

BAIRNSDALE SHIRE—PUNT V. BRIDGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE GIPPSLAND TIMES.

SIR,—The immediate attention of the Shire Council is requested to the present condition of the punt. It is the surprise of all new comers to the district who have been induced to settle within the boundaries of the shire, that such an effete worn out old structure, should, in the year 1869, be the only means of communication between Bairnsdale, and the extensive district stretching to the borders of New South Wales.

The punt is an abomination in the eyes of the townspeople, a source of continual delay to the traffic, and intercourse between the residents of the town and those on the other side of the river. In fact, an intolerable nuisance to every one from the toddling schoolboy to the pumping puntman, whose avocations compel them reluctantly to avail themselves of this "modern ark" to float them across the River Mitchell, and lastly, as a means of locomotion, is positively dangerous. No one denies the absolute necessity that exists for the construction of a bridge over the river, for one thing is certain, our old acquaintance the punt is in its last stage of existence. Some fine morning ere long, Charon will find his antediluvian dingy hanging by the hauling rope, with its lee side deep in the water looking for that team that disappeared at the same place some twenty years ago, or possibly a good heavy load would make it collapse suddenly. There is not a single timber of the original framework in a sound condition, and many are so completely decayed between wind and water, that the wonder is she has not been *scuttled* long ago. It is only by incessant pumping that the present lessee is able to keep her afloat. These facts are patent to every body, and show how necessary it is to have something done immediately to prevent the total cessation of traffic that must ensue, should our ancient friend suddenly give up the ghost. It is curious that the Mitchell is the only river in Gippsland without a bridge on the main line of traffic, plainly evincing an unaccountable apathy on the part of the inhabitants of this place. The construction of a bridge is of paramount importance, not only to the citizens of Bairnsdale, but to the district at large. When the blessings of local government were conferred on this district, we were to have a bridge built, the main road cleared and formed for several miles on each side of Bairnsdale, and several other good things proceeded with at one and the same time. Nearly two years have elapsed, and the Shire Council, after mature deliberation, have effected the following works within the town boundaries, viz:—Clearing and grubbing

daries, viz:—Clearing and grubbing about half-a-mile of the main street or road. Clearing three cross streets. Improving the approaches to one of the places of public worship, and widening the road to the wharf, the latter work not yet completed. Assuredly the townspeople ought to be grateful for this liberal expenditure of ratepayers money, the ratepayers can console themselves by the reflection that if the Council continues to manage the public funds in the economical manner it has hitherto done, it will, in a few years, be able to do without collecting rates at all. However satisfactory that may be, there are a few ratepayers desirous of seeing some of the surplus funds invested in a reproductive work such as the bridge would be, if the Council continued to collect tolls. The revenue from the punt for the present year, is over £300, an amount that would more than pay the interest per annum on any sum required for the construction of a bridge. I hope the ratepayers will take the matter up and insist on having the work forthwith commenced. In conclusion, Mr. Editor, should the punt survive the building of a bridge, and should our economical council be at a loss what to do with it, I would suggest, fit her up with a powerful engine, and use her for the reception on the lake's of members of the government when they visit Gippsland at some remote period, or make a present of her to that "peppery" individual, who recently discovered a second edition of Welshpool harbor in Mr Logue's paddock, at Stratford. Judging from the great draught she would be eminently adapted for navigating that remarkable sheet of water that has remained undiscovered since Stratford was founded, until the present time.

Your insertion of the foregoing, will oblige your obedient servant,

A RATEPAYER.

Bairnsdale, 27th March, 1869.

It is stated that Sir Roger Tichbourne arrived at Falmouth, from America, early in February.