

Sheffield Evening Star, 11th November, 1873

Serious Fire in Sheffield This Morning Latest Particulars

At an early hour this morning a serious fire occurred on the premises of Messrs. Wilson and Davies, silversmiths and platers, Sycamore street. The premises are not large, but the damage must be considerable, as they contained an extensive assortment of silver and plated goods made at other establishments in the town, as well as a large quantity of articles in various stages of manufacture. How the fire originated is not known with any degree of certainty, but it is probable that it was caused by a gas stove which had recently been placed in a portion of the works. The fire was discovered by a policeman almost immediately after it burst out, and he communicated at once with the fire brigade. This was at twenty minutes after three o'clock, and the brigade were upon the scene a few minutes afterwards. The fire then was very limited in extent; and in fact, it had only begun to make its way from near the stove to the ceiling above, and it could have been easily extinguished in a few minutes, but there was no water in the mains; and the brigade had to remain almost in comparative idleness till five o'clock. During all this time the fire held undisputed sway, and ultimately reduced the building to a heap of smoldering and blackened ruins. There was fortunately little wind, and this very much assisted the firemen in preventing the flames from extending to adjoining property. During all the time they were without water they stationed themselves at various parts of the surrounding buildings, and spurted out small jets of water from hand pipes and buckets with the view of confining the flames to Messrs. Wilson and Davies premises. A little before five o'clock access was obtained to a capital supply of water on the premises of Messrs. Joseph Rodgers, Sons, and Company; the engine could then be used for the first time, and the powerful stream of water which it sent into the burning building quickly subdued the flames, and in less than an hour the fire was completely extinguished. By this time, however, the workshops were utterly destroyed. All that remain entire are a small warehouse and office. Some of the contents of the shops were saved by the firemen; but by far the greatest portion of them are now lying amongst the debris. Spoons, forks, and pieces of German silver, in various stages of workmanship, are to be found thickly scattered about among the ruins; and it is said that a large quantity of pure silver has been melted, and has run no one knows where. A more complete scene of destruction and damage than the premises now present can hardly be imagined. All the machinery is destroyed or rendered comparatively worthless. It is impossible to estimate the damage which Messrs. Wilson and Davies have sustained, it must be very large. Their stock was insured in the Alliance, but we believe not to the full amount of its value. The building was also insured.

The serious nature of the fire is entirely owing to the length of time the brigade had to wait before they could obtain a supply of water. The reason there was no water in the mains is that some new pipes are being laid down in Glossop road. These were being connected last night, and whilst this was being done the water had to be shut off.