

## Brigade without a Bell or Water

A FIRE brigade without alarm bells, without water, without even horses to pull the engines along, sounds farcical. This was an exact picture of the plight of Sheffield Fire Brigade, however, in the first few years after it was formed.

*The Brigade's first chief, Superintendent John Charles Pound, wrote its history shortly before he retired at the end of the last century.*

His grandson, Mr. Frank Alan Smith, of Seagrave Crescent, saw pictures of the old-time Brigade in "The Star" and took the original copy of the report to brigade headquarters.

### Difficulties

In three yellowing pages of copperplate script, headed "Fire Engine Station. Sheffield." the Superintendent tells the story of his own life as well as the history of the brigade.

When he wrote it, at the age of about 62 - its exact date is not known - the brigade was well-established with 20 men, five horses, ten appliances and nearly two miles of hose.

The only comment he makes on early troubles is a plaintive understatement, "I had many difficulties with which to contend."

But there are hints that the Kentish ex-sailor, who had taken part in the Crimean War, fought several other battles with Sheffield's City Fathers before the new brigade found its feet.

### Whistled!

He was appointed Superintendent in 1869, and then had to form the brigade with 15 young- police constables as firemen.

"When fire occurred at night I had to call them off their beats with a whistle. In the day time I had to pick up any constable I could find."

Twice later for long periods the water was turned off at night. "I had to insist on a turncock being in attendance at the Fire Station to turn the water on in case of fire."

For four years the engines had to be dragged to a fire by hand, as no horses could be got out in reasonable time. But then - the Superintendent only hints at it - came a big storm.

## Then Horses...

“I received a call for a fire at Fulwood. We had to wait 45 minutes for horses.

“Before we started, an alderman and several reporters came to the station and the next day there was a long report in the newspaper. After the next council meeting two horses were purchased.”

Later the' horses were kept busy hauling the prison van and carrying coal to the Police stations as welt as dragging the fire engines.

The superintendent's report was, read eagerly at brigade headquarters, for the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. B. Jones, is writing a history of the brigade.