

UTI/FIR/2#3

# SECRETARIAT

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(Formerly)

SUBJECT:

File Caution Commercial Businesses

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CONNECTED FILES.

NUMBER

# ESTABLISHED 1863 HUGHES & LOGGERS WILKINS

SUCCESSORS TO CHAS WILLIAMS.

ESTD 1863

## GENERAL MERCHANTS

PORT STANLEY  
FALKLAND ISLANDS.

RADIO ADDRESS  
"WILLIAMS"  
CODES USED  
BENTLEYS  
A.B.C. 5TH ED.  
A.I.

Written from Montevideo, 13th March, 1959

The Chief Constable  
Port Stanley.

Dear Sir,

I am much perturbed about the news of the Colonial Secretariat/Treasury building having been extensively damaged by fire on last Monday night.

I have received no details so unable to know whether the cause of this fire has been determined. However, given the recent history of fires both in Port Stanley, and at some farming settlements, there seems to be a possibility that some 'fire raiser' is at work in the Colony. On the other hand defective electrical wiring may be the cause.

I mention 'electrical wiring' because previous to the installation of electricity I only recollect 3 fires in Stanley  
1- a daytime fire in the old F.I.Co. Millinery store. (1921 ?)  
2- Pearson's cottage - early morning - bad chimney. (1927 ?)  
3- McAtasney & Sedgwick - old cottage being repaired. (1928 ?)

Since electricity came in I think this is the sequence:-

- a) The Quarters (now a vacant plot).
- b) Sullivan House (1929)
- c) The First & Last - bad old premises used as naval store.
- d) The Town Hall (10th April 1944). *also fire on F.I.Co. jetty (rotten fumes)*
- e) and now the Col. Secretariat.

In the Camp:-

- f) a big fire at Hill Cove
- g) a very big fire at Goose Green (1957)
- h) a second " " " " "

At the inquest over the Town Hall fire a lot of the evidence revolved around the matter of the electrical wiring - though no concrete fact determined.

Some of the trouble (if electrical wiring is at fault) may be due to the fact that originally installations were only made to provide electric light, and the same light lines and fittings have been later used to carry fires and other appliances.

Only last year my own house (Waverley House) gave me a scare due to a faulty 15 amp connection serving a heavy electric fire. The wiring was overloaded and burning but I detected the fault immediately before anything caught alight.

Reply at 6.

But there is concrete evidence that a fire raiser was operating during the winter of 1956 (or was it 1957 ?) I was absent from the Colony so did not get first hand knowledge - but your own records will show you what was going on.

Assuming that there is one (or more) fire raisers in the Colony I consider that the need for protecting property against fire is more important than protecting property against theft.

I have therefore wired to Mr. Leonard Reive today as follows:-

"Suggest Chief Constable should be requested Maintain special night guard our premises we paying extra cost."

What I have in mind is that a constable should have a suitable guard room, properly installed somewhere in the vicinity of our warehouses and the F.I.Co.'s installations, and that he should have a restricted beat from about midnight until daylight, to patrol every half-hour from the corner of John St. and Dean Street, up to Ross Road where Mr. Hugh Hardigg's house is.

He would thus keep under guard the West Store, Kelper, Kelvin, Falkland, Globe, the E.L.W. warehouses, and the F.I.Co.'s main premises, and considerably reduce the chance of any fire raiser venting his spite around the principal sources of merchandise for supplying the Colony's needs.

The Estate Louis Williams is willing to contribute £120.- per annum to Police funds for the installation of such a guard.

Yours very truly,  
p.p. Estate Louis Williams.

*E.G. Rowe*  
E.G. Rowe.

*S.P.E.D.*

*This letter was handed in by the C.C. v  
H.H. would appreciate your comments on X  
on the first page, pl.*

*8.4.59*

Power & Electrical Department,  
Stanley,  
Falkland Islands,

.....8th April,.....19.59

A.C.S.

I have never closely inspected Waverley House as far as the electrical installation is concerned, but I believe it is antiquated, Mr. Rowe at one time had his own lighting plant installed in an adjacent warehouse, he has boasted to me that his house was one of the first to have electricity installed, in fact, if I remember correctly he did quite an amount of the installation himself. He has recently installed a cooker and other labour saving electrical devices and I have no doubt that many of his circuits are overloaded. However if this is the case the onus of the installation being dangerous rests with himself, see Paragraph 6 and 7 of the Electricity Regulations. Perhaps when answering his letter he might be informed that this Department will test, inspect, and report to him on the condition of the electrical installation at Waverley House, but it should be remembered that any faulty circuits discovered, should, according to our Regulations be disconnected once they come to our notice.



Supt. P.E.Dept.

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JKS

For your information Mr. Rowe returns on this Darwin

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11/4  
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15th April, 1959

Dear Mr. Rowe,

Would you please refer to your letter of the 13th March, which you addressed to the Chief Constable on the subject of fire precautions in Stanley.

The wiring of the Secretariat was renewed only a few years ago and was in a satisfactory state. Although an electrical fault cannot of course be entirely ruled out as the cause of the Secretariat fire, we think that it is most unlikely. Similarly, because the fire must have started only a very short time after staff left the office, and upstairs at that. We think it is very unlikely that it was the work of a fire-raiser.

I am very much afraid that we could not make the arrangement that you suggest with regard to the stationing of a Police Constable in the vicinity of your warehouses and the Falkland Islands Company installations. Once we adopt that principle there are many other areas of Stanley that would be entitled to similar protection. In addition we are one short for the time being, with one man on leave, and even if there was a suitable recruit in view, I don't think we would be justified in increasing our establishment for the purpose of posting a static guard in one section of the town. The proper course I think, as we have suggested to Mr. Heive, is for the Estate Louis Williams to employ a night watchman if you are concerned about the security of the premises and feel that the Police are unable to afford sufficient "round the clock" security.

/Sincerely.....

H. S. Rowe, Esq.,  
Estate Louis Williams,  
STANLEY

AGLT/ND

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Finally I think that I should add, in your own interest, that we have reason to believe that a number of your circuits in Waverley House are overloaded and consequently may be dangerous. If you so wish the Power and Electrical Department will test, inspect and report to you on the condition of the electrical installations at Waverley House on the understanding, however, that in accordance with the Regulations any faulty circuit that may be discovered would have to be disconnected.

Yours sincerely,

A. G. Denton-Thompson.

Copies to: Chief Constable  
Power and Electrical Dept.

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23/11/59.