



## The Drover and Horse Sculpture

The sculpture outside the Mathoura Visitor Information centre is one of the eleven that tell the stories, tales and history along the Long Paddock touring route which follows the Cobb Highway from Moama to Wilcannia.

This sculpture depicting a stockman trying to get his horse out of a swamp was inspired by the stories of the difficulties confronting overlanders (drovers) as they brought large mobs of sheep and cattle through this area. The wetlands in the forest east of Mathoura were notoriously difficult to cross, particularly when the Murray River was in flood.

The area was probably wetter than in more recent times, partly because there were fewer trees then to soak up the floodwaters.

When the explorer Charles Sturt brought a mob of cattle down the Murray travelling to Adelaide in 1838 he reached the Edward river but local aborigines indicated by sign language that he would not be able to travel any further because of floodwaters. After one of his stockmen found extensive flooding with swamps and creeks full of fallen timber to the north of the Edward, he crossed the Murray to what is now Victoria to continue his journey.

Sturt described the area occupied by the Barmah-Millewa forest as "a vast marsh" covered in tall rushes, apparently with very few trees.

In 1842 the first white settler in the area, Henry Lewes who founded Moira Station, spent more than two weeks getting his stock across the flooded Edward River and Gulpa Creek to Moira, a distance of less than 20 kilometres.

Several stockmen are believed to have drowned in this area.

One has been identified as 40 year old Leith Mackenzie from the upper Murray. He drowned in 1864 while attempting to cross the Gulpa Creek only a few hundred metres from where the sculpture is located.

In 1875 the Gulpa Creek also claimed the life of Johnson Grenfell of Clunes, Victoria.

Another stockman who drowned on his way home from one of the local hotels, is remembered by Deadman's Creek on Picnic Point Road.

The artist, Corey Thomas, has sculptures displayed in Melbourne (where his Rainman solar-powered statue of a man with an umbrella standing in a lake in St Kilda's botanic gardens, is perhaps his most popular work to date), Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Port Augusta. He is also represented in a number of private collections.

The Long Paddock sculptures are fast becoming an iconic stop on the Australian Tourism Bucket List. The sculptures are not only a great photo opportunity, they reflect the heart and soul of these small rural communities. For more information on the Long Paddock Touring Route [www.longpaddock.com.au](http://www.longpaddock.com.au)

*Researched and written by David Joss for the Mathoura Visitor Information and Business Centre*

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