

## CASE STUDY: Brisbane Cyclone, 1887

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A tropical cyclone moved along the east coast of Fraser Island down to the Sunshine Coast and then into Brisbane City. From the mean sea level charts (Figure 1) the cyclone can be seen move down to Brisbane and then remained stationary there driving very heavy rainfall into the Southeast Queensland area and into the southern Border areas.

Some of the impacts from this event are listed below:

- Heavy gale and rains over southern part of Queensland with intense damage.
- 19th-21st - W to NW gale off Double Island Point with telephone lines down along the coast.
- A ship, 43 km ENE of Noosa at 8pm 20th read bar 1002 hPa had SE winds and heavy NE swell. The bar was 998 hPa at midnight with hurricane force winds. The bar was 998 hPa at midnight with hurricane force winds which eased a little as the bar went down to 992 hPa. Then the wind turned NE with gales at 8pm 21 January and moderating by 8am 22 January.
- At 9am Friday 21st 2 inches or 51mm of rain fell in the past 24 hours in Brisbane and then 8 inches (203mm) in succeeding 12 hours with gales and 262mm in the next 12 hours.
- Easterly gales at Sandgate had seas breaking over the jetty and all the bathing houses were washed away- large trees were blown down in different directions. A man was drowned at Woolloongabba and another at South Brisbane.
- At Goodna flooded houses were under water. Rail lines were cut out of Brisbane - Bowen Bridge was 5 feet (1.5m) under water and at 4pm a large number of people were rescued from Breakfast Creek and a house floated into the Creek.
- Many people were rescued from the South Pine River and 2 miles of railway was washed away between Toombul and Bald Hills.
- On Saturday 22nd there was little rain in Brisbane with the low moved overland to the west.
- Two men were missing at Gold Creek reservoir believed drowned when water in the form of a large bore came over the by-wash. The baths were carried away at Ipswich.
- Three girls aged 7 to 10 were missing believed drowned.
- 23rd - Very high flood in the Brisbane River with a crewman of barque Afton drowned after the boat was swamped in fast flowing Brisbane River. Railway line washed away at Laidley- boats rescuing people South Brisbane- two men drowned- enormous amount of timber lost to sea.
- Large loss of life in the Logan area from floods.

### Rainfall

The rainfall was exceptionally heavy (see below) and caused rapid Creek flooding. Brisbane received a record 24 hour rainfall total of 465mm which still stands as a record for the city today.

Rainfall in 24hours to the date shown:

	20 Jan	21 Jan	22Jan	23 Jan	24 Jan
Beenleigh	0.0mm	68.6mm	67.3mm	287.0mm	69.9mm
Brisbane	20.1mm	53.3mm	465.1mm	19.1mm	0.0mm
Bulimba	21.1mm	53.1mm	462.3mm	15.7mm	0.0mm
Caboolture	2.5mm	12.7mm	254.0mm	127.0mm	0.0mm
Englesberg	0.0mm	12.7mm	43.2mm	259.1mm	98.8mm
Enoggera Reservoir	13.0mm	18.0mm	48.5mm	235.7mm	36.8mm
Esk	0.0mm	36.8mm	52.1mm	271.8mm	1.8mm
Franklyn Vale	0.3mm	16.8mm	59.7mm	158.0mm	34.0mm
Goodna	2.5mm	0.0mm	95.3mm	279.4mm	0.0mm
Gympie	20.3mm	43.4mm	14.0mm	42.4mm	41.4mm
Inskip Point	12.7mm	7.6mm	5.1mm	12.7mm	0.0mm
Ipswich	0.0mm	7.6mm	66.8mm	240.3mm	23.6mm
Lytton	12.7mm	58.4mm	326.4mm	36.1mm	0.0mm
Margate	5.1mm	17.0mm	17.3mm	355.6mm	17.0mm
Nerang	6.6mm	60.5mm	52.6mm	194.3mm	0.0mm
Petrie	5.1mm	24.6mm	53.3mm	294.6mm	17.8mm
Sandgate	0.0mm	11.7mm	50.8mm	255.3mm	25.4mm
Southport	19.1mm	41.7mm	44.5mm	135.1mm	70.0mm

## Flooding

### Logan River

There was fearful loss of life and property on the Logan River with the destruction of the railway bridge. At Logan a family of five were drowned, two men were drowned, a man and his son were drowned crossing a creek and 60 to 70 families were washed out of their homes. The waters were higher by 12 feet than the flood of 1864.

### Clarence River

Glenn Martin author of the book "Places in the Bush a History of Kyogle Shire" wrote 'The flood of 1887 is said to have been higher than any flood in history. Roseberry (about 20km upstream on the Richmond River from Kyogle) recorded 52.1mm 20th, 104.6 mm 21st, 256.5 mm 22nd and 30.5mm 23rd. The Clarence River at Grafton 23 January 1887 reached 7.83metres which was a major flood and the 2nd highest level ever recorded there. The whole of South Grafton was completely submerged, except the high knoll known as Wilson's Hill. In North Grafton there were only three houses out of water.

### Richmond River at Casino

The most disastrous flood on record in the upper Richmond occurred in Casino on Saturday 22 January. Rain began Wednesday night until daylight Saturday 22 January with 13 inches in 48hours. On Saturday at 8am the river was 23feet (7.0metres) from then to 5pm there was a rise of 35feet (10.7metres) making 60 feet (18.3metres) in all. The river at its highest was awash with the decking of the bridge. The Australian Hotel had 4 feet of water through it several other places were also flooded, damaging the furniture, clothing, etc. Galley and Loveday's back store had three feet of water in and tho 6000 gallon tank of water in the Public school was wholly destroyed by the cesspit

overflowing, caused by the flood waters. Houses were inundated and there were several dramatic rescues, one lasting 7 hours. Lismore and Coraki were not so severely affected.

#### Brisbane River

3.78metres 23 January 1887 The flood in the river was severe. All the wharfs were under water, some 10 feet. A sailor named James Challón, one of the crew of the barque Afton, was drowned through the boat capsizing in the river. A man named Richard Thompson was drowned in Merrivale Street, South Brisbane. The Sandgate railway was partly submerged, and the Bowen Bridge and Breakfast Creek Bridge were covered. The steamer Barrabool ran aground in Brisbane River and two sailors drowned.

#### Norman Creek at Thompson Estate

Many houses were lifted from the stumps on which they were built and carried away by the flooded Norman Creek. One house floated away with the family in it, and the occupants were rescued with great difficulty. A man named Joseph Halloran was drowned on the Thompson Estate. At Swan Hill, Albion, O'Connell Town, Breakfast Creek, and Newstead, most of the houses are underwater. The flood rose so rapidly that people could not leave their houses.

#### Bremer River

The river reached 17.3metres at Ipswich and the flood was higher than in 1864. Brisbane-street was 15 feet under water.

#### Warwick

The flood was the highest and most disastrous the present generation had witnessed, The River rose 80 feet in a few hours. There were over four feet of water in business places and the Government offices. Only one person was drowned, a Miss Reeve, of Emu Vale, who was climbing along a wire fence and was washed off. Her two brothers had a narrow escape. The river rose 80 feet in a few hours. There were over four feet of water in business places and the Government offices.

#### Pine River

The agricultural district was completely swept clean and the damage to crops was enormous. The Pine Bridge approaches were washed away.

#### Flooding also at

Bundaberg, Maryborough and Gympie (river 40 feet (12.2 m) above normal).

Bathurst Monday 24th. Heavy rain past two days has flooded Creeks and caused damage. In Milltown some houses were evacuated.

Gundagai Sunday 23 January. The Murrumbidgee River at Gundagai rose to 27 feet above summer level. It was only about two feet deep the previous night. Tho river flats and site of the old Gundagai Township are submerged. This was the highest flood since 1879.

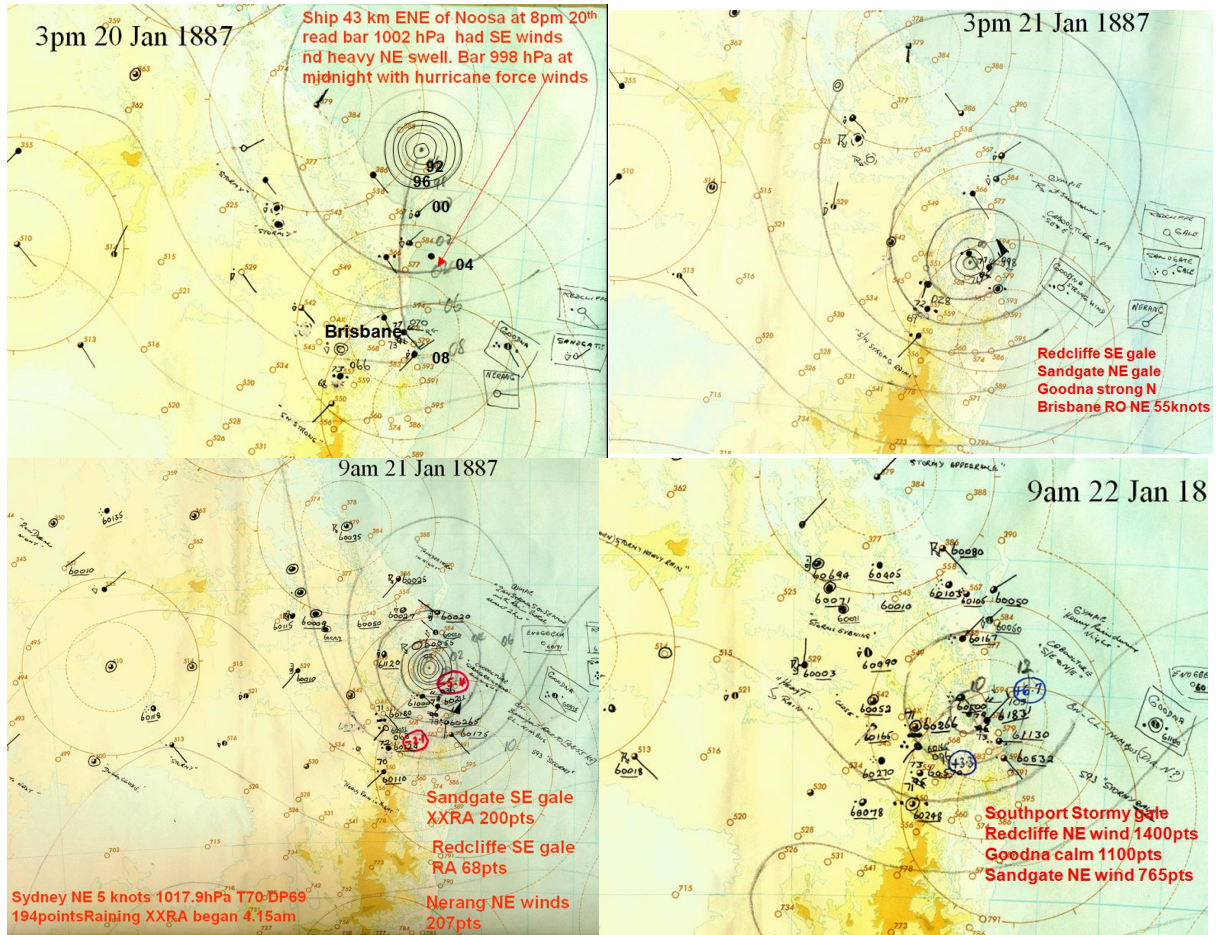


Figure 1 Mean sea level analyses constructed from data in National Archives from 3pm 20 January to 9am 22 January 1887.