Fylde Street Disaster 1957 - Farnworth (Mosses Gate)

Suddenly and without warning at 7:10am the earth started to quake at Flyde Street, a hole appeared in the road which slowly grew throughout the day......

By tea time the hole and grown to a massive 40m long, 4m wide and 6m deep, affecting an area of 75 meters roughly in the shape of a semi-circle from the where the hole first appeared.

Being a built up street, shops and houses collapsed into the hole and many others in the immediate varsity where badly damaged, in total 19 houses collapsed and a further 121 houses were badly damaged.

All in all in just one day 400 people were made homeless and there was no end in sight, Farnworth was in serious trouble, needing help and needing it fast.

From far and wide hundreds of volunteers started to arrive to lend a hand wherever they could, helping to move out furniture that was still salvageable, however, many homes and possessions were destroyed.
The cause? A very heavy persistent down pour of rain and a long since forgotten storm drain..... The drain had been built in circa 1860, following parallel the route of the old Farnworth Hall Clough a small first order right bank tributary of the River Croal.

The stream was incised into a 3.5m thick bed of glacial silt in the delta deposits of the Croal overflow channel between a layer of sand , gravel above and boulder clay below.
The silt has many characteristics of an expanse soil. When it is dry it can bear considerable loads, however, once its gets wets it becomes plastic and changes to a silt of minute particales suspended within the water.....

The drain crosses the former Clough at three places.

This day the ground water level was very high at almost surface level, ground water moved through the old stream bed gravel and began to wash away the fine particles through the matrix, thus weakening the support for the drain.

With the newly developed support failure, disaster was about to occur, further support failure caused longitudinal joints to break, allowing water to escape thought ans thus causing the situation to worsen rapidly, a jet of escaping water more then likely the adjacent silt to liquefy and so the hole enlarged further still, until the sheer volume of weight caused the road to give way....

Water could be seen gushing up out of the ground and bystanders could do nothing but standby and watch as their homes slowly crumbled.

Further afield a mere 100yrds away Trains started to be affected by an unexpected turn of events, water could be seen bubbling up out of the ground between the tracks, a result of the blockage within the drain further up stream.
This event was the result of both the modification of the natural drainage system and the properties of the glacial deposits.

The Short Story!

This was a man made disaster and has we learned yet? NO! We still insist on building on natural water courses and floodplains and then there back scratching our heads wondering why it flooded during the storms!

We build upon old mine working and wonder why subsidence occurs! Is it just me or is man very, very stupid and doesn't really learn from mistakes?