

## Adelaide Fire Brigade 1857

***Adelaide Observer (SA : 1843 - 1904), Saturday 9 May 1857, page 4***

Fire in Wakefield-street.—On Thursday evening, at about 8 o'clock, a fire broke out at the house in Wakefield-street known as "The Barn," probably the most ancient residence in South Adelaide, having been erected, we believe, in 1837, soon after the arrival of Governor Hindmarsh, to whom the acre upon which it stood belonged. It was at first occupied by Mr. Strangways, at that time Colonial Secretary, and for a short time after Sir John's departure by Lady Hindmarsh. Mr. Milner Stephen and Mr. Mundy, successively Colonial Secretaries, and both Sir John's sons-in-law, were subsequent occupants; then Mr. Thomas Williams, J.P., formerly of the Hermitage, near Highercombe, and now of Warfield Lodge, near Windsor, England. Thus the rambling old wooden mansion, thatched with the almost extinct reeds of the Torrens, was not without historical associations. The land is still the property of Sir John Hindmarsh, or of his son, and is rented, we understand, by Mr. Elliot, proprietor of the steam-mill in Hurtle-square. Mrs. Clark, formerly of the Commercial Inn, resided there, and the rumour among the crowd was that the fire originated through some frolics of her children. The rotten wood and reeds blazed up readily, and in a very few minutes the fire-bells were ringing, the engines were hastening to the spot, and all the town was on the alert; for the flames were far more conspicuous than would have arisen from the burning of a brick building ten times as large. The London Companies' engine was first upon the ground, followed instantly by the police and Mr. Nitchke's. Captain Vereker was there almost immediately, accompanied by Lieutenant Saunders and Mr. Williams, together with a detachment of the troops, who did excellent service. Inspectors Hamilton and Reid were there also from the first with a large number of the police, who exerted themselves to the utmost in the removal of such furniture as could be saved and the cutting off of all communication with other buildings. The firemen worked lustily, aided by numerous volunteers, and the supply of water was so good that the damage done was confined to the wooden portion of the house, the more recent and rather more substantial additions of brick and stone having been injured by partial tearing down rather by the flames. Mrs. Clark and her children escaped unhurt, but some of the furniture and bedding was destroyed. Mr. Carvosso requests us to take the opportunity of urging the necessity of making efficient arrangements to secure order in cases of fire. At the fire on Thursday evening the engines could scarcely be worked for the crowd of persons pressing to reach them. If this exertion sprang from an earnest desire to assist in the preservation of property, it might be pardoned, though it would still be inconvenient. But Mr. Carvosso complains that the eagerness is exhibited rather to secure tickets entitling the holders to reward than for any better purpose. He alleges that immediately after the subjugation of the fire on Thursday, he and his little brigade were literally hemmed in by a crowd of not less than 500 excited men, all imperiously demanding tickets for their services on the occasion. Mr. Carvosso thinks it highly desirable that it should be made one portion of the duties of the police at fires to protect the fire brigade in the discharge of their functions.

***South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 - 1900), Monday 16 November 1857, page 3***

FIRE BRIGADE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE REGISTER.

Sir — Having called your attention to the delay in forwarding assistance to the late disastrous fire, and having learned with regret that the want of system, as in many past instances, was the cause of much greater destruction of property than might have otherwise been, I hope you will not consider my again writing on this important subject as occupying too much of your valuable space. My present object is to place before your readers a plan for an efficient fire brigade, and to call forth the expression of public opinion on the subject previous to calling a public meeting to take decisive action in the matter. The importance of the subject must be so generally felt that any endeavours of mine to place it more clearly before the minds of your readers would be futile. I would suggest that the south part of the city be divided into four wards, each to have an engine and volunteer fire brigade, with all the necessary appurtenances thereunto, and that an engine-house be built in each of the following squares, being the centre of their respective wards, viz. :— 1st. Light-square ; 2nd. Hindmarsh-square ; 3rd. Hurtle-square ; 4th. Whitmore-square ; and over each engine-house an alarum bell, to be rung on needful occasions ; and that it may be immediately known in which ward the fire or alarum is given that the number of the ward in which the fire is be distinctly struck, with a slight pause between each repetition, until sufficient alarm has been given. It can easily be seen how this system can be extended to North Adelaide, the Port, Nor-wood, or any other adjoining township. Further details of my plan I leave till another time ; but if any of your readers could supply the following information, or part of it, it would tend very much to the advancement :— 1. Which is the most durable and powerful engine, and what four complete and ready for action would cost? 2. What is the cost of a fireman's complete suit, as worn by the London Brigades ? 3. How many fires have occurred in the city, both north and south, within the last three years? 4. What they have cost for assistance ? 5. What is the total of the estimated loss on those painful occasions ?

I am, Sir, &c., C. H.

School of Arts, November 13, 1857.

***Adelaide Times (SA : 1848 - 1858), Thursday 19 November 1857, page 3***

#### FIRE BRIGADE.

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir—I have occasionally during the last ten years endeavoured to draw public attention, through the newspaper columns, to the importance of a well organised fire brigade, and the late calamitous fire at the Port affords me an opportunity of renewing the subject.

All acknowledge its necessity, but no tangible and workable scheme has yet met with public support. I will give the law in the State of New York twenty-three years ago, which was found to work so well, that it is doubtless still in operation.

1st. Every American citizen was bound to enrol himself in the militia or the fire brigade, and the result was, the game men, who might otherwise have been breaking their necks in a steeplechase, or doing worse to keep cool their fiery blood, joined the fire brigade, while the drawing-room exquisites spent money on their uniforms, nearly cracked their looking-glasses, became their own intense admiration, and the laughing-stock of the community. With the fire brigade the case was far different.

Each officer and man slept week by turns with his fire uniform beside his head, prepared, at the ringing of the fire bell, to take his part in the arduous and dangerous duty of battling fire ; and their complete organisation, numbers, and moral influence, enabled them, on the responsibility of the chief officer, to perform any work required for the saving of any block of buildings.

The militia being under the State, cannot, of course, interfere except with permission of the brigade, and consequently the rabble must be only new comers, boys, and thieves. I would submit that if volunteers were asked for from our militia, many good men, who have now been trained to act in concert, would, even if it were for their own protection, be happy to respond to the call; and the result would be a body of men, whose united and prompt efforts would become, in case of a large fire, invaluable.

Exemption from the jury-list, provision of good plain uniform and helmets ; also for the support of, and medical attendance upon, any one who had received injury from the fire ; a handsome remuneration for services rendered on each night of service, and extra pay for extraordinary work, would bring forward a valuable body of men.

These rough suggestions thrown hastily out will, I trust, be taken up by some whose practical experience may assist in causing them to be carried out.

I am, Sir, &c., C. J. CARLETON.

***Adelaide Times (SA : 1848 - 1858), Friday 27 November 1857, page 2***

#### FIRE BRIGADE.

We sincerely hope the meeting in White's Room the other evening will not turn out a mere flash in the pan. That a deep necessity for the formation of a fire brigade exists, every one admits, but whose business is it to enrol, to organize, and remunerate such a force ? If the gentlemen, who stand forth prominently at the meeting, are to be accepted as authorities on the subject, the whole of this is to be flung back on the Government. They are to "enrol, to organize, and remunerate," and they are moreover, to take the necessary step, "to give proper efficiency to this movement." It is doubtless a very convenient thing to have a good-natured Government, with a very long purse, to fall back upon in every emergency, but we would humbly suggest the propriety of others considering how far they themselves are concerned in the matter. For instance, why should the Government be called upon "to enrol, to organise, and remunerate" a fire brigade, any more than take charge of watering the streets ? Again, why should the various insurance companies not be called upon to contribute largely to an object of this kind, in which they have so deep a pecuniary interest ? In putting these questions, we have no intention of throwing a wet blanket over the movement, but we really think the best way of securing the help of the Government in a case of this kind, is to show our readiness to help our-selves. In common fairness, what is intended for the safety and protection of the city should be provided by the city itself, and if there be any more especially interested in that safety and protection, they should be looked to contribute rateably towards the helping on of such an important movement. But so pressing and urgent do we consider the matter, that we would rather have it done by the Government, than not done at all, and we would therefore urge upon the gentlemen appointed to carry out the resolutions of the meeting the importance of promptness and immediate decision and action.