

Not Just a Walk in the Park!

***Adapted from “Case Study” produced by:
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Mike & Nancy Dittrich are a retired couple who are about 70 years of age and originally come from America. After many years of dealing with the public when managing a Post Office and earth moving business, Mr and Mrs Dittrich were looking forward to experiencing some peace and quite and privacy. They felt that if they could build their retirement house in an isolated rural setting that would be just about perfect. This led to acquiring a 40 ha property in hilly country at Tuchekoi, located between Cooroy and Imbil.

The land holding was originally part of a much larger property that had been use for cattle grazing over many years. The property had been extensively cleared of native vegetation on all but the steepest slopes and ridges (14ha) and supported a variety of pasture grasses of low productivity. Apart from several dams, there were no fixed improvements. The annual average rainfall for the district is about 1000mm.

Immediately after purchasing the property in 1996, the Dittrich’s arranged for construction of their house and began to consider their first plot of plantation trees. Mr and Mrs Dittrich only act when they have planned a task very thoroughly. Therefore, before commencing their planting they completed a forest grower training course (The Master Tree Grower Program. The course gave them the confidence and know-how to proceed with the initial plot. They decided that Gympie messmate and forest red gum were the best species for their purpose.

Establishment of the initial plot of 2.5ha in 1997 turned out to be an arduous task. After months of labour they were convinced that they could not personally expand the area under trees. Then a fortuitously timed advertisement in the paper led them to consider a joint venture plan with the DPI. They readily accepted this option and that took care of the remaining 21 ½ ha of useable land in 1999 to 2000. Now with the plots well established, the Dittrich’s enjoy their privacy and aesthetic environment they have created.

Although the primary motivation for acquiring the property was for peace and quite, Mr and Mrs Dittrich were also aware that if they developed the property in a way that would be pleasing for eventual prospective buyers; this would lead to a higher property value in the future. Since the Dittrich’s are self funded retirees, this is important to them.



Trees fitted in with their aspirations in the following ways:

1. Trees would be of value in increasing the privacy of their home.
2. Trees lining the entrance driveway would enhance the vale of the property.
3. There was a further 20 ha of open grazing left as so they decided that trees over that area too would be a convenient way to manage the land.

Mr and Mrs Dittrich, recording their plantation growth

Both the original planting and the joint venture are maintained in an immaculate park-like state due to the Dittrich’s desire to maintain tidiness. This passion is manifested in practices such as following after the pruning contractors have finished and mulching the off cuts. When a part of their plantation has been thinned, they drag the removed logs away to where they will not look untidy. While this state of orderliness is hardly essential for tree growth, it dose add immensely to the immediate aesthetics and enduring value if the property.

The trees established under the joint venture fit neatly with the Dittrich’s objectives – with the joint venture partner (DPI) taking care of the tree management. Tree growth is very strong and healthy in each of the plots and all of the trees are large enough to tolerate cattle grazing. The Dittrich’s now have cattle grazing under the plantation trees. The cattle are managed by a neighbour on a revenue sharing basis.

Dittrich's park like maintenance

To any one fortunate enough to wander through the Dittrich's plantations, the overwhelming impression is of a carefully tended park like forest, indeed soothing to the soul. If the soul is soothed more effectively knowing that capital is secure and growing, this too is evident – tall, rapidly growing, straight trees, headed for harvest or an appealing real estate sale.



Every day, Mr and Mrs Dittrich partake of the forest delight that is their creation, enjoying the visual appeal of the trees and the presence of many bird species that previously did not inhabit this area. The Dittrich's have achieved in their retirement what many would aspire to do in their more active years but lack their courage and energy. Their results can be an inspiration to all armchair foresters! Besides the immense satisfaction they can feel at having transformed bare grazing paddocks into their picturesque retirement haven, they have created a habitat for wildlife and they feel they have protected the land from erosion.

Mr and Mrs Dittrich plantation venture has not come at the expense of financial; benefits. The forecast results from timber harvesting in the future are strongly positive. If the owners choose to sell the property earlier than that, then they will still gain through having a highly valued piece of real estate.



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