



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, the first Japanese internees entered
Woolenook Wood camp near Renmark.
This is their story**

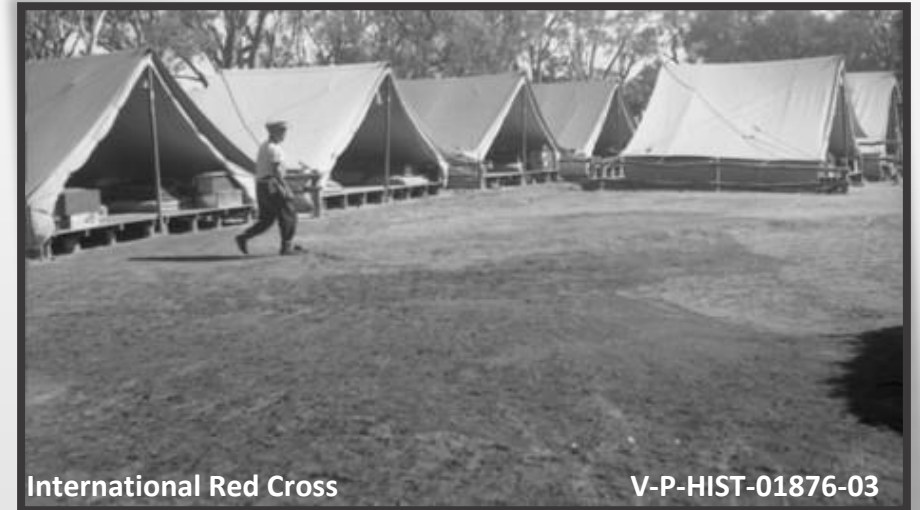


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This talk today will...

Examine

- The location and timeline of the Woolenook Wood camp
- Camp conditions
- Timber cutting and transport via PS *Ulonga* to RIT
- Interaction with the community
- War Art – the ‘New Moon’
- 1946 - Dismantling of the camp



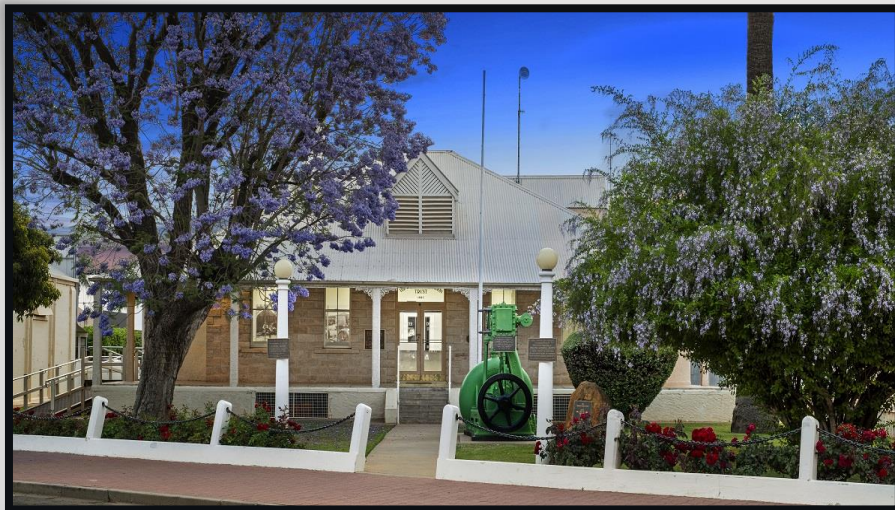
What sources are we using?

- Photographs
 - [Australian War Memorial Photographs](#)
 - [State Library of South Australia photographs](#)
 - Photographs from the International Red Cross
- NAA
 - [War diaries of the 25/33 Garrison Battalion 1942-1945](#)
 - Documents relating to RIT and the AIF 1941-1946
- Renmark Irrigation Trust Board minutes 1940-1946
- *The Murray Pioneer* 1941-1946
- Loveday lives <https://lovedaylives.com/history/>
- Oral histories from Renmark residents
- Koike, M (2022) *Four Years in a Red Coat: the Loveday Internment Camp Diary*
- Dean, E.T. (1946) *History of Loveday internment Group, 1940-1946*
- Bull, Geoff (2018) *125 Years of the Renmark Irrigation Trust No. 1 1893-2018*

Who are we?



- Renmark is Australia's first irrigation settlement - 14 February 1887
- Renmark Irrigation Trust (RIT) established in 1893
- 5000 ha of productive land, 600 irrigators
- Environmental Watering Programs



Timeline of Woolenook

JAPAN ENTERS WAR

12/
41

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



ARRIVAL AT WOOLENOOK

05/
42

On 7 and 8 May 1942, 113 Japanese internees arrive at Woolenook via PS *Ulonga* from Loveday Interment Camp.



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.



1943
- 45

WOOD CUTTING

Internees cut and stacked wood for loading on to PS *Ulonga* and trucks. Sent to Renmark for use by RIT and Berri for other irrigation pumps. Sawed 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 from August 1945



Location of Loveday, Wood Camps and RIT



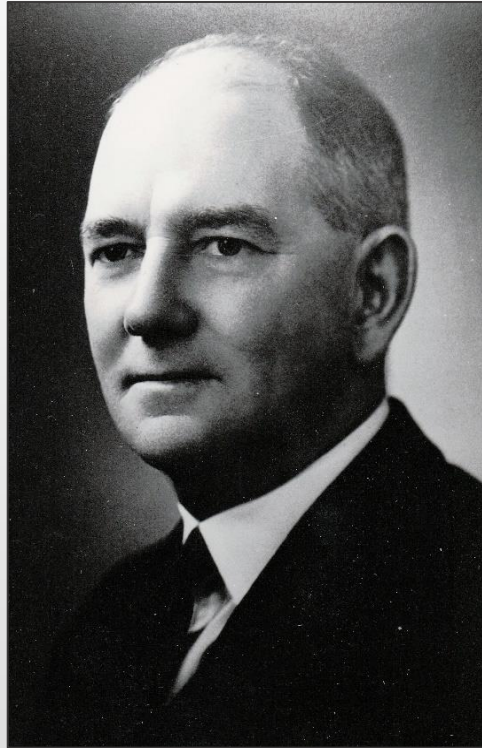
Loveday Internment and POW Camp (near Barmera SA)

- 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 – 9, 10 and 14
- Loveday camp also had satellite wood cutting camps at
 - Katarapko, housed Italian POWs – 5/42 – 9/42 Closed due to flooding. Moved to Moorook West
 - Moorook West – 9/42 - 1/44 - 113 Japanese transferred to Woolenook as all available wood cut
 - Woolenook – only Japanese internees 5/42 – 5/45 then PWC Hostel – Italians from Aug 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. 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.
Visited Woolenook to inspect
wood piles and sawn wood**

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



13 May 1943

The Camp



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

1 22949

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



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

064862

Barbed wire surrounded the camp (February 1943)
Camp was approx. 230m x 110m with longest side adjacent to River Murray

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

Internees tended vegetable gardens



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SLSA 55112

The vegetable gardens were on the right hand side of the track which led from the main entrance 1944

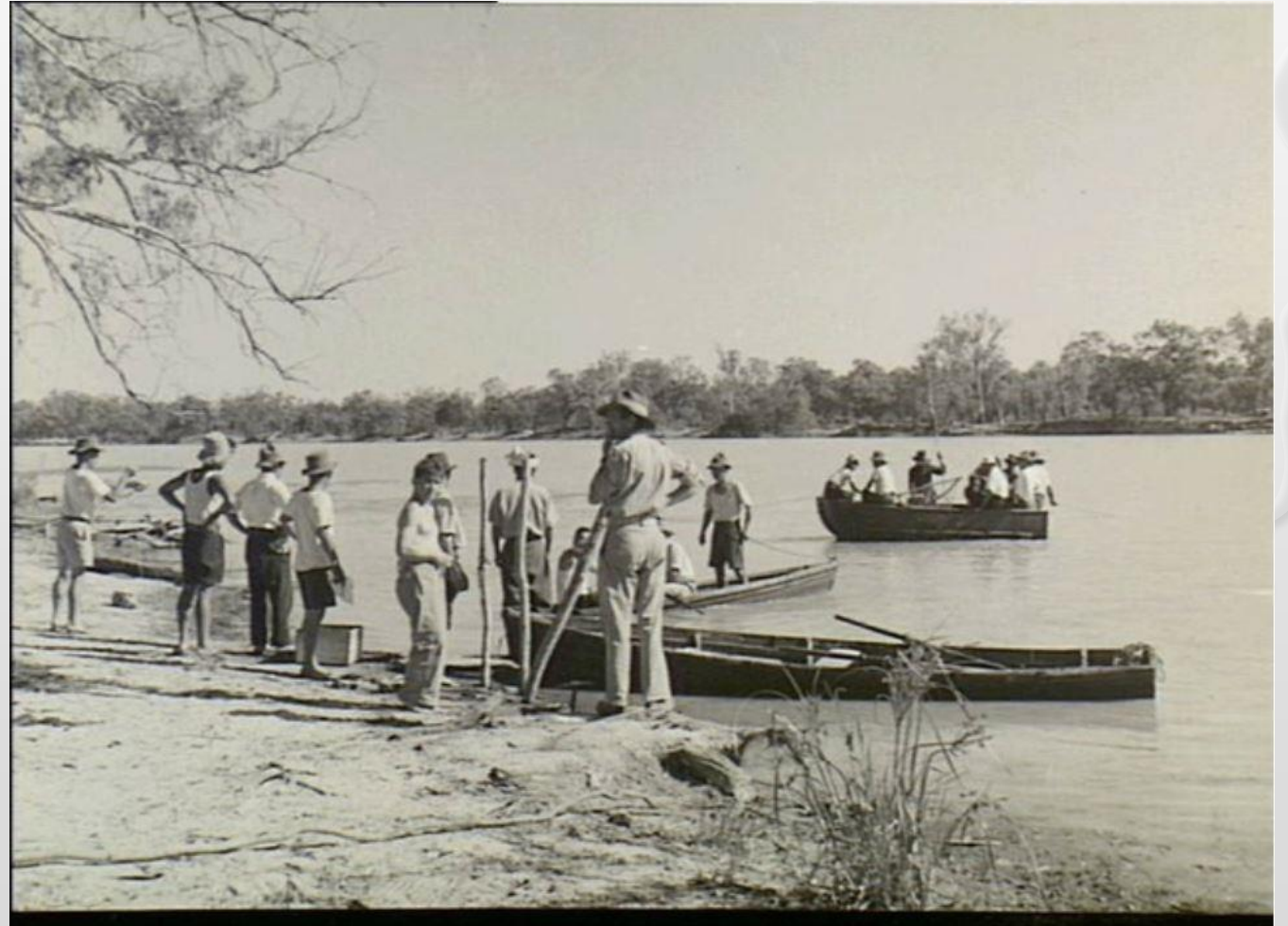
Fishing after work



Australian War Memorial

February 1944

122980



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

122981

Example of War Diary – internees and wood collection March 1943

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

Army Form C. 208
(adapted.)

N. 100M 2/42 Unit Woolenook, 33rd. Grn. 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.
<u>Woolenook I/Camp</u>	<u>March 1st.</u>		<u>Armourers checked all firearms in camp - Charcoal safe completed.</u>	<u>MB</u>
	<u>" 2nd.</u>		<u>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.</u>	<u>MB</u>
	<u>" 3rd.</u>		<u>Internees Kishi and Noguchi returned to compound-would not work.</u>	<u>MB</u>
	<u>" 4th.</u>		<u>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.</u>	<u>MB</u>
	<u>" 6th.</u>		<u>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.</u>	<u>MB</u>

War Diary – RIT visits and wood supplies – May 1943

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.				Army Form C. 2118. (adapted.)
(Erase heading not required.)				
Unit <u>33rd. Garrison Bn.</u>		Date and Time.—From <u>May 1st 1943.</u> To <u>May 8th 1943.</u>		
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 weed and internee movement. Beach cricket team beat Camp team 200/405	MB
	3rd.		S.S. ULONGA commenced loading first weed since March	MB
	4th.		Mr. Katekar, 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 weed cut and discussed installation of saw bench and cartage of cut weed by boat Dental officer arrived.	MB
	7th.		S.S. Ulonga left with barge "Arouce" towing approx. 400 tons weed. 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 Bridg. Capt

Unrest at the camp – July 1944

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

Army Form C, 2116-
(adapted.)

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.
Wooleneok Int Camp	1st July		Supplied Canteen goods to 11 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 Stoves 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



AWM 122955

Kerosene Powered Saw

1944



SLSA B 55119

Wood saw bench

1944



SLSA B 55102

Wood saw bench with camp in background

1944

Wood stacked near river



AWM 122975

400 ton stack of firewood cut to five foot lengths

Carting wood to PS *Ulonga*



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February 1944

Loading wood on to the Ulonga



B55121 Reproduction rights: State Library of South Australia

February 1944

Loading wood (2)



B55121 Reproduction rights: State Library of South Australia

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.



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).

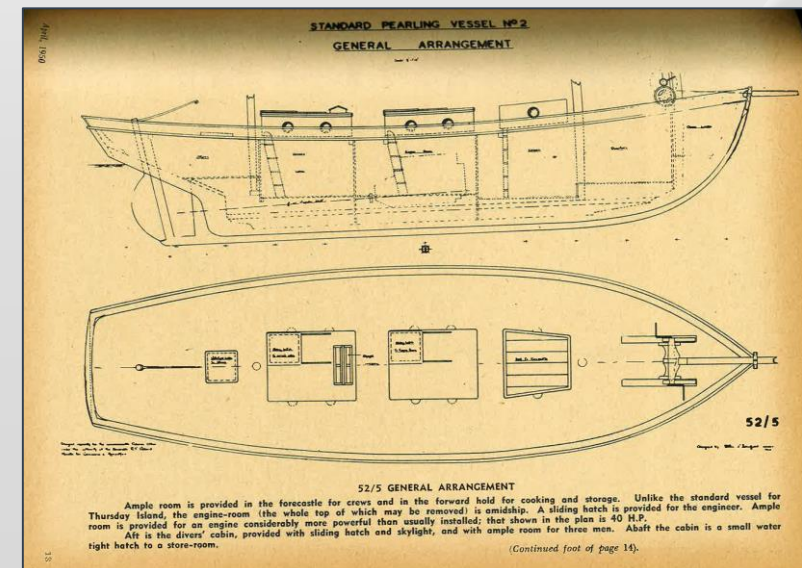
Murray Pioneer 12 November 1942

New Moon



‘New Moon’ – a carved replica of Broome lugger given to Captain Reed of the PS *Ulonga* by a Japanese internee at Woolenook

- Perpetual loan to RIT by his son, Trevor Reed in 2013
- Sails have been repaired in the 1950s.
- Boat painted and sails repaired in the 1990s



Dismantling the camp



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

123139

243 internees and 25 guards disembarking at Berri, then via truck to Loveday Camp No. 14A (26/5/45)

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 (C793); 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

Standard 100