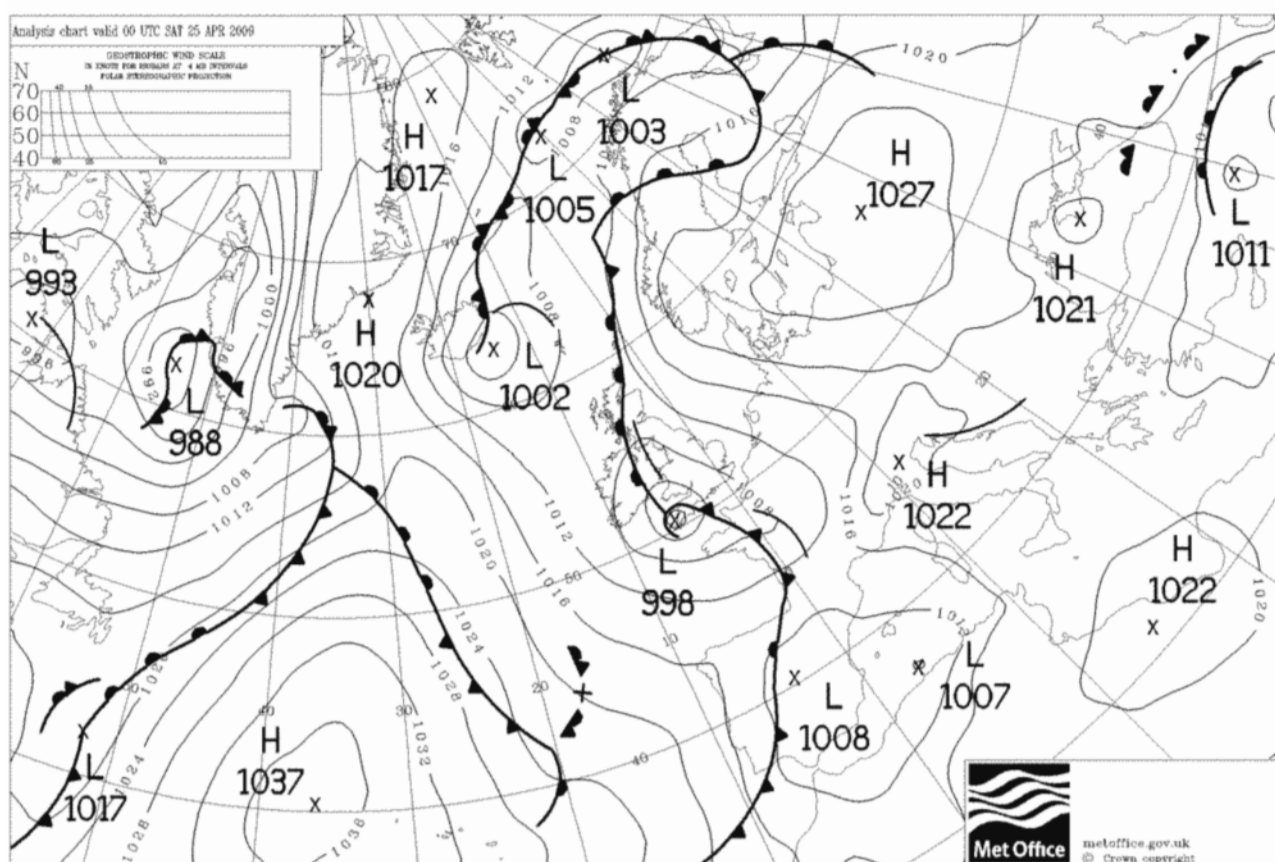


St Ives Flood 24th / 25th April 2009

On the night of 24th/25th a depression formed on a thundery cold front, and gave rise to several hours of intense rainfall, with some thunder, over West Penwith. The worst affected area being near Zennor, 3 miles to the west of St Ives.



The rainfall recorded in Penzance between 23:00 on 24th and 09:00 on 25th was 65.2mm. A further 22.9mm fell in the following 12 hours. The area of intense rainfall was very localised. Culdrose received just 22mm

The following analysis, based on the rainfall radar, was provided by Chris Kidd

The area west of St Ives had typically ~170mm with a maximum of 193mm ~4km SW of the town. Zennor had 136mm. However, very sharp E-W gradient with much lower totals to the East of St Ives - typically no more the 25mm.

The highest totals were just offshore to the NW of the coastline with up to 200mm - however, maybe brightband played a part here - this region is ~37km from the Predannack and assuming a maximum height of the freezing level to be ~2km puts it at the 3 degree beam elevation... "

There was extensive flooding in St Ives, where several shops and properties were severely damaged, just one month after a £10m flood defence scheme opened. During the night 45 guests had to be moved to safety when the flooding resulted in the evacuation of the Chy an Albany Hotel in Albany Terrace. Cornwall County Council teams worked throughout the night to provide supplies of sandbags and support for those affected by the flooding. The Environment Agency have gone some way to admitting the failure of the brand new £10m flood defence scheme. It would appear that very little water flowed away down the huge grills across the road because the pumps were totally inadequate.

Sadly three men and a woman, local to west Cornwall, were returning from a night out in St Ives when their car was washed down a stream near Zennor. The stream, which is normally just a few inches deep, had swollen to a depth > 10'. One man escaped before the battered vehicle came to a rest a hundred yards downstream, and raised the alarm. A search operation involving the fire service, coastguard, police and a search & rescue helicopter began at 2.25am, eventually finding the vehicle fully submerged and full of water, and a mans body. 1 further person was found at the bottom of the cliffs. His sister's body has yet to be recovered, presumably washed out to sea.

There was extensive flooding along the north coast west of St Ives. Several miles of the coastal footpath are still closed, and are likely to be throughout much of May, due to the erosion and damage to bridges done by the floodwaters. The main north coast road west from St. Ives is having to be shut for essential repairs.

The clear up operation was not helped by further heavy rain over the following 5 days. In Penzance the 6 day total to 09:00 on 30th April was 132.7mm. The wettest 6 day period I have ever recorded.

Graham Easterling
Penzance