

# Flooding and Pollution

## Background

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The River Severn and many other waterways beside are a key feature of the landscape of Gloucestershire, and South Gloucestershire. They have sustained and created countless towns and settlements over the centuries, but their flooding has also had a major impact on shaping the stances and feelings of individuals toward the environment. Significant flooding in 1947 and 2007 highlights the upward trend of flooding in this area. Throughout our research in the Archives, we've discovered many personal stories shaped by these events and gathered evidence on how lives have been transformed. This guide acts a gateway into researching this topic, helping you to discover and perhaps consider adding to our collections.

## What records are there and what information will they contain?

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This list is by no means exhaustive and will act as an entry point for those interested in this line of research. We recommend you also look at the Gloucestershire Archives Research Guide: *Floods and Flood Defences*, which gives an overview of the different collections housed here at the Archives.

### Records on Flooding

- **P18 IN1/1** - An account of a flood in the Arlingham parish register that documents the resilience of the local communities as they sought to overcome the impacts of the flood. Lives and crops were still lost however, and a heatwave that followed claimed further lives. This comes under the period of the Little Ice Age, which helps to explain these erratic weather patterns at the time (1607).
- **GBR/H2/3** - Lieutenancy/ Order and Letter Books which documents deliberate flooding for military purposes during the Siege of Gloucester. It shows a complete disregard for the damage both environmentally and economically, and was an instance where flooding was used to enable a military advantage (1639-1661).
- **D9846/9/7** - History of Hucclecote, including flood in 1924. This document contains photographs, newspaper cutting, and first-hand accounts of the flooding in 1924. Framed in this way, this is an excellent instance of a community documenting its own history (early 20<sup>th</sup> century-1990s)
- **D2219/accession 9196/box 14/6** - Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings relating to the Nailsworth flood of 1931 with photos of damage to garden of High Beeches Nailsworth (1931).
- **K1960/box 42689** - Transcripts and one mini disk of interviews with people in Gloucester and Tewkesbury during the flooding in 2007 - Interviews were commissioned by Gloucestershire Archives and Libraries and were conducted by Brenda Read-Brown and Jill Barker (2007).

- **D2460/2/3/6/2** - Rainfall Records recorded by the Severn Commission - 1858-1904. Records recording daily rainfall records from 1881-1904, including three areas in Gloucestershire. Those being Maisemore Lock, Llanthony Lock, and Upper Lode Lock. **See also D2826/box 28624** - Daily Observations taken at Witcombe Reservoir 1870-1915, also containing rainfall data (1858-1904).
- **D5627/7/5** - Typescript of an account of a flood in Lydney in 1900 from Harris' 'Forest of Dean Almanac and Directory'. A vivid early account of flooding in Gloucestershire (1902).
- **DA23/132/7** - Flooding at Bourton-on-the-Water - Clerk's Correspondence Files (1937-1960).
- **D10638/1/1965/52** - Photographs from the Gloucester Citizen showing flooding in Saul during December. A map showing the extent and levels of the flooding at Saul can be found in **D7768/1/1/6/7**, from the Environment Agency collection (1965).
- **D7603/ Acc7603** - Flooding in Westgate Street. Footage captured on 16mm film documenting the snow fall and subsequent flooding of March 1947 in Gloucester. Digital access copy available to order and view in Searchroom (1947).
- **D14802/1** - Tales of the Vale: A Forgotten Landscape (2016-2018) Hard drive containing the full content of the oral history project archive (audio, photographs and digitised documents) - also including historic memories and accounts of flooding in the Lower Severn Vale.
- **D7768 (Collection)** - Recently catalogued and now available for the first time as part work by the Green Pledge Project, the Environment Agency collection contains maps and plans created by the Environment Agency's predecessors and related bodies. These records include flood hydrographs, plans of embankments and floodbanks, flood alleviation scheme plans as well as photographs of flood defences. (1849-1997)

### Records on Pollution

- **D2025/BOX17/Bundle 12** - What we believe to be the earliest known letters of water pollution at the Archives dates from 1824! These concern the pollution of the water supply at Boddington by the Gas, Light and Coke Company of Cheltenham.
- **DA24/132/1** - Pollution of Waterways Files 1922-1963 by East Dean Rural District Council - Contains within a petition written by villages of Soudley complaining over the state of pollution and subsequent flooding of their properties (October 1944).
- **D1571/F875** - Paper mainly comprising genealogical notes about Estcourt family and related letters but also including correspondence with Tetbury Local Board about pollution caused by Sewage works, 1877-1879.
- **GCC/COM/1/5/3/2** - Local Civil Emergency plans, particularly with regard to water pollution and flooding (1967-1969) - Includes a flood relief plan for the Rural District Council of Gloucester (1968). Minutes of meetings concerning flooding and its extent for the River

Severn and its tributaries (1968), as well as documents relating to a conference held in 1969 on oil pollution in the River Severn and the Sharpness Canal (1969).

- **D14699** (Collection) – Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – Now available for the first time as part of work by the Green Project, this collection includes river surveys, Stroudwater canal wildlife surveys, water level management and habitat restoration (1920-1916).

Local Studies material held at Gloucestershire Archives offers a great gateway into secondary research on this topic. Some highlights include:

- **CE/G551.4HAL** - Severn Tsunami - The Story of Britain's Greatest Natural Disaster (2013)
- **GAL/E5/55693GS** - Gloucestershire Through Time, a collection of old and new photographs showing the changes in Gloucestershire through the years. Flooding in Tewkesbury and Cirencester are recorded in this publication (2013).
- **J19.1GS** - Your Essential Flood Guide, produced by Gloucestershire County Council (2007)
- **JR1.124GS** - Great Flood of 1947 - Bygone Gloucestershire, Vol 6 (1997)
- **RR86.28GS** - Memories of Coleford Town Flood in 1931, by C.J. Elsmore (2001).
- **GAL/G5** - "Under water": Flooding in Cheltenham 1731-1993, by Mick Kippin. An article from Gloucestershire History no.22, pg. 25-29 (2008).
- **SR 46/24291** - A collection of records from the 1947 Gloucester Floods, including original extracts from the Gloucester Journal, original photographs from the floods used in both the Citizen and Journal, an Engineers report on the Flooding of March 1947, Flood relief instructions and bulletins (1947)

## How to Find the Records

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To view a list of records in a collection please use our online catalogue, which can be found on our website at: <https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/> Use the references given above as your search terms if you are trying to locate these examples. If you want to search for other documents or collections relating to flooding or pollution, try using key words such as 'flood', 'pollution', or 'river'. You can also refine or sort your search by other search categories, such as date created. For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs.

## Further resources and websites

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### National Meteorological Library and Archive - Exeter

A comprehensive collection of meteorological records which can prove useful for research into these themes. Observational data, including rainfall records, climatological returns, storm signals, and much more besides will prove invaluable tool in quantifying your research.

<https://library.metoffice.gov.uk/Portal/Default/en-GB/Search/SimpleSearch>

### **The British Newspaper Archive**

An excellent repository of original and digitised historic newspapers. There are articles to found as far back 1875 concerning flooding in this area. Use the search term 'flooding' or 'floods' and set the location to Gloucestershire.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/help/contact>

### **Have something to bring to the Archives?**

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We are always looking to grow and develop our collections for Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. If you have any material surrounding flooding or pollution in Gloucestershire or South Gloucestershire and are either interested in depositing it with us, or looking for guidance of how to look after your collections, visit [Adding to our collections | Gloucestershire Archives](#)

### **Podcasts from the Green Pledge Project**

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This guide was put together by the Green Pledge Project team. Also, as part of the project, we have created podcasts, meeting people from across our area, sharing stories from the past and the present, and imagining what our future could be. For this theme, why not dive further and listen to:

#### **Episode 2: GPP at the Two Rivers Converge Festival, Tewkesbury Abbey, Feb 2024**

Introducing our first event, catching the thoughts and voices of locals and environmental organisations at the [Tewkesbury Two Rivers Converge festival](#). Diving into our environmental past, to reflect on the present, and imagine what our future could be.

#### **Episode 9: Mollie Meagre**

Mollie Meagre is a lifelong campaigner for social and environmental justice who lives in the Forest of Dean. In this episode we talk about her work with the Save the Wye campaign, her early influences, and her time with CND and the Greenham Common Peace Camp.