



# RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST

## Woolenook Japanese Internment Camp and Renmark Irrigation Trust: 1942-1945

*Dr Judy Bailey and Geoff Bull*

Underpinning the economic, social and environmental sustainability  
of the Renmark Community



ALLIANCE FOR  
WATER STEWARDSHIP  
PLATINUM CERTIFIED

**80 years ago on May 7, 1942, 31 Japanese internees entered  
Woolenook Wood camp near Renmark.**

**This is their story ....**



# This talk today will...

## Examine

- The location and timeline of the camp
- Camp conditions
- Timber cutting and transport via PS *Ulonga* to Renmark Irrigation Trust
- Community interaction
- War Art
- 1946 - Dismantling of the camp

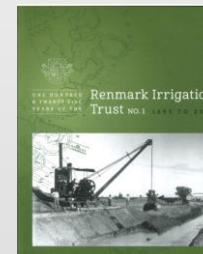


International Red Cross

V-P-HIST-01876-03

# What sources are we using?

- Australian War Memorial Photographs
- Photographs from the International Red Cross
- State Library of South Australia
- War diaries of the 25/33 Garrison Battalion 1942-1945
- Renmark Irrigation Trust Board minutes 1940-1945
- Loveday lives <https://lovedaylives.com/history/>
- *Murray Pioneer 1941-1945*
- Information from oral histories of Renmark residents



- Koike, M (2022) *Four Years in a Red Coat: the Loveday Internment Camp Diary*
- Bull, Geoff (2018) *125 Years of the Renmark Irrigation Trust No. 1 1893-2018*
- Dean, E.T. (1946) *History of Loveday internment Group, 1940-1946*
- Nagata, Y (1993) *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese internment in Australia*

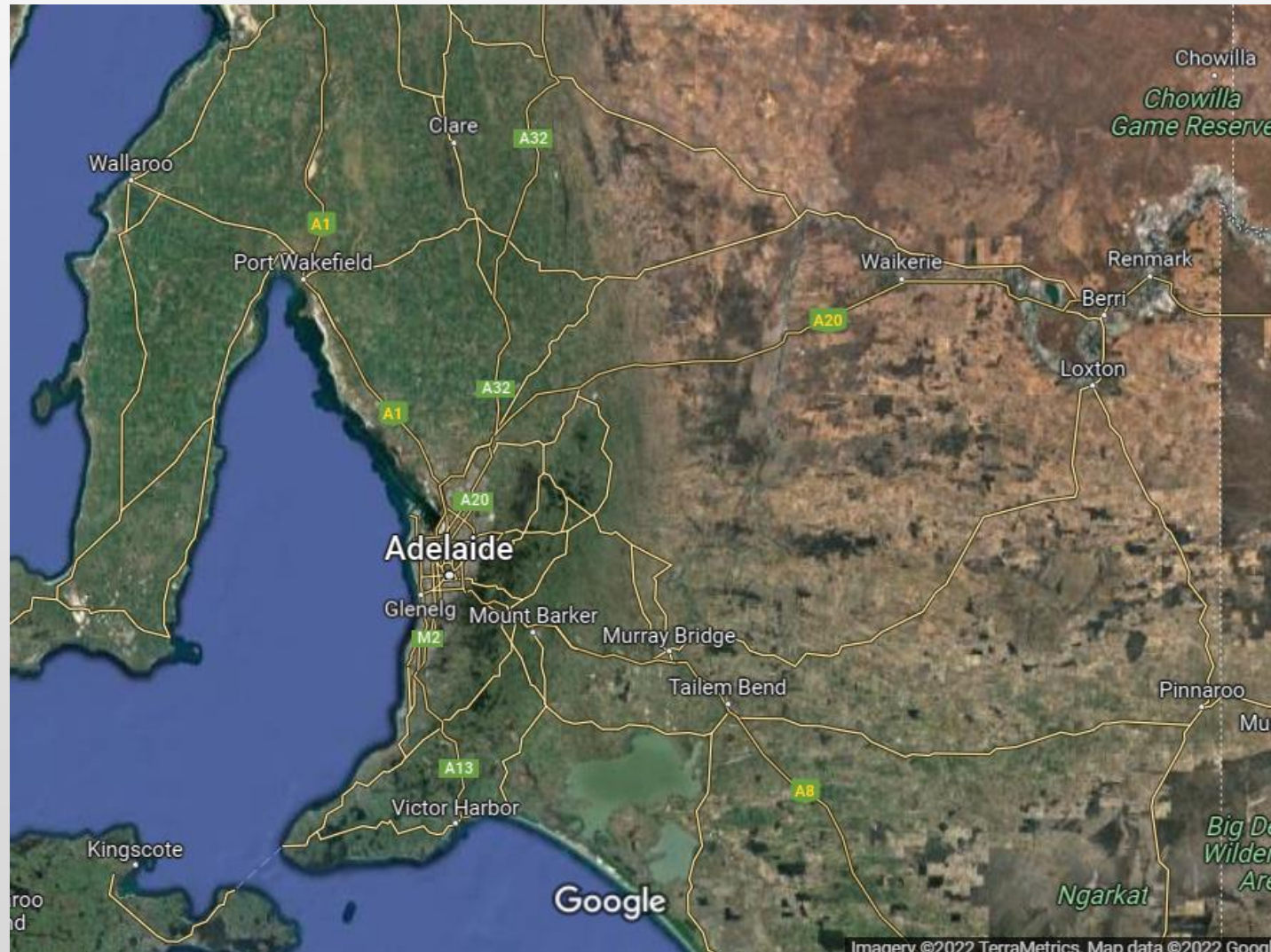
# RENMARK IRRIGATION DISTRICT



- **Renmark is Australia's first irrigation settlement - 4 February 1887**
- **Trust established in 1893**
- **5000 ha of productive land**
- **600 irrigators**

# Renmark, South Australia

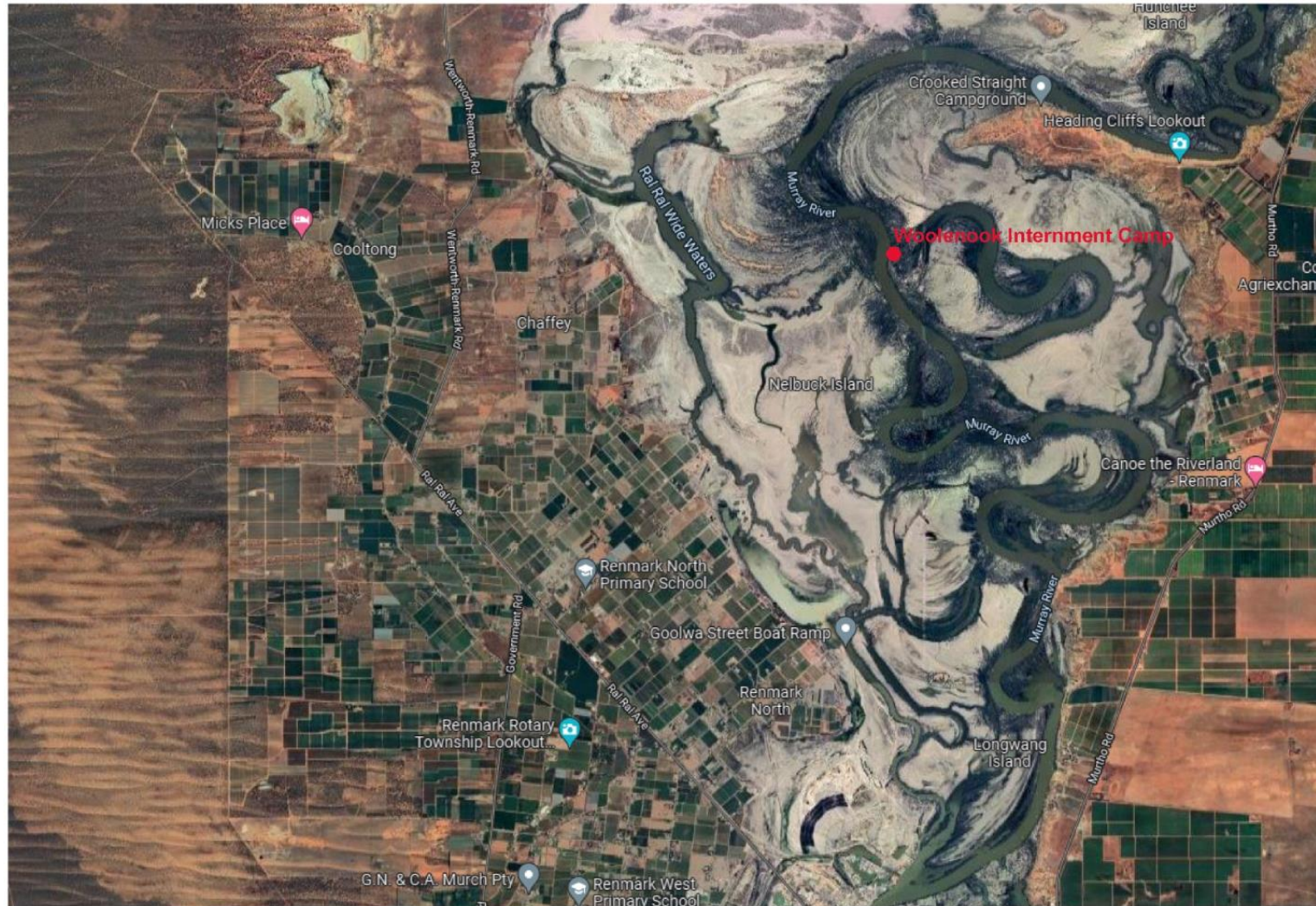
*260 km northeast of Adelaide*



# Location of Woolenook Wood Camp

4/30/22, 2:34 PM

Google Maps



<https://www.google.com.au/maps/@-34.1179213,140.7857515,14412m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=en>

2/3

Camp was 14 miles north of Renmark

# Timeline

## JAPAN ENTERS WAR

12/  
41

Japanese attacked American fleet at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941



## ARRIVAL

05/  
42

On 7 and 8 May 1942, 113 Japanese internees arrive at Woolenook from Loveday.



07/  
42

## RIT NEGOTIATES SUPPLY OF WOOD

Army HQ to provide internees to cut wood at 1/9 per ton. Captain Reed of the PS *Ulonga* to deliver and stack wood from Woolenook to Trust Power Station for 5/6 per ton



## HEDLEY CULLEN

05/  
43

AIF photographer, Hedley Cullen takes photos of 364 Japanese internees arriving at Renmark from Hay enroute to Loveday. 100 de train and board the PS *Ulonga* for Woolenook Camp.



09/  
43

## WOOD CUTTING

Between July and November 1943, over 2000 tons of wood was transported to Renmark for use by RIT. Internees cut and stacked wood for loading on to PS *Ulonga*. Sawn wood was shipped to Morgan then by train to Smithfield in Adelaide



05/  
45

## INTERNEES LEAVE

243 Japanese internees transferred to Loveday. Woolenook now a camp for Italian POWs





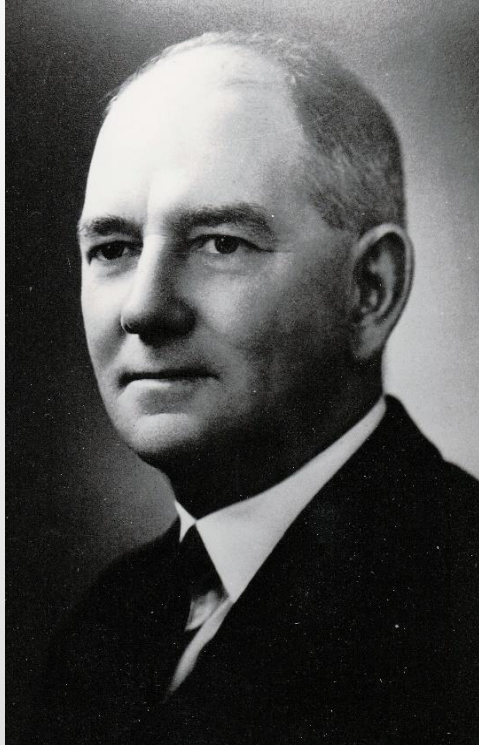
# Loveday Internment and POW Camp

- Lt Colonel Howard Tolley selected Loveday, near Barmera for a new camp on 12 July 1940
- Loveday was the largest civilian camp in Australia
- Group of camps – main camps were camps 9,10 and 14 (a Japanese camp)
- By January 1943 there were 4660 internees and POWs at Loveday
- Loveday camp also had satellite wood cutting camps at
  - Katarapko, housed Italian POWs
  - Moorook West (closed 28 January 1944, Japanese internees moved to Woolenook)
  - Woolenook – only Japanese internees May 1942 – May 1945



View from the Southern Tower, looking north, at No 14 Camp of the Loveday Internment Camp Group. C Compound is to the left and B Compound to the right. Photograph by Hedley Cullen. AWM 122991.

# Renmark Irrigation Trust



**Charles Katekar RIT chair  
1925-45**

**Negotiated with the Army for  
wood to be cut by internees  
at Woolenook**



**Lt Colonel Howard Tolley DSO  
Chief Engineer at RIT 1923-26  
1939-1945 Royal Engineers**

**Pivotal role in securing land in  
Loveday for a camp. Friend of  
Charles Katekar**



**John Tolley (Brother to  
Howard) Chief Engineer at RIT  
1926-1954**

**Close liaison with his brother.  
Responsible for keeping the  
lights on and the pumps  
running**

# Trust's key role in providing electricity to the region – 1942 map



**Blue line shows the electricity network supplied by RIT - Loveday camp needed a regular supply of electricity for over 6000 internees, POWs and the Garrison**

# Fuel and manpower shortages

- In the 1930's pumps were powered by electricity – diesel was the fuel used to create electricity
- Shortage of diesel during the war created a demand for wood as fuel
- Heavy demand for wood due to increased electricity to Loveday and towns in the Riverland
- Shortage of labour during the war – woodcutters and deckhands had joined the army
- RIT was an 'essential industry'

## Arrival of Japanese at Renmark (13 May 1943)



# Enroute via Ral Ral Avenue to the PS *Ulonga*. *Travel to Woolenook – approx. 2 hours*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

123041



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

123046

# The camp



Camp showing a brush hut which was a Salvation Army recreation centre - 'Hop in you're welcome' (Photo taken February 1944 by Sgt H.K. Cullen)



Photo taken March 1943 - Tents of Garrison personnel at Woolenook

# The Camp



Woolenook from the river. The Officer's mess is the building with the balcony (Feb 1943)

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

1 22949



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

064862



# Internees fished after work and tended vegetable gardens



Australian War Memorial

February 1944

122980



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# Example of War Diary of the Garrison Battalion – internees and wood collection March 1943

**WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY**  
(Erase heading not required).

Army Form C. 278  
(adapted.)

Unit Woolenook, 33rd. Gra. Bn. Date and Time.—From March 1st. 1943 To March 6th. 1943.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
Woolenook I/Camp	March 1st.		Armourers checked all firearms in camp - Charcoal safe completed.	MB
"	2nd.		Major Hunkin, Mr. Bracht visited. Mr. Bracht reported no complaints from internees. E.S.B. truck with new tank for engine. put in new foundation.	MB
"	3rd.		Internees Kishi and Noguchi returned to compound-would not work.	MB
"	4th.		Had Kishi and Noguchi paraded claim the usual misunderstanding with employment Cpl. but promised to work if sent out again - watching closely Noguchi is real Jap. type and young. Kishi more educated looking, but more silent.	MB
"	6th.		Tonnage very low 112 tons-Good weather- causes are. (1) 2 miles to walk- takes 35 minutes to walk out, 25 to walk home. (2) tools in bad condition. (3) Box timber very light. Saw Hama re walking slowly and asked for better results. Internees held concert quite fair effort.	MB

# War Diary – RIT visits and wood supplies – May 1943

**WAR DIARY ~~OR INTELLIGENCE~~ SUMMARY.**  
(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118.  
(adapted.)

Unit 33rd Garrison Bn. Date and Time.—From May 1st 1943. To May 8th 1943.

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
Keeleneek I/Camp	May 1st.		2 men rejoined from Seasonal leave	MB
	2nd.		Cel. Dean visited re wood and internee movement. <del>Beaches</del> <del>cricket team beat Camp team 200/405</del>	MB
	3rd.		S.S. ULONGA commenced loading first wood since March	MB
	4th.		Mr. Katar, Chairman, Mr. Telley, Mr. Angeve visited camp.	MB
	5th.		Renmark Irrigation Trust sent truck to commence carting from stack to bank.	MB
	6th.		Cel. Dean, Mjr. Secombe inspected wood cut and discussed installation of saw bench and cartage of cut wood by boat Dental officer arrived.	MB
	7th.		S.S. Ulonga left with barge "Arouce" towing approx. 400 tons wood. Capt. Archer and Lt. Reesler visited in reference to internee movement. Padres Walsh and Conlen held R.C. Church parades	MB
	8th.		R.C. Church Parade	MB Borden

7872.L. By Authority: L. F. JOHNSON, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.

# Unrest at the camp – July 1944

## WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C, 2116-  
(adapted.)

(Erase heading not required).

8. 1000 2116

Unit 25/33 Aust Grn Btn (WOOLENOCK) Date and Time.—From 1st July 44 To 3rd JULY 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
Woolenoak Int Camp	1st July		Supplied Canteen goods to 41 workers and hygiene party who kept working. Paroled Internees very happy to be partly free. Compound personnel very sullen. All security precautions possible taken. Canteen Staff cleaned all Canteen Strees from Compound.	\$
	2nd. July.		7 Internees removed to LOVEDAY. Agitators -- HAKODA, OKADA, FUJII, HATA, TAMASHIRO, also undesirables-- FURAKAWA, MIYASAKI. Pay and Checking staff from Group visited on duty. Sgt. Brewster Jones and party visited Camp, GHQ advised that "The Gang" would not be removed.	\$
	3rd. July.		Compound still on strike. Security troops loading Barge with sawn wood for Morgan, to SAL OF C. Internees given till 1500 Hrs to Give the final answer, to work or not. 21 Internal workers only reported. Major DICK interviewed Y. HAMA, Compound Leader following intergation of Internees sent to LOVEDAY on 2nd inst. Interview unsatisfactory and HAMA advised accordingly.	\$

7 AUG 1944

# Cutting and stacking timber

## Furnace and sawn wood



Australian War Memorial 122955  
Kerosene Powered Saw - February 1944 (Photo Sgt H.K. Cullen)



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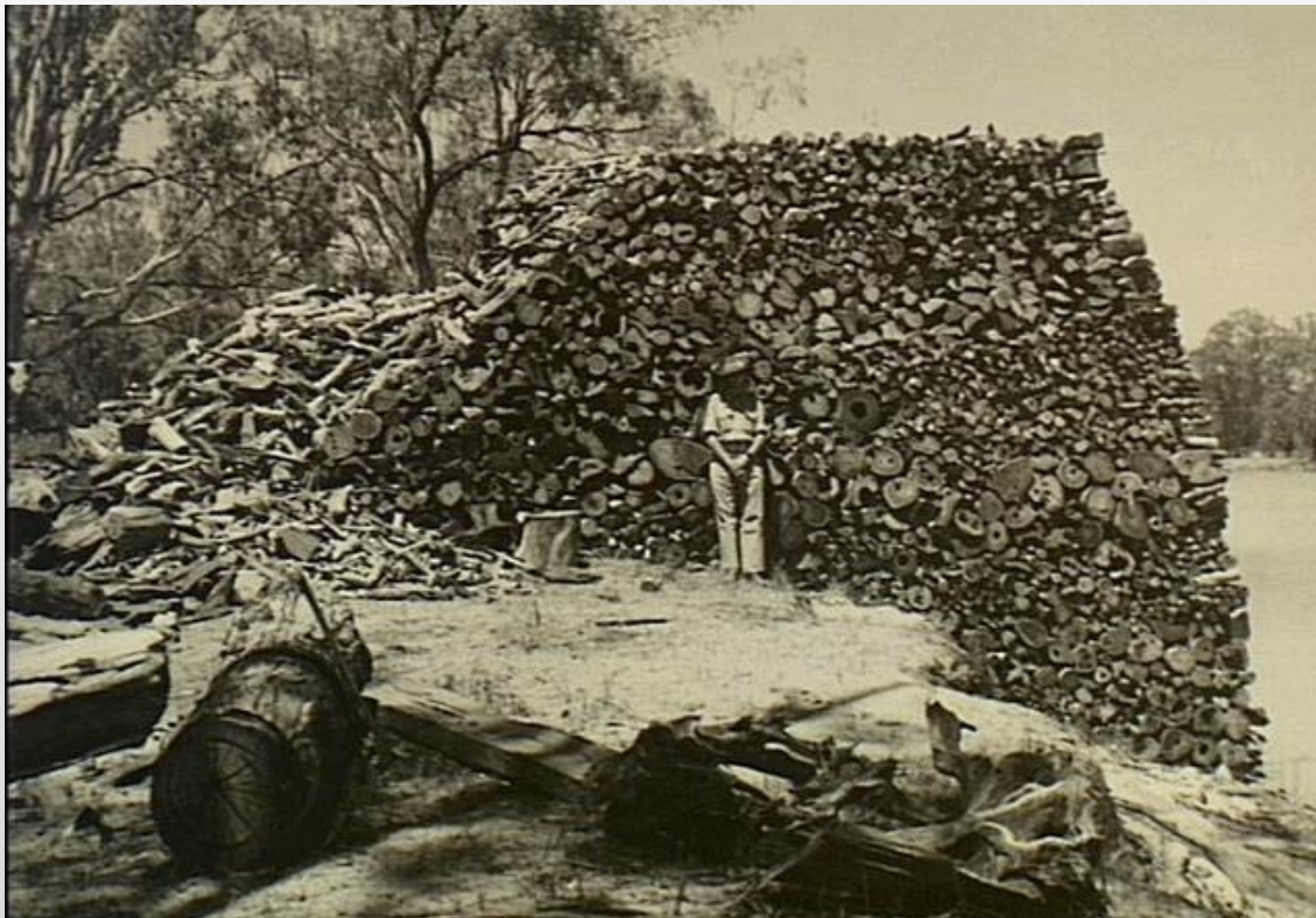


Australian War Memorial 122971

Saw Mill at Woolenook

February 1944 (Photo Sgt H.K. Cullen)

# Wood stacked near river



Australian War Memorial 122975

400 ton stack of firewood cut to five foot lengths

# Carting wood to PS *Ulonga*



**B55098** Reproduction rights: State Library of South Australia

February 1944

# Loading wood



**B55121** Reproduction rights: State Library of South Australia



# Ulonga and barge



PRG 1258/1/3617

Ulonga and barge loaded with wood at no. 1 pump station Renmark

# Community interaction

Murray Pioneer 2 December  
1943

## WOOLENOOK CAMP DANCE FOR SOLDIERS CLUBROOMS

Arranged by the personnel of the Woolenook Camp a dance will be held in the Renmark Institute on Thursday November 19, in aid of the Renmark Soldiers Social Committee clubrooms. Ted Thomas's orchestra will be in attendance, and there will be novelty dances. The charge for admission will be 1/6 (men in uniform 1/-) and buffet supper will be available for sixpence.

Example of contact with Renmark people – dances, showboat trips etc



PRG 1258/1/3531

Murray Pioneer 24 August 1944

## SHOWBOAT "TRIX"

WILL LEAVE RENMARK WHARF

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27th—Special Trip upstream to Woolenook Bend, 11 a.m. returning 6 p.m. Hot water provided. Fare 5/-. Tickets available at Frazer's Fruit Shop.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13th—2.30, returning 4.30 p.m. in time to catch bus and train. Fare 2/6. Home-made Afternoon Tea 6d.

# Cricket at Woolenook



**PICNIC MATCH**  
Crescent 286 (A Pitt 100; R. Marsh 62; N. Marshall 57; S. Pitt 18; W. Marshall 14; D. John 13; J. Axon 10; Darby 4/41; Elston 3/85; Falkner 2/38)  
b. Woolenook 120 (Darby 21; Mitchell 19; Falkner 17; Berryman 13; Schloithe 12; Soroghan 10; Mick Jones 3/2; Marsh 3/22; K. Pitt 3/16).

Murray Pioneer 12 November 1942

Renmark teams came to Woolenook to play against the guards

# *New Moon*



**'New Moon' – a carved replica of Broome lugger given to Captain Reed of the PS *Ulonga* and donated to the Trust by his son**

**It was carved by a Japanese internee at Woolenook**

# Dismantling the camp



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

123139

Berri (26/5/45) 248 internees and 25 guards disembarked. Went via truck to Loveday Camp  
No. 14A

Murray Pioneer (Renmark, SA : 1942 - 1950), Thursday 21 February 1946, page 10

## Commonwealth Disposals Commission

### Announces a Sale by Auction at **Woolenook Bend Internment Camp**

(Approx. 14 miles N.E. of Renmark)

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26th, 1946,**  
Commencing at 10 a.m.

### **BUILDINGS FOR REMOVAL**

Including:

**18 Prefabricated Huts (15 x 12)**  
(3 of which are erected at Barmera Hospital)

together with

6 h.p. "National Diesel Engine, Pumping set, Kelly & Lewis Centrifugal Pump, and 2 1/2 h.p. Ronaldson Tippet Engine; Corrugated Iron, Piping and Fittings, Tanks; 2 Semi-Rotary Pumps; wire Netting; Fuel Stores; 2 Water Heating Units; Camouflage and Shrimp Nets (new condition) and other Sundries.

**GOLDSBROUGH, MORT & CO.,**

BY ORDER OF

**The Commonwealth Disposals Commission**  
will sell by auction as above;

Catalogues will be available on application to the Commonwealth Disposals Commission, Bank of New South Wales Chambers (C7983); or from the Auctioneers, Goldsbrough, Mort & Co., North Terrace (C8650), or their Branch Offices.

### **LOVEDAY INTERNMENT CAMP**

Sale of Buildings, Building Materials, Plant and Machinery, Camp Equipment, &c., will be held on

**March 6th and 7th**

January 1946

# Any Questions?

*Please contact us if you have anything to add to the story of the Japanese at Woolenook Bend  
jbailey@rit.org.au*



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