

APPENDIX C

HISTORIC RECORD OF BOWRAL FLOODS

Floods in Bowral.

Unprecedented Rainfall.

Narrow Escapes.

Heavy Damages to Property.

Nearly £500 Damages to Streets and other Council Property.

Also Heavy Losses to Owners.

ALTHOUGH the weather during last week was beautifully fine, a change took place on Saturday evening. From an early hour clouds began to rise, preceded by the old folks complaining of aching corns, while the singing cricket and croaking frog predicted rain in the near future. Before twilight waned the distant rumbling of thunder could be heard, while the storm seemed to be backing up from all points of the compass. When darkness set in, the lightning flashes were vivid and appalling, and were followed by loud grumbings overhead like the prolonged sound of booming cannons. With the exception of a slight storm between eight and nine not over-much rain fell during the rest of the night, while the next morning broke with promise of a wet Sabbath. Slight showers were in full play till about 10.30, when the pent up warnings of nature broke forth with a blinding, drenching, and streaming downpour of rain. It seemed as if all the water-spouts of the heavens were let loose; at times the rain was carried in sheets by occasional gusts of wind, while at others the drops fell thick and fast. Thunder rumbled at different parts, while the unabating appearance of the storm began to be alarming. Fires were doubted, dinners were spoilt, houses leaked, while other super-numeraries are too various to mention. All the low-lying country in the vicinity was nothing but sheets of water, while the watertables and gutters in many of the streets were not sufficient to carry the overflow away, consequently it became stationary in some places, and at others swamped the street and made free entrance into residences. Torrents of water could be seen streaming off the hills and high adjacent land; dams burst and landslips took place, while everything presented the appearance of being a second edition of the Queensland flood. In the meanwhile the creek rose as if on pinions, and it is some 23 years ago since it was seen so high—if it was then is a moot question. It played havoc with everything it came in contact with; bridges were slaughtered and fences swept away. Ducks and fowls were shown no mercy; furniture, boxes, tubs, casks, and other sundry articles were tossed and tumbled like "ocean greyhounds" in its whirling, gushing, and leaping torrent. Willow trees on the banks of the once gurgling stream were torn up by the roots and carried in its course. Rescue parties were out willing to help those sufferers who were in distress; in many places their services were needed, as various narrow escapes took place. At times intense excitement prevailed; along the sides of the creek could be seen numerous pedestrians, amongst whom were ladies who did not seem in the least afraid of melting. Such was the flood that took place on the Sunday in question, it will be long remembered and is a fitting event to be recorded in the annals of Bowral history.

THE NURSERY.

At Messrs. Cope and Sons' nursery in Merrigang-street the greatest damage appears to have been done and the biggest loss sustained. It was indeed a pitiable sight to see the once pretty and attractive grounds wholly submerged in the surging flood waters. Flowers were washed up by the roots, and plants, shrubs, and fruit trees were swept away. In the house the water rose to about 14 or 15 inches, and considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the lady members of the family on to *terra firma*. Men had to wade through water chin-high, and had to return with members of the fair sex shoulder-high, battling slowly but bravely with the torrent. It is believed that a horse belonging to this homestead was drowned, as it was carried off its legs and last seen plunging in the stream.

THE GAS WORKS.

At the Municipal Gas Works great havoc was played. A corrugated iron fence was broken down in a number of places, the fires put out, and the mains filled, a number of bags of coke were washed away, and three retorts broken. The water flowed through the residence very freely, although as sale was effected there the pay before there was a very little to spoil. A large log came with a terrific crash against the iron fence, bursting it open, but the log was blocked. The town was in darkness during the night as far as gas was concerned.

The Merrigang-street bridge bore up bravely against the brunt of the flood. Very little damage was done to it, only a portion of the hand-rails being carried away.

Proceeding down the creek, one was able to judge with what force the current was rushing. Fences were clean swept away, fowl-houses damaged, and bark huts fared very badly. On Willis' Estate the water covered a deal of ground, and a few families in that vicinity were forced to leave their home and seek shelter elsewhere. Nothing more of much consequence meets the eye until in

BONG BONG-STREET.

Here a wide expanse of water of over 100 yards could be seen extending along the street. A couple of houses were completely surrounded. At the house occupied by Mr. Crieman the water was up to the window-sill, while it also paid homage to the inside of the place. Mr. Smith's residence next door also received a fair share of patronage. The bridge was not very much damaged, although the gas lamp under the red bridge was broken. Further up the street was a large sheet of water and it paid a visit to the shops of Messrs. Mandelson, Lansdowne, Frost, Butter, Allerdice, and the Co-operative store, but with the exception of a couple of chairs, some boots, and other articles having a free bath no loss was sustained.

A large dam in Mr. B. M. Osborne's Hopewood estate gave away, and the rush of the large body of water, combined with debris and large logs, compelled the dam in Mr. Holle's property to burst asunder. This terrific rush of water carried away a bridge crossing to Mr. W. Neich's residence on the Fairmount Estate, while the Centennial Road bridge was clean uplifted.

Some houses in the vicinity of Railway Crescent were also swamped, and the families had to be removed.

THE LAWN TENNIS COURT.

The court belonging to the Bowral Lawn Tennis Club was not passed by the flood without having a share of damages meted out to it. It is a complete wreck. Great havoc has been played with the wire-netting, and in many places it is laid low. Debris and other stuff is piled up all round; and the crockery used for afternoon tea was also washed away.

IN BOWRAL-STREET.

In this street the water approached the road some two hundred yards above the bridge. At the latter great mischief was done. The handrails were slaughtered and knocked about greatly, although the flooring was not very much hurt. A young gentleman from the Brahan Bank School had a very narrow escape in trying to cross the bridge on horseback. Messrs. Baird and Herrington went to his rescue, and landed him safely by the aid of a rope. The fences below the bridge received the same fate as those higher up the creek.

IN SHEPHERD-STREET.

Mr. W. P. Barnes gives us the following particulars concerning the adventures of a number of families in the lower part of the street. About 1 o'clock Mr. Barnes (who occupies the fifth house from the bridge) looked out of his house and saw the water was running along in front of his garden over a foot deep. Thinking that his neighbours must be in need of help he went to Mr. Dunwoodie's residence, and found two women and five children in the house, Mr. Dunwoodie being at church. The water in the place was over a foot deep. He first removed the three children, and at once returned for Mrs. Dunwoodie and her lady friend, and the two babies, removing all to his own residence. Messrs. Gash, Harper, and Wylie then appeared on the scene and the four went to Mr. Taylor's. Here there was Mrs. Taylor, a gentleman, and a child. These were taken to Mr. Reddall's empty house, where they were treated very kindly. The four rescuers then returned to Mr. and Mrs. Seamen's residence on the Glebe, and succeeded in getting Miss Seamen after difficulty to Mr. Perkins's residence; but Seamen preferred to remain, although his garden was completely submerged. Furniture from Mrs. Taylor's residence came out of the door and lodged in front of the fence. The Shepherd street bridge was not damaged.

THE GARDENS.

The Chinamen's gardens up the creek were in many parts swamped, and the loss sustained was not so much as anticipated. It was rumoured that the Celestial gardeners had to seek refuge on the top of their "humpies," but we believe the report was only a sham. "Floodee comee in five mince; very gladee got all tatee up loofee," was the reply of a native of the Flowery Land when questioned on the flood question.

MR. STANGER LEATHES.

A dam in Mr. Stanger Leathes property broke away, besides the damage done to his place was very considerable. A large number of trees and logs lodged on Merrigang-street, the other side Jamieson Hill, to clear which a number of hands were put on last Monday.

SMALLER ITEMS.

All bridges on Centennial Road to Cutaway Hill have been washed away; temporary thoroughfares have been made through the properties of Messrs. Fowler and B. M. Osborne by kind permission of the owners.

A landslip took place on the Winge-carribbee Estate, while another one took place on Mr. B. M. Osborne's property.

A couple of pigs belonging to Mr. W. Moore were drowned in a sty, besides which a number of ducks and fowls got a free carriage down the creek.

Mr. Pain's cottages in Winge-carribbee street were under water.

A second heavy storm took place, between eight and nine on Sunday evening; several families had again to seek refuge elsewhere.

SUGGESTION.

To relieve the flood water going round the town in a circle, a suggestion has been made to cut a canal at the corner of Holly and Bowral streets; run the canal along Bowral-street past the hospital through Station-street under the railway to creek.

RAINFALL.

Through Mr. Sherriff's kindness we are enabled to publish the total rainfall for 3 days, the great bulk of which fell between 10.30 to 1 o'clock on Sunday morning:—

Saturday 8.30 a.m. to Sunday 8.30 a.m.	21 points
From 8.30 a.m. Sunday to 1 p.m.	717 "
1 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	258 "
5.30 p.m. to 9.15 p.m.	124 "
9.15 p.m. Sunday to 8.30 a.m. Monday	95 "
8.30 a.m. Monday to 8.30 a.m. Tuesday	48 "
Total	1263

The Bowral Free Press, Saturday, March 11, 1893, p.2 (Source: State Library of NSW)

The Floods in Bowral.

MR. FARROW'S OFFICIAL REPORT.

THE following report, dated Thursday last, March 9th, was read at the Council meeting that evening by Mr. W. R. Farrow, Clerk of Works:—

The heavy storm of Sunday last combined with the collapsing of three private dams made great havoc with the thoroughfares. The greatest damage done was to the Centennial Road and Park, one bridge being swept away; the other, on Mr. Holle's property, remains intact, but the debris from the dam completely blocked the water-way, consequently the torrent made two large breaches in the approaches. The metal road for about 300 yards has been greatly torn about. I have had the road fenced off at the washaways, and made arrangements with Colonel Roberts and Mr. Fowler for a temporary thoroughfare through their property. I have also made arrangements for getting the repairs done, but the continued bad weather has prevented the men from working. Logs for a new temporary bridge are being procured from Mr. Ben. Osborne's paddock, that gentleman having kindly given me permission. With the men engaged, and fine weather, I hope to have the road open for traffic in about 7 days.

In the Centennial Park about 30 rods of two rail fencing has been carried away, and about 10 rods displaced. The little foot bridge across the creek is also gone. The contractors, Herrington and Bauer, expected to have completed their earthwork in about 3 days, and I regret to say that all but about a dozen yards has been swept away.

Oxley st. has been greatly torn about and traffic all but suspended. Men have started to do necessary repairs. The log foot bridge in Rose-street has been swept away. Some of the logs are now lying in person's gardens, but I consider the cost of removal would be of far more expense than their worth.

Shepherd-street bridge had a portion of the approach washed away—this has been repaired. Slight damage was done to the handrail of this bridge, also to the Merrigang one—repairs will be effected as soon as possible.

At the north-end of Merrigang-street, near Outler's, the street was completely blocked with logs and rubbish—these have been cleared away. The culvert at this spot will, when weather permits, want raising at least a foot to allow of the water passing under. At present it is completely silted up.

In Carlisle-street, the newly-made water-table and footpath have suffered considerably.

In the main portion of the town the damage done has not been of any great extent, further than silting up water channels and pipe-drains; the latter will have to be lifted and cleaned.

Altogether 12 extra men and 3 horses and carts have been employed up to Tuesday night.

James Ralston, the accepted tenderer for spauls, has, not up to the present signed the necessary papers of contract. As we shall require some at an early date, will the council please to direct what is to be done in the matter. [Fresh tenders to be advertised for.]

As there is every appearance of continued wet weather, there will be a necessity of getting some ashes, our present stock being nearly run out. [5 trucks to be obtained.]



1915: Flooding near Shepherd Street, with PL Travers (author of *Mary Poppins*) standing on bank.

Source: Unknown



1975 March: Looking north along Mittagong Road.

Source: WSC, 1990



1978 March.

Source: Southern Highlands News, 22 March 1978 (Berrima District Historical Society)



1985 November: Beavan Place.

Source: Southern Highlands News?,
13 November 1985 (Berrima District
Historical Society)



1986 August: Rivulet Park.

Source: Highlands Post, 8 August
1986 (Berrima District Historical
Society)



**1988 April: Looking south along
Mittagong Road.**

Source: WSC, 1990



1999 October: Backyard of residence in Farmborough Close.

Source: Mr Ted Westwood



1999 October: Bowral Golf Course.

Source: Mr Charles Carey



2005 February: Beavan Place.

Source: Mr Phil Campbell, SES



2007 June: Farmborough Close footbridge over Mittagong Creek.

Source: YouTube