

ACT Heritage Library Manuscript Collection

Interview with Alan Christie - Timed Summary

ALAN CHRISTIE - TOPICS	TIMELINE (END)
Early cadetship – spent 18 months in workshops – one placement in Kingston Powerhouse – watch keeping (temperature and pressure) – mostly ‘hands-on’ as trades assistant – shifting coal wagons – disposing ash – building specialised brick shapes -	04:11
Repairing steam winch for moving rail trucks for unloading, etc	06:44
Repairing fire bricks for combustion chamber – making special moulds – relation to old ‘Admin building’ boiler -	10:30
Description of chain grate stokers – rationale – ash handling – use of ash around his time in Canberra	14:55
Use of ash around Canberra – as filler in non-load bearing concrete – East and West Blocks – Admin Building – Temporary Parliament House – filler for decoration of outside of houses Kingston and Manuka -	17:05
Reference to coke, how to make it, uses in steel, domestic heating, “coke berries” – ash was also used for landscaping, driveways, playing fields, tennis courts	18:55
Temperature, noise and smell – engine room, noisy - galleries around boiler room, very hot – sulphur smell everywhere	20:07
Moving from boiler room to engine room (Alternator hall) – like moving from outside to inside – pristine – painted – light and airy – relatively quiet – gantry and gallery around the machine – for inspection – reference to Brush turbine -	23:29
1950s – State of the art power station? – Christie thinks so, but at the end of that era – coal firing technology was up to date – pulverised fuel (not used at Kingston) was just being introduced to the power industry – discussion about the new pulverising technology – burned just like gas – did away with the steam interface – could be injected directly into turbines	26:49

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Vibration – very little in turbines	27:24
Whistle – widely heard – is it still sitting on roof? – used as starting and stopping signal for whole of Canberra workforce – could be heard all over town – does not know origin of whistle – i.e. rumours came from well known vessel?	30:12
Does not have any recollection of relation to NSW power system – initially no interconnection – decision to power Cotter Pumping with electricity – high voltage line required – possibly a first application for Australia? – 22Kv – 15 miles	32:51
People working at power station – his uncle George Saint – superintendent at the time Alan was there – mixed team of “new Australians” – George was north country man – North Umbria – number of brothers enlisted in war – George was gassed then repatriated to UK – came to Australia in 1920s? – Commercial fishing – came to power station as switch operator? – married his aunt in 1940 – from then on working at KPS – lived in flat roofed house in Canberra Ave – walking distance to work – during war wife took his meals to him – essential power supplies for HMAS Harmon (Transmitting at Belconnen and receiving at Symonston) made for very long hours on shift – Alan thought George was quite popular as superintendent – reference to unskilled workers at the plant – George remained as superintendent until station closed in 1957 (40:57)	39:56
Reference to attempted “bribe” of home grown vegetables delivered to his aunt – worker then asked if there might be some extra overtime available? – aunt referred them to her husband	40:41
Other names? – can’t recall unless particular event	
Safety and accidents – no accidents while he was there – very safe working area – war experiences had impact on workers – everybody took a lot of care – small pop in Canberra -	44:32
Number of staff on hand for a shift – 3 on night – up to 10 on day shift – maintenance of wash rooms – experience of his brother – keeping hand basins clean – need to teach how to do	49:42
1950 – 1954 – Time when economiser was added – Menzies came in 1949 – pop of Canberra was going to grow – need to increase efficiency of the station – coal was in short supply – coal miners strike – army brought in – additional shed for economiser - also new diesel generator sets – Blackstone – in separate building – could hear them running from his family home in Forrest – ‘quiet country town’	52:36
Recalls how he heard the first jet airplane – right at end of war – Meteor – came in from Goulburn – full throttle – banked over Cooma – came back over City at high speed – set the dogs to barking	53:50
Status of powerhouse – Did people realise the importance? – yes had status – three whistle blasts – 7:30, 12:00 and 5:00?	55:14
Had no recollection of station closing – was overseas – 1956 – 1959 – in that time NCDC	57:27

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had started – John Overall appointed – his hometown had “disappeared” in rampant population growth – went to 56,000 from 8,000 – fortunate to get into redevelopment of industrial infrastructure – work on water supply and sewerage – building services – space tracking stations	
Would he like machinery back again? – two esp. – very few operating steam engines – would be nice to have some examples – and brick making equipment – logistical problems of having <u>working</u> examples	60:51