

DONCASTER COUNTY BOROUGH FIRE BRIGADE HISTORY and STATISTICS

From Thirteenth Century to the Twentieth Century

His Worship the Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The earliest recorded reference to fire in our town of Doncaster is made in the year 1204, when it is mentioned that the township was totally destroyed by fire.

There is little evidence available to help to say how such a disaster was caused, or even how it was dealt with. Whatever the circumstances, it is certain that organised fire fighting arrangements were not provided. It is also questionable whether practical steps were taken as the- result of the lessons learned on this occasion.

It is interesting to note that one of the principal weapons for fire fighting, namely water, enters into history not as a protection to the community from fire but from invaders; a clause is included in a Charter of King John dated 1215 stating that the River Cheswold formed part of the fortifications of the town.

Again, an early mention of accessible water is in the year 1595, when references are made of wells in Hallgate and in the Market Place. Accounts are in existence dated 1632 relating to materials supplied for the maintenance of a well at the town's "Pillorye." It would seem that these wells, which were provided for drinking purposes, were mostly owned by private persons, since certain citizens were fined by the Court Leet for not keeping them in repair, and an instance occurred in 1701 when the Corporation itself was fined for not keeping the well at Butcher's Cross in a satisfactory condition.

The first evidence of providing the town with piped water is in 1703, when a certain John Yarnold commenced operations to pipe water to various parts of the town from the River Cheswold by means of a water wheel and engine and a cistern at the south end of Hallgate. He was granted a lease for 300 years at a cost of 5/- per annum and he had also to provide yearly a couple of capons for the Mayor.

We now come to a period in history when it would seem that water in pipes could be made available for fire lighting purposes, because in the following year, a minute of the Town Council orders "that four citizens or any two of them go about the Town to get subscriptions for a Water Engine to quench Fire, and to report their doings at the next meeting."

Manual fire engines had been invented during the latter part of the 17th century, and this direction of the Corporation would indicate that while fire was a problem so long ago, so were the means of obtaining weapons to fight it.

It would seem also that thoughts were directed to the building of a fire station, because in 1727 ground was bought "for the purpose of erecting a house for the horse engine," although almost eighty years passed before such a fire station was established, near the Parish Church.

Insurance of properties against the ravages of fire had been possible for some years, and in the Corporation "Courtiers" for 1733 there are references ordering that *"ye Castle with a number at ye foot of ye same be cast in lead and fixed upon all ye houses belonging to the Corporation."* and also a scheme was launched *"to nail,, screw, or secure, insurance policies in some conspicuous spot on Corporation properties."* These actions obviously refer to what are now known as fire marks.

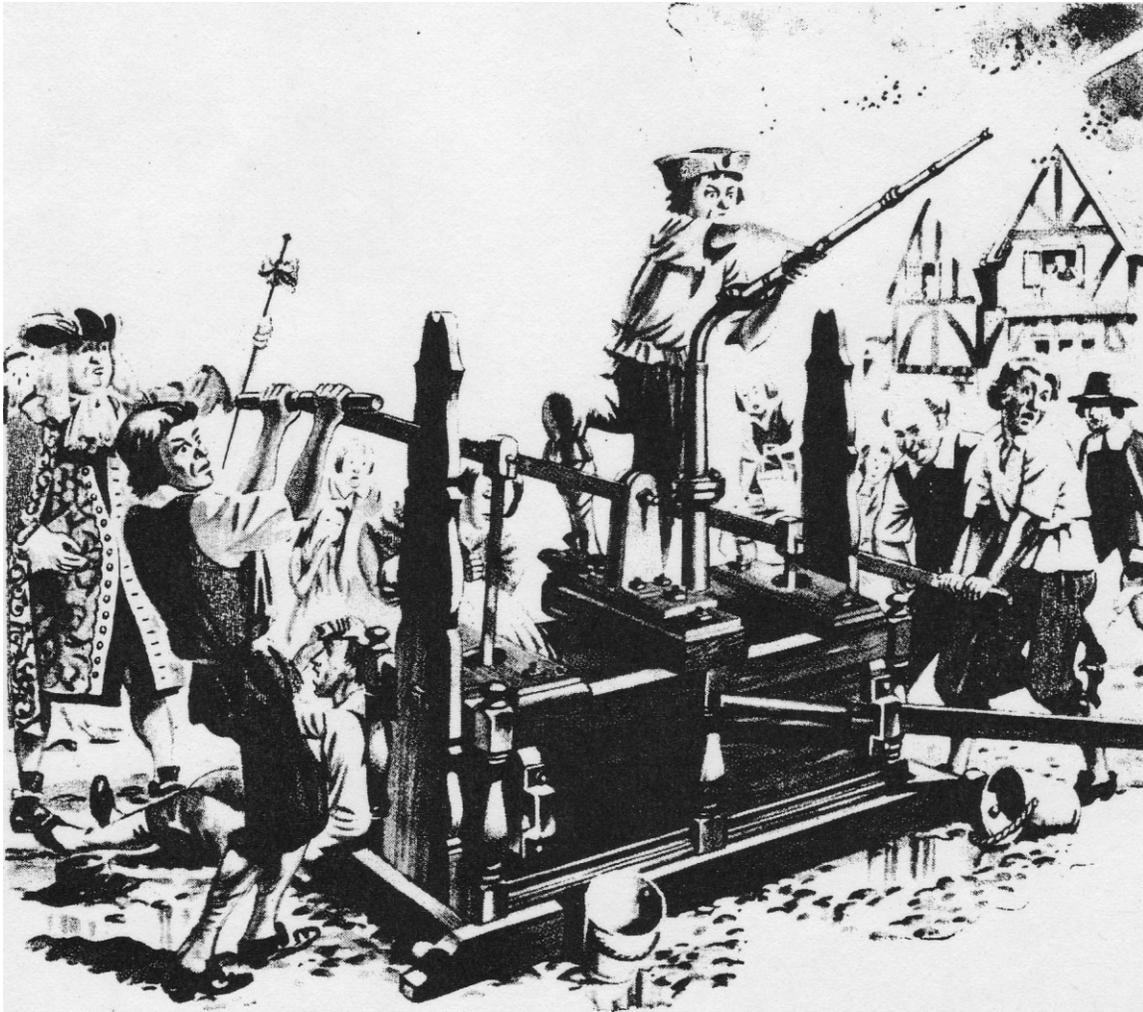
It can safely be said that this period in our history registered the first practical attempts by the authorities in the town to provide the means such as supplies of water, fire station and fire engines to safeguard the property of the Borough. Like all things. however, the cost of maintenance of these facilities comes into the picture, and it did so then, 200 years ago, as the following Council Minutes reveal:

"Ordered that ye Corporation do contribute ye sum of five guineas towards raising a sum of money for purchasing a Fire Engine for ye use of ye Town of Doncaster." and again in the next year, 10 guineas were ordered to be disbursed from the Corporation monies for this purpose, and in 1752. £12 was paid to a Mr. William Elleber towards paying for a fire engine which was to be lodged at the Mansion House. The question of warning the townspeople and the town firemen at this period is revealed by the entry in the Corporation " Courtiers " in 1764 " ordered that the fire bell be immediately put up at the usual place."

Since the inception of the Water Works Undertaking. various persons had been owners or part owners, but in 1775 the undertaking. such as it was, was purchased outright by the Mayor and Corporation for £2,300, and during the next ten years the system was slightly extended and a new cistern at the top of Hallgate was erected to hold 28,000 gallons.

One of the earliest fires in the town which was recorded in detail, occurred in 1817, when the Corporation Corn Mill on the Mill Bridge at the north end of Marshgate was burnt out. It is described as *"a commodious and up to date structure of handsome and extensive design"* built and owned by the Corporation and occupied by one of the Borough aldermen. The premises were observed to be on fire at 5.0 a.m. by a passenger in the Edinburgh stagecoach going over the Mill Bridge on its way to London. The fire was of such dimensions that it was reported that it could be seen from as far away as Sheffield. The fire engines were rushed to the scene, but one was found to be so much out of repair it was useless and the other was of no avail as the fire had got such a hold so as to defy all efforts. The local Justices of the Peace issued a *"brief" or special certificate for a collection to be made in the counties of York, Chester, Cumberland, Durham, Lancaster, Northumberland and Westmoreland for the relief of John Wright. Miller, "sufferer by fire."* This was a usual procedure after disastrous fires. The damage was assessed at £6,000.

The following years, 1818-1819, are given as the years when cast metal pipes for carrying water were used for the first time. The diameter of these pipes was 3-inch and 4-inch.



One of the earliest type manually-operated fire engines with fixed monitor

Another serious fire occurred in Marshgate In 1825 involving a malt kiln, and it was described as being a fire of large dimensions, but the effectual exertions of the firemen saved the premises. The cause in this case is recorded as being due to the fire in the fireplace being too large and the fireplace not being made "flameproof."

During the period 1824-1844, only a few fires occurred in the Borough and they were of little consequence, although several records refer to the good work done by the firemen. Also during this time, but mostly in 1831, the local press records numerous reports of fires occurring up and down the country caused by rioters, but Doncaster was not affected. In this year occurred the Coronation of William IV and a civic procession took place in the town, in which the firemen took part. In 1842 the Town Council implemented the Act of Parliament relating to the prohibition of children under 21 years of age being used for climbing inside chimneys to clean flues. The same Act, of course, took the first steps in fire prevention measures, in laying down regulations concerning the construction of chimneys and flues.

Three years later, in 1845, many references are made which indicate that the Town Council set about to increase the efficiency of the fire fighting resources of the town by re-organisation.

During the first six months of the year, relating resolutions of the Town Council were made. The following being extracts:

- (a) A Committee appointed to inspect the fire engines with a view to their efficiency in cases of fire and to report thereon;
- (b) It was resolved that the fire engines be removed from the premises in St. George Gate to Factory Lane;
- (c) Authority be given for the purchase of patent arms for the large fire engine from Messrs. Reed and Seaton;
- (d) Permission given to purchase a quantity of piping from Mr. Tilly of London;
- (e) It was resolved that the truck used for conveying the smaller engines be broken up as it was useless, and that the two smaller engines be used solely for town purposes;
- (f) Three glazed hats were ordered for the use of the firemen and the words "Doncaster Fireman" be painted on each hat, and they were also to be provided with a blue coat having the numbers 1, 2, 3 and the letter F embroidered in white on the collar;
- (g) The firemen were also reminded to exercise the engines on the first Wednesday of every month.

In connection with this re-organisation, it was resolved that application be made to the agents of the fire insurance companies who had offices in Doncaster, for a new fire engine which was considered highly necessary, and which would be found beneficial in cases of fire in the neighbourhood of Doncaster.

It is interesting to record the local press comments on this re-organisation and resiting of the fire station, and the following is an extract from the Doncaster Gazette of July, 1845:

—“We mentioned on a former occasion that the fire engines were about to be removed from their old position at the top of St. George Gate to a building adjoining the gaol, situated in Factory Lane. This removal has now taken place and the engines are now placed therein. The room has been fitted up in a manner well suited for all the purposes required. Gas has been laid on. The whole of the hose with the addition of the new and well manufactured portions is arranged around, as well as the buckets, with other conveniences adapted for the utmost haste and Facility in getting the engines, which are always in order for immediate use, quickly on the way to any locality where their services may be required.

“The situation fixed upon could not have been better than it is. The Police Station House is immediately at hand where an alarm can be given at any hour of the night. so that every facility is presented with the least waste of time. The business hand of Mr. Butterfield is visible in this. as well as in every other Public Undertaking to which his practical skill and experience are applied. We sub-join the names of the Firemen, Thomas Mitchell, Director of the Engine, Wood Street, near the British School; Robert Burton, Chancery Place; Thomas Archer. St. Sepulchre Gate.”

It is perhaps appropriate at this juncture to refer to the cost of running the Fire Brigade at this time. and reference to the Town Council's Annual Expenses and Statement of Account for the year 1846 reveals that the sum of £25 13s. 0d. appears as the cost.

A year later, the brewery in Pond Lane was involved in fire and burned with much fury for three hours when the roof fell in and the "*water-supply was inadequate to the necessity.*" The following year, 1848, marks another step in Fire Brigade local history, because the Guildhall was opened, and as is well-known, this building houses the Doncaster Borough Police Force which, for a great number of years, worked with and controlled the Fire Brigade. In passing, it is well to record another great event, namely the installation of the first railway line into the town, which enabled racegoers to visit the 1848 St. Leger for the first time by train.

A correspondent writing to the, Editor of the Doncaster Gazette at this time raises a point regarding the ownership of the old Fire Engine House in St. George Gate. and makes a statement that, from earliest days, the fire engine had belonged to the Parish of Doncaster and not the Town Council. There may be some truth in this statement because a stone plaque can be seen on the wall of the old Fire Station in Factory Lane, which is now occupied by the Police Traffic Department.

Whatever success the re-organisation of the Town's Fire Brigade had in 1845, it would seem some weakness developed. because four years later, in 1849, a fire occurred in a third storey bedroom in High Street, and only the Director of the Fire Brigade turned up. Allegations were made at the time that the other firemen were asleep. It was also reported that the hose was in bad condition and that the engine was not of much use. but a plentiful supply of water was available from a tap in the street. The fire was out when the remaining firemen turned up two hours later.

Nevertheless, prompt action was taken to remedy this slip on the part of the firemen because a few weeks later, when a fire occurred in Bowers Fold, the firemen and engine responded promptly and the engine was in excellent condition, the water supply was good, but unfortunately the fire resulted in the death of a woman occupant and the total blindness of her grandchild. A public subscription was opened for the grandchild's benefit. In consequence, a recommendation was made that a better system of alarm should be arranged coupled with the suggestion that the town fire bell be removed to the Guildhall. but seven years elapsed before this was done.

In the October of that year, Mr. Thomas Mitchell, the first Director of the Town Fire Brigade died and was succeeded by his son. Both of these gentlemen in turn, in addition to being in charge of the Fire Brigade, were employed by the Corporation as Superintendents of the Water Department. Thus it will be seen that from this early date the desirability of employing Fire Brigade personnel having detailed knowledge of available water supplies was considered good practice.

The next record in the development of the town's fire fighting resources is recorded in 1851, when the Corporation purchased their first chemical fire extinguishers and authority was given to order three such appliances at a total cost of ten guineas. Again, a year later, the Town Council authorised the installation of hydrants on water mains for the first time, and gave authority for forty such hydrants to be fixed on the new mains at a cost of £100.

In the year 1853, a disastrous fire occurred at the Parish Church. when the building was completely gutted it would appear that early on Monday. February 28th two workmen were passing the Parish Church and noticed a fire burning inside. The Fire Brigade was called immediately, but all its efforts proved to be of no avail, even with the help of York Fire Brigade, who had to travel from that town by rail.

This fine old Church, which for centuries had been called the Mother Church of the Don Valley, was completely destroyed. The large central tower fell at about 8 o'clock in the morning.



Horse-drawn manually-operated fire engine of a type commonly in use by brigades in the middle of the nineteenth century

Apart from tackling the fire, the firemen, together with church officials, made strenuous efforts to salvage the ancient parochial records, and to a great extent they were successful. It is interesting to note that an inquest on the fire was held by the Borough Coroner sitting at the Guildhall a few days later, and technical evidence was given by James Braidwood, Chief Officer of the London Fire Brigade.

It is recorded that the most probable cause was the overheating of a heating duct which set alight the floor and pews, and criticism was made concerning the manner in which certain duties had been carried out. Within a week steps were taken to build a new Church and a subscription list was opened to which the Corporation and Queen Victoria contributed several large sums. Sir George Gilbert Scott was commissioned as the architect, and during the rebuilding of the Church experiments were conducted with sandstone and limestone as to their behaviour in fire, in order to decide which stone had the better fire resisting qualities. It was found that limestone was the better.

The Parish Church fire raised controversies with regard to the Fire Brigade's efficiency, and the inadequacy of water supply, which resulted in Sheffield and Rotherham Fire Brigades giving a demonstration outside the Mansion House in March. 1853. It was stated that these brigades formed a striking contrast to the Doncaster Fire Brigade and, furthermore, that they emptied the mains of water. No doubt the limitation of water supplies for fire-fighting as produced by this demonstration influenced the decision to provide larger diameter mains on the water works system (which included mains from 9-inch downwards) and an increase in the total length of the mains to 6½ miles. Also the output of the water wheel and pump was increased to 320 gpm.

In 1854 there is recorded for the first time, particulars of two outbreaks of fire occurring at the same time within the town. One engine being engaged at the Red Lion Hotel and the second engine at a haystack at Hexthorpe. It is interesting to note that at this latter fire the Town's Fire Brigade was assisted by the fire engine and Fire Brigade from the Great Northern Railway Works, which had just been established. Here then is the evidence that industrial fire brigades have been established in our town for about 100 years.

A year later some insight into the behaviour of the local crowds is revealed by the fact that whilst the fire brigade was attending a fire at a shop in Baxtergate, pick-pockets were at work amongst the onlookers, and one thief was caught and subsequently sentenced for his crime.

An instruction of the Town Council in this year authorised the firemen to be supplied with clothing similar to that worn by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, This consisted of safety helmets, waterproof coats, belts, axes and pouches.

During the next year or two it is assumed little of any consequence occurred relative to the fire brigade, until February, 1857, when it was recorded that a fire occurred at the premises of Plant and Burton, drapers, in Baxtergate. This fire would appear to be rather more serious than those lately attended by the brigade, as the damage to stock alone was valued at £900. Arising out of this fire, the desirability of the town possessing a fire escape was first raised. Representation to the Town Clerk resulted in the matter being brought to the notice of the Council, and the ensuing discussion was centred around a Shand Mason 54-foot escape ladder at a cost of £50. Again considerable argument took place as to who should bear the cost, before it was decided that such an appliance should be obtained. It is recorded that a donation from the Yorkshire Insurance Company of fifteen guineas was obtained towards the expense of the ladder.

At the same meeting of the Town Council it was also decided to reform the brigade and increase the number to consist of one Superintendent and six men.

Herewith is an actual reproduction of the appointments, rules and regulations which were adopted.

"Doncaster - Fire Engines"

At a Meeting of the Town Council held on the 12th August, 1857, the following Appointments. Rules and Regulations were adopted:

"That Thomas Mitchell be appointed Superintendent; and William Butterfield, John White, William Coy. Joseph Dakin. Charles Firth. Thomas Pawson, Firemen, who shall have the care and direction of the Doncaster Fire Engines; and attend to the working of them on all occasions.

"That each Fireman when on duty shall wear the clothes with the accoutrements provided for him, and the word 'Fireman' shall be painted over the door of his dwelling.

"Every person requiring the use of the Fire Engines shall pay after the following rates : — For the use of the Fire Engines within the borough, 20s... but one half of that amount to those Fire Offices who contribute to the maintenance of the Fire Brigade; for the use of the Fire Engines when required beyond the limits of the borough, the sum of 60s... but only 30s. to those Fire Offices who contribute; and in each case shall further pay the sum of 7s. to each Fireman for the first day; and for every day or part of a day longer, the sum of 5s, each; but on any alarm of fire, where (by its being timely arrested) the Engine shall not have been used, each Fireman in such case shall be paid only 4s., and no charge made for the Engines, unless any damage shall occur thereto, which, in all cases of their being called out, shall be made good by the party requiring their use.

"Whenever the Engines are wanted, application must be made to the Fireman, who shall, when requisite, procure horses. etc., for their conveyance: the expenses of which, together with any other incidental charge, shall be defrayed by the person requiring them.

"The Engines must be at all times in perfect working order: and the Superintendent must report to the Watch Committee when any part of the apparatus requires repair. He must also report any misconduct of the Firemen, and failing to do so, he shall be held responsible for such misconduct.

"When an alarm of fire is given, the Engines shall be immediately despatched to the fire, and the Superintendent shall use every exertion in working the engines and in obtaining a supply of water.

"In the absence of the Superintendent, the man next to him shall take the command.

"The Firemen must be careful to take no directions from any person but the Superintendent, and they must refer any person who applies to them for aid, to the Superintendent; they are also particularly directed not to accept beer or spirituous liquors from any person but the Superintendent, who will see them properly supplied with refreshments; every appearance of intoxication will be marked, and any man found in that state, shall not only forfeit his allowance for the turn out, but shall be liable to dismissal from the brigade.

"All concerned are strictly enjoined not to lose temper, and on no occasion whatever to give offence to the inhabitants by uncivil language or otherwise: the utmost attention and activity are indispensable in every case.

"Any man destroying his equipment, or wearing them off duty, or for any unnecessary length of time, shall be punished with a fine or dismissal; careless or disorderly conduct and irregular attendance will be punished in like manner, and every man who may be dismissed from the brigade, or who may resign his situation before he leaves the service, shall deliver up to the Superintendent all articles of dress that may have been supplied to him by the Corporation."

A few weeks later, the newly chosen Brigade had a trial of the fire engine on several buildings in the town. This was witnessed by the Mayor and all was pronounced proficient. It is recorded also that *"the test was most successful by the supply of water from the main."*

In the same period, the Watch Committee considered the acquisition of a new fire engine; again Insurance Companies were asked for a contribution, but this time there was no response. Remarks were passed in Council regarding the inadequacy of the water supply in Marshgate, where a fire had occurred earlier in the year, and it is stated it took one hour for water to be obtained. These matters were referred back for further consideration.

In December, 1858, a fire occurred at the top of Hallgate and the reports on this occurrence include high compliments of speed of turnout and appearance of men and of the rapidity with which the water was turned off in other parts of the town.

One year later, a demonstration and trial of Merryweather's Prince Albert fire engine took place at the Mansion House in the presence of the Town Council. A $\frac{3}{4}$ inch jet of water was thrown over the roof and it is stated that the cost of this engine was £170.

Eight years after the serious fire at the Parish Church, it seem that the visit of Mr. James Braidwood, the Chief Fire Officer of London Fire brigade, was well remembered because in the issue of the local press on the 20th August, 1861, half a column of news is devoted to his obituary notice.

In common with other Boroughs, it would seem that it was the custom for the Council to charge the various fire insurance companies the cost of extinguishing fires in premises insured with them, but in some instances. this charge was waived where a company made an annual contribution to the brigade.

Apart from the brigade attending fires in the Borough. their services were always available to properties in the surrounding districts. Some of these occurrences were dealt with expeditiously but others were not, and one instance relates the brigade being called to a farm fire at Barnborough, when it took them half an hour to obtain horses to pull the fire engines.

At this stage of our History it is interesting to note that the Town's Brigade was being called out on average once per month, and it is recorded that in 1864 the Brigade turned out 12 times, seven in the town including one at the Plant Works and five in the surrounding countryside.

In the following year several interesting fires were attended, which included one at Robin Hood's Well, where the Town's Brigade was assisted by the brigade from Campsall. Another serious fire occurred at the Plant Works, involving the carriage sheds and the Great Northern Railway Company's Directors' coach, and caused damage amounting to £12,000. Also in the same year a fire at the Guildhall involved the Freemasons' Robing Room.

Included in the Annual Report of the year 1865, is an interesting description of the two Doncaster fire engines. One, known as the Large Locomotive fire engine, required 30 men to work it. This machine. with all hands at work, could deliver 280 gallons of water per minute. Apparently man power could easily be recruited on the spot. The small fire engine required 18 men and was capable of delivering 130 gpm. These engines were connected to hydrants and fire plugs which were placed on the water mains about 70 yards apart. The report states that streams of water from the larger mains could be projected 100 feet high.

The reader will have noticed that in 1854 authority was given by the Council for the purchase of a fire escape, but we find that in 1866 purchase of the ladder had not yet been made. This matter was debated in Council several times during the year and it was not until April, 1867, that one was obtained. It is described as "a machine made on a principle invented by a Birmingham Policeman, costing £2 together with a carriage costing £2 5s. 0d." The escape was kept in the vestibule of the Guildhall.

An interesting instance of communications applicable to the times is recorded in December, 1866, when the railway telegraph system was utilised for calling the Fire Brigade to a fire at North Elmsall. The occupier of the Old Elmsall Hotel despatched a man on horseback to South Elmsall railway station, where he caused a telegram to be sent to Doncaster Fire Brigade via the railway telegraph system to the Doncaster railway station. Previous to this, the only method of calling the assistance of the Fire Brigade was by horseback or foot messenger.

During this winter difficulty was experienced with the freezing up of fire hydrants owing to the extreme severity of the weather, and the Superintendent of the Water Works Undertaking (who was also the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade) was given instructions to carry out measures to remedy the matter. It would appear that at this time there were 200 hydrants installed on the water mains.

The Minutes of the Town Council for the year 1869 contain information regarding the licensing of premises for the storage of petroleum. Even today the storage of this hazardous volatile liquid is the concern of the Local Authority, and in this Coronation year the Town Council have adopted new licence conditions designed to lessen the risks associated with petroleum products.

The Royal Society of Arts in the year 1873 promoted a competition (together with prizes) for an improved design of kitchen grates. But the idea was sponsored to find ways of economising on fuel rather than minimising the cause of unwanted fires. A local resident entered the competition but there is no record of the result. However, it is interesting to note that the question of fuel economy was of national concern eighty years ago, when coal cost only 6/- a ton.

It would seem that in the year 1874 the command of the Fire Brigade changed, and, as was usual, the new Fire Officer followed his wholtime occupation as the official in charge of the Water Works Department. This practice continued for 26 years even though the Chief Constable would appear to have certain responsibilities regarding the Fire Brigade, because he was authorised by the Watch Committee to purchase new supplies of clothing for the firemen.

Boxing Day, 1876, is recorded as being the date on which the town's first roller skating rink caught fire. The building was situated somewhere about Cheswold Road, near the present Weights and Measures Office. The fire rendered it a total loss and it is recorded that the efforts of the Brigade were hampered to a very great extent by the behaviour of a drunken crowd and a blinding snowstorm.

Earlier in the following year, a new appliance was designed for use in the town. This consisted of a large pair of wheels with a long length of fire hose rolled around the axle. This type of appliance was in regular use for the next 35 years for first aid measures, and subsequently was kept at the Guildhall, together with standpipes for use by the Borough Police, who, immediately an alarm was received at the Guildhall, would proceed with all haste trundling the reel to the scene of the fire.

Subsequently other reels of a similar type were kept in the I lyde Rick and Holmes Market districts of the town.

The year 1878 saw an extension of the water supply for the Borough. A reservoir had been constructed at Ravensfield, between Conisborough and Rotherham, and water from this reservoir was piped into the town, and it is reported that "*If hose of the Fire Brigade be connected to the new main, it will be possible to throw water over the highest building in Doncaster.*"

During this year also occurred the first recorded instance of a petroleum store being involved in fire. This was at Nettletons' Grocers, situated in Mail Coach Yard. The Brigade received help from bystanders who assisted in extinguishing the fire with sand.

The following year, a Sub-Committee of the Watch Committee was authorised to report on the condition of the present fire engines and fire escapes, and the efficiency of the Brigade, and to consider the question as to the need for a new engine. It would appear that over a year elapsed before the Sub-Committee presented its report.

Very early in the morning of January 3rd, 1880, the Brigade was called to Bessacarr, which at the time was outside the Borough, to a fire involving 10 stacks of hay, and it would seem that the major part of the Brigade made up the attendance. At 5.50 a.m., the same morning there occurred a very serious explosion at the Blue Bell Inn and Hanson's, gunsmiths, in Baxtergate. The attendance made to this serious incident was by an ex-fireman and the small engine, and the Plant Works Fire Brigade arriving at nearly the same time. A message was sent to Bessacarr for the large fire engine and crew, informing them of the Baxtergate occurrence, and they responded. There was much criticism of the difficulty experienced in finding the hydrants in Baxtergate, and it is stated that "*the Corporation Engine could not be got to play because those in charge did not know how to use it, but. Adams eventually got things right.*" This explosion caused the death of Mr. Hanson, his wife, and a Miss Roberts, who was living with them. The front of the Blue Bell Inn and Hanson's gunsmiths shop was demolished and all the shop windows in Baxtergate were broken. The street was closed to traffic for a considerable period. At the time it was thought that the explosion had been caused by the firing of a wooden beam running through the party wall of the Blue Bell Inn and Hanson's shop, which had become ignited the previous evening by a chimney fire at the Blue Bell Inn. Subsequent enquiries did not support this idea.

The Explosives Act had been placed on the Statute Book in 1875, and consequently Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Explosives attended the inquest. This revealed that the Town Council had licensed the premises each year since 1876, and criticism was levelled regarding the inspections necessary to see that the provisions of the Act had been obeyed. Furthermore, it would appear the Council had delayed the appointment of an Inspector of Explosives as required by law, and the Coroner's verdict, with the Jury's rider, included "*Instructions for an Inspector to be appointed under the Act; for a new fire escape to be provided and for the Police to receive instructions on how to use it.*" Apparently, the cross-examination at the inquest was very keen and it is interesting to note that the Explosives Act of 1875 is still the main Act in force governing the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives, and the Fire Prevention branches of the various Brigades up and down the country spend a great deal of their time advising the public generally on how to comply with the requirements of this very important Act of Parliament.

Arising out of the above serious occurrence, the Town Council, through the Watch Committee endeavoured to put their house in order. An Inspector under the Act was appointed, a 45-foot wheeled escape was ordered from Messrs. Bayley and Co., London, and a third hose reel obtained from Messrs. Merryweather and Sons, together with 200 feet of patent woven canvas burnettised hose of 2-inch diameter at 1/2d per foot, along with the necessary fittings. New rules were framed, which were subsequently ordered to be printed, setting out the duties of the Fire Brigade. These specifically mentioned which appliances and personnel should be despatched to fires outside the Borough, thus ensuring in the future that the major appliances, and the Superintendent would be always available for local cover. It is pleasing to record that several awards and merit badges were given to the police for duties carried out in assisting the firemen at the Baxtergate explosion and £5 was sent to the Great Northern Railway Company, to be disbursed amongst their firemen in recognition of their help.

During this year 1880 the River Cheswold water supply was discontinued for domestic purposes although the system was left in being for fire and street cleaning uses. There was substituted a water supply from Thrybergh and Firsby Reservoirs which supplied water, via a small service reservoir, to the town, using 18-inch to 16-inch mains.

The Doncaster Fire Authority had always been ready to accept advice from other authorities in matters connected with fire extinction, and in 1881 the trial of the new fire escape took place in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation. This trial was under the direction of the Superintendent of the Huddersfield Fire Brigade, who also advised the Watch Committee on all matters connected with the re-organisation of the Brigade, and what type of clothing should be provided for Brigade use.

Arising out of this re-organisation a deputy Superintendent was appointed, and a number of the Brigade given a salary of £3 per annum for being responsible for extra services connected with the fire escape.

As ever, the money necessary for the purchase of new equipment was hard to come by, and again at this time the local fire insurance companies were asked for a contribution towards the cost of the Fire Brigade, but the insurance companies were not disposed to respond.

The next serious fire in the town occurred on the 21st August. 1881. The premises were Robinson and Hanley's Corn Mill, in Fishergate, which had been built in 1788. The outbreak was discovered in the early hours of the morning by workpeople in the mill, but a call was not received by the Fire Brigade until two hours afterwards, and the firemen were faced with an impossible task. In all, seven jets were used, and the Police assisted the Fire Brigade in manning these jets. Several of the firemen and police were injured. and £3 was awarded to one fireman in consequence of injuries sustained to his leg whilst using the fire escape. The fire damage was assessed at £3,000.

An interesting discussion took place at the October Council Meeting in 1882, regarding the principle of charging ratepayers for the use of the fire engines in extinguishing fires involving their property. One of the City Fathers stated that "*it had been decided in the Higher Courts. that anyone in a Borough who contributed to the local rates was absolved from payment for any Fire Brigade services.*" Consequently, from this time, no charges were made by the Brigade for their attendances at fires in the Borough. Today, under the Fire Service Act, 1947, no individual can be made to pay for the services of the Fire Brigade in carrying out fire-fighting duties.

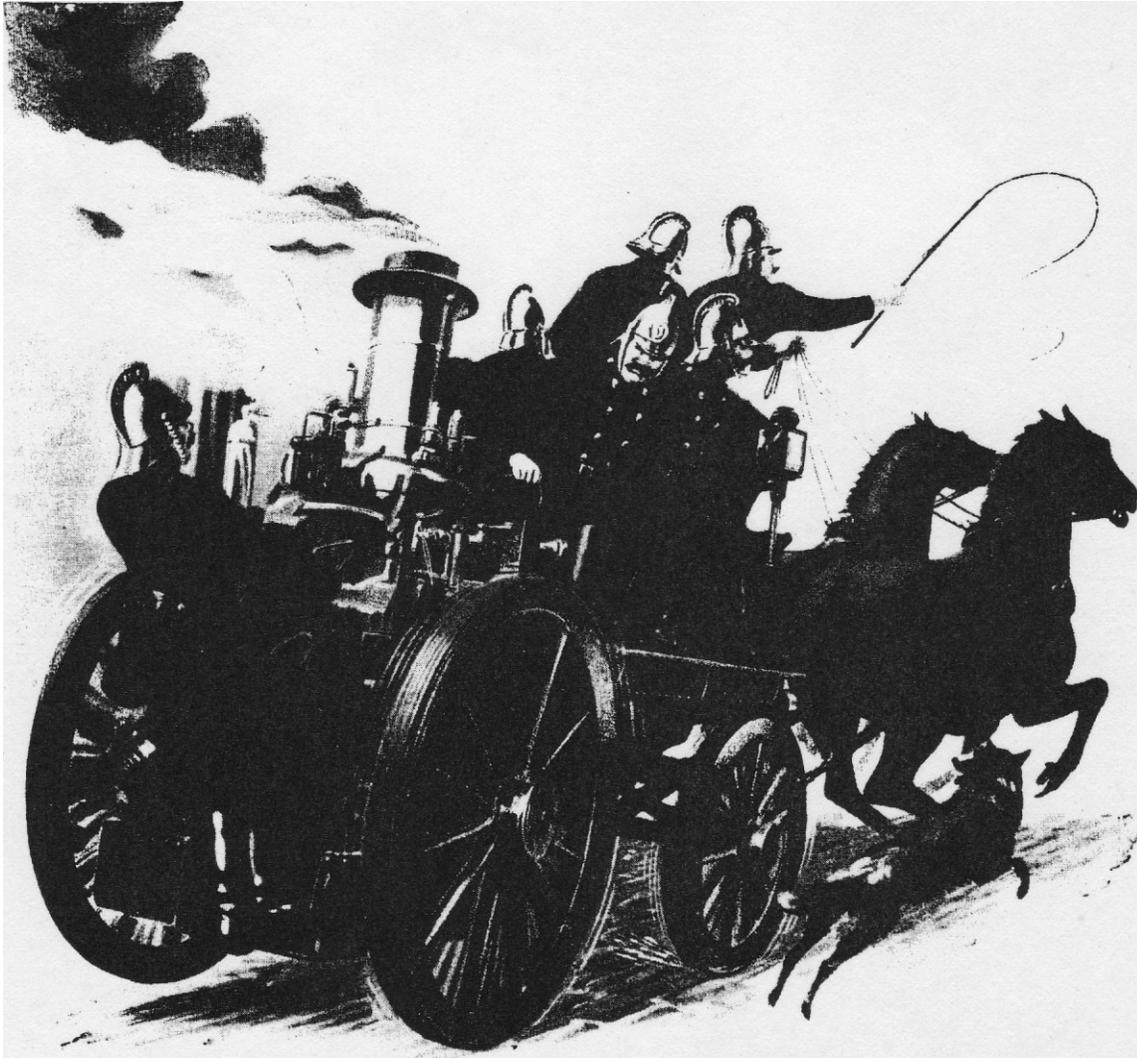
The well known saying, " All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." is as true in its application to fire brigade work as in other occupations and it is recorded that in the latter part of the 19th Century the Corporation always invited the Fire Brigade and Police Force to an Annual Dinner. In common with functions of this type during this period, the fare was sumptuous, and press reports described in great detail the various courses partaken and the liquid refreshment consumed. Toasts were proposed and responded to, in the accepted manner, by members of the Council, the Chief Constable, and the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade.

It was also about this time that the Town Council first authorised the attendance of the Superintendent and four of his men to the Annual Conference of the Yorkshire Fire Brigades Friendly Society and other professional organisations. The Watch Committee Minutes always made reference to such permission being granted, and the expenses allowance on such occasions stood at 7s. 6d., per head for many years. It is noted. that in 1886. the Yorkshire Fire Brigades Friendly Society held its Annual Meeting at Sheffield, and the members were entertained at the Cutlers' Hall, which indicated the esteem in which this august Company held the Fire Brigades. A point of interest is the record detailing the assets of the Friendly Society at this time, which amounted to £12,015.

Later in the same year, the Brigade Superintendent was awarded the Professional Fire Brigade Association Medal for meritorious service. His Worship the Mayor presented it during a sitting of the Court.

To continue in a similar strain, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the Fire Brigade, in two separate parties, visited the Manchester Jubilee Exhibition, and all expenses were paid by an anonymous donor in the town.

During this decade the matter of equipment etc., had not been lost sight of, and there are numerous references in the records of the Town Council authorising expenditure on equipment which needed replacement, and of new and extra materials needed by the Brigade. In 1888 the salary of the Superintendent was increased to £7 per year. Also in the same year, the old building in St. George Gate, which had previously been used to house the fire appliances, was demolished in order that the site might. be used for the erection of a Public Library. This fact was noted in the Doncaster Gazette at the time in the following words: *"Another old and famous landmark has been removed; the old Sexton's House, situated at the top of St. George Gate close to the Parish Church. How many of you have read the inscription? We should say thousands, but how many knew what it meant? The house, besides being the residence of the Sexton, was also the Depot of the two, Fire Engines which were provided by the Parish. In 1835 the Corporation had bought a new engine, and this also was kept at the Engine House. This old House was occupied by Mr. Joseph Hirst and his father before him and. it has now been pulled down to make room for the New Library and School of Art."*



Steam fire engine of a type similar to the one purchased by the Corporation in 1896

Safeguarding the public from the dangers of fire and panic whilst attending places of entertainment, gained prominence following unfortunate disasters which occurred up and down the country during this period. One around this time was at Sunderland, when 190 young children lost their lives. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1888, the Doncaster Theatre Royal was equipped with rising mains and internal hydrants for the better dealing with any outbreak.

Another matter which caused concern in 1888 was the provision of horses for drawing the fire appliances, and there are several items on record which state that considerable delay, even up to half an hour, was caused by horses not being readily available. In order to remedy this undesirable feature, the local firm of Messrs. Smith and Sons, entered into a contract with the Corporation to furnish an efficient supply of horses.

The competitive spirit amongst fire brigades has always been fostered with a view to promoting efficiency, and in the year 1890, part of the Doncaster Brigade went to Conisborough to meet the Rotherham, Mexborough and Conisborough Brigades at drill. There is no record of the results, but six months later, the Rotherham and Mexborough brigades visited Doncaster, when three drills were held, of which Doncaster won two.

A year later a similar competition was held with the Castleford Brigade, who visited Doncaster and were subsequently entertained to dinner.

Doncaster has always been famous for its butterscotch and other firms in the town besides Parkinsons have been concerned in its manufacture. In August, 1895, a fairly serious fire occurred at the factory of Messrs. Killingrey and Co. Frenchgate, which caused damage valued at £2,000. There are excellent reports of the work carried out by the Fire Brigade, but much stock, including sugar, was greatly damaged by water.

About two months after the fire at the confectionery works, St. James's School in St. Sepulchre Gate, was badly damaged by fire. This occurred very late at night, and the Great Northern Railway Plant Works Fire Brigade was first in attendance. Difficulty was experienced with the town's water supply during this period, because of water shortage, and in consequence the supply to the town was turned off between 11.0 p.m. and 5.0 a.m. each day. The Railway Company's water supplies had to be used in the early stages of the outbreak, and successful fire fighting operations were of little avail. The premises were badly damaged to the extent that the major portion had to be rebuilt.

It was now evident that the growth of the town industrially, provided too high a fire risk for it to be protected by manual fire engines. Consequently, the first steam fire engine obtained by Doncaster was ordered from Messrs. Merry-weather and Co., Ltd. It is described as " having four deliveries, giving a total output of 500 gpm., and the engine can be got to work within six and eight minutes of the fire being lighted. There was a public trial of the fire engine before the Mayor and Corporation at the Racecourse Grand Stands in February, 1896. but it was found that the water supply in this part of the town was nor sufficient for the engine to operate to its full capacity. It was therefore decided to construct a number of underground tanks in various parts of the town. in order to meet the needs of the engine.

Further modernisation, with the consequent increase in efficiency, was brought about in 1897 by the provision of an electric bell system. This is described as being provided by the well-known firm of Messrs. Gent and Co., and every fireman was put in private connection with the Guildhall. By the pressing of a switch a bell rings in the house of thee fireman, who, hearing it ring, presses a button which signifies that, he had had notification of the call; alternatively, every fireman can set the alarm in motion from his own house.

In this year also. there is mention of further developments in fire fighting, as it is reported that another small fire occurred at Hanley's Flour Mill in Fishergate, and this fire was put out by the recently fitted automatic sprinklers.

A link with the past, however, was caused by the retirement from the Brigade of Mr. William Coy, who had been a fireman for over 40 years. He was presented with a medal by the Mayor, in token of his long service, and in his reply Mr. Coy remarked that he was very sorry to mention that the wages of the Doncaster firemen had been reduced recently.

In 1890 a fire occurred at Carr Side Farm, near Wroot. The Doncaster Brigade attended, in charge of the Deputy Superintendent, who was joined by the Epworth Brigade on this occasion. Several stacks were involved and the interest arises from the amusing fact that there were too many persons, who went and watched the firemen, but shared the free beer. These spectators did no work in assisting with the pumping of the manual engine but did heartily consume the refreshment, and no less than three barrels of beer disappeared down thirsty throats.

The attention of the local police constable was called to this state of affairs, but as he was a constable in the Lincolnshire force, and the fire was in Yorkshire, he could do nothing about the matter.

In the last year of the last century, the Watch Committee had before them statistics relating to the constitution of the Fire Brigades in other towns in the North. It was found, when comparisons were made, that the Doncaster Brigade was not in a satisfactory condition, and a Sub-Committee was appointed to enquire into the matter and prepare a scheme. At the same time, the Town Clerk of Sunderland had written to Doncaster inviting help with a petition to be submitted by that town to the Government, requesting an Exchequer grant of half of the cost of the Fire Brigade. In passing, it is interesting to note how often throughout the ensuing years, this question of Government help crops up again and again, and even though the Fire Services Act of 1947 provides for 25% grant towards the cost of peace time fire protection, the demand for half the cost still remains a "hardy annual."

To open the new century, the Brigade was reconstituted, and increased to one Superintendent and 12 Firemen, six to be members of the Police Force, and six to be civilians; all on a part-time basis. A new Superintendent was appointed on the 27th April, 1900, his predecessor, however, still carried on his normal employment as Superintendent of the Water Works Depot. He was always informed of any fire occurring in the Borough, so that he might assist with the provision of adequate water supplies.

The six policemen who were to form the police section of the Brigade were not named, but the Chief Constable said he would select any six of the younger members of the Force and always ensure they would be readily available at all times. The pay for this extra duty of the Police Constables was 1/6d for a turnout, plus 2/- for the first hour and one shilling for each subsequent hour thereafter, and 2/6d for each practice. This pay was put into a pool and divided at the end of each year among the whole of the policemen who had undertaken fire-fighting duties. At the same time, a new scale of charges (payable by authorities outside the Borough) was authorised for the use of the Fire Brigade and appliances. These are recorded as being £2 2s. 0d., for the first three hours, and 5/- per hour thereafter for the manual. £5 for the first three hours and £1 per hour thereafter for the steam fire engine, plus a cost for cleaning the engine and equipment at the rate of half a guinea for the manual and a guinea for the steam engine.

There had occurred within recent years several small fires at the premises of Hodgson and Hepworth, St. Sepulchre Gate, and two in particular were serious incidents. The first, in October, 1900, which involved their oil and inflammable liquid stores, required the services of the whole of the Fire Brigade, who, it is reported were in attendance within the very short space of time of two minutes from receipt of call.

The second, and larger fire, occurred 10 weeks later, on the 6th January, 1901, and was one of the most notable fires occurring in the town up to that time. The whole of the premises were burnt out and a major portion of the structure of the building collapsed. The contemporary reports include references to practically every fireman by name, and it would seem the Brigade as a whole did very excellent work. It was noted, however, that the call bell system was out of order at the time owing to broken overhead wires. This failure resulted in the Superintendent of the Water Undertaking not being present to render assistance with water supplies. It is reported that the defect in the alarm system was rectified within a few days.

Another occurrence of note in the year 1901 was a fire at Duke Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, reported as being (but for the prompt action on discovery, and subsequent tackling by-the Fire Brigade) one which might have been the most serious in all the history of Doncaster. The Superintendent utilised the services of his two sons to fetch the hose reel from the Fire Station In all, four jets were used, and it was three hours before the fire was under control.

A further item of interest in the same year is recorded in the Council Minutes relative to the decision of the Town Council delegating the control and administration of the Fire Brigade to the Watch Committee, and this practice applies to the present time.

From time to time during the first few years of the present century, we find the Borough Surveyor advising the Watch Committee on Fire Brigade matters, the advice being mainly concerned with the maintenance and upkeep of equipment. On one occasion, he reported that the Fire Escape was beyond repair, and the Watch Committee recommended to the Council that another 60-foot fire escape be obtained. - The Borough Surveyor also reported at intervals to the Watch Committee concerning the activities of the Fire Brigade.

The prompt attendance of the Brigade to a fire at Priory Place Chapel in the year 1904 averted what might have been a very serious occurrence. Prompt as it was, the damage caused was fairly serious, no doubt the amount of timber used in the construction of the building added to the risk involved.

It is recorded in the same year that the first stringent steps were taken by the Watch Committee on fire prevention measures in houses of entertainment. A meeting in February, 1904 was mainly concerned with fire prevention in public buildings and a report was submitted by the Borough Surveyor on the matter. It was subsequently recommended that a fireman be on duty each night at the Theatre, half of the cost to be borne by the Brigade and half by the licensee. Furthermore, the police were instructed to examine all exit doors nightly. The municipally owned Corn Exchange, which was also used as a place of public resort, was required to be provided with adequate means of exit. The Borough Surveyor was specifically required to inspect all churches, chapels, schools and other similar buildings, and to report thereon. This he did at the next meeting, and the persons controlling these premises were required to cause all outer doors to open outwards and staircases within the building to be adequately lighted. With reference to the charges for firemen at the Theatre, it was later decided that a fireman be employed by the Theatre management and the charges be borne in full by the licensee.

At the end of the year 1904 the death is reported of Mr. Dunkerley, aged 75 years, who had retired five years previously, after being a fireman in the Brigade for 50 years. He was also one of the Borough lamp-lighters. His funeral was attended by detachments of the Fire Brigade, Police, St. John Ambulance Brigade and fellow workers at the Gas Works. Evidently this old fireman had been held in very high esteem by his colleagues. Another old Doncaster fireman died in 1907; he was Fm. G. Dewsnap, of whom it was stated in the obituary notice that he was the keenest, and most reliable man in the Brigade. He was specifically mentioned by name at practically every fire the Brigade had attended over 30 years. No doubt his particular knowledge gained while following his normal occupation as a chimney sweep stood him in good stead when attending with the Brigade at properties to which he was well acquainted.

The factory of Belmont Works, belonging to Peglers, Ltd., was the scene of the next large fire, in 1907, when the engine house became involved. Here again, there was no need to have recourse to the fire engine for the provision of fire lighting jets as the water pressure from the hydrants was sufficient. As a result of this fire, 130 employees were thrown out of work. It is interesting to note that the other Brass Works situated in the vicinity suffered a fire some eighteen months later; this being Messrs. Woodhouse's Factory at Hexthorpe.

Hexthorpe was at this time outside the Borough, so, in accordance with the Town Council's instructions, charges were made to Woodhouse's for the attendance of the Fire Brigade. This was presented, and after much argument, the bill was met. The fire was reported as being fairly serious, the large main four storey block being burnt to the ground, and 400 men were thrown out of employment for some time. Damage of £15,000 is recorded. Excellent praise is given to the Fire Brigade by the Directors of the firm, and they are quoted as saying that the London Fire Brigade could not have done better.

In January, 1909, there was first debated in Committee the question of obtaining a motor fire engine, and it was decided that the size of the Borough did not warrant one. It was further laid down that the steam fire engine should under no circumstances go outside the Borough. This decision of the Watch Committee caused editorial comment in the local press. The article was headed, "*Doncaster Fire Brigade—Is it efficient? —Watch Committee say yes.*" In the article, it is stated that the appliances; "*at present consist of a Merryweather steam fire engine with an output of 400 gpm., bought in 1895, which since that time has only been to seven fires, and then only actually used on four occasions: a manual engine of 200 to 300 gpm. used for country fires; and an older manual still. Other equipment in the way of hose reels is kept at the Guildhall, The Holmes and Hyde Park. The regulations of the Fire Brigade say that the steamer must never leave the Borough. None of the surrounding Authorities pay for the services of the Brigade but bills, for the wages of the firemen, are submitted to the insurance companies of the various properties concerned.*" The article continues by complimenting the Superintendent and his Brigade, and it also mentions that every policeman is a fireman who has received training. Another item mentioned is the fact that the Hyde Park district of the town has been petitioning the Watch Committee for the installation of a Gamewell Fire Alarm system in that locality. The press also goes on to say, "*The delays in the turning out of the Brigade are due to the fact that no professional firemen are employed, and all personnel have to come either from their homes, work, or place of their recreation: the horses have to be fetched from Messrs. Smiths' stables. The pay received by the firemen is per annum, plus turnout fees.*"

The reaction by the Watch Committee to this article in the press was to authorise the installation of electric bells near to the hose reel at Hyde Park, and the Holmes, and to direct that they be tested frequently. The question of purchasing extra equipment and the appointment of additional firemen being deferred to a later date.

In October 1911, Superintendent Gregory attended his last fire, which was a stack fire at Bentley, and it is on record that the Deputy Superintendent followed to the fireground by tramcar.

Superintendent Gregory was 75 years of age on the date of his retirement, and had been a member of the Fire Brigade for 42 years. During this time he gained an extensive topographical knowledge of the Borough and of the countryside for 16 miles around. The consideration of a successor was deferred so as to enable the Town Clerk to write to other towns for information.

At the same time further consideration was given to the re-organisation of the Fire Brigade. Having regard to the information supplied by the Town Clerk as a result of his enquiries, it was decided that the Fire Brigade should consist of 16 members, 12 of whom be policemen. The Deputy Chief Constable was appointed Chief of the Fire Brigade and a Police Sergeant his deputy at a salary of £20 and £10 per annum, respectively. The remuneration of the firemen, whether police or civilians. was fixed at the sum of 2/6d. per week, plus the same payments that were then in operation for fires outside the Borough. However, before the reorganisation was completed, the Chief Constable retired, and the Deputy Chief Constable succeeded him. In consequence, a Police Sergeant was made Superintendent of the Fire Brigade. Only one civilian fireman was appointed and the new constitution resulted as follows:

Chief Officer : The Chief Constable.
Superintendent : Police Sergeant.
10 Police part-time Firemen.
1 Civilian part-time Fireman.

The Annual Report for the year 1912 reveals some illuminating facts relating to the number of turnouts and the annual costs which, to say the least, make striking comparison with present day costs - 11 turnouts, of which nine were in the Borough and two in the County Area - Estimated damage £1,635. The cost of the Brigade attending the two County fires was £24 4s. 3d., which was apportioned as follows :—

£6 15s. 0d. to the Corporation Fund.
£5 11s. 3d. for remuneration of the firemen.
£11 18s. 0d. for the hire of horses.

It was also noticed in the report that the contract for providing horses for the fire engines had been given to Messrs. J. Steadman and Sons.

In order that it might be fully efficient, and equipped with modern appliances, it now became necessary to provide the Fire Brigade with an up-to-date motor fire engine. The efforts of the Watch Committee were directed to this end and during the early part of 1913 they journeyed to various Fire Stations in the North, Leeds, Grimsby. etc., where motor fire engines had been used since 1910. After considering the different makes of appliances they had seen, it was decided to ask Messrs. Merryweather and Sons to arrange for a demonstration in Doncaster of their motor fire engine.

Eventually, a Merryweather engine was purchased, costing £1,067 (which included a telescopic ladder). This new purchase attended its first fire on the 26th June 1915, at a hay and corn merchants in Cooper's Terrace.

The new engine, of course, required a driver, and advertisements in the local and technical press were inserted, inviting applicants for this position at £2 per week, plus uniform. It would seem that the first person to accept the post was not suitable, and within nine months he was dismissed. Subsequently, the Committee appointed Mr. S. Sutcliffe, of Batley, as Fire Brigade engineer and driver at a similar wage.

The records referred to for the period of the first World War do not reveal many interesting fire fighting items. It was decided, however, on the recommendation of the Chief Constable, that the old river main system should be available night and day in case of air raids, and to enable this to be done, an electrically driven turbine pump was substituted for the old water wheel.

The control of this machinery was duplicated, by siting it at the Guildhall as well as the pump house in the Water Works yard. This system is still in being, and at the present day for any fires occurring in the vicinity of the area served by the old river mains the pump may be started at either place. The biggest fires attended by the Brigade during the first World War concerned a fire in the store and lamp room of Bullcroft Colliery; one at the rug factory in Marshgate which caused severe damage; a fire at Warmsworth Council School, which at the time was occupied by a detachment of the Durham Light Infantry, the whole of this structure was destroyed; a large fire at the Great Northern Railway Decoy Sidings involving many stacks of railway sleepers, and a serious fire at Butterbusk Farm, near Conisborough; when 15 stacks and a Dutch Barn were concerned. The last-mentioned fire occurred during a very high gale and little was saved, as the water supply was negligible. The Doncaster Brigade was in attendance for 27 hours without relief.

It was a custom at this time for the Brigade, which was still a part-time service with the exception of the Engineer, to practice and exercise monthly at various properties in and around the town. The Borough comprised a greater area than hitherto; Balby, Hexthorpe and Wheatley being incorporated in 1914; also under various retainer agreements, a considerable part of Doncaster Rural District, Thorne Rural District, Bentley, Adwick and Conisborough Urban Districts were able to call on the services of the Doncaster Fire Brigade.

In 1920, Engineer Sutcliffe was designated as Instructor and Engineer of the Fire Brigade, and his wages were increased over 100'.

In order to augment the Brigade during the September Race Week period, it was the practice specially to engage additional police firemen from Rotherham, so as to afford better protection to the town during the influx of visitors for the races.

In 1921, the attention of the Committee was again given to the further modernisation of the equipment held by the Brigade and new hose, foam equipment, collecting heads, etc., were obtained. The delivery of a new Leyland motor fire engine at a cost of £2,083, also marked another important step. When the new machine was put to trial, witnessed by the Committee, it was found to give every satisfaction. The steam fire engine was then described as obsolete, and the Chief Constable was authorised to obtain tenders for its disposal.

During the early 1920's the command of the Brigade changed, the Superintendent having retired, and another Police Sergeant was appointed to the post. Within a short time another Police Sergeant took over and this officer also severed his connection with the Fire Brigade a year later. Consequently Brigade Engineer Sutcliffe was appointed Superintendent of the Borough Fire Brigade, with Mr. L. Bateman as his Deputy and Engineer, thus for the first time, the whole time staff of the Brigade consisted of two members.

A fire occurred on Saturday, the 22nd September, 1923, which was then described as "Doncaster's greatest fire in living memory." It involved, once again, the corn mill occupied by Messrs. T. Hanley and Sons, Ltd., and caused damage amounting to £90,000. The fire was discovered at 3.30 a.m. by two watchmen, and within a short time the Doncaster Brigade was on the scene with two motor appliances, in charge of the Superintendent. The Chief Constable, who was Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade. took command of the fire fighting.

The resources of the Fire Brigade were strained to the limit and the maximum of jets which could be brought to bear and handled were used. The Brigade were successful in saving the steel and concrete grain silo, which is 90ft high, and formed part of the affected property. This silo is still one of the most prominent landmarks seen on entering Doncaster from the North. No doubt the abnormal amount of timber which forms part of the machinery in flour mills contributed to the intensity of the fire, which is still spoken about by persons at present residing in Doncaster as being one of the most spectacular they have ever seen in the town.

It can be safely assumed that the Chief Constable reported to the Watch Committee on this fire in great detail, and no doubt reference was made to the increasing risk of fire in the town. The question was raised relative to the provision of a new fire station to replace the one in Factory Lane, which at this time was approximately 30 years old. Two sites were suggested, one known as the Old Tannery near Church Street, Grey Friars Road, and another in West Laith Gate. The Corporation Estates Surveyor was instructed to draw up plans and prepare details and the Town Clerk authorised to negotiate for the land and so on. A number of years elapsed but the scheme did not come to anything. It is impossible to say why, but no doubt the question of finance would influence the delay.

The Chief Constable, together with the Borough Surveyor, during the year 1924, directed their efforts to the improvement of the town's water supply for fire fighting purposes. The Committee was present on various occasions when flow tests were tried out on the mains. They proceeded to Parkinson's Butterscotch Works, which had installed an underground fire tank served by water from the River Don. The outcome of these efforts resulted in the Water Works Committee of the Corporation being requested to improve the supply in the town. This task could not be easy because of the ever increasing population and its consequential growing consumption of water. The Water Authority, however, was busy during this period expanding the system and utilising fresh sources of supply, which were from underground boreholes, notably Armthorpe, Nutwell and Thornham. From these bore holes, water is pumped to water towers, hence the fact that Doncaster has never been supplied with water of very high pressures. Consequently, most fires had to be tackled by jets supplied by water from the fire engines boosting from the town's mains.

In 1925 the Fire Brigade obtained its first trailer pump from Messrs. Merryweather and Sons. Ltd. The unit, which had a capacity of 150 gpm., was mounted on a trailer held by the Brigade and its acquisition paved the way for the disposal of the last obsolete manual pump.

The recurring question of retaining fees from surrounding authorities cropped up during this year -and the controversy caused certain authorities to be informed that if increased fees were not paid, fire brigade services would be withdrawn. Evidently, this ultimatum was never put into effect because there is no record of Doncaster refusing to turn out to fires in the County districts.

The next year saw the retirement of the Chief Constable, and his successor was given the responsibility of the Fire Brigade.

October, 1928, would seem to have been a busy month for the Fire Service, because it is recorded the Chief Constable reported to the Watch Committee that nine fires had been dealt with during the month.

From time to time, the Chief Constable reported to the Committee the desirability of keeping the Brigade up-to-date in accordance with generally accepted fire-lighting technology. Foam equipment, breathing apparatus, hose, floodlighting sets were all obtained. The motor appliances were fitted with pneumatic tyres. Then the question of a site for the new Fire Station, which had first been mooted in 1923 and was still in abeyance, cropped up again in 1931, and it was finally decided that a site off Leicester Avenue, opposite the Racecourse, be reserved for the purpose. The Estates Surveyor was instructed by the Watch Committee at their meeting held in March 1931, to draw up preliminary sketch plans, and in May 1935, a tender for the construction of the present station was finally placed. The Brigade at this period had a wholetime strength of five, the part-time element being composed of police constables.

The old Merryweather fire engine was now showing signs of considerable wear and tear, and after due consultation with the Corporation's Transport Manager, it was decided to replace this appliance with a new one. A Leyland fire appliance with a Cub engine and 350 gpm pump, fitted with a Braidwood body, was purchased, and this machine is still in regular service to-day. It has, of course, been fitted with a modern OHV engine and reconditioned, and turned out like new.

Concurrently with the erection of the new fire station and purchase of a new engine, suction hydrants having 5½ inch outlets, were installed on large diameter mains adjacent to high risk areas in the Borough. The extra volume of water obtained from these special hydrants is very valuable to the Brigade in the congested areas of the town.

The formal opening of the New Central Fire Station in Lonsdale Avenue took place on the 10th March 1937. The cost of the building was approximately £17,000, and it comprises a 5-bay appliance room with a bay adjoining for housing an ambulance, watchroom, offices, drill yard, hose tower, workshops, recreation room, dormitory and residential accommodation for five whole-time members of the Brigade are also adequately incorporated. Even today, the station is considered to be one of the best in the country, considering the size of the Borough. When the decision was taken to construct the building on this site, there was criticism as to it being too far away from the built-up area of the town. The rapid extension of the town was foreseen, with the result it is now recognised the siting of the fire station is ideal. Also, international affairs tend to influence policy concerning services likely to be engaged in wartime, and consequently fire stations are not erected in heavily built-up areas unless special circumstances warrant.

The Home Office circulated Local Authorities in May. 1937, regarding the employment of police as part-time firemen, and it was recommended Chief Constables should be relieved as far as possible of the duties of Chief Officers of Fire Brigades.

Towards the end of the year, the Government was directing its thoughts to matters connected with air raid precautions and a draft scheme for an Emergency Fire Brigade Organisation in connection therewith was drawn up by the Chief Constable and submitted to the Secretary of State. Home Office observations were later received and subsequently the Watch Committee agreed to accept on loan, fire appliances, hose and equipment, etc., for equipping the Auxiliary Fire Service. The enrolment of Auxiliary Fire Service personnel was commenced and this step marked the beginning of a new era in Fire Brigade organisation and conduct.

Baxtergate once again was the scene of a serious fire on the 6th May, 1930, when the established business of Verity's, the well-known drapers, and Messrs. Woolworths, Ltd., store were the properties concerned.

It occurred at 7.0 p.m. on a Friday evening, which in those days was the peak of the weekly shopping period. The fire, which started in Verity's premises, spread with great rapidity and all customers and staff were hurriedly evacuated. The Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene with three self-propelled appliances and a trailer pump, but owing to the insufficiency of the water supply the fire spread to Woolworths. Once again, in order to augment the mains supply, use had to be made of the steam pump at Hanley's Mill, which was situated on the canal a quarter mile away. The Brigade was assisted on this occasion by some of the newly enrolled Auxiliary Firemen, and help was also obtained from Rotherham and Edlington. It was 2.0 a.m. the next day before the fire was under control, and as a result of it over 200 people were thrown out of work. The damage caused was in the region of £100,000. Evidently a considerable portion of the Brigade's stock of hose was damaged at this incident, and one finds that immediately afterwards the Watch Committee authorised replacements up to 300 yards.

About this time there was being debated in Parliament the Fire Brigade Bill, which subsequently was placed on the Statute Book as the Fire Brigade Act, 1938. The main provision of this Act made it obligatory on all local authorities to provide means for extinguishing fires within their areas, either by maintaining their own fire brigades, or by securing the services of a nearby Authority's brigade, subject, of course, to agreements being drawn up. Much time, therefore, was taken up by the Watch Committee during this period in making satisfactory arrangements with the neighbouring Urban and Rural authorities for the services of the Doncaster Fire Brigade to their areas.

Another local repercussion of this latest Act was the increase of the number of whole-time personnel in the Doncaster Brigade to 12, made necessary by the increased duties undertaken by the Brigade in the training of auxiliaries for both the Borough and other local authorities.

It was decided early in 1939 to obtain for the first time a 100-foot mechanically operated turntable ladder, and a tender from Leyland Motors was accepted for this appliance. However, owing to the outbreak of hostilities in September, 1939, the order had to be rescinded by Messrs. Leyland, Ltd.

In common with other fire brigades, the outbreak of war necessitated the immediate mobilisation of a large number of auxiliary firemen in this area and placing them on a whole-time basis. This required the setting up of sub-fire stations at Balby, Beckett Road and Factory Lane, and within a short time the authorised establishment figures of 131 whole-time, and 300 part-time, auxiliary firemen was reached.

On the 22nd May, 1940, the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade resigned and Mr. J. Leadbeater was appointed. The following month, however, the Chief Constable passed away and Superintendent Leadbeater assumed command of the Fire Brigade in its entirety. Thus, for the first time in over 100 years, the Fire Brigade was finally separated from Police control.

The new Chief Officer concerned himself with the provision of new and up-to-date appliances. and efforts were made to obtain a new Leyland pumping machine, but once again Leyland's could not supply. The question of communications was discussed at the Watch Committee meeting in November. 1940, and it was decided that. if possible, the brigade should be equipped with wireless facilities. It was found that the necessary equipment could not be obtained.

In common with other fire brigades in this part of the country during the winter of 1940-41, assistance was rendered by both the regular Brigade, and the Auxiliaries to the towns and cities subjected to blitz bombardment. These included Birmingham, Coventry, Hull, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Leeds, Grimsby, etc.

In comparison with other towns. Doncaster did not experience any severe bombing during this winter, but it is recorded that bombs were dropped within 300 yards of a large fire which occurred on the afternoon of the 21st December, 1940, at the Plant Carriage Works. This fire, which was of very big dimensions, necessitated the use of over 12 jets, and was tackled by the Doncaster Brigade and its auxiliaries, together with the Brigade maintained by the Railway Company. It affected the main portion of the carriage building workshops, but owing to the censorship of news in force at the time, little was reported in the press regarding it, but the damage caused was in the region of £132,000. As this fire was burning during the blackout and the premises being of national importance, the military authorities endeavoured to protect the area from aerial bombardment by laying a smoke screen over the scene.

In response to directions by the Government, reserve water supplies for fighting purposes were created by the laying down of static water basins, surface tanks, and steel piping laid under and on the roads. Delivery was also accepted of a large amount of equipment in the way of pumps and special appliances. The trailer pumps required motor vehicles to tow them, and the townspeople and business men loaned their vehicles for fire brigade use, in most cases on a voluntary basis.

On August 18th, 1941, the Fire Services in the British Isles were nationalised, and for the first time became a Crown Service. Doncaster became part of a Fire Force Area with Headquarters in Rotherham, and Divisional Headquarters were set up in the town to control the fire service activities in the districts administered by the following Local Authorities: Doncaster Borough, Doncaster Rural, Adwick-le-Street Urban, Bentley-with-Arksey Urban, Conisborough Urban. Mexborough Urban, Swinton Urban, Tickhill Urban and Thorne Rural. Both whole-time regular and auxiliary personnel were placed on the same footing and eventually merged with the part-time auxiliary into one fire fighting force.

State control brought about an increase in efficiency in all branches of the science of fire engineering, and a great degree of standardisation, both in appliances, equipment, training and operations was introduced. New appliances, such as 100-foot mechanically operated turntable ladders, water tenders, hose laying lorries, control units, canteen vans. etc., were made available to Doncaster. The state set-up provided for the resources of the whole of the National Fire Service to be available to reinforce and assist any area or district requiring help. In various parts of the country Training Schools were established, and for the first time a National College was created. These schools and the college provided technical knowledge and instructed thousands of officers and other personnel of the Service. The study of every aspect of fire brigade work was placed before the student during this period of State control by experts in a manner deserving the highest credit.

A few notable fires occurred in the Borough, namely, fire at a large food warehouse involving a loss of £10,000: a raw waste cotton warehouse resulting in £60,000 damage; the top floors of Alfred Hall, Ltd., Ironmongers. etc., wholesale and retail warehouse in Silver Street, causing damage to structure and stock, etc., to the extent of £17,000, and a £7,000 loss incurred at Stevens Railway Wagon Works.

It is interesting to compare the statistics of the calls received by the Brigade for fires within the Borough during the periods covered by World War 1 and a similar period 30 years later:

Year.	No. of Calls.
1913	19
1914	10
1915	21
1916	10
1917	13
1943	106
1944	127
1945	123
1946	139
1947	201

It will be seen, therefore, that over the last 30 years the rise has been phenomenal. The causes for this increase are varied, but the increase of population, the greater number of buildings, the more serious hazards in industry constitute the main reasons.

The end of the war in 1945 brought about a reduction in the number of personnel and appliances in the Service, nationally and locally, and the necessary re-organisation to cater for peacetime needs was carried out. It was realised, however, that the fire defence of the country would have to be on a much larger scale than pre-war and stress was made upon whole-time establishments in towns similar to Doncaster. It is true to say that the war years brought about immense changes in the fire brigade profession, and almost every activity in the service acquired a new outlook.

The inefficiency of centuries was erased during the war years, and it was clear there could not be any return to pre-war conditions if the public and the nation was to have adequate protection from fire.

Final details of the new Local Government Services were contained in a comprehensive Act of Parliament known as the Fire Services Act. 1947. This Act governed the return of Fire Brigades to local control and reduced the number of brigades from 1,400 to 134.

A most important requirement of the Act concerns the amount of protection to be provided within the community, and consequently, a minimum establishment of men and appliances are authorised for each Brigade.

During the latter part of 1947 it was realized that in order to effect a smooth change over to local authority control, certain measures would have to be taken before the Act came into force, consequently each designated Fire Authority had to take such steps as appointing staff.

The Chief Officer and Staff were appointed by the Watch Committee in accordance with the Regulations, and consisted of one Chief Officer, a Deputy to the Chief Officer, two Operational Station Officers, a Fire Prevention Officer with the rank of Station Officer, four Sub-Officers, four Leading Firemen, 32 Firemen, six female Control Room Staff and two Civilians.

The Fire Service Act, 1947, required fire authorities for the first time to provide arrangements for the inspection of property in their area with regard to their risk: to take steps to mitigate damage caused by water and carrying out salvage work: and for giving, when requested, of advice on fire prevention and means of escape in case of fire. It also gave powers for them to delegate their functions in whole or in part to other Fire Authorities. and in the case of Doncaster, the neighbouring County Councils arranged for Doncaster-Brigade to make initial attendances to incidents within their areas which are near to Doncaster.

As from the appointed date, and for the first time in history, the Government are authorised to make a contribution, not exceeding 25% to the cost of administering the Fire Brigades, provided the efficiency of the Brigade is up to the standards required by the Home Office. To ensure that this standard is maintained the Home Office appointed a Chief Inspector of Fire Brigades and a staff of several Inspectors who are known as Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fire Brigades.

The same liability is placed on fire brigades by the 1947 Act as the 1938 Act, (which was repealed in its entirety), i.e., the question of mutual assistance between themselves so that the resources of one are available in case of need to others.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department is the responsible Minister of the Government empowered to administer the Fire Brigades Act and he is authorised to initiate legislation on various cognate matters. Regulations are issued from time to time, dealing with conditions of service, pay, leave, pensions, training, and promotions, thus ensuring that all brigades are administered at the same standard. In making these regulations the Secretary of State must, and does, consult such bodies as Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and the National Joint Council for Fire Brigades. These bodies are formed of representatives of the Local Authorities, Fire Engineering Technical Bodies and Associations, The Chief Fire Officers' Association, The National Association of Fire Officers and the Fire Brigades Union, thus it is ensured that any regulation made has always been agreed to before its promulgation.

Up to this point, this publication has been rather in the nature of a history of fire brigade activities in Doncaster from the earliest time, but control being remitted to local authorities on March 31st, 1948, and with the consequent formation of the Doncaster County Borough Fire Brigade on April 1st, 1948, the matter following will now take the form of the first quinquennial report of the Brigade, covering the period ending March 31st. 1953.

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

to 31st MARCH, 1953

WATCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1948/49

Alderman G. H. Ranyard, J.P. (Chairman)
Alderman W. J. Crookes (Vice-Chairman)
His Worship The Mayor (Alderman P. Judd)
Alderman H. Burton
Alderman H. L. Gee, J.P.
Alderman A. E. Hall
Alderman E. Scargall

Alderman A. Thomson
Councillor O. H. Jackson
Councillor C. H. Mason
Councillor L. Nicklin
Councillor E. H. Shaw
Councillor B. Varley, J.P.

1949/50

Alderman G. H. Ranyard, J.P. (Chairman)
Alderman W. J. Crookes (Vice-Chairman)
His Worship The Mayor (Councillor H. Martin)
Alderman H. Burton
Alderman A. E. Hall
Alderman E. Scargall
Alderman A. Thomson

Councillor S. H. Auckland
Councillor W. Chappell
Councillor A. Harvey, J.P.
Councillor O. H. Jackson
Councillor C. H. Mason
Councillor L. Nicklin
Councillor E. H. Shaw

1950/51

Alderman G. H. Ranyard, J.P. (Chairman)
Alderman W. J. Crookes (Vice-Chairman)
His Worship The Mayor (Councillor H. Wilson)
Alderman H. Burton
Alderman A. E. Hall
Alderman E. Scargall
Alderman A. Thomson

Councillor S. H. Auckland
Councillor W. Chappell
Councillor A. Harvey, J.P.
Councillor O. H. Jackson
Councillor C. H. Mason
Councillor L. Nicklin
Councillor E. H. Shaw

1951/52

Councillor E. H. Shaw (Chairman)
Alderman G. H. Ranyard, J.P. (Vice-Chairman)
The Worshipful The Mayor (Alderman R. Hodson)
Alderman H. Burton
Alderman W. J. Crookes
Alderman E. Scargall
Alderman A. Thomson

Councillor S. H. Auckland
Councillor W. Chappell
Councillor O. H. Jackson
Councillor C. H. Mason
Councillor L. Nicklin
Councillor C. Porter

1952/53

Alderman G. H. Ranyard, J.P. (Chairman)
Councillor W. Chappell (Vice-Chairman)
His Worship The Mayor (Councillor E. Hubbard)
Alderman H. Burton
Alderman T. H. Burton
Alderman W. J. Crookes
Alderman E. Scargall

Alderman E. H. Shaw
Alderman A. Thomson
Councillor S. H. Auckland
Councillor A. E. Cammidge J.P.
Councillor L. Nicklin
Councillor C. Porter, J.P.

Establishment

The authorised establishment of the Doncaster County Borough Fire Brigade has, with one slight exception, remained the same during the period, as follows :

Chief Fire Officer	1
Assistant Divisional Officer (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)	1
Station Officers (Operational)	2
Station Officer (Fire Prevention)	1
Sub-Officers	4
Leading Firemen	4
Firemen	32
Civilians	<u>2</u>
Total	47

The personnel has varied from time to time owing to retirements, resignations, and transfers to other brigades, and to keep the brigade at strength the recruitment of persons suitable for the appointment of firemen has been carried out, together with promotions within the brigade, to fill vacancies in the higher ranks. At the present time the strength of the brigade is below the authorised establishment as follows :

One leading fireman and two firemen.

In addition, the operational strength is reinforced by uniformed firewomen for control and mobilising purposes, to an extent of one leading firewoman and five firewomen, and at the end of this period, owing to similar reasons heretofore mentioned, only four firewomen are employed. The clerical work associated with administration duties of the Brigade is carried out by civilian staff, authorised by the Home Office, which constitutes one chief clerk and one female clerk/typist, and this staff is fully engaged with matters connected with administration duties of the brigade, such as posting of orders, compilation of wages, stores, accounting, etc.

Fire brigade appliances must be maintained in a high state of efficiency and to provide for this, employment of one civilian brigade engineer / mechanic is authorised. Similarly, as personnel work tours of duty which do not allow them leaving the station for the purpose of meals, canteen facilities have to be provided on the station, and for this one wholetime civilian cook is employed.

Difficulty has been experienced from time to time in maintaining the authorised establishment of operational personnel, as applicants for employment have in many cases been of an unsuitable type. A potential recruit is interviewed and examined in arithmetic, dictation. etc., and it is often found that the elementary standard required is not possessed by the applicant. In addition, physical and medical standards of a high order are required, and here again a high percentage of the applicants fail. Nevertheless. it has been possible during the five years to maintain an efficient brigade properly balanced as regards youth and experience.

Training

The technical knowledge required by professional firemen is of a high order, consequently, immediately on enrolment, a recruit is required to attend a recruits' course, which, by arrangement with neighbouring fire authorities, is held at Leeds. At the end of the course the student sits for an examination. The recruit returns to his brigade and his progress is closely watched during the first two years in particular. Subject to passing a satisfactory probationary period, the Watch Committee confirms the appointment.

The efficiency of any fire brigade is probably more dependent upon constant practice with the use of fire appliances, ladders and all types of gear than any other form of instruction. Consequently drills and practice constitute an essential daily feature in the lives of both officers and men. In addition, lectures and courses of instruction are given at frequent periods upon the station by officers and visiting specialists on all subjects connected with fire fighting.

The daily training at the station constitutes a basic standard of instruction, and in order to keep abreast with new ideas, members of the brigade have from time to time attended courses at the Fire Service Colleges at Brighton and Dorking. The following personnel have received refresher courses at the College:

Chief Officer
Deputy Chief Officer
Operational Station Officers
Fire Prevention Officer
Sub-Officers

Members of the brigade have also attended courses on turntable ladder operation and maintenance.

The majority of the personnel of the brigade possess qualifications for rendering first aid to the injured, following a course given by an officer of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Other items of equipment, such as self-contained breathing apparatus, requires very careful use and handling, and specialised training of personnel in the maintenance, use and operation of such apparatus is carried out weekly.

Sickness and Injury

By the nature of his occupation a fireman is considered to be more prone to injury than other persons following a less hazardous employment. Thus injury occasioned whilst on duty is not surprising. During the period under review, considerable time has been lost in consequence of injuries, but it is not considered excessive. The most serious case was a spinal injury caused to a fireman whilst responding to a call of fire. Other cases have occurred from time to time, most of them being of a trivial nature necessitating only short absences from duty.

Illness, however, caused a far greater toll on the strength of the brigade during the past five years. Several members of the brigade have been absent from duty for several months at a time, and with one exception all returned to duty completely cured. The exception, however, necessitated the retirement on an ill-health pension, of Sub-Officer Downing, who shortly afterwards succumbed to his ailment.

It is appropriate to record the fact that Sub-Officer Downing was held in very high esteem by his colleagues in Doncaster and his passing naturally created sorrow amongst those who knew him.

Discipline

The standard of discipline required by Fire Authorities from members of their fire brigades is governed by regulations made under the Fire Services Act. During the period under review contraventions against the code of discipline have been few and of a minor nature. The members of the brigade have at all times been ready to carry out any orders or tasks which have been necessary to ensure an efficient fire brigade.

Government Inspection

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, each Fire Authority's Brigade is subjected to an Annual Inspection by one or more of H.M. Inspectors of Fire Brigades, and during each of the past five years an inspection has been carried out in the presence of the Watch Committee. On each occasion, all aspects of fire brigade procedure and administration, in detail and in general, have been inspected, and in each instance the Inspector has expressed his satisfaction with what he has seen.

Appliances and Equipment

On the appointed day (1st April. 1948), the appliances held by Doncaster were, in the main, of an obsolete type, and in some cases consisted of appliances specifically designed for war-time emergency requirements. Consequently, the reversion of the State to Local Government control demanded a review of the appliances and equipment. The Watch Committee authorised the acquisition of modern appliances and replacement of gear, and an early start was made to achieve a desirable balance of equipment.

In order that Fire Authorities may have the benefit of the fire fighting ideas and knowledge of the country as a whole, the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council set up a Sub-Committee whose terms of reference concern, inter alia, with the design and development of fire appliances. This Committee has issued specifications and recommendations as to what is considered the best type of appliances. Accordingly, when new fire appliances are purchased by a fire authority there are in being specifications available for their own particular requirements. Here below is recorded the details of the type and number of the appliances held by this brigade since the appointed day :

One Leyland "Cub " self-propelled 350 gpm. pump with Braidwood body, originally put into commission in 1935. Fitted with a new engine of different type during the period of State control. This appliance at the present time has been completely dismantled and is in process of thorough overhaul: fitting of a new engine and amending the gear ratio, rebuilding and painting, and will be back into commission again by the time this report is published.

One Dennis "F7" dual purpose machine fitted with a Rolls Royce 150 BHP. engine and a Dennis 800-1,000 gpm. pump incorporating 100 gall. hose reel tank and two hose reels. This appliance was obtained in May, 1950, and is the first Doncaster machine to meet all the requirements of the specification laid down by the Home Office. It is equipped with VHF. wireless transmitter and receiver.

One Fordson water tender fitted with a Coventry Climax light pump. This appliance was designed as a prototype for post-war use by the Home Office and was partially constructed in the Brigade's own workshops. It was completed by the personnel of this Brigade and put into commission in April, 1948. The built-in tank contains 500 gallons of water serving two 60-foot hose reels. This home-made machine has given five years' admirable service and served to tide over the period required by manufacturers to get production of modern machines under way. It is now considered obsolete and the Watch Committee have authorised its disposal.

One Bedford heavy self-propelled pump fitted with 1,000 gpm. Gwynne pump driven by a Leyland engine. This appliance was supplied by the Home Office under the emergency organisation and after the "appointed day" was completely dismantled and overhauled and fitted with a new streamline semi-limousine body by the personnel of this Brigade.

Here again. this heavy pumping unit served as an essential standby for delivering water into the built-up area of the town, pending the Water Department efforts to improve supplies in the domestic mains. The Watch Committee have now approved the proposal to dismantle the machine, and in order that a water carrier could be made in the brigade workshop a 500-gallon water tank and a 350 gpm pump is being built on to the chassis to provide a reserve machine to be specifically used as a water carrier for supplying water to fires and other occurrences in the surrounding agricultural districts.

One Fordson Home Office type pump escape fitted with 300 gpm front-mounted Barton pump, supplied in 1941 under the emergency organisation. This appliance at the present time is placed on reserve, and is allocated to the Auxiliary Fire Service for training purposes. It is intended to replace this machine by a new one of Home Office pattern early in 1954.

One Albion 6-wheel Aircraft Crash Tender with limousine streamline body incorporating one 600-gallon water tank and one 60-gallon foam tank complete with special inductors for producing foam, also enclosed within the body is a Coventry Climax light pump. This appliance was put into commission during the emergency and it was disposed of in May, 1951, to another Fire Authority, who purchased it for the protection of a Municipal Airport.

One Leyland Merryweather 100-foot mechanically operated turntable ladder. This appliance is powered with a 6-cylinder Diesel engine, and the ladder is of all-steel tubular construction. It is fitted with a 350 gpm Sulzer pump powered by its own internal combustion engine. In 1948 this appliance was sent to the Home Office Depot, Wakefield, and completely overhauled and rebuilt in accordance with the standard practice of completely overhauling turntable ladders at five-yearly intervals. At the time of writing this report steps are being taken for this appliance to undergo its second overhaul.

One Bedford water tender tilted with a 350 gpm. Dennis pump and a limousine body built by Hampshire Car Bodies, Southampton. Carried amidships is a 400-gallon water tank which serves water for two 100-foot hose reels. This appliance is the latest acquisition to the fleet and was put into commission in September 1952, and is the second Doncaster machine to conform to Home Office requirements. It is fitted with wireless.

Two 350 gpm Coventry Climax trailer pumps, one of which is a special issue by the Home Office for A.F.S. training purposes, the other being part of the regular brigade equipment.

Two 120 gpm war-time Standard Gwynne trailer pumps of Home Office type which are no longer in such a condition as to be efficient for fire fighting purposes and the Watch Committee have authorised disposal.

Two Austin 2-ton towing vehicles received in 1941, which, since 1948, have each been completely overhauled and rebuilt. These appliances are used as general utility vehicles and for towing trailer pumps, etc.

One Bedford FWD. tipping lorry fitted with a winch. This vehicle was issued during the State control period. in 1946. It is maintained in good mechanical condition. and used mostly for work connected with special services and for salvage work at fires.

One 1947 Austin 12 h.p. Saloon staff car issued by the Home Office.

One 1951 Vauxhall "Velox" Saloon staff car purchased by the Watch Committee.

One 25 h.p. Wolseley 1939 Saloon staff car issued by the Home Office and disposed of as surplus to requirements in 1950.

One Austin "A40 " light van purchased in 1952 used primarily by Officers of the Brigade for general use.

One Scammel wheelbarrow pump having an output of 65 gpm. at 50 lbs. per sq. inch.

One Foam trailer designed and constructed by Brigade personnel in 1952, equipped for carrying foam branches, knapsack tank, inductors and 110 gallons of foam.

Having regard to the fact the maximum numbers of officers and men on duty at any one time is 18, it will be appreciated that all the 'listed appliances could not be manned at once. Consequently a system of allocating personnel to one or more appliances is applied so as to ensure all contingencies are met by the use of a wide variety of appliances. It can be stated with confidence that the fire appliances attached to this Brigade are a credit to any community and they contribute in no small measure to the pride and efficiency of the crews who operate them.

The provision of efficient equipment is of major importance in every brigade and the costs are such that many years of operation are needed before a brigade can boast ownership of all requirements. Here in Doncaster, we are fortunate, and during the past five years the Watch Committee have approved a steady annual expenditure to enable necessary gear to be obtained.

A very important item is hose, and this very expensive essential to fire brigade operations demands extreme measures to ensure fair and efficient life. In accordance with normal practice a certain quantity of hose is bought year by year, thus providing a stock of good quality to be always ready for immediate use. There is 15,000 feet of first class hose held by the brigade at the present time, of which a fair proportion is made up of internally lined latex hose.

As regards other items of equipment it is interesting to note that over 3,500 items are listed in the station inventories.

Personal Equipment

Throughout the whole of the period the members of the brigade have been provided with reasonably good uniform and personal equipment, and constant efforts are made to obtain better. During the early part of the period after State control, most of the uniform was obtained by central purchase from Home Office stock. This was cheap and made principally for war period. When stocks were finished, uniform replacements were obtained by contract from various suppliers. These new issues conform with the standards recommended by the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades, as regards quality. The uniform manufacturers are now in a position to supply really good quality uniform at reasonable prices for the first time since the war and the brigade will now benefit.

Water

The Fire Service Act, 1947, makes it the responsibility of the fire authority to "take all reasonable measures for securing the provision of an adequate supply of water and for ensuring that it will be available for use in case of fire."

Appropriate steps have been taken during the period to give due regard to these requirements, and all new extensions have been piped with suitably sized mains and fitted with approved standard design hydrants. The supplies to the mains will be substantially increased when work now in progress is completed.

With regard to existing mains carrying only small quantities, increased supplies have been obtained in certain districts by installing special suction hydrants on trunk mains.

The work of replacing obsolete hydrants has gone on steadily, and progress has been made with the policy of standardising on one type of hydrant within the Borough. The difficulties experienced in pumping supplies to the river water mains have been overcome, and it is expected that there will be no anxieties regarding water supplies for fire fighting purposes in the near future.

There are 2,036 hydrants in the Borough, 1,287 of which are of appropriate standard outlet conforming to national standards 749, however, all ball hydrants, and 140 of these are on the river main system. These ball-type hydrants are considered obsolete in pattern and are either being replaced with valve type or sealed off altogether. All hydrants are inspected at regular intervals by the personnel of the brigade, and any defects are reported to the Water Undertaking for rectification. The installation of more suction hydrants with 5½ inch outlets on trunk mains in the town has greatly relieved water problems in the worst districts.

Access points to the various supplies of static water have been listed and the sites kept available for immediate use; these are, in the main, situated along the banks of the canal and the River Don.

Workshops and Maintenance

The brigade is fortunate in being equipped with two well established workshops, which enables the Brigade Engineer, together with the help of uniformed personnel, to carry out practically all the necessary repairs and maintenance on the appliances and equipment. Only in a few instances has it been necessary for work to be sent out to private firms. It is the policy of the brigade to continue to equip the workshop with up-to-date machinery and tools, and already much progress has been made in this direction.

Day to day servicing of the appliances is carried out on a routine which ensures the highest efficiency being obtained.

Fire Prevention

The war years proved beyond doubt that every community should have access to up-to-date knowledge in fire prevention matters. Prior to 1940, practice in giving advice on fire prevention fell far short of the desirable standard. It was common for a fireman to be asked an opinion which too often was accepted, even though such advice did not bear much relation to scientific measures or legislation.

The fireman of to-day is much better fitted to render advice, although the legal and commercial technicalities involved in submitting advice on fire prevention measures demand that such duties must form a specialist reference within any fire brigade. Fire Prevention Officers undergo at least three months' special training at college, and even then continue long hours of study to meet the present day requirements.

In accordance with Section 1 (1) (d) and Sub-Section 2 of Section 1 of the Fire Services Act. 1947, the Watch Committee appointed seven members of the brigade to be certified officers of the Fire Brigade Authority qualified to give information on fire fighting, with regard to the character of the buildings and other property in the area.

The primary function of the Fire Prevention Officers is to make a special study of fire protection problems within the scope of the Fire Service, and to carry out the more specialised duties, such as fire prevention surveys and inspections, and to collaborate with and maintain liaison with the operational officers in fire prevention matters.

It is convenient to classify fire prevention inspections under three headings as follows:

FULL SURVEY.

A thorough and comprehensive examination of the premises and processes at risk. as regards the fire protection arrangements which are in operation or requiring to be made, covering. for instance, fire appliances and equipment, water supplies, means of escape, storage conditions and " good housekeeping ";

SPECIFIC INSPECTION. An examination of the premises and plant for the above purpose, but limited to one or more particular aspects of fire prevention

ROUTINE INSPECTION. An examination made, as a rule, periodically, for the purpose of ascertaining whether particular precautions which should be in operation are in fact being maintained.

To give further guidance as to the extent of the activities of the Fire Prevention Department, I quote hereunder the Acts (which in most cases have Regulations) which are related to Fire Prevention:

- Petroleum Consolidation Act, 1928
- Factories Act, 1937
- Celluloid Cinematograph Film Act, 1922
- Public Health Act, 1936
- Explosives Acts, 1875, 1883 and 1923
- Education Act, 1945
- Children's & Young Persons Act, 1933
- Theatres Act, 1843
- Public Health Amendment Act, 1890
- Cinematograph Act, 1909 and 1952
- Heating Appliances (Fireguards) Act, 1952

Experience has shown during the last five years that much worthwhile work has been carried out, and it is evident that a higher standard of safety now exists in places of public resort. Business firms and architects, etc., are now calling for advice concerning fire prevention matters on a much greater scale, and this fact indicates how much the service is appreciated. Assistance and advice on fire prevention matters is given to all Corporation departments and liaison is maintained, which, amongst many advantages, includes discussions on new plans submitted to the Town Council for approval. These are examined and commented upon by this department, and the co-operation existing ensures that all new work in the Borough is constructed in accordance with good practice as regards fire prevention generally.

The fire brigade is also responsible for the examination and maintenance (and, in most cases, the provision of) first-aid fire fighting appliances in property occupied by the Corporation. It will be seen by the following figures how the work of fire prevention has grown steadily during the period under review and consequently assistance has to be provided to this department by operational personnel.

The number of inspections and visits carried out during the last five years are as follows:

Year	No. of Inspections
1948-1949	221
1949-1950	719
1950-1951	772
1951-1952	863
1952-1953	1130

The bulk of the work undertaken by the fire prevention branch is naturally conducted on a goodwill basis, since the department has only limited powers under Section 34 of the Factories Act, 1937. Section 59 and 60 of the Public Health Act, 1936. and the Heating Appliances (Fireguards) Act, 1952. The recommendations and reports made regarding conditions at cinemas and theatres are borne in mind by the Licensing Authority for these premises when they consider the granting of the yearly licences.

The knowledge required by the personnel of the brigade with regard to fire prevention must always be kept up to the highest standards as progress in industry, etc., call for new processes with their consequent fire risks.

To keep in step with the latest development the Watch Committee have become members of the Fire Protection Association of Great Britain. and they are able to refer any matters of a highly technical nature to this body. In addition, various bulletins, papers and reports from the Home Office and from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research on fire 'prevention matters supply a wealth of information on the subject which is valued and used to advantage.

Operations

It will be realised that the prime duty of a fire brigade is the protection of life and property from the dangers of fire, and all work undertaken by the brigade is directed to the one aim.

It is common knowledge that year by year the nation's fire loss increases, as does the number of fires attended.

Doncaster provided no exception to this statement. and the reader will have noticed how the figures have grown. In this connection it is appropriate to publish the number of calls accepted by this brigade since 1948. Calls are sub-divided under various headings, i.e.,
Fires

Chimney Fires

False Alarm with Good intent

False Alarm given Maliciously.

Special Services (Calls for help in cases where fire brigade equipment is suitable and the case is of an urgent nature).

Operational Statistics

Services performed within the Borough and for other outside Authorities during the period 1st April, 1948. to 31st March, 1953.

	1948/49	1949/50	1950/51	1951/52	1952/53
DONCASTER COUNTY BOROUGH					
Fires	92	139	118	120	166
Chimney Fires	44	34	57	69	74
False Alarms with Good Intent	20	17	14	16	26
False Alarms Malicious	3	-	3	5	18
Special Services	40	114	79	117	103
TOTAL	199	304	271	327	387
WEST RIDING COUNTY COUNCIL					
Fires	84	93	55	66	89
Chimney Fires	4	5	11	6	13
False Alarms with Good Intent	6	6	6	4	5
False Alarms Malicious	-	2	1	-	3
Special Services	1	-	2	1	2
Retransmitted Calls	13	73	14	12	10
TOTAL	108	180	89	89	122
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL					
Fires	3	6	3	3	9
Chimney Fires	1	1	1	1	-
False Alarms with Good Intent	4	2	-	-	3
False Alarms Malicious	1	-	-	-	-
Special Services	-	-	-	-	-
Retransmitted Calls	3	18	3	1	4
TOTAL	12	27	7	5	16
LINCOLNSHIRE (LINDSEY) COUNTY COUNCIL					
Retransmitted Calls	2	1	1	-	-
ROTHERHAM COUNTY BOROUGH					
Standby Call	-	1	-	-	-
GRAND TOTAL	321	513	368	421	525

It was mentioned earlier that one of the requirements of the Fire Services Act requires Fire Authorities to delegate their functions either whole or in part to neighbouring Fire Authorities in cases, when, by doing so, the appliance which could reach an incident first should be the one to attend. Accordingly, Doncaster Fire Brigade act on behalf of the West Riding County Fire Service and the Nottinghamshire County Fire Brigade in providing part of the initial "first attendance" to the surrounding county areas near to

Doncaster. Doncaster Fire Brigade also accepts calls to incidents from whatever address they emanate and if the incident is in an area not protected by an initial attendance from this brigade, the call is retransmitted to the appropriate fire station covering that area. Hence it will be seen that included in the statistics are calls headed "retransmitted calls." It will be noticed that the last five years' working shows an upwards trend in the number of calls received. In the period 1949-50, when 513 calls were received, the very dry summer caused an abnormal number of heath, grass and moorland fires in the greater part of the surrounding country districts which are rural in character. Another disturbing feature revealed by the statistics concerns the increase in chimney fires, which have nearly doubled in number. This trend, which is general over the country as a whole, is due to several causes, e.g., inferior fuel, slow burning fires and higher cost of chimney sweeping. To some limited extent it is possible that the public send for the fire brigade more readily to chimney fires in the knowledge that our services are free. The Town Police Clauses Act. 1847, makes it a summary offence to wilfully set on fire, or cause any chimney to fire by neglect, and numerous successful prosecutions have been brought by the Police as a deterrent to this type of incident.

Doncaster has been most fortunate during the period under review in that, with one exception, no serious fires have occurred. This exception was a fire which occurred at the premises of Messrs. P. Platts and Son, Market Place, Doncaster, in January, 1952, causing damage of approximately £20,000, and this fact should be borne in mind when considering figures of fire losses during the period, which are:

Year.	Amount.
1948-49	£4,219
1949-50	£2,364
1950-51	£7,689
1951-52	£23,064
1952-53	£4,181

These figures bear well in comparison with other Boroughs of similar size, and also it is very pleasing to record that during this five year period none of the 635 incidents resulted in loss of life.

Connected with fire extinction is another duty carried out by fire brigades (which again is required under the Fire Services Act), viz., salvage operations. This desirable feature was first started (on a country-wide scale) during State control. The practice is to carry out (at fires) operations designed to minimise damage by fire, water, smoke, fumes. etc., to goods, furnishings and fittings. A varied amount of equipment such as salvage sheets, squeegees, brushes, augers, sawdust, oil, are carried on each of the fire appliances, and reserve equipment is held at the station to facilitate this aspect of operational work.

It will be noticed that the brigade has carried out over 350 special services during the past five years, and in most instances these have been of an urgent and special nature. This assistance has been rendered to the public, possessions and property. Flooded basements have been pumped out; dangerous structures demolished; sunken canal barges refloated; persons trapped in lifts rescued; hazardous liquids removed from highways and buildings; assistance rendered at road and rail accidents: animals rescued from trees, high buildings and normally inaccessible places; access provided to secured premises; assistance rendered to police in searching high buildings; provision of water supplies to farms, etc., during drought and the cessation of normal supplies; these and a host of similar occasions have constituted the bulk of the valuable special services rendered by the brigade.

An illustration of how " Mutual Assistance " operates between Fire Authorities is shown by the help rendered to other brigades during the East Coast floods in January/February, 1953. Doncaster Fire Brigade sent an appliance, together with a full crew, to Lincolnshire for a whole week and they co-operated with other brigades in rendering such help as was necessary in order that damage and distress be reduced.

Housing and Premises

The Borough of Doncaster is one of the most fortunate in this respect. for at the commencement of the period covered by this report, the brigade got off to a good start with a comparatively new and up-to-date fire station and headquarters. Throughout the period the bulk of the maintenance work on these premises has been carried out by the personnel of the brigade, and the various properties are at the moment in an excellent state of repair and condition.

With regard to the housing of the personnel, it was soon evident that the residential accommodation available would be insufficient. The Fire Authority took immediate steps in 1948 to remedy the matter and at a time when building projects were seriously limited, the Watch Committee issued contracts for the building of one detached and 31 semi-detached houses. These houses were completed within two years and are situated in close proximity to the fire station. In this connection it is interesting to record that there is held annually a garden competition which helps to foster esprit de corps amongst the personnel. Certain prefabricated huts built at the rear of the station during the war years became dilapidated by 1951. Rather than scrap them and clear the site. they were dismantled, repaired and re-erected, so as to provide extra accommodation for vehicles and the Auxiliary Fire Service. This work was carried out by personnel of the Department, and the result is worthy of high commendation.

Promotion Procedure

Promotion and advancement within the brigade is governed by the conditions laid down by the Fire Service (Appointments and Promotions) Regulations, 1950. and, in association with other Fire Authorities in the district, there was formed the Yorkshire Fire Authorities Examination Board, which conducts the promotion examinations which are necessary for personnel to pass in order that they may reach higher rank. Since the inception of these examinations, 13 personnel have passed the Leading Fireman examination, five the Sub-Officers examination and three the Station Officers examination. As a result of these examinations all the promotions that have been made since the "appointed day" have been from duly qualified personnel.

Industrial Brigades

Throughout the period under review liaison has been promoted and maintained between firms in the surrounding district. It is with regret that I have to record the falling into abeyance of the Doncaster and Industrial Fire Brigades Association. A few of the members of this body rejoined and formed the nucleus of the Doncaster Fire Prevention Association, which concerns itself with the spreading of information on matters of general interest to fire brigade work and fire prevention. Visiting lecturers have attended the meetings of this Association and spoken on specialised subjects, and these have contributed in no small measure to the success of the organisation. Members have. also visited member firms within the district to inspect their works and obtained knowledge of the industrial processes and hazards and the precautions taken to safeguard them.

Civil Defence Auxiliary Fire Service

The Civil Defence Act, 1948, makes a Defence System almost a permanent feature of Local Authorities' duties. Provision is made for fire brigades to undertake specific duties, and every effort has been made to get under way the Auxiliary Fire Service Organisation. Operating as a separate unit in accordance with the terms of the Civil Defence (Fire Service) Regulations, 1949, equipment has been obtained for training purposes and personnel enrolled. The strength of the A.F.S. at March, 1953, stood at two Sub-Officers, four Leading Firemen, 24 Firemen and 11 Fire-women, the majority of which have completed their initial training. Recruitment throughout the period has been slow, although in this respect the Doncaster contingent is at a greater relative strength than are its neighbours. It will be some considerable time before a full authorised establishment is reached.

The present members are keen and attend their weekly drill with commendable regularity, and every opportunity is taken whereby they can co-operate with other Auxiliary Brigades in large scale Civil Defence exercises.

The Doncaster Auxiliary Fire Service personnel are fortunate in that they occupy separate premises at the fire station and are able to carry out their own training programme without being disturbed by the activities of the regular brigade. The auxiliaries do assist their colleagues in the regular brigade at fires and other urgent occasions, to the benefit of both and the public.

All members are provided with an issue of uniform at the completion of their training, and this enables them to carry out recruiting drives which are necessary to obtain new members.

With few exceptions all members of the regular brigade have received instruction for and obtained the Temporary Civil Defence Instructor's Certificate (Green).

Every opportunity has been taken of the facilities afforded by the responsible Government. Departments and the Chief Officer and other officers of the brigade have attended courses dealing with Civil Defence matters. The venues for these courses have been the Civil Defence Training Schools at Easingwold and Fallowfield, the Fire Services College, Dorking, and the Civil Defence Staff College, Sunningdale

Liaison is maintained at all times with the other Civil Defence organisations within the Borough.

Communications

The responsibilities taken over by this brigade in 1948 included the function of warning and calling out retained personnel at three West Riding County Fire Service Stations. This was achieved by remote control over the GPO. network. In 1950 the brigade was relieved of this responsibility and since that date it has only been necessary to inform the nearest West Riding Station when we have received a call for assistance from their area.

Two years ago the brigade were fortunate to obtain the installation of very high frequency radio on three appliances and a transmitter and receiver set in the station watchroom. The scheme is shared jointly with the Borough Police and the equipment is maintained by the Home Office wireless depot at Kippax. The facilities afforded by this system are of inestimable value and ensures constant contact with appliances attending fires. This installation marked the success of repeated applications for wireless equipment which commenced in 1941.

In order that adequate facilities are available to the public in the new housing estates in the Borough, extensions have been made to the Fire and Police Pillar system. The cost of this being shared jointly with the Fire Brigade and Police.

Canteen and Messing

The Fire Brigade canteen is run jointly by the Fire Authority and representatives of the staff. All meals are prepared on the station by one whole-time cook, who receives assistance from time to time by operational members of the brigade. Over 11,000 hot meals are provided yearly, and more than treble that number of beverages. The charges for meals are kept at a minimum compatible with the service desired.

Welfare and Recreation

The personnel of the brigade support by all means within their power the activities of the various national organisations dealing with welfare and benevolence, the main one being the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund. This fund has often assisted members and ex-members of the service here in Doncaster, and its good work has been augmented by grants from the Watch Committee from its Charity Fund.

The brigade have their own Social Club, which provides for its members' indoor recreation and outdoor sports. For some time during the period under review the Club co-operated with the Borough Police and Corporation Transport Departments in an organisation having their own sports ground. Cricket and football matches have been held between other brigades and various organisations within the Borough.

Any necessary expenses incurred by the Social Club are defrayed from regular voluntary subscriptions of its members.

Visits to Station and Demonstrations

The popularity of the Fire Station as a place of public interest is well known, and whatever type of party every endeavour is made to make the visits as instructive and entertaining as possible. More than ever requests are received from schools for classes to look round the station under the care of teachers, and it is felt that that in itself is a true indication of the value of the fire station visits.

Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Sea Cadets, Boys' Brigade and all such organisations have regular classes attending in the evenings to receive instructions in elementary fire fighting and rescue.

In addition, political bodies, religious organisations, study groups and youth clubs visit the station from time to time as part of their normal activities. The station is prepared to receive and welcome the general public on Bank Holidays and on the occasion of advertised "Open Days."

General

The weakness of the pre-war Fire Services were made very apparent during the war and after. The Service, being the only public undertaking which has experienced Government control and then returned to Local Government administration, has undergone a serious number of changes which can be considered unique.

It is pleasing to report that the Doncaster Fire Brigade has derived much benefit from these changes, and having regard to all the circumstances I am happy in the knowledge that the community can enjoy the services of an efficient, modern and economical fire brigade capable of meeting all the requirements of the Fire Services Act, 1947.

The measures necessary in bringing about this change-over would have been very burdensome had not the utmost support from the Chairman and the members of the Watch Committee been forthcoming, and the success which has attended the efforts of the brigade over the last five years are due in no small measure to their decisions.

No Corporation department can carry out its functions without recourse to the help of other departments and Committees, and I am grateful to the Town Clerk, the Chief Constable and all other Chief Officials and Heads of Departments for their help and assistance during the last five years. To the officers and men of the brigade and to all whom I have the honour to command, I wish to express my appreciation of the loyal manner in which they have carried out their duties, and trust that their efforts have resulted in making the Doncaster Fire Brigade a worthy servant of the public of this Borough.

I am, Sir and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

H. Jones

Chief Fire Officer.