

"The hydrant-indicators lately placed in position, 7 in. by 3½ in., white, with red letters, are not distinctive enough to be of much service to the brigade on a dark night; they should be larger, and painted white with black letters.

"During the turnout drill with the engine it was apparent that one of the horses is still very fractious, and might be the cause of a serious delay at any time.

"The station and equipment are generally maintained in good order and condition.

"I understand it is customary at certain times to detail as many as six members of the Fire Police for duty at the Town Hall at one time, with two on duty simultaneously at the Picture Theatre, which reduces the number of the corps to twelve actually available for fire service should a fire break out during the time they are performing the said duty; for if it is necessary in the interest of the public safety to have six men stationed there at such times, it would not do for any of them to run away in the event of an alarm of fire. This, to say nothing of others temporarily absent from the town—a not uncommon occurrence—is an undue depletion of the strength of the Fire Police Corps as authorized by your Board, and better arrangements should be made in the matter.

"Having given the matter consideration in accordance with the request of members of your Board, I beg to inform you that I consider the car with motor-pump attached most suitable to your local conditions would be one having an engine of 50 B.h.p., geared to a top speed of thirty-five miles per hour on the level; pump to have a capacity of 300 to 400 gallons per minute, capable of working up to a pressure of 180 lb.; to carry eight men; telescopic fire-escape, having a perpendicular height of 40 ft. when extended; hose-box to carry 1,600 ft. 2½ in. unlined hose; accommodation for carrying stand-pipes and all necessary small gear, &c.

"I have, &c.,

"THOS. T. HUGO,

"Inspector of Fire Brigades."

The brigade attended thirteen calls, as against twenty for the previous year: that included nine actual fires occurring in the district, three less than last year.

The fire loss amounted to £5,462, as compared with £2,482, an increase of £2,980.

The estimated cost of the brigade for the year 1912-13 is £1,136 14s., as against £1,023 19s. for the year 1911-12, an increase of £112 15s.

MILTON.

Two inspections of the Milton Fire Brigade and its equipment have been made—viz., 25th September, 1911, and 5th February, 1912.

At the first inspection there were present the Superintendent and nine firemen, or ten out of a total strength of fifteen all told; the remaining five were on leave.

Various test drills were carried out in a satisfactory manner, though one of the small manual pumps proved to be out of order.

The following report, forwarded to the secretary of the Board, covers the second inspection:—

"SIR,—

"2nd April, 1912.

"An inspection of the Milton Fire Brigade, its station and equipment, was held on the 5th February last, when there were present the Superintendent and six firemen; these, with two on leave and four absent from the town, accounted for the full strength of the brigade.

"It will be noted that four firemen were away from the town, thus leaving ten all told as available for work at a fire. This is too small a number, and arrangements should be made whereby not less than the present authorized strength of fourteen will be available at all times in case of need.

"The station and appliances are maintained in good order and condition, and the defective manual pump has been put in good working-order.

"This brigade has not yet been supplied with hand-pumps as previously recommended, and I would again, as in previous reports, direct the attention of your Board to the dangerously inadequate supply of water available for fire-extinction purposes, and refer you to my letter on this subject dated 22nd February, 1911. Should it ultimately be decided to sink wells it will be necessary to provide the brigade with more powerful pumping-apparatus than they now have.

"I have, &c.,

"THOS. T. HUGO,

"Inspector of Fire Brigades."

A fire, disastrous when taking place in a small town like Milton, having a population of under 1,400 inhabitants, broke out on the 16th March last in a general store situated in Union Street, involving a loss of £12,300. A second fire broke out on the same premises in the following month, causing a further loss of £2,340.

The amount of water available for fire-extinction purposes is totally inadequate, and I have periodically in my reports called attention to that fact. Further severe losses may be looked for, in any but the smallest of outbreaks, if a better supply is not provided.

During the year just ended five fires have occurred in the district, two more than during the previous year.

The fire loss amounted to £14,891, compared with £475, an increase of £14,416.

The estimated cost of the brigade for the year 1912-13 is £120, as against £140 for 1911-12, a decrease of £20.