

Bushfires Recorded In The Eurobodalla Almanac Until 1968

The Almanac is published by the Moruya & District Historical Society Inc.

1865 BUSHFIRES in September.

1870 DROUGHT and BUSHFIRES until rains in April.

1871 GARLANDTOWN -September -Bushfires.

1882 BUSHFIRES -January -GLEN DUART, KIORA, MOGGENDOURA, MERRICUMBENE and other areas in danger from severe bushfires which came in the middle of a long drought. Enormous damage.

1885 BUSHFIRES.

1895 BUSHFIRES - September - MORUYA district. BUSHFIRES - GARLANDTOWN, BUCKENBOURA, MYNORA badly affected.

1903 BATEMANS BAY area -Bushfires.

1904 BUCKENBOURA - Bushfires - Eleven houses destroyed. Families did not return to Buckenboursa.

1905 DANGEROUS BUSHFIRES -New Year's Day -Throughout the whole district from mountains to sea. Heavy stock and property losses.

1908 BUSHFIRES in district. The Annual Show had to be abandoned.

1909 NERRIGUNDAH -Bushfire. Town saved with some difficulty.

1919 NAROOMA, WAGONGA, GLEN DUART and MOGGENDOURA districts badly damaged by bushfire.

1928 BUSHFIRES near MORUYA.

1929 BUSHFIRES - From Braidwood, through the Araluen Valley to the coast. MORUYA and GUNDARY in serious danger. BODALLA threatened by a separate bushfire at the same time.

1939 BUSHFIRE BRIGADES - After the devastating fires at Nelligen, volunteer bushfire brigades were formed at NELLIGEN and MORUYA. Brigades were later formed in other centres. Until after the fires of 1965 these volunteers functioned with very little equipment.

1949 NAROOMA - Bush Fire Brigade started in a small way. The fire trails opened in forests during following years were of tremendous help during the 1952 fires.

1952 SERIOUS BUSHFIRES throughout shire in January.

1953 BUSHFIRES destroyed vast areas in October.

1954 BATEMANS BAY - Fire Brigade established.

1957 BELOWRA -Fire on a 50 mile front swept through the area causing much damage.

1965 EXTENSIVE BUSHFIRES in many parts of the Shire during March and September.

BUSHFIRE BRIGADES - In conjunction with State Bushfire Control authorities, Shire bushfire brigades became better equipped, with a radio network, safety clothing, modern vehicles, etc. Fire prevention methods were up-dated and fire trails formed.

1968 DROUGHT -Shire wide water restrictions implemented. BUSHFIRES -State of Emergency declared in September. During October fires spread throughout the Shire. Arthur Bunt granted a British Empire Medal in connection with the rescue of two fire-fighters caught at LARRY'S MOUNTAIN.

Note: During 1860's and 70's very few local Moruya Examiner newspapers have survived and some are missing from the 1880's.

Disastrous Bushfires in Moruya January 1884

By Shirley Jurmann

Bushfires around Moruya in December, January and February are not uncommon. A look back through various newspapers will show how frequently they appear.

January 1884 seems to have been a particularly bad year. Temperatures all along the coast were the highest ever remembered by old inhabitants. Fires stretched all along the east coast of NSW with only small gaps in between. Many persons lost all their worldly possessions and barely escaped with their lives.

At the beginning of the month newspaper reports began appearing about bushfires raging around the Moruya area. Violent hot winds had blown until about 3 pm on one particular day, destroying much valuable property and miles of fencing. A southerly arrived causing the winds to change direction suddenly, saving many buildings which had been in danger but causing other problems. When the fires passed it was discovered that Mr Heffernan had lost many out buildings but the house was saved. Mr Thomas Emmott had also lost outbuildings and four pigs were roasted alive. With the assistance of neighbours he was able to keep the flames from the house. Martin Fogarty's house with all its contents was burnt to the ground. Goodin and Son's sawmill at Glenduart was in great danger. Mr C. McIntosh's premises nearly caught fire several times but these fires were put out. Mr C. Crapp lost outhouses containing 550 bushels of maize and farming equipment. A large area of grass land was also burnt. A number of other disasters were reported.

On Monday 7th January about 9am a very strong north west wind again sprang up. All the old fires which had nearly died out were reignited and several new ones started up. Soon after the whole place for many miles around was in flames. At Turlinjah Mr William Keyes suffered great loss. The flames enveloped his dwelling so suddenly that nothing could be saved. Even a goat could not be freed in time and was quickly roasted. Fire got into the scrub at Mr Mylott's farm at Tuross Head and also burnt the dividing fence between Mr Mylott's and Mr E. Hawdon's properties. Mr McLean's house was saved with great difficulty but all his grass was destroyed.

Mr Robert Anderson and about 15 other men set out to help fight fires at Cooboora, Mr Thomas Emmott's property, which had been damaged earlier. The wind reignited the fire and unburnt portions of paddocks were burnt. Despite their efforts the fire crossed the main Bodalla road into the Noggerula area, setting fire to Milligan's place which was completely burnt out. Nothing was left of the homestead but a few stones from the homestead chimneys. Mr Anderson and the men rode as fast as they could gallop but the fire reached Bergalia, a distance of about 1 ½ miles but were unable to save barns, stables, yards etc. with all their contents, including hay, farming implements, buggy and cart, harness etc. being lost. Several times dwelling houses, the cheese factory and other buildings were ignited but were saved. A large group of men worked continually to save the Bergalia Post Office and dwelling. The fire then swept around, destroying another house and threatening another. It then roared on to the coast causing a great deal of damage to settlements in its path. The wind then changed to a south easterly direction towards Mr Anderson's property Lake View, two miles from Bergalia, where it came to within a short distance of new buildings there. The wind became more southerly which fortunately saved everything except the fencing and about two thirds of the grass. At Bergalia the extensive milking bails caught fire at least 60 times from embers falling from neighbouring trees and was only saved by the unremitting exertions of Mr J.C. Anderson, the manager, and some of the station hands. Bergalia is the property of H. Clarke Esq. M.P. The residence, cheese room and buggy were saved. Mr Spear, near the public school at Bergalia, lost his milking bails and barn. The extreme efforts of the school master, Mr Lear, his son and some visitors, saved the school, the teacher's residence and its fences. The Bergalia sawmill was in extreme danger all day for all the trees for many miles around were burning and the high wind was sending embers in all directions. Parts of the road between Moruya and Turlinjah were strewn with boxes, furniture and



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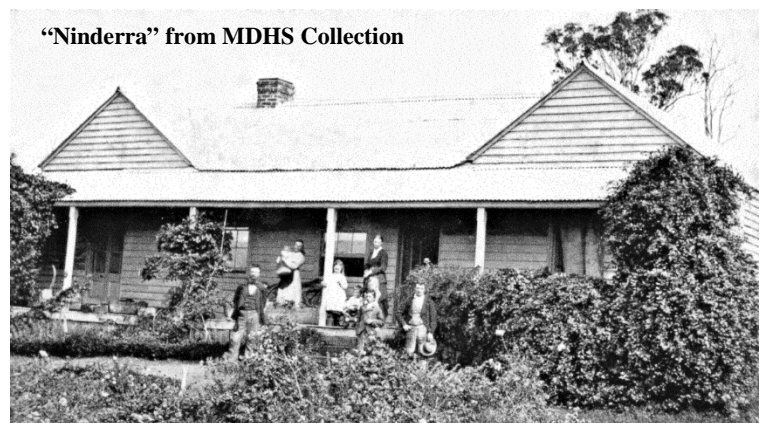
bedding as people fled from their homes with what they could carry. Some elderly and infirm were hastily removed from harm in carts. No lives had been lost.

At one stage it was feared the fires would engulf the Mort Estate at Bodalla but it was saved with only minor damage.

The Kiora and Wamban areas were hard hit. Another disastrous fire broke out on the same day at Mungerarie, the property of Mrs W.T. Collett. It was fanned by a strong north wind. The fire spread over the country with great walls of flames, destroying everything before its path, including pigs in their styes before they could be freed, and incinerating two valuable horses. All of Mrs Collett's furniture, other goods and buggy were taken down to the sand by the river where she sheltered expecting to see her home go. The house was saved mainly by the efforts of the family, including daughters, Mr Davis and Davey, the groom, and many townspeople who came to help, although the fire came within 50 yards up behind the house. A great deal of fencing and grass land was lost. One of the Collett farms tenanted by Mr W. Lavis was completely destroyed, with the house, furniture, barns and other outbuildings burnt to the ground. The barn contained a large quantity of grain and farming implements of considerable value. On another Collett farm the tenant, Mr William Taylor lost everything except the house. As the fire was approaching Mr Taylor dragged all his furniture out and placed it in a field of green corn but flying embers ignited some of the bedding and the lot was burnt. The barn and other outbuildings had contained about 1150 bushels of grain as well as valuable farming equipment such as winnowing machines, chaffcutters, ploughs, harrows etc. Also lost was a large new dray purchased only a few days before the fire. Mrs W. Hawdon, lying ill in bed, had to be removed to the river as flames were leaping over her house. All the Kiora people had to take what belongings they could and shelter in the river bed. Mr Benjamin Collett was burnt out. In trying to save some of his things his beard caught fire and he lost most of it. Passengers on the mail coach from Araluen to Moruya had a narrow escape. The bush on both sides of the road was ablaze. In a narrow cutting on one section they came across hundreds of marsupials, many scorched, looking for escape from the flames. As the mail coach approached the frightened animals scattered left and right, some even leaping back into the flames. The driver, with the assistance of passengers, had to cut away smaller obstacles but in places the trees over the road were of such huge proportions that the coach had to be lifted over or around them.

Great damage was done to Mr Stephen's property at The Burra and Mr Ling also suffered losses. Embers were carried to Yarragee a mile and a half away. The residence of Mr Luck caught fire several times but fortunately was soon under control with little damage. The worry was that if the fire took hold at Yarragee the whole town would be in danger of being wiped out. Some of the out buildings and milking shed near the residence of Mr W. Flanagan of Shannon View were destroyed. Mr W.H. Simpson, Esq. J.P. of Ninderra had great difficulty in saving his place. A large party fought to keep the flames back while everything in the house was being removed. Fortunately they were able to prevent the fire destroying the house.

Wires and pole were damaged so there was no telegraphic communication for several days. The road between Moruya and Bateman's Bay was cut owing to the danger of trees falling across the road. The Araluen Road was closed for some time also due to the same danger. Bridges and culverts were burnt out. The country all around presented a picture of desolation. The high winds blew several roofs off in the town. Mr Lawler and Mr Gildea had their premises damaged and the Bank of New South Wales also suffered. Due to the violence of the gale it was considered too dangerous to cross the bridge. The whole town was shrouded in smoke and immense columns of smoke were visible to the south and west. There was no sign of rain and until there were decent falls there would be no safety. Water and feed were now very scarce. Cattle were wandering around looking for grass. Local inhabitants cannot remember a time previously in Moruya of such ruin and desolation.



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