

WOOD FIRE INFERNO

Ablaze was a big timber yard at Barking, in the biggest fire Essex has known since the war. 300 firemen, with 30 engines, waged a long fight to contain it and save surrounding property. Nearby, large storage tanks full of petrol were becoming hot. A major disaster seemed to be only minutes away.

22 families in Abbey Street had to be evacuated - their houses in imminent danger. They grabbed everything they could, some going to friends outside the threatened area.

It was hours before they learned that their houses were safe after all. Meanwhile, a school was hastily converted into a reception centre. What an agonising night they went through. When at last the fire was under control, damage totalled at least £200,000.