

ORBOST HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

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Boat Parties Work Bravely to Rescue Flood Victims at Orbost

FURTHER RISE IN RIVER WILL MEAN GREAT DANGER

Heavy Rain at Head Waters of Snowy Threatens Increased Flooding

OTHER PARTS OF STATE SUFFER

STORIES of gallant rescues in the face of great odds in the flooded areas around Orbost indicate the extent to which one of the most fertile areas in the State has suffered. Extensive damage has also been done in the north-east, while Bega, in New South Wales, has experienced a severe flooding.

THE Weather Bureau indicated last night that while further showers might be experienced, the worst of the flood danger for the present was over.

By Our Special Correspondent

ORBOST, Tuesday. — By this evening the record flood in the Snowy River had receded by 10ft. and with the rescue of marooned families the feeling of alarm that was so great last night has eased considerably.

All alarm, however, has not been dispelled. Reports received from Delegate (N.S.W.) today stated that up to last night 16in. of rain had fallen over the area in which the Snowy has its sources, and that further extensive flooding might be expected around Orbost. There was no sign of any rise in the river this evening.

If the river does rise again the desolation caused in the past two days

will be more widespread, and the houses which have been vacated on the river flats may be swept away.

This is easily the greatest flood in the history of East Gippsland, and the losses in Orbost district alone are estimated at as much as £300,000.



MR. E. NYE, Railways Traffic Inspector in Gippsland, examining the damage done to the permanent way in Orbost station yards.

Rescued From Tree

A MAN perched on the middle span of the bridge over the Snowy River at Orbost had a narrow escape.

As a huge log swept down on the bridge he jumped to safety. A 75ft. section of the middle span was carried away and the piles were uprooted.

In a flat-bottomed boat Mr. Don Thompson, of Newmerella, rescued Mr. Sidney Curtis, his housekeeper (Mrs. Wylie), and her grand-daughter, Jean Dalgleich, who had climbed up a dead tree in the middle of a maize crop when their home was flooded.

Two Days of Toil

ANOTHER gallant rescue party consisted of Mounted Constable Snarp, of Orbost, and Messrs. P. Morrison, E. Joiner and G. Lavell. In an 18-ft. boat they have toiled unceasingly for two days rescuing families above the town.

This party rescued 12 persons yesterday and 30 today. These 30 spent the night huddled together and wet through in a three-storied barn on Mr. P. Boucher's property.

Most of the sufferers have lost nearly all their belongings and what remains in their homes is ruined.

Mr. J. Lyons's five-roomed home on the river flats above the town was torn from its foundations and smashed to pieces. Barns, sheds, and stables everywhere have been destroyed.

Farmers Lose Heavily

LOSSES of live stock are exceedingly heavy, especially dairy cattle, pigs and sheep. One farmer of the river flats, Mr. P. C. Nixon, estimates his losses at £10,000, and several others have lost just as heavily.

Two spans of the Princes Highway bridge leading into Orbost from Melbourne have collapsed, leaving a gap more than 100ft. wide. It will be at least a month before it can be repaired.

Communication with Melbourne by telegraph and telephone has been restored, and mails were brought into and taken out of the town today for the first time since Saturday. They were transported across the swollen river beside the wrecked bridge in a rowing boat. Train services are still suspended beyond Nowa Nowa.

Fishermen to Rescue

EXCEPT those who refused to leave their homes when they saw the flood receding, all the marooned families were rescued today.

To facilitate the work of rescue three boats were brought 40 miles from Lakes Entrance by motor truck last night and two others from near Marlo by the Brodrick River bridge. With the boats from Lakes Entrance came a band of volunteer rescuers, sturdy experienced fishermen, skilled in handling small craft in rough seas.

They are some of the heroes of the flood and notable among them are Messrs. Alfred, David and Victor Carstairs, Cyril Egan, P. Sutherland, W. Henning, Arthur and David Allen, and Constable Anstee, all from Lakes Entrance.

Before dawn they were paddling round in the torrent, going from house to house in search of stricken families. Between them they rescued 17 persons this morning, and 15 this after-

noon. Among the children rescued were babies only a few months old. Six perilous journeys were made across the swollen stream to bring back 11 people who were stranded on the roof of Mr. Robert Brown's home, opposite the township.

Long Ride For Help

VOLUNTEERING to try to obtain help for isolated Orbost, J. W. Birkett, 30, an assistant at Orbost post office, rode through the flooded area in search of a post office from which an S.O.S. could be sent.

He reached Bombala, more than 100 miles away, in New South Wales, early yesterday afternoon and managed to get a trunk-line call through.

Arrangements were made for broadcast appeals for help.

Seven persons are still in a house on the Newmerella side of the river.

Where Floods Are Worst

Victoria.—Orbost, Traralgon, Marlo, Lang Lang, Wangaratta district, Wilby, Tungamah, Apollo Bay.

N.S.W.—Bega, Boree Creek.

They are Mr. and Mrs. W. Porter, senior, and their son, Mr. and Mrs. Stan Porter and their baby, and Miss Vera Radiam. When rescuers went to their aid today they declined to leave the building.

No Word From Mails

THE railway station yards were 3ft. under water yesterday, but they were dry this afternoon. Repairs to the track will be begun tomorrow and trains should be able to come through from Nowa Nowa on Thursday.

Still nothing has been heard here about the position at Marlo. The road is impassable and telephone and telegraph services have been disrupted. A squally south-easterly wind is blowing tonight and this may bank up the flood waters and impede their passage to the sea.

Unconfirmed reports have been received of bridges over the Snowy River beyond Buchan having been destroyed. The Princes Highway is covered with water between Eden and Genoa. The Cann River bridge also is submerged.

FARMERS SHELTER REFUGEES

New £14,000 Bridge Goes At Gelantipy

A REPRESENTATIVE of The Sun who has been on holidays in Orbost district, and who is marooned at Newmerella, telephoned late last night that hundreds of refugees from the flood are being cared for by friendly farmers.

A new bridge, erected at a cost of £14,000 on the Gelantipy road, on the upper reaches of the Snowy, is reported to have been washed away. It was to have been opened next week. Telephone linesmen report that the two standing sections of the main bridge over the Snowy River on the Princes Highway are shaking badly, and may disappear at any moment.

Inquiries were being made last night for Mr. Phil Pepper, a dairyman, who left on horseback during the afternoon to examine his inundated farm at Brigabalong, and had not returned at a late hour.

PONTOON BRIDGE FOR ORBOST

Plans For Repairs Likely To Cost £2500

IMMEDIATE steps are being taken by the Country Roads Board to provide for the passage of traffic over the Snowy River at Orbost, where the washing away of the middle span has closed the road.

Already pontoons borrowed from the Defence Department are on their way from Melbourne to Gippsland, and are expected to arrive near Orbost today. As soon as the flood waters of the main Prince's Highway bridge recede sufficiently they will be floated out across the river and a bridge built on them to carry light traffic. This, it is expected, will be completed in two or three days.

To replace the pontoon bridge a solid temporary bridge will be constructed in a fortnight, to serve until the main bridge is repaired. This will be a long and difficult job. The cost of these repairs was roughly estimated last night at £2500.



When the flood was at its height many residents were trapped in their houses during all Monday, and they awaited rescue on the roofs. This photograph shows one family being brought to safety in a boat.



Thousands of acres of land have been submerged, and enormous damage has resulted from the floods on the Snowy River. Many residents were rescued in boats from roofs. The photograph shows the town of Orbost and the flood waters rushing over the lower levels nearby.