

SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

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CYCLONE PASSAGE OVER WEIPA

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A summary of the main features of the Peninsula-Coral Sea cyclone of 2-8 March, 1961, is given in the Australian Meteorological Magazine No. 35, December 1961. The cyclone originated near the northeastern tip of Arnhem Land and proceeded eastsoutheast across the Gulf, making its landfall just south of Weipa ($12^{\circ} 38'S$, $141^{\circ} 54'E$) shortly after 0600 EST on 3 March.

By courtesy of Comalco, who maintain the Weipa observing station, the writer has been given access to the records from the Weipa Dines anemograph. The relevant chart is reproduced in Fig. 1.

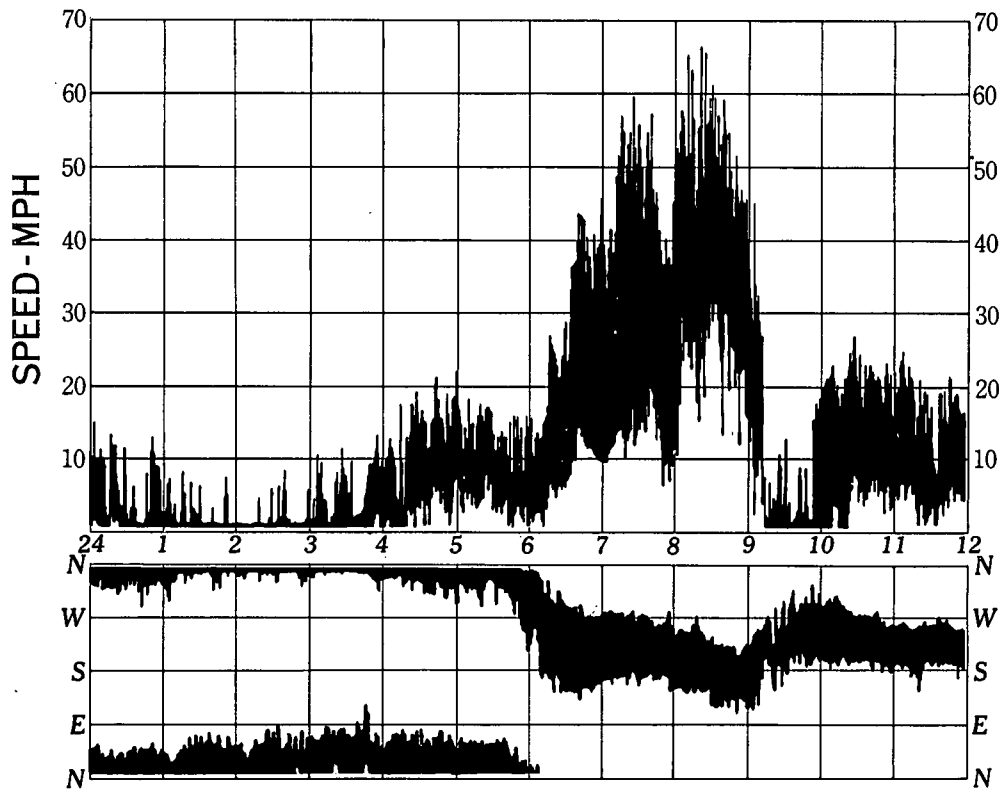


Fig. 1 Weipa Anemogram, 4 March, 1961

The speed of translation of the centre at the time was about 20 kt and Fig. 1 shows that the duration of strong winds was only 3 hours. This would give a radius of only 60 miles for the area of wind damage. The word "radius" needs modification, since Fig. 1 indicates that the eastern half of the circle would not have contained strong winds at all. In fact during the northeasterlies ahead of the landfall the gusts only reached 20 m. p. h. and it was not until the wind turned SW at 0610 hr that the wind commenced to rise. The maximum gust was S 70 m. p. h. at 0825 hr, after which the wind decreased very steeply to practically nil between 0915 and 1000 hr.

Two major points of interest emerge:

- (1) It is evident that such a cyclone could quite easily slip undetected through the synoptic network, since the duration of strong winds was the same as the time between reports.
- (2) The cyclone displayed a remarkable asymmetry in the wind field as between its eastern and western semicircles. The strength of the wind at Weipa right up to the time of passage of the centre almost over the station gave no indication that a cyclone might be approaching.

Rainfall: An analysis of the pluviograph records gave

0400-0630	1.08 in.
0630-0900	0.60 in.
After 0900	no rain