

HARDEN UP

QUEENSLAND



CASE STUDY: Cyclone Leonta, March 1903

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Tropical cyclone *Leonta* during March 1903 recurved over Townsville where the barometer dropped to 965 hPa. The winds reached Hurricane force (average speed 64knots or more) when the winds were mostly from the SW of SSW. The most damage came from the severe wind gusts with flying roofing iron, buildings blown over and verandas wrenched away. The Townsville Hospital with 36 cm thick brick walls was wrecked by the wind and the brick Grammar School was destroyed. There were nine fatalities in the hospital and two bodies were found in wrecked houses while another was found on Stanton Hill two day later. This brought the total number of deaths to 12 in Townsville. The cyclone travelled inland for a period passing close to Charters Towers where there were 2 deaths and then it passed near Bowen where it also caused severe wind damage. The track is shown in Figure 1.

Observations from Townsville Pilot Station Observer

6.30am 9 March 1903 1001.7hPa SSW 22-27knots
10.20am 9 March 1903 993.6hPa SSW 28-33knots
10.30am 9 March 1903 993.4hPa SW 41-47knots
10.40am 9 March 1903 992.2hPa SW 48-55knots
10.57am 9 March 1903 990.8hPa SW 56-63knots
11.06am 9 March 1903 990.0hPa SW 64knots or more
11.15am 9 March 1903 989.5hPa SSW 64knots or more
11.35am 9 March 1903 986.7hPa SSW 64knots or more
11.55am 9 March 1903 983.7hPa SSW 64knots or more
12.15pm 9 March 1903 981.7hPa SW 64knots or more
12.50pm 9 March 1903 979.3hPa SW 64knots or more
02.00pm 9 March 1903 974.4hPa SSW 64knots or more
02.10pm 9 March 1903 969.9hPa S 64knots or more
02.15pm 9 March 1903 965.1hPa S 56knots-63knots
03.00pm 9 March 1903 966.9hPa SSE 48-55knots
05.55pm 9 March 1903 995.3hPa ENE 48-55knots
The wind then turned North and at 9pm 9 March the bar was 1006.4hPa

Charters Towers Reports

For the twenty-four hours ending 9am 10 March 1903 134mm of rain fell. It is reported that a man was drowned, at Kirk. Some of the buildings there were a complete wreck. The Town's engineer and second engineer were badly injured by wind debris and the latter was expected to die. One block of houses between Stanley and Gregory streets, consisting of twenty four houses, were wrecked.

Cairns Report

On Tuesday 10 March morning gale force winds hit the Town, the wind having a force of seventy miles an hour and the storm continued for four hours, and damaged the municipal 'baths, washed the logging from the embankment of the esplanade, and destroyed the brick drains The waves

washed over the esplanade In numerous places No damage was done to houses or shipping. The gale came from north-west very little rain fell.

Bowen Report

A severe cyclone was experienced Bowen on 10 March and did great damage to buildings. The wind commenced from the southwest on Sunday night (9 March), increasing in force, and veered round by south to east, blowing in strong gusts, with heavy rain. The barometer was at its lowest about 10am Monday, when the storm was at its worst. The drill shed. Burns, Philip, and Co.'s cargo-shed and shipping office, the Presbyterian Sunday School, and Stewart's forge collapsed. The engine-shed, goods shed, and railway station, Schilling's, Cook's, Mackenzie's the Federal and Commercial Hotels, the Joint Stock Bank, the inner jetty shed, the "Times" office, and the houses of Messrs. Massy. Mackenzie, Brooks and others, were partly unroofed, and the verandas removed. The telephone and telegraph lines were dismantled, and the baths collapsed. Heavy rain followed the cyclone, causing great damage to exposed property. The only casualties reported were those of Constable Luck and James Page, who were cut on the head and Pilot Gibson, who hurt his leg injured.

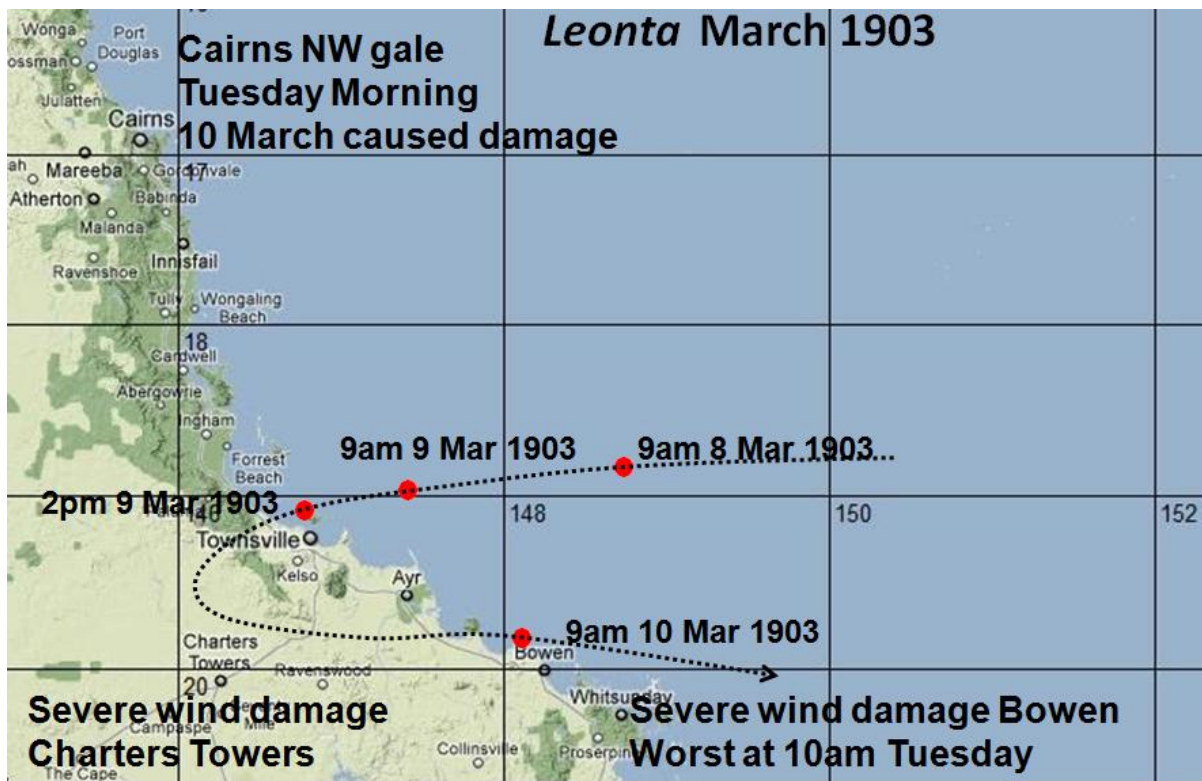


Figure 1 Track of tropical cyclone Leonta 9-10 March 1903.