

The Dane John Gardens at Canterbury were closed to the public this week — but the Festival exhibit that caused much controversy was unscathed.

# Outlook is bleak down on the farm

FRIDAY'S storm is still blowing chill winds through the wreckage of many of Kent's farms.

Orchard growers are checking their trees to see how many have survived — and how many will have to be replaced by stock that will take up to four years to yield another crop.

Cereal growers are busy checking the damage to grain where the gales ripped the roofs off storage sheds, exposing crops already hit by the disastrous winter and rain-sodden summer to even more water damage.

Dairy farmers who have planted maize to

provide fodder for the winter months are desperately trying to rescue the fallen crops from the mud.

Egg farms are rebuilding their batteries and roosts while the chickens shiver without cover or heat.

Vegetable growers are glumly looking at crops scorched an ugly black by the salt-laden winds.

Damage to buildings, to miles of fences, to wind breaks and crops runs into millions of pounds — and many farmers have never been able to afford the high premiums demanded for storm damage protection.

For them the cost of

rebuilding after years of falling incomes may be too much.

The outlook is bleak, and for apple and pear growers there is another fear. They are now waiting to see if the wind scorch has destroyed their chances of a crop at all next year.

## Released

If the leaves are killed off before next season's buds can form, their remaining trees may well be barren in 1988.

Canterbury National Farmers' Union secretary Mr Richard Hoad, a man reluctant to cry wolf at previous farming setbacks, is now blunt and uncompromising in his

description of the situation.

"It is a total blanket disaster.

"Farmers have always had to put up with the weather but there are people around here who I cannot see how they are ever going to recover.

"Farmers have a resilience, an ability to bounce back, but with incomes substantially reduced in recent year, with pressures from the EEC, the Government and some sections of the public, there is now very little strength left in their will to survive.

"We have got to do what we can and hope someone comes to our support."

... followed by its trees, has suffered as brutally as elsewhere, but its most famous tree has survived.

At 450 years old, Majesty is the oldest maiden oak in Britain,

picture is one of unrelieved destruction.

Kent University has closed off the remnants of the woodlands by its playing fields. The RSPB nature reserve at Church Wood, Rough Common,

In the orchards of the Garden of England the battle is on to save as many trees as possible.

Most of the apples and pears have already been picked and stored, though breaks in the power supply to cold stores may mean fruit will have to be released on to the market months earlier than usual.

At Bridge Mr Ian Johnston, managing director of Highland Investment Company, said: "Quite a number of orchards have been seriously affected with trees being ripped up and there has also been damage where trees planted as windbreaks

have fallen into the orchards.

"Where we will have to replant we will have to wait three to four years for another crop.

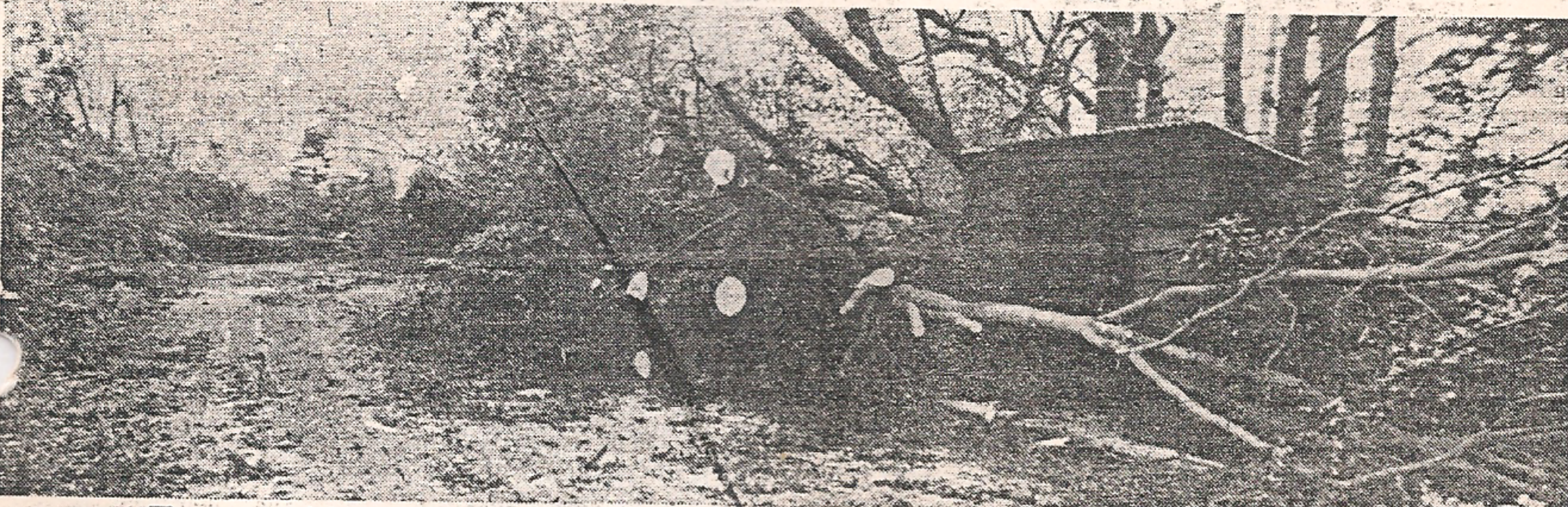
"Another poor year is going to be hard to take. There is going to be some very hard work ahead of us."

At the South Barham Farm, run by Mr Lawrence Goddard and his son Robert, generators provided power to milk their 200 dairy cows and after a way was cut through the trees, and the remains of a thatched barn were shovelled away, the milk tankers were able to reach them.

"One of our biggest problems is the 135 acres of maize we grow for fodder," said Mr Goddard. "That is all flattened. If it carries on wet we will have real difficulties in getting into the fields and getting it up because it will just come up by the roots when we try to cut it."

Every section of the vast agricultural industry has its own grave problems, but the eventual cost of the financial and physical battering suffered by the farmers will take another season to become fully apparent.

Until then the farmers are working — and praying.



The scene of devastation outside the A2 entrance to Highland Court at Bridge, where fallen trees presented an obstacle course.

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