**Essays on Mount Crosby - 1974 Flood**

For a long while the Hesters lived across the river where there was a five-ways of sorts just off the end of the weir. To the left, a road went to the Sportsground just the way it does now; to the right were two roads (I don’t know why) that joined up a little further along to become Allawah Road. Ahead wound the track to our house.

In the early 70s, as Bill and I scuffed our way home from school, across the river reminding us of its presence, our conversation often turned to the great (and mysterious) flood of 1893 and where it might have got up to - especially compared to our house, which seemed so far from the river that I supposed it got up to there (which it hadn't because it wasn't there). I shouldn’t speak for Bill, but I know I secretly hoped to see a flood of that magnitude (which children are allowed to do because they are not thinking of the heartbreak downstream).

The fourth biggest flood in our recorded history arrived on 28 January 1974 and was announced by Bill reporting that he could see the river from our kitchen window - a detail that momentarily reduced the strength of his story until we went and saw it for ourselves. At the five-ways the water soon covered the road to a shallow depth and we stood looking across to the pumping station unaware of the efforts being made to save it from the rising water.

Old long forgotten tunnels entering the pumping station had begun to make themselves known again. Since the twenties water had been directed to the station’s pump wells through the tunnels linking the 'new' weir to the pumping station. The original south tunnel and screen shaft were now unused, but still there, and the unprecedented pressure of the floodwater drove back into them and threatened to enter the pumping station from within. The Station also looked under threat from water rising above the floor level, and the ground into which the wells were sunk was so sodden from rain and flood water that torrents of water flowed inwards through their walls.

Measures were being taken to stop the many ‘leaks’ wherever they could. Sandbags and wooden bulkheads were being put in place to stop water spilling in and water was being pumped from the wells to keep things as dry as possible. Here the people of Mt Crosby excelled themselves and showed the character of the company town on which the city’s water supply had long depended. All who could attend the station volunteered for long hours of work. The ladies kept them fed and worked as well, between doing the chores that let the men do theirs.

Engineer-in-Charge, Ray Rogan, knew the cities would need water for cleaning and disease control after the floodwaters had receded, so one pump from each well was hoisted to the roof of the pumping station in the hope that they could be saved. Despite all the odds, the pumping station delivered 126 megalitres of water on the day of highest flooding and thereafter managed to deliver all of the water required to clean up the silted cities – three cheers for Mt Crosby. On the other side of the river, I was satisfied with my flood.

Col Hester