

## Easter 1998 floods

At the start of Easter 1998 (9-10 April) a stationary band of heavy rain affected the Midlands. This resulted in floods in which five people died and thousands had to be evacuated from their homes. The wettest area, with over 75 mm, stretched from Worcestershire towards The Wash and the flooded towns included Evesham, Leamington Spa, Stratford-on-Avon, Bedford, Northampton and Huntingdon.

### Impacts

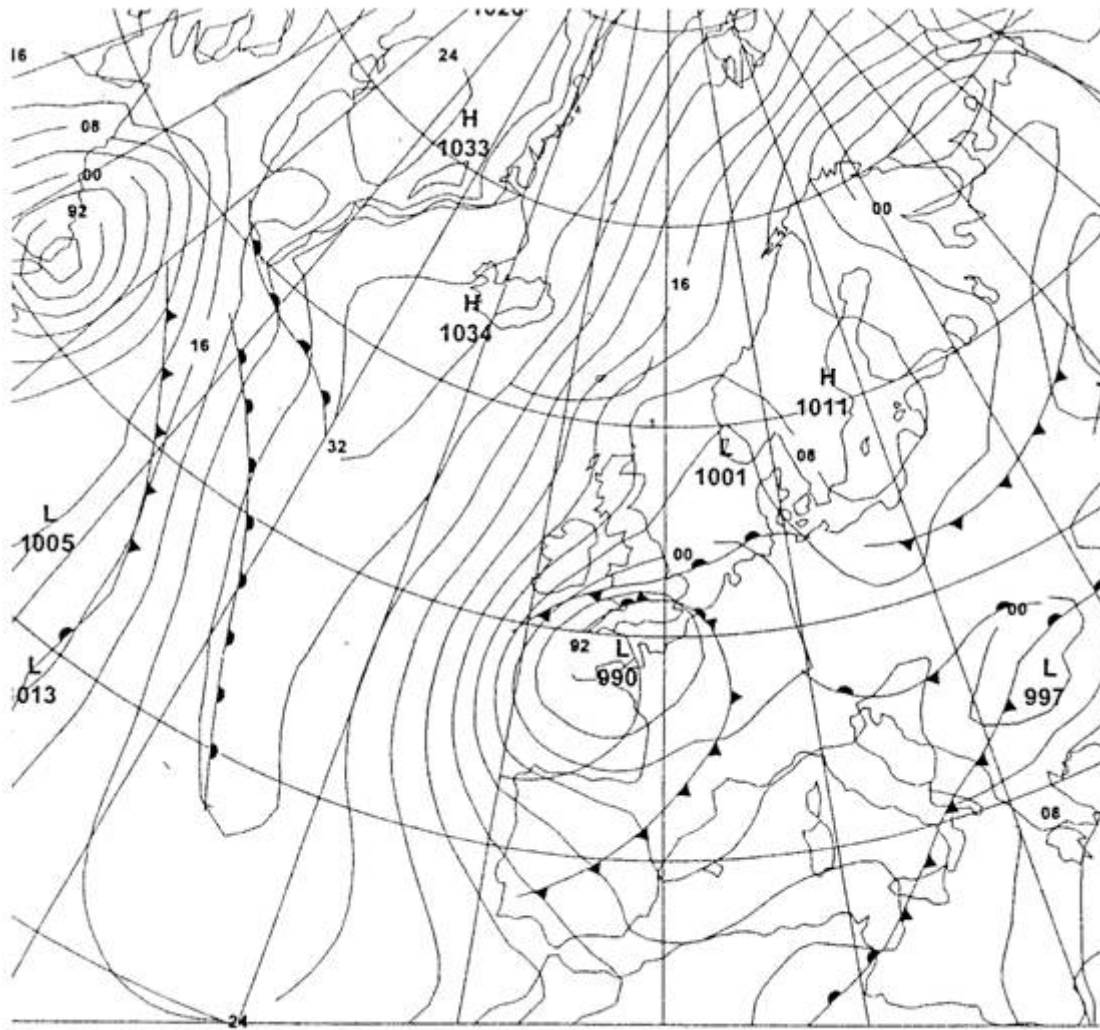
In the river systems draining the 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> area bounded by Bedford in the east, Evesham in the west, Peterborough in the north and Oxford in the south, the flood levels were generally higher than those of the record-breaking 1947 flood. The already saturated nature of the ground worsened the impacts, leading to excessive surface run-off in the upper reaches and widespread flooding further downstream. Rivers such as the Avon, Ouse and Nene readily burst their banks. Over 4,200 homes and businesses were flooded in England and Wales, including some 2,000 properties in Northampton alone. Electricity supplies were lost and there was damage to cars, boats and caravan parks - being a holiday weekend, this disruption hit particularly hard. The cost of the flooding was estimated as £350m.

An independent review described the lessons from the Easter 1998 flood experiences in relation to flood-plain management and flood forecasting, and investment in flood defences and warning systems followed.

### Weather data

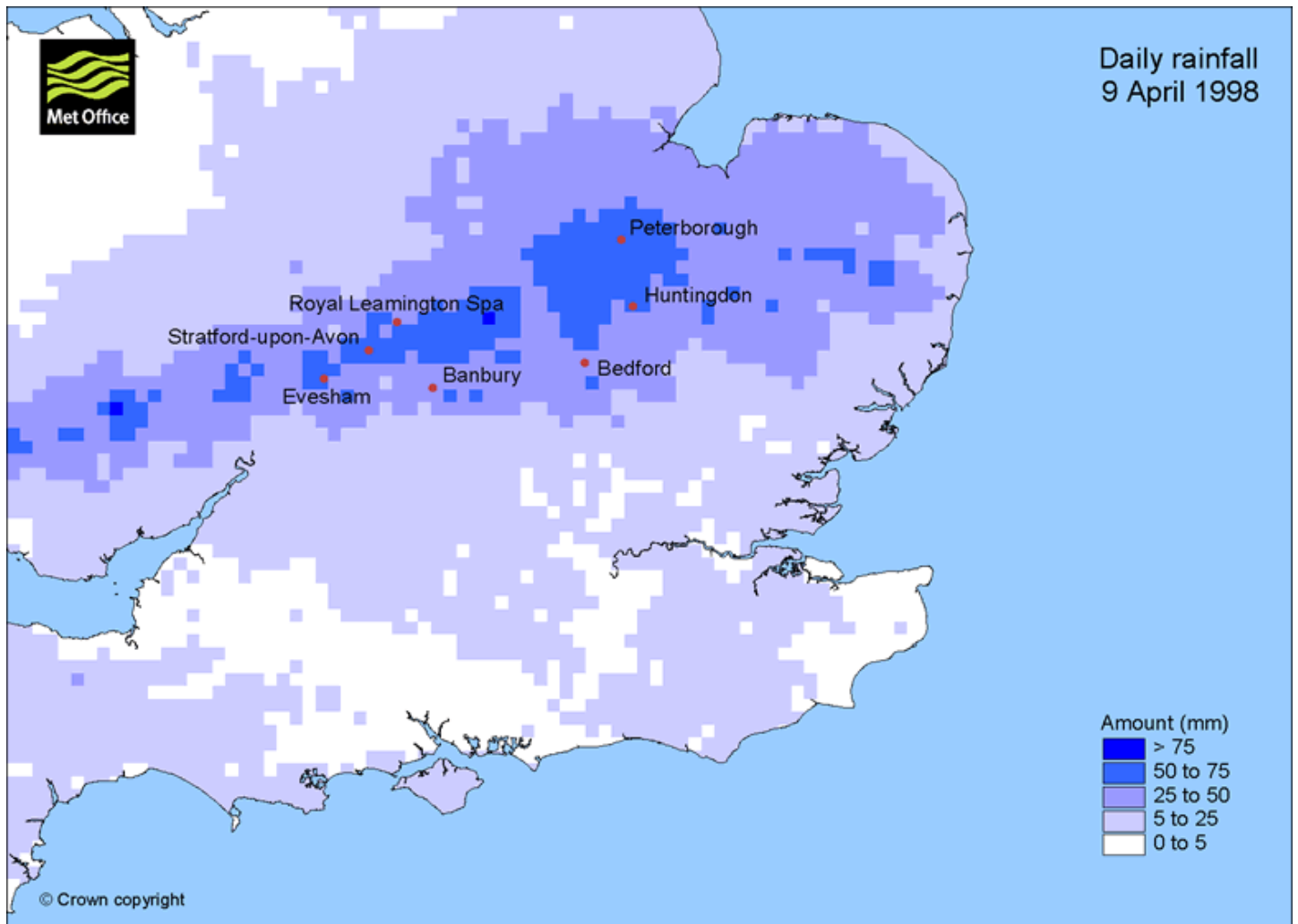
On Maundy Thursday (9 April), thundery rain in the south of England moved northwards and became slow-moving from East Anglia through the Midlands to north Wales. This band gave some very heavy downpours with hail and thunder. On Good Friday (10th) the band rotated slowly anticlockwise spreading to Lincolnshire and the west country and continued to rotate, with sleet and heavy bursts of rain in places. There was sleet and snow across the Pennines and north Wales during the evening.

The synoptic chart for 1200 GMT on 9 April 1998



**VALID 1200 UTC THU 09 APR 1998**

Rainfall 0900 GMT 9 April to 0900 GMT 10 April 1998



24 hour rainfall at the wettest places

Station	County	Rainfall 0900 8 April - 0900 9 April (mm)	Rainfall 0900 9 April - 0900 10 April (mm)	Return period (yrs)
Hampton Park Waterworks	Hereford and Worcester	25.1	72.0	70
Staplow	Hereford and Worcester	32.6	69.6	70
Stanground	Cambridgeshire	4.7	73.8	65
Ledbury	Hereford and Worcester	18.2	69.9	60
Pulham St Mary	Norfolk	0.4	69.1	60
Lutton Grange Farm	Northamptonshire	13.5	75.5	55
Althorp Park	Northamptonshire	8.7	74.4	55
Yaxley	Cambridgeshire	4.5	70.0	50
Warmington	Northamptonshire	16.8	72.7	50
Kings Cliffe Sewage Works	Northamptonshire	10.5	70.5	45
Tebbitts Bridge	Cambridgeshire	2.5	67.6	40
Stretham	Cambridgeshire	6.3	60.2	40
Wellesbourne	Warwickshire	12.9	64.5	35
Old Buckenham	Norfolk	0.2	60.1	35
Marholm	Norfolk	9.1	63.7	30

# Return periods (average frequency of occurrence) for 0900 GMT 9th to 0900 GMT 10th

## Additional information

Easter floods 1998, Report to the Board of the Environment Agency by an Independent Review Team led by P. Bye. Two volumes: Initial assessment, Final assessment, published London, Easter Floods 1998 Independent Review Team, 1998 - copies available in Met Office Library.

Easter 1998 floods, M.W. Horner and P.D. Walsh, Water and Environment Journal, 14, 415-418, 2007.

Last updated: 25 October 2012

