

FIRE

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/After-the-fire-in-the-sugar-store1.jpg>



Raw sugar was refined through many processes to make the product stable and durable as well as pure. One hazard that could not be eliminated was fire. And when fire caught hold, the spectacle matched the destruction.

Fire burst out in the CSR's refined sugar store before dawn on October 25th, 1918. Flames shot 30 metres into the air, and explosions woke the neighbourhood. Police had to control the huge crowds drawn to the contest between fire, firemen – and the fireboat Pluvius. Before the fire was brought under smouldering control, 3000 tons of sugar was caramelised, the seven storey sugar store had collapsed, and all its machinery was wrecked.

The Sydney Morning Herald report (below) explains the location and structure of the refined sugar store. On the site of the present Fleetview building, it was four storeys high on Bowman Street, and seven storeys high at water's edge: it occupied the space between Refinery Square (the terminus of Jones Street) and the Engineers' Offices (now the Rum Store).

BIG CITY FIRE.

C.S.R. COY'S. SUGAR STORE COMPLETELY DESTROYED WITH CONTENTS.

Sydney Morning Herald 25 October 1918

At 1 o'clock this morning a fire was discovered in the refined sugar store of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company at Pyrmont, and as a result almost 3000 tons of refined sugar, together with the building and machinery, were completely destroyed. The store was a brick building with an iron roof, facing Jones and Bowman Streets, and running back to the water's edge. The front portion of the building consisted of four stories and a basement, while that portion facing the harbour was composed of seven stories and a basement, and in this building were stored almost 3000 tons of refined sugar, while in another portion of the same building was erected machinery for handling the sugar. This building was connected by a set of offices with the loaf sugar factory, and on the other side was the boiler-house and engineer's offices. Some of the employees were at work in the store when the fire was discovered, and the alarm was at once given to the Fire Brigades Headquarters.

With all speed Chief Officer Sparkes turned out every available fireman and fire engine. He also sent for the fire-float Pluvius. The fire men attacked the burning building from every available angle, but the flames seemed to rush from floor to floor and end to end like lightning. Suddenly the roof fell in with a loud report, and the flames leapt high into the sky. Then as the great heat and flames burnt through the supports the top walls begin to go. Those facing Jones-street went first, and as they crashed through the roof below, the report was like that of a cannon, and the sky for a great distance was illuminated. Despite the great heat the fire-men stuck to their task. Chief Officer Sparkes directed every energy towards preventing the flames spreading beyond the store, and paid particular attention to the loaf sugar factory, which they succeeded in saving. But the flames were not to be denied, and they completely burnt out the refined sugar store, together with the whole of the contents. At one time there was great danger of the boiler-house going, and to prevent any explosion through the walls of the store falling in on the boilers the steam was blown off and the fires drawn. For hours the firemen worked at the building, pouring tons of water on to the molten sugar, burning wood, and red-hot bricks, and at last they had the satisfaction of getting the flames under control. The fire was still smouldering when this edition went to press.

The general manager of the company, Mr Knox, was acquainted of the fire, and he made an appearance at the works shortly after 2 o'clock. When spoken to Mr Knox said he was pleased to say that although some men were at work in the building at the time of the fire none were hurt. No one knows how the fire had occurred. Between 2000 and 3000 tons of refined sugar were stored in the building, and this had been completely destroyed. Fortunately the fire had not touched the main refining machinery, and they would be at work again on Monday. The whole of the sugar in the store had been insured, but, speaking off hand, the damage would amount to between £60,000 and £70,000.

At times the flames rose probably 100ft in the air, and this soon attracted an enormous crowd of people, who came from everywhere. A large body of police was present and kept the too-eager ones back from hampering the efforts of the firemen.

Another fire a few years later (below) resulted from spontaneous combustion in the coal silos.

BIG FIRE at Sugar Refinery

DAMAGE PLACED AT £50,000

SYDNEY, Monday.

Serious damage was caused by a fire which broke out at the works of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Pyrmont, late last night. Two hours elapsed before the firemen gained the upper hand.

A loud explosion occurred as the huge boilers blew out. It is thought that spontaneous combustion in the coal stacks was responsible for the outbreak.

Damage is estimated at about £50,000.

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Assessing-the-damage-after-the-fire1.jpg>



<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Rebuilding-the-sugar-store-after-the-fire1.jpg>



NICE GIRLS WEAR STOCKINGS

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/stockings-ad1.jpg>

You actually save money with
sheer nylon **foil-a-run**
stockings that
won't run from
1-thread snags!

wear tests averaged 27 days without a run and the high was 31 days!

Without any special, the kind of running
machine and high heel shoe. Even a bare foot
won't run from 1-thread snags. And you'll get
any extra protection for those beautiful
of 14 days extra. This is the only
the most, keep it for you for yourself
and the Hosiery Luxite girls.

ASK FOR MORE WITH YOU
This Hosiery Luxite is of quality and durability for
the best of Hosiery Luxite. For more information, see the
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Hosiery
Luxite

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A manager visiting the research laboratory was horrified to observe that the young female chemists – mainly “nice” North Shore girls from private schools – were bare legged. On enquiring, he was told that they couldn’t afford to keep buying stockings, as the chemicals burnt holes in them. Soon after, they received in their pay packets a “stocking allowance” – on the understanding that there would be no more bare legs in the lab!

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/stockings-Kayser-ad-Sydney1947-1.jpg>



NO CATHOLICS PLEASE!



Norm, a foreman at the caneite factory, trained young men to be supervisors including Bruce, a 25-year-old whose father held an executive position in CSR. Bruce was keeping company with a Catholic girl, which was totally frowned upon by management. “If you wanted to stay in the company and get anywhere you couldn’t marry a Catholic.” There were no Catholics in CSR management; there were some Catholic workers but they never rose above the role of foreman. Promotion was impossible. Bruce was eventually sent to the sugar mills in Fiji in order to break up the romance. He never returned to CSR.

THE STORY OF THE WEATHERCOCK

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/weathercock1.jpg>



What connection can there possibly be between a famous episode in the Boer War (1899-1902, fought between Britain and Boer republics in South Africa, with Australian contingents joining in) and the CSR site in Pyrmont, now Jacksons Landing?

Early in the 20th century two coppersmiths working in the CSR workshop at Pyrmont designed and constructed a weathercock. When completed, it was erected on the old Refinery main building, to celebrate, it was said, the Relief of Mafeking. The Boers had laid siege to British forces in the town of Mafeking in South Africa over a period of 217 days, from October 1899 to May 1900, under the leadership of Robert (later Lord) Baden-Powell, who went on to found the Scouting Movement. The lifting of the siege was a decisive victory for the British and a crushing defeat for the Boers. The news of the Relief of Mafeking was greeted with wild jubilation all over the British Empire, in Sydney no less than anywhere else.

Henceforth the weathercock swiveled smoothly round to indicate the direction of varying winds – a landmark to check each day, and a sign of 'business as usual' for CSR workers.

Come the 1990s, the sale of the CSR site to Lend Lease and the ensuing demolition. While the avowed intention was to conserve items of archeological or industrial

significance, some things simply disappeared – among them, the weathercock. Retired engineers with a long work history at CSR Pyrmont were disturbed. The weathercock was part of their heritage. They had a fair idea where it had gone, and were able to retrieve it for safe keeping.

But what to do with it?

One of the retired engineers was a member of a bowling club, and he arranged for it to be erected on the Clubhouse, where it whirled around happily until 2010. Then the Bowling Club went into liquidation. Where would the weathercock go now?

Retired CSR engineers meet regularly for lunch and discuss weighty matters. As they pondered this problem, one of them mentioned that his wife's cousin was now a resident of Jacksons Landing and seemed to be fairly active there. His colleagues agreed that it would be fitting for the weathercock to return to its birthplace, although the building on which it had stood for so long was no more.

Hence began a lengthy negotiation – first, to inform the Jacksons Landing Community Association of the offer, and for the Community Association to indicate its willingness to receive the weathercock and to erect it somewhere on the Estate; secondly, to enlist the cooperation of Lend Lease in the enterprise. The weathercock was duly removed from the Clubhouse, and picked up by Jacksons Landing residents from an ex-engineer's home. After careful consideration of an appropriate and safe site for re-location, the weathercock was erected on the pillar facing Bowman Street and adjoining the old administration building (now The Station at Jacksons Landing) at the end of 2010. Lend Lease provided and installed a plaque on the pillar that tells the story of the weathercock.

The weathercock and plaque are now viewed by hundreds of school students who go on 'history walks' around Pyrmont. Perhaps some of them go home and look up 'The Relief of Mafeking' on the internet!

<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CSR-weathercock1.jpg>



<https://jacksonslanding.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Weathercock-plaque1.jpg>

**This memorial weathercock was fabricated
in the CSR Pymont coppersmiths
workshop and erected to celebrate the
relief of Mafeking in South Africa, where
British Forces under the command of
Colonel Baden-Powell were besieged by the
Boers from October 1899 until May 1900.
Artisan coppersmiths C. Marsden senior
and G. Orpwood senior were known to
have been involved in its manufacture.**

**It was originally placed on the high point of
the CSR Sugar Refinery roof. After
demolition of the factory, it was
preserved and reinstated here in September
2010 by retired CSR Engineers, the
Jacksons Landing Community Association,
and Lend Lease.**