

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER, 2008

'Snowy River Mail', Wednesday, November 25, 1970:

When the Telegraph First Came to Orbost

For many years prior to 1895 the then small but growing township of Orbost was without telegraphic communications with the outside world. After this link had been established the telephone followed.

(To the Editor)

Dear Sir: In your issue of the "S.R.M." of November 4th, there appeared a very interesting account of the early days of the Post Office in the Orbost district

Post Offices are a vital necessity in any town or community and our local P.O. Has played a very important part in the progress and development of this town and district. Not only has this been in distributing mail, telegrams and the like, but in the early days when floods were frequent and often disastrous.

These floods often came down without warning but the Post Office was always to the fore in giving out weather forecasts and the heights of the river at certain places, so that landholders had some idea whether to move stock to higher ground or not.

Sometimes the flood arrived before the warning. When that happened there was much loss of stock.

Of course I am Speaking before we had modern television.

In your account, no mention was made of two people who did a very worthwhile job in the

working of the Post Office in the early days - Mrs. P. F. Morris, (who was then Miss Crawford) and Mr. Archie Munro.

Mr. George Burn was about the first Postmaster at Newmerella.

Mrs. Morris took over from him and carried on for many years also at Newmerella.

Afterwards, the office was moved over the river to Orbost, and Mr. Archie Munro officiated as Post Master.



Mr. James Cameron's Barn (on left) from where Mr. Archie Munro operated the Post Office after it moved from Newmerella to Orbost

The then Post Office was situated in Mr. James Cameron's barn. James Cameron was afterwards M.L.A. For East Gippsland.

Mr. Munro and his brother, Donald, had the first boot making and repairing business in Munro street. Munro street was named after him.

Later on still, the Post Office was moved to where the Commonwealth Hotel now stands.



Post Office on the site of the Commonwealth Hotel with Miss Farrell as Postmistress. Cunninghame (Lakes Entrance) Coach at front.

The Post Mistress was Miss Farrell, and she was a trained telegraphist. This was the first time the telegraph line had reached Orbost, and was about the year 1895 or 1896.

When the present Post Office was built the Postmistress' name was Miss D. O'Connor.

I don't know what D. Stood for, but the boys christened her Dan, as she was rather short tempered and did not suffer fools gladly. She was apt to tell you off on the least provocation.

Her assistant was Mr. Albert Flight, who also served here for a good many years.



Orbost Post Office and Residence, corner Nicholson and Ruskin Streets, soon after completion in 1898.

There was no postal boxes in those days and no telephones. The mail was sorted after the coach arrived from Cunninghame at 4 o'clock, if it was not delayed through being bogged along the road, which often happened.

The mail was given out over the counter.

Trusting that these remarks will be of interest to your readers. — R. R. JOHNSTON



The Post Office building in 1935.



The Orbost Post Office in more recent times. Before the building was demolished and rebuilt in 2008 as a replica of the original building.