

Construction of Hume Dam, 1919-1936

Part 9: The 'U' Tube nears completion

Joe Wooding and Greg Ryan

A skateboarder's heaven plays a vital role at Hume Dam. Often idle for years on end but when required, this monolith is designed to withstand and blunt the enormous forces unleashed from millions of litres of water cascading into the trough from the crest of the spillway 35m above. The wall then ushers this raging torrent through the stilling pool to begin its long journey to the sea. This spectacle, combined with its thunderous roar and billowing spray, attracts sightseers from far and wide.

The *Border Mail* of October 27, 2000, listed flood peaks recorded on the Murray at Albury. The top six were:

Date	Height
October 28, 1870	5.89m
October 22, 1917	5.83m
October 8, 1867	5.79m
October 27, 1975	5.69m
October 19, 1974	5.55m
October 10, 1992	5.40m
October 6, 2016	5.36m

It could be argued that snow melt in October may be a factor.

The downside is the perennial argument around pondage for irrigation versus airspace for flood mitigation. Far more frequently however, is the acrimonious issue of water allocations between environmental and irrigation interests. In our land of extremes, with droughts and flooding rains, we are not likely to see resolutions with which everyone will agree.



A dry dissipator trough and wall is not an everyday sight.

The dissipator wall is 220m long, 7.5m high, its crest is 4.18m wide while its base extends for 12m downstream. Unlike the stilling pool beside it, which has an upturned ramp at its downstream extremity, the base of the dissipator wall has a five-metre downturn to bedrock for its downstream foundations.

The photo shows a workman in a precarious position on a concrete chute, directing concrete into this downstream section. OH&S issues did not complicate working life in the 1930's. The curved formwork is not in use but shows how the wall was built. On the spillway, a small section of formwork is in place. Bronze bolts were inserted into the wet concrete. When set, this allowed the boxing to be bolted to the wall when it was lifted for the next pour. The spillway's main slope is 64 degrees.

Post World War I, cement was often in short supply. On occasions, usage on the NSW side exceeded 3,000 bags per day. 25,000 bags were kept in reserve on site, with that many again at the North Street siding in Albury.