

Rain lashed village is counting the cost FLOODED OUT

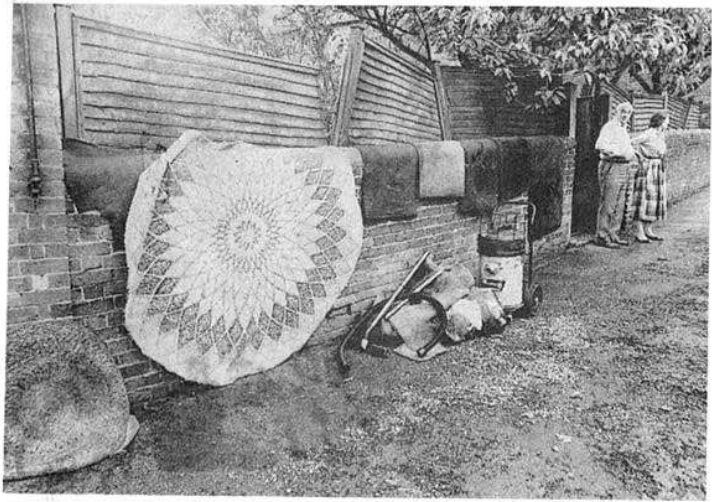
Storm dumps
million gallons
on Berks village

Flashback to the POST on Friday ©

Villagers pick up the pieces after storm



A tractor picks up debris from where the storm water knocked over a six-ft brick wall behind the home of Bob Jones ©



Carpets and rugs drying out after the Aldermaston flood © Pictures: ROZIE STOTT

STANDING in his devastated garden, Bob Jones tells of a terrifying ordeal in which he narrowly escaped death.

As the flood waters cascaded down towards Aldermaston the pressure destroyed a wall and beat its way through houses, gardens and down roads.

Mr Jones of Church Road was standing right next to the wall when five feet of flood water burst it open, sending bricks flying in all directions.

Mr Jones said: "The wall just opened up and I thought 'I must get the hell out'. I turned and ran but the wall of water caught me and the wave burst over my head.

"How I wasn't killed I don't know. I just turned and ran for my life."

The water smashed through the Jones' garden, tearing down six foot walls, knocking over small huts and wrecking his car.

That story is one of many to come out of the tragedy that struck the village. Emergency social services have rushed in drying-out equipment with Newbury District Council providing pumps for flooded homes.

THE Berkshire village of Aldermaston was swamped by a million gallons of water after an 11-acre lake flooded during freak storms. SIMON MILLER reports from the stunned community

The cellar of Dr Cedric Brown in The Street was completely under water with emergency services still pumping after extracting 10,000 gallons.

Vera Jollif, 78, has yet to be told of the flood which wrecked her home in The Fosters.

Insurance

Vera is in hospital undergoing a cancer operation.

Businesses in Aldermaston have also been badly hit, with flooding and a carpet of mud bringing devastation.

Sue Allen has only been operating her unisex salon for five months. Sue told the Post she's out of business but her insurance should cover it.

She said: "I really feel sorry for the villagers, but everybody here has been marvellous."

"We all pitched together to help ourselves out of a desperate situation."

Some people are angry at insurance companies who have, they say, not yet given satisfaction.

Drainage

There is also anger over the lack of drainage and the height of culverts in the village.

Barbara Barrat, whose home, Corner Cottage, in the village centre, was wrecked, has more reason than most to be furious.

Barbara, 74, who has just refurbished her 350 year-old listed home, said villagers have been campaigning since a previous 1971 flood for better drainage.

She said: "We have been arguing and pushing to try to avoid what has just happened to us. Maybe this time they will listen and put in more effective drainage."



Bob Jones shows how high the water came up against his house ©

Downpour leads to big repair bill

STORM-HIT Berkshire could face a million pound bill after a tidal wave of destruction which shook the county.

Aldermaston lay amid receding water and blankets of mud as dawn rose on the village last week and residents began to assess the damage to their homes.

Road chiefs were aghast at the massive damage which they say will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to repair, possibly more than £1 million.

Meanwhile, investigators claimed to have pieced together the events that left a small Berkshire village in the path of a raging torrent.

Mike Parker, construction chief at Blue Circle Plc which owned the lake feeding the river into Aldermaston, has now refuted reports that the firm's man-made lake burst its banks.

In fact, the water flowed normally out of the lake until it arrived at an underpass just behind a wall at the top of Aldermaston, he said.

He said: "The water was actually flowing normally through the underpass but it was coming down at such a rate that it built up into a lake behind the wall and then broke through."

The role of Aldermaston's neighbour, the Atomic Weapons Establishment, is still in confusion as they deny letting any water out of their rainwater ponds.

By DAVID WILLIAMS

Mr Parker could not comment on Aldermaston's assertion, but he said: "All I can say is that we had an awful lot of water coming into the lake."

Whatever the reasons for the disaster, the consequences were catastrophic and could be long-lasting.

At the height of the crisis some 17,000 homes were cut off from power, though most were reconnected within hours by electrical engineers working during the night.

But as road gangs set about repairing the wreckage, Berkshire's highway chief Bob Clarke admitted he was facing a massive repair bill.

The thunderstorms turned roads around Aldermaston and Tadley into rivers, ripping up tarmac and weakening surfaces already weakened by the hot summer.

Flooding damage could cost county thousands



The big clear-up under way in Aldermaston, with families salvaging what they can from flooded homes ©



1971 — Barbara Barrett's home flooded

Flooded out yet again

ALDERMASTON resident Barbara Barrett warned when the village was flooded in 1971 that better drainage was needed.

After being flooded out again last Thursday she said: "Maybe this time they will listen."



Barbara Barrett today ©