

Officer Stevenson denied that he was told how to enter the basement. He said all he was told was, "It's in the cellar, a cable's fused." He apparently made no request for further information, and said that no one preceded him into the right-of-way. After passing through the double doors, according to Mr. Falkingham, Officer Stevenson returned to the street for a respirator.

We find it difficult to reject the evidence of Mr. Roger Ballantyne and Mr. Falkingham that they were both beyond the double doors when Officer Stevenson made his first journey into the right-of-way. Undoubtedly Mr. Roger Ballantyne, shortly before meeting Officer Stevenson, had walked from the appro office out of the door leading to the right-of-way through which it was hoped the brigade would put a lead into the cellar. Mr. Ballantyne said he told Officer Stevenson, or a fireman, that there was no sign of flame, and that he thought an extinguisher might be sufficient.

143. When No. 1 machine arrived Officer Burrows, like Officer Stevenson, went directly to the right-of-way, where he, too, was met by Mr. Roger Ballantyne and was informed that the fire was in the cellar, had been caused by a cable, and that the door leading to the cellar was on the right-hand side of the right-of-way. Officer Burrows then donned a smoke-mask and followed Officer Stevenson and Branchman Thompson up the right-of-way. According to his own evidence, he went on his hands and knees when 8 ft. to 10 ft. up the right-of-way.

144. From Officer Burrows' own account it seems he did not ask Mr. Roger Ballantyne the position of the doors across the right-of-way, the position of the door leading into the basement, or whether there was an access by internal stairway from the ground floor. According to him, he went a considerable distance up the right-of-way, finding no difference in the volume of smoke. He crawled up the centre of the right-of-way and, although the smoke-mask would have prevented his seeing the door leading to the basement, he expected to be able to see the red glow of the fire. Not finding any such red glow, he returned to the street for the purpose of making further investigations.

145. Officer Stevenson and Branchman Thompson, with a charged hose, were left in the right-of-way. At the time he entered, Officer Stevenson said he did not anticipate any difficulty in finding the entrance to the cellar. When giving evidence he agreed that it would have been wiser to have asked for further information before he started. Officer Stevenson described the smoke as so dense that the electric lamp he carried was of no use. After going some 15 ft. to 20 ft. in, he and the branchman were forced to crawl—the branchman close to the north wall, and he farther out.

His one object, he said, was to locate the fire, and he anticipated no difficulty in doing so as he thought the volume of smoke would readily show where the fire was. From his account it appears he lost contact with the branchman and went up the right-of-way beyond the door leading into the basement. On retracing his steps he discovered the branchman in a doorway, which he sensed to be the door leading to the basement.

He passed the branchman and went a short distance into the building. Finding no ramp or stairway leading to the basement, but only heat and smoke, and being in an exhausted condition, he decided to withdraw with the intention of planning a further movement or getting fresh men to effect an entry. When, however, he moved into the right-of-way he heard a low roar, and on reaching the street he found that there was a break-through of flame. No further effort was made to use the right-of-way.

146. On the brigade's own evidence Officer Stevenson was shown the right-of-way as a means, through a door, of reaching the cellar. Officer Stevenson and Branchman Thompson, with a loaded hose, entered the right-of-way shortly after 3.48. Flames broke through the building at 3.58.