**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Coal Shed**

In 1916, the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board had a lot of projects underway. In Brisbane they were building the long awaited S1 Sewer that would drain the city between South Toowong and Pinkenba (about the extent of the city in those days), and at Mount Crosby they had embarked on an ambitious expansion of pumping equipment, replacing the original engines with new Hathorn-Davey triple expansion steam engines. From an engineering perspective it all looked rosy, but there had been problems, not the least of which was a series of crippling coal strikes that endangered the pumping station's ability to keep operating. For weeks at a time the station had to be fired with up to fifty tons of wood per day.

Warned by the lesson, the Board decided it should hold a large coal reserve. At first they proposed a coal shed on the same side of the river as the pumping station, then called tenders to supply 1000 tons of coal to be used only in the event of an emergency. In due course, the Board was informed that a coal shed built there would certainly be washed away in a sizeable flood - so the engineers were asked to consider sites on the west bank of the river.

That they did, and a 1000 ton coal shed was built near the end of the Tivoli to Mount Crosby railway line at Westbank, which has that feature I enjoy about decisions once they have been made - they become obvious.

The coal shed stayed on after the end of steaming, becoming my neighbour for the years between 1970 and 1985. We played soccer against it, practiced catching balls that were thrown onto its roof and, when we felt a little mischievous, we snuck into it to look at its eclectic mix of old and new equipment. It was during one such time that a memorable thing happened. A corrugated iron rolling machine that had been laying in wait for years was spotted by my younger brothers. One turned the handle and brought it to life while the other (who is now an engineer) decided to find out what it felt like to be corrugated, by putting his fingers where they shouldn't go. Judging by the noise, some experiments should be left to the professionals.

All danger to children was removed when the shed made way for the Westbank Water Treatment Plant in the mid-eighties.

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