

# THE BRITISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PORTUGAL

THIRTY SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT  
AND REVIEW 2009

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**DIARY OF THE FLOOD IN THE RIVER DOURO  
1909-1910**

**Frederick William Flower**

Tuesday, 21st December 1909- Willie arrived on Saturday night- quite well. Sunday morning I did not go to town, having arranged with Dr Fiandor to take class and service. This was fortunate as it rained hard all the morning. I walked up in afternoon and kept dry. Had tea at Club- then to service and slept at flat. Yesterday was Willie's birthday and we had the Cassels in for the evening. W. is 22. Very stormy all night and the sea very high. Foam all over the beach. The river is very high and several barges have been lost. Had to walk round by bridge between Oporto and Vila Nova yesterday and today. W. and I had to come home by cab from Batalha.

Nina has been staying in town with Linda at Glennie's since Saturday.

Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> December- The stormy weather continues and exciting scenes have been witnessed. Every steamer in the river and every ship, with the exception of one trawler, one tug and two very small tugs and vessels, have been swept down the river and lost- either on the bar or stranded. Hundreds of barges and lighters also, besides much cargo and goods from the quays, huts and even wine from the lodges swept away. Many owners of lighters have lost all they had. Houses and walls have fallen. There is no gas and even the tram service may cease if the weather gets into the power station.

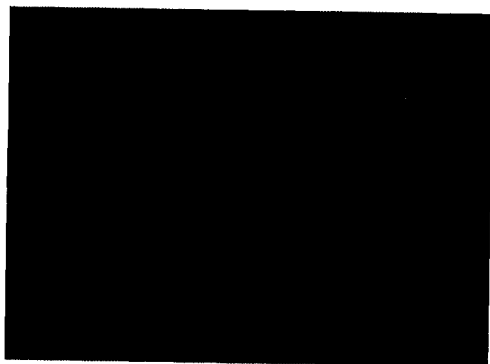
At present the rain continues so there is no sign of any abatement. This is the biggest flood remembered. The water

floods the old city wall between the Terreiro and old Banhos. Much damage and I fear some loss of life has occurred. Communication is also cut off with the Douro and Lisbon in consequence of landslips in the former and floods in the latter. Richard Dartford was expected here yesterday from England, on his way to Lisbon but no trains had arrived up to this afternoon. Robert was going to spend Christmas at Estoril but could not go.

Yesterday I went to Bomfim service and stayed in town. Today we could not stay in our office in town because the river had got into some stores with carbyde and an explosion was feared near.

Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> December-

Rain still continues but barometer rising and wind more westerly. Intervals of clear sky, but heavy rain between. River lower this morning, but not so low this



Taken from Vila Nova de Gaia across river at Oporto

evening. The *Cintra* on the reef and mud sank by the bow during the night, but stern still on the rocks. Part of the crew apparently tried to escape by the boats, but only 3 so far appeared, being pulled out of the sea at Foz. Four remained on the ship and are still there, out of reach. The water has washed away part of the Cabedello and the *Sylvia* outside is now surrounded by water. Today the electric tram service is stopped. Still unable to stay in office so wrote letters at lodge. Lunched at Club. Heavy rain at 5 to 5.30. Robert is still without news from Lisbon or from Richard as the trains and wires are interrupted. Very sad Christmas for many. Thank God for all his mercies to us and

that we are all well and safe. Linda and Nina were to come down today but rain prevented.

Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> December- The weather improved since last entry. Christmas Day was fine, and the river has fallen rapidly because there is no cabadello to keep the water back. I rode up for morning service at Bomfim, while Alfred and Katie drove later to go to Church. Trams all stopped then, but on Sunday were running in town. Robert, Linda and Grace dined with us (Nina also returned home). Spent a pleasant afternoon and evening with children, walking out, exchanging presents and singing. Mr H. Cassels and Miss De Haviland looked in. On Sunday Katie and I went to Bomfim by train from Coimbrões to Campanhã and back same way. As there was no gas in the city the second service was at 3 instead of 7, but Snr Fiandor took it.

Yesterday Linda went away but Grace still with us. Richard Dartford arrived Sunday evening from his long journey by the Douro, and he and Robert left for Lisbon by the Western line as the usual route is still stopped.

Alfred and I stayed late last evening to União and drove down at night.

The men on the *Cintra* were rescued on Sunday at noon. The flood has done most extraordinary damage. Besides the wrecks and loss of cargoes and boats the roads, quays, walls and even houses are damaged. Large lighters are stuck high and dry on the roads, and the piles of sands are left about even blocking up doorways etc.

The Cabedello has been cut almost completely away and the sea at high tide washes up to Sampaio- a most extraordinary transformation! Shall we be able to cross by boat between here and Foz any more?

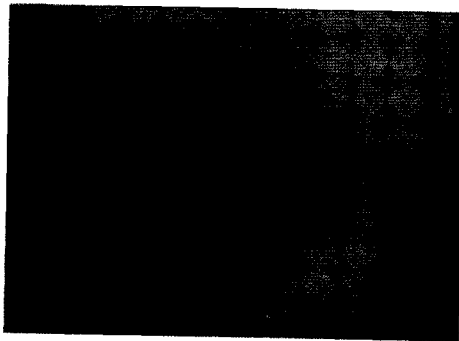
Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> December- Yesterday stayed up to service and came late. Willie is going to stay a few days more as Mr Frazer has come to see after the damage done to the telephone cables and W. is staying to help him.

Steamers have entered the bar. Postcard from Robert at Estoril.

Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1910- "Dia dos Reis". This is the first entry this year, as I have been so busy. On Friday 31<sup>st</sup> Lina went up to our flat in the morning, met Grace there and went to see May Chegwin. In the evening we both went out to buy prizes for the school children, and then went to the Watch-night Service, which was well attended, and we slept at the flat. Next morning had the prize-giving festa and in the evening the XIIIth Anniversary of the União. All went off well.

Monday, Leonard's school reopened but the difficulty of crossing, now that there is no "Cabedello" became a serious one, and I began to think that it would be better to send him to England. He went over, however, with a message that he might not continue. In the evening A. and I stayed for the União meeting. Being the "Evangelical Alliance" week of prayer some of our Mirante friends came.

Tuesday was Leonard's birthday. He did not go to school, but yesterday he went again. In the meantime I had wired to Mr Whitbread to ask if he would take him on same terms as Godfrey. The reply was "yes" if decided at once as there was



Miragaia, behind the old Oporto customs house

only one vacancy. After due consideration we have concluded to send him for the following reasons: 1<sup>st</sup>- the difficulty of his going to school here; 2<sup>nd</sup> that, after taking into account his keep it is cheaper to send him away because Mr Whitbread makes special terms for my boys- £30 a year; 3<sup>rd</sup> having Godfrey there, it will be nice for both of them; and 4<sup>th</sup>, because a boy, Fred Patterson, from the same school is here for a trip in the *Redstart* so Leonard can go with him. The way seems pointed out, and though he is only 12 years old, and very small for his age, we think he will get on all right.

Yesterday evening I stayed up for the Service and came home late.

Today, being a holiday, I took Lina and two girls to see the wrecks on both banks of the river. From the Guano Fábrica we went in a boat up to the Afurada. Saw a schooner *D. Maria* in a field, the SS *Ellida* in the mud standing straight up, the *Amazonas* lying on her side at Afurada with part of the chapel roof in her bowsprit, and many barges and lighters about. On the other side where we crossed over were 2 small vessels, the barque *Santos Amaral*, steamers *Nestor* and *Gascon* and the remains of many others- besides the *Estephânia* and *Douro*. The *Sylvia*, *Cintra*, etc, sunk.

Harold brought home young Patterson, who is staying the night.

Letters from Godfrey at Looe. He was anxious at not having letters from us but had got them when he wrote.

Willie returned to Lisbon yesterday.

Robert has not returned yet.

*FREDERICK WILLIAM FLOWER (Fred, Jr) younger son of Frederick William Flower Sr, believed to have been the first photographer in Portugal, was born in Vila Nova de Gaia in 1858. He married Caroline Decima Chegwin (Lina) in 1887*