

*Landmarks: People and Places across Australia, a gallery bringing together over 1500 objects, explores the history of Australia since European settlement.*

## OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

### Brisbane Stock Exchange Trading board

On 28 September 1990, stock transactions were recorded on the trading boards at the Brisbane Stock Exchange up for the last time. Twenty years later, the marks left from that final day of trading will go on display in the National Museum of Australia's new gallery, Landmarks: People and Places across Australia, a gallery bringing together over 1500 objects, exploring the history of Australia since European settlement. The National Museum of Australia has loaned six large trading boards for the new gallery.



**The Brisbane Stock Exchange ceased trading in November 1990. Photo: Damian McDonald, National Museum of Australia.**

Exchange employees, called 'chalkies,' recorded the bids and transactions made by stockbrokers on these large blackboards. The boards were positioned around the trading floor, raised above eye level. They ran across thirty metres of wall, listing around 550 stocks.

During the 1870s, hundreds of companies were formed due to Queensland's mining boom. With increasing numbers of local investors looked for places to invest money and many businesses seeking funds, Queensland needed a formal system to regulate the buying and selling of stocks and shares.

In 1884, the Brisbane Stock Exchange opened on the corner of Queen and Albert Streets. It replaced the various broking associations and mining exchanges, which were established in the absence of a Stock Exchange.

Until the 1960s, the Brisbane Stock Exchange used the call system. An exchange employee, known as a caller, would shout out a company name and brokers would bid on stock at each call.

During the 1960s, to cope with increased levels of trading, the Exchange introduced the post system. Stocks and transactions were recorded on boards or 'posts' next to a three or four letter code which identified each company. Two chalkies continuously rushed along the blackboards, recording bids, offers and sales.

During the late 1980s, the introduction of electronic trading to Stock Exchanges across Australia heralded the end of the post system and the use of these trading boards. Electronic trading offered faster access to up to the minute information. By the end of 1990, every trading floor in Australia had closed. The Brisbane Stock Exchange was the last to cease trading in November 1990.

After 20 years, the chalk left on the boards from that last day of trading was decidedly fragile and beginning to slowly flake off. When the trading boards arrived at the National Museum of Australia, they underwent treatment to preserve the chalk markings. Museum conservators painstakingly applied a fine spray of adhesive mist to the writing on the six trading boards to improve the chalk's adhesion to the black boards and prevent any loss to this snapshot in time.

**Conservator's notes:**

The chalk applied to the boards by the 'chalkies' was supposed to be temporary as stock prices were erased, adjusted and rewritten during trade. The ephemeral nature of the process means that the chalk numbers are easily removable and thus very vulnerable to damage. To preserve the writing on the boards the National Museum's Objects Conservation Lab undertook testing to determine the best option for consolidating the chalk layer onto the board surface. This included testing many different consolidants and application techniques. Different treatment options were assessed for predicted long-term stability, appearance of the blank areas after application, colour change of the chalk, and adhesion between the chalk and board surface. The final treatment involved spraying a fine mist of warm gelatine solution onto the chalk. This treatment took three conservators over a month to complete.

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Object biography prepared by Leah Bartsch, Curator, conservator's notes prepared by Cathy Collins, Conservator, National Museum of Australia.

**Landmarks: People and Places across Australia** is the National Museum's newest and most ambitious gallery to date, bringing together over 1500 objects to create a history of Australia since European settlement.

For more information about the exhibition visit  
**<http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/landmarks>**