

## Adelaide Fire Brigade 1895

### ***From the Sands and McDougall Directory for 1895.***

Metropolitan Fire Brigade, G. A. Booker Superintendent of Fire Brigades SA. Wakefield Street, between Chancery Lane and Hanson Street.

### ***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Monday 14 January 1895, page 3***

#### FIRE IN HINDLEY-STREET.

At 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon a call to a fire was received at the Central Fire Brigade Station from the Bank-street alarm, and a reel, steamer, and ladder were instantly dis-patched to the locality whence the notice was received. On their arrival it was found that there was a fire on the premises of Messrs. Green & Sons, gunmakers, of Hindley-street, but a line of hose having been got to work from the rear in Bank-street all danger was soon over, and the steamer and ladder were sent back to the station. Owing to the nature of the stock one of the firemen was left behind to thoroughly clean and oil all the rifles and firearms to prevent them from rusting. The contents of the building were insured in the Imperial Fire Office for £500. The city coroner was informed of the occurrence and considered an inquest unnecessary.

### ***Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Thursday 21 February 1895, page 5***

#### FIRE AT NORWOOD.

At 2 o'clock on Wednesday morning a fire occurred in the turner and carpenter's shop belonging to Mr. J. H. L. Burmeister, of the Parade, Norwood, by which the shop and contents were totally destroyed. The stock and tools were insured in the Commercial Assurance Company's office for £450, and the whole of the buildings were insured for £500 in the Phoenix Fire Insurances Company. The shop destroyed was a very old building constructed of concrete and iron. Mr. Burmeister can give no idea of the cause of the fire. Immediately the alarm was given the Norwood and Adelaide fire-reels attended and extinguished the flames. No inquest will be held.

### ***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Friday 29 March 1895, page 3***

#### "AT HOME" AT THE FIRE BRIGADE STATION.

On Thursday Mr. G. A. Booker, Superintendent of the Fire Brigade, and Mrs. Booker held a reception at the Central Fire Brigade Station. Their numerous guests included the Commissioner or Public Works (Hon. J. G. Jenkins), the Mayor of Adelaide (Mr. C. Tucker), Alderman the Hon. H. R. Fuller, M.L.C., Mr. Scherk, M.P., the Town Clerk (Mr. T. Worsnop), Commander Creswell, and many other prominent citizens, with their wives. Various evolutions in which the Brigade took part were carried out. First of all there was a descriptive fire which was supposed to have occurred on the east wing of the station. Five lines of hose were kept going and rescue work was carried on, the firemen coming through the windows into jumping sheets. There were also exercises in the yard in connection with the telescopic ladder, a steamer was kept at work in the street, and reels were ordered out several times to show the smartness with which the firemen get to their duties when they are called to a fire. Every one was delighted with the performances.

The Boardroom, very tastefully decorated, was laid out as an afternoon tea-room for the ladies, and the Superintendent's office was devoted to the requirements of the gentlemen. Everything passed off most successfully. The Mayor of Adelaide proposed "The Health of Superintendent Booker," and remarked that the citizens should congratulate themselves on having obtained the services of such an officer. Mr. Booker had proved himself be second to none in Australia, and the record of the Brigade was in every way one of which they might all well feel proud. The toast having been heartily drunk, Mr. BOOKER appropriately acknowledged the sentiment. He said the Corporation of Adelaide were manfully doing their

share of the work of maintaining the Brigade, but the Brigade was undermanned, it being really but the nucleus of what he hoped it would be. Mr. SCHERK gave "The Health of Mrs. Booker," which was most cordially drunk, and then Superintendent BOOKER toasted "The Navy," a sentiment always popular among the British. Commander CRESWELL, in replying, spoke of the excellence of the work of the Brigade, and thanked Mr. Booker for the help he had given in taking into his service men who had been retrenched from the Naval Force. We are given to understand that the entertainment was of a purely private nature, and not quasi-official, as had been announced in the papers.

***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Friday 26 July 1895, page 2***

A Fire Engine for the Broken Hill Fire.

It was mentioned in our telegram from Broken Hill on Friday morning that at a meeting of the Directors it had been resolved to purchase the double-cylinder vertical fire engine which was lying at the Adelaide Brigade Station under offer from Messrs. Shand and Mason to the Adelaide Fire Brigade. We learn from Messrs. J. & R. Johnston, of Stephens-place, who are the local agents for Messrs. Shand & Mason, that the engine is guaranteed, when rushing through air, to get up a pressure of 100 lb. in five minutes forty two seconds. When tried on its arrival in September last it threw 260 gallons of water per minute to a height of 150 feet. When stationary it acquired a pressure of 120 lb. in seven minutes.

***South Australian Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1895), Saturday 27 July 1895, page 9***

A LARGE FIRE.

MENZ & CO.'S FACTORY DESTROYED.

Adelaide has been for a very long period without any large or disastrous fire, and the citizens were beginning to have such confidence in the readiness and admirable organisation of the Metropolitan Brigade, which has quenched so many conflagrations in their very beginning, as to think that a big fire was almost a thing of the past. The middle of winter and a damp and rainy night seemed the least likely time for an outburst, and yet Messrs. W. Menz & Co.'s steam bread, biscuit, and confectionery factory, in Wake-field-street, fell a prey to the flames on Wednesday evening. The fire first broke out in the front part of the building, and was therefore well situated for attack; but the flames had a firm hold from the start, and the utmost that the fire brigade could do was to save the stables and sheds and the buildings on either side. The factory itself was completely gutted, but the dwelling-house which adjoins it has escaped to a certain extent. Messrs. Menz Bros. are unable to estimate the extent of their loss at present, and were in a state of considerable and natural excitement during the evening. Their insurances total £6,710, which are on the building, stock, machinery, and fixtures.

The fire was first discovered by the proprietors themselves, who were sitting at tea in the dwelling-house between 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening. Finding the gas was burning dimly in the room where they were sitting, and hearing a rumbling noise overhead, Mr. W. Menz went up into the factory to see if anything was wrong on the premises, and came back with the information that the place, which was locked up for the night, was on fire. Mr. August Menz at once rushed across the street to the fire brigade-station, which is just opposite, and the alarm was thus given at 7.6 p.m. Mr. Booker, the energetic superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, is just now absent in Broken Hill lending his aid and advice, in the attack upon the conflagration in the big mine, but his deputy and the members of the brigade did their duty bravely and vigorously, although they could not subdue the flames before a vast deal of damage had been done. About a dozen horses and several carts were taken out of the stables and yard early in the evening. All the employes were away at the time the fire broke out, the factory being closed for the night, and the cause of the fire is at present unknown. Half an hour after the alarm was given the sight was a grand one, the flames leaping up through the roof and windows, and reddening the clouds of smoke above them. A large crowd

soon assembled and stood in the muddy streets, and slopped through the gutters which were running ankle deep with the overflow from the fire hoses. A dozen foot-police and two or three mounted-constables under Sergeant Adams kept the pavements clear and a certain portion of Wakefield-street opposite the burning building. The brigade attacked the fire both from the entrance to the yard off Wakefield-street and by the side entrance on Divett-place. The latter lane was crowded with spectators, who got as near to the gateway as they were allowed, and at about 8 o'clock, when the back part of the premises were being soused, one of the reels played over the walls of the burning building into the lane and gave a good many of the spectators a bath. The front part was again attacked a little later on, with a rattle every now and then as the stream of water smashed an upper window and sent the panes of glass clattering into the street. The firemen mounted ladders placed against the front wall and got the better of the flames in the front, so that by about 9 o'clock the fire was practically over, and the blackened walls were no longer brilliant from within. An expert who was present expressed the opinion that the brigade had saved at least £12,000 worth of property by their energetic action.

#### STATEMENT BY MR. A. MENZ.

Mr. August Menz, one of the proprietors of the factory, in conversation with an Advertiser representative last evening, said : — "We were seated at tea a little before 7 p.m., and were burning a Welsbach light, which instead of giving a powerful and steady flame as it usually does kept gradually weakening. Finally we turned the light off and lit another gas jet which burned freely enough for a brief period, and then became extinguished. About this time a rumbling noise attracted our attention, apparently proceeding from some bedroom upstairs. After satisfying ourselves that the noise did not emanate from that quarter my brother (Mr. W. Menz) went into the factory, and came back with the information that it was on fire, at the same time directing me to rush across to the brigade and give the alarm. As I hastened out to do so I glanced at the factory, and saw through one of the windows that the packing-room, which is located on the ground floor, was well alight. "The fire brigade on receipt of the alarm were at work very promptly. By the time I returned from giving the call the fire was no longer confined to the ground floor, but the flames had leaped up and had secured a hold of the joists above. The firemen burst in the windows and quickly had water playing upon the burning building, the front portion of which is used for biscuit packing, whilst in the rear part the baking is carried on. Our stock, which was an extensive one, comprised all the ordinary goods used in the manufacture of confectionery, biscuits, and bread. We are always careful to effect insurances sufficient to cover us against fire, but I hardly think our loss will be covered in this instance on account of our having accumulated a large amount of additional stock. As it is absolutely unsafe to inspect the building till daylight it is impossible to form even an approximate estimate of the machinery which has been saved. We have been in business in Adelaide since 1850, and this is our first experience of an outbreak of fire upon our premises. I would like to add that in the present awkward situation loyal friends have volunteered to supply us with sufficient bread to meet the wants of our customers, and we hope by Friday to complete arrangements with the insurance companies that will permit of us delivering the bread ourselves."

#### FOREMAN CLELAND INTERVIEWED.

Foreman Cleland, who during the superintendent's absence is in charge of the Metropolitan station, on being interviewed, said — "It was 6.54 p.m. when the call was received, Mr. Menz coming personally to the station to deliver the message. I immediately turned out all the strength at my command, and also telephoned to North Adelaide for assistance. There was a good pressure of water running so that the steamer was not necessary, and a good supply of hose was taken across the road on the station reels. Directly the door of the station was opened it could be seen that the fire had a good hold of the building, and it was alight from basement to roof. The premises were all locked up, and the front door was immediately broken open and the windows were smashed to admit the hoses. Scaling ladders were placed against the front wall of the building to the second story, and a line of hose was got to

work on that part immediately. Another line was playing in a few seconds on the basement, one from Divett-place through the back windows, and two from Roper-street through the side windows, the men here being stationed on the stable roof. The telescopic ladder was also ranged in front of the premises, and a hose from here threw a jet of water over the roof. The place was well alight in front and at the back, and it was burning like matchwood. All the partitions were of matchboard, the front wall is constructed of stone, and the side and back walls of brick, so that there was plenty of fuel for the flames. A wooden stair-case and the boarded floors also aided the fire to a great extent. The bulk of the machinery was on the bottom floor, while the top story was crowded with packing cases, which were stored from floor to roof. The top floor was rapidly burned through in several places, and then the fire took a firm hold of the main joists and principal's, which were more or less charred. The stock is practically useless, as what was not consumed by fire was destroyed by water. The machinery is, however, all right, and if attended to early in the morning will be none the worse for the watering it received." "Yes," he replied to a query, "there was a considerable amount of danger attached to the work, as there is in all fires of a similar character. None of the men was injured except myself, and that is merely an ugly gash on the hand which I received in passing a hose through a broken window. When I had an opportunity I tore off a piece of my shirt to bind up the wound. Mr. Woolley had a very awkward climb through the first story window. He had three lengths of scaling-ladder, but it did not reach the window and he had to haul him-self over a cornice by means of his axe. The fire will smoulder for some time yet, but it will be watched throughout the night.' THE

#### MANAGER'S STATEMENT.

Mr. Weiner, the manager of the bakery, said :— "I was called to the scene of the fire shortly after tea. At first the whole place seemed to be in a blaze, but on rushing to the back I found that the dwelling-house was safe. Everything was apparently safe when I left the bakery in the evening, and I had a look at the top and bottom floors before quitting the building. There is no doubt that the conflagration began in the packing-room, and of course the material stored being so inflammable it quickly spread to the upstairs rooms. There the various kinds of confectionery were being made, and when the flames reached these it was like adding fuel to the fire. The fire-men did their work well, but I regret the absence of Superintendent Booker. He knew every inch of the building, having been over it and thoroughly examined it a good many times. That being the case he would have been more at home perhaps than his subordinates were. But this does not mean any reflection on the firemen who labored so zealously. Fortunately the machinery has not been seriously damaged by fire or water, but the belting is, of course, burnt. In all the departments of the bakery about 60 or 70 men are employed."

#### RESCUING THE HORSES.

When the flames burst through the roof a number of horses, which were chained on the east side of the bakery, became very restive, and tugged at their fastenings so violently that one or two men who tried to unloose them had to give up the attempt as too risky. Mr. Taylor, who lives close by the bakery, however, succeeded in releasing the animals, which were driven into an adjacent paddock.

#### THE INSURANCES.

The total amount of insurances effected upon the building, stock, machinery, fixtures, &c, is £6,710, which is distributed in equal sums of £3,355 over two offices — the Liverpool, London, and Globe, and the Standard Fire and Marine Insurance Company of New Zealand.



*State Library of South Australia - Photographs of W. Menz & Company [BRG 94/124/14]. W. Menz & Company premises in Wakefield Street, from Divett Place to Roper Street, Acre 299, approximately 1878 to 1946. Some include staff in 1880, 1921 and late 1930s. 1892-1955. W. Menz & Co.*

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Tuesday 30 July 1895, page 2***

#### THE FIRE AT MENZ'S.

The verdict at the inquest yesterday on the fire at Messrs. W. Menz & Co.'s biscuit factory, though inconclusive, was inevitable. There was no evidence to show how it originated, but certain facts were clear. The brigade authorities are convinced that there were two separate conflagrations, one in the basement and one in the storey above. Both had been burning at least an hour before the arrival of the brigade; they might have started simultaneously, but from their position the brigade officers saw in a moment that they could have had no connection with one another, and their opinion was con-firmed by a subsequent inspection of the premises. The packing-room, which was the locale of the fire that was first observed, was situated downstairs, and the officers were congratulating themselves on the extinction of the flames in this quarter when the upper portion of the building was found to be alight. The flames could not have ascended from the packing-room, because some boxes they would have had to pass in order to reach the storey above were absolutely intact, and besides they were raging in a part of the building remote from the packing-room. "There might," says Superintendent Booker, "have been many indications removed or destroyed before he had had an opportunity of seeing the building," and he has to confess to being utterly baffled to account for the occurrence. Those connected with the place were for the most part equally at a loss for theory. Mr. William Menz suggests that an exhaust-pipe may have become overheated, causing the ignition of a case of goods resting against it. Superintendent Booker finds it easier to demolish hypotheses professing to explain how the premises came to be burnt than to set up a theory himself. With all the appliances for their extinction on the other side of the road it is at first sight a little remark-able that the flames should have done so much damage ; but the hour during which they were at work was long enough to give them a thorough hold upon the factory, and the brigade when once summoned seems to have done its work very efficiently. That is the only satisfactory feature of the business.

**Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Thursday 17 October 1895, page 5**

THE LATE FIRE AT MENZ'S.

An arbitration case with reference to Messrs. W. Menz & Co.'s claim in connection with the recent fire at their premises was commenced at No. 23, Waymouth-street, on Monday, October 7. The arbitrators appointed were—Mr. M. J. Solomon by the insurance companies, and Mr. L. L. Furner by Messrs. Menz & Co., with Mr. W. Longbottom as umpire. The case lasted about three days. Mr. A. Adamson, jun., represented the insurance companies and Messrs. J. Ford Yuill and A. S. Neill appeared for Messrs. Menz & Co. The matter in dispute was to a great extent a question of accounts and a voluminous array of figures was placed before the arbitrators. The companies had previously agreed to reinstate the building, fixtures, &c, and to make good the damage to machinery, and had also agreed with the insured as to several small matters in their claim. The amount in dispute was for stock-in-trade, moulds and patterns, belting, &c, and totalled £2,224, and Messrs. Menz & Co. had offered to accept £2,250 (in settlement of this amount and £111 agreed upon as loss on implements of trade), but declined an offer of the insurance companies to pay £1,800 in settlement of same, and called for arbitration. The claim submitted to the arbitrators was for £2,324, the prior claim having been in-creased by £100. The arbitrators failing to agree, the services of the umpire were called into requisition, who after mature consideration awarded the sum of £1,805 5s. 8d. in settlement. The costs of the arbitration, amounting to £154 6s. 10d., to be paid as follows:—One-third by Messrs. Menz & Co. and one-third each by the two insurance companies interested. The following is a summary of the settlement:— Stock-in-trade— Estimate of loss after deducting salvage. £2,491; insured for £1,800; amount allowed, £1,411 5s. 8d. 2. Belting—Amount claimed, £80; amount allowed, £60. 3. Moulds and patterns— Amount claimed, £400; amount allowed, £300. 4. Office furniture, &c.—Amount claimed, £25; amount allowed, £15. 5. Implements of trade —Amount claimed, £19 ; amount allowed, £19. Total, £1,805 5s. 8d.

**Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Friday 6 December 1895, page 5**

THE FIRE BRIGADE.

Shortly before 10 o'clock on Thursday morning the Metropolitan Fire Brigade received a call from the Morphett-street alarm. A reel was promptly on the spot, when a small fire was discovered in an iron foundry off Morphett-street, occasioned through the overboiling of some tar. At about 1 o'clock on Thursday afternoon Superintendent Booker summoned the brigade from the Advertiser alarm to test the smartness of the men. After 2 min. 39 sec. had elapsed the reel arrived and had the hose fixed and water playing at the back of the Advertiser office.

**Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Friday 6 December 1895, page 3**

FIRE IN RUNDLE-STREET.

TWO FIREMEN INJURED.

The members of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade have had excellent practice lately, and on each occasion when their services have been demanded they have been well up to the required standard. Their latest adventure was on Thursday evening, when a call of fire was received from Rundle-street. The scene of the excitement was at Mr. B. Grummett's chemist shop. At twenty minutes past 8 Mr. H. Gallus, clerk to Mr. Grummett, was sitting in his office at the rear of the building engaged in his work when he heard a crash of bottles in the cellar below, and on running outside he was met by a thick volume of smoke. He immediately gave the alarm, and the steamer and reel from Wakefield-street came along, followed shortly afterwards by the North Adelaide reel. One line of hose was run through the passage alongside the shop, while another was got to work from Fisher-place, at the back. The cellar, being stored with all kinds of chemicals for medicinal preparations, was a dangerous place to enter, but the firemen bravely broke in. The fumes were very strong, and one or two men were overcome. Miniature explosions were going on, and Foreman Cleveland was severely burnt about the

face and hands owing to a sudden outburst of flame. Fireman Correll received injuries in a lesser degree. Cleveland was attended to by Dr. Poulton, and the two men were sent back to the station. Meanwhile Superintendent Booker and his men were pouring a flood of water into the cellar, and within half an hour all danger was averted. The blaze was confined to the cellar. While it lasted the fire was very severe, and was attended with greater danger than is generally the case, owing to the spirits and chemicals which were burnt. Mr. Grummett cannot yet estimate his loss. The insurance on the contents was £1,500 in the Northern Insurance Company.