

## The January 1974 Flood

On the last weekend in January 1974 (Saturday 26-Monday 28, the Australia Day long weekend), flood waters spread through Jindalee, only a little more than a decade after its initial establishment. The 1974 flood remains the highest known flood since suburban development commenced but was not as high as the 1893 flood: see 'Floods in the Centenary Suburbs Area: Overview' on the Natural and Historical Features page <http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/natural-and-historical-features/> and 'the 1893 Floods and Pre-Suburban 20<sup>th</sup> Century Floods' <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/floods-18932.pdf>

In early 1974, only part of the available freehold land along the river was built on, and the area south and west of Curragundi Road had only scattered housing. The suburbs of Jamboree Heights and Mount Omanney had been formally launched a few years before but housing had not yet developed to the extent that it exists in 2012. Riverhills and Westlake suburbs had been officially started in 1973, the year before the flood: some housing existed but a considerable part of those areas was yet to be developed. Consequently, the major impact of the flood was experienced in Jindalee. Twenty two percent of residential land in Jindalee was flooded, while 15% of Westlake and Riverhills was flooded and 5% of Middle Park, Mt Ommaney and Jamboree Heights was flooded.



The 1974 flood followed the now familiar pattern, affecting some riverside properties but also backing up along the creeks and gullies. A 'runaway' gravel barge *Koala* rammed the Centenary Bridge on the upstream side, causing damage. The bridge was totally closed for some weeks after the flood. There was only a single lane of traffic for two years. (Image of *Koala* rammed against Centenary Bridge courtesy of Brisbane City Council).

Flood waters rose 15 feet (approximately 3 metres) above the top of the Jindalee Bowls Club. The Army assisted with evacuations of householders but residents also undertook rescues, using a privately owned boat. The continual heavy downpours of rain over the weekend exacerbated the difficulties in moving furniture and other household items out of the reach of rising flood waters.

The Looranah St and Curragundi Rd shopping precincts, then the main sources of household supplies, were flooded badly. As the plight of the isolated western suburbs community became known, food drops were made by Army helicopters.

Members of a youth group dived into the supermarket to obtain canned goods while the owners of the Looranah St Nursery made their premises available as a store where people could obtain goods. The youth group also assisted families with infants by obtaining fresh milk in buckets from Sir Hercules Sinnamon's farm: this involved crossing the flooded Jindalee Creek in the group leader's boat. The flooding of the main sources of household supplies, and the temporary closure of the Centenary Bridge, meant that residents had to obtain necessities from areas such as Oxley for some time after the flood. In the immediate

aftermath of the flood, some residents including an Oxley-Corinda pharmacist went to work by boat, bringing supplies back the same way.



Some parts of the area were affected more severely than others. Telephone contact was lost as flood waters rose in one area and phones remained out of order: at the height of the flood, only a taxi radio provided communication between this part of Jindalee and the rest of Brisbane. However, in another part of Jindalee, residents were able to maintain telephone contact with family and friends outside the area. Electricity was not available for at least a week after the flood in most areas.

The image opposite shows the flooded Brisbane River and riverside properties at Jindalee, January 1974 (image courtesy of Gordon family).

The recollections of one Jindalee resident of the 1974 flood are recorded online at the following site: <http://sharn-genealogyjottings.blogspot.com.au/> (scroll down to “Memories of My Suburb in the 1974 Brisbane Flood”); or Google “Sharn’s Genealogy Jottings”.

For the Bureau of Meteorology report on the 1974 flood, see *Brisbane Floods January 1974* available in pdf format on the Bureau’s website:

[http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/fld\\_reports/brisbane\\_jan1974.pdf](http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/fld_reports/brisbane_jan1974.pdf)