**Essays on Mount Crosby - Chinook Lift at Mount Crosby**

It was always a little cramped building the city's water treatment plant on the side of Mount Crosby. If you are one day touring at the treatment plant, you will see behind that concrete facade that the plant hangs out over the edges in a multitude of places, and traffic, including surprisingly large trucks, are bound to make their way carefully around narrow terraces to serve their duty.

I like it; it forces things to happen a bit slower up there. It also makes engineers scratch their heads and think harder when they have to build something - and they have been building something up there on Mrs O'Brien's ridge since 1890. I digress, but it has been my pleasure to witness that when engineers think about what they are doing they can come up with enlightened ideas. Rely on it. I'm not one, by the way, which helps my argument. Anyway, I bet if it was flat up there the layout would be properly unremarkable.

A contender for the most enlightened idea came about in the early 1970s, when some work was required on the large concrete basins that cling to the northern side of Mount Crosby. Around their perimeter was a small road, mostly on old spoil, and that road wasn't ready to support a crane large enough to reach a concrete beam that needed to be moved near the middle of the basins.

Now it happens that quite nearby, at the Amberley Airbase, No. 12 Squadron had recently formed to fly twelve new interesting cranes called the Chinook CH-47C helicopters, and it hadn't passed the notice of the engineers of the Water Supply & Sewerage Department. I suppose they just made a phone call (the sort of thing you could do in those days) and they asked whether that useful instrument could possibly come and give us a hand.

" Yes," they could, "just don't mention it too widely. We don't want an audience or to lift over people's heads ..."

Now what do you think? Yes, only the whole town turned up to watch the secret spectacle; mothers and children, wives of engineers, farmers, and every worker from every quarter of the plant (basically, anyone who wasn't at school). And they weren't disappointed. The great air-crane lifted the beam and made everyone's heart race as it slapped hard at the air - and Mrs Rea's dress got out of control with the great whirlwind, which is sometimes a topic all these decades later.

Col Hester