

AUTOMATIC FIRE PROTECTION

As the title suggests the most important job of any automatic fire protection system is not to raise an alarm that there is a fire, although this is important, but to spring into action automatically and extinguish the fire as soon as possible.

Automatic fire protection has been in existence in one form or another for over 280 years. Although the first attempt might seem a little risky it was marketed and sold as a means of protecting your property and life by watching out for a fire and extinguishing it in its infancy. It was a brave if not dodgy character who took the first step.

His name was Charles Povey of Hampstead, England, who in about 1723 created a device that he called Povey's WATCH-ENGINE. A description of this device in his own words.....

This Engine is made in the Form of a Vessel, with Four thin Iron Hoops, an Iron Bale, and the Top of the Engine goes with a Screw, upon which is a pasted Touch-Paper, and a Fuse, and a Tin Bomb is Fixed in the middle of the said Screw, filled with Gun-Powder, and the Bomb lies in the Center of the Engine in Water.

So a wooden barrel full of water with a bomb inside. It worked by allowing the fire to light the fuse and the resulting explosion would distribute the water and extinguish the fire and the loud bang would alert anyone within earshot that there was a fire.

1723

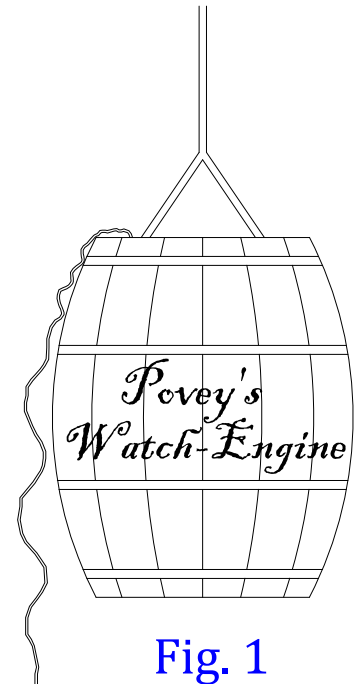


Fig. 1

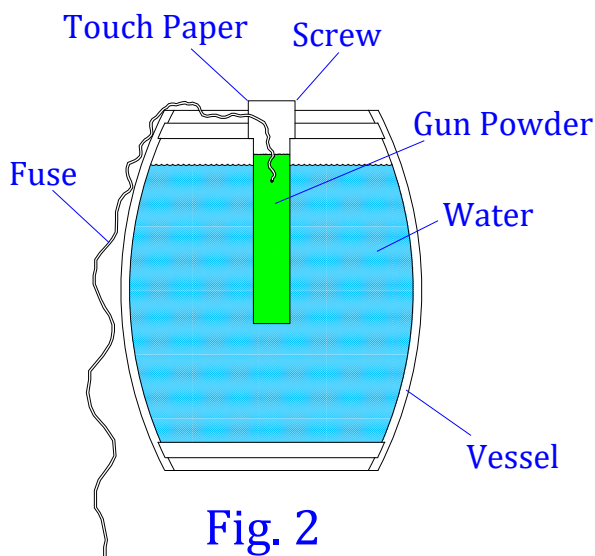


Fig. 2

Povey tell us to hang the device in our homes then you are safe to go to bed, sleep safe and sound, and leave the care of our houses, good lives to his mighty Watch-Engine. He says that it "plays by itself, watches by itself, gives alarm by itself, and extinguishes by itself".