HISTORY OF THE EUNGELLA RANGE ROAD
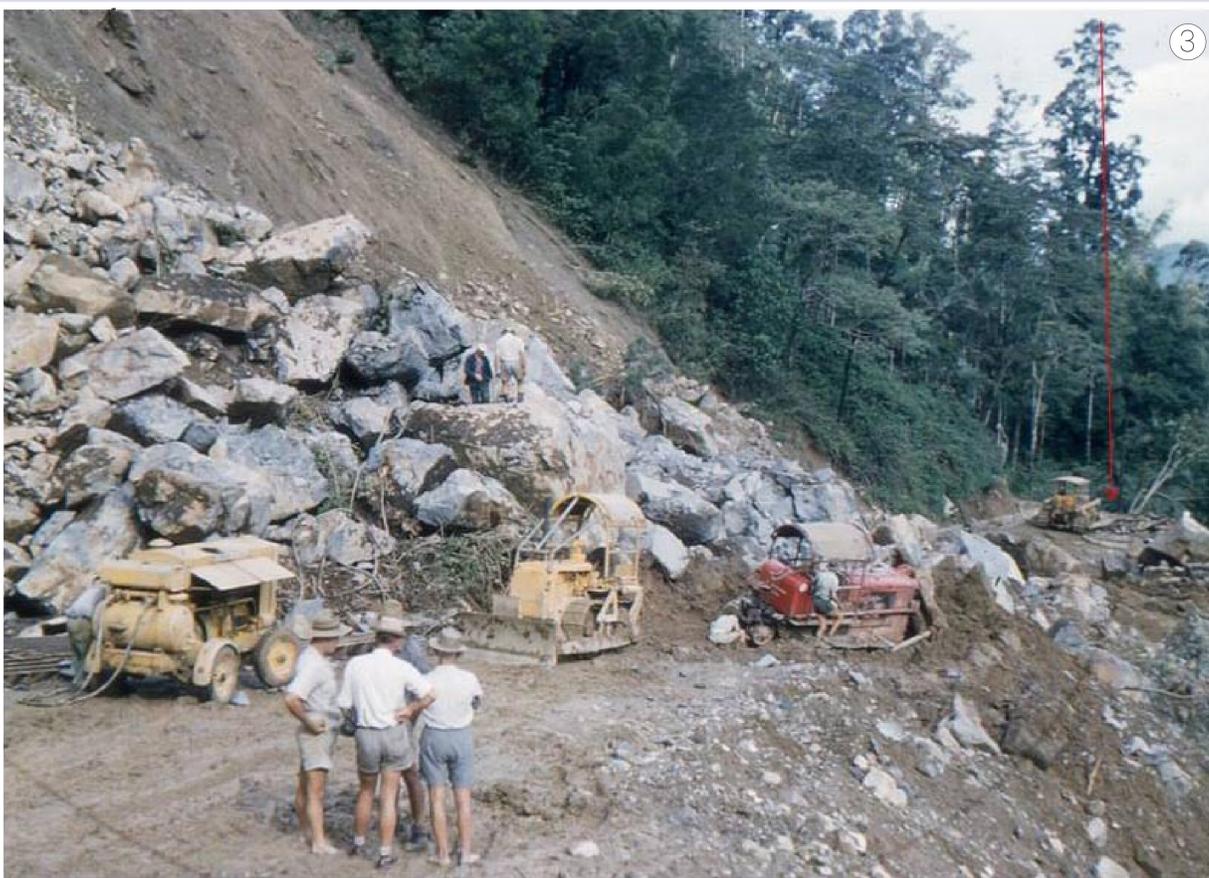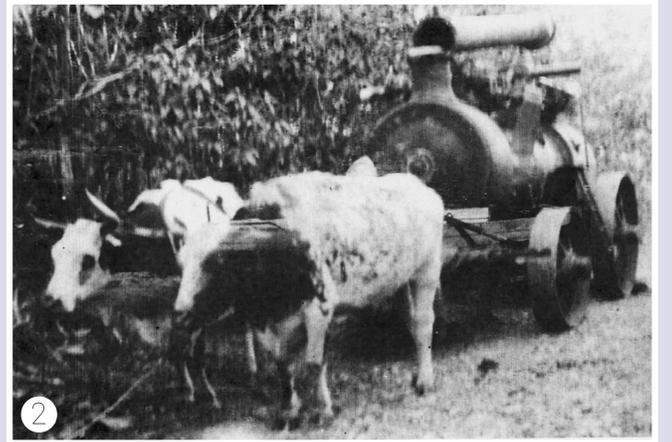

IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS:

1. Range Road ca.1915 - notice horse on road lower left (State Library image APE-038-01-0001)

2. Mr Dobson taking a steam engine up Range Road in 1913 for the first saw mill in Eungella

3. Clarke Range land slide,1958

4. Range Road with fenced railing and people - early days

5. Range Road land slide after Cyclone Aivu - April 1989

Around the 1880s Charles Armstrong, husband of Dame Nellie Melba, established a pack horse track just east of Netherdale and up a spur to the Clarke Range. This track still exists today, in rough form. Being only a pack horse track, it could not handle the larger, heavier loads so these loads had to arrive via Nebo and Mt Britton.

Karl Flohr established another track in 1888, in the same area as Armstrong's. Between 1904 and 1909, the Pioneer Development Board built the Range Road at a cost of 1700 pounds - a labourer's weekly wage was one pound a week in those days. Mr James McGinn was lead engineer and the road rose from 540ft at Netherdale, to 2300 ft at the top of the range. But even this road could not handle some of the longer logs harvested at the "top", so a "timber chute" was established, where the logs slid partially down the range and bullock teams were used to finish the trip.

In 1989, cyclone Aivu caused so much damage to the Range, that it had to be completely closed for repairs, only open for a short time in the morning and evening to let residents complete their trip to Mackay for supplies. This caused much disruption to the tourism and dairy industry for an extended period of time.

Only after $2.2 million dollars was spent on repairs and upgrading, was the road fully re-opened. Because of the type of the terrain and climate, landslips still can occur today.

Step Back in Time
gathering Eungella's past