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FORECAST.—Fine; moderate temperatures; southerly winds.

BRITISH AIR MISSION — PAGE 8.

# The



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### 109.6 DEG. IN CITY HOTTEST IN 33 YEARS

Melbourne's million people sweltered yesterday in the city's hottest day for 33 years. The maximum temperature was 109.6 degrees, the highest since January 23, 1906, when the same temperature was recorded.

The whole of south-eastern Australia was affected by the heat wave, temperatures in each of the three capital cities passing the century mark. Adelaide and Canberra each recorded a maximum of 108deg. Even Hobart reported 90deg.

Towns in northern Victoria experienced the heat first on Saturday, when thermometers showed 100deg or more, and almost throughout the State yesterday similar temperatures were recorded.

The hottest town in Victoria was Sea Lake with 115deg. Except for a similar reading in 1906, Melbourne's 109.6deg. yesterday was the highest since January 19, 1887, when the reading was 110.5deg.

The hottest day ever known in Melbourne was 111.2deg. on January 14, 1882. On December 12, 1876, the temperature in Melbourne was 110.7deg.

#### Rose Quickly

A remarkable feature of the heat in the city yesterday was the rapid rise in temperature in the morning. The maximum overnight temperature of 64.7deg. was recorded at 5 a.m., and was only a few degrees above normal.

By 9 a.m. however, the temperature had risen to 98.5deg., only 1.3deg. below the maximum temperature on January 1, the previous hottest day of the season.

Although the relative humidity was only 23 per cent, the hot north wind made conditions unpleasant and carried the heat indoors. By 3 p.m. the humidity was 33 per cent, still fairly low.

The maximum temperature was reached at 12.20 p.m., but a few minutes later the wind changed to the south and the temperature fell 2.5deg. in 90 minutes. However, it fell more steadily for the remainder of the day, with the wind still in the south.

(Hourly Readings—Page 2.)

## BUSH FIRES RAVAGE WIDE AREA

### 43 HOUSES BURNT AT DROMANA

### 1,000 FIGHT YALLOURN OUTBREAK

### MEN BURNED AT GARFIELD

FROM OUR SPECIAL REPORTERS

Yesterday was Victoria's Black Sunday. Destructive bush fires swept the greater part of the State, threatening life, destroying homes, fences, orchards, haystacks, and laying waste vast tracts of timber and grass lands.

With temperatures above the 100 mark and fierce winds blowing all over Victoria, only the western portion of the State escaped the devouring flames. Thousands fought the fires throughout the day and night.

Swept on to Dromana by a 40-mile-an-hour wind, the flames sent residents and holiday-makers fleeing to the safety of the beach. Forty-three houses were destroyed. Last night a whole section of the town was a heap of smouldering ruins.

The flames descended suddenly on the camps on the foreshore. The occupants were forced to take shelter in the sea while their temporary homes were demolished. Many of the occupants of the destroyed houses also narrowly escaped death. One, an 80-year-old crippled woman, had her hair singed before she was carried to safety.

The Rubicon power station and eight sawmills in the district are threatened. Six sawmills on Mt. Baw Baw are isolated by the fires which swept up the mountains.

Racing on a motor-cycle to fight a fire on their father's property at North Garfield, two young men were seriously burned. Their machine crashed into a burning fence and their clothes were ignited. They were rescued by another brother.

### 43 HOUSES LOST THREE-MILE FRONT TWO HOURS IN RIVER

#### Dromana Swept by Flame

Sweeping down upon the township of Dromana before a 40-mile-an-hour wind, a fierce fire destroyed 43 houses and sent hundreds of residents and holiday-makers fleeing to the safety of the beach.

Many persons had miraculous escapes from death, including a crippled woman aged 80 years, whose hair was singed before rescuers could carry her to safety.

The fire began about midday at the Heronwood property, formerly owned by Mr. Justice Higgins, in Barrett's road, at the foot of Arthur's Seat. The property is now occupied by Mr. W. A. Farquhar of Camberwell. The fire was noticed in one corner of the 35 acres of land near the house and driven by the gale swept along the foot of the mountain. When the wind changed to the south, it drove the fire without warning toward the town.

#### Radio S.O.S.

Urgent calls for help were broadcast by amateur station 3BH Mornington, owned by Mr. C. B. Whitehead, and hundreds of men were carried to the firefront in motor-trucks supplied by tradesmen. Practically every man in Dromana was fighting the flames, and reinforcements arrived from neighbouring towns, including many travellers, who left their motor-cars on the beach and joined the other fire-fighters.

There is no water supply in the area, and as many of the houses hold tanks were practically dry, the homes were at the mercy of the flames, which swept down from the foot of Arthur's Seat. The water shortage is acute, and the bush nursing hospital has been cutting supplies from Mornington, 11 miles away, for weeks. The fire-fighting committee has been cutting water from Bittern, 14 miles away, for the use of campers. A spring on the foreshore has run dry for the first time in 40 years.

**Left Without Clothes**  
Five residents lost their homes, and about 20 families who were on holiday in the district were left with nothing but the bathing costumes and wraps they were wearing on the beach when the fire occurred shortly after midday. They returned to their homes in various suburbs clad in bathing suits.

Practically all the camps along the foreshore were destroyed when the fire leaped Point Nepean road. The occupants had to take shelter in the sea. The fire burnt right to the water's edge, and property which had been stacked on the sand for safety was burnt.

#### Scene of Desolation

Last night a section of the Dromana township was a picture of desolation. The twisted iron of tanks and roofs lying amid the black debris of destroyed homes. Men were on duty guarding against fresh outbreaks, but there was little danger, as the fire had destroyed practically everything in its track.

(WIDESPREAD DAMAGE, PAGE 2)

### THREE-MILE FRONT OUTBREAK AT YALLOURN

Menaced by the worst bush fire in the history of Yallourn, the townships of Haunted Hills, Yallourn, and Brown Coal Mine, and the State Electricity Commission's power station and briquette factory were saved from destruction yesterday only by the united efforts of nearly 1,000 fire-fighters.

Many of the volunteers were brought from outlying districts to cope with the desperate emergency.

For more than a week a fire had been smouldering in the heavily timbered country to the west of Haunted Hills. When the northerly wind changed to the west yesterday morning the fire was revived and was soon burning fiercely on a front of nearly three miles.

Roaring over the tree-tops, the flames swept toward the Haunted Hills, across the main, Sale-Melbourne road and fire breaks, and up the gullies toward Yallourn. A house occupied by Mr. W. Toogood was destroyed.

Yallourn Fire Brigade, and hundreds of volunteers, turned out. Early in the afternoon the warning siren at the power station, which residents of Yallourn had not heard for years, was blown. Vehicles were commandeered to rush more volunteers to the fire front and soon every available piece of fire-fighting apparatus in the district was in use.

Shortly afterward the streets of the township were invaded by hundreds of terrified kangaroos and possums, fleeing from the flames.

The automatic sprinkling system in the open cut, designed to protect the coal face from fire by covering it with a thin film of water, was set in operation.

A dense pall of smoke hung over the township, obscuring the outlines of buildings.

Sparks were blown on to the powdered coal at the top of the steep haulage from the cut, and soon the sleepers were burning, but were quickly put out these flames.

To the west of the township the fire swept through thick timber toward the western camp, where nearly 800 employees of the commission live in weatherboard buildings.

A stack of about 500 tons of firewood owned by Mr. C. J. Pennington and another stack of 1,000 tons owned by Mr. H. Devine, a motor-trailer, and a number of tyres and other accessories were destroyed on the spot.

The flames were checked as they reached the walls of the western camp.

The direction of the wind changed slightly and blew the fire between the open cut and the briquette factory, where thousands of tons of briquettes were loaded on trucks awaiting transit.

About 4.30 p.m. when it seemed that despite all efforts heavy damage would be done, the wind changed to the south-west. The danger to Yallourn and the electricity works was immediately reduced, but at the expense of an additional threat to the residents at the Brown Coal Mine, about a mile and a half to the north.

### TWO HOURS IN RIVER Forest Men's Escape

For two hours early yesterday afternoon 11 forestry employees lay in the shallow water of the Bunyip River, near Beenak, while a terrific bush fire burnt over their heads.

So intense was the heat that they had to splash bilbies of water over the exposed parts of their bodies.

At first it was feared that the men had been trapped and incinerated. A dramatic car dash to Beenak was made by First-constable G. Kennedy, of Emerald. While blazing limbs fell on the rough bush track, Constable Kennedy and Mr. Wells of Baan's Corner travelled at high speed, stopping only to clear the road of fallen trees.

When Constable Kennedy arrived at the forestry employees' camp he found the men, their eyes red and snarling from smoke, heat, and nights without sleep, washing in front of their tents.

The men who suffered the ordeal are—

Messrs. W. L. Grigg (officer in charge of Dandenong Forest), O. F. Morris, C. Lawlor, W. Mason, H. Eckhardt, G. Golds, C. Benham, P. O'Hara, T. Howell, S. Ashford, and C. Wordsworth.

#### Wind Switches

Three fires were converging on a valuable face of young mountain ash near the head of the Bunyip River," said Mr. Grigg last evening, "and right through Saturday night we tried to save it. A chopping wind made the fire dangerous, but we did not leave the forest because we knew that in an emergency we could use the river."

"Then the wind switched round again, and the fire came straight at us, travelling at more than 10 miles an hour," he continued. "The river is about 10 feet wide at that place, but there was only six inches of water in it. My back and shoulders were sticking up out of the water, and I had to keep turning to keep each part cool. The fire was blazing all round us, and sparks and hot ashes were falling on us. We had to splash bilbies of water over ourselves to relieve the terrific heat. For two hours we lay in the water. When we saw that big trees were likely to fall into the river after the worst of the fire had passed, we walked five miles through hot embers to our camp."

At the height of the blaze the fire was leaping 500 yards at a time through the trees. C. Wordsworth escaped being trapped by seconds when he retrieved his coat and shirt from a sawdust heap at an abandoned mill near the Bunyip River. He had to run through flames.

It is feared that the young mountain ash has been destroyed. Many of the men had not slept since Thursday night, when they went out to try to save it.



WITHIN ONLY ONE HUNDRED YARDS OF THE POWERHOUSE AT YALLOURN, this bush fire swept through timbered country yesterday. Only the change in the direction of the wind saved the township from destruction.



TWISTED GALVANISED SHEETS WERE ALL THAT REMAINED OF Sister Rogerson's cottage after the fire had passed at Dromana yesterday. It was one of the 43 houses destroyed in the blaze. The picture shows the proximity of other houses which escaped the fire.



THEIR HOME REDUCED TO RUINS BY THE BUSH FIRE.—Mrs. A. Gribble and her two daughters, Jean and Eileen, surveying salvaged furniture after their home had been destroyed in the bush fire at Yallourn yesterday.

### HILL HOMES MENACED

#### Outbreaks in the Dandenongs

Smoke from many fires enveloped the Dandenong Ranges in a thick haze, but only one small house at Cockatoo was burnt.

Blazing strongly on the high ridge between Cockatoo and Gembrook, a fire yesterday morning destroyed the house of Mr. Helwell and scorched the house of Mr. L. Tompkins. Mr. Helwell's mother, who is aged 78 years, collapsed when the fire was at its height, and it was necessary to obtain stimulants from Gembrook.

Two other fires were still burning on the Pakenham road last night. Traffic was held up for some time in the morning, both on the Cockatoo-Pakenham and the Cockatoo-Gembrook roads.

At Fielder railway employees on the narrow gauge train had to extinguish burning sleepers before the train could proceed.

A large area of scrub country between Emerald and Cockatoo was swept by another fire. Falling limbs prevented cars from using the Emerald-Besconfield road in the morning.

The houses of Constable Crofts, M.L.C. Dr. Rechner, and Messrs. McDonald and Spay were threatened by a fire which spread from One Tree Hill toward Bittern road, Pakenham, last night. Traffic was held up for some time in the morning, both on the Cockatoo-Pakenham and the Cockatoo-Gembrook roads.

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