



The True Heart Inn

*Bishopstone
1846*

The sunken floor

An alarming occurrence happened at the above place, on Tuesday, the 13th inst., on which day, Mr J. C. Salmon, of Highworth, was selling an assortment of drapery goods by auction, in the large room of the True Heart Inn. There was a very numerous company, the room being so crowded that a number of persons were obliged to remain in the passage.

The sale commenced a little after half past one, and about half the lots were sold by four o'clock, when the floor of the room, on the side which the ladies occupied, suddenly, with a terrific crash, gave way, and began to sink rapidly, and the company with it, most of them being thrown from their seats. It would be almost impossible to describe the consternation and confusion that ensued. When the floor had sunk about four feet and a half, it appeared to have met with some resistance. which formed a support sufficient to prevent its falling further, but it continued cracking frightfully. In the meantime, those persons who were huddled together on the lowest part scrambled up the floor as fast as possible, and, each intent on his own safety, rushed towards the door. The auctioneer had by this time got from the table on which he was sitting, and very calmly requested the company to remain quiet, till they could be assisted over the soundest part of the floor, and assured them that if they continued to press towards the door in such numbers, that part of the floor could not possibly sustain the weight. The self possession displayed by the auctioneer seemed to inspire them with confidence and courage, and, in about half an hour, every individual was safe out of the room, when, it was ascertained that no person had received any further injury than a slight bruise or two.

Underneath the room was situated the cellar, and in that part beneath the side of the room which gave way were several large upright barrels, containing beer, and these formed the fortunate and timely support above alluded to. Had not the floor met with this support, and the company been precipitated into the cellar, the result might have been very serious, if not fatal, to many. When the room was cleared, it was ascertained that the beams and joists were all in a decayed state, apparently from dry rot, and had broken short off close to the wall. The room was built only five or six years since. The sale was afterwards attempted to be continued in another part of the home, but the company did not again assemble in sufficient numbers.

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette 22 January 1846