



ACT Heritage Library Manuscript Collection

Interview with Don Thomas - Timed Summary

DON THOMAS - TOPICS	TIMELINE (END)
Introduction – migrated to Australia 1920 – at Powerhouse in 1930s – father associated with powerhouse 1921 or 1922 – worked on problem of Bellose-Morcombe machines running out of synch – more on father’s work – how Don came to Canberra – working with electrical firm in Melbourne – had a knack for working on motors and engines -	8:33
First work in Canberra 1935 – first job at Powerhouse – assistant in research section testing power meters– station not running – mentions cadet engineers that helped him there – description of meter section in Powerhouse -	15:29
Other things he did – oscilloscope – test elec motors – testing of Westinghouse circuit breakers – description of windings in certain transformers -	20:35
Was there for 2.5 years – machinery did start up once – could not determine why it was started – observations -	23:14
Whistle – names of some other workers there -	24:45
Various people who worked there – description of small hut facing switchboard – Ron Bisset and Tom Trevillian – both betting men – changed clock settings in workplace – not sure about synchronising time – wired up radio speaker and Ted Francis did a perfect fake call of race -	31:52
Discussion of Tom and Harry Trevillian – father and son – description of them – their car -	36:03
Other people who worked there in 1930s – mentions a number and their cars – one was overhauled in the Powerhouse each year -	40:21
Other things they did – switch board – various types of circuit breakers – testing and near electrocution when he stood up under wires	44:11
Description of being in station when operating – various pumps – various alternators – boiler room – ways of unloading coal – not sure of details – describes chain grate stoker –	54:34

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conveyor belts -	
Description of steam engines – triple expansion –double acting	56:58
Accidents – did not happen while he was there – describes one accident Friday afternoon – climbing a pole – forgot his safety belt had been released and fell from pole and died	58:22
Description of swimming at river -	60:06
Powerhouse status – studying while working -	62:58
PART 2	
Cadetships being cut - Spoke about Bill Gray – technical questions – learned enormous amount from him – describes study and getting a job – refused clerical position – eventually Mt Stromlo assistant (left powerhouse to take up position) -	6:08
Superheaters (pre-heaters) – description of Babcock-Wilcox boilers – pipe insulation was asbestos – description of noise of safety valve blowing was very intense – some confusion of process	11:32
economiser room – description –steps – Ron Bisset’s job was to scrape out the condensed tars –well earned money	12:18
Murdoch Macgregor – description of conduit in Causeway Houses -	14:48
General discussion of things discussed – swimming in River below outlet – water was warm and was used for swimming – somewhat disjointed -	17:38
Fallout and smoke from chimney – wanders onto other motors and pumps – goes down list -	19:39
Cotter pumping station – description of pumps – not much detail – requires detailed editing – too disjointed and detailed -	27:57
Humorous stories – Andy Fraser – eating room – recording voltmeter from Burrinjuck Power Station – big roll of paper - chart changed every month – but Andy tied the recording needle with thread (cotton) so it drew a steady line – thus “eliminating” the varying voltage which had been the worry – only discovered when the chart was changed – needs editing to get pithy bits	31:51
Bill Gray and Don Thomas – rigged up a way to measure electromagnetic field on rabbits which were the subject of scientific study by Health Department- too disjointed and wanders – practical joke -	37:57
Reaction to closure of Powerhouse – disjointed conversation – really upset to see shell of buildings -	42:57