

On the first floor there were also large lateral openings. The total area contained in this floor by means of lateral openings in the brick walls was 25,000 square feet.

On the second and third floors lateral openings did not exist to the same appreciable extent.

The substantial opening in the basement between Congreve's and Goodman's was closed by a wire-mesh gate padlocked. The opening from the basement of Goodman's to a cellar at the rear of Pratt's had a steel door which it would appear was open at the time of the fire. An opening in the course of being cut in the northern wall of the basement of Goodman's had a soft-fibre-board dust-screen surrounding the opening.

(f) *Unprotected Vertical Openings.*—Staircases in all buildings were unenclosed, with the exception of the Goodman basement stair. The lift in Goodman's was virtually unenclosed from the basement to the third floor, and the lift in Pratt's was apparently enclosed with inflammable materials, and, in any case, the doors were of the open-wire-mesh type.

(g) *Fire Loading.*—From the point of view of fire loading, taking into account the total combustible contents of the buildings—floors, linings, goods, fittings, &c.—the total number of British thermal units available for the production of heat in the event of fire was very substantial, the following approximate figures being indicative:—

BRITISH THERMAL UNITS PER SQUARE FOOT

—	Basement.	Ground Floor.	First Floor.	Second Floor.	Third Floor.	Roof.
Congreves	200,000	108,000	249,000	237,000	..	80,000
Goodmans	65,000	213,000	244,000	224,000	226,000	79,500
Pratts	278,000	200,000	217,000	308,000	..	79,000

It will be observed that, if the roof loading is added to the top floor in each case the position is very substantially worsened. As the above are typical, it is quite unnecessary to state figures for other portions of the building.

(h) *Veranda.*—Along the full width of the footpath a suspended veranda existed through the whole of the Colombo Street and Cashel Street frontages of the buildings. This veranda was of an unusual type in that it had a ridge down the centre with slopes at either side pitched at an angle of 30° towards both the road and the building. It was covered with slates and had a gutter at the bottom of the inside and outside slopes. The structural features of this veranda proved a serious obstacle to the attempts of the fire brigade to effect rescues of those trapped above ground floor in both Goodman's and Pratt's buildings.

29. *Supply Services.*—The supply services were electricity, water, and gas—the first two being supplied by the Christchurch City Council, and the latter by the Christchurch Gas, Coal, and Coke Co., Ltd.

(a) *Electricity:* The municipal electricity supply in the area of the premises of Messrs. J. Ballantyne and Co., Ltd., was the ordinary, normal, and standard type of three-phase alternating-current overhead supply, controlled from a