

Storm And Floods

By C.T. Reporter OCTOBER 14, 1960

LAST Saturday's storm was one of the worst experienced in the area for many years. Gale force winds swept through Christchurch and surrounding villages at speeds reaching over 50 m.p.h. and many families felt the impact of swiftly rising flood water.

High seas lashed the coastline while inland flood water forced its way into low-lying homes. Villagers who had waded waist deep from their living rooms described the floods as the worst in living memory.

Reinforced by the heavy deluge and menacing south-easterly gale, Saturday afternoon's incoming tide swallowed up the whole of Stanpit Marsh and raced towards the town. Boats strained at moorings and the Avon and Mill Stream at Convent Walk became one. Debris was thrown up on the Town Quay while Mudeford Quay was almost cut-off.

The large converted M.T.B. "Sea Vixen," the Mudeford home of the sailing section of de Havilland's Sports and Social Club, was torn from its berth at the normal water's edge, was turned completely round and pushed almost 20 yards on to the reeds by the heavy harbour swell.

In the town, slates were hurled from roof-tops, huts and garden sheds caved in and the large plate glass window of a High Street store was near shattered.

Pedestrians found it almost impossible to stand up, pedal cyclists had to walk and cars were forced to a slow speed.

BRIDGE STREET

Flood water reached over a foot deep in Bridge Street and anxious business people worked hard to save stock from the rising water.

Householders in Purewell were badly hit, for with the rising flood water at the rear of their homes came sewage. Manhole covers were uprooted with the force of the deluge.

The new £325,000 sewage disposal plant at Stony Lane is due to go into operation any time now.

"The weather just beat us," said Borough Surveyor, Mr. E. B. Wise. Tests at the plant last week revealed a defect which is now being put right before the plant deals with sewage.

But town flooding was not as severe as anticipated.

At Mudeford sandspit one Council owned beach hut was destroyed by the sea and two were severely damaged. The roof of a deck chair was blown off at Highcliffe and there was a cliff slide at Steamer Point. But beach defences stood firm and according to Mr. Wise the extent of damage on the beaches could have been much worse.

BY-PASS

Mr. Wise stated that in his opinion the construction of the by-pass and its bridge in no way worsened the flooding to the north of the new road.

Impact of the flooding in homes was not felt fully until Sunday morning, and in many parts of the area the water rose higher as the day went on.

Burton, Bransgore, Winkton and Ripley were the worst hit. In these villages many homes were cut off and families were, confined to upstairs rooms.

Mr. L. J. Witt, of The Shack, Burley Road, was awakened at 3 a.m. by the sound of rushing water. He looked out of his window to see that the road outside was a swirling river. Mr. Witt considered himself lucky. He was able to barricade his doorway with sandbags. His brother was not so lucky—he had three to four inches in the living room.

PITIFUL

A nearby caravan home looked pitiful with waves lapping at the top step. Bewildered children looked out from the window and a Calor gas container was two-thirds submerged. The water was still rising—another few inches and cooking would be out. The family's poultry had found refuge on higher ground in an adjoining field.

One Burley Road householder splashed merrily through the water in shoes. With a spade over his shoulder, he strode back to his home his knees now well below the water level.

Further down the road, the Lamb Inn was completely cut-off. It was rumoured that nearly five feet of water had entered the premises.

The centre of Ripley was under four feet of water and was completely cut-off from the outside world. The Woolpack Inn at Sopley was surrounded with water, and on Saturday night customers drank their beer in candle-light. For an electric power line supplying house-holders from Sopley to Bisterne had been brought down under the force of a heavy tree.

Workmen described the break-down as one of the worst for a long time.

DIVERSIONS

Wherever motorists went in the villages it was diversion after diversion. Bransgore was practically cut off and during one part of Sunday the only route to this village was via Ringwood, Burley and Thorney Hill.

There was no direct way through Burton, for a section of the main street was under water for nearly 200 yards. And in the middle of this were Mr. and Mrs. Rolls in their small roadside cottage.

Mrs. Rolls was marooned for most of the day in an upstairs room until firemen carried her to safety. At 11 o'clock on Sunday morning Mr. Harry Cailes waded through to take Mrs. Rolls some hot tea and breakfast.

Further down the road ex-seaman Mr. Harry Peckham was evacuated from his cottage after part of the thatched roof had been blown away.

On the fringe of the flood water at Winkton, Mr. Alfred Hiscock and Mr. A. Haines agreed they had never seen anything like it before.

MAROONED

Mrs. E. M. Hermes, of Bockhampton, reports that the flooding prevented her from attending the B.B.C. recording of Gardeners' Questions at Christchurch Town Hall on Sunday afternoon. No car was able to reach her. Three cars had been abandoned near her home the previous evening.

Roads were also blocked at Somerford Bridge and there was flooding in the de Havilland factory. There was flood water for about a quarter of a mile at the bottom of Roeshot Hill and several cars which risked the water had to be pushed along by willing hands. One car had to be dragged from the ditch.

Stony Lane was under water and remained so until later in the week.

From the by-pass to way beyond Avon Causeway was a huge lake which encroached still further into the villages as Sunday went along. Avon Causeway itself was under water in several parts. But on higher ground cattle and horses munched away at the rich meadow grass.

For many people, Sunday was a sight-seeing day. Cars appeared from nowhere and excited children peered out of the windows for a better view. No one had seen anything like it before and some don't want to see anything like it again.

CHEERS FOR THE CHAMPIONS

Did someone say "shorts" were in big demand at the King's Arms Hotel on Monday lunch-time? Or was it really flood water which was sucked through the firemen's hose-pipes from the beer cellar to the fire tender?

There was 18 inches of flood water in the beer cellar and the firemen pumped it out, so here's to the helmeted champions and beer all round !

Waist Deep At Ripley

RIPLEY was isolated by floods. Water throughout the village was four to five feet deep and C.T. reporters were only able to reach to the extreme outskirts of the village.

There they met a disconsolate group standing near Parson's Farm.

They had just dug a ditch by the roadside to try and take away some of the flood water.

At that time not much headway was being made and water at least five feet deep was lapping against the wall of the Farm House.

The farmer—Mr. Reginald Mitchell—said that at 7 o'clock no water had come into the house. But by 9.30-10, the water had risen up four steps. In their pantry more than 30 dozen eggs were floating.

The ditch near the house had burst its banks causing the farmhouse to be flooded.

CHANGED IN COW-SHED

Mr. and Mrs. Parsons said that they had carried dry clothes out of the house held above their heads and had put them on in the cow-shed. They didn't know how they were going to get back into the house that evening—they were planning to sleep in the cow-shed.

The centre of the village was under water and cut off from both sides.

A tractor brought the milk to the water's edge to be collected by a lorry—the tractors wheels were more than half covered by water.

The police had come to the village earlier in the morning, but had explained that nothing could be done to alleviate flooding at that time because the centre of the village was in a dip, and as fast as the water was pumped away more would run back in to the "basin."

A CHEERY SMILE WITH THE MILK

OUT of every calamity comes a story of human courage. A story which tells of bravery, self-sacrifice and cheerfulness in the face of overwhelming odds. Such is the story of the young milk roundsmen and women of Bransgore Dairies.

Not a very exciting job delivering milk—and everyone expects to see it on the doorstep on the dot.

Sunday morning was one of those occasions which tests the stamina of those who quietly carry out the day by day dull yet vital routines.

Sixteen-year-old John Mercer and 18-year-old George Sherwood and their Bransgore Dairy work companions Mrs. Judy West, Mrs. Sheila Barrow, Miss Gwen Barrow and Miss Veronica Humphries, set out on Sunday to deliver their milk. And this they did, but not without courage, bravery, self-sacrifice and cheerfulness.

Their milk vans were stuck time and time again, but with a smile and a heave the milk got through.

At Ripley, Mrs. Judy Barrow was faced with overwhelming odds. Four feet of water is enough to put anyone off. Along came farmer Mr. Albert Wiseman and his tractor. This took the

milk so far, but not far enough.

Judy waded waist deep to place all her bottles, not on the doorstep, but on the window-sill. Another milkmaid took off her jeans to wade through the ice-cold flood water.

They all returned to the dairy shivering with cold yet laughing and joking about the whole situation. "I'm proud of them all," said dairy manageress Mrs. L. Stokes.

Homes Flooded And Roads Blocked At Ringwood

PARTS of the Ringwood area were badly hit by flooding but the water quickly subsided and all roads were passable by Monday.

Ground floors of a number of houses were flooded to a depth of several inches and Ringwood Fire Brigade were on duty from 3 a.m. on Sunday until midnight pumping water out of several homes.

Two sections of the main A.31 road through Ringwood were affected by flooding, and in places the water was between one and three feet deep.

TRAFFIC DIVERTED

The A.31 between the Wessex Road and Eastfield Lane junctions was flooded throughout Sunday, and all east-bound traffic was diverted via Broadshard Lane, Northfield Road and Hangersley. Single-line traffic from the Southampton direction was marshalled through the flooded area by police.

The other part of the A.31 affected at Ringwood was between the river bridge and the railway arch at Ashley and this was passable only to single line traffic on Sunday.

Members of the Special Constabulary were called out on Sunday to assist the police on traffic duty in the flooded areas.

"RUSHING TORRENT"

There was bad flooding in Eastfield Lane between the Cloughs Road and Hightown Road junctions and several houses in this section had water in the ground floors. Mr. and Mrs. F. Jordan, of Oak Tree Cottage, found the water up to the bottom step of their stairs on Sunday morning and outside the little gravel lane running past their home was a "rushing torrent" of water. Ringwood firemen were pumping water out of Mr. and Mrs. Jordan's home for much of Sunday.

The grounds of Old Barn, Eastfield Lane, home of Mr. and Mrs. D. D. B. Morris were under water, but fortunately there was flooding in only a ground floor bedroom in the house itself.

Mr. and Mrs. L. Pickrell's home at the Poplar Farm House, in Eastfield Lane, was flooded to a depth of about four inches and, said Mr. Pickrell: "The water just came in with a rush." Mr. and Mrs. Pickrell spent Sunday night in an hotel, and found on Monday morning that the water in their home had subsided. "What amazes me is where the water has gone so quickly," he said.

Ringwood Fire Brigade were also on duty at Hightown Elm Farm, Hightown, home of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Ayles, and by pumping continuously in the early hours of Sunday they were able to prevent the flood waters from seeping into the house. As a precaution the firemen took up carpets and moved furniture and, said Mrs. Ayles this week: "They did a wonderful job."

Homes in Riverside in the Bickerley had a narrow escape from flooding, for the swollen waters of the nearby stream came right up to the doorsteps of houses there.

The Old Toll Cottage at Ashley, where Mr. T. A. Smitham has a dental practice, was flooded on Sunday morning, but the water had subsided by Monday morning. A short distance away the White House, home of Mr. and Mrs. Geoff. Rooke, was flooded to a depth of between two and three inches.

Roads in Crowe and Ibsley were flooded on Sunday, and there were reports of flooding on the railway line between Ringwood and Holmsley.