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Action call after petrol tanker overturns on hill

STREETS OF FOAM

Village hails hero driver

By KARL NEWMAN and ANTONY DORE

HERO fuel tanker driver Peter Brown risked his life to stop his runaway lorry ploughing into homes and a village school near Bristol.

He overturned the vehicle as it careered down a steep hill after the brakes had apparently failed.

Today, as he recovered from shock at home in Lindsay Road, Horfield, Bristol, fire chiefs praised him for averting tragedy.

The drama happened at 1.30pm yesterday when Mr Brown, aged 48, was driving down a hill on the A37 into Pensford.

As his brakes failed he steered his UK Petroleum tanker — loaded with about 3,000 gallons of petrol and derv — on to a grass verge on the opposite side of the road.

The lorry ran up the embankment and rolled over on to its side, with fuel pouring out down the hill.

More than 200 people and a school were evacuated for six hours as fire crews used foam to limit the risk of explosion.

Mr Brown — who told villagers his brakes had failed — escaped with minor chest bruising and shock, and was treated at Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Avon Fire Brigade spokesman Ian Jefferies said: "He ran up the bank and stopped the lorry in the only available place.

"There were houses either side of the road the rest of the way down.

"If his brakes had failed, he would have had a job at the acute bend at the bottom of the hill.

"There was a community hall almost directly in line with the hill if he didn't make it round."

Today Mr Brown's wife said her husband was still in shock.

The accident caused villagers to call for swift action.

They say they asked three years ago for traffic-calming measures on the hill.

Mrs Diana Jones, one of the residents to be evacuated, said it was the village's worst nightmare come true.

"We had such a lucky escape. It would have been a fireball all the way down into the village if it had ignited," she said.

"If the driver hadn't done what he did then it would have been dreadful.

"Our house and the school at the bottom of the hill are right on the main road and would have been in the way."

Mrs Jones, who lives on Pensford Hill, said a petition of 200 signatures was handed to Avon County Council demanding traffic-calming measures four months ago.

And they had been calling for measures to protect villagers and pedestrians for three years.

"Something has to be done now," she said.

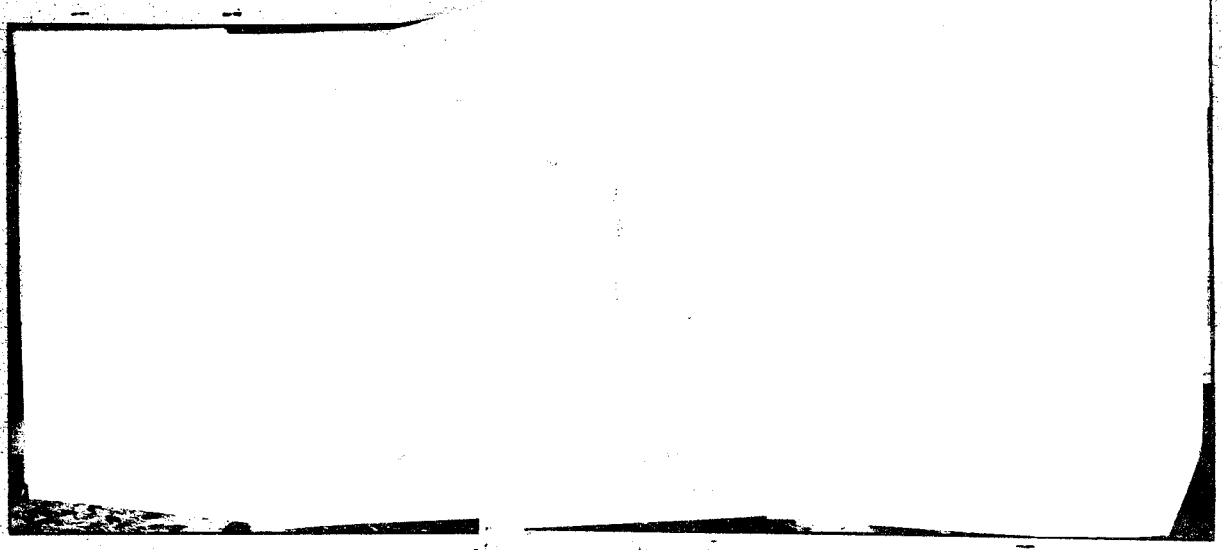
Demands

"It wasn't unexpected. The only surprising thing is that no one has been killed yet. We want to prevent that from happening."

Villagers are demanding signs asking drivers to slow down, a crossing for children and raised yellow lines across the road to reduce vehicles' speed.

Teacher Mrs Kate Daintith was preparing for a sports day involving children from nearby Chew Magna and Stanton Drew schools when police ordered the evacuation.

More than 90 children were moved to the Memorial Hall.



ROADBLOCK: Firemen begin an extensive mopping up operation after the tanker dramatically overturned on the Bristol to Wells road at Pensford

Pictures: NIGEL TALBY

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