

Barmah National Park Historical Timeline **Activities**

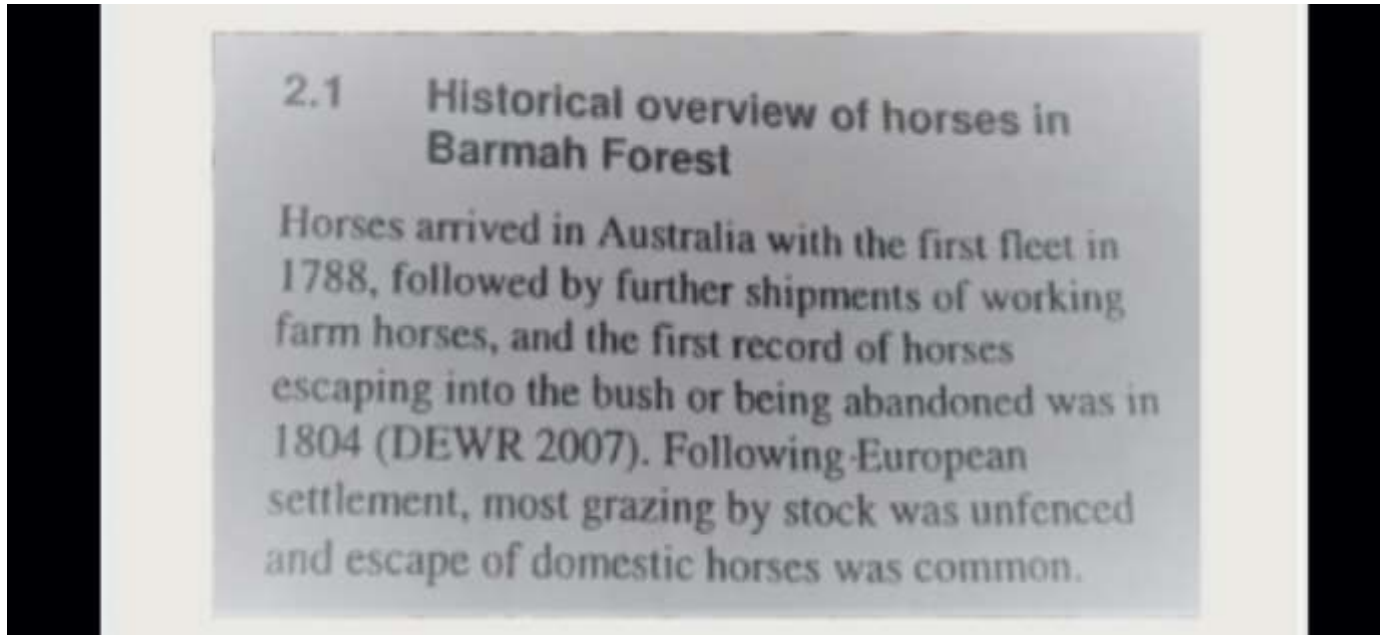
20,000 years ago, a geological event lifted a large land area, blocking the Murray River. A huge lake formed & the river changed direction, flowing north & south around uplifted land. The resulting narrow river channel (known as the Barmah choke), ensured regular flooding of surrounding plains, creating a unique set of wetland habitats. (1)



Wild horses in the Barmah parks.vic.gov.au

The earliest mobs most probably originated as domestic horses that escaped into the forest from overlanders and colonists. Wild horse populations later may have existed due to the agistment of horses by soldiers going off to wars – but these horses were most probably not left to roam wild after the war, but collected due to their ongoing value..... it is understood that some surplus horses were released into the Barmah Forest during the post WW2 period when technological advances such as motorisation rendered them less valuable as beasts of burden - when considering the cost of capturing and homing them (some of these horses may also relate to the current population). While it was also common practice to put working horses on agistment in the forest after the harvest in summer, these horses were generally geldings and mares, and while they were valuable, were then brought back to the farm. It is highly doubtful whether there can ever be absolute certainty over the origins of every wild horse in the area. (42)

1804



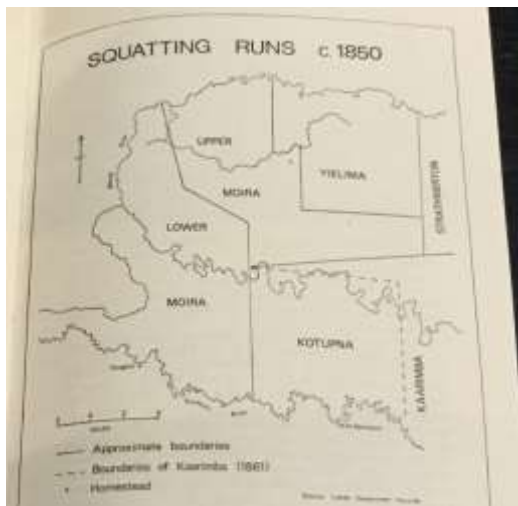
1830s Area first explored and settled soon after. Europeans and Aboriginals worked *sheep, cattle, horses and timber* from this area. Following European settlement of the area, land was extensively cleared to allow for *farming and agriculture*. (2)

1840's **Horses** were amongst animals imported by the colonists. The first **horses** to pass through the area were most likely those which belonged to the pastoralists in the 1840s, such as Edward Curr who came to the Barmah Forest looking for summer grasses for their sheep (Fahey 1988:11). Domestic **horses** were an important component of colonization, and early populations of '**wild horses**' were a by-product of that colonization. (42)

1850 Sheep and cattle grazed around the Barmah region from mid to late 1800s. Periodic burning previously undertaken by Indigenous Australians was also halted. Logging of River Red Gum forests was an important part of late 1800s and early 1900s. ^(3 & 4)

Mid 1800's

The park contained a population of [wild horses](#), which mainly originated from free roaming **horses** that either escaped or were purposely released for breeding stock in the mid 1800s by local early settlers. (42)



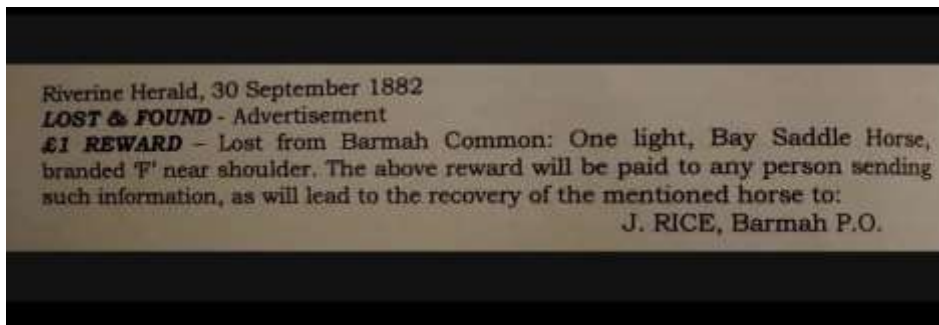
A History of Nathalia Shire-source Lands Dept Records

- 1860** Punts began serviced this crossing 1860s and 1966. (5)
- 1863/4** Railway line from Bendigo to Echuca built, and consumed large volumes of sleepers cut from the red gums in the Barmah forest. The punt joins the tracks from Echuca to Yarrawonga where they crossed the Murray River. (6)
- 1866** Barmah surveyed and laid out in 1866, on rising ground near the punt. The resulting Barmah village became a river outlet for wool from surrounding pastoral stations. (7)

Hi Renee, I own a farm at Picola North with its Northern boundary the Barmah Forest and I've signed the petition here because I am a 3rd generation landholder there, my Great Grandparents having arrived in the district in 1870 from Ballarat, their parents coming from England and Scotland. I grew up with horses as did my parents. My grandparents at Picola North farmed with horse teams which summered in the forest with the other local farmers' teams after harvest was over. We know from Mr Ted Martin's accounts that when he and his father arrived earlier than that and selected what eventually our family farmed, that there were large mobs of up to 200 horses roaming the area. No doubt our farm horses were intermingling with the wild mobs as well as the other farm teams from the district. We brought a wild filly home in the boat one year after finding her stranded and unwell on a ridge and bottle raised her and she lived until she died of old age at about 33. I'm telling you all this because I feel a strong sense of connection with the forest and have a high regard for those horses existing in it and I deplore the gov't intention of slaughtering them. Suzanne Killmister

1870

- 1870** Harry Broom had land in New South Wales across the river from Lower Moira, and during the 1870 flood he rode over to the Kotupna station either to skin drowned sheep or to find **FIZZERS** (Wild horses). (51)
 Scott Hohn L. Davidson and George O'Malley from Collingwood followed directions from a shepherd that pointed them in the direction of the Broken Creek. They came across a stretch of creek with fresh water they hobbled their horses and turned them into the nearby bush drafting yard belonging to Upper Moira and slept under the stars. (52)
- 1871** Barmah township was small and consisted of a hotel, sale yard and a few houses. (7)
- 1871** A school was opened at Barmah. (7)
- 1876** A Barmah Post Office opened 16 Sept 1876. (8)
- 1877** St Michael's Catholic Church built [at approx. 100 people in the vicinity. (9)
- 1878** Details of Ned Kelly's crimes and murders at Stringybark Creek soon circulated. According to the Riverine Herald at Echuca that before the robbery at Jerilderie the Kelly's forded the river Murray a little above Ulupna and they had crossed on Enoch Trickeys's Barmah Punt. (53)
- 1876/80** Barmah East Wine Palace (now Moira Lakes Wine Palace) built, original home of Joseph Waldo Rice, who set up Murray River Fishing Company at Moira Lakes. (9)
- 1877** Barmah was, for a time, a prosperous centre, whose chief industry was sawmilling. There were two major sawmills; that of Robert Barbour on the N.S.W. side of the river, and James MacIntosh's and E. Whitely's on the Victorian side. Much of the timber was exported to India for piles and railway sleepers until a government prohibition of the export of redgum, forcing closure of the Barmah mills (when?) (10)
 Many men with bullocks came to haul the logs over the boggy ground or with sturdy horses when drought made fodder scarce. (50)
- 1878** 'Barmah Common' gazetted (17,000 acres including lower half of Kinnear's Island). (11)
- 1878** Echuca Shire council built the first yards, as first managers of the Common. (11)
- 1879** Barmah Common was reserved for stock to be grazed, particularly in drought years. (11)
- 1882** Management transferred from Echuca Shire council to a committee of local farmers who employed a herdsman and arranged quarterly musters. (11)



1882

1885 In July, over 220 cultivators used the Common. As a group they grazed 2,436 cattle.

1886 A town surveyed on rising ground near the punt and became **Barmah** village which became a river outlet for wool from surrounding pastoral stations & the shipping point for railway sleepers cut for domestic use and for export to India & New Zealand. (7)

1891 Barmah's population census recorded as 73. (7)

1892 Perrin organised thinning of 15,000 acres. Under the Forest Commission's trained foresters (i.e. Tingate) *silvicultural* became an integral feature of forest management. 121 acres were ring-barked in the Barmah muster paddock, to improve grass. (11&12)

1894 A Barmah Village Settlement brought more people to the area. Timber-cutting rose and fell with demand, and was milled locally or at Echuca.

1895 Under Forest Department control and referred to by many as 'State Common', a local farmers committee appointed a herdsman and maintained yards and fences. (11)

1898 The use of the forest was of great benefit to the farmers. Young cattle could be turned out for three to four years, and the agistment for **horses** was particularly valuable as the brood mares, foals and young unbroken **horses** could be left to run over the summer months, developing their stamina and surefooted ability to go anywhere in rough, wet country. **Draught horses** were also given a spell in the forest during slack periods, saving the work and feed on the farms. Some of the adjoining landowners even worked their **horses** off the 'common' and the lad whose job it was to find them early in the morning developed great skill in tracking the **horses** in this enormous paddock, an asset for any bushman. Mustering of the longhorn cattle was done was done quarterly and later in 1897 half yearly. This system continued into the new century with Arthur Campbell as herdsman on the Yielma State Forest and Hugh Moor and Peter Ferrari after 1907 on the Barmah Farmers Common. It came to an end when the Forest Commission was constituted in 1911. (54)

Late 1800s/early 1900s, Barmah Forest visitors marvelled at the extensive 'emerald green' treeless grassy plains, dominated by highly productive semi-aquatic Moira Grass that provides important habitat for fauna, including colonially-nesting waterbirds. (13)

1902 Barmah Township Post Office opened on 2 May (8)

1907 Barmah PO opened 16 Sept 1876 renamed Barmah East. (8)

1911 Barmah's census populations recorded as 328 [highest recorded?] (7)

- 1911** Forest Dept. employed its own herdsman. Two annual musters held. During musters up to the 1940s cattle were drafted in succession at Mannion's Yards, the Cherry Tree Yards and finally at the Barmah Yards. (11)



Historical Stockyards Barmah Ric Raftas

1914+ The Mannion's recalled:

*".....The **brumbies** started from people agisting **horses** on the forest. When the war started a lot of fellas who had **horses**, and even fellas who only had a hack or something, went away in the army in World War II, they'd put their **horse** out in the forest when they went away.*

*They had a similar thing happen in WWI, but then they got control of them again and they didn't breed up. Then in WWII, when it was drought years, the farmers that had **horses** out there didn't want them home and feed got pretty scarce out there. A couple of enterprising fellas put a couple of **stallions** out there to try and improve the type of breed. So that was the big numbers build up during that wartime and when the war was over and fellas come home again, they didn't want their **horses**. [...] They wanted motorized vehicles and so they didn't really care if they never got their **horses** back ... So, the **horses** out in the forest eventually became a mixture of ponies, trotters and Clydesdales. "(42)*

The people used to come catching them, well the ones that weren't in very good condition were the ones they caught so that got rid of them.

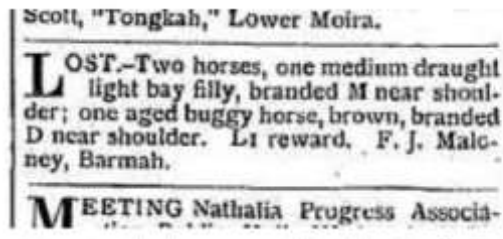
- 1916** As local Numurkah councillor W.T. Maloney reminisced of the colonial days in 1916:

*Then we had Nature. The bush in its primal state, where **wild horses**, kangaroos, emus and wild game abounded. Now the bush has gone, and with it the **wild horse** and the kangaroo, and in their place cultivated fields and substantial homesteads and roads and bridges and all the etcetera's of civilized life. (Numurkah Leader, 1 September 1916)*

- 1910s** Trade picked up later, with the expansion of the railway network and a new sawmill was opened by R. Evans, who shipped the sawn timber to Echuca on his steamboat in 1916, the *Edwards*. (14)

1914 Was the driest record. Crops failed, grass withered and water was scarce everywhere. Farming suffered.... The stock on the forest commons was a pitiful sight. The carcasses of young **horses** were surrounded by trenches gouged by weak legs struggling to stand. (55)

1918 A **horse** lost in the Barmah Forest – Nathalia Herald Dec 7th 1918



1920s Barmah became a destination for campers and fishermen. Its popularity has grown, particularly for canoeing during flood times. (7)

1920s Dams construction upstream from Barmah Forest had a vast impact on water flowing in the Murray River and instances of flooding. (15 & 16)

1924/4 Longer-term significant ecological changes in the Moira Grass plains first became apparent leading to substantial extinction of this interesting ecosystem (Chesterfield 1984).

1920s Sleeper hewing was Barmah Forest's 2nd major revenue source (Charles Fahey history)



Sleeper Cutter Barmah Forest Trove National Library

1930 Forest Commission Barmah map in 1930 estimated 13.5% (4,050 ha) of the forest as open Moira Grass plain. Over the next 50 years of altered flood regimes show Giant Rush & River Red Gums invading to reduce Moira grasslands to **5.5%** (Chesterfield 1986)

1936 The Hume Dam was operational from 1936, (17)

1939 Tom Galloway herded cattle in Barmah from 1939 to 1970 (18)

1939 The Yarrawonga Weir became operational in 1939.

1930s Extent of Barmah Forest Moira Grass has declined since the Murray River's natural flood regimes were regulated in the late 1930s. Severe drought occurred in the region between 2001-2009, followed by large-scale flooding from late 2010 to early 2012. Despite drought-breaking floods, Moira Grass did not recover as expected. (Mapping ref) (19)

1939 – 1945+

Notable local historian Tim Mannion and former forester Barry Dexter have argued that the current population of **wild horses** may be traced back to the release of surplus **horses** into the Barmah Forest in the Post-war (WW2) period when technological advances such as motorisation rendered them less valuable as beasts of burden.

Earlier populations may have existed due to the agistment or purposeful release of **horses** by soldiers going off to wars (World War I and World War II), but Mannion argues that these **horses** were not left to roam wild after either war but were collected due to their ongoing value. Rather, it was their replacement by motorized vehicles after World War II that made it less profitable to recapture them. Furthermore, as Howie Marshall (a long-term resident of Nathalia) related, while it was common practice to put **working horses** on agistment in the forest after the harvest in summer, these **horses** were generally geldings and mares, and while they were valuable, were then brought back to the farm. (42)

1940's Gerry Moor of Barmah also remembered catching **Brumbies** as a child (Teese & Wright 2008:390):

“Father would send Ray and I out looking for cattle and we’d strike a mob of brumbies and bring home brumbies. Quite often we got into strife for that. We’d catch them when they were about 12 months old and bring them home and make hacks of them. But it got to the stage where you couldn’t catch them, it was impossible to yard them. [...] I think we caught about 20 in three months. “



Photo Shepparton News

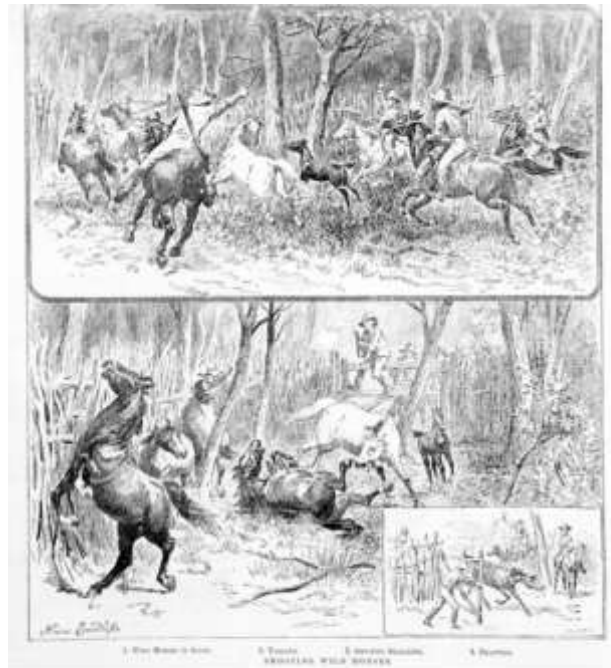


Figure 4 Capturing and shooting wild horses in colonial Victoria published in *Australian Illustrated News* 9 November 1889. Source: State Library of Victoria.

- 1947 Barmah's population census recorded as 183 [Drop of 145 from 1911] (7)
- 1949 Last great roundup of wild horses when approximately 70 wild horses remained in the Barmah Forest (42)

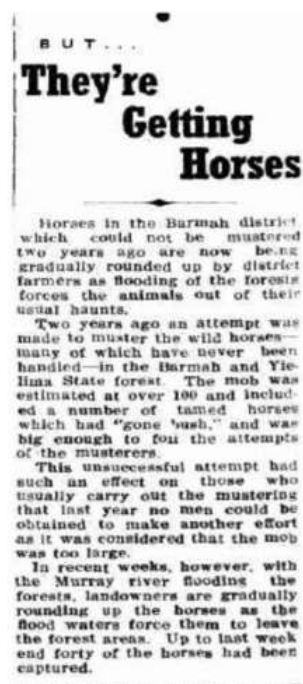


Figure 3: *Riverine Herald*, 2 December 1949.

1950 Yielima & Yalca Shire grazing areas closed in 1950 & Mannion's yards fell to disuse. (11)

1950s Showed that weirs built on the Murray River for irrigation were decreasing the flood frequency in the Barmah forest. The change of rhythm decreased the germination of red gum seedlings and interfered with the breeding of water birds. Effluent from human and farm activity also adversely affected water quality. (7)

1950s Tom Galloway built the herdsman's hut adjacent to the Barmah Muster Yards in the early 1950s, and at times brand trees for saw loggers and sleeper cutters (5)

1951 Barmah East PO closed. (8)

**1951
to**

1952 The Commission restricted the number of cattle for agistment and completely closed Barmah Island and the Yielma end of the forest because they considered cattle were damaging the young saplings. In 1955 The Victorian Forest Commission officials visited the forest at the invitation of the Stockman's Association to review the situation, and again in 1960 members of the Stockman's Association managed to persuade the Minister for Forests, Mr Frazer, to visit the forest in an attempt to gain extra grazing rights. The spokesman for the stockowners, Ian Killmaster, was able to show the Minister damaged sapling **areas where cattle had not grazed**, and also the good growth of trees at G.W. Newman's farm at the Yielma pre-emptive right where cattle had continuously grazed. Barrie Dexter, of the Forest Commission, began research on the regeneration of the river gums and concluded that any damage done to young trees by browsing cattle ,or by trampling in those areas used as a 'dust bath' **was outweighed by the benefits derived from the grass and weeds they ate which otherwise would have competed with the trees for moisture.** (B.D. Dexter, *Flooding and Regeneration of the River Red Gum, 1967, Forests Commission of Vic.pg. 31*).

In 1965 Barmah Island was reopened for grazing and four miles of high tensile barb wire was erected.... In one way **the cattle have been a benefit to the forest.** One forest officer was able to **put out five spot fires** which began one blustery February day in 1977 at Top Island from material blown from a fire on the NSW river bank, **thanks to the cattle which had eaten down the grass.** (56)

1952+ Stock released by a local trotting **horse** breeder Horace Adams after 1952 bolstered their population after the last great roundup of 1949, when approximately 70 wild horses remained in the Barmah Forest. (42)

1954 Rod Power (2007) recalled that by 1954, in Barmah Forest:

*.....” there were only about five rogue **horses** amongst them which made them very hard to muster. He (Horace Adams) tried for a fortnight to muster them and when he could not, he wiped his hands of them.” (42)*

Noel and Lyn Eyre of Bearii got just one of their trotting **horses** from the “...**Brumby** mob out of the forest ... he was called Step Lightly. He was a chestnut **horse** and we got him out of a mare off the bush”. Step Lightly won six or seven races at Echuca, Shepparton and Bendigo (Teese & Wright 2008:296). Another **horse** out of the Barmah Forest to win races was Barmah’s Gift, which was rescued from being dinner for a lion at Melbourne Zoo by a Melbourne **horse** dealer (Riverine Herald 19 April 1954). The Riverine Herald reported at that time that:

*In the noted Barmah muster those **horses** which can be mustered from the Barmah Common are often offered for auction by Mr H. Adams, local breeder. Some are well bred, some are **brumbies** ... Mr Adams recommends buyers to the Barmah muster in a few weeks’ time stating that there are plenty of other good trotters on the Common – if they can be caught for the muster.*

1954 A Melbourne **horse** dealer seeking suitable nourishment for the lions at the Melbourne Zoo bought the **horse** for £3, but another local fancier Mr G. A. Bates, scenting that the bloodlines deserved something better than a lion's lunch, bought the steed back at the original price of £3. He offered it to Nathalia trainer Mr Lloyd Pell for £5, and the latter in accepting aptly named the **horse** Barmah’s Gift. Since then Barmah’s Gift has lost Ms brumby ways and recently won at Mooroopna. His win at Echuca on Saturday was no fluke for he paced a 2.15 mile and beat a big field which included several very good performers. (43)

1954/84 Changes in Moira Grass plains are one of more significant longer-term ecological changes in the forest which first became apparent about 3 decades ago and lead to substantial extinction of this interesting ecosystem (Chesterfield 1984).

1955 Cherry Tree muster yards were abandoned as motor vehicles gave musterers more mobility, and all of the cattle were drafted at the Barmah Yards. (11)

1959 Flood regulators installed. (7)

1960 Gradual reduction in number of cattle grazed from 1960s. (11)

1961 Barmah's census populations recorded as 167 [*Drop of 22 from 1947*]. (7)

- 1965** The second aerial sowing of eucalypt seed took place in the Barmah Forest at Black Swamp in 1965. The aircraft was a Cessna 180 equipped with wing pod seeders (Figs.1 & 2), the same aircraft used on the first trial. The block was sown with 3/4lb. (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* - River Red Gum) seed per acre in early June 1965. Aerial seeding of 150 acres took 27 minutes and cost 45 cents per acre. This price covered the return ferry of the aircraft (250 miles) and an aerial reconnaissance prior to seeding.



- 1966** Punt pulled out of the river and replaced by a bridge. (5)



Barmah Punt photo Tracks, Trails and Coasts near Melbourne.

- 1968** Government paid musterer commenced [1968-1984] & later supervised cattle grazing and timber harvesting until they ceased prior to Barmah National Park. Mature River Red Gums in Barmah can reach 45 metres in height and are up to 500 years old.

1970 Tom Galloway ceased herding cattle in Barmah after starting work in 1939. (5)



Barmah cattle muster. Herdsmen shepherd cattle to the race to be claimed by owners.

The annual Barmah muster was a red-letter occasion. FCV Annual Report 1967-68



Photo vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au Barmah Muster Yards

1970 Reports of wild horses, kangaroos, emus were trapped caused by flooding – 400 bales Of hay ,70 bags of oats were aerial dropped in due to the distress of starving animals. (31)

1970 Land Conservation Council was established by the Land Conservation Act 1970.

1975 Cattle quotas for summer & winter seasons determined by DSE on advice of Barmah Forest Grazing Advisory Committee, est. under National Parks Act 1975. Agistees grazed between 1,000 - 2,000 cattle in summer and 300 -700 cattle in Winter. (20)

1979 The Dartmouth Dam became operational from 1979. (21)

1980s Forest Commission was successful and able to sustain saw mill production in Barmah 1922 through to the 1980s. *Ref: Barmah Forest – A History by Charles Fahey*

1981 From 1920 to 1981, cattle agistment was Barmah Forest's 3rd major revenue. (*Fahey*)

1982 *RAMSAR lists Barmah Forest as a wetland of significance.* (22)



Graphic ABC News Australia

1982 Grazing occurring in Ramsar site by grazing licences issued under Forests Act 1958. (23)

1984 Report on changes in Moira Grass plains as significant longer-term ecological change in the forest and substantial extinction of this ecosystem (Chesterfield 1984).

1984 Government paid musterer stopped working. [1968 to 1984]. (11)

1984 Hydrological changes have reduced fish and waterbird populations and their breeding habitats, particularly species dependent upon flood waters. Decline in numbers and species of birds breeding documented, particularly over last 30 years (Chesterfield et al.1984, Leslie 1988). Much of this is attributed to changed hydrological conditions, as flooding is required to provide suitable nesting conditions & sufficient feed to rear young successfully. Lack of drying phase in low lying wetlands, & consequent change in vegetation, disadvantaged species (grebes, terns, coots, avocets & stilts (Leslie 1998).

1984 **Barmah Cattlemen's Association** formed to look after grazing after Department of Conservation and Lands divested itself of this responsibility. Mustering work was carried out by local farmer volunteers, some of which were descendants of original Common users. The muster became a wider social district event, with increasing participants, families & friends camping at the yards over several days each year. (11)

1984 Non-palatable Giant Rush become more widespread, favoured by the hydrological changes caused by river regulation, has (Chesterfield et al.1984).

1985 Importance of Barmah forest for recreation was reinforced by the opening of Dharuya Centre, jointly run by State government and the local Aboriginal community. (7)

1985 Timber cutting and summer grazing continue.

1985 Land Conservation Council Murray Valley area Final Recommendations published.

1986/8 Changes in Barmah forest vegetation are well documented (i.e.: Chesterfield 1986; Bren & Gibbs 1988; Leitch 1989). The condition of flood plain vegetation is strongly influenced by flood timing, frequency, duration and depth. These parameters have altered since construction of two major storages, Hume Reservoir and the Dartmouth Reservoir, followed by changes in botanical associations of floodplain communities (Chesterfield 1986, Bren and Gibbs 1988). The site quality of red gum provides a good indication of water availability under natural conditions, as many of the mature trees grew before regulation of Murray flows reduced their water supply.

1986 Area mapped 1979-80 by Chesterfield (1986) shows Moira Grass plain had reduced to 5.5% (1,650 ha) of the total area of Barmah Forest, a loss of approximately 2,400 ha.

1986 Chesterfield (1986) estimates that 1,200 ha of the Moira Grass plain has been lost to Red Gum regeneration and the remaining 1,200 ha to Giant Rush encroachment.



Picture Ecos Magazine

1986 Chesterfield (1986) suggested changes in the Barmah area water regime as a result of river regulation on the Murray has allowed *Juncus ingens* to out compete the Moira grass (*Pseudoraphis spinescens*) previously found to a much greater extent.

1987 Barmah State Park Established (42)

- 1988** Moira grassland plains covered only 5.2% in 1988 (Bren and Gibbs 1988). Prior to 1934, Moira grassland plains covered 13.5% of forest area (Chesterfield et al. 1984). Some former Moira Grass plains have developed into rush lands because of prolonged flooding resulting from higher river levels in summer & autumn; whereas others have been encroached upon by river red gum seedlings where regulation caused a reduction in flood frequency (MDBC 1987).



Murray Darling Basement Authority Giant Rush

- 1988** Forest flooding was often been observed to alter the quality of water within the forest. Morrison (1989) described water during a trial release December 1988 as being darkly coloured, less turbid and oxygen deficient as it passed through the floodplains.
- 1989** Under natural conditions, inundation occurred every year & lasted 8.7 months on average
Dry periods lasting an average 3.9 months would have occurred in 4 of 5 yrs. Under the **conditions current in 1989**, flooding duration had significantly decreased with dry periods lasting for more than 10 months at a time (Leitch, 1989).
- 1989** Sedimentation in Barmah Forest wetland areas appear to have increased (Leitch 1989). Forest wetlands, particular Top Island and Barmah Lakes, appear to be silting up very rapidly (Leitch 1989), requiring higher rivers to effectively flood these areas. Although siltation is a natural process, the rate of sediment build-up seems to have accelerated over recent years (DCE 1992).
- 1988/98** Noted: Under natural conditions, 70% of the forest would be flooded for average of 2.9 mths in 78% of yrs. Since regulation, this level of flooding is only experienced for an average of 1.3 mths in 37% of yrs. (Leitch 1989, Bren and Gibbs 1988).
- 1992** Distribution and condition of the shorter-lived understorey species are more strongly influenced by recent watering conditions (MDBC 1992).
- 1992** Bren noted that the Moira Grass plains have continued to decline in extent in the 12 years since Chesterfield's assessment. (24)

- 1992** Damage to aboriginal sites by **horses** in Barmah Forest is a further concern, although the extent of this and the relative contributions of feral and domestic horses, cattle and other grazing animals is not clear (DCE 1992a)
- 1993** Surveys undertaken since 1993 indicate considerable decline in breeding events for Rufous Night Heron, spoonbills, egrets & cormorants compared to previous records. (25)
- 1995** 200 to 300 horses in the Barmah National Park (57)
- 1995** The current Parks Victoria policy on feral horses refers staff to the previous National Parks Service policy (NPS 1995). This policy considers that properly controlled and regulated brumby running is an appropriate method of feral horse control. The policy does not address other means of control, other than to prohibit poisoning or shooting, due to perceived public opinions about these lethal control techniques. (58)
- 1998** Irrigation drainage identified as major contributor of nutrients, especially phosphorous to waterways in the catchment (GBCMA 1998).
- 1998** Native Title Determination Application by Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community was heard by Federal Court December 1998 which determined the Yorta Yorta had no continuous association with the land, so no Native Title over claimed land & waters. (26)
- 2000/1** Mid-Murray Forest Management Plan (NRE 2002b) records timber produced from Barmah in 2000/2001 as; 2,631 m³ of sawlogs, 842 m³ of sleepers and 1,056 m³ of residual logs (low grade logs by-product of sawlog/sleeper harvesting and regrowth management operations) were removed from the forest. Wood products derived from Barmah include; heavy construction timbers, railway sleepers, house stumps, furniture timbers, flooring, feature panelling, poles, fence posts, firewood & charcoal.
- 2000/1** River Red Gum species harvested, not Yellow Box, Grey Box & Black Box (NRE 2002b).
- 2001** Yorta Yorta appealed to the Full Bench of the Federal Court, which, in February 2001 upheld the previous decision. (27)
- 2002** May 2002, Yorta Yorta appealed the Federal Court's decision before the Full Bench of the High Court. (27)
- 2002** Full Bench of the High Court in December upheld the Federal Court's decision. (27)
- 2002** Localised floods, covering under 10% of forest, occur at least 8 times more frequently since regulation began (Chong & Ladson 2002) AND more likely to occur between December & April. Forest flooding is affected by earthen block banks, levees, and regulators constructed over the past 50 yrs. to regulate flows & control bank erosion.

2002

Kingfisher Cruises operator Benita Lamond said the river level was 3.06m. With more water about, a wide range of birdlife, including pelicans, able to be seen at present. **Wild brumbies running the shallow waters had also provided a great show for passengers, Ms Lamond said. "They loved it," she said.** (44)

2003 Moira Grass plains constitute about 5.5% of the forest area (DCE 1992).

2004 Some visitors to the Victorian high country and Barmah Forest are attracted by the opportunity of seeing wild horses and a small number of tourism operators, particularly some horse-riding tour operators, promote their tours by advertising the chance to see one. (58)

Feral horses in Barmah Forest have been removed in the past, by various parties, using a range of methods, including (J. **Kneebone, pers. comm.**):

- **trapping, using a mare to lure** horses into an adjacent paddock;
- shooting; and
- **brumby** running (58)

Along the Murray River, there are currently several key strategic matters affecting the future management of the Barmah Forest, and therefore the feral **horses** within it. These include:

A cooperative land management agreement with the Yorta Yorta people.

A proposed investigation into the uses of Crown land in the Murray River Red Gum forests by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC).

A proposal for a cross-border national park comprising the Barmah Forest in Victoria and the Millewa Forest in NSW. Until these major strategic issues are resolved it is unlikely that the potentially sensitive issue of feral **horse** eradication will be tackled with any vigour. (58)

2005/6 A large volume of environmental water was released to the forest over the spring and summer of 2005-06, triggering a major bird and fish breeding event. (21)

2007/9 Prolonged drought conditions then prevailed and even some 'permanent' wetlands dried up. Giant Rush (*Juncus ingens*) took over much of the wetlands ~ growing one and half metres tall in six months ~ whilst red gum saplings took over other areas.

2007/8 Cattle grazing in Barmah forest ceased. (28)



Photo Jennifer Marohasy

2010 Victorian Government created Barmah National Park (29)

2010 Blackwater event December 2010 resulting in substantial fish & crayfish death in the Murray River downstream of Barmah Forest (King *et al.* 2011), appearing to result in complete loss of crayfish downstream of the forest while some of the more mobile fish species have returned to the area (Raymond *et al.* 2012). Almost all the red river gum was flooded for the first time in 15 years and the park were temporarily closed.
(7)



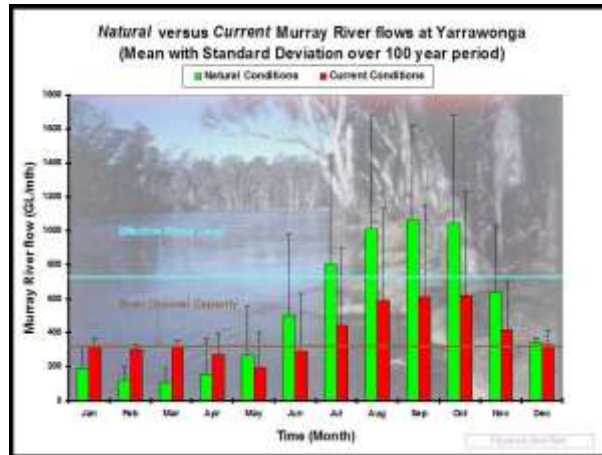
Eureka Street Pic

2010 *Logging stopped* following establishment of the River Red Gum national parks. (29)

- 2010/11** Biggest (natural) flood for years resulted in colonial water birds nesting and raising young and absence of hypoxic blackwater during the period. Highlighted the need for near annual floodplain inundation to reduce the accumulation of organic compounds that lead to blackwater development. Timing of flood inundation & return flows is critical (avoid warmer months of summer & early autumn), plus the need for a drying regime on the floodplain during summer to early winter. (30)
- 2012?** Parks Victoria established the Barmah Horse Advisory Committee (BHAC) to provide specialist advice on horse management and consultation with the broader community to inform development of the Barmah Horse Management Strategy. (32)
- 2013** Late 2013, Parks Victoria decided all Barmah **horses** will be removed soon, before Barmah Horse Advisory Committee (BHAC) completed its assessment of management options or made recommendations.
- 2013** Barmah forest seasonal watering Proposal for 2013-2014 [return to natural flooding] Concerns now exist for alarming decrease in extent & cover of Moira Grass, that used to dominate the treeless Barmah Forest floodplain & serve as major waterbird feeding ground on which Ramsar status has been bestowed on the reserve. Moira Grass was recently mapped had approx. 5% of the area that existed 70 years ago, should benefit with recent dry regime **but only** if followed by a return to deep winter-spring floods. Increase natural peaks during early-to mid-spring to flush the floodplain during cooler conditions which will reduce the likelihood of a blackwater event.
- 2013/14** Budget cuts to Condition & Intervention monitoring will cause most, if not all, monitoring programs to cease & no data to measure if environmental targets are met.
- 2014** Context Wild Horses in the Barmah National Park – an exploration of Community Heritage Values June 2014
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm&ogbl#inbox/FMfcgxwJWXVDPftKnnW WXKSZCmplKGSC?projector=1&messagePartId=0.3>
- 2015** As of February 2015 the BHAC has not met since being told all horses to be removed.(35)
- 2015** Barmah Town has a hotel/motel, Caravan Park, school, boat ramp, picnic spots along the river and Anglican & Catholic churches. Logging & cattle grazing have ceased, and Barmah **horses** alone remain to show Barmah's post settlement cultural living heritage and colourful/productive history to pass on to future generations. (7)
- 2015** **Hon.**Lisa Neville No Barmah Brumby removal pending consultation process finished. (36)
- 2015** April 29, Barmah **Horse** consultation Group (BHCH) reconvenes after 18mth gap. (35)
- 2016** Barmah population 282 – ABS June 2017

2016

- /17 Barmah Millewa seasonal watering proposal – Minimise hypoxic black water, enhance vegetation health, recovery of native fish, minimise summer-autumn unseasonable flooding (37)



- 2016 Parties involved in the debate over the future of **brumbies** in Barmah National Park. Expressed disappointment over the lack of consultation. (38)

- 2016 Options to manage the impacts of **brumby** populations are being considered in partnership with Yorta Yorta & TOLMB and Parks Victoria (40)

- 2018 **Barmah Brumby Hay Angels was established as a working Facebook group for the Barmah Brumbies. July 4th 2019**

- 19 Moira Grass was recorded in areas where it had previously disappeared. (39)



Picture - Murray Darling Basement Authority Barmah Millewa Forest Report Card 2017-18

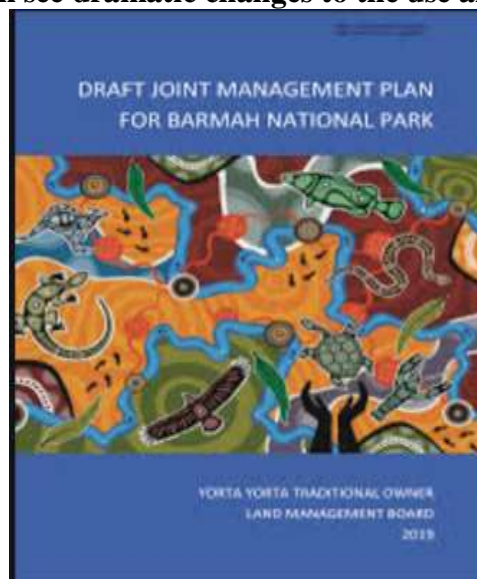
2018/ Unnatural floodwaters were forced upon the Barmah by MDBA that killed vital food sources and **brumbies** along with other wildlife. Unprecedented flooding, depth and duration made it a disastrous time with high death rates of animals both for the **brumbies** and native animals. Causing the mass starvation of hundreds of animals. Support groups stepped in and feed over 130 **brumbies** and countless native animals for approx. 4 months. Parks Victoria euthanised many **brumbies** that were deprived of their normal environment to survive in. Estimates are well over 100+ **brumbies** deceased through starvation or being euthanised by Parks Victoria – true numbers would be unknown to the real toll within the park.



Sarah Radford Dec 3rd 2018

2019

2019 Parks Victoria and Yorta Yorta jointly drafted a Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023. Submissions were made by many groups and individuals upon its release.
The proposals will see dramatic changes to the use and management of the Park.



2019 September saw the release of the **Legislative Council E Petition #136** . Contact Principle Marilyn Nuske Ocean Legal . Sponsor Hon. Wendy Lovell MP. Brumby bloodlines should be protected in the form of legislation, namely a 'Victorian Brumby Heritage Act', which should recognise the heritage value of sustainable wild horse populations within the Barmah and Alpine National Parks and surrounding area of the Bogong High Plains.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to abandon plans to remove all brumbies from the Bogong High Plains, Barmah and Eastern Alps and instead manage sustainable brumby populations, introduce legislation to protect brumby bloodlines and establish scientific and community advisory panels to participate in all future decisions for brumby populations, which should include a representative from key brumby organisations.

Set for tabling on August 4th 2020 . At time of publishing this document 14 658 Victorian residents have signed.



2019 A Change .Org Petition was commenced by Marilyn Nuske of Ocean Legal . Seeking Legislation to protect Victorian Brumbies in the 3 key areas namely Barmah Forest and the Alpine National Park which includes the Bogong High Plains and Eastern Alps. We cannot keep on pursuing expensive legal actions each time Parks Victoria want to shoot Brumbies, we must achieve something enduring, long term and permanent to protect our Brumbies. This will sit alongside the E Petition #136. **At time of wring this document, 147 495 signatures have been sought.**

Recognise and Protect All Victorian Brumbies with Heritage Brumby Legislation



Street Legal shared this petition to Daniel Andrews (Premier of Victoria) and 3 others

A PLAN TO SUPPORT THE SURVIVAL OF VICTORIAN BRUMBIES

Note the Brumby depicted, Banjo, a Brumby from Kosci National Park. Sincere thanks to Michelle J Photography for her permission to share her photos.



- 2020** Release of the Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/barmah-strategic-action-plan>
- 2020** March 31st 2020 first round of Expression of Interest (EOI) to re-home a Barmah Brumby closed. (46)
- 2020** April 3rd 2020 Lily D'Ambrosio MP signs off and announces the implantation of the Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023. (45)
- 2020** Wendy Lovell MP Member for Northern Victoria Region. June 4th 2020 in Parliament moved a Motion to stop the Andrews Government from shooting Brumbies in Victorian National Parks. The Motion passed with the support of my Liberal and National colleagues and strong support from the cross-bench MP's. Even Labor MP's – including five Cabinet Ministers – failed to vote in favour of their own party's policy. (47)
- 2020** Second round of EOI Open July 1st for a 6-week period. (46)





- Key dates:** **1830s** Cattle & horses began grazing & trees logged for timber.
- 1982** *RAMSAR lists Barmah Forest as a wetland of significance.*
- 2007/8** Cattle grazing ceased in Barmah Forest
- 2010** *Logging stopped in Barmah.*
- 2013** *Parks Victoria decide all Barmah horses will be removed soon.*
- 2018** *Parks Victoria & Yorta Yorta jointly drafted a Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023.*
- 2020** *Release of the Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023.*
- 2020** *Lily D'Ambrosio MP signs off and announces the implantation of the Strategic Action Plan – Protection of Floodplain Marshes 2020 – 2023.*
- 2020** *First round of Expression of Interest (EOI) to re-home a Barmah Brumby closed.*

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METHODOLOGY

Written and researched based on historical documents from a number of sources and archives that included oral, local, newspaper reports, State Library, TROVE and various historical books supplied by Gerry and Kaye Moor of Barmah. *Renee Neubauer June 2020*



Document drafted by Jill Pickering President Australian Brumby Alliance 2013

Completed/Referenced by Renee Neubauer Barmah Brumby Hay Angels. June 2020 ©

