

## Adelaide Fire Brigade 1850

***South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1847 - 1852), Saturday 30 March 1850, page 3***

### IMPORTANT INVENTION—FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

We have been permitted by his Excellency the Governor to publish the following letter, just received by him from E. Barnard, Esq., Agent-General in London for the Australian Colonies, on the subject of a most important invention for the immediate extinguishment of fires. Small machines, easily portable, under perfect control, and procurable at a price varying from three to seven pounds, and capable of being set in action at a minute's warning, have been constructed by a Mr Phillips, of London, and as our readers will see, are, by the careful prevision of Sir Henry Young, on the eve of introduction into Adelaide. We subjoin Mr Barnard's letter, and a few extracts from the paper referred to in it:—

5, Cannon-row, 5th December, 1849.

My dear Sir—Before you quitted England you witnessed the power of Mr Phillips to extinguish fire, and I promised to inform you of the progress made in it. A company, consisting of a small number of persons, has been formed, and has been in operation for nearly six months, during which time arrangements have been made for bringing this invention under the notice of the public, and in the manufacture of the smaller machines for sale. Many machines have been already disposed of for this country as well as for abroad ; and the value of the invention is fully appreciated by all who have seen it, although those who have not are slow to believe its extraordinary efficacy. I have enclosed to you herewith some copies of a reprint from the Historic Times, describing the invention and the use of the machines, and also some copies of the Prospectus, to which is added a list of the prices of the smaller machines. These are principally intended for accidental fires in houses, &c. The more powerful machines for brigade engines and more serious fires are in progress. As you requested me to make arrangements for sending out machines to South Australia, I am negotiating with one or two merchants trading with Adelaide to take some of them out as an investment ; and when any are shipped, I will give you an intimation of the names of the parties taking them out. Dr Arnott is about to publish a pamphlet upon the means hitherto devoted for extinguishing fire, and the value of Mr Phillips s invention, in preference to all others. George Rennie has just returned from Russia, where he has been professionally employed as an engineer by the Russian Government, and he tells me that Phillips's invention was much talked about in Petersburg, and that he had the opportunity of bearing witness to its merits, and stating that he had already purchased two machines for the protection of his factory. A machine for experiment has been sent to St Petersburg, and the Turkish Ambassador has sent two of them to Constantinople.

Believe me, my dear sir, yours very truly,

EDW. BARNARD.

His Excellency Governor Sir H. Young.

Mr Phillips explained the construction of the machine, and the method of using it. The machine for ordinary use —two or three of which he would recommend to be kept in readiness in dwelling-houses—is about 16 inches in height by ten in diameter, and weighing

nearly 40 lbs. It consists of an outer iron case, with a chamber at the bottom containing water ; two cylindrical cases, one inside the other, perforated with holes ; in the inner case is placed the charge which generates the vapour; in the centre of the charge is a hole of three or four inches in depth; into this hole is placed a glass bottle containing the priming of the charge ; this being broken, ignition of the charge takes place. This is effected by a small iron piston, placed in the cover of the machine being driven down forcibly. To prevent an accidental ignition of the charge, this piston is protected by a wooden plug at the top of the cover, which is taken out on the machine being wanted, the smaller end of the plug serving as an instrument for striking down the piston, and thus breaking the bottle, igniting the charge, and causing an instantaneous emission of the vapour, in which flame cannot exist. Mr Phillips proved the efficiency of his invention on a large and imposing scale. At the end of an extensive gas-retort-house, a pile of wood, about 18 feet in length and 10 in height, was constructed in such a manner as to afford the greatest facility for the draught of air to pass between, and thus augment the flame. The wood was saturated with pitch and turpentine and coal tar, and loose shavings were hung about it, and placed below and among the pile. When this mass of inflammable materials was set on fire, the flames, as may be easily supposed, raged and roared with the utmost violence ; indeed a conflagration of a magnitude and intensity was produced, such as few have before witnessed. The heat was so great that the spectators were obliged to stand off at a considerable distance, and then was shown the really astonishing power of Mr Phillips s invention. A machine was put into action of a size larger than the one already described —but still easily carried by a man with one hand—and no sooner did the vapour issue than he was at once protected by it from the heat. He approached the fire within a few feet, and by directing the stream of vapour where requisite, the fire was extinguished as if by magic We may safely say that in less than two minutes a fire was extinguished which, with the ordinary means available, would have extended to such a height as to defy the utmost efforts of water engines to subdue, until any building in which it might have broken out had been destroyed.

***South Australian (Adelaide, SA : 1844 - 1851), Monday 14 October 1850, page 2***

#### LOCAL NEWS.

Last week a careless girl engaged as house servant at the Billy Barlow, in Light-square, nearly destroyed that celebrated house of call by leaving a candle in a window sill, close to the curtains ; they caught fire, and the police engine might have been in real request but for the effective interference of Constable Lankenau, who, seeing the flames, rushed up stairs and extinguished them before they had spread to any great extent.