**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Chief Engineer's House**

On the Works Hill, Stumers Road tumbles down past the Hall and the pumping station toward its meeting with the river. Possibly you notice there are two roads; a steep little dirt one, that for years tested the skill of young cyclists, leading off to the right (this is the real Stumers Road); and parallel to it, the painted edged road you normally drive down that tries to be Stumers Road but is really part of Allawah Road. Now there are several reasons for this division, for little enough happened in the way of early road-building to create unnecessary extras, and Mount Crosby's roadmen were not exceptional.

The main reason is that the original road to Kholo cut to the right in a way best described by the little dirt road and it was as treacherous then as now, so the Board made the gentler terrace one of their first jobs when building the pumping station in 1890. The old road being on a gazetted easement influenced the location of the Chief Engineer's residence, which had to be placed behind it, for it had already been decided that the big man's house should be separated by a road-width from the houses of the hoi-polloi.

The Chief Engineer's house was a handsome brick and timber bungalow that doubled as his residence and an on-site boardroom for the Brisbane Board of Waterworks. It was grand enough, but it knew sadness. Robert Rutherford, the builder who started its construction in 1891, drowned in the river in baffling circumstances. The popular young man was bathing with friends at the river in about four feet of water when he called to Billy Stanley, just a few yards from him, "See how far I can swim …”. He kicked to the surface, mimicking those who could swim, then took two strokes in the direction of the deeper water and drowned so simply that few could believe it. Amid his grief, Robert's father completed the building and satisfied the Board's contract (as they insisted he must do).

A later resident of the house was the venerable engineer Jack Dann. In 1936, his son Leonard also drowned at the river (after tipping from a canoe and failing to make it to shore through the thickness of weeds).

When Jack retired in 1952 (after 33 years of service), the Board made him the unique offer of being able to stay in a house at Mount Crosby (not that house) - which he took up for a short time before moving to Ipswich to truly retire. Subsequently, the chief engineer's house passed from one occupant to another until, in the 1980s, the great decade of disregard, another inexplicable thing happened - it was demolished so simply that few could believe it.

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