

# Foreword



THIS BOOKLET, describing the growth and development of the country districts of Victoria, has a double purpose. It is designed to tell the story—of necessity briefly—of one of the eight great districts into which Victoria is divided. It is also designed to remind a new generation of the great and dominant part played in this story by “The Age” throughout the 75 years of its far-sighted influence on public life. The pressure of to-day sometimes causes us to forget the debt due to yesterday. We reap the benefits of the successful striving and initiative of a great organ of public opinion, but forget the principles of policy upon which that striving and initiative are grounded.

The supreme service rendered by “The Age” is comprehended in the twin policies of “Unlocking the Lands for the People” and “Protection.” Each arose out of the

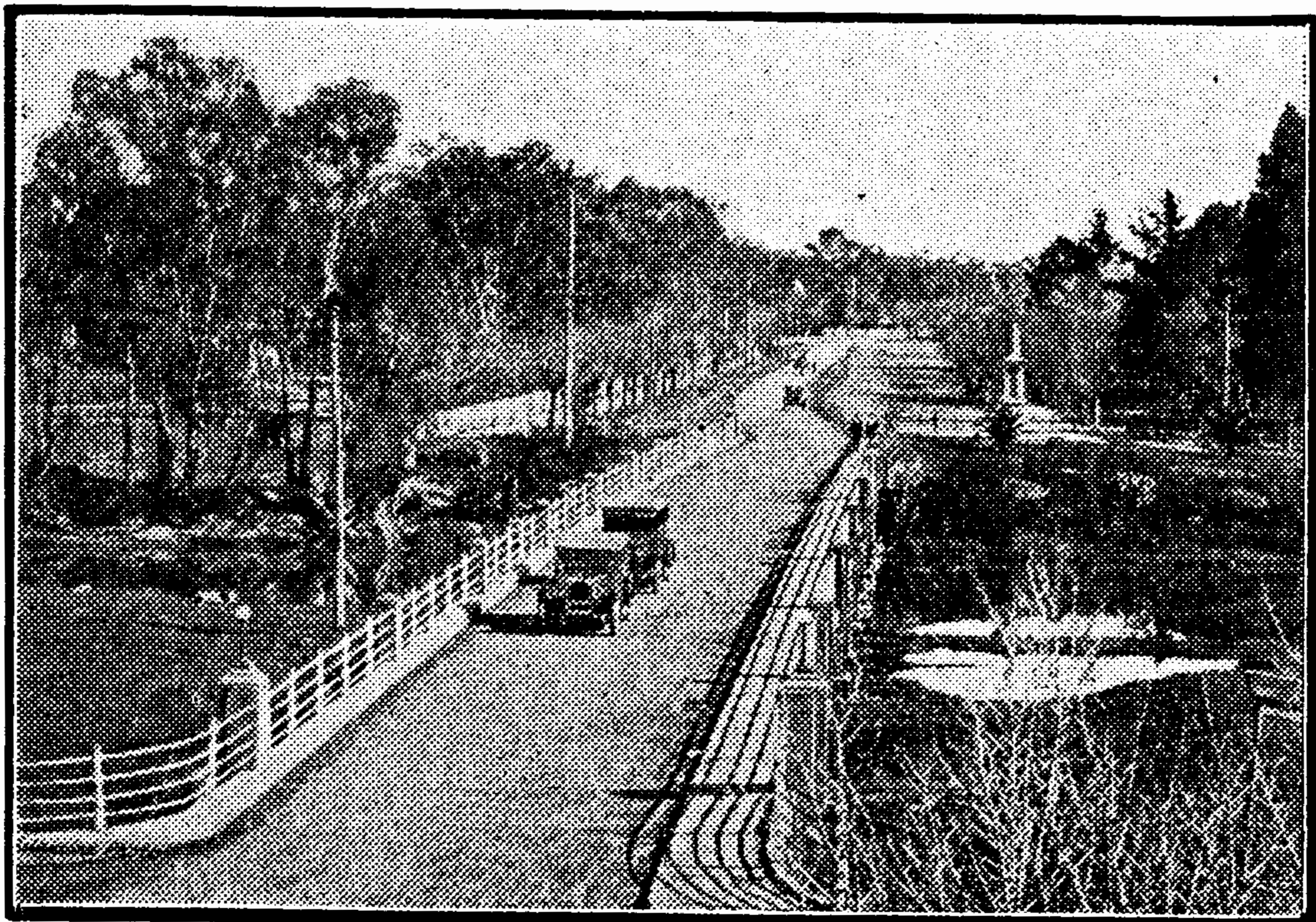
historic necessities of the State after the Gold Rush had ended. But each was based upon a reasoned conception of Statecraft which aimed at a State consisting of hundreds of thousands of families working on farms and in factories, masters of their own home market, owning on easy terms their own freeholds, protected by a tariff from the unfair competition of oversea competitors, and possessing such a wide franchise, and so many representative institutions, as to be really a Free Democracy within the British Empire.

The fight for these policies of "The Age" was long and sometimes bitter, but in the result splendidly successful. From 1856, when "The Age" raised the cry, "Unlock the Lands," to the great Land Act of 1898, it was a stern struggle by this great paper to open up the country for the common people, to free it from the grip of squattocracy and to make land acquisition possible to people of small means. From 1860, when "The Age" first raised the flag of Protection, down to the Lyne Tariff of 1908, for the entire Commonwealth, the stern, unwavering battle for Protection for farmer and industrialist alike was waged. To-day Protection, which means millions yearly to the Victorian producer, is the policy of the nation; that which began in "The Age"



office nearly 70 years ago, is the economic basis of Australia. Without it the Australian farmer would have, at best, had a local market of 2,000,000 people, as against over 6,000,000 people under Protection.

Behind the two great policies thus briefly described, "The Age" in 1929 stands as it did in the early days. Advances in science and invention, methods of finance, cultivation, selling and marketing, are welcomed, so that the fruit of the policies may reach the humblest settler or artisan. As these pages show, "The Age" has been, and continues to be, the best friend the Australian farmer has possessed in this community.



**ENTRANCE TO BENALLA**



# *The North-East*

## *Nucleus of a Vigorous Development*



It is a far cry from the year 1824, when Hume and Hovell crossed the Ovens River on their first expedition from New South Wales to Port Phillip. Almost as far removed from the early squatting period, which began in 1835, to flourish in lusty pioneering vigor, is moreover, the nucleus of that rural self-development which spells progress in North-Eastern Victoria to-day. For that mountainous land of promise, bounded, roughly, by Yarra-wonga, Euroa, Mansfield, Bright, and Corryong, below the Murray, and known rather prosaically as "the North-East," dawned for democracy with the opening up of the Ovens goldfield in 1853. Few of us sigh for a recurrence of those restless days of the gold rushes. They stripped life bare in their feverish bustle and reckless cosmopolitanism. But they did something more, unconsciously perhaps; they sowed the seeds of a common prosperity. When 14,000 diggers assembled at Moonlight Creek, Forest Creek, and Woolshed to demonstrate their resentment of the vicious administration of an unjust licensing system which preceded adoption of the miner's right, they were making Australia safe for democracy. Their protest may have been direct and violent, but the means



justified the end brought about by the tragic Eureka Stockade incident of 1854. It was during this vital stage of Australia's political history that "The Age," the journal which best expressed the virile Liberal reaction against an effete Conservatism which threatened like a blight to settle on this fair land, was founded.

From the year of its foundation, 1854, "The Age" never ceased to uphold the rights of people in their development of "Australia Felix." Its unwavering policy of fostering secondary industry, to function hand in hand with primary industry, was pursued even while jeopardising its own pecuniary stability. But the wisdom of that policy has become apparent in every sphere of production. For a long time Wangaratta, the oldest town in the North-East, was the centre of early community life. The "father" of the township, William Henry Clarke, grew 5 or 6 acres of wheat there in 1846, and gristing was done by hand mills until the erection of the first steam flour mill in 1856. In 1849 the first brick building was erected in Wangaratta, and to-day brick kilns are conspicuous in many of the North-Eastern towns. Quite early in the history of the settlement a foundry was established there. In Benalla to-day there are not only foundries operating, but the hum of saw mills is heard in Euroa and Violet Town, there are woollen mills at Wangaratta, and weaving mills also at Euroa, while Beechworth is the home of a large tannery. Cordial factories are general in the larger towns,



Leading Towns: Benalla, Rutherglen, Wodonga, Omeo, Euroa, Mansfield.

## DIVISIONAL STATISTICS

1928. Area Cultivated.		1908. Cultivated Acres.		1928. Production.		1908. Production.	
Acres.		Acres.					
Total Area .	150,085	Total Area .	147,500	—		—	
Wheat ..	44,372	Wheat ..	34,300	906,428 bushels		591,000 bushels	
Oats ..	8,287	Oats ..	24,900	238,138 "		821,000 "	
Hay ..	44,000	Hay ..	54,000	65,000 tons		81,000 tons	
Maize ..	2,399	Maize ..	1,493	86,695 bushels		46,000 bushels	
Vines ..	5,400	Vines ..	9,302	—		—	
Grapes ..	—	Grapes ..	—	125,786 cwt.		151,000 cwt.	
Wine ..	—	Wine ..	—	809,689 gals.		880,000 gals.	

### BENALLA (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 9,160	Population . 9,000
Dwellings . 2,308	Dwellings . 1,900
Valuation £177,503	Valuation £89,000

Agricultural district; with brickworks, flour mills, etc., in township.

Railways outward traffic revenue, Benalla, 1927-8, £21,468.

### RUTHERGLEN (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 3,854	Population . 5,854
Dwellings . 879	Dwellings . 1,063
Valuation £57,950	Valuation £30,000

Agriculture and viticulture.

Railways outward traffic revenue, Rutherglen, 1927-8, £8,765.

### WODONGA (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 2,820	Population . 1,822
Dwellings . 536	Dwellings . 360
Valuation £49,313	Valuation £20,128

Agriculture, pastoral, and a little mining; wool scouring.

Railways outward traffic revenue, Wodonga, 1927-8, £83,849.

### OMEO (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 2,369	Population . 5,000
Dwellings . 675	Dwellings . 1,200
Valuation £48,900	Valuation £45,000

Agriculture, mining, dairying.

### EUROA (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 5,000	Population . 5,590
Dwellings . 915	Dwellings . 1,188
Valuation £72,058	Valuation £66,516

Agricultural and pastoral activities, with weaving mills, butter factories, and ice works in township.

Railways outward traffic revenue, 1927-8, £11,175.

### MANSFIELD (SHIRE) :—

1928.	1908.
Population . 4,000	Population . 3,780
Dwellings . 990	Dwellings . 794
Valuation £85,683	Valuation £48,822

Farming and grazing pursuits.

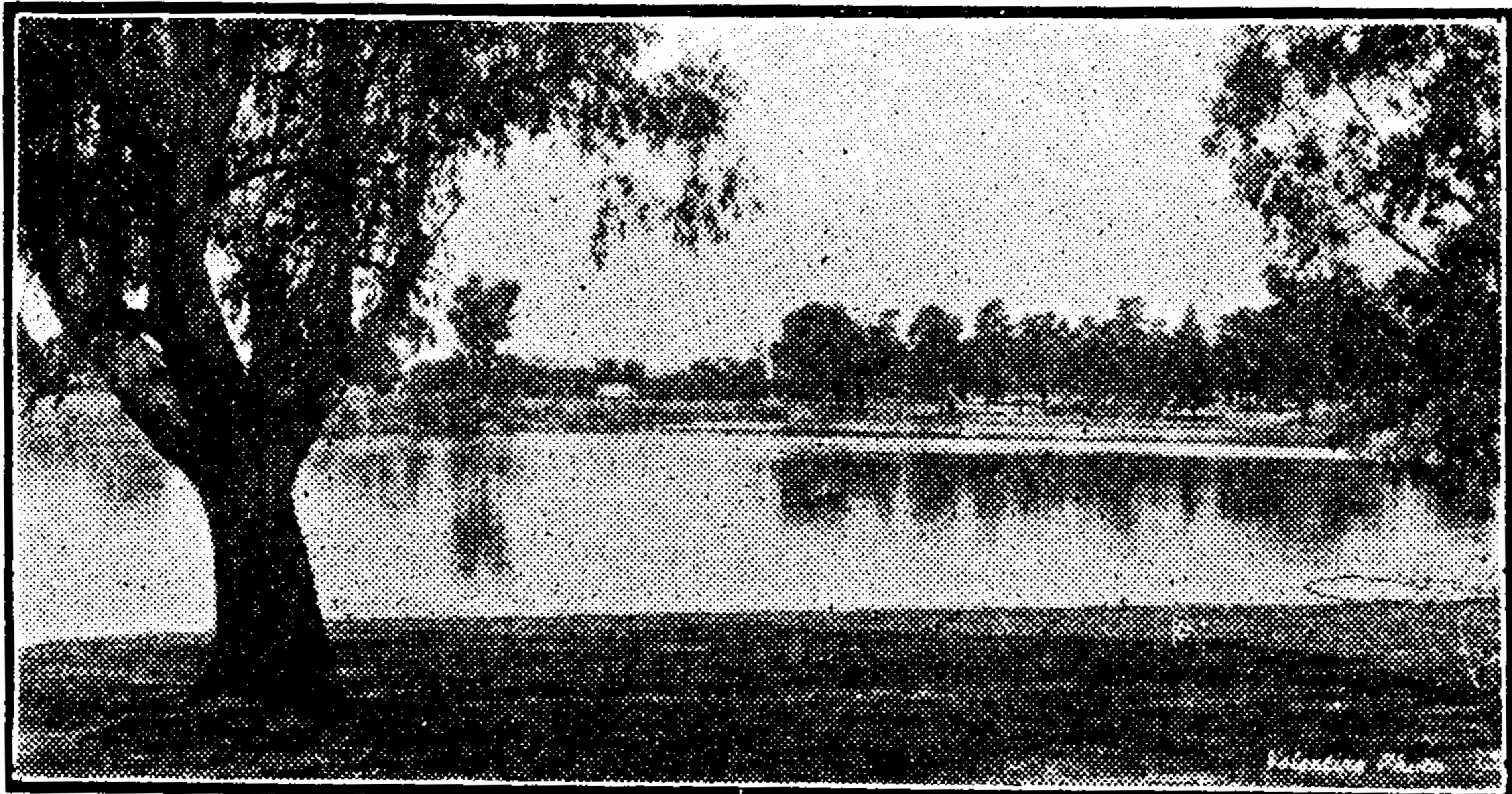
Railways outward traffic revenue, Mansfield, 1927-8, £10,194.

*Note.—In each instance population figures, etc., are those of the municipality.*



and breweries have been established for years at Wangaratta and Beechworth.

Of paramount importance, however, the butter, cheese, and bacon-curing factories represent now the most prosperous branch of secondary industry. The scientific and expeditious handling of the dairy farmer's product is a sound factor in the trend towards decentralisation. These factories at Wangaratta, Euroa, Benalla, Kiewa, Yarrawonga, Springhurst, Violet Town, Strathbogie, Cudgewa, Moyhu, Myrtleford, Milawa, Tallangatta, Tawanga, Noorongong, Eskdale, Benambra, Swan Pool, Walwa, and other towns and villages, are the very life blood of the districts' general welfare. Benalla's obvious prosperity is inescapable; Beechworth takes pride in its four parks and shady streets; Wodonga has long been known as the largest depot for the sale of store cattle in Victoria; and Rutherglen's viticulture has brought that district fame. While these aspects of



**RUTHERGLEN PARK**



individual civic achievement are recognised, while Yarrawonga remains conscious of growing in its neighbourhood some of the best wheat in Australia, the butter factory obtrudes itself as the most hopeful sign of the future. The output of Victoria's butter, cheese, and bacon-curing factories amounts annually to £10,000,000!

When the railway crept up from Essendon to Schoolhouse Lane (south of the Goulburn River) in April, 1872, and was extended during the following year to Wodonga, the first locomotives manufactured for the Government by the Phoenix Foundry at Ballarat (ten of them) were used on that line. Pioneering tracks had become highways and byways, and the chief of these, the old Sydney Road, deserves still to be famous for its unique bridges and culverts of Glenrowan granite. Those same roads to-day have been constructed by modern processes for the ubiquitous motor vehicle. Lateral roads have also been opened up by the Country Roads Board, whose work since 1913, however, has consisted for the most part in building the valley roads already surveyed and laid out for traffic of a disappearing past. The backbone of the roads system in the North-East is formed by the Hume Highway (main Sydney road) and the Omeo Highway. This latter surface runs from Wodonga through Tallangatta, along the valley of the Mitta Mitta to Omeo, and thence down to the Prince's Highway, in Gippsland. The next road



which should be declared a State highway is the Murray Valley Road, from Wodonga to the furthest settlement above Bringenbrong, opening up great stock fattening country. This road extends westerly to the South Australian border, and links up the terminus of every railway line running north to the Murray.

Construction of the Hume Reservoir has stressed the significance of roads in this fertile portion of the State. Any expenditure on roads which will lead to the development of closer settlement in the smiling Murray Valley demands urgent consideration. Merely a hint of the possibilities of development in the Upper Murray region is given in the recent progress made in dairy farming along the Kiewa Valley. Corryong, eleven miles from the railhead at Cudgewa, is becoming the thriving centre of an area which Mr. Elwood Mead regarded as ideal country, with its wonderful climate, for selection.

Just as "The Age" policy of the progressive establishment of home enterprise and markets has materially assisted in the development of this beautiful countryside, so its influence is pledged to the further development of that greater North-East which is looming pleasantly on the horizon. Areas devoted to dairying, tobacco, maize, broom millet; the hop gardens and orchards growing passion fruit and citrus, and the numerous groves of walnuts—each and all proclaim the richness of soil and salubrity and diversity of climate in the valleys of the



Ovens, King, Kiewa, and Mitta Mitta, and tributaries of the Upper Murray, which will grow most things for our universal storehouse. Hay crops predominate in the North-East, and on the pastures, which cover an area of 3,422,582 acres, there were 1,144,239 sheep and 213,152 cattle grazing, according to a recent record. But agriculture is in its infancy. Tobacco has not been fully tried out, the soils of Edi having disclosed by analysis percentages equalling those of Kentucky, and easily surpassing those of North Carolina. In forestry, the plantation by the Forests Commission of thousands of acres of pine in the dredged river valley of the Ovens is a phase of sound development which must be extended scientifically. Beechworth's earnest hopes to establish forests of conifers in abandoned mining areas, and the formation of extensive softwoods forests from Beechworth to the slopes of Feathertop and St. Bernard, are worthy of realisation.

Meanwhile, the towns of the North-East are undergoing a process of civic stimulation which indicates potential rural progress. The electricity transmission line from Sugarloaf through to Albury and Corowa is a recent boon. State schools in most towns, and High schools in Wangaratta and Benalla, are, too, expressive of the educational outlook, and a phase of social progress in Victoria which "The Age" has never failed to advance. There was a time when the number of banks in a town was regarded



as the barometer of progress until the expression "over-banked," applied to ultra-conservative communities, came into use. More than ever to-day, country people are realising that the school, the cinema, the amusement hall, and the garage and service station register more accurately the degree of a district's vital prosperity. They have become conscious of the value of money which circulates, of the adoption of the best modern equipment available to primary and secondary production, and that decentralisation is assured by the provision of a high standard of education and entertainment in town and village.

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