

The Big Fire

On 25th May 2014 a service was just starting in Fakenham Parish Church with the procession of the clergy, except that the Rector was not there. Moments later he burst in the door and said that there was a fire outside, it was the old Aldiss building only yards away from the church on the north side of Upper Market.

The congregation began to leave while some of us stayed to sort out the buggies and wheelchairs belonging to the disabled members of the congregation,

Then it was time for me to go, I had my wife and her elderly sister with me so we went out into Upper Market just as the windows of the building blew out which was very frightening, a car parked nearby had its tyres alight. This car belonged to some members of the congregation who would normally leave their dog inside, but not on this day.

The Fakenham Fire crew were already there and they were soon joined by crews from Kings Lynn. It must have been quite a sight to see them speeding along the A148 on their way to Fakenham. Crews came from far and wide making 14 altogether.

Our car was parked some distance away yet we could not get away to go home because of the hoses across the streets and firemen dealing with hydrants.

Eventually we got home two miles east of the town, only to find that ash was falling in our garden since the wind was in the west.

I decided to go back into town to see how that fire was progressing but going by car was out of the question, so I cycled down only to find that the town was a 'no go area'. So I joined the crowds behind the barrier. The occupants of the flats above had been evacuated without casualties. By this time the building was just four walls.

In time the contractors moved in to demolish what was left of the building and they took some of the more decorative pieces to Fakenham Museum for safe keeping. Local people got used to the hole left in Upper Market and some wanted it to remain but this was not possible and a new building took its place.

This fire had been the largest since the Printing Works fire of 1914.