



Ruined: Shoddy building work caused the Edwardian terraced home to crack and collapse PICTURE: CASCADE

Couple win £290K after home falls to bits around them

A COUPLE who escaped with their lives when their home collapsed have won £290,000 damages.

Edward Goldswain and Jacqueline Hale, who was eight-months pregnant, fled their £345,000 Edwardian ground-floor flat moments before it disintegrated.

Ms Hale, 39, went into premature labour, although her baby was delivered unharmed. They were dealt a second blow when they realised the loss was not covered by their household insurance policy. High

by **DANIEL BINNS**

Court judge Mr Justice Akenhead said the 'incompetence' of builders from AIMS Plumbing & Heating Limited was likely to blame for the collapse in Finchley, north London, in November 2012.

He awarded the couple £290,000, but they may not receive a penny because the firm is believed to be insolvent.

The Hales first noticed cracks in the walls open up while the builders

were trying to extend into the basement. Mr Akenhead said the company had taken no effective steps to prop up the flank wall or to lay a concrete floor slab, which could have stopped the building falling down.

Ms Hale, an investment banker, said: 'The day it all happened was like something out of a disaster movie. It was like an earthquake had hit.'

The house has since been pulled down by order of Barnet council because it was so dangerous.