

**Chapter 1 - 1st Steps On A New Farm**

**Shane** This is the heart of the farm. This is the biodynamic spraying rig. So when I arrived here in January 2014 the most important and powerful tool I had in my toolkit at that time was the biodynamic preparations and biodynamic soil activator. So to me it was a priority to get that onto the as much of the place I could soon as I could. So when I arrived here, I came equipped with gear for spraying out the preparations and I had the whole place done within 48 hours. That was in January then in February I went around and put in steel posts that were basically to become the center of view when you take photos. So for fixed point photo sites, and I wanted baseline data. I didn't have my baseline data from Dukes Plain and so I didn't have anything to say this is where we started. This is where we've arrived at. Now I've got baseline data from this place. I've got soil tests when we came here before we bought it and I've got these fixed point photo sites that show what the country looked like.

This one we'll go past on the way to the cattle. It's in the holding paddocks. This one also is in the same area in the small holding paddocks. This is in front of the house. We can go there. This is on the western side of the house. We can also go there and see what that looks like. So they're basically recording what the country looked like and I'm hoping that I've got one in here somewhere that shows what the gullies looked like, but I'm not sure whether I've got it. This one we'll go past on the way to the cattle also. This is on top of a hill pretty much bare dirt there.

**Helen Disler:** How big's the farm?

**Shane Joyce:** The farm is a hundred and forty-one hectares, something like 19 paddocks in all. An old school way of looking at the place but within those 19 paddocks now where we've got the cattle now, we've actually got an area that was one paddock that has been subdivided with permanent electric fencing into six paddocks and we go into those paddocks with temporary electric fencing and so the paddock there's 1/6 of that big paddock subdivided. We now go in there with temporary electric fences. And so we actually cut that one sixth of the paddock into eight separate paddocks as we graze it, so by strip grazing.

**Helen Disler:** “People say it's expensive to farm that way because of the cost”.

**Shane Joyce:** “It's expensive not to farm that way also because of the cost!”

I guess there's two things going on here. The agriculture that I grew up in was characterized by entropy. So it was characterized by systems running down; we expected that, it was the norm. It happened with the brigalow country. Started off up here and degraded over 20 years. So we expected that was normal and then we have to go to the expert outside from Newton's

science and get the advice. What do we need to buy? What inputs do we need to put out to get this back? The agriculture that I come out of now lives in a paradigm of syntropy where systems actually run up you use your animals and you use your vegetation to actually run it up and then improve everything.

So that's the cost. Farming in a system that runs up is that you continually improving and reducing your external inputs. The cost in a system that's running down is you're always going to town to buy inputs and you always using machinery to bring it back to life again. So these photos are in June of 2014, so basically six months into the end of the beginning of restoring this farm and I think that when I came here we didn't get there January was as dry as chips. February was dry. We didn't get decent rain until March. So we're now looking at what the country looks like in June and you may notice there's a little bit of difference. This is in one of the holding paddocks I said we'll go past on the way to the cattle. This is also in the holding paddocks. This is up on top of the hill where the concrete tank was and you'll see there's a scar across the landscape. That was freshly laid water system water pipes. Six months into the program you can see we're starting to get a bit of grass cover on the country.

So it's the beginning. There's another scar from a water system. So this place when we came. Here really had no stock water system. One of the previous owners had started on a development plan of building houses and sheds and fences and left here before he got to implement the water part. The next owner didn't do anything about the water; the livestock just had access to the gullies where there was permanent surface water. So one of my priorities here was to put in a decent reticulated water system so that we could actually start to manage the grazing of the country. These are behind the house which we can go and see in the in the flesh as well. Just the beginning of planting trees and this is in front of the house, which yep, so that's that.