



The 1841 Flood Damages At Tilshead

Tilshead, Jan 19.

The waters from Can Down began to flow into this village about the middle of the day on Saturday, from the north; but although they soon rose to the depth of two feet in that part of Tilshead, the upper part of the parish, viz. the west end, was almost completely free, and no danger was apprehended. This state of things continued until about half-past five, when the flood came furiously down the whole breadth of the street, at the rate of at least ten miles an hour, and about three feet deep, rising very rapidly until about half-past nine, when it began gradually to decline. In the centre of the village the two streams met, and then it became evident that the consequences of a very serious character were likely to follow, as from the rapidity of the current, it was impossible to render assistance from one side of the street to the other. Indeed, though we heard repeated noises as of houses falling, such was the darkness of the night, the howling of the wind, and the roar of the waters, that we did not know the extent of the mischief until next morning.

Nine houses were either entirely destroyed or must be taken down. No lives were lost; but the escape of several families was almost miraculous. A labourer of the name of Baker, with his wife and five children, were in the upper room of his house, when the foundation began to move; the roof was already falling, then he assembled his family in a corner of the room most likely to facilitate their escape; but to his great alarm, found one was missing. Calling the lost child by name, the boy replied, by saying that he was under the bed, where the falling timbers had probably forced him. Driven to desperation by his perilous condition, the father seized a pick-axe, and succeeded, before the floor went down, in forcing an opening through the gable of his cottage, into the upper part of a carpenter's shop, through which he dragged his family only a few minutes before the whole building gave way; having no time to save a single article of his property.

An adjoining cottage, occupied by Richard Gale, the oldest inhabitant in the parish, next gave way – a female and several children escaping before it fell. A cry was then raised that the old man was buried in the ruins. - Mr Folliot and Mr Henry Norris almost immediately procured a horse, and, with the assistance of a labourer, attempted to reach the ruin; but the stream was too powerful, the horse was unable to keep its feet. It then occurred to them that probably by following the course of water into the field, they might find less difficulty. – This plan succeeded, and they found Gale standing with his back against the chimney, which, being built of brick, the water could not remove. Though much exhausted, they were soon able to place him beyond the reach of further danger.

In two other cases the escape of the families was equally remarkable. In no instance were the inmates able to save any of their goods; all were left to the mercy of the water, and the poor people have little left that is not seriously damaged either by the flood or the fall of their houses. Among the sufferers are two

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poor but very industrious men of the name of Smith, who, for many years have kept a little shop. Their house must be entirely rebuilt, which they will be unable to do unless they receive the liberal support of the public.”

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