



Lake Bonney is the Geographic centre of the Riverland. The natural Sparkling fresh water lake is fed from the Might Murray River via Chambers Creek.

Whether you are a nature lover, into history, a keen fisher, or after the excitement of skimming over the water, Lake Bonney offers it all.

# Statistics

- Depth :** 8 metres
- Circumference :** 15 kilometres
- Length :** 6.5 metres
- Width :** 4 kilometres
- Surface :** 1687 hectares
- Volume :** 58 900 Mega Litres
- Distance around Lake Bonney of sealed road :** 22 kilometres

**Barmera Visitor Information Centre** 

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Open Mon - Fri 9am to 4pm  
Sat & Sun 10am - 1pm  
Public Holidays 10am - 1pm  
Closed Christmas Day & Good Friday



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# Lake Bonney



*Natures Resource* **Riverland**  
*in the...* South Australia

## Discover...



Aboriginal people always knew our lake as "Nookamba". When Joseph Hawdon, the first Overlander, found this inland lake for his thirsty cattle on March 12th 1838, he re-named it Lake Bonney after his friend, Charles Bonney.

Following the discovery, Lake Bonney became a sought after destination as the overlanders, whilst using "Stony Pinch Track" stopped to water their stock enroute between Ral Ral and Wentworth.

It soon became apparent that a place providing lodging and refreshment was required, and in 1859 William Parnell commenced the building of the hotel then known as "Lake Bonney Hotel".

In 1863 William Napper purchased the hotel along with 80 hectares of land where he established an orchard consisting of vines and fruit trees near the present Napper's Bridge site. He used a steam engine to pump water for his orchard and so became the first irrigator in the Upper Murray Region.

Lake Bonney was plagued with problems in the early 1900's, suffering both drought and severe flooding.

## Observe...



A bridge was built at Chambers Creek entrance with work beginning during the drought of 1915. At this time, Lake Bonney dried up almost completely resulting in locals farming cereal crops on the dry lake bed. The bridge, then known as North Lake Bridge consisted of moveable panels which acted as a weir, controlling water into or out the lake thus protecting these crops. However, August saw the river rise and the crops were inundated with water during the flood of 1916.

While building the northern approach to the bridge, the bones of hundreds of natives were unearthed and went into structure. Built of timber retrieved from flats of Cobdogla, the bridge survived until it was replaced in 1953 with a sturdier concrete structure known as Napper's Bridge. This bridge was opened in 1954 and inundated during the floods of 1956.

## Enjoy...



The first irrigation pump was installed at the south end of Lake Bonney during 1914. The drought was followed by a flood in 1916 and the plant, placed in a flood zone, was saved by the rushed building of an encircling wall which is still present today.

This resulted in a larger unit being built in 1920 on higher ground in what is now the Yacht Club building. Both these pumps were wood fired steam units, which supplied irrigation water to the Cobdogla region. With fluctuating water levels and high salinity becoming a problem the plant was closed in 1927 and moved to Loveday.

The inclusion of "Lock 3" into the Murray River system resulted in a stable Lake Bonney with the average pool level being 139 feet above sea level. The raised water level had altered the wetlands ecosystem. The water is deeper, cooler and slower, and the annual rise and fall has largely gone with adverse effects on the wildlife. Native fish and waterfowl are no longer subject to natural breeding conditions. It has also caused the death of many Red Gums.