

# FIREBALL

An aerial photograph showing the aftermath of a disaster. A large, dark, rectangular building, identified as Alnwick Cottage, is severely damaged with its roof partially collapsed and debris scattered around. To the right of the cottage, a blue lorry is overturned on its side, with several large, dark cylindrical objects (possibly drums or tanks) visible on its side. The surrounding area is a mix of green grass and trees. Several people, some in high-visibility clothing, are visible on the ground, likely emergency responders or investigators. The scene is captured from a high angle, providing a clear view of the extent of the damage.

Two  
dead in  
horrific  
smash

○ Ian Morgan

TWO men died when their lorries collided head-on, sparking an inferno which gutted a nearby cottage in north Herefordshire.

The tragedy has shocked the community of Ashton, near Leominster, and has led to renewed calls for a bypass on the A49.

Christopher John Gore, 43, of nearby Leysters, and Thomas Gethin Mark Jones, 39, from Dyfed, died at the scene of the horrific smash on Monday afternoon.

Ray Rogers, district commander for the Herefordshire division of the fire brigade, said an explosion immediately followed the collision and then a blaze virtually gutted Alnwick Cottage, which has left a family homeless.

The tenant of the cottage, Barbara Sheen, and her son Alex, 13, who attends Ludlow C of E School, were not at home when the fire broke out.

Fire fighters managed to rescue their pet cat.

A gas leak at the cottage forced fire fighters to stop tackling the blaze for a short time until the system was switched off.

Nearby homes were evacuated and left without power for several hours while the electricity was turned off.

Bill Edwards, of Ashton Court Farm, said he heard

● Photo: David Griffiths.

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● A PLUME of smoke spews into the air from the crash scene.

Photo: Allen Gough.



● EMERGENCY services at the scene.

Photo: Arun Marsh.

## Tragedy on the A49: 'I saw flames higher than the highest trees'

# A plume of black smoke

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several explosions – which he believed were tyres bursting and went out to the road.

"I saw a big black plume of smoke and flames higher than the highest trees."

Resident Allen Gough, from The Forge, also saw the huge plume of smoke and immediately grabbed his camera.

"The heat was incredibly intense," he said. "Soon after the crash I saw a man from another vehicle running down the road. It was dreadful."

Mr Jones, from Rhyd Lewis, was driving south on the A49 in a Mercedes milk tanker, while Mr Gore was heading north in a Renault large goods vehicle.

Mr Gore was following a white Foden Tipper large goods vehicle travelling in the same direction. The collision involved all three vehicles.

The driver of the Foden Tipper was unhurt.

The contents of the milk tanker leaked into the water system and the fire service worked with the environment agency to minimise the impact.

Mr Rogers said there were 70 fire fighters at the height

of the operation, with crews from Hereford, Leintwardine, Kingsland, Leominster, Bromyard, Kington, Tenbury Wells and Ludlow.

"The Leominster crew were at the scene within minutes. Apparently, people could hear the explosion 10 miles away," said Mr Rogers.

Ben Bydawell, a joiner from Tenbury Wells, who works in Ashton, arrived on the scene just a couple of minutes after the accident.

He was drawn out by the sound of the crash.

"The rapid response vehicle arrived in less than five minutes but the wreckage was already burning out of control," he said.

"To see death and destruction is a horrifying sight"

Pensioner Iris Cooke, from Court Cottage, Ashton, said: "It's frightening to think two people have been killed on your doorstep. It's a terrible tragedy."

The road remained closed on Tuesday while the vehicles were lifted from the scene and the road resurfaced. Police are appealing for witnesses to the collision or anyone who saw any of the vehicles travelling on the A49 before the accident.



● Firefighters battle with the flames. Photos: Allen Gough

