



The Exeter Theatre Fire (Historical series)

David Anderson

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The Exeter Theatre Fire is a fascinating insight into the events that led up to the disaster at the Theatre Royal, Exeter, on the night of September 5th 1887. The book details what went wrong, from blatant mismanagement to chemical naivety of the day – all contributing factors to the catastrophe — and what lessons were learned from this event. Much of what was discovered and recommended in Captain Shaw's report of the fire is the basis behind modern fire regulations for places of public entertainment that are still in force today.

No single problem or event caused the disaster but a catalogue of circumstances is detailed throughout the narrative of the book. The reader is taken on a journey through the design and building of the theatre as well as its management strategy. There are details described that the modern-day reader knows are a recipe for disaster, yet turn the page and another horrifying fact is revealed. This is a good historical reference work, but also a thoroughly readable story frightening only in that it was allowed to happen.

Theatre historian David Anderson compiled the work in 1987 whilst working as a technical advisor for TSW's documentary on the fire but he sadly died before the work was published.

David Wilmore took on the completion of this project as a tribute to Anderson's endeavours and research into this important part of theatrical history. ETP is pleased to present The Exeter Theatre Fire as the first book in the Historical Series.



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