

## Adelaide Fire Brigade Equipment locations 1889

### **Locations of Fire Reels**

FIRE BRIGADES BOARD.  
(Under Acts No 273 of 1882 and No. 288 of 1883)  
Office, No 71 King William street.  
Hon Wentworth Cavenagh, J.P. (Chairman);  
E. M. Ashwin; F. Wilton Gardiner;  
Theo Hack, J.P.; Christian L. Meyer,  
J.P.; Alderman Solomon, M.P.; Sidney  
Malin, J.P.  
Secretary, William Birkinshaw Wilkinson,  
J.P.  
Superintendent, Geo A. Booker  
FIRE STATIONS.  
Head, Flinders street, Geo A. Booker and  
11 permanent firemen  
O'Connell st, North Adelaide, permanent  
fireman

*Sands and McDougall 1889*

NORWOOD AND ST. PETER'S  
VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE.  
No. 1 Station, Parade, Norwood  
Horse Reel and Hand Reel.  
Captain—T. S. Warman  
1st Lieutenant—R. E. Kippist  
2nd Lieutenant—J. E. Steed  
Firemen—J. E. Gooden, — Davy, W. Tux-  
ford, W. Dixon, F. Bowen, P. Little,  
F. A. Gray, J. Quilty, and three reserve  
men.  
KENT TOWN AND ST. PETER'S.  
No. 2 Hand Reel, Maid and Magpie,  
Stepney  
1st Lieutenant—C. Gleiber  
2nd Lieutenant—J. T. Newitt  
Firemen—A. Burford, A. Franklin, P.  
Carroll, R. Rosenberg, and three reserve  
men  
Hon sec, R. E. Kippist, Edward st, Norwood

*Sands and McDougall 1889*

### ***The Sands and McDougall Directory for 1910 has the following listings:***

123 Flinders Street, Fire Brigade Station No 1, South side. Geo. A. Booker Superintendent.

North Adelaide, 110 Tynte Street Fire Station.

Hindmarsh, Adam Street. Fire Reel for the Hindmarsh Volunteer Fire brigade. Arthur Wharton, Blacksmith and Coach Builder.

### ***South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 - 1900), Friday 25 January 1889, page 4***

Fire at Mitcham.— The Blythwood Hotel, Mitcham was totally destroyed by fire at an early hour on Thursday morning. The previous night the occupants had retired about 11 o'clock, and nothing of a suspicious nature occurred until about half-past 1 o'clock, when Miss

Pollitt, daughter of the landlady, Mrs. Winifred Pollitt, was awakened by the crackling of wood and smashing bottles. Upon investigation she found that the bar was in flames. She immediately gave the alarm, but when Superintendent Booker, of the Central Fire Station, arrived in charge of a firereel the whole twelve rooms of the building were in flames. Meanwhile some little furniture, &c., had been removed into the street, though the proportion saved was small indeed, the whole stock-in-trade being consumed. The contents were insured in the New Zealand Insurance Company for £250, and the hotel in the Queen for £700. The hotel was the property of the S.A. Brewing Company. It is out of the brigade district, but Superintendent Booker on receiving a direct call from the police at five minutes past 2 o'clock went to the fire with three men and a horsereel. The promptitude with which the firemen did their work is proved by the fact that half an hour after their arrival they had the flames subdued, and that the walls and some doors and windows of the building are still standing. An inquest will be held at the Edinburgh Hotel, Mitcham, at 11 o'clock this morning.

***Ballarat Star (Vic. : 1865 - 1924), Friday 25 January 1889, page 4***

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

ADELAIDE, Thursday.

The Blythwood hotel, at Mitcham, was destroyed by fire early this morning. On the previous night the occupants retired about 11, and nothing of a suspicious nature occurred until half-past 1, when Miss Pollett, daughter of the landlord, was awakened by a crackling of wood and a smashing of bottles. Upon investigation, she found that the bar was in flames, and immediately gave the alarm; but when Superintendent Booker, of the Central fire station, arrived, the whole 12 rooms of the building were in flames. A little furniture was saved, but the whole of the stock was consumed. The contents were insured in the New Zealand Company for £250, and the building in the Queen's for £700.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Tuesday 12 February 1889, page 2***

GENERAL NEWS.

An alarm of fire was received at the Brigade Office on Tuesday morning at 6.55 from Gilbert Wilcox & Co., of North Adelaide, hay and corn merchants. On the arrival of the reel from the head-station it was found that instead of the establishment being alight the flames were coming from a waggon containing five tons of hay. The North Adelaide reel was in attendance. The hay destroyed was not insured.

***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Thursday 21 February 1889, page 2***

Our Fire Brigade.

CITY FIRE BRIGADE.—In response to an invitation from the Fire Brigades Board several members of the City Council inspected the Head Fire Brigade Station on Wednesday afternoon. The members of the Board, with their guests, piloted by Superintendent Booker, had a look round the neatly kept station. They soon saw that in every respect perfect order is maintained. Every inch of metal on the engine, on the reels, in the stables, or in the office is bright, and dust is not allowed to accumulate anywhere; in fact everything has a pleasing, clean, fresh, appearance. The Superintendent has a tidy little office and all the thirteen men under him comfortable quarters, while the horses are splendidly stabled, well groomed, and

in the pink of condition. Every improvement, even to the raising of the roof of the shed several feet, has been carried on by the firemen under the superintendence of Mr. Booker. The system of signalling is simple yet effective. The station is replete with everything that tends to facilitate the getting away of the reels when an alarm is given. Practical tests were given, and the visitors were much interested. First of all a horse-reel, so insignificant in appearance alongside the fire-engine, was ordered out. In between six and seven seconds the men had a horse out of its stable. The patent collar and harness dropped as if by magic from the roof over the animal's neck, and the traces being already connected with the reel the men mounted and were ready to leave the yard. Then the fire-engine was called for. The horse was harnessed in, steam was turned on, and in seventeen seconds the engine had left the station. In less than three minutes it was back again with full steam up, and immediately the water hissed from the immense pipe. Then the visitors appreciated the difference between this volume of water and the puny stream which came from the hose carried by the ordinary cartreel. After this exhibition the visitors went inside, and over a glass of wine Mr. T. Hack, on behalf of the Boards welcomed the Council and gave the health of His Worship the Mayor. He claimed that the brigade was now in a thoroughly satisfactory condition. It was very effective. The fire-engine had proved a great success. He had seen the stations in Melbourne and Sydney, and although they were exceedingly elaborate they did not do better work than the Adelaide Brigade. Mr. Shaw, in responding, expressed his pleasure with what he had seen. He felt particularly gratified that the City Council had moved in the direction of having the fire-engine. He proposed the health of the Superintendent, to whom they owed the success of the brigade. He had never seen the station in better trim. Mr. Booker having replied, Councillor Willcox proposed "The Fire Brigades Board" in felicitous terms. Mr. C. L. Meyer, in responding, said the citizens had not much to fear when they could get the stream of water from the engine on to the fire in two minutes from the time the alarm was given. The signal system was very effective, and he hoped to see it extended. Councillor Robertson said he would like to see a fire-escape which would reach a 60 feet building in charge of the brigade. Ere the speaking had been finished an alarm was given, and before the guests could get out of the room they saw the horsereel dash out in to Flinders-street for practice.

***South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 - 1900), Friday 22 March 1889, page 7***

FIRE IN HINDLEY-STREET.

THE COFFEE PALACE GUTTED.

At 10 minute past 3 this morning the occupants of the Coffee Palace in Hindley-street were alarmed by the cry of "Fire!" It proved to be so sudden an outbreak that the inmates had hardly time to seek shelter in an adjoining stable before the whole of the upper story was ablaze. The lessee, Mr. Hammond, was in doubt even whether one, if not more, of the lodgers had escaped. By 3.20 two fire-reels from the Adelaide Fire Brigade were on the scene, and shortly after another got into full work in the rear, where at 3.30 the fire was raging fiercely. However, owing to the timely action of the firemen the flames were confined to the Coffee Palace. The upper portion of the building has suffered considerably, but it is evident that the fire started upstairs. As we were going to press the flames had been practically overcome.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Friday 22 March 1889, page 2***

## FIRE AT THE COFFEE PALACE. MR. F. W, TAPLIN KILLED

### ANOTHER MAN INJURED.

We were able to announce in the Advertiser this morning that just as we were going to press a fire had occurred at the Coffee Palace, in Hindley-street. The conflagration, it now appears, was attended by some most melancholy events, one of these being the death of the Mr. F. W. Taplin, the well known missionary at the Point Macleay Mission Station, who, according to some statements, must have sacrificed his life in the attempt to rescue others from the devouring flames.

Another man named King also contributed a sensational element to the proceedings of the early morning. He, it seems, no doubt stupefied by the smoke, which was very dense indeed, mounted the parapet of the building in the lane on the eastern side of the Coffee Palace and sprang on to a large lamp which has been placed there for the purpose of illuminating the thoroughfare. The lamp gave way with him and he was precipitated to the ground, falling on his back and receiving injuries to his spine, which are regarded as very serious. He was at once taken to the Hospital, where he is now being attended to.

The body of Mr. Taplin was taken to the morgue as soon as it was rescued, and will there await the necessary inquest, which takes place at Elephant and Castle at 2 30 this afternoon.

It is, of course, difficult after occasions such as this to obtain anything like a connected account of what has actually transpired, but the following account given us by Mr, Goldsmide will be found interesting as well as giving an authentic narrative of the events of the morning. Mr. Goldsmide says:—I was awakened at about 11 minutes past 3 o'clock in the morning by hearing Police-Constable Sweeney vigorously blowing his whistle. I threw open my window and saw a glare in the direction of the Coffee Palace. I came down stairs, and my place being situated only some few yards from the Coffee Palace I soon ascertained the locality of the fire. The first thing that struck me as being necessary to do was to arouse the inmates, and taking a stone in my hand I went up the lane and broke four of the windows. By this time a young fellow named Ives, who lives next door to me, joined me, and we were successful in helping a woman out of the burning building. I had a good look into the centre of the establishment and saw that the staircase was entirely on fire. Mr. Hambly, the manager of the Coffee Palace, when I first arrived was standing right at the back near the staircase buttoning up his coat. He, however, got away all right. Then we saw a man on the roof. This was just as the fire-reels came up, and when he fell the reels very nearly ran over him. He stood on one of the arms of the lamp in the lane intending to jump, but the arm gave way and he fell heavily on his back. The poor fellow lay there for a second or two meaning heavily, "Oh, my back," and then he was picked up and taken to the Hospital. The girls of the establishment were in a dreadful state of fear, and each one was in a condition of dishabille. He took half a dozen of them into Mr. Nairn's establishment, throwing blankets round them for their protection. The paddock at the back of the Coffee Palace was literally strewn with clothes and boxes. There did not seem to be any way for the inmates to get out, as the staircase was one mass of flames. This staircase, I may say, starts at the back of the building and runs straight up, thence leading to the bedrooms in the front. The firemen did remarkably good work on their arrival, considering the firm hold that the flames had obtained on the structure."

### THE MANAGER'S STATEMENT.

Our reporter who waited on Mr. Hambly, the manager of the Coffee Palace, found that gentleman in a state of great mental exhaustion. He said he had no idea as to the origin of the fire, and he thought it would be as well to leave enquiries on that point until the inquest to be held this afternoon. There are 60 bed-rooms in the Coffee Palace, and last night there were 20 boarders. The rule of the establishment is to close at half-past 11 o'clock, and this rule was strictly observed last night. Mr. Hambly states that when he received the alarm of fire he had to work his way back from the front sitting room, and eventually landed on the back of McLean Bros, Rigs, & Co.'s premises. It was expected that Mr. Hambly would have been able to throw some light on the unfortunate death of Mr. Taplin, but, as he himself confesses, he was too excited to really notice what was going on. Mr. Taplin, he says, helped him to get the doors of the establishment open. He and Mr. Taplin were personal friends, having had an acquaintance of many years duration, and when Mr. Taplin was in town he invariably called round at the Coffee Palace to see Mr. Hambly.

POLICE-CONSTABLE SWEENEY.

states:—"At 10 minutes to 3 o'clock I came down my beat in Hindley-street, while Constable Delaney, who is stationed on the other side, was walking up his beat. Sergeant Macnamara visited us there, and we passed the Coffee Palace without there being the slightest indication of a fire. I went up my beat as far as King William-street, and then turned back. Lance-Corporal Lynch, who was in charge of the theatre, was strolling down, and we stopped to have a talk. I heard a noise of hammering and wondered what it was. Eventually we came to the conclusion that it was some of Conrad's men getting ready to kill some sheep. We walked up the street again, when I saw a reflection through the front windows of the Coffee Palace. Lynch ran off to the fire alarm, while I blew my whistle as hard as I knew how and endeavored to arouse the inmates of the palace. I tried to force in one of the front doors, but was un-able to do so, and when I went back to the lane I observed a woman in her nightdress who was ready to drop into my arms from the eastern wall of the building, when I called upon her to do so. Constables Huppatz, Delaney, and myself were able to secure two men and two women in this way. As a matter of fact you may say that the women showed more pluck than the men. For instance, there was one woman on a little shed you will have noticed just outside the back premises. She left her room tolerably fully dressed, and continued to dress herself on this structure as cool as a cucumber, although the flames and smoke must have been most distressing to her. Now, on the contrary, the men whom we rescued seemed most disinclined to adopt our suggestions, and one man threw down his gold watch, apparently wanting us to save that even before himself. I cannot possibly say anything with regard to the origin of the fire, but there is not the slightest doubt that it broke out in the rear portion of the building, where the "boots" of the establishment is generally located."

WHAT SUPERINTENDENT BOOKER SAYS.

Superintendent Booker, of the Fire Brigade, said, in reply to the queries of an Advertiser reporter : — "We received a call from Bent-street fire Alarm at 10 minutes past 3 on Friday morning. I at once turned out the whole of the brigade, consisting of four reels, 12 men, and 2 officers, and by 3.13 we were at the scene of the fire and at work. I did not take down the steamer as there was a splendid pressure of water on—no less than 70 lb. to the square inch. We quickly got the hoses into play, and as the fire then seemed to be right in the centre of the building—which, by the-way, was well alight and spreading very fast— I

surrounded it with lines of hose. I had hoses attached to the plugs in Currie street and carried over the roofs of the buildings, and in that way we were enabled to play upon the flames from all points of the compass. From this stage the fire never spread; we soon got it well in hand, and by 4 o'clock all danger was at an end. By half past 5 it was practically extinguished. When we reached the fire some of the inmates were making their escape, and I made enquiries as to whether all of them had left the building. Mr. Hambly, the manager, said he had great fears that one of the inmates was still in the palace, and gave me the number of the room where he was supposed to be. I searched every room in the building with the exception of one and a small passage adjoining it, which were alight, to which it was impossible to gain ingress. That room unfortunately was the one Mr. Taplin was in. No one was in the room the manager mentioned to me. When we found the body of the deceased it was lying on the floor face downwards. I attribute his death to suffocation and burning. Owing to the position of his room he was placed between two fires, and his escape would have been an impossibility. There was an iron spiral staircase within a few feet of his door, but the flames prevented him reaching it. As far as the origin of the fire is concerned I cannot form any definite opinion at present, but at the inquest I shall have something to say on the subject. It apparently started on the ground floor between the scullery and the pantry. The whole of the building is built of inflammable material, and it is a wonder that any of the inmates escaped. If the place had been full of visitors, as I have no doubt it frequently is, I believe we would have had to record from 15 to 20 deaths. I think we succeeded in saving 33 or 34 rooms, and in 31, strange to say there is not even a vestige of smoke. The building is about 60 x 80 feet, and the partitions to most of the rooms are lath and plaster with matchwood linings." The brigade is entitled to great praise for their promptitude, and there are certainly few if any brigades in the world who could beat the record on the present occasion, namely, travelling from Flinders-street station to the locus in quo and being at work within three minutes from the time of receiving the alarm.

#### AN AFFECTING SCENE.

The Rev. James Lyall, the well-known clergyman in charge of the Presbyterian Church in Flinders-street, attended the scene of the conflagration while one of our reporters was pursuing his enquiries. He was most anxious to gain information with regard to his friend Mr. Taplin, and stated that it was only yesterday morning that he had left Mrs. Taplin and the members of her family at Point Macleay. There seems to be not the slightest doubt that Mr. Taplin, who had assisted Mr. Hambly in waking up the other lodgers, could have easily saved his life only that, recollecting something he had missed or fearing that he had not properly awakened somebody in the establishment, he went back, and was suffocated before aid could be vouchsafed to him.

#### THE BUILDING

It is only recently that special arrangements were made at the Coffee Palace to provide for egress in case of fire. This was done on the recommendation of Mr. Pank, the corporation building surveyor. When reporting in 1887 upon the question of the means of exit provided in large buildings in the city, Mr. Pank said:—"I may instance a very glaring case that demanded prompt measures where no provision had been made for the safety of a large number of boarders, where I was informed at least 60 people slept upon the premises. I refer to the Coffee Palace situated in Hindley-street. At the time of inspection these premises contained a basement, ground, and first and second floors comprising 60 bedrooms, with

only one wooden stairway for the whole of the premises. I reported to the mayor (Mr. Bunday) and the town clerk my fears regarding the inmates of such a building should a fire occur during the night when most of the apartments were occupied. A further inspection of these premises was made by the mayor, town clerk, and myself. The result of this inspection was that additional means of egress from the building had to be provided. The proprietor at considerable cost caused an iron spiral staircase to be constructed in the yard, communicating with each floor of the building."

#### THE LATE MR. F. W. TAPLIN

was the son of the late Rev. George Taplin, the founder of the Point McLeay Mission Station under the Aborigines' Friends' Association, and when his father died, in 1879, Mr. Taplin, who was then overseer of the station, was appointed to succeed him as superintendent of the mission. The deceased gentleman was brought up on the station and educated there. He was superintendent of the mission, and of course carried out the missionary work among the natives. He was a very capable gentleman, understanding the natives' language, their habits and customs. He was industrious, and enjoyed qualifications for his office possessed by few men. The deceased came to the city on Saturday last for the purpose of delivering a lecture on the following Monday, before the members of the Australian Natives' Association. After this had been delivered Mr. Taplin remained in the city to attend some meetings of the committee of the Aborigines' Friends' Association. These meetings concluded he made arrangements to proceed to his home by the 10 minutes to 7 train on Thursday morning. Unfortunately, however, the deceased missed the train by oversleeping himself, and thus it was that he was detained in the city over night. The deceased gentleman leaves a widow and five children. By all who knew him Mr. Taplin was held in high esteem, and his lamentable death will be deeply regretted on all sides. To the Aborigines' Friends' Association and to the natives his loss is a severe blow, as his qualifications and experience eminently fitted him for discharging the duties of the important office which he held.

#### THE INQUEST.

The city coroner (Dr. Whittell) held an inquest at the coroner's office, King William-street, on Friday afternoon on the body of the late Mr. F. W. Taplin. Mr. Lathlean watched the proceedings on behalf of Mr. Hambley, the manager; Mr. Yuill represented the Colonial Mutual Insurance Company; and Mr. De Cean the S.A. Insurance Company. Inspector Upton was present on behalf of the police.

George Burnell, woolscourer, of Hindmarsh, said the deceased was his nephew. His residence was at the Mission Station, Point McLeay, where he was superintendent. He was about 38 years of age. He was intending to leave Adelaide by this morning's train.

Eugene Lynch, constable, said he was on duty in Hindley-street. At 5 minutes to 3 on Friday morning he was standing under Mr. Conrad's verandah looking in the direction of the Coffee Palace. There was nothing noticeable at that time. Shortly after he crossed the street to his fellow constable, P.C. Sweeny, who was on duty on the south side. Had a few minutes' conversation, and then heard a noise as of something cracking or breaking. Immediately on this heard the sound of glass breaking, apparently in the lane to the east of the Coffee Palace. They ran in that direction till they got opposite to the kitchen, which stands in about the centre of the Coffee Palace. Then saw that the place was on fire and burning rapidly in the western end of the kitchen ; also extending to the main building through the doors and

windows. They gave the alarm immediately to the people on the premises, and blew their whistles to get the assistance of other constables. Whilst Constable Sweeny aroused the inmates witness ran to the fire alarm in Bank-street and gave the alarm. Other constables soon arrived on the scene, and helped the people to escape Had reason to believe that Mr. Taplin remained in the building. By the time of his return the firemen were at work. Should think the fire reels were on the spot within five minutes of my giving the alarm. The fire was got under about 4 30. Should imagine the fire commenced, from its appearance when witness saw it, either in "the north-west corner of the kitchen, or the pantry ad-joining on the north. Observed no one about prior to the fire.

P.C. Sweeny corroborated, and said he tried to force the front door and failing, he hammered on it with his staff. Saw a young lady named Miss Whillen on the roof above the pantry, Asked her to jump down, and she jumped into witness's arms. Other inmates jumped in the same way, and were caught by the constables present. The boots then came out by the back gate. He had his trousers and vest on. Several other inmates then made their escape by the spiral staircase outside. They were all in deshabille. Saw Mr. Hambley in the backyard, and several others were there also. He was not dressed. Got blankets and sheets to wrap round the ladies. The fire evidently broke out in the kitchen portion of the building. Have no suspicion that there were separate fires. Not a soul was about the place.

Cyprian Hardy, second officer of the Fire Brigade, said—We received a call this morning to the Coffee Palace at 3.10. The superintendent proceeded with one reel and I with the other. Arrived at the fire within three minutes. We took 30 seconds to turn out. The ground and first floor of the Coffee Palace were on fire on our arrival. The superintendent directed me to get to work from Currie-street, at the rear of the building, whilst others got to work from the front of the palace. The reason for going to Currie-street was that one of the mains had burst in Hindley street. Mastered the fire by about 5 o'clock. After we got inside the building to work on the several buildings that were alight we put them out, and one of the firemen tried a door at the south end of the passage. He found a panel had been burnt away, and on looking in called out, "There is somebody here." Turned the search lantern on, and found a man lying on his face with his head jammed against the door. Called the superintendent (Mr. Booker), and immediately afterwards there was a crash, and the floor fell in and the body fell with it to the ground floor, where it was partly covered with debris. The face was scorched. The police then brought the ambulance, and removed the body to the morgue. Believe the fire originated at the rear of the building on the south side. Think it originated in the room directly under where the man was lying, that is, in the pantry. Should say the man was between two fires when he died, one coming from the staircase and the other from the door opposite.

Henry Goodfellow, night watchman at the Coffee Palace, said his duties were to prepare the fire in the kitchen range, and then to collect the boots and polish them. At this time the gas would be alight, and as he collected the boots he turned the different jets out. He used to polish the boots in the kitchen. His duties on Thursday night occupied him till mid-night, and he then left the kitchen and went to bed. Lit a candle, intending to clean the boots, but as there were such a few, he thought he would leave them till the morning, and he then went to his room, which is over the yard off the main building. Everything at that time was perfectly safe. Was awakened by hearing the constables' whistles, and then found the palace was in flames. His duty was only to remain up till all the lodgers were in.

As further evidence was necessary, the inquest was adjourned till Thursday morning next at 10 o'clock.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Saturday 23 March 1889, page 3***

FATAL FIRE AT THE COFFEE PALACE.

MR. F. W. TAPLIN KILLED. ANOTHER MAN INJURED.

Adelaide of late has enjoyed a singular immunity from fires, and it is a long time since it has been our painful duty to chronicle so sad an event as that which occurred during the conflagration by which the Adelaide Coffee Palace was destroyed early on Friday morning. At about 3 o'clock yesterday morning Lance-Corporal Lynch and Constable Sweeny, who were on duty in Hindley-street, whilst engaged in conversation in the vicinity of the Coffee Palace heard a crackling sound, immediately followed by the breaking of glass, and proceeding in the direction of the noise found a lurid glare rising up from the Coffee Palace. With praise-worthy thoughtfulness the lance-corporal ran to the nearest fire alarm and communicated with the head fire brigade station, whilst Constable Sweeny battered with his staff on the doors of the building with the object of arousing the sleeping inmates, at the same time blowing his whistle, in order to obtain the assistance of other constables who were in the vicinity. His efforts soon met with their reward, as the noise quickly awakened those who were in the structure, and with the assistance of the police who were present they were nearly all enabled to make their escape from the burning building. Long before this, however, the fire brigade, under Superintendent Booker, had arrived, and the commendable promptitude which characterised the arrival of the firemen cannot be overrated. Within three minutes of the alarm being given, the reels were at work on the fire, and in less than three-quarters of an hour it was quite under control. The fire when the brigade arrived appeared to be raging with the greatest fierceness in the centre of the building, and it is believed that it originated in a pantry near the kitchen. The night watchman—who, by the way, does not stay up all night—says that when he retired at midnight every thing was all right, and the origin of the fire certainly appears a mystery at the present time. Short as the time was that it lasted, yet it did a considerable amount of damage, the nature of the building assisting in no small degree. Lath and plaster partitions, and matchboard linings, are certainly not the kind of structure that a large lodging-house should be composed of, and it is indeed a fortunate thing that the Coffee Palace had very few lodgers on Thursday night, otherwise, as Superintendent Booker says, the loss of life would have been appalling. The fire will doubtless have the effect of calling the attention of the authorities to the danger attending dwelling in such tenements—a danger that is accentuated by the fact that one of the lodgers, and no less a personage than Mr. F. W. Taplin, the well-known superintendent of the Point McLeay Mission Station, lost his life. Mr. Taplin, it appears, was staying at the palace on Thursday night, and on the alarm being given was one of the first to quit the building. Hearing, however, that a young lady had failed to make her escape he returned to the burn-ing pile, but the flames increased so rapidly that his escape was quite cut off, and before assistance could reach him the unfortunate gentleman succumbed to the smoke and flames. Another man named King also contributed a sensational element to the proceedings of the early morning. He, it seems, no doubt stupefied by the smoke, which was very dense indeed, mounted the parapet of the building in the lane on the eastern side of the Coffee Palace and sprang on to a large lamp which has been placed there for the purpose of illuminating the thoroughfare. The lamp gave way with

him and he was precipitated to the ground, falling on his back and receiving injuries to his spine, which are regarded as very serious. He was at once taken to the Hospital, where he is now being attended to.

The body of Mr. Taplin was taken to the morgue as soon as it was rescued, and the City Coroner (Dr. Whittell) commenced an inquest on it on Friday afternoon.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Saturday 23 March 1889, page 3***

WHAT SUPERINTENDENT BOOKER SAYS.

Superintendent Booker, of the Fire Brigade, said, in reply to the queries of an Advertiser reporter : — "We received a call from Bent-street fire Alarm at 10 minutes past 3 on Friday morning. I at once turned out the whole of the brigade, consisting of four reels, 12 men, and 2 officers, and by 3.13 we were at the scene of the fire and at work. I did not take down the steamer as there was a splendid pressure of water on—no less than 70 lb. to the square inch. We quickly got the hoses into play, and as the fire then seemed to be right in the centre of the building—which, by the-way, was well alight and spreading very fast— I surrounded it with lines of hose. I had hoses attached to the plugs in Currie street and carried over the roofs of the buildings, and in, that way we were enabled to play upon the flames from all points of the compass From this stage the fire never spread ; we soon got it well in hand, and by 4 o'clock all danger was at an end. By half past 5 it was practically extinguished. When we reached the fire some of the inmates were making their escape, and I made enquiries as to whether all of them had left the building. Mr. Hambly, the manager, said he had great fears that one of the inmates was still in the palace, and gave me the number of the room where he was supposed to be. I searched every room in the building with the exception of one and a small passage adjoining it, which were alight, to which it was impossible to gain ingress. That room unfortunately was the one Mr. Taplin was in No one was in the room the manager mentioned to me. When we found the body of the deceased it was lying on the floor face downwards. I attribute his death to suffocation and burning. Owing to the position of his room he was placed between two fires, and his escape would have been an impossibility. There was an iron spiral staircase within a few feet of his door, but the flames prevented him reaching it. As far as the origin of the fire is concerned I cannot form any definite opinion at present, but at the inquest I shall have something to say on the subject. It apparently started on the ground floor between the scullery and the pantry. The whole of the building is built of inflammable material, and it is a wonder that any of the inmates escaped. If the place had been full of visitors, as I have no doubt it frequently is, I believe we would have had to record from 15 to 20 deaths. I think we succeeded in saving 33 or 34 rooms, and in 31, strange to say there is not even a vestige of smoke. The building is about 60 x 80 feet, and the partitions to most of the rooms are lath and plaster with matchwood linings." The brigade is entitled to great praise for their promptitude, and there are certainly few if any brigades in the world who could beat the record on the present occasion, namely, travelling from Flinders-street station to the locus in quo and being at work within three minutes from the time of receiving the alarm.

***South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 - 1900), Saturday 23 March 1889, page 4***

THE COFFEE PALACE FIRE.

Until the inquest is finished it is not worth while hazarding a guess as to the origin of the fire at the Coffee Palace in Hindley-street yesterday morning. There are, however, certain

aspects of the affair which may be dis-cussed with advantage, pending the conclusion of the investigation. The mere fact that a life could be lost in the way in which Mr. Taplin met his death is calculated to awake a serious alarm. The Coffee Palace is virtually a Temperance Hotel, and of course does not come under the provisions of the Licensed Victuallers. Act. It did, we believe, come under the provisions of the Lodging House Act. It has bedroom accommodation for some sixty persons, some of the rooms, including that in which Mr. Tapley slept, containing two beds. On Thurs-day night there were only twenty staying in the house besides the Manager and the attendants. The fire appears to have been discovered a very few minutes after it broke out, and the alarm was at once given to the inmates, who without delay began to make escape from the building, for most of them had on only their night garments. Thus far there is nothing to show that the flames started simultaneously in two or three places, the evidence pointing to the conclusion that it originated in the pantry. After making full allowance for the terror created by an alarm of fire in the early hours of the morning, when all the inmates were wrapped in the profoundest slumber, the mere fact that some escaped with difficulty, and that one life was sacrificed, points to the conclusion that the building was not constructed with a due regard to the safety of the occupants. Every structure is liable to an outbreak of fire, and the contingency is much greater in a building that is occupied from night to night by visitors, many of whom are strangers to it. In the Coffee Palace the means of egress were lamentably defective, and it is noteworthy that few of those who escaped got out by the stairs, of which there were but two, one of them being an iron spiral stairway. The interior of the building is of a very flimsy character, yet, only eleven of the rooms have been touched by the flames— a circumstance which of itself proves that only a slight interval elapsed between the beginning of the fire and the arrival of the brigade, and which also speaks well for the energy and skill of the firemen. How it was Mr. Taplin did not succeed in making his escape is not known. It is stated that he came down by the staircase and out into Club House-lane, and afterwards returned to the house and went upstairs to help to rescue any that might be in danger. It is not at all clear, however, that he did leave the building at all, and all the probabilities point to the conclusion that it was his anxiety for the safety of others that led to the sacrifice of his own life. It would have been more satisfactory if a little more evidence on this point had been taken at the inquest yesterday. Unlike some who were in the house, Mr. Taplin was no stranger to it, and therefore knew exactly where the means of escape were. The bed on which he slept was uninjured, his watch was ticking on a chair near to it, his port-manteau was left open on the floor. Close to his bed is a window, through which he could, with the utmost ease, have stepped on to a flat iron roof, from which he could readily have reached a place of safety. From the position in which the body was first seen the natural inference is that he could not get back to his room, that he could not reach the spiral staircase because the floor connecting it with the building had given way, and that he was prevented by the smoke and flames from gaining the wooden staircase. The circumstances of Mr. Taplin's death are exceedingly mournful, and profound sympathy will be felt for his widow and family, who were expecting his return yesterday morning, and who received instead the painful tidings of his death. The sad disaster will, we trust, help to direct public attention to the need for a more searching supervision of buildings used as hotels or coffee palaces. This particular building has been added to more than once; and though it is comparatively a small structure, a stranger might easily be puzzled in getting from one part of it to another. Old travellers on reaching a house with which they are unfamiliar naturally try to find out the geography of the building. But many who stay at an hotel are not experienced travellers, and

frequently visitors arrive after dark. It is very desirable, therefore, that these buildings should be constructed with ample means of egress from the upperfloors, and with broad passages that lead to safety and do not confuse the casual visitor. It is also of the utmost importance that such structures should be of a thoroughly substantial character. The Coffee Palace in Hindley-street certainly does not answer to this description, and we trust the disaster of Friday morning will convince the municipal authorities that a more complete supervision of houses of public entertainment is absolutely necessary. While compelled to speak in terms of censure of the building, we are glad to be able to mention in terms of praise the exertions of the firemen, whose good judgment and zeal undoubtedly stayed the progress of the flames, and kept the injury done by them within a comparatively small compass. A word of commendation is also due to the police, who rendered effective help in rescuing the sufferers and obtaining shelter for them. Seeing that the interior of the building was of such a flimsy character, the wonder is that the destruction was not much greater. The bursting of the main in Hindley-street was an unfortunate circumstance, and probably led to a little delay, as in consequence of it one of the reels had to be worked from Currie-street. It is important that precautions should be taken against the recurrence of such a mishap at so critical a time as the outbreak of a fire. It is much to be deplored that so useful a colonist as Mr. Taplin was should have lost his life, and the sadness of the occurrence emphasizes the need for compelling the owners and occupiers of houses used by the public to have the buildings erected in a substantial manner, and to see that they are well provided with the means of escape should they be attacked by fire.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Thursday 28 March 1889, page 2***

Coroner's Inquest.

THIS DAY.

The Late Fire at the Coffee Palace.

The enquiry into the cause of the recent fire at the Coffee Palace, Hindley-street, was resumed by the city coroner (Dr. Whittell) at his office, King William-street, on Thursday. Mr. Lathlean appeared for Mr. Hambly, the lessee of the Coffee Palace, and Messrs. Yuill and DeCean for the insurance companies interested.

John Smith was working at the Coffee Palace on the night of the fire and slept on the premises, in the same room as Goodfellow. Went to bed at 10.30 p.m., but was not awake when his room mate retired. Between 3 and half past 3 o'clock was aroused by his companion, who said the place was on fire. Got up, dressed, and went to the kitchen door, where he saw flames coming into that room from the pantry. Saw nothing burning in the kitchen. Tried to save some of the things in the house, but made no attempt to extinguish the fire, His duties were to clean knives, keep the yard in order, and other work of a kindred character. Used a candle in cleaning the knives on the night in question, Put out the candle, went down to the railway-station, and returned at about 9 o'clock, Afterwards went into the smoking-room to play draughts. Placed the candle on the zinc after blowing it out. There was a small piece of matting on the floor of the pantry where he was working. Lit the candle in his own room, and only saw one candle in the room in the mug. Goodfellow only smoked in his own room or when he was working at night. He might have taken it out of the room without the knowledge of the witness ; Goodfellow was in the habit of using it when going for coal, If he went out he would go through the pantry into Bishop's lane.

Elizabeth Whenan, teacher at the Grote-street school, and who boarded at the palace, stated that she was aroused from sleep early in the morning of the fire by the sound of a police man's whistle. Rose at once, opened her window, looked down and saw smoke. Before she had time to turn round her door was burst open. Rushed out of her bedroom into the passage, and saw the flames coming up the staircase. Noticed a tall gentleman in the passage who caught her by the hand and led her by way of a corridor to an iron roof. Then saw Mr. Hambly rushing to the children's bedroom, and followed him. Asked Mr. Hambly which way she should escape. He replied "Go to Sarah's bedroom." Did so, and afterwards reached a place whence she was rescued. Did not see Mr. Taplin during the progress of the fire. Knew that there was a spiral staircase upon which she could have got by stepping out from her bedroom.

Frank Hambly, proprietor of the Coffee Palace, said that building was not licensed as an hotel, but as a lodging-house. There were about 20 lodgers and 10 servants in the house at the time of the fire, and there was only members of his family on the premises besides himself. Slept upstairs in the north-eastern corner of the palace, and went to bed at 11.30 p.m. Was aroused between 3 and 4 o'clock, but could not say exactly how. The first thing of which he became conscious after being awakened was the sound of something cracking. Immediately went out into the large room adjoining and saw the flames coming up the staircase. Then went to Mr. Taplin's bedroom door and broke it open with his foot. Mr. Taplin rose at once and followed witness to the passage. Asked Mr. Taplin to assist in getting the people out. Mr. Taplin went along the right-hand side and witness on the left-hand side of the passage, each breaking in the bedroom doors in passing. The lodgers came out and all were rescued by Mr. Taplin and witness. They were not quite certain about Miss Whenan, Saw Mr. Taplin break open that lady's door. Mr. Taplin passed on to break open the other doors, and witness lost sight of him, never seeing him again alive, With regard to the management of the house witness stated that the housemaids were released from duty at 10 pm, Goodfellow, the "boots," then came to the kitchen and laid the fire for the next morning,

[Left Sitting.]

***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Friday 29 March 1889, page 3***

The Coffee Palace Fire.

THE COFFEE PALACE FIRE. — The City Coroner on Thursday resumed the enquiry into the fire at the Hindley-street Coffee Palace. Additional evidence was given by several employes, by the landlord, and by the boots, Goodfellow, who was subjected to a lengthy cross-examination relating to his action before retiring for the night. Evidence was also taken from some of the firemen. Dr. Whittell in summing up the evidence condemned the flimsy nature of the building, and spoke of it as being more like a rabbit warren than a lodging-house. The Jury returned a verdict that Mr. Taplin's death was caused by suffocation, and added that there was no evidence to show the origin of the fire. They also stated that provision should be made for a safer class of premises where a number of persons are congregated.

***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Friday 29 March 1889, page 3***

The Coffee Palace.

The inquest into the circumstances attending the death of Mr. F. W. Taplin, and consequently into the origin of the fire at the Coffee Palace, has brought to light few facts beyond those with which the public are already well acquainted. It has, however, served to confirm in the completest manner the conclusions previously arrived at. So far as Mr. Taplin is concerned the fact is established beyond doubt that it would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to have ensured his own safety had he not employed himself in rescuing the inmates of the burning building. How it came to pass that he succumbed to the smoke and the heat—for it is evident that he met his death from suffocation, and not through injuries caused by the flames themselves— will never be known, but it must be a mournful satisfaction to his friends to recall the fact that he perished while humanely engaged in saving others. His conduct was none the less heroic because it was not given to him to do any great thing. It is not improbable that all those placed in peril by the fire would have escaped without his aid, but it is still true that he sacrificed himself to a high sense of duty towards his fellow-lodgers. Conduct such as his is worthy of all admiration, and the further light that the inquest has thrown upon his action cannot fail to promote the success of the movement that has been set on foot for the benefit of those who have been so suddenly and sadly bereft of their natural protector. The origin of the fire remains a mystery, although the investigations have tended to bring the facts bearing upon that point within a very narrow compass. The most reasonable theory is that sparks from hot embers removed from the kitchen grate fell upon some combustible material, and after smouldering for hours burst into flame. After all, however, that is only conjecture, and with this the public will probably have to rest satisfied. What is clearly disclosed by the evidence is that the Coffee Palace was altogether unsuited for the purpose to which it was applied. Everything tends to show that it was a tempting of Providence to use the building as the lodging-house of a large number of people. It is horrible to contemplate how ghastly might have been the results of a fire happening at a time when every room was occupied and under circumstances which did not admit of an alarm being given until the premises had become wrapt in flames. The Coroner rightly describes the building as a rabbit warren, without any reasonable provision in its internal arrangements to guard against the spread of fire or to afford facilities of escape to the inmates. It is easy to conceive of conditions under which not one life but a score of lives might have been sacrificed. All that is left is for the authorities to profit by the terrible experience of last week, and as far as possible to guard against the occurrence of similar catastrophes. It would seem that the municipal authorities have not all the powers they should possess for ensuring protection of persons congregating in lodging-houses such as the Coffee Palace, but they can refuse licences in cases where in the opinion of their Inspectors the risk is more than it should be, and it is open to them to collect evidence that will influence Parliament in conferring further powers upon them. It is due to the Coroner to say that the enquiry seems to have been a thoroughly searching one, and that in his charge to the Jury he showed a mastery of the duties of his position which gives good promise of effective management of inquests in the future.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Saturday 11 May 1889, page 2***

Fire.

During the early part of Friday evening an obnoxious smell, as if something was burning, was prevalent about the vicinity of the corner of King William and Hindley streets, and at about quarter past 9 dark clouds of smoke were seen issuing from Mr. Paul Thomas's boot-making premises in King William-street. The fire brigade, who were at once communicated with,

SA Country Fire Service Promotions Unit

[www.fire-brigade.asn.au](http://www.fire-brigade.asn.au)

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responded sharply, taking only about two and a half minutes to reach the spot. The firemen entered a room at the rear of the premises by forcing open a door, and they had to crawl on their hands and knees to tear up some oil-cloth and flooring-boards so as to get at the fire, which was confined to a cellar underneath. The flames were soon extinguished, and it was found that a number of empty boot-trunks had been destroyed, and that the flooring above the cellar was severely charred. If the flames had got a much firmer hold the whole block would probably have been destroyed.

***Adelaide Observer (SA : 1843 - 1904), Saturday 5 October 1889, page 29***

GENERAL NEWS.

The Victoria Coffee Palace. — The premises in Hindley-street known as the Adelaide Coffee Palace, which were partially destroyed by fire some months since, have been reinstated and remodelled, the alterations being now complete. The plan generally is on the same principle as before the fire, but all the passages are now wider and the rooms much larger, in addition to which fireproof floors have been introduced where practicable, and additional means of escape have been provided at each end of the building. An outside stair is provided with doors at the ends of the passages on the different floors, in addition to which the iron spiral stair at the back is retained, so that each passage leads direct on to an external stair. Another staircase has been introduced in the back building, thus giving four distinct means of access to and from the upper floors in addition to the main central stair. The building is now of the most substantial character throughout, and is comfortably furnished and made as attractive as possible. The premises have been inspected by the Building Surveyor and the Secretary of the Board of Health, who cordially express their appreciation of the efforts made with the object of improving the nature of the building and providing facilities for the comfort and safety of the occupants. The work has been well carried out by Mr. N. W. Trudgen under the architects Messrs. Wright, Reed, and Beaver.

***Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912), Wednesday 23 October 1889, page 2***

Adelaide to the Front Again

FIRE LADDER AND ESCAPE.—In the presence of a committee of the Fire Brigades Board, at the Head Fire Station, Flinders-Street, on Wednesday morning, October 23, a test was made of a telescopic fire ladder and escape, which has been recently introduced for approval. The makers of this appliance are Messrs. Shand, Mason, & Co., who are represented in the colonies by Messrs. A. Guthrie and Dodds, whose Adelaide-office is in Peel-street. Adelaide can lay claim to be the first city in Australia to introduce this entirely new improvement in connection with fires, and should it prove successful here, and there is every likelihood of its doing so— Melbourne, Sydney, and other of the eastern cities of Australia will no doubt use it as an adjunct to their fire escape systems. In the past telegraphic and telephone wires in our city have been obstacles in the successful working of fire ladders and escapes. Experience has proved everywhere the utility of having an elevated position independent of all buildings and street obstructions from which a fireman can direct his hose on a conflagration, and consequently fireladders have been introduced. The escape now in Adelaide consists of three strongly trussed ladders. On an elevated fulcrum is pivotted the main ladder, supported on a four-wheeled carriage, with front wheels locking round. To the top of the main ladder two wooden props are placed there, being again connected by steel rods to the bottom of the ladder, and firmly trussed at intermediate points. A double wire

rope fastened to the bottom of the main ladder and attached to a drum on bearings on the main carriage as it is wound up elevates the escape from the horizontal position to the vertical, while ratchets on the main ladder props support it in its elevated position at any desired angle. The sliding ladders are extended by means of wire ropes and a winch at the foot of the main ladder. The escape, fully extended, may be moved about on its wheels. The ladder can be inclined to several angles, so that if the escape is required for use on the side of a hill, the main wheels being on different levels the ladder can be placed vertically independently of the inclination of the wheels. A more simple and substantial appliance could not be desired. Four firemen can work the machine, and they can be carried on the ladders. The idea is to run the machine to the scene of the fire by horses, or it can be drawn by hand at a fast speed and with equal facility as an ordinary fire escape. When fully extended the escape reaches a height of 60 feet. The Fire Brigade Board members were pleased with the experiment that was tried on Wednesday, and Superintendent Booker expressed himself as satisfied with the great advantage such a machine will afford in connection with large fires.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Thursday 14 November 1889, page 3***

A small fire occurred in a house occupied by John Jones, a bootmaker living in Brown-street, at about 9.30 on Wednesday night. The flames originated through Mrs. Jones, while putting a child to bed, placing a kerosine lamp on a dressing table and igniting a couple of dresses which were hanging behind the bed-room door. Very little damage was done. The furniture was uninsured.