

VOLUME 4



JOURNAL OF THE  
NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA.

<http://naa-online.com/>

# ASSOCIATED FIRE ASSURANCE COMPANIES FIRE BRIGADE MEDAL

BY PETER LANE

The recipients of this medal helped to lay the foundation of our modern fire brigades and the mottos on the medal "ALWAYS READY" and "WE STRIVE TO SAVE" are still appropriate today.

The Adelaide fire brigade medal is an early South Australian award. Only two other S.A. medals predate it – the Silver Murray Medal 1853, and the Duke of Edinburgh Medal of 1867, which is sometimes referred to as the South Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Society Medal. Like the first medal, the fire brigade medal was struck in England, and perhaps it was even struck before the locally produced Duke of Edinburgh Medal as there were only a few weeks between the presentation of the medals.

In 1860 the Adelaide insurance agents amalgamated their fire services to reduce overheads and the value of their claims. Adelaide is now serviced by the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service and the insurance association is now part of the Insurance Council of Australia Ltd.

On the 22nd of January, 1867, a discussion regarding the medal took place at a meeting of the Agents of the fire insurance companies in Adelaide. The meeting resolved to reward all members of the fire brigade for their "dilligence on various occasions . . . in particular a fire that broke out on Mr. G.P. Harris's premises, (which were) insured (for) £36,000 but by the promptness of the firemen . . . the loss . . . was only £20." As the 'Harris fire' was contained before it could spread and become an inferno, it naturally received little publicity as it was by its very nature a non-event.

A few days later the men of the fire brigade held a meeting at the London Inn, Flinders Street, Adelaide, to decide on what type of testimonial they would like – money or anything else for their "seven years" of service. They decided on a silver medal, which was proposed by their Superintendent Mr. A.J. Baker.

Two committeemen from the insurance agents' council, the Hon. J. Morphett and a

Mr. Acram, were appointed by the other local agents to acquire a gold chronometer watch and medals. They wrote to Mr. A.J. Wright, a former Adelaide agent of the Imperial Insurance Company, who was at that time in England, to purchase the medals and a gold chronometer watch by one of the 'best London watchmakers'. Whilst the correspondence has been lost, a photograph similar to the fire brigade unit depicted on the medal exists. This photograph is not identical to the medal design, however it is highly likely that the medal engraver used it with some artistic licence.

Mr. Wright, the former Adelaide agent, would have received the request at his London address by mid March 1867, as it took the iron clipper ships of the 1860's approximately ten week to sail from Adelaide to England. Within five or six months Wright contacted the best watchmakers in London, obtained an acceptable quote, placed the order and then dispatched the watch and medals. Wright contracted Carter of 61 Cornhill Road, London, a chronometer watch and clockmaker to the Royal Navy, and the Hon. East India Company. Incidentally there was an eminent family of medallists by the name of Carter who lived and worked in Birmingham during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However there appears to be no connection between the Carters of Birmingham and London. As our Carter has never been recorded as a medallist it is reasonable to assume that he may have sub-contracted the medal to a local medallist, and if so, he probably requested them not to place their name or mark on the medal. Carter's name appears on the medal box.

On the 26th of November, 1867, just over ten months after the motion was passed to reward the firemen, the presentation took place. Had the medals and watch been available a few weeks earlier, they may have been presented by the Duke of Edinburgh while he was in Adelaide. The Duke did present the Duke of Edinburgh/Agricultural and Horticultural Society medals during his Adelaide visit.

The Firemen's medal presentation took place at the Adelaide Insurance Companies Offices in Grenfell Street, Adelaide. The proceedings were chaired by the Hon. J. Morphett, who praised all those serving the brigade. He also stated that "George Barlow, Thomas Barlow and Henry Lankenow enlisted when the fire brigade was first formed in 1860. The remaining seven were employed when the (1862) Brigade Act was passed. Then Mr. A.J. Baker, the brigade's Superintendent, was presented with a "handsome gold chronometer watch". Then "handsome silver medals were presented to all the men of the City Fire Brigade". The medals were individually named. On behalf of the brigade, George Barlow, a foreman, thanked the agents and expressed a desire to uphold the two mottos on the medal "ALWAYS READY" and "WE STRIVE TO SAVE".

The City Fire Brigade had stations in Rundle Street East, Waymouth Street East, Blyth Street and Margaret Street in North Adelaide. All stations were staffed by a foreman and one fireman except Rundle Street East, which had one foreman and two firemen, and the four stations were controlled by the Superintendent.

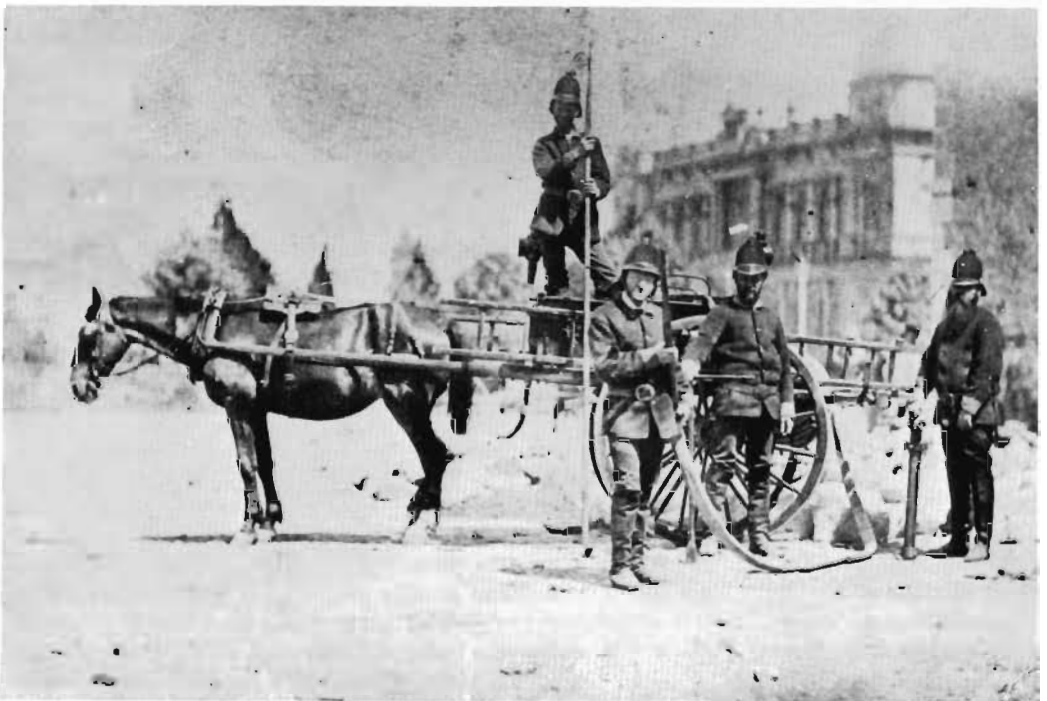
## THE RECIPIENTS

- \* Baker, Arthur John, Superintendent
- \* Barlow, George, Foreman  
Barlow Thomas
- Carvosso, J., Foreman
- \* Clark, Richard G., Fireman
- Harris, G. Foreman
- Howe, J.H.
- Lankenow, Henry
- Mervyn ? (Margaret Street Station)
- Platts, J. Foreman

(The above list was compiled from a 1862 S.A. Government Gazette and from the names mentioned at the medal presentation

\* denotes that the author has confirmed that the medal still exists.

Apart from the above medals, the Art Gallery of South Australia has another identical medal also awarded to Superintendent Arthur John Baker, but dated 1876. Unfortunately, the gallery's index card does not record how or when it acquired the medal. It is likely that Baker received this medal when he took leave of absence in October 1876. He resumed his position with the brigade a few months later and he did not retire until 1882.



Four firemen of the Adelaide Assurance Companies Fire Brigade circa 1865. It is thought that this photograph was used with some artistic licence for the central design on the obverse of the medal.

ASSOCIATED FIRE ASSURANCE COMPANIES FIRE BRIGADE MEDAL.

Silver,  
Size 53mm.



Obverse

Around outer circle, AUSTRALIAN ALLIANCE/NORTH BRITISH MERCANTILE/DERWENT & TAMAR/LONDON & LANCASHIRE/AUSTRALASIAN/COMMERCIAL UNION/ROYAL/QUEEN/IMPERIAL/SOUTH AUSTRALIA/ADELAIDE/CORNWALL/NORTHERN/ALLIANCE BRITISH & FOREIGN/LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE/CHURCH OF ENGLAND/. Middle circle, the recipient's details engraved. Inner circle, +WE STRIVE TO SAVE+above, NUNQUAM NON PARATI (translation - always ready) below. Centre, scene depicting three firemen with a horse drawn hose reel with a building in the background.



Reverse

Around outer circle, ASSOCIATED FIRE ASSURANCE COMPANIES FIRE BRIGADE ESTABLISHED IN ADELAIDE SOUTH AUSTRALIA. A.D. 1860\* Middle circle, IMPERIAL/ROYAL/ALLIANCE BRITISH & FOREIGN/CORNWALL/LIVERPOOL & LONDON/NORTHERN/SOUTH AUSTRALIAN/. Inner circle, +WE STRIVE TO SAVE+above, NUNQUAM NON PARATI (translation - better of on an annual average). Centre, an early coat of arms of the City of Adelaide.

REFERENCES

"The Advertiser" S.A., 1-2-1867 page 2, column H.  
Australian Numismatic Journal, the Official organ of the Numismatic Society of South Australia, Vol. 15, No. 4, Page 172 "Australiana Medals" by W.E. Curran F.R.N.S. and J. Hunt Deacon F.R.N.S. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A. medal index No. 2230.  
Mortlock Library, Adelaide, S.A. photographic reference No. B 7985.  
"Muscle and Pluck Forever!, The South Australian Fire Services 1840-1982" by Michael Page and Malcolm Bryant, published by the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, January 1983, ISBN 0 0596451 2 8. South Australian Government Gazette 1862 and October 1876.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Laurence Brown, B.A. Seaby Ltd. London U.K.  
Malcolm Bryant, Adelaide Metropolitan Fire Service, S.A.  
Peter Fleig, S.A.