

CHANGE IN WIND SAVES COAL DEPOT.

SPRINGWOOD, Friday.

The fire on the mountains approached the railway depot at Valley Heights, and the huge coal stacks at the depot caused anxiety until a lull in the wind enabled the fire fighters to control the blaze.

The bushfires on the Blue Mountains extended from Kurrajong across to Mittagong, but the most serious blaze was at Springwood, Glenbrook and Valley Heights. The westerly wind fanned the smouldering ember on the outskirts of the towns into fresh life, and by noon flames were said to be leaping 300 feet high. The fire reached the outskirts of Springwood, and burnt outhouses and fences.

Then the wind carried the flames to Glenbrook. The smoke was so dense and sparks showered over the town so menacingly that the postmistress sent out an urgent appeal to the Fire Brigade in Sydney for men. The fire engine from Penrith was sent with all the men at the station, and, in addition, Mr. Richardson despatched more men with 2000 feet of hose and a motor engine from Sydney. Three houses in the track of the fire caught, and were burnt within 10 minutes. The only water was from a lagoon nearly a mile distant.

At times, the smoke over the mountain towns was so dense that it was almost impossible to see where the fires were burning, and Constable Frost, at Springwood, fearing that the town of Springwood was likely to be enveloped at any time, sent an appeal to Mr. Richardson for more fire-fighters. All the men available were sent under District-officer Griffith.

The police also made an appeal to every man in the town to assist in fighting the flames, and at Penrith a constable was stationed on the Great Western-road to stop motor cars. The drivers were warned of the danger of attempting to cross the mountains, and they were asked to join the band of volunteers. In this way, hundreds of fire-fighters were mustered, and a desperate attempt was made to save Glenbrook homes.

LOST HOME.

"The fire went through our part of the town in a few minutes," said Mrs. D. Foster. "Our garage and fences went, and then I saw a neighbour's home burning," she said.

Mrs. A. E. Mineeff, the widow of a returned soldier, lost practically everything. "I was in the road about 100 yards from my house when the fire broke through, but it was not until Mrs. Foster called that I saw my home was alight.

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"I rushed back into the house, but had only time to throw a few clothes and some material into a small trunk before I had to run for my life. I saved my purse and some of my jewellery, but I lost my wedding ring and watch with my home. It's so terrible, I cannot even cry," she said. Mrs. Mineeff has four children—two girls and two boys. It was her eldest daughter, Marusa, who ran to one of the churches when the fire roared through and tolled the bell to summon men to the rescue.

Five hours after the Scout Hall, owned by D. Skarratt, was burnt, water in tanks beside the building was still boiling. At the toll of the bell every available man hurried to fight the fires which were burning throughout Glenbrook. Twenty-six men at work on the new swimming pool downed tools, and, with police, firemen, and residents fought the flames which leaped 40ft into the air.

The home of Major A. Shallard, who was

away, went next, but helpers were able to get out most of the furniture. In a few minutes a house nearby caught alight, and, despite efforts to save it, was gutted. It was owned by G. Waugh.

While flames licked the side of the home of F. H. Currall, helpers carried out furniture and clothes, and piled them in the street. After a long fight the fire was put out.

The fire destroyed four week-end houses in the next street, and within 10 minutes two other cottages were destroyed. Latimer's garage was burnt out. The Deputy Commissioner of Taxation, Mr. Armstrong, who is holidaying in Glenbrook, said that the fire going through the town was a terrifying sight.

"It was terrible the way the fire swept across the town," he said. "The heat was almost unbearable, and the noise was deafening. Only a miracle saved our house."

Eileen Armstrong, 23, his daughter, who rushed out of the house when the alarm was given, had to run through burning trees to safety. Her left arm was badly burned, but she insisted on helping the fighters.

"We all had to help, and I did not feel the pain until the fire was out," she said.

The fire was so serious around Nurse Squire's convalescent home that a special squad of men had to fight for an hour before immediate danger was averted. Many of the fighters received injuries. W. Sheens, while helping to save one house, had his arms burnt and hair singed, and another man almost cut off his fingers. A. Spence was overcome with fumes and had to receive medical treatment.

WITHOUT WATER.

Glenbrook is without water, and fighters had to depend on tanks and wells. Fourth-officer Barber, from fire headquarters, who is in charge, said that an S.O.S. was sent to Sydney from Glenbrook, and a fire tender, in charge of District-officer Neville, was despatched to

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"With another tender, I arrived at Glenbrook at 12.30," he said. "We saved three cottages. The roof of one of the buildings was alight, but we hacked our way through the door and saved the contents, and at another place two old people, who were believed to have been incinerated, were found and rescued."

Barber said that the fire came out of the gullies carried on a 60 miles an hour wind and took everything before it. Between Springwood and Glenbrook, 40 firemen had been on duty throughout the day.

Mrs. E. Ellison, Blaxland newsagent, described how at 2.30 p.m. only a man and a boy were fighting to save the town. She telephoned for help, and 10 men and five police came from Glenbrook by bus, lorry, and car, in addition to a fire tender. Four houses and a small cottage, which had been threatened, were saved.

Rail communication was held up in the afternoon between Glenbrook and Springwood, and about 4.30 p.m. two pilot engines and water tanks were taken through. The fire had jumped the line at many places, and sleepers were smouldering. The first train was allowed through at 6 p.m. An hour and a half later at Blaxland-road the traffic was also held up for some hours.

MR. LYNCH'S TRIBUTE.

A tour of the area between Paulconbridge and Glenbrook was made by the Assistant Police Commissioner (Mr. Lynch) and Superintending Carter, and at Blaxland and Warrimoo Mr. Lynch addressed hundreds of helpers, firemen, and police.

In the middle of the main highway at Blaxland, Mr. Lynch faced 200 dirt-grimed, weary men. Blue smoke was blown across in thick pungent clouds while he spoke.

"The heroism I have seen to-day makes me proud that I am Australian," he said. "Nowhere else would you find such fine, gallant men who would give up so much and risk their lives to save and help others. The Victoria Cross has been won to-day many times." The men cheered and returned to the fight.

Sergeant Russell, who is in charge at Warrimoo, said that most of the men were exhausted. Many of them had been working for 12 hours without rest or food. At Warrimoo in the afternoon flames raced up the ridge side and set fire to the Post Office. Firemen and others had to hack their way through the rear of the building, and made a save. Several homes on the northern side are believed to have been gutted, and numerous others damaged.

CALLS FOR HELP.

Two men who ran out of a blazing building

Two men who ran out of a blazing building got lost among burning trees. Their calls for help were heard by police, and they were rescued. One was so exhausted he had to be carried to the road.

Among the fighters was an old man of 80, who, though exhausted, refused to rest. At one stage he was in the midst of burning bush with his shirt ablaze.

The men had a hard task to save two places opposite Warrimoo Station. G. Halliwell sat on the burning roof, while helpers handed buckets of water to him. W. Bowman described how he and others rescued three children from another building. "We forced the door and got the kids out," he said. "One was sick, so we put him into a police car and drove up a track across which the flames were leaping. The others we carried through the fire."

Valley Heights, which is a mile from Springwood, was threatened early in the day, and within an hour three residences had been destroyed.

When Miss Doane's place caught fire, three men climbed to the roof and made a save. Seven fire-fighters cut their way through the roof on J. Brand's home, while P. Clark, another helper, crawled between the roof and ceiling and beat out the fire.

FRESH OUTBREAKS.

Fresh outbreaks occurred at Faulconbridge. Fire went through McLaren's property, ruined the orchard, and burnt two garages, a car, and outhouses. Fire broke out under the house, and P. Roles had to crawl underneath and beat the flames out with a rake.

To-day, a fund for relief workers was opened by the postmaster (Mr. R. S. Turner), on the suggestion of Mrs. Norman Lindsay, who gave £5.

Late this afternoon at Valley Heights, the home of Mr. S. McNiff caught fire. He was reluctant to leave, and finally had to be taken from the house. Thirty seconds later the house was wrecked by an explosion. Police discovered that a quantity of gelignite had been stored in the building.

WIND CHANGES.

SPRINGWOOD, Saturday.

At 3 a.m. to-day there was a slight change in wind to the south, and a few drops of rain fell. Some of the fires have burnt themselves out, but there is a chance that the increase in the velocity of the wind may carry sparks to other areas, and as a precaution police have been stationed at possible danger zones at Valley Heights.