
FEATURE ARTICLE

The extent of the floods during the first half of 2001.

Throughout the six months, the impact on the village (and also in Compton) was recorded photographically and by using a camcorder, both locally and from the air. On October the 7th, an exhibition was set up in the School Hall to show for the first time. It was important to identify where the drainage problems occurred so the precautions could be taken to minimise the impact of future events.



Figure 1

The still photographs were useful (for example Figure 1) but the camcorder images were more appropriate in showing the force of the ground water pressure, particularly to show the flow out of the borehole near the pond, at a level well above the pond. The spectacular camcorder views from the air were shown at the exhibition as a ten minute tape-loop and showed the flooded areas in the Pang Valley from Hampstead Norreys to West Ilsley via East Ilsley and Compton.

The 2001 floods were put into the context of Marcus Goddard's well water level measurements that stretched back to 1923 and his memories of the 1916 floods when he was a boy.

The usefulness of his readings shows the importance of recording today's events for future residents and both Thames Water and a research scientist asked for copies. There was an exhibition display of this ongoing research provided by Brian Adams of COVAR. Its aim is to understand the link between rainfall and water level in the downlands and we happen to be one of three areas being studied.

Marcus Goddard's well readings were also compared with rainfall data from the Met Office's historic data archive for the whole period between 1920 and 2000. There is quite a good correlation between the 6-month cumulative rainfall and the well readings. An example is shown in Figure 2 for the 1970s, where we had both floods and droughts. To put the rainfall data into context, we seem to get significant floods (and the Abingdon Lane ponds appear) when the rainfall in the previous 6 months exceeds about 500 mm and Marcus's well dries up when the rainfall is less than about 150 mm. The Met Office data (which goes back to 1853) will help us to identify earlier years when there were floods – 1904 was one of the worst for rain.

Other associated topics were also on display such as Pond Watch Project, organised by Peggy Betterton. The exhibition gave a chance to acknowledge all the work that she and her team put in to upgrade the pond area. Another more recent event was the flooding caused by a

torrential downpour last July when the water could not flow freely away from the pond. It was the worst flash flood in living memory.

This topic highlights the need to record recent events that will make for interesting reading years later and this too is very much part of the LHS work - History in the making.

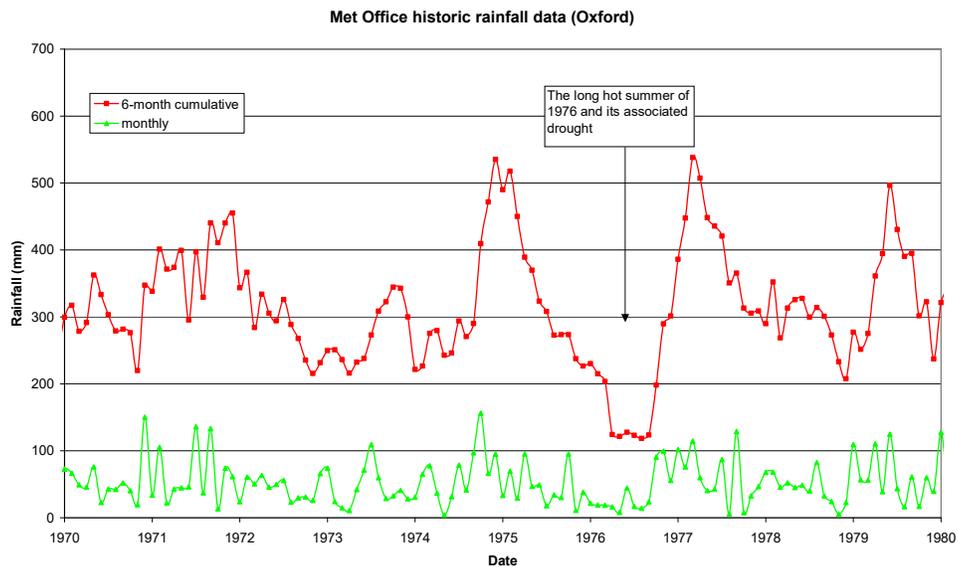
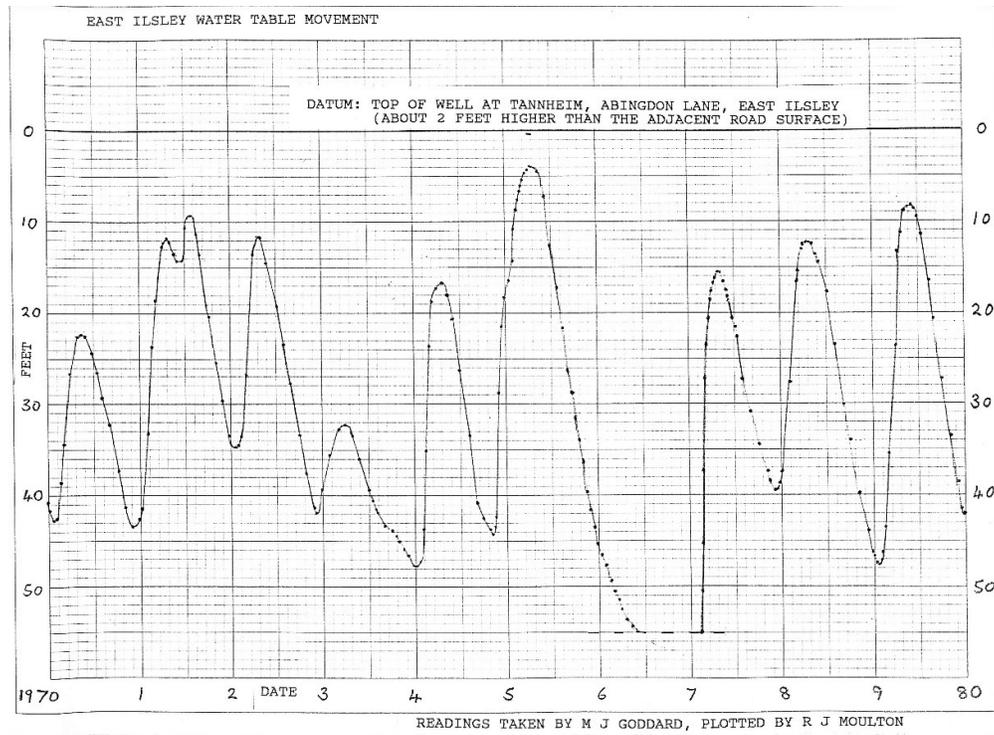


Figure 2: Marcus Goddard's well readings compared with the Met Office historic rainfall data for Oxford (our nearest weather station for historic data) for the period 1970 - 1980

Sue Burnay