

THE BARCALDINE FIRE.

Interesting Interview.

(From Our Barcardine Correspondent)

I sent you a fairly full and comprehensive telegram of our latest disaster on Tuesday morning, 29th October, and one which will put back the progress of the town for years, but a few further details and a chat with Mr. J. Meacham, one of the oldest residents along the line, and backed up with photos of the scene of the fire, may be found interesting.

Mr. Meacham said Mrs. Meacham called him and said, "The store's on fire," and he noticed the hands of his watch marked 3.30. When he saw the Exchange building was well alight he lost no time with assistance in emptying the office of books and papers, which were conveyed to safety by the firm's motor vehicles. At this time there was no chance of saving anything in the furniture department, adjoining which were double doors and a passage they dividing off the main shop from the building, which was in a way isolated, a large yard space being in the rear, on which fortunately no timber was stacked. The fire burnt vigorously and soon licked up the valuable furniture of which there

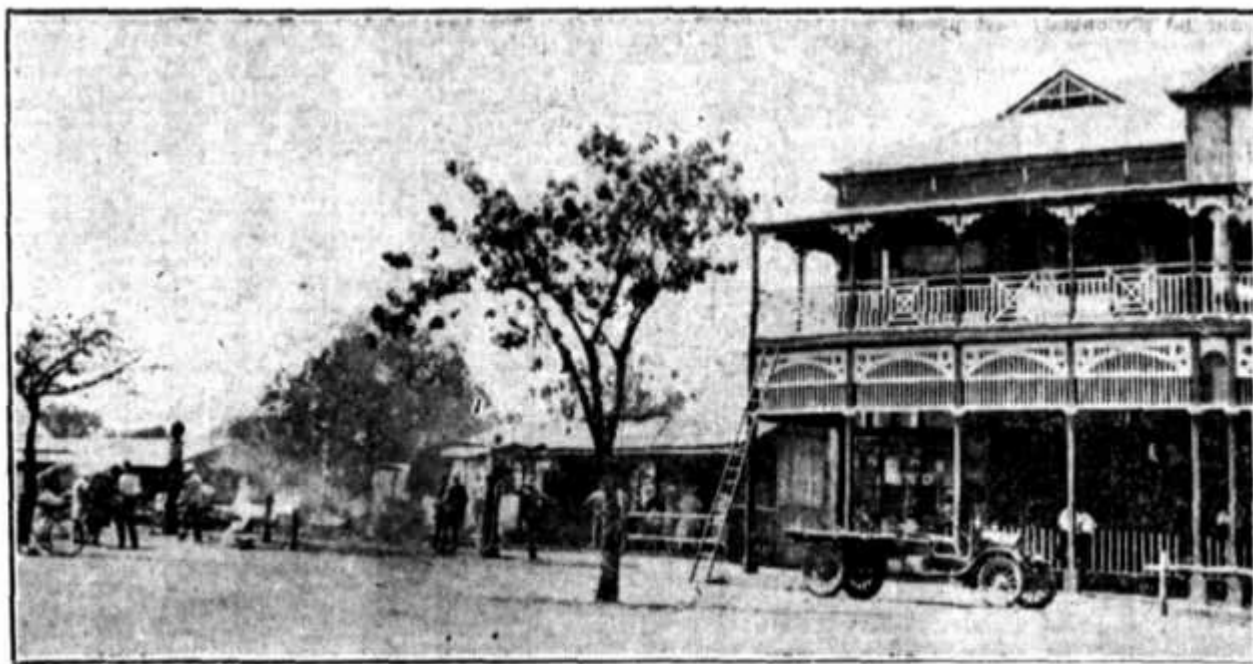


The Business Section of Oak-street, Barcardine, the damage by fire amounting to £15,000. The Railway Hotel and Exchange Hotel were burnt to the ground and Parnell's general stores. The photo shows the East end save of Meacham and Leyland's store, the furniture portion being destroyed.

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Front View showing the charred stumps of verandah posts..



The Royal Hotel at the right had a lucky escape.

was a large assortment, including lino goods, just to hand, and ice chests. The Fire Brigade put in excellent work here and made the utmost use of the passage, with the result that the fire proceeded no further in this direction. Mr. Meacham estimates his loss at

proceeded no further in this direction. Mr. Meacham estimates his loss at between £1100 and £1200, and the total insurance on the furniture, building, and stock was only £400, in the Norwich Union Fire Office, England, which did not cover invoice cost of the lino, and other goods just installed. Nothing in the large retail

of the line, and other goods just installed. Nothing in the large retail premises was injured in any way.

The fire removes another of the old central line buildings. I understand the premises originally belong to Francis Tagg (formerly Fox and Tagg)

and Arthur Parnell, who carried on a mixed store and forwarding agency business, and were moved along the line as it advanced to Bogantungan. When the line went over the range, Fred Jungmann, who did a lot of contracting in those days, and for whom Mr. Meacham eventually removed the building to Pine Hill, from where it was taken as it stood, on wheels further along the line. The building was eventually moved to Barcaldine, where it was occupied by Mr. W. Eastlake, solicitor, and later by Mr. R. F. Lyons, solicitor, when he commenced the practice of his profession in Barcaldine.

The destruction of Parnell's store removes another old time warrior, and indeed Savage's stores are the only business buildings left of the early days of settlement along the central railway line. Parnell's was a household word from Copperfield days; indeed the old "Champion" office was Parnell's store at Clermont. The buildings escaped the big Pine Hill fire, but had a narrow escape some ten years after Barcaldine blossomed forth as a town. About 2.30 on the afternoon of Boxing Day, 1896, a fire broke out in the Railway Hotel, kept by the Lennon family, caused by a man throwing down a lighted match, which caught a quan-

tity of paper and rubbish underneath the building, and a big flare up was the result. Most of the residents were away at Lagoon Creek at the time taking part in the first Salvation Army picnic, but there were enough people in the street to fight the fire until assistance arrived. In those days there was only 100 feet fire hose and a small manual engine, but an old Berlin fireman named Harry Grimm, took charge of affairs and although he gave his orders in German everybody appeared to understand them, and obeyed them. Harry sat astride the roof of Parnell's and prevented the fire going west. As a further precaution a small shop adjoining the Royal Hotel was pulled down,

Eastwardly the fire burned, snapping Francis's Hall, a couple of stores, a small two-storey hotel kept by Mr. E. A. Peel, and Dick Hoskin's saddler's shop. The detached dwelling house occupied by the Hoskin family, was quite close to Messrs. Meacham and Leyland's workshop, and was destroyed. Between Mr. Hoskin's and Meacham and Leyland's was a space, and here a determined fight was put up, the fire being successfully stayed by the use of French garden sprays, which threw quite a force from a bucket of water. In due time the ground was again built on, being occupied by two two-storey hotels and shops. It was just at about 4 a.m. on the 3rd November, 1927, when a fire broke out in the storeroom of the Exchange Hotel, and it and the Railway Hotel adjoining, and Mr. J. S. Jackson's shop was destroyed. Parnell's had a particularly close shave, as the flames had actually entered the store from the south-eastern corner. Meacham and Leyland had bed-linen and furniture destroyed, chiefly by smoke and water.

And now comes the greatest disaster of all in this block, by which two hotels, a store, and three shops were burned out. The Royal Hotel undoubtedly escaped destruction due to the outer walls of this massive wooden

building being externally sheathed with iron.

At a meeting of members of Loyal Barcaldine Lodge, held on Wednesday evening, October 30th, reference was made to the great loss sustained by Bro. Parnell in the fire on Tuesday morning, and a message of sympathy with the firm was unanimously carried. In conveying the resolution, the Secretary (Bro. C. J. James) wrote that members hoped, like the Phoenix, Parnell's would rise from the ashes more prosperous than ever before, and that the "auld hoose" with its old associations would give place to a modern building worthy of such an important centre as Barcaldine.

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