

Pensford, the village whose heart was washed away

by JEREMY BRIEN

Pensford was a village without a heart this afternoon — a bitter, bewildered village ripped apart by a 12-foot tidal wave.

Its main bridge swept away, its historic Church Street shattered, its people homeless and helpless in the face of a torrent of ooze and water, its church and its pub mud-bound and unusable . . .

. . . Pensford was suffering the worst of all ordeals — ordeal by flood.

And over-riding everything was the fear, a fear mentioned only in hushed tones, of loss of life.

As the swirling, dirty red

RAGING WATER

waters of the Chew began to subside, police and civilians intensified their river bank search for a car swept away at the height of the floods.

Eye-witnesses described seeing it caught in the torrent of water in the centre of the A.37 bridge, seconds before its collapse.

Lights flashing, the car

thought to be a Cortina, was swept over the side and down river.

Several cars parked in the village when the wave of water descended, began to appear above the raging water this afternoon.

But the police had no reports of any bodies being found.

Intensive police inquiries disclosed that only two people were still not accounted for.

They were two men from Midsomer Norton who attended a greyhound meeting in Bristol—and might have been returning by way of Pensford.

WASHED AWAY

Today, the centre of the low-lying village looked as if a tornado had torn through it.

One house, historic Bridge House, which is on the Gov-

ernment Preservation list, had collapsed at the front into the River Chew.

The owner, Mr. Charles Flower, his wife, and a friend were in the back of the house when the two front storeys were washed away about 4 a.m.

Mr. Flower's butcher's shop opposite had also been devastated by the flood water.

The village was completely isolated from the outside world—no telephones, no power supply, no water!

Police set up road blocks on the Bristol boundary, and crawling lines of traffic made long diversions round the disaster area.

ASLEEP

At Publow, the neighbouring village to Pensford, a helicopter was called today to rescue an elderly man who had spent all night up to his waist in flood water at his home.

As the flood waters swirled through the home of 72-year-old Mr. Percy Perrett in Church Street—he slept in the front bedroom.

He was missed during the rescue when people were taken from their houses.

He was only discovered after a policeman checked that his name was not on the polling list of those rescued.

His son Jack said: "I went in and carried him out, and took him to my brother's at the other side of the village via Bristol-Keynsham, Burnett and Marksbury."