

Report from Flood Action Group, 1st March 2021

Current Situation

The Groundwater (GW) levels continue to fluctuate at this time, with the general trends being very changeable. The readings for this year compared to 2020 are significantly lower.

22/02/20	BHD 66.060 AOD	Whitedale	57.059 AOD
22/02/21	BHD 55.620 AOD	Whitedale	53.070 AOD

This would “normally” be the waning phase of the Flood Season, and a time for us to take comfort in not having to do any pumping or considering other emergency procedures. Our practice of liaising with the Environment Agency and continually monitoring the state of resiliency measures and groundwater readings, has been frustrated by the unpredictability of the weather conditions and the plethora of theories on what’s causing it. Although we have trigger points established for BHD and Whitedale with the EA, the actual point at which they send-out the warnings is any water in cellars on Lower West, as notified by the FAG. On Monday 15th Feb, the alarm sounded without consultation with us, however, and the first actual small amount of water appeared in Weaverlands cellar on the 17th of Feb, and confirmation was sent-out again by the EA, causing a bit of confusion. There has been no other feedback to date from first responders, and the small amount has all but disappeared.

The FAG is confident that we are now out of the risk area, but the EA remains cautious as Spring is somewhat late and trees are not in leaf to suck-up water. That contributes to an element of doubt in their minds, along with the dubious world storm predictions, which holds-up the “all clear” signal for now.

Points of Measurement

There are three points that govern the groundwater status for Hambledon; Broadhalfpenny Down, Whitedale Farm and the Borehole at the old Hartridge Brewery facilities. With the demise of that business at the location, we have been depending on third point input from the former owner, Geoff Hartridge (Weaverlands), to notify the FAG as the primary first responder when any water appears in his cellar. From advice gathered over the past several years, it was explained there was a regular dipping process of the borehole in the Hartridge facility to measure the depth and quality of the water. The depth reading was transmitted to the EA to confirm the aquifer level to establish the data for the triangulation of the threat of flooding, with a verified AOD. The FAG is concerned that the current method of visual examination of the shallow sump in the floor of the cellar, is a less than satisfactory way of gauging the height and rate of increase of this key aquifer reference point. Accordingly, we have been carrying out a review of the overall situation to determine a better solution to provide good data for early warning of a flood risk for ourselves and the EA. This effort began with a measurement taken at the proper borehole, along with an inspection of the cellar on Saturday 20th Feb, and a report will follow in due course.

Ditches and the Headwall

We can confirm there have been no maintenance activities carried out at the headwall catchment basin, or the ditch down to Hook Vinney since the January

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report, and it is noted there are no major restrictions in the ditch or its culverts at this time, which is also being monitored. We note there is water continually flowing in the ditch out of the Big Pipe (BP), and from the catchment basin down past Hook Vinney. This is also increasing the build-up of sediment extending up the BP, further reducing its capacity, as can be seen in the rising level in the catchment basin. The football pitch is heavily saturated with continual run-off into the ditch, and filling the culverts to the half-way point downstream. We have been contacted by Silvia Cleeve (Brown) from Old Forge Cottage on two occasions this past week, advising there is air bubbling up in the catchment basin, which she says is typical of air being pushed-up through the soil on top of the aquifers. We have also been provided with input from Francesca Pennant (Hook Vinney) on the overflowing of the spring adjacent to her property on the Southwest corner of the FB pitch.

We would like to record that in spite of the lack of attention by HCC Highways on the drainage issues, the status quo should be sufficient with no significant need to make contact. We are all aware little can be done at the headwall until it drains down. We have also observed maintenance work being carried-out at the Bury Lodge Pumping Station, but no sign of tankers at this point. A reminder – problems with Southern Water is at the top of our risk list, encompassing sewerage system failures, and possibility of road closures.

FAG Membership

A notice was sent out to all members 10/02/21, covering the current situation in the village. We're pleased to report there have been a few new members included in the FAG, and the present membership includes:

Jan Jarvie (Chairman)
Neil Mason (Deputy)
Paul Quinn
William Stanton
James King
Simon Dettmer
Gary Plaisted
Chris Hand
Ian Hall
James Silcock
Graham Hounslow
Joe Tanzer

The FAG contingent is considered to be a good mix of volunteers throughout the village to adequately deal with our duties and responsibilities. When the need arises.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Jan Jarvie
Chairman, Flood Action Group