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CENTS

# Riverlander

MURRAY

GOULBURN

MURRUMBIDGEE



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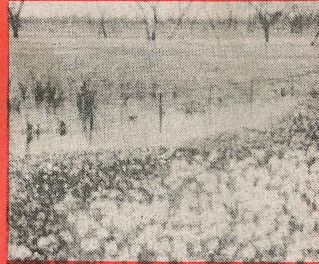
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## MIRROR ON THE MURRAY



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## MARCH OF THE HYACINTH



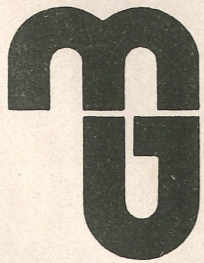
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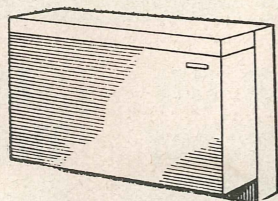


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## EDITORIAL

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"THE ecological consequences of water hyacinth choking our waters are staggering to contemplate".  
G. W. Douglas, B.Agr.Sc.,  
Chairman, Vermin and Noxious Weeds  
Destruction Board.

# Victoria defers catchment plan

THE Victorian Government has deferred action to set up a series of regional catchment authorities until later this year.

The Premier, Mr Hamer, says a report by the Parliamentary Public Works committee into flooding will be closely studied with recommendations made in 1970 by the Victorian Joint Select Committee on drainage.

Mr Hamer says the Drainage of Land Bill, introduced in State Parliament in November, will facilitate action by private individuals and existing authorities. But provision for setting up new authorities, he says, has been deferred pending further consideration of the Public Works Committee's report.

The Victorian Premier says the report is a valuable reference document. Its main recommendation is to set up catchment

authorities to co-ordinate flood mitigation, river improvement, arterial drainage, soil conservation procedures, levee bank construction, flood warning and other related matters.

The committee has spent two years studying the effects of flooding in Northern Victoria. It says the present piecemeal system of flood control and prevention in northern Victoria is totally inadequate. 'Ample flood warning is of little use if there is a lack of preparedness for well planned action once the crisis is at hand,' the committee adds.

'Permanent vigilance on the safety of levee banks and the condition of local streams is of the utmost importance'. The committee says collective action, rather than individual effort, is required if flooding and drainage problems are to be lessened—and under present legislation there are no specific powers to remedy the effect of works carried out by private landholders.

'Many of these works', says the report,

'although protecting the individual, lead to heading up of flood flows which adversely affect other properties. The present state of affairs wherein local organisations such as municipal councils, river improvement trusts, drainage trusts and local groups, along with individual landholders, spend money and effort in piecemeal fashion is totally inadequate.'

The committee urges that catchment authorities be established in northern Victoria without delay. The main rivers affected are the Goulburn, Murray, Campaspe, Loddon and Avoca. The report says: 'Catchment authorities should be constituted with majority representation of local municipalities and they should be vested with powers to absorb existing river improvement trusts, drainage areas and flood protection districts within their catchments.'

• see Cash Please or it is Down the Drain — page 6.

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Cover Picture—The famous Walls of China, 100 kilometres north-east of Mildura in the Balranald Shire of New South Wales. [Picture courtesy Australia Now.]

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## How two states see a pest

WHAT's being done at Government level to combat the hyacinth problem at Moree in northern New South Wales?

The State's Deputy Premier and Minister for Local Government, Sir Charles Cutler, says \$1,000,000 will be used for control of noxious plants this financial year. He says \$3,030 of this has been set aside to pay for the aerial survey of the Gingham watercourse to help the eradication program.

The Boomi Shire Council also has a special grant of \$8,000 for eradication when a satisfactory method has been found.

But South Australia's Minister for Works, Mr Corcoran, believes not enough money is being spent on control. He says his own Government will consider any request for financial help to control and eliminate it.

Mr Corcoran has written to the NSW Premier, Mr Lewis, saying he is worried that the weed may spread into the Darling-Murray river system. He says \$200,000 is needed to control the weed properly by spraying with 24D, a weedicide which breaks down quickly and does not affect the environment.

Mr Corcoran says he is concerned that the spread of hyacinth would make water undrinkable for humans and livestock, would deplete oxygen in water and kill fish and choke irrigation systems.

In his letter to Mr Lewis he says: 'If the River Murray became infested to the same extent as other rivers in which the hyacinth is present, the future of water supplies to metropolitan Adelaide and the major industrial and commercial centres and country lands dependent on the River Murray would be in jeopardy.'

Mr Corcoran said a meeting of the Agricultural Council early next year would discuss financial aid and measures of controlling the weed.

# The massive the Hyacinth

By G. V. Lawrence

## Expert panel

THE Working Panel on Water Hyacinth is convened by Mr J. Strang of the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. Other members present on the Moree inspection tour were Mr G. W. Douglas, Chairman Victorian Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board; Mr D. Murrie, Department Agriculture, South Australia; Mr G. R. Sainty and Mr M. J. Shaw, Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, NSW; Mrs C. L. Settle, Department of Environment, Canberra; and the secretary, Mr I. G. Fenton, Department of Agriculture, Moree.

Official observers were Dr K. Harley and Miss N. Forna of CSIRO, Division of Entomology, and Mr R. Sloggett of the NSW State Pollution Control Commission.

Contributions were also made by Mr G. R. Godden and Mr K. E. Chaffey, Department of Agriculture, NSW and Mr O. Pastega, Clarence River County Council, Grafton.

The MVDL thanks all for their co-operation and sharing of opinions. It particularly thanks Mr Willmot and Mr Fenton without whom the visit would not have been nearly so effective.

water weeds, who was there to advise the panel.

We made two ground inspections, first with Clive Willmot, weeds officer with the Boomi Shire and later, more extensively with the whole party. The circuit downstream of The Raft took us along dry roads, covered in some fifty places by overflow channels of the Gwydir and Big Leather systems. Flood conditions and necessary releases from the Copeton Dam had been responsible for this situation prevailing for the past eleven months.

Provisionally, on our final look 83-year-old Charles Spilsbury rode up behind the cattle he

A MURRAY Valley Development League team visited Moree and the Gwydir Valley area in late November to see for itself the nature and extent of the water hyacinth infestation. It went there deeply concerned at the implications for the Darling-Murray River system and came away badly frightened.

The team—T. R. Mellor, P. A. Yeomans and myself—approached the problem area by chartered plane. We flew westward down the Gwydir River from Moree and suddenly there was no river.

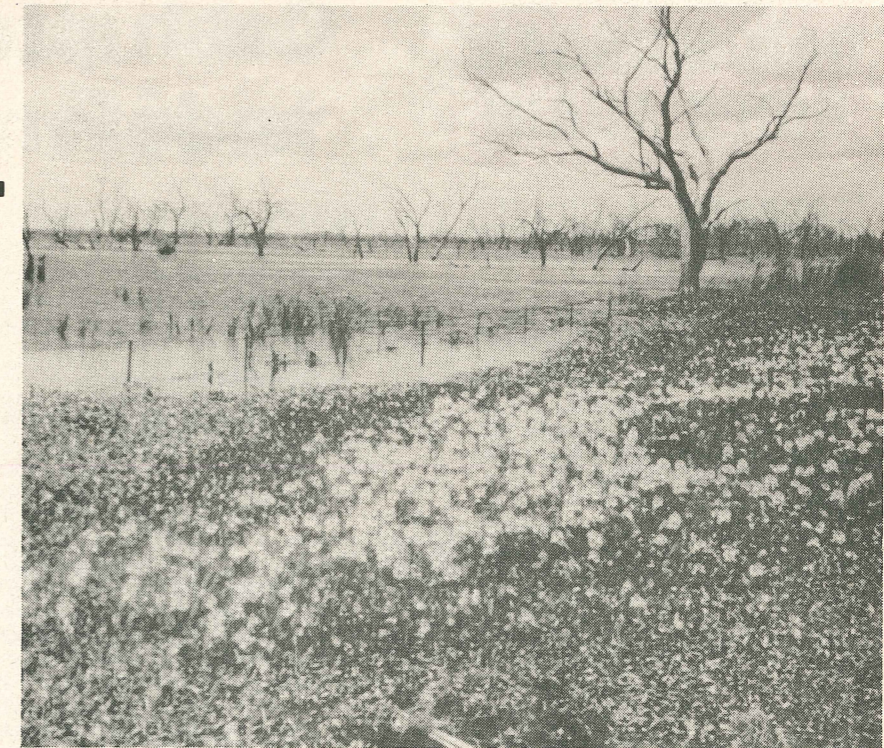
We were at the upper end of the barrier known as The Raft. The Gwydir River as such had disappeared and the water it carried was moving out both north and south in multiple streams which eventually re-united in the north to form the Gingham and the Big Leather in the south.

This was the area of the water hyacinth. Eight thousand hectares was the estimate we took with us. Ten thousand hectares they now say at Moree. There are not ten or eight thousand hectares of solid water hyacinth but great masses of it are spread throughout the area.

From the air the hyacinth is a dark and attractive green, alternating with pools of clear still water, channels of streaky white and, where the hyacinth has not yet penetrated, green water meadows. On the ground there is beauty in the flower—fatal beauty that has carried it across the world from an American origin and the lily ponds of garden fanciers.

Thanks to advice from Ralph Hunt, the federal member for Gwydir and the help of W. T. Murray, President of the United Gwydir Valley Water Users Association, we were able to program our visit to coincide with that of the working panel on water hyacinth of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Dr David Mitchell of Rhodesia, a world expert on

# march of course . . .



HYACINTH near Moree in northern NSW . . . a frightening infestation.

was droving. He had been an observer from the start twenty years ago, when he discovered the first patch. The cattle ate it. His horse ate it and he had a nibble himself.

He assumed that the stock could handle it, but was taken by surprise in a flood year when water hyacinth demonstrated its ability to double up every fifteen days or so. For a time he was prepared to accept the hyacinth to get the water. Then he put up banks to keep some of his property dry, only for the main bank to be overwhelmed.

Now he would like to be dried out. A neighbor is 90 per cent water and hyacinth. Others in the watercourses area are still gaining on the whole, but generally a situation is building up in which the Murray Valley Development League and the Gingham Water Users will reach a common determination to remove the menace.

It is time to talk about The Raft.

In the earliest years of this century a gaggle of logs lodged in the bed of the Gwydir and silted up to form a stilling pool which stopped more logs which silted up to form a stilling pool which . . . The Raft is now fifteen kilometres along the old course of the Gwydir River, distinguishable now only by the greater height of trees.

At the upstream end of The Raft we saw a calm pool with many logs floating—the march of The Raft towards Moree. Maybe that fine city will be threatened before the end of the century.

What's to be done?

David Mitchell believes that water hyacinth can never be totally eradicated in the Gingham situation but can be driven back and the spread downstream prevented. His own aerial inspection had yet to be made when we left. His considered opinion will be awaited avidly and we have hopes that he will talk to lower Murray audiences.

Our tentative conclusions:

There is the Gwydir River with the Copeton Dam to regulate its flow. We do not know of any comprehensive plan to utilise it. This

offers tremendous possibilities for developing irrigation further to enhance the prosperity of the Moree district.

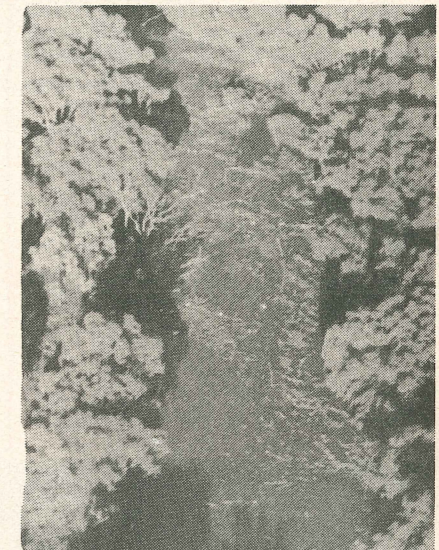
In the course of planning the reticulation and use of this water, the flooded areas below the Raft could be progressively dried out and the hyacinth denied its water base.

A chemical spraying approach would have its place in attacking some of the then reduced mass and particularly in spots of revival and occurrences in new areas. The experts can provide the right mix of drying out, long term biological control, rapid chemical attack, mechanical and manual efforts.

It will be a question of money—a lot of money now and some to follow up. Or multi-millions in the years to come when water hyacinth gets away into the Barwon-Darling-Murray. Sooner or later it would get away.

The needed funds cannot come from the landowners who are theoretically responsible for extirpating their noxious weeds, nor from the Boomi Shire. Even the New South Wales Government (which has set aside an as yet

• Continued Page 20



THE Raft from the air . . . marching towards Moree.

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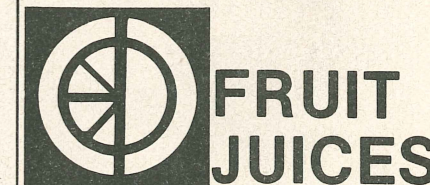
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## DAN MORGAN RIDES AGAIN

THE escapades of bushranger Daniel Morgan will soon be re-lived across the cinemascope screens of the world.

What will be the largest feature film on authentic Australian history is now being shot on location in 'Morgan Country'.

The film, 'Mad Dog', is being made by Motion Picture Productions Pty. Ltd., of Melbourne, who are now showing their national award winning film 'Brother Can you Spare a Dime' throughout the U.S.A., and Australia. Top Australian actors, including Jack Thomson, David Gullpillil, Frank Thring, Graham Blundell, Michael Pate and forty others are co-starring with Hollywood actor Dennis Hopper in Mad Dog.

Restoration of five original homesteads, station buildings, a Cobb and Co Inn and the construction of a gold mining city are some of the activities taking place. It has not been without problems—the October flood in the Billabong Creek washed away eighty buildings and a bridge on the gold mine set. Many jobs have been created building and restoring sets. Local people are playing parts as extras. The towns of Culcairn, Holbrook and Walla Walla are buzzing with film people and vehicles.

Filming started on October 27 and continued well into December. The company's executives spent three months seeking out authentic locations and natural bushland settings. They were assisted by the Morgan Country Tourist Officer, Mr Neville Lowe of Culcairn. Mr Lowe joined the company as liaison officer for the Mad Dog production.

It is expected the film will be released worldwide in July, 1976. The film, which will make Morgan Country a national attraction, is expected to have a big effect on tourism.



DAN Morgan [Dennis Hopper] and Billy [David Gullpillil] break for a cool drink during the filming at Morgan's cave.

## Cash please, or it is down the drain

A MASSIVE input of finance and effort is needed to solve the drainage and salinity problems of the Goulburn Valley, according to the Goulburn Irrigation Region Drainage Action Committee.

The committee, in its first annual report, says there is no alternative but to seek Australian Government finance.

The report, presented by re-elected chairman, Mr Tony Brown-Graham, a Tongala fruit-grower, says GIRDAC concentrated on short-term problems in its first year of operation. Tremendous activity was necessary, he said, because of unprecedented rises in groundwater levels throughout a great proportion of the area.

Mr Brown-Graham said a State Government appropriation of more than \$1 million enabled a significant number of groundwater pumps to be installed in horticultural areas. 'Fortunately this action has been a relative success as a short-term measure, but not before considerable areas of trees had been seriously affected,' he says in the report.

Mr Brown-Graham said the committee's success in inviting the secretary of the Australian Government's Department for the Environment, Dr D. McMichael, and the then shadow Minister for the Environment, Mr Ralph Hunt, to the area could prove invaluable. It could serve, he said, as an introduction to future efforts to gain Australian Government support for long-term drainage projects.

Guests at the annual meeting included Mr Eddie Hann, MLA; Mr Gavin Swales, the Water Commission's assistant engineer for investigations; Mr Bram Bakker of the Horticultural Research Station, Tatura; Mr David Wauchope, Department of Agriculture, Shepparton, and Mr Gordon Weller of the Victorian Farmers' Union.

Mr Swales spoke about the Water Commission's 10-year \$40 million salinity control and drainage strategy for northern Victorian Irrigation and Murray River strategy (reported in earlier Riverlander editions). He said the biggest problem would be the disposal of increased drainage effluent which would follow an extensive drainage system in the Goulburn region.

He said that unless major drainage improvements were made the viability of significant areas would be seriously affected. For this reason, it was essential for the proposed diversion of Barr Creek to be diverted away from the Murray and into Lake Tyrrell for evaporation.

The GIRDAC annual report says the committee has also pressed the State Minister for Agriculture to start research on pasture regeneration at the earliest possible stage and adequately monitor developments.

Another move has been to press for extensions to Rural Finance and Settlement Commission loans for private pump installation. The GIRDAC has asked that any extension be available to all landholders.

The committee has also asked the Victorian Government to consider favorable loans for the installation of private drainage re-use schemes. It feels these schemes would greatly benefit many farmers and graziers.

## Murray controls 'approved in principle'

PLANS to give the River Murray Commission control of Murray water quality as well as quantity have been accepted in principle by Ministers representing the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian Governments.

South Australia's Minister for Works, Mr Corcoran, says this means the first major hurdle to improve the quality of Murray water has been cleared. (The move to give the RMC these powers has been a major plank in Murray Valley Development League policy).

Mr Corcoran returned from Canberra in November after a steering committee of Ministers had met to discuss a report from the River Murray Working Party.

The Working Party, was established in 1973 and is made up of senior officers from the contracting governments. Its 200-page report was accepted in principle by the Ministers.

Mr Corcoran said the conference outcome was a 'very significant step forward in ridding the Murray of harmful pollutants'.

The Working Party says the RMC should have the power, through amending legislation to the River Murray Waters Agreement, to protect, improve, regulate, control and monitor water quality along the full length of the Murray. The commission would also be free to make representations to the Governments on any water quality issue affecting the Murray.

## Mirror on the Murray River

The Book Of The Murray. Edited by G. V. Lawrence and Graeme Kinross Smith. Rigby: \$11.95.

Reviewed by ALAN BELL

IT would be a grim order to put the essentials about an entire country into fourteen chapters and 250 pages. The Murray Valley is larger and more variable than some nation States, yet the job has been done.

Not by a single hand—that might have been a task too unmerciful but by a round dozen of interpreters, united to produce, each with specialised skill, a lively fresco defining the complete length of our principal river.

The scope may be understood from the fourteen chapter heads. They require listing:

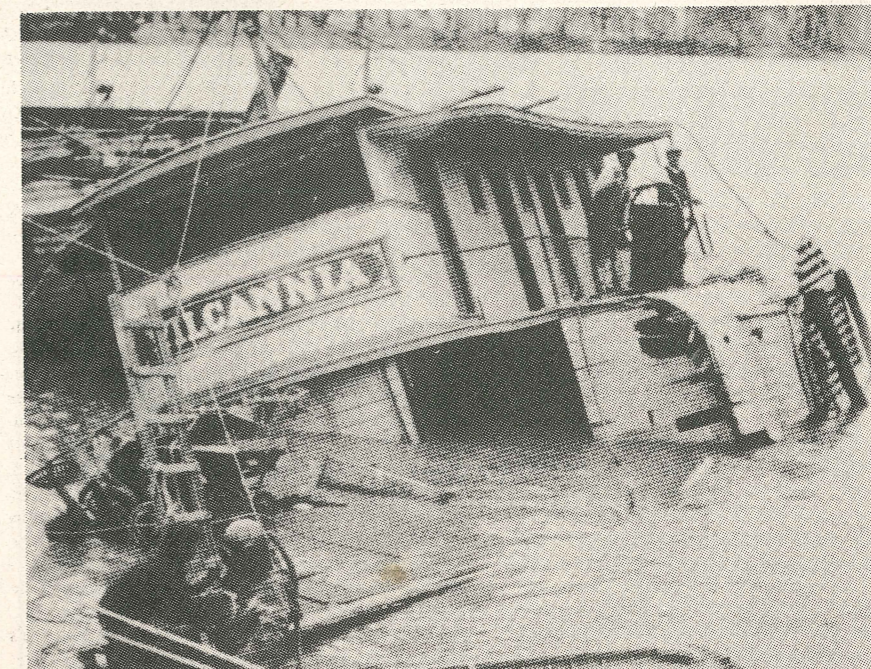
- Past, Present, and Future, by G. V. Lawrence;
- The Structure of the Murray, by Edmund D. Gill;
- Seeing the Murray, by Graeme Kinross Smith;
- The Mountains at the Source, by Elyne Mitchell;
- The Explorers, by Leigh Betheras;
- The Irrigators, by G. Arch Grosvenor;
- Murray Water Conservation, by W. G. L. Harrison and K. E. Johnson;
- The Murray River Steamers, by Ian Mudie;
- Pioneer Days: A Story of Seventy Years Ago, by Dorothy Roysland;
- Birdlife of the Murray Valley, by John Eckert;
- Aborigines in the Murray Valley—How We Learned the Story, by H. A. Lindsay;
- The Aboriginal Occupation, by Norman B. Tindale;
- Fish of the Murray River, by John S. Lake;
- Native Plants of the Murray Valley, by J. H. Willis;
- Murray Wildlife, by K. N. G. Simpson.

### Intimate

The chapter to lead the way naturally falls to the man who must know the Murray, yard by yard, more intimately than any; the executive workman for the Murray Valley Development League since its founding thirty-two years ago, and also, for the last couple, the Editor of the League's publication, the Riverlander. He shares, as co-editor of this handsome book, with a commendable contributor to the old magazine.

The opening sketch provides history, geography and balance sheet, a summary of the League's year by year rush of activities. Gazing back the chronicler will have had to excise as much as he tells of the generation-long battle for really valid political support.

There was, I recall, a time when each month survived by the League, and each coming out of the Riverlander, emerged as only a miracle forlornly expected. On a virtually honorary basis, the nursing staff persevered with hope, and their once delicate charge has assuredly grown up—to the



THE wreck of the Wilcannia, one of many riverboat scenes in The Book of the Murray.

## The launching

FIFTY guests of Rigby Limited and the Adelaide Branch of the Murray Valley Development League celebrated the launching of 'The Book of the Murray' by the Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia, Mr W. R. Crocker, at the South Australian Government Tourist Bureau theatre, Adelaide, on December 17.

Mr Crocker found much to commend in all the contributions but reserved his warmest words for Dorothy Roysland's eyewitness account of Renmark in the earliest days.

Co-editor and writer of the introductory chapter, Vernon Lawrence, gave high praise to the craftsmanship of Rigbys. He was supported by co-editor and contributor, Graeme Kinross Smith, who specially welcomed Mrs Roysland and Arch Grosvenor who wrote of the Settlers, and John Eckert, authority on the Valley's 350 bird species.

David Mercer of Rigbys said sales were buoyant.

Enquirers should first approach their local bookseller, but may also apply to the MVDL, Box 359, P.O., Albury. 2640. Price \$11.95 plus postage.

condition when Governments look to it and join with it, and to a point when Murray policies have become a head-source of ideas, of currents of thought, which have seeped and spread through wide areas of this country.

The co-editor with Mr Lawrence transfers the scene to out of doors. He seeks to convey the infinitude of the river panorama; 'the glory and the dream' which accompanies and hovers about the Murray's wayward and deliberative loops. Readers of bygone Riverlanders will recollect that he has a queuing eye.

From here it is an easy passage to the chapters on the Valley's birds and universal wild life, and to its plants, 'rich and varied throughout', pronounces the eminent botanist who, during forty excursionist years, has defied any plant to miss him. As to those amphibious reptiles and mammals, they're a weird mob, with the red kangaroo and the koalas perhaps most attractively in the van. There is much half-hidden, living antiquity here, sometimes grotesque, but for the most part fascinating—and not, surely to be 'almost everywhere met with fences, guns, traps and poison'.

The crowning wild life of the Valley belongs to the birds, 350 species, about half of Australia's tally, tapering down from the largest native, the emu.

The river reaches, and the broad belts through which they flow, present a hospitable diversity—all-purpose home sites and building blocks on offer—to the most diverse species.

The enumeration is mainly factual, the author taking as read awareness of the exalting mass spectacles and encounters with brilliant individual beauty which the territory guarantees. There has to be the inevitable hint that for wild life and

• Continued page 8





DALGETY Study Award winner Mr John Kennedy [extreme left] chats to judges Dr Stuart Hawkins, senior lecturer in Agricultural Extension, Melbourne University; Mr E. J. Matuschka, public relations officer, Dalgety Australia Ltd and Mr Bob Carrail, acting chief of the animal industry division of the Department of Agriculture.

## Editor to study river systems

VICTORIA's 1975 Victorian Farmwriters' and Broadcasters' Dalgety Study Award winner will investigate overseas management of river systems.

The winner, Mr John Kennedy, is editor of the 'Irrigation Farmer' and is well-known in the Murrumbidgee area of New South Wales.

Mr Kennedy will study United States and Canadian river valley authorities for at least five weeks next May and April. He will also look at the use of water resources generally.

Mr Kennedy will relate the information he has gained on his return to Australia. The Executive Director of the Murray Valley Development League, Mr G. V. Lawrence, says Mr Kennedy's achievement will help emphasise Australia's need to give greater importance to the study of river systems.

# RIVERLANDER

AUSTRALIA'S LEADING REGIONAL MAGAZINE

No. 333

THIRTIETH YEAR

Published by the Murray Valley Development League to shape, safeguard and stimulate the progress of the Greater Murray area. The League is a non-profit-making organisation having as members local government bodies and as associate members all those who support the Riverlander and general fund. The aim is a million people for the Valley — a three-fold increase. M.V.D.L., P.O. Box 359, Albury, New South Wales. 2640.

## Three thrusts for a 1976 program

ALL governments and all political parties subscribe to the principles of Murray Valley development and the conservation of its natural assets.

Indeed, the four governments with which we of the League are concerned have for sixty years co-operated in water conservation, ever since the first River Murray Waters Agreement was signed by the Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia in 1914. Successive amendments have had the same high level imprimature, always preparatory to ratification in the four parliaments.

We can expect therefore, and we are entitled to expect, that the River Murray Working Party (an early 1973 appointment of the same four governments), which produced its yet unreleased report at the time of the Australian Caretaker Government, will have wise and weighty recommendations; that it will be heeded by those governments; that it will lead to the River Murray Commission being given responsibility for water quality and active

concern for the problems which now confront the Murray Valley.

Maintaining and enhancing water quality is the first requirement. Salinity can be moderated, as Victoria's \$40 million plan for the Shepparton and Kerang Regions and, hopefully, the River Murray Working Party report indicate. The pollution that can mount with population can be countered, and countered best of all if the Murray Valley Development League's 'City Forest' and related proposals are heeded.

We may have to live with—and we should increasingly utilise—the water-rolling European Carp. The time for prevention of this animal pest was over with its first escape, or release, to the Murray River.

We can still prevent that great plant pest, Water Hyacinth, from taking over. The extent of its infestation of a Gwydir Valley watercourse is further documented in this issue. No effort should be spared to remove this threat to the whole of the Darling-Murray river system.

Next in importance is the problem shared by all Australia—the need for decentralisation, for a vastly different balance in development as between the capital cities and the rest.

Incentives which New South Wales and Victoria give for country location of industry have brought many successes, but there has been no success in fundamentally changing the capital-provincial balance. Required now for the sake of the Murray Valley, for the sake of all other well endowed provinces, for the sake of Sydney and Melbourne themselves is a system of capital city disincentives that would deflect most future development away from the capitals.

Our third problem—and opportunity—is the recreational use of the Murray waters. It impinges on the first problem, for water quality can be effected if due care is not prescribed and taken.

Visitors are to be prepared for and welcomed; the tourist industry is to be developed for all Murray Valley centres, small and big; at the same time the rivers and the valleys of the Greater Murray are to be protected and their appeal maintained.

Three of the main thrusts for a 1976 Murray Valley program are therefore, as before, care for the water quality, development of appropriate industry and the acceptance and welcoming of very many visitors.

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## A mirror on the Murray

• From page 7

'tourist Meccas' to agree is hard. The plea for sounder protection and a scheme of National Parks should be made loud hailer stuff by anyone who looks towards tomorrow, or indeed, at today.

The revelation of the airy country where the river has its birth—lofty, stimulating country—and the remembrances of the gaudy era of the paddle-wheelers lie in safe and well proved hands.

The history of the river through the eyes of its engineers, and the history of the Valley's first ground-renters, the Aborigines, both possess the materials, ancient and modern, of romance. The reader's assessment of the total chapters will be that no performer comes off stage illjustified.

The color illustrations and black and white photographs are abundant, what one would expect from a work of this calibre. Some furnish valuable record; some are old friends from the notable Picture Page formerly in the Riverlander. It is good to view these.

In sum, we have a book to be enjoyably read, as well as a book to be consulted. The Murray Valley in these days is coining a lot of publicity, but what is said and pictured here will leave few gleanings for the most industrious would-be new adventurer in print.

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## THE PASSING SHOW

THE TRADITIONAL cards have been rendered too expensive, so I'll send out a circular—Merry Christmas.

Peace and good will round the globe have not been subject to inflation. They seem instead to be contracting. The only wall poster with a Christmassy message has gone up in the dilapidated and unlikely town of Abu Dhabi.

It shows that one oil emperor knows how to lay out his treasure.

ABU DHABI, when Wilfred Thesiger, that fearless challenger of unknown Arabian deserts passed through, sheltered 2,000 half-lost souls on the edge of 'an appalling desolation'. An Arabian Nights transformation now awaits it.

Shiek Zayad, with a wave of his million-dollar hand, has summoned a 500-acre forest to spring from the expressionless blank of the sands.

But it's a British landscape contractor who has to work out the conjuring trick.

Wells will be sunk. An irrigation system will be laid out to deliver five gallons daily to 40,000 trees—the varieties have yet to be tested and chosen. Surrounding them, a mighty bit of fencing will call the bluff of goats and camels.

Blakedown Landscapers are pondering also how to firm the sand and nourish the trees. Will camel dung make a compost?

If this big retrieving effort wins, it promises rain and shade to the desert and birds to haunt the trees. Several species of swallows and martins breed in or migrate north from North-

West Africa and Western Asia. They may be persuaded to 'stop off' at Abu Dhabi.

I wonder what Mr Yeomans has to say on this one?

MR WHITLAM'S courtier-like affection towards the Queen and the principles of monarchy must have gratified all who observed the interview he staged for television in Britain.

Yet it leaves, surely, some puzzles. For instance, the verdict against the National Anthem by a small selective poll; the Queen's likeness expunged from Australia's stamps; the apparent dictate, on national television and radio, that news about royalty and general news from Britain must strictly give way to news from Lebanon or Oskosh, Pa.

Then there's the further decision, described by a well known Australian columnist as 'deeply symbolical.'

Is it correct, as he reports, that 'the Australian Postal Commission has been busy deleting the insignia ER and OHMS from its buildings and post boxes.?'

THE POST OFFICE, ah yes. Ours used to be a corner grill in the general store, a gossips' corner, where it was divulged that apples were bound to be good after the last fifty points and that Jones's cow was in the pound again.

We have now an official palace, with

spanking plate glass and a glaring concrete approach. Nobody lingers.

Mercifully a chemist, shrewd fellow, has set up to medicare the outbreak of suburbia round about—although really he's more of an American drug store, with brooches, watches, charms, toys for the kids and knick-knacks, you name 'em.

His has become the civic centre, the temple of gossip. But it's exclusively feminine.

Creep in for tooth-paste and you duck through a gauntlet of women, all compelled to stand two feet apart while they converse.

Their eloquence, bless them, runs on one sole topic, the extrapolation of The Welcome Nugget.

IN THE loud fretting about numbers in the Senate, no politician has recalled how comfortably things were settled in the House of Lords a couple of centuries ago.

During a division on an amendment to the Habeas Corpus Act, Lord Grey, one of the tellers, counted a very fat lord for ten.

He meant this as a joke, but finding that his opposite teller, Lord Norris, had not observed it, held his peace.

Thus a decision was reached by a robust majority.

*Peter Simple*



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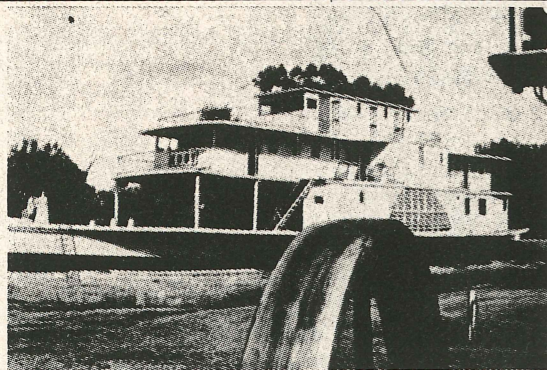
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# Mungo, our oldest man

LAKE Mungo and the Walls of China are 100 kilometres north-east of Mildura in the Balranald Shire of New South Wales. The story and pictures starting on this page, about Australia's oldest man, are reproduced, with permission, from the export magazine Australia Now. On Page 18, L. P. Connellan tells about the time when the area was part of a great lakes system.

by Terry Branson

AUSTRALIA'S Lake Mungo has been waterless for 16,000 years. Twelve miles of sand dunes flank its north-eastern boundary.

In the century or more that man has disturbed the natural vegetation cover, biting winds have eaten away at the surface of the dunes creating eerie residuals and vast stretches of shifting sand. Infrequent rain has contributed to this erosion, scouring out myriad shadow traps, highlighted each day by the rising and setting sun.

Tourism thrives on the phenomenon of Lake Mungo but its real significance is scientific because erosion has unearthed clues providing a glimpse of modern man's beginning.

Discoveries unearthed by erosion, subsequent excavations and work by scientists in different fields over the past six years have enabled reconstruction of a complex Aboriginal culture which existed at least as long ago as 38,000 years BP (before present). This evidence has shattered previous theories that human occupation of Australia has been only recent.

### Awesome

It is appropriate that a setting as awesome as Lake Mungo—which provides evidence of modern man ranking in antiquity with that found anywhere—should be found in Australia, the oldest continent. Finds in Australia now compare with the world's earliest traces of Homo sapiens (modern man) including the discovery in Borneo of a skull dating back 40,000 years, and similar evidence in Europe and Africa.

Scientific work at Lake Mungo began in 1968 when Dr Jim Bowler, a geomorphologist with the School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, undertook a project to determine the environment in south-western New South Wales during the ice age.

Bowler located a series of ancient lakebeds about 300 miles north-west of Melbourne and 500 miles west of Sydney and began his work. Late that year Bowler came across several bones uncovered by erosion at the southern end of the dunes. The dunes are known to tourists as the Walls of China. It is understood they were named in connection with large numbers of Chinese who worked on sheep stations in the district last century.

Radiocarbon dating tests indicate the bones found by Bowler are 26,000 years old. They are the broken skull of an Aboriginal woman, ritually cremated. The body had been burnt, the bones broken and the remains burnt again. The find was internationally significant because it was the oldest evidence in the world of a ritual cremation.



WINDS and shifting sands revealed this ceremonial burial and gave Lake Mungo a place in the history of man.

Clues that were to follow included more human bones, animal bones, charcoal from ancient fireplaces, shells and pellets of ochre—earth made up of clay and hydrated oxide of iron. Among the bones archaeologists found what they termed a 'classic burial'. The skeleton, preserved by the chemistry of the soil, was lying next to the ancient fireplace.

Again radiocarbon dating techniques pointed to the 26,000 BP period. However, unlike the

first Mungo skeleton, it had not been cremated. Instead the bones were covered with ochre, indicating another kind of ritual. As ochre is not indigenous to the area, chemists believe that this find represents an interest in art. They claim this and ochre traces in the various strata indicate that Aborigines probably developed their interest in art as early as the artists of palaeolithic (stoneage) Europe.

• Continued page 15

December, 1975/January, 1976

11

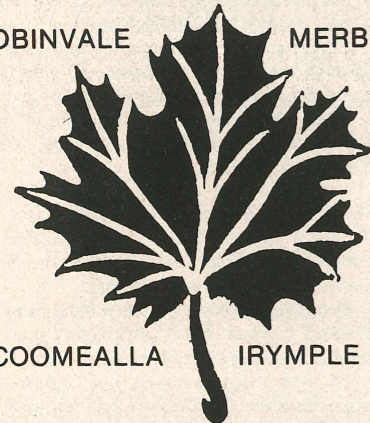
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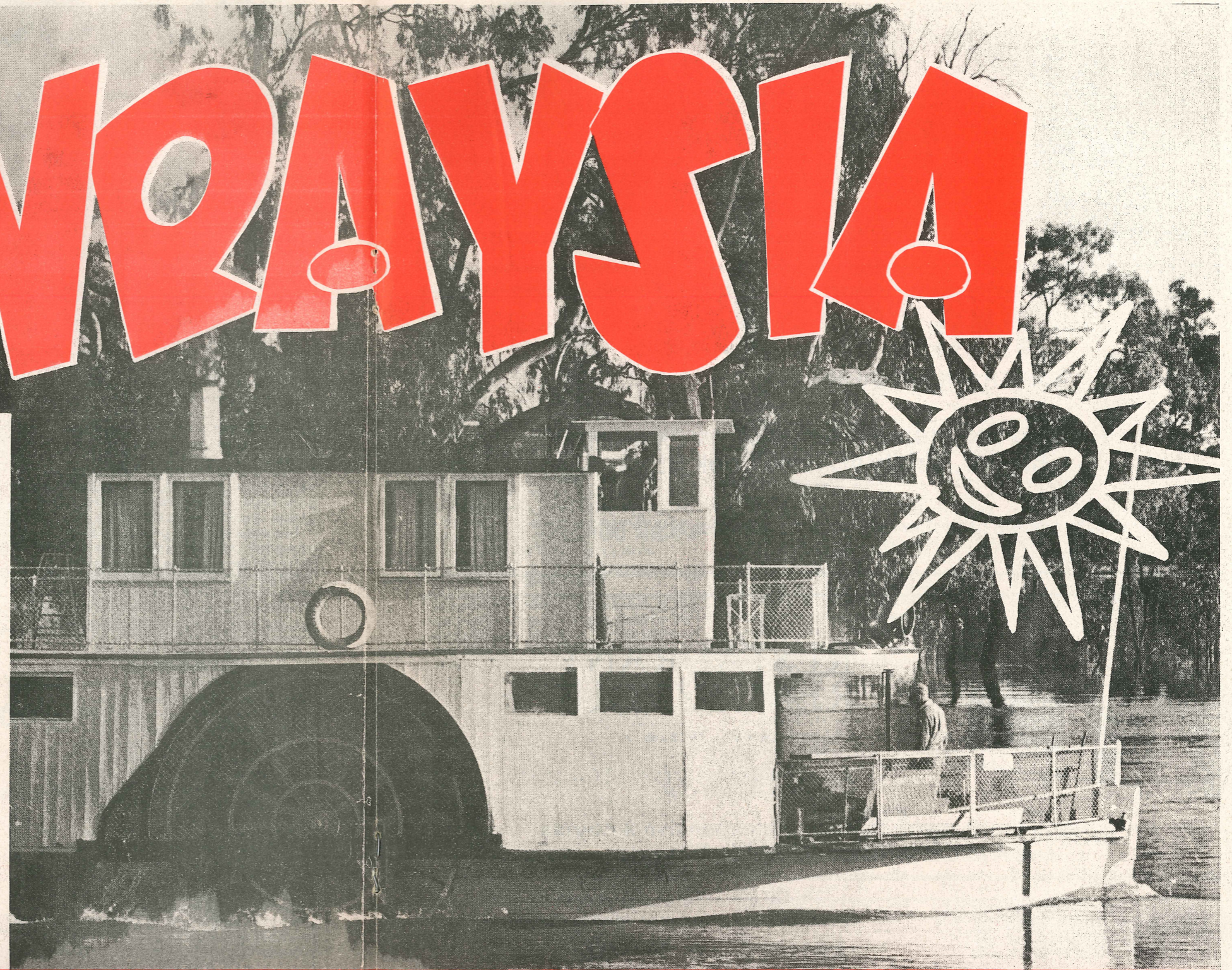


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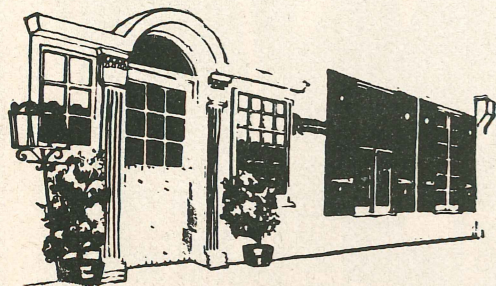
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## Mungo—the oldest man from an ancient land

• From page 11

Dr Harry Allen in 1969, while he was with the pre-history department of the University's School of Pacific Studies, began a general survey of the region. Allen attempted to reconstruct how the Lake Mungo Homo sapiens lived 30,000 and more years ago.

Evidence suggests the lake was part of an ancient water system flowing through south-western New South Wales. Until the lake dried up, Aborigines camped on its shores. These are now covered by layers of drifting sand. The Aborigines lived abundant lives. The lake was stocked providently with fish and freshwater mussels.

In scrubland bordering their camps the Aborigines collected emu eggs and hunted a wide range of game, including marsupials. They cooked their food in earth ovens, made by pre-heating lumps of clay, and rested beneath a variety of trees that thrived on the shores.

### Barren

In contrast to Allen's reconstruction of the ancient environment, the setting today is flat and desolate, covered in good times by saltbush. In bad times it is barren and dusty. Two sheep stations partly occupy the former lake. When nature is kind the vegetation supports one sheep to every ten acres. When drought sets in, for animals and plants survival is nearly impossible.

The ancient fireplaces, human implements and pellets of ochre—left behind in the layers of time formed by the dunes at Lake Mungo—have enabled archaeologists to obtain about 100 radiocarbon dates which pinpoint human occupation to beyond 38,000 years BP.

On neighboring Arumpo Station—also a lake in ancient times—Bowler made another internationally important discovery. He found spreads of mussel shells with hearths alongside them. They were dated scientifically at 36,000 years BP. The Aborigines had exploited the lake systems' shellfish, cooking and eating them on the beaches and leaving behind what is now the world's oldest proof of man's use of shellfish as a food.

But the conditions at Lake Mungo were too good to last. As the climate changed and the lake system began to dry up about 14,000 years ago, Homo sapiens found his food supply diminishing. He began then to exploit wild grasses as a food source.

Discovery of numerous grinding stones dating back to this period support scientists' theories that the Lake Mungo Aborigines used wild grasses to provide grain for food as early as any other modern man. Many pre-historians regard such a development as a cultural milestone.

Among the Lake Mungo finds was one by Dr Michael Barbetti, then a student interested in Palaeomagnetism (a phenomenon in rocks showing a remnant magnetism in a different direction to the earth's present field).



PREHISTORIAN Dr Rhys Jones examines an ancient campfire on Lake Mungo.

Because of the large number of radiocarbon dates available, Barbetti, when he investigated the hearths, was able to take magnetic readings that unexpectedly showed a 120 degree reversal of the Earth's magnetic field. It took place about 30,000 years ago, lasting for about 2,500 years. For that period the magnetic north actually became the magnetic south. (This is the second most recent reversal recorded—the most recent being 12,500 years ago, evidence of which has been uncovered in Sweden and France).

Scientifically, one of the most curious surprises linked with Lake Mungo comes from the discovery of the two 26,000 year old skulls. A find at another Australian archaeological site, Kow Swamp in Victoria, revealed skulls only 10,000 years old with archaic features. They had a cranial capacity less than that of normal Homo sapiens and similar to that of Homo erectus, a species of man thought to have lived as long ago as 500,000 years BP.

An academic attempt to explain this enigma is that two different groups of man co-existed for probably 30,000 years or more after separate migrations to the continent. Alternatively, the two skulls represent different extremes of a single founder population which entered Australia prior to 40,000 BP.

### Research

The layers of sand in The Walls of China have contributed a great deal of evidence about early man's existence in Australia and in fact about modern man's presence in the world. Three of the Lake Mungo researchers, Bowler, Barbetti, and Allen, have obtained PhDs from work on the site. Another research worker appears likely to obtain his doctorate as well.

Professor Derek J. Mulvaney, a noted author on Australian pre-history, head of the Department of Pre-history and Anthropology at the ANU's School of General Studies, and chief co-ordinator of the research work at Lake Mungo, believes there are many more years of painstaking research ahead.

He and other scientists lead groups of students at every university vacation to the lake where they excavate and probe the dunes, sifting through layers of time in search of more evidence. The work is like that at any archaeological site: shovels slicing into sand, the scraping of a trowel across a sieve, the rumble of a motor and hiss of an air compressor vibrating the sieve—and an occasional burst of conversation or laughter providing relief in a tedious job.

Colorful plastic buckets are ferried by willing hands to take sand from the diggings to the sieve for sifting and scrutiny. 'Hey, here's today's find,' shouts the sieve operator and work momentarily stops while a tiny flake—a fragment of a stone tool no bigger than a man's thumb—is examined. Success after the first two hours of the day's work. Nothing else is found that day.

'It takes time to dig into the past,' explains Mulvaney. 'But already a very important message can be gained from the Lake Mungo work. The Australian Aborigine has often been written off as unimaginative and dull, but this work has shown that their way of life 40,000 years ago was one admirably suited to the environment. And they continued it in much the same way through the years until as late as last century.'

### Heritage

'It could be claimed this was unintelligent. But they used the land more sensibly for 40,000 years than have many Europeans in Australia in 100 years. The Aborigines were not necessarily unintelligent because they did not develop agriculture. Europeans with their agriculture managed—in many cases through just one human generation—to reduce the same regions to desert.'

'I think scientists can contribute a lot to present Australian culture and to world knowledge of early man by uncovering the length and breadth of Aboriginal achievements. It may be a cliché, but this is our cultural heritage.'

### League notice board

#### ANNUAL REGIONAL MEETINGS

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- Region 3. March 5 Kerang Shire 10 for 10.30.
- Region 4. February 9 Mildura Grand Hotel. 2.00
- Region 5. February 11 Cadell Training Centre 10.30.
- Region 6. February 16 Murray Bridge Corporation 10.30.

\*Regional meetings are subject to confirmation by honorary regional secretaries.

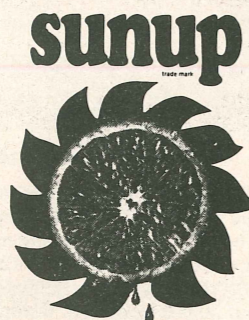


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## Cash loan for canneries

THE crisis-ridden Goulburn Valley fruit canneries SPC, KY and Ardmona will get a \$3 million emergency loan from the Government.

Half the money will come from the State Government and half from the Federal. Victoria's Premier, Mr Hamer, says the loan will enable the canneries to pay growers a substantial part of the money owing to them from last season. This will enable growers to harvest this season's crop and meet other obligations.

The companies to benefit are SPC Limited of Shepparton, Ardmona Fruit Products Co-operative Co. Limited and Kyabram Preserving Co. Limited. It is not yet known how the money

will be shared between them and what the re-payment terms will be.

Government help follows a warning in October by SPC's chairman, Mr J. P. Cornish, that canneries could close if there was no emergency aid. The canneries hold large unsold stocks from last season and face world over-production.

Mr Hamer said the future of the three canneries would have to be discussed in depth. 'At the moment they are all in competition and it's a question of whether they can all survive indefinitely,' he said. Mr Hamer said the tree-pulling program would also have to be reviewed to see if it was effective.

## Rice harvest

THE annual report of the Ricegrowers Co-operative Mills of Australia shows that the 1975 harvest in the Murray Valley yielded 151,542 tonnes. The Murrumbidgee harvest was 148,533 tonnes. The third area, Coleambally produced 74,498 tonnes.

While production from both the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally area declined by a total of 41,223 tonnes in 1975, the Murray Valley saw an increase of 12,358, taking it into the lead for the first time.

The total harvest last season was 374,573 compared with 403,438 tonnes the year before. This season, the Ricegrowers Co-operative Mills Limited expects a harvest of 475,000 tonnes.

Southern Riverina News 4.11.1975

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MUNGO Station, the birthplace of Australia's now famous Mungo Man, will become a tourist attraction far greater than Ayers Rock.

This is the opinion of Mr L. P. Connellan, a member of the New South Wales Upper House, Balranald Shire President and chairman of a committee formed to develop and preserve the lake area.

Mr Connellan believes that the greatest threat to Mungo Station is the vandalism that might go hand-in-hand with a heavy tourist traffic—the destruction of valuable information in the form of rocks, caves and Aboriginal paintings.

'As far as I am concerned,' he says, 'I am determined to ensure that this sort of thing does not happen to the Mungo region. The development of the region will need a great deal of assistance and thought. It will need a substantial amount of money for roads and for tourist facilities.'

Mr Connellan says funding for preliminary research and investigation of the Mungo region is needed to draw up a plan for the protective management of the area. 'But it must be a plan that not only protects environmental and scientific interests but also provides for the welfare of the leaseholders, without whose active interest and co-operation the full potential might not have been realised!'

The following story is an edited version of a speech Mr Connellan made to the NSW Legislative Council during the Spring Session of Parliament.

# When great lakes flowed through the

By L. P. CONNELLAN

LAKE Mungo is one of the five major lakes of the Willandra billabong system, a drainage channel that takes off from the Lachlan River at Hillston.

In the recent geological past the Lachlan was a much larger river than it is today. After flowing out of the foothills at Hillston it broke up into four or five major channels, spreading out like outstretched fingers across the plain.

These flowed west towards the great sand dune sheets that stretch eastward from the dry interior, reaching into the wetter river country east of the Darling, before terminating in the mallee country near the Murrumbidgee. The Willandra channel flowed due west from Hillston into the heart of these sand dunes, where it spread out in an interconnected system of large lakes.

Five of these have now been named, from north to south, Lake Mulurulu, Lake Garnpung, Lake Leaghur, Lake Mungo and Lake Chibnalwood, each forming a large fresh water body that overflowed into its neighbor. Enough water was then available not only to

keep these lakes filled but also to maintain an overflow channel which flowed south through the sand dunes to meet the Murrumbidgee about eighteen kilometres west of Balranald.

To the people who do not know the area, it is remarkable to go through today and see the arid bush in an area where the average rainfall is only ten inches a year. There one can see this remarkable formation, the Walls of China, a sandhill about 120 to 130 feet high; it varies in height, and it is remarkable to visualise that in previous times there was fifteen or eighteen feet of fresh water in the lakes; also, it is remarkable when one realises that people lived there so many ages ago.

The lakes represent a period when the climate was very much colder and wetter than it is today. The lakes were so large that if the total Lachlan flow were diverted into the system now it could only just keep it full, let alone maintain three or four channels of similar size. These and other lakes in western New South Wales were filled at the same times as permanent ice—not snow—was found all the year round on the peaks of the Snowy Mountains. In other words, the Lachlan in those times was at least four or

# lakes flowed fossil desert

five times larger than it is today, and therefore delivered a much greater volume of water.

The lakes represent the response in the semi-arid zone equivalent to the formation of glaciers in the high mountain regions during the last major ice age 30,000 years ago. Much of the legacy of the extraordinary environments of that time is to be found in the intriguing twenty kilometre long chain of dunes that forms the eastern lake shore of Mungo—the feature known as the Walls of China. I believe that this name arose from the fact that Chinese immigrants came to this area in the early part of last century to make up the local labor force.

It is common knowledge that these Chinese were working there and did a lot of building construction, particularly shearing sheds. Indeed, one shearing shed is still in use on one of the properties at Lake Mungo. It is over 100 years old, and is a remarkable building. The evidence from this area has attracted worldwide scientific interest in the study of ancient climates relating to major changes in the southern hemisphere. Although each lake is somewhat different from its neighbor in the nature and quantity of evidence it preserves, Lake Mungo can be said to be representative in the broad sense and also unique in the special wealth of detail it has already yielded.

The lake which once covered an area of about some 200 square kilometres now falls partly on the station leases of Zanci, Mungo and Julni. The most important section lies in the southern half of the lake on the two adjoining properties, Mungo and Julni, the properties of Mr Albert Mr Alex Barnes respectively. The Barnes brothers have consistently co-operated with and actively encouraged the research work that has resulted in such interesting information in the past seven years.

Moreover, they have protected the sites often at their own cost and inconvenience while at the same time encouraging the facilitating controlled access by visitors. There is now an almost daily tourist service running the 100km route between Mildura and Mungo, and even with present poor road conditions, hundreds of visitors are coming annually.

Those roads are in the Balranald shire. The area combines the most important landscape, archaeological and environmental features may therefore be designated as that part of Lake Mungo that falls in the leases of Mungo and Julni stations, that is, approximately the southern half of the former lake.

Lake Mungo lies within the extensive region of dune fields, a fossil desert, now vegetated by the mallee eucalyptus once so characteristic of a

large region of northern Victoria and western New South Wales. Unlike the Victorian Mallee, the area near Mungo has not been cultivated or cleared—of many parts it can be said they still resemble their pristine state when white men first settled in the region. Moreover, the extensive floors of this and adjacent lakes provide examples of the saltbush communities that many Australian have heard of and few have seen. It is good wool-growing country.

During last summer, when large bushfires occurred in the district, some were diverted into the area of the Walls of China because they act as a perfect firebreak, with their 40-metre high sandhills. It was awe-inspiring—I flew over it many times in an army helicopter—to see the country burning for 100 miles, to look on the arid region along the line of sand dunes, to visualise the scene of 30,000 years ago to realize that until about 15,000 years ago many people lived there.

Within this general region with its truly wilderness characteristics the eastern dune ridges of Lake Mungo—the Walls of China—rise as a long chain of white sandhills forming the single eye-catching feature of relief. Great rolling hills of white sugary sand rise 40 metres above the plain.

Lake Mungo was once, in the white man's time, part of an extensive property known as Gol Gol which was subdivided in the latter part of last century. Mungo was the site of a shearing shed. The original shed, built in 1860 by Chinese labor using local timber and home-made nails—there is not one iron nail in the whole building—is still in use.

The shearing shed with its direct links with

• Continued page 20

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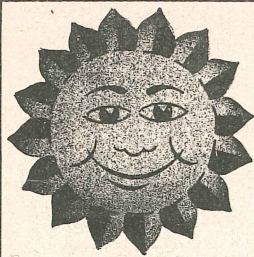
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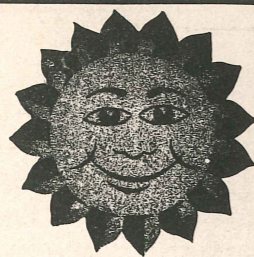
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and service.

## Great lakes flowed in the desert

• From page 19

more than a century of Australian history adds a relatively modern touch and combines with the record of the more ancient past to emphasise the major heritage value of this site.

It is of urgent priority that the ecological, scientific and historic resources of the entire region should be assessed. Among questions requiring answers are, which areas are of the greatest importance? What are the most appropriate means of preserving them and what are the needs of controlled tourism? Given that the Walls of China are an outstanding feature, how should they be managed and what is the minimal area involved in their conservation?

We must consider also how best to co-ordinate tourism and all-weather road systems, given that most tourists currently are based on Mildura, that they travel on Wentworth shire roads, and that their chief destination, Mungo, is in the Balranald shire. These and other questions require specialist consideration.

## The march of the hyacinth

• From page 5

unused \$50,000 for expenditure this financial year) would be impossibly extended to carry the campaign alone.

It is also appropriately the concern of the other Governments responsible for the Murray River—Victorian, South Australian and the Australian Governments. All four governments are parties to the River Murray Waters Agreements, which require them to provide a quarter each of the cost of agreed capital expenditure.

This is the vehicle through which funds could best be provided and there is an overwhelming case for the Australian Government to take a much larger share of the costs.

## Murray cray, damper and Kiewa cheese

IT was a menu to toast the Murray at the 12th conference of New South Wales Tourist Associations at Albury in October.

Delegates at the official dinner ate Dora Dora Murray cray cocktails—chopped freshwater crayfish tails garnished with Kosciusko sauce and lemon wedges; Tumbarumba trout and Thologolong blue-ribbon beef roast (slices of murray grey steak roasted and served with Jingellic jumbuck damper).

'The poms pinched the recipe and had the cheek to call it yorkshire pudding, a name that will never catch on,' said the menu.

Dessert was Murray River tourist apple pie—'crusty sweet and like the Murray, real deep and full of goodness.' Kiewa cheese, biscuits of course, wines from Rutherglen, finished off the meal.

## VALLEY PEOPLE HONORED

THE Murray Valley Development Legue congratulates the following Valley people named in the New Year Honors list:

### Tom Mitchell, CMG

Thomas Walter Mitchell, MLA for Benambra in the Victorian Parliament since 1947, has been awarded the Companion of St. Michael and St. George. Mr Mitchell, a former State Attorney-General, has been associated in many public fields. These include war historian, local government councillor, national and international skier and organiser, President of the Upper Murray Shire and District Commissioner for the scouting movement for more than thirty years. Tom Mitchell is a widely known and respected leader and politician whose Parliamentary career will terminate at the end of his current term.

### David Aloysius McKenzie-McHarg, OBE

Councillor McKenzie-McHarg of the United Shire of Beechworth was its president for nine years. He was the inaugural president of the Beechworth committee of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). For many years he has been a member of the Murray Valley Development League No. 1 regional council and general council.

### Roy Duncan O'Brien, OBE

Roy O'Brien was deputy to the Shepparton Town Clerk from November 1939 and became Town Clerk himself from January, 1961. He is also secretary of the Shepparton Sewerage Authority. He is involved in sporting and education bodies, a member of the Tarcoola Shepparton and District Retirement Village Society committee and prominent in planning the Shepparton International Village.

### Thomas Peake, MBE

Councillor Peake has served as a Chiltern Shire Councillor since 1937, except for two years. He was president four times and a member of many community groups and shire committees.

### Rosemary Boyes, BEM

Most Albury-Wodonga people remember Mrs Rosemary Ethelwynne Boyes for her regular recall of early visitors and settlers along the Murray, particularly the first of all—Hume and Hovell. The yearly visit to the Hovell-inscribed tree each November 17 was strikingly enlarged for the sesqui-centenary in 1974 when she played a major part in bringing together descendants of the Hume and Hovell party of eight. She wrote for the National Trust and for the Albury and District Historical Society and won the Certificate of Honor from the Society for Cook Bi-Centenary Citizens' Committee.

Mrs Lena Roberta Howard, BEM, of Moulamein, was awarded the British Empire Medal for service to the community.

December, 1975/January, 1976

## Rail history recalled



THE Australian Railway Historical Society has commemorated the 121st anniversary of the opening of Australia's first public railway line from Goolwa to Port Elliot in 1854.

In the picture above, the Chairman of the Victorian Railways Board, Mr A. G. Gibbs, on September 28 unveils a plaque at Goolwa, South Australia specially made in the Victorian Railway workshops for the occasion. When the line opened in 1854 trains were powered entirely by horses.

The passenger service was normally a single car drawn by one horse. The goods service was usually three or four trucks coupled together and hauled by a team of three or more horses.

When horses were short, bullocks were used. They worked at night and six of them could haul up to twenty tons at 3 m.p.h. The first steam power operated on the Goolwa-Victor Harbour line in April, 1885.

THE sixth edition of the Murray Valley Tourist Guide, an action-packed 120 pages of information, maps and pictures, is now available. The guide, which is keenly sought by schools, parents and tourists, costs only sixty cents or \$1 posted. It covers the area from Kosciusko to the sea and embraces the States of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It tells you what you want to know about the regions, including boating, fishing, accommodation, wineries and community life. You can buy it from 100 Murray Valley outlets, including news-agents or by writing to the Murray Valley Development League, Box 350, Albury, NSW (Phone 21-3049).

## Tourist takings take off!

A RECORD \$6,500,000 was earned by the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau in 1974/75—\$880,000 more than the previous year.

The State's Minister for Tourism, Mr Murray Byrne, told the annual meeting of tourist bureau managers in Melbourne that more tickets were sold for airlines, road tours and shipping than any previous year. Rail ticket sales jumped by

more than 10,000.

The Mildura bureau lifted its revenue 'well over \$80,000.' Mr Byrne added: 'Our alpine development and promotional efforts also showed up handsomely with increases in bookings from all States and country centres. Mr Byrne said the State's regional tourism scheme had contributed to its success, with several regions reporting increases in tourism of up to thirty and forty per cent.

## Trust classifies Murray plain

THE National Trust has classified thirty kilometres of the Murray Valley flood plain.

The classification was announced jointly by the Victorian and New South Wales trusts. The flood plain has been classified from Albury west to Howlong. The area lies between the Riverina Highway in New South Wales and the Murray Valley Highway in Victoria.

The trusts said the area was being classified because it was considered an essential part of Australia's heritage and a site of historic Australian landscape to be preserved for future generations. Early Savannah woodland has survived in the area. There are also fine examples of river red gum, native grasses and herbs, and natural billabongs.



# Black Thursday, hellfire that changed a colony

WHEN Hume and Hovell crossed the Owens River near Everton at the end of November, 1824, they gave an enthusiastic description of the country that lies on the fringe of the alpine regions.

They described the country 'as scantily wooded, but with timber trees of the most valuable description with fine hills and grasslands at the back'. Their view of the mountains was obscured somewhat by the smoke of fires burning near the Horn on Buffalo, presumably lit by natives on their annual pilgrimage to feast on the swarms of Bogong Moths.

## Wombats

Since the kangaroos and wallabies were being steadily exterminated by the dingo packs, it had become necessary for the Aborigines to exploit all possible food sources. They were forced to hunt the wombats which abounded in the foothills, ample evidence of this being the number of holes about two feet in diameter and up to ten feet deep dug to extricate animals from pop-holes along the secluded valley where I spent my boyhood.

The finding of stone axes and cooking ovens showed that the Aborigines spent most of the summer months in the mountain foothills where possums, goannas, snakes, fish, birds and honey supplemented their diet. Their only burial ground of which I have heard in these parts, is located at the lower end of the Never Never on the west side of Mt. Buffalo.

When Major Mitchell crossed through Victoria in 1836 he described it as 'a splendidly grassed country'; but I am indebted to the two volumes of William Howitt for accurate descriptions of the countryside and mountain foothills as he wandered across Victoria during 1853-4.

## Pipes replace open channels

WORK has been completed on an \$800,000 pipeline system to supply water to the Tresco irrigation district, near Swan Hill, in northern Victoria. The pipelines replace a network of open concrete and earthen channels.

The project, designed and constructed by the Water Commission, was declared officially completed by the Minister for Water Supply, Mr Granter, at Lake Boga on November 7.

The Tresco scheme includes a new main supply channel and pumping station, as well as forty-one kilometres of reinforced concrete, and asbestos cement pipes.

The open earthen channels operated at about 50 per cent efficiency, half the water pumped into the system being lost through seepage, evaporation, overflow and other factors. But the new pipeline system is about 98 per cent efficient and maintenance and manpower costs are greatly reduced.

## Part three of Dreamtime Days and Ways by PERCY WESTON.

Wherever he ventured, the same description generally applied: 'The grass is of the richest green, and the trees fresh and beautifully scattered'; 'Here we look out on the green champaign, tall and beautiful trees and running water and hear again the voices of our old bird friends'; 'At this time of the year, the grass is green and the huge gum trees scattered over it, give it a park-like appearance'; 'Our approach was through the native forest, resembling a walk through some old English park, both from the antiquity of the trees and the appearance of the forest turf under our feet'.

Referring to an unburnt section in the Buckland Hills at the base of the alpine regions, he writes that 'above the green sward, extended high, wide and solemn the primitive forest'. (January, 1854).

That is the picture of the environment when the first settlers arrived here: whether on plain, hill or mountainside, you had mature trees of great age well scattered over a heavily grassed countryside. That explains why the summer river flows of that time were normally much greater than they are today. Rain was held where it fell, to soak into an absorbent soil, partially shaded by the huge trees limiting evaporation, to be released in a supply of water much more clear and constant than we know today.

Settlement and squatting and grazing of the alpine regions began in the 1840's, and the dangerous condition of the country was soon apparent to the early-comers. Cattle were so few in numbers that they had little effect at first in reducing the fire hazard that had grown by the killing of the kangaroo by the dingo. Howitt gave his impression of the situation thus—'my opinion is that the country is not stocked one tenth in proportion to its capabilities'.

This vulnerability to fire reached its climax in early 1851. Settlers had been too careful with fire: that allowed a huge build up of

inflammable material. Despite the pattern that nature had evolved to conserve rainfall and ensure that trees were spaced far enough apart with a deep rooting system that guaranteed a constant moisture supply, conditions in the summer of 1850-51 became explosive.

A wet early spring, promoting prolific growth of rank high grass, was followed by four months hot dry weather. When gum leaves are deprived of moisture they are ready to explode in flame. On February 6, 1851—'Black Thursday'—a hell of fire was let loose. Howitt, writing a year later, describes the appalling calamity in these few lines:

## Furnace

'The fire on "Black Thursday" destroyed the face of the whole colony over a space of 300 miles by 150, with farms, flocks and herds, by tens of thousands, and numbers of people. The whole country for a time was a furious furnace and what was most singular, the greatest part of the mischief was done in **one single day**'.

Had these conditions developed two years later, when the discovery of gold brought thousands of miners and prospectors wandering the countryside, there is no telling how many would have been burnt to death.

Victoria was indeed fortunate to escape what could easily have been the greatest disaster in our history. At the time diggers were dispersed from the Grampians and Bedigo in the west to the alpine areas in the east of Victoria, and the tornado of flame that swept over the country-side would not have allowed much hope of survival to the defenceless miner.

As far as I can ascertain, this was the only occasion when fire swept over areas of the Bogong High Plains.

NEXT MONTH: The Ruthless Miner.

AN animated cartoon—The True Story of Ned Kelly—has won first prize in the 38th Victorian International Amateur Film Festival. Mr Paul Williams of Warrandyte, Victoria, took the honors from sixty-six other entries, twenty from overseas.



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## NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

### COROWA FEED MILL TO RECEIVE GOVERNMENT HELP

The NSW Government has granted assistance of more than \$250,000 to a new industry at Corowa.

The Minister for Decentralisation, Mr Bruxner, yesterday announced the assistance for a \$1.25m. feed mill for Fidelity Feeds Ltd.

Fidelity Feeds Ltd., a subsidiary of Bunge (Industrial) Ltd., intends to purchase land at Corowa, construct a new stock feed mill and silos and carry out associated works.

The Government assistance will consist of a \$268,000 factory loan and a \$4500 transport subsidy.

Corowa Shire Council has been invited by the Department of Decentralisation and Development to participate in the assistance.

The council has been asked to advance additional \$134,000 loan funds to Fidelity, which is about 25 per cent of the total cost of \$536,000 for land housing.

Border Morning Mail, 9.12.1975.

### REGIONAL TRUST AUTHORITY FORMED

Combining parts of the MVDL Regions 3 and 4, the long-awaited North-West Regional Tourist Authority to develop and promote tourism throughout the Mildura-Swan Hill-Kerang areas has been officially formed.

The office will be established at Mildura, initially at the Mildura Tourist Bureau.

The authority was formed by the six member municipalities at Robinvale on November 18.

Cr Alan Clark, of Swan Hill City, was elected authority chairman with Mr L. Barndon, of Mildura vice-chairman.

Other committee members are Crs K. Gambetta, J. Clark, M. Jobson (Mildura City), T. Ryan (Swan Hill Shire), K. Cullen (Kerang Borough), I. Kenny (Kerang Shire) and S. R. Bodinar (Wycheproof Shire) and Messrs P. Saunder, J. Blain, B. Cox, J. Cohn (Mildura), G. Wakeman (Kerang) and G. Dryden (Wycheproof).

The Mildura and Swan Hill-Kerang-Wycheproof areas will each contribute \$10,000 to which the State Government Ministry of Tourism will add \$10,000 for the authority's budget of \$30,000.

Swan Hill City has guaranteed to provide \$4500, Swan Hill Shire \$2500, and Kerang Borough, Shire and Wycheproof Shire \$1000 each.

\*The position of tourist officer has since been advertised.

Northern Times 25.11.1975.

### LEAGUE LEARNS OF YABBIE FACTORY PLAN

A yabbies factory and farm at Wentworth is to be established in 1976 to supply live yabbies to Europe and America.

In a report to Region 4 of the Murray Valley Development League Mr Gary Helm of Wentworth has outlined plans to establish a yabbie export industry at the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers.

December, 1975/January, 1976

Mr Helm said his company also has a firm order for the supply of 300 tons of yabbies to the Australian market.

'We hope to cash in on the lucrative market of landing live yabbies in Sweden,' Mr Helm said. 'At present 2,000 tons of yabbies are supplied annually from Turkey and only 72 tons from Australia,' he said.

Mr Helm has just returned from America where he also discussed exporting plans with wholesalers in the USA.

Mr Helm said that size restrictions would be strictly enforced and the factory would only take yabbies from professional fishermen along the Murray River.

Mr Helm said that establishment of a yabbies industry was only viable in the immediate vicinity of the catching area and that's one of the reasons why Wentworth was chosen.

Yabbies would be washed down, cooked, frozen and stored until required at various markets.

In addition to the export of live yabbies, frozen yabbies and yabbie tails, the factory would produce frozen packs of native river fish, Murray Perch and Murray Cod, if available.

Mr Helm said he was expecting final approval for factory and farm plans in the next few months and that the whole project should be underway by next October.

### PLATYPUS FOUND ON STATION

A platypus has been found tangled in a wire fence near the water's edge close to the Murray at Moorna Station, 20 miles west of Wentworth.

The owner of Moorna Station, Mr Doug Morphet, said last night he had never heard of a platypus being found so far downstream in the Murray.

Sunraysia Daily 10.11.1975.

### MVDL MOVES FOR A NATIONAL PARK

At the November 5 meeting of No. 5 Regional Committee a motion, sponsored by the Chairman of the Morgan District Council Cr H. E. Boord, called for the declaration of 'Richard's Lagoon', opposite Morgan as a national park.

Cr Boord said that the move was necessary to protect the area from further vandalism by indiscriminate shooters and damage by uncontrolled motor bike riding.

The league's moves to urge action to eradicate, not just control, water hyacinth in the Gwydir River; efforts to promote tourism in the Murray Valley; and initiatives taken with regard to its belief that urgent action is required to maintain and enhance the quality and quantity of water in the River Murray system were the main matters highlighted in the reports.

The next meeting is to be held at the Cadell Training Centre so as to inspect experimental work being carried out in conjunction with the Fisheries Department.

### ELECTRIC SUPPLY TAKE-OVER

Renmark's electricity supply undertaking was officially taken over by the Electricity Trust of South Australia on December 17.

A cheque for \$68,000 was presented to the Mayor of Renmark (Mr L. G. Sims) by the ETSA regional manager (Mr R. B. Gordon), during a ceremony in the council chambers.

The Renmark Corporation electricity supply undertaking started in 1916, using a direct current supply system.

Between 1948 and 1950 the undertaking converted to an alternating current system and the corporation became a bulk consumer of the trust, receiving supply from the Renmark sub-station.

With the transfer of the undertaking to the trust, all electricity supply in the Riverland will now be under the trust's control.

Murray Pioneer 18.12.1975.

### IRRIGATORS FORM A NEW ASSOCIATION

More than 30 irrigators formed the Lower Murray Private Irrigators' Association at a meeting at Purnong Landing on November 5.

They will affiliate with the South Australian Murray Irrigators' Association and will cater for the interests of all private irrigators between Blanchetown and the Murray Mouth.

Until now irrigators below Swan Reach have not been represented.

Wednesday's meeting was convened by the Purnong and District Branch of the South Australian Fruitgrowers' and Market Gardeners' Association, under the chairmanship of Mr Gordon Marks who was elected Chairman of the new body.

The objectives of the new body are almost the same as those of the SA Murray Irrigators' Association.

They are the promotion of conditions favorable to the effective use of River Murray water for the irrigation of vegetables and fodder crops, orchards and vineyards, by private irrigators.

The meeting was told that an important part of activities was liaison with the Engineering and Water Supply Department, which issued licences to use water from the Murray in South Australia.

Other office bearers elected were, Vice-Chairman, E. W. Hage, committee members, Sir Barton Pope, I. M. Detloff, K. Wolki, D. H. Emmins, M. Baulderstone, G. Paddick and G. Hodge.

Murray Valley Standard 6.11.1975.

## MURRUMBIDGEE

### TRAINING MANAGERS

POTENTIAL managers of irrigation properties are being trained at the Yanco Agricultural College.

The ten-month irrigation certificate course, about to start its sixth year, educates students in irrigation agronomy, irrigation engineering, soil-plant-water relations and irrigation economics. Topics within this framework include landforming techniques, row cropping, emergence problems, system design, surveying, soil selection, water application, budgeting, machinery preparation, irrigated pasture and vegetables, spray irrigation and pump selection. The college has the co-operation of practising farmers and research institutions throughout the Murrumbidgee area, Deniliquin and Hay irrigation districts and the Macquarie Valley.

From Irrigation Fa



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Boomerang Hotel Motel, Hume Highway, Nth. Albury	251711	56015	32	abcdehikmnrstvxz
Garrison Hotel Motel, Hume Hwy.	251272	—	29	abdehkmvtvz
Jasper Hotel, Hume Highway, Nth. Albury	251465	Thru 56015	17	abdgijmrvstvxz
Lancaster Travel Lodge, Hume Hwy	213127	—	22	acdhienvz
Southern Cross Motel, Hume Hwy Nth. Albury	251622	—	18	abcdghfnrstvz
<b>KHANCOBAN:</b>				
Khancoban Alpine Inn, Alpine Way	769471	56474	36	abcdeghkmntyz
<b>MT. BEAUTY:</b>				
Mt. Beauty Chalet	572303	—	87	cdghnvz
<b>TUMBARUMBA:</b>				
Tumbarumba Motel	344	—	10	abdghntvz
<b>WODONGA:</b>				
Terminus Hotel, High St	241777	—	12	abcdeghikmntvz
<b>YARRAWONGA:</b>				
Garner's Bridge Motel	443685	—	9	abcdfirtvxy
Ski-Land Motel, Murray Valley Hwy	443937	—	12	abdhimnrstvxz

**REGION TWO**

<b>BARMAH:</b>				
Barmah Hotel Motel	693270	—	5	abcdehijkmnrstvxz
<b>ECHUCA:</b>				
Echuca Flag Motel, Murray Valley Hwy	822899	52901	21	abcdhimrstvxz
<b>KYABRAM:</b>				
Ky Motel	522424	—	16	abcfhijnrtvxy
<b>NUMURKAH</b>				
Numurkah Motel, Tocumwall Rd.	621922	32464	17	abdfhijmnrvtvxy
<b>ROCHESTER</b>				
Motel Rochester, Echuca Rd.	505	52911	12	abdfhimnrstvxz
<b>SHEPPARTON:</b>				
Victoria Hotel Motel, Wyndham St	219955	—	39	abcdehikmnrvtvxy

**REGION THREE**

<b>KERANG:</b>				
Kerang Motel, Murray Valley Hwy	521512	—	25	abcdfgijmnrstvxz
<b>ROBINVALE:</b>				
Motel Robinvale, Bromley Rd	10	—	14	abdhimnrstvxz
<b>SWAN HILL:</b>				
Highway Sixteen Motor Lodge, Murray Valley Highway	322123	52926	37	abdfhrtvxy
Lake Boga Motor Inn, Murray Valley Highway, Swan Hill	372103	52756	32	abdehikmnrstvxz
Oasis Hotel Motel, Campbell St.	322877	—	22	abcdehijmnrvtvxy

**REGION FOUR**

<b>IRYMPLE:</b>				
Irymple Community Motel Hotel	245506	—	12	abcdehikmnrvtvxy
<b>MERBEIN:</b>				
Merbein Hotel, Game St	252704	—	29	acdeghikmrvxy
<b>MILDURA:</b>				
Grand Hotel, 7th St	230511	50384	112	bcdehikmnrstvxz
Hodgsons Vineland Motel, Deakin Ave	234036	—	6	abdhnrsvxy
Mildura Inlander Motel, Deakin Ave	233823	50400	50	abcdehijkmnrstvxz
Sunland Motel, 232 Deakin Ave	232704	50395	35	abcdhimnrstvxz
Wintersun Hotel, 124 8th St	230365	—	80	abcdehiklmntvxy
<b>WENTWORTH:</b>				
Royal Hotel Motel, Darling St	18	—	7	abcdehghkmrtvxy

**REGION FIVE**

<b>BARMERA:</b>				
Barmera Hotel Motor Inn, Barwell Ave	882111	—	50	abcdehikmrtvxy
<b>LOXTON:</b>				
Loxton Community Hotel Motel, East Tce	847266	84450	57	abcdgefijkmnrstvxz
<b>RENMARK:</b>				
Renmark Fountain Motel, Renmark Ave	866899	—	20	abcdfgimrstvxz

**REGION SIX**

<b>MURRAY BRIDGE:</b>				
Greenacres Motel, Princes Hwy	321090	—	20	abcdhijmnrvtvxy
<b>VICTOR HARBOUR:</b>				
Victor Harbour City Motel, Ocean St (opp. P.O.)	522295	—	14	abcdfgnrtvxy

**MOTEL LEGEND**

a—Hot and Cold Water in all or most rooms. b—Rooms with private bath or shower. c—Lounges. d—Deduction for children. e—Licensed. f—Rooms with telephone available. g—Garage. h—Heating. i—Room service available. j—Fans. k—Restaurant is Licensed. l—Lift Service. m—Other meals provided. n—Electric blankets. r—Rooms with refrigerator. s—Swimming Pool. t—All or some rooms with private toilet. v—Television in rooms or lounge. x—Air Conditioning. y—Yard space for cars. z—Family rooms with concessions.

**AVAN PARK LEGEND**

22 — Motel or Lodge Accommodation. b—Barbeques. c—Playground. d—Cafe. f—Pets Allowed. g—Laundry Facilities. h—Swimming on Room. j—L.P. Gas Available on Site. k—Kiosk. l—Boat Launching

**SNOWY MOUNTAINS REGION**

CANBERRA:	Name	Address	Phone	Total Sites	Pwd Sites	On Site Vans	Legend
Red Cedars Accommodation Centre		Cnr. Aspinall & Stirlings Sts., Watson	412407	12/12	—	—	acgdm
<b>REGION ONE</b>							
<b>ALBURY:</b>							
Albury Tourist Haven		Hme H'way, Nth. Albury	251619	40/28	4	—	cgjm
Noreuil Caravan Park		Hume H'way, Albury	211734	300/160	23	—	cgjk
<b>BRIGHT:</b>							
Alpine Cabins and C'van Parks		Mountbatten Ave., Bright	551064	70/60	15	—	bcgjm
<b>BRIGHT ENVIRONS:</b>							
Dennis Caravan Park		Mt Buffalo Rd, Porepunkah	562235	120/96	15	—	bfgi
<b>CHILTERN:</b>							
Chiltern Caravan Park		Chiltern	261206	14/14	—	—	befg
<b>COROWA:</b>							
R.T. Ball Park		Corowa	331426	450/222	—	—	cfgj
<b>ESKDALE:</b>							
Eskdale Caravan Park		Omeo Highway, Eskdale	3	30/16	—	—	ef
<b>HOLBROOK:</b>							
Holbrook Caravan Park		Hume H'way, Holbrook	362405	60/12	2	—	cfg
<b>MITTA MITTA:</b>							
Magorra Caravan Park		Mitta Mitta River, Mitta Mitta	723520	70/40	—	—	cefg
<b>MULWALA:</b>							
Purtle Park Caravan Park		Mulwala	443452	70/50	—	—	f
Hargreaves Caravan Park		27 Corowa Rd, Mulwala	443452	60/50	6	—	cfghjl
<b>MYRTLEFORD:</b>							
Myrtleford Caravan Park		Whitfield Rd, Myrtleford	521598	100/100	—	—	befg
Nug Nug Reserve		Buffalo Rvr Rd, Bufflo Rvr.	542217	50/—	—	—	—
<b>TALLANGATTA:</b>							
Lakelands Caravan Park		Q. Elizabeth Dr, Tallangatta	135	130/130	—	—	bcgkl
<b>TUMBARUMBA:</b>							
Captain Cook C'van Park		Lauder St. Tumbarumba	149	50/26	—	—	fg
<b>WODONGA:</b>							
Boat Haven Caravan Park		Murray Valley Hwy, Ebden	206130	144/100	10	—	bcgijkl
Drive Inn Caravan Park		Melbourne Rd. Wodonga	242598	50/50	12	—	cgjk
Spillway Caravan Park		Ebden	206050	100/72	—	—	bcgegijkl
below L.H. s'way wall							
<b>YARRAWONGA:</b>							
Yarrowonga Caravan Park		Yarrowonga	443420	600/500	8	—	cfglk

**REGION TWO**

<b>COBRAM:</b>							
Apex Caravan Park		Punt Rd, Cobram	721185	94/89	—	—	fg
<b>DENILIQUIN:</b>							
McLeans Beach C'van Pk.		Butler St, Deniliquin	812444	400/280	—	—	gjk
<b>ECHUCA:</b>							
Riverlander Caravan Park		Pianta's Rd, Echuca	822558	80/44	8	—	cfghjk
<b>NUMURKAH:</b>							
Numurkah Caravan Park		Melville St, Numurkah	621222	50/36	—	—	fg
<b>ROCHESTER:</b>							
Rochester Caravan Park		Church St. Rochester	622	36/36	—	—	cfkg
<b>STRATHMERTON:</b>							
Jack Farrall C'van Park		Cnr Murray Valley & Goulburn Vly Hwy, Strathmerton	—	8/8	—	—	fg

**REGION THREE:**

<b>BALRANALD:</b>							
Balranald Caravan Park		Balranald	321	140/70	10	—	cfjk
<b>BOORT:</b>							
Boort Lakeside C'van Pk.		Durham Ox Rd, Boort	64	40/34	—	—	cfgl
<b>COHUNA:</b>							
Cohuna Caravan Park		Gunbower Is. Rd, Cohuna	562562	138/138	9	—	bcfgjk
<b>KERANG:</b>							
Kerang Caravan Park		Riverwood Drive, Kerang	521161	64/64	7	—	cefg
<b>KOONDROOK:</b>							
Koondrook Caravan Park		Gunbower Pde, Koondrook	522266	20/20	—	—	fg
<b>LAKE BOGA:</b>							
Lake Boga Caravan Park		Lake Boga, Mry Vly Hwy	—	60/50	—	—	bcghl
<b>PYRAMID HILL:</b>							
Pyramid Hill C'van Park		Victoria St. Pyramid Hill	161	20/10	—	—	bfg
<b>ROBINVALE:</b>							
Robinvale Caravan Park		River Frontage, Robinvale	343	70/42	6	—	bcefgjkl
<b>SWAN HILL:</b>							
Riverside Caravan Park		Monash Drive, Swan Hill	321494	125/116	12	—	bcefgk

**REGION FOUR**

<b>CULLULLERAINE:</b>							
Johansen Memorial Caravan Park		Sturt Hwy, Cullulleraine	282226	70/43	—	—	bfgk
<b>MERBEIN:</b>							
Kenny Park Caravan Park		Box St. Merbein	252598	52/40	—	—	g
<b>MILDURA &amp; DISTRICT:</b>							
Buronga Riverside C/Pk		River frontage, Buronga	233040	150/120	25	—	cfgjk
Coachman Tourist Park		Calder Hwy, Irymple	245316	60/60	10	—	bcgj
Golden River C'van Grdn.		River Rd, West Mildura	234171	30/30	12	—	bcghjk
Lake Hawthorn C'van Pk		Calder Hwy, Mildura West	231687	54/44	10	—	bcfghjkl
The Palms Caravan Park		Cureton Ave, Mildura East	231774	64/64	15	—	cfgjk
<b>RED CLIFFS:</b>							
Quandong Caravan Park		Calder Hwy, Red Cliffs	242261	220/120	4	—	bcefgjk
<b>WENTWORTH:</b>							
Belleveue Grove C/pk		Silver City Hwy, Curlwaa	276210	32/32	7	—	bfgj
Willow Bend C'van Park		River frontage, Wentworth	196	100/68	10	—	gjk

**REGION FIVE**

<b>BERRI:</b>							
Berri Riverside C'van Pk		Berri	821718	300/84	14	—	cfghjkl
<b>RENMARK:</b>							
Renmark Caravan Park		Renmark	866315	400/200	10	—	bchjkl

**REGION SIX**

<b>MILANG:</b>							
Milang Caravan Park		River St. Milang	22	300/32	—	—	bcdfhjkl
<b>MURRAY BRIDGE:</b>							
Sturt Reserve		Princess Hwy, Murray Brq.	323042	102/72	—	—	bcfghkl