**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Standpipe**

High on the side of Mt Crosby, looking out over the town and its works, is a strange dark monument to the earliest days of Brisbane’s water industry. Standing several metres tall, strong arms at its side, it would have been visible from most parts of the town before the trees grew back to reclaim the view. Despite its fine lines and sculptured look this is no official monument, but rather, it’s a remnant from an age when engineering pride was expressed with a crowning pièce de résistance.

Although redundant since the twenties, this substantial piece has survived untouched for more than 120 years and no one, it seems, has ever suggested removing it. And that - be assured - is high praise for any old thing. Perhaps it's because of its stately position and peerless vintage, or perhaps there's a simpler, more practical reason - it was just too darn heavy to get down from there. In any case, the Brisbane foundry that cast this piece gave it enough style to last one hundred years and more, and enough people love it to make it the poster child of the Mount Crosby Historical Society.

But what is the "monument" on our hill? To give it its correct name, it is the Standpipe. In 1891, it was the loftiest part of the new Brisbane River water supply scheme and to its height, hundreds of feet above the river, millions of gallons of water were pushed daily by the mighty steam engines of the pumping station below. When the new Mount Crosby reservoir was full, the excess water could be directed to Brisbane’s Gold Creek reservoir; but to do this required an extra fifty feet of head (or height). The extra height was achieved by directing the flow away from the reservoir and up this wonderful standpipe.

With every rotation of the great pumps the water would rise above the arms of the standpipe and, then falling, begin the long journey to Brisbane’s Gold Creek reservoir. If you were there you would have heard nothing but soothing cascades of water keeping time with the flailing pump engines which, four hundred feet below, were creating a hot and roaring devil of a place to work.

*The Queenslander* seemed impressed too. They wrote “*from the water [the river], may be seen the head of Mt Crosby, crowned with the reservoir of concrete, [and] marked by the huge black standpipe shown in our illustration*”.

I like the Standpipe's simple yet practical lines, and I’m sure that the engineers of its day did too. There are many ways to achieve its function that are less interesting, but here the engineers chose to overdo it a little. The flared top, which ought to never see water wasted upon it, has been created with artistic lines so that even this mishap would be reduced to a pleasing spill.

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