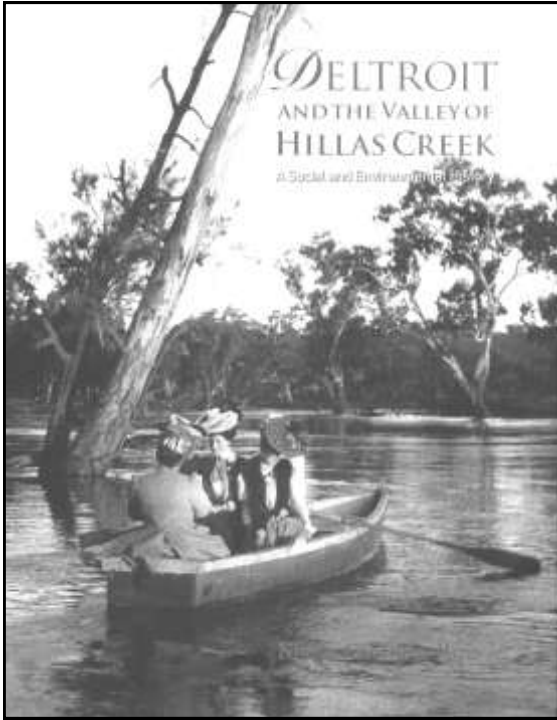


## **Deltrout and the Valley of Hillas Creek—Nicola Crichton-Brown.**

In January 1866 William Richardson selected a 320 acre block on the north bank of the Hillas Creek, as allowed by the Robertson Land Act. This block was part of the original Yabtree Run, which by then was owned by R. F. Horsley. Over a period of time this first selection grew to more than 7,000 acres (all part of the original Yabtree) and became known as Deltrout.

Deltrout is currently owned by Anthony and Nicola Crichton-Brown, and it is Nicola who is the author of this book. Nicola notes that when she first took an interest in the history of the station she was quite surprised to discover how little recorded information was available. I share her surprise at this - how could a run described as “*one of the finest in the district*” and a “*model*” farm, have such scant detail recorded? We are therefore indebted to Nicola for filling this void.



The book is very easy to read, maintaining reader interest with a variety of detail about the people, the environment, natural phenomena (fires, floods, etc.), and the changing face of agriculture from the 1860's through to the present, all arranged in a logical and appealing manner. Like many creditable non-fiction books it is extremely well researched.

Nicola has an ability to write succinctly and avoids getting bogged down in monotonous passages of chronological facts, births, deaths, and marriages.

The book itself is A1 quality. The editing, the design, the photographs (colour, sepia, and black & white), the maps and documents, along with a hard cover and good quality paper make it a very attractive package. Nothing has been skimmed on here.

The depth of the book is surprising. It covers the history of the run right from Richardson's first selection, through to the current time. It traces the Richardson family back to England, and follows them through to the time when the family connection with Deltrout was broken. It has a chapter on the nearby Junction Inn, and another on the post office and other significant items.

The main body of the book though centres on the various families who owned Deltrout. There are plenty of references to the Horsley's, the Richardson's, and the others that followed. The Horsley and Richardson families are iconic rural dynasties and the book has benefitted from a large amount of information and material supplied by family members. This information gives a vivid insight into the social activities and business operations of those connected with Deltrout. It is a book I will return to again and again for reference.

A quote from Peter Austin (former editor of the Land) is a fitting tribute:

*“A landmark study which should add Nicola Crichton-Brown to the illustrious body of women writers of Australian pastoral history. An enthralling account not just of Deltrout but of the evolution of rural Australia from pre-settlement to the modern day.”*

Deltrout and the Valley of Hillas Creek – Nicola Crichton-Brown. Melbourne Books. 320pp. RRP \$45.00

**[Available at Collins Books in Baylis Street. - Ph.6921 8933]**