

Construction of Railway Station at Barcaldine.

Disastrous Fire in Early Morning.

Fire Brigade's Good Work.

Refreshment Room and Goods Shed Saved.

The railway station building at Barcaldine was totally destroyed by fire early last Sunday morning, June 18th, the alarm being sounded at about 3.15, by which time the building was burning furiously at the western end. The Fire Brigade was promptly on the scene, but the fire had such a hold that the firemen had little chance of doing anything beyond preventing a spread of the flames to the refreshment room, on the eastern end, and the goods shed. Both these buildings were saved, and so far as the refreshment room is concerned—it is only about thirty feet away from the main office—the Brigade effected a good save. Had the unfortunate accident to the suction hose not occurred, it is possible the Brigade might have saved the office. However, the suction pipe from the hydrant burst, and it was necessary to attach the hoses to the hydrant and work from the main direct. Until this accident happened there was a terrific pressure of water, and it

a terrific pressure of water, and it was really not too bad afterwards. Chief Officer Williams ran out two lengths of hose, attacking the fire from both ends of the goods shed—200ft. in all. The heat was terrific, and the firemen were compelled to utilize wet bags over their heads when attacking the fire from the front. Fortunately, the wind was favorable and the flames were blown mainly away from the goods shed, which is connected by an arch to the main building. Heavy rafters of the arch ignited, but the creeping flames were speedily quenched. The fire was eventually got in hand, but not before the main building had been gutted, only the badly burnt walls of the eastern section remaining. The contents were practically all destroyed, including the telegraphic instruments, telephones, &c., and a large number of parcels.

The fire undoubtedly started in the western end of the building in a small room at the rear of the ladies' waiting room. In this room,

ladies' waiting room. In this room was stored a number of bags of corn and chaff, and it is thought that spontaneous combustion was the cause of the outbreak. The flooring boards of this room were completely burnt, only the joists remaining. This room was attached to another room, in which a lot of records were stored, and it is presumed that when the fire broke through the partition, and these paper documents were ignited the fire spread rapidly. The railway staff was at the station up to a late hour on Saturday afternoon and Constables Jensen and O'Connor visited the station before going off duty at midnight the previous night. Nothing in the way of fire was noticed then. There are no suspicious circumstances, and it seems quite probable that spontaneous combustion was the cause of the fire.

A special train running from

Alpha to Longreach, manned by J. E. Palmer (engine driver), F. J. Pellin (fireman), and Albert Brumm (guard), was due to arrive at about the time the fire occurred. The train crew had a bit of trouble with the Westinghouse brake about six miles from town and they noticed the glare as soon as they started again after effecting repairs. As they approached the town they blew the whistle continuously. Quite a lot of townspeople heard this whistle, but just thought it was a special train coming in in the usual way. Mr Stanley

Carey, at the Commercial Hotel, however, was awakened and he noticed the fire and immediately gave the alarm from the siren switch in Oak-street. When the siren screeched forth its dread alarm people flocked towards the fire from all directions. Residents in the outside areas were sure it was in the main street block, the fire being located at either the Royal Hotel, Meacham & Leyland's, or Kuder's. However, there was some relief when it was discovered that it was on the other side of the line. Hundreds of people were soon assembled in the vicinity of the fire, and it was not very long before the building was demolished.

The station building presented a sorry sight when daylight broke. A number of books and records had been gathered from the debris, and although these were badly burnt and water-damaged the officials said they would be very useful, as they were mostly decipherable. The ticket cabinet was burnt beyond recognition, while the remains of C.O.D. and other parcels were strewn all over the place. The contents of the safe (including some money) were intact, which was a great relief to Mr. Egan, Acting Station Master, when he opened it. As showing the intense heat, the weights on the scales on the verandah and the brass handbell were melted up into solid masses. The refreshment room, beyond being charred on the western side, was quite all right. The stock, of course, had been removed while the station building

moved while the station building was burning.

On Monday morning the office staff took up its quarters in the goods shed. Telegraphic connection was soon established again and the line was open almost immediately. Business was carried on as usual under the best conditions possible in the unfortunate circumstances.

Particulars as to value of parcels destroyed, &c., are not available, but until arrangements are made for re-building business will be conducted in the goods shed.

It is hoped that the Department will now favorably consider the matter of re-erecting the station on the southern side of the line, as has been agitated for for a number of years. In this connection a

public meeting, convened by the Chairman of the Shire Council, will be held in the Shire Hall on Monday night next to consider the matter of petitioning the Commissioner to select a site on the southern side of the line for the new station.