

## FIRE-MARKS in BIRCHINGTON

- No: **28370** - issued between **1765-1778**  
Made by Hannah Thompson  
made of lead **LABURNUM HOUSE**
- No: **537003** - issued between **1778-1790**  
Made by Isaac and Margaret Mather  
made of lead **JESSAMINE COTTAGE**
- No: **722396** - issued between **1800-1805**  
Made by Thomas Woods  
made of lead **ELDER COTTAGE**

**Unnumbered plate** - issued between **1850-1865**  
probably by Samuel P. Irish who worked for Sun Office 1836-1862  
made of copper **15 MILL ROW**

All these plates would have had a gilded face for the Sun on a blue background, with the policy number in gold.

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The Insurance Company with which the owners of these houses were insured were issued under the emblem of a Sun. The Company had its origins in a scheme devised by Charles Povey, a London business man. This was set up for insuring goods against the loss by fire in London. In 1708 he extended it to the rest of the country. The Exchange House Fire Office, as this company was first called, employed men stationed in the suburbs of London and Westminster to assist at fires in removing goods from the burning buildings.

To enable an insured property to be recognised, Povey supplied a numbered mark bearing a Sun. It is thought he chose the sun because of his interest in astrology. However, Povey felt unable to carry the risks alone and sold the business to a co-partnership of 24 members for £480 cash, plus an annuity equal to 10% of the profits, up to a maximum of £200 per annum.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1710 the Deed of Partnership was signed and the new Sun Fire Office began issuing policies, from a room in Causey's Coffee House in St Paul's Churchyard.

The Sun Insurance maintained a well-equipped Fire Brigade from 1711 and by 1727 possessed several fire engines. It had also invested in some floating fire equipment to be used on the Thames, for protecting the riverside properties. In 1959 the Sun amalgamated with the Alliance Assurance Company and in 1965 the Sun Alliance amalgamated with the London Assurance Company.

On a Sun policy dated 1804, which covered the Seed Mill of James Neame of Birchington, the policy number of **761999** was quoted, but this may have been a renewal rather than a new policy.