

Walberswick Local
History Group

1953 FLOOD

Part 2

Southwold

Pictures and Memories.

and

Other flood pictures.

Part of a Exhibition commemorating the 50th Anniversary

Held on May 26th 2003



Walberswick Local History Group

1953 FLOOD

Southwold Gazette 14 March 2003
Mrs Maud Collins

I know I am late with flood news but I would like to tell you of my experience on the evening of January 31st 1953.

My husband was at the Drill Hall in St Edmunds Road helping with the electric lights for the Saturday night dance there. We lived at St James Green then.

I went into the passage between the two cottages and could hear a crunching noise so I went onto the sea front. Looking down I could see the beach huts moving backwards and forwards on the prom, which was covered in stones and water.

One beach hut was hanging over the edge and while I watched it slid off into the sea. It was awful watching them moving.

I went back indoors and didn't see anyone till my brother-in-law, a Mr Brand who had been to the cinema with two friends, came and said they couldn't get over the bridge to go home to Halesworth. Then my husband came home and told us all the people who had been to the dance had to stay there for the night. He and three others went to up to the round house on Gun Hill to see but couldn't give any help, so they then went down to the pier.

I went and saw it all the next day. My brother E. J. Goldsmith was the Eastern Electricity Board van driver.



Damaged beach huts on the Prom , and vessels sheltering at sea.



Walberswick Local History Group

1953 FLOOD

MY MEMORIES OF THE 1953 FLOOD

by

Mrs Shirley (nee Church) Eade.

Me and a friend called Iris Penfold cycled over to Southwold on the 31st of January 1953. We usually went to a dance at the Pier or the Rifle Hall most Saturdays, this evening it was to be the Rifle Hall.

We had a very rough ride over, there was so much wind, I remember we had a job to keep on our cycles.

Different people kept coming into the hall during the evening and saying the water was rising very quickly and we ought to go home, but we really didn't take much notice, we just carried on dancing and having a good time, we could hear the roof of the hall making a lot of noise and the wind blowing in gusts.

I can't remember who it was said the people from Walberswick wouldn't get home that night, because the road was flooded.

I stayed the night at Rita Land's house in Stradbroke Road, I think Iris stayed next door at Mrs Nauntons.

We all decided to go down to the sea front and have a look at the sea, I remember it was all we could do to stand up against the wind, we then all went back to Mr and Mrs Land's for hot drinks.

I didn't get home till late on Sunday evening, my mother was really worried about me as we could not let anyone know we were all right.

I remember all the tide washings left by the high tide up on the road, there was such a mess.

I also remember that the people who were flooded had really nice carpets given them, our house didn't get flooded so we didn't get any, and I still can't remember how I got home.

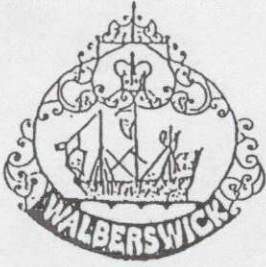


Southwold Prom, Sunday 1st February.
From the cliff top.





Southwold Prom Feb 1st 1953.



Walberswick Local History Group

1953 FLOOD

MY MEMORIES OF THE 1953 FLOOD.

By

Richard (Dick) Leon.

Saturday night 31st January 53, started much the same as other Saturday nights, I met up with Derek Muttitt and we cycled over to Southwold to go to the dance. There was a strong wind blowing as we cycled along the old railway track and the tide was high as we went over the bridge.

We left our bikes at our friend Peter Crick's house in Pier Avenue, and walked up into the town for a drink before going to the dance which was being held at the Rifle Hall (now called The Dome) rather than at the Pier.

During the evening Jimmy Cook from Reydon came in and said "you won't get home tonight", then explained that the tide was right over the road at Mights Bridge between Southwold and Reydon. Some of us then left the dance and went to have a look, the water was right up to the Southwold Service Station, there was all sorts of things floating by, dustbins, chicken huts, pieces of wood and all manner of debris.

We then went back to the dance, by this time it was getting late and the dance was coming to an end. I think it must have been given out at the dance, that anyone who could not get home could go to the Homestead on South Green, which was being opened up as a W.V.S. Centre, we went there via the sea

front and were amazed how high the sea was and how far up the cliffs the waves came. The night was very cold with a strong wind and the moon shone brightly through the gaps in the clouds, we spent the night at the Homestead and if I remember correctly there was tea and biscuits.

In the morning we went out on to Gun Hill and then to Ferry Road, the Beach was all over the road, there was an Ambulance lying on its side where the road should have been, we then went onto the Common by the Water Tower and all we could see was water from the bottom of the Common right to the fields at Walberswick, with the Harbour Inn and houses in the middle of it.

We then went down to the Pier, the sea had come right through the lower parts of the building, which housed the slot machines and had taken them out into Pier Avenue.

After another look round I went to my sister's, Derek went to his brother's, both living in Southwold.

Later we met up again having heard that there was a lorry either Army or T.A., which was high enough to get through the flood water between Southwold and Reydon ferrying people across. We managed to get on the lorry with our bikes and got to Reydon Corner, we were told not to go by the Halesworth Road as the road at Wolsey Bridge was flooded, so we set off and cycled to Wangford, then along the A12 till we came to more flooding just before the Southwold turn off at Foals Watering. We turned back and went through Henham Park coming out at the High Lodge and down the drive to the A12. (The drive which is now being opened up).

The A12 was again flooded between the Beccles Road and Blythburgh Bridge, we managed to carry our bikes and get along the top of the bank beside the A12, at that time no trees or bushes grew on the bank. Once we got to Blythburgh we were able to cycle on to Walberswick getting home about 4pm on the Sunday.

We later heard that some people had been rescued from Ferry Road, but also some had lost their lives.



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1953 FLOOD

Note from the Lavender Laundry
with the "clean laundry".

This bundle of laundry, together with 2,000 others has
been under flood water for two days.

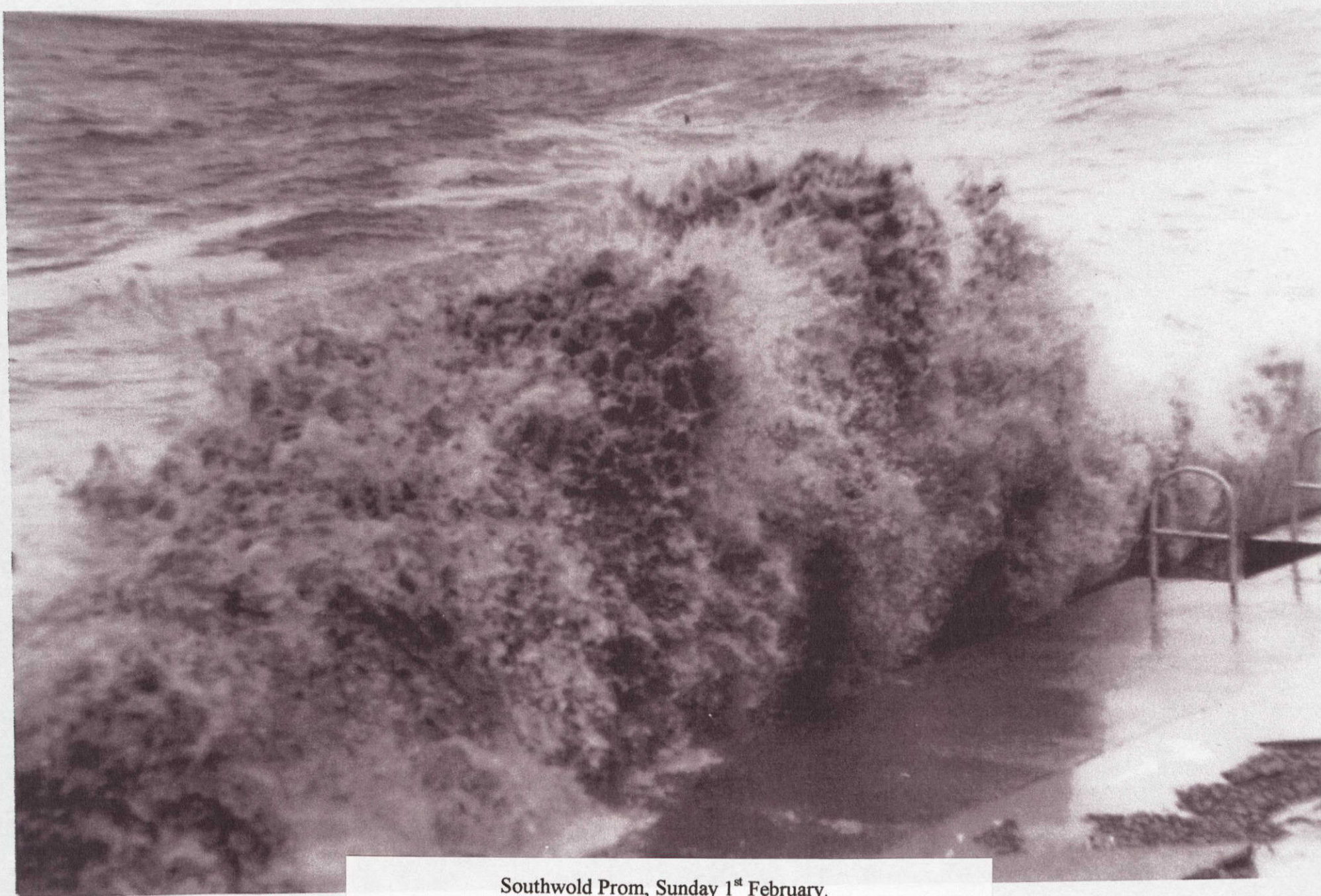
It is not laundered as it should be but under the
circumstances we beg your indulgence.

We have a record of any articles not returned and we shall
do our best to trace these, but we need time to do so. Please do
not enquire for a few days.

We thank you for the consideration which you have
already shown us and we hope that we may count on your
continued support.

THE LAVENDER LAUNDRY

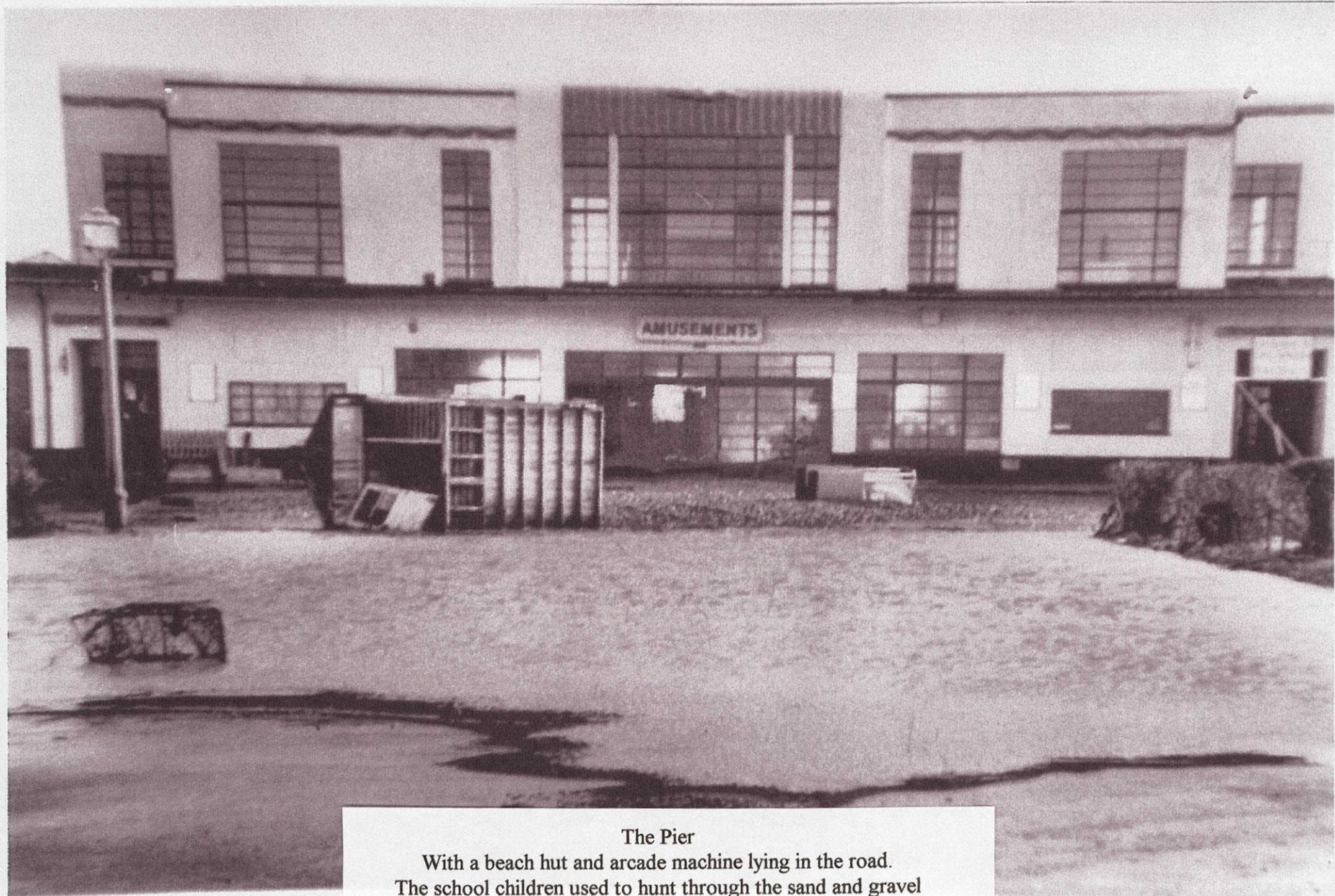
The "Lavender Laundry" is situated in Lowestoft
"Beach Village" on the "Denes".



Southwold Prom, Sunday 1st February.
From the cliff top.







The Pier

With a beach hut and arcade machine lying in the road.
The school children used to hunt through the sand and gravel
looking for coins that got away.



The Pier Pavilion.
Southwold Feb 1st 1953.
The bar and club room all gone
see the ship out at sea ?
The Pier itself just stood out of the water.



Mights Bridge, Southwold.

Sunday morning Feb 1st

“Dusso” Winter did a shuttle service to and fro with the Council tractor.
Note the car which was stuck on the bridge all night with a man in it.
Water much deeper on the Reydon side.



Southwold Prom, Sunday 1st February.
From the cliff top.



Gun Hill
The beach totally flattened



Ferry Road

People surveying the scene, the beach huts lay in a jumble, but they have collected the fish boxes.



Southwold
The Great Flood.
Ferry Road from foot of Gun Hill
Sunday morning Feb 1st 1953.
Water still flowing into the marshes.





Close up of the destruction of one of the Bungalows.







Southwold
The Great Flood Jan 31st—Feb 1st 1953.
Ruins of prefab “Blue Posts” where lived Mrs Ballard and her little son.
All bungalows and Mr Aldrich’s sheds etc. gone this side of the
“Dutch Barn Cafe”.







Fisherman's sheds beside the toilet in Ferry Road.



Ferry Road deep in sand and shingle with an Ambulance on its side.





Behind Ferry Road



Behind Ferry Road



The lower end of South Green, the sewerage pumping station roof shows above the tide washings, looking to Ferry Road.



The Ferry footpath to Southwold, the sea has torn through the clay bank and spread the residue on the other side of the ditch.



The Harbour Inn
picture taken from the common
sitting in an inland sea
Yes, there was snow around



Beer delivery to the Harbour Inn, by boat, how were the customers going to get there, three Walberswick men in the picture, Kenneth Bloomfield sitting rowing, with Leslie Goodwin in the bows, in the stern of the dingy "Dubber" English, it has been said that all the men were employees of Wm Denny, Builder, in Southwold.

OTHER
FLOODING



Damage caused at Gunhill, Southwold, October, 1905. Broken Sea Wall on left



SOUTHWOLD, MARCH 13TH 1906.