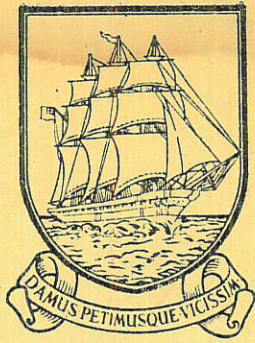


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British Guiana

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BRITISH GUIANA FIRE BRIGADE AND AMBULANCE SERVICE

FOR THE YEAR

1963

(Printed by the Authority of His Excellency the Governor).

GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA, BRITISH GUIANA.
1964.

C.G.P. & S. 2319/64.

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Annual Report of the British Guiana Fire
Brigade and Ambulance Service for
the year 1963

Fire Brigade Headquarters,
Water Street, Georgetown,
British Guiana,
7th October, 1964.

The Honourable,
The Minister of Home Affairs,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Brickdam, Georgetown.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit for your information the Annual Report of the British Guiana Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service for the year ended 31st December, 1963.

1. Strength

The strength of the Brigade at 31st December, 1963 was:-

- 1 Chief Fire Officer
- 1 Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- 2 Station Officers
- 1 Motor Mechanic
- 5 Sub Officers
- 10 Section Leader
- 32 Leading Firemen
- 135 Firemen
- 2 Class II Clerks
- 2 Clerical Assistants
- 1 Barrack Labourer

2. Stations

There are three fire stations in the City of Georgetown (two land stations and one river station) and one in the town of New Amsterdam.

There is an increasing need for new stations in Georgetown due to the continued expansion of the city, but very little progress has been made in this direction up to the present time.

3. Fire Boat Station

The number of men stationed at Fire Boat Station at 31st December, 1963 was as follows:-

1 Sub Officer

3 Section Leader

6 Leading Firemen

23 Firemen

4. The station was equipped with two fire boats, the larger of the two, the "Lady Woolley" being of steel construction and the other, the "Stagshaw" built of wood. Four fire boats were previously maintained in service, but two of these were condemned as unserviceable and were later sold. As a result, the remaining two boats have been severely pressed in order to maintain a satisfactory standard of efficiency.

5. The fire boats responded to 36 fire calls during the year in the waterfront area, and attended to a number of emergency and ordinary special services involving the salvaging of vessels and the rescuing of persons and vessels adrift at sea or in the harbour. A number of ambulance calls to Vreed-en-Hoop were made to bring sick and injured persons for conveyance to the Georgetown Hospital. These calls were especially frequent during the period of the disturbances on the West Coast of Demerara. Fire Boats also stood by at the British Guiana Airways Ramp, Ruimveldt, to ensure the safe landing and taking off of planes.

6. Training

General training in fire-fighting methods was maintained throughout the year with special emphasis on the means to be adopted to combat ship fires and other emergencies requiring the attendance of fire boats. Classes in seamanship and the performance of rescues at sea were also held frequently.

One Leading Fireman and two firemen pursued training

at the Government Technical Institute in certain technical skills. The subordinate officer who is responsible for the maintenance of the fire boats also had the benefit of a four-month training course at the Fire Service College in the United Kingdom.

7. Maintenance

The maintenance staff kept all equipment and appliances in good repair. Docking and general maintenance of the "Stagshaw" were satisfactorily carried out by them throughout the year, despite a lack of adequate facilities and up-to-date tools necessary for such work. The "Lady Woolley" was docked as usual at Messrs. Sprotons Dry Dock.

8. The practice of docking this vessel once yearly is proving to be very costly, and it is felt that it would be most economical if docking is permitted to be done at least twice yearly as previously. The fact is that her sea worthiness is more and more in doubt due to rapid deterioration of both the hull and superstructure. This vessel is involving heavy maintenance expenditure each year, and its replacement is a matter of urgency.

Needs

9. New Station

There is urgent need at the moment for a new Fire Boat Station with accommodation for the mooring and docking of fire boats. Arrangements were also made some years ago to include the Transport and Harbours Department pilot launches, and Police and Customs launches when this question was being considered. A suitable site has been acquired for this purpose, and plans were prepared and submitted for inclusion in the Colony's Development estimates.

It is envisaged that the new station will provide adequate covered accommodation for all the boats mentioned, and it is expected that this will greatly reduce wear and tear due to exposure to harsh weather conditions.

10. Ambulance Launch

A fast and modern ambulance launch should be provided to meet the special needs of conveying sick and injured persons without in any way sacrificing fire-fighting requirements. The present fire boats do not have accommodation for stretcher cases or even any means for protecting such cases from inclement weather.

In addition, such a craft would be very suitable for attending to the safe landing and taking off of planes at the British Guiana Airways Ramp, Ruimveldt.

11. Appliances

The appliances held at the end of the year were as follows:-

Georgetown Unit

- 6 Dennis Water Tenders of 600 g.p.m. capacity, each equipped with V.H.F. Radio.
- 2 Austin Champs (Firefly) of 350 g.p.m. capacity each.
- 1 Pump of 900 g.p.m. capacity.
- 3 Hathaway Light Pumps of 150 g.p.m. capacity.
- 2 Landrover Fire Appliances of 350 g.p.m. capacity each.
- 1 Fire Boat of 2,700 g.p.m. capacity, equipped with V.H.F. Radio.
- 1 Fire Boat of 500 g.p.m. capacity.
- 1 Bedford Utility Truck.
- 1 Land Rover Truck.
- 1 Godiva Lightweight Portable Fire Pump of 250-350 g.p.m. capacity.
- 3 Morris Commercial Ambulances.
- 1 Land Rover type ambulance equipped with V.H.F. Radio.
- 2 Volkswagen Van.

New Amsterdam Unit

- 1 John Kerr Water Tender of 600 g.p.m. capacity equipped

with V.H.F. Radio.

1 Dennis Water Tender of 600 g.p.m. capacity equipped with V.H.F. Radio.

1 Self-propelled pump of 300 g.p.m. capacity

1 Austin Champ (Firefly) of 350 g.p.m. capacity

1 Morris Utility Van.

1 Morris Commercial Ambulance and 1 Land Rover type Ambulance, each equipped with V.H.F. Radio.

1 Volkswagen Van.

12. Maintenance

The routine standard of maintenance of fire appliances and equipment was continued during the year by the Workshop staff. This ensured that all appliances were maintained in good order. There is need, however, for more and better workshop accommodation in Georgetown Unit if the efficiency of the staff is to be maintained or expanded as required.

Work on the project of converting the western end of the Want-of-Entry Bond to the south of Mc Inroy's Building into a workshop has not yet started although this matter has been under consideration for some time now.

13. Hydrants

Seventeen new hydrants were installed during the year in the Georgetown area as follows:-

Eleven in South East La Penitence.

Six in Alexander Village.

The total number of hydrants in the city and its environs is now 1,187.

One hydrant was also installed in Plaisance Village on the East Coast of Demerara.

In New Amsterdam, six new hydrants were installed

in the Stanleytown area. There are now 119 hydrants in that town. Efforts are being made now to ensure that over a period of time all hydrants are of the same standard pattern as those installed in Georgetown.

14. Hose

A total of 27,525 feet of hose was held by the Brigade at the end of the year, 21, 375 feet in Georgetown and 6,150 feet in New Amsterdam.

Hose which was loaned to this Brigade in 1962 by the Trinidad and Barbados Fire Services was returned during the year. The circumstances which made this loan of hose necessary has increased the need for a reserve to be kept in the Brigade.

15. Equipment Received

The following equipment was received during the year:-

- 2 Land Rover fire appliances
- 2 Volkswagen vans
- 2 Extension ladders
- 219 lengths of 75' Superflex delivery hose
- 18 - eight foot lengths 4" BSS Suction hose
- 2 Portable Oxy-Acetylene welding and cutting sets
- 1 Water Cooler
- 4 "Super fog" trigger operated hose reel noxxles
- 6 - 12 Volt Electric Ambulance Bells
- 2 Collecting Breechings
- 2 Dividing Breechings
- 3 Low Level Strainers
- 4 Pye transmitting/Receiving Mobile Sets
- 1 Pye Transmitting/Receiving Master Set
- 280 Gallons Foam Compound
- 180 Chemical Foam Charges
- 80 Soda Acid Charges
- 50 - 2 gallon Nu-Swift Air Foam Extinguishers

	Total B/Fwd 110
Rescuing persons from buildings	
involved in explosions.	3
Miscellaneous	18
	<u>131</u>

Of the total number of calls listed above, 22 were treated as emergency calls.

During the year the sum of \$3,768.56 was collected as charges for special services rendered and yielded a revenue to Government of \$2,340.85. The amount remaining was paid to the firemen who performed the services.

17. Fire Calls

The Brigade responded to 578 fire calls during the year an analysis of which is given hereunder.

Georgetown Unit

Actual Fires	- 386
Late Fire Calls	22
False Alarm (good intent)	17
False Alarm (Malicious)	86

New Amsterdam Unit

Actual Fires	47
Late Fire calls	8
False Alarm (good intent)	12
False Alarm (Malicious)	—

There was a marked decrease in the number of malicious false alarms during the year when compared with the number on record for 1962. This figure, however, is still too high and efforts are being made increasingly to discourage this irresponsible practice.

Causes of Fires

Electrical faults	123
Electrical, gas or oil stoves	37

Spontaneous combustion	3
Children playing with matches	18
Motor vehicle faults	10
Careless burning or rubbish	8
Welding	4
Boiling over of fats & Oils	6
Reignition	2
Coal Pots and fire places	4
Oil Lamps, candles and mosquito coils	4
Explosion	1
Unknown	1
Ignition of inflammable vapours of substances	17
Wilful and malicious setting of fires	34
Careless use of fire for domestic purposes	11
Careless disposal of smouldering coal	1
Careless disposal of cigarette ends or matches	168
Overheating of electrical appliances	10
Careless use of gasolene	1
<u>Method of Extinguishing</u>	
By occupants or other persons using buckets of water or extinguishers before arrival of the Brigade	126
By Electricity Corporation	104

By Brigade using:-

(a) Hand appliances	17
(b) Hose reels	70
(c) One jet from pumps	118
(d) Two jets from pumps	15
(e) Three jets from pumps	2
(f) Four jets from pumps	2
(g) Six jets from pumps	1
(h) Eight jets from pumps	1
(i) Fire Beaters	2
(j) Buckets of water	3
(k) Wet bags	2

Methods of Calling Fire Brigade

Georgetown

Central Exchange	485
Running Calls	23
Private Fire Alarm Systems	2
Radio Communication	1

New Amsterdam

Central Exchange	41
Police Direct Line	6
Running Calls	8
Private Fire Alarm Systems	11
Radio Communication	1

18. Number of Buildings destroyed or seriously damaged

Buildings Destroyed - Georgetown

(i) One wooden building measuring approximately 70' x 45' with "V" shaped galvanised iron roof situated at Lot 3 and 4 Garnett Street and Vlissengen Road, Newtown Kitty, owned by India Overseas (British Guiana) Limited, 134 Church Street and known as the Boren Cinema. Building completely destroyed by fire. (22.6.63 - 1.37 a.m.)

(ii) One wooden building of two floors, measuring approximately 40' x 30', covered with corrugated galvanised iron roofing, situated at 132 Regent Street, Lacytown, owned by Messrs. Omar and Kem Majeed of 12 and 13 Barima Avenue, Bel Air Park. Ground floor occupied by Khan's Electrical, Radio and Machine Sales, and first floor used as a dwelling house. Entire radio store gutted and floor and eastern wall of first floor scorched. (31.10.63 - 3.12 a.m.)

Buildings Seriously Damaged

(i) One three-flat concrete building with corrugated metal roof measuring 60' x 48', situated at Lot 106 Regent Street, Lacytown, owned by Mr. Kada Rali of Agricola Village, East Bank Demerara and used as a Drug Store on the ground floor and as a private dwelling on the first and second floors. Severe damage caused to walls and contents on the western half of both first and second floors. (6.1.63 - 1.37 am)

(ii) One wooden building of two floors measuring approximately 35' x 24', covered with corrugated galvanised roofing, situated at 93 Hadfield Street, Werk-en-Rust, owned by Mr. Richard Clement of the same address and used entirely as a dwelling house. Floors, walls and roof of kitchen on ground and first floor were destroyed, and walls of bedroom at southern end of first floor were badly charred (15.1.63 - 2.32 a.m.)

(iii) One wooden building of two floors measuring approximately 111' x 35', with roof constructed of aluminium sheeting owned by the Government of British Guiana, and known as the Campbellville Government School. South-western section of ground and first floors were gutted and cupboards and their contents destroyed (20.6.63 - 12.48 a.m.)

(iv) One wooden building of two floors measuring approximately 30' x 40' with corrugated galvanised iron roof,

situated at Lot 16 Waterloo and New Street, owned by the Government of British Guiana, and occupied by the Central Housing and Planning Department. Walls of south part of building partly destroyed. (1.7.63 - 6.06 a.m.)

(v) One wooden shed measuring approximately 100' x 20', covered with corrugated galvanised roofing, situated on the Queens' College compound. Extensive damage done to roof of shed and to lighting plant and contents of the garage. (20.7.63 - 8.49 a.m.)

(vi) One wooden building of two floors, bottom of concrete and top of wood, measuring approximately 70' x 40' with galvanised roof, situated at Lot 4 George Street, Werk-en-Rust, owned and occupied on the top floor by Mr. James Cheong, ground floor being used also as a dwelling house. Southern section of upper flat completely gutted and remainder of flat damaged by smoke and water. (25.7.63 - 4.00, pm)

New Amsterdam

Building Destroyed

(i) One wooden building covered with galvanised roof, measuring approximately 22' x 20' situated at Clifton Settlement, Corentyne, Berbice, owned and occupied by Mr. C. Ishmael and family, Entire building destroyed by fire (5.7.63 - 11.20 p.m.)

Rural Areas

Building Destroyed

(1) One wooden building of two floors measuring approximately 30' x 24', covered with galvanised roof, situated at Buxton Sideline Dam, owned and occupied by Mr. Suraj Mohan and family. Building completely destroyed by fire. (3.7.63 - 1.11 a.m.)

19. Ambulance Calls

The number of ambulance calls attended during the year

was 11,598 of which 9,771 were emergency calls. The ambulances travelled a distance of 143,519 miles.

(a) Chargeable Cases

In Georgetown, the ambulances undertook the conveyance of 90 cases for which charges were made, and in New Amsterdam there were 8 such cases yielding a total income of \$236.10.

(b) Mental Cases

Ninety-eight mental patients were taken by ambulance from the Georgetown Hospital to the Georgetown Railway terminal and conveyed by Transport and Harbours Department special ambulance car to Rosignol, thence by steamer and ambulance to the Mental Hospital.

(c) Atkinson Field

Ambulances responded to 37 emergency calls from Atkinson Field during the year to convey to the Georgetown Hospital, sick or injured persons arriving by plane from the interior.

20. Leave

A total of 2,002 days' casual leave was granted to personnel averaging 10.6 days taken per man.

Vacation

Forty-two men were granted a total of 2,619 days vacation leave for the year, which is an average of 60.9 days per applicant.

Sick

The general health of all personnel continued to be most satisfactory throughout the year. A total of 1,211 days sick leave was granted making an average of 6.4 days per man as compared with 6 days per man for the previous year.

21. Discipline

The usual high standard of discipline was maintained

during the year. Twenty cases of discipline were dealt with resulting as follows:-

Confinement to Barracks	7
Admonished	2
Reprimanded	1
Severely Reprimanded	5
Stoppage of pay	1
Not Guilty	3
Warned	1

22. Resignation

During the year one Section Leader resigned from the Service to take up residence abroad.

23. Transfers

During the year two firemen were transferred temporarily to New Amsterdam Unit.

24. Promotions

The vacant posts of Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer were filled during the year. Six skilled firemen were also promoted to the rank of Leading Firemen.

25. Training

(a) Local

The training of Brigade personnel was well maintained throughout the year. Regular drills were conducted at Station level in the use of fire appliances and equipment, as well as theoretical training in Fire Service subjects. This was considered to be absolutely necessary since it is realised that to keep pace with new hazards the standard to which its men are trained must of necessity be more exact and varied than ever before.

The training of Auxiliary personnel also continued to great advantage. Members of the Auxiliary Unit were also summoned for emergency duties during the period of the General strike with a view to increasing the manning

strength of the Watches at stations.

(b) Overseas

The system of overseas training in the United Kingdom continued, two subordinate officers being nominated during the year for study courses at the Fire Service College. Two other subordinate officers who travelled to the United Kingdom late in 1962 to pursue similar courses returned to the Colony during the year.

One senior officer also pursued training in administration and general organisation and staff work, in addition to the Long Fire Prevention Course at the Fire Service College.

26. Awards

(a) Long Service Medal

One Leading Fireman and two firemen were recommended for the award of the Colonial Fire Brigade Long Service Medal. One Sub Officer was recommended for the 25 years clasp.

Bronze Medals for Gallantry

Two firemen received awards of the bronze medal of the Society for the Protection of Life from Fire for gallantry displayed during the disturbances of 16th February, 1962.

27. Fire Prevention

During the year under review a Fire Prevention Campaign was launched in all commercial premises in Kitty. The plan was accepted as a very novel one and proved most effective in that firemen with a fire appliance under the supervision of a Fire Prevention Inspector, inspected each building and gave advice on general fire protection measures. The whole plan was very well received and it was heartening to see that the recommendations put forward, were in the main, implemented. This plan is part of a comprehensive scheme to educate people along lines of fire

protection. During the 80 day old strike, periodic patrols and inspections were carried out in the City and Country areas.

28. Mahaica Hospital

In October, 1963 the Fire pump developed a major defect and had to be taken out of service for repairs. In order that proper fire coverage could be maintained during repairs, one of the recently acquired Land Rover fire appliances was immediately despatched to the Hospital, and instructions in the handling and operating of this appliance were given to members of the staff concerned. On the 28th October, 1963, repairs were completed, and the pump returned to the Hospital. On the whole, recent inspections of the pumps allocated to Government Institutions in the Rural areas have shown that due to the lack of attention and proper maintenance, in some cases their standard of performance is far from being satisfactory, and will not function as they should in the event of an outbreak of fire. The main trouble in a number of cases seems to stem from the fact that those persons on the spot who are responsible for the maintenance of the pumps, in addition to their regular duties, are not remunerated. The Chief Engineer of the Brigade pays periodic visits to these pumps as often as his duties in Georgetown will allow him, but these visits cannot be frequent enough to ensure the efficient and regular maintenance of the appliances. Consequently, it was recommended that a retired mechanic be appointed to service out-district fixed pumping installations and fire pumps, as it is felt that this regular maintenance and servicing will render them instantly available in case of an emergency. This whole question of the servicing of out-district fire pumps was first mooted in 1961, and was consistently pursued in the years that followed. It is hoped

that this vitally important recommendation will be implemented in the not too distant future.

29. Public Hospital Georgetown.

Two new 100 ft. Everyway Hose Reel have been installed in Wards 5 and 6, and it is hoped that over a period of time the entire Institution will be so fitted, and the delivery hose withdrawn. Past experience has shown that this new device is easier to handle and readily available in the early stages of a fire.

30. Fire Protection Works in Government Buildings

Very little has been done generally by way of implementing recommendations for fire protection works in Government Buildings. However, a priority list of outstanding recommendations was submitted and it is hoped that provision has been made in the Draft Estimates for the work to be done in 1965.

Follow-up inspections were carried out at all Government Buildings in Georgetown, New Amsterdam and the rural areas including the Potaro district and lectures on the use and operation of the fire equipment allocated, were given.

31. Fire equipment were allocated as follows:-

Fire Extinguishers

Two-gallon foam	48		
Two-gallon water		<u>Buckets</u>	58
pressure	19	Noble Branch-	
CO ₂	3	es	2
Quart C.T.C.	10	Delivery	
<u>Charges</u>		Hoses	8
Foam	179	Hose reels	2
Water CO ₂	47	Fire escape	
Soda Acid	65	(Rope)	2 lengths
C.T.C.	19		

32. Schools

Evacuation exercises continued to be conducted at schools both Primary and Secondary and approximately 18,892 children took part in these exercises, along with masters and mistresses who were very co-operative, in the process.

33. Ninety-six schools including Government aided and Secondary schools were inspected and recommendations submitted in respect of the means of escape in the event of a fire. Seventy-five per cent of these recommendations were implemented.

34. Lectures on fire prevention with demonstrations on the use of fire extinguishers were given. The programme continues in 1965.

35. Inspections under the Fire Brigade Ordinance

Under the terms of the Fire Prevention Ordinance 19 of 1954, a total of 9,323 inspections were made throughout the Colony; these included hotels, factories, private hospitals, old peoples' homes, convents, boarding and lodging houses of which follow-up inspections and routine inspections were carried out.

36. Proposed new buildings and alterations to existing building were also inspected.

37. Seven legal notices were served and one owner complied with the requirements. Legal proceedings were instituted against three and the remaining notices are unexpired.

38. Publicity Propaganda

Fire Prevention slides continue to be projected on the screens of cinemas in Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

39. Public Relations

Fire Prevention booths were on display at Fairs sponsored by the League of Coloured Peoples and the British Guiana Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. Pictures depicting

various aspects of Fire Prevention were exhibited and demonstrations on how to avoid electrical and oil stove fires were given. The Fire Prevention branch in New Amsterdam also held displays at the Esplanade, Rose Hall, Port Mourant and Albion at the invitation of the Community Centres. On each occasion, a large number of people attended and showed a keen interest in the proceedings. Fire Prevention pamphlets on "Hints on Fire Protection" were also distributed.

40. At the invitation of the Booker Group of Companies in Georgetown, a series of lectures on "Means of Escape from fire" and "Fire Prevention in Industrial premises" were given to various groups at the Theatre Guild, after which discussions were held.

41. A special two week course of training was also undertaken by a member of the Demba Constabulary.

42. Press

The good relation between the press and the Brigade continued. Seven press conferences were held during the year and among matters discussed were "Care and maintenance of oil stoves" and "The careless disposal of unserviceable materials". The Press co-operated generously and gave publicity to the various points raised.

43. Visits

Organised groups of school children, Police recruits and members of Youth Clubs visited the Fire Brigade Headquarters and Fire Prevention branch. They were also taken on a tour of the Fire Boat Station and a lively interest was shown by them all. Several groups from the Boy Scouts Movement were trained and Certificates issued for the Fire-Fighter and Fireman's badge.

44. General Observations

All members of the Brigade continued to perform their

duties cheerfully. They have worked hard to maintain the high standard of efficiency which is of vital importance especially when dealing with fires in a city in which most of the buildings are constructed of wood.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

W. J. [unclear]
Chief Fire Officer.

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Expenditure - British Guiana Fire Brigade

1963

Head 23 - Ministry of Home Affairs - Fire

Prevention Department

<u>No. of Sub Head</u>	<u>Title of Sub Head</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
1	Personal Emoluments	\$ 462,398.00
	<u>Other Charges</u>	
2	Transport and Travelling	12,009.00
3	Fuel, oil and grease	8,108.00
4	Spares, Repairs and Replacement	30,060.00
5	Ambulance and First Aid Equipment	534.00
6	Auxiliary Unit	1,565.00
7	Maintenance of pipelines in Commercial Area	908.00
8	Uniforms and Bedding	24,484.00
9	Funeral Expenses	-
10	Miscellaneous	1,937.00
		<hr/>
		\$ 79,605.00
		<hr/>

Extraordinary

11	Purchase of Equipment	\$ 54,179.00
12	Auxiliary Fire Equipment etc. For Government Buildings	7,669.00
		<hr/>
		\$ 61,848.00
		<hr/>

Summary

Total, Personal Emoluments	\$462,398.00
Total, Other Charges	79,605.00
Total Recurrent Vote	<hr/>
	\$542,003.00
Total Extraordinary	61,848.00
Total of Head	<hr/>
	\$603,851.00
	<hr/>