

# Barnham MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF BARNHAM RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 1994

## NEXT OPEN MEETING:

**Thursday 10 February**  
**at**  
**Barnham Primary School**  
**(Elm Grove)**  
**8.00 pm**

Flood Relief Office  
- work to date &  
planned.  
Flood Relief Fund.  
Technical  
investigations into  
reasons for flooding  
- Dr John Mason.  
Open discussion on  
collective action.

All residents of Barnham  
village are welcome.  
Refreshments will be  
served.

**Barnham Residents' Association**  
78a Barnham Road, Barnham  
West Sussex PO22 OES 0243 555131

## INSIDE:

**Residents' Association  
opens Flood Relief  
Office.**

**Flood Monitoring &  
emergency  
co-ordination.**

**Divided  
responsibilities.**

**Letters.**

**A259 Barnham  
Bypass.**

# DISBELIEF AND DESPAIR



December 30th 1993 will surely be remembered as one of the blackest days in Barnham's 1000 year history. Torrential rain (around 40mm in 24 hours) caused severe flooding on the afternoon of the 30th. As darkness fell, more and more properties became victim to a disgusting mixture of rife water, sewage and diesel oil. Parts of Orchard Way, Farnhurst Road, Warren Way, Lake Lane, Dial Close and Barnham Road were seriously affected.

South of the railway line, parts of Marshall Close, Highground Lane and Hill Lane suffered. Then, over the next few days, it became clear that the flooding also extended to Stempwood Way, Elm Grove, Spinney Walk, Wentworth Close, Downview Road and Ewens Gardens.

With much of the village blacked out by a power cut at 6.13pm, people in the worst affected areas were evacuated by lifeboat.

That evening, disbelief turned to despair as people stood and watched the disaster unfold in and around their homes.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Emergency aid has been earmarked by the European Community for flood affected people in the South of England.

Applications are sought urgently from residents of Barnham who have suffered severe personal loss. Each case is considered individually and we have been informed that those without contents or buildings insurance or with insufficient cover are most likely to benefit.

Please contact the Flood Relief Office as soon as possible if you wish to be considered. The number is 0243-553681.

**Please respond by  
9 February.**

## FLOOD MONITORING & EMERGENCY CO-ORDINATION

Since the evening of the major flood, the National Rivers Authority, Southern Water and Arun District Council have been in the village on numerous occasions, working to reduce water levels.

In addition to this we have set up our own Monitoring Team which is observing weather conditions and checking the rifes regularly and thoroughly.

A recurrence of the major flood may be improbable, but in the unlikely event of an imminent flood risk, a group of Co-ordinators has been set up to alert people in affected areas.

We are also considering installing simple electronic monitoring equipment to help reduce the burden in the longer term. We hope these arrangements will help you to rest assured that something is being done.

If you would like to find out more about these arrangements, please contact the Flood Relief Office or come in for a chat.

### *General cleaning*

We have disinfectant, bleach, mops, cloths etc. N.B. WEAR RUBBER GLOVES

### *Dehumidifiers*

Discount hire rates are available. In most instances insurance companies are willing to pay the hire fees. If your property was uninsured contact us and we will help if we can.

### *Decontamination*

It is advisable on health and hygiene grounds to have flooded rooms decontaminated professionally, especially if the flood water contained raw sewage. Again insurance companies will usually pay and we can arrange cleansing services.

### *Flood damage & insurance claims*

- do what you can to prevent things from getting worse, your policy may cover the cost of emergency work
- most policies will pay toward the cost of drying out
- it can take up to 12 months to dry out a building; during this time further damage may be discovered so DO NOT ACCEPT A SETTLEMENT CLAIM AS FINAL UNTIL YOU ARE SURE IT IS OK.

*Joe Hayes, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Bognor Branch tel 820644*

## FLOOD RELIEF OFFICE OPENED BY BRA

When the flood water began to retreat, the real problems began. On Thursday 6 January, Barnham Residents' Association opened a Flood Relief Office in the centre of the village to provide practical assistance and advice for affected residents. The office is at 42a Barnham Road - above Atelier 29.

The original plan was to open this office for six weeks, although it has since become apparent that there will be an on-going need for support for some months to come.

The Flood Relief Office has dealt with a huge range of problems. It has acted as a depot for donations of food, clothing, carpeting, furniture, cleaning materials, and many other items. It has provided a local base for the Citizen's Advice Bureau to help with insurance and compensation claims.

'Meals on wheels' were arranged for people without cooking facilities, and counselling has been arranged for people suffering trauma as a result of the flood.

De-humidifiers, decontamination services, and skips have also been organised, filled, and taken away.

From this temporary base in the village, teams of volunteers worked during January to clear up the debris, help clear affected homes, dig ditches, lay pipes and improve the watercourses.

Perhaps most important of all, the relief office has provided a nearby accessible place to comfort, reassure and help, staffed by concerned neighbours. The benefits of this approach have been incalculable.

None of this would have been possible but for the immediate and untiring support of many local people, in some cases working into the small hours night after night, and the astonishing generosity of industry and commerce. On behalf of the people you have helped, this Association extends its sincere thanks to you.

## FLOOD RELIEF FUND LAUNCHED

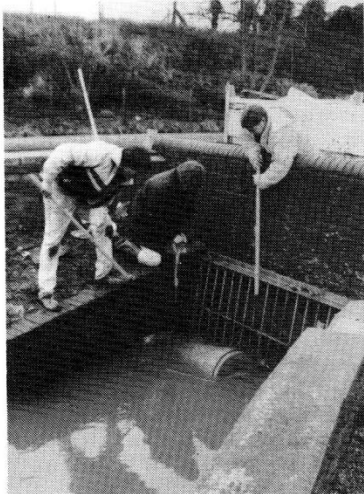
Current estimates are that uninsured losses in the village caused by the flooding could easily amount to £200,000. One of the things we are presently doing is building an accurate list of the number of properties flooded and the extent of the damage.

In the meantime we have received donations of money totalling over £5000, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Lady Caroline Marshall. We can assure you that this money will be used for the purposes for which it was given, i.e. flood relief for Barnham residents.

We would like to discuss how these funds will be used at the next Open Meeting (10 February). However much we succeed in raising though, we are sadly powerless to replace those prized possessions of sentimental value which were destroyed in the flood.

photograph Barbara Brittan

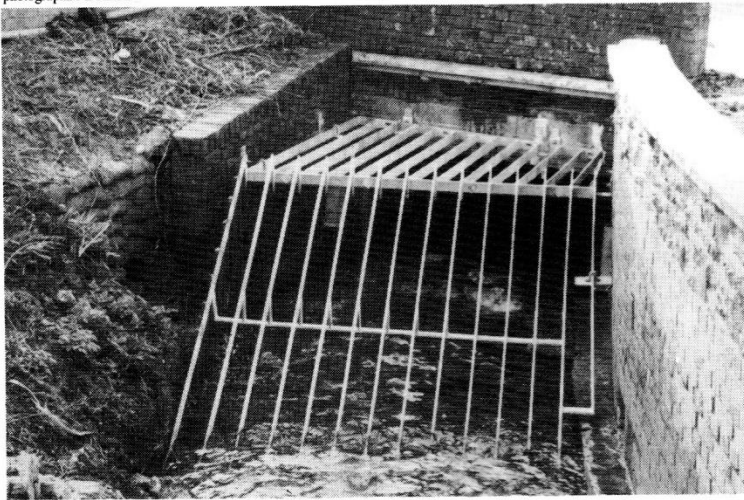




photographs J Donabie

## NRA KEEPS PROMISE TO INSTALL NEW GRILLE

At a meeting of Barnham Parish Council on 5 January, Barnham Residents Association requested of the NRA that a new more efficient grille be installed as a temporary measure to lessen the chances of a blockage at the Gooseberry Bush culvert. NRA agreed to do this. Shown left is the old grille with some of the debris that had washed against it during the flood. The new grille, shown below, was designed, manufactured and installed within two weeks. Thank you NRA.



### STOP PRESS.....4/2/94

At the time of writing, there has been another night of steady rainfall, although compared to 30/12/94 it was not much. At 10am this morning though, Hedge End Wood had started to flood again as the pipe there could not cope with the volume of water coming down the rife.

A few yards further down, at the bottom of Orchard Road, surface water drains were overflowing because the pipe from Hedge End Wood was now unable to accept this water. Meanwhile over at the Farnhurst Road play area raw sewage was once again surcharging near the playground. Sewage was also surcharging opposite the Gooseberry Bush shop, where it was running into a highways drain which feeds into the culvert under the railway.

Two of our members in Dial Close noticed the water level in their toilet had risen. They immediately called Southern Water who came out and installed a pump in Marshall Close. The reason for this, according to an employee of Southern Water, was to give the system a 'helping hand' because it could not cope.

And they tell us the foul sewage system is not at fault! What will it be like when another 50 houses are connected? Perhaps the Board of Southern Water would care to live with this faultless system. . .

## DETAILED REVIEW PROMISED

BRA has been assured publically that there will be a detailed review of the drainage systems in Barnham. Until then the relevant authorities are still coping with the aftermath of some very serious emergencies. So if you are considering taking legal action, there may be no alternative but to wait.

In the mean time, you might consider writing to your Member of Parliament; Sir Michael Marshall, explaining what has happened and how it affected you personally. This will help exert pressure and raise the profile of Barnham. His address is:

Sir Michael Marshall M.P.  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1 0AA

## COMMUNITY CHARGE REDUCTIONS

We are pressing for reductions in Community Charges for residents whose homes are uninhabitable as a result of flooding. Wish us luck!

## SANDBAGS

There are still a large number of sandbags in the village. The Flood Relief Office will be arranging to collect them at the end of February. The bags will then be stored in the village to be available quickly in the event of further flood risks. So please look after the sand bags until then.

## CAN YOU HELP?

A work party of able bodied people will be ditch clearing on Saturday 12 February. If you can help, please meet outside the Flood Relief Office at 9.30am with waterproofs, forks and wellies. Lunch and snacks will be provided.

## TOUTING FOR BUSINESS

A number of homes in Barnham have received mailshots from 'Flood Helpline'. These seem to be a sales ploy by an insurance company in Brighton called SOS. They're nothing to do with Barnham's Community Flood Relief initiative.

## HELP US HELP YOU

We are trying to establish the adequacy of the drainage systems in Barnham. Please report to us details of any outpourings of sewerage during the last year - dates, locations, frequency etc. 0243-553681.



## **DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITIES**

by Dr John Mason

The consequences of the floods have been dramatic. Insurance claims run into many hundreds of thousands of pounds and already some house sales in the village have collapsed. It is quite likely that those wishing to move in the near future may find it more difficult to do so. Property values could fall and insurance premiums will surely rise if the postal district is moved into a higher category.

Is the main culvert under the railway large enough?

Are the safety screens on the rifles well enough designed?

Are drainage improvements north of Barnham causing problems here?

Have changes in land use added to the problem?

Can the sewers cope?

Will further development over burden the drains and sewers?

Flooding is not a new problem in Barnham; people have been concerned about it for years. Clearly the time has come for the talking to stop and urgent action to begin. One problem is that, since privatisation of the water companies, responsibility for drainage and therefore flood defences in the Barnham area have been shared between four different authorities, leading to 'buck-passing' and confusion.

The National Rivers Authority (Southern Region) is responsible for supervision of matters relating to flood defences for main rivers and streams feeding into those rivers, and it has permissive powers to do works in Barnham. NRA also has responsibility for the watercourse downstream of the junction between Lake Lane and Barnham Lane, and for the main culvert which passes beneath Barnham Road and the railway line at Barnham Station, eventually discharging into the sea at Felpham.

Southern Water Services plc is responsible for the foul sewers and public surface water systems which collect rain water from roofs and yards, but not the public highways. Neither the NRA nor Southern Water Services plc are responsible for surface water landing in fields and flowing into ditches which do not form part of the main river system, and the NRA does not have statutory powers to maintain ditches. This rests with Arun District Council. In addition, some of the ditches around Barnham are the responsibility of West Sussex County Council, who own farmland in the area.

With four different bodies involved, is it any wonder that confusion occurs?

What is needed urgently is a mechanism by which close co-ordination between all those responsible can be achieved.

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

Whoever is responsible for flood defences in Barnham, an urgent review of their design, state of repair and maintenance record must now be a top priority. The culvert under Barnham Road and the railway has to accept water from many sources, particularly the streams crossing fields both to the East and West of Barnham Lane, all of which converge in the village.

A major problem is preventing debris from blocking screens over the entrances to the enclosed sections of the rife. This causes the water to 'back up' and increases the risk of inundation.

During the early hours of 31 December firemen at the main culvert pulled out a large piece of plastic sheeting which was blocking the grille. Although this is not thought to have been the cause of the initial flooding, it was preventing the flood

waters draining away once the rain had stopped.

While it is true that routine maintenance of the screens and clearing of the rifles has not always been carried out as often as necessary, at times of heavy rainfall it can be a full time job keeping the screens clear. This is because the rifles run through wooded and residential areas where large quantities of debris can fall in to them or be dragged in by rising water, or be thrown there by children, rubbish tippers etc.

The official reason for the floods on 30th December was an exceptionally large amount of rain coupled with debris in the screens. While rainfall in December was high, over 150mm, it was by no means unprecedented.

Preliminary figures indicate that the total rainfall for the last six months of 1993 was around 530mm. Here are some comparisons:

1974	585mm
1976	508mm
1982	542mm
1992	533mm

What matters most, of course, is the pattern of rainfall. In October 1987, the month of the great storm, rainfall amounted to 225mm. There was no serious flooding in Barnham at that time.

Measurements of water levels in the rife behind Orchard Way over a number of years indicate that in fair weather, the average level in the autumn is now rather higher than it was, say, ten years ago. A rise has also been apparent since the summer of 1992. Is this due to an increased amount of surface water running off fields to the north of Barnham? If so, why?

Another apparent change since the autumn of 1993 is a change in the rate at which water levels rise during heavy rain. Why? Could this be due to the fact that a newly completed drainage system for the area around Walberton pond, twice the capacity of the old system, is now directing water more efficiently towards Barnham?

A further problem is that the foul sewers in Barnham rapidly become charged with flood water during heavy rain, such that they can no longer cope. Some residents of Warren Way would argue that the foul sewers cannot cope even on dry days, and many residents have noticed gurgling noises in their toilet pans during quite moderate rain.

*Clearly there are many questions to be answered, but it could take some time to pinpoint the right cures and put in place all the necessary improvements. Until then, surely, there should be a freeze on further development?*

# A HUGE THANK YOU

**HOBDENS**, the local estate agents & Alison - securing the Flood Relief offices, use of fax, word processing, making posters etc.  
**DOBSON** Solicitors & Mr M H Nicholass, the leaseholder - permission to use the office.  
**ATELIER 29** & Clive Millet - permission to use the office. Flood Relief with coiffure.  
**B&Q** - cleaning materials, carpet  
**DO IT ALL** - cleaning materials  
**BT** - phonline & ansaphone  
**BASIL SHIPPAM TRUST** - donation towards cost of telephone calls  
**ELECTRICITY BOARD** - heating & lighting  
**HIGHFIELD LAUNDERETTE** - discount laundry  
**TREASURES** - paper  
**BARNHAM CP SCHOOL** - stationery, help with cleaning, photocopying - the best CP in the known universe  
**BARNHAM PC** - loan of tables & chairs, meals for workers  
**HIRE A TOOL** - dehumidifiers & vax  
**PEGRUMS** - large amounts of pies and sticky buns for workers  
**NRA & SOUTHERN WATER SERVICES** - rakes, wet weather gear and waders  
**CIRCLE K** - 18 pencils  
**COVERS** - building materials  
**HALL & CO** - building materials  
**SAINSBURYS HOMEBASE** - cleaning materials  
**HYGIENE EXPRESS** - cleaning materials  
**LITTLEHAMPTON BOOK SERVICES** - replacement books for children  
**VIC MAY** - fresh food  
**BOGNOR ROTARY** - donation  
**M CARYER** - transport  
**W&M SKIP HIRE** - skis  
**SLINDON VILLAGE STORE** - rubber gloves  
**HALES WASTE CONTROL** - skip  
**ASHTEAD PLANT HIRE** - flood lights  
**BRITISH STEEL** - bedding & towels  
**DCS TRAVEL SERVICES** - minibus  
**RT PAGE** - collection & delivery of relief parcels  
**SUSSEX STATIONERS** - stationery  
**MOTHERS UNION** - rubber gloves & blankets  
**CHURCHILL HOUSE** and Jan - use of laundry and, of course for looking after so many evacuated residents on Dec 30th  
**WVRS** - Square meals for flood affected residents - Food, glorious food

CLARE AND ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE BEEN AND ARE CONTINUING TO STAFF THE FLOOD RELIEF OFFICE.  
 CAROLINE MARSHALL - A REGULAR BARNHAM PERSON NOW.  
 CHRIS MILLS AND THE DITCHLINGS FOR DOING ALL THE DIRTY STUFF.  
 PLUS EVERYONE ELSE WHO ROLLED UP THEIR SLEEVES TO HELP

## FROM THE *chair*

Roger Barnett

Six years ago Barnham Residents' Association was formed because of concern regarding the drainage and sewage systems in the village. Regretfully on Thursday 30th December, the worst happened. Homes were affected by a mixture of water, raw sewage and oil, and possessions of sentimental value were lost for ever. Elderly residents were rescued by lifeboat. A scenario we never want to see again.

Within 7 days Barnham Residents' Association acquired a suite of offices, telephones, equipment and, with an army of volunteers, formed the Community Flood Relief Office. Initially, the office was staffed more or less round the clock, and the telephone rang continuously. All this without an Emergency Plan. Where was the Emergency Plan?

I know that I am speaking for the whole community when I extend thanks to all those who gave up their time to assist. from the firemen and workers at Arun District Council who were superb on the night of the flood to the many members of the local community who have been working since.

A Flood Relief Fund has been established to assist those most seriously affected by the flooding. If you consider that we can help you, please contact the Flood Office. On Thursday 10th February there will be an Open Meeting at Elm Grove C.P. school. Dr John Mason, a physicist who lives in the village, will be giving a talk on the causes of the flooding problems with the aid of slides and a video.

As usual refreshments will be served and the company will be excellent! Please join us.

### ABOUT B.R.A.

If you are not already a member of Barnham Residents' Association, why not join?

The aims of the association are to work to preserve the character of the village, to press for improved facilities and amenities, and generally to maintain and improve the quality of life within the community. The association is apolitical in nature and is open to membership regardless of sex, race or crede.

Approximately two hundred households in the postal village of Banham are members, but we would like to represent more.

There are quarterly open meetings and a quarterly newsletter.

### INFLATION SORES

Since the day this association was formed, the subscription rate has remained the same.

We are not a fund consuming organization and our overheads are low although they have obviously risen during the last six years.

So B.R.A. has finally found it necessary to increase the subscription fee.

As from January 1st the membership fee will be an amazing £3.00 per household.

Still, we hope you will agree that membership is still excellent value.

#### BARNHAM RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

I would like to join the association/renew membership

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE .....

Signed ..... Date .....

Please return with £3.00 annual subscription to:  
 Membership Secretary, Barnham Residents' Association, Orchard Grange, Yapton Rd.

# LETTERS

from: Private Secretary to Sir Michael Marshall MP  
to: Rt Hon John Gummer MP  
date: 10/01/94

Dear Secretary of State,

Sir Michael has asked me to write to you regarding the severe problems experienced in many parts of the constituency as a result of flooding on 30 December 1993 and in subsequent days.

It is clear from inspections of many areas that severe flooding caused many homes to be flooded - in some cases to a depth of over three feet. A number of elderly people had to be rescued by indoor lifeboat as the water rose in their bungalows and ground floor flats in a matter of minutes to this depth. Whilst the water has subsided for the present and the local authority and other organisations are working round the clock to help those affected, many problems remain, including evidence of sewage which has not only entered homes but is still pouring from manholes and lying in some places on open ground.

Sir Michael is particularly anxious to enquire whether any Government assistance could be given to help those, many of whom are old age pensioners, in coping with their difficulties. It seems that some people are not insured for contents and have therefore lost everything. The administration of claims for those with insurance appears to vary considerably and it would therefore be most helpful to know if anything can be done to assist those so badly affected in the interim period.

from: Ian Sumnall, Chief Executive Arun District Council  
to: Sir Michael Marshall  
date: 11/01/94

Dear Sir Michael Marshall,

Thank you for your faxed communication of 10th January 1994 further to which I would like to update you as follows:

1. 30/32 Marshall Close Barnham - Sewage is currently being pumped by Southern Water Services into the rife to relieve pressure on the public sewer leading to the backing up of the drainage system in Marshall Close. Further pumping is to be undertaken today in an attempt to improve the situation.

2. Medway Cottages, Bilsham Lane, Yapton - Southern Water Services have assured me they will be undertaking a cleaning service of the floors and sub-floor spaces of these cottages. However a further public sewer surcharge is very likely if more rain occurs (as expected in the next 24 hours), and further sewage flooding of these cottages is a certainty. As soon as floods have subsided or properties have once again been pumped out, cleaning will be undertaken at the first possible opportunity by Southern Water's contractors - Eco Clear.

- 3/4. Sewage contamination around Farnhurst Close and Dial Close - Southern Water Services contractors, Eco Clear, are to hose down and disinfect these areas as soon as possible today.

With regard to the repetitive nature of sewage flooding of some of the above properties, I would confirm that this authority will be liaising closely with Southern Water Services and the National Rivers Authority, to establish cause and short and long term prevention measures which can be taken to deal with this situation.

from: CJM Marshall, Chairman, Planning & Housing Committee, Arun District Council  
to: The Times newspaper  
date: 17/01/94

Sir, You have published several letters (January 10,11,17) about the floods in the South of England. The cause of the initial flooding at Barnham in West Sussex, which created misery for scores of residents, was plastic sheeting carried down Lidsey Rife to a key culvert near Barnham station, where it lodged in a steel grille. The weight and volume of water prevented its clearance. The effect was immediate and catastrophic. Should it not be made a serious offence to fail properly to secure plastic sheeting, old fertiliser bags, bins etc, so that it is less likely that these materials will foul waterways at times of very heavy rainfall?

**With respect to Mr Marshall's conclusion that plastic sheeting was the cause of the initial flooding on December 30th, how can he be so sure when the experts are still investigating this? On January 5th at a meeting of Barnham Parish Council which was attended by the four authorities responsible for drainage, no clear answers were available as to the cause of Barnham's floods. We therefore asked that the planning embargo lifted by Arun District Council in 1991 be reimposed, at least until the flooding issues have been fully investigated and effective remedies are in place. We have now been told that, for this to happen, Arun District Council would need to be informed by Southern Water that the drainage systems cannot presently cope. Editor.**

Letter to the Editor  
Barnham Residents Association.  
Dear madam/sir, - At a Barnham Parish Council meeting shortly after the flood we heard some very forceful opinions by Southern Water that the drains in Barnham have enough capacity to do the job. Why then do we regularly see faeces and toilet paper flowing freely in the gutters? Why when the flood occurred did we need a sewage lagoon on open ground next to the childrens playground in Farnhurst Road and why do some villagers suffer the indignity of someone elses foul waste appearing in their overflowing toilets?  
Might I suggest that as villagers we adopt some control on this subject and test our "adequate" system. If it is adequate, it will withstand the flushing of every toilet in the village simultaneously.  
(name & address withheld)

## BOGNOR REGIS AND DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The Town Hall, Clarence Road, Bognor Regis,  
West Sussex PO21 1LD

### Volunteer Car Drivers required in the Barnham Area

We run a car service to local hospitals etc. but do not have any drivers in the Barnham area.  
If you are interested, we pay 27p per mile petrol allowance. Please contact us on Bognor 827821.