



George Belivanis and Domenic Melacrinis in the Boiler Station

Known as the "Admiral" (he was once known as "Captain Hooke") he believed he sacked more people and took on more people than most managers would ever know.

One person who he could have quite easily sacked was Arthur Murphy. Arthur was driving a loader and almost reversed over this chap watching him work. After yelling out, "you old bastard, do you want to get bloody run over!" he discovered the next day that the "old bastard" was Gus Hooke, the new manager!

That was not the only occasion when Arthur was worried during his 31 years at Pymont. In about 1948 or '49 he was cleaning the sugar box and fell in. Buried in sugar up to his waist, he hung onto a bar above him. The hessian boots he wore were pulled down to his ankles and dragged through the shakers - had he lost his grip his feet and legs would have surely been crushed. Before they could switch the machine off, he was asked how long he could hold on. His reply - "forever!". In fact, they had to prise his fingers off the bar!

Cec Hendry had the knuckles of his right hand crushed in an elevator, but others were less fortunate. Max Bell, at the start of his term as manager in 1969, was faced with two deaths while Eric Hall lost his next-door-neighbour.

These tragic incidents had a dramatic impact on the development of systematic safety management at Pymont and other CSR establishments. In recent years, education and training of the whole workforce has been a central element of the safety program.

On odd occasions accidents happened which didn't hurt anyone but caused some product loss or required cleanups. Frank Righetti remembered Christmas Eve in 1974 when a pump was misdirected and 35 tons of liquor was pumped straight into the harbor. Another time 3000 gallons of treacle was spilt. To make matters worse, it was



Mid 1950s: Three Brown Boveri turbo-alternators supply the electrical power requirements, generating 6600 volts. The turbines are driven by high pressure steam from the boiler station. The boilers and turbines installed in the 1940s and '50s heralded a significant improvement in the refinery's methods of production.

Photo shows Sam Fenech at the Turbine control panel

1956: The refinery's capacity is 900 tons of sugar a day, compared with 70 tons a day in 1878.

1957: Monthly steam conferences have resulted in halving the steam per 100 tons of melt compared with nine years earlier. Steam blowing to waste was costing the company about 100 pounds a week.



1958: CSR sets up its own retail packaging plant, starting with 5lb packs. The pre-packed refined sugar is introduced to meet the steadily growing demand from the grocery trade - particularly self-service stores.

Photo shows Ica Valajcavska and Jeanette Mirabito packing Retail Brown Sugar in 1992



Above **Erecting bulk raw sugar unloading cranes, 1955**

Top right

Doug Glisovic, John Taylor and Salvatore Tropiano above the carbon plant, with views of the Glebe Island Terminal and Balmain in the background

Middle Right

Fireman: Brian Collis

Lower right
Gatekeeper: Peter Ruggeri



during a coal strike so there was no hot water to clean it up.

Even though it had been many years since most of the group had worked, few offered stories to incriminate themselves! Arthur, however, did admit that crane drivers occasionally had a nap when there were no ships to unload.

Frank sometimes led groups around the Refinery and during the seventies he led a group of school girls on a tour. He thought he would demonstrate a filter, but he didn't bother to ask the operator. It had been back-filled with water and when Frank went ahead and turned it on, the whole group was sprayed!

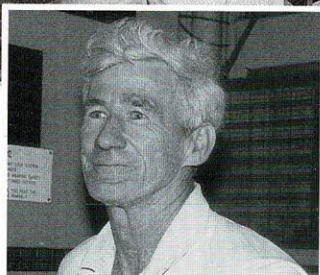
Most of the memories of former employees revolved around people, the people they worked with over many years. The social club was strong for many years and the annual picnic was a major event. It was held over the years at various locations, including Bronte Beach, Lion Park and Clifton Gardens. Cec Hendry remembered the company providing ferries to take everyone across to Clifton Gardens from Pyrmont.

When there were transport strikes, the company even picked up workers from their homes around Sydney to keep the Refinery running. Sugar transport trucks would collect people from their homes, take them to Pyrmont and home again later.

Everyone remembered the days when the horses were at Pyrmont. For Max Bell, a first and lasting memory of Pyrmont was the smell.

"It was unique - horses, sugar, the char mill, dust - Pyrmont had a unique aroma."

The friendships between people were strong at Pyrmont and even the industrial disputes were laughed about. There was the time when the metal trades union went out on strike. Union officials stormed out of a meeting when they thought someone said, "Put the boot in". Actually the person had said, "The boot is on the other foot"!



Management and other employees kept the plant going for eight weeks.

After two hours of reminiscing the group went for a tour of the Refinery and more memories kept coming back. Some of the last employees who had been with CSR for many years spoke and joked with their former work-mates and bosses.

While the end of the era was greeted with sadness by these men, all agreed the memories of CSR Pymont will be with them forever - happy memories, and memories of a place where they all felt proud to have spent much of their lives.

Late 1950s: A new tanker holding 3000 gallons of liquid sugar is built for Sugar Cartage Ltd. The tanker is required to meet increased demand for liquid sugar from the principal Sydney breweries.

Late 1950s: Bulk deliveries of granulated refined sugar begin in new road tankers which carry about 10 tons.

1959: Sugar Cartage Ltd becomes a wholly-owned subsidiary of CSR and, sentiment prevailing, its name reverts to McCaffery's.

1962: The company develops a special grade of liquid sugar for the soft drink trade and for other manufacturers who prefer sugar of higher quality than normal refined sugar. The new product is called Superfine liquid sugar.

1963: The engineers' stores section is reorganised to bring all readily-movable parts under one roof, and all items are classified and catalogued. This reduces the time taken to obtain parts.



1963: The old arch-type gates at the main entrance to Pymont are demolished and new, wider gates installed. The arches were too low for present-day loads and had been struck many times. The entrances were also too narrow to cope with the number of vehicles entering and leaving the refinery.

Photo shows Paul Valek at the Bowman Street gate.

MORE PYRMONT MEMORIES

From those
who were
there at the
finish

One of the most noticeable things about the Pyrmont workforce was the large number of employees who had spent most of their working lives there.

About 65 out of the 270 employees left at the Refinery when it closed had worked there for more than 20 years.

Of this number, three - Laurie Vella, Norm Monks and Ray O'Brien - had each worked at Pyrmont for more than 40 years.

At age 68, Laurie Vella had retired as a McCaffery's Transport truck driver but was invited back to fill the role of caretaker at the truck depot.

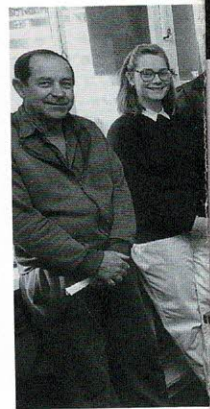


He joined the company, then known as Sugar Cartage Ltd, immediately after the Second World War. Horse-and-dray was the main form of transport for unloading the sugar bags from the ships moored at the Refinery wharf.

It was a labour intensive task, with the wharf filled with teams of drivers, loaders and Clydesdale horses.

Laurie was employed as a loader, working alongside Georgie Barnes, who went on to become the British Empire's welter-weight boxing champion. The back-breaking work of lifting the heavy 140-pound CSR sugar sacks no doubt contributed to Georgie's training.

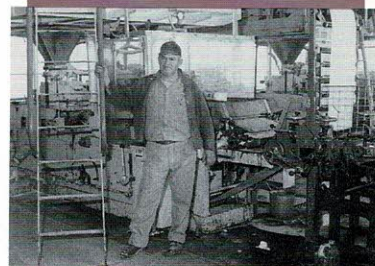
Norm Monks recalled another famous sportsman, an Indian wrestler named Jaget Singh, who used to carry a sugar sack under each arm and one in his mouth.





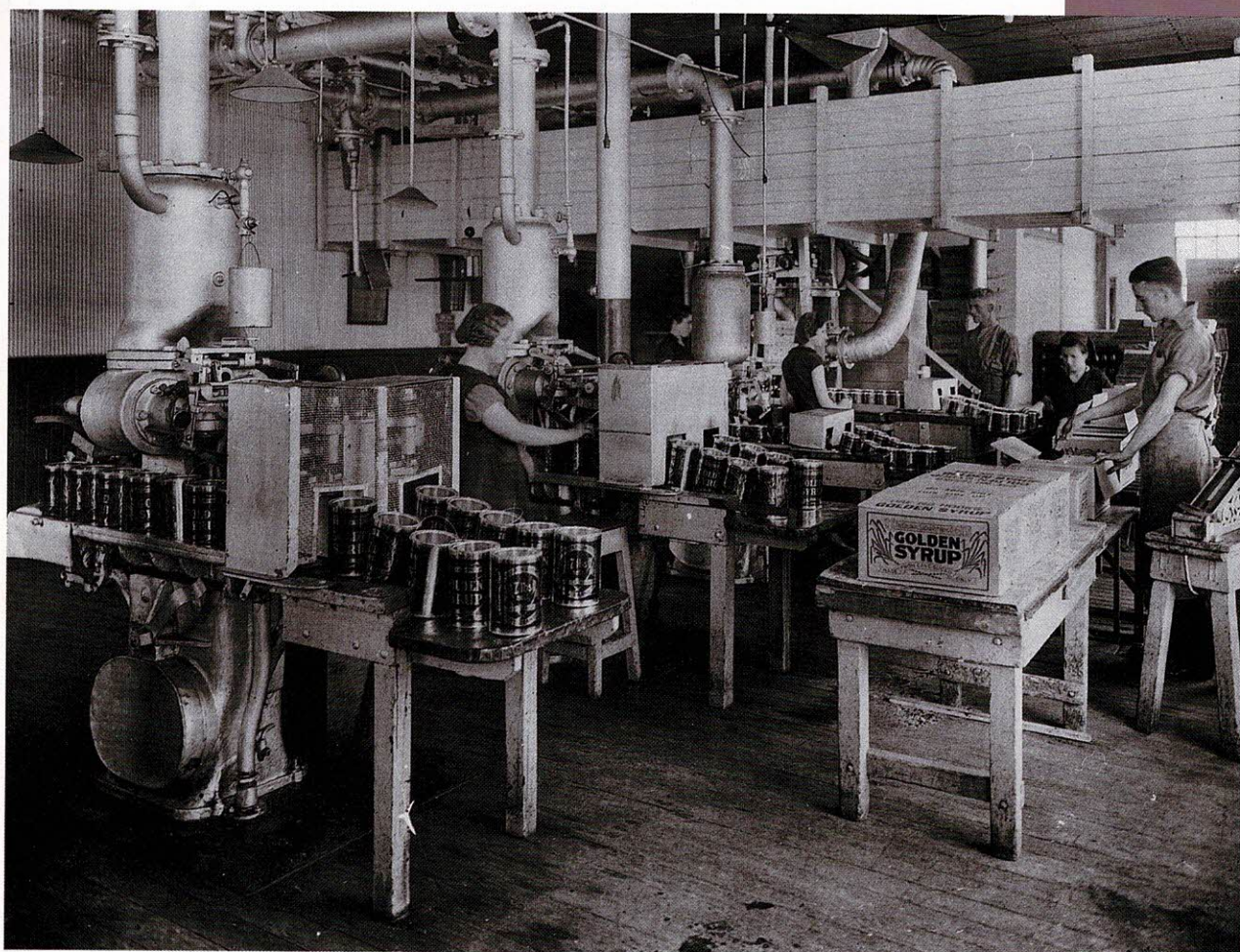
Far left *McCaffery's staff including (L to R) Jim Matthew, Laurie Vella, Carlo Gallassi, Scott Dorahy, Pauline Vaughan, Bevan Ineson, Bill Vaughan and Roger Tozer*

Left *The weighbridge office is one of the customer service hotspots. Pictured (L to R) are Jim Matthew, Louise Hoven, Dennis Halliday, Diane Walker, Marea Martlew, Bronwyn Frindle, Bill Vaughan, Tim Gotts, Norm Monks, Jack Righetti and Lisa Kane*



1964: Automatic collating equipment is installed to eliminate the bottle neck when arranging 2 lb refined sugar packets for parcelling. Designed by CSR, the system collates packets from two Hesser machines and delivers them ready for parcelling to the parcelling machine.

Photo shows Jimmy Foundas at the 2kg Hesser machine.



Above *Syrup packing*

Left and far left *Scenes from a bygone era - horses working on the wharves*

1965: A pilot plant to purify raw washings by a new process known as ion exclusion is installed at Pymont. Raw washings are the low-grade syrup spun off the raw crystals during the affination (washing) process.



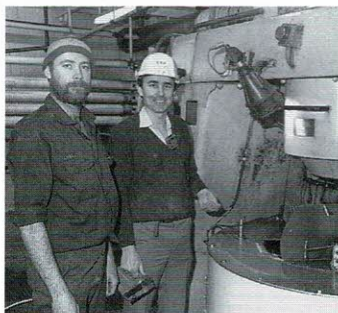
1965: A new system for supplying raw sugar to the process and a new affination station begin operating at Pymont. Both are controlled automatically, the rate of supply of raw sugar is reduced or increased according to the requirements of the affination station.

Photo shows Theo Van de Hoek attending an affination fugal



1965: McCaffery Services offers the first pneumatic delivery of refined sugar. The tankers are fitted with air blowers to deliver sugar at 20 to 30 tons per hour, to a height of 80 ft.

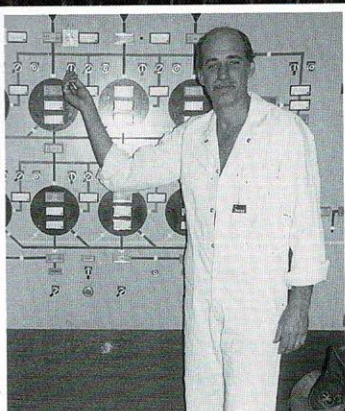
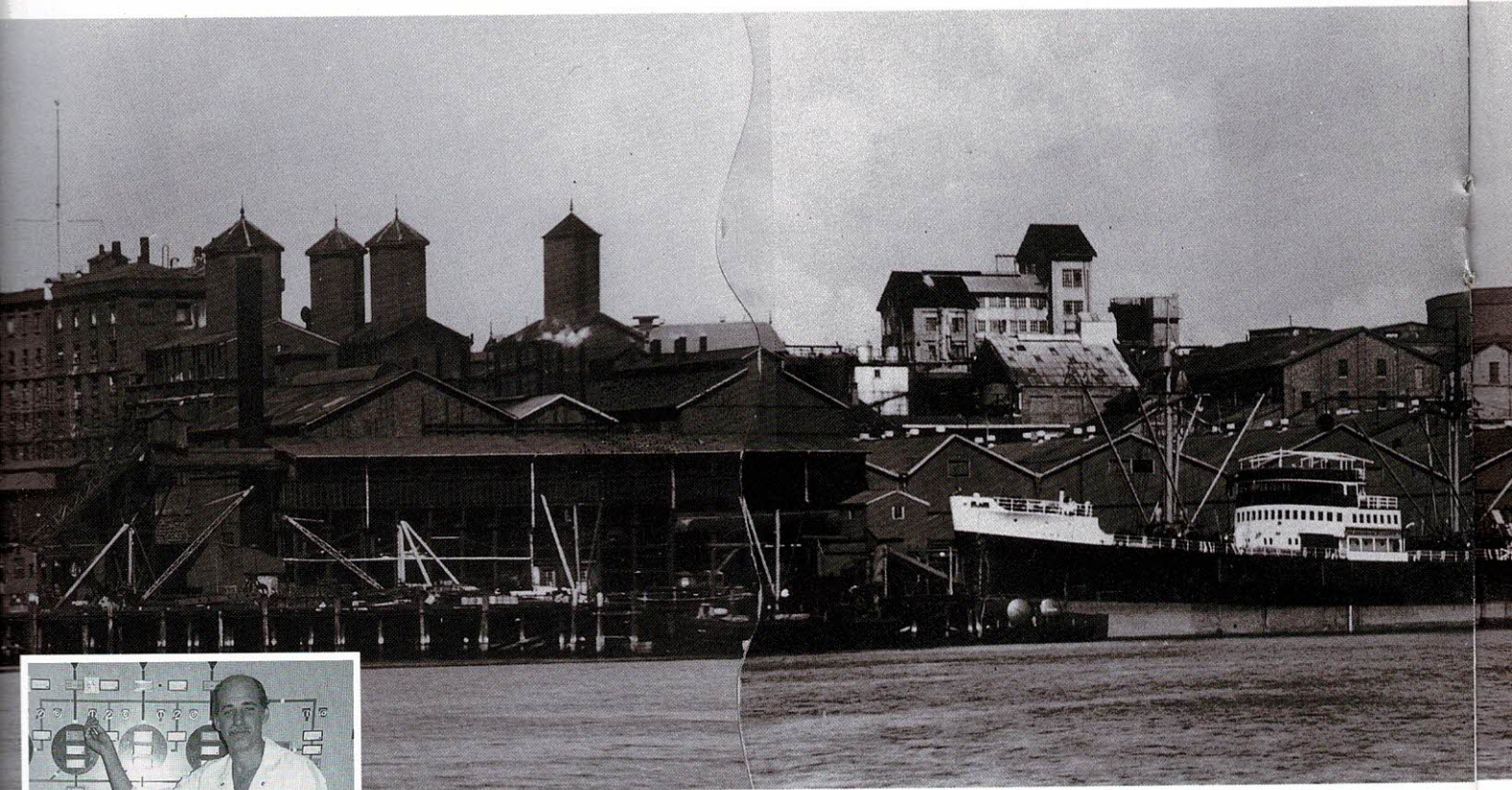
Photo shows Pictured with a modern pneumatic bulk sugar tanker are (L to R) Denis Davies, Ron Anderson, Bill Vaughan and Wayne Graham.



Mid 1960s: CSR refineries' first conventional conical basket continuous centrifugal is commissioned at Pymont on boilout duty.



Norm, 62, started at Pymont as a labourer packing sugar in the store-room. He finished his working days as a weighbridge clerk.



Above **John Taylor**, at the drier station control panel.

Above left '**Camira**', the last collier to be unloaded in 1992

Far left **Chris Lynch** and **Geoff Wilson** inspect a boilout fugal

Centre left **Crane drivers (L to R) Huseyin Gulle, Tony Centrangolo, Horst Giesel, Hassan Kemal, Keith Farrell and Chi Vho**

Lower left **Ivor MacDonald** in his shift fitter days

Rats were a major problem in the early days and it was not uncommon to see the giant rodents scurrying across the storehouse beams.

A rat catcher was employed full-time and his duties included looking after a large number of cats.

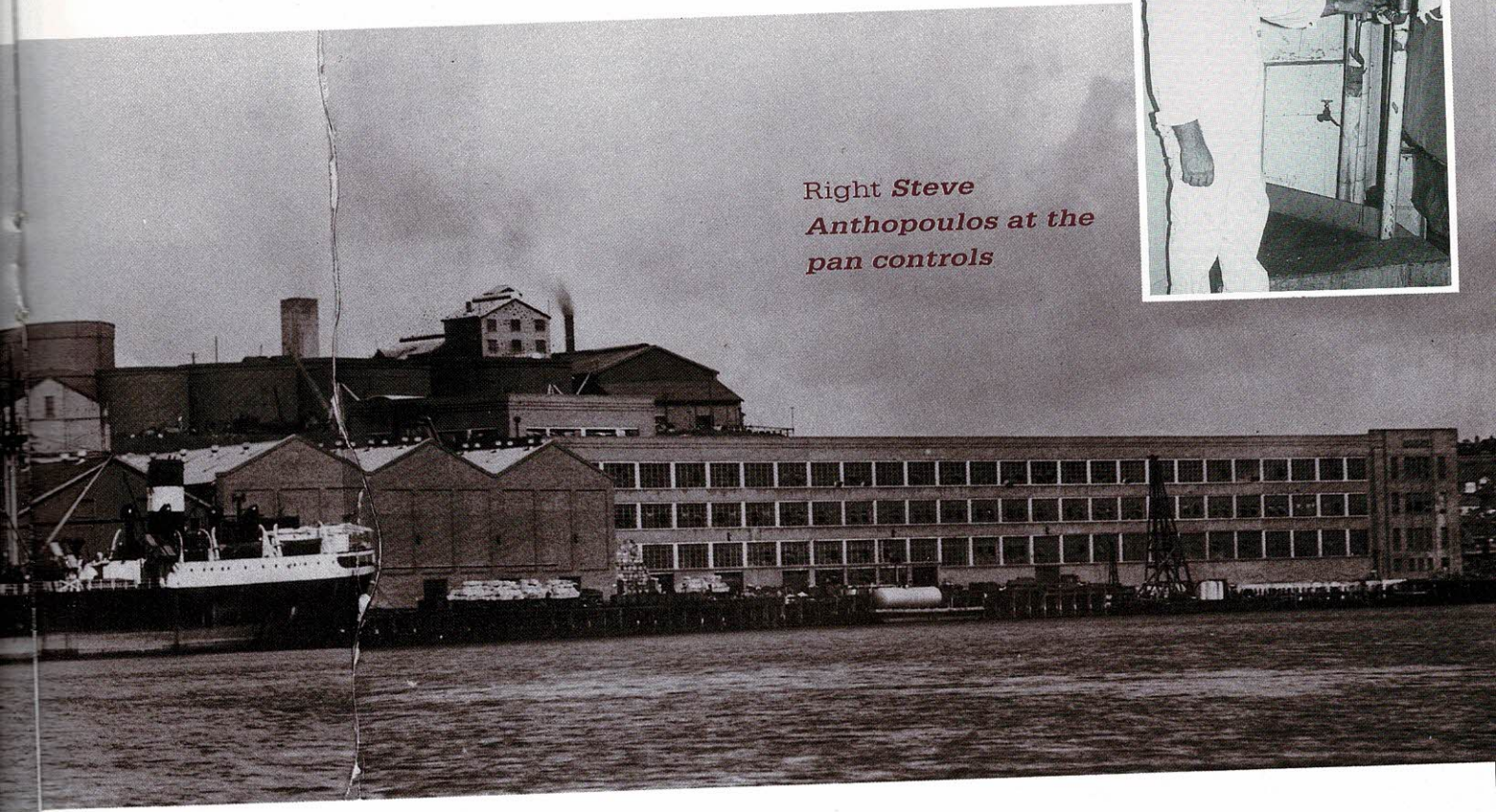
Another pest were pigeons. A device was introduced which produced a high-pitched noise designed to scare them away, but many of the pigeons were nesting and refused to budge. They became used to the noise and even appeared to like it.

The transport teams carried old bone, often riddled with maggots, for use in the refinery's bone mill. The bone was burnt to produce charcoal used in decolorising the sugar.

Laurie remembered when, each lunchtime, the road leading from the wharf to the main gate would be

choked with men and horses - a continuous stream of wharfies, transport men and sugar workers all heading for one of three pubs.

Right **Steve Anthopoulos** at the pan controls



Below **The sugar workers take a well earned break**



About 1400 people were employed at the "Sugar House", as everyone called it then. It seemed to Laurie that everyone in Sydney had worked in the Sugar House at one time or another.

Cottages owned by CSR and occupied by Refinery workers stood across from the front gate, where the car park is now located.

Right *The horse teams were phased out in the 1950s and replaced with a fleet of Morris trucks*

Far right *Paymaster Ray O'Brien (left) and Personnel Services Supervisor Glen Capelin*

Below *Guests enjoying Open Day 1992*



It was like a self-contained village, with a bakery, fruit shop, barber's shop, chemist, delicatessen, takeaway food shop and newsagency all servicing CSR.

A nursing sister was employed full-time and a doctor visited the Refinery every morning. Few employees took sickies because they knew they could obtain a free consultation at work.

The old-timers would thrill Laurie with stories from the days before the Harbour Bridge was built, when they would lead teams of eight horses on punts, in often hazardous weather, to cart sugar to North Sydney.

The day came when Laurie earned the right to learn how to drive a dray led by a team of three horses - "quite an education for a bloke from Balmain".

One of the occupational hazards was when horses fell from the wharf into the Harbour.

A driver named Darcy Peterson became a local hero when he rescued one of his horses, "Rosey", from the water. He was awarded a medal for his bravery and Mr Hallstrom, the philanthropist who was associated with developing the Taronga Park Zoo, gave Darcy 200 pounds.

A similar thing happened a little while later involving George Bannen, who almost drowned trying to save his horse. Expecting a pat on the back for his efforts, he was devastated by the reaction of "old Mr McCaffery", who said he would have preferred the horse had died so he could claim the insurance money. George was never the same after that, according to Laurie.



CSR took control of Sugar Cartage Ltd in the mid-1950s and gradually replaced the horse teams with Morris trucks. Many of the horses were sent to the knackery and most of the drays

were burnt in a huge bonfire which lasted for weeks. The rest of the horses and equipment were sold "up the bush".

Ray O'Brien, 59, also started with Sugar Cartage. He was the paymaster for 30 years, moving down the road to the Refinery pay office 11 years ago.

He recalled giving the workers four shillings lunch allowance each day, which was deducted from their pay at the end of the week.

Electrical Superintendent Allan Burton spent 35 years at the Refinery, starting at age 16 as an electrical apprentice.

1968: CSR Sugar Cubes are made available to the retail trade. The move is accompanied by a large advertising campaign. Demand has been greater than the wrapping machine can supply in a double shift and another wrapping machine is on order.

1968: Pyrmont begins to supply about 20,000 tons of refined sugar a year to the US Army for allied forces in the Pacific area. The containers and pallets are specially made to the US Army specifications.

1968: The company begins converting refinery packing stations so that sugar can be packed in 70 lb multiwall paper bags instead of 70 lb hessian bags and 140 lb jute sacks.

1971: An automatic bag packing system is installed to pack the 70 lb bags at the rate of 20 per minute.



1972: Deliveries of refined sugar in 30 kg instead of 70 lb bags begin - the first metric conversion in the sugar industry.

Photo shows (L to R) Vince Rossello, Louis Lorquet, Vrej Varvachtian and Jack Righetti at the 25 kg packing line. The weight of sugar packed in multiwall bags was changed from 30 kg to 25kg in 1992.

1973: The refinery makes some old-style loaf sugar for display in one of Australia's oldest buildings, Experiment Farm Cottage in Parramatta. Loaf sugar was one form in which refined sugar was marketed before the invention of the centrifugal.

Below **Over the years, Pymont Refinery maintained a commitment to training apprentices. John Colenso (back right) is shown with a group of apprentices being trained in 1983**



Above **Electrical Superintendent Allan Burton (far left) supervises installation of wiring for the change to a depot**

Top far right **Front end loader driver Chi Vho**

Far right **Martinho Esteves preparing to palletise brown sugar**

Right **Guests at the last 20 year dinner (1992), (L to R) Cemal Mustafa, Hanife Mustafa, Brian Nichols, Hasan Kemal and Nesla Kemal**



"There were apprentices employed in virtually every trade imaginable. We went through the CSR training school to learn the right way to do things, before being put with the tradesmen who then wanted to

show us all the short cuts and bad habits," Allan said.

Sugar cubes were cut by hand from tablets six-inches long by one inch square. Allan joked they took two weeks to dissolve in the cup. These days, a machine forms the sugar into perfectly shaped cubes which dissolve very quickly.

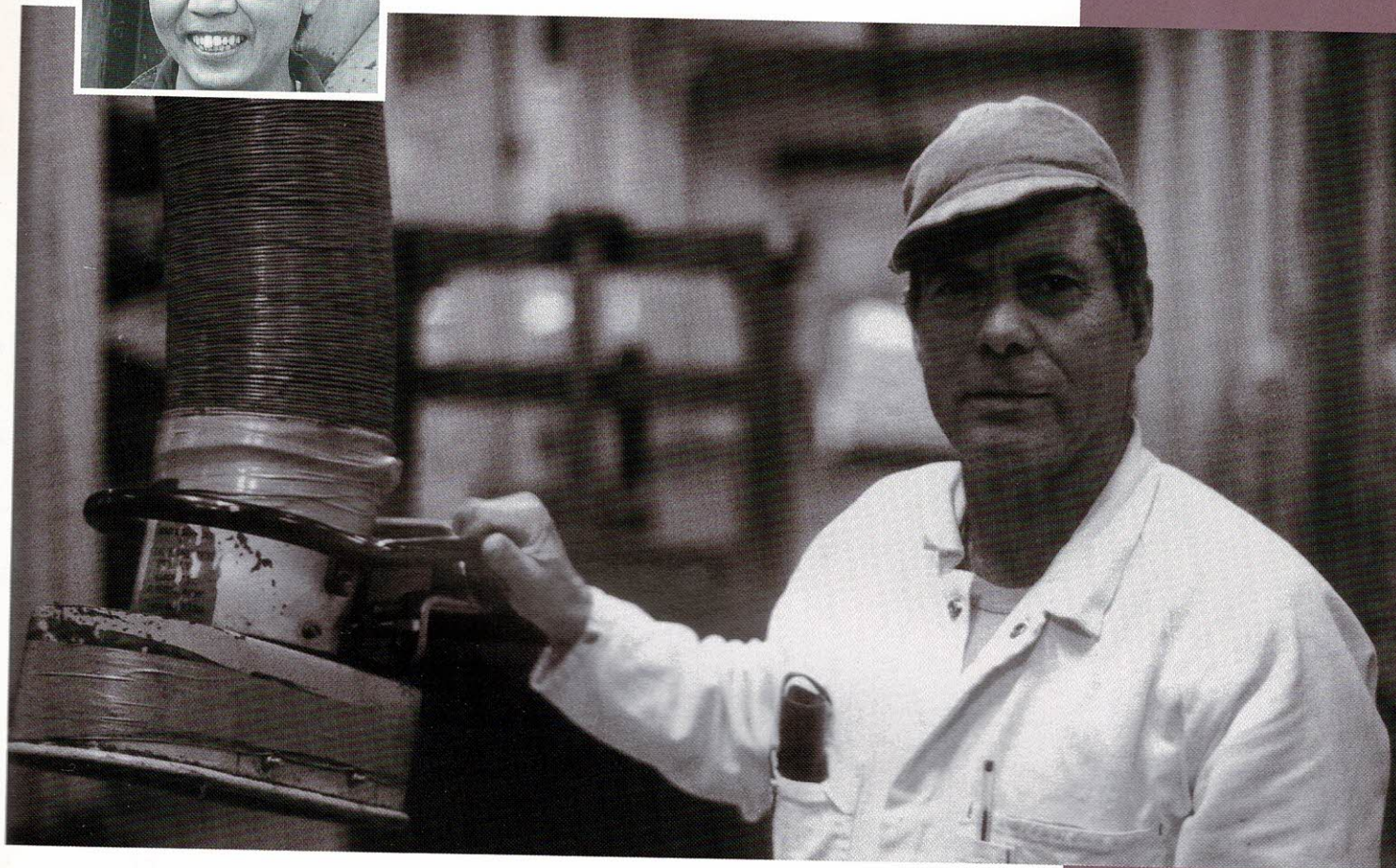
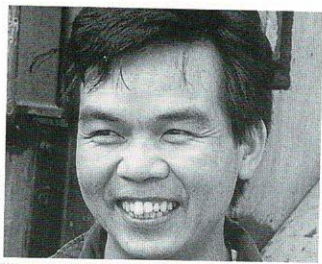
The great strength of Pymont, according to Allan, had always been the "great bunch of people, at all levels".

This helps explain why people like Allan stood by the company over so many years. Whole families were involved in the refinery's running, often spanning several generations.

One of the best-supported social occasions was the annual dinner for employees who had been at the Refinery for 20 or more years.

But like any large company, CSR had its share of industrial troubles.

Industrial action was virtually unknown before the 1960s, but the workforce gradually became more unionised until there was a closed shop in the metal trades.



The most serious dispute involved an eight-week strike over the fact that a pay increase for CSR employees in Queensland had not flowed on to NSW. Apprentices and senior staff kept the plant running throughout the strike.

Most disputes resulted in only one or two-day stoppages, becoming more frequent in the last eight years as CSR started to rationalise its operations.

Any workforce has its share of characters and Pyrmont Refinery appears to have had more than its fair share.

Allan remembered a lanky electrical engineer, well over six foot tall, who bore an uncanny resemblance to the English comedian, John Cleese. He even had some of Cleese's mannerisms, including the famous



1977: An automatic palletiser is installed, making the operation of filling 30kg bags with sugar, stacking them on pallets and fork-lifting them into store one of the most efficient operations in the world.

Photo shows new palletiser operating in 1977

1977: A \$1.2m baghouse filter is installed to filter out smoke and dust emitted from the coal-fired boilers. No smoke is now emitted from the chimney, only colourless gases.



Top Pictured at the Brown Sugar Packing machines are (L to R) Du Thanh La, Michael Prasad, Edgar Farol, Joe Frade, Greg Zanardo, Joe Budanovic, Yavuz Turkoz and Robert Barnett. In recent years Pymont manufactured most of Australia's brown sugar
Top far right Assistant Fireman Joe Sykora

Far right The 'Auto Pack' floor where 70 and 140 pound bags of refined sugar were packed in the 1950s and 1960s

Above Commercial staff (L to R) Libby Moore, Maree Ross, Shirley Jones, Malcolm Sabine and Pina Mangion. 'There are no secrets from us'

Right Production staff in the main laboratory (L to R) Berice Maclay, Michelle Duff, Irena Skarzynski and Tony Harris

"funny walk". The man was nicknamed "Basil", after Cleese's classic character, Basil Fawlty.

Shirley Jones, the data entry purchasing clerk, came to the Refinery 30 years ago. For 19 of those years, she worked with her sister, Lyn Minton, who was the assistant purchasing officer.

"The boss was a bit reluctant to have sisters working together at first, because he thought we'd fight, but we've always got on fine," Lyn said.

Their office behind the storeroom was uniquely placed with a view over Wharf 25 - a source for great entertainment, judging by the stories the sisters have to tell.

The water police station is at the end of the wharf, but Shirley and Lyn recalled when the site was occupied by a rough wharfies' hotel. They came to work one morning

to find one of the drunken wharfies had broken in and found a place to sleep.

On another occasion a truckie fell asleep at the wheel and awoke to find his truck had rolled off the wharf and into the harbour. His truck was filled with meat, which created a bad smell around the wharf area for days afterwards.

The sisters had to run for their lives once when a ship attempting to dock at Wharf 25 over-shot the mark and its bow came close to smashing through the office window.

