

Adelaide Fire Brigade 1903

From the Sands and McDougall Directory for 1903



Metropolitan Fire Brigade Stations

Metropolitan Fire Brigade Station, Wakefield Street, Booker, G. A, superintendent fire brigades S.A.

North Adelaide Fire Brigade Station, 73A O'Connell Street, Luck, Gustav, in charge.

Port Adelaide Fire Brigade Station, Commercial Street, West side, Hedger, H. H, foreman in charge.

Semaphore Fire Brigade Station, Hall and Jagoe Streets, Goddard, F. H, foreman in charge.

Glenelg Fire Brigade Station, Augusta Street, McDonald, Geo, fireman in charge.

Norwood Fire brigade Station, Parade, South side, Benda, Alf, in charge.

Unley Fire Brigade Station, Edmund Street, North side, Oldham, Chas, foreman.

Hindmarsh Volunteer Fire Brigade Stations

Hindmarsh Place, North side, No 1 station

Ninth Street, North side, No 2 station

From the 1902 Fire Brigades Board Annual Report.

The staff of the brigades comprises 75 firemen of all ranks, distributed as follows—Adelaide, 23; Unley, 4; Norwood, 4; Port Adelaide and Semaphore, 12; Port Pirie, 11; Moonta, 4; Gawler, 4; Glenelg, 4; Kadina, 3; Kapunda, 3; Port Augusta, 3.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Friday 9 January 1903, page 5

THE FIRE BRIGADE. EFFICIENT, BUT NOT SUFFICIENT.

SERIOUS DANGER.

(By our Special Reporter.)

The people of Adelaide are living in a Fool's Paradise so far as protection from the ravages of fire is concerned. They have an excellent brigade, it is true, and both the superintendent and the men under his command have proved their efficiency and promptitude on many occasions. But its personnel and its equipment are dangerously below the requirements of the situation. It would be impossible at the present moment to get more than a dozen men to work immediately on a fire, no matter what its magnitude might be at the time the brigade was summoned. That surely is a woefully inadequate force except in the incipient stages of a very ordinary outbreak. In the face of a really great conflagration it would be ridiculously below the standard wanted. Years ago there was an epidemic of incendiarism in the city, and nearly every timber yard in the metropolis was set alight. Supposing there was a recrudescence of this crime, and two or three big fires were to occur simultaneously, the brigade would be paralysed. Yet it is not beyond the limits of probability that purely accidental blazes might discover themselves in different parts of the city at the same moment. Hitherto Adelaide has enjoyed a wonderful immunity from really great fires. The broad, straight streets of the city and the absence of sharp hills offer facilities for the quick progress of the brigade when a call is received, while the smartness and skill of the men enable them to make the most of their opportunities in this respect. There is a splendid supply of water always available, and hydrants are conveniently situated. So it has happened that in the vast majority of instances the brigade, summoned promptly by means of one or other of the fire alarms, has pounced down so quickly on the first sparks, that have manifested themselves that the proportion of real fires to "calls" has been kept very small. Not infrequently, however, tens of thousands of pounds are in jeopardy, and well-directed energy at the psychological moment makes all the difference between what appears to be a mere "exhibition run" through the streets and a fierce fight against the devouring element which may last with many features of imminent peril for hours.

Adelaide has had some extensive, conflagrations, and in regard to all of these the brigade has won the battle by cleverness, by endurance, and by wonderful activity aided by a very large proportion of good luck. With a strong wind blowing from any quarter of the compass the blaze which consumed so much property in Messrs. John Martin & Co.'s establishment a little over a year ago must have got away from the firemen, and devastated a large area in the busiest part of the city. To a lesser extent the same remark holds good in regard to the more recent fire at Pritchard's ware-house in Grenfell-street. It will always be true of any serious fire which takes place where large and lofty business premises are plentiful in the chief thoroughfares of Adelaide until the brigade is strengthened and its appliances are increased. One shudders to think of the holocaust which would ensue if at a time when Rundle-street shops are crowded with customers and the upper floors are filled with workpeople, a sudden and serious conflagration should burst out. There is only one fire escape ladder, and it is too short to reach the topmost windows of the tallest buildings even if it could be made available at a minute's notice. If while the brigade were manfully contending against such a fire another were to be reported in a distant part of the city the superintendent would have to make rapid calculation as to which was likely to do the most harm, and then leave the other to burn itself to ashes practically unheeded. That statement has an extraordinary sound, but it is nevertheless strictly accurate. It would never do to weaken the attack on a fire which threatened to involve a loss of hundreds of thousands of pounds, when not a man could be safely spared, in order to attempt to save a cottage worth, with its furniture, only a few hundreds of pounds. Yet, how indignant would the owner of that cottage be, particularly if his possessions were uninsured, and now scandalised would be the community if such a contingency arose. Arise it must some day, however, if the Fire Brigade is kept in its present attenuated state, and if it is compelled to continue its present hand-to-mouth existence.

The amount of revenue available to the Fire Brigades Board for the protection of the city of Adelaide is £4,500 a year, which barely avails for the upkeep of the present brigade and its equipment, and does not allow a single penny for the formation of a sinking fund, out of which new appliances may be purchased, or those at present in use may be renewed. Brisbane, which is a much smaller city than Adelaide, has an equal sum at its command for fire

protection, and it has no rent or rates to pay on its head station. Under the South Australian Fire Brigade Act the board is authorised to fix the expenditure necessary to be incurred in all districts and municipalities which come under its purview out-side of the city of Adelaide. The revenue required is then provided by the contributing bodies in the stipulated proportions, namely, two-ninths by the municipality, three-ninths by the Government, and four-ninths by the insurance societies. In the city itself, however, where the greatest need for a strong and efficient brigade exists, the board are almost completely at the mercy of the corporation. A minimum of £666 13/4 is fixed, which on the basis of the proportions already mentioned works out to a total revenue of £3,000 a year, and unless the civic fathers choose to increase their vote that is all the board can rely upon. During the last year or two the council has fixed its contribution at £1,000, the amount apportioned for the present twelve months, which gives a total income of £4,500. Out of that sum the head station and the branch at North Adelaide have to be maintained, while rents, rates, taxes, and wages have to be paid, and such plant as is urgently heeded has to be bought. The board has power to borrow, but has no security to offer other than the annual contributions, so that the privilege is a mere dead letter, and the Government have refused to advance £1,000 asked for to enable the purchase of a steam fire engine capable of throwing 750 gallons of water a minute, the glaring need for which was abundantly shown at each of the big fires which have occurred during the last 18 months.

The brigade is now spending all its in-come on the essentials of its continued existence at its present strength and in a state of efficiency. There is no margin whatever. If a serious accident were to occur, by which 2,000 ft. of hose were lost, if one or two of the valuable horses were killed when galloping to a fire, or if a steamer were wrecked—and any one of these contingencies might easily arise—there are no funds out of which to make good the deficiency. Necessary expenses swallow up all the money, and it is only possible to meet ordinary wear and tear by the very strictest economy. The apportionment of the contributions to the brigade in South Australia differs from that which prevails in New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, where the municipalities, the Government, and the insurance companies each provide a third of the revenue, while in Brisbane the Government also built a fire station for the accommodation of the men and their appliances. It is urged, however—and with considerable fairness—that no matter what the proportion determined on may be, there should be no limit placed on the expenditure of the board, except that of the real requirements of the city from year to year, as assessed by the board and its experts. The Government, the insurance companies, and the corporation are all represented among its members, who are, therefore, not likely to waste the money of their principals, their only desire being to ensure the adequate protection of the citizens. In London, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, as well as in all the large cities of Europe and America, the corporations practically bear the whole cost of the brigades. In London, where the expenditure on fire extinction exceeds £200,000 annually, the Government only pays £10,000 a year for the protection of the national buildings, while the local governing body provides three-fourths of the remaining sum by a special rate, and the insurance societies the other fourth, on the basis of a tax of so much per every £1,000,000 of gross annual insurance. "Fire and Water" for December, 1902, contains a description of a formal opening of the splendid new fire brigade station built by the corporation of that city, at a cost of £41,000, made up of £16,000 for the structure, £12,000 for the site, and £13,000 for the fire-alarm installation. Sir Charles Firth (president of the English Fire Brigades Association and inspector of fires and fire brigades), speaking as a visitor, stated that when he first made the acquaintance of Bradford its only fire extinguishing appliances were the manual fire engines, owned by the insurance companies. Still, he admitted, it was one of the first provincial towns to introduce steamers, and he was glad to see that it was maintaining its reputation as a go-ahead place. Mr. E. J. Smith (chairman of the corporation fire brigade committee) said he did not desire for the Bradford brigade the reputation of dealing with big conflagrations, but of preventing them. When the various projects contemplated by the committee had been fully carried out, he added, he believed the corporation would be in a position reasonably and safely to carry the whole of their insurance themselves, and to feel that the protection was equal to the risk involved.

No doubt these aspirations of the Bradford committee are far in advance of any which may find a lodgment in the Adelaide municipal mind, but they should at least have influence in inducing the local corporation to deal in a more liberal spirit with the Adelaide brigade, especially when it is remembered that every big fire makes a serious inroad on the city rates. The inadequacy of the brigade as at present constituted is entirely due to the imprudent parsimony of the council, which has turned a deaf ear to the appeal of the board for an increased subsidy, and has thus pre-vented its income from advancing beyond a starvation rate.

Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Saturday 31 January 1903, page 6

FIRE!

Precisely at 8.30 on Friday evening a gentleman clad in white ducks and attended closely by a portly figure similarly attired and resembling a naval officer alighted from a cab as it dashed up to the fire alarm at the corner of Gawler place and Grenfell street. The first person, without heeding the presence of a policeman on the corner, who was suspiciously eyeing him, rushed to the alarm, broke the glass, and—waited the arrival of the brigade. Two more cabs then pulled up, and a number of gentlemen joined the first two, and excitedly pulled out their watches as though timing a crack gallop at Morphettville. The Y.M.C.A Building was not on fire, nor had a bolt from the skies set the heart of Adelaide in a blaze, and it was certain that Hades was not burning its way upwards, though the temperature, seemed to indicate something of that nature. It was only a test of the Metropolitan Brigade's smartness, and the "alarmists," timekeepers, and others were simply the Chairman of the Fire Board, the Superintendent of Brigades, and a party of interested civic gentlemen exercising their rights of turning out all the fire fighting appliances in and around Adelaide. They had been at the game all the after-noon, and had broken more panes of glass than a small boy with a "shanghai" could smash in a conservatory in five minutes, and this was just the grand finale. It was sensational, too, and as the city reel dashed up, closely followed by the steamer, ladder, and the reels from Unley, Norwood, and North Adelaide, the crowds of people who had assembled cheered the brass-helmeted fire-fighters, and dispersed when they heard the Superintendent say, "An eminently satisfactory turnout. Home!"

Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Monday 9 February 1903, page 2

FIRE IN GRENFELL-STREET.

Early on Sunday morning the Metropolitan Fire Brigade received a call from the alarm near the intersection of King William and Grenfell streets, and at a quarter to 3 o'clock the reel, steamer, and ladder dashed out from the head station, the turn-out being remarkably smart, considering that the majority of the firemen were asleep when the bells sounded. Constable Naylor, who rang the bell, directed the brigade to the tobacconist shop occupied by Mr. W. E. Benda, a few doors east of King William-street in Grenfell-street. The flames had obtained a firm hold, and when Superintendent Booker burst open the front door the heat was considerable. The fire was fed by a quantity of wax vestas, light shelving, cigar boxes, cigars, tobacco, and other highly inflammable material, and the flames had almost eaten through the lath and plaster ceiling when the water was turned on. A few minutes sufficed to extinguish the fire. The damage is estimated at from £25 to £40. Had the brigade been less prompt in responding to the call possibly the whole corner block would have been consumed. The North Adelaide reel was ordered into the city, but the Unley and Norwood brigades were told to "stand by." As the seat of the fire was where wax matches were stored the presumption is that rats or mice were responsible for the outbreak. The city coroner has been informed.

Tuesday 10th February 1903 – Fire at Holden and Frost, Grenfell Street, Adelaide.

Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Wednesday 11 February 1903, page 1

The site of the fire which broke out in Grenfell-street on Tuesday night is a scene of ruin. The walls of Messrs. Holden and Frost's premises, blackened and scorched by the smoke and flames, rise up grimly from a mass of debris, which was still smouldering on Wednesday

morning. Hundreds of people gathered to gaze on the spectacle. The Fire Brigade men were at work all the morning pumping water out of the basement of the building. Mr. H. J. Holden stated on Wednesday morning that he had now ascertained that the damage was greater than had been anticipated. There was a good deal of salvage, but he was doubtful as to its value. He intends to reopen his business to-morrow morning in Genders' Buildings, where he has been fortunate in securing accommodation. It is not known yet whether any enquiry will be held. The cause of the fire still remains a mystery. The premises of Messrs. Henry Berry & Co., adjoining the gutted building, were not damaged by fire. There is, however, about a foot of water in the cellar, where tinned goods are stored, but the damage can in this case easily be covered by £200.



PRG 631/2/3

State Library of South Australia - Grenfell Street looking east towards Hindmarsh Square [PRG 631/2/3], Grenfell Street, looking east from Chesser Street. The near side of Holden and Frost's is 9 1/2 yards east of Chesser Street. Frontage: 22 1/2 yards. The buildings along the north side of Grenfell Street include Henry Berry and Company Merchants which is situated in the Holden and Frost Building, A Brose, P Scrutzs and later the Ornate turret of the Adelaide Arcade. Opposite is the building housing Wilkins. Horses, carriages, carts and pedestrians are going about their business. Approximately 1901, Photographer Ernest Gall, Part of Acre 104 Collection



BRG 213/1/1/3

State Library of South Australia - J.A Holden & Co., 100 Grenfell St. [BRG 213/1/1/3], J.A Holden and Co., 100 Grenfell St. (ca.1879) 'The saddlery and iron monger business of the first of the Holden's, James Alexander Holden, in Adelaide'. Approximately 1879, GM Holden Ltd. Part of Holden Collection.



State Library of South Australia - Holden & Frost premises on Grenfell Street, Adelaide [PRG 631/2/1452], [General description] Holden and Frost saddlery, forerunner to the motor company General Motors Holden's Australian operation. The ornate facade of the building features a statue of a white horse standing on a balcony over the entrance. A horse stands in front of the premises harnessed to a wagon partially loaded with hides. [On back of photograph] 'Acre 104 / Grenfell Street, north side / Nov. 14, 1907 / Left side of building is 9 yards east of Chesser Street. Frontage: 23 yards.' (Another hand) 'The verandah and balcony was removed in 1937. Extra storey added to building some years previous to 1937. 1907, Photographer Ernest Gall, Part of Acre 104 Collection

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Wednesday 11 February 1903, page 5

GREAT FIRE IN GRENFELL-STREET.

£18,000 DAMAGE DONE.

MESSRS. HOLDEN & FROST'S

STRONGER BRIGADE NEEDED.

ADJOINING PREMISES BARELY SAVED.

Sometimes it is said that Adelaide is only a small place. That is a calumny. The question need not be argued. No one with a well-balanced mind, however, will not say that we do not have big fires. We do. And the intervals are not too long to lull business people into a feeling of false security, or to arouse a feeling that fire policies are an error. It is not long since a fire, and a big one—the record for the State it has been termed took place at the business premises of Messrs. John Martin & Co., of Rundle-street. Hardly has that been relegated to the lumber-room of the past when a new fire sensation has to be chronicled. They come upon us suddenly.

This one took place on Tuesday night, the scene being Messrs. Holden & Frost's saddlery establishment, Grenfell-street. The city was quiet. A bright moon shone from a dark blue sky. Mr. Reid was talking eloquently to his followers at the Town Hall. But some time after 9 o'clock a cry was wafted over the town—the cry of fire. Adelaide was soon astir, and so were the suburbs. The hoofs of galloping horses could be heard, together with the rumble of wheels. There was no need to look long to find out in what direction the flying hoofs were going. A glance towards the sky showed that volumes of smoke were arising in the vicinity of Hindmarsh-square. Thither people in thousands wended their way with eagerness. Once Grenfell-street was reached it was easy to see that the fire was one of large dimensions.

The building is one of two storeys, and the flames were bursting from the windows on the top flat. The fire brigade had hardly arrived on the spot when a great crowd of men and women and children collected. It was a cheap entertainment to the people, and the attendance was large. The scene in front of the premises is one that will not easily be forgotten. The flames brilliantly illuminated the wide street. In the centre worked Superintendent Booker and his men, like the well-drilled soldiers that they are, without hurry or confusion. In physique towering above them all was the South Australian Captain Shaw. He led the rank and file splendidly, but the fire had obtained such a strong footing that it soon became apparent that with the appliances at his disposal he could do little beyond protecting surrounding premises. This was the first thing attended to, and as soon as lines of hose had been laid on to the danger places a stream of water was turned on to the top flat from the ladder run up in the centre of the street. This was at ten minutes to 10 o'clock. Later, another was in operation, but it is no exaggeration to say that the two combined could not subdue the seething mass of flames inside the building. Then, too, to the lay mind, the flow of water, seemed to tally inadequate. "The Advertiser" has recently been persistently pointing out the fact that the brigade is not properly equipped, and those who witnessed this big fire came to the conclusion that "The Advertiser" articles had in no way been over-drawn. Gallons of water were being poured in where hundred of gallons were required.

If anyone had a feeling that the writings on the subject were of a too sensational a character, such an idea was cast aside last night. Lookers-on shuddered to think what would become of the adjacent buildings had in the early career of the fire the east and western walls given away. The brigade did all it could, but it looked a case of the fire burning itself out. At five minutes to 10 o'clock the lower rooms became ignited, but quickly a hose was withdrawn from the top flat and directed to the new outbreak, and promptly extinguished it. At ten minutes after 10 o'clock the back portion of the roof gave way, shooting up what they term a waterfall of stars at fireworks demonstrations. All this time the crowd were looking on and wondering how long the fire would last. And it was brought home to all that the brigade was working splendidly, but the men were not well armed. With force the words of a recent article in this paper were brought home to all—"The fire brigade, in its present state, is but the nucleus of what it should be. The system is admirable; in fact, the brigade compares favorably with any other of its size in Australia, if not the world; but it cannot be expected to do the work which properly can only be done by a brigade of twice its strength, especially when it is also lacking much of the apparatus that should be possessed by an up-to-date brigade. For years Superintendent Booker has urged that the Act should be amended so as to provide for an increase in the strength of the brigade, and he has repeatedly stated that he will not hold

himself responsible for any wholesale incineration which may result from the brigade being undermanned and inadequately equipped as at present."

"WHERE DID THE FIRE START."

The fire is supposed to have started in the upper room. The premises were securely locked up at a quarter to 6 by one of the assistants, and no lights were left burning. Just before 9.30 o'clock a passer-by noticed a cloud of smoke coming from the roof, and a hurried examination convinced him that the seat of the fire was in the ceiling, which was packed with seaweed. Superintendent Booker inclines to the opinion that the conflagration occurred at the rearmost portion of the upper workroom, for it was there that the flames were fiercest when he arrived. The origin of the fire is a complete mystery.

GREAT DAMAGE DONE.

It was naturally impossible to make anything like a reliable estimate of the damage done, as an examination of the building and stock could not be made during the night; but, roughly speaking, the computation of the damage was £18,000. The salvage stock will probably return a couple of thousands, and to that extent reduce the loss. All the goods on the upper floor were destroyed. After the fire had been thoroughly subdued, such inspection as was possible under the circumstances was made, and the brigade withdrew. The buildings were left in charge of constables, and the large hose was continued to play on the debris all night.

CUTTING TELEPHONE WIRES.

At an early stage the firemen who were operating at the end of the ladder were in great danger, for huge tongues of flame and thick, suffocating smoke belched forth from the window opening, at which the ladder was placed. Several times the firemen were within an ace of being enveloped, but Superintendent Booker's resource saved them from injury on each occasion, for he ordered the water from several hoses, which were playing on the conflagration through the front windows, to be temporarily directed on the end of the ladder, thus beating back the flames and giving the endangered firemen an opportunity to breathe. As soon as a favorable opportunity presented itself, the superintendent ordered the ladder to be wheeled back a few feet. The firemen were then at a safe but still effective distance from the fire, and as they again set to work to quench it the crowd cheered loudly to show their appreciation of the firemen's efforts, and to express a sense of relief at the escape of the brave fellows who remained at duty's post even when the distance between life and death was measurable. As the ladder was moved back the telephone wires overhead entangled the men on top. "Take out your axe and cut those wires," imperatively ordered the superintendent, and in a few seconds the severed wires fell on to the pavement. The ladder was then raised several feet, and from the loftier altitude the stream of water could be poured on to the flames with greater effect.

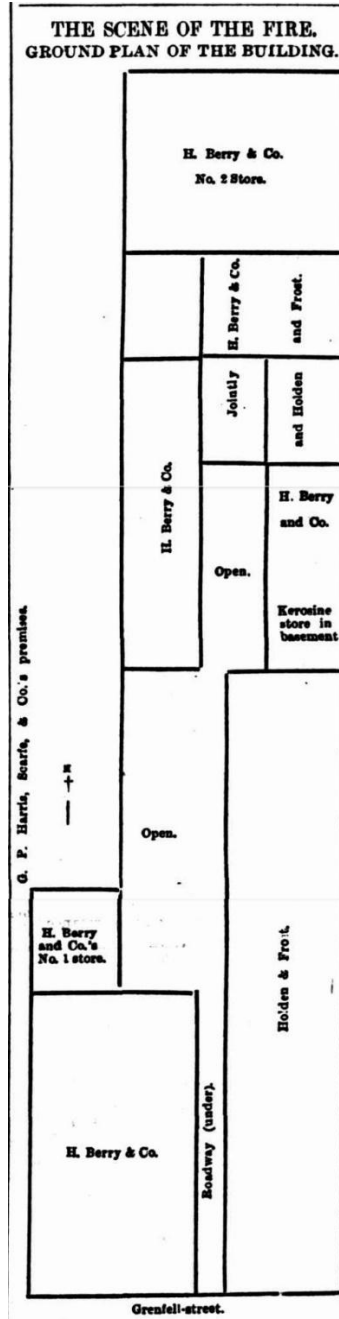
AMONGST THE CROWD.

The large crowd of spectators, which gathered with amazing rapidity in the locality of the conflagration, watched the operations of the firemen with the keenest interest. The brigade worked valiantly. From the top of the large ladder a number of helmeted men worked a hose projecting a stream of water through the windows of the upper story, which for the time being had the appearance of opening into a vast furnace. The flames, which now and again leaped up high above the roof, cast a glow of light on the buildings close by, and a weird uncanny reflection was noticeable on galvanized roofs and verandahs in the distance. As some new mass of flame was reached by the water, or a clever attempt was made to face back an encroaching mass of fire, lusty cheers from the crowd evidenced the appreciation of the onlookers.

During the time that the fire showed its fiercest glow the sight was spectacularly very fine, although there was of course a sense of its destructive character. Through the aperture in the front wall falling timbers, all ablaze, could be seen at rapidly recurring intervals, and when

large rafters were loosened from their holdings and fell the showers of sparks which rose and surmounted not only the burning building but all the adjacent edifices, looked magnificent, though appalling. The falling of the roof formed one of the features of the evening from the standpoint of the onlookers. The fierce glow which had held supreme its reign, despite great volumes of water pouring from four large hoses, had subsided. Still there were light and flame enough to make objects near look black by contrast,

THE SCENE OF THE FIRE.
GROUND PLAN OF THE BUILDING.



when a loud crackling noise was heard, followed by a long rumbling, and culminating in a terrific crash. "It's the roof," gasped hundreds of voices at the same time, but Superintendent Booker simply said "Now we shall have a chance; the roof has gone." One peculiar effect much commented on was produced by the mingling of golden colored smoke and sprays of steam, with huge showers of sparks. Through this combination the moon, nearing full, was at

times visible, although frequently obscured. The sight of the lunar orb as viewed through the cloud and fire, was particularly picturesque and effective.

FROM RUNDLE-STREET.

Little could be seen of the fire from Rundle-street for some time. As the smoke and flames showed up against the sky, however, the news quickly spread, and the pedestrians were soon aware of the catastrophe. Numbers of people rushed down Gawler-place, and added their presence to the already vast multitude that had congregated. Many also endeavored, to gain an entrance to the scene by way of the lane passing at the back of the Arcade, but were frustrated by the police at the Grenfell-street end, and were sent back disappointed. They however made their entrance by way of Gawler-place, and soon became spectators of the scene.

ACCIDENTS TO FIREMEN.

It was a difficult fire to get at, for, while it was confined to a comparatively small building, there were no wide thoroughfares on three sides as at Martin's, and in consequence the firemen labored at a distinct disadvantage. The strong smelling smoke collected in the narrow lane leading to the store at the rear of the gutted premises, and Fireman Alexander was at one stage completely overcome by it. He soon recovered, and remained on duty till the fire was subdued. Fireman Peterson was not so fortunate, but luckily he escaped with slight injury. He fell and sprained his ankle, and despite Superintendent Booker's advice to him to go off duty he elected, to stick to his work till the end.

SUPERINTENDENT BOOKER'S STATEMENT.

"We received the call at 9.30 pm.," said Superintendent Booker after the fire. "The call was received at the head station from the Charles-street alarm in Rundle-street, near Messrs. John Martin & Co.'s. The reel, steamer, and ladder were turned out, and as the alarm was received from a thickly populated district, North Adelaide and Norwood brigades were called in, and the Unley brigade was ordered to call at the head station and bring on the second steamer. Upon arrival in Rundle-street we were informed that the fire was in Grenfell-street, and when we reached Holden & Frost's the place was well alight on the upper floor, and the fire was spreading rapidly towards the Grenfell-street end. I immediately got six lines of hose to work from hydrants and standpipes situated in Grenfell-street, Hyde-street, Rundle-street, and other places. Also two powerful jets were turned on from the steamers. At the start of the fire, when the two first lines of hose were taken into the building and up the staircases to the top floor, the fire was so fierce that the men were driven back, and had to retire foot by foot. But, after a hard fight, by half-past 10 all danger of the fire spreading was practically over, and it only then became a matter of cooling down, and at 11.20 I was able to order the ladder and two steamers home, to stand by ready for emergencies. I have left a couple of firemen in charge of the building with a line of hose in case any of the smouldering debris might catch alight."

Has the fire resulted in a total loss?

"No, not by a long way. There is a splendid lot of salvage. In fact, a great quantity of stock is not even slightly damaged by water, for salvage sheets were used wherever it was possible to do so, and over a dozen were spread out over the stock. I may say that it was rather a peculiar kind of building. There was a gallery floor half-way between the ground and first floors, with light courts right through. These, I might tell you, caused a great draught to fan the flames."

How did your men work?

"Splendidly. My only trouble is well known to the press; therefore I need not repeat it at length. I want more men and better appliances."

How many firemen were there?

"Fifteen, out of a total strength of 21, including the North Adelaide brigade. There are always two men on leave from the head station, and sometimes three, as was the case to-day. Then one man is always stationed at the Islington workshops. The actual strength of the brigade is what I had out to-night. The staff ought to be doubled if the brigade is expected successfully to cope with big outbreaks."

Was there much risk to the adjoining properties?

"As I explained to you just now, that fire was surrounded by jets of water, and but for this it might have spread to Harris Scarfe's, or Mayfield's. If the back workshop of Holden's had caught alight it would have been a matter of impossibility to save Mayfield's, and there is no telling how far it might have spread."

MR. HOLDEN SPEAKS.

Mr. H. J. Holden was at his home in Osmond-terrace, Norwood, when he heard of the fire, and naturally he made all haste to the scene of the conflagration. By the time he arrived the upper portion of the building was completely gutted. Indeed, the place looked in the darkness one huge mass of molten fire. When asked by a representative of "The Advertiser" if he could suggest any means by which the origin of the outbreak could be accounted for, he replied he could not, and mentioned that great precautions had recently been taken against fire by the introduction of fireproof doors and iron window protectors. It was fortunate that these improvements had been adopted, as otherwise the danger of the flames spreading beyond the factory would have been increased. The place was used for the manufacture of harness and saddles, and there was a quantity of leather and padding in the stock, but these were not particularly inflammable. The benches and tools would be much more likely to burn easily and help feed the flames. The value of the stock and fittings in the factory would be, roughly, about £3,000, but the total value of goods and fittings in the entire building was about £15,000.

The building-was about 150 ft. deep from Grenfell-street, with a frontage of 45 ft., and consisted of basement, ground floor (which was practically subdivided by a gallery running round the flat), and the upper storey, used as the factory. "About 12 months ago we had iron fire-proof doors placed at the rear of the building," Mr. Holden stated. "This was very fortunate, in view of the fire which has occurred, as otherwise nothing could have prevented the flames reaching the premises of Messrs. Mayfield, in Rundle-street. If once the fire had got a hold there, there would have been a straight run along Rundle street."

The force of Mr. Holden's statement was rendered additionally emphatic by the fact that at the moment he was making it a number of firemen were exerting themselves to the utmost to project a stream of water right to the back of the building, but the insufficient strength of the stream rendered this impossible. The appalling results which would have followed on the disaster hinted at by Mr. Holden may well be contemplated by those who are not yet convinced of the need of a more generously equipped brigade. Mr. Holden, continuing just as a peak of flame rose fierce and threatening nearer the west front of the building, mentioned that only about a month ago the parapet wall had been erected, dividing their portion of the pile from that occupied by Messrs. Henry Berry & Co. To the spectator it was abundantly clear that the new addition was an important factor in confining the fire to the original premises.

In reply to the query as to the number of hands employed by Messrs. Holden and Frost, Mr. Holden replied about 100. He also went on to state that the firm usually closed their premises at about 5.30 p.m. Mr. H. Pascoe was in the habit of locking up, and before doing so, he usually saw that all was safe and right in the building. Mr. Holden had been informed, that it was about a quarter to 6 that evening when the place was locked up, but there was nothing unusual in this, as it not infrequently happened that some of the men were a little late in getting away. Although there was a right-of-way at the west side of the building in front they joined on the west blocks at the rear, and this greatly increased the danger of the fire spreading.

MESSRS. H. BERRY & CO.'S PREMISES.

Mr. P. Delbridge, the manager, with power of attorney, for Messrs. Henry Berry and Co., arrived on the scene when the fire was at its height. On being questioned when it had been practically extinguished, he said:—"When I arrived here I found firemen standing on the sheds at the back of the premises pouring immense quantities of water on to the flames, while other men, as you know, were attacking the fire from the front. It was fortunate the gale we experienced the previous evening was not blowing at the time, and that the firemen were assisted in their work by the bright moonlight. The block of buildings occupied by Messrs. Holden & Frost and the firm I represent is owned by Mr. T. L. Browne. The front portion of the premises of Messrs. Berry & Co. were set apart for offices, while the remainder contained wholesale groceries of all descriptions. The premises at the rear were jointly occupied by Messrs. Holden & Frost and us, but about four-fifths of the total accommodation was reserved for our goods. Messrs. Holden & Frost only had at the back an engine-room, a collar-making apartment, and a factory. "Our kerosine store in the basement, immediately at the rear of Messrs. Holden and Frost's front shop, was a licensed magazine. There was only a small quantity of kerosine there when the fire broke out. There was nothing very inflammable in our stock of groceries. A roadway separates our ground premises from those of Messrs. Holden & Frost, but the only division on the second floor is a 14-in. wall. Fortunately within the past month Mr. Holden had alterations carried out to guard against an outbreak of fire. The wall between the two places was built right up to the roof, and doubtless our stores would have been destroyed by fire if this precaution had not been taken. The buildings at the rear were erected only about 18 months ago. The premises on the western side of the block of buildings are in the possession of Messrs. G. P. Harris, Scarfe, & Co., and those to the east are occupied by the Allgemeiner Deutscher Verein. The property of Messrs. Berry & Co. was insured in the Manchester Assurance Company for a total of £8,225, divided thus—£2,725 on No. 1 store and £5,500 on No. 2 store. There are three principals of the firm of Messrs. Berry & Co., namely, Mr. Henry Berry, Mr. H. W. Berry, and Mr. H. P. M. Berry. Mr. Henry Berry resides in Melbourne. I anticipate the only damage that has been done to Messrs. Berry & Co's stock has been by water. I cannot guess what the amount of damage is, but it must be considerable."

THE POLICE ARRANGEMENTS.

The police arrangements were admirable. The Commissioner (Colonel Madley), Inspector Sullivan, and Sub-Inspector Shaw were on the scene soon after the outbreak, and Inspector Sullivan called up all the available city constables. These included three watches, and with half a dozen mounted men brought up the total to about 40 men. There was naturally a large crowd of spectators, but splendid order was preserved, and the operations of the firemen were in no way impeded, as the constables were able to keep a sufficient space clear without difficulty.

THE INSURANCES.

The building, which is owned by Mr T. L. Browne, of Mount Gambier, is insured in the Commercial Union Company for £5,000 by the landlord. Messrs. Holden & Frost have in their agreement of lease a clause arranging that in consideration of certain sums paid in addition to the rent they are relieved from the responsibility of insuring the building. The stock is insured directly by the firm in the Colonial Mutual Society for £8,700, of which amount that company has returned £1,000 risk, and transferred the remaining sum as follows—The Guardian Fire and Life Office, £2,000; National Insurance Company of New Zealand, £1,000; North British. £1,000; Alliance, £1,000; Sun, £1,000; Northern Assurance, £1,000; and London and Lancashire, £700.

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LARGE FIRE IN THE CITY.

STIRRING SCENES IN GRENFELL STREET.

HOLDEN & FROST BURNT OUT.

GOOD WORK BY THE BRIGADES.

LARGE QUANTITY OF STOCK SAVED.

One of the largest and most destructive fires that has occurred in the city for some time past broke out in Grenfell street between 9 and 10 o'clock on Tuesday evening. The result of the conflagration was the destruction of a large portion of the stock of Messrs. Holden & Frost, the well-known saddlery firm, whilst the premises occupied by them were completely gutted. During the last 12 months Grenfell street, which is rapidly becoming one of the most important thoroughfares of the city, has been the scene of at least six outbreaks, two of which have occurred during the present week. Although the alarm was promptly given on Tuesday evening, the brigades were misdirected by the call having been given from Rundle street, and the delay thus caused gave the fire an important start. A large concourse of people were soon drawn towards the main point of attack, which was in Grenfell street. Although from the outset Superintendent Booker had hoses at work at four points, in a very short space of time a thin white wreath of smoke, which might have been seen winding its way from the back portion of the premises occupied by Holden & Frost, gave way to a black column, and it was only a few minutes before flames could be plainly observed from Rundle street and any portion of Grenfell street. Within 10 minutes of the first alarm the reflection was discernible in the suburbs, and by 10 o'clock the scene in the vicinity of the outbreak was a stirring one. Hundreds of cyclists might have been seen scorching towards the point of interest, whilst vehicles of all descriptions, up to the most modern motor car, were brought into requisition by people who desired to get on the spot early and watch the proceedings. Owing to the substantial character of the building, which was erected in 1878, the firemen were comfortably able to confine the flames within the four walls of Messrs. Holden & Frost's. At no time was the full power of the brigades employed. At one period it looked as if the surrounding establishments were in imminent danger, but a few anxious moments sufficed to reassure owners of adjacent properties, many of whom quickly effected an entrance into their holdings, and began making what provision they could for keeping the enemy back. All hope of saving the premises of the well-known saddlery firm were soon abandoned, and as the flames secured a strong hold of inflammable material on the upper floor, and from this jumped quickly to the roof, it was realized that the outbreak was going to prove a very destructive one. At the end of an hour's fierce struggle fire fighters and spectators alike recognised that Messrs. Holden and Frost would be burnt out, but that adjoining premises would be saved. This proved to be the case, as Messrs. Henry Berry & Co., who occupied a portion of the same building, were able to inform us late last night that, after a hasty inspection, they found that their premises have not been injured. Whilst the fire lasted it was fierce, and called for vigorous efforts on the part of the firemen. Throughout, however, Superintendent Booker had a strong re-serve force at his command, which he never had occasion to draw upon. A second fire engine, ready at a moment's notice, stood awaiting an emergency, which never occurred, and, thanks to the efficiency of the brigades, the outbreak at no time got out of hand. The fire fighters covered themselves with glory at every point. —The Scene in Grenfell Street.— The shouts of the firemen as they skilfully negotiated sharp corners at a smart hand gallop, long, thin curling wreaths of smoke each moment increasing in volume, policemen hurrying from well-trodden beats, half-clad troopers galloping from the bar-racks, quickly emptied all other streets of the city of casual passers-by, and caused a human stream, broad and deep, to flow into Grenfell street. A southerly breeze caught the smoke, and spread it towards Rundle street, and through the black cloud which was formed there burst at short intervals sheets of flame which threw a reflection over the buildings in the vicinity of the Arcade. No better direction could possibly have been given to people who happened to be out of doors in the suburbs or in the city, and from all directions and by every conceivable means of conveyance a vast audience was drawn together. Nearly 2,000 persons who had been listening with rapt attention to Mr. Reid in the Town Hall had a new form of attraction awaiting them at the close of the meeting, and as the alarm of fire was by that time resounding throughout the city, they quickly helped to swell the rapidly growing crowd gathered in the

middle of Grenfell street. With the exception of the space kept by the police for the fire fighters, that portion of the thoroughfare from Hindmarsh square to Gawler place, as well as every adjoining lane, and the Arcade itself, was closely packed with sightseers, who followed with intense interest every movement on the part of the firemen, cheering enthusiastically as the daring fellows indulged in plucky frontal attacks against the flames or brought off successful flanking movements. Whilst Superintendent Booker directed operations from Grenfell street several firemen made their way through the Central Hall to the top of the roofs to the east of where the fire had been located. Others forced an entrance through the main door leading to the archway between Messrs Holden' & Frost's and Berry & Co.'s premises, and the reports from these two sections showed that the conflagration was confined to the back premises of the well-known saddlery firm. If ever there was a strong argument for the placing of telegraph and telephone wires underground it was supplied to the audience who waited first with breathless impatience and then with some concern the movements of two firemen who were on a ladder placed against the front elevation of the building. Ladder and men for a moment seemed to be entangled in the cobweb of wires, and elevating the former meant jamming the men, and rendering them and their hose useless. "Cut those wires with your axes," roared the Superintendent, to the accompaniment of falling glass as the front windows gave way and a burst of flame fed by the draught of air illuminated the scene with a grand pyrotechnic display. Out came axes, and a few blows sufficed to cut off no end of subscribers who would doubt less be ringing up the exchange anxiously to ask if it were true that a fire had broken out in Adelaide, and wondering why they "couldn't get on." "Back with the ladder, boys," cried Mr. Booker; and firemen, helped by willing volunteers, sprang to the wheels and brought their comrades into a better position for attacking the flames. Within 10 minutes of the arrival of the brigades dense columns of smoke were issuing from the roof and windows, and from every aperture tongues of fire leaped out. Within a quarter of an hour there was a brilliant blaze of light as a portion of the main rafters fell in and sent forth a shower of sparks in the direction of Harris, Scarfe, and Co.'s yard and towards Rundle street. Just at this critical juncture, when the thoughts of many in the crowd were turned towards the unenviable position of the adjacent buildings, Mr. Richard Smith and his two sons, who had been attentive listeners to the eloquent Mr. Reid, arrived on the scene. The spring with which one of the young men vaulted to the top of a large iron gate rather alarmed a policeman close by, who probably mistook the flying youth for a burglar bent on extracting bar iron or some other commodity from the yards of the well-known firm. The anxious look on the face of Mr. Smith, however, was a sufficient passport, and in a very short space of time the caretaker and several workmen had the firm's hose playing on that portion of the building nearest to the flames. At 9.50 the first steamer was ready for action, and the blowing of its whistle was the signal for a round of applause on the part of the crowd, who repeated its efforts a few seconds later as a fine stream of water was poured into the eastern windows. By this time the flames had obtained a strong hold, and were rapidly travelling towards the front of the building and down-wards on to the main floor. All hope of saving Messrs. Holden & Frost's had long been abandoned, and whilst every effort was made to reduce the fierceness of the fire the main attention of the brigade men seemed to be concentrated in fighting back the flames from the surrounding buildings. As the rafters began to fall the roof caved in, and showers of sparks at close intervals told their own tale of the destruction that was going on within. From first to last the sight, from a spectacular point of view, was a grand one, and it was close upon mid-night before the audience thinned out sufficiently to give the constables a little relaxation from their vigilant and vigorous work in keeping a clear space for the firemen.

BEGINNING THE FIGHT.

—A Preliminary Skirmish.—

All things considered, the brigades did remarkably well to get to work as smartly as they did. They were handicapped from the outset by the call coming from Rundle street, and the reel, steamer, ladder, and suburban brigades were all in turn off the scent, as it were, for a few minutes. The result was they had to wheel round and trot through an alley alongside the Arcade to get into Grenfell street. On arrival Superintendent Booker at once realized that a

difficult task was before him and his men. "Now then, men, get the first hose to work as quickly as possible," he remarked coolly, as he began taking in the situation. A bystander volunteered the information that there were fire doors at the rear of the building; consequently, while some of the brigade were running out the hose a couple more were deputed to batter in the door of the main entrance. Even at this stage the fire appeared to have the building at its mercy. Flames could be seen running along almost the whole extent of the western side of the top, and smoke was issuing from the upper windows at the front of the establishment. As soon as the large front door gave way the Superintendent led his men with a hose in tow to the far end of the main building, and within a few minutes a good pressure of water was being applied. By this time the steamer had arrived, and was getting into working order, while the suburban reels were galloping up in rapid succession. The arrival of each brigade was the signal for a rousing cheer. The ladder was run into position, in order to fight the flames from the air, but, unfortunately, became entangled with the telephone wires, and valuable time was lost. The men, however, were not slow to take in the position of the enemy, and lowering the head of the ladder they gradually forced it under the wires against the topmost window, and a high pressure of water was applied. An entrance was also forced into the right-of-way between Holden and Frost's and Henry Berry & Co.'s and a hose run alongside, and a stream was thus played on to the western side of the building. By this time, however, the flames were leaping from rafter to rafter, and the factory seemed doomed. And it is doubtful whether a dozen minutes had elapsed! The preliminary skirmish was over, and Superintendent Booker and his well-trained men settled down to a stubborn struggle with an enemy that gives and asks no quarter.

—Fighting the Flames.—

It was about 9.30 that the alarm was given from the instrument at the corner of Charles and Rundle streets. Not with-standing that the location of the conflagration was at first wrongly given, and that the brigades on arrival at the alarm had to return to Grenfell street for the main at-tack, scarcely any time appeared to elapse before the tall ladder stood erect in the wide thoroughfare, manned by helmeted firemen busily pouring water into the cauldron that seethed within the building. The hold that the flames had obtained was apparent from the first, for rolls of black smoke poured forth, and were wafted to-wards Rundle street. The topmost men on the ladder, Firemen W. L. Booker (son of the superintendent) and W. Alexander, determinedly pointed the nozzle to its work, in spite of the fierce heat that could be felt by the spectators on the ground in close proximity to the apparatus. Lustily their chief shouted, "Keep the ladder cool!" as the flames curled and played about its topmost rungs, and the men were again and again cheered by the large crowd for their daring. The perseverance of these men appeared to be altogether unrewarded by success, however, and the order to draw the ladder away had to be reluctantly given at the end of a fierce 10 minutes' struggle. Then another difficulty presented itself. The overhead telegraph and telephone wires—with which our every street is still disfigured—offered an impediment until the hatchets quickly made work for the line repairers. Four windows were belching forth fire, and through the apertures showers of sparks made a fine pyrotechnic show. Not before 9.50 did the steamer get into operation; but the additional hose sent up a volume of water three times as strong as that already playing in the front. Superintendent Booker exclaimed— "I think I want some more men. That looks like it, doesn't it?" And the superintendent turned away to look at an injured fireman. It was quickly evident that nothing could save the central upper story from entire destruction, and the main effort was directed to secure the safety of the premises of Henry Berry & Co., next door, portion of the same building, but separated by a narrow alley from the other, and the comparatively new Central Hall and appurtenances on the eastern side, the home of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Club. So well was the work of the brigade concentrated that, notwithstanding the to all appearance impossibility of the task, it was not long before signs of conquest began to appear. Portions of the roof now and again fell in, the concussion throwing up multitudinous sparks, which made a magnificent and awe-inspiring picture set against a chocolate back-ground of illumined smoke. But the main battle had been fought by soon after 10 o'clock, and little of spectacular interest occurred until the crowd on the eastern

front found some diversion in the endeavours of the firemen to break through the lower windows with the jet of water from a branch fed by the steamer. This proved of but slight avail. Two of the firemen, however, broke metal from the macadamized street with their tomahawks, and after some little practice at stonethrowing the object sought was achieved. It was then an assured thing that the adjacent buildings were safe, and there was little to chain the attention but the throb of the engine, the rapid artillery of the water, cracking, Nordenfeldt-like, through the narrow nozzle, and the occasional hapless drenching received by some unfortunate as he passed a leaky joint in traversing the network of hose on the roadway. Gradually the crowd melted away, and by 11 o'clock, after a fight of an hour and a half, the fire had been sufficiently subdued to enable the welcome signal to be given for the steamer to be shut down. Soon the men were at work rolling up the lengths of canvas tube, the streets were deserted, and nothing broke the stillness of the night but the occasional bugle blast which called for a little more water as a new focus of heat was discovered, or bade the stream cease when its purpose was accomplished. Superintendent Booker entered the front store, lit the gas, revealing the fact that the fire had been kept well out of the front of the lower story. The floor was inches deep in water, and the rapid drip from above told how well the premises had been soaked. The dauntless energy of the brigade, added to and aided by the cool courage and deliberate action of its leader, had accomplished a splendid feat in restricting within so small a space the damage that threatened a fearful havoc. Holden & Frost's was gutted, but Berry' & Co.'s establishment and other buildings were saved, and this result was due to the splendid manner in which the flames were fought and prevented from spreading beyond the four walls within, which the fire started.

—"No Cab For Me."—

It was just when the excitement was keenest that the cheering of the crowd and the shouting of the firemen was momentarily hushed by the cry—"A fireman hurt!" "Look! there he is!" and attention was riveted upon the efforts of two brigadesmen who could be seen carrying a comrade through the archway into Grenfell street. Sympathetic enquiries were shouted across the street, and the spectators gave way as the fire fighters placed their burden on the footpath. "A broken leg," somebody shout-ed. Superintendent Booker requisitioned a trooper to fetch a conveyance, and as a cab dashed up Fireman Petersen, the injured man, sat up, and exclaimed—"No cab for me; not much," and the bystanders cheered at this intimation that no serious harm had befallen the man, and at the determination of the plucky fellow not to go out of the fighting line. "I felt something give way underneath me," Peterson subsequently explained, "and down I came. The sudden stoppage did not agree with my ankle, but I'll soon be all right." It was not long before Peterson regained his lost helmet, and was lending his mates a hand.

—Viewed from the East Parapet.—

The scene as presented to the gaze of those who gained a coign of vantage on the east parapet of the burning building was like an immense crater. Those "in the gallery," as it were, saw at 10.15 the northern end of the roof collapse, and the southern portion gave ominous indications of soon following. The northern, eastern, and western walls were completely denuded of every vestige of plastering, and all the woodwork and stairways had disappeared. At the bottom of the amphitheatre formed by the four enclosing walls the flames roared and crackled among the remains of costly harness, saddles, bridles, and various equestrian appurtenances with demoniacal glee. Suddenly, as the smoke drifted, a glimpse was had of a beautifully finished riding saddle as a pile of debris was brushed aside by the powerful stream, of water from a hose, but in another instant it had dis-appeared, swallowed up by the searching and unsparing flames. In one corner a quantity of saddlery shone out resplendently in the glare of the light, but not for long, as a greedy tongue of fire stretched out and licked it up. Three firemen took up a position with a hose on the north-eastern corner of the building and poured in a heavy stream of water on the burning mass beneath. Immediately the water touched the fiery substances a blinding, choking smoke was generated, and it seemed probable that the men would be compelled to beat a retreat. But with characteristic pugnacity

they held to their post, notwithstanding the blinding fumes which blew in their faces, and which caused the reporter to seek a purer atmosphere, and continued their efforts to extinguish the flames.

—Scene in Rundle Street—

Throughout the evening there was a considerable body of spectators in Rundle street, where the North Adelaide and Port Adelaide reels were stationed, and lines of hose were run out to the rear of the building from that thoroughfare. Throngs of people who passed through the Arcade noticed considerable smoke had penetrated to its interior, and some concern was also felt for the shops of Mr. Mayfield and other business premises fronting the main street. There proved, happily, to be no cause for serious apprehension in this direction.

INTERVIEW WITH SUPERINTENDENT BOOKER.

—"Splendid Lot of Salvage Stock."—

Superintendent Booker gave the order "Stop the steamer and gather up lines of hose" at 11.20, but it was not until an hour later that he was able to return to the Central Station, in Wakefield street. When he entered his office his clothes were saturated with water and his face and hands were blackened with smoke. A representative of The Register was waiting to interview him, and he remarked, "Yes. it is all over, and I am tired. If you will excuse me for a moment I will change my clothes, and then I will tell you all I know about the fire," A few minutes later, when he returned to the office, there was nothing in his appearance to indicate that he had just concluded a long and anxious struggle with the flames. The members of the small but zealous brigade under his control had worked splendidly during the evening, and Mr. Booker had the gratification of knowing that the conflagration had been confined practically to the upper story of the premises in which it originated. He had also satisfied himself before leaving the building that the salvage stock which remained in the warehouse would prove a valuable asset. These considerations justified the satisfaction which he experienced when he contemplated the result of the strenuous exertions, which he and his men had made to combat the fire. "At 9.30 p.m. a call was received at the headquarters station from the Charles street alarm," remarked the Superintendent, "and a reel, steamer, and ladder were immediately ordered out. As the call was received from, a thickly populated district the North Adelaide and Norwood branches were called in, and the Unley Brigade was ordered to call at the head station, and bring on the second steamer. Upon arriving in Rundle street we were informed that the fire was in Grenfell street. We galloped through Twin street, and found Messrs. Holden & Frost's factory well alight on the upper floor. The flames were then spreading rapidly towards the Grenfell street end. I immediately got six lines of hose to work from various hydrants and standpipes situated in Grenfell street, Hyde street, and Rundle street. Shortly afterwards two powerful jets from the steamers were also concentrated upon the burning building. At the start of the fire two lines of hose were run into the building and up the stair-case to the top floor, but the heat was so fierce that the branch men were driven out of the premises. They were compelled to retire foot by foot before the overpowering heat. After a hard fight, however, we got the flames well in hand, and by 10.30 all danger of the conflagration spreading was passed. From that time it was only a matter of pouring in water for the purpose of cooling down the walls. At 11.20 I was able to order the ladder and two steamers to return to the central station, the men being instructed to stand by in readiness to turn out again if required. As it was possible that small outbreaks might occur later through smouldering debris being fanned into flame, I left two firemen and two policemen in charge of the premises with a line of hose attached to a hydrant in readiness for an emergency.

—Not a Total Loss.—

"Is the stock totally destroyed?" "Certainly not," replied Superintendent Booker. "It is far from being a total loss. There will be a splendid lot of salvage; in fact, a considerable quantity of the stock is not even slightly damaged by water. Salvage sheets were used wherever it was

possible to do so. About 12 or 14 of these water-proof rubber coverings were utilized on the lower floor and gallery. I may remark here that the building is rather peculiar, owing to a gallery being situated between the ground and first floors. There are lighting courts right through which caused a great draught, and fanned the flames on the top floor." "How did the men work?"— "They carried out their duties in a splendid manner, and I have no reason to find any fault with them in that respect. My trouble on this occasion was the same as I have experienced at previous fires, namely, the numerical weakness of the brigade. I require more men, and better appliances to enable me to cope with large fires in a proper manner." "Do you think you could have saved the building if you had had better appliances?" —"Certainly. If my equipment had included a large steamer capable of throwing 750 gallons of water per minute, for instance, I could have swept the top floor of the factory from end to end with a 2-in. column of water, and the fire would have been extinguished with far greater rapidity. This would not only have minimised the risk of the conflagration spreading, but less stock would have been destroyed. The total strength of the brigade staff, including the North Adelaide branch, is 21 men, but two of the number stationed here are constantly on leave, and one is always at Islington. The result was that when the call was received the total number of men available was only 15. In my opinion the staff should be doubled. At present it is hopelessly inadequate. For instance, what would have been the result if another fire had broken out in Adelaide while we were engaged in Grenfell street to-night. Valuable time would have been lost while I was making up a party and providing them with appliances from the apparatus in use here." "Will you explain why only one steamer was used when two were available?"— "The second steamer was started, but I did not keep it going during the latter part of the time we were fighting the fire, because I found there was a splendid pressure of water in the main, and I could not get much better jets by pumping than was obtainable from the hydrants. In the second place I deemed it advisable to disconnect the second steamer as soon as possible in order that it might be kept in readiness for any emergency, such as another fire. If it had been of any material benefit to me in the circumstances you may depend upon it that I should have utilized it during the whole of the time."

—Mr. Holden Interviewed. —

The firm of Messrs. Holden & Frost comprises Mr. H. J. Holden, of Osmond terrace, Norwood, and Mr. H. A. Frost, of the Parade, Norwood. Mr. Holden was viewing the conflagration from the rear of the building, a spot where sparks were scattering freely and water was literally coming down in torrents, when a representative of The Register had a few seconds chat with him. "There are a couple of fireproof doors at the entrance of the engine room and collar factory," exclaimed Mr. Holden, pointing to the spot. "They are double-proof; but if they give way— well, then the fire will assuredly spread fast into Mayfield's and into Rundle street. I do hope they stand." Mr. Holden did not hear of the outbreak until a few minutes to 10 o'clock, and leaving a message to be forwarded to his partner, he hurried into the city. He arrived at the scene a few minutes after the hour, and knowing what was at stake he almost immediately rushed to the rear of the building, and while there he made the following statement:—"I have no idea of the cause of the fire. I have not been near the shop since 3 o'clock this after-noon. It is the duty of our head clerk, Mr. H. Pascoe, to lock up at half-past 5 or thereabouts. One of my men tells me he left about a quarter to 6, and Mr. Pascoe locked up at the same time. I cannot tell the insurances, or whether my loss is covered. I should say roughly that the stock in the room in which the fire is burning is worth between £2,000 and £3,000, and the whole stock and everything about £15,000. I employ about a hundred men, and this means they will be out of work for a day or so. Until a day or two ago our machinery was driven by electricity, but this was disconnected, since when gas has been used. There are no electric wires towards the northern end of the building. From what I have been able to gather I should say the fire broke out in the ceiling. It seems to have been first noticed by flames leaping from the parapet, and as no flames were seen from the windows at the time, and there were no shutters on the windows, it seems feasible enough to presume that the outbreak first occurred in the ceiling. I have no idea how I will carry on until things get straight again, but we will manage somehow."

—Statement by an Eyewitness.—

A gentleman in business in Grenfell street, who was one of the first to reach the scene of the fire, said:—I had just finished work in my office, and going out into the street, saw a small wreath of smoke in the direction of the Arcade. Knowing that there was no factory stack in the vicinity, my suspicions were aroused, and quickening my pace I arrived opposite Holden & Frost's simultaneously with the first reel. The brigades came up in fine style, with the bold dash and precision of a battery of artillery. The men dropped off the engines, and began unlimbering with the smartness and well trained regularity of artillerymen. The horses from the engines were detached and handed over to the care of willing boys, who evidently felt proud of the post of responsibility allotted to them. Nothing could have been finer than the preliminary proceedings of the brigades, but apparently some hitch, occurred, for minutes went by and still there was no water, whilst the volume of smoke increased in density, and now and again flashes of flame illuminated the sky, and gave the direction to the vast gathering crowd. The ladder was run up to the western window of the saddlery firm, but operations were greatly interfered with by the network of telegraph and telephone wires, and two firemen from the ladder were for some time jammed in between wires, fire, hose and water. It was some minutes before the first small stream was turned on, and the first hose had a leak in it. Ultimately the telegraph wires were cut and the ladder, the top of which had been burnt, was brought back into a more commanding position. To the onlookers there appeared to be unnecessary delay in bringing the hoses into play, whilst it was a considerable time before the first engine got started. As a spectator, my admiration for the fire fighters was increased by the methodical manner in which they appeared to move about, but it seems to me that there is something that wants explaining concerning the delay in getting the hoses and the fire engine, into full going order."

—"Splendid Force the Police."—

The members of the police force have secondary but by no means unimportant duties allotted to them when a large conflagration occurs in the city. It is essential that the street in the vicinity of a burning building should be kept clear in order that the firemen may not be hampered in their efforts to utilize the appliances at their command to the best possible advantage. The crowd which assembled in Grenfell street on Tuesday night numbered many thousands of spectators, and as every person present desired to obtain a place in the front ranks the members of the police force had to be constantly on the alert. About 30 constables and six troopers were summoned to the scene of the outbreak, and they rendered capital service. Inspector Sullivan was present during the whole of the time, and with the assistance of Sub-Inspector Shaw he supervised the arrangements for keeping the roadway clear. The foot constables were under the direction of Sgts. Burchell, Burden, Radford, and Kelly. The troopers experienced some difficulty in keeping their horses under control when they found it necessary to pass in front of the blazing building, and the plunging steeds had a salutary effect upon too eager onlookers. In spite of the universal desire felt by the spectators to secure positions from which they could view the operations of the fire-men, there was no jostling or confusion, and very little difficulty was experienced in keeping sightseers outside the area required for the manipulation of the lines of hose. The Commissioner of Police visited the locality shortly after the fire was discovered, but he did not find it necessary to interfere with the arrangements made by his subordinates, who once more gave practical demonstration of their claim to be regarded as a "splendid force."

—The Building and the Insurances.—

The premises in which the fire occurred form portion of a fine block of buildings about two-thirds of the way down Grenfell street, and almost border on the Arcade. They were designed by Messrs. Garlick and Jackman, to the order of Messrs. J. H. Holden & Co., and built by Mr. William Baker in 1878. The building is of stone, and the walls are thick and substantially constructed throughout. The fire appeared to be confined within a building 100 ft. deep and 40 ft. wide. There is an under-way which separates Holden & Frost from Berry & Co., and from

the front floor there is a well-built dividing wall. The back gable is constructed of stout masonry, which withstood all the attacks, and pre-vented the fire spreading towards Rundle street. The premises are held on lease by Mr. Tom L. Browne, son of Dr. Browne. For many years Holden & Frost occupied a portion of the building now held by Henry Berry, & Co., whilst the latter firm utilized the space where the fire happened. However, about half a score of years ago an arrangement was agreed upon by which Holden & Frost took over the front portion of the premises, then occupied by the well-known grocery firm, in exchange for the western portion and a building at the back. After the exchange Mr. Holden's portion consisted of a building 105 ft. by 45 ft., and comprised a cellar, ground floor, and a gallery, or practically a second floor. It was in this part which was utilized as a factory, that the fire occurred. The major portion of the ground floor was taken up by the retail department, which was conducted by Mr. Frost, and the offices; and, of course, all of these are more or less damaged. He also had a large room at the rear of the main building, and this was known as the harness and collar department, but luckily escaped serious in-jury. The building is partially covered in the Commercial Union, while the stock is insured in the Colonial Mutual for £8,700, of which £7,700 is reinsured, as follows:— Guardian, £2,000; National of New Zealand, £1,000; North British, £1,000; Alliance, £1,000; Northern, £1,000; Sun, £1,000; London and Lancashire, £700.

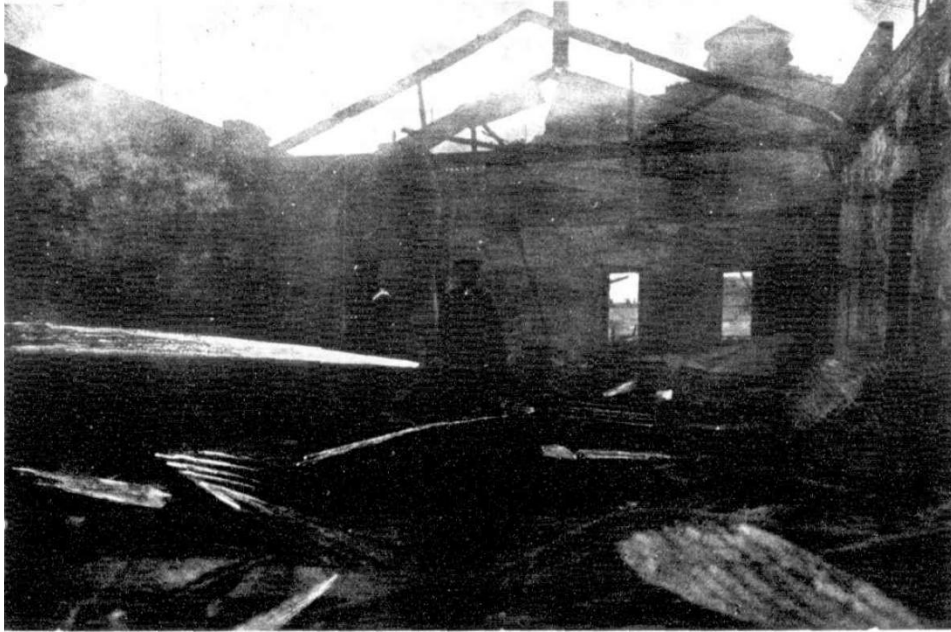
Adelaide Observer (SA : 1843 - 1904), Saturday 14 February 1903, page 23

THE GRENFELL STREET FIRE.



THE GRENFELL STREET FIRE. FRONT ELEVATION OF MESSRS. HOLDEN AND FROSTS WAREHOUSE.

Photo, by W. S. Smith, Arcade.



THE GRENFELL STREET FIRE. AMONG THE RUINS.

Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954), Saturday 14 February 1903, page 44



MESSRS. HOLDEN & FROST'S SADDLERY ESTABLISHMENT IN GRENFELL-STREET.
PARTIALLY DESTROYED BY FIRE ON TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10.



THE FIRE AT MESSRS. HOLDEN & FROST'S: AN INTERIOR VIEW.

Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Saturday 21 March 1903, page 1

FIRE IN GRENFELL STREET.

Considerable commotion was caused in Grenfell street at about 8 o'clock on Friday night, when a volume of smoke was seen to issue from the block of buildings adjoining The Register lane. The streets were well filled with people, and a rush was promptly made for the King William street fire alarm. The call was received at the metropolitan station at 4 minutes past 8, and shortly afterwards the reel, steamer, and ladder arrived, while a few minutes later the North Adelaide, Unley, and Norwood reels dashed up. Superintendent Booker broke into the front door of Mr. S. Gully's bicycle shop, and was assailed by a dense, pungent cloud of smoke. The fumes completely filled the shop, and the firemen had great difficulty in locating the exact seat of the conflagration. Several large cases of Mr. Gully's stock were tumbled out on to the footpath, and a number of bicycles were removed with as much speed as the blinding smoke would permit. After a careful examination the fire was located in the basement, which was well stocked with bicycles, tires, and all manner of rubber material. Until this time no water had been used, for, as the superintendent it, "It is no use turning water on to smoke." So soon as the whereabouts of the flames had been discovered by temperature a hole was cut in the floor of the shop, and a stream of water sent into the "lower regions." A moment later the men got into the basement by means of a narrow winding staircase, and the fire was then quickly extinguished. In conversation with Mr. Gully afterwards a representative of The Register learned that everything had been secured when the shop was closed after the day's work. A lad had put out the lights and satisfied himself that things were as they should be. The building, which bore but slight evidence of the fire, belongs to Prince's estate, and was insured in the Norwich Union Office for £700. The stock was insured with the New Zealand Insurance Company for £250, an amount which will probably cover the damage.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Saturday 25 April 1903, page 6

THE ADELAIDE FIRE BRIGADE.

Recently a series of articles and interviews appeared in The Advertiser concerning the constitution and the revenues of the Fire Brigade Board. In the course of these articles it was pointed out that the brigade was hampered in its work by the lack of funds, and that there was need for greater liberality on the part of the contributing bodies in order to secure the complete efficiency of the brigade. The Australasian Insurance and Banking Record of last Monday's date, in the department devoted to insurance affairs, writes:— "No corporations in

the world pay so little to the maintenance of fire brigades as those in South Australia, and yet they have the power of blocking the expenditure of the board and retarding useful and necessary reforms. In Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland the corporations pay one-third of the expenditure, and in West Australia four-ninths. It is difficult to see why in South Australia they should not pay one-third, and why the absurd provision giving them the power to limit their expenditure should not be swept away. It appears to us that the cumbersome section 43 of part 5 of the 1890 Act should be repealed, and a simple clause substituted providing that the board should have the power to levy whatever sum might be required annually for the protection of the city, in the proportions of one-third each from the Government, the corporations, and the insurance companies. If this course were adopted the grievance of unequal taxation would be removed, and increased power and dignity would be given to the board, which would probably take immediate steps to place the brigade on a thoroughly efficient footing." On the subject of pillar hydrants the same paper remarks:—"Those who know anything of Port Pirie will agree that if Port Pirie consisted solely of Ellen-street the superintendent's remarks on the defective system of fire plugs would be amply justified, while as regards Port Adelaide, the absence of pillar hydrants is nothing more nor less than a disgrace to South Australia. Let us hope that the constant dropping will eventually wear away the stone of Ministerial inertia, and that the desired reforms will be effected."

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Friday 8 May 1903, page 6

A SMALL FIRE.

An alarm of fire was raised in the City shortly before 11 p.m. on Thursday, and a fire engine, fire reel, and escape ladder from the metropolitan station, a reel from Norwood, and another from North Adelaide, were soon on the scene. Some firemen, by climbing on the roof of a small tailor's Shop in James-place, soon discovered the flames, and extinguished them before much damage was done. It appears that a fire that had been used for heating the tailor's irons had been drawn, and the ashes had smouldered until they set alight to a small quantity of wood and coal and a wooden partition. A large crowd gathered near the spot but they saw nothing of the fire.

Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Tuesday 12 May 1903, page 4

WOMAN KNOCKED DOWN BY A FIRE REEL.

At 7 o'clock on Monday evening the Metropolitan Fire Brigade received a call from the Bank street alarm, and, with characteristic promptitude the whole of the appliances at the head station were soon rattling thither. It was, however, found that the reflection from a foundry at the western end of Hindley street was the cause of the turnout. During the progress of the Unley contingent along King William street a woman was knocked over and badly shaken. Superintendent Booker stated that the suburban brigade had called at the head station for the second steamer, and that when they were nearing the intersection of Currie street on the western side the officer in charge noticed a woman step off the footpath. He called out to clear the road, applied the brakes, and attempted to pull off. Notwithstanding his efforts the woman was struck by one of the horses. She was knocked down, and was apparently seriously injured. A fireman was left in charge of the sufferer, who was promptly removed to the Adelaide Hospital in a semi-conscious condition. Dr. Wells found that she had received a severe shaking, but that no bones had been broken. Superintendent Booker considers that as the Unley horses had come in smartly from the suburban station there could be no suggestion that the steamer was travelling unreasonably fast when the accident occurred.

Port Pirie Recorder and North Western Mail (SA : 1898 - 1918), Wednesday 13 May 1903, page 3

KILLED BY A FIRE REEL.

Mrs. Marian McKay, aged 59, a widow residing at Parkside, who was knocked down by a fire reel in King William Street on Monday night, died in the Hospital to-day.

Kalgoorlie Miner (WA : 1895 - 1954), Thursday 14 May 1903, page 4

WIDOWS SAD DEATH.

KILLED BY A FIRE ENGINE. ADELAIDE, May 13.

An inquest was held to-day as to the death of Mrs. Marian McKay, who died yesterday as the result of being knocked over by a fire engine. It was stated in evidence that the deceased, a widow of about 59 years of age, was at the Royal Oak Hotel on Monday afternoon. She was not observed to take any drink there, but when she came she appeared to have had some liquor. She was alright when she left the hotel. She had three sons and a daughter in West Australia, and had received remittances from them occasionally. She had never been heard to threaten her life. A verdict was returned of accidental death, no blame attachable to anyone.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Thursday 11 June 1903, page 6

FIRE IN HINDLEY-STREET.

The Fire Brigade received a call from Morphett-street at 6.19 p.m. on Wednesday evening. The reel, steamer, and ladder from the head station and the reels from Unley, North Adelaide, and Norwood were quickly on the scene. The fire was in a secondhand dealer's shop in Hindley-street, occupied by Mr. Ackolson. A quantity of secondhand clothing in the window was well alight, but when the brigade arrived the flames were quickly subdued before much damage was done.

Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Friday 25 December 1903, page 7

AT THE FIRE BRIGADE STATION.

His Excellency the Governor paid an unofficial visit to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade on Christmas Eve. Sir George Le Hunte and his private secretary (Hon. Victor Nelson Hood) arrived at 9 o'clock, and were received by a guard of honour composed of the firemen, while the band played the national anthem. Even a viceregal visit did not lessen the readiness of the brigade for a turnout, but, fortunately the proceedings were not interrupted by such a contingency. The station was beautifully decorated, and a Christmas tree was shipped by Mrs. Booker for the benefit of the children of the firemen present. Sir George Le Hunte was much pleased with what he saw, and in wishing the brigade the compliments of the season, congratulated them upon their smart appearance, and expressed the hope that he would meet them a year hence in the same happy circumstances. He likened the drill of the firemen to that of the police, with their well-known precision, and expressed the sentiment that the fire fighters were as much the guardians of the public peace as were the police. He congratulated Superintendent Booker upon the admirable good order and readiness of the station.