

# ***Queen Mary Expedition Fund Award – Kent, UK.***

## **Flood Risk in Tonbridge, Kent.**



Figure 1 showing flooding in Tonbridge.  
From the BBC (2013)<sup>1</sup>

During the course of the summer and early autumn, I undertook the task of completing my fieldwork in Tonbridge, Kent – an area in southern England that is at risk from frequent flooding.

### **Why Is Flood Risk Becoming Increasingly Important?**

More people living in flood risk areas coupled with the increasing risk of climate change is a primarily important factor why the study of flood risk is crucial. The increasing risk of climate change and the continued development in flood prone areas is another reason as to why flood risk is becoming an increasingly important issue. The expedition has significant relevance to my degree studies, forming the central base of my third year as part of my Independent Geographical Study.

### **Where Was The Fieldwork Based?**

My expedition was carried out in the South East of England in the market town of Tonbridge where widespread flooding has taken place in recent winter months and has been frequently featured in the media. Tonbridge is located on a crucial point in the Medway catchment. The river and numerous adjacent streams surround Tonbridge, and this along with its continuous urban development on floodplains makes the town susceptible to flooding. This reinforces the need for further research to prevent and adequately mitigate against future hazards which are brought by the

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, F, News UK BBC. (2013). "In pictures your floods photos". Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25518359>. Last accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

increasing influence of climate change and the exacerbated environmental hazards it inevitability brings.

In order to accommodate the aforementioned factors, fieldwork assessing the areas land use was undertaken. These were then translated onto a thematic map. Furthermore, the fieldwork also involved assessing the various flood protection measures in place and their relative state, from the recorded information above a flood map was then produced showing the areas flood risk; in particular the building's if any are at risk from flooding.

With the purpose of carry out research, daily commutes to Tonbridge was taken for approximately three weeks in the summer and a week autumn, building on work already undertaken with my supervisor in the spring, on that trip I was able to see the aftermath of the flooding that occurred I the winter, this further fuelled my interest on carrying out research in this area. This expedition not only helped in furthering my personal academic development, but also fuels my long standing interests of how people and the environment interact.

## **HOW THE EXPEDITION AND FUND HELPED ME?**

The interaction between people and the environment, in particular their management and adaptive measures against environmental hazards, and balancing complex and often opposing arguments between stake-holders have always interested me, the expedition fund allowed me the means to carry out research on a topic which I have always found interesting and stimulating.

This expedition also offered me the unique opportunity of working with professionals in the disaster management sector and will allow me to add to the little existing information in an area prone to flooding and it has benefited me greatly with my final year dissertation. Furthermore, this expedition will not only help me through my IGS work, but also other physical geography modules thus benefitting my academic work greatly. It has also reinforced my interest in working in this sector after my studies are completed.

The work produced will ultimately aim to inform disaster management agencies future flood management plans in the area. This expedition has ultimately benefit me

in providing me with primary data to implement for dissertation and also in career and personal aspects gaining the necessary skills and experience to work in a similar field, of environmental modelling and disaster management, in the future. I am also planning to go back to Tonbridge for short visit to assess the flood protection measures promised by the government following the 2013/2014 winter floods.

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