

Stanley Hangs Up His Helmet as the Old Order Changes



AT midnight on Sunday, Sheffield Fire Brigade winds up to make way for a new brigade covering all South Yorkshire.

Bowing out at the same time is Mr Stanley Lambert, the city's fire chief for the last eight years.

Retiring as he does - two years later than planned to see the changeover effected - Mr Lambert has seen 39 years work with the fire service.

Born and educated in Hull he joined the Hull City Police and Fire Brigade in 1935 and was immediately seconded to the fire service.

He came to Sheffield in 1948 as third officer, becoming assistant chief officer three years later and chief officer in 1966.

Mr Lambert has seen many changes in the fire service since he first joined - in training, in fire fighting techniques, and in the fireman's role.

He said: "There has been a tremendous improvement in training. Now a fireman has to know something about everything from chemicals to electrics to building construction,

It is no longer just a matter of throwing water on a fire it is almost a science and our firemen must be trained to meet the demands of technological advances."

Scope

Firemen are following training courses all the time, he said, "and each new promotion means more training."

The scope of a fireman's work has widened greatly since Mr. Lambert joined. He said: "One of the new challenges is hazardous loads on lorries. Firemen must deal with all sorts of acids and chemicals and even liquid metals in load spills." And then there is the "special services" - attending road accidents, dealing with flooded mains, removing rings from swollen fingers and extricating children from railings they have put their heads through.

Last year the Sheffield brigade handled nearly 1,800 "special" cases.

Yet despite the improvements in training and techniques, Mr Lambert says: "There is a higher element of danger in fire fighting now than 25 years ago."

The reason is not only the increase in the number of calls - Sheffield brigade received over 6,000 - double the average figure of a few years ago.

A main danger now is "on the chemical and production side," says Mr Lambert.

A welcome change over the years for him has been the growing awareness of the public of the need for fire precautions and their increasing readiness to call for help rather than try to deal with domestic fires themselves.

Last year members of the fire service talked to over 15,000 people in the Sheffield area about fire prevention.

After eight years with responsibility for 270 uniformed firemen, 35 other personnel and the efficient running of Sheffield's eight fire stations, Mr Lambert is taking a long holiday before deciding on his future plans.

Happy

Mr Lambert said: "There will be hardship and difficulties for the new force, but I'm sure the calibre of the men will overcome these and bring an efficient fire service to all of South Yorkshire."

I hope all the men will be as happy with the service as I've been for nearly 40 years."

Mr Lambert lives in Fulwood, Sheffield, with his wife Joan and two children.