



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**4<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

### **Robertson family opens the gates to Chowilla for 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations**

One of Australia's oldest grazing properties, Chowilla Station, celebrates its 150 anniversary this year.

To commemorate the occasion, the Robertson family will host a range of special events including paddle steamer re-enactments, shearing and blacksmithing demonstrations and tours of the property on Sunday, September 21.

Wooden boats and paddle steamers will travel upstream along the Murray from Renmark to Chowilla where they will moor under the gums in front of the historic Chowilla Woolshed and Shearer's Quarters.

Both blade and mechanical shearing demonstrations will take place during the celebrations in the historic shed, which was built in the 1870s. However numbers will be slightly fewer than back in its heyday, when in 1881, 70,250 sheep were shorn.

Chowilla was established by the Robertson family in 1864 when Richard Holland settled the original property, Bookmark, with his three step-sons; John, William and Robert Robertson.

Bookmark was later divided into two properties based on equal carrying capacity, which then became Calperum and Chowilla.

In 1919, the company, Robertson Chowilla Pty Ltd was created as an alternative to further dividing the property, with shares issued to the expanding family.

Aside from being run as a successful grazing enterprise for the past 150 years, the property has had a fascinating history and continues to attract attention.

From the early days when the Robertson's bred and raced champion racehorses, irrigated pastures, and relied on the river trade, to the ill-fated Chowilla Dam project, environmental works and its wetlands of international significance.

In recent years the company has also bought three neighbouring properties in NSW to complement its grazing operation, which now spans 320,000 acres.

These days, Robertson Chowilla Pty Ltd, is owned by James and Kerrie Robertson and cousin Dr Piers Robertson.

James says he is excited to be able to share this historic milestone with the community.

"We're looking forward to seeing the four paddle steamers moored on the riverbank outside our old woolshed," he said.

"The opportunity to be able to re-enact how things were done in the past where our annual clip was loaded onto these vessels and taken down river to the port will be something quite special.

"We hope the celebrations and events will allow families to have a great day out and learn or reminisce about the past and my family's history at Chowilla."

The PS Industry of Renmark and the PS Oscar W of Goolwa will offer short cruises on the day, while guided bus tours will be available to experience the RAMSAR listed wetlands including Werta-Wert, Chowilla Island and Coppermine.

District Council of Renmark Paringa Mayor Neil Martinson commended the Robertson family for its contribution to the region's history and opening their gates to the community for this special event.

"It will be a time when those who have had association with Chowilla over the years, can come back and enjoy the magnificent surroundings and for those who love old wooden boats, it will be an event not to be missed," he said.

"We are thrilled that the PS Ruby is coming from Wentworth to celebrate the event and will join the PS Marion from Mannum and many other wooden boats along the Chowilla riverfront.

"Stations along the Murray played a vital role in shaping our country's wool and grain industry with paddle steamers being the only means of transport.

"The celebrations in September will take us back to those glorious days of steam on the river and the Renmark Paringa Council is proud to have such a prestigious station still operating today in its own backyard."

Chowilla's 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations will be held on Sunday, September 21, with just a gold coin donation entry. All proceeds will go to the organising not for profit associations.

There will be live entertainment, steam powered cruises, food stalls, Chowilla's commemorative photographic collection and memorabilia on display.

For further information contact the Renmark Visitor Information Centre on 1300 661 704, email [tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au](mailto:tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au) or visit [www.chowilla.com.au](http://www.chowilla.com.au)

**Media enquiries: James Robertson 08 8595 8048 or 0409 306 696.**

#### **EVENT INFORMATION:**

**Event:** Chowilla Station 150th Celebrations  
**Date:** Sunday, September 21, 2014  
**Times:** 10am-4:30pm  
**Entry:** Gold coin donation  
**Enquiries:** Renmark Visitor Information Centre [tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au](mailto:tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au) Phone: 1300 661 704  
or visit [www.chowilla.com.au](http://www.chowilla.com.au)

**Program:** PS Oscar and PS Industry - One hour river cruises:

10:30am	PS Oscar
11am	PS Industry
12pm	PS Oscar
12:30pm	PS Industry
1:30pm	PS Oscar
2pm	PS Industry
3pm	PS Oscar
3:30pm	PS Industry

**Cost:** \$20 Adults, \$15 Concession, 5-13 years \$10, Family \$50 (2 adults 2 children) children under five years, free.

**Guided bus tours of Chowilla:** 10am, 11:15am, 12:30pm, 1:45pm and 3pm

**Cost:** Adult \$15, Concession \$12, 5-13 \$7.50, Family \$37.50 (2 adults and 2 children) children under five years free.

#### **Cruise and Bus Tour Bookings:**

Renmark Visitor Information Centre [tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au](mailto:tourist@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au) Phone: 1300 661 704

#### **Chowilla Woolshed events:**

Blacksmith demonstrations  
Sheep shearing  
Blade shearing  
Explore the levy banks, shearers quarters and woolshed  
Live entertainment  
Food stalls/bar facilities

Wooden boats and paddle steamers on display including the PS Marion from Mannum and the PS Ruby from Wentworth, NSW.

All proceeds will be distributed to participating not for profit organisations and the paddle steamers involved in the organisation of event.