

*Norton Fires
Sheffield Fire Brigade will Not Attend
Serious Position
No One to Quench the Flames*

We have received the following letter, bearing yesterday's date, with a request for publication:

*(To the Editor of the "Telegraph and Star")
97 Meersbrook Bank Road,
Meersbrook Bank, Sheffield.*

Dear Sir – I received a circular today issued by the Norton Rural District Council, stating that we in the Norton Rural District are now exempt from calling upon the Sheffield Corporation's fire engine in case of fire. It stated that the agreement made in March, 1904, had terminated and the Corporation will not enter into a fresh agreement excepting upon terms which are too high as to be prohibitive. Can anyone give me more information as to what is to be done in case of fire? As a ratepayer to the Sheffield Corporation I would like to know more on this matter: and many others would also – Yours, etc., HERBERT HORNE.

A "Star" reporter made inquiries this morning of Mr. J. E. Moulding, Clerk to the Norton Rural District Council, concerning the deadlock which has arisen. The agreement, which has been in force since March, 1904, terminated a few days ago, six months' notice having been given in July last. The new terms of the Corporation were that in addition to the usual charges for a fire – turnout, mileage, time charges, and so on, which for an ordinary outbreak may mean anything from £10 to £18 – the Rural Council shall pay £30 for each call, this sum to go to the Police Pension Fund. Under this arrangement, ever fire, no matter how trivial, would be liable to cost the Rural Council between £40 and £50.

These terms the Rural Council consider to be prohibitive. In case of several fires of a serious character occurring during a year, the rates would be very seriously affected, though certainly this is highly improbable. One outbreak a year is quite within the average for the district. They have sought the consideration of the City Council to review these terms, but in vain. They have offered to pay the sum of £30 a year to the Police Pension Fund, whether it is necessary to call out the Brigade or not, and, in addition, of course, the usual charges that they have been paying during the last four years. The offer, however, has not been accepted. The City Council have stated their terms, and are not disposed to yield in any degree.

At present the district is in the unenviable position of being quite without any safeguard against fire. The Sheffield brigade is not available, and there is no other body of fire-fighters that can be called upon. Mr. Moulding has thought it prudent to inform the ratepayers of the position of affairs and circulars have been issued.

Future policy is being anxiously discussed. Regrettable though it would be, the likelihood of the connection with Sheffield being severed is realised. Different suggestions are being made. One is that the Rural Council with the Parish Councils of Norton and Dore, should form a brigade of their own, and have appliances kept at some convenient station. That would mean a return to the old days when the hoot of the fire buzzer was a familiar sound.

There is a proposal that permission should be obtained to establish a sinking fund, so that no one year shall cause an excessive burden to be laid upon the rates.

The position is a very serious one, and calls for prompt decision. Despite the infrequency of fires in the Norton area, the probability of an outbreak is always existent, and a big blaze may always result from the smallest ignition if effective treatment is not available in the early stages.

The letter printed above may give rise to some misunderstanding. Some of the circulars sent out by Mr. Moulding may by mistake have been delivered to ratepayers in the City of Sheffield. It should be clearly understood that the difficulty which has arisen only affects the area within the Rural District of Norton. Presumably the residents will know whether or not they reside in that area Notices of rates are a sure indication in such matters.