

River Boats



The paddle steamer 'EMU' at Ipswich, c1870.

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The Brisbane and Bremer River system was the most important link between Ipswich and Brisbane until the 1870s.

In the convict era, Captain Logan and other visitors were rowed to the Limestone Station (Ipswich) in a whaleboat with a crew of six or eight convicts who took about 12 hours to make the trip. Flat bottomed barges or punts were used to carry the lime.

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When free settlement was allowed in 1842, similar punts were used to carry cargo for the settlement. Travelling time was reduced in 1846 when steam engines were introduced.

The first paddle steamer to make the trip was 'The Experiment' with Captain Aylmeer Campbell. Before long, other paddle steamers began to operate on the rivers including the Mary Anne, Emu, Hawk, Swallow, Breadalbane, Settler, Bremer and Ipswich. The trip time was reduced further to four or five hours, depending on wind and tide.

The busy days of the river trade ended when the railway line between Ipswich and Brisbane opened in 1875. Two steam punts, Glide and Essex, continued to carry cargo after the 1870s.

Pleasure boats also continued to operate and a river trip with a picnic at the Junction or Fairy Bower was a popular pastime until about the 1940s.

In 1933, Percy Manders began to operate cargo boats including the Eclipse and the Bremer. His wharf was in the Basin and each trip from Ipswich to Brisbane and back took two days including the loading and unloading time. Another boat was called Srednam (Manders backwards) and was used for picnics and for fishing in Moreton Bay.

