

The Jericho landscape

Mary Ramsay shares the story of four generations of tree planters beside the Jordan River in Tasmania's Midlands.

Travellers from the south heading north towards Launceston make the descent into the valley of the Jordan River near Jericho on the Midlands Highway. There's a great contrast in tree cover between the left and right sides of the valley.

On the left is a massing of trees in the cherry orchard on 'Sandhill' but there are very few other trees. On the right many plantings can be seen. This property is 'Bowsden', which has been in my family, the Burbury family, for almost a century.



Bowsden, 2022. Photo Jennifer Stackhouse

The earliest trees mark the hawthorn hedges that surround the paddocks closest to the site of the original house built by the Hudspeth family.

This main legacy of trees however has been the work of four generations of the Burbury family. Planting began in 1928 when the family bought the farm. Charles Burbury (1861-1946) loved trees and planted a great many. A family belief is that he also planted the trees on Marys Island in Lake Dulverton at Oatlands.

On 'Bowsden' he tended to plant in groups, which he called plantations. These groups consisted of mostly macrocarpa pines, willows and eucalypts. Many have now reached the end of their life. As a child I recall the gums in the Park Paddock being lopped to prolong their survival. This has not ensured their survival until this century – due mostly to the depredations of possums and drought. From 1945 my father, Geoff Burbury (1903-1964), began planting shelterbelts. The most obvious are the macrocarpa pines near the house. In contrast he also bought a bulldozer in the 1950s and removed some of the native vegetation on the 'run' country as did many other farmers in the 1950s.



Cypress plantings along the driveway at Bowsden. Photo Jennifer Stackhouse

Charles Burbury, his son (1945-), planted an avenue of eucalypts along one drive and rows of cypress with Mexican cypress (*Cupressus benthamii*), Arizona cypress (*C. arizonica*) and Brunnings cypress (*C. macrocarpa* 'Brunniana Aurea') on either side of another drive.



Shelterbelt plantings at Bowsden. Photo Jennifer Stackhouse

His son Damian has also grown and planted trees across 'Bowsden', the most conspicuous to the traveller is the shelterbelt along the highway from Mud Walls Road to the base of Pike's Hill. This shelterbelt was planted with professional advice and involved planting 1600 trees.

Despite 100 plants being stolen the night they were put in the ground it has had a very good survival rate. It only received one watering after it was planted but the ground had been left fallow

for a year before it was planted out. It is a mix of native plants such as casuarina, eucalypt, acacia and prickly box. You can have a very good look as you crawl past all the roadworks in progress along that stretch of the Midlands Highway.

Mary Ramsay is a member of AGHS and serves on the Committee of the Tasmanian Branch of AGHS. If you have a story about a family garden or landscape you'd like to share, email Mary Ramsay on ratho1@bigpond.com, or Jennifer Stackhouse on jstackho@bigpond.net.au.