







Flood

Bidder's Marsh (beneath the present Bidder Street in Canning Town) was seven feet below the mean high tide and flooded every Spring.

Melanie McGrath

Flooded pub, Orchard Place



East London's Great Flood,

On the 27th September 1763 the Thames rose in a surprising manner and drove the ships at their moorings with great fury against each other. At first it was reported that "very little damage was done." But, later it appeared that by the time that fell for some days previous, the high tide in the Thames, and a strong gale of wind from the North, the rivers within 20 miles of London were so raised that the tide had never been known in the memory of man, and that the damage sustained, more especially in the River Lea, was almost incredible. It was then that the Water in the River Lea was almost incredible, and to have seen twelve feet in progress, Henry Pelham, William Ashurst, West, Charles Knight, Robert Stratford, and to the inhabitants. Most of their cattle died in the fields were carried off. The houses of Hay and Wood, with the Leas and Vard, together with all the houses of Stratford the Flood reached their Chamber Windows, and the Flood of the Water was covered with the bodies of the dead that perished. The inhabitants from the nearest Computation that they could make, and that 5,000 from the Flood, together with all the houses and other cattle that were in the houses, whose numbers were very considerable. This Flood extended itself over all the country, and several people were lost in the high Road, a Woman and a Horse; also a Gentleman in a Post Chaise with the Horse and Post Boy, all perished in the Water, and three of the passengers in the River Medway, with the two Chais, were also drowned. The China Works beyond New Bridge were overflowed in such a manner that the current rushed through the great arch like the Tide through the Arch of London Bridge; the Kiln Gravel in the Neighborhood of New and Stratford were all overflowed, and great Quantities of Lumber were carried off. The Houses from New Bridge to Stratford were all overboard, and the inhabitants forced to get out at their Windows. E.L.O. 8.11.1916

FLOODS

The River Thames burst its banks at Elmshouse in the 15th century. In 1529 the bank again failed and the whole of the Isle of Dogs was practically under water. When a repetition of this occurred in 1571, the Government spent 215,000 in thoroughly restoring the bank, and taking effective measures to prevent a recurrence. (East End News "History of Poplar") The Isle of Dogs was again flooded on the 31st July, 1888. (Co-partnership Herald, July, 1933). In 1928 (January) floods occurred in Poplar (Orchard House, Blackwall Tunnel, and Isle of Dogs) and other river-side districts of London. An article on the floods appears in 'P.L.A. Monthly', February, 1928, pp.119-122).

Floods in East London.

To the Editor of the East London Observer.
Sir,—When I was reading your local history a reference to floods in the lowlands of East London, I was reminded that the "Annual Register" records that on September 27th, 1763, the tide-water in the Thames and Lea ran twelve feet in the houses. At Stratford the upper rooms of the dwelling houses were flooded, and there was an immense loss of animal life. The great quantities of linen were swept away, everything was submerged between New Bridge and the Putney, on the ground floor.
Your obedient servant,
E.L.O. 24/9/16 "Lionel East Londoner."

Wet and Dry

When Old Canning Town flooded, people would have to go into the Public Hall for a dry bed and something to eat. Various churches would also take them in. When the flood went down they had to go back to their houses which were soaking wet.

Alice Poyser

Flood and freeze on Bow Creek

250AD

One of the earliest recorded incidents of the FREEZING of the tidal River Thames and tributaries was in this year, when it is thought that the freeze lasted around 9 weeks.

1204/1205: (Winter)

The winter of 1204/05 was one of the SEVERE winters of history and most rivers, were frozen completely

1564: (early winter)

(According to Currie / 'Frost Freezes & Fairs') " Queen Elizabeth I walked on the river Thames in London after 21st December and the river remained FROZEN until 3rd night of January which then THAWED. The THAW caused high FLOODS in England."

1662-1667:(period/Winters)

Three of the five winters from late 1662 to early 1667 were COLD with SEVERE FROST.

1683/1684 (Winter)

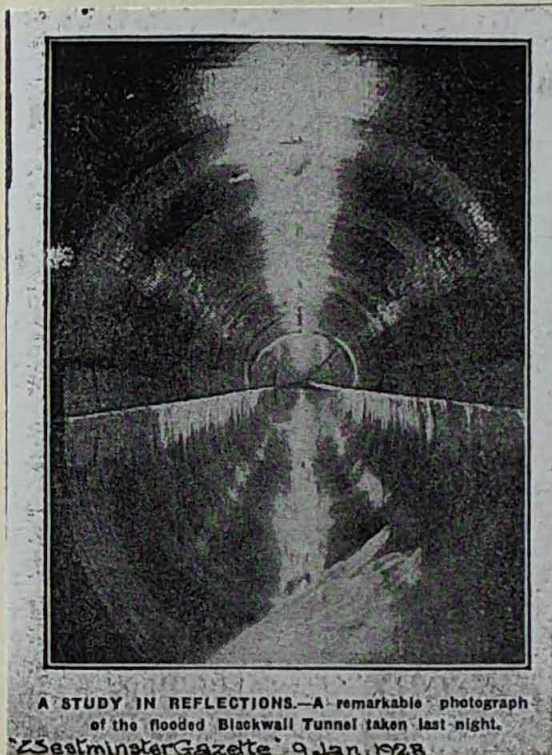
One of the four or five COLDEST WINTERS over the British Isles. The GREAT FROST of 1683/84 was claimed to be the longest on record, the Thames and tributaries in London were completely frozen for about two months and the ICE was reported to be some 11 inches (28cm) thick. This was the winter described so vividly by R.D. Blackmore in 'Lorna Doone'.

1694/95: (Winter/early spring)

A SEVERE winter. December 1694 - FROST/SNOW started in London area on 25th. At Oxford, frost began around 28th. January 1695 - Fairly general 'severe' conditions. Thames and tributaries frozen on 23rd and by the 30th, FROST/ continual SNOW had lasted for 5 weeks in London area. February 1695 - Deep SNOW after heavy falls 8th/9th. More snow end of month London area.

March 1774: worst FLOOD of the 18th century along the Thames Valley.

The winter of 1794/95 was EXCEPTIONALLY SEVERE, with the very cold conditions setting in on Christmas Eve 1794. The FROST then lasted, with some breaks, until late March. On the 25th January, an extreme temperature of (minus)21 degC was recorded at an unspecified location in England. A rapid but temporary THAW, accompanied by heavy RAIN began on the 7th February. This resulted in much FLOODING.



A STUDY IN REFLECTIONS.—A remarkable photograph of the flooded Blackwall Tunnel taken last night. Sealminster Gazette 9 Jan. 1928.

1813/1814 (Winter)

One of the four or five COLDEST WINTERS on record. See also 1683/84; 1739/40 and 1962/63. Particularly cold January to The last time that the 'tidal' River Thames froze over sufficient to hold 'frost fairs' etc.

1894/95 (Winter)

Exceptional COLD/WINTRY from 30/12/1894 to 05/03/1895. Records from Cambridge Observatory show that there were actually air frosts on 70 of the 84 nights between 26th December 1894 and 20th March 1895. From the 9th to the 17th February the whole of the Thames and tributaries was more or less blocked by ice-floes, some of them 6 or 7 feet thick.

1921:(19th to 21st November): PERSISTENT DENSE FOG EVENT

Dense fog blanketed many parts of England during this period, causing many road traffic accidents and seriously disrupting railway services, in the days before automatic warning and signalling systems. Severe delays to shipping.

1928:(6th January): NORTH SEA SURGE/THAMES ESTUARY SEA FLOOD

A northwesterly severe gale produced a strong surge down the North Sea coast of eastern England, which combined with a high tide in the Thames estuary, produced severe flooding in the London area as the Embankment was breached in several places with many roads damaged. At least 14 people were drowned in their homes due to the rapid rise of the water, with thousands left homeless.

1935 - River Lea Flood Relief Works completed

1953 London's docklands, oil refineries, factories, cement works, gasworks and electricity generating stations were flooded and brought to a standstill.

In London's East End, 100 metres of sea wall collapsed, causing more than 1,000 houses to be inundated and 640,000 cubic metres of Thames water to flow into the streets of West Ham from Bow Creek.

SEVERE DAMAGE BY FLOODS AT POPLAR

East End News
Feb. 6, 1953

The Lea Overflows: Mayor's
Home Inundated

MAYORESS WADES TO EMPTY HOUSE TO RESCUE KITTENS

IN the early hours of Sunday morning residents of Portree-street, Poplar, were awakened by the knocking of police officers on their doors warning them that the River Lea was over its banks and that their homes were in imminent danger of flooding. The warning was not given a moment too soon—before many people had time to dress, water was pouring through breaches in back garden walls, bursting open doors and swirling in ground-floor rooms to a depth of four feet.

One of the flooded homes was that of the Mayor and Mayoress of Poplar (Ald. and Mrs. W. I. Brinson).

Mrs. Brinson took an "East End News" reporter into several homes in the street. She remarked, with a smile: "I can't help laughing at myself now it's all over—but I was very frightened."

She told how when the water had gone down to knee level she waded to a house further up the street in an attempt to rescue three kittens which she knew were in a house where no one was staying. She managed to get into the room where the kittens were kept and saw the mother cat meowing on top of their box, which she couldn't open.

KITTENS DROWNED

She called a policeman to help her but the kittens had been drowned.

The Mayoress spoke highly of the police, fire brigade, and other helpers who arrived to give assistance.

"There were some proper heroes down here," she said.

Mr. Robert Mitchell had his arm in a sling when interviewed and said he cut his hand as he smashed glass in the front door to try to get it open. He came downstairs to rescue the family's dog, cat and tortoise. The dog and cat were swimming in the swirling water and the tortoise was floating about in a box he made for it to hibernate during the winter.

Some idea of the strength of the water can be obtained by the fact that a galvanised tank

containing about two cwt. of coal was washed from Mr. Mitchell's back garden into the front room and a flower box which normally had to be carried by two men, was found in the front room of the house next door.

Mr. Edward Townend, when the Mayoress and the "E.E.N." reporter called, was still clearing away mud from the floor of his ruined scullery.

BURST OPEN DOOR

"The water burst open the back door," he said. "It tore down the scullery wall, went right through the house and into houses at the other side of the street."

Eating lunch surrounded by wreckage was Mrs. Isabella Cattane. Her home was perhaps one of the hardest hit. Walls had been knocked down and her garden was strewn with bricks and rubble.

Mrs. Margaret Dorling said: "My husband was wading about waist deep in his pyjamas to rescue the dog. I shall never forget the swirl of the water as long as I live. My husband has gone back to work—but he isn't well. He seems dazed."

FOUR FEET DEEP

Mrs. May McCarthy remarked: "The water was four feet deep in my house. I was away on Saturday night and when I came back on Sunday all my furniture was in the street being washed with a fire hose. My chicken and rabbit for Sunday dinner were in the oven all covered with mud."

Mr. J. Reeves recounted: "I was in bed with the Old Dutch when it happened. The police came along and said there was danger to the street and told us



Mud splashed but smiling the Mayor and Mayoress of Poplar (Ald. and Mrs. W. I. Brinson) are seen with their pet dog, "Trixie" shortly after the water had subsided.

8 EAST LONDON ADVERTISER, Friday, February 6, 1953

EASTERN ECHOES

THE FLOODED HOMES OF POPLAR

E.L.A.
FEB. 6, 1953

ALDERMAN W. BRINSON, experience of the people of Mayor of Poplar, faces Portree Street. As it was its sad aftermath of people into the streets to isolate the who have lost many of their Island for some hours and to possessions for the second show how narrowly a major time during his year of office flooding was avoided.

Early in that year there occurred the big water main burst in Bow which flooded houses and caused severe damage to some, rendering people homeless and destroying their belongings. Alderman Brinson did a real man-size job on behalf of those people seeing to many of their immediate needs and months later, when no help had been forthcoming from the Metropolitan Water Board, he championed their cause. He pointed out that though the Board not might not be legally responsible for the effects of their burst main, there was nothing to prevent them making ex-gratia payments.

PRESENT FLOOD

EARLY on Sunday morning another kind of flood, caused by the rapid rise of the River Lea, surged into the homes of the people of this own road, Portree Street. Again the Mayor has risen to the occasion. He has praised the courage of the victims, he has paid tribute to those who went to their assistance and put in good service. He has gone further and pointed out how grievous has been the loss of clothing and furniture, ruined and smashed by the flood. He has appealed for money and for goods to help the people of this Borough. A Mayor is not all-powerful, he has to rely on the help of others, but for the second time he has faced a sudden disaster in Poplar in less than a year and has given a worthy lead.

IN MILLWALL

PEOPLE who can well be thankful that they did not share in the misfortune of the floods are the folk of Millwall. In 1928, they did suffer terribly and the water poured over the Island wharves into hundreds of homes. The lesson of that year was, however, taken well to heart, the height of the wharves was raised and special flood defence measures were taken. There can be little doubt that without those steps many folk on the Island would have suffered the sad

Water Up To My Chest

WARDROBE FELL ON HIM

People walking along Portree Street on Monday morning saw useless electric cookers out on the pavement as well as ruined furniture and household goods. Most of the people living in Portree Street had nothing more to wear than the clothes they were standing up in.

The back-yards in Portree Street are quite small yet many of the inhabitants of the street are keen on keeping them smart and tidy. The deluge had washed away seeds and bulbs and the gardens were under inches of mud and debris from the collapsed dividing walls.

One woman pointed to her piano. It was choked with mud and the keys were unmovable. "I might be able to get a few pounds on it for scrap," she said. In front rooms one could see furniture that had been piled high and dirty, muddy, torn and worthless linen and clothes were thrown together on large heaps.

One of the victims, Mr. Edwards who lives at No. 28 said that he had been out of work for some months with a smashed wrist. His wife is partially crippled with arthritis. Only recently his eighteen-year-old daughter had died. In his front room on a shelf stood a number of photographs of her—a dark good looking girl. "All I was worried about was those photographs," he said. "If the water had risen another inch they would have been washed away."

But, like many of the others Mr. Edwards is determined to get a home together again—although he is heartbroken. Bad luck has left him bewildered but not undaunted.

Mr. Edwards' version of what happened is similar to many others. "At one moment I was standing ankle deep in water," he said. "The next minute it was up to my chest. The wardrobe fell on me and I thought I had had my lot. The first thing I did was to get the wife to a house across the road. I was soaked to the skin. Somebody lent me a dressing gown and a policeman gave me a pair of corduroy trousers. Except for one or two things the only clothes I have left are these which I am now wearing."

POLICEMAN CARRIED SICK CHILD FOR HALF-MILE

E.L.A.
FEB. 6, 1953

Isle of Dogs Isolated

For a considerable time the Isle of Dogs was isolated, which presented a special problem for Dr. Roberts, of 93 West Ferry Road, who wanted to get a young child to hospital and put through an emergency call to the police.

The child was five-years-old John Knowles, of Exmouth House. He was ill with pneumonia, and the doctor said that it was imperative that he should go to hospital. No ambulance could get on to the island, due to the depth of the water and the raising of the bridge by the P.L.A. for emergency reasons.

Police Constable Edwards of the Isle of Dogs Station, carried the child in his arms for a distance of nearly half-a-mile, with the water swirling about his legs. As he carried the child, a police car was waiting to take the kiddie to Poplar Hospital. He is said to be progressing very well.

Many of the telephones on the Isle of Dogs were put out of order, and the Police on the Island had to keep contact with Limehouse Police Station by means of a wireless van.

School Was Ready

Harbinger Road School was always ready to be converted into an emergency rest centre, but as luck would have it, it was not required for that use.

Flood Warning

The river police at Blackwall Station in Coldharbour Street, were given the flood warning fifteen minutes past twelve on the Saturday afternoon. At that station, police who had finished their tour of duty were called from their beds and helped to raise the alarm. They visited wharves and riverside factories and also nearby houses to tell of the imminent danger. At one time the water was two and a half feet above danger level.

The police from Blackwall were called to several places along the River to help in organising the breaches that had been made in the shore and walls.

Tools Rusted By Flood

At No. 24 Portree Street, Mrs. Leborgne pointed to some iron tools. "That's finished," she said. The dried out iron cracked at the slightest attempt to roll it. In the garden Mr. Leborgne's son was de-rusting and greasing a vast amount of woodwork tools. They had been kept in two large chests just outside the back door. They were completely submerged in the deluge. Her son uses the tools for his work. They were in a completely rusted condition and a lot of work will have to be put in before they will be able to be used again.

Wall Collapsed

The dividing wall at No. 44 Portree Street was among those which collapsed under the pressure of the flood water.

Mr. Townend, the occupant, took his wife and five-year-old daughter, Margaret, across the road to his mother-in-law's flat. He returned home to see what furniture and other property he could salvage and was at the front door when the wall collapsed.

Miss A. Nicholls, of No. 48 was among the few who managed to save some furniture and clothes before the flood water invaded each ground floor room.

It was in this part of the road that the water reached a depth of six feet.

Poplar W.V.S. In Action

BOW TRADER'S £50
CLOTHING GIFT

Local people have rushed to the help of flood-hit victims with supplies of warm and clean clothing, the Poplar W.V.S. centre at Bromley Public Hall announced during the week. With supplies received from their own headquarters, the W.V.S. can supply clothing to all victims if they call at the centre.

Mrs. Davis who trades as "Wynne" at 59 Bow Road has made a most generous gesture by supplying new clothing direct from her shop amounting to approximately £50.

On Sunday evening women from the Poplar W.V.S. visited Portree Street and issued articles of clothing to people in need. Others were asked to visit the local headquarters at Bromley Hall on the following morning.

If London
flooded



would you know
what to do?



LONDON BOROUGH
OF TOWER HAMLETS

[LHA]

