

CASE STUDY: Cardwell Cyclone, 24th-28th March 1890

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A tropical cyclone crossed the coast near Cardwell on 24 March and moved back into the Coral Sea on 28 March passing over Fraser Island 28th (see Track in Figure 1). There were 20 fatalities.

Impact

- Disastrous floods over much of Queensland and northern NSW.
- At South Barnard Island: two men were drowned when their boat was swept away after losing its jib. The house on the Island was blown down and the wife of one of the men was stranded for 2 days with her 4 children. Two beche de mere fishermen were drowned.
- Cardwell: the winds started 7pm Sunday 23rd and were at their worst until 7am Monday 24th. Only 4 houses were left standing, the rest were wholly blown down, unroofed or destroyed. Two Government boathouses were destroyed; the jetty was wrecked, the Schoolhouse blown down, and the Courthouse almost blown away. The tide came up over the bank.
- Dungeness: (mouth of Herbert R.) The sea came up high over town and all people left the town. All buildings were more or less damaged with houses and shops blown down and Customs House unroofed. The schooner *Mary Ellen* was wrecked in the Herbert River and 4 punts were wrecked. At Halifax a man was killed when a house blew down on him and a man was drowned at Victoria plantation. At Ingham the Church of England was levelled to the ground.
- Townsville: a gale blew all Sunday night (23 March) until 9pm Monday 24th with 15 small houses wrecked by the wind, 30 homes blown off their blocks, 40 verandas wrecked and 3 or 4 houses washed away. 110 people were homeless with the whole of Hermit Park was under water. Heavy seas rolled over the top of the Breakwater which was 6 feet above high water spring tides. Two boats sank in Ross Creek, the Launch *Eleanor* was lost, the ketch *Snowdrop* lost and the Customs launch sank. A man was washed off a cart and drowned and a woman was killed when her house caved in.
- Burdekin: 431 mm in 24 hours at Ravenswood. A man drowned at Sellheim, several houses disappeared, a man drowned at Sandy creek and a rescuer drowned. Ayr: Church razed to the ground and the Police building unroofed. At Mackay a man drowned.
- Emu Park: Wednesday 26th 15 inches (381mm) in 12 hours and man was killed by lightning 6.30 am Wednesday. The Schooner *Matha Reid* was dismasted and captain knocked senseless and thought to have died. Major Flood at Rockhampton 3 April and reached 8.5m at Rockhampton.
- Darling Downs: 2 policemen drowned in floods near Dalby and at Roma 100 people were evacuated from floods. At Roma a farm was destroyed by floods along with a large number of sheep.
- Beaudesert: man drowned in creek 28 March.
- Isisford had the largest flood experienced up to then with one drowning. Creek at Blackall 800m wide.

- Charleville and Cunnamulla were flooded and nearly every building flooded at Bollon.
- Nepean Flooded with one drowning.
- Grafton, Maclean, Bingara, Moree towns all flooded.
- Texas: Numerous buildings washed away, man drowned and a large number of stock lost. The water came down four miles wide, and at one time rose 1ft in 10 minutes. (See Figure 2 Texas is on the Dumaresq River which is fed from the Wallangarra/ Stanthorpe area.)

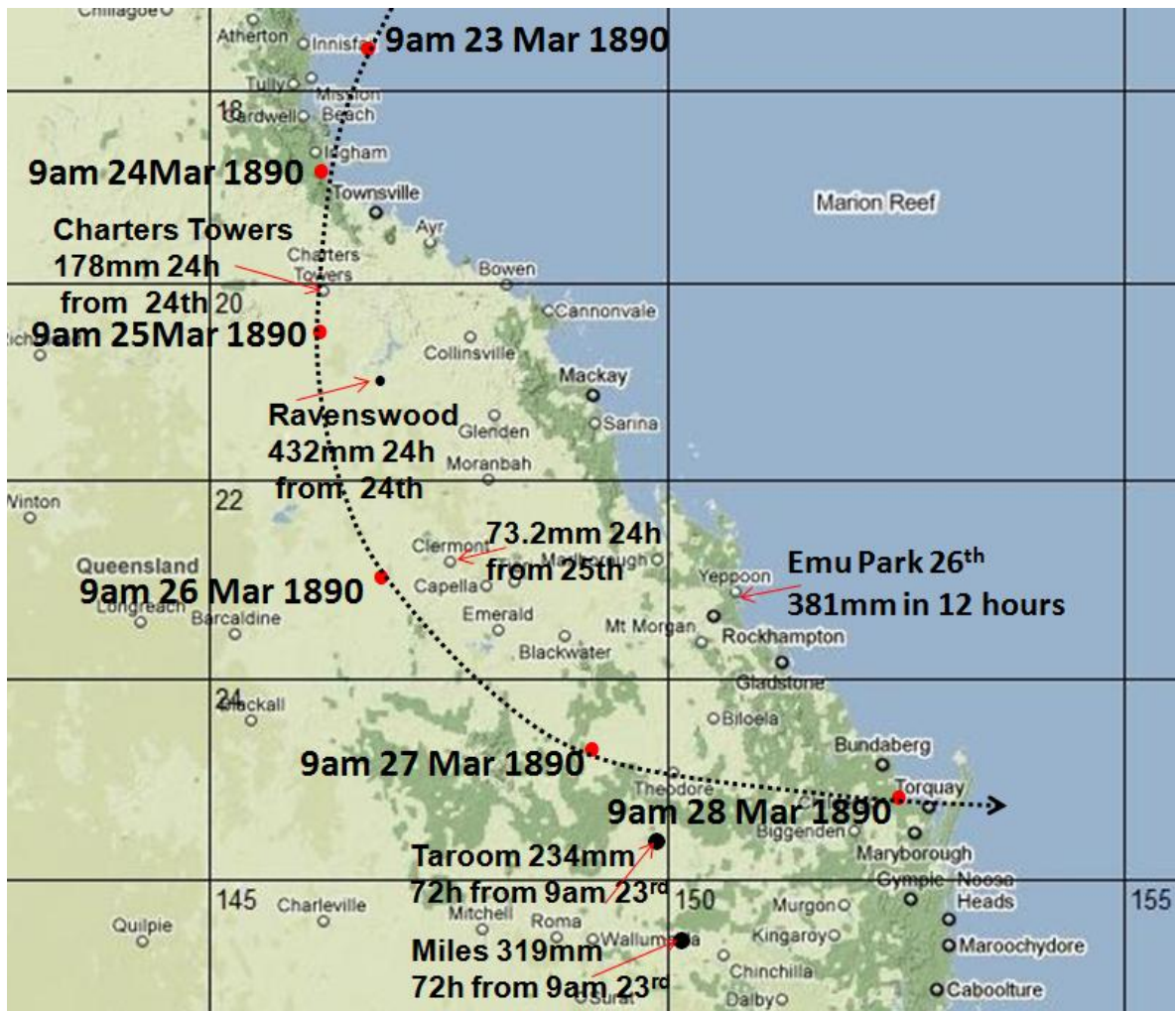


Figure 1 - Track of the 1890 Cardwell Cyclone.

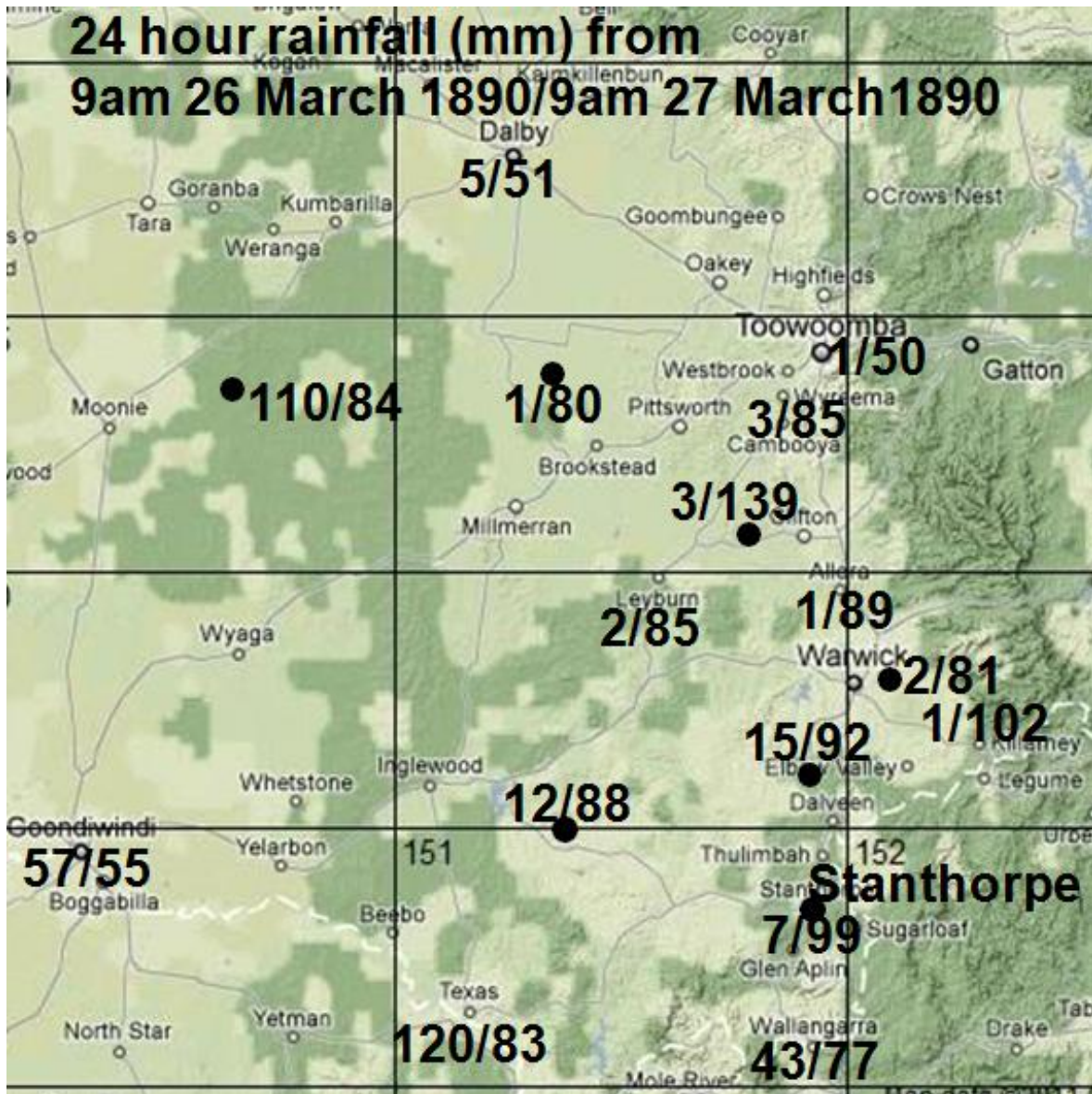


Figure 2 - Rainfall over a 48hour period in the Texas Stanthorpe area.