

In memory of the suffering endured by villagers following the disaster floods of 1993 A plaque to mark high water

By Kevin Smith

A suitably wet day marked the unveiling of a plaque to record Barnham's worst flooding.

The round symbol of the suffering endured by hundreds of villagers was installed under the railway bridge.

It has taken the place of the high tide mark painted 6ft up from the ground on the bridge's eastern side.

The marking was originally carried out in the aftermath of the flash flood in late 1993 which saw a lifeboat being launched to rescue stranded householders.

The one-foot diameter plaque was unveiled by Lady Caroline Marshall last Friday.

As the wife of the then MP Sir Michael Marshall, she played a major role in helping with the flood relief efforts started by the Barnham Residents' Association among others.

Lady Marshall said: "Although Barnham has a history of flooding, what happened on the night of December 30, 1993, was unprecedented.

"Two inches of rain fell on that day alone and then, over the next few weeks, six more inches of rain fell.

"The water rose to 6ft under the bridge on December 30.

"People were faced with having sewage coming into their houses, finding they were not insured and, for those that were, having to battle with their insurance firms.

"But out of this horror there came many stars."

She praised the efforts of John and Clare Auckland, of the residents' association, for starting up the flood relief office, district councillor Jean Goad, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and others.

The flood happened



Floods remembered - Bill and Babs Britton (left), and Councillor Jean Goad, Caroline Marshall and Patricia Ford, at Barnham railway bridge where the

within a few minutes late at night on December 30. The culprit was found to be a tarpaulin which became trapped on the vertical grille at the culvert where the rife behind Dial Close goes under Barnham Road and the railway embankment.

Water swept along by the torrential rainfall built up quickly.

The effects of the disaster lingered for months. The

high water mark served as a reminder of what residents had endured.

The idea for a plaque to remove the need to frequently repaint the marking came from Patricia Ford.

The Yapton resident frequently cycled under the railway bridge to Barnham where she lived for 20 years. It took her two years to convince the railway authorities to allow the



plaque (above right) has been placed. 013736

laque on their property.

"I thought that one of these days the paint marking would disappear completely and it would be a shame if there was no reminder of the flooding," she said.

Barnham Parish Council readily backed the idea earlier this year. Chairman Alec Tritton designed the plaque.

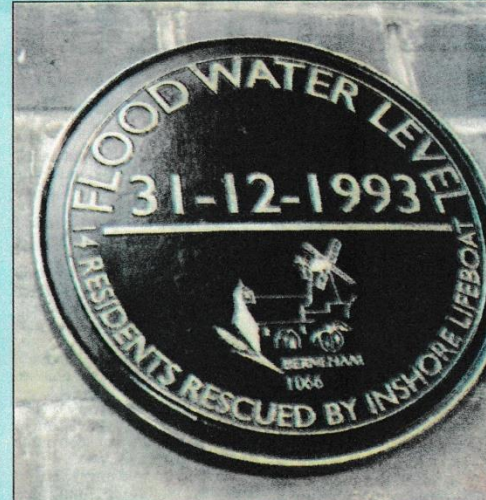
It was paid for by Arun District Council and Melvyn

Cutten, of the nearby Murrell Arms pub.

Flood victims Bill and Babs Britton were among the 30 people at the unveiling. They spent seven weeks in a holiday while their Dial Close house dried out from the flooding.

It took them three years to fully get their lives back in order.

Mr Britton (83) said: "The memories of the flooding often come back to me. It



was a terrible time.

"It's a lovely thought that in years to come people will be able to see what happened.

"The number of people who helped out after the flooding was quite amazing. It was absolutely fantastic in my view.

"What we remember most is when Babs was sitting on the stairs waiting to be rescued by the lifeboat and seeing our Christmas tree and cards and presents floating by her."

Work to prevent future flooding in Barnham was being carried out while the plaque was unveiled.

Southern Water is installing an overflow foul water pipe under Barnham Road to link with a new pumping station in Marshall Close.

The additional pipe - with a total cost of £100,000 - will be used when the main drainage system is overloaded.

It follows substantial improvements by the Environment Agency in

installing a second culvert under the railway line to take away the rife.

The £300,000 scheme doubled the capacity of the previous culvert when it was completed in late 1995.

A new horizontal grille has replaced the vertical one where the rife goes under Barnham Road to reduce the risk of rubbish blocking the flow of water.

Mr Britton, whose house backs on to the rife, said: "All the work that has been carried out has been very good. We feel a lot safer now.

"They did a wonderful job punching the extra hole through the railway embankment. We've also got plenty of sandbags today."

The ground floor of the house where he and his wife have lived since 1988 was under four feet of flood water laced with sewage during the worst of the flooding. Other roads affected were Barnham Road, Lake Lane, Farnhurst Road, Orchard Way and Spinney Walk.