



[www.oldsydneysigns.com](http://www.oldsydneysigns.com)

## ENAMEL SIGN MANUFACTURERS

### Australian makers of old enamel and tin signs

*Compiled by Greg Howard – collector of advertising antique signs © 2009. E.& O.E.*

#### A SIMPSON & SONS LTD

Had a number of slight variations on their company name, two of which were Simpson & Sons Ltd. Adelaide and A. Simpson, Adelaide. This was by far the largest sign manufacturing company in Australia, originating in 1855 as a hardware manufacturer/general supply company which supplied bedsteads, iron ware, ovens, safes, japanned and galvanised wares, tin ware, tins, and buckets. The company employed more than two hundred people in their several factories, and produced thousands of different types of signs, a mere sample of which are mentioned below:

- Ask for Laurel Kerosene
- Buck Service Station
- New Zealand Insurance
- Plume Motor Spirit
- Plume Vacuum Oil
- Plume Please Shut The Gate
- Waltons Challenge Cocoa
- Shell Pennant Household Kerosene
- Shell Look for the Yellow Disc
- Top Brand Super
- Cumming-Smith Manures
- Yankee Doodle Dark Tobacco
- Vinola Toilet Soaps
- Lux Won't Shrink Wool Soap
- Hudons's Soap
- Rinso Soap
- Lifebuoy Soap
- Golden Fleece Motor Spirit
- Wertheim Pianos
- North British and Mercantile
- Sunlight Best Soap
- Monkey Brand
- T Gaunt Watchmater

#### METTERS

In 1890, Fred Metters commenced manufacturing stoves in Adelaide. Four years later he opened in Perth, and in 1907 Metter Ltd was formed and based in Adelaide. A Sydney operation was commenced in 1913 and by 1927 they had amalgamated with a Sydney foundry for manufacturing. Not long after this, another factory in Footscray, Melbourne was opened.

This is a list of some of their well-known signs:

- Bushells Blue Label Tea
- Goodyear
- Texaco Motor Oil Clean Clear
- Texaco Motor Oil Rack Sign
- Texaco Motor Spirit/Motor Oil round sign
- Cross Kerosene Shut the Gate
- Shell Spirit and Oils, The Quick Starting Pair
- Shell Shut the Gate
- Shell Power in Motor Spirit

#### VICTORIAN ENAMEL WORKS, GEELONG (*Vic enamel Works*)

By the 1960s, their trading name was Victorian Ferrous enamelling Works, Geelong (V.F.E.W.) and they were responsible for making many Castrol signs in this period. The company still operates today.

Some of their signs include:

- Lifebuoy Soap Sailor Man
- Waratah Motor Spirit
- Voco Petrol
- Shell Imperial Spirit
- Golden Fleece Motor Spirit
- Please Shut the Gate and Use Federal Manure
- Motor Service Station  
Plume – Benzine – Gargoyle
- Sennitts Ice Cream
- Plume (Vacuum Oil Co. Pty Ltd)
- W Haughton & Co Skins Wood Hides Tallow
- Hudson's Soap. The Time and Money Saver

*Continued next page...*

## **OTHER ENAMEL SIGN MAKERS**

The following are more obscure sign companies, many of whose existence I only became aware of when I discovered a sign bearing their name printed on the bottom right-hand corner. Forgive me for any inaccuracies as some of these signs have been damaged and the spelling may be misspelt. Regardless, I thought it important to mention them:

### **J.A.S. Robertson, Sydney**

- Dr Morse's Indian Root Pills
- Burgon Sheep Shearing
- Kiwi
- BIOC (Shell) Imperial Motor Sign

### **K.F.B. Foundry**

- Smith's Weekly
- National Insurance Co.

### **Standard Signs, Sydney**

- Brasso
- Reckitt's Blue. Out of the Blue Comes the Whitest Wash

### **Myttons, South Melbourne**

- Shell Motor Oil. We Stock It, We Recommend It

### **J.T Paken & Sons, Melbourne**

This company also made early Shell Motor Oil tins.

- Shell Motor Oil Superior as Shell Spirit
- Look For the Pure Shell disc
- Shell Motor Spirit Shorten Every Road

### **Rice & Co, Sydney**

- Abraham's Pills

### **McLean & Rigg Ltd, Melbourne**

- Australian Widow Fund
- Yankee Doodle Cigarettes

### **Ronaldson & Tippet, Ballarat**

- Transfer Flag Sign

### **Saddler & Co., Melbourne**

- The Dail Telegraph Tasmania

### **Laughtons Enamelling, Footscray, Melbourne**

- All Mobil and Mobil Oil signs

### **Standard Industries, Sydney**

- Sydney Mail
- Castrol (1970s signs)

### **Efficiency Displays, Sydney**

- Castrol screen-printed signs and oil bottle stand plates (late 1980s)

### **Associated Printing Group, Sydney**

- Castrol (screen-printed signs of the late 1990s)

## **TIN SIGN MANUFACTURERS**

Sands & McDougall Limp Callic, Melbourne

- City Mutual Aboriginal

Leckie & Gray Pty Ltd., Melbourne

- Shell Tox  
(embossed shelf signs)

Blyth & Platt Australia, Sydney

- Cobra Boot Polish  
(embossed pressed metal signs)

Unfortunately, many signs do not have any manufacturer's mark, making it near impossible to identify. Curiously, some manufacturers marked their signs for certain years but not others.

If in doubt, call me or any other dealer worth their salt. My mobile number is 0409 621 018.

*Greg Howard*

Proprietor – Old Sydney Signs