

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRE WHICH
HAPPENED AT CHATHAM, ON THE 30TH
OF JUNE, 1800, THE MONEY COLLECTED
FOR THE RELIEF OF THE SUFFERERS, THE
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAME, &C.**

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An Account of the Fire Which Happened at Chatham, on the 30th of June, 1800, the Money Collected for the Relief of the Sufferers, the Distribution of the Same, &c. by William Jefferys

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WILLIAM JEFFERYS

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10/30/1800 ✓

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BY WILLIAM JEFFERYS,
TREASURER TO THE COMMITTEE.

AMBROSE ETHERINGTON, PRINTER, NO. 78, CHATHAM.

1801. ✓
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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following Sheets contain an Account of the Fire, which happened at CHATHAM, on the 30th of June, 1800, the Proceedings of the Committee, with a List of the Subscriptions;—also the Names, and Claims, of the Sufferers, and how far they have been relieved; to which is added, a Description of the Estates burnt or injured.

The Purpose of this Publication, is, to record the Benevolence of the Subscribers, and to inform them who were the peculiar Objects of their Bounty;—to acquaint the Sufferers who were their generous Benefactors, and to whom the Debt of Gratitude is due;—and to satisfy both, that the Money collected, has been faithfully distributed. If, in Addition, the Contents should, in the least Degree, contribute to facilitate the Proceedings of a future Committee, in Case of a similar Calamity, the Views of the Publisher will be amply gratified.

W. J.

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AN
A C C O U N T
OF THE
FIRE, &c.

ON Monday the 30th June, 1830, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the shed or building, No. 61, in the annexed plan, in which was deposited a great quantity of cordage, oakum, &c. was discovered to be on fire. Various opinions were formed respecting the cause of the fire, some attributing it to sparks emitted from a blacksmith's forge adjoining, which they imagined passed through the crevices of the shed, (which were much enlarged by the dryness of the season,) and this indeed, seemed to be the most prevalent opinion; whilst others (less liberal, though perhaps not less just) conjectured it to have arisen from design; the real cause in all probability will ever remain unknown, at least, it will never be made out to the satisfaction of all.

The fire commenced with such amazing and irresistible fury, that the shed in which it took place, with the forge and warehouses adjoining, and a hoy with her masts and sails, that lay unloading close to the side of the wharf, formed in a few minutes one general blaze. The wharfinger, and men employed on the wharf, in endeavouring to extinguish the fire, exposed themselves to great danger, and were scarcely able to effect their escape.

Many causes conspired to extend the conflagration; the shed in which it began, was full of combustible matter, viz. cordage, hemp and oakum, the building itself, and most of those adjoining, were of wood, some of them had been recently tarred and ochered, and the whole were rendered extremely susceptible of fire from the long drought, and heat that had preceded.

In the space of three hours, the several houses, buildings, &c. mentioned in the description annexed to the plan, were either wholly destroyed, pulled down or damaged, and their

unfortunate occupiers, being above one hundred persons with their families, bereft of their homes; and the greater part of them rendered destitute of all means speedily to obtain others. The adjoining gardens, road, fields, &c. were the only immediate places of safety to which they could fly, and these places contained the remnant of their apparel and furniture, which, in many instances, at the imminent hazard of their lives, they had snatched from the ravages of the merciless flames.

Unfortunately this dreadful scene commenced about an hour before the ebb of the tide, which prevented the removal of the hoy, and occasioned her loss, and rendered it very difficult to procure a sufficient supply of water for the engines; this, with the other circumstances above stated, are the principal causes of the conflagration extending itself so widely.

The exertions which were made to extinguish the flames, can scarcely be described. The inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, seemed to vie with each other who should do most, to assist the unhappy and distressed sufferers in the removal of their effects, and in the prevention of their houses from being consumed, and in so doing, exposed themselves to the most severe fatigue and imminent dangers. The Commissioner of Chatham Yard (P. J. Hartwell, Esq.) immediately gave all the workmen employed there, liberty to leave their work, to assist at the fire, and had them supplied with proper implements for pulling down houses, &c. He also sent the Dock Yard engines, and (by the Dock teams) a large supply of water in butts. The Commandants of the Barracks at Chatham (Major General Hewett and Major General Innis) sent large bodies of troops to assist in the removal of goods, and the extinguishment of the flames, and also guards to protect the goods taken into the fields, &c. The Agent Victualler at Chatham (Joseph Mathews, Esq.) also, sent the men employed in his department, the engines kept at the Victualling Office, and a large supply of water in butts. The gentlemen of the several breweries in the town and neighbourhood, sent very large supplies of water and small beer, and kept their teams employed in that service, during the whole continuance of the fire. The assistance of all these gentlemen, (as well of those in public, as of those in private stations,) was rendered unsolicited, and with a zeal and alacrity, that reflects the highest honor on their character, and intitles them to the gratitude of the public.

By the united endeavours of all, and the merciful interference of Providence, the flames were at length extinguished, where it least could be expected; for the buildings at the East end of the ruin on the North side of the street, and at the West end of the ruin on the South side of the street, where the fire ceased, were chiefly of timber covered with weather boarding.

Fortunately

Fortunately the wind was moderate at the time the fire happened; during the conflagration, it veered from the East and South to the West.

The strength of the fire was so great, that on the falling in of the houses, large flakes of fire were thrown up a prodigious height, and carried to a considerable distance, and on reaching the ground, did considerable injury to the hay, which lay half made, and the haystacks in the fields, on the South side of the town; but the most unfortunate effect arising from this cause, was, that in the midst of the great conflagration, two or three cottages and a barn in Louch's field, at the distance of a quarter of a mile at least from the town, caught fire, and being in a great measure left unguarded, (the occupiers being either engaged at their employ, or in assisting at the extinguishment of the fire in the town) were in a very short space of time, with almost every article they contained, consumed.

To describe the calamitous scene, which this dreadful conflagration occasioned, is impossible; parents searching after their children, whole families roofless and penniless, and such like spectacles were every where to be seen. But the most dreadful catastrophe attending it, was, the burning of William Bassett, a servant of Messrs. Best, who, in defiance of the intreaties and remonstrances of the surrounding multitude, rushed into his house, while it was burning, to endeavour to get some money he had left in it, and was immediately buried in the ruin, leaving a disconsolate widow, then far advanced in pregnancy, to lament his loss. Another catastrophe happened in the evening, after the fire had subsided, by the falling of a chimney on a Mrs. Dank, who incautiously ventured too near it with her infant child in her arms, and they were both killed. To the divine interposition of Providence alone, can it be attributed, that no other lives were lost on this most melancholy occasion.

It is worthy of remark, as a proof of the intensity of the fire, that many hooks, screws, nails, &c. in Mr. Seaton's house, melted, and ran into one solid mass.

Several persons suffered from accidents which befel them, in endeavouring to extinguish the fire, most of whose names, with the nature of their injuries, appear in the list of sufferers.

General Hawett, with the same humanity that prompted him so materially to assist in saving the property of the sufferers, in the evening endeavoured to alleviate their miseries, by sending tents, and having them pitched in the field adjoining the New Road, for the reception and accomodation of those, who had not been able to provide themselves with a shelter.

A guard of the Gentlemen of the Clatham and Rochester volunteers, was placed on that, and many succeeding nights, to watch and preserve the property which had been deposited in the road, gardens, fields, &c. adjoining, for the benefit of the sufferers.

The loss arising from this dreadful visitation, was computed at £30,000, £25,000, of which were insured, principally in the Sun, Phoenix, and Royal Exchange Assurance Offices; the first of which furnished about three fifths of the loss.

To alleviate the miseries this dreadful calamity had created, and to soften the pangs of the distressed sufferers, several gentlemen of the town assembled a few days afterwards, at the house of Joseph Mathews, Esq. the Agent Victualler, and entered into the following resolutions,

Chatham July 3, 1800.

At a meeting of the principal inhabitants of the town of Chatham this day, to take into consideration, the most effectual means to be adopted, for the immediate relief of the unfortunate sufferers by the late dreadful fire, whereby upwards of sixty houses were totally destroyed, and a great many families reduced to the utmost distress.

It was unanimously Resolved,

That a subscription be immediately made, from house to house, throughout the town and parish, to effect the above laudable purpose.

That application be made to the respective Magistrates, Ministers, &c. of the several cities, boroughs, towns, and parishes, in the county, stating the above mentioned calamitous affair, and supplicating their aid by a similar subscription.

That one or more persons, from the neighbouring parishes, be requested to assist the Committee appointed for this parish, in examining the claims of the sufferers, and granting such relief as circumstances will allow, and the nature of their case may require.

That the Committee do meet at the Vestry-room, Chatham, on Tuesday next, the 8th inst. at ten o'clock in the forenoon, to receive statements of the losses sustained by those persons who are desirous of receiving relief from the Subscription, and that public notice be immediately given of such meeting.

That such statements be forthwith examined, and distribution made of the money collected, in such manner as shall be judged expedient, and will best tend to alleviate the miseries of the unfortunate.

That the following Gentlemen be appointed, and be a Committee for this parish:

The Commissioner	Mr. John Madgshon	Mr. John Irons
The Agent Victualler	Mr. John Gurr	Mr. Thomas Simson
The Minister	Mr. — Farquhar	Mr. Troy, Agent to the
The Constable	Mr. John Lock	Sun Fire Office
The Churchwardens	Mr. Alexander Gardiner	Mr. Chillely, Phoenix
The Overseers	Mr. Edward Boys	Mr. Tracy, ditto
Mr. Thomas Bentley	Mr. William Jefferys	Mr. Witheridge, British
Mr. John Burton	Mr. James Tong	Mr. Fleet, Royal Exchange
Mr. Edward Syson, sen.	Mr. George Osborn	Affurance

That

That Mr. William Jefferys be appointed Treasurer, and that subscriptions be received by him; the Committee; Mr Townson, and Mr. Etherington, bookfellers, Chatham; and at the Bank, at Rochester.

Immediately a collection was made by the Committee and several other respectable gentlemen, from house to house, throughout the town of Chatham, excepting the houses of those persons who belonged to the Dock Yard, who, it was understood, had previously determined to make a collection amongst themselves.—The liberality of the inhabitants, both poor and rich, with the exception of a few characters, exceeded the most sanguine expectations, as will best appear by a reference to the list of the subscribers.—On this occasion Mr. Gurr, and Mr. Lock entertained the Gentlemen with suitable refreshments.

The subscription of the privates, in the Marine service, who voluntarily gave the sum sent to them by the Directors of the Sun Fire Office, for their exertions at the fire, is worthy of every commendation.

Copies of the above Resolutions were made and sent to the undermentioned places, *viz.*

Ashford	Gillingham	Rochester
Boxley	Goudhurst	Romney
Bromley	Gravefend	New Romney
Canterbury	Greenwich	Sandwich
Charing	Hawkhurst	Sevenoaks
Cranbrook	Hythe	Sheerness
Dartford	Lewisham	Sittingbourne
Deal	Lyd	Strood
Deptford	Maidstone	Tenterden
Dover	Malling	Tunbridge Town
Eltham	Margate	————— Wells
Farningham	Milton	Woolwich
Feverham	Queenborough	Wrotham
Folkestone	Rainham	Wye
Fordwich	Ramsgate	Yalding

With a LETTER, as follows: