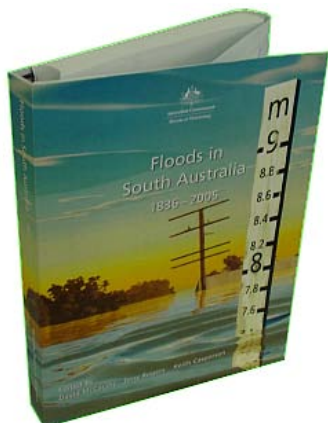




SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FLOOD WARNING COMMITTEE

THE HISTORY OF FLOODS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Launch Date Announced

An official publication date has been set for the "Floods in South Australia 1836-2005" (ISBN 0 642 706 999). The book and DVD set will be launched on Monday 11th December 2006 in the Gil Langley function room at The Adelaide Oval. Draft copies have been completed for review.

The book contains over 300 pages and is designed to open flat for ease of copying and use as a reference source. The DVD contains video footage and photos of floods in the last 160 years. Included are software tools allowing the retrieval of flood references based on location, date, flood impact and other selection criteria.

The combined publications will not only interest technical professionals such as planners, engineers and hydrologists but will also be useful tools for historians, educators, journalists or anybody with an interest in the impacts of extreme weather on South Australia.

How to buy a copy of the publications

The book (RRP \$79.95 plus \$6 P&H) will be available for pre-purchase at a discounted price of \$49.95 at the Weather Bureau stand in the Farm Expo marquee at the Royal Show Adelaide. It will also be available at an early bird discount of \$51.95 until December 1st by accessing an order form on the Weather Bureau website at

http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/sa/inside/flood_history/index.htm.

First death from flood in S.A.

The first recorded death as the result of a flood in South Australia occurred on Sunday, the June 8th 1851. A number of letters from correspondents in Burra are quoted in the Observer:

"I reopen my letter to acquaint you that at 6 o'clock this evening (8th June) we were visited with a dreadful storm of hail, rain, and thunder, and at this moment (8 o'clock) are swamped, and much goods destroyed, the street is again 'like another Niagara'. It is impossible to tell at this time what damage is done; all is consternation, and the elements battle with each other, which adds much to the awful character of this visitation. We are completely drowned up here...."

Another correspondent from Burra was eager to tell his mine bosses that all was secure, *"It is with regret that I have to write you the circumstances which took place last evening about 6 o'clock. We were again visited with lightening, thunder, hail and rain, to a most fearful extent. I was obliged to press men to watch and keep the drains clear, to prevent the rivers of water from washing away the ore and also from going down the mine. I am happy to say we lost no ore and the mine is all right.... I then started with five or six carts for the township and creek, to assist people in removing their families, goods, &c. Every place in the shape of a shed or covering overhead, is filled with people. One poor man by the name of Box a lander at Paxton's shaft, was killed by the falling in of his hut. He has left three poor little children, now motherless and fatherless. I just now sent for one of the children, but the people refused to let him go."*

The inquest in Mr Box's death records that, *"It was clearly shown the deceased came to his death by the falling in of the roof of his hut, in the Burra Creek, whilst in the act of removing his furnishings. It appears that the deceased had previously helped his next door neighbour, and his neighbour in return assisted him for the same purposes, and was standing within a yard of the deceased when the roof fell in and covered the unfortunate sufferer."*

Student expertise makes a contribution

Students from the University of South Australia have added considerable value to the Floods project. Through academic project work, over 40 students have contributed many hours completing assignment in the area of marketing and software.

Dr. Hervé Remaud, a lecturer at the School of Marketing managed a project with his students that examined a number of marketing issues associated with launching the book and DVD. Ten student teams examined and suggested answers to marketing issues such as RRP, target market, and size of first print run. The project marketing team found their input was incisive and thought provoking and many of their ideas were incorporated into the marketing program.

Another team under the Direction of Su Spencer at the School of Computer and Information Science designed and built a major piece of software that allows users to interrogate the 3,800 flood records on the DVD. The software will allow researchers to extract flood references based on any combination of location, postcode, date, flood impact (death, stock loss, etc), river catchment, etc.. Thus, from the 3000+ records, the researcher will be able to isolate the 12 newspaper reports mentioning human deaths due to floods between 1970 and 1992.

The project is indebted to the University students for their enthusiastic and professional work.

Volunteering – a positive experience

Keith Casperson has been a volunteer in the Flood History project for 3 years. He retired from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources with specialist skills in geographic information systems (GIS). For 20 years he worked on the Department's project to map the fauna of South Australia. Data about significant animals was gathered in the field and then catalogued and stored electronically for display using graphic and text-based retrieval tools.

Keith's expertise has been very useful in all phases of the project including researching and storing data on floods, compiling the electronic records and designing the tools researchers will use to access the information. Keith is now one of three Editors and Supervisors on the project and has played the key role in assembling the DVD component of the publications.

Keith has enjoyed the unique combination of continuing to use and update his professional skills while working in a relaxed environment 2 days a week. "Volunteering has brought me into contact with a variety of interesting people including other volunteers and some skilled work-for-the-dole participants. It has been a great transition into retirement and it is my decision to

come to the Weather Bureau two days a week. Though it feels like work, it has all the benefits of keeping socially and mentally active without dominating my week."

Nine other volunteers also work on the project and they include a former senior manager, a Professor of History, an I.T specialists, a historian, a project manager, and several research specialists. Most have worked long term on the project and have enjoyed mixing their skills to produce a tangible and useful result from their work.

The cost to compiling a history of floods

The Flood project has been staffed by over 100 work-for-the-dole (WDP) participants (at a cost of \$90,000) and volunteers (who have given their time for nothing). In addition the Bureau of Meteorology has made office space and computer facilities available at no cost. In the preceding article, the work of the students at the University of South Australia was outlined. Many other people have been involved including community professionals who have served on a Steering Committee and of course, there have been many contributions made by members of the public who contributed information and photographs of floods.

What has all of this added up to? It is impossible to make an accurate assessment but a figure in excess of 30,000 hours is probably not far off the mark. A loose calculation of the financial value of these hours and support costs arrives at a figure exceeding \$1,500,000! The project is an example of what can be accomplished at a community level.



What could be more South Australian – A pub, the pub-keeper, an outback four wheel drive, West End beer, the TAB and blokes with beer?