

Dangerous Fire at Fulwood Church The Tower Damaged

On Sunday morning a fire of a sufficiently alarming nature to rouse the people resident about Fulwood at an uncomfortably early hour was discovered about six o'clock in the morning by a labourer named Pickwell, who was passing to his work at Mr. Spitalhouse's farm. He detected smoke and flame issuing from the leaden roof of the church tower, and at once raised the alarm. He called up several men who live near the church. These men, Danks, Naylor, Mottram, Hancock, and Taylor, came upon the scene almost immediately. A man named Bingham was sent to call up the Fulwood policeman who in turn sent the message to the Broomhill Police Station, with instructions to warn the Fire Brigade. It was rightly conjectured that the cause of the fire was in some way due to the chimney fire on the previous evening. That fire was considered as safely extinguished when the church was locked up for the night; but, it would appear that the flue had been of a defective nature, and that the sparks had by some means got through the rubble and stone or overheated them to such an extent as to ignite the flooring boards and joists of the roof of the tower. This had gone on smouldering and concealed until the lead which on the roof, had melted and betrayed the danger in which the edifice stood. The willing helpers who had gathered 'at once set to work to collect ladders from neighbouring farmhouses, and with buckets secured water from the school yard adjoining. Placing the ladders against the outside of the tower they climbed on to the roof and poured water conveyed in this fashion through the openings of the clock chamber and belfry in both of which places the fire was seen to be burning with vigour.

In the meantime the Fire Brigade in Rockingham street had received the call from Broomhill at half-past-six o'clock, and in 27 minutes Sergeant Crawford and four men reached the scene of the fire with the tender. They proceeded into the interior of the building with the hand-pump and while the men outside were pouring buckets of water on the point where the fire undoubtedly originated - under the roof of the tower - the firemen attacked the burning joists of the floor of the clock chamber. Having extinguished this portion of the outbreak they worked their way up to the floor of the belfry where the fire was very soon put out. Then they combined forces with the men who were pouring water on the roof, and the fire was speedily conquered. The sparks from the roof, it seems, had dropped on to the floor of the belfry, and that having ignited, the sparks fell down on to the clock chamber floor, which in turn took fire. The danger in which the church was for the time being is thus apparent, for had the leaden roof not held out longer, the downward progress of the fire would have reached the roof of the church itself, and this being of wood, would have quickly lent force to the conflagration.

Fortunately the fire was discovered in time or the edifice might have shared the fate of St. John's Church, Ranmoor, a few years ago. In that case the fire originated just above the organ, and the efforts of Capt. Pound's men were only successful in saving the tower. The churchwardens (Mr. Francis Howard, and Mr. T. R. Nowill) were present during the course of the firemen's work yesterday, and considerable gratification was felt that their labours

and those of the willing band of workers assisting prevented what might have become a very disastrous conflagration. As it is the damage is not very serious. About a square yard of the two floors and of the roof of the tower was burnt through. The damage is covered by insurance in the Alliance Fire Office.