

**Bomford Cottage on the River Churn for almost two centuries**  
– some interesting observations about flooding by the owner and occupant, William Cooper.



Bomford Cottage – renamed in about 1900 from just Bowling Green Cottage – was built by the Chestermaster Estate (we think) in about 1835. It is on the river bank to make use of the transport provided by small canal boats of cloth processed in the cottage. The working men living here worked at Whiteway Farm. The canal terminated adjacent to the full-sized canal near the

location of the old station yard next to the modern Waitrose site. We have lived here for about 27 years.



The cottage does not flood; the river does. The overflow from the river, the Churn, spills into the Meadows opposite the cottage. The Meadows flood to a maximum (once in the last 27 years) of about two-thirds of its area, thus acting as an unofficial storage for the excess water. In that event, the water is about 35cm below the cottage floor. Before it comes into the cottage the waters would flood over the main road into Stratton. We feel quite safe as there would be a lot of England to flood before us!

Looking at the ground and the OS map (Surveyed 1875 & 1882 – published 1884) it can be seen that in the past there was a system of water drainage ditches and shutters that allowed the fields to be flooded and emptied for agricultural purposes. Such overnight flooding was carried in many places in England – and I'm sure, elsewhere – to protect new growing grass in the early Spring from frost. The waters were then released in the day to allow the pasture to grow. Typically, this could gain three weeks or so advantage of early grazing. The water channels are still very evident, as many of you will be familiar with, but the shutters no longer exist



It may be of some interest that about a year ago a consultant who was contracted with the Environment Agency carried out a survey to report on all the options to hold back the water flow in times of excess to prevent flooding in the town. He said that one option was to build a bund along the main road and then flood the Meadows to some depth and thus hold back waters for later regulated release. If they needed to raise it so high that the cottage would be uninhabitable then so be it, we would be moved! He said it very nicely and was reassuring as he felt certain that that particular option would not be taken up .....

*William Cooper*  
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