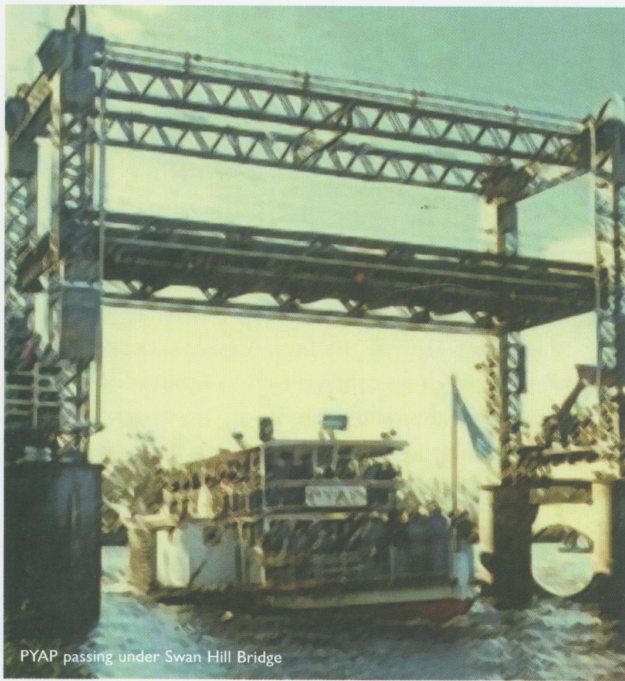




Bridging the Murray River Albury to Swan Hill regions

Heritage Drives

SELF-GUIDED TOURS



PYAP passing under Swan Hill Bridge

Self-guided tour

The Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW (RTA), Engineers Australia and the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) have developed this self-guided heritage tour. It supports the National Trust Heritage Festival for 2004 with the theme "Foundations of tomorrow in The Year of the Built Environment".

The tour features the history of the "Bridging of the Murray River" indicating pioneering efforts of the early explorers and settlers, and visits key historic river crossings between the Albury and Swan Hill Regions. On Saturday 1 May 2004 Engineers Australia plaqued the Swan Hill Bridge as an Historic Engineering Marker.

Roads and bridges noted in this guide are used for traffic. You should only view them from safe locations.



For further enquiries:



02 8837 0151
8.30am - 4.30pm Mon-Fri



www.rta.nsw.gov.au

Roads and Traffic Authority

April 04
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In 1842, Hamilton Hume purchased a property north of Yarrawonga for the widowed wife of his brother John. Elizabeth named her homestead **Byramine (11)** and the elm trees she planted are now the oldest in Victoria. In 1962, it was classified by the National Trust. Today the district is known as Burramine.

In 1838, Charles Sturt was one of the first to explore the area of **Barooga (12)**, and in 1847 George Hillas took up the Barooga run. An adjacent property acquired by William Hay in 1863 was later subdivided, leading to the development of the township. Across the river is the township of **Cobram (13)**. Built in 1902, the present timber truss bridge with a metal lift span will be replaced by a concrete one, while it is proposed to retain part of the old bridge.

In the 1840s, Benjamin Boyd, a whaling entrepreneur of Twofold Bay, opened the first run in the area of **Tocumwal (14)**, while land owned by Edward Hillson in 1860 was the actual site of the township. A village was recognised in 1872, the same year a punt was established. A bridge replaced the punt in 1895. The railway arrived in 1908 and was connected to the NSW system in 1914. This old bridge was replaced in 1987 by a prestressed concrete road bridge.

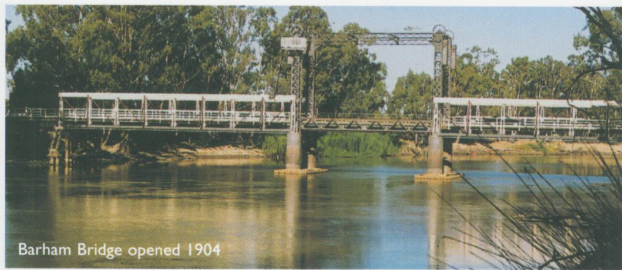
As river transport grew so did the demand for the red gum of the **Barmah (15)** district. Because of its durable nature, it was used for everything including wharfs, railway sleepers and building materials. It also fired the paddle steamers. Today Barmah is of international significance and boasts the largest single stand of river gum remaining on earth. Some of the trees are over 300 years old and over 40m high. A punt was used until 1966, when it was replaced by a prestressed concrete bridge.

The twin towns of **Moama (16)** and **Echuca (17)** were once the paddle steamer capitals of Australia. Today they boast the world's largest fleet of paddle steamers still operating. As old boats are given a new lease of life their manifests are now filled with passengers' names.

The first settler in the area was James Maiden who settled on land he called Moama and established a punt across the Murray, which was in use when the first paddle steamer Mary Ann arrived in 1853. Maiden's punt was put out of business by 1856, when Henry Hopwood established a punt and pontoon bridge from the southern side of the river. Following a land sale in 1855, the area became Echuca. In 1864, when the rail link was established with Melbourne, Echuca grew rapidly as the closest point on the Murray to Melbourne.

By 1878, a road rail bridge was the first physical link between Victoria and the Riverina in NSW, allowing Victorian trains to reach Deniliquin and Balranald. It was built with the three main spans set to a high level alleviating the need for a lift span. This bridge is currently the oldest on the Murray River. Today the bridge is used for road traffic as VicRail has built a separate rail bridge alongside the existing structure.

The Port of Echuca was declared an historic precinct in 1975 and was used for the TV series 'All The Rivers Run'. Across the river in Moama on a visit to the Adventure Playpark in Perrecotta St, one can see the history of the town carved into a large red river gum. Moama is also the starting point for the Cobb Highway so named in 1947 because it follows the mail line of 1882 to Wilcannia in NSW where the Cobb & Co run terminated.



In 1843, Edward Green acquired the lease of an unoccupied NSW land grant and named his station Barham after his wife's maiden name. The bridge built in 1904, between the towns of **Barham (18)** and **Koondrook (19)**, is one of the older lift span bridges on the Murray. Until it was motorised in 1997, it was operated by a system of weights worked by two men turning wheels.

In 1850, Robert Beauchamp established the Gonn crossing below Barham and soon a punt was provided. A rail-link from Kerang was established upstream from the Gonn punt and a bridge over the Murray, now known as the Gonn Crossing Bridge, was completed in 1926. Designed in Victoria it carried both rail and road traffic until 1961, when the railway was closed. Because the bridge was a long way from the original Gonn Crossing, a new town called **Murrabit (20)** was established near the bridge which is still used today. It is a steel girder bridge, two lanes wide, and unique due to the unusual design and lift span.



A cairn marks the spot where Major Mitchell camped in 1836 and named the area **Swan Hill (21)** because of the noisy birds. The drays of Major Mitchell's party sank deep into the ground in places as he travelled along the Murray, leaving marks that became known as the Major's Line. In Swan Hill, Burke and Wills are remembered with an obelisk underneath one of the biggest Moreton Bay Fig Trees in Australia, planted at the time of their visit in 1860.

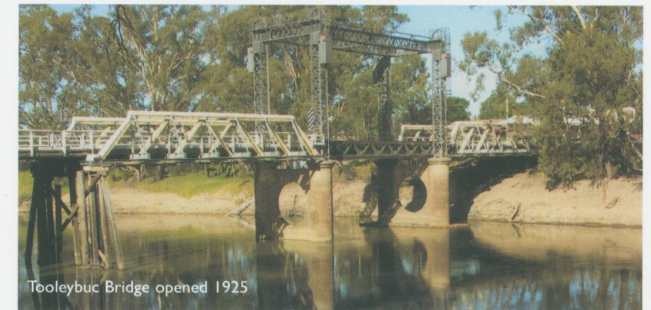
The arrival of the paddle steamers Lady Augusta and the Mary Ann in 1853 began a trade that made Swan Hill Australia's second largest inland river port. Murray Downs Homestead was built at this time and had the largest river frontage on the NSW side, while the Beveridge brothers established 'Tyntynder', on the Victorian side.

When Swan Hill's punt went into operation in 1846, it was the only way of crossing the river for 160km in either direction. A wharf was built and remained in use until the 1920s. The railway arrived in 1889 and the first timber truss and steel lift span bridge designed by Percy Allan was built in 1896. Some days before the bridge opening Hermon Moser drove the first vehicle across loaded with bales of wool. The bridge keeper lived in a small cottage on the NSW side, and three long blasts of a riverboat whistle signalled the bridge span to be lifted.

Swan Hill became a municipality in 1871, a borough in 1939 and a rural city in 1965. The Pioneer Settlement Museum, opened in 1966, carries visitors back in time when viewing the paddle steamer Gem, or inspecting machinery and relocated heritage buildings. They can see the all but lost crafts still being practiced. Today interpretive signs along the river walk also show the early history of the area. A short distance from Swan Hill is the **Flying Boat Museum (22)** on the shore of Lake Boga, named by Major Mitchell in 1836 after the Bogan Aboriginal people.

The **Speewa punt (23)** is one of very few still working the Murray. The first punt, installed by J F Jager in 1914, was replaced in 1926 by a Public Works Department punt. This was replaced in 1979 by the Department of Main Roads and is still in use today. It has been lengthened to accommodate three vehicles.

At **Nyah (24)** a 104m long and 5.5m wide steel girder lift bridge was constructed in 1941, which joined the township of Koraleigh with the larger town of Nyah.



A vehicular punt was in use by 1847 at **Tooleybuc (25)**, with a riverside hotel, the Tooley Buc, on the NSW side. Tooleybuc was on the Puon Buon run, part of the 1847 empire of Ben Boyd. The Railway reached Tooleybuc in 1889, but a road bridge across the Murray was not constructed until 1925. It was the last Percy Allan timber truss and lift span bridge constructed.

Text and images: Leonie Knapman on behalf of the RAHS.

Hume Weir photograph by courtesy Hume Shire Council.

Cover photograph by courtesy Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement Museum.

Bridging the Murray River

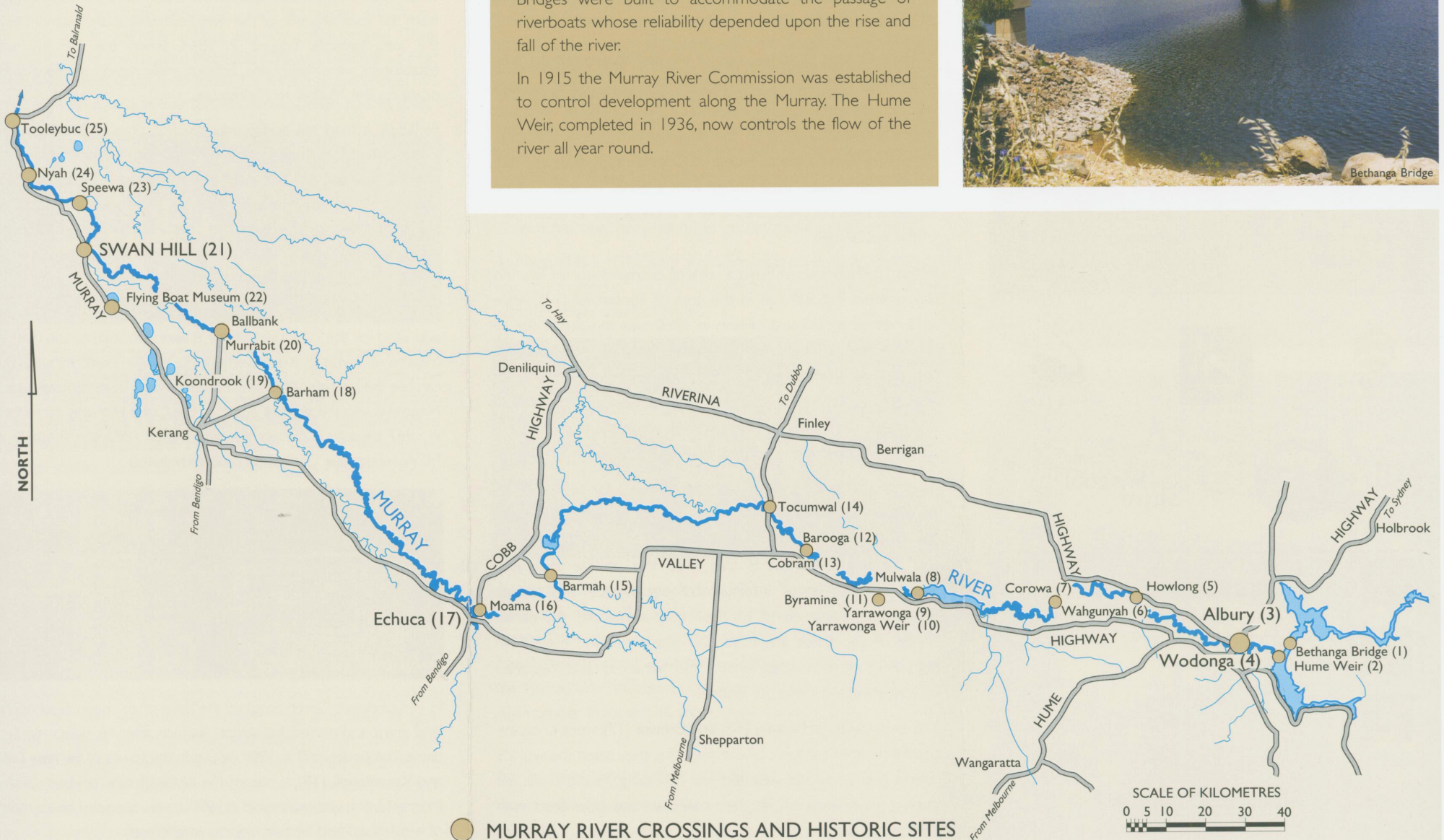
Map showing Murray River crossings between the Albury and Swan Hill Regions.

Bridges were built to accommodate the passage of riverboats whose reliability depended upon the rise and fall of the river.

In 1915 the Murray River Commission was established to control development along the Murray. The Hume Weir, completed in 1936, now controls the flow of the river all year round.

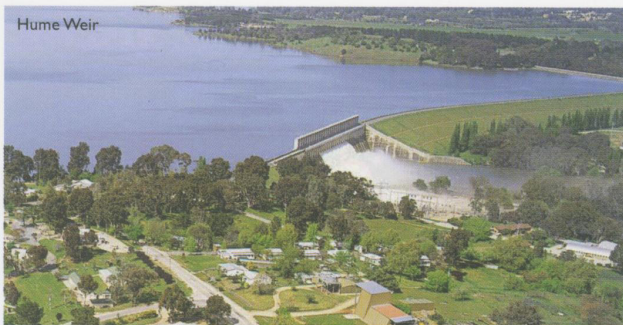


Bethanga Bridge



● MURRAY RIVER CROSSINGS AND HISTORIC SITES

SCALE OF KILOMETRES
0 5 10 20 30 40



→ Historical overview

Each year the melted snow of the Snowy Mountains travels more than 2700km along the Murray River passing through NSW, Victoria and then on to Encounter Bay in South Australia. For thousands of years the river supplied Aboriginal people with all their needs. They were part of the river and beside their food and shelter it controlled their traditional way of life. They had mastered the river with their canoes, simple craft made of bark, long before Europeans arrived.

In 1824, the first European explorers to see the upper regions of the now named Murray River were Hamilton Hume and William Hovell. As Hume was the first to see the river, Hovell named it the Hume. Six years later Captain Charles Sturt discovered the lower portion of the river, and named it the Murray after Sir George Murray, the Secretary of State for Colonies.

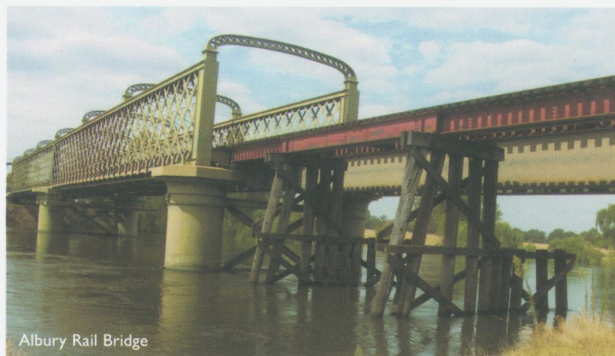
In 1851, Sir Henry Young, the Governor of South Australia, offered a prize for the first vessel to travel up the river. In 1853 two skippers who thought they were the first caught sight of each other near Swan Hill. The *Lady Augusta* pulled into Swan Hill while the *Mary Ann* continued on to Echuca and had the honour of being the first riverboat to travel up the river. This event heralded the paddle steamer trade, with over 200 riverboats trading on the river by the 1860s.

Designing and building the numerous bridges across the Murray were challenges because these designs had to accommodate the passage of the riverboats in conditions of changing water levels. A number of these bridges are still in use today.

This guided tour visits and describes the evolution of the many river crossings from the upper reaches of the Murray River at Lake Hume above Albury to Tooleybuc Bridge below Swan Hill. This bridge was the last of the wooden truss and steel lift bridges designed and built by the famous NSW bridge builder Percy Allan.

→ Your tour begins at Bethanga Bridge

Completed in 1930 the nine span steel truss **Bethanga Bridge (1)** was built to cross the expanding waters of Lake Hume. Not far from the Bethanga Bridge near the **Hume Weir (2)** is a monument that commemorates the site where the party of Hume and Hovell took four days to cross the river they had named the Hume a few days earlier.



When Hume and Hovell arrived on the banks of the river in the area now known as **Albury (3)** they each carved their names on trees, one of which still stands today in Hovell Tree Park. Soon settlers began arriving and by 1844 a log punt was introduced, with paddle steamers arriving by 1855, followed by a toll bridge in 1861. Once the Murray River was bridged it connected the Great Southern Road from Sydney to Melbourne. In 1928, the road was re-named the Hume Highway in honour of Hamilton Hume. The old toll bridge was replaced in 1896 and again in 1961.

Albury was first surveyed as Bungambrawatha. When gazetted in 1839, it became Albury and was declared a city in 1946. **Wodonga (4)** was gazetted as Belvoir in 1852, changed to Wodonga in 1874 and declared the world's first 'rural city' in 1973.

The railway arrived from Melbourne in 1873 and from Sydney in 1881, but it was 1883 before a wooden railway bridge crossed the Murray. As the tracks in each state were different gauges, the two states could not agree on a transfer point, so they had an iron lattice bridge sent from England, which carried both gauges, after which freight and passengers changed at Albury. It was 1962 before the first train ran straight through from Sydney to Melbourne.

Downstream from Albury is **Howlong (5)** where, in 1838, the first overland mail delivery service saw John Bourke travel from Melbourne, swim across the river and exchange mail with the Yass postman, who then continued on to Sydney. The first bridge built at Howlong in 1887 was of timber construction. This was replaced by a composite steel and timber truss bridge in 1905, and again in 2002 with a prestressed concrete bridge.

In 1838 John Foord took up a run on the Victorian side of the river, now the township of **Wahgunyah (6)** while land he acquired from the NSW Government became North Wahgunyah in 1859, later renamed **Corowa (7)**. A private licensed toll bridge was erected across the Murray in 1862 and the railway arrived from Culcairn in 1892. Corowa's major claim to fame is its reputation as the 'birthplace of federation' as it played an important role in bringing about the federation of the Australian colonies when a meeting was held there in 1893.



James McRae of **Mulwala (8)** was the first to run a punt across the river in the 1850s and on the southern side **Yarrowonga (9)** was founded in 1868. It was 1893 before a wooden bridge crossed the river, with a lifting section to allow passage for riverboats. It was replaced in 1924 with a prestressed concrete and steel bridge. The railway arrived at Yarrowonga in 1886, but a railway bridge was not built until 1932. It was replaced in 1989 by a concrete and steel structure. In 1939, the **Yarrowonga Weir (10)** was completed and is the largest of the 14 built across the Murray. Yarrowonga and the Hume Weir are the only weirs without locks.