

Bridges and floods on the Scamander – newspaper reports recreate catchment history.

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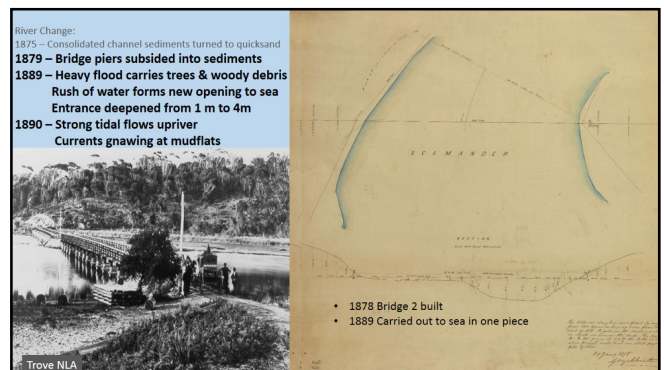
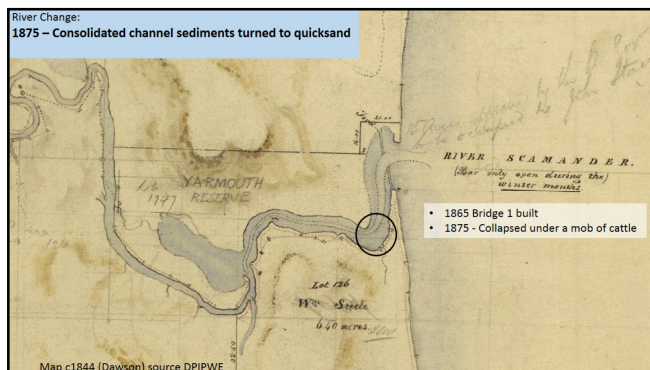
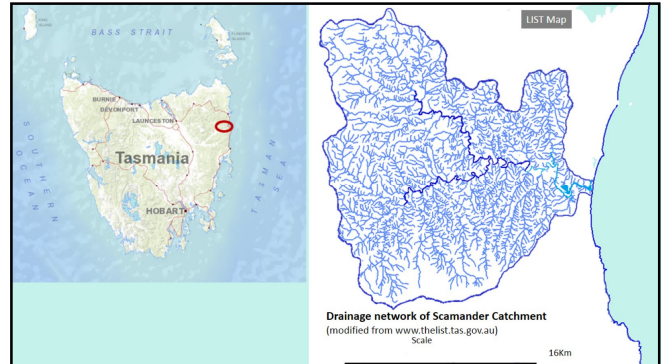
In the year 1880 a very substantial bridge and causeway was erected over the Scamander, but a great mistake was made in extending the causeway too far into the river bed, therefore not allowing sufficient water way, and the consequence was that the first heavy flood caused four sets of gales to sink to a distance of 86. Mercury Hobart, Thurs 5 Feb 1885

There is an almost indescribable scene of wreckage and debris on this coast. Thousands of tons of timber now remain on the beach, for years a reminder of this disastrous gale. At daylight it was astonishing to witness the unbelievable quantity of foam washed and blown far up on the land. In many places 20 to 30 feet deep. At one spot for a distance of 300 yards inland. Examiner Launceston Thurs 11 April 1929

Newspaper articles sourced from Trove National Library Archive digitised newspapers section


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Historical information to be published, with full referencing as: Fearman, L. (2017) 'Bridging the Scamander – a most treacherous river', Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings, vol 64, no 2, on August 11, 2017



River Change:
 1875 – Consolidated channel sediments turned to quicksand
 1879 – Bridge piers subsided into sediments
 1889 – Heavy flood carries trees and woody debris
 Rush of water forms new opening to sea
 Entrance deepened from 1m to 4m
 1890 – Strong tidal flows upriver
 Currents gnawing at mudflats
1897 – Low base flows
1900 – Barway repeatedly blocked & dug open
1911 – Large trees & logs block flow
 Supercritical flows through gaps destabilise channel sediments.

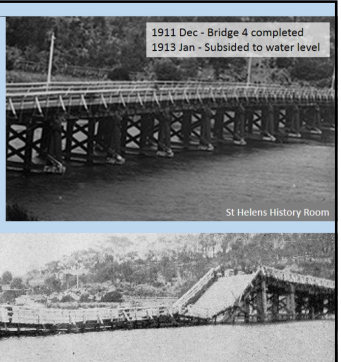
1892 Bridge 3 built
1911 – Half carried to sea, half buried in mud



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1913 – Rocky sediment layers penetrated by bridge piers

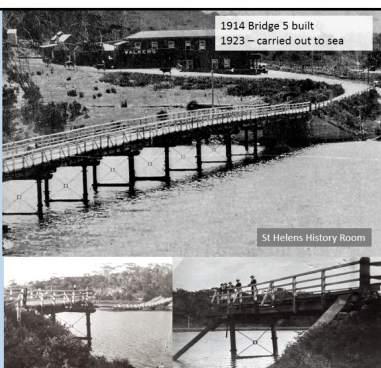
1911 Dec - Bridge 4 completed
1913 Jan - Subsided to water level



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River Change:
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 Currents gnawing at mudflats
 1897 – Low base flows
 1900 – Barway repeatedly blocked & dug open
 1911 – Large trees & logs block flow, supercritical flows through gaps destabilise channel sediments.
 1913 – Rocky sediment layers penetrated by piers
1915 – Trees and wood stripped from banks carried out to sea by flood
1923 - Flood levels unexpectedly high upriver
 8-10 cm black slime covers floodplains
1924 – Salvage divers find logs, trees and remains of 3 bridges buried at river mouth (but not Bridge 5)

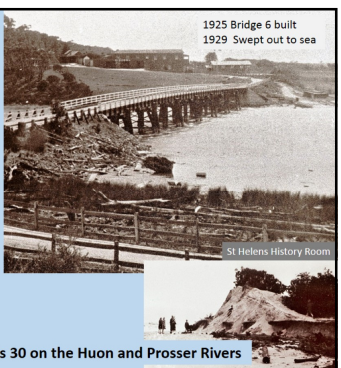
1914 Bridge 5 built
1923 – carried out to sea



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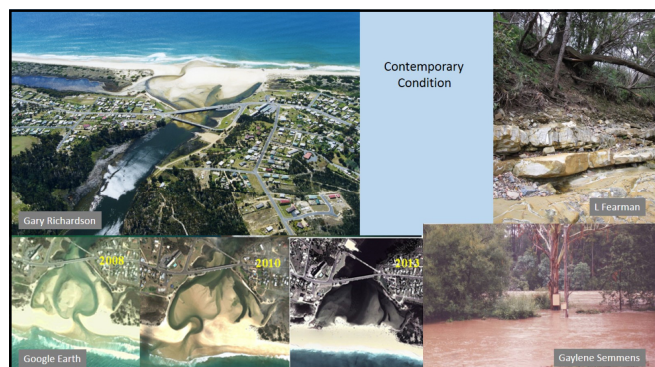
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 1900 – Barway repeatedly blocked & dug open
 1911 – Large trees & logs block flow, supercritical flows through gaps destabilise sediments.
 1913 – Rocky sediment layers penetrated by bridge piers
 1923 – Trees and wood stripped from banks, carried out to sea
 Flood levels unexpectedly high upriver
 8-10 cm black slime covering floodplains
 1924 – Salvage divers find logs, trees and remains of 3 bridges buried at river mouth (but not Bridge 5)
1929 - Huge island of trees and debris blocks flow
 Sand hills that had reformed swept away.
 Debris diverts floodwaters through lagoons to Falmouth
 Foam on dunes up to 9m deep and 280m inland

1925 Bridge 6 built
1929 Swept out to sea



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Scamander bridges last 9 years on average, vs 30 on the Huon and Prosser Rivers



Lessons

- Communities know the past – or not? We can check via Trove!
- Some Australian rivers have been traumatised by European settlement and don't follow the normal rules.
- To reduce vulnerability in repairing or rebuilding, we need to understand how the river is changing.

Question:

- How can community members with useful knowledge engage the 'powers that be', so that they make plans that work?