

## SERIOUS FIRE IN SHEFFIELD £5,000 DAMAGES

Sheffield has been the scene of another fire in a timber yard – apparently quite as destructive and serious as that which occurred recently in the Wicker, or that which took place some time before in Sydney street. The unfortunate owner of the premises in flames on Wednesday night is Mr. Wm. Walker. He was formerly in business with his brother, Mr. John Walker; but they dissolved the partnership, and about twelve months ago, Mr. William Walker took possession of a large piece of land situated at the corner of Corporation street and Bridge street, belonging to the Soho Wheel Company. The plot is about 100 yards long, and 50 yards wide. The ground is about ten feet below the street, and advantage was taken of the fact to form very large cellars, in which was stored an immense quantity of wood. On what might be termed the ground floor workshops, were erected, and they were fitted up with the newest and best that could be obtained for cutting and preparing timber for building purposes. Above the workshops, supported upon brick pillars and extending nearly all over the yard, were sheds, in which were stored large quantities of timber. Mr. Walker commenced work upon the premises about six months ago, and with recent additions, he stored upon them upwards of £4,000 worth of timber, principally deals and battens. No one lived upon the premises, and when Mr. Walker left them on Wednesday evening everything appeared perfectly safe.

At about half-past nine – two hours after the yard was closed – the discovery was made that the place was on fire. Two men named Grayson and Bagshawe with great promptitude broke into the office and succeeded in carrying off some of the books. Their efforts in that direction were soon checked, for the fire spread with amazing rapidity, and in a very short space of time the whole of the sheds and workshops were on fire. The scene at this time was alarmingly grand. The flames shot up high into the air, lighting up the whole neighbourhood. The heat was most intense. The flames stretched right across the streets, but for the most prompt efforts on. Several occasions, other property would have fallen prey to them. Immediately opposite the wood yard in Corporation street are the premises of Mr. Jenkinson, slater, and Mr. Loxley, builder. The timber upon Mr. Loxley's premises took fire, and spread to Mr. Jenkinson's property. A number of people, threw the burning wood into the street, and with a few buckets of water the progress of the fire was fortunately checked.

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The houses opposite to the timber yard in Bridge street had a narrow escape. The sign over the Foresters' Arms, kept by Mrs. Andrew, actually took fire, as did also some of the other woodwork in front, but with buckets of water it was extinguished. The heat broke the glass in the windows and scorched the paint. When the danger of the property actually firing became imminent, Detective Womack and others went into the houses, and removed the children to a place of safety. At one time, it was thought that nothing could save the wooden structures at the corner belonging to Mr. Calee, photographer. Mr. Calee continued to pour

water upon it, and that alone, there is no doubt, saved it. Below the public-house on the opposite side of the walk heading to the iron bridge are the steel works belonging to Mr. Barker. The woodwork of the doors and windows was severely scorched: but it did not actually ignite.

The Fire brigade and a couple of engines were upon the scene in perhaps twenty minutes or half an hour but for some time no combined efforts were apparent. This was mainly owing doubtless to a lack of water, the supply of which at first seemed so short that every now and then the firemen had to cease their labours, and look on the terrible scene before them, powerless to prevent its spread. To make matter, worse, when the water came more abundantly, the hose had a provoking tendency to burst, and this caused delays which, to say the least, were most unfortunate.

Almost at the very time when the fire was discovered, it was self-evident that it would be useless to attempt to save any portion of the contents of the yard. No attempts, indeed, in this direction were possible. The entire premises speedily became one mass of flames, and the brigade first confined their attention to saving adjoining property. In this they were eminently successful. Having confined the fire to the yard, the brigade played upon the burning timber, and before midnight the fire had been so far got under that all fears of its spreading were removed. It was not till some hours afterwards, however, that the flames were really extinguished.

The origin of the fire is a mystery. It is said there was no fire on any portion of the premises except in the office. There was no boiler or furnace, the power for driving the machinery being obtained from the Soho Wheel.

We are glad to say that Mr. Walker's Loss will be partially covered by insurance in the British and Mercantile Office. What his loss will be can at present be hardly estimated. It will probably exceed £5,000 and for that amount he was insured in the office mentioned.

## LATER PARTICULARS.

### This Day

By inspecting Mr. Walker's premises this morning, a better idea could be formed even than last night of the terrible fierceness with which the flames raged, and of the completeness of their work of destruction. Then there was something truly grand in the sight of the high rolling waves fire, in listening to the crackling of the wood, and in watching the movements of the vast surging crowd. Now the results of the few hours' work are seen in offices and workshops gutted, in piles of charred and blackened timber, in machinery torn, twisted, and broken; and in walls tottering to the fall. Into every corner of the premises, and from cellar to drying shed, the fire penetrated. The frame for sawing deals stood nearly the centre of the works, and rested on a bed of massive masonry. The heat around this was so intense that it actually melted its thick cast-iron supports, and it tipped over into the cellar. The immense block of stone which formed a portion of its bed is cracked in all directions, and it falls to pieces on a touch. The

framework of the planing machine and grinding stones, of the circular saws, and of the horizontal saw for cutting logs quickly burnt away, and the valuable machinery has fallen and broken to pieces. Running the length of the sheds was the framework which supported the travelling crane. That, of course, was food for the flames, and the crane fell into the cellar. The machinery, the greater portion of which was supplied by Messrs. Robinson and. Son, of Rochdale, if not broken and twisted, has been so affected by the intense heat to which it was subjected as to be valueless except as old metal: 'The offices and stables, which were near to the entrance gates in Corporation street were completely gutted, and the principal walls have fallen.

By twelve o'clock all danger of the fire spreading beyond Mr. Walker's premises was at an end, and the firemen then directed their energies to the extinguishing of the flames in the yard. however, was a work of some difficulty such complete mastery had they of the whole of the premises. The sheds, with the timber they contained, together with all the contents of the workshops underneath, had been added to the piles of wood in the cellars, and the whole was in a blaze. The firemen worked well, and in the small hours of the morning they had the satisfaction of seeing the last flames die out. The fire continued to smoulder, and at twelve o'clock water was still being poured upon the smoking ruins.

The origin of the fire has not as yet been ascertained; or even the precise spot at which it originated. The fire in the office went out at half-past five; and gas is only laid into the drying shed which is in the extreme corner of the yard in Bridge street , and where the most damage has been done. Children are allowed to fetch in shavings away as they are made, and early in the evening Mr. Walker. Jun, went through the cellars to see that all the children were out, and that all was safe. At seven o'clock Mr. Walker himself was through the works, and there was no sign of fire then. The fire, it is thought, must have been burning some time when it was discovered; and it is somewhat extraordinary, as the place is situated in such a populous a neighbourhood. Mr. Walker's principal books were locked up in a Milner's safe in the office. The safe was opened about eight o'clock this morning, and the books taken out, in what state of preservation we were unable to ascertain. Large numbers of people have visited the scene of the fire this morning, and the police have had some difficulty in keeping the over curious out of danger .

## DAMAGING HOSE AT MR. WALKER'S FIRE

At the Sheffield Town Hall this morning, before the Stipendiary Magistrate, a youth named William Bower, living with his parents in Plum street, was charged with willful damage. In the course of the fire on the premises of Mr. Walker, on Wednesday night, Police-constable Bird was informed that some lads were jumping upon one of the hoses which had been laid down to convey water to the fire. He went to the place and saw the prisoner jump three times upon upon the hose. He took him into custody. - The Stipendiary said it was a most serious case, and as Superintendent Pound was not present to prove the damage, he should remand the prisoner until to-morrow - The prisoner was then remanded, but allowed bail.