

# Flood 1910

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This is not the first flood, and certainly not the last.

Flooding started early on Wednesday, 30 March.

In the 12 hours from 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday there was 12in of rainfall, while the fall for 16 hours from the time mentioned was rather over 14in [356 mm].<sup>1</sup>

## 31 March

PAEROA FLOODED.

RIVER OVERFLOWS ITS BANKS. MAIN STREET AWASH. LOWER PORTIONS OF DISTRICT SUBMERGED. (BY TELEGRAPH. — OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

PAEROA, 9.20.

Paeroa, situated on the delta formed by the Ohinemuri and the Waihou rivers, is again being visited by a serious flood which is leaving in its track enough damage to make it impossible for the settlers to forget the autumn, for a good while.

It is again the Ohinemuri which is the cause of the trouble. This is the stream in connection with which there is such a strong agitation to get the Government to compel mining companies to cease emptying tailings into it. These tailings have banked up in many places, and changed the whole course of the stream, while just about Paeroa township, calling places at which the steamers used to tie up are now so shallow that boats cannot get near them. The river is a fairly sluggish one at the best, and with this enormous amount of silt being thrown in every year the channel is quite unequal to the work of carrying off the flood water whenever the river rises above the ordinary level. The settlers in the out-districts have many tales of past woe to tell, and some of their farms have been utterly ruined.

The unusually heavy rain of the past two days has been making the settlers very anxious, and the worst fears were realised this morning just about daybreak, when the Ohinemuri flooded its banks, and already has done a great deal of damage. It is the biggest flood ever recorded in the district, and at the time of writing, the waters are still rising. Paeroa is flooded, the streets being in some places over three feet under water. The main street is a small torrent, and the lower parts of the town are rapidly disappearing from view. Most of the shops in the main street are flooded, and the houses in the Puke and Junction roads are all more or less feeling the effects of the rising.

PAEROA. 10.30.

The line from Paeroa to Waihi runs along the bank of the Ohinemuri, and the service has been suspended owing to the rails being under water in a number of places.

PAEROA, 11.15.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100404.2.67>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14335, 4 April 1910, Page 6

Heavy rain is still falling, and the waters continue to rise. The station yard is quite flooded. The express train from the Thames got through this far all right, but cannot proceed any further, as the line is washed away.

Between here and Karangahake the roadway is in some places seven feet deep, and the people are isolated from this end till the waters go down.

It is difficult yet to say the extent of the damage, but reports come to hand of live stock being lost.

The waters came up so quickly that many people were taken unawares, and there have been several narrow escapes.

The flood is the biggest on record, and the river is still rising.<sup>2</sup>

**WIND AND RAIN. A RECORD FLOOD. PAEROA UNDER WATER  
LARGE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE. PEOPLE LEAVE THEIR HOUSES  
RAILWAY WASHED AWAY**

The most disastrous flood and hurricane ever known in the district occurred at Paeroa yesterday. On Tuesday night the rain literally came down in torrents, and yesterday morning the rain was unprecedented, while the wind was almost of hurricane force. About seven or half past seven in the morning the river came over its banks, and it was not long before the whole of the town was under water. Nearly the whole of the business places in the main street were flooded out, in some cases there being two or three feet of water in the shops. All day the water continued to rise, and the residences in the low lying parts of the town were soon surrounded with water. In the lowest parts of Puke Road there must have been four feet of water in some of the houses. Most of the residents in the flooded parts of the town were rescued by means of coaches, the women and children having to be carried out on the men's backs. Numerous trees, fences, chimneys, etc. were blown over by the high wind. The railway line suffered badly, and there must be miles of the line washed away. No trains were able to run after the morning train got through from Thames yesterday. The water came right over the railway line a few yards on the Thames side of the railway station, this being a very high part of the line and a part that has never been flooded before. The main street was for a while a regular stream of dirty yellow water.

In Paeroa township yesterday there was a stream of dirty, muddy, slimy, yellow water, which rushed along with the force of a torrent. The whole main street was like a river, and was practically covered from up by the Roman Catholic Church to away down past the railway station. The flood occurred with amazing rapidity. At seven o'clock yesterday morning the street was comparatively dry, but an hour later the water was rushing along the street at a great pace. The wind increased in force during the morning, and very soon numerous trees were blown over; while quite large pieces of timber were carried considerable distances by the force of the wind.

The river seems to have come over the banks first of all by the traffic bridge, opposite the Bank of New Zealand, and it was not long before it also overflowed at other places further down stream.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100330.2.33>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 75, 30 March 1910, Page 5

Business in Paeroa was at a standstill yesterday. The high wind soon found out any weak spots in the roofs and sides of the buildings, while the flood water entered a great many of the shops. At the top end of the town there was a fair depth of water in Mr J. Nathan's stationery shop, while the flood also entered the Bank of New Zealand premises. On the opposite side of the street there was a couple of feet of water in Mrs Bollens' boardinghouse, and it was in the water that the staff had to prepare as best they could the meals for the boarders.

Then in Mr McWatters' house and shop there was a considerable amount of water, and the shop's of Mr Jackson, Mrs Wilson, Mr Morgan, Mr Blyth, and Mr E. Jones also had a large share of the flood water. The usual expedient of cutting the footpath to let away the water was tried, but on this occasion it was of no avail, as the water came with such a rush that it swept right over the path and into the shops.

At the lower end of the main street the water also entered several shops, including those of Mr Emmett, Mr Adnains, and Mr Brennan, while in Mrs Capill's boardinghouse there was about two feet of water. Notwithstanding the extreme difficulties under which they worked, Mrs Capill's staff worked like Trajans to supply the wants of the boarders, of whom there was a houseful. Last night the bottom floor, of course, could not be occupied, as the flood water had possession, and it was not until early this morning that a clearance could be made.

Possibly the flood was worst from the railway station down towards the Junction and the Puke. Lots of people stuck to their houses as long as possible, getting their furniture piled up comparatively safely. But towards dark some - of them gave it up as a bad job, and they were rescued by means of coaches, and taken to the homes of friends on higher land. Down the Puke Road Mr J. Nathan and family had a particularly bad time, and there was something like three feet of water in the house. Mr Rolton, Mr T. Shaw and others in the same vicinity also suffered, while the water was also in Mr Evitt's house to a depth of a few inches. In Rye Lane Mrs Manning's, Mr Lucas', and other places were flooded; in Station Road one or two houses suffered with a slight depth of flood water; in Junction Road some of the residents suffered. On the Te Aroha Road Messrs G. Nicholls, Gardner, Larney, and others were flooded out. It is almost impossible to give anything like a full list of those whose houses had more or less flood water in them, but it is certain that almost all except those living in the higher parts of the town suffered more or less.

At the Puke Wharf the water came just into the shed, but fortunately caused very little damage. Even now there is about four feet of water at the back of the wharf. From Mr Thorp's bridge at the Puke right up to Mr T. Dean's place there is at the present time a large sheet of water, stretching right across the road for a considerable distance on each side.

The damage caused by the wind was only second to that occasioned by the flood. The roofs of several buildings were considerably injured, sheets of iron being in some cases torn off and blown for long distances. The Ohinemuri Jockey Club's grandstand suffered once more, a number of the shutters and portions of the roof being blown away. So strong was the wind that in one case a sheet of iron was blown off the grandstand right over the road on to Mr F.

Ott's farm. A good portion of the iron was stripped off the roof of Mr W. Medhurst's stables.

The damage to the railway line was very considerable. The traffic is at present thoroughly disorganised, and it will be some time before the trains are running again. The last train to get through yesterday was the morning express from Thames, but after that the trains could neither get to or from Paeroa. The passengers for Waihi, Karangahake, Te Aroha, Auckland and other stations had to stay the night at Paeroa. Some found accommodation at the boardinghouses, while others had to camp in the train, and wait with as much patience as they could muster.

To make matters worse all telegraphic and telephonic communication with out-side places was stopped early yesterday morning, all the lines being down. Bridges in all parts of the town have been swept away, and some of them were recovered this morning long distances from their original situation. For instance, the bridge in Rye Lane was recovered this morning down by the railway line, and to get there it had to travel a considerable distance across paddocks.

To show how much higher the flood was than ever before, it might be mentioned that the water came right over the railway line on the Thames side of the Paeroa railway station. This has always been regarded as a particularly high part of the line, and when there have been floods previously the line was always high and dry. This time, however, the formation has been washed clean away in places, and the sleepers and rails are left bare. Last night the water was rushing under the line at a tremendous pace, and the wind was blowing so hard that it was dangerous to walk along the line. Residents of Puke Road who got to their homes that way last night found it by no means an easy task to get along, and at times they had to lie down to prevent themselves being blown off the line into the deep flood waters on the side.

At Tirohia, on the Paeroa-Te Aroha railway line, about two miles of the railway is under water, but the extent of the damage cannot be ascertained until the water subsides. On the Paeroa-Thames line about three miles of the line has been washed away at Parawai, and about a mile and a-half at Hikutaia. The railway line through the tunnel at Karangahake was badly injured, the water from the river coming through from the Waihi end. As there is a pretty steep fall in the tunnel from the Waihi end, the water rushed through at a great pace, and although the exact extent of the damage has not been ascertained so far, it is certain that it must be very great.

The stop bank erected by Mr W. G. Nicholls in front of his property at Paeroa kept the water back on that side of the river for a time, but after a while the water broke through and soon spread itself across the country. Last night stock was wandering all over the roads in the higher parts of the township, having been turned out of the paddocks by their owners when they saw there was going to be a flood.

Late last night the water started to recede from the main street in Paeroa, and this morning the road is fairly clear of water. Down the Puke and Junction Roads, however, there are still large stretches of the dirty flood water, and it must be some time before the paddocks are clear again.

The gale caused a lot of damage to the Criterion Theatre, and it is doubtful if it can be repaired. The whole of the back portion is twisted all out of shape, and it is a wonder that it was not blown down yesterday. For some hours it swayed about from side to side in a dangerous fashion, and those who were watching expected every minute to see it collapse. However, it stood the shock, but it is in a pretty bad state.

Reports from up-country state that the damage to the roads and bridges is very great. Several bridges on the main Paeroa-Waihi Road have been swept away, and wash-outs are numerous. On the Komata Road the creek has risen to a great height, and it is impossible to get through with a vehicle, although the mail was brought through on horseback. Across the Komata Road there are numerous great trees that have been blown over, and these will all have to be cleared away before traffic can be resumed.

The mail service is being carried on by means of coaches between Waihi, Te Aroha, and Thames, and will no doubt be continued this way until the railway line is repaired.

Mr W. Williams, who resides in Rye Lane, had an unpleasant experience yesterday. He had decided to stay in his house, but at last was compelled to leave as the water got too high. He was lucky to get out, as a few minutes afterwards his house was lifted bodily off the blocks and carried to the other side of the section. In Mr Malcolm's house in the same vicinity the water was over the tops of the beds. The occupants of the house got out, but nearly all the furniture was destroyed.

Mr A. J. Thorp and Mr W. Emett and his little boy had a narrow escape while out riding near Te Aroha Road yesterday. The flood came on them so suddenly that they were caught in the waters. Mr Emett took refuge up a tree, from which he was rescued by Mr Thorp after a lot of trouble. Then Mr Thorp himself capsized in the water, and he had considerable difficulty in reaching dry land.

At the abattoirs some of the sheep that were yarded were drowned, while stock in various other parts of the district also suffered. The quantity of poultry drowned must be enormous, as those people living in the lower parts of the town lost nearly all their poultry.

The recreation ground at Paeroa yesterday was literally a lake, the whole of the reserve being covered with water from one side to the other.

Great as was the damage in Paeroa, it was much worse up-country, judging from the meagre reports to hand. It is reported that at Waikino several houses were washed away, while at Waihi matters were as bad, or possibly worse. At the Victoria battery at Waikino thousands of pounds' worth of damage has been caused, and the Waihi G.M. Co's operations will be hampered considerably.<sup>3</sup>

Yesterday morning the tunnel on the Waihi line at Karangahake had 4ft of water in it.<sup>4</sup>

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 1910. FLOODS AND THE SILT QUESTION.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OG19100331.2.18>  
Ohinemuri Gazette, Volume XXI, Issue 2623, 31 March 1910, Page 3

<sup>4</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100331.2.25>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14332, 31 March 1910, Page 5

For the cause that lacks assistance. For the wrong that needs resistance. For the future in the distance. And the good that we can do.

Considering the phenomenal character of the rainfall by which Auckland and the surrounding country have been visited during the past three days, we can hardly be surprised that the rivers in the districts affected are now in heavy flood. So far as the Thames Valley is concerned, the configuration of the country and the character of its natural drainage are in themselves sufficient to account for its liability to floods. But the danger of such a calamity should warn us against doing anything that could possibly aggravate the risk to which the district is permanently exposed, and it is impossible under the circumstances to shut our eyes to the obvious and necessary connection between the recurrence of these disastrous floods and the use of the rivers in the Thames district as sludge channels. Floods there certainly would be from time to time in such a country, if the rivers were left entirely to their own devices. But if from 40,000 to 60,000 tons of mining debris are poured into these streams every month throughout the year, how is it possible to avoid the conclusion that the beds of the streams will be raised, and as soon as ever the channels are called upon to carry off an unusual rainfall, the water will back up over the low-lying banks and inundate the adjacent land?

It is, of course, too early to estimate the amount of damage inflicted upon the settlers and residents in the district by this week's flood. But, judging by past experience, the people of Paeroa, and the farmers along the Ohinemuri, will have a heavy account to settle when everything is cleared up. Not only will the townspeople and the settlers lose a great deal of valuable property, but the adjoining land will be overlaid with barren silt, to the serious detriment of its productive powers.

So far as Paeroa is concerned, it is important to observe that this very calamity has been confidently predicted as an inevitable consequence of the silting-up of the Ohinemuri through the accumulation of mining spoil in its channel. Over a year ago we published a letter from a well-known Paeroa resident, dealing with this question, in which it was emphatically asserted that "it means only a question of a few years and a few days' rain, when the Ohinemuri River will be found to cut out a fresh channel for itself at one of the bends near Paeroa, very probably through the town of Paeroa itself, destroying in its course an enormous amount of property right through the valley." We have still to learn how far and how literally this ominous prophecy has been verified. But, considering the evidence that we have at various times compiled as to the silting-up of the Ohinemuri and other streams in the district, we can see no way of avoiding the inference that the use of these rivers as sludge channels has been one of the primary causes of this disaster; and we hope that the Royal Commission now set up to investigate the silting question will direct its attention particularly to the connection between the practice of dumping mining debris in the rivers and the periodic recurrence of these destructive floods.<sup>5</sup>

RISING OF THE WATERS.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100331.2.20>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 76, 31 March 1910, Page 4

The Ohinemuri River overflowed its banks about daybreak yesterday morning, and in a short time the township of Paeroa, as well as the low-lying portions of the surrounding districts, was submerged. Several of the streets were 3ft or 4ft under water, and the main street assumed the appearance of a small river.

Most of the business places in this street were flooded, and the shopkeepers were busily engaged in placing as much of the stock as possible above the rapidly-rising water.

In the lower parts of the town, the position was even worse. Many houses were flooded to a depth of several feet, and so quick was the rush of water that it was impossible to do much in the way of saving household furniture and goods from destruction or damage. Many people, as a matter of fact, received so little warning of the flood that they could do no more than secure the personal safety of themselves and their families. A number of narrow escapes from drowning have been reported. In the country districts much damage has been done by the washing away of land and the drowning of stock.

The flood has had a serious effect on the railway, and the traffic was altogether disorganised yesterday, several of the trains being unable to run. The line was flooded between Te Aroha and Paeroa, and Paeroa and Waihi, and none of the trains on those lines were able to get through. Yesterday morning the tunnel on the Waihi line at Karangahake had 4ft of water in it. The express train from Thames got as far as Paeroa, but was compelled to remain there, owing to the washing away of portions of the line. A large part of the line on both branches is submerged, and until the waters subside it will be impossible to form an estimate of the damage.

The roads have also been damaged to a great extent. Many small bridges and culverts have been washed away, and in several places, especially between Paeroa and Karangahake, deep gaps have been made in the roadway, thus shutting off communication for the time being. The loss to the local bodies is expected to be considerable.<sup>6</sup>

## 1 April

OHINEMURI COUNTY COUNCIL. PUBLIC NOTICE.

The travelling public and users of the Main Paeroa-Waihi Road are warned that the road is unsafe for all classes of vehicular traffic between Karangahake and Waikino. Also that the road is fenced off from the junction with the Rahu Road on the Eastern side of Karangahake and at a place commonly known as Dogtown at the lower end of the gorge near Karangahake.<sup>7</sup>

### THE GALE

THE PAEROA DELUGE. RESIDENTS FLOODED OUT. REMOVED ON RAFTS. RAILWAY TUNNEL BLOCKED. MINING PROPERTY DAMAGED. (By Telegraph.—Own Correspondent.) PAEROA, Thursday.

The largest flood ever experienced at Paeroa took place here this week, the water coming up with great rapidity after only a few hours' rain. The damage is very far-reaching, trees, houses, branches, and anything movable almost

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<sup>6</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100331.2.25>

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14332, 31 March 1910, Page 5

<sup>7</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OG19100401.2.22.1>

Ohinemuri Gazette, Volume XXI, Issue 2624, 1 April 1910, Page 3

having been blown or washed away. At about 7 a.m. on Wednesday the Ohinemuri River overflowed its banks at McAndrew and Co.'s timber mill, and a little later on at the Criterion Hotel, at the upper end of the town, and also on the Karangahake road. At Mr. Cock's farm the water rose with great rapidity, and by half past 8 the town by the railway station was completely submerged. The river also broke its banks at Mackaytown, and the water raced across the swampy country towards the Paeroa-Waihi railway line, and the first train to Waihi from Paeroa was unable to leave owing to a large portion of the line having been washed away.

**HURRICANE FROM THE EAST.** The wind was blowing a hurricane from the east, and the rain continued to fall in torrents. The flood waters steadily rose, and by 12 o'clock nearly every shop in the main street was flooded out. The residents of the houses on the low-lying lands in Rye-lane, Puke-road, Junction-road, and Karangahake-road were also flooded out of their houses, the water rising 3ft in some of the houses. One four-roomed house in Rye-lane was completely washed away. Numerous outhouses, sheds, and other buildings were floating about, and the footbridge in Rye-lane was washed away.

**RAILWAY COMMUNICATION STOPPED.** The Auckland express, with a number of passengers, arrived from Thames, but could not proceed further on account of the number of washouts on the Paeroa-Te Aroha line. The passengers are still stranded in Paeroa, some of them having to stay on the train all night, as all accommodation had been taken by flooded-out Paeroa residents.

**PAEROA COMPLETELY ISOLATED.** At 11 o'clock all communication with every place was cut off and Paeroa was completely isolated. At 3 o'clock the water seemed to be falling a little in the town, but was still rising in the low ground about the Puke and towards Netherton.

The wind still blew a gale. The verandah was blown off the Commercial Hotel, and the Criterion Theatre was also severely damaged. The Ohinemuri Jockey Club's grandstand at the Racecourse is a complete wreck.

**NOTHING BUT WATER.** I paid a visit to the Te Aroha-road at two o'clock. There was nothing to be seen but water for miles round. The farmers in this part of the town are all heavy losers, having lost cattle and horses. Haystacks have blown over into the water, and several large cowsheds are destroyed.

**WAIKINO AND KARANGAHAKE.** Paeroa is not the only place to sustain damage. The residents of Waikino and Karangahake, and, in fact, all along the river, have suffered severely. Waikino was flooded to a depth of ten feet in some places, and people had to be rescued from their houses by rafts. There was seven feet of water in the shops on the main road, and three feet of water was running through the tunnel on the Paeroa-Waihi railway, carrying with it logs and other debris. As the mouth of the tunnel at the Karangahake end is twenty feet above the road, the water and debris rushed out at a terrific speed. The tunnel is now blocked with logs and rocks. The line is all washed out, and slips have occurred all the way along.

**MINING PROPERTY DAMAGED.** The Waihi Company are very heavy losers, the extent of damage to their plant and property running into four figures. About three hundred tons of coke and four hundred tons of coal were washed into the river. The Government coal trucks were also washed into the

river. The Waihi Company's cyanide solution vats at Waikino were completely submerged, and consequently the contents are totally destroyed.

The Talisman Company at Karangahake will also lose a considerable amount of property. Their iron water race is destroyed, and the battery is very badly damaged.

**STOCK LOSSES.** Along the bank of the river at Paeroa are numerous dead animals, telling of the farmers' losses on all sides. All the beasts at the local abattoirs were drowned.

**PAEROA GASWORKS FLOODED.** The Paeroa gasworks were flooded and the fires could not be kept going, so when night came darkness was added to the general discomfort.

**FLOOD WATER RECEDING.** To-day (Thursday) the water has gone down nearly everywhere in the town, but the river is still running very high, and the low-lying lands are still flooded.

**A LENGTHY TRIP.** The s.s. Waimarie took twenty-three hours to make the trip from Auckland last night instead of the usual eight. It will be some days before things regain their normal condition.

**RIVER SILTING PROBLEM.** It seems incredible that, the place could be so badly flooded after one day's rain, and it only serves to show what real damage is being done to the country all along the river by the deposit of mining debris and silt that is being constantly dumped into the river.<sup>8</sup>

The approaches to the tunnel on the railway line just above Karangahake have been damaged, and the steel bridge below the mouth of the tunnel on the Karangahake side is said to have suffered considerably. Two or three shanties on the banks of the Ohinemuri, in the bend just above Karangahake, were swept bodily away by the flood waters, together with practically the whole of their contents.<sup>9</sup>

**MANY HOUSES FLOODED.**

**FAMILY TAKES REFUGE ON ROOF. ALL COMMUNICATION STOPPED** (By. Telegraph.—Own Correspondent.) WAIHI, Thursday.

Waihi since last night has experienced the greatest flood, with consequent damage to residences, ever experienced in the district, and in more than one instance loss of life was narrowly escaped. All communication by railway and road and telegraph was on Wednesday evening completely cut off. Owing to the carrying away of two trestles in Walmsley Creek, some of the main water pipes connected with the town supply were broken, cutting off the service. Gangs of men are now employed effecting the necessary repairs. The gasworks were also flooded, being situated in a low-lying part of Waihi, but, owing to the efforts of the manager (Mr. Hookey) and staff, the supply was not given out.

It is reported that, owing to the Ohinemuri River flooding its banks, water is rushing through the Karangahake railway tunnel.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100401.2.65>

Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 77, 1 April 1910, Page 5

<sup>9</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100401.2.70>

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14333, 1 April 1910, Page 6

Rain came down in heavy torrents last night, continuing the whole time without intermission, and at the time of writing shows no sign of abating. Mr. Devereux, F.R.M.S., states that the gale is identical to the Suva hurricane of the 25th inst., and has arrived in average time. Two inches of rain have fallen since 8 a.m. this morning, making 14 inches in 16 hours, a phenomenal record. By a strange coincidence, the visitations occur on the anniversary of a flood on the same date last year.

A most sensational incident occurred beyond Waitete bridge, at the residence owned by Messrs. Fitzpatrick and Say, and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hall, their little girl (aged 14), Miss Mulhooley, and Mr. Harris. The house was almost entirely submerged. At about three a.m. the inmates were aroused by a sudden inrush of water. With almost incredible rapidity the water rose several feet, and in a few moments the house was flooded to a depth of three feet.

Mr. Hall, who is suffering from rheumatism, and the child were, with as little delay as possible, assisted on to the roof, Mrs. Hall, Miss Mulhooley, and Mr. Harris following in turn. By the time they reached this temporary place of safety, there were six feet of water tearing through the house, and the flood steadily rose until it reached the top of the verandah. The descent of the flood was so sudden that the unfortunate inmates had no time to secure any clothing, with the result that all of them, with the exception of Mr. Harris, who managed to seize a pair of pants, escaped on to the roof in their night clothes. In this scant attire, the cold; and shivering little company remained on the roof until a rescue party, consisting of Messrs. Fitzpatrick, Say, V. Meehan, Langdon, and Constable Miles, took them off in a raft at eight o'clock. Mr. Hall and the little girl were in a state of almost utter collapse. Both were unable to stand when conveyed to dry land, and the former was so exhausted that only with difficulty could he keep his position on the roof. Miss Mulhooley maintained a brave front during the whole trying ordeal, and in a large measure kept the others from despair. Soon after daylight, the Government railway engine and van, with Messrs. R. E. Williams and W. Russell, of the Waihi Company, arrived near the scene with a punt, which had been brought in case of emergency. Mr. and Mrs. Hall were conveyed in the van up to Waihi, and safely installed in a friend's house, Miss Mulhooley and the little girl finding shelter in the house of a nearer neighbour.

All the Waihi Company's batteries have stopped. The vanner room, at the Silvertown Mill, is four feet under water, and the entire flat at Waikino is covered over its whole area. The vicinity of Worth's paddock presents the appearance of a lake. So rapidly did the river rise, that Mr. Ulph had to abandon his residence and grounds. At Barry's the place was covered several feet above the level of last year's flood.

The water entered Mrs. T. P. Clarke's place in Lower Clarke-street to a height of two and a-half feet, covering the floor with slimes. Some residents in Baber and Consols-streets suffered considerably. Here the homes of Messrs. Conway (with five or six children), Mackay (with two or three children), in Baber-street, Cramp and McMasters and Wilson (with three children each), were flooded out at about three a.m. In some cases the people remained in; their homes until daylight, perched on the top of furniture, while others got out the best way they could.

In some homes the water rose three to five feet. Several houses in London-street, including Mr. J. Kean's, were flooded, and a timely rescue was effected from a residence near Tauranga bridge by Mr. H. Deverell. Mr. Fairburn, a resident in the vicinity of Black Hill, had to swim from his house to higher ground. His poultry and some furniture were swept away.

From the river bank a terrace of mattresses and a number of dead fowls could be seen floating on the flooded river.

A washout occurred on the Waihi Company's railway line here, an embankment for a chain or more being completely washed away, leaving for a short span the rails hanging in suspension. No definite news of the condition of the line further down is available. Reports to hand early this morning show that the conditions of Waikino was so bad that the night shift men of the battery were unable to get back on the township side, and the day shift men were unable to get to work. The Government railway line, at a point about 70 yards below a sharp bend in the main road beyond Waitete bridge, was washed away for about two chains.

This morning the seven o'clock train left as usual, but had to return on account of the washouts. No trains were running on the line to-day.<sup>10</sup>

#### WAIHI RESIDENTS IN PERIL.

A FAMILY ON A ROOF. RESCUED ON A RAFT. SEVERAL HOUSES FLOODED. [BY TELEGRAM!. OWN" CORRESPONDENT.] Waihi, Thursday.

Waihi has just been visited by the most disastrous flood experienced in the history of the field. During Easter Monday and Tuesday the high wind and steady rainfall interfered with holiday-makers, but it was not until nightfall on Tuesday that the position became serious, and then an easterly gale, of almost hurricane force, accompanied by torrential rain, swept the district.

The Ohinemuri River and its tributaries rose rapidly, and long before daybreak overran their banks, with the result that the flats about Waihi township, the major portion of which fortunately, stands on high ground, were soon under water. Numerous residents along the river banks had their dwellings flooded, and their furniture practically destroyed. Not a few were compelled to make an hasty exit from their houses, and in addition to their effects suffered, the loss of live stock, including pigs and poultry. In one or two instances, even horses and cattle were swept away.

The extent of the rainfall may be gathered from the fact that the instruments of Mr. H. B. Devereux, F.R.M.S., recorded no less than 12.15 in of water in 12 hours, while between midnight and one o'clock a.m. quite 2in fell. The rain continued throughout yesterday practically without intermission, but it was by no means as heavy as the overnight fall.

Worth's paddock, on the banks of the Ohinemuri River, presented the appearance of a lake. Early yesterday morning, shortly after three o'clock, Mr. Ulph, an official of the Waihi Company, had to abandon his residence adjacent to the river, leaving much of his household effects under water. The grounds about Mr. H. P. Barry's (the company's superintendent) were several feet

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<sup>10</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100401.2.66.1>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 77, 1 April 1910, Page 5

underwater, and the dwellings of Mrs. T. P. Clarke (Clarke-street), Mr. J. Kean (London-street), and those of Mr. Fairburn and others on this side of the township, were flooded, the water in some instances rising from 2ft to 3ft above the floors, which were covered with silt and mud, while furniture, cooking utensils, etc., floated about the rooms. Mr. Fairburn had to swim from his house (near Block Hill) to higher ground, and a Mr. Sawyer and one or two others are reported to have had similar experiences.

A very unpleasant time was spent by several families living in Consols and Baber Streets, where, owing to the culvert under the Waihi Gold Mining Company's railway line not proving equal to the demands made upon it, the flood waters banked up rapidly against the line, and crossing the road entered the dwellings of Messrs. Conway, Barker, McMasters, Wilson, Dick, McKay, Cramp, and Godfrey, all of whom suffered a considerable loss of furniture and personal effects, while the women and children had to be conveyed (some but half clothed) in the drenching rain to the homes of more fortunate neighbours, who put them up for the balance of the night.

The most trying experience was that of the family of Mr. E. Hall and others staying with them in their dwelling on the main road between Waihi and Waikino. About this point the roadway and adjoining flats were quickly under water to the depth of several feet, and the occupants of the house had to take to the roof for safety in practically nothing but their nightclothes. Messrs. Hall and Harris, Mrs. and Miss Hall and Miss Mullhooly were compelled to remain in torrents of rain for several hours, being ultimately rescued in an exhausted condition, about seven a.m., by a party summoned by a Mr. Deem, who noticed their sad plight and promptly came through to Waihi for assistance. The rescuers brought them off on a hastily-constructed raft on the opposite side of the river. The house of Mr. Langdon was flooded, the inmates managing to make their escape to higher ground at the back of the property.

In various parts of the township municipal undertakings in hand suffered, and wash-outs and slips occurred, involving considerable loss to the local body. All the mainstays of the Tauranga Road main bridge were carried away, and Mr. M. Crimmins, who attempted to get through to Katikati with his coach yesterday morning, was compelled to turn back after reaching the gorge. He reports the loss of some of the smaller bridges, and slips and wash-outs along the road.

Owing to damage to the trestle work and the reservoir and pipes generally, the town water-supply has been cut off, and a day or two will probably elapse before the supply is restored. Meanwhile residents are catching all rain water possible to provide against shortage, and workmen are busy effecting repairs to the reservoir. At the borough gas works the water yesterday morning was up to the fires, and other portions of the plant were submerged. The supply of gas then on hand was computed to be sufficient to maintain the service for 24 hours, and notices were issued asking consumers to conserve the supply.

The floods have fortunately not interfered seriously with the mining industry. The Wash-out on the Waihi Company's line will delay the carriage of quartz to the Waikino battery for probably three days, which it is estimated will be the length of time occupied in bridging the gap caused by the wash-out. Both the Waihi Company's Silverton battery (at Waihi), and the Waikino battery were some feet under water at the height of the flood, but the waters have since

receded considerably, and as the plants suffered little or no injury, everything will be in readiness to resume crushing operations at these mills in a day or two. The mines have not in any way suffered, and work underground is proceeding as usual. The Grand Junction Company's battery, which stands on an elevation, escaped damage. The Paeroa-Waihi Gold Extraction Company's plant, on the banks of the Ohinemuri, below Waihi, suffered, the principal damage being to the tailings elevator.

Communication has been cut off entirely below Waihi, but information coming through is to the effect that there has been considerable damage to property on the river banks and flats between Waihi and Karangahake. The approaches to the tunnel on the railway line just above Karangahake have been damaged, and the steel bridge below the mouth of the tunnel on the Karangahake side is said to have suffered considerably. Two or three shanties on the banks of the Ohinemuri, in the bend just above Karangahake, were swept bodily away by the flood waters, together with practically the whole of their contents.

**ESCAPE THROUGH A WINDOW.** The business premises and dwellings of several residents in the main street at Waikino were under water on Wednesday morning, about six o'clock, and so quickly did the river rise that considerable loss resulted to stock and furniture. One man, named O'Donoghue, residing in a shanty which was swept away bodily from the river bank, made a hasty exit by the window, leaving everything behind him, including some £30 in cash. Several sheep, which were washed away from the abattoirs just below Mackaytown, were to-day seen hanging up on the wire fences. One carcase was wedged in the branches of a tree.

All the swing-bridges between Waihi and Paeroa have disappeared, and numerous wash-outs on the road have occurred.<sup>11</sup>

**THE RAILWAY LINES.**

**EXTENSIVE WASH-OUTS. FLOOD IN A TUNNEL.** [BY TELEGRAPH.—SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.] Paeroa, Thursday.

The damage to the railway lines is such as to preclude the probability of trains getting through from Paeroa to Waihi within a week, to Te Aroha within four or five days, and to Thames within a day or two. Mr. T. Ashby, inspector of permanent ways, who went over the lines today, states that 10 chains of the line, one and a-half miles on the Paeroa side of Waihi, had been carried over to the boundary fence as though the rails were so many palings.

The Karangahake tunnel, which is 20ft or 30ft above the normal level of the river was reached by flood for the first time, with the result that a tremendous volume of water rushed through, carrying with it logs, etc., which caused a serious block. Several other wash-outs and slips happened at other sections of the line, while the railway telephone, telegraph, and tablet wires along the route, were in many places completely demolished.

On the Thames line the track is practically wrecked from the 41½-mile peg (two miles from Paeroa) to the 42-mile peg, the rails being carried over to the fence. Minor wash-outs have also occurred between Paeroa and Thames. Coaches are now commencing to fill the breach.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100401.2.70>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14333, 1 April 1910, Page 6

A wash-out has also taken place at the Waikino railway bridge.<sup>12</sup>

AFTER THE FLOOD. COUNTING THE COST  
THOUSANDS OF POUNDS OF DAMAGE.  
DESOLATION AND DESTRUCTION.

Now that the flood waters have somewhat abated, people are beginning to wonder what the cost is going to be. Although nothing like an accurate estimate of the damage can be arrived at, it is certain that it will run into thousands and thousands of pounds. Each report that comes in seems to make things appear worse than ever, and it is absolutely certain that there has never before been such a lot of destruction and damage caused by a single flood.

Paeroa township this morning wore a very bad appearance. On all sides appear broken willow trees, sheds that have been blown over, verandahs and fences that have left their accustomed places. The footpath along Normanby Road is all broken and torn, the road is swept clear of all but the solid metal, and footbridges have been carried away in all directions.

In various places there have been losses of stock, and it is beyond doubt that the farmers will be heavy losers.

At Karangahake houses have been swept off the blocks, while the road is in a very bad and dangerous condition. Wash-outs are numerous, and when the County Council comes to foot the bill for repairs there will be a severe strain on the County funds. The railway tunnel at Karangahake has a considerable amount of debris in it that was carried there from the river, and the work of clearing the tunnel will be no light task.

A lot of damage has been done to the mining companies' properties at Karangahake, amongst other damage being the crumpling up of the Talisman water-race. One man who came through from Waihi this morning says the race just looks as if it had been caught in a giant's hand and squeezed and twisted in all directions.

Waikino also seems to have had its full share of the flood. The business premises were flooded out, as also were several of the residential premises. The damage to the battery has also been extensive.

The rate at which the river rose was something wonderful. One man who was watching it at Paeroa states that it rose ten feet within an hour, and although this may seem like exaggeration our informant is positive in his statement.

At Netherton the damage has not been so bad as usual in a flood, although the water has been all over the place. The Netherton Hall has been blown over by the wind, and a good bit of damage has been done to fences. The road to Netherton is blocked for vehicular traffic, as the bridges have been lifted from off the crossings, but it is possible to get through on horseback. The cream is being brought from Netherton to the Puke by launch and carted from there to Paeroa.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100401.2.71>

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14333, 1 April 1910, Page 6

<sup>13</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OG19100401.2.14>

Ohinemuri Gazette, Volume XXI, Issue 2624, 1 April 1910, Page 3

## 2 April

DAMAGE BY FLOODS. LOSSES AT KARANGAHAKE.

THE TALISMAN WATER-RACE.

TWO HOUSES SWEEP AWAY.

PAEROA. Friday. Surprising occurrences have taken place in the Karangahake Gorge, the walls of which confined the raging waters, causing the roaring stream to undermine the roadway cuttings for many chains and twist the huge steel pipes forming the Talisman water race into fantastic shapes. Over half a mile of the race has been completely destroyed, and at lowest estimate the damage will not be repaired for £3000. A considerable quantity of roofing was also blown off the Talisman power house, and a short distance higher up the river two residences were swept away by the roaring torrent early on Wednesday morning. Mrs. Robinson and her four children occupied one and Mr. D. Skirtsky the other. Fortunately all of them got out just in time to avert disaster.

Several outhouses on the river banks at Waikino were washed away, while shops in the main street were flooded as high as the counters. One sight of interest today was the spectacle of drapery stock, etc., in large quantities hung out to dry. Shopkeepers at Karangahake suffered similarly, and at both places the damage in this respect is estimated at several hundreds of pounds.<sup>14</sup>

## 4 April

The Ohinemuri County Council gives notice that in order to effect repairs the road in the gorge at Karangahake is absolutely closed for all traffic. Notice is also given that any person removing or interfering with any fence erected across the road will be prosecuted.<sup>15</sup>

AN OFFER DECLINED.

[by TELEGRAPH.—OWN CORRESPONDENT]

Waihi, Saturday.

The Waihi Gold Mining Company offered the Railway Department as many miners as could be spared to assist in repairing the lines, but on learning that the rate of pay was to be 1s per hour the men declined the work. They offered to accept 1s 6d per hour, but the ganger could not accept, as the usual rate paid by the Department was 1s.

DAMAGE AT WAIHI.

The recent flood was easily a record, and the rainfall abnormal. In the 12 hours from 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday there was 12in of rainfall, while the fall for 16 hours from the time mentioned was rather over 14in.

The Ohinemuri River was fully 4ft higher than on the occasion of the previous greatest flood, which, by a strange coincidence, occurred on the same day (March 29) last year. Then 6.87 in of rain fell in nine hours.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100402.2.83>

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14334, 2 April 1910, Page 8

<sup>15</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OG19100404.2.8>

Ohinemuri Gazette, Volume XXI, Issue 2625, 4 April 1910, Page 2

<sup>16</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100404.2.67>

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14335, 4 April 1910, Page 6

## 8 April

### TALISMAN

Floods have destroyed more than half the Woodstock water-race. Damage estimated at £3000. It will take 90 days to repair the damage. Work will be carried on as usual.<sup>17</sup>

It was decided to make a ford across the river on the old Tauranga Road, where the bridge was washed away.<sup>18</sup>

### RANDOM SHOTS by "Zamiel"

I have just been looking at some photographs of the country around Paeroa and along the Ohinemuri taken since the flood, and I have come away simply astounded at the assurance of the people who run the mines and want to keep on using those rivers as sludge channels. The whole place is overspread with silt; everybody who has seen or touched it swears it is just pulverised rock and sand, and nothing more; and yet the mine managers want to persuade us that the rivers carry all the stuff poured out of the mines away into the sea. I wouldn't mind listening to those people if they wouldn't try to prove too much. It's very well to say that it would ruin the companies to dump their spoil elsewhere:—not that I believe it. But to say that it doesn't make any difference to the channels of the rivers to have 40,000 or 50,000 tons of stuff dumped there every month, or that the rivers wash it all away, or that none of it gets spread over the land in flood time, or that it has nothing to do with the floods at all - these allegations are too solid for my consumption. The only effect that this sort of twaddle has upon me is to make me long eagerly for the coming of that Royal Commission.<sup>19</sup>

## 9 April

### MINISTER'S GOLDFIELDS TOUR.

The Engineer had reported as to damages, stating that footbridges were destroyed at Mackaytown station, Owaharoa station, also the footbridge and Benner's bridge, near Waikino. The estimated cost of replacing the Mackaytown bridge was £640, and of Benner's bridge £275; Owaharoa bridge would not need replacing.<sup>20</sup>

## 11 April

After paying a visit to the Ohinemuri River yesterday, at Paeroa, the Mayor of Waihi reports that the recent flood has swept all the silt away, and, instead of inflicting any damage to the river and its banks, has proved most beneficial in scouring the channel out.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100408.2.10>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14339, 8 April 1910, Page 3

<sup>18</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19100408.2.9>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume XLVII, Issue 14339, 8 April 1910, Page 3

<sup>19</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100409.2.99>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 84, 9 April 1910, Page 16

<sup>20</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100409.2.57>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 84, 9 April 1910, Page 9

<sup>21</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19100411.2.35>  
Auckland Star, Volume XLI, Issue 85, 11 April 1910, Page 4