

HONGKONG.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF FIRE BRIGADE FOR 1892.

*Laid before the Legislative Council by Command of His Excellency
the Governor, on the 8th March, 1893.*

No. 3.

FIRE BRIGADE DEPARTMENT,
HONGKONG, 1st February, 1893.

SIR,—I have the honour to present the following report of the Fire Brigade Department for the year 1892.

The Brigade was called out for the extinction of fires on sixteen occasions. This number though not excessive was double that of the year before. None of the fires attained very serious proportions, though in one instance property to the extent of about forty thousand dollars was destroyed.

In addition to the fires requiring the attendance of the Brigade, there were eighty-three alarms, the fires in such cases being either non-existent or extinguished before headway was made.

Ten of the sixteen fires were made the subject of Magisterial enquiries. I am of opinion that these enquiries continue to have a wholesome deterrent effect and check the great temptation to arson held out by the insuring facilities of the Colony.

Advantage has been taken of the supply of water afforded by the street hydrants to gradually introduce a change into the tactics of the Brigade as regards the general arrangements for the suppression of fires, and to place reliance upon the street hydrants rather than upon the steam fire engines.

The appliance at present in use for this purpose is known as the Fire Despatch Box, its merits consisting in its handiness which enables it to be worked by one man at the same time that it is supplied with three hundred feet of hose and all the appliances necessary for immediate use of the street hydrants.

They have during the year been gradually increased in number without extraordinary expenditure, and now number fourteen. They are situated in the following places :—

No. 1 Police Station.
Engine-house in Wanchai Road.
Royal Naval Yard.
Clock Tower.
Central Police Station.
No. 9 Police Station.
Engine-house in Hollywood Road.
Man Mo Temple.
Government Civil Hospital.
No. 7 Police Station.
Nam Pak Hong Engine-house in Bonham Strand.
The Gas Works Premises.
Central Fire Brigade Station.

Their number is being further added to as opportunity offers.

For fire purposes the Town is divided into three districts: Western, Central and Eastern; the Western extending eastwards as far as the Harbour Office, the Central extending eastwards as far as the City Hall, and the remainder of the Town forming the Eastern District.

The particular district in which a fire has broken out is notified to the Brigade by the Fire bells; three strokes signifying the Western District, two strokes the Central District, and one the Eastern District.

In order to obviate the possible danger that might arise from denuding the Central District of its firemen and fire appliances, upon the occasion of a fire in the Eastern District, special arrangements are made for fires in the latter district according to which a certain number of men are told off each month for the purpose of attending at fires at Wanchai, the remainder being kept in the Central District unless the exceptional magnitude of the fire requires their attendance.

Although it is a long time since a fire of extraordinary magnitude took place I do not disguise from myself the possibility of its occurrence and circumstances might arise which would extend the area of the flames beyond the control of the limited number of men that belong to the Brigade. Promptitude in attendance and care in having in readiness the necessary arrangements for extending the operations are the best preventives against the spread of a fire.

The Assistant Superintendentship of the Fire Brigade has, during the past year, been mainly filled by Mr. Chief Inspector MATHIESON who has proved himself a valuable acquisition to the Brigade.

The thanks of the Brigade are also due to Mr. KINGHORN, the Engineer, under whose supervision the engines are kept in excellent order, and to Mr. CAMPBELL, Assistant Engineer, who has the important work of generally superintending the up-keep of the gear and of attending to the proper carrying out of the orders in force for the general arrangements that have been made for the guidance of the Brigade.

The clerical work of the Department, which requires considerable care and attention, has been admirably performed by Mr. CHAU SHAU, than whom it would be impossible to find a more painstaking and trustworthy officer.

The conduct of the Brigade throughout the year has been satisfactory.

I have the honour to enclose Mr. KINGHORN'S report on the state of the Engines together with the Return of Fires and Alarms.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

H. E. WODEHOUSE,
Superintendent, Fire Brigade.

The Honourable G. T. M. O'BRIEN, C.M.G.,
Colonial Secretary.

HONGKONG, 19th January, 1893.

SIR,—I have the honour to forward my report on the state of the Government Fire Engines for the year ending 31st December, 1892.

STEAMER No. 1.

(Floating Engine) by Merryweather & Sons.

This Engine has been 26 years in service, during the year it has not been disabled at a fire, but on the 2nd December, while testing the Boiler under Hydraulic pressure, the tubes gave way, and they had all to be renewed, and the Boiler repaired, the time occupied by these repairs was ten days, and the Engine and Boiler are now in good order.

STEAMER No. 3.

Land Engine by Shand & Mason.

This Engine has been 14 years in service, during the year it has been carefully overhauled, and has done its work well; it has not been disabled at a fire and is now in good order.

STEAMER No. 4.

This Engine has been 11 years in service, during the year it has been overhauled and put in good order; it has not been disabled at a fire and is now in good working order.

STEAMER No. 5.

Land Engine by Shand & Mason.

This Engine has been 7 years in service, it has been carefully overhauled during the year, and required no repairs; it has not been disabled at a fire and is now in good order and condition.

STEAMER No. 6.

This Engine has been 14 years in service, (9 years in Volunteer Brigade), during the year the Boiler has been carefully overhauled and the working pressure reduced; it has not been disabled at a fire and is now in good order.

MANUAL ENGINES.

Nine Manual Engines are all in good order.

The Assistant Engineer and Engine drivers have done their work during the year to my satisfaction, and have promptly attended the calls on the Fire Department.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN W. KINGHORN,
Engineer,
Government Fire Brigade.

H. E. WODEHOUSE, Esq., C.M.G.,
Superintendent,
Government Fire Brigade.

FIRES AND ALARMS, 1892.

| No. | DATE. | TIME. | SITUATION OF FIRE. | No. OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED. | | DAMAGE. | CAUSE. | REMARKS. |
|-----|----------|------------|--|-----------------------------|---------|----------|--|--|
| | | | | Wholly. | Partly. | | | |
| 1 | Jan. 2, | .... | House No. 32, Hollywood Road, | .. | .. | Trifling | Accidental. | |
| 2 | " 5, | .... | Grass on hillside near Mountain Lodge, | .. | .. | Trifling | Unknown. | |
| 3 | " 7, | .... | House No. 14, Burd Street, | .. | .. | Trifling | Overheating of a stove. | |
| 4 | " 7, | 12.30 p.m. | House No. 78, Queen's Road West, | .. | .. | Do. | A bed curtain caught fire. | Insured in Messrs. Reuter, Bröckelmann & Co. for \$45,000. |
| 5 | " 10, | 6 a.m. | House No. 9, Queen's Road Central, | 1 | .. | \$40,000 | Overheating of a stove pipe, | |
| 6 | " 10, | .... | House No. 34, Praya Central, | .. | .. | Trifling | A basket of coffee beans accidentally caught fire. | |
| 7 | " 10, | 8 p.m. | House No. 16, Tsz Mi Lane, | .. | .. | Do. | Old bags accidentally caught fire. | |
| 8 | " 11, | 1.30 p.m. | House No. 4, Ezra Lane, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Upsetting of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 9 | " 12, | 2 p.m. | House No. 28, Battery Street, Yaumati, | .. | .. | Unknown | Spontaneous combustion of coal. | |
| 10 | " 13, | 4.30 a.m. | House No. 146, Bonham Strand, | 3 | .. | \$8,000 | Unknown, | Insured in Messrs. Hewett & Co. for \$10,000. |
| 11 | " 15, | 7 p.m. | A stonecutter's match at Kennedy Town, | .. | .. | \$100 | Supposed arson. | |
| 12 | " 15, | 11.30 p.m. | House No. 140, Third Street, | .. | .. | Trifling | Wooden partition accidentally caught fire. | |
| 13 | " 16, | 2.30 a.m. | House No. 528, Queen's Road West, | 1 | .. | \$6,000 | Unknown, | Insured in the Hongkong Fire Insurance Company for \$12,000. |
| 14 | " 16, | 3.30 p.m. | House No. 41, Staunton Street, | .. | .. | Trifling | A bed curtain accidentally caught fire. | |
| 15 | " 16, | 3.20 a.m. | A certain house in Western District, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown, | |
| 16 | " 21, | 4.15 p.m. | House No. 81, High Street, | 1 | .. | \$100 | Do. | |
| 17 | " 24, | 2.40 p.m. | S.S. <i>Haiplong</i> in Victoria Harbour, | .. | .. | \$25 | Do. | |
| 18 | " 28, | 5.30 a.m. | House No. 54, Jardine's Bazaar, | .. | .. | Slight | A bed curtain caught fire. | |
| 19 | " 31, | 3 p.m. | Houses Nos. 28 and 29, Battery Street, Yaumati, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Spontaneous combustion of coal. | |
| 20 | Feb. 21, | 2 a.m. | House No. 24, Wellington Street, | .. | .. | Trifling | Unknown. | |
| 21 | " 23, | 11.40 p.m. | A house (unnumbered) in Mong Kok, | .. | .. | Do. | Do. | |
| 22 | " 25, | 11.50 p.m. | A match at the Naval Camp, Kowloon, | .. | .. | Do. | Do. | |
| 23 | " 29, | 8 p.m. | A stack of grass at Shaikiwan, | .. | .. | \$50 | Do. | |
| 24 | March 3, | 12.30 p.m. | A match at the Naval Range, Stone Cutters' Island, | .. | .. | \$60 | Do. | |
| 25 | " 4, | 7.30 p.m. | No. 7, Central Market, | .. | .. | Trifling | Do. | |
| 26 | " 6, | 4 p.m. | House No. 78, Jardine's Bazaar, | .. | .. | Do. | Overheating of a boiler. | |
| 27 | " 6, | 4.30 a.m. | A room in the D Block Military Barracks, | .. | .. | \$200 | Unknown. | |
| 28 | " 13, | .... | Grass on hillside at Magazine Gap, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 29 | " 13, | 7.45 p.m. | House No. 95, Queen's Road West, | .. | .. | Trifling | Overheating of a furnace for drying | |
| 30 | " 13, | 1 a.m. | No. 34, Square Street, | .. | .. | Do. | A bed curtain caught fire, [tobacco. | |
| 31 | " 14, | 4 p.m. | House No. 16, Chinese Street, | .. | .. | Slight | Unknown. | |
| 32 | " 20, | .... | Grass on hillside at Mount Kellett, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 33 | " 26, | 10 a.m. | House No. 368, Queen's Road West, | .. | .. | Trifling | Do. | |
| 34 | " 27, | 4.40 p.m. | A match in Coffee Plantation, | .. | .. | \$200 | Accidental. | |
| 35 | " 30, | .... | Chimney of House No. 23, Centre Street, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown. | |
| 36 | April 1, | 8.15 p.m. | House No. 26, Sai Woo Lane, | 1 | .. | \$1,000 | Upsetting of a lamp, | Insured in Messrs. Schellhass & Co. for \$3,000. |
| 37 | " 4, | .... | Grass on hillside at Tai Tam Tuk, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown. | |
| 38 | " 5, | .... | Grass on hillside above Deep Bay, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Firing of crackers while worshipping at the tombs. | |
| 39 | " 10, | 10.40 p.m. | House No. 17, Queen's Road West, | 1 | .. | \$400 | Unknown, | Insured in Messrs. Hewett & Co. for \$2,500. |

FIRES AND ALARMS, 1892.—Continued.

| No. | DATE. | TIME. | SITUATION OF FIRE. | NO. OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED. | | DAMAGE. | CAUSE. | REMARKS. |
|-----|-----------|------------|---|-----------------------------|---------|----------|---|---|
| | | | | Wholly. | Partly. | | | |
| 40 | April 11, | 9.20 p.m. | House No. 104, Queen's Road West. | .. | 1 | \$1,500 | Unknown. | |
| 41 | " 15, | .... | House No. 37, Kennedy Street, Yaumati. | .. | .. | \$60 | Carelessness with lighted match. | |
| 42 | " 23, | 9.45 p.m. | A matchshed in Tung Lo Wan. | .. | .. | \$300 | Mosquito curtain accidentally caught fire. | |
| 43 | " 27, | 3.30 a.m. | House No. 26, West Street. | .. | .. | Trifling | Burning of Joss paper. | One man was burnt to death and 2 others injured. |
| 44 | May 2, | 6.30 p.m. | House No. 8, Fuk Tsun Heung. | 1 | .. | \$100 | Bursting of a kerosine lamp. | Papers saturated with kerosine oil were found in different parts of the house. |
| 45 | " 3, | 2.15 a.m. | House No. 148, Third Street. | .. | .. | Trifling | Supposed arson. | |
| 46 | " 5, | 10 p.m. | A Fishing Junk lying in Aberdeen Harbour. | .. | .. | \$5 | Unknown. | |
| 47 | " 9, | 11.45 p.m. | House No. 16, Station Street. | .. | .. | .. | Upsetting of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 48 | " 18, | 11 p.m. | A stack of grass at Shaukiwan. | .. | .. | \$30 | Unknown. | |
| 49 | " 18, | 10 a.m. | A stack of grass at Hung Hom. | .. | .. | \$10 | Do. | |
| 50 | " 22, | 8.50 p.m. | House No. 17, Tank Lane. | 1 | .. | \$250 | Do. | Not insured. |
| 51 | " 23, | .... | Chimney of House No. 29, Graham Street. | .. | .. | Trifling | Do. | |
| 52 | June 21, | 1.30 p.m. | House No. 29, Centre Street. | 1 | .. | \$100 | Do. | Not insured. |
| 53 | " 28, | 6 p.m. | House No. 15, Station Street, Yaumati. | .. | .. | .. | Do. | |
| 54 | July 3, | 2.15 a.m. | House No. 91, Wing Lok Street. | .. | 1 | \$5,000 | Overheating of a stove for drying tobacco. | Insured in Messrs. Reuter, Bröckelmann & Co. for \$5,000. |
| 55 | " 3, | .... | Grass on hillside at Magazine Gap. | .. | .. | .. | Unknown. | |
| 56 | " 6, | 11.30 p.m. | House No. 324, Queen's Road Central. | .. | .. | .. | Bursting of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 57 | " 17, | 9.45 p.m. | House No. 31, Praya, Kennedy Town. | .. | .. | \$10 | Unknown. | |
| 58 | Aug. 6, | 1.45 a.m. | Messrs. Marinburk & Co's Furniture Store, at Wanchai. | .. | .. | Trifling | Do. | |
| 59 | " 10, | 9 a.m. | House No. 87A, Praya East. | .. | .. | Do. | Spontaneous combustion of coal. | |
| 60 | " 18, | 10.40 p.m. | House No. 49, Queen's Road West. | 1 | .. | \$300 | Unknown. | Insured in Messrs. Kruse & Co. for \$1,200. |
| 61 | " 21, | 12.05 a.m. | House No. 48, Queen's Road West. | 1 | .. | \$3,000 | Upsetting of a kerosine lamp. | Insured in the Commercial Union Fire Insurance Office for \$3,000. |
| 62 | " 31, | .... | House No. 76, Praya East. | .. | .. | .. | Spontaneous combustion of coal. | |
| 63 | Sept. 15, | 1.05 a.m. | House No. 80, Queen's Road West. | 4 | 2 | \$4,000 | Unknown. | Insured in the Economic Fire Insurance Company for \$4,000. |
| 64 | " 15, | 11.10 a.m. | A matchshed at Kun Chung, British Kowloon. | .. | .. | \$475 | Carelessness while baking cakes. | |
| 65 | " 18, | 11.30 a.m. | A wooden hut No. 86, Ma Ti, British Kowloon. | .. | 1 | \$5 | Playing with burnt grass by a child. | A girl of 4 years of age and 13 pigs were burnt to death. 11 huts and 11 pigsties were destroyed. |
| 66 | " 23, | 2 a.m. | British S.S. <i>Tai On</i> in Victoria Harbour. | .. | .. | Trifling | Accidental with lighted candle while searching for opium. | |
| 67 | " 28, | 8 p.m. | House No. 43, West Street. | .. | .. | Do. | Breaking of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 68 | Oct. 6, | 6.30 a.m. | House No. 325, Queen's Road Central. | .. | .. | Do. | Unknown. | |
| 69 | " 11, | 7 p.m. | A stack of straw at Tin Wan, Aberdeen. | .. | .. | .. | Do. | |
| 70 | " 11, | 5.20 p.m. | House No. 80, Praya East. | .. | .. | .. | Do. | |
| 71 | " 13, | 7 p.m. | House No. 48, Stanley Street. | .. | .. | .. | Do. | |
| 72 | " 30, | 6.30 p.m. | House No. 150, Shaukiwan. | .. | .. | .. | Upsetting of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 73 | Nov. 2, | 2.45 p.m. | House No. 41, Praya Central. | .. | .. | Trifling | Unknown. | |
| 74 | " 10, | 3 a.m. | House No. 71, Queen's Road Central. | .. | .. | .. | Accidental with lighted candle. | |
| 75 | " 14, | 1 a.m. | Chimney of House No. 25, Possession Street. | .. | .. | \$10 | Unknown. | |
| 76 | " 17, | Midnight. | Grass on hillside at Aberdeen. | .. | .. | .. | Do. | |

FIRES AND ALARMS, 1892,—Continued.

| No. | DATE. | TIME. | SITUATION OF FIRE. | NO. OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED. | | DAMAGE. | CAUSE. | REMARKS. |
|-----|----------|------------|---|-----------------------------|---------|----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| | | | | Wholly. | Partly. | | | |
| 77 | Nov. 18, | 4.45 p.m. | Grass on hillside above Magazine Gap, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown. | |
| 78 | " 18, | 11.50 p.m. | The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, | .. | .. | \$28 | Overheating of chimney. | |
| 79 | " 19, | 8.30 p.m. | A haystack at Yaumati, | .. | .. | Trifling | Unknown. | |
| 80 | " 19, | Midnight | House No. 82, Station Street, Yaumati, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Accidental while worshipping. | |
| 81 | " 27, | 4.30 p.m. | Grass on hillside at Tokawan, | .. | .. | \$10 | Unknown. | |
| 82 | Dec. 1, | 2 p.m. | A haystack at Tso Pai Tsai, British Kowloon, | .. | .. | Trifling | Playing with matches by boys. | |
| 83 | " 1, | 11.30 p.m. | Wellington Barracks Wharf, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown. | |
| 84 | " 1, | 3.30 p.m. | Grass on hillside at Wong Nei Chung, | .. | .. | \$200 | Do. | |
| 85 | " 8, | 8 a.m. | House No. 20, Fuk Sing Lane, Yaumati, | 1 | 2 | \$5,000 | Do. | Insured in Messrs. Kruse & Co. for \$5,000. |
| 86 | " 8, | 11.20 p.m. | House No. 333, Queen's Road Central, | 1 | 2 | \$40 | Do., | |
| 87 | " 13, | 5.20 p.m. | A matsbed at back of Wong Nei Chung Village, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Playing with fire by a girl. | |
| 88 | " 14, | 3 p.m. | Grass on hillside at Aberdeen, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown, | Several fir trees were destroyed. |
| 89 | " 14, | 5 p.m. | Grass on the Rifle Ranges, British Kowloon, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 90 | " 18, | 1 p.m. | Grass on hillside above Richmond Road, | .. | .. | \$10 | Do. | |
| 91 | " 20, | 7 a.m. | A matsbed at the Military Camp, British Kowloon, .. | .. | .. | \$300 | Do. | |
| 92 | " 20, | 9.30 p.m. | House No. 14, Jubilee Street, | .. | 1 | \$600 | Do., | |
| 93 | " 22, | 2.40 a.m. | House No. 4, East Street, | 1 | 1 | .... | Playing with matches by children. | |
| 94 | " 24, | 6 p.m. | House No. 18, Stanley Street, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Upsetting of a kerosine lamp. | |
| 95 | " 25, | .... | House No. 7, Ezra Lane, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Unknown. | |
| 96 | " 28, | 6 a.m. | Grass on hillside at British Kowloon, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 97 | " 28, | .... | Grass on hillside at Wong Ma Kok, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 98 | " 30, | 7 p.m. | A Matsbed at Yaumati, ..... | .. | .. | .... | Do. | |
| 99 | " 31, | 3.15 p.m. | A matsbed at Tai Hang Village, | .. | .. | \$580 | Do., | 19 matsbeds and 4 pigstyes were destroyed and 15 pigs burnt to death. |

H. E. WODEHOUSE,
Superintendent, Fire Brigade.