

A Short History of Ipswich Waterways

FINDING THE BREMER

In September 1824, a small group of men set out to explore the Brisbane River. On their journey they discovered a large stream flowing into the Brisbane River from the west and named it the Bremer River.

It wasn't until much later, in 1827, that Captain Patrick Logan decided to explore the Bremer River, accompanied by the well known botanist, Allan Cunningham. It was on this voyage, looking out from their boat, that they first discovered "the limestone hills" and what was to become the site of the modern City of Ipswich.



Bremer River - 1872

IPSWICH

Soon after the discovery of 'the limestone hills', convicts were sent to build a small out-station to mine limestone which was then transported along the Bremer and Brisbane Rivers to Brisbane. Free settlers soon arrived, farming the land and making Ipswich a transport hub. By the 1850's Ipswich was a thriving town, development was booming and Ipswich was competing with Brisbane to be named the capital of Queensland.

THE PLOUGH STATION AT BUNDAMBA CREEK

Early settlers found the soil around the town of Ipswich to be infertile and not suitable for growing crops. Food supplies often ran low until new shipments arrived from Sydney. New farmland had to be found if Ipswich was to become independent. Approximately 4 kilometres from Ipswich CBD, rich fertile river flats were discovered along Bundamba Creek, a tributary of the Bremer River. The first farm was soon established and became known as "The Plough Station". Part of this area became the Grange Racecourse and remains an open landscape today.



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DISCOVERING WARRILL CREEK

The upper reaches of the Bremer River remained un-discovered for several years until Allan Cunningham set off on one of his many explorations. Cunningham passed over Warrill Creek several times, noting that it formed a thin chain of stagnant pools of water but showed signs of high flood levels. Travelling closer to the mountains, Warrill Creek was recorded as being lined with swamp oaks and described as “a mountain torrent with a stony bed” even though it was dry at the time. It was on this trip that he stumbled upon Cunningham’s Gap.

WESTERN CREEK AND THE ROSEWOOD SCRUB

In 1829 Allan Cunningham returned to Ipswich before setting out once again on another adventure. On this trip he passed through the areas of Kholo and Pine Mountain but could go no further when he was confronted by the Rosewood Scrub. At that time, the Rosewood Scrub was a thick woodland with a diverse range of native plants, covering the area from Lowood to Rosewood, and Haigslea to Plainlands.

Today, less than 5 percent of the original scrub remains and many of its unique species are in danger of becoming extinct. When Cunningham discovered the scrub it was so dense his pack bullocks couldn’t get through and he had to find another way around. Travelling west around the Rosewood Scrub Cunningham came upon Western Creek where he camped for the night. Today this camp site sits in Bigges Camp Park, near the town of Grandchester.



Farm near Rosewood, 1945

PAGE 2

HISTORICAL FLOODS

The first recorded flood in Ipswich was in 1841 when the Bremer River was said to rise over 16 metres. In January of 1893 weeks of heavy rainfall saw Ipswich and most country areas completely cut off with roads and railways impassable, telegraph lines down, and gas and water supplies cut off. The Bremer River reached 24.5m above its normal level and the floods lasted for more than 3 weeks.

In 1947 while western Queensland was experiencing record droughts, Ipswich flooded again. Water covered Brisbane Street and houses and businesses were inundated with flood waters.

Many people living in Ipswich today may remember the great flood of 1974, one of the worst floods on record to hit the Bremer River Catchment with 461mm of rain falling in the catchment.



Historical Floods, Brisbane Street, Ipswich, 1947



Historical Floods, 1893

TIMBER



Glencoe Mine - Rosewood

Much of the Bremer River Catchment prior to European settlement was covered by tracts of Sub-tropical rainforest, eucalypt forest and large areas of ‘scrub country’. The scrub consisted of valuable timbers including hoop pine, brigalow or “rosewood”, crows ash blackbean and red cedar. This brought about the timber boom of the late 1800s.

PAGE 3