

# Fire Destroys Historic Home

In the most disastrous fire to occur in the district in many years the historic "Waterhatch" residence of Mr and Mrs R. T. Broun was completely destroyed on Sunday afternoon last. The blaze started in the absence of Mr and Mrs Broun and their two children who were visiting the Dale for a practice cricket match arranged by the Dale Club. A neighbour in Mr. Les Barrett-Lennard noticed some smoke in the area early in the afternoon, but thinking it was only coming from a rubbish fire took little notice until its increasing volume some time later led to investigation when

it was discovered that the nine room home was ablaze from end to end. Mr. Lennard managed to enter the main bedroom of the premises and to drag clear two wardrobes, some bedding and furniture and these items comprised all that was salvaged from the home, the whole of the contents of which including valuable papers and records, were destroyed.

The children were left only with the clothes they were dressed in at the time.

Both the town and bush fire units of the Beverley Fire Brigade, together with representatives of the Civil Defence organisation attended the blaze, but the fire had such control at the time that little or nothing could be done to save any portion of the premises.

or nothing could be done to save any portion of the premises. The only portion of the building in which the floor remained intact was that from which the few items mentioned above were saved through Mr. Lennard's strenuous efforts.

The fire must have engendered tremendous heat as glassware and fittings melted under extreme temperatures, roofing iron buckled and collapsed and the children's cycles which

had been left leaning against a wall at the south end of the house buckled into grotesque shapes.

No fires had been used in the house for many hours, a cold luncheon having been prepared by Mrs Broun in view of an early departure for the Dale cricket ground. In these circumstances it is thought that the blaze may have originated in the southern end of the home where a refrigerator was operating and where a heater was located. The appearance of the wreckage afterwards would indicate that this part of the premises was the first to be destroyed.

Fortunately for the family involved the loss was fully covered by insurance. However immediate problems of accommodation and replacements of burnt necessities presented themselves but were overcome by the generous offers of help from scores of friends.

This was the second disaster which had overtaken the 'Wat-

which had overtaken the 'Waterhatch' home since it was first erected. After withstanding the elements for over 80 years it was struck by a fierce willy-willy in 1939 and largely wrecked when occupied by Mr and

Mrs Owen Broun and family. However by Easter 1940 it had been reconstructed.

The Broun family first became associated with 'Waterhatch' in the early fifties of last century when it was acquired by James William Broun, grandfather of the present owner and on his death was inherited by his son Frank Tyndall Broun who during his occupancy became member for the district in the Legislative Assembly and for some years was Colonial Secretary of WA, a position which his grandfather, Peter Broun, had originally filled.

The commodious Waterhatch home has over the years been a most hospitable and gracious social centre and on occasion the gathering place of scores of district residents so that if the old walls could speak they could relate much local history. It was not far from the original home that the perpetrators of the only murder ever recorded in this district (the killing of Const. Hackett) were brought to bay by a police party which included a number of Beverley citizens — two of the criminals being shot, whilst the third was later hung.