

Corn Exchange' Records Safe War Precautions Left Old Papers Unharmmed

Corn Exchange Open to the Winter Sky



Snow drifts through the gaping roof into the smouldering shell of the Sheffield Corn Exchange

Records of Births, marriages, and deaths kept in the Corn Exchange, Sheffield, which was practically gutted by fire earlier today, are intact in steel containers and safe among the debris.

The older records were saved as a result of a war-time precaution.

At the outbreak of war they were put into steel containers and safes and placed in a bricked-up vault in the Exchange.

Floor Opening

The only access to them was through an opening in the floor covered by an iron sheet.

Digging down through the debris the Registrar's staff found the iron covering intact.

When this was raised it appeared that everything inside the vault was intact.

More recent records kept in the steel containers and safes in the Great Hall of the Exchange are also believed to be safe.

To City Hall

All business which has been done by the Registrar of Births and Deaths in the Exchange will be carried out temporarily in the City Hall.

These duties include marriage ceremonies.

Entrance will be from Balm Green, and hours of business 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to mid-day Saturday.

The cause of the outbreak is unknown. There appears to be no connection with a chimney fire earlier in the night at the Maunche Hotel, which was extinguished by the N.F.S. in about half an hour.

The hotel and offices at the end of the building were comparatively undamaged.

When the outbreak started all engines of the Sheffield N.F.S. and also some from Rotherham turned out to fight the flames, but it was almost a hopeless battle from the start, for the old wood beams and panelling blazed furiously.

First task of the N.F.S. was to rescue Mr. Brookfield and his family, Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Cooper and their 18-month old child and Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Foster with their 13-month old child before the flames reached them.



Rescued earlier from the blazing Sheffield Corn Exchange, Mr. H. Brookfield returned to salvage some of his belongings, helped by his daughter and friends

Room Untouched

There was one room untouched by the fire or by water - the Muniment Room in which priceless treasures connected with English history, and which dated back to Edward I are stored.

Fire Force Commander Reynolds who was in charge of the firefighting operations told the "Star" he visited the room with officials of the Duke of Norfolk and found everything undamaged.

The room is directly under the tower. In it are prints of old Sheffield and one of the original copies of the Harrison Survey of 1637.

These are Munorial Records with many details of the Shrewsbury and Norfolk lines and of their connection with the city and its early history.

Previous big fires in the city since 1920 include:-

Skelton's Sheaf Bank Works, estimated damage £100,000 April 1921; works of the Hardy Patent Pick Co, Heeley, November 1929; Theatre Royal destroyed December 1935; Albert Hall Destroyed July 1937.