

We lived in the lower part of Lake Lane, as we still do. My wife and I both worked in Chichester at the time. My wife drove home and got as far as the station area. Seeing the flood, she parked her car and started to attempt to wade through the flood. She was anxious to get home as we had a house full of family guests staying for the festive season. She was part way into the water when someone warned her to go back as it was very deep at the middle of the flood. Fortunately a friend spotted her, Dick Agate. At that time he had a wonderful early post war green Bedford lorry and he brought her home on the back of the lorry via Farnhurst Road and then into Lake Lane.

I later also drove home. I think I might have had a warning phone call from my wife about the situation. The east end of Lake Lane was impassable so I attempted to get home down Barnham Lane from Walberton. Again I was thwarted because the road was flooded at the junction of Lake Lane where the rife passes under the road. I parked up and was wondering what to do when, again, a friend spotted me. I think it was Dick's son Kevin who also had a truck and he offered to take me round into Lake Lane and home as he was able to get through the flood.

Fortunately our property was not flooded but, sadly, some of our neighbours were. But we did have a power cut which presented a challenge as we had that houseful of guests to feed. The power came back on the following day, a minor inconvenience compared with what some residents had endured.

I was Chairman of Barnham Parish Council at that time and was liaising with someone in emergency planning. They asked if the Barnham Parish Hall on Yapton Road could be opened to use as an emergency rescue centre. I had a set of keys for the hall but explained I could not get there as we were marooned. However, arrangements were made for me to be collected by the Selsey Lifeboat rescue boat which had been brought up to the village! I was able to get as far as the railway bridge in my wellingtons. When passing under the railway bridge I remarked that I never thought that I would be coming through there in a boat! In the event I think most evacuees were taken to Yapton in the first place and Barnham Hall was stood down.

The rescue boat evacuated residents from Dial Close which was badly flooded. I recall a friend who lived there, Babs Britton another Parish Councillor, saying that she had to be rescued from half way up her staircase. Although Babs and her husband were able to return home after about 6 months, I don't think she ever rested easy after the flood. Babs used to go and check the state of the rife where it passed under the main road almost daily and was constantly on to Southern Water if there was any build-up of debris.

After the event Barnham and Eastergate Parish Councils campaigned for something to be done to prevent a recurrence of the flood. Whilst there was a suggestion that a plastic sheet had caused a blockage, it was clear that there was insufficient capacity for the rife where it passed under the railway embankment. Eventually a second culvert was bored under the railway and the debris catching arrangements improved. Fortunately we have not had a

recurrence of the flooding in the centre of the village, but sadly we still get occasional flooding events in the lower part of Lake Lane.

Roger Jones,  
October 2020.