

MARLIE MARCH

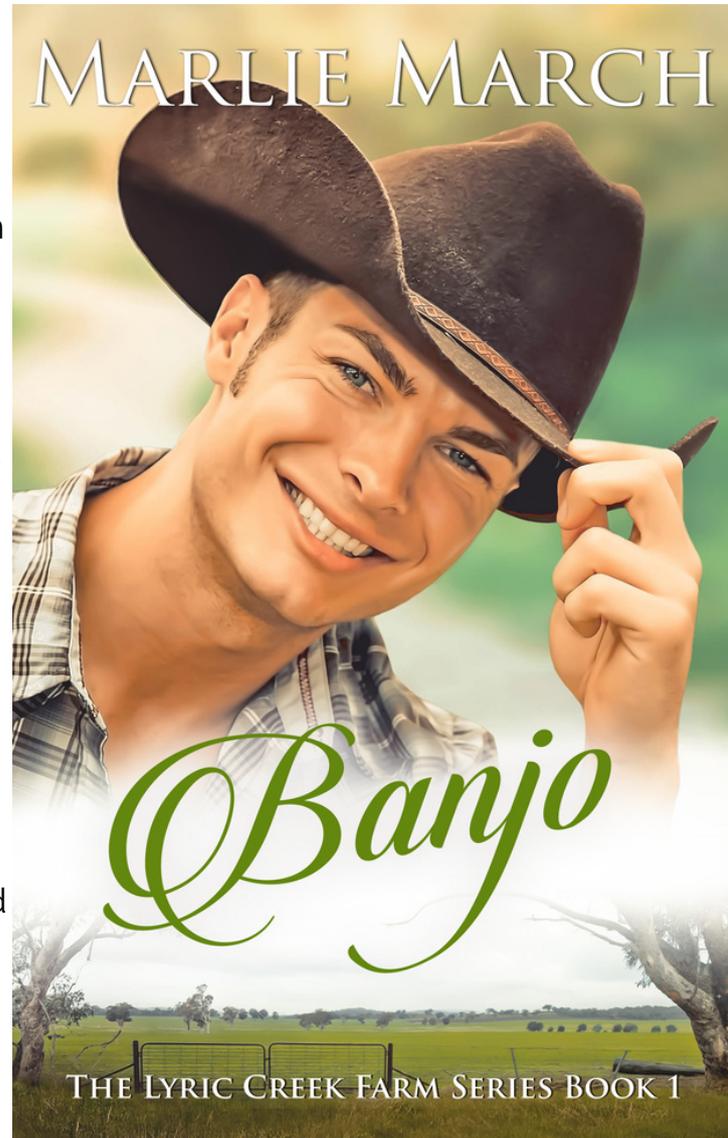
BANJO: THE LYRIC CREEK FARM SERIES BOOK 1

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

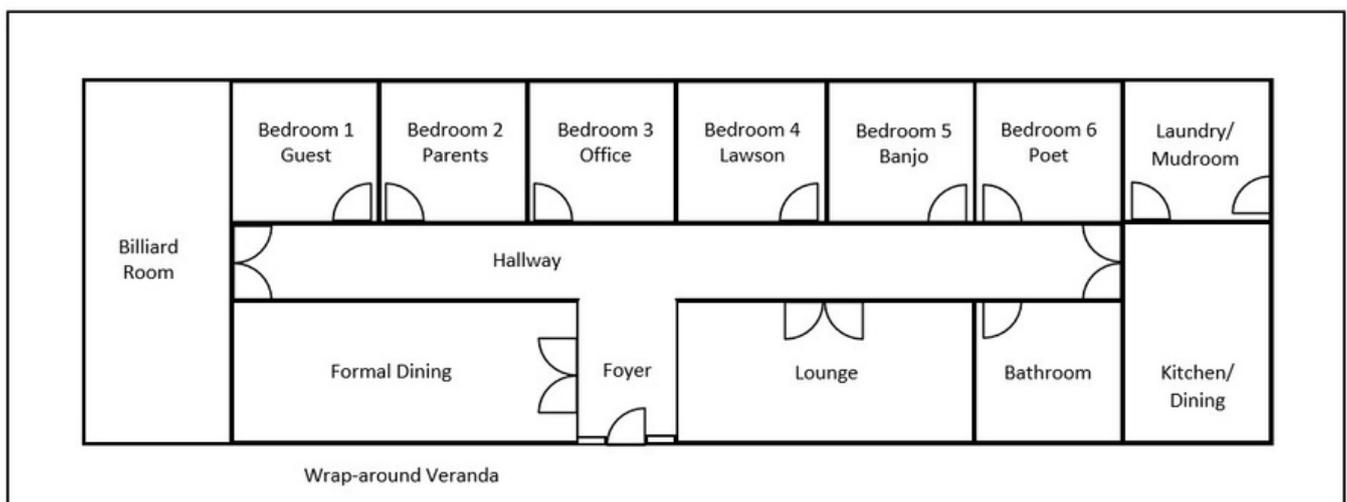
Banjo Blake's story is set on the Lyric Creek Farm near the fictional town of Lyric in the Victorian high country about two hours drive north of Melbourne, Australia. For those who know the area, I imagined Lyric to be somewhat like Euroa in terms of location, size, population, and climate.

The Blake homestead was based on a historic house where I lived for about three years during my late twenties. It had been built in 1892 and was situated on a sheep and potato farm in Western Victoria, outside of Ballarat.

This plan of the Blake homestead is quite similar to that historic home except that I gave it twelve rooms instead of fifteen. The rooms that I omitted were two maids' rooms and a butcher's room which had been set up like a giant Coolgardie safe to prepare and store all the meat and dairy products required to feed the family and their workers.

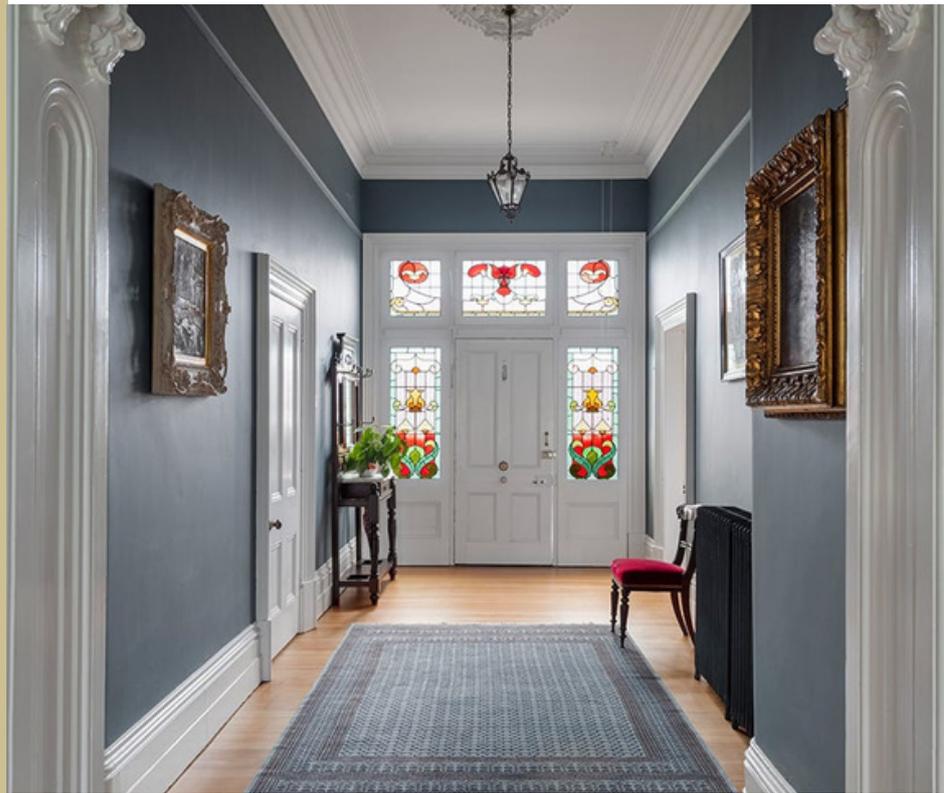


THE PLAN OF THE HOMESTEAD



THE HOMESTEAD

"Later in the afternoon, Matilda grew bored and decided to test out her crutches. At the door to the lounge, instead of turning right to head to the kitchen, she turned left to explore the homestead. The corridor had to be longer than a cricket pitch and was interspersed with wooden fretwork arches along the way. Once she'd gone several metres, a large foyer appeared on her left, leading to an intricate leadlight door. Sunlight streamed through the predominantly red coloured glass, casting patterns on a set of double wooden doors to the side of the foyer. Tentatively, she opened one and gasped in surprise. She was facing one end of an extremely long antique dining table surrounded by twenty green velvet-covered chairs. She closed that door and went back to the hallway, venturing further down until she reached yet another set of double doors at the very end. Peering inside, she thought this room appeared longer than the previous room. There were several wing-backed chairs, also upholstered with green velvet, and a full-sized billiard table that seemed dwarfed by the space. Matilda closed the door then turned around to make her way back. She counted six doors on the left side of the hall, which she thought to be all of the bedrooms. On the right, once she'd passed the foyer, there were only doors to the lounge and bathroom. When she made it to the opposite end of the corridor, she went into the kitchen through more double doors and was hit with the rich aroma of a casserole cooking."



SUCCESSION PLANNING

Many existing Victorian farms originated as land acquired through the Soldier Settlement Scheme by Discharged Servicemen post World War I. These people cleared the blocks, built basic homes and outbuildings, erected fences, and with limited funds, purchased stock, seed, and equipment. Some managed to eke out a living, establishing a legacy they wished to hand down to their children. The blocks were usually just large enough to be able to provide enough work and income for the next generation of males. The daughters were given no expectation of inheritance and often left the farm after marrying young.

The third generation, however, came across extra difficulties:

- The farm was likely already struggling to support two, three, or more families and the block could not be further divided.
- Their grandparents were of the generation that intended to stay working on the farm until the day they died. They would not relinquish control nor would they put any retirement plans into place.
- Their parents had been working for their grandparents receiving little to no wages and any ideas their parents had for improvement or expansion were immediately dismissed by their grandparents. To stay on the farm would mean the same for the third generation so many made the choice to leave and find employment elsewhere.
- Somewhat like the women of the second generation, the men and women of the third generation were given no consideration for any form of inheritance once they had the audacity to leave the farm.

Drought, fire, and flood, together with climate change and high-interest rates have in the past brought many farming families to their knees, some even losing their land altogether. Succession planning is essential to prevent disharmony and to protect the family legacy, but many of the previous generations refuse to relinquish any control to plan for, not only their own future but also the futures of their children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, that attitude dies with them, often leaving their children or grandchildren with no alternative but to contest their wills in court.

Sadly, I am familiar with the experience of the third generation. My husband and I could see the writing on the wall and chose to leave the land and the family behind to provide a better life for our children. It took another thirty years for the poop to hit the proverbial fan and we are thankful that we were well out of it. In our opinion, no amount of financial gain is worth the stress that would bring. Anyway, I have touched on this issue in 'Banjo' and am looking forward to further exploring the theme of Succession Planning in 'Lawson.'





The Wedding

These are the photos I used to inspire my description of Tilly and Banjo's wedding.



The Bouquet

"Not quite. Don't forget the flowers." Poet picked up the two modest bouquets of fresh pink and white freesias with their stems bound together by silver ribbons, then handed one to Tilly. "Now, you're perfect."



The Ring

The platinum ring looked like a flower, with a pear-shaped pink diamond in the centre, a halo of ten more pink diamonds and then another halo of nine white diamonds, all cut into the same pear-shaped design.



Well, that's it for this 'story behind the story.' I hope you enjoyed visiting Banjo's world.

Siblings, Lawson and Poet will each have their own stories written in The Lyric Creek Farm Series which will be published in 2022.

I love hearing from readers, so please leave a review and subscribe to my website.

Much love, Marlie March.