Adelaide Fire Brigade 1946

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954), Saturday 12 January 1946, page 1

BIG TORRENSVILLE FIRE

Extensive Damage To Woollen Mills

Extensive damage, estimated at several thousands of pounds, was caused by a fire at Torrenside Woollen Mills. Torrensville, early this morning. One part of the mills was completely destroyed, and much machinery and other valuable equipment were extensively damaged. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Hindmarsh Brigade, and other neighboring units fought the fire, which was burning fiercely when the firemen arrived. The brigades made an efficient save, the fire being under control by about 2 am.—within less than 45 minutes after their arrival.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954), Monday 14 January 1946, page 5

TORRENSIDE BLAZE DESTRUCTIVE

Firemen Injured

The fire at the Torrenside Woollen Mills, Taylor's road, Thebarton, early on Saturday morning, was stated, at the weekend, to have caused damage approaching £20,000. Firemen from headquarters and several suburban brigades combined to prevent the spread of the flames to the premises of J. W. McGregor & Sons, woolbrokers, which are separated from the mills by a 12 ft. right-of-way. The blaze was got under control in about 40 minutes. Deputy Chief Officer W. McCallum, of Adelaide, was in charge of the fire-fighting operations. Valuable carding and spinning machinery was destroyed by the fire. A quantity of baled wool was only slightly damaged. In the height of the blaze, portions of the mills collapsed, and a falling piece of timber struck Station Officer R. Paul, inflicting severe burns on one of his hands. Fireman J S. Manning, while playing a hose on the fire from the roof of the main building, slipped and fell through a skylight, receiving a thigh injury. He remained on duty. Later he received treatment at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Other firefighters were struck by falling iron, but escaped serious harm.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954), Wednesday 1 May 1946, page 10

TALKIE ALARMS FOR BURGLARS

System Connected With Fire Brigade

Adelaide firemen are now likely to trap burglars who break into factories equipped with a new type of talkie fire alarm, which includes a watchman's punch-clock. Chief Fire Officer J. J. Whyte yesterday explained:—"If burglars prevented a watchman from making his allotted rounds of alarm points in the latest installations, the Fire Brigade would speed to the factory when the watchman missed punching one clock on a half-hourly schedule. "A watchman could also call the brigade by merely pressing a button and whispering into one of the 20 or more talkie fire alarm points in a large factory if he suspected that burglars were in the premises. "The watchman could then carry on a whispered two-way conversation with Fire Brigade headquarters. "Talkie alarm speakers are so powerful that they will pick up ordinary speaking tones 50 feet away. A loud voice reply from the Fire Brigade Station can be heard 50 yards from the alarm point."

First Adelaide Installation

The new alarms, patented by Adelaide Fire Brigade officers, are made at Adelaide Fire Brigade headquarters. First installation of the new alarm, equipped with watchman's clocks, was at Pope Products, Ltd. Mr. J. J. Thyer, chief Fire Brigade electrician, designed this type of alarm. Chief Officer Whyte and the late Mr. E. M. Angas, former chief fire brigade electrician,

earlier patented the talkie fire alarms. The Fire Brigade charges a rental of £11 10/ a year for a 20 alarm point combination fire alarm and watchman's punch-clock system. Rental charge for each ordinary voice fire alarm point in factories, theatres or other business premises is £2 10/ a year. Chief Officer Whyte said:—"We shall complete by the end of this year the conversion of all street alarms in the City of Adelaide proper to the talkie sys-tem, and also the installation of talkie alarms in many city factories and theatres." Street and factory talkie alarms have already been installed in Port Adelaide, Woodville and Hind-marsh industrial areas. Four wall panels in the main control room at Fire Brigade headquarters can each carry 100 separate alarms of one type. The 400 alarms are grouped in the four panels as follow:— Street talkie alarm, automatic sprinkler systems, heat-operated alarms, and talkie alarms in factories or other large buildings. As soon as any section of an automatic alarm system develops a fault, a loud signal in the Fire Brigade control room indicates the section concerned.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954), Friday 7 June 1946, page 8

"TALKIE" FIRE ALARM

New System In Operation

With its new "talkie" fire alarm control room in operation this week, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade now led fire brigades throughout the world. Chief Fire Officer J. J. Whyte said yesterday. The brigade had practically completed the installation of talkie alarms through out the city. The British Home office has asked for details and illustrations of Adelaide's alarm system. Australian, British, New Zealand and American fire brigades have also made enquiries. Chief Fire Officer Whyte and the late Mr. E. M. Angas, then chief electrician for the Fire Brigade. 10 years ago began experiments to improve Adelaide's fire brigade sys-tem, then considerably out of date. They carefully studied the most modern fire brigade systems over-seas. After three years they evolved the "talkie" alarm. A fire call received in the new control room yesterday morning from the Mile End factory of Horwood, Bagshaw Ltd., showed the ad-vantages of the new system. When a girl in the factory pressed a talkie alarm button a bell sounded in the control room While alarm bells rang throughout the station and firemen rushed to man the motor appliances. Fireman D. Brecht, at a microphone in the control room, was asking:—"Horwood Bagshaw's, why are you calling?" Reply (in conversational tones): —"There is a fire in the paint-dripping section of our factory. Our plant fire squad is running two lines of hose." Fireman Brecht:—"Fire appliances are being sent at once to the factory."

False Alarms Reduced

Chief Fire Officer Whyte left headquarters with four motor appliances, carrying special liquid fire extinguishers for paint fires, and Thebarton Fire Station also sent an appliance. When the firemen arrived at the factory, Horwood Bagshaw's own fire squad, trained in ARP during the war. had al-ready extinguished a fire, which, unchecked, might have destroyed the large factory. An official of the insurance company which carries the firm's fire insurance, happened to be in the factory when the fire occurred. "This is the best fire organisation I've seen," he said. The new system has already stopped 80 p.c. of the false fire alarms, previously due to line faults. The alarm system uses 400 underground telephone lines, hired from the PMG's Department. To operate a street talkie alarm the caller should grasp the cuff of a sleeve, bend the arm and press the elbow against the glass until this shatters. The caller should then press a button in the box, and after receiving a reply from the fire station, report in a conversational tone the location and type of the fire. He should remain at the alarm box until the brigade arrives.

Adelaide's New Talkie Fire Alarms in Action

Adelaide firemen claim that this new "talkie" fire alarm control room at Fire Headquarters, Wakefield street, city, is the most up-to-date in the world. Here Fireman D. Brecht (at microphone) is receiving an actual talkie alarm at 10.59 a.m. yesterday from the Mile End

factory of Horwood, Bagshaw., Ltd., concerning a paint fire in the plant. Inset—One of 60 "talkie" fire alarms recently installed in the city.

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Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954), Tuesday 11 June 1946, page 9

"BRAIN" OF "TALK" FIRE ALARM

1,000 Nerve Centres With Three Functions

A huge electrical "brain" with 1,000 nerve centres controls Adelaide's unique "talk" fire alarm system at Fire Brigade Headquarters, Wakefield street, city. Chief Officer J. J. Whyte yesterday explained features of the new control room, designed and built entirely by the brigade's technicians, under his directions. Each of the hundreds of "talk" alarm circuits has its own particular set of three nerve centres on large panels in a relay room, attached to the headquarters control room. Each "nerve centre" has three sections—a fast relay, which responds to genuine alarms when a button is pushed at an alarm box.) a slow relay, which detects line faults, and a control relay. In the case of a genuine alarm, the control relay automatically enables two-way conversation be-tween the control room and the caller. Flashes on indicators showing the location and type of the alarm, ring bells throughout the station. In the case of a line fault, an amber light flashes in the control room and gives a warning signal. This enables immediate location and correction of the fault. The complexity of the miles of wiring in the three large relay frames behind the control room contrasts with the simplicity of automatic indicators and push but-ton controls in the control room.

Mail (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1954), Saturday 6 July 1946, page 3

Fire

By JACK EDMONDS

Illustrated by IAN McBAIN

STATION OFFICER PAUL . . . marathon runner.

They've spoilt the fire brigade. It's not as good as it used to be. In the good old days a fire was a fire. But what is it now? It's usually a flop. They rush round and put it out before it has really got started.

THAT'S why the fire station was made the subject of this week's investigation.

"Don't be alarmed!" we told Chief Fire Officer Whyte, fixing him with two penetrating gazes. "We won't get tough with you, the two professional boxers, the two champion wrestlers, or the 17 league footballers you employ, but we want to know who's sabotaging our fires." And then the whole sad story came out. We found that every one in the Fire Brigade was largely in the pay of the insurance companies. But we won't go into that beyond the bald statement of the facts. The State Government pays two-ninths, the insurance companies five-ninths, and the various councils two-ninths of the cost of spoiling all the fires. We leave our public to work it out for himself. Finding ourselves in the very heart of this octopus which now stretches its tentacles all over the State, we couldn't help feeling that it was better when they had horses

and carried the fires about with them in belching fire engines. Some of these horses were wonderful. Like Barney. They still talk about Barney up there while they change the sump oil in their new-fangled machines. It was Third-Officer Patton who told us about Barney. He said that once when the firebells were clanging and the horses trotted to their places, had the harnesses dropped on them, and were hitched to the engines, Barney refused to go when his driver called "Tally-ho" or whatever the firemen used to call when on the trail of a fire. But Barney would not budge. The driver cracked his whip and spoke to him rather sharply— but still Barney wouldn't budge. So the driver got down to see what was the matter. And then he noticed that one of the harness buckles was undone. The buckle was done up, and Barney and the fire engine left for the fire without further ado. "That's gospel," Mr. Patton said. Another backward step they have taken is the abolition of the brass helmet. Now they've got black composition ones, which don't shine half as much and are not nearly so pretty. Certainly Station-Officer Paul explained that they kept off falling beams better and didn't let the tiles come through, like the thin beaten brass ones did. But it's discouraging to think that the fireman of today can't take a decent bash on the belfry. Of course, the most retrogressive step yet is the introduction of the new talk-alarm system. This system is definitely unfair. In the good old days in the city you just rang the alarm and the whole outfit turned out, no matter what size the fire. Now they ask you what sort of a fire it is — and probably send round a man with a stirrup pump. And it's robbing the urchins of their fun. They used to break the alarm, press the button. Then run behind the fence to watch the fire brigade arrive. But that's not what happens these days. A voice from the talk-alarm asks them what's the trouble. And what can they say? So instead of the fire brigade a chap arrives on a bicycle to catch the culprits, if he can, and replace the broken glass in the alarm. And it's been the downfall of a number of alcoholic larrikins. After giving the false alarm they've still been talking to the chap at the fire station when the other one arrives on his bike. Then the police take over. Even though the Home Office has written for details of this system, which was developed at the Wakefield street headquarters, and other fire experts have hailed it as a very big advance, we still think it's not quite fair. We forced Station-Officer Paul to show us all the secrets of the different outfits they had there. We saw the salvage van, looking like a red Black Maria, which carries everything from asbestos suits, oxy-acetylene cutting gear, and oxygen "Proto" outfits which will allow a man to live and work in the densest smoke or the deadliest gases for two hours without suffering ill-effects, to canvas sheets, used for covering over the millinery, and brooms to sweep up the mess. We saw the 120-horsepower La France pump, which will pump 830 gallons of water a minute through six hoses, and the Leyland-Metz 126-ft. extension ladder, which has a self-levelling device and cut-outs which stop the ladder when it begins to get too much overhang, and a telephone to the man on the top step. But what appealed to us most were the sledge hammer and axe which are carried in the leading appliance — to open up the doors. And when we noticed that each fireman had his own private hatchet we were all set to join. We changed our minds only when he saw Station-Officer Tom Schwerdt putting the men through their paces. He showed us how the detachable ladders worked, just for good measure got a 12-st. man to carry a 13-stoner down the ladder from a two-story roof. And then we saw their private obstacle course. You wouldn't even call it good, clean fun. They shut the doors of a shed which contains a couple of drums of wet straw soaked with kerosene. When there's so much smoke inside that you can't see a thing they shove the chaps inside, wearing 42-lb. special breathing outfits. Then they shove them in a tunnel about two sizes larger than a rat role, make them crawl through it and round all sorts of ingeniously placed obstructive beams. After that they climb a hanging ladder, worm their way across the rafters for the length of the shed, stagger out into the sunlight when their oxygen has ended.

After reviewing the course we withdrew our applications. Bitterly disappointed that there had been no fire while we were at the station, we stopped to ask Chief Officer Whyte when it was that he had his best fire. "Our best save was at Birks recently," he said. "I had a very nasty feeling there for about three quarters of an hour, but we controlled it in the end. One of the chief factors in making the save was the excellent alarm we received from the York Theatre through their talk-alarm. If we had got there two minutes later we may well have lost the entire

building and stock— which was insured for more than £250,000." We still haven't forgiven him for spoiling what might easily have turned out to have been the best fire in town.

PUT THAT OUT! . . . Station Officer Tom Schwerdt on the job.

THIRD OFFICER PATTON . . . definitely the "Proto" type.

Big "Whyte" Chief Trailing a Blaze

South Western Times (Bunbury, WA : 1932 - 1954), Thursday 5 September 1946, page 12

Robot Fire Alarms

Unique Adelaide Invention

Robot fire alarms which shout questions at a person giving an alarm and then pause while that person replies are an interesting feature of a new fire alarm being installed in Adelaide streets. The system is said to be the best in the world. The alarm is given by breaking the glass and pressing the button in a box on the alarm standard. An indicator falls in the control room at the fire station, and, using a microphone the fireman on duty asks where the fire is and what type of fire it is. The person giving the information just stands in front of the alarm and gives the required information in a normal voice. The voice can be amplified both ways so that instructions can be heard 100 yards from the alarm point. One immediate result of this has been to cut down the number of alarms by 80 per cent. The Talkie Alarm System has already caused the arrest of many offenders. The patent is held by the South Australian Fire Brigades' Board and was devised by the late Mr. E. Angus, the board's Chief Electrician and the Chief Officer (Mr. J. J. Whyte). The British Home Office, U.S.A., and New Zealand have all asked for details of the system. Factories can also be equipped with the talkie alarms which make a most effective burglar alarm. Should this system become universal one of the direct benefits will be great decrease of loss through fire and robbery. With this, will come lowered premiums for insurance. In the past, and at present, insurance offices have always given lower premiums to places equipped with safety devices so as to prevent as much loss as possible. A typical example is the sprinkler system. Also, they have assisted in supporting both in finance find principle, research, undertaken to minimise fire loss.