

# The Scene of Saturday's Alarming Fire at Chelveston.



## THE BURNT-OUT COTTAGES.

Four thatched cottages in Chelveston were on Saturday evening destroyed by fire. Adjoining property was for a time in grave danger, but thanks to effective work by the Higham Ferrers Fire Brigade the damage was limited to the one group of buildings.

The burnt-out cottages—small, stone-built dwellings of considerable age—are in the part of the village known as St. George's Row, and were the property of Mr. F. Britten. Their occupants were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Allen, Mr. and Mrs. H. Whiting, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Newall, and Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Knight.

The chimney of one of the cottages (occupied by Mr. Whiting) caught fire on Saturday morning, but as the smoke soon died down, no great importance was attached to the incident by the tenants.

It is probable, however, that a spark which escaped through a hole in the chimney ignited the under side of the thatch, which smouldered all day, and in the early evening burst into flame.

## FURNITURE REMOVED.

It was at about 5.30 p.m. that people passing down the lane saw the smoke and flames. The occupants of the cottages were informed, and were quickly joined by a host of volunteers, who cleared the lower rooms of furniture and rescued as much as possible of the bedroom appointments.

Mr. Collis Baxter, Mr. M. Dunkley, and

## THE CENTRAL CHIMNEY STACK IS WHERE THE FIRE BEGAN.

others obtained ladders and climbed to the roof, where they applied water until the growing heat forced them to abandon their task. As many as 50 people carried water from the brook near by.

While this work was going on Mr. B. Tiney sent a message to the Higham Ferrers Fire Brigade, who received the call at 6.15, and, obtaining horses from Mr. Neville, galloped to Chelveston with the manual. Vice-Captain Twelvetree was in command.

When the firemen arrived the cottage roofs were blazing fiercely, flames lighting the sky for miles around. It was decided to concentrate on protecting the adjoining property, and, an abundance of water being obtainable from the brook, the thatched roofs of the cottages on either side were given a thorough drenching. Fortunately the breeze was gentle, and its direction favourable to the operations.

The firemen and villagers worked splendidly, and by 10 o'clock the danger of the fire extending was removed. In very cold weather the brigade remained on duty until 4 a.m. on Sunday.

The four cottages were reduced to mere shells, and are beyond repair. They stand roofless and almost timberless, filled with charred beams, twisted bedsteads, ruined ranges, and the like.

Only one of the tenants, it is understood, was insured against fire, but Mr. Britten says the damage to the property itself, amounting

to hundreds of pounds, is partly covered by insurance.

## TEMPORARY LODGINGS.

Mrs. Isaac Knight, who is 69, had lived in St. George's Row since birth. Mrs. Newall, another of the unfortunate tenants, is Mrs. Knight's daughter. All those rendered homeless by the fire—and these included a family in which there are five children—were accommodated for the night by friends in Chelveston and Higham. Some of the occupiers of neighbouring cottages left their furniture in a field all night, but were able to replace it on Sunday morning.

Captain A. Sudborough, of the Higham Ferrers Fire Brigade, was away from home when the call arrived, but took charge of the operations later in the evening. The brigade worked admirably on its first serious errand since 1920. So severe was the frost that on Sunday morning the hose-pipes were full of ice, and could not be rolled up.

## A CASUALTY.

A young man named Wagstaff, while helping to pump the manual, had a hand badly crushed, and was taken away for medical attention.

Supt. H. D. Macleod and Inspector A. J. Hankins were in charge of the efficient police arrangements.

Contrary to statements in the London Press, the manual engine was pulled all the distance from Higham to Chelveston by horse