Have put Langton / King’s in bold as not sure what the hyperlinks are from Richard Maltby

**Floods of 1909**

In the early winter of 1909 Canterbury was literally waterlogged, assailed by severe weather that damaged hundreds of homes. Heavy rains from Tuesday 2 November, with a storm on the evening of Thursday 4, saw residents being rescued in boats, while enterprising postmen went round on carts and threw their letters through upstairs windows.[[1]](#footnote-1)

More seriously, considerable damage was done in working-class areas such as Millers’ Field, Linden Grove, St Peter’s Place and Black Griffin Lane, leaving a number of old people trapped in their bedrooms with no fire-place and no means of keeping warm.

As schools were closed down in the worst affected areas, students from the **Simon Langton Boys’ Grammar School** were still able to get in for their day’s lessons. But they seem to have made the best of this misfortune, as ‘It was quite fashionable to go down to the flooded districts and have free rides through the water. The mysterious examination of the playground by certain of “ours” was explained, when news came that certain schools were closing on account of the deluge'.​[[2]](#footnote-2) At the nearby **King’s School** the only casualty was, of all places, the drying room.[[3]](#footnote-3)

It was not just Canterbury that was affected by the floods. The rain ‘caused floods and havoc in all the low-lying districts of Kent, while Thursday night’s storm did enormous damage in places’[[4]](#footnote-4) including Chartham, Wye, Maidstone and Ashford. In Romney Marsh scores of sheep were drowned. [Seaside towns]( /seascape) were also badly hit: relief parties in Folkestone were up to their necks in water; Farthingale Farm near Dover was ‘like a huge lake’; and Herne Bay suffered serious damage to the Parade.

The rains finally came to an end on Friday 5 November or ‘Bonfire Night’, an irony that is unlikely to have been lost on residents. The situation was considered serious enough to elicit a message of sympathy from the Queen, described somewhat gratuitously by the *Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette* as ‘entirely spontaneous’.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Article by Carolyn Oulton**

1909 was not the only year that Canterbury was flooded by the Stour. For more on its history see [Historic Canterbury](<http://www.machadoink.com/The%20River%20Stour.htm>)

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2. British Newspaper Archive. Accessed 28 April 2021.

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# ‘Queen’s Message of Sympathy’. *\_Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette\_.* 13 November 1909.

1. ‘Floods and Storm in Kent. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. \_Langtonian\_. With thanks to Janeen Barker. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. \_The Cantuarian. With thanks to Peter Henderson. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ‘Floods and Storm in Kent.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘Queen’s Message of Sympathy’. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)