



Helidon

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## Queensland Floods Commission of Enquiry

At 73 I am a fourth generation resident of the Lockyer Valley. My four ancestral families were all pioneering families, with roads and districts named after them. When elected to Gatton Shire Council between 1979 and 1991 I was a third generation councillor. I am a published author and have written the history of three areas of the Lockyer Regional Council. Nothing I have written has ever been challenged.

GRANTHAM developed later than Gatton, Helidon and Murphys Creek. Grantham had a railway station when the Grantham Run was still mainly intact. It started to develop when the co-operative butter factory was built across the railway line in 1905. It had 400 suppliers, the business centre of Grantham developed along William and Harris Streets about this time. The businesses included a hotel, a private hall, general stores, saddlery, boot manufacturing business, bakery, butcher shop and produce merchants, who consigned produce from the area by rail to Brisbane and Ipswich.

The butter co-operative factory replaced the Silverwood butter factory across the line at Gatton which was burnt down. It was a time

of great prosperity, most of the smaller farms east of Anzac Avenue of about 30 acres, were developed as citrus orchards. When the road traffic increased about 1940 about half a dozen fruit stalls developed on a seasonal basis.

Grantham had numerous floods which were caused by Sandy Creek which runs parallel to William Street and Harris Street and joins the Lockyer Creek just above Thistlewaite Bridge, overflowing its banks and rejoining the Lockyer Creek further down stream.

There was no development at Grantham apart from the railway station at the time of the 1893 flood. 1974 was a major flood and the Armstrongs orange trees were flattened. There was very little structural damage to any buildings. The area on the western side of Anzac Avenue to where it joins the Old Toowoomba Road had been approved for residential subdivision. The developers were Peters Realty, and in those times council approvals for subdivision were for a 12 month period. It was normal to get up to a couple of extensions, however Tatton Shire Council refused to extend their approval and it lapsed.

When the butter factory closed about 1968 the Grantham meat works became the major employer of the area.

In the late 1980 Tatton Shire Council approved a sand mining operation by Hartins which was subsequently bought by Wagners. There was a large creek pocket and their

application was to take off the top soil, mine the sand and gravel and reinstatate the topsoil at a lower level. There were a number of local objections and bounceit made a condition that flattens the bank the edge of the pocket and not allow any flood waters to enter the site. This is where the flood waters broke the creek bank and descended accross the flat on the town of Grantham. eformally the flood waters would have spread out accross that pocket and continued down the Lockyer Creek.

This actually did happen at Helidon, just south of Helidon on the Back Flagstone Creek Road. The flood waters spread out over more than 100 acres of creek flats on two properties, Kettle's and formerly Pat Bonolles. It was several metres deep over all the area and was almost up to the highway, had it gone much higher it would have inundated the lower part of Helidon. Helidon is an old town which was surveyed before the coming of the railway. The only time it had a natural disaster was in 1911 when a cyclone practically demolished the town.

Murphys Creek was also surveyed at the time of the railway construction in the 1870s, it was called Fungal and was bigger than Toowoomba. It had a lot of industry centered on sandstone quarrying, timber, sawmilling. It had two hotels, brickworks, the bacon factory K R Darling Downs started off there. It had a police station and court house and a permanent policeman until 1928. Photographs have shown that the present flood was about

the same as in 1893.

Withcott is only a recent town developed since the late 1970s. It was subdivided about the time of the 1893 floods. It was originally an area of citrus orchards and vineyards. The first hotel was further up the road near Roaches Road which was also the site of bob & co coaches spelling paddock. The bob & co charging station was on the other side of the road from Postmans Ridge Hall.

There was significant flooding and the Range Highway was cut off in 1974 but I didn't hear of any structural damage.

1893 was the major flood of the area, with most of the flood waters in Brisbane coming from the Lockyer. The area between Gatton, Grantham and Tenthill was a sea of water. There were still Aborigines in the area and they were camped where the Logan Centre is now built in Gatton and the present site of the University. The only communication was by telegraph line which ran between the railway stations, it was washed away in the first flood. There was even heavier rain a few days later and Lockyer finest horseman set out to warn Brisbane. He rode across country by Esk swimming the flooded creeks and Pine River. He rode into the telegraph station at Petrie the following afternoon, however it was too late for the police to take further action as the flood was almost there.

I remain

Yours Faithfully,

BARRIE PRIOR