

**Slab Cottage = Myrtle (late 20s), mother of three, wife of early settler Thomas.
(c1880)**

Welcome to our home. Mind the chickens—they have a habit of getting under your feet.

My husband Thomas and I are selectors. Four years ago he walked into the bush, chose 320 acres of forest and announced that we'd make our future here. We're the newcomers, and we are here to create the next chapter in the story of this land. A story that has existed for thousands of years. I looked at the towering, ancient trees and thought it was a very ambitious plan.

The Government says that if we clear the land, fence it, farm it, build a house and keep paying rent for long enough, we may eventually own it.

That sounds simple enough on paper.

In reality, every acre has been hard won.

Those giant trees didn't fall by themselves. Thomas has spent years felling timber, splitting posts and clearing ground for crops and stock.

When we first arrived, we lived in a bark hut. It kept out some of the weather, but not nearly enough of it. This cottage is a great improvement, and Thomas built much of it by hand.

Life here demands a little of everything. I sew clothes, make soap and candles, tend the vegetable garden and help keep the household running.

The nearest town is miles away, and when winter rain turns the roads to mud, we can be cut off for weeks at a time.

With three young children, that's what weighs on my mind most. An illness, an accident, or a difficult birth can quickly become a serious matter when help is so far away.

Still... every tree we clear, every fence we build and every seed we plant brings us one step closer.

One day this land won't just be where we live...

It'll be **our** home.