

The Star, Monday, August 3, 1942

Early Morning Blaze Wrecks Empire Stage

Fire completely gutted the stage of the Empire Theatre, Sheffield, to-day.

The N.F.S., under Divisional Officer C. Teather, saved the dressing-rooms, carpenter's shop, and scenery flats, though these suffered damage from water.

The safety curtain prevented the flames spreading to the auditorium.

Doorman's Discovery

The outbreak was discovered when the stage-doorkeeper reported for duty at 9 a.m.

Finding the area under the stage filled with smoke he immediately called the National Fire Service.

Within a few seconds firemen under Company Officer Jeffcott were concentrating jets under the stage.

Stage an Inferno

Thick smoke poured from doors and windows at the rear of the theatre, and reinforcements were called.

Soon six engines and pumps were feverishly at work.

Flames reached scenery on the stage and leapt to the roof, setting it ablaze,

The stage was now a raging inferno.

Not until great streams of water, -poured through the roof from turntable escapes, had lessened the fierceness of the blaze were firemen able to get to the stage itself.

£3,000 Scenery

Ordinarily the stage would have been clear of scenery but the settings for Ernie Lotinga's new production, "The Gestapo," were fixed yesterday, ready for a matinee to-day.

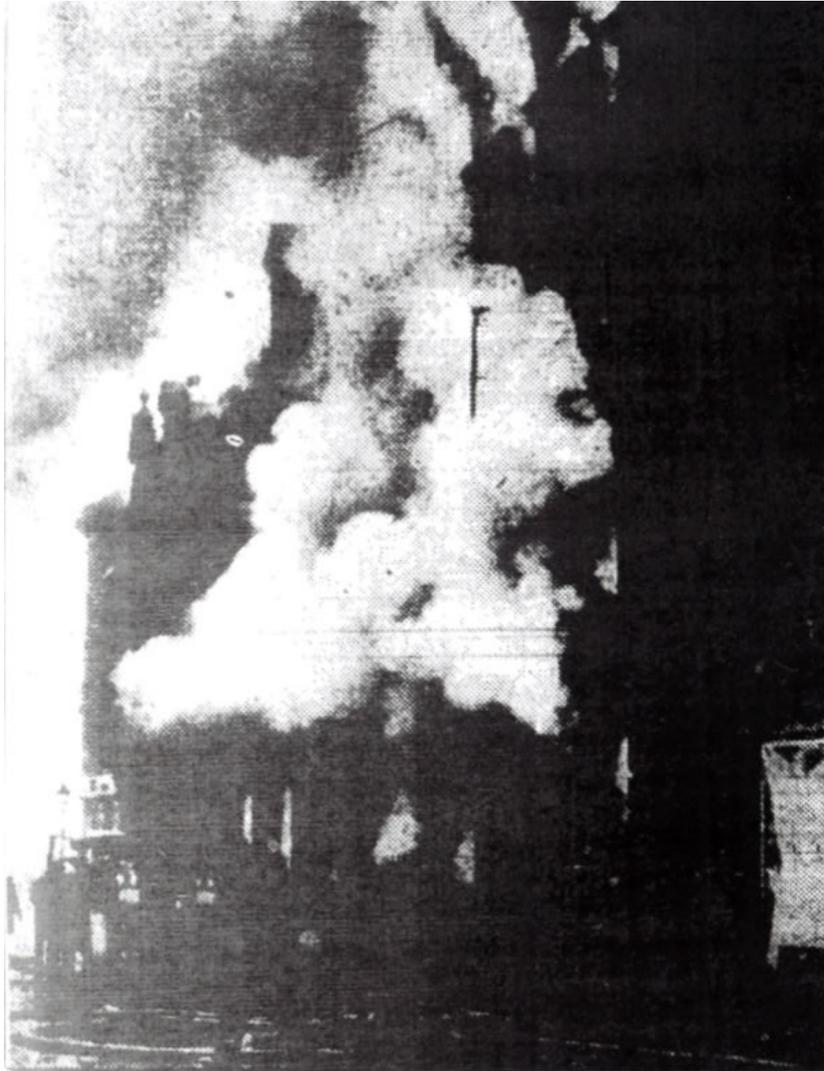
This scenery, valued at £3.000 was completely destroyed but the dresses for the show, in the dressing rooms, were saved.



Firemen pour water through the stage roof.

Firemen Overcome

Divisional Officer Teather, who directed the N.F.S. operations, said to "The Star": "The men did some excellent work, especially those on the turntable escapes directing water on to the roof. They stuck it despite the heat and smoke and helped to save the dressing rooms."



Smoke pours from the stage portion of the Empire Theatre, attacked by fire today.

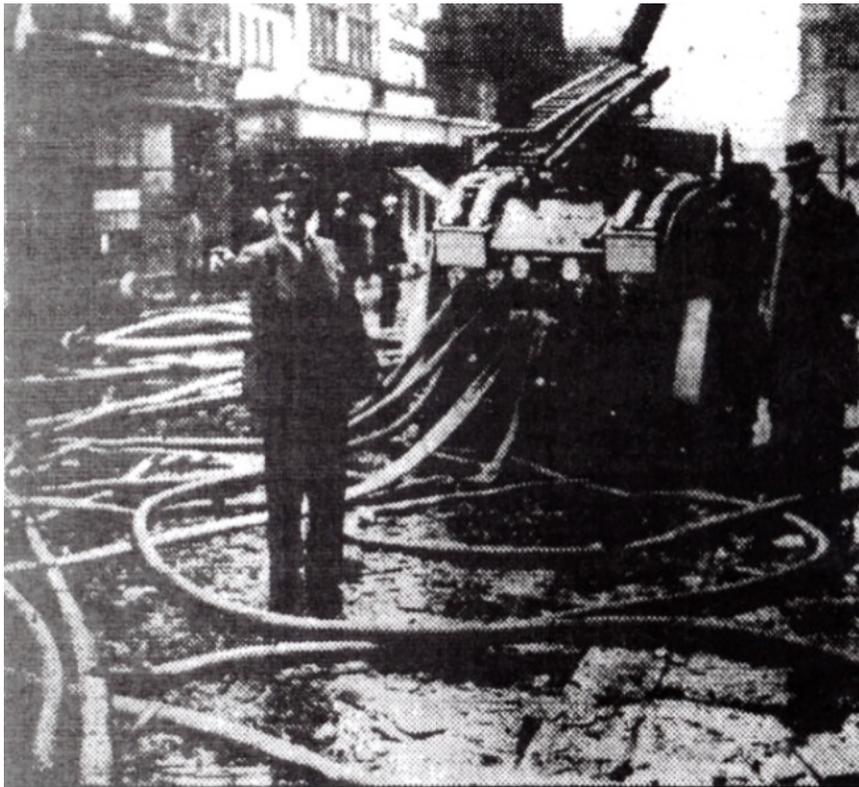
Flying slates and sparks fell on adjoining property, and a small outbreak was discovered in the roof of a nearby building. This was quickly quelled.

Company Officer Jeffcott was overcome by smoke inside the building, but managed to get outside, where he collapsed, and was taken to the Royal Hospital.

Other firemen were affected by the smoke, but recovered sufficiently to carry on with their task.

Mr. Neate cannot say at present whether the stage will be rebuilt during the war, but added: "On the face of it I doubt it, owing to the restrictions on amount of rebuilding."

While the fire was raging at the back of the theatre dozens of people were trying to book seats for the matinee.



Ernie Lotinga lends a hand in fighting the fire in which he lost several thousand pounds worth of scenery.

The theatre is owned by-Moss Empires Limited.