

The Auckland Fire Brigade 1874-2024 Project

The 1920s Part 1. 1920-1922

The 1920s brought a number of amalgamations of volunteer fire brigades as Auckland continued to grow. Considerable national fire legislation was also introduced and an increase in the number of ship fires was noticeable.

During 1920, land at corner Ponsonby Road and Lincoln Street Grey Lynn purchased for new Fire Station named Western District, built and occupied 1923. Site sold early 2017.

By May 1920, Duplex SFA [street fire alarm] round cast metal box system had been installed throughout the old City area, the replaced older Kirkby system [rectangular box] moved to outer districts. SFA's were fitted with a telephone jack to plug telephone handset carried in appliance alarm make up box, staff able to speak back to the Watchroom. August 17 1920 Auckland Harbour Board agree to Auckland Fire Board request to install Duplex fire alarm boxes in the harbour offices and on the wharves. The Duplex system was designed by Geoffrey Porter, a motorman [driver] in the Dunedin Fire Brigade. The first Duplex installation was in Dunedin in February 1913. Installation in Auckland had been delayed because of shortage of material during and after WW1. System used existing wiring. In the SFA box, new earth connection and a second contact arm were added on the cam. At the station, extra wiring was added to the indicator circuit. An alarm punched out two sets of four codes [line and earth], but if one of the wires failed, the earth return provided the back-up. All SFA boxes were removed in 1979, too many false alarms and almost every house had a telephone. First mobile phones [the brick] appeared in NZ early 1990's.

October 25 1920 City Mayor James Gunson unveiled a memorial plaque on the outside front wall at the first Pitt Street Central Fire Station. During the First World War forty Auckland Fire Brigade Firemen served overseas, four of whom died. Moved 1944 across to new Pitt Street Headquarters, between appliance room front doors and front people door. Now [2022] in the appliance room at Pitt Street Fire Station above duty board lobby. Also see earlier entry.

December 31 1920 - Calls 227 [289 in 1919], 100 fires, 77 false alarms. 24 chimney fires, 22 gorse etc, 4 out district. Budget £17,000. Staff; 42 permanent, 20 auxiliary, 15 theatre firemen. Stations 6 - Central, Ponsonby [St Marys Road], Parnell, Remuera, Grey Lynn and Eden Terrace. Plant - 10 motor appliances, 2 telescopic ladders, 1 hand reel, 19 telephone points, 234 SFAs and 44 PFAs.

During 1921 Doctor Norman [DNW] Murray appointed Honorary Surgeon for Auckland FB.

March 2 1921, Auckland Fire Board wrote to Auckland Harbour Board asking them to stop using the recently installed siren in the Ferry Building tower as a work start-stop signal because it was confusing to drivers on the road. Harbour Board were not convinced saying it gave uniformity of time across all wharves.

March 2 1921, UFBA [United Fire Brigades Association] annual conference, Secretary Thomas [TJ] Watts moved: "That in view of the serious nature of the recent Hamilton accident, the Government be requested to take steps to prevent similar occurrences." He said the time had come when Brigadesmen should not run such risks. He stated that in some places, instancing Auckland, Firemen travelled too quickly, even returning from a fire at an excessive rate of speed. Thomas Watts was Captain Newmarket VFB and UFBA National Secretary. January 19 1921, about 17:00, responding. two Hamilton Firemen died and four others injured, three uninjured, appliance rolled.

April 14 1921, Grafton Northern Rugby League team changed their name to Fire Brigade. Not all players were Firemen. May 14 1921, the Fire Brigade Rugby League team playing City at the Domain were: Charles Woolley, Jack Woolley, John Adlam, J Dunn, W Williams, K Gleeson, J Howlett, P Brady, Robert McKay, J Innes, Bert Ivil, R Coates, Henry McNeil, J Nicholson. J Docherty. Playing kit colours were all white. Team quickly improved after losing all their early games, they reached the semi-finals, but lost to Maritime 12 - 7. Jack Woolley and Henry McNeil were selected in Auckland rep team. Club folded in 1922.

April 20 1921, full settlement in claims at conciliation council by Auckland Fire Brigade Industrial Union with Auckland Fire Board. Settlement decided by the casting vote of Chairman. Terms little altered except a Fireman could be a First Class Fireman in two years rather than three. An allowance of £1 per week to married staff not in quarters. Ernest [EC] Cutten SM, presided, assessors Honourable Patrick [PJ] Nerheny, John [JJ] Kingston and Sydney [SE] Wright advocate for the Fire Board, William [WJ] Kurney, Richard Merrick and Oliver [OJ] Veale [Secretary, Auckland- Fire Brigade Union, but not a Fireman] for the union.

May 6 1921, City Fireman William Belchin [35, married, six children] found guilty in Auckland Police Court of stealing a revolver and table knives, total value £4.10s, at Briscoe Warehouse fire, Customs Street East. Sentenced to one month's hard labour and fined £70. Auckland City and ex-Wellington Fireman James Morton was remanded to Wellington after fire damaged goods were found in his room worth £4. 5s.9p which came from a fire in Wellington on December 11 1920. Morton was implicated by Belchin in the Briscoe theft but case discharged. June 13 1921, in Wellington Magistrate's Court, Morton sentence to one month imprisonment for stealing clothes at a fire. Both Judges said Belchin and Morton, as Firemen, had betrayed public trust.

December 15 1921 Ernest [EH] Davis [later Sir] reappointed a Auckland Fire Board member, a City Council representative. He replaced Honourable Patrick Joseph Nerheny who had died. Davis served two terms on the Fire Board, first appointed May 23 1917, replaced May 31 1923, and was Auckland Mayor 1935 - 1941.

The 1920s Part 2. 1922-1923

January 16 1922, New Lynn Road Board discuss forming a volunteer fire brigade when water reticulation complete, never happened. August 7 1933, after a house fire, New Lynn again sought assistance from neighbouring brigades, thought of setting up own brigade again. March 32 1932, Auckland FB advise not able to attend fires in borough. In the absence of a local, brigade, the council resolved to write to Mt Albert and Henderson for terms should their brigades be available in case of fire. December 13 1933, 12 month agreement made with Auckland MFB for fire protection coverage from Avondale Station, payment 12 months in advance.

February 1 1922, about 13:00, four members of Auckland City FB were thrown from their 16-foot open boat off Stanley Bay. Peter Healey, Bob [Robert] Walker, Jack Woolly and Fred [FV] Welham had rowed toward Stanley Bay to fish. They later set a sail and about 400 yards from the shore the craft capsized. Sailors from cruiser HMS [later HMNZS] Philomel in two boats soon rescued the men and boat.

May 4 1922, Auckland FB staff filed dispute under Labour Disputes and Investigation Act. Heard May 11 1922, an agreement was reached on all points and settlement filed as an industrial agreement for two years.

May 6 1922, Auckland Star newspaper recorded that a Fireman's recompense for his dangerous work was £3.17s.6d a week, plus the cost-of-living bonus of 13 shillings a week allowed by the Arbitration Court, if married he got £1 a week extra. Firemen are somewhat like poets— they are born, not made. An important quality is that he is trained in the mechanical parts of the business. If you took an average crowd of men, the number capable of becoming a qualified fireman would be very small. Half-past six in the morning the firemen turn out, a quarter of an hour is allowed for any little "toilet" that is necessary, after which they fall in and go to drill, which is varied as much as possible to avoid monotony.

June 9 1922, Auckland City Council discussed letter from Auckland Fire Board stating that the present condition of Grey Street [now Avenue] was dangerous to the Fire Brigade

Year ending June 30 1922, Auckland City FB attended 240 incidents. nine more than 1921. Of these 136 were actual fires, 55 false alarms, 15 chimney fires, 28 rubbish and gorse fires, six out of district. Of the calls, 147 were given from street fire alarm boxes. 75 by telephone, eight by private automatic alarms. Six alarms were given by strangers and one by a Fireman. Of the false alarms, 27 of 55 were classed as malicious, eleven due to line faults, five from automatic installations caused by sudden rises in temperature. One call was accidental.

Year ending December 1922, attended 232 calls, against 247 in 1921, 227 in 1920, 231 in 1919, 237 in 1918, and 289 in 1917. Of the 232 calls, 133 were actual fires. increase of eight on 1921. The improved system of alarm boxes reduced number of false alarms, an average of one per week, compared with 64 in 1921, 77 in 1920, and 95 in 1919. June 16, one fatality [male] in a Grey Street [now Avenue] lodging house.

In 1923, the telephone number to report a fire in Auckland City was 13!! The Brigade had 17 Officers and 120 firemen, 15 motor engines and 1 hand reel. Five permanent stations, City, Grey Lynn, Ponsonby, Parnell and Remuera and a volunteer station at Pt Chevalier. There were 234 SFAs and 47 PFAs connected.

April 5 1923, the wood firebell and lookout tower, Ponsonby Fire Station, St Marys Road, Three Lamps started to be demolished. The bell had been removed many years before, replaced by street fire alarm box system. Last of the high towers remaining. New station at Lincoln Street and Ponsonby Road was under construction.

May 31 1923, Auckland City Councillors John [JW] Hardley, Alfred [AK] Lawry, and John [JB] Paterson appointed to Auckland Fire Board.

June 21 1923, Captain Thomas Watts, Newmarket VFB and National Secretary UFBA [United Fire Brigades' Association], said the standard size of fire hydrants in New Zealand was 2.5 inches, 123 Brigades and Newmarket used 2.5-inch hose as against eleven Brigades [including Auckland City] used 2.75-inch hydrants and hose. By October 5 1927 Newmarket BC had changed to be compatible with Auckland City.

June 30 1923, Annual Report, 223 call for year, decrease of 17 calls. There were 126 actual fires, 19 were chimney fires, 22 rubbish or gorse fires, 51 false alarms, and five outside the Board's district. Street fire alarm boxes gave 122 calls. There were 22 malicious false alarms, seven were good intent, and two were accidental. Strength of Brigade: one Superintendent, one Deputy Superintendent, three Foremen, one motor mechanic, 42 firemen, of whom 17 were auxiliaries, nine motor drivers, two Watchroom attendants and 15 theatre duty firemen. Most fires occurred between 17:00 and 24:00, but the worst fires generally occurred between midnight and 04:00. A significant number

were recorded between 07:00 and 11:00 on Mondays and Tuesdays, attributed to the type of fuel often used under the washing boiler.

September 17 1923, new Western District [later called Ponsonby] Station occupied, September 22 1923 opened, sometimes called West End, corner Ponsonby Road and Lincoln Street. A two floor. two double bay brick station, six married quarters [four on Ponsonby Road, two on Lincoln Street] and ten single bedrooms. Architect Daniel Boys Patterson, built by Fletcher Construction, cost £10,626. Foreman Percy Williams [from Rose Road], seven permanent, six auxiliary firemen, two appliances when station opened. Grey Lynn [Rose Road] and Ponsonby [13 St Marys Road] stations closed. Demolition started September 1928; new station rebuilt on same site.

October 17 1923, Tenders, addressed to the Chairman, for the Purchase of either, or both, of the undermentioned properties, recently occupied as Fire Brigade Stations, will be received by the undersigned, from whom full particulars may be obtained. Terms, ten per cent deposit, balance of purchase money to be paid on completion of transfer. Section and building at 13 St Marys Road, Ponsonby. Section and buildings at corner Williamson Avenue and Rose Road, Grey Lynn. The highest or any Tender not necessarily accepted. Auckland Fire Board. Percy Butler, Secretary. In 2022 both old Stations still standing, both cafes.

Late November 1923 Tamaki Road Board declined Captain Thomas [TW] Scott's request to open an outstation in nearby Kohimarama. June 10 1924, local meeting of residents and Tamaki West VFB agreed to form a substation at Kohimarama, with seven members, operating a manual hose reel, out of William [WG] Mulholland's garage, of Kohi Cash Supply Stores and new VFB member. Mulholland offered the use of his motor delivery van in the case of fire when the truck was in the district. During the meeting a bell was heard ringing, a rush for the engine ensued. It turned out to be the St John's College bell, the meeting resumed. Euchre parties and dances raised funds for firefighting equipment and uniforms. Closed in 1926 after new Station opened at 32 St Heliers Bay Road, corner Polygon Road, part of Tamaki Road Board building. November 9 1923 name changed to Tamaki Road Board, dropped West.

December 13 1923, Tamaki West Road Board held public poll on the proposal to borrow a total of £91,800 for carrying out four works in the district. Part was £1,500 for the erection of a fire station, and purchase of firefighting appliances and equipment. Result was for 234, against 78, majority for 156. The original proposal was to provide a Central Fire Station at the Powerhouse site top Long Drive. To supplement this station, two substations at Kohimarama and St Heliers were to be set up, provided with hand reels and gear to deal with any incipient outbreak. Actually, on April 26 1926, new Fire Station opened at 32 St Heliers Bay Road, corner Polygon Road, part of Tamaki Road Board new £2,753 building development. November 24 1930, new West Tamaki Station [now St Heliers] opened at 179 Long Drive, near St Heliers Bay Road.

The 1920s Part 3. 1924-1925

April 5 1924, Mt Albert VFB Fire Station improvements completed. New sleeping quarters for single members, now eight men sleeping on station. Three others have bells in their homes. Electric light had been installed. Five more street fire alarm boxes, now 22 installed. Members had bought a crystal and two two-valve sets for their own amusement, can listen to stations in Australia.

June 20 1924, Auckland Fire Brigade employees filed under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act before Conciliation Commissioner Patrick Hally. The employees were represented. by Ernest

Herring, George Pardy, and Robert McKay with Oliver [O] Veale as agent. Sydney [SE] Wright advocate, John [JJ] Kingston and John [JB] Paterson represented the Auckland Fire Board. Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson was also present. An amicable agreement, based on the lines of the existing one, was agreed. Slight increases in wages were agreed, new agreement came on June 27 1924, duration was two years.

July 1 1924, year ending, Auckland FB resources were 3 fire stations, 11 fire appliances, 42 permanent men, 26 Auxiliary Firemen and 16 theatre duty Firemen. Brigade received 283 calls, increase of 60 during 12 months. There were 129 fires, compared with 126 in 1922-23. No large spectacular fires in the year. Fire loss was £39,936. compared with £58,545 in previous year.

June 20 1924, at conciliation, Auckland Firebrigadesmen reached amicable agreement based on existing one with Fire Board. Two-year agreement saw slight increases in pay.

June 20 1924, Timber Conference in Wellington recommended scrim and paper not be used for the interior walls of buildings. Suggested that inside of all external walls and partition walls be lined with lath and plaster, plaster boards, fibrous plaster, asbestos sheet, timber panelling, or match lining. Scrim and paper was regarded as being unsanitary and unhygienic, as well as being a source of danger in fire. Architects were divided in opinion. Recommendation made to all local bodies. if adopted by-laws have to be altered.

Year ending June 30 1924, Auckland City FB received 253 calls, an increase of 60. There were 129 fires, 126 previous 12 months. No great individual fires, few accidents, and no fatalities. Eleven fire engines in service, staff of 42 permanent and 26 auxiliary Firemen. Also 16 theatre duty men. Were 60 false alarms during the past 12 months. Grey Lynn worst for such mischievous calls. Sixteen were malicious, nine oversensitive automatic alarms, only one purely accidental. Twenty calls were received in July 1923, 19 in August, 14 in September 15 in October, 24 in November, 38 in December, 33 in January, 43 in February [mostly scrub fires], 21 in March, 21 in April, 12 in May and 23 in June. Chimney fires were 20 compared with 19, attended 68 rubbish and gorse fires as against 22. Eight fires outside Brigade's district, an increase of three. Monetary loss in Metropolitan area was £39,936 compared with £58,545 in 1923.

August 7 1924, Auckland City Council approved Auckland Fire Board request that electric sirens be installed at the corners of Queen and Wellesley Streets, Queen and Customs Streets, Karangahape Road at Pitt Street, Liverpool Street for Queen Street Symonds Street, and Symonds Street and Khyber Pass Road, for the purpose of announcing the approach of fire appliances. City Council amended their by-laws to make all vehicular traffic, on hearing alarm, draw into the near side kerb, clear of tram safety zones and fire hydrants, and remain there until the fire appliances passed. March 6 1925, four sets of sirens switched on. Replaced intersection alarm bells fitted in 1916. All intersection sirens around Central Auckland removed about 1968, too many complaints about noise.

During late 1924, Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson made a short visit to some eastern Australian Fire Brigades. November 20 1924, he attended £7,000 loss fire at Elliott Brothers chemical works, Rozelle, Balmain, with Chief Fire Officer Jackson, Sydney. Wilson was especially interested in the central management of all the New South Wales firefighting forces under the Board of Fire Commissioners in Sydney. November 24 1924 Wilson returned to Auckland on the Makura.

December 1924, several discussions about inadequacies of water supplies in many parts of the city started after the large fire in Waitemata Street, St Marys Bay. The 4" [100mm] Ponsonby main was a dead end, very low flow and pressure, took five minutes for Khyber pressure to take effect. April 16 1925, James Carlaw, City Water Engineer didn't agree saying Auckland FB steam pump rarely, if ever

used. It had been sold in 1920!! Poor water across City lasted many decades, "additional water required" priority message very common.

Year ending December 31 1924, Auckland FB received 290 calls as against 241 calls in 1923, attended 145 actual fires compared with 141 in 1923, but more destructive fires. No fatalities. Staff were 42 permanent firemen, and 26 auxiliaries.

February 1925, there were two industrial Fire Brigades in Auckland, Newmarket Railway Workshops and Westfield Freezing Works.

March 5 1925, Auckland CC considered Fire Brigade report on condition of the Auckland water supply. Poorest supply from Ponsonby reservoir. Khyber pressure took five minutes to flow through and be effective. Dead end mains also a serious problem.

March 6 1925, sirens at the corners of Queen Street at Wellesley Street, Queen Street at Customs Street, Karangahape Road at Pitt Street switched on. Operated from Watchroom at Pitt Street. Replaced alarm bells fitted in 1916. Early 1928 sirens at Karangahape Road at Liverpool Street and Symonds Street at Khyber Pass Road installed. Purpose to announce approaching fire appliances.

April 1925. new post, Charles A Woolley Junior appointed Foreman and first Inspecting Officer to visit all business to advise on fire prevention matters and installation of fire appliances. Said to be first in NZ. Woolley had returned from WW1 to Auckland FB as Senior Fireman at Western District [later Ponsonby], suggested this new post.

April 29 1925, Mt Albert BC conduct a ratepayer poll on the proposal to raise a £7,000 loan to build a new Fire Station and buy a new Fire Appliance. Polling for was 1590, 570 against. Poll for additional water mains and storm water drains held at same time also successful. September 22 1925, Council accepted tender from Thomas Clements for £4,243.

June 8 1925, tender published for alterations and additions to Central Fire Station, closed June 18 1925. Daniel B Patterson, Architect, 23 Shortland Street, Auckland. Work included reconstruction of workshops block. behind Beresford Street, second floor added, workshops below, five married quarters. Cost £2487-2-6. The extra strip of land bought from Church for £300 in 1925. Pitt Street now had ten married quarters and bedrooms for thirty-five 'single' men. In July 1927 Pitt Street station underwent extensive repairs and 'modernisation'. Late 1937 into 1938 the rear wing was extended to add accommodation for extra new staff, known as "rookies retreat".

June 11 1925, Thursday, Auckland City Council appointed John Barr Paterson, Andrew [AJ] Entrican and Michael [MJ] Coyle as Council's representatives on the Auckland Fire Board. Michael John Coyle had joined Auckland Volunteer Fire Brigade in 1884 under Superintendent John Hughes, served at least eleven years. The first and only old Firebrigadesman elected to join the Auckland Fire Board. June 23 1925, Wednesday, Fire Board meeting attended by Chairman John [JJ] Kingston, Thomas [TE] Miller Northern Assurance Co, Michael [MJ] Coyle, Walter Pavitt, Andrew [AJ] Entrican and John [JB] Paterson.

Year ending June 30 1925, Auckland FB attended 305 calls, 283 the year before, highest number to date. Of these 192 were for actual fires, 49 false alarms 19 were malicious, 22 chimney fires, 30 rubbish and gorse, remaining 12 were outside the city area. Staff were 40 permanent men, 26 auxiliary, and 18 theatre firemen. There were five stations, Central, Western District [later Ponsonby], Parnell and Remuera, all with permanent staff, all equipped with motor appliances. Plus, Pt Chevalier, volunteer staff and only hand equipment. No fire fatalities. Largest fire was November 15 1924 at Guthrie Bowron, Albert Street, City.

July 29 1925, notice was given that the Office of the Auckland Fire Board has been removed from No11 and 12 Union Buildings, Customs Street to No1 and 2 Maritime Buildings, Quay Street, Auckland. Percy Butler, Secretary.

Year ending December 31 1925 Auckland FB attended more calls than ever, 371 calls [290], 213 fires, 76 false alarms, 29 chimneys, 44 rubbish and gorse, 9 outside district. Staff were Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson, Deputy Superintendent George Avenell and Senior Foreman John Adlam, 46 permanents [29 at Pitt Street, Foreman Percy Williams and 8 at Western District, Foreman John N McDonald and 6 at Remuera, Foreman Les Emslie and 3 at Parnell], 26 auxiliaries, and 16 theatre firemen. Drivers had to retire at 45, ordinary fireman 55, average age just under 30. Some new structural work had been completed at Headquarters'. Total 14 automatic fire alarms and 6 sprinkler systems connected. The SFA system in Grey Lynn and Remuera were extended. Budget for 1925-26 was £20,000.

The 1920s Part 4. 1926-1927

January 11 1926, the Insurance Underwriters' Association offered £100, named three fires which it specially suspects a fire raiser has been at work. The fires were the Hall of Commerce, High Street, on October 30 and City Chambers, Queen Street soon after, on December 31 Alston Chambers, Lower Queen Street. They were not the only instances of foul work from what the Fire Brigade and Police found, the most suspicious. The methods adopted suggested that it was all the work of the one individual.

April 26 1926, Tamaki VFB Fire Station opened at 32 St Heliers Bay Road, corner Polygon Road, part of Tamaki Road Board new £2,753 building development, hose tower alongside cost £4.3 shillings. By November 1927, Tamaki VFB had purchased uniforms cost of £70, purchased 500 feet of hose, standpipes and branches, purchased a fire motor which cost £1,200. and ratepayers had authorised a loan to build a Fire Brigade Station, probably in the vicinity of top of Long Drive and the main St Heliers Bay Road. April 1 1928 incorporated into Auckland FB who paid rent at £1 per week until new Station ready. November 24 1930, Auckland FB opened new West Tamaki Station [now St Heliers] at 179 Long Drive, near St Heliers Bay Road. In 1931 Tamaki Road Board building converted to a library.

April 28 1926, Auckland FB published new By-Laws, included charging building owners for attending fires outside the Auckland FB [City] area, from time of leaving station until return. Minister of Internal Affairs approved them June 6 1926. Officer In Charge £2.2.0 first hour then £1.1.0, Firemen 10 shillings first hour then 5 shillings, each appliance £5. The same scale applied to ship fires.

May 20 1926, Auckland City water supply system was severely disrupted by flood damage to the supply mains from both the Nihotupu and Waitakere dams in the torrential storm of Wednesday and Thursday. Over twenty trucks with water tanks delivered water to property owners. The higher suburbs were most effected, especially mains fed from the Mt Eden reservoirs. May 25 1926, water supplies slowly came back, the Waitakere Dam continued to supply 4,000,000 gallons a day through the mains to Khyber Pass reservoir, where the water is distributed into the city system and the other reservoirs. Western Springs was also used, all water had to be boiled. Onehunga spring supply was not affected. Few fires.

June 5 1926, Minister of Internal Affairs approved and published in the Gazette by-laws made by Auckland Fire Board. They included provisions to charge for services at a fire in any building outside

the city of Auckland at the request of the owner or occupier. The rates owner or occupier paid - Superintendent or officer in charge of brigade, first hour £2 2s, each succeeding hour £1 1s; for each fireman, first hour 10s, each succeeding hour 5s; each fire appliance, £5. The charges started from the time the brigade left station until it returned to the station. The same scale of charges for attendance at any fire on a ship. Also covered maintenance of discipline and good conduct, the enrolment of volunteers and the conditions of service of members of the brigade.

June 23 1926, about 05:10, burglary, the Mont de Piete Loan Co pawnbroker's shop, Gas Company Wembley Building, Pitt Street, next to Central Fire Station. A heavy foggy morning, timed to Police shift change. Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson was awakened by the sound of breaking glass. He looked out of his window, but was unable to see anything in the fog. A few minutes after the crash he heard someone walk slowly past the Fire Station. Jewellery valued at about £90, included seventeen rings and three or four wrist watches had been taken.

June 23 1926, annual Auckland FB meeting re-elected John [J J] Kingston for next twelve months. Also present were Thomas [TE] Miller, Michael [MJ] Coyle, Andrew [AJ] Entrican, Walter Pavitt, and John [JB] Paterson.

July 3 1926, reported that Pitt [later Poynton] Terrace, opposite the Fire Station, was widened. Previously only eleven feet wide, additional property was acquired, a shop with Pitt Street frontage was pulled down to give a width of 21 feet. Vehicles could now reach Myers Arcade and the Park steps. On the first bend was the Premier Skating Rink, where two large floors were available, special section for learners, first class band. Competitions were also held. Now Parisian Ties.

July 12 1926. John Milne appointed to Auckland Fire Board as Government representative. Born Toronto, Canada, died October 18 1928, age 63 in Auckland. He was managing director of John Chambers and Son.

October 29 1926, job advert. Auckland Fire Board. Motor driver required. The Board requires the services of an experienced motor driver with a good knowledge of the city. Apply for particulars to the Superintendent, Central Fire Station, Pitt Street. Percy Butler, Secretary.

December 11 1926, letter to editor asked " what justification the Auckland Fire Brigade had for the speed at which their fire engines travel? On Monday evening a little after five o'clock, a fire engine flew down crowded Queen Street at a speed that can only be described as terrific. Mighty lucky that young children, jay walkers and jay motorists were not in the line of flight otherwise what a colossal smash! Forty or fifty casualties, at least, all the Firemen included! Exit fire engine and the firefighters! What then of the fire? This practice should be stamped out with heavy feet. Is property of greater value than human life?"

The 1920s Part 5. 1928-19229

January 1 1927, the Fire Brigades Act 1927 came into effect. An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the establishment of Fire Boards and the protection of life and property from fire. It remained in force until 1949. By 1946 there were 60 constituted fire districts, each with its own fire board and fire brigade, and financed by the Crown, local authority, and insurance underwriters. There were another 99 fire brigades in boroughs which were not fire districts or within fire districts. These brigades were set up under the authority of the Municipal Corporations Act 1920, which contained no provision for contributions from the Crown or the insurance companies, the whole cost of the Fire Brigade borne by the local authority.

February 23 1927, Wednesday, just before 21:00, Headquarters No1 pump collided with full bus, Customs Street West between Albert Street and Little Queen Street, Officer in Charge Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson, driver George [GA] Pardy. Pump and bus going opposite directions, bus just left Queen Street, pump hit bus in centre. One bus passenger slightly injured, broken glass. Little damage to bus, appliance axle pushed under vehicle, front wheels slewed, towed back to Headquarters.

May 6 1927, Auckland FB visited by Government Fire Inspector, Captain Thomas [TT] Hugo. He inspected out stations and, in the evening, Central Station. The muster had twenty-five Firemen and three Officers. Rescue drill raising and carrying an unconscious person, use of the canvas "blanket" [jump sheet] to catch anyone jumping from a window, tying the "arm-chair" knot to hold an unconscious person lowered from a high position. One member of the brigade rescued from a second-storey window. The "smoke helmet" also tested. An impromptu alarm, took but a few seconds for the men to don helmet and belt and run the engines on to the street.

July 4 1927, the outside of twenty-five-year-old Auckland City FB Station, Pitt Street, was covered in scaffolding. The building was plastered to "modernise" it and much of the original detailing removed. Renovations made inside. Late 1937 into 1938 the rear wing was extended to increase accommodation for increase in staff, known as "rookies retreat".

August 18 1927, Auckland City Council agreed, 10 votes to 9, that Greys Avenue would be the future name for Grey Street. The petition for a change of name was because the character of the street had fallen into disrepute. The Legal and Bylaws Committee recommended that the name be changed to Queen's Avenue, that was rejected. Auckland Mayor at the time was George Baidon who had been a Arch Hill VFB Fireman and built Pitt Street and Beach Road Stations. Myers Park had just been transformed from the waste of Grey Street Gully thanks to the generosity of Sir Arthur Myers, a former Mayor.

September 1 1927, Avondale Borough Council area incorporated into Auckland City and Auckland Fire Board. One permanent Foreman [Ernest Herring] transferred from Western District [later Ponsonby] and three Auxiliary Firemen appointed from the Volunteer Brigade. Fire Board leased the station and Guy appliance [briefly] for £1 per week from Auckland CC. The 1909 Thornycroft hose and ladder tender soon relocated from Western District [later Ponsonby].

During 1928 negotiations between Newmarket BC and Auckland Fire Board failed when the Auckland FB asked for £600 per annum, more than the £150 [rose to £450] Newmarket currently paid for their VFB. Newmarket would not have a Fire Station [AFB's Parnell was just up road near the Cathedral], they had a lot of commerce and factory risks, but a small residential population. In October 1930 a poll of Newmarket residents approved setting up their own Fire Board.

"Newmarket, entirely surrounded by Auckland City, nearly carried a proposal the other day for putting up a new fire station. Is it not the argument for a single fire board, or none at all?" In June 1931 Auckland Fire Board made an offer that Newmarket ultimately accepted. October 30 1931, Government passed legislation to enable Newmarket and Auckland to enter an agreement, the rate was £500 per annum. Captain Thomas J Watts, Newmarket VFB was also a Newmarket Borough Councillor and fulltime Advisory Superintendent for the UFBA before and after the closure of Newmarket VFB.

March 1928, Blockhouse Bay Road [then 6 Manukau Road on Albert View Estate] site near New North Road, Avondale purchased for £295. A section in Cradock Street was the first choice [cost £400] but local objections overturned purchase. Advantages of purchased site was on higher ground

for fire lookout, at the junction of five roads, and better coverage in conjunction with Pt Chevalier station.

March 10 1928, Auckland Star proposed plan that all fire stations should be under one control. The proximity of Parnell and Remuera [both in the city], and Newmarket brigades should be noted, also the "bunching" of the Remuera, One Tree Hill, Ellerslie, Onehunga and Mt. Roskill stations. It was contended that a central station near Greenwood's Corner, Epsom, would effectively serve a wide area.

April 1928, each bulk flammable fuel tank in Western Reclamation area were provided with a Foamite foam plant, fed from two storage tanks containing 8,800 gallons. On alarm of fire, the engine is started and Foamite foam pumped into the tank, this formed a blanket and smothers the flame. When the Foamite was pumped there was no danger of an explosion. Second safety provision was an earth bund wall, seven feet high, built around each tank, making a well [with same capacity as the tank] into which the fuel could run and be contained. Where petrol was stored in containers in cases, all the Fire Brigade could do was to allow the fire to burn itself out.

April 1 1928, Tamaki VFB [now St Heliers] incorporated into Auckland Fire Board. District joined Auckland City, together with Orakei Road District. Auckland City Council population rose to 95,852 people.....Wellington City Council population was 97,986.

April 1 1928, Orakei Road District [the garden suburb] incorporated in Auckland City and automatically into Auckland Fire Brigade area. Had no fire brigade. From this date, protected by Tamaki [now St Heliers] and Remuera.

April 7 1928, the final of the tug-of-war contest at the Prince Edward Theatre, Karangahape Road and France Street [now Mercury Lane] held. Two competing teams were Southdown versus Fire Brigade. Can't find who won....!!

May 7 1928, TB Strong, National Director of Education, Wellington agreed to adopt suggestion that fire education be included in school's syllabus. Auckland Education Board had approved August 3 1921.

Late July 1928, Remuera Station, 287 Remuera Road reopened, almost totally rebuilt, two bay, two floors, flats above. Architect Daniel [DB] Patterson. Work started January 10 1928. new station cost £5587-8s-10d. February 9 1928 Auckland Fire Board sought to depart from City Council building by-laws, desired top floor built of wood instead of concrete or other fire resisting material, not approved. Front exterior made "attractive" to fit into the local residential character. Staff increased to eight permanent men. Foreman John [Jack Nugget] McDonald. Demolished 2004, new one bay station built same site, entry only from front, opened 2005.

August 1928, the storage capacity of Auckland City water reservoir sites were: - Ponsonby and Arch Hill each 3 million gallons [232 ft], Khyber Pass 8.5 million gallons [3 reservoirs at 310 ft] , Mt Hobson 1.2 million gallons [484 ft], Mt Eden 2 million gallons [2 reservoirs at 493 ft]. Pressure zones were Ponsonby, Khyber and Eden. The Auckland Domain reservoir was built 1952, holds 4 million gallons, feeds Downton and Parnell, height about same as Ponsonby.

September 13 1928, Mt Roskill Fire Board critical of Mt Roskill Road Board who had recently reduced its outside staff, laid off several firemen, some who lived alongside fire station and were as good as permanent men.

During 1928, Auckland FB had 49 paid staff, 45 auxiliaries, and 18 theatre special duty staff. At Central [Headquarters] 26 paid, 9 auxiliaries, and all 18 Theatre special duty auxiliaries, Western District 8 paid, 6 auxiliaries, Parnell 3 paid, Pt Chevalier 1 paid, 6 auxiliaries, Avondale 1 paid, 12 auxiliaries, St Heliers-Kohimarama 1 paid, 11 auxiliaries, Remuera 6 paid, and 1 auxiliary. The inclusion of One Tree Hill, Avondale and Tamaki required employing 20 additional men, bringing the total strength to approximately 118.

March 4 1929, 05:30, the 1912 Mt Eden No2 reservoir burst and 800,000 gallons water escaped. Construction of a new third 3.5-million-gallon reservoir had left one 13" unreinforced concrete wall of older reservoir exposed and it failed. Repairs and strengthening cost £2,140. There were two reservoirs on Mt Eden, No1 stored 500,00 gallons and No2 1,500,000 gallons. Provided Eden pressure.

Year ending March 31 1929, Auckland City FB attended 519 calls, 562 in 1928. They comprised 256 structure fires, 126 grass etc, 21 chimney fires, 15 outside district, and 101 false alarms. Most of the false alarms were by telephone, Police, Ambulance and the taxi companies all received false infatuation attention.

April 24 1929, upgrade of fire alarm receiving panel in Central Station Watchroom completed. The original Duplex system had one battery per circuit replaced with larger Duplex switchboard that used one battery for all twelve circuits. Switchboard capable of sixteen circuits. The old switchboard transferred to Remuera Station.

July 23 1929. Rev William [WE] Gillam, City Fire Brigade Chaplain for twenty-six years died. Canon Claude Grant - Cowen [St Matthew's] accepted role of honorary chaplain. [died August 6 1933].

October 10 1929, Superintendent Bill [WL] Wilson told City Council Building Approval meeting that fireproof staircase and fire escape ladders down the exterior walls could not be regarded as a safe means of escape in the event of fire. His experiences in tall buildings were that people absolutely refused to go down the outside fire escapes in cases of fire. He gave the case of a city fire when three men who went out on the gallery on the fifth floor refused to descend the fire escape and remained there until the fire was extinguished. The same thing happened at a city hotel fire. Some of the guests went out on the landing and flatly refused to go down the fire escape. Descending 70ft or 80ft was a difficult matter for elderly people and the risk of them falling under the stress must not be ignored.

Auckland FB total calls during 1929 were 487, of that 254 were fires, 84 false alarms, 34 chimney, 103 grass and rubbish, 12 out of district calls. One fire fatality at Hotel Cargen, Eden Crescent.

Many thanks again to Cliff Mears who has tirelessly recorded the AFB history from log books, Fire Board Reports, Newspaper Cuttings and other sources making our job so much easier.

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