

# FLOODED OUT

## Storm dumps million gallons on Berks village

**ONE MILLION** gallons of storm water ripped up road surfaces, destroyed walls and swept through dozens of homes in Aldermaston when an 11-acre lake broke its banks last night.

In nearby Beenham, a teenager was pulled to safety by a friend after falling into the swollen River Bourne.

Mark Beaumont slipped from the bank near the Six Bells pub. He was rescued by Andrew Selwood, 15, who dived in to save him, and taken to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Villagers were evacuated from Aldermaston when a 60ft length of brick wall which had held back the lake waters burst across a road and into gardens.

Residents already fighting floods after a storm of hailstones "the size of eggs" saw their homes engulfed in waters four feet deep.

Children swam in the lakes of floods as the village turned into a river of rushing water that cut all electricity supplies.

The entire village, without electricity, was still cut-off off this morning as firemen continued their battle to pump away water.

Six police frogmen joined the operation last night, checking homes for casualties. Luckily, nobody was injured.

Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service said the flood started when a manmade lake in Aldermaston Court, owned by Blue Circle plc, burst its banks.

A million gallons of water built up behind an 8ft wall in Church Road and then burst through,

By DAVID WILLIAMS and SIMON MILLER

turning the village into a rushing river.

Peter Howes, 40, of The Street, said: "I was bailing out my garage with my son and there were lines of spray coming off the roofs."

"There were massive hailstones, heat and steam—like a monsoon, with trees swaying from side to side. Then the wall broke."

"I heard the sound of flying bricks and then all

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of a sudden I saw this rush of water.

The trees in the gardens below, the hedges and the walls were just ripped out.

"It was carrying lumps of tarmac up to 40ft long. I slammed the door shut, ran to the window and saw a car that had been washed down the road."

Fay Vanstoke, also of The Street, said her home was inundated to waist height. Her 13-year-old daughter Zoe went swimming outside.

"My kitchen table was

floating around, I opened my fridge and it was full of water, too. I opened a cupboard and everything floated out."

Jan and Martin Bartlett, of the Hinds Head pub, ripped down curtains to block up doorways and save a £30,000 restaurant that was due to open today.

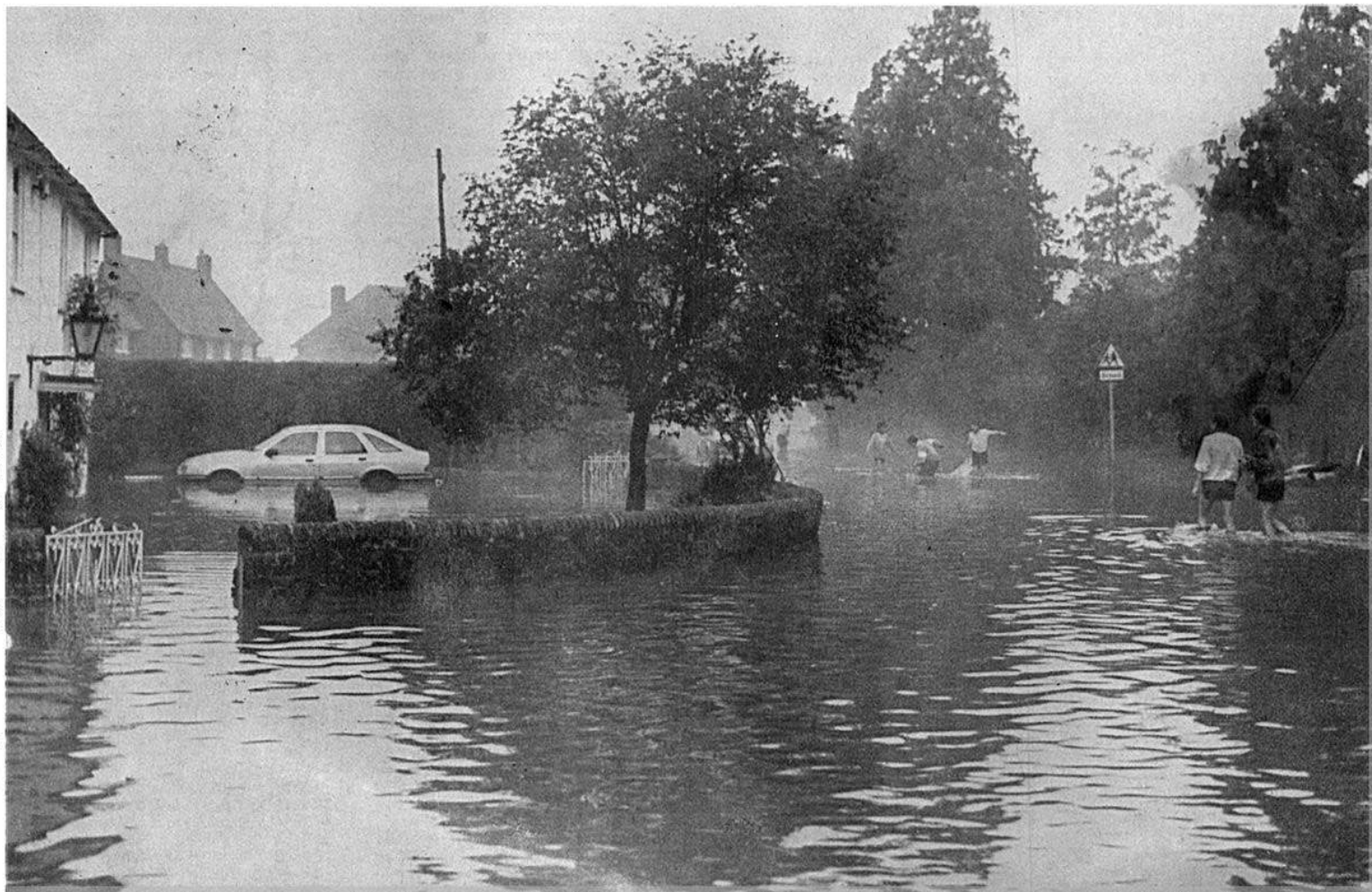
The couple still managed to put up a dozen villagers left without a roof for the night.

Blue Circle executives paid for eight evacuees to stay at the near-by Aldermaston Court hotel, which the firm owns.

John Harrington, the rescue service's divisional officer at Reading, said at the scene: "We are trying to keep up with the flow of the lake but it is a mammoth task."

"We have tried to dam the worst affected houses and pump them out."

Teams of workmen from Newbury District Council are helping in an operation co-ordinated from the civic offices as a big clear-up starts today.



Youngsters play in knee deep-flood water in Aldermaston last night following the storm which caused a lake to burst its banks. Picture: Jonathan Hindmarch

## Downpour causes havoc across region

**MASSIVE** thunderstorms and flash floods brought chaos to the Thames Valley last night.

Villages were half submerged, homes had to be evacuated, motorists were stranded and bolts of lightning caused blackouts.

Eleven homes in Tadley were flooded and had to be pumped out. Roads between Aldermaston and Tadley are still flooded and police are urging motorists to avoid the A340 and A4.

Emergency services in Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire have been working flat out throughout the night to deal with calls.

Firemen answered more than 50

emergency calls to flooded basements and lightning-hit homes.

Southern Electricity Board workers also worked through the night to keep people supplied.

However, a spokesman said a number of areas were without power for more than an hour, affecting roughly 17,000 residents.

Homes in Pangbourne, Stratley, Cholsey, Woodcote, Beenham, Burghfield Common, Theale and Swallowfield were all affected.

Police at Pangbourne were thrown into chaos, when power cuts caused telaxes and telephones to go haywire.

Train services between Newbury

and Reading were hit when lightning struck electricity lines.

A Post Office van careered off the A4074 and hit a tree. No one was injured.

Woolhampton C of E School, Bucklebury Primary School and Aldermaston C of E School were all put out of action.

In the rest of Britain the picture was the same.

In Essex thousands of rail passengers found up to half the trains from Shoeburyness to Fenchurch Street were cancelled.

An AA spokesman said there were six inches of rain on the M1 in Bedfordshire at one stage.

## WEATHER

Today: Sunny spells with isolated thunder showers. Wind moderate, north-easterly. Max 24C 75F.

Outlook: Remaining unsettled with further outbreaks of thundery showers spreading east. Drizzle and mist spreading south-east.

Local weather for past 24 hours:

Rainfall ..... 12.1mm 0.5ins  
Max. temp ..... 29C 84.2F  
Min. temp ..... 18C 64F

Forecast temp today:

Max. temp ..... 24C 75F  
Min. temp ..... 16C 61F

Pollen Count  
Forecast today — low

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