

# deaths feared

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## FOUR MEN ARE DEAD AND AT LEAST 25 PEOPLE INJURED AFTER A MILLION GALLON GAS TANK BLEW UP IN SHEFFIELD TODAY.

The blast devastated a 100-yard area skirting the East Midlands Gas Board depot in Effingham Street and damaged property over a huge area.

Emergency services from every corner of the city rushed to the scene and were reinforced by ambulances from Rotherham.

The wall of Hillie Engineering, next to the depot was demolished and chunks of concrete from the Gas Board premises "rained" through the factory roof on to workers.

Dozens of cars parked in side streets near the depot crumbled under tons of rubble flung from the blast area.

Four contractors who were converting the tank at the gas depot to hold diesel oil are believed to be the victims.

Two of them were flung a hundred yards from the tank and one man's body was found on a massive gas tank 150 yards away and 150 feet up from the heart of the explosion.

### DEVASTATION

A fourth man was found beneath a crane lorry near the tank which had crumpled like a toy with the force of the blast.

As scores of firemen, police and ambulance men, many of them off duty, scoured the devastation area looking for more bodies a fleet of twenty ambulances rush the injured to hospital.

Factories in the area were evacuated as firemen and police worked side by side sifting through the wreckage.

"We have accounted for four bodies and there were four men working on the tank at the time, but there are tons of rubble to sift through and there could be more bodies," said a fire brigade spokesman.

Police checked the wrecked cars to make sure no one had been sitting in them at the time

### ● MORE dramatic pictures and eye-witness accounts—Page 11.

of the explosion and a roll call was made of workers evacuated from nearby buildings.

The buildings were also checked to make sure no one was still inside.

While this went on, Tempered Springs' canteen manager Jill Turner, her assistant Joan Bullimore served cups of tea to rescue workers from the back of an estate car.

Casualties were taken to the Royal Hospital and the Royal Infirmary. Other hospitals were put on stand-by.

A medical "flying squad" of doctors and nurses went to the devastation.

Mr. George Johnson of Liberty Hill, Stanington, Sheffield, was in a workshop at Hillie Engineering when the explosion shook the premises.

### CAVED IN

"I have seen two world wars but have never known anything like this. We didn't know what had happened. It was like a bomb going off and through the windows I could see a massive sheet of flame and thousands of sparks rising into the air."

"People started screaming and then the wall caved in. As we tried to run for cover pieces of concrete came through the roof into the workshop."

"I think four people from here were taken to hospital, but they were suffering from shock and cuts from broken glass."

The four men who

worked for an outside firm of contractors had started work earlier on the tank which at one time held a million gallons of liquefied gas but was empty.

They had been called in to convert the tank to diesel and were using welding gear on it.

Sheffield and Rotherham Constabulary's deputy chief, constable Mr. Stanley Morris, the city's chief ambulance officer Mr. Denis Kennedy and deputy chief officer Mr. Frank Peel supervised rescue operations.

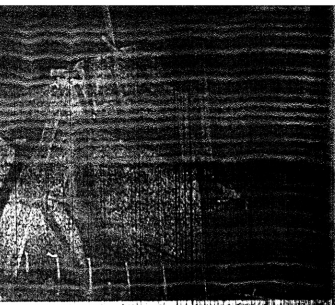
Gas Board officials were called in and firemen set up water jets to douse flames in the crater which had housed the gas tank.

While they were working colleagues sealed the nearby tank to recover the body of the fourth victim.

Machinist Frank Lawrence, aged 54, of Ballifield Road, Handsworth, was an eye witness. He was working 200 yards away at the Tempered Springs Works.

He said: "I was facing up Effingham Street. One moment I could see the gas holder and the next moment there was a huge flame like a volcano. It must have been a sheet 300ft. high."

"There was a real bang at the same time and then a cloud of orange



Twisted metal and a gaping hole



Complete desolation nearby cars are wrecked. Littered in rubble

## A HAIL OF GLASS

STEVEN CHILDS REPORTING FROM THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

A 67-YEAR-OLD man among the injured rushed to hospital by ambulance told of "a hail of glass and stones."

Mr. George Creaser was walking along Effingham Street to fetch fish and chips for his workmates at the works.

"Suddenly there was this terrific bang. I've never heard anything like it

before. Then the sky was a cloud of glass and stones which rained down on the street."

"I flung myself to the ground and crouched under the back of a car. A piece of glass cut my leg. The whole street was covered in debris."

A blonde haired office girl, her face riddled with cuts, could only manage a few words about the horror.

"I was sitting in the office and then the windows and glass just came flying at me. It was horrible."

## 'It was like blitz'

dust. I have never seen an atomic bomb, but that is what it must be like."

"I rushed towards the scene but the dust covered me and glass was falling everywhere, so I dashed back into my works to warn the others."

Another witness said: "Debris was whizzing about like flying locusts."

Shop foreman, Edward Darby, aged 53, of Park Hill Flats, was working 50 yards away. He added: "There was a terrific

bang. About 50 windows were smashed and four or five people were hit by flying glass."

George Holmes, a binding clerk of Arundel Road, Nether Edge, who was working across the road in one of Tempered Springs' offices, said: "We heard a loud, low, rumbling noise and noticed debris flying about."

"We rushed outside. It was like the blitz. After the first bang, there was nothing but a water spout like a burst main."

Firemen in the centre of parked cars wrecked in the blast.

## Eighteen injured brought in from a 'battlefield...'

AN AMBULANCEMAN bringing in some of the 18 injured to this hospital said: "It was like a battlefield. People were lying motionless on the ground and others staggering to first aid centres."

A fleet of 12 ambulances

ferried the casualties here. Some were stretcher cases but some were treated for minor shock.

"One man had been in a nearby smelting shop at the time of the explosion. He said he saw a hail of debris

falling over the building and the people in the shop dived for cover."

Mrs. Nora Kerrigan, of 31, St. James Walk, Woodhouse Moor, was working in the general office of Tempered Springs at the time of the blast.

"The windows were blown in and bits of ceiling came

down on to our heads," she said. "Everybody rushed to get out. People were cut by the glass."

"It was raining bricks and windows were falling in. We all just tried to make it for the door," said Michael Robbins, who was in the smelting shop behind Tempered Springs.

## 'All that's left is a huge crater'

THE EXPLOSION shook scores of Sheffield buildings. Here are eyewitness reports

Mr. Dennis Gregory, a clerk at George Oxley and Sons, Ltd. in Attercliffe Road, said there was a tremendous explosion and debris fell onto the roof of their offices.

"All there is now, where the gasometer was standing, is a huge crater," said Mr. Gregory.

He said one of his colleagues suffered a badly bruised leg, but did not go to hospital.

Oxley's is about 300 yards away from the scene of the explosion, and debris was hurled across the River Don which separates the works from the gasholder.

Mrs. Irene Buffey, aged 59, a telephonist at the

smeat Works of Thomas Turron's near the gasworks, said: "The whole building shook."

"There was a huge column of smoke. Doors flew open and everyone rushed into the corridors," she said.

The blast moved a boundary wall several inches, according to a spokesman for Bentley Brothers, the motor firm about half-a-mile from the scene.

He said: "The wall which

bounds our building took the force of the explosion and moved several inches. The wall supports the roof."

"It would appear that the roof will have to be braced and the wall demolished and rebuilt. The roof will have to be re-laid — it was peppered with pieces of concrete some as big as your fist, others being as big as your head. Fortunately, no one was injured."

One of the staff at Bent-

ley's said: "There was a tremendous vibration and then the large plate glass window shattered. We didn't really hear a bang because of the noise from the window. It was terrifying. The window fell inwards very near to my desk."

Mr. Norman Fairweather, who works at Baines Engineering, about 100 yards from the gas works said: "The first we knew about it was when the doors rattled. When we realised it was an explosion we dashed outside and the street was full of police and ambulance men."

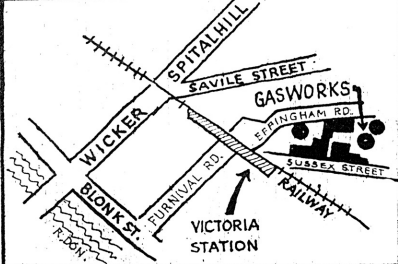
"Luckily our works is under the railway arch, so it didn't really suffer any damage."

### KEEP AWAY PLEA BY POLICE

POLICE appealed for the public to stay away from the scene. "It could mean the difference between life or death," said a spokesman.

They cordoned off some streets and emphasised: "This is a major incident."

The Gas Board said supplies were unaffected.



● Map shows the gasworks location.