



THE DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORY OF THE BRISTOL FIRE BRIGADE

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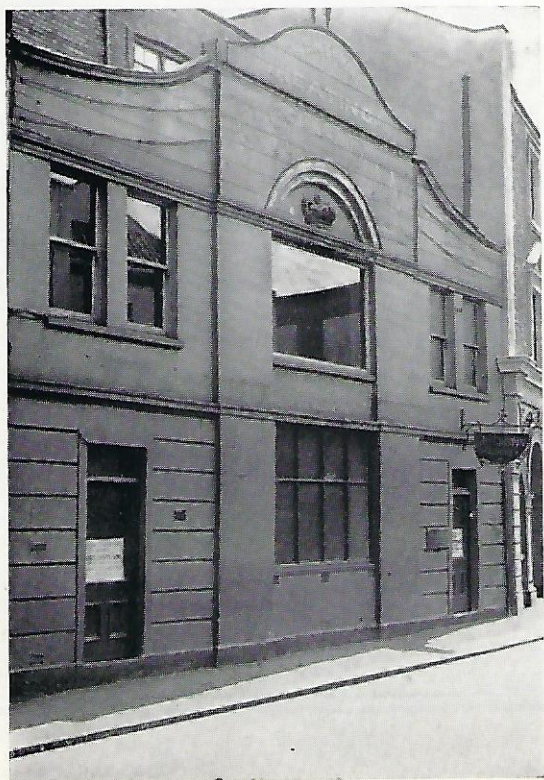
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Headquarters : BRISTOL FIRE BRIGADE.



No. 26, Nelson Street, originally the Fire Engine House
of the Crown Fire Office.

DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORY OF THE BRISTOL FIRE BRIGADE.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

IN order to realise the ever present danger from fire in the Middle Ages, it must be appreciated that in Bristol and likewise in other cities, the narrow streets were lined by timber houses, with combustible roofs, which were heated by open fires in the centre of the downstairs room, as fireplaces were unknown at that time. The introduction of the curfew (from the words "Couvre Feu") by William the Conqueror indicated that the danger was appreciated and this early law provided that each occupier had to place a metal cover over his fire each night on the sounding of a bell. In Bristol the curfew was rung at nine of the clock each night at St. Nicholas in the city.

It was not until the 16th century, however, that any further action was taken in Bristol but in 1577, as a result of a terrible fire on the quay, in premises occupied by "one Wolfe a joiner", the City Council passed the following ordinance:—

"It is ordained and enacted that after the feast of Pentecost, if any fire do appear gleaming out of any house within the said city of Bristol or suburbs of the same that the owners thereof shall forfeit and pay for every such offence 6/8 to the use of the Chamber.

Item : it is ordained that after the feast of St. Bartholomew, no house, roof or pent house within the walls of the city of Bristol shall be roofed with reed or thatch upon pain that the same shall be pulled down and taken away."

A further ordinance, which may be seen in the City Archives, was passed in 1586 when it was ordered that:—

"Any person being of the Common Council of this City shall at their own costs and charges before the feast of St. Michael the Archangel next provide six water buckets of leather and shall always keep and maintain the same in his house to be in readiness for the avoiding and suppressing the danger of fire which shall happen within this City or liberties thereof upon pain that any such person of the Common Council which shall not provide and have the said

buckets as aforesaid shall forfeit and pay to the Chamberlain to the use of the mayor and commonalty of the said City twenty shillings of lawful money of England. And moreover that the Mayor and aldermen of this City shall forthwith rate and appoint such other substantial burgesses and citizens of the said city as they shall think meet to keep and maintain such convenient number of like buckets for the use aforesaid as they shall think good to appoint them and that every citizen and burgess shall provide, keep and maintain the said buckets so rated and appointed on pain of ten shillings to be forfeited and paid as aforesaid if he shall make any default herein."

Another most destructive fire recorded in the early history of Bristol occurred on the 17th February, 1647. It originated in a house on Bristol Bridge occupied by an apothecary named Edwards and, as the buildings were constructed mainly of timber, the flames rapidly spread to involve and destroy in a few hours about 24 houses which lined the narrow thoroughfare between the relics of St. Mary's Chapel and the northern end of the Bridge. The tradesmen on the Bridge were regarded as the wealthiest in the City and consequently the stocks destroyed were of great value. A London news sheet stated that the flames were prevented from spreading further only by the pulling down of a number of houses and, added the writer, "Such was the fruit of paper or wooden dwellings, which no loss will make to be laid aside."

As a result of this disaster, at a meeting of the City Council on the 25th February it was ordered that, to repay the charges of quenching the flames and also for the erection of walls or rails for the protection of passengers, a rate should be levied on householders. In addition, as at this time the City did not possess a fire engine, the Council decided to order one from London for which the sum of £31 10 0 was paid, together with £8 8 0 for 48 buckets, thus establishing the first provisions against fire in Bristol. It was also ordained that every member of the Common Council should keep six buckets of leather in his house in readiness against fire or forfeit twenty shillings, and a great many more were ordered to be kept in the parish churches and in the halls of the trade companies.

On Bristol becoming a garrison town at the outbreak of the Civil War, the nightly watch, which had been established in 1621, was abolished to lighten the taxation on householders, but as the majority of the troops were withdrawn by February, 1654, the Common Council of the City resolved that the former regulation

for the provision of a nightly watch should be revived on the 1st March. It is probable that a serious fire, which had occurred in Wine Street on the day that this resolution was passed, had some effect on the Councillors, as this outbreak evidently showed the necessity of taking steps to protect property and suppress disorder. Another ordinance that had been obsolete, forbidding the boiling of tallow, oil and pitch in houses in the heart of the city was also revived at the same meeting.

An outbreak of fire in September, 1666, in a private dwelling situated at the corner of Broad and Corn Streets and which adjoined the Council House, created quite an alarm, and it is recorded that the Chamberlain distributed two shillings and sixpence amongst "those that did help me down with the books and boxes out of my office." He also gave twenty shillings worth of liquor to some "that took extraordinary pains to quench the fire", which fortunately caused little damage.

Several fires were suffered after this occurrence and on account of the general alarm following the appalling devastation of London in the Great Fire of 1666, the Council were moved in 1667 to renew the often revived but always neglected ordinance for the provision of a plentiful supply of water buckets. Up to this date the responsibility for dealing with an outbreak of fire was included in the duties of night watchmen employed by the Council for maintaining order, but in August of this year they were discharged and their responsibility in regard to fire imposed upon all householders personally in turn. (The Fireguard Organisation of the 1939 - 1945 War was obviously not a new idea). The resolution, however, proved unworkable and was dropped in favour of the re-instatement of the original night watch. A few months later it was discovered that many members of the Council had ignored the order for the provision of fire buckets in their homes, whereupon the Swordbearer was ordered to make a general visitation and to inform against defaulters, the consequence of which is not known.

In November, 1668, the Chamber resolved on the purchase of another fire engine and gave orders for a profuse supply of buckets, the Corporation to provide 70, the Parochial Vestries 208, the Dean and Chapter 24 and the Trading Companies 146, together with a requisition for several hundreds more, which were to be supplied by the principal inhabitants. Notwithstanding these "elaborate" precautions, the grand jury at the October sessions in 1670 protested that the provisions were illusory, as shown by the fact that a fire had recently occurred in a sugar refinery in

Redcliffe Street, threatening wide destruction owing to the force of the wind, but no buckets were forthcoming until after a long delay and "scarce one was sound".

Another alarming fire occurred in March, 1672, when the Bell Tavern in Broad Street was burned to the ground. As the fire engine ordered in 1668 had never been purchased a committee was appointed to consider how many small engines should be procured, with as little result as hitherto, as shown by the fact that two further destructive fires, one upon the Quay and the other in Wine Street occurred in the early months of 1681, when the provisions against such calamities was again found wanting.

In 1683 the engine purchased after the fire at the apothecary's shop in 1647 had evidently become out of date and two shillings and sixpence was paid to some men "that brought out the engine from under the Guildhall to try him, whether he was in order". It was apparently found defective as a new machine was purchased in 1684 for £34 15 0d.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. INSURANCE FIRE BRIGADES.

Following a fire in the autumn of 1702, the Council again revived the order made after a fire in 1647, calling for six buckets to be available in the house of every member of the Common Council, which, despite previous efforts, had always been evaded. At this time the Corporation had two "engines" similar to the garden utensil of later times, consisting of a vessel on low wheels containing about twenty gallons of water, with a force pump and nozzle.

On the 26th December, 1716, a serious outbreak took place in Wine Street, near the High Cross, when the deficiency of the apparatus was proved by the total destruction of three houses and the Council once more appointed a Committee to consider what should be done. In July, 1717, it was recommended that the two engines should be made serviceable or be replaced by better ones, and that a fireman should be appointed for each of the twelve wards, to be provided with two buckets, a pickhook and an axe and to be paid 1/- per hour during a fire. It was also suggested that 48 buckets should be kept at the Council House and that hose should be provided to feed the engines and to convey water from them to the burning premises. Shortly afterwards a new brass engine was purchased for £8 15 0d and the low price paid gives some idea of its efficiency. In 1720 another engine was made out of the materials of two old ones for £17 11 0d. and a few weeks later, after the destruction of a

large sugar house and several adjoining dwellings, £4 19 0d. was paid to "Robert Price for mending and painting the City buckets."

The Wine Street disaster in 1716 served a useful purpose, however, as it caused the first local movement for securing protection from losses by fire and in 1718 a number of leading merchants guaranteed a fund of £40,000, thus founding the Crown Insurance Office which, in common with other Insurance Offices, eventually established its own Fire Brigade and opened a "Fire Engine House" at 26, Nelson Street. This building, a photograph of which is shown on page 6, is now occupied by James Crispin & Sons, Heating & Ventilating Engineers, and few people are aware of the significance of the large crown which was carved on its facade when it was the Fire Station of the Crown Office.

In 1739 the provisions against fire again being found insufficient, the Corporation decided to purchase a new fire engine at a cost of £51 17 0d from Richard and Lawrence Newsham and the letter from this firm, which is filed in the City Archives, regarding delivery of the appliance is quoted below:—

"Honourable Sir,

According to your letter which my son received, we have sent you a good 4th fire engine with suctions and all improvements and I hope it will give a full satisfaction. There is directions in print under a horn fixed to the engine, which, if observed, will show how to use and keep the engine in good order. It is both our great concerns to serve that honourable city of yours in the best manner.

The engine comes by the Dolphin, Mr. Derick, Master, who is expected to sail every day. I have agreed for the freight at the price of 50/- and 2/6 left to your Honourable Gentlemen. I could not make any better agreement though I sent to your wagons who would not carry it under a penny a pound, which would have been much dearer. The leather pipes, the sucking pipe and copper branch pipe and two iron keys for taking the engine apart with are in a long box or case made for the purpose for which the Master gave me his receipt which I keep to send you upon your order. If you should want leather buckets or engines of the same or other sizes we shall be very glad to serve your honourable city with the same, and we are humbly yours to command.

Richard and Lawrence Newsham.

October 11th, 1739.

P.S. Upon the other side we have sent you the accounts which is according to our constant dealing with all men.

The mere purchase of fire engines, however, from time to time did not apparently solve the problem of providing adequate fire cover for the City as another serious fire took place on the 16th November, 1762, in a house on St. Philip's Plain, in which eight persons lost their lives, when attention was once more called to the inadequate measures for the prevention of such tragedies. The Corporation took no action however and shortly afterwards, when a sugar house was completely destroyed, the only apparatus in working order was an engine belonging to the Crown Fire Office which contained 40 gallons of water and was worked by two men.

The numbering of houses at the time insurance companies were first established was unknown and consequently it was extremely difficult for fire insurance offices to distinguish property insured by them, in event of a claim being made. For this reason, at a very early stage in insurance history, small metal plates were fixed, usually at first floor level, to the front wall of the premises which had been insured. These plates were made in the form of a symbol representing the name of the company, in a similar fashion to the modern trade marks and it was usual for the policy number to be stamped on each plate. Early types were cast in lead, copper and tin being used at a later stage. Subsequently these marks enabled each insurance brigade, on being called to a fire, to recognise whether or not the premises were covered by their company and they then became known as firemarks. If, on arrival at a fire, an insurance brigade found that the property was not insured by their office either the men would stand by and watch the building burn, keeping however a careful eye on any adjoining property insured by their fire office, or simply return home. The rules of the various companies governing the conduct of the firemen make interesting reading and a few quotations are given from those of the Norwich Union :—

“That any Fireman challenging another Fireman to fight shall be fined Two Shillings and Six Pence ; anyone striking another to be fined Five Shillings ; and if the man so struck returns the blow, they shall each be fined Five Shillings.”

“That every Fireman shall attend a brother Fireman's funeral, clean and in full uniform, or forfeit Five Shillings.”

“That all fines shall be collected by the Engineer and deposited in the Manchester Savings Bank, in the name of Messrs. Higson & Hughes, and shall be called “The Fund of the Norwich Union Firemen” for the purpose of relieving any Fireman of this Office in case of accident, or severe illness or distress.”

Fire marks may still be seen on some of the old property in Bristol, the best example possibly being 35, Broad Street in the City, the former offices of the Bristol Mercury Newspaper, where the marks of no less than four companies may be seen. The owner was evidently a cautious man !

Following the establishment of insurances offices, the City relied upon the Fire Brigades of the Crown (taken over by the Sun), Norwich Union, West of England (taken over by the Commercial Union), Royal, Imperial (taken over by the Alliance), and the Liverpool, London & Globe, each supporting an officer and six men, who were paid by the hour for their services on the occasion of a fire. Photographs of the fire marks of these companies are shown on page 18.

For several days in 1777 a number of fires were started by an incendiary, who commenced his campaign of destruction by firing three ships in the City Docks. The most serious of these fires involved the warehouses of Lewsley & Company in Bell Lane, containing Spanish wool and grain, when six buildings were destroyed in two or three hours. It seems probable that ten engines were employed at this outbreak, but of these not one remains, though two eighteenth century manual pumps are still in existence in Bristol, which were formerly the engines of the parishes of St. Michael the Archangel and St. Mary Redcliffe. It is stated in the records of the latter, dated 6th November, 1759, that the "churchwarden John Bloome do pay to John Day the sum of thirty five pounds, when he shall have finished and completed the new fire engine for the use of this parish and also deliver him the old engine, the said John Day having agreed to allow ten pounds for the same, out of forty five pounds, the sum agreed for the new one." No information can be found about the old engine mentioned, but the "new" one may still be seen at the church. St. Michael's Fire Engine dates from 1790, when the sum of £40 was bequeathed by a parishioner, Mrs. Anne Frazier, to purchase an engine for the parish, and this machine, which lay neglected in the crypt for many years, was eventually removed to the City Museum for preservation. Photographs of these two engines appear on page 15.

NINETEENTH CENTURY. MUNICIPAL FIRE BRIGADE.

The Norwich Union established its Fire Brigade in Bristol at some date between 1797 and 1821. In the early days, no doubt, the engine was of the manual type, but later the brigade was equipped with a horse drawn steam engine by Shand Mason & Co., which was eventually handed over to the Bristol Corporation when a municipal

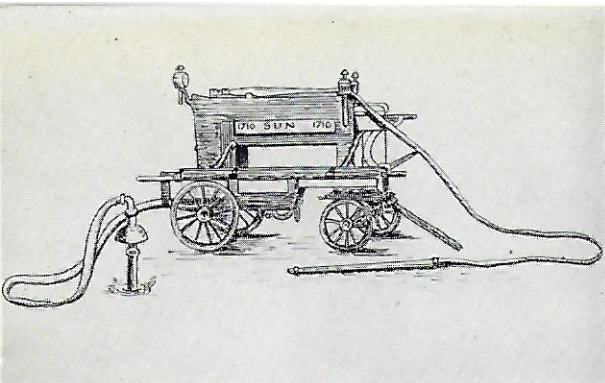
brigade was formed. A photograph of this appliance, which was apparently not fitted with brakes, appears on page 16.

The Crown Fire Office was absorbed by the Sun Insurance Company in 1837, when the premises at 26, Nelson Street, continued to serve the latter company as a Fire Station. The ground floor front mainly consisted of big gates with an ordinary door at the side, and a fire bell with a large brass handle for passers-by to give a warning of fire. The Captain of the Brigade, who was not employed full time, lived above the ground floor, which housed a manual engine, and a hose reel for use at fires in the City where the water pressure in the street mains was greater than the manual engine could deliver. This engine is stated to have been rather different from the normal type, as the body consisted of a tank which was filled at a pond or other source, and the machine was then taken to the fire, whereas the usual procedure for most engines was to remain near the supply from which water was pumped through a line of hose to the site of the fire. The latter method is the one adopted in modern firefighting. The hose reel consisted of a box mounted on two large wheels, in which was placed the branchpipes, and standpipes which had to be connected to the water main, whilst a long length of hose was wound around a reel which revolved on the axle. Sketches from a photograph of this manual engine and hose reel are shown on page 15.

The standpipe used at this period became known as the plug standpipe, as a wooden plug driven into the water main had first to be removed, and the standpipe inserted in its stead. On releasing the plug a jet of water would issue from the main, and the fireman shipping the standpipe frequently had a wetting. Some very early plug standpipes had an umbrella shaped shield, shown in the sketch on page 15, in an endeavour to keep the fireman dry! In Bristol this method of tapping a water main still exists to a limited extent, the opportunity being taken, however, to install modern equipment when repairs or replacements have to be carried out.

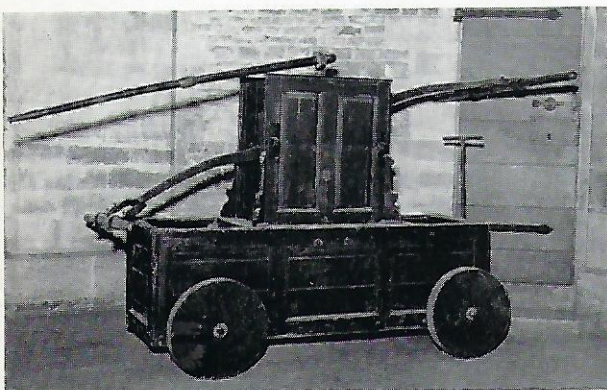
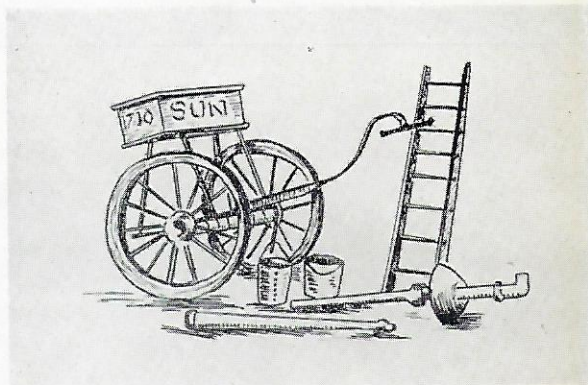
Nelson Street, and its immediate neighbourhood was also the site of other Insurance Fire Stations, including the Royal and Imperial.

This century was marked by wide devastation caused by fire during the Bristol Riots of 1831. Bridewell, the City Gaol on the bank of the Avon, the County Gaol at Lawford's Gate, Toll Houses near the Floating Harbour, The Bishop's Palace on the south side of the Cathedral, Warehouses in King Street, The Mansion House, Customs House, and numerous private houses in Queen Square, were the principal buildings which were deliberately fired by the rioters, resulting in damage assessed at the time at £100,000.



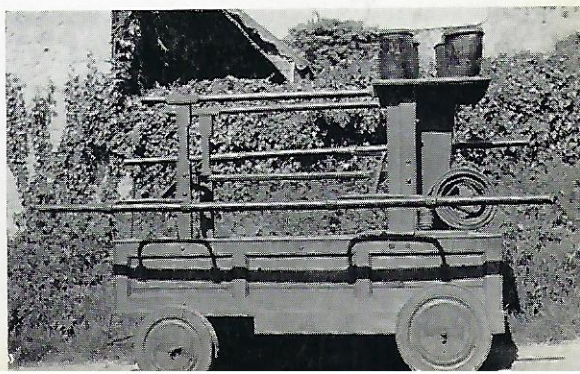
*Manual engine maintained by
Sun Insurance Company.*

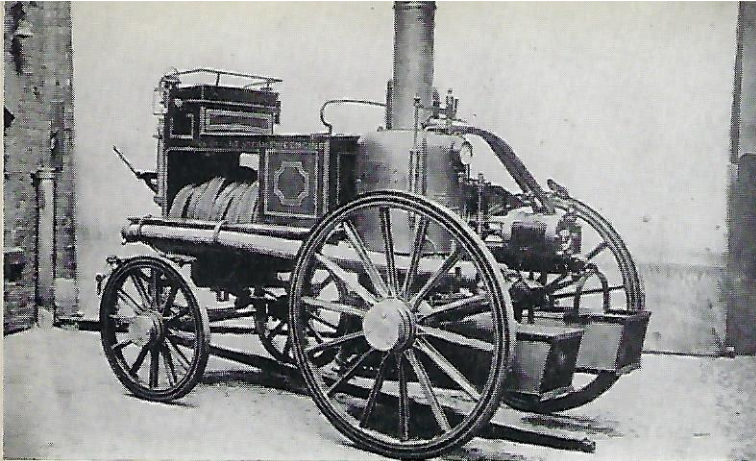
*Hose reel also maintained
by Sun Insurance Company.*



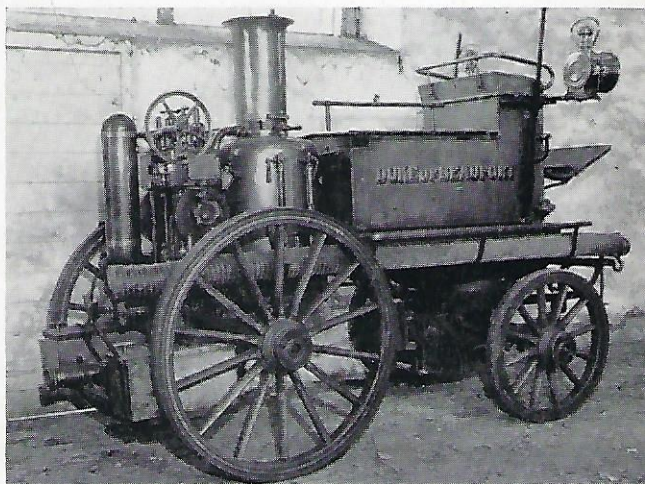
*St. Mary Redcliffe
Parish Engine. 1759.*

*St. Michael the Archangel
Parish Engine. 1790.*

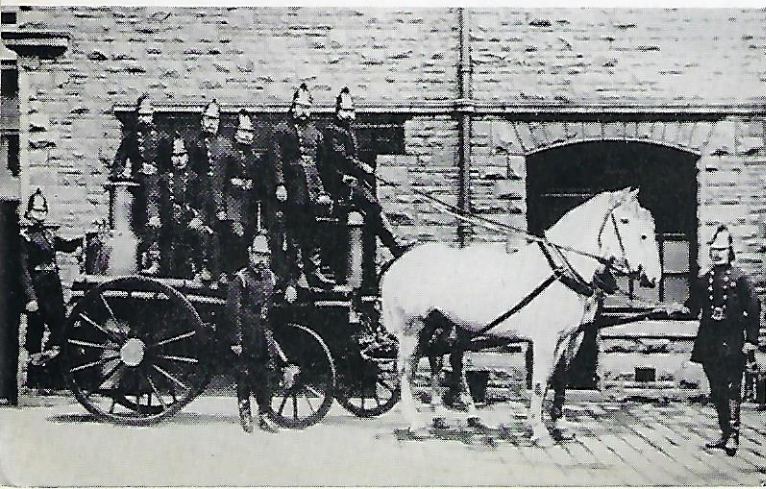




*Steam Fire Engine.
Norwich Union Fire
Brigade.*

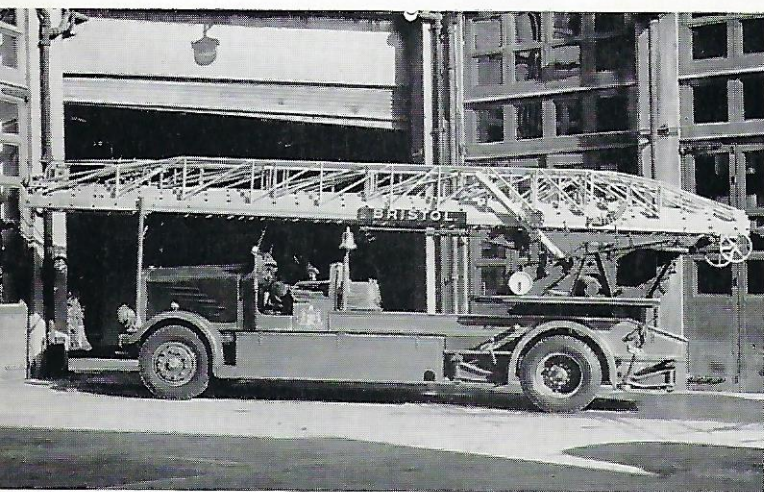


*Steam Fire Engine. Circa 1900.
Duke of Beaufort's Fire Brigade.*



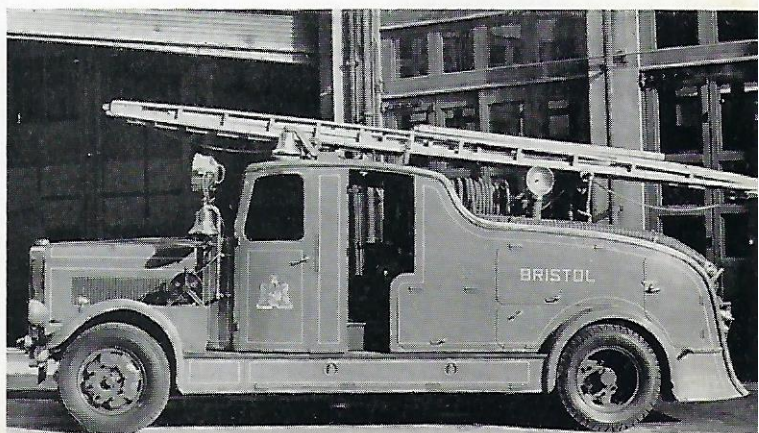
*First Steam Fire
Engine - Purchased
for Bristol Fire
Brigade. 1882.*

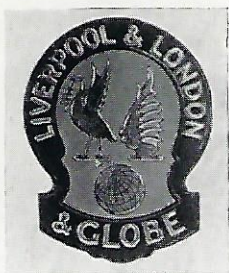
*Modern Pump
Escape.*



*Modern Turntable
Ladder.*

Modern Pump.





INSURANCE FIRE MARKS.

The following account of the sack and destruction of the Customs House presents a vivid picture of the methods adopted by the mob :

“A small band of men and women forced their way into the building, and after allowing the officials to remove documents and books, set about their work of destruction. Whilst some were occupied in firing the property others made their way to living rooms on the upper floor to regale themselves with the food and liquor available. In the midst of this revelry the fires which had been started below reached the staircase which soon became impassable, and finding themselves trapped some revellers dropped from the balcony outside and escaped, others jumped to death from the windows, whilst one or two who leapt on to the lead roof of the portico were held fast by the molten metal and were literally roasted to death.”

A report in the Bristol Mercury briefly summarised the fire situation in the following words : “Not a fire engine was present nor do we hear that any made the attempt. The firemen of the different companies alone, armed with their fire hatchets would have been more than sufficient to have routed the mob at this or any other subsequent time during the evening.”

The first indication of the Corporation becoming aware of their responsibilities in regard to fire, apart from the purchase of fire engines, was in June, 1845, when the Superintendent of Police was instructed to contact the Superintendent of the London Fire Brigade with a view to obtaining as much information as possible in respect of the measures necessary for the provision of means of escape from buildings involved in fire. As a result a set of “fire escape ladders,” buckets and other implements were purchased, but it was not until 1876 that the establishment of a brigade was considered, when a sub-committee of the Watch Committee was formed to enter into preliminary negotiations with Fire Insurance Offices and the Waterworks Company. The Lord Mayor, Major Bush and Messrs. Thomas, Carpenter, Whitwill, Fry and King were elected to serve on this sub-committee, with instructions to report to Council. On the 27th March, 1877 the Council affirmed the desirability of forming a municipal brigade, and on the 8th May it was resolved to establish one in conjunction with the Police Force, thus constituting a Police Fire Brigade. The Insurance Brigades, with the exception of the Imperial, then ceased to function, and presented free of charge their engines and ancillary equipment to the City. The Imperial, however, continued to maintain their Fire Brigade for some time,

attendances being made to fires just outside of Bristol, the majority of which were hayricks, and the engine also serving as a good advertisement for the Company.

It was decided that the newly formed Police Brigade should consist of a superintendent and twelve men, and that the rest of the Police Force should be trained to act at fires in aid of the firemen. Mr. Tozer of the Manchester Fire Brigade was appointed the first superintendent, and it was stated that the twelve men should be selected either from the existing Police Force, the Fire Brigades of the Insurance Offices, or elsewhere. They were given the rank and pay of First Class Constables, and one of the twelve men was made a Sergeant.

A "powerful steam fire engine" by Merryweather, capable of pumping 360 gallons per minute, and costing £482, was purchased, to be stationed at the Central Police Station, and "depots" for the "ordinary" appliances, such as fire escapes, fire buckets, hand pumps, etc., were established at the Police Stations at Bedminster, St. Philips and Clifton. An arrangement was also made with the Bristol Waterworks Company for a turncock to be available each night and it is interesting to note that up to the present day a turncock is on duty each night at the Central Fire Station.

The Watch Committee appear to have had some difficulty in deciding whether they would maintain their own horses for drawing Fire Brigade vehicles, and an endeavour was made to come to an arrangement with the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Co. Ltd. for the supply by the Company of the necessary horses. It was finally agreed that the Company should provide horses as required for the sum of £100 per annum, plus the sum of 10/-d. per horse borrowed. The first horse drawn fire engine apparently excited some interest, as it is reported that applications had been received to see it working and it was resolved that it should be exhibited at the Zoological Gardens.

On page 16 will be found a photograph of a variable expansion steam fire engine manufactured by Shand Mason and Co., which belonged to the Duke of Beaufort's Private Fire Brigade, and this machine, now in the Museum, clearly illustrates the main features of this early type of mechanical fire engine.

A further "depot" was opened in January 1883 opposite Christ Church, Clifton, where a constable was on duty day and night, so that in the event of fire "he is enabled to communicate instantly with the Central Station by telephone." At this time communication between stations was effected by means of the Wheatstone telegraphic system.

In 1884 a "powerful floating fire engine," to be worked by the "Water Brigade" was procured at a cost of approximately £2,300, and a further development on the 9th February was the purchase of a site at the Shrubbery, Lower Redland Road, for the erection of a Police and Fire Station to serve the Redland district. This station was opened in 1892.

The cost of the Brigade for several years was about £1,500 per annum. In July 1898, however, after an extension of the City boundaries, the strength was considerably increased and about £1,500 was expended on an additional steam fire engine and other appliances. It was on the 1st. of September of this year that the Colston Hall was first destroyed by fire. At about quarter past two in the morning fire was discovered in the premises of Messrs. Clarke & Co., Wholesale Clothiers, extending from Colston Street to Trenchard Street, and the flames spread so rapidly that the extensive building was burning from end to end before the arrival of the Fire Brigade. The peril of the Colston Hall adjoining the premises was quickly apparent, but despite all efforts the flames soon communicated with the roof, enveloped the organ and orchestra and rapidly spread over the great hall, which was reduced to ruins. The lesser hall (Little Theatre) was preserved, but a dwelling house in Trenchard Street was destroyed and others were severely damaged. The destruction of the hall occurred at an unpropitious moment, as it was being utilised at the time for the meetings of the Trades Union Congress, and would in a few days have been the scene of gatherings and festivities in connection with the opening of the Cabot Tower and of the visit of a squadron of men-of-war, whilst the triennial Musical Festival, which would have followed shortly afterwards, had to be indefinitely postponed.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Another engine was purchased in 1900, costing £450, being substituted for the old one at St. George, which was sold, and about 1906 a new "floating fire engine" was purchased for use at Avonmouth Dock, the existing engine being transferred to Portishead. It was reported that the "new engine, which is a most powerful one, can throw 2,000 gallons of water per minute and attained a speed, when steaming to Avonmouth against the tide, of 7.7 knots."

In 1906 it was decided that the Fire Brigade should be administered by a "Fire Brigade Sub-Committee" of the Watch Committee, and the following members were elected on the 31st October: The Lord Mayor, Aldermen James, Eberle and Kurle, and Messrs. Stephens,

Gane and Newth. In this year the equipment of the Police Fire Brigade included 1 chemical fire engine, 3 land steamers, 3 floating steamers, 13 horses, 2 tenders and 1 tender wagon, 2 tenders for fire escapes, 1 horse ambulance, 2 horse hose carts and ladders, 5 fire escapes, 48 scaling ladders, 133 branchpipes, 89 standpipes, 17 jumping sheets, 22 life lines, and 27,410 feet of hose.

In this same year the City was equipped with the Gamewell public fire alarm system, 50 alarm points being established by 1910, which continued in service until 1934 when it was replaced by the present day Police Telephone Pillar System.

At this time there is also a mention of a horse drawn Morris turntable ladder, with a maximum extension of 72 feet, "men working at this dizzy height being chained to the ladder."

In 1908 when the mechanisation of the Brigade may be said to have commenced by the purchase of the first motor appliance, the total strength, with auxiliaries, was 39 men; one inspector, five sergeants and 32 constables, with Superintendent Gotts in charge.

The equipment in the year 1910 included 1 motor steamer, 2 floating fire engines, 1 motor chemical engine with fire escape, 1 motor chemical engine with ladders, 1 horse drawn escape, 4 ordinary fire escapes, 18 hand hose carts with ladders, 57 scaling and pompiers ladders, 1 horse ambulance, 8 chemical hand extinguishers, 35 hand pumps, 106 standpipes, 183 branchpipes, 295 nozzles, 20 jumping sheets, 29 life lines and 35,515 feet of hose.

The present Headquarters of the Fire Brigade was officially opened on the 5th November, 1930, and it is interesting to recall the various stages of development from 1836, when with the establishment of the Bristol Police Force in this year, the old Guard House in Wine Street became the City Station. Consequent upon the growth of work given to the Police, these premises soon became unsuitable, and on the 24th March, 1843, the Watch Committee adopted a report recommending a new Station at Bridewell Lane at a cost of £2,800, which was opened in 1844. With the formation of the Fire Brigade, these premises became not only the Headquarters of the Police, but also the Central Fire Station. The accommodation, however, again proved to be inadequate with the passing of years, and in May 1923 it was decided to erect a new building on the same site, work on which commenced in 1926. It was obviously necessary to secure temporary accommodation for the Fire Brigade, whilst the alterations were in progress, and a move was made to Quakers Friars on the 25th November, 1927.

aid and carrying escapes, three motor turbines with first aid and ladders, one trailer pump, two fire boats, two turntable ladders, four automatic lowering lines, seven scaling and pompier ladders, one fire escape, one inspection car, one emergency car and sixteen Safoam units. The strength at this time was one superintendent, two inspectors, seven sergeants and 75 constables, a total of 85 men.

When war became imminent, towns and cities maintaining a Fire Brigade were instructed under the Emergency Fire Service Act, 1938, to recruit and train a sufficient number of auxiliary firemen to augment the existing Brigades. It may be interesting to record that in 1939, the Fire Brigade Sub-Committee consisted of Aldermen Cox, Milton, Sennington, Sheppard and Messrs. Cottrell, James, Plum (Chairman), Rogers and Smith. The strength of the auxiliary service in Bristol reached a total of 1,175 wholtime officers and men and 40 full-time women, whilst in addition some 3,000 part-time firemen were enrolled. The amount of fire fighting equipment was considerably increased to meet the emergency and about 300 appliances, including large, medium and light pumps, fire boats, water carriers, hose laying lorries, etc., together with personnel, were allocated to 30 Auxiliary Fire Stations.

By August, 1941, as a result of the experience gained by the wholesale blitzing of towns by the enemy, it was found necessary to bring the locally controlled brigades throughout the country under one command, and on the 18th of this month the National Fire Service was born, with the promise, however, by the Home Secretary that on the cessation of hostilities, the Fire Brigades would be returned to local control.

A noteworthy fire occurred on the 5th February, 1945, when the Colston Hall which had been rebuilt following its destruction in 1898, was again destroyed. An indication of the vast improvement in the availability of fire appliances is indicated by the fact that 10 pumps, 1 pump escape, 4 turntable ladders, and other appliances attended this outbreak, which was successfully prevented from spreading to adjoining property.

A serious fire also broke out on the stage of the Bristol Hippodrome on the 16th February, 1948, which threatened nearby properties in this highly congested area of the City, but by the deployment of the modern equipment which was available, damage was confined to the stage, and to the top floor of an adjacent warehouse. This occurrence afforded an interesting comparison with those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, inasmuch as no

less than twenty powerful jets were employed to subdue the outbreak, water from the town's mains being supplemented by a fire boat working from the City Docks.

The Fire Services Act of 1947 was passed to transfer fire fighting functions from the National Fire Service to Fire Brigades maintained by Councils of Counties and County Boroughs. Fire Brigades were thus returned to local authorities in accordance with the declared intention of the Home Secretary, but the provisions of the Act had the effect of reducing the 1939 figure of 1,400 fire authorities to approximately 133. On the 1st April, 1948 the National Fire Service was disbanded and Bristol once again had its own Fire Brigade, but with a difference. It was not re-established as a Police Fire Brigade, controlled by a Sub-Committee of the Watch Committee, but as an individual Corporation Department functioning under its own Committee, to which the following members of the Council were elected: Aldermen Bicker, Cann, Cottrell, James, Milton, Sheppard, and Messrs. Knight and Poole (Chairman). Mr. J. Y. Kirkup the Superintendent of the Brigade prior to Nationalisation and Fire Force Commander of this area during the War, was appointed the first Chief Fire Officer. Six fire stations were established, situated at Bridewell Street, Stoke Hill, Avonmouth, Brislington, Ashton Drive and Fishponds, and the authorised establishment was 234 officers and men.

On the 5th July, 1948, consequent upon the Nationalisation of the Health Services throughout the country, the responsibility for the organisation of an efficient Ambulance Service within the City devolved upon the Fire Brigade, which was then given the title of the Bristol Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service. Following this, there was a further increase in the establishment, and in 1950 a total of 338 officers and men with 8 firewomen were employed. The appliances available at this time included 6 pump escapes, 8 major self propelled pumps, 4 major trailer pumps, 4 light trailer pumps, 3 turntable ladders, 3 water tenders, 2 foam tenders, 2 fire boats, 1 salvage tender, 4 wireless cars, 2 chimney vans, 26 ambulances, numerous other special appliances, and 67,575 feet of hose.

Thus from the birth of the first Municipal Fire Brigade nearly 100 years ago, emerged the present day Bristol Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service, whose modern equipment and high degree of efficiency rank second to none in the Country. No effort is spared in attaining the maximum standards in keeping with the highest traditions of the Service, and the ancient City of Bristol can be justly proud of its Brigade, which will always be maintained "Ship Shape and Bristol Fashion."

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