

Firemen's Ordeal Fierce Blaze at Laboratory Acid and Ammonia Perils in Sheffield. Old Theatre Royal Saved From Destruction.

Battling against the fearful odds of dense acid and ammonia fumes, explosions, and a fierce blaze, the Sheffield Fire Brigade under Superintendent T. Breaks and Second-Officer C. Teather, proved their skill in the early hours of this morning when the old Theatre Royal, Attercliffe was saved from destruction.

The Sheffield Metallurgical Laboratories, Staniforth Road, which adjoin the theatre were gutted by fire. At about 4 a.m. in the morning a police officer noticed flames coming from the laboratories and immediately summoned the brigade.

By the time the brigade arrived, with three engines from headquarters and one from the Attercliffe sub-station the building was a mass of flames. The ground floor, first floor, and the roof were burning, and the flames were licking up the back of the old Theatre Royal.

Over thirty gallons of various acids and ammonia had been released by the intense heat, which had broken the glass containers, and pungent, choking fumes endangered the fire-fighters at every turn.

Theatre's Narrow Escape

Part of the building is occupied by a sign-writer, J.W. Basford, and fear was at one time felt for a quantity of paint which was in store.

Through the excellent work of the brigade the fire was actually under control within 15 minutes, although the complete extinguishing of the flames to the greater part of three hours.

The Attercliffe old Theatre Royal has been out of use for over two years but it is understood that the interior is being re-decorated and modernised for further service.

Inspector Teather told the "Star". "If the call had been 5 minutes later the theatre would have been burned to the ground.

Mystery of Origin

A manager for the firm said "We are informed that the fire started in the cellar but we cannot understand what caused the outbreak because the cellar has not been entered for more than 2-weeks.

The cellar is used as a store for chemicals - none of which are highly flammable. The outbreak is a mystery to us.

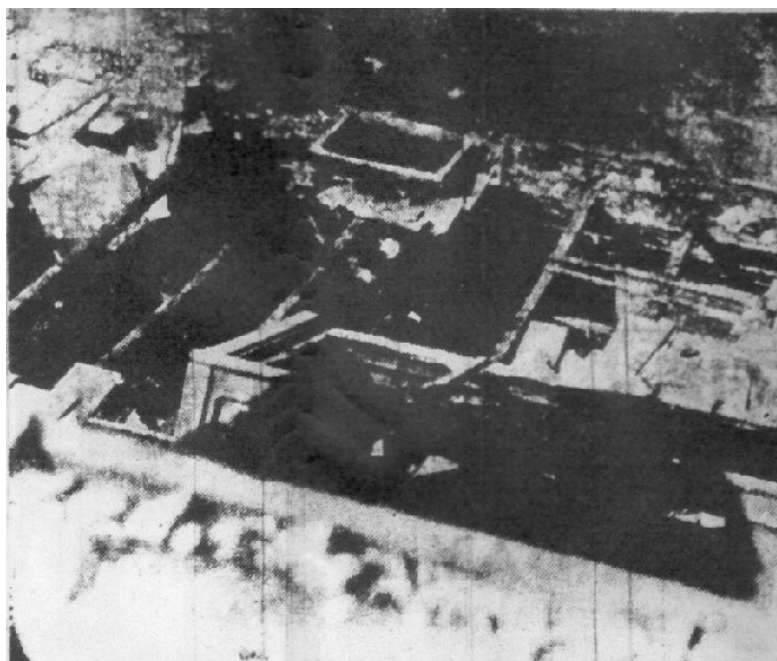
We cannot form any opinion as to the cost of the damage: practically everything has gone.

Fortunately our supplies of acids and ammonia were getting rather low and this prevented further damage and nuisance being caused.

“It is only through the courtesy of another firm, which has provided us with the necessary equipment that we shall be able to continue our work”.

The part of the building occupied by a sign-writer, and another part used as a spiritualists meeting room were only slightly damaged by water.

An exit from the theatre leads through the laboratories, and this is the only part of theatre which has been damaged.



"Star" photo of the roof of the Sheffield Metallurgical Society's laboratories after the fire