gathered armfuls of sticks for burning off while the clothes clung to our backs with muddy perspiration. Sometimes Dan and Dave would sit in the shade beside the billy of water, then they would turn hopelessly and look at what they still had to do. And then they would wonder if they would ever get the land cleared.

It wasn't only the burning off! Whenever there was a short **drought** the waterhole was sure to run dry. Then we had to take turns to carry water from the springs - about two miles. We had no **draught** horse, so we humped it - and talk about a drag! By the time you returned, if you hadn't drunk the bucket (in spite of the big drink you had before you left) more than half would be spilt by the bucket bumping against your leg every time you stumbled in the long grass.

One hot, thirsty day it was Joe's turn with the bucket, and he managed to get back without spilling very much. We were all pleased because there was enough left after the tea had been made to give each of us a drink. Dinner was nearly over. Dan had finished and was lying down on the **sofa** when Joe said, "Dad, what's a **dingo** look like?"

Dad told him. "Yellow, sharp-ears and bushy tail."

"Those muster been some then that I seen - I don't know 'bout the bushy tail - all the hair had come off."

"Where'd y' see them, Joe?" we asked.

"Down at the springs floating about - dead."

Then everyone seemed to think hard and look at the tea. Suddenly I didn't want any more. Dan jumped off the sofa and bolted outside. Dad took care of Mother while she was sick.

At last the four acres were cleared. Then came a problem that couldn't be worked out too easily. I have already said that we didn't have a draught horse. The only thing on our selection that looked like a horse was an old mare that Dad used to ride. She was older than Dad I think, and we found her one day lying dead in about eighteen **inches** of mud in the creek.

We couldn't use her to break up the ground anyway as we had no plough. How *were* we going to put in the corn? That was the problem.

Dan and Dave sat outside in the corner of the chimney, both scratching the ground with a chip of wood and not saying anything. Dad and Mother sat inside talking it over. Sometimes Dad would get up and walk around the room shaking his head, then he would kick old Crib for lying under the table.

At last Mother thought of something that brightened him up, and he called Dave.

“Catch Topsy and -” he paused because he remembered the old mare was dead.

“Run over and ask Mr Dwyer to lend me three **hoes**.”

Dave went. Dwyer lent the hoes, and the problem was solved.



How Well Did You Read ?

A - Circle the letter that starts the best answer to each question.

- 1 Why did they remember the day that they arrived so well?
 - (a) It had been raining and the creeks were running.
 - (b) Everything and everyone was piled on the dray.
 - (c) The pots kept falling off the dray.
 - (d) It was twenty years ago to the day.

- 2 What caused the creeks to stop running?
 - (a) It was scorching hot.
 - (b) There had been no rain for months.
 - (c) They drank the creeks dry.
 - (d) They were in the middle of a drought.
- 3 What was the roof of the house made of?
 - (a) Tiles. (b) Shingles. (c) Mud plaster. (d) Wooden slabs.
- 4 What was the problem that they had with sowing the corn?
 - (a) How to bury the horse.
 - (b) How to pay for the seed.
 - (c) How to get clean water after the horse died in the creek.
 - (d) How to plough the land and break it up.
- 5 The problem was solved by borrowing
 - (a) hoes. (b) seed corn. (c) a plough. (d) a horse.
- 6 The water spilled from the bucket when
 - (a) Joe dropped it. (b) it bumped against Joe's legs.
 - (c) Joe drank from it. (d) he saw the native dog.
- 7 Why were the family upset at dinner?
 - (a) Mother was sick.
 - (b) Crib had crawled under the table.
 - (c) There wasn't enough water to make tea.
 - (d) Some dingoes had died in the spring.

B - Appreciation exercise : choose the best words from the list to fill in the blanks (there are more words than you will need).

Life was _____ at the Creek but that's the way it was in the _____ days. When Dad and his family started farming there were no _____ conveniences like water, sewerage or _____. The selection was _____ and it was many kilometres to the nearest town or _____.

electricity
neighbour

corn
early

modern
isolated

hard
fun

DAD AND DAVE**CHAPTER 1****Starting the Selection (Pages 2 - 5)**

A	1 (b) 5 (a)	2 (c) 6 (b)	3 (b) 7 (d)	4 (d)
B	hard isolated	early neighbour	modern	electricity

CHAPTER 2**Our First Harvest (Pages 6 - 9)**

A	1 (d) 5 (c)	2 (a) 6 (c)	3 (c)	4 (a)
B	money poor	shopkeeper	climate	debt

CHAPTER 3**Kangaroos in the Barley (Pages 10 - 13)**

A	1 (b) 5 (b)	2 (c)	3 (a)	4 (d)
B	bush sad	selection hard	deeds	owners

CHAPTER 4**Dave's Snake Bite (Pages 14 - 18)**

A	1F 5F 9F	2T 6T 10F	3T 7F	4T 8F
B	11 (b)	12 (d)		
C	dangerous help	days	doctor	little