

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



President: Beryl Macalister
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Secretary: May Leatch
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John Phillips
Geoff Stevenson
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Newsletter Editor: John Phillips

NEWSLETTER

JUNE, 2008

The Snowy River Mail, Thursday, May 9, 1912:

WANTED: AN OUTLET

SHIPPING conditions do not appear to be improving on the Snowy River. The entrance is still closed to navigation, and likely to remain so for an indefinite time.

The loss of the Wangrabelle is calculated to discourage the Shipping Company, but we understand it has sufficient faith in the future of the trade to be setting about the purchase of a new boat.



The 'Wongrabelle' at the Marlo wharf. It was wrecked on 10th April, 1912, running aground after crossing the bar at Marlo

The directors, no doubt, understand their business better than anyone else does, and the prospects must appear brighter to them than they do to us.

It has become the custom to abuse the Shipping Company, as it is not everyone who remembers to praise the bridge that carries him over, but the present company and its predecessors are really entitled to the highest credit for the manner in which they have, in the face of small profits and much discouragement, catered for the requirements of the farmers of this district.



**Henry (Harry) James
Second Secretary of Snowy River Shipping Co.
He later took over ownership of the Shipping Co.**

For some time past it must have been patent to everyone that it is more with the object of getting the farmers' produce away than of making profit that they have kept their boats in commission.

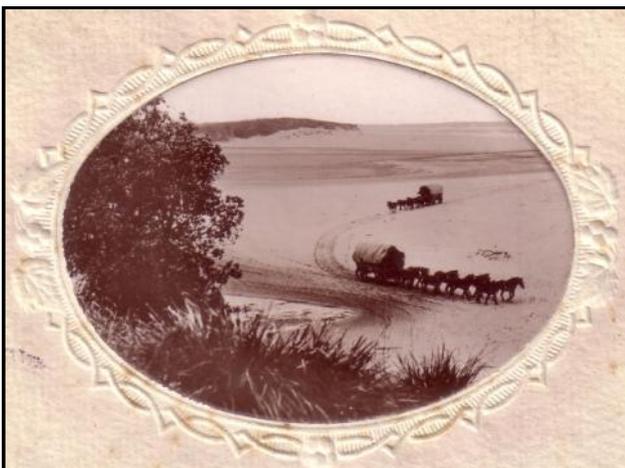
If they had not been able to command success, they deserve it. For many years, production on the Snowy River flats was only rendered profitable owing to the existence of the mosquito fleet that has been dodging in and out of our now precarious entrance, but it is an open question if it would not have been better if the entrance had become impracticable years ago.



The Snowy River and Entrance at Marlo, 1889

It would have compelled us to find other means of exit, and a first-rate road would have been made to Bairnsdale long before this.

Farmers are now carting their maize to Lake Tyers, then boating it down the lake, and re-loading it on the Cuninghame side and carting to the Lakes' Entrance, at a total cost of about 32s per ton, which amounts to about 9d a bushel.



Lay and Joiner's teams crossing the sand bar at Lake Tyers.

Then they have to pay for shipping from the Entrance to Melbourne, and the freight and carriage from here must be about 1s a bushel, a terrible handicap when growers have to

compete with other places that can put the crop on the market at something like threepence per bushel.

In addition to that there is the long delay and uncertainty in forwarding.

Twenty years ago, one third of the maize crop of this State was grown at Orbost, but it is not surprising to learn that there are now other districts less favourable to the growth of this cereal that have a larger output.



Cutting maize at Orbost

The local butter factory, although it is making good headway in spite of it, labours under similar disabilities, as it costs £2 per ton to carry their butter to Cuninghame.



Orbost Butter Factory cnr. Browning & Lochiel Streets — 1892-1917

It would be interesting to calculate the benefit the district would have derived if there had been good roads in existence on which produce could have been cheaply and regularly carried to the wharf or railway station.

It is important to remember that the loss to the district is not so much in the money paid for cartage, as that is distributed locally, although, with good roads the carriers could work more profitably at lower rates, but the difficulties of

transit are a check on production, and if they were removed we would be sending away much larger quantities of produce of every kind.

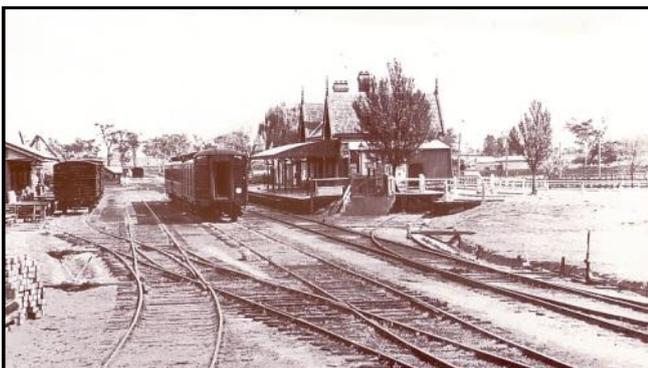
We are expecting all this to be remedied when we get the railway, but good roads have successfully competed with the railways before now, and they will always be worth the money they cost even after rail and water communications are successfully established.



Vehicle bogged at Hospital Creek, 1913

Since the construction of the different railway lines in Gippsland there have been hundreds of miles of good roads made, many of them running along the lines, that would not have been made yet if it were not for the introduction of the railway. It will be some years before we get the railway, and a judicious expenditure on a road would be more than repaid in that time.

The problem of obtaining a good road is not very difficult of solution now. A thousand pounds or so would make a very good road to Swan Reach; this would connect with the shipping, and also with the Bairnsdale railway station.



Bairnsdale Railway Station

The distance to Swan Reach is only 40 miles, and by either of the roads now used it is about 38 or 39 miles to Cuninghame, while there is absolutely no comparison between the routes in regard to facilities for traffic.

The lower road to the Entrance had to traverse about three miles of heavy sand, and on the

Nowa Nowa route the Toorloo arm of the lake has to be negotiated.



Toorloo Bay, Lake Tyers

As things are at present a much heavier load could be carried in less time to Swan Reach, apart from the fact that a comparatively small expenditure with a deviation at Ironstone Creek would make a really good road, not only to that place, but right into Bairnsdale.

If the mails were carried that way they could easily be brought from Bairnsdale in one day instead of taking two days as at present.

If Swan Reach is not a recognised port it could easily be made one. The largest steamers on the lakes could get there, and turn in the Tambo river without any difficulty.



Paddle Steamer passing through the Bridge on the Tambo River at Swan Reach

The place is only a few miles out of the regular course of the Melbourne steamers, and if the Snowy River farmers were to announce their intention of sending their stuff there the shipping companies would very soon make the necessary arrangements for picking it up.

Anyone acquainted with the contour of the country must be able to see that apart from the Snowy River, and the prospective railway, the natural outlet for this district is by way of Swan Reach and Bairnsdale.