

From this lift-well it was possible to pass through Goodman's basement, and from there entrance could be gained to Congreve's basement. Mr. Roger Ballantyne stated there was some smoke in this lift-well, but Officer Burrows said he did not see any smoke, and concluded that if the lift-well had any connection with the seat of the fire it must be very distant and, furthermore, he could see no possibility of operating a delivery down that way, so that to investigate further would in his opinion be a waste of time.

152. The difficult part to understand is that Officer Burrows, apparently without any inquiry from Mr. Roger Ballantyne as to why he was brought to the goods-lift, retraced his steps through the shop to Colombo Street.

We have given the reason Mr. Roger Ballantyne gave as to why he took the course he did. Counsel for the fire brigade laid great stress on the waste of time incurred in taking this route. No doubt valuable minutes were wasted and, more important still, Officer Burrows did not have an opportunity of estimating the value of attacking the fire through Goodman's cellar by way of the stairway from Goodman's first floor. At the time, however, Burrows made no complaint, and, after rejecting the lift-well approach, made no inquiry as to whether there were other means of access.

153. Leaving the lift-well, intending to return to the right-of-way, on his way through the shop to the entrance on the corner of Cashel and Colombo Streets he neither saw nor smelt smoke, but on arrival outside Congreves noticed that the smoke had greatly increased in volume, but even at that stage he did not envisage a major outbreak.

154. Noticing smoke coming in some volume from a window on the first floor of Congreves, he gave an order for a substantial lead of water to be directed through that window. Up to that time no lead of hose, other than that entering the right-of-way, had in any way been prepared for use. The purpose of directing a lead of water through this first floor window was, according to Officer Burrows, to provide a cooling down lead, but it is difficult to understand a cooling lead being played into the first floor in preference to the ground floor.

After giving this order Officer Burrows entered the right-of-way and encountered Officer Stevenson and his branchman withdrawing, and on reaching the street discovered the fire had broken through.

155. In answer to questions by counsel for the Crown, Officer Burrows agreed that he should have made an inspection of the ground floor immediately above Congreve's basement with a view to hacking a hole in the floor, if necessary, and attacking the fire in that manner. He said that this would have been his next move after investigating the position in the right-of-way.

156. On observing flame in Goodman's and Pratt's buildings Burrows appears to have realized, for the first time, that he was confronted with a major fire, and, in fact, up to this time had not envisaged the possibility of the fire becoming other than a cellar outbreak.

157. On being faced with a fire of the first magnitude Officer Burrows ordered the firemen to operate as many leads as possible, including the coverage of Cashel Street frontage, and instructed that a brigade call be sent to the station and, from the Occurrence Book at the fire-station, we know that this brigade call was received at 4 p.m. From shortly after that time brigades and appliances arrived until ultimately the whole of the central and suburban strength, with the exception of one suburban unit kept at headquarters for emergency purposes, was available to fight the fire.

158. The Deputy Superintendent (Mr. Barnes) reported back to the fire-station at 4.15 p.m. and arrived at the fire at approximately 4.20 p.m., and, although not reporting his arrival to Officer Burrows, he assumed control on the Cashel Street frontage.