TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH ROSS LINDSAY ON THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ABATTOIRS - 25th November, 1989.

Sherin: In what year was the abattoir officialy opened and why was the Waratah site selected?

Ross: Well the Abattoirs was opened in 1915 um and uh Waratah site was chosen um this site had the advantage of being a) centrally located to the population and at the same time was far enough away so as not to cuase a nuisance to the local residence and b) close to the main highway and stock routes and c) um adjacent to the railway and um and d) there was a good catchment area for the dam and uh there was um well drained and uh the overflow was into ironbark creek and uh finally had good access to Hunter River water supply uh as a as a potable water supply.

Sherin: Why was the central location important to the Abattoirs?

Ross: Well you considerthe period um 1915 and meat deliveries at that time were would be done by horse drawn carts uh as motor lorries were in their uh infancy development and in addition to uh that employees had to walk or ride horses or bike to work.

Sherin: How necessary were the stock routes?

Ross: Well the stock routes were well used in those days um as um uh this case the abattoirs drew their meat their stock from Waratah and Maitland sale yards and um so um the method of getting the stock from uh Maitlands Maitland sale yards was to walk the stock down the route to Newcastle in the early hours of the morning and uh these of course then were driven into the uh paddocks, the resting paddocks at the Waratah works.

Sherin: Were railways considered important in the development?

Ross: Um railways were most important actually essentual for transfer of stock in those days for stock transport and also for the uh removal of or transport of products

Ross cont,d: from the works uh products such as ah of uh the meat meals and fertilizers and so on they would have had to have been transfered away from the works and out to the farming areas.

Sherin: With all the stock coming into the abattoirs how were they fed and watered?

Ross: Well the proposed kill in 1915 um 200 a day was the killing figure and so uh to maintain continuity of through put and no interuption, a large amount of stock numbers of stock had to be held in the resting paddocks and uh of course that meant uh water had to be supplied from the dam. Well this dam that was constructed was uh caught uh took had its catchments are in the paddocks specially constructed to feed back into the dam and uh these catchment areas even extended as far as Maitland Road. The stock were hand fed with hay to uh supplement the natural grasses and not to overgraze the paddock um the amount of feed to the stock had to be kept to a minimum prior to slaughter.

Sherin: Why was why was good water drainage important?

Ross: um In addition to keeping the area dry there was an abnormal use of potable water for washing the dressed animals and non potable water for the washing down uh washing of edible materials and washing down of slaughtering and chilling areas. um As a matter of interest use of dam water for other than stock drinking water was banned by the Australian Bureau of Animal Health and uh current regulation and this in turn made the availability of potable water potable Hunter River water supply vital.

Sherin: Did the killing methods change?

Ross: Um in the case of cattle they were initially speared and bled and then a later development was the stunning with a sledge hammer and subsequent bleeding and the third was they were stunned by a pneumaticaly driven plunger and bled uh um stunning by the pneumaticaly driven plunger was considered a humane weapon. The most important development was in the

Ross cont'd: dressing of beef um. The original method was known as uh floor dressing then followed rail dressing and finally the continuous chain.um The continuous chain is a development of modern times satisfying the current hygene regulations. By comparison the beef does not touch the floor and um all um dressing operations um are done at a specific point which inturn has its advantages in handling.

Sherin: Did this change occur in sheep and pigs as well as beef?

Ross: Yes um the sheep was originally a solo system uh where one individual dresses a complete sheep and then followed the continuous chain system satisfying all current regulations in that ah and it also assisted in the um handling costs, handling of by product materials.

Sherin: Did the changes in the system of slaughtering alter the job requirements and the skill required?

Ross: I take it you're refering to the sheep in the solo system.

Sherin: Yes.

Ross: um well in the solo system uh one man did the job, a highly skilled man um was required to do all complete dressing. In the chain system ah one man did one particular job as a consequence um any labour suitable labour could be trained do to this job and um and do it with efficiency but of course it is a much more boring job for the blokes on the chain doing the one job all day.

Sherin: What happened to the meat after it left the slaughter hall?

Ross: Well um in the early days it more or less hung in an unchilled area and um pending the installation of brine coolers which came later in the early days and then later on um these brine coolers they absolutely corroded the steel work and made a proper mess of the of the uh chill room and um they were they were removed and air cooled without any brine was finally installed. Some uh some of the beef was went to

Ross cont'd: hind quarters and four quarters and frozen for export and uh sheep were sorted and graded and sent either to the local trade or export and pigs were sent to local trade or the bacon department.

Sherin: How was the beef prepared for export?

Ross: Well the beef was quartered and um trimmed and then stocking netted sewn up - put into hession bags - sewn up and uh sent to uh sent to the freezer room where it stayed for um four to five days and passed into store.

Sherin: How was the meat transported to its destination?

Ross: Um In the early years the hind quarters and four quarters were um loaded on what's called refrigeration trucks and they were they transported the frozen quarters to the wharf where they were loaded on um ships into freezing rooms - into freezing rooms of the ship - um the later development was the um - naturally with using the or storing the four quarters on the ship was a big waste of space and a development came where the meat had to be packaged into certain sized packages so it would be packed economically in um into containers. Naturally this was a more econmic method and uh so uh the bone had to be removed - the bone wasn't transported.

Sherin: What happened to the bones removed from the meat for export?

Ross: Well these were bones of edible quality and uh they were very carefully transported uh over to the edible by-products section, crushed, cooled uh squeezed and um and crushed cooked and the edible tallow was squeezed out and um and was processed to edibl by-products and sold as dripping. The bones were then um milled and converted to by-products.

Sherin: What happened to the blood in the process?

Ross: Well the blood dropped into a receiver and which was transported pneumatically to a blood cooker and it was then uh centrifuged to remove the water uh partially then dried and uh sold as fertilizer.

Sherin: Was there any waste products from slaughtering?

Ross: No there was no waste from slaughtering. Everything

Ross cont'd: was used and uh.

Sherin: What about the manure?

Ross: Well manure was sold but the stomach uh a certain amount was sold but that - what wasn't sold was put in uh a flinger - a manure flinger - which was really just a trailor with a rotating blade in it and this was driven around the paddock and um the uh stomach contents were flicked through this blade up into the air allowing them to be distributed over wide areas so as not to uh allow fly strike to occur.

Sherin: And uh the fat products that came out of the beast?

Ross: um Fat , depending on how it was collected, went to either the edible side or the inedible side, to produce edible tallow or inedible tallow but the inedible fats curds and so on that found their way into the drainage system were collected and uh manually, and sent to the inedible area but there was a lot of smaller pieces in the line. Now uh this um necessitated special treatment and this effluent containing fat was pumped up into what's called a big fat container which was a tank and uh with paddles in it , would skim the fat off the top. In the process of uh pumping the fat contaminated water to the top, air was induced into the system and this air attached itself to the particles, small particles, that floated to the top which were skimmed off and sent straight to inedible tallow production.

Sherin: Were there any smells in the production of tallow?

Ross: Uh there were smells initially produced and allowed to go to the atmosphere but uh as a result of complaints a special um lease - special equipment was designed where the um all these smells were burnt at high temperature and um as a result ah the um the smell was in fact be non-existent when all the vapours were not - the smell was non-existent when the remainin vapours entered the atmosphere. Now this was - this process was very important as um the steam that came off the um off the cookers, in passing through the system, was condensed and this produced an enormous amount of hot water that was required for the in the

Ross cont'd: in the washing of prime beef - so it had an added advantage in addition to getting rid of the smells the um the production of hot water was vital in the operation of the abattoirs.

Sherin: Was the cartoned meat frozen in the same way as the carcass meat?

Ross: Uh Not really, the carcass meat was frozen in rooms fitted with 2" coils wall and side and frozen over 4 to 5 days. There were also offals to be frozen and uh this was carried out on static 2" bench coils. Now with the blast with the cartoned meat these couldn't be hung on rails and frozen um in these uh freezers, so um frames were built - special frames were built to um hold these cartons and in effect when they were fitted into these frames they became a part of the shelf and uh the air was blasted through these chills at high speed and very low temperature - normally about between a range 0 to -10 degrees F for a period of forty hours. On completion of this cycle, theuh frozen cartons were then slipped into the store and held - which were stored - anduh at static 2" coils and just held at a temperature of 0 degrees F, the same way as the uh quarters.

Sherin: The chilling - did the chilling method change?

Ross: Um the chilling yes - well the chilling had to be the uh sides had to be chilled in about 12 to 14 hours and uh if the meat was going into these cartons it had to have its temperature maintained and uh it was necessary to bone out this meat in a carton - in a boning out room maintained at a temperature of about 50 degrees F.

Sherin: Did this change fit in with the construction of the abattiors that it was - already was - that um you already had there or did you have to alter the abattiors to uh meet this requirement?

Ross: It did have handling problems - whereas the carcass meat could be continually um pushed along rails into the - after being chilled, it was pushed on rails or conveyed on rails uh to a freezer room where it was frozen and then pushed out again onto the rail and

Ross cont'd: uh taken to store, or uh if the - so called - if the freezer room was located above the store room, it simply dropped through a manhole to a large storage room below. Now in the case of the cartoned meat, um once the meat is broken up, these cartons had to held in a chill room during the days - for so many hours until the load was collected and removed from the boning room, whereever it was located around the plant, and carried by - sometimes by motor transport- down to the um freezing room uh handled and carried into the freezing room and put on racks frozen and then individually handled down into the freezer store. um so you can see there's quite a bit of handling with the product um.

Sherin: This would've been expensive too.

Ross: Very expensive, um actually um in 1958 uh there were the last - probably the last room that was built was designed as a chilling and freezing so for a quarters so uh in effect there was once the article had been chilled there was no handling until it went into store. Uh whereas these cartons, they were picked up and handled all the time.

Sherin: Our export increased um in this period as well, didn't it?

Ross: Yes and uh export increased and the stringent regulations on the freezing of the cartons then um.

Sherin: This was by the Americans?

Ross: By the Americans and um it had to be frozen in a certain and um otherwise the meat would putrify, so the carton around the meat acted as an insulaator, so to they wanted - it had to be frozen in forty hours at least, which was called blast freezing and uh.

Sherin: Did the strict rules that the Americans put on you with their um export regulations, did that cause any problems with all this changing in freezing and that you had already done?

Ross: Yes well it um its a difficult thing to freeze like that. You have to have uh very carefully stacked and.

Sherin: The design of the room.

Ross: The design of the room yes um if you made a blue in

Ross cont'd: the design or cartons are missing or so on - it wouldn't be frozen in the proven time.

Sherin: In the beginning when the abattiors was constructed it was mainly for local and a small export market. Did the American um inclusion on our market, did that cause great concern with the overall structure of the abattoirs?

Ross: Well agreement to export to America was that all meat had to be prepared under American regulations and that um if our works was going to export to America, uh it was - it was - it would be necessary to be part of the contract that an American Veterinary Surgeon would come and visit the works and see that it conformed to all regulations. Well this was devistating for Newcastle to have to conform to the American standards.

Sherin: In what way was it devistating, did you um have problems with the construction of the building or ?

Ross: Well one of the requirements - that was the materials construction - the first - one of the major things that no wood was to be used for a start. Well say in 1958 in that period only one chiller building would conform to those regulations.

Sherin: And at this stage how many chiller buildings were there in the abattiors?

Ross: Well I suppose there were basically um we refer to them as various blocks - the hot beef chillers, there was four - there was four chillers in that and then there was another block, the next block built, 5 to 32, which was one of the centre blocks the main centre block and uh this was situated right in the works right in the whole works.

Sherin: And that was the only one that conformed?

Ross: No this one didn't conform not apart of that satisfied and the next one that's a chiller block and the third one was the latest one built in 1952 - 58 and this was - conformed.

Sherin: So the one that was in the centre of the abattiors how did you go about fixing that up for export requirements?

Ross: Not really it was uh - it was used but um se it was all wood and as a temporary measure we had to shroud all parts for a start, with stainless steel where meat might bump and things like that at enormous expense. See the doors were wooden they had to be thrown out and uh uh a modern uh white construction insulated door used of synthetic material - that applied to all the doors in the works for a start. and you shroud all the door jams and so on . This was only - this measure of shrouding was only as a temporary measure sort of thing. The Americans went along with that in existing plants but uh that was uh- that was a question of how long they would allow you to do that? They expect you to have some plan for the future to convert the lot.

Sherin: Did our did our Newcastle abattiors ~~it~~ fell in line with Maitland I believe.

Ross: Maitland had the same problems at that time and uh in effect well - it wassuch that both works were struggling to maintain licence all the time. They'd um - they were expected to do a certain bit just to keep them going but they must have - they should have were expected to have some plan for the complete conversion of the works to conform to American standards or they became Australian standards based on American standards.

Sherin: A new board had to be formed - how important wasthis?

Ross: What happened there, at that period both plants had problems with - well Newcastle was going working to capacity and Maitland was in trouble and uh a joint management was formed to control the two works and share the load to keep going.

Sherin: Some of the export was handed up to Maitland wasn't it?

Ross: Yes on joint management and um some of the customers were asked to kill at Maitland to uh to level the load out a bit enable to break even points.

Sherin: Did the the chain system - the continuous chain system was there any problems with that with the export changes?

Ross: No the chain system - the continuous chain system was not in at that time and uh so the ruling at that time was that you were only allowed to do changes and put in equipment which could be used at the proposed farley works. Or if it was necessary and basically it had to be necessary for your continued co-efficient operation and uh so to achieve this, Newcastle was granted permission to put the continuous chain in and actually then increased the - very considerabley increased the output from the Newcastle works.

Sherin: It became more efficient.

Ross: It became more efficient and it allowed non-skilled people to be used on the chain to do various operation. Continuous chains had more people doing pacific jobs one only at a particular spot and it also rationalised the handling of ah by-products from the uh trimings or uh dressings of the beef. These uh these were dropped straight below at a pacific spot and all the necessary treatment plant for these bits and pieces to be washed and processed by-products be carried out.

Sherin: So this meant that you would have had to change the ceiling structure as well because you had to put a chain system in had a wooden roof.

Ross: No no wooden roof at all in that the roof house was ideally set up for that it could be readily installed there and uh a matter of fact lent itself ideally for its installation uh of course it had to be thought out carefully - how to be done and uh quite efficient arrangement was produced . But the main changes were in the grading in the surfaces of the floor. All the floor had to be regraded at certain spots and uh right through the whole works and uh walls had to be curved and uh all the windows had to be fly proofed. Special fans were placed over the entrances to the slaughterhall for cattle so that no flys were carried in.

Sherin: They had to have clean feet to didn't they how did that?

Ross: Yes clean feet, this echoed right through from the time the beast entered the works. Saleyards had to

Ross cont'd: be paved and of course the only catch was that in the time the race to the works um they got them dirty again and of course this was never tarred but uh they certainly didn't get in the grime and squash and intensive plunging up there at the abattoirs - up there at the saleyards. But of course when the cattle delivered direct to the abbatoirs themselves, from other saleyards, they came straight onto paved yards at the works - holding yards - and these um yards had to be or were and were um concreted, graded and separately drained so that uh if there uh was uh contaminated or diseased animal in a pen anything from the animal wasn't washed to other pens.

Sherin: So the whole process was virtually changed from the beginning from 1915 um right through.

Ross: Yes it would um when you looked at it there was absolutely - when looked at it from the modern plan of the works and that it was absolutely devastating. In effect only - when the beef house was finished, we had and ultra modern beef house for chain dressing, and then it could only lead away to one chilling block that conformed to the regulations that was built in -37 to 42 - built in 1958.

Sherin: So all the changes that were made up to this period, after this period you had more problems with um conversion because the Americans put more regulations on you or?

Ross: No um what happened um, seeing we were an existing works certain stop gap methods - maintenance were put in pending the abattiors doing something in planning. In this case there was uh more or less a guarantee to the Americans or the Bureau of Animal Health that a new abattior would be built and we were only doing such maintenance and so on to uh keep ourselves in business pending um the construction of the new Farley works so uh the problem remained with us.

Sherin: What happened to the new Farley works?

Ross: Well it was an uneconomical proposition and ah.

Sherin: The export dropped off at some stage.

Ross: Yes the um at that time um uh or the export was actuall

Ross cont'd: quite good. But ah it wasn't a pliable proposition for the two works but subsequently when the joint management agreement ceased, Newcastle was on its own and it was then that consideration had to be given to the upgrading of Newcastle so that they could maintain their license. But ah which was a very difficult thing because you have the worst right in the centre of the works was this chilling and freezing block which was being tolerated by the Americans until such times as we built a new works and the threat became immediate that we would lose our license if we didn't do something and uh so the decisiion then was that we would work out a plan of development immediately and uh we proceeded to call a plan and call tenders for a chilling complex adjacent to the 19- the last chiller block built, 37 to 42, and uh call tenders.

Sherin: And the tenders, were they successful or?

Ross: The tenders were called and uh at that time um the export market started to receed.

Sherin: The councils had problems with it as well.

Ross: Well the council then decided that they would defer they would defer the construction of this new chilling and freezing block.

Sherin: How did the Americans handle this news?

Ross: Well there was a big slump uh some months later oh I suppose about six months and ah the American vet called in to do his inspection. Made enquiries of whether there was anything in the pipeline and ah the license was lost.

Sherin: This was in about 1979 was it or later?

Ross: This was ah this happened just prior to shutting up.

Sherin: So the local market .

Ross: Well I suppose about six months prior to shutting.

Sherin: And the local market, how did it effect the local market?

Ross: Oh the local market had been affected by the talks of farley and rumbles of what goes on here and butchers um looking to their own security wise, took their business elsewhere and ah the through put of the works dropped very considerabley.

Sherin: So it was then that the decision of the council to ah to cease work in the abattiors because it was costing them more to than it could be figured to be worth.

Ross: Yes ah it ceased then, or shortly after that it ceased um losing heavily and ah everyone was paid off and Ron Tange took over and worked the abattoirs.

Sherin: And ah it still didn't succeed after Ron Tange.

Ross: No every effort was made to get a sort of temporary license to keep going but the Bureau of Animal Health definitely made it impossible to carry on.

Sherin: Thats when the land started to be sold off too didn't land at the bottom end of the paddocks, it was obviously not used anymore?

Ross: Yes well of course the resting paddocks weren't required to the same extent as they what they were when the abattiors was first established. Over the years you had the intrusion - or certain areas sub-divided to first of all the markets came there and then light industry came up to as far as the railway line.

Sherin: It was um the holding paddocks were also not used for another reason was it because of transport?

Ross: Oh yes the necessity of ah holding cattle in the paddocks as it used to be you see from about 1950 I can just remember there used to be two or three cattle trucks used to come in and uh they would pick up cattle from saleyards all up the valley and deliver them down to the works straight into the holding yards for slaughtering the following day and ah as the years moved on and ah it was more a continuous flow of stock - they used to buy stock direct from the graziers paddock bring them straight in, all this sort of thing.

Sherin: The stock routes, they closed off too wouldn't they with the development in suburbs?

Ross: Yes stock routes closed off very early in the piece.

Sherin: Maitland stayed open did ah was it helpful for them to gain some of your export business?

Ross: No Maitland was more or less brought out for private enterprise and was only a matter of time that that closed down met the same fate.

Sherin: So um the council owned the land and sold off what they could and that was it.

Ross: That was the finish it just ah just impossible to carry on.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH TERRY WARNABY ON WORKING IN THE ABATTOIRS.
25th November, 1989.

Sherin: This is an interview with Terry Warnaby on his experiences at the Abattoirs. How long did you work at the Abattoirs and what was your position?

Terry: I worked there for about seven years. I started off there as a tradesman fitter, fitter and turner tradesman and after about three years I moved into the office with the Chief Engineer as a draftsman. Did a course of mechanical engineering certificate and and finished up, finished up as assistant engineer at the Abattoirs I relieved the Chief Engineer whn he went on holidays.

Sherin: How many men worked under the Chief?

Terry: From er - from memory about 28. There were fitters and turners, blacksmiths who shod the horses for the stockmen, um carpenters, plumbers, painter, motor mechanics and a rigger.

Sherin: Were there any unusual forms of employment at tthe Abattoirs?

Terry: Different from anywhere else I suppose would be the stockman. Ah they were employed to bring the stock in from the outlying paddocks and bring them up the races to the slaughtering area - they had their own horses which they got paid and allowance for, they also had their own dog which they got paid for an allowance for. Ah the dogs, the dogs thought that the - that the stockmen was the most wonderful thing that that he'd ever saw and it used to sit there with adoring eyes waiting for him to give it a job. They'd run across the backs of sheep, they'd chase the cattle and bite them on the heels and occassionally um when a bull or a cow would get away from the slaughtering area, um when it was - it was knocked down and it wasn't unconscious, it would get up and it would run through the slaughter house and it would be the stockmans' job and his dogs to bring it back to the area to be slaughtered.

Sherin: Were there any side issues that the average person didn't hear about?

Terry: Yes there was quite a number of side issues. Tings that you wouldn't expect-for instance um in the tallow house, it's where they sent all the offal and and bone to be rendered down for bone and tallow - industrial tallow - there was always a fine mist of fat in the air and everybody that

Terry cont'd: worked in the tallow house put on weight- it was something you couldn't help - you couldn't miss out on it - you just automatically put on weight if you went to work in the tallow house, in fact some of the fitters had to be changed around because they got - they started to get too fat and they had to be taken out.

Sherin: The surgical gut?

Terry: Yeh the surgical gut was was made from specially selected intestines um it was, they had a lower road under the beef house ah it was selected and sliced up into thin layers and sent through to the medical houses who made it into surgical gut. Also from the intestines they got sausage skins, These sausage skins came in all sizes just from the big empire sausage type down to ah a little tiny cocktail frankfurt size. The - these were also selected and um some of them had spots on them so they had to throw them away. Other - other animals also in the tallow house, they had a a special place there where they - they brought animals that died away from the abattoirs such as dogs and cats and horses and they were cut up and they were rendered down also and used for blood and bone um tallow and once we had a visiting circus in the town and an elephant died so they brought the elephant along and they cut it up and rendered it down they got quite a lot of fat off the elephant, there is a lot of fat on an elephant.

Sherin: I could imagine.

Terry: Yeah um Forge Tank - some other things that you would probably never hear about - on the lower road they had a thing we called the forge tank. It was a long tank with paddles in it and it stirred up the manure that came down from the beef house above when they emptied out all the ah stomachs and they stirred this up in this tank and it was pumped away down in the paddocks - down near the railway line at the bottom ofthe Abattoirs and every now and then the paddles would break and somebody had to go in and clean it out and hosed it all out. They'd find rings and watches and every now and then they'd come out with a nice brown ball of hair which had come out of a cows' stomach because they had been licking themselves over the years and they formed this about the size of a cricket ball and that's

Terry cont'd: what they used it for. Some of the boys used to play cricket with them on the lower road during their lunch hour.

Sherin: They cleaned them and played cricket with them?

Terry: Ah well they were washed down cause they cleaned down the tank everything was clean. You got wedding rings and engagement rings an. Freddy, talking about thelower road, there was a gentleman there who we all call Fred, which was his first name. Fred was a little man and his job was to push a trolley loaded with this offal from one end of the lower road to the other. It was highly mechanised you see it was one man power type thing. Fredpushed these trolleys backwards and forwards all day from the beef house, under the beef house up to the tar house and he wore this full length, from his neck to his toes plastic apron and these trolleys weren't covered in and it used to splash out all over the place and naturally splashed all over Fred and of course the thing that everybody remembers about Fred is that when it came lunch time Fred would sit down to have his lunch and where everybody would go and wash their hands, Fred'd just wipe his hands on his plastic coat and say "well they're clean" and start eating his sandwichs.

Sherin: Yuck.

Terry: Much to everybodies disgust. They also had a department there called the um edible by-products section where they made dripping and one of the - the side issues which was probably a foreign order more than anything which is a job done on the side has nothing to do with the Abattoirs um some of the boys used to make walking sticks and they used to make them out of Bulls' penis and they used to shape the handle over a pipe or something and push it into shape and then they'd let it dangle over the pipe and tie a brick on the end of it to get the length and then they'd twist it to get - put a nice twist spiral twist in the in the walking stick and if ever you see a walking stick with a spiral twist in it that looks like a piece of wood, have a close at it because it could be a bulls' penis. It's a they used to varnish them and they come up - and they - I defy anybody to tell they are not wood so just have a good look at them and you see one with a nice little spiral in

Terry cont'd: it just have a look at it. Um - another unusual thing I'd say anybody that's been to a hospital would probably or worked at a hospital would probably know about this. Pigs' offal, pigs offal is just about the same as human beings' um if you shopped up a human and laid it on the deck and then chopped up a pigs' intestines and laid them on the deck you'd sort of say well they're very very close together as a matter of fact, if you burn your finger and bite it you'll taste pig anyway, that's why pygmies call us two legged pigs, they used to shop up these - they used to lay this offal out and once a week and they used to bring nurses and interns over from the hospitals and they used to do their course on um intestines and the Doctors could actually - the lecturer could actually show them first hand what it would look like if it was a human. It's hard to chop a human up to show so they used to lay the pigs' offal out. It's quite interesting to see laying out there once a week we all had a look at it. They came over and had a look at it too and got the necessary information that made good doctors and nurses out of them - I hope.

Sherin: What was the management - employee relationship like at the Abattoirs?

Terry: It was very good actually I have no complaints about it. I think you'll find that most the blokes that worked there quite enjoyed workingthere. Um I suppose if you get into you can buy your meat nice and cheap most blokes were quite happy to have some sort of relationship with their boss that ah makes their life worth living there. Um I can remember one instance we were working back - we were putting in what they call the beef chain in - we worked Friday night, we worked Saturday, all day Saturday and everybody was a bit exhausted and we came back at 4 o'clock the next morning on Sunday because the beef chain had to be going for Monday otherwise there wouldn't have been any productiion at the Abattoirs so by starting at 4 o'clock, we thought that we'd be able to get it finished early and we had our dinner, which was a barbeque, we always had when we worked overtime at the Abattoirs um. We had our about half past ten- eleven o'clock and we were working through, right through. The engineer was with us, Ross Lindsay, the Chief Engineer was

Terry cont'd: with us most of the time and we worked right through till about 11 o'clock at night and the manager of the Abattoirs came down to see how we were going and he said "How long have you got to go fellows" and we had um probably half past twelve we said. He said uh he said how long since you've eaten and we said about half past ten this morning and hewas horrified. So then he disappeared then about half past twelve when we'd just finished the last of the jobs he turns up with twelve meals - steak vegetables and chips that he's got his wife out of bed to cook and we thought that was wonderful so - yes the relationship between the men especially the maintenance men and the management wasvery very good.

Sherin: How did Ross Lindsay get the Chief as a nickname?

Terry: Oh mainly because of the Chief Engineer the most Chief Engineers on boats are called Chief - the chief and I think he liked that. He preferred you to call him that than Ross. Some blokes called him Ross the Boss to stir him but - ever - he liked to be called the Chief - everybody called him the Chief.

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Signed R.S. Lindsay B.E. (Hydlic.) M.I.E(Aust)

Date 25.11.89

Interviewer .....

Steven Boogard.

Ross Lindsay

The Rise & Fall of Newcastle Abattoirs.

Summary Good succinct summary. 4 ~~3½~~/5.

Transcript Interesting account of the changing practices in the abattoirs. Fascinating details of the way every part of the beast was utilised, problems facing the Abattoirs. The interview with your father also makes interesting reading – the forge tank, walking sticks, cricket balls etc the 'pigs' offal. Good questioning. 8/10

Paper Not well organised – but good material. 7/10.

Tape Good quality & questioning. Didn't ~~st~~ ask Mr. Lindsay about own job. 4/5

~~24/30~~

~~23~~ ~~22½~~/30.

23/30.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ABATTOIRS

By Sherin Boogaard

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

REGIONAL HISTORY ASSIGNMENT

LECTURER: Margaret Henry

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The establishment of an abattoirs in Newcastle took 37 years from the date of its inception to the laying of the foundation stones in 1915. The reasons varied for the need of an abattoirs but the main feature was for hygene and sanitary reasons in a growing colony. The abattoirs was designed for a local market with little funds for establishing a large works therefore when the abattoirs needed to expand to meet export regulations after 1958, the changes needed in construction were too great and the expense could not be met by the Council.

Under growing community concern, the combined councils of the Newcastle region held meetings to confer on the matter of an abattoir and an appropriate site for the abattoirs. Wickham council was the first to draw attention to the need of an abattoir as there were 5 slaughterhouses in the municipality at this time.[1] In July,29th, 1879 the councils of Newcastle, Waratah, Hamilton, Wickham approached the Colonial Secretary on the question of the abattiors site and purchase of land. The government was not willing to grant Newcastle funds for an abattoirs as this would set a precident for other growing towns ~~with~~ which they would be answerable to.[2] The population of Newcastle had grown from 60,000 to around 70,000 therefore increase in comsumption of meat would mean the establishment of more slaughterhouses within the area and the community protested at the location of the already existing slaughterhouses. They were too close to housing and were unsanitary and the stench from the works were unsavoury.

1. Newcastle Morning Herald, 16/11/1879 page 2
2. Ibid., 6/9/1893, page 8

The council had found a sound reason, apart from hygene in the community, for the establishment of an abattoirs. The Diseased Animals and Meat Bill had become law on the 20/5/1892, which meant an inspection would be carried out of all slaughter yards in the area therefore a central location would be more suitable for carrying out inspection.[3] Because the inspectors could not get to all 13 slaughterhouses, Waratah was concentrated on and 88% of meat was inspected and for the year ending December 31st,1901 , 9633 cattle were slaughtered at the Waratah slaughterhouse and 33 condemned. In all other parts of the Hunter River combined district 11,849 cattle were slaughtered and 23 condemned and 5049 pigs were slaughtered and 4 condemned.[4] The butchers had instructed the slaughtermen not to send on carcasses they believe may have disease but the inspectors were sure that diseased meat may get through because therewas a need for complete complete supervision by competant people. For adequate supervision there should be complete supervision at every slaughterhouse or a public abattoirs should be erected.

All deputations sent to the Governments for the last decade from 1892 had been done in vain and at the rate payers expense. Napoleon Bonaparte ordered the erection of a publice abattoirs in Paris which was so plainly to the public benefit that they became models for similar structures in the leading centres of population throughout the world. However Britain and her colonies were lagging behind in development.

Some butchers seemed to be opposed to the idea of an abattoirs mainly because of the amount of money they had spent on their existing slaughter yards. But most were in agreement on account of the difficulty they experienced in obtaining renewals

3. Ibid., 20/5/1892 page 5.
4. Ibid., 24/7/1901 page 7.

for their annual licenses. The need for an abattoirs was also apparent where animals were condemned but were often sold outside the yards.

The bill introduced into parliament, 4/10/1912 by the Premier for the establishment of an abattoirs in Newcastle by law became the Newcastle District Abattoir Act 1912. Within three months from the date of the Act an election was to be held every three years to elect an Abattoirs board made up of persons residing within the district.[5] The district of the board was in a 14 mile radius of the Newcastle Post-office. The board was constituted of five members who were elected by the aldermen and councillors of the municipalities and shires triennially.[6] The board was responsible for the purchase of the site, maintaining an abattoir and cattle sale-yards and a plant for the treatment of offal.

Mr d'Elbro was appointed architect to the board who supervised the erection of the Adelaide abattoirs and meat works in other states. The scheme was designed to treat 250 cattle,100 calves, 100 pigs and 1200 sheep as the average daily output, thus allowin for an increase of 100% in output in the future.7 However the expense was more than anticipated and the scheme was reduced to cater for 200 cattle and 1000 sheep daily output.[8] This was to cause problems from 1958 with increase in production.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stones of the abattoir was performed on the 30/1/1915 by the Minister of Public Health, Mr Flowers and Mr Creer, Chairman of the Board.[9] The building at this stage was mainly used for storage. Slaughtering commenced on june 4, 1916 by the statutory body.[10] The dam was also erected with a capacity of 8,000,000 gallons.[11]

5. Ibid., 5/10/1912., page 6.
6. Ibid., 21/11/1914, page 2.
7. Ibid., 24/11/1914, page 5.
8. Notes from the Newcastle National Trust records on the Abattoirs.
9. Newcastle Morning Herald, 1/2/1915, page 5

With the opening of the abattoirs came the closing of the slaughterhouses as the butchers by law had to slaughter their meat through the abattoirs. If this was not done a 100pound fine was enforced.

In 1918 the board proposed that the Newcastle Abattoir area be extended to include Maitland and Cessnock. The proposal was dropped in the face of strong opposition from butchers, stock agents drovers and others. During 1921 important extensions of the boards' refrigerating facilities were completed. A new two-storied building of brick construction provided on the ground floor a large chilling room fully equipped with overhead rails and a small goods room and five insulated air locks.[12] Delivery platforms for vehicular delivery provided at two sides of the building, while a railway platform was provided along the whole 117 ft frontage of the building to the railway line.[13] This building would later be the problem for upgrading in the abattoirs and one of the main reasons for its closure.

With the creation of Greater Newcastle in 1938, Newcastle District Abattoir was placed under the control of the Council of the City of Greater Newcastle.[14] The Abattoirs developed further by the council adding to the original buildings and installing modern machinery and treatment plant in every section of the works. The plant and equipment of the abattoir was in keeping with the best plants of this nature in the world. Most paddocks were rented by master butchers operating at the Newcastle Abattoir and they used these paddocks for resting stock prior to slaughter.[15] The abattoir authorities took delivery of stock in the lairages at the Abattoir and fully recorded the stock received. Adequate pens provided cover and

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid..
14. Safeguarding Public Health, Newcastle Abattoir, Newcastle, Page 5
15. Ibid. p6

there was a plentiful supply of fresh water, stock being generally yarded and rested for at least twelve hours prior to slaughter. The stock was slaughtered under the most humane methods and under the strictest control of hygiene. Certified meat inspectors, by both ante and post-mortem inspection, ensure the protection to the public.

A by-products department gives a further service to the public and to the pastoral industry by providing all types of stock foods, fertilizers, from inedible by-products, as well as various meals for stock and poultry food.[16] The provision of tallows, hides and skins, glues and gelatines, rennet and a variety of other products, all strictly protected for quality, emphasises again the wide service the abattoir gave to the public and producer.[17] The abattoir was also responsible for providing from various partsand organs of the slaughtered animal, the raw materials for various pharmaceutical products such as adrenalin, thyroid extract, insulin, liver extract, cortizone and a variety of other products.[18]

Export of the meat was the most important provision of the abattoirs and the requirements needed to meet export regulations from America changed frequently at a cost to the abattoirs. All meats intended for export are inspected by Commonwealth Government Meat Inspectors to ensure quality, but modern freezing and cold storage techniques have enabled certain essential foodstuffs to be stored over extended periods. The change from carcass freezing to carton freezing meant that equipment had to be changed not long after it had been modernized. This did enable better handling but it also meant that transport was required to get the cartons from the

16. Ibid., p6
17. Ibid., p6
18. Ibid, p6

boning room to the cold storage room.
New discoveries of efficient and hygenic methods of processing were at an immense cost to the Council. In 1973 all timber doors were removed and polystyrene doors fitted and door jambs replaced.[19] The floors were replaced with stainless steel and were curved and graded.[20] The timber pylons were coated and the wooden benches replaced. The coating of the timber was an acceptable temporary measure in the buildings until new arrangements could be made. Condensation problems occurred in the rooms where freezers were located above and under inspection by the vet, these rooms were condemned until modified.
By the 1980's the equipment at the abattoir had become outdated and modifications were needed to keep the export licnce. The Council contmeplated the idea that a new works, the Farley works, would be more suitable than rennovation to the existing plant. However the Farley works was too expensive to establish therefore tenders were called to upgrade the existing abattoir. Some of the local trade had heard that the abattoir may lose the licence and protecting their own intersts, carried on their business outside the district. The export market had slumped during this period and the council could no longer continue to support its operation becuase of the constant trading losses it had been suffering.
Levies were not imposed on Newcastle district ratepayers for the abattoirs in its' 65 years of operation. Unfortunately lack of funds was one of the reasons for the closure of the works. In October, 1980, 315 workers were paid off.[21] Alderman Joy Cummings voiced her opposition to the closure because of

19. Notes from the National Trust., page 4
20. Herald...., 19/11/1980, page 1
21. Ibid,

loss of emplyoment and loss of industry to Newcastle. A three month lease was signed with Ronald J Tange Pty Ltd in an attempt to keep the abattoirs going.[22] This proved fruitless as Dr K. Constantine, an officer of the Department of Primary Industry, said that the export licence to the United States and other countries would not be renewed after 31/12/1980.[23] He advised that the works were deteriorating and unless they were rebuilt licences would not be restored.[24]

By 1981, new plans had been made for the abattoirs . The land was sub-divided and remaining equipment was auctioned off by the council. The original design of the abattoir did allow for the changes needed 65 years later therefore, the service industry on the hill is now a shell of its former self.

22. Ibid., page 1
23. Ibid., page 1
24. Ibid., page 1

APPENDIX

A) A copy of the original design of the Abattoirs, 1915.

B) Photo of the Abattoirs in 1958.

C) Airial photo of the Abattoirs

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