

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



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<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	John Phillips

## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 2010

This Newsletter returns to the series based on the formation and development of the Orbost Shire and deals with the pre-Orbost Shire period when the Snowy River and Bendoc Ridings were part of the Tambo Shire.

### TAMBO SHIRE 1882-1892 — PART 3



The reading of the Tambo Shire Council minutes from 1882 to 1892 reveals a great deal of historical information. The minutes record many of the hardships faced by the inhabitants of the time, and the problems which confronted them as they endeavoured to survive these difficult times.

Roads were just bush tracks which generally were unsuitable for any type of vehicular traffic so were traversed mainly by horseback. The Shire councillors from the Snowy River and Bendoc ridings had to travel to Bruthen for Council meetings. After the Bendoc riding was added to the Tambo Shire in 1885 meetings were then held on the Friday preceding the full moon to give extra moonlight for the councillors riding home after Council meeting days.

Punts were the method of crossing major rivers, bridges came later. Postal services were irregular and communication non-existent. The elected council representatives endeavoured to improve these services for their constituents.

#### SHIRE OF TAMBO

##### Result of first Election

There being no contest for the Snowy River Riding, Messrs James Cameron, Charles Henry Grove and William Watt, were declared elected on the 14th January 1882.

Representatives for the Bruthen, Bumberrah and Buchan Ridings were declared duly elected on the 23rd February 1882:

##### First Meeting

The first meeting on the newly constituted Council was held at Bruthen on 15th March 1882, when Cr John Merry (Bruthen Riding) was duly elected the inaugural President.

William Watt was not in attendance at the first meeting.

Cr James Cameron successfully moved that the day of meeting be the first Friday of every month. It was also decided that the meetings be held at Bruthen.

##### Appointment of Officers

At the April meeting Thomas Telfer Stirling was appointed Valuer, Rate Collector and Collector of Statistics at a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds Stg. per annum, and James P. Wilson was appointed Supervisor of Shire Works at the rate of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

##### New Road Cunninghame to Newmerella

At the first meeting, on 15th March, Cr Charles Grove furnished a notice of motion that the Supervisor be instructed to report on clearing of a new road from Newmerella to the Lakes Entrance. This was formalised at the April Council meeting when Cr Grove

moved a motion where the Supervisor was instructed to report on the clearing and making passable the new road from Cunninghame to Newmerella.

The Supervisor (James P. Wilson), who commenced duty on the 17th April, and had only been on the job for 8 days when he reported to an adjourned meeting on April 25th that he had not had time to inspect the track from Newmerella to Cunninghame but would do so as soon as possible.

At the June meeting Cr Grove moved that tenders be called for necessary works to make passable the new road from Newmerella to Cunninghame but, as cost was doubtful, Cr Cameron moved that the Supervisor report as to cost at the next meeting. Cr Grove also gave notice of motion that tenders be called for making the necessary Bridges to complete the road from Newmerella to Lake Tyers - such tenders to be returnable by August.

The Supervisor reported to the July meeting that he estimated the cost of the road from Lake Tyers to Newmerella, including culverts, at £112.

In September Cr John Merry was re-elected President for a second term and the Supervisor reported that he had prepared plans, etc., for clearing and culverts on the new road from Newmerella to Lake Tyers. The tenders received were:

Hospital Creek Log roadway & Culvert:  
Stirling & Bulmer £75  
Wombat Creek Culvert: Stirling & Bulmer £25  
Clearing Lake Tyers to Snowy River:  
Stirling & Bulmer £24.10

As these were the only tenders submitted they were accepted on the motion of Cr Cameron seconded by Cr Grove.



Mr Albert Coulson's Coach endeavouring to negotiate an obstacle on the Cunninghame to Newmerella Road

At the December Council meeting the Supervisor reported that the contractors on the Snowy River Road were progressing satisfactorily but had been detained in their works by the late rains. So when Stirling & Bulmer requested a one month's extension of time to finish their contracts their request was granted.

The Supervisor was requested to report as to the cost of culverts over Simpsons and Swamp Creeks on the Snowy River Road. He reported back to the January 1883 meeting that his estimate of a log roading over

Simpsons Creek and backwater to be £18—, and the cost of a culvert and approaches for Swamp Creek was estimated at £30. When William Bulmer submitted the only tender of £50, for making two crossings at Simpsons Creek and one at Swamp Creek, it was accepted.

#### **Newmerella Mail**

Cr James Cameron moved a motion at the April 1882 Council meeting, which was seconded by Cr Ronald McDougall (Bruthen Riding) and carried, that the Council support a memorial for a bi-weekly mail service from Cunninghame to Newmerella.

It took until May 1883 before a reply was received from the Deputy Postmaster-General promising to call tenders for a daily mail service to Bruthen and an increased frequency to Buchan and Newmerella.

#### **Rain Gauges**

Also at the April meeting on the motion of the President [Cr John Merry], the Secretary was instructed to apply to Mr Ellery for a rain gauge for each Riding of the Shire.

A letter was received in June from the Government Astronomy asking who would be in charge of the rain gauges. The Secretary was requested to inform Mr Ellery that Cr James Cameron would take charge of the Snowy River rain gauge. Other citizens were nominated to take charge of rain gauges to be located at Bruthen, Bumberrah and Buchan.

At the September meeting the Government Astronomer advised that the rain gauges were ready, and then provided the instructions for setting them up to the October meeting.

#### **Bendoc Road**

Cr C. Grove moved seconded by Cr Jas. Cameron that the department of Public Works be asked to proceed with opening a Road from Orbost to Bendoc.

A letter received from the Department of Public Works and tabled at the June meeting in relation to the Orbost and Bendoc road informed the Council that work outside the municipal boundary would be proceeded with when funds were voted. It took until May 1883 before further correspondence was received when the Hon. The Commissioner of Public Works stated that favourable consideration would be given to applications for £350 for the Orbost to Bendoc Road.

#### **Orbost Punt**

In April 1883, Cr James Cameron moved, seconded by Cr Watt and carried, that the Government be asked to revolt funds for establishing a punt on the Snowy River at Orbost.

A ferry was, at this time, operating on the Snowy River at Turnback (McKellar's Crossing), in the vicinity of today's McKillop's Bridge. A letter from Josiah W Heath in relation to this ferry was received by the Council stating that fares would have to be raised if the ferry was not subsidised. A motion was passed that Mr Heath again be informed that this Council is not prepared to subsidise the Ferry in question.

Orbost Ferry: At the October 1883 Council meeting,

Cr Grove moved, seconded by Cr James Cameron and carried, that tenders be called for the construction of a punt at Orbost Snowy River. At the November meeting the Supervisor reported that in reference to the punt at Orbost he did not include the approaches in the contract inasmuch as they would likely cost about half as much as the punt.



The Snowy River Punt at Orbost

The only tender received for the construction of the Snowy River Punt at Orbost was: F. Smith £125—. The tender was accepted on the motion of Cr Grove, seconded by Cr. O'Rourke.

Then at the November meeting Cr Grove moved, seconded by Cr John Cameron, that plans, etc. be prepared for making approaches to the proposed ferry site at Orbost. The Supervisor reported to the December meeting that he had prepared the plans for the approaches to the new punt at Newmerella, and at the January 1884 meeting tenders were called for making approaches to the Ferry site at Orbost. Three tenders were received: Geo Horton & Co. £70—, Jas Anderson £91-10—, and John McLean £145—. The lowest tender was accepted on the motion of Cr James Cameron, seconded by Cr Grove.



This Punt was the only means of crossing the Snowy River at Orbost until the first bridge was built in 1890.

#### Reserve at Orbost

At the May Council meeting, Cr Cameron moved, seconded by Cr Grove, and carried, that application be made to have 20 acres of land south of the Orbost Crossing at Snowy River reserved for Public purposes.

A letter received from the Lands Department and tabled at the July Council meeting stated that land would be reserved at Orbost Crossing as desired by the Council.

#### Burn's Hill

Cr Cameron moved, seconded by Cr Grove and carried, that the Supervisor have the new cutting at Burn's Hill made passable and in conjunction with Snowy River members have power to expend a sum not exceeding two pounds for the purpose.

The Supervisor reported back to the June meeting that he had examined the cutting at Burns Hill, Newmerella, and that one of the bends in this work required a further expenditure of 35/- to make it fit for traffic. He also reported that it would take the contractor 3 weeks in which to finish the work with the present number of hands employed. The matter was left to the Snowy River members (councillors) to deal with.

The contractor, Mr James A. Robertson forwarded a letter to the council in September regarding the works at Burn's Hill. It was resolved that Mr Robertson be referred to the Bairnsdale Shire Council and that the Council be informed that the works have been executed in a satisfactory manner.



The Road down Burn's Cutting at Newmerella

#### Newmerella to Buchan Road

Also at the May meeting Cr Grove proposed a notice of motion that ten pounds be spent to have a road marked from Newmerella to Buchan via Tarra Range.

The proposal was confirmed at the June Council meeting on the motion of Cr Grove seconded by Cr

Bowie when the Buchan and Snowy River members were authorised to offer ten pounds for a passable road from Buchan to Newmerella.

Frederick Mundy's request at the March 1883 meeting, asking for £10—, for marking a road from Buchan to the Snowy River was referred to the Buchan and Snowy River councillors.

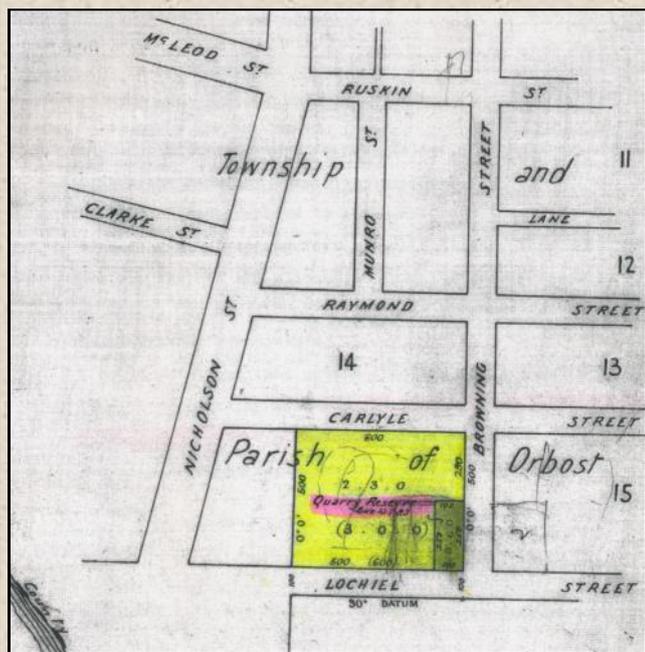
Three items of interest were discussed at the Council meeting held on 4th August 1882:

- Quarry reserve at Orbost,
- Township at Wat Wat, and
- Telegraph to Orbost.

### Orbost Quarry Reserve

Cr James Cameron moved, seconded by Cr Watt that 3 acres of land at Orbost be reserved as a Quarry reserve. The Department of Crown Lands and Survey, at the September meeting, requested that the Quarry reserve at Orbost be marked on the plan, then in November advised the Council that the site for quarry purposes at Orbost would be reserved.

The Land Officer at Bairnsdale requested £2-3-11 in survey fees for the Quarry reserve at Orbost, which was duly paid.



Location of the 3 acre Quarry Reserve site at Orbost

### Wat Wat Township

Appropriately Cr Watt moved and Cr Grove seconded that the land between O'Dear and Robinson on the Snowy River at Wat Wat be reserved as a site for a township.

### Telegraph to Orbost

Cr Grove moved, seconded by Cr James Cameron and carried that telegraphic communication be extended coastwise from Cunninghame to Orbost and thence to Bendoc.

At the September meeting correspondence was received from the General Post Office regarding the telegraph to Orbost but no other details are given.

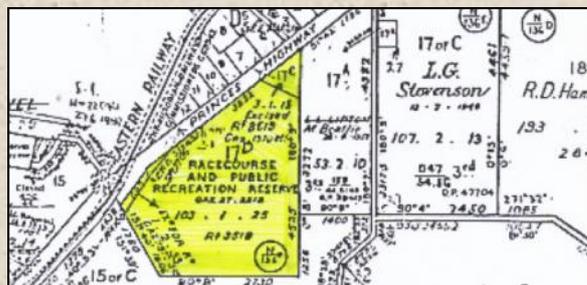
### Steam Pilot and Tug Boat

In September 1882 the attention of the Hon. the Commissioner of Trade and Customs was directed to the necessity for a steam pilot and tug boat being placed at Lakes Entrance to assist vessels there and at the Snowy River.

The Trades and Customs Department reply was received in April 1883 to inform that the establishment of a Pilot and Tug Boat should be left to private enterprise.

### Newmerella Reserve

The Shire had requested an area of land be reserved for Public purposes at Newmerella. At the October 1882 meeting two pieces of correspondence was received from the Lands Department - one stating that land at Newmerella was being reserved as required, and the other stating that about 120 acres of land was reserved at Newmerella as desired.



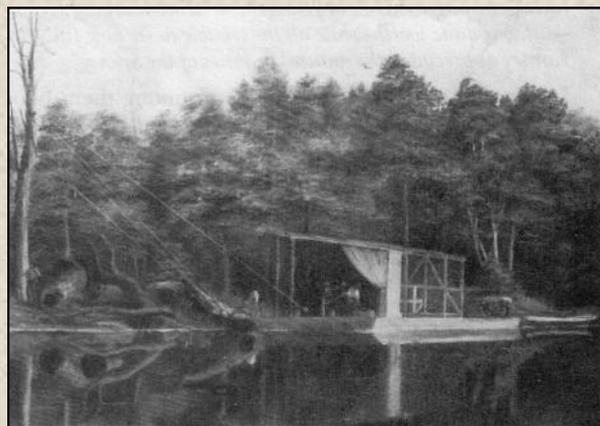
### Councillors Resign

At the November 1882 meeting, Councillor Robert McKie (Buchan riding) tendered his resignation from Council, however it was resolved on the motion of Cr John O'Brien (Bumberrah riding) and Cr Charles Grove (Snowy River riding) that no action be taken. Cr McKie must have had a change of mind as when he submitted a letter requesting permission to withdraw his resignation to the December meeting permission was granted.

However when Cr William Watt (Snowy River riding) tendered his resignation at the same (December) meeting it was accepted.

### Clearing Snowy River of Snags

Cr James Cameron moved at the February 1883 meeting, seconded by Cr Duncan Johnston (Bruthen Riding) that the Hon. the Commissioner of Public Works be asked to have the Snowy River cleared of Snags as far as navigable.



Snagging on the Snowy River near Marlo in 1885