

Floods and Flood Defences

Background

The River Severn and several other waterways run through Gloucestershire. Over the years there have been many floods in various areas of the county; the most famous currently being in 1947 and 2007. Several bodies including the county council, district councils and drainage boards have been involved in creating and maintaining flood defences. There are also many documents in the archives which relate to events and experiences of floods both in recent times and historically.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

This list is by no means exhaustive. It should be used to identify the major sources of information about flood defences and flooding in the county. See '*How to Find the Records*' below for instructions on how to search the online catalogue for related records.

Drainage Boards

Internal drainage boards are independent bodies set up to maintain rivers, watercourses, pumping stations and water level management, including some flood defences. Gloucestershire Archives holds records of the following drainage boards and related collections:

- D272 Gloucestershire Court of Sewers [later South Gloucestershire Drainage Board]:** Includes minutes, rates and orders, rate books, accounts, maps and surveys (1583-1940).
- D392 Ladden Brook and Yate Internal Drainage Board:** Includes documents relating to Commissions of Sewers, also including two appointments of additional commissioners (1862-1903).
- D2882 Ladden Brook Commission of Sewers [later Yate Internal Drainage Board]:** Includes minutes, accounts, rate books, correspondence, maps and papers (1863-1973).
- D11164 Longdon and Eldersfield Internal Drainage Board:** Includes minutes and cash books (1925-2005)
- D11165 North Gloucestershire Internal Drainage Board:** Includes minutes, maintenance works books, ledger of accounts and attendance book (1973-2005)
- D4170 West Gloucestershire Internal Drainage Board:** Includes minutes and correspondence, register of annual values for drainage rates, accounts, register of mortgages, attendance book, and papers concerning sea walls and survey of sea walls (1831-1989).
- D3592 County Land Drainage Officer:** Includes news cuttings, site photographs and notes of County Land Drainage Officer 1933-1958
- D2826 Severn Trent Water and its predecessors:** Includes the administrative records of the companies and authorities responsible for the provision of clean water throughout Gloucestershire (1751-2005). *This collection has been recently catalogued as part of the Green Pledge Project.*
- D7768 Environment Agency:** Comprises of maps and plans created by the Environment Agency's predecessors and related bodies (1849-1997). *This collection has been recently catalogued as part of the Green Pledge Project.*

The Gloucestershire portion of the River Severn is now covered by the Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board. For more information, please visit: <http://www.lowersevernldb.org.uk/>

County Council (Ref: C, K or GCC/ENV)

The county council has some powers over matters such as sewerage and water supply. The following collections relate to these topics:

- Land drainage (reference **GCC/ENV/3/3/8**, **K837**, **K871**, **K1806**, and **K2017**)
- Sewerage and water supply schemes (reference **K144**, **K181**, **K596**)
- Research files relating to G E Payne's Gloucestershire: a physical, social and economic survey and plan, c.1940-1945 (reference **C/AP/R1**)
- Flooding (reference **K1851**)

There are other items in the county council archive which relate to flooding, including reports and photographs of floods.

District Councils (reference DA and DC)

Urban and rural district councils had control over sewerage until 1974. In Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury these powers were held by the borough councils. The number of records that have survived for each district council varies. You may expect to find documents relating to sewerage schemes, drainage plans, correspondence, reports, etc.

For more information, please see *Research Guide: District Councils*.

British Waterways Collection (Ref: D2460)

This collection contains documents which relate to the canal companies that controlled canals in Gloucestershire. Much of the collection consists of plans and drawings, some of which relate to flood defences. There are some engineer's records (**D2460/2/3**) which include references to the Tewkesbury waterworks, or the Cheltenham waterworks at Tewkesbury (now known as Mythe waterworks). *Appendix 1 in the printed catalogue (available to request onsite) has details of the subject of correspondence from and to both the clerk and engineer.*

For details of British Waterways after the 1940s we recommend you start your search by visiting the Canal and River Trust, which can be accessed at: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/canal-history/the-waterways-archive>

Newspapers

You may find articles and reports relating to floods and new flood defences. For details of our holdings of newspapers please see our comprehensive Newspaper Handlist:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/zi5egfyq/gloucestershire-newspapers-ie-handlist-pe-update-2022-04-01.pdf>

Other Records

There are many other records which are likely to mention flooding in the local area. These include early parish registers and vestry minutes, school log books, diaries and estate records. You might be able to find these by searching the online catalogue (see below). For more information on these records please see the relevant research guide.

How to Find the Records

You can view a list of records in these collections via our online catalogue, which can be found on our website at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives. Use the collection references given above as your search term. We also recommend that you try searching the catalogue by key word, e.g. “flood”, “drainage”, “watercourse” etc. You can refine or sort your search in various ways, for example by date.

For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch our YouTube tutorial.