



Stert Farm stood near the parish church

Fire at Stert Farm, near Devizes

On Sunday week, a destructive fire, caused, we regret to say, by the hand of an incendiary, occurred in this neighbourhood, and laid waste property to a considerable amount, consisting of farm buildings, implements, and no less than 240 sacks of grain. It appears that about one o'clock in the morning, Mr. Cook, the occupier of Stert Farm (about two miles from Devizes), was awoke by a loud roaring noise and a glare of light proceeding from the barton yard fronting his house, and from his bed-room window he instantly perceived flames issuing from a cow shed and a wheat barn, which appeared to have been burning some time. Mr. Cook immediately ran out; but, having no man sleeping upon the premises, 10 minutes elapsed before any assistance was at hand, and the flames had then assumed a mastery which seemed to defy all human exertions.

The first care was for the horses and cattle confined in the buildings, and with difficulty these (with the exception of a cow and calf that perished in the flames) were rescued; many of the colts being forcibly dragged out by the legs. A messenger was then despatched to Devizes for the town engines, but before they could arrive the whole barton (covering a space of three quarters of an acre) was one burning mass, and by three o'clock, stables, piggeries, cow-sheds and houses, wheat ricks, and barns, were reduced to a heap of ruins.

The wind was fortunately blowing from the North, slightly shifting during the progress of the fire towards the East, or the dwelling-house (behind which stands the church) and several valuable hay ricks must have fallen prey to the flames. As it is, property to an amount little short of £1,400 has been destroyed

Mr. Cook's loss (for which we are happy to find he is fully insured by the Farmers' Society) being between £500 and £600, and that of the proprietor of the premises, held by Mrs. Gabriel, of Calne, under the new College, Oxford, being estimated at near £800. That this fire was caused by an incendiary there can be no doubt, from the fact that all the workmen had left the premises long before dark, and that the fire when discovered proceeded from distinct parts of the yard. What however, could have instigated the perpetrator of so diabolical an act, it is impossible to imagine. Certainly there has been nothing on Mr. Cook's part to engineer ill-will among his work people; all his men are, and have been for some time past, employed at "lump" work, with good wages; and, we may add, exerted themselves to the utmost in endeavouring to subdue the fire. Several fellows, however, from the neighbourhood got quite drunk, and refused to render any help.

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