This part of the Murray River is famous for its Red Gum forests. The first white settlers harvested timber for fence posts, housing and fuel. Red Gum forests were utilised extensively during the paddle-steamer, railway and gold eras, especially with the operation of quartz reef mining during the 1860s and 1870s.

Commercial sawmills were established along the creeks and rivers of the Cohuna, Leitchville and Koondrook districts to access the forests of Gunbower Island. With the opening of the railway from Melbourne to Echuca in 1884, several mills were set up in the area to provide Red Gum to the export markets of the British colonies which were heavily engaged in railway and wharf building.

Sawmills were the largest employer in the district from 1874 until the decline of river boats from the 1880s. Building of barges and paddle steamers was undertaken at Koondrook by Arbuthnots and Cheesale.

The Arbuthnot Sawmill at Koondrook was opened by Alexander (Sandy) Arbuthnot in 1889. Koondrook became important for timber production and the port was heavily reliant on the local saw mill. It was commented that the streets were paved with sawdust.

Arbuthnot Sawmill still operates today. It provides timber to commercial building and trade centres across Australia as well as supplying the local red gum furniture industry.

Koondrook is credited as the main production centre in Australia for quality Red Gum timber and furniture.

Source: Gannawarra Shire Heritage Study Stage One Vol 1 Thematic Environmental History
Source: Barham-Koondrook Bridge Truss and Victorian Approach Span Restoration, REF, Feb 2016

NOTE: 1. TO BE INSTALLED ON PICNIC TABLE AS DETAILED IN LD-401
2. IMAGES AND TEXT ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE