

29 KNOWN DEAD

BALLANTYNE'S BUILDING DESTROYED

20 Missing; All Bodies Not Yet Recovered

EMPLOYEES TRAPPED IN BLAZE

In one of the greatest fire tragedies in the history of New Zealand, 28 perished, one died from injuries, and 20 other persons, including a baby, were officially reported missing. The disaster occurred when fire, in one hour, swept yesterday afternoon through the one-acre block of the three-storey drapery store of J. Ballantyne and Company, Ltd. Another four persons were reported as "doubtful," the possibility being held that they may not have heard the broadcast call to report in the evening.

The fullness of the tragedy will probably not be known for several days, but recovery operations were suspended at nightfall with the knowledge that other bodies were lying in the smouldering shell. The bodies recovered so far were taken from the ruins inside the main entrance and in a part of the Colombo street frontage. With a greater part of the debris yet to be searched, remains of bodies were visible in the ruins, hanging from rafters and lying on the top of a fire escape.

Of the staff of 300 employed by the firm, the exact number missing last night was not known, and there is a possibility that an unknown number of customers may also have been trapped in the flames.

Only the danger of the collapse of the Oamaru stone walls of the store caused the recovery work to be suspended, and it will not be resumed until the shell is made safe or demolished. The death roll must, therefore, be indefinite until a check is made on every person who was known to have been in the building or who was possibly in the building.

The Press, Nov 19, 1947. p.7.

ACRE OF STORE DESTROYED

Fierce And Swift Fire

DISASTER WATCHED BY THOUSANDS

The Press, Nov 19, 1947. p.7.

Fire Debris Falls Far from Scene

With smoke rising a mile into the air, masses of debris were carried over the southern and western parts of the city from the fire. Pieces of tarred roofing felt fell in Ngahere Street, Riccarton.

Strangest of all was an unscorched Ballantyne's docket which fluttered into the garden of a house in Puma Street, in the Riccarton State housing block a mile and a half from the fire. Fragments of charred paper fell at Riccarton racecourse.

The Star-Sun, Nov 19, 1947. p.4.

WOMAN'S FATAL INJURIES

JUMP FROM THIRD STOREY

TWO HAVE LUCKY ESCAPE

Two of the three office employees who jumped from third storey windows on Colombo street had fortunate escapes from serious injury, and the Christchurch Hospital last night reported that their condition was satisfactory. The third woman was seriously injured, and died in the hospital at 7.45 p.m. She was:

Mrs Violet May Coady (or Coady),
address unknown.

The injured women were:—

Mrs Nancy Gladys Nash, aged 25, of
71 Conway street, Spreydon.

Miss Lois M. Kennedy, aged 20, of 4
Swanns road, Richmond.

Miss Kennedy's fiance, who works near Ballantynes, ran to the building when he heard that a fire had broken out, and was in time to help firemen lift Miss Kennedy from the veranda on to which she jumped. Mrs Nash was a close friend of Miss Kennedy, and the two decided to jump when they found that all exits from the administrative offices were blocked by flames.

The Press, Nov 19, 1947. p.7.