

## THE CHIPPING FLOOD      Tuesday 1st July 1851

The story has been compiled mostly from an account in the Preston Guardian, Saturday, 5th July, 1851; the journalist having visited Chipping the day after the flood. Other information is from the Rev. Alfred Weld's account in "The Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science" Sept. 1851 — a prestigious national scientific journal. Alfred Weld was a teacher at Stonyhurst, and the youngest son of George Weld, the squire of Leagram Hall. Having witnessed the storm from Stonyhurst, he visited Chipping soon afterwards and explored Parlick and the Wolfen Hall area where the storm had been centred.

**"The atmosphere was completely illuminated by the electric fluid .... and the valley reverberated with the awful roaring and bellowing of heaven's dread artillery.. "**  
(Preston Guardian)

The morning was sultry and by afternoon the thunderclouds had gathered and passed over the valley towards Parlick. By half past one, heavy rain, thunder and lightning started, and the storm steadily increased in fury, with almost continuous lightning. By three o'clock the cloudburst began over Parlick. A tide of water rushed from the fells down the Chipping Brook. During the next two hours, the river became a torrent causing much destruction along its course, right through the village. It was the worst flood in living memory.

**"Havoc and ruin .."**

**On the top of Parlick** at the time of the storm, the rain fell in sheets or streams of water, so heavy that people there had difficulty in breathing. Seven huge scars were cut on the eastern side of Parlick to a depth of 5ft on the lower slopes, probably caused by the rush of water from the line of springs (though Weld suggested the damage was caused by separate waterspouts from the thunder cloud). The water from these seven torrents had formed a river 150 yards wide, even before meeting the water from the similarly swollen Whitestone and Greenlough Cloughs. Hundreds of tons of earth and boulders were carried to the bottom of the fells.

**At Wolfen Hall**, several acres of pastures farmed by John Procter were covered with slutch, and trees washed away.

**At Saddle**, the farmer reported that the rain drops appeared like snow; each drop being the size of a half-crown. The water had streamed down the Saddle road one or two foot in depth.

**At Peacock Hey**, the farmland of Thomas Dewhurst suffered similar damage.

**At Wolfen Mill**, where Thomas Dewhurst also carried on a spindle and fly making business, the weir was damaged and his factory, employing thirty men, brought to a standstill. Eye-witnesses there reported that the flood on the brook started with a wall of water 2 yards high.

**At Springs House**, farmed by John Bateson, a torrent of water from the higher farmland poured through the house half a yard deep, washing away part of the garden, fruit trees etc., destroying 20 yards of wall and damaging crops of potatoes, mangold wurtzel, and turnips.

**At Saunder Rake** cotton spinning factory belonging to Simon Bond, the floodwater burst open a sluice, got into the mill and damaged machinery, so that 30 or 40 employees were out of work. The cottages at Saunder Rake (the Bottoms) were flooded. Two invalids, George Wilkinson and Alice Tingle (Tindale), in rooms on upper floors, were rescued with difficulty.