

GOLDSBROUGH FIRE – INSURANCE REPORT

Re FIRE LOSS-GOLDSBROUGH MORT & CO. LTD.

H.J. Unsworth

16th April, 1936.

At about 7.15 a.m. on Wednesday, the 25th September, 1935, a fire occurred in the building occupied by Goldsbrough Mort & Co. Ltd., as a Wool Store, known as No. 1 Store, situate Pymont and Fig Streets and Camden Lane, Pymont.

The call of fire was received by the Pymont Fire Station at 7.15 a.m. by means of the operation of the Reichel Alarm system, which was installed in July last. The Brigade from this station was definitely on the scene at 7.19 a.m.

An employee named E. Exon alighted from a tram at the corner of Fig and Harris Streets at about 7.15 a.m. and walked past the building on the corner of Harris and Fig Streets, known as No. 2, on his way to open No. 1 Store. As he walked towards the latter building he heard the fire alarm bell ring, and at the same time noticed smoke issuing from the windows on the 2nd floor at the rear. (The 2nd floor at the rear, which is on the western side, would be the 3rd floor from Pymont Street.)

He then hastened along Pymont Street to a small door in Building No. 1, and just as he was opening this door he was joined by another employee named Muir and they both entered the premises. The Brigade arrived almost immediately and a fireman asked for the telephone. Exon took the fireman to the 'phone on the first floor, and at this particular stage no smoke or fire could be found in this portion of the building.

Exon then ran down the stairs to open Nos. 4 and 5 docks leading to Pymont Street, and as he approached No. 4 dock he noticed black smoke, sparks and cinders coming down No. 3 elevator. He then went into the lane to open the gates and found that the firemen had already opened them. By this time the stairs leading from the first to the second floor were well alight and smoke was pouring into the first floor.

Whilst the hoses were being run out and attached to the hydrants, a senior Officer commenced an inspection of the premises, and on reaching the first floor noticed sparks dropping down some of the chutes.

By this time, other Brigades were in attendance. The detachment from George Street West entered the building from the rear and immediately took their hoses to the first floor, which would be the second floor from the Pymont Street side.

At this stage that section of the building was burning fiercely, and here three Brigades met and were forced by the terrific heat to retreat. In point of fact, they had to abandon their hoses.

fighting force of the Metropolitan Brigades. Within a short space of time fully 20 Engines and approximately 230 men were fighting the conflagration, whilst every available hydrant was utilised.

The fire was attacked from all around; from Streets, and through Buildings Nos. 2 and 3, as well as others. The ladders were utilized as water curtains. In addition, the special pressure tank was used in order to ensure that a full volume of water could be maintained through all motor engines and hoses.

For years past, both those concerned and the ordinary layman have watched with interest the advances made in the equipment of the Fire Brigade as well as their manipulation, and in this particular instance it would appear that we are in the proud position of having a most efficient protective force. This opinion is expressed on full consideration of the operations at this fire and that at "Hardwick House," York Street.

If you will be good enough to study the plan, which no doubt is in the possession of each and every Company interested, it will be seen that Building No. 1 was in close proximity (about 24 ft.) to Buildings Nos. 2 and 3, occupied by Goldsbrough Mort & Co. Ltd., and 16 ft. to the building on the northern and north-western end, occupied by Pitt, Son & Badgery Ltd.

At the time the firemen commenced their task the wind was blowing from the south-west and the flames rapidly spread along the whole building and very soon found their way to Pitt, Son & Badgery's building. The windows were cracked and broken in all directions as the flames rapidly spread towards the roof of the adjoining premises.

Here again the officers in charge of the Fire Brigades showed remarkable foresight, inasmuch as men had previously been sent with their equipment into the building occupied by Pitt, Son & Badgery Ltd., not only to attack from here, but to watch developments in this particular quarter. They first attacked the fire from there, and later kept it back in this building, for not many minutes elapsed before the northern wall, and almost at the same moment the western wall of Building No. 1 collapsed. This resulted in a great portion of the brick wall falling on to the roof of the premises of Pitt, Son & Badgery Ltd. and tore away quite a considerable amount of the roof and masonry of that building.

The wall on the western side also tore a hole through the wall of Pitt, Son & Badgery's building, but fortunately, the flames did not penetrate this particular section. It is surmised that in this happening, several of the water mains feeding sprinkler installations were also broken.

From the northern side of Building No. 1, where the wall had fallen on to the southern side of the premises occupied by Pitt, Son & Badgery Ltd., the flames leapt through and very soon the building and portion of the wool contained therein were on fire. We are informed that the heat was calculated up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and in this regard it may be mentioned that railway trucks of wheat 300 feet away burst into flames.

As the western wall fell a portion of Building No. 3 was torn away by the falling masonry, resulting in a certain amount of damage being occasioned to this building and contents.

Almost from the commencement of the outbreak the windows of Building No. 2 were shattered by the heat and some few bales of wool were ignited. The fire in these two buildings was, however, kept well in check, with the result that the claims on contents are not very severe.

At this particular moment the work of the firemen was aided by the cessation of the south-west wind, and the submission is made that the collapse of building No. 1 probably assisted in confining the fire to its ultimate limits.

Building No. 1 can only be treated as a total loss.