



The Kangaroo River in Flood

The problem with preppers, as Bill Connolly would say, you know? and Australia and New Zealand seem to be gaining a fair number, particularly in regional areas, is that they keep on reading the signs of doom into everything. After all, all their work and expense has to be justified. Its quite hard living from the garden and moving away from the theatre...though you know people do slip up to the cinema at Bowral to see concerts from the Lincoln Centre from time to time.

When the earth was corrupt and filled with violence it rained for forty days and forty nights. The flood engulfed the earth, mountains were covered and valleys filled. Noah was 600 years old, his instructions were to build an ark that was 300 metres long and 126 metres wide with three stories. He filled it up with his family and two of "everything of all flesh". The water rose six metres. After 150 days the waters subsided, Noah's ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat and the earth made a new start.

In 2022 it rained for over forty days and forty nights in Sydney and across many other parts of Australia. In my home, Kangaroo Valley, there was 3.5 metres of rain, a record and there was over a metre of rain in just one month, March. Sydney broke records for monthly rainfall

in March, July and October. The rain on the roof became something to dread, instead of welcome. Mc Cains have had to cancel advertising for their super juicy corn for an indefinite period, we hear.

The little brook on my land rose to a roaring torrent and almost knocked me down and swept me down into the gullies of the Kangaroo River. Down the gorge I would have been swept. Upper River Road washed away. Cambewarra mountain was closed as was Barrengarry Mountain and Woodhill Mountain way. The valley was cut off for many months.

All over the world it is raining catastrophically. In Pakistan it is flooding. In Europe there was a flood and like us formerly a drought. They say at Fitzroy Crossing there has never been such a deluge and no-one has seen the river rise so high. Even those who are accustomed to the monsoon were set to wonder. Echuca, Cummera and Bama flooded. The slow rise of the old man Murray/Dungala engulfed South Australia. In North America they talk about atmospheric rivers that turn into snow and ice this year. Even the Pink Test was spoiled by rain.

In the aftermath of the great rains there was a sigh of relief and hopefulness amongst farmers. But the grass and harvests did not grow so well after so much rain. The minerals in the soil had been washed away. Fertilisers flow into rivers because they sit on top of the soil. It will now take a long time to restore them. Biodynamics is the answer, but not many have the capacity for that kind of long term fix.

So what is happening? Has the world become so corrupted and filled with violence that it must be cleansed again. How many Noahs arks are being built by preppers across the world? Have they switched from bunkers or just made them water tight?

Are the ice caps melting all over the world and now is there is just so much moisture in the atmosphere that it becomes pot luck where it all falls? But where-ever that is, is there catastrophe?

The river heights of the Shoalhaven River over the past fifty years show patterns. There was the drought of 2013-19 and the bushfires followed by an extraordinary flood event in February and March 2020, the Shoalhaven River rose to a height of 16.42 metres. It is almost impossible to imagine. But this was also the time when the water nearly reached the bottom of the Hampden Bridge at Kangaroo Valley. Everyone was grateful that the fires were finally out. It was only a wind change that saved Kangaroo Valley town in the Christmas of 2019.

There have been other extreme events in the age of the white man. In 1870 the entire town of Terrara was swept away, houses, hotels, shops, everything. After that the town of Nowra was established on the high ground where Aboriginal people had traditionally camped above the great flood plain.

For the last few years we seem to have been hit with proper deluges at more regular intervals. Not the huge cloudburst that broke the drought and put out the bush fires in 2020 but just regular months of high rain fall. Is this simply la nina or something more?

We live in an age of pessimism. I guess at minimum its time to start asking why our friend and saviour, water, has become so recently our enemy. Why do friends become enemies? Maybe it is an epithet for our age.

In the 19th century, here on the south coast, Henry Kendall wrote of "rain sobbing at the door", its a full on cry now and Henry's age seems quaint and whimsical.

"The tempest-trodden wastelands moan — the trees are threshing at the blast;
And now they come, the pallid shapes of Dreams that perished in the past;
And, when we lift the windows up, a smothered whisper round us strays,
Like some lone wandering voice from graves
that hold the wrecks of bygone days.

I tell ye that I love the storm, for think we not of thoughts of yore,
When, streaming down the lattices, the rain comes sobbing to the door?
When, streaming down the lattices,
The rain comes sobbing to the door?"

Monthly Rainfall 2022 Sydney/Kangaroo Valley



