

COROWA SHIRE - HISTORY

Corowa Shire

The Corowa Shire, formed under the Local Government Act, was gazetted on the 10th of June 1955, with the amalgamation of the NSW Municipality of Corowa and the Shire of Coreen.

The Municipality of Corowa was and gazetted on 19 June 1903 and the Shire of Coreen was gazetted on the 16th of May 1906. The Shire of Coreen included the township of Mulwala and the surrounding districts of Balldale, Buraja, Coreen, Daysdale, Lowesdale, Hopefield, Rennie, Savernake and Warragoon.

The region is steeped in history, playing a significant role in the 1901 Federation of Australia, boasting a historical 'man-made' lake vital to the irrigation of the Riverina Murray area and seeing the attempt of several overland services.

Federation

The township of Corowa is often referred to as the 'Birthplace of Federation'. It was at a conference in Corowa in 1893 held by the Federation Leagues of Australia, that a resolution was passed paving the way for the eventual formation of the Australian Commonwealth.

Until the Corowa Federations League Conference the Federation Movement had been largely a political movement. However, following the passing in of the unanimous "peoples" motion to the Corowa Court House, the Federation Movement became a popular people's movement. This held ultimate significance and saw the beginning of the push for Federation by the people.

Finally after a lengthy process lasting 50 years, Queen Victoria proclaimed the Commonwealth of Australia and announced Federation was to be inaugurated on 1st of January, 1901.

Lake Mulwala

People power also played a role in the development of Lake Mulwala in 1939. The River Murray Commission sought to create the Lake at Mulwala as irrigation water storage. The Commission were planning to fill the area without removing a considerable Red Gum forest, which as a result would become submerged.

The locals however had another vision for the area as more than just irrigation storage; they saw the opportunity to create a picturesque lake. As a result of considerable community spirit, local volunteers worked long hours felling the Red Gums by axe. The tree felling was complete in June 1939 and the Lake was first filled on the 12th of August of the same year. The local communities use the Lake for water sport and recreational activities.

Howlong

Towns throughout the Shire have their own unique histories. Howlong was the origin of the first overland cattle drive to South Australia, as well as claiming the first overland mail service between Port Phillip (Melbourne) and Sydney.

A 100-mile horse race was also run from Howlong. It is considered the longest horse race in the world.

Historic Bridges

In addition, the township of Corowa is home to the John Foord Bridge. This bridge is a significant example of late-Colonial bridge design. The Bridge is the only one of its type of the 17 road bridges over the Riverina Murray between Albury and the South Australian border.

The bridge is one of 18 surviving British lattice truss type bridges in New South Wales, all designed by John A McDonald. They were the dominant group of large span bridges built between 1873-1983 and are among the most significant bridges of the Colonial period.

When completed in late 1892, the 3-span bridge was one of only four bridges across the River Murray and had a prosperous impact on inter-Colonial commerce and communications. It is the only bridge on the River Murray named after a pioneer settler – Mr. John Foord.

John Foord was a pioneering cattle overlander throughout the region. He was often thought of as an entrepreneur, making the most of the river trade and the gold rush at nearby Rutherglen. John Foord was a storekeeper, flour miller and transport operator owning two paddle steamers and a punt.

Additionally, he structured the townships of Wahgunyah on the Victorian side of the river and North Wahgunyah (now Corowa) on the New South Wales side of the river. John Foord was a prosperous and influential man, a worthy name sake for the 1892 bridge.

In more recent times a new river crossing has been built on the opposite side of Corowa. Federation Bridge was officially opened on 2nd April 2005.

Visit the Corowa Shire to explore the rich local history and natural heritage of our towns, villages and hamlets.

For information please contact:

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Corowa Federation Museum

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Mulwala Historical Society & Pioneer Museum

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