

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



**President:** Heather Terrell  
**Vice President:** Darren Downey  
**Secretary:** May Leatch  
**Treasurer:** Lillian Bishop  
**Museum Curators:** Eddie Slatter  
Marina Johnson  
Geoff Stevenson  
Darren Downey  
John Phillips

**Research Secretaries:** Lois Crisp, Gail Hume  
**Newsletter Editor:** John Phillips

## NEWSLETTER

### RIVER - ROAD - RAILWAY

THE 3 R's OF ORBOST — 1880 - 1916

Part 2 of the research project completed by Di Weatherly in 1986 when she studied Year 12 Australian History at Orbost High School as a mature aged student.

#### An Old Bush Road

"Dear old road, wheel—worn and broken,  
Winding thro' the forest green,  
Barred with shadow, and with sunshine,  
Many vistas in between.  
Grim, scarred bluegums ranged austerely,  
Lifting blackened columns each  
To the large, fair fields of azure,  
Stretching ever out of reach...

Dear old road, no wonder surely,  
That I love thee like a friend!  
And I grieve to think how surely  
All thy Loveliness will end...."

Poem by Jennings Carmichael  
The Orbost Poetess

'Gap' Magazine, page 13

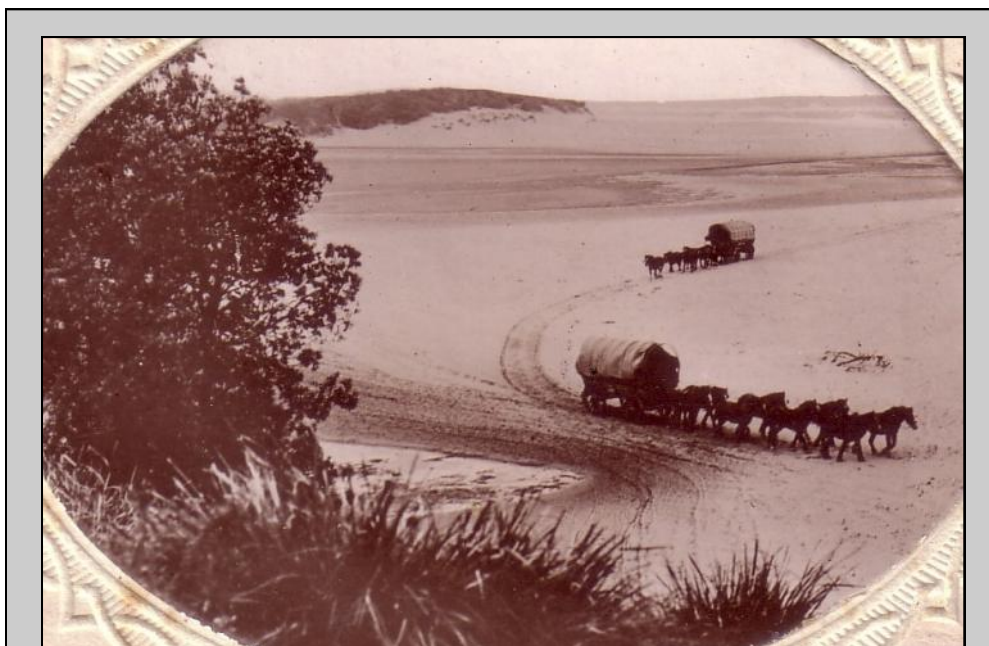


FIG. 1: ROAD FROM CUNNINGHAME TO ORBOST  
"Crossing the Sands, Lake Tyers" is the title of this photograph. It shows horse teams taking supplies to Orbost along the then road to the town.

## ROAD TRANSPORT

In the late 1800's early 1900's to say that transporting goods by road was difficult is the under-statement of all times, it was impossible roads as thoroughfares did not exist. The roads around Orbost were perhaps the worst in the State, being mainly bullock and droving tracks through forest and swamp areas. Transport was by foot, horseback, dray and bullock wagon. Areas to the north of Orbost Bendoc, Tubbut and Goongerah were in very mountainous terrain, to the west the Snowy River and other creeks had to be crossed. Eastwards forests and low lying swampy ground impeded the traveller and southwards coastal scrub, lakes and rivers hindered the road's way. Progress was very slow and the distance from big centres large, the isolation of Far East Gippsland was advanced by the lack of good communication between settlements.

The road from Cunninghame in the west came via Lake Tyers across the sand bar and dunes rather than the shorter route through Nowa Nowa due to the impossible conditions around Nowa Nowa and the lack of a bridge over the Boggy Creek. This did not improve till the 1920's when the Country Roads Board took on the responsibility for the area from Lakes Entrance to Nowa Nowa. The Orbost Shire moved in December 1893 that the road from Lakes

Entrance go through Nowa Nowa but nothing was done about this till 1919 when the CRB took over. (see figures 1 and 2).

North of Orbost the settlements at first relied on the NSW roads bringing their supplies down through the Monaro in fact when the area was first settled goods were shipped from Melbourne to Tasmania then to Eden for delivery in the Bendoc area. The terrain was pretty rugged and it wasn't until late 1890's that the "Old Orbost Road" was surveyed until then it was just a track along which pigs and stock were driven together with the man on horseback. Actually whole households travelled into the area by horseback mother nursing children in front of her.

East of Orbost it was just as nightmarish trying to get from one settlement to another. Sand and mud hollows causing wagons to bog and even as late as 1919 taking two and half days to get to Mallacoota from Orbost. In 1913 members of the Country Roads Board visited East Gippsland and remarked upon the state of the roads particularly east of Orbost which little more than trackless, but as usual nothing was done for this part of Gippsland and finally in 1967 the Princes Highway east of Orbost was sealed.

The means of travelling along the roads in the 1800's was by bullock wagon, horse pulled dray, pack horse and simply by foot. Then the motor



FIG. 2: THE ROAD NEAR HOSPITAL CREEK

The above photograph shows conditions between Nowa Nowa and Orbost — about 1918 [2 years after era]. The unfortunate motorists are attempting to extricate their car by using a Spanish Windlass.

car came along although in the period under discussion this had very little impact on the Orbost Area. Probably the first truck brought into the area was a Willys for the Herbert family <sup>(1)</sup>, but a very interesting article appeared in the 'Snowy River Mail' in 1911 when a Mr Burnside of the Daimler Co tried to influence the townsfolk



Main Street, Orbost, in the early eighties.  
HARDLY A SPEEDWAY!



This picture was taken in the Main Street of Orbost, probably about 1907, building to the rear of the buggy is the Orbost Post Office.

NOT MUCH IMPROVEMENT!

into purchasing a Daimler Road Train. I have not been able to find any photographs of this wonder so will describe it verbatim from the Newspaper article:- "Road Train is a French invention consisting of a locomotor of 100 horse power, and cars or followers up to four each of which is capable of carrying 7 tons. The locomotor does not merely haul the cars but supplies the power to each car which enables it to propel itself. In the Renard system which is utilised in the D.R.T. the last truck does as much as the first one consequently should the motor stick in the bog it would be driven forward by the

<sup>(1)</sup> An article written for the "Australian Motorist" - July 1st 1915.

back cars. Every car runs on 6 wheels which reduces the wear and tear on the road. The cars follow in the track of the leading vehicle and can be turned in a circle having a diameter of less than 20 feet." Truly a remarkable thing. I also could not find any buying one of these contraptions which were supposed to be world wide. This vehicle was to meet the needs of Orbost until the Railway arrived.

The dreadful state of the roads was the more reason for the lobbying for the extension of the Railway to Orbost and thus the three R's interlock poor road feeds river traffic which in turn is hazardous and brings need for efficient transport which in those days was Railways.



A loaded Pack-horse



A Buckboard



Bullock Team

**To be continued in November Newsletter  
The Third 'R' - Railway**