

Floods

EVESHAM UNDER WATER

The day the rain didn't stop



July 20, 2007

Discovering Evesham

○ Floods

People lost everything, homes were ruined, businesses were devastated and even lives were lost - a particularly wet summer and a freak storm of rain combined to produce one of the worst floods to hit the Vale in its history. The Journal's photographers, journalists and readers recorded events.



Floods



Tales from the Riverside -how business battled on

AS the Evesham businesses devastated by July's floods gradually dry themselves off and reopen their doors, one of the town's commercial leaders has suggested that such traders could contribute to an insurance scheme similar to the one that indemnifies their New Zealand counterparts against earthquake damage.

Lew Hammond, Evesham Market Town Partnership Manager, was speaking as four Port Street and Waterside businesses prepared to reopen after being closed since the floods struck four months ago.

Insurance

He said: "Traders are worried that insurance companies will either refuse to insure against flood risk or hike premiums up to such a high level that it will discourage future investment.

"One has had a premium rise of £1,200 with added penalties.

"Maybe, in view of the obvious adverse effects of climate change, a national insurance scheme should be established, perhaps similar to that in New Zealand which has an earthquake scheme, whereby everybody is indemnified against that natural catastrophe."

Ten of Port Street and Waterside's flood-stricken businesses have reopened, with two having moved to new premises.

Of the 20 that remain closed, all but one has work in progress.

Recovery work has started at Avon Caravan Park, Pershore Road, while all the badly hit businesses at Cadbury Court, on Blackminster Business Park, have reopened with the addition of two new businesses.

At Sedgberrow, the flooded joinery business has reopened and progress is being made on refurbishing the Queen's Head pub.

It will probably take Hinton-on-the-

Green's Cornmill Bank Business Units at least a year to return to normal because all except one of the businesses that operated on its ground and first floors have left, which means new tenants will be needed.

Insurance has funded repairs at most of Evesham's flooded businesses.

Since its Port Street premises suffered thousands of pounds' worth of flood damage on July 20, Gems Stems has traded from a 40-foot-long former refrigerated unit that Vale Frozen Foods used more than 20 years ago and is situated at the rear of Vale Cycles.

Charlie Batt, Gems Stems' proprietor, said the florist's shop was named in honour of his daughter and business partner, Gemma, with whom he launched the venture 18 months ago.

He said the night of the floods saw them remain on the premises until the early hours as they tried to sweep the water out but they were helpless to stop their premises being inundated with four-and-a-half feet of it.

Most of their shop's stock was destroyed and they offered to give the few surviving items away for free but their customers insisted on paying.

Charlie and Gemma were soon trading from the former refrigerated unit but concentrated solely on fresh flowers and did not stock the vases, candles, plants and other merchandise they used to sell.

Dried

Their shop has been dried and cleared of debris and they hope to move back in during early December, after it has been refitted.

Charlie, who thanked his customers for their support, said: "It's been a strain but it could've been worse.

"You have to take it in the right spirit."

He added: "Long term, we're going to have to look at whether Port Street will recover. We're worried about it happening again."

Port Street's Olivino Restaurant sustained about £100,000-worth of damage after being inundated by almost four feet of water, which reached to just below the bar-top and ruined the furniture and wine cellar.

Ronald Gijzel, who runs the Italian/Mediterranean restaurant with his wife Nilhan, said: "At the beginning, it was very hard. There came a point when there was nothing left to save; you just had to let go."

It took one-and-a-half months to clear and dry the restaurant, after which the refitting began.

Reopened

Olivino, where five part-time staff are employed, reopened in mid-November.

Ronald said: "We've really had a lot of support from our regulars. I'm sure that everything will be OK."

Port Street's Cotswold Trichology Centre, a hair and scalp clinic, suffered about £4,000-worth of damage after being flooded by more than three feet of water.

Proprietor, Sally-Ann Tarver, said: "I and a friend swept the ground floor as much as we could and then sat back and watched the water come in."

The sole trader worked from a nearby hairdresser's salon while her clinic was gutted, dried and refitted. Like Olivino, it reopened in mid-November.

She said: "I'm optimistic.

"If anything, my business may end up benefiting from the floods.

"It's a part of town where a lot of people from around the area are coming to look at how the shops are recovering from the floods.

"In the process, they're coming to look at businesses that have been repaired."

With such optimism abounding amongst Evesham's traders, it is doubtful that even an earthquake could shake their resolve.



● A caravan floated down the Avon and hit Evesham's Workman Bridge



● Another caravan lodged in the trees



● Water levels displayed at Vale Cycles, Port Street



● The famous scene of the great hole where the main road was washed away in Crophorne



● Police had to close Abbey Bridge when water started to rise above it



● Narrow boats broke free and lodged on top of Evesham lock.

● Rescue crews were busy along Waterside



○ Floods



● The Cotswold Trichology Centre was recently reopened to much celebration. Owner Sally-Ann Tarver is pictured on the right and also on the picture to the right when she had to be rescued from the flat above the shop as the flood levels rose.



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