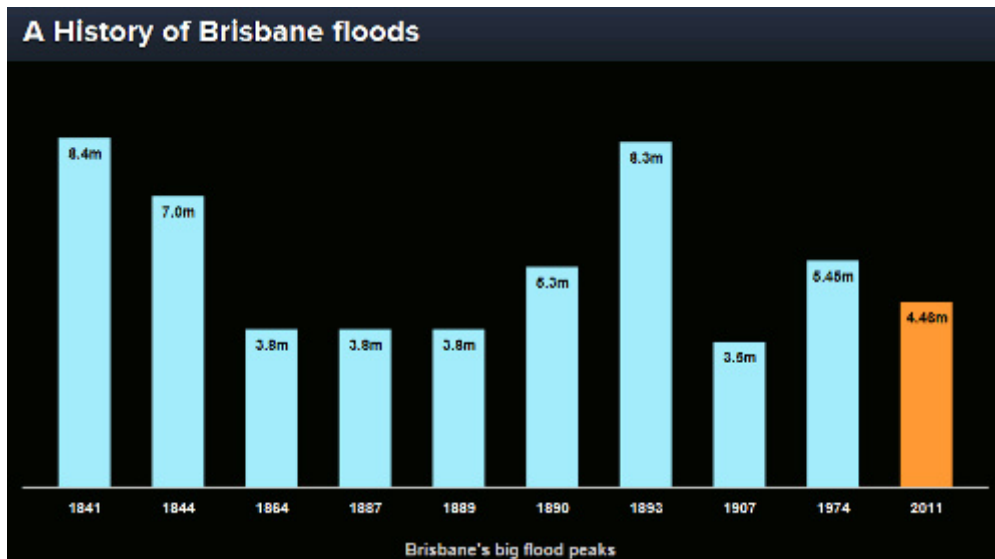


The Brisbane Floods of 1893

The biggest flood ever to strike Brisbane was the flood of 1841. But probably the most destructive was the flood of 1893, which was far higher than either 1974 or 2011.



Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/infographics/qld-floods/peaks.htm>

Brisbane had seen floods in 1887 and 1890, but the big one was in 1893.

The first warning about a possible flood came on 3rd Feb 1893 when, after cyclonic rain, the lower parts of the city were submerged. The real drama started the next day with disastrous floods in Brisbane and Ipswich. Houses were swept away and the Eclipse Colliery at Ipswich was flooded, drowning seven men. Several mines at Gympie were also destroyed.

The flood drama continued for 4 days. On 5th Feb the Indooroopilly Railway Bridge was swept away. Things got worse on 6th Feb with major flooding in South Brisbane and the northern end of the Victoria Bridge was destroyed by houses and other debris being swept down the river. The mail train from Sydney was marooned at Goodna, unable to go either way.

The situation on 6th Feb was described by a journalist of the time, Theosophilus Pugh:

"Crowds lined the high grounds near the river bank or wherever a good view was obtainable; and the roar of the water as it rushed along at a speed of from 8 to 10 miles an hour, carrying with it scores of houses, furniture and household articles in endless variety...As house after house was carried against the Victoria Bridge the crash could be heard over everything and all that was swept onwards was smashed to fragments."



Brisbane, after the flood of February 1893 – the remains of the Victoria Bridge looking towards South Brisbane (Plate: courtesy of John Oxley Library).

With the destruction of the Colleges Crossing Bridge, the rampant Brisbane River had destroyed all bridges existing in 1893. Rainfall registered over eight days exceeded 84 inches or 2,119 mm. 35 people were killed and 300 injured in the Brisbane-Ipswich-Maryborough region.

A week later, further heavy rain sent a second flood down the River peaking on 13th Feb. People were relieved that this flood did not reach the levels of 6th February.

But the river was not finished with Brisbane. Heavy rains on 16th Feb caused the river to rise again and on 17th Feb Brisbane suffered its third flood of the year. Waters rose and remained high until 21st Feb, and another span of the Indooroopilly Bridge was carried away. The water level almost exceeded the previous highs. However, a historian related: "By then, however, there was little which had not already been damaged and the third flood went almost unnoticed."

The Brisbane flood dramas of 1893 were not yet over. On 10th June 1893 there was "a fresh in the Brisbane River". This turned into the fourth flood which peaked 2 days later.

But by then, Brisbane River floods were no longer a novelty.

Viv Forbes ----- Feb 2011

References/sources:

<http://carbon-sense.com/2011/01/16/john-oxley-brisbane-floods/>

- A bit of early flood history and comparison of flood levels.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1893_Brisbane_flood

- A short history, pictures, maps and references.

<http://www.ourindooroopilly.com/brisbane-history.html>

- An interesting history of Brisbane including floods of the 1800's.

http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/flid_history/brisbane_history.shtml

- This report has brief details of every known flood in the Brisbane and Bremer Rivers.

<http://www.queenslandfirsts.org/01 cms/details.asp?ID=22>

- Material from State Archives on early floods and flood relief.