

Fire causes \$1m damage to city sugar refinery

An electrical fault is believed to have started a fire which caused damage estimated at \$1 million to \$1.5 million to CSR Ltd's New Farm sugar refinery late yesterday.

Fire units were called to the scene about 5.40pm, when a worker reported smoke coming from the northern end of the huge sugar warehouse.

Firemen entered the building, climbed an internal set of ladders and took hose lines to attack the fire from the building's gantry.

A hydraulic platform outside the building with a telescopic pump and two firefighting jets also helped to contain the blaze.

The blaze was quickly brought under control but the sugar piles were extensively damaged.

The Administrative Services Minister, Mr Cooper, inspected the scene last night.

A spokesman for his department said between 2000 and 5000 tonnes of



raw sugar were destroyed.

Estimates put the damage bill at \$1M to \$1.5M but it could be much higher, the spokesman said.

Structural damage to the building is estimated at \$100,000 with one wall partly burnt out and a large section of the roof gutted.

Fire Brigade Superintendent Frank

Sloman said the fire had been hard to get at.

"It was hard work for men to climb the stacks of sugar and operate a support jet and check the extent of the fire," he said.

"There appears to have been an electrical problem."

CSR's New Farm operations manager, Mr

Peter White, said 25,000 to 30,000 tonnes of sugar were stockpiled in the building.

The Sugar Board chairman, Mr John Andrews, said New Farm supplied sugar into the Brisbane market.

Story and photo courtesy of The Courier-Mail, 8 November 1988

■ Aftermath of the 1988 fire.

The photo shows how the fire buckled the steel gantry high up near the ceiling of the store, with the melted raw sugar mountains below.



Quality assurance – caring for the consumers

When the New Farm Sugar refinery opened in 1893, there was a two-storey building containing the manager's office, general office, chemist's laboratory and a room for cutting and sewing hessian bags.

In 1993, though there have been changes, modifications, refurbishments and extensions, the same building still houses refinery offices.

For a large part of the century, many administrative staff worked from an office in the city. In the 1970s, all branch staff were moved to New Farm and the laboratory which was on the second storey was moved to its present site.

For many years the laboratory was a training ground for refinery personnel. Current operations manager, Glenn Cohen started in the laboratory in 1971. He is quick to point out other staff members who got their start in the laboratory.

Commercial manager Julie Fox, quality coordinator Lyn Zipf and pay officer Anne-Maree Maguire all began their CSR careers in the laboratory.

"The lab always had a high profile role in two ways. One was making sure we were controlling the process and the other was as a training ground," Glenn Cohen said. "People like myself started in the lab and got to understand the process technically and then moved on to other areas," he said.

"In those days, people would work in the lab while they finished off their degrees and then move into the factory as a supervisor," Glenn said.

However, since the 1970s that training role has changed.

"Nowadays, we take on graduates when they finish university, train them in factory operation for a period, and a small amount of their training is in the laboratory," he said.

The laboratory now offers career development in different ways. Vicki Yeo started as a packer, before becoming the canteen operator. She then spent a year as a relief analyst in the laboratory and has since become a full-time laboratory analyst.



■ Above: laboratory and process staff with Glenn Cohen, the current operations manager, at a going-away party when he transferred to Chelsea refinery in 1987.

■ Below: the lab team of the mid 1970s at work. Left to right: Sue Harrower, Julie Fox, Glenda Williams, Linda Bowen.





■ Launch of CSR Quality Assurance program, AS 3902 in April 1992.

Everyone from the refinery was at the Riverside Ballroom, New Farm to participate in the launch.

The program included presentations from customers and group discussions on the implementation of the program.

The laboratory today

In the 1990s, the CSR laboratory has expanded its role in monitoring the sugar production process to also improving the final product to meet consumer expectations.

Laboratory staff sample and analyse the sugar seven days a week in the constant effort to fulfil customer and CSR's requirements. Six laboratory analysts are in hourly contact with refinery staff, monitoring colour, grain size and purity.

Senior laboratory analyst Julie Haines says the most satisfying part of her job is detecting flaws in the process and getting them fixed immediately – saving the company money and giving the customer a better product.

The chances of finding and averting flaws are maximised with the laboratory tapping into every aspect of sugar production at the refinery. Laboratory staff take and analyse sugar samples at every stage including receiving, refining and despatch.

Maintaining and improving quality

The main function of the laboratory is to ensure the right quality of refined sugar is maintained.

"It's basically a quality assurance check of the process, as the sugar goes through," Glenn Cohen said.

"Sugar can decompose fairly readily if the temperature is too high or the pH is out of control. We monitor that very closely. It's a highly technical process and because the value of the product is fairly high, it's important to keep close tabs on it."

Over the last couple of years, CSR has embarked on a quality program which is not only about ensuring product quality but quality management as well. This includes seeking certification to AS 3902 which is an international quality standard.

"We realised we had to change the way we served our customers and the way we involved people in their everyday work and decision making. As part of the quality program everyone on-site has documented their work procedures and the next step is to start improving the way we do things. We want to get people working as teams, improving the level of cooperation within teams and between teams," Glenn said.

"We are now embarking on our 'Building in Quality' program aimed at achieving this."

"Over the past hundred years the style of the working environment at New Farm has changed, but now more than ever it is the people and the way they work together that will determine our degree of success."

■ Quality coordinator Lyn Zipf displaying the Quality Systems manual.



“Now we concentrate on making sugar”



■ Workers from the Workshop circa 1936.

Standing left to right: Jack Beattie, Len Davis, Tom Strange, Bill Spence and Harry James.

Sitting: Skiff Gillett, Alan Broadhurst, Sid Johnson and Bob Isaacs

Bob Isaacs: “It was fairly primitive. Machinery was pretty old. We used to inherit a lot of stuff from other refineries. My uncle, who was the second engineer at Melbourne, installed new boilers in Melbourne and the old boilers were sent to New Farm. A year later he was transferred to New Farm as chief engineer. He ended up having to install the old boilers he had just got rid of in Melbourne.”

Keeping the refinery operating efficiently is the primary purpose of the engineering department. This falls into two main functions – maintenance and capital works.

Henry Segerius, engineering manager, says that although the role of engineering remains more or less the same, what engineers do today is quite different from a hundred years ago.

“In the past they used to manufacture and make parts and equipment. Now we concentrate on making sugar. There are other people who are experts in making and supplying parts and equipment,” Henry said.

“Before we’d have carpenters, painters, plumbers and other trades – now we have fitters, electricians and riggers. We contract out those other services.”

Henry Segerius puts changing practices in engineering down to the fact that the world is much smaller now.

“You can get a spare part from overseas in a couple of days whereas in the past it would have to come by ship. You couldn’t have your factory stop while you’re waiting for a ship to come from overseas. I think that’s what has changed,” he said.

■ The huge shadow board inside the Engineering Workshop in 1957.



■ Workshop personnel circa 1957.

Ken Martin identified most of the people in this photo.

Ken says, "All these workshop personnel made a big contribution to the CSR Company in the 1940s, 50s and onwards. I knew 90 per cent of them and found them colourful and wonderful to work with."

Standing left to right: Bill McCarthy, Dave Everson, Eric Lack, Tom Nolan, Dave Massey, Ron Burston, Ken Niven, Cliff O'Sullivan, Harry James, Jack Fulton, Bob Beattie, unknown, Pop Cranston, Jimmy Pringle, Jack Beattie, Alan Wilson, Arthur Hughes, unknown, Chester Kanonski, Syd Keeble, Jack Mackie, Philton Stanton, Glen Mann, Mic O'Brien, Arthur Woodhouse, unknown, Bob Wright, Arthur Watkins, Jack Valonoti, Basil, Graeme Bell, Peter Christison, unknown, unknown.

Sitting and squatting left to right: George Collins, unknown, Wally Cranston, Bill Elms, Bill Matthews, Jack Farrimond, George Normen, Dave Anderson, unknown.



The engineering department in 1993 consists of six engineers and 22 tradespeople, including four apprentices.

As well as being responsible for machine repairs and maintenance, the engineering department also works in partnership with operators and production people, with operators carrying out some of the minor maintenance tasks.

Training and apprenticeships

The first person to be apprenticed at the New Farm sugar refinery was Campbell Cowley who was indentured on 1 July 1898 to the engineering trade.

According to his indenture document, in his first year at the refinery, Campbell was paid 5 shillings a week. This amount increased each year until his fifth year when he was paid the grand sum of 25 shillings a week.

From the beginning, CSR accepted the responsibility to train tradespeople. In the past there was a great variety of apprentices – from carpenters to sugar boilers. Many people would continue working at the refinery when their apprenticeships were finished.

Now, only a few apprentices are taken on and the policy is to send them out into other jobs after they finish their apprenticeships.

Another change in policy is offering adult apprenticeships.

"Currently we have two adult apprentices, Steve Catalano and Peter Kenman. Peter's electrical apprenticeship is his second at New Farm, so when he's finished he will have two trades. That's really where industry is headed, to multi-skilled tradespeople," Henry Segerius said.

"Being both an electrician and a fitter will have its benefits," said Peter.



The last plumber

Bob Beattie (left) joined New Farm sugar refinery as an apprentice plumber in February 1945. The last plumber to work for the refinery, Bob spent his whole working life there until his sudden death in November 1991.

Living in New Farm and loving his work, Bob had not relished the thought of retirement. He had followed in his father's footsteps. Jack Beattie had worked as a plumber at New Farm from the 1920s until his retirement in 1968.

Bob's son Brian also worked at New Farm. He joined as an apprentice plumber in 1972 and left at the completion of his apprenticeship. Together the three generations of Beatties accumulated over a century of service.

"I will certainly be better equipped to analyse the cause of machinery breakdowns and to understand the complete operations of CSR's equipment," he said.

This type of employment is part of New Farm refinery's commitment to providing training opportunities for its employees.

"We are now in an era where there will be continual change and we will need to continually improve our skills to keep up with technology," Henry said.

The future of engineering

The engineering department has always had an important role at CSR's New Farm refinery – a role that's still developing.

"In the past we would either run to failure then repair or replace parts periodically. Now we are moving towards condition monitoring," said Henry Segerius.

With condition monitoring, systems will be put in place which can predict failures so equipment can be repaired before it fails.

There will also be a change to computerised maintenance. A history of repairs and maintenance to equipment and plant will be held in a computer system. This will assist budgeting, justification for replacement of equipment and improve scheduling of work.

The other development in engineering is how the department is managed.

Now responsibility is delegated to all members of the engineering team who are developing a team approach to problem solving.



■ Above: constructing the Carbon Plant. One of the most significant changes to the refining process at New Farm was the construction of the Granular Carbon Plant. This replaced the outdated Char End, which was the chief decolourising step in the refining process.

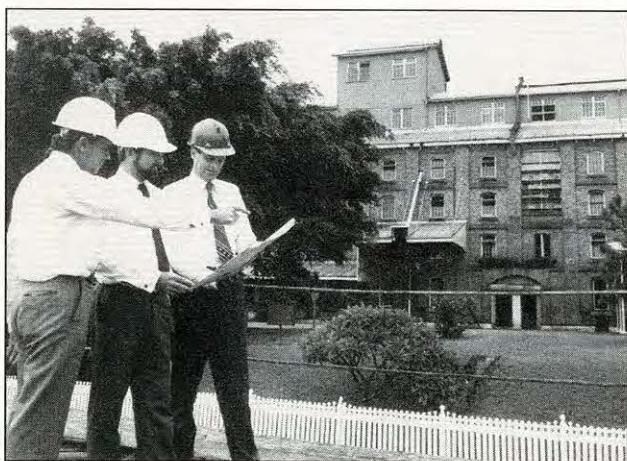
The carbon plant was designed and constructed by CSR employees. New Farm engineer, Bill Alcorn was responsible for construction and shift process supervisor Peter Housecroft was responsible for commissioning the plant.

Construction took about 18 months and the plant was commissioned in 1984.



■ Above: the installation and commissioning of four robots in the packaging section was a major achievement for the engineering team in 1992/93.

CSR New Farm is one of the leading Australian industries in its use of palletising robots.



■ Engineers with manager Arthur Graham in the late 1970s.

A Community of workers with community spirit

One of the strongest features of CSR at New Farm has always been a lively community and social life.

For decades, the major social event was the annual refinery picnic, a tradition going back to early this century, when refinery workers and their families went to Sandgate by train.

The Sandgate chapter ended after a fight among picnickers in the local pub. They found the police waiting for their train when they got back.

From then on, refinery workers and their families were picked up from the wharf on a boat called the 'Koopa' and taken to Redcliffe for the picnic.

Sporting events, known as the 'Refinery Championships' included athletics, sack races and 'throwing the broom' and were followed by a dance.

■ The CSR picnic – an eagerly-awaited event. It is thought that this photograph dates from the time picnics were held at Sandgate, up to 1935.



■ From the 1960s on, the refinery social club organised a Christmas party and tree every year, with presents for employees' children.

In 1990, the children's Christmas party was held at the Woolshed in Ferny Grove.



"On the way home we danced on the boat as well," said former employee Len Bell.

The picnic tradition began to fade out in the early 1960s, when the Koopa stopped running. The annual picnic was eventually replaced by a Christmas party.

A sense of fun

Planned social activities were supplemented with jokes and mischief.

Norm Waye recalls one Christmas-time, 'when spirits were high', several workers decided to get the local practical joker who was 'always doing terrible things to everybody and never getting caught'.

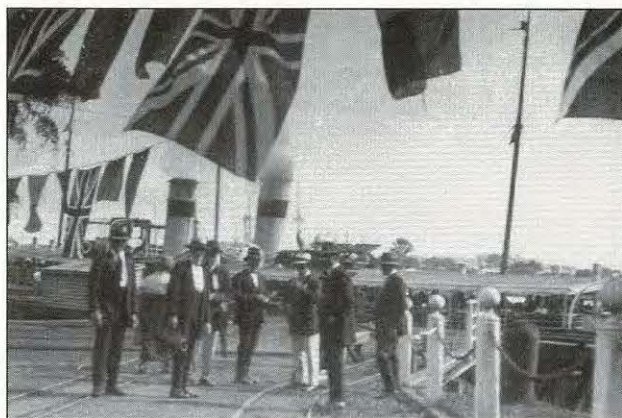
"We watched him come across the yard and we had two buckets waiting inside the door for him. Who should come through the door but our boss. He pushes the door open and we say 'We've got you this time' and let the water go. Our boss never spoke to us for three or four days, but he was all right after that."

"They were pretty rough days, they were hard days, but they were good days," said former commercial manager Alan Johnson.

Making the best of the system was also a challenge for Alan Johnson, whose main job when he started at the refinery 39 years ago as an office boy was to collect orders from head office in the city twice a day.

Alan was supposed to make the round trip on the tram.

"I used to get five shillings a week for the tram fare. So I brought my bike to work and I used to ride to and from the city and pocket the five bob," he said.



■ The steamer Koopa, which transported the workers to Redcliffe on the occasion of the annual picnic. In the picnic's later years, the destination changed to Bishop and Bribie Islands.



■ The canteen not long after its construction in 1952. These days there are fewer tables and most people eat their lunch on the verandah enjoying the views of the river while others play table tennis and pool in this room. The canteen is managed by the social club committee with Judith Bleasel, the current canteen operator.

■ Xmas party of retirees in 1982. Retirees are invited to join employees at the annual Christmas party.

Left to right: Bill Matthews, Eddie Collins, Jack Mackie, Len Bell, Tommy Nolan, Arthur Woodhouse, George Manson, Syd Gilbert, Kevin Smith and Alan McCormack.



The social fabric

Many former employees remember the old refinery swimming pool down by the wharf.

"There used to be beautiful sand on the bottom of that swimming pool," said Eric Ingram.

"We used to swim there, sometimes completely naked. There used to be complaints from the other side of the river."

With the pool on-site, "everyone used to learn to swim", remembers Len Bell.

"They'd throw you in. I remember being grabbed by the hair to pull me up when I was going under."

"George Heywood had a net and we used to catch prawns off the wharf at night. We took them to the boiler station to have them cooked," he said. Len also remembers catching perch.

"With hindsight I would say that it was a happier workplace than later when paternalism went by the board in favour of our computerised, Americanised world," said Bob Isaacs.

■ Below: an early version of the Safety Record Board.

DEPARTMENT	NO LOST TIME INJURIES	THOSE INJURED FOR RECORD	NO LOST TIME INJURIES FOR PREVIOUS BEST
BAG ROOM	14 325		2 DAYS
CHAR. END.	14 173		3 DAYS
CLARK'S COTT.	2 131		
CLUB HSE	93 187		
MELT HSE	36 246		
PAN HSE	4 46 02		
RZW STORE	8 61 12		
REFIN. SHED	7 1 193		
SACK SHED	16 262		
WORKSHOP	167 218		
	14 142		

In the early years of CSR, the rungs on the power ladder were much more defined.

"The manager was right on a pedestal. You wouldn't look him in the eye in those days," said Alan Johnson.

"We always referred to the manager as Mister, there was always a very strict line drawn. They always had time to have a few words with you, most of them," said Bob Isaacs.

Part of New Farm community

Throughout the one hundred years, the refinery has been an important part of the whole New Farm community.

Many employees lived in the area, including the managers who were housed on-site.

In his early years at the refinery, John Cuk used to run errands for the manager's residence as well as the refinery.

He remembers how his limited understanding of English led to embarrassing situations with local shopkeepers.

One day he got orders to go down to the local grocer, instead of the butcher, to get some brains.

When John asked the grocer "Do you have any brains?", the shopkeeper was not impressed.

Nowadays, John has made peace with the local people. He still lives in New Farm and volunteers his time and expertise to run judo classes for New Farm children in a shed provided by CSR.

John believes judo is a great way for children to learn self-discipline and confidence, while keeping fit.

"I do it for love. I do it for the benefit of the children," he said.

Caring for workers

John Cuk's role at the refinery now is the occupational health and safety officer. He says that a lot of the safety requirements introduced by recent legislation have been in place at the refinery for years.

"We've come a long way since men worked in bare feet and hessian-bag aprons. Protective clothing is now part of daily routine," he said.

The first safety officer was appointed part-time in the 1950s. He was Alan Wilson who also worked in engineering. He was followed by draftsman Bob Isaacs who took over full-time and then by John Cuk in November 1979.

Safety first, not Production first, is the motto of the current refinery manager.

The refinery's safety record has greatly improved with innovative programs which give awards to workers for improving safety standards.

The refinery has been involved in the National Safety Council Five Star Program for many years and has achieved four stars under the council's rating system. John says the refinery is close to achieving five stars – the best a company can get under the safety council program.



■ The CSR safety committee with National Safety Council officials.

Left to right: Bill Alcorn, Ted O'Shea, Bob Duncan, Michael Brennan, Mark Eldridge, Sir William Knox, Ian Chisholm, Henry Silk, Billy Moo, Anna Poljak, Jenny Kunkel (now Lysiuk), and John Cuk.

Centenary celebrations

A centenary committee spent considerable time and effort preparing for CSR New Farm sugar refinery's 100th anniversary.

Special events marked the anniversary. A Centenary Bash was planned for 14 August 1993 for refinery employees and retirees. An Open Day was organised for 21 August for family and friends of employees and the residents of New Farm.

The centenary committee were Susan Carroll, Wayne Scott, Barry McIntosh, Leta Reiger, Ken Farquhar, John Palmer-Field and Narelle McFarlane.



■ Norm Morris (below left) and packing and logistics manager Ray Wimberley. Norm, a leading hand in the Brown Sugar Plant, received the Pride in Workmanship Award 1992 from the Rotary Club of New Farm. Ray said that Norm is the sort of person who is very enterprising and always looks for high standards not only in himself but also in others.



■ Above: the triumphant New Farm touch team.

Left to right:

Back Row: John Plowman, Steve Martin, Gerard Cooney, Terry Douglas, Ray Clarke, Paul Benecke.

Middle Row: Ray Wimberley, Richard McKee, Billy Edwards, Eric Gourley, Glenn Cohen.

Front: Brian Croyden, Steve Catalano, Richard Whiting, Mick Spratt and mascot Dino.

Sport

Sport plays a big part in CSR social life, with competitive cricket and football tournaments a major feature.

Cricket was most popular because, in the early years, football was not encouraged. "If you played and were injured your job was in jeopardy," says Bob Isaacs.

The refinery cricket team often played other organisations, as well as games within the refinery, where traditional rivalries between the workshop and the factory always added spice.

The refinery has had a touch football team in recent years culminating last year in a CSR competition involving twelve teams from other CSR

activities in Queensland.

New Farm supplied two teams for the competition held at the University of Queensland grounds. Operations manager Glenn Cohen described the event as "a knockout competition won by 'the Green Machine' from New Farm".

Another highlight in CSR sporting history was sending a cricket team to Sydney in the early 1980s to play the Pymont refinery.

"It was a bit like a State of Origin challenge and Queensland as usual won," said Glenn.

The refinery also has a gym which provides basic gym equipment for employees courtesy of John Cuk.

■ CSR's 1939/40 cricket team.

Front Row: H G Dunne, T Hynes, A W Isaacs, R W Shaw, A M Epps, G Brook, T Dunne.

Second Row: W Bell, W E Bell, T Flood, W Gibbs, J Porter, T Gray, K Hatton, G Heywood Snr.

Third Row: H J Heywood, S D Gardner, R C Dowd, E Lackey, W B Dunne, A C Gemmell, G E S Heywood.

Back Row: M Dixon, W B Grieve, W H Hinks, H G Dodds.

Inserts: W Coster, W C Brennan.



Receiving raw sugar

From the beginnings of the New Farm sugar refinery, many forms of transport were used to deliver raw sugar from the sugar mills.

One of the main reasons for building the refinery on the banks of the Brisbane River was so ships could be used for raw sugar transport.

Ships brought in the raw sugar in 140 pound hessian bags which were unloaded by wharfies onto the dock at New Farm.

According to Eric Ingram, who worked at the refinery from 1927 to 1978, the wharfies would land the sugar onto a small truck on rails known as a "jessy".

Eric says a Clydesdale horse would pull two loaded trucks to the Raw Store.

Arriving by rail

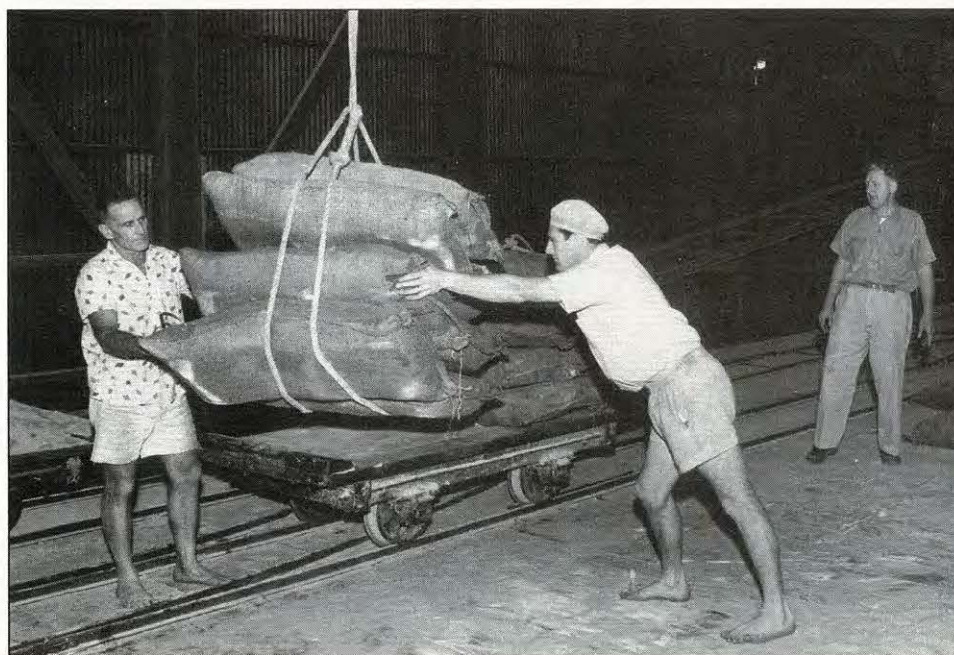
Sacks of raw sugar also arrived at New Farm by rail.

Initially, there was no rail link from the city and raw sugar arriving by rail was transferred by road from the city to New Farm.

CSR soon requested that the Queensland Government construct a rail link. Legislation was enacted in 1895 and the line was built two years later.



■ Above: ships similar to the one above were used to transport raw sugar to the New Farm refinery up until 1960 when bulk handling was introduced.



■ Slings sugar onto a truck is John Felesina (wearing the cap).

John started work at New Farm in 1956. Before coming to CSR, he had worked on a sugar farm in Bundaberg.

"I used to have a Zephyr Convertible then – used to be only three in Queensland. Cost me £1,800 then. Cutting cane you were making good money. I came down and everyone used to know my car around Brisbane..."

I started down the Raw Store... I did everything, I did stacking, I did slinging, loading the truck, pushing the truck, I did everything."

John still works as a process operator at the refinery.

Left to right: John Burr, John Felesina and foreman Eric Lack.

■ In the early days, raw sugar was received in wagons like this. This photo shows the condition of the sugar received from the Fairymead Mill.



The rail link came through Teneriffe to New Farm to serve not only the sugar refinery but also the growing number of industries and commercial enterprises in the area.

From 1897 until 1989, during the season from July to November, raw sugar would arrive at New Farm by rail.

But while the sugar refinery remained, other industries came and went.

By the 1980s, CSR was the only major rail user left in the area and the railway line had become uneconomic. The Brisbane City Council and developers called for the line to be scrapped.

The railway line was closed in 1989 and CSR swapped over to road transport only for the delivery of raw sugar. The trucks are much more flexible than rail which was subject to Queensland rail times and restrictions.

■ Right: receiving by 30 tonne conventional rail wagons. The wagons were covered with tarpaulins and unloaded by a two and a half tonne grab. The sugar dropped through the grill on to the conveyor.

Photo shows a worker taking a sample of raw sugar for testing in the laboratory.

