5. Flood History & Improvements

5.1 The flooding that occurred in Spalding and over a considerable area of land around Postland from the River Welland, during March 1947, has now passed its 57th anniversary but remains most worthy of mention. Reports of the time portray a situation that materialised from the combination of heavy rainfall and the effect of a very rapid thaw in the upstream river catchment that caused the release of a considerable amount of frozen precipitation that culminated in an extreme river flow. The river was consequently the subject of major improvement that included construction of the Coronation Channel to bypass Spalding, therefore relieving the inadequate river channel through the town.

5.2 More recently, but again some years ago, the potential for fluvial flooding in Spalding was addressed by predecessors of the Environment Agency when the automatic syphon was constructed at Four Mile Bar to direct excess river flow into the functional floodplain of Crowland and Cowbit Washes. Whilst the installation came very close to priming during the flood flows of April 1998 when the river level through Spalding attained a level of approximately 4.42m ODN, it has yet to operate.



SYPHONIC WEIR FOUR MILE BAR

5.3 The tidal event of January 1978 overtopped the river embankment between Marsh Road Sluice and Fulney Lock causing minor localised flooding but the unsatisfactory situation was duly improved by the authority of the day.

6. Local Hydraulics

6.1 The aspect of hydraulics in this Fenland area is inevitably a land drainage issue and it is to be recognised that the efficiency of open channels is affected by aquatic weed growth and bed accretion that occurs over time. However, to ensure that the IDB watercourses function to a good standard, the vegetation is cleared once and most probably twice annually by either machinery or hand labour, depending upon available access, with desilting operations undertaken as necessary. This said, it is inevitable that heavy rainfall will occur at some time when various watercourses are profuse with aquatic growth but under such circumstances, it is improbable that the matter would not receive emergency attention by the Board, particularly if water levels in a "high priority" watercourse, became unacceptably high.