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RESEARCHING, PRESERVING AND COLLECTING AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE





Fire Insurance Companies' Fire Marks: the Art Gallery of South Australia collection

Few of us spend enough time cataloguing, photographing and managing our collections – subjects we will address in future issues. The Art Gallery of SA's collection of "fire marks" put out by insurance companies has been in storage for over 70 years, but now they have been photographed, and catalogued by the Gallery's indefatigable honorary numismatist, Peter Lane.

PETER LANE

Throughout Australia and many parts of the world in the mid-19th century, insurance offices' metal fire marks, depicting the firm's decorative coloured emblem, could be seen on buildings insured with them. Today fire marks rarely come on the market, nor are they displayed in public institutions. From 1915 to 1939, a collection of fire marks was displayed in the coin room in the South Australian

Museum building (an annexe of the Art Gallery) in Adelaide, placed in a prominent position around its walls.

Since then, public institutions have to a large extent kept them in storage. The Art Gallery of South Australia's (AGSA) collection has just been catalogued. The South Australian Australiana study group (which meets monthly in Adelaide) saw them at a private viewing at the Gallery.

Fire marks in Australia

From the 1830s British fire insurance companies set up agencies and branches in Australia and at the same time Australian fire insurance companies were established. They continued the custom of issuing fire marks that date from the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, when the first fire insurance companies were established. Insurance companies gave their policy holders a fire mark. These bore their

trademark on embossed sheet metal, brightly painted in various shapes; most are around 30 x 30 cm in size. House owners and business owners were encouraged to place them in a prominent position on their insured buildings (plates 1–2). In Britain in the 17th and 18th centuries road names were rather haphazard and street numbers were rarely recorded, a far cry from the formalisation we have today. Fire marks were intended to help firemen locate a property. The use of fire marks in Australia fell out of use shortly before federation. Who designed and manufactured the many fire marks used in Australia is not known and no maker's marks have been seen on any example. Some fire marks were exclusively used in Australia and would have most likely been made locally, but as yet no hard evidence supports this. Tinware manufactories in major cities are a possibility, as many would have

1-2.

Brunkhorst's jeweller's shop, 110 Rundle Street, Adelaide, at the corner of Charles Street, with an Equitable fire mark immediately below the Charles Street sign; the photo was taken on 16 July 1915 and within days the building was demolished. Collection: State Library of SA B83

had the necessary machinery, skills and manpower; one such was Alfred Simpson's workshop in Gawler Place, Adelaide.¹

An urban myth exposed

Initially fire brigades were funded by individual insurance companies, and some banded together to share overheads and reduce claims. Then they were taken over by municipalities, and more recently by state and territory governments.

Since the fire marks ceased to be used, newspaper articles on fire marks have told the story that when a fire broke out and an insurance company fire brigade arrived on the scene to find that the insurance sign was not theirs, they would not act.

No Australian newspaper articles have recorded actual events where firemen simply watched a building burn down. It was a great way to sell local and popular insurance company policies. Insurance companies handed out fire marks to policy holders and told them to put them on a wall in a prominent position so the firemen could see them. I can't help thinking that it was a cheap and effective way to advertise the insurance company! Fire marks used in Australia did not carry the policy's expiry dates and it appears no one went around and removed them if the policy lapsed; some buildings had a multitude of fire marks on their walls. Owners might take out multiple policies to spread the risk. For instance, when Hill's Australian Furniture Warehouse burned down on 21 December 1865 (plate 3), the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that²

The insurance on Messrs. Hill and Co.'s stock in the Sydney Insurance Company is £3000, and on the building £1000. The building is also insured for £2000 in the Northern, £2500 in the Liverpool and London, and £1000 in the Victoria. The stock is insured for £4000 in the United, £2500 in the Liverpool and London, £2000 in the Imperial, and £1000 in the Victoria. The amount of the insurances on the building is £6500, and on the stock £12,600.

Four fire engines attended the blaze, two from the Fire Insurance Company's Brigade and two from the Volunteer Company. The practice of having multiple fire marks was not uncommon. In 1917, Alfred Chitty was allowed to remove fire marks from wool brokers and skin merchants Synnot Bros' warehouse at 276 Spencer Street in Melbourne. Those in the Adelaide collection represent five different companies: Alliance, Australasian, Colonial, Liverpool London & Globe, Tasmanian and Victoria. In Sydney, Circular Quay Bond Store provided four from their building: Commercial Union, Imperial, National Mutual and Standard.

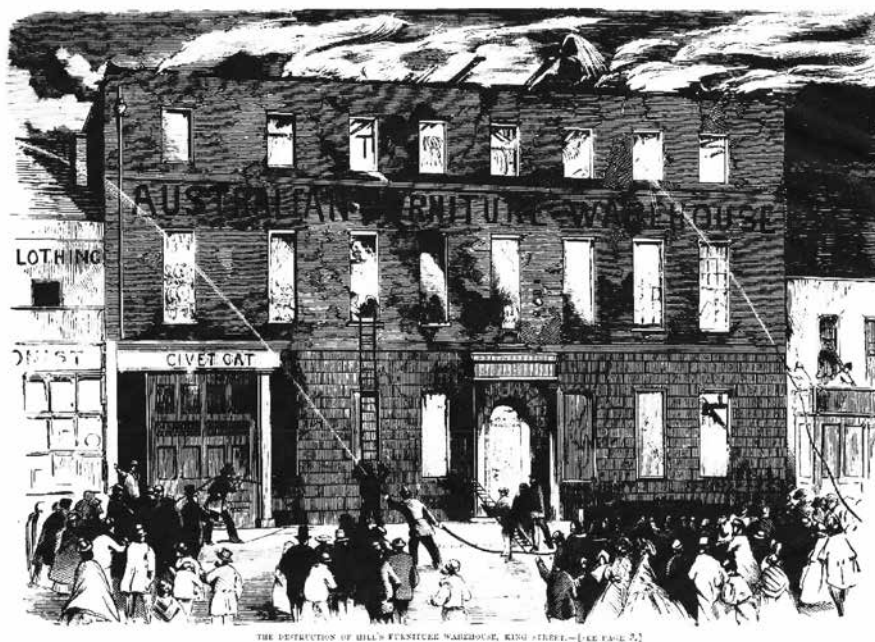
What happened to fire marks?

Fire marks are rarely seen on walls nowadays. It appears many were removed from walls during World War I scrap metal drives to support the war effort, if they had not already been souvenired by a small handful of collectors. Before and since, many have been lost due to building demolition. Fire mark clubs exist around the world, in particular in Great Britain and America, but none in Australia. A collection of Australian fire marks came on the market in February 2015,

put together by long-time Australiana collectors, the late Caressa Crouch and Carl Gonsalves of Sydney, auctioned through Mossgreen. The auction catalogue and website shows images of them.³ Lot 428, five pieces, sold for \$2,232; lot 429, six pieces (of which two are not fire marks but manufacturer's nameplates from safes, one made by John Tann of London and the other made by Thomas Wearne of Sydney), sold for \$1,364, while lot 430, a pressed metal mark for the Cornwall Fire & Insurance Company, together with a certificate for their insurance of the Assembly Rooms and Hotel at Campbell Town, Tasmania dated 1846, sold for \$1,240. Among these were plaques for insurance companies not represented in the current AGSA collection: Phoenix,⁴ London, National, Australian Mutual and Van Diemen's Land.

3.

"The Destruction of Hill's Furniture Warehouse, King Street", *Illustrated Sydney News* 16 January 1866 p 4.





4.

The Adelaide Coin Room with fire marks high on the wall. AGSA Reference Library

5.

Alfred Chitty, photograph c 1910. Collection: State Library of SA B93787/108



The Art Gallery of South Australia collection

The Art Gallery of South Australia's collection of 49 examples includes multiple copies, and all except one were either on Australian businesses or homes at one time or were in the possession of Australian insurance managers. The odd one was found on a ruined building on the Western Front during the Great War and brought back to Australia as a wartime souvenir. At one time the Gallery's collection had even more specimens in it.

Alfred Chitty, who was responsible for acquiring and displaying the fire marks, published an article on them in an Adelaide newspaper.⁵ He stated that they had recently acquired a Sun example made of lead [Alfred Chitty reference number AC1] that had been on a London wall for 113 years, and was donated by Mr Edward Malpas who acted as the attorney for the Sun Insurance Company in South Australia. Mr Coombs, from the Yorkshire Insurance Company's Grenfell Street, Adelaide Office, presented one from his company [AC96 tinplate] and another from State Insurance [AC89 tinplate].

Chitty wrote "some marks before me are:-" Colonial [AC14 iron], Melbourne Fire Company [AC7 copper], London Assurance Company [AC58 copper], Pacific [AC23 copper], Van Diemen's Land Insurance [AC5 copper], and Victoria

[AC10 copper], and described design details and recorded many other insurance company fire marks. None of these nine examples named can now be found. When Chitty wrote "some marks before me", did he mean they were in the collection or just lent from his private collection? He had an even larger collection than the Gallery.

The Gallery's fire marks were acquired between 1915 and 1922 and placed around the coin room walls (plate 4). At that time the coin room was in the East Wing of the South Australian Museum, an annex of the Gallery; the wing is on the western side of AGSA. The fire marks remained there until 1939 when the coin and fire mark collections were moved to the Art Gallery building. While the coin collection went on display in the Gallery, the fire marks went into storage and have remained there.

Having researched and written a manuscript on the Gallery's numismatic collection, I was aware of the marks but had no knowledge of their whereabouts, and was extremely delighted that they had been discovered after having been tucked away and forgotten for nearly 80 years. This was a great start for 2017 and this sighting kindled my enthusiasm for the fire marks and aim to get them the exposure they rightly deserve. They represent the largest public collection in Australia that I am aware of; the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney has eleven.

Fortuitously, some of the fire marks stored in envelopes still had their caption cards with the insurance company's name, donor details, where it was originally attached and the date of acquisition; these were printed either during World War I or soon after. In all there are 28 captions, and this suggests that there were at least that many fire marks on display. Twenty can be linked to a particular fire mark while the other eight record the same information, but due to having multiple copies it is impossible to attribute them individually to a donor. Fortunately, the original correspondence between the institution and the donors has survived in the State Records office, and duplicate copies are held in the AGSA Research Library. These were examined and a few more snippets of information were gleaned from them.

The Gallery's fire mark enthusiast: Alfred Chitty

Alfred Chitty was retired, an enthusiastic and much respected coin collector of Melbourne when he was offered the position of numismatist in 1911, to sort out the Gallery's collection and build it up (plate 5). He was born in England, and arrived as a young adult in Melbourne in 1871. Chitty was a self-employed house builder until 1882 when he became insolvent, and later ran a newsagency. He was due to start in November 1911 but due to one of his daughters' ill health he started in January 1912, days after she died. Another daughter accompanied him to Adelaide.

He remained in the position till 1917 when his understudy of 12 months, Miss Sedley Towler, took over his position. The two had met through Chitty's daughter who worked at the same company as Towler. Chitty was a mentor and friend to her and she visited him regularly for a few years after he returned to Melbourne. The only year she missed seeing him was 1919, the year of the influenza epidemic.

In 1915 when the public coin room was opened in the new Eastern Wing, high up around its walls Chitty started to fill the space with fire marks; he seems to have filled every inch of space in the modest-sized room. Chitty contacted many insurance companies and wrote newspaper articles in the pursuit of fire marks as well as coins and medals for the collection. The following list gives individual details if known.

When Chitty left Adelaide there was a continuous flow of correspondence for some five years between him, the mentor, and his student. He offered many kinds of currency specimens and medals as well as fire marks; Towler readily accepted them all. In 1921 he gave a paper on fire marks to the [Royal] Victorian Historical Society and it was published in their journal;⁶ an offprint he gave to the Gallery illustrates 28 examples, mainly from his private collection. In 1922 he started to catalogue the National Gallery of Victoria's numismatic collection, now held by Museum Victoria.

In 1925 Chitty published a monograph *Fire Insurance offices and 'Fire-Marks' in Australasia* through Southland Press in Melbourne. He illustrates 134 examples and notes a few minor varieties. The book is 12 x 21 cm, has 12 pages of plates, 44 pages of text and sold for seven shillings and six pence, a hefty sum in those days. This is now a rare publication and is available online. Chitty died on 4 June 1929.⁷ A newspaper report shows that he offered his private collection to what is now the State Library:

Alfred Chitty, of Turner Street, South Camberwell, numismatist, who died on June 4, left real estate of £3320 and personal property of £966 to his children, subject to gifts to grandchildren. He bequeathed to the Adelaide Public Library his collection of church tea sets, fire marks, fire buckets, and directors.⁸

Chitty's bequest was conditional on his fire marks going on display, and if the collection already had an example they would not be given a duplicate.⁹ Towler was keen to acquire them and recalled that Chitty had about 150 fire marks, containing about 20 possible duplicates. She pointed out to the Board that they were relics of a bygone era and that 31 fire marks were already displayed in the Coin Room, with no space for more. However, Towler recommended they be accepted and suggested they be hung in the main hall of the administration department.¹⁰ Regrettably the Board declined the bequest on the grounds that they lacked sufficient space.¹¹

While Towler readily accepted fire marks through Chitty she did not chase them, and likewise her understudy, James Hunt Deacon, who worked in the coin room from 1917. He took over when she died in 1931 and remained in charge until his retirement in 1966. He was the last staff numismatist at the Gallery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AGSA registration officer Daniel Schutt brought the fire marks to my attention. Rebecca Evans, curator of European and Australian Decorative Arts, encouraged me to record and write about the collection. Saul Steed photographed the images. Australiana Society members Bernie Begley and Richard Phillips gave valuable comments and encouragement.

The Associated Fire Insurance Companies Adelaide Fire Brigade medal 1867

Insurance companies with offices in Adelaide banded together and established a fire brigade in 1860. Seven years later, they asked their firemen with seven years' service if they would prefer money or some other token of appreciation. The men chose a medal, so the companies organised for one to be struck in England.

Chairman of the Adelaide Insurance Companies, John Morphett, presented the silver medals to the men and a gold watch to the superintendent on 26 November 1867. At that time the brigade had three stations in Adelaide and one in North Adelaide. Around the rim are the names of all the insurance companies in the association.

Right: Fireman Richard Clark's 1867 Adelaide Fire Brigade Silver Medal, private collection



The Catalogue

Reference numbers 'AC' refer to Alfred Chitty's numbers in his *Fire Insurance offices and 'Fire-Marks' in Australasia* published by Southland Press, Melbourne 1925.

THE WESTERN FRONT FIRE MARK



LA BELGIQUE

The Belgium Joint Stock Company was established in 1855.

Description: Centre a Belgian crown, below in a curve LA BELGIQUE in an oval within a rectangular frame. This example has blue/white paint fragments.

Metal: zinc

Size: h 22 w 28 cm

Weight: 141 g

Provenance: Donated by Mr H W Marshall 1918.

Reference: AC118

Accession no: NFM 001

The donor, Mr Hately Waddell Marshall in 1916 was the chief clerk at the Adelaide Public Library. He was a friend of Alfred Chitty and had seen fire marks high on the walls of the coin room. Marshall enlisted in the AIF and as a signaller served in Belgium. While marching at Ypres with his company he noticed the fire mark on the only remaining section of wall of a house, and remembered how enthusiastic Chitty was about these things. When his company camped nearby, Marshall and one of his mates returned to the wall and out of the ruins built a scaffold and removed the fire mark. Marshall was unsure how he could get it back to Adelaide. Somehow it arrived at the South Australian Agent-General's Office in London and was then shipped to Adelaide. When it reached the coin room it was put on display. Upon Marshall's return he went back to the library, and shortly afterwards was promoted to General Secretary of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery which position he held until 1939, when it became three separate entities with their own boards.

AUSTRALIAN FIRE MARKS



ALLIANCE

Description: A castle keep with four projecting corner towers each flying a flag, raised on a rocky base in an oval frame, above the word ALLIANCE, the castle and name gilded on a dark ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 23 w 23 cm

Weight: 73 g

Provenance: Donated by Mr H Caire, 59 Hindley St Adelaide, 1915.
It had been displayed on the front of his saddlery premises.

Reference: AC30

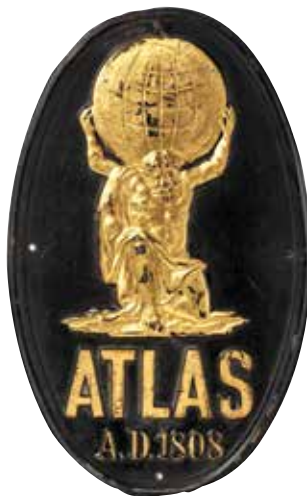
Accession no: NFM002

Alliance was created in 1824 in England and in 1833 appointed as its Sydney agent Montefiore & Co;¹² their insurance policy on the life of explorer J T Gellibrand, who died in 1837, was believed to be worth £10,000.¹³ Alliance established an agency in Adelaide in 1847 and Melbourne in 1848. Branches were established in Melbourne 1860, Sydney 1876, Adelaide 1882 and Brisbane 1886. In 1959 it amalgamated with Sun Insurance office and this entity became Sun Alliance Insurance Company, now Vero. In April 1917 Chitty interviewed an old staff member at Australian Alliance in Melbourne and learnt that this fire mark was similar to a British mark as it was copied from one and would have been issued on an old policy. The following mark (AC31-NFM003) was a later issue.



ALLIANCE

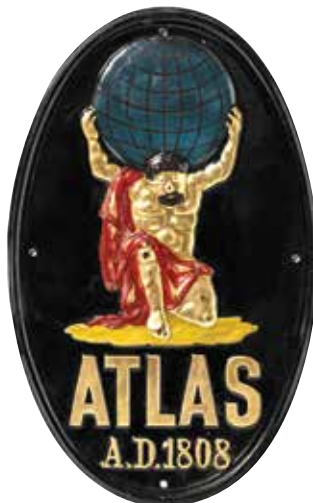
- Description:** Allegorical figure of Plenty in the form of a standing woman holding a cornucopia and comforting a kneeling woman and child, within a garter bearing the word ALLIANCE, unpainted.
- Metal:** zinc
- Size:** diameter 20 cm
- Weight:** 95 g
- Provenance:** Donated 1917 by Synnot Bros, who permitted Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.
- Reference:** AC31
- Accession no:** NFM003



ATLAS

The Atlas Assurance Company was established in 1808 in London, opening an Australian office in 1890. Atlas was taken over in 1959 by Royal Exchange Assurance.

- Description:** Atlas, the mythological Titan condemned by Zeus to hold up the sky, representing strength, supporting a globe, below in two lines ATLAS/A.D.1808. The figure, globe and lettering are gilt and a black background.
- Metal:** tinplate
- Size:** h 25 w 15 cm
- Weight:** 63 g
- Provenance:** Donated 1917 by Alfred Chitty of Melbourne. This example used in Melbourne
- Reference:** AC33
- Accession no:** NFM004



ATLAS

Duplicate, Accession no: NFM005, weight 58 g. Otherwise identical, the globe is painted blue, the robe red, and ground yellow on a black ground; donor Atlas Assurance Co. Ltd 1917. This example was used in Adelaide.



AUSTRALASIAN INSURANCE

The Australasian Fire and Life Assurance Company was established in August 1857 in Melbourne with head office in Collins Street.

Description: Circular mark, five-pointed stars of the Southern Cross within a ring, around above AUSTRALASIAN, below INSURANCE. Traces of bright blue paint remain.

Metal: zinc

Size: diameter 24 cm

Weight: 140 g

Provenance: Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne, who gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.

Reference: AC21

Accession no: NFM006



BRITANNIA

Description: Palmette-shaped mark with standing figure of Britannia holding trident and shield, and reclining British lion, below BRITANNIA. This example has traces of red paint.

Metal: copper

Size: h 31 w 26 cm

Weight: 111 g

Provenance: Donated in 1915 by the South Australian Company. The fire mark came from a house at 227 Pirie St, Adelaide.

Reference: AC39

Accession no: NFM007

In 1844, the Britannia Fire Association was founded in London and in 1873 Alfred Watts of 1 Register Chambers, Adelaide was appointed their first agent in South Australia.¹⁴ Chitty recorded that this specimen was from a house in Pirie Street. He noted that each of a terrace of six houses next to Chalmers Church, North Terrace, Adelaide bore this mark. He was unaware of any of their fire marks on Melbourne buildings despite an agency being set up in Melbourne in 1879. The office was renamed Britannia Home and Colonial Insurance Company in 1879, and that same year it was taken over by the Anglo-French Fire Insurance Company.



COLONIAL

Colonial Insurance Co was established in Victoria in 1855.

Description: A rococo shaped fire mark, centre, COLONIAL and above, a flame. Traces of red and black paint. Chitty believed the flame would have originally have been coloured gold.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 25 w 23 cm

Weight: 85 g

Provenance: Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.

Reference: AC15

Accession no: NFM008



COMMERCIAL UNION

- Description:** Circular mark with British Ensign in the centre, above COMMERCIAL, below UNION.
- Metal:** tinplate
- Size:** diameter 18 cm
- Weight:** 66 g
- Provenance:** Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack, Circular Quay Bond, 5-7 Phillip St North, Sydney NSW.
- Reference:** AC42
- Accession no:** NFM009

Commercial Union (London) was established in 1861 and in 1881 it took over the Sydney Insurance Company (see AC 13) and in 1905 it absorbed Hand-in-Hand (established 1696). The Commercial Union's emblem was a salamander (an animal with a lizard-like form that has an affinity to fire) among flames. The ensign probably alludes to its overseas interests.



CORNWALL FIRE INSURANCE

- Description:** Centre standing kangaroo on grass, facing left, above FIRE INSURANCE, below CORNWALL. Kangaroo, lettering and borders of frame yellow, centre background and grass green, frame mainly red.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 28 w 22 cm
- Weight:** 113 g
- Provenance:** The collection has two examples, one from a house in William St, Norwood SA in 1915 and the other in the same year as an anonymous donation, but it is not known which one was displayed with this caption.
- Reference:** AC6
- Accession No:** NFM010
- Duplicate:**
- Accession no:** NFM011, weight 109 g.

In 1842 Cornwall Fire Insurance Office was established in Tasmania and named after a county in that state. It ceased as an entity circa 1911.



DERWENT & TAMAR FIRE INSURANCE

- Description:** Centre, Phoenix rising from the flames, around DERWENT & TAMAR FIRE and on base INSURANCE. Phoenix and flames, and lettering and borders of frame in gold, background of centre red and dark blue in frame.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 24 w 21 cm
- Weight:** 76 g
- Provenance:** Donated along with the duplicate (NFM13) in 1916 by the landlord of the Ross Hotel, Ross, Tasmania; it was attached to his hotel building.
- Reference:** AC4
- Accession no:** NFM012
- Duplicate:**
- Accession no:** NFM013, weight: 73 g.

The Derwent and Tamar Fire Insurance Company founded in Hobart in 1838 is regarded as the first Australian-originated insurance company. In 1854 it established agencies in Victoria and NSW and in 1858 South Australia. Royal Insurance acquired the company in 1961.



EQUITABLE

Equitable Insurance Company of London established a subsidiary company in 1857 titled Equitable Fire Assurance Company of Australia.

Description: Centre, a hand holding scales representing Justice, above INCORPORATED 1865, below on base EQUITABLE. traces of blue paint throughout.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 21 w 27 cm

Weight: 166 g

Provenance: Six examples are in the collection but only one donor is known; Mr H Caire, of 59 Hindley St, Adelaide. He donated two Equitable fire marks in 1915, and they had been attached to the front of his saddlery premises. It is not known which two examples Caire donated. An article by Chitty appearing in the *SA Register* on 23 August 1915 on fire marks states that the last one in Rundle Street was removed a few days previously from Brunkhorst's jewellery shop (**plate 1**) and it was an Equitable Office mark. Chitty wrote 'There are a number of them about in Adelaide... I know of only one that is on a wall in Melbourne.'

Reference: AC17

Accession no: NFM014

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM015, weight: 221 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM016, weight: 214 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM017, weight: 197 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM018, weight: 159 g.

Accession no: NFM019, weight: 154 g.



IMPERIAL

Description: Crown, below IMPERIAL. Crown and frame around lettering in gold, and rest black. Back blackened.

Metal: copper

Size: h 21 w 21 cm

Weight: 87 g

Provenance: The collection has seven Imperial fire marks and one is a minor die variety; no relief line between crown and lettering, NFM026. Two fire marks have been recorded as being donated; in 1915 Mrs Holder of *Ellimatts*, Main St, Henley Beach donated one that was attached to a building at 283 Waymouth St, Adelaide. The other was received in 1921 from Mr F.C. Jack of Circular Quay Bond, 5 & 7 Phillip St North, Sydney.

Reference: AC52

Accession no: NFM020

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM021, weight: 71 g, paint removed.

Accession no: NFM022, weight: 131 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM023, weight: 93 g.

Accession no: NFM024, weight: 95 g.

Accession no: NFM025, weight: 88 g.

Imperial was established in England in 1803 and a Sydney agency was established in 1845 followed by Adelaide 1847 and Melbourne in 1848. Subsequently branches were established in Melbourne in 1860, Sydney 1876, Adelaide 1886 and Brisbane in 1886. In 1902 Imperial was taken over by Alliance.



IMPERIAL

- Description:** Crown, below IMPERIAL. Back blackened.
- Die variety:** There is no line between crown and lettering and made of tinsplate.
- Metal:** tinsplate
- Size:** h 21 w 21 cm
- Weight:** 82 g
- Provenance:** See comments NFM020
- Reference:** AC54 (die variety)
- Accession no:** NFM026



LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE

- Description:** Centre left, liver bird with a liver branch in its mouth facing left (from the coat of arms of the city of Liverpool), and right, a dragon (supporter on the coat of arms of the city of London). Above LIVERPOOL and below LONDON. In the attached ribbon, '& GLOBE' and it is attached to the original sign by a brass split pin. Back of main fire mark is blackened.
- Metal:** tinsplate and zinc (ribbon)
- Size:** Top h 25 w 21 cm, attachment h 10 w 25 cm
- Weight:** 106 g
- Reference:** AC56
- Provenance:** Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.
- Accession no:** NFM027

The Liverpool Fire and Life was established in 1836, and in 1847 it absorbed the London, Edinburgh and Dublin Assurance Company of London and was renamed Liverpool and London Fire and Life Insurance Company. In 1851 it took over the Australasian Company. In 1864 the Liverpool and London merged with the Globe (commenced 1803) and traded as Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company. In 1919 the company was acquired by Royal Insurance Company. This example appears to have been issued shortly after the merger with Globe and predates AC 55. Chitty believes this type was used only in Melbourne.



LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE

- Description:** Centre left, liver bird with a liver branch in its mouth facing left (from the coat of arms of the city of Liverpool), and right a dragon (supporter on the coat of arms of the city of London), above a globe, around LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE, below 1836. Symbols and lettering in gold, frame and scroll red, centre black ground.
- Metal:** Copper
- Size:** h 28 w 22 cm
- Weight:** 53 g
- Reference:** AC55
- Provenance:** Donated in 1915 by W Coombs, Yorkshire Insurance Company, Grenfell St, Adelaide. This example appears to have been unused and displays its original paintwork.
- Accession no:** NFM028



LONDON & LANCASHIRE

The company, involved in Australia since 1838, established an office in Melbourne 1862 and at the time also had offices in London and Liverpool.

Description: Centre in three lines LONDON/&/LANCASHIRE, gold lettering, on a black ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 26 w 24 cm

Weight: 46 g

Reference: AC60

Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Accession no: NFM029



LONDON & LANCASHIRE FIRE

Description: Centre coloured shields of London and Lancashire, above LONDON and below FIRE and LANCASHIRE, on an unpainted ground.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 23 w 27 cm

Weight: 112 g

Reference: AC61

Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Accession no: NFM030



MERCANTILE MUTUAL

Mercantile Mutual was established in Sydney in 1877.

Description: Oval mark with MERCANTILE/FIRE/MUTUAL in gold lettering on a black background.

Metal: copper

Size: h 15 w 21 cm

Weight: 43 g

Reference: AC24

Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack, Circular Quay Bond, 5-7 Phillip St North, Sydney NSW.

Accession no: NFM031



NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY OF NEW ZEALAND

National Insurance Company of New Zealand established a branch in Melbourne in 1874.

Description: Rectangular mark with NATIONAL/FIRE AND MARINE/INSURANCE COMPANY/NEW ZEALAND on four lines

Condition: badly pitted.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 13 w 23 cm

Weight: 106 g

Reference: Not listed in AC but Chitty mentions the company on page 28 and in the AGSA copy Chitty wrote in pencil that this variety exists.

Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mrs F. Rutkin, from a building in Kiama NSW.

Accession no: NFM032



NORWICH UNION

Description: Centre, Justice blindfolded standing facing front, around a decorative scroll, at base in two lines NORWICH/UNION. The figure and lettering are gilded. This example has fragments of red and black paint. Back blackened.

Metal: copper

Size: h 37 w 26 cm

Weight: 94 g

Designer: Gandiano

Reference: AC72

Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Accession no: NFM033

Norwich Union was founded in 1797 and an agency was established in Melbourne in 1870. Chitty states that the company used 16 or more fire mark varieties of which two were used in Australia. This example was issued about 1860 and was known as the Gandiano sign, named after the designer.



NORWICH UNION

Of the three of this type of Norwich Union fire mark two were donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Design: Centre Justice seated facing right, shield with clasp hands (representing good faith), above NORWICH and below UNION. Gilded figure and lettering, on a black ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 27 w 22 cm

Weight: 98 g

Reference: AC73

Provenance: See above

Accession no: NFM034

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM035, weight: 93 g.

Accession no: NFM036, Weight: 95 g.



QUEEN INSURANCE

Description: Centre, young head of Queen Victoria facing left with traces of gold paint, above QUEEN, and below INSURANCE, on a black ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 27 w 25 cm

Weight: 90 g

Reference: AC79

Provenance: See above

Accession no: NFM037

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM038, weight 89 g.

Accession no: NFM039, weight 89 g.

Accession no: NFM040, weight 88 g.

Queen Insurance was founded in Liverpool in 1857 and a branch was established in Victoria in 1865; by 1891 the company was absorbed into the Royal Insurance Company. Chitty noted six fire marks varieties but he had seen only two in Melbourne. Three of the four of this design were donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse. The provenance of the other is unknown.



ROYAL

Description: Centre, ROYAL, above a crown and below a liver bird (a cormorant) with a laver branch (crest of Liverpool) facing left. Gold crown, lettering and bird, background on scroll black, all other parts green.

Metal: copper
Size: h 30 w 25 cm
Weight: 99 g
Reference: AC83
Provenance: See above
Accession no: NFM041

Royal Insurance Company was established in 1845 in Liverpool and established agencies in Adelaide in 1848, Melbourne 1849 and Sydney in 1850. There are two similar varieties, one 30 cm high and the other 38 cm; of the former, one example and of the latter two examples are held. The caption cards reveal that one came from Mr T. Truscott in 1915 and the other from Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse in 1916. Chitty's 1915 correspondence states the third example came from Don Taylor of Rundle St, Adelaide.



ROYAL

Description: Centre, ROYAL, above a crown and below a liver bird (a cormorant) with a laver branch (crest of Liverpool) facing left; overpainted brown.

Metal: tinplate
Size: h 38 w 31cm
Weight: 201 g
Reference: AC82
Provenance: See NFM041
Accession no: NFM042
Duplicate:
Accession no: NFM043, weight: 174 g.



STANDARD

Standard Fire and Marine Insurance Co. of New Zealand was established 1847.

Description: Centre Royal Scottish Standard, around above STANDARD and at bottom four stars each with five points. Hints of a faded blue in centre, on a black ground.

Metal: zinc
Size: h 25 w 20 cm
Weight: 85 g
Reference: AC18
Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack from Circular Quay Bond, 5 & 7 Phillip St North, Sydney, NSW.
Accession no: NFM044



SYDNEY

Sydney Fire Insurance Company was established in 1844 at 468 George St, Sydney.

Description:	Centre Golden Fleece facing right, above FIRE INSURANCE below SYDNEY
Metal:	copper
Size:	h 18 w 26cm
Weight:	47 g
Reference:	AC13
Provenance:	Donated in 1916 by Goldsborough Mort & Co from their Melbourne warehouse.
Accession no:	NFM045



TAMAR FIRE & MARINE INSURANCE

Tamar Fire & Marine Insurance established in Launceston c.1853.

Description:	Centre a radiant sun with a human face, around TAMAR FIRE & MARINE and at bottom a star and on base INSURANCE. Sun, star, and lettering gold, centre background blue background of frame and base red.
Metal:	copper
Size:	h 23 w 20 cm
Weight:	83 g
Reference:	AC3
Provenance:	The quality of the painting and the lack of attachment holes show this example is unused. Chitty had purchased two in Launceston from the estate of its first insurance manager and sold his duplicate to the Board in 1916 at cost price of 7/6d.
Accession no:	NFM046



TASMANIAN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY

The Tasmanian Fire Insurance Company was established in 1835 in Hobart. The company was taken over by Alliance Insurance Company of London. Pre 1917

Description:	Centre, emu facing right head turned left, around TASMANIAN FIRE INSURANCE, and on base in two lines A.D. 1835/COMPANY. Bird and lettering gold on a black ground. Back blackened.
Metal:	copper
Size:	h 23 w 17cm
Weight:	61 g
Reference:	AC2
Provenance:	Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.
Accession no:	NFM047



VICTORIA

The Victoria Insurance Company was established in 1849 in Melbourne.

Description: VICTORIA on ribbon, above eagle in flight. Bird and lettering in gold, ribbon blue and background red.

Metal: copper

Size: h 21 w 23cm

Weight: 56 g

Reference: AC11

Provenance: Donated in 1918 by the manager, Victorian Insurance Company, 53 Market St, Melbourne. As it came from the insurance company and is in mint condition it would have never been placed on a wall.

Accession no: NFM048

Duplicate:

Accession no: NFM049, weight: 108 g, and provenance; donor Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne (1917).

Coloured postcard entitled "A fire alarm – Adelaide Brigade – racing to the scene" dated 1906. In the background is a sign for C. Ohlmeyer, Butcher, which was established in Wakefield Street in 1862. Collection: State Library of South Australia, B 39379



NOTES

- 1 Eg *South Australian Register* 24 Oct 1865 p 2.
- 2 *SMH* 22 Dec 1865 p 5.
- 3 Mossgreen, *The Collection of Caressa Crouch & Carl Gonsalves*, Melbourne 22 Feb 2015 (MG045); <http://www.mossgreen.com.au/m/view-auctions/catalog/id/137/>, accessed 2 Mar 2017.
- 4 Phoenix appointed H W Phillips as their SA agent in 1846; *SA Register* 25 Feb 1846 p 2.
- 5 *The Register* 23 Aug 1915 p 9.
- 6 *Journal of the Victorian Historical Society* vol viii nos 3, 4, October, December 1921.
- 7 His obituary is in *The Argus* 8 Jun 1929 p 9.
- 8 *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 20 Jul 1929 p 11.
- 9 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 13 June 1929.
- 10 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 5 July 1929.
- 11 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 3 Aug 1929.
- 12 *SH* 1 July 1833 p 2.
- 13 *SG* 18 May 1837 p 2.
- 14 *SA Register* 2 Aug 1873 p 5.



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