

Carreras: family, firm and factory

by David A Hayes

Dominating the northwest end of Hampstead Road, and overlooking Harrington Square, is Greater London House, the refurbished former 'Black Cat Factory' of Carreras Ltd. When the tobacco firm relocated here in 1928, it moved coincidentally into a district that was home a century earlier to members of the Carreras family, as refugees.

The origins of the Carreras company are obscure. Its letterhead and publicity invariably declared the firm to have been established in 1788, while its 'Black Cat' logo always included the initials "J J C". Howard & Newman¹ assert that "José Joaquín Carreras opened a little shop in Regent Street in 1788". This cannot be correct, as Regent Street did not exist at the time! José did subsequently run a branch there, but not until some 90 years later. Perhaps the family had tobacco interests in Spain before their migration to London: a tobaccoist's that is run by Luisa Gimeno Carreras still trades today on the Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona, the birthplace of José Joaquín.² It seems, however, that a Carreras tobacco business emerged in London only in the next century.

Refugees in Somers Town

According to a former company archivist³, the family "came from Spain before 1837 and subsequently settled in the St Pancras area". 19th-century census returns confirm this to be correct, while leaving questions unanswered as to the various family members' precise relationships; only gradually are any connections with the tobacco trade revealed.

The Post Office Directory of 1846 lists Joseph Carreras, a "linguist", at 20 Wilsted Street (now Ossulston Street), and Frederick Carreras, a grocer, at the same address. We are in

Somers Town, a neighbourhood colonised from c.1823 by many Spanish liberals fleeing the despotic monarchic regime installed in Spain after the French invasion of that year. Alacala Galiano, a Professor of Spanish at University College London, and a future Spanish government minister, declared that Somers Town was known in his homeland as "a miniature constitutional Spain which made room for a great number of homeless Spaniards".⁴ Charles Dickens, referring to Somers Town, wrote in *Bleak House* of the "poor Spanish refugees walking about in cloaks, smoking little paper cigars".⁵ In *Camden History Review*,⁶ Claire Gobbi wrote eloquently of the Spanish community in Somers Town, and of the suffering they endured in the foggy cold of a London winter. The area offered a Catholic chapel, still thriving in Phoenix Road as St Aloysius' Church, although Spaniards had to make do with services in English or French. Despite British government pensions of £36 p.a., secured by well-wishers on their behalf, the incomers were obliged to earn a living in whatever way they could.

By the time of the 1851 census, Joseph (aged 58) was installed with his wife Engracia and four of their offspring at 76 Chalton Street, giving his occupation as "Spanish Refugee". A decade later, and by then a widower, he had moved slightly upmarket to 71 Upper Seymour Street (now Eversholt Street), on the site of Carriage Row. He was now described as an "antiquarian linguist". Gobbi also notes how the influx of refugees prompted an interest in some English circles in the collection of old Spanish books; and how Spaniards set up printing and publishing businesses, one of which was based in Johnson (now Cranleigh) Street, Somers Town. Some refugees took to translation work: maybe Joseph Carreras was among them.

His son Theobald was the artistic one, recorded in 1851 as

a 21-year-old "wood engraver", and married, like all of the Carreras sons, to a London-born wife. He later moved to 46 Alma Street, Kentish Town, where he was listed in 1861 as a "journeyman woodcutter". Likewise upwardly mobile were Theobald's younger sisters, St Pancras-born Laura, and Grace (intriguingly born in Hammersmith), who had meanwhile installed themselves at 2 Regent's Park Place, Oval Road (Camden Town), Laura described now as a lady of "independent means".

Their younger brother, Guillelmo (aged 22 in 1851), was born in Camden Town, which suggests that his parents were in London by 1830 and that they had then settled in that area. Guillelmo later lodged with his siblings, first with Theobald in Alma Street, and then with his sisters in Oval Road, where he achieved an entry in the 'Court' (middle-class residential) section of the Post Office directory, notwithstanding Laura's status as head of household. Guillelmo is the only conclusive link I have found between Joseph's family and the tobacco trade. 40 years later, with his forename anglicised to William, he was running a tobaccoist's shop in Deptford High Street, assisted by his Barnsbury-born daughter, Rosa.

An enigmatic Frederick Anthony Carreras, either related to (or identical with) the "grocer" of 1846, appears in the 1861 census, aged 34 and living with his wife Elizabeth at 8 Hampden Street, Somers Town (now Polygon Road). He was working then as a "commercial clerk" in an unspecified trade. A later directory (1877) lists "Frederick Anthony Carreras & Co." as "cigar brokers" at 129 Gresham House in Old Broad Street (City). Yet in the 1901 census, the septuagenarian Frederick still perplexingly describes himself only as a "merchant's clerk".

By 1881 a second Carreras family had appeared and were

living in the Stoke Newington area⁶: brothers William (30) and James (19), and sister Lucy, all Gibraltarians and with a mother hailing from Newfoundland. Both brothers were recorded as "commercial clerks" in the "tobacco and cigar trade". Their relationship (if any) to the Somers Town Carreras is unclear.

A little Soho shop

José Joaquín, the undoubted founder of the Carreras firm, surfaces only in the census of 1851. While I have found no unambiguous evidence of a connection with the Somers Town clan, I surmise that he was either brother or cousin to Frederick Anthony: the pair were only 3 years apart in age, and both were Barcelona-born. Perhaps, by 1851, J J C had left the family nest in Chalton Street to make his way in the world.

In the census we find him at 61 Princes Street (later 7 Wardour Street), in what is now Chinatown. He is listed not as the expected proprietor of a tobacco business, but as "shopman" (assistant) to William Sanderson. Recorded as an American-born British subject, the latter seems to have earlier owned tobaccoist's shops both in Newgate Street (City) and at 52½ High Holborn.

By 1861 José Joaquín had taken over the Soho shop, now aged 37, married, and resident there with his Marylebone-born wife Mary Ann, his 6-year-old son José M Carreras, and his mother-in-law. There were two live-in shop assistants, one of them a Dutchman named Theodore de Graauw.

The commercial directory of 1863 lists José as a "cigar importer & snuff manufacturer". His business thrived, earning a considerable reputation and apparently attracting royal patronage. Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, is said to have selected cigars in the Princes Street shop, while seated in an



THE MOST MODERN HYGIENIC CIGARETTE FACTORY IN THE WORLD



armchair. Sitting in the shop window, maybe, was the black cat, which, the story goes, habitually sat there, inspiring both the name of the later well-known brand of cigarettes and the Carreras company's trademark.

Another eminent customer was William, the 3rd Earl of Craven, who patronised the Soho shop before his death "of paralysis" in 1866. He liked to experiment with different pipe-tobacco blends of his own devising, one of which was adopted by Carreras and named 'Craven Mixture'. The name 'Craven A' would later be assigned to a brand of filter-tipped cigarette, still marketed today by British American Tobacco (BAT).

By 1877, a branch outlet had been opened in more fashionable Regent Street, at No.98. Fourteen years later, Mary Ann was a widow, and had seemingly taken over the shop. In the 1891 census she is described as a "tobacconist", and is living at 7 Wardour Street with a female cousin and one assistant.

Five years later (on Mary's death, maybe) the Carreras business, while retaining the family

name, was bought for £3,525 by an American financier, William Johnston Yapp. It was he who, in 1932, funded the 36-inch Yapp Reflecting Telescope at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux, and whose bequest on his death in 1946 established what is now the (general-purpose) Yapp Charitable Trust.

A tobacco Baron

Equally philanthropic was Bernhard Baron (Fig 1, top centre), the founder of the Baron Cigarette Machinery Co. Born in Russia (1850), he had emigrated to the USA. There he invented a cigarette-making machine that was to revolutionise the tobacco industry, enabling the production of up to 18,000 cigarettes an hour, whereas the fastest woman worker could hand roll only 324. Baron arrived in England in 1895 with the intention only of selling the manufacturing rights to his equipment. He decided to stay, and to diversify into the making of actual cigarettes.

In 1903 he joined a consortium with William J Yapp.

'Carreras Ltd' was floated on the stock exchange with share capital of £200,000, and a subsidiary company, Carreras & Marcianus Cigarettes Ltd, was established. Proudly declaring itself to be "England's greatest independent cigarette manufacturers", the new firm was second in size only to the huge multinational, British American Tobacco Co., which had been formed a year earlier, absorbing Imperial Tobacco, the Wills' and Player's group.

Carreras Ltd initially occupied Baron's cigarette-machine factory in St James Place, Aldgate, while retaining the old Soho shop. Expansion soon followed, and by 1908 the firm had additional manufacturing premises in the City, at 15-17 Creechurch Lane (off Aldgate). Around 1910 a new cigarette factory was opened at 238-240 City Road, a long, narrow building lining one side of Dingley Road (Fig 2) and situated, ironically, opposite the Royal Hospital for Diseases of the Chest!

The factory was named the Arcadia Works. In *My Lady Nicotine* (1890), J M Barrie, the Scottish journalist and future playwright, regularly refers to

1 The Black Cat Factory, 1928, artist W Warman. Directors (L to R): William J Yapp, Louis B Baron, Bernhard Baron, Edward Baron, William H Loudon.

'Arcadia Mixture', the favourite tobacco blend of a fictionalised smokers' club called the Arcadians.⁷ When asked to explain the name, Barrie confessed that the allusion was to Craven Mixture.

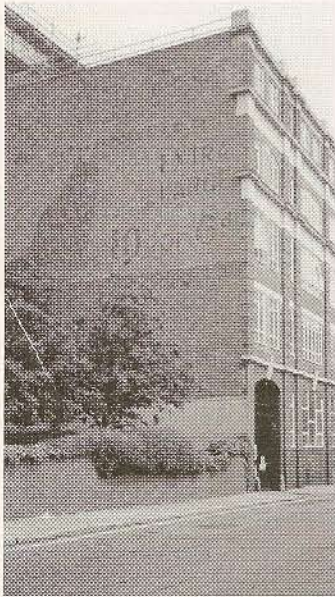
The innovative Carreras company laid claim to having first introduced cork filter tips (in its Craven A brand), while its Club brand was, in 1910 the first to offer gift coupons exchangeable by smokers for consumer goods. By the next decade a "branch factory & gifts department" was flourishing at 23-27 New North Street, Holborn. Jack Whitehead, in *The Growth of Camden Town*, recalls how footwear was among the most popular gifts, and how customers collecting their new boots or shoes at the later Camden Town factory would change into them on the spot, abandoning their old ones on the doorstep, to be cleared away at regular intervals by a boy assigned to the task.

The 'Black Cat Factory'

A new West End retail outlet was opened at 55 Piccadilly, and subsequently became the firm's registered address.

By 1926 Carreras had already outgrown its City Road premises and would soon be on the move again, this time to Camden Town. A new Arcadia Works was to be erected on the garden enclosure of Mornington Crescent, which had been sold for development in 1922. Eleven years earlier the gardens had been immortalised in paint by Crescent resident, Spencer Gore.⁸ Their destruction was deplored by contemporary conservationists, and led to the formation of the Royal Commission on London Squares.

Despite its recycled Greek name, the new factory was designed, by M E and O H Collins, in the Egyptian style popular after the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, and as a stylised copy of the temple, at Bubastis, of the cat-headed goddess, Bastet. The firm's trademark was embodied in the two 10-ft-high bronze cats outside the main entrance, and in



2 Part of the old Arcadia Works, still standing in Dingley Road, EC1, with a fading advertisement for Black Cat cigarettes (photo: Ruth Hayes).

the frieze of ten black feline faces gracing the façade. Pevsner would later declare himself unimpressed by the "bogus-modern" building: "... alas!, Carreras' abominable factory ... with a showy Egyptian centre and utilitarian side

ranges". He compared it unfavourably with Maxwell Fry's truly modern Cecil House (now Pranker House) in North Gower Street.⁹ Commentators in 1928 praised the factory, not for its decoration, but for the functionality of its interior. They emphasised its great size (all of 550 feet long), describing it as the "largest in the Metropolis"; its air-condi-



3 Silver medal presented to Carreras employees, 1928, with the face of Bernhard Baron, and inscribed "My thanks for all your help".

tioned modernity, with an accent on spaciousness and light; and the patriotic use of home-produced materials, using 3,000 tons of British steel, with window frames in British bronze, while "every cog in its machines ... has been made in Great Britain". The 400,000 sq.ft of flooring was of maple from Canada, where Carreras owned a branch factory.

To mark the completion of the building, a silver medal (Fig 3) was presented to each Carreras employee. The opening ceremony was captured on a newsreel film described by Jack Whitehead. On 9 November 1928 the *St Pancras Gazette* reported that "on Saturday" (the Jewish Sabbath!) a "simple ceremony" was attended by a "huge crowd" in the presence of Cllr Alfred Squire, the Mayor of St Pancras. Mr Robert McAlpine handed Mr Baron a gold cigarette casket bearing an image of the new building, which had been erected in 18 months by his army of 700-800 (often Irish) workers. Mr Belisha¹⁰ proposed a toast, describing Baron as "a Prince of Benefactors. Nobody had done more for the poor and needy in our time". (Bernhard gave away some £2 million in his lifetime. The Institute of Pathology at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, was named after him in 1927, although the eponym has since been dropped).¹¹ Baron replied that his life's ambition had been to achieve a tobacco factory that was a (supposedly!) "healthy

and pleasant place to work".

Nine months later, on 1 August 1929, Bernhard Baron died and was buried at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue cemetery in Willesden. He was succeeded on the Carreras board by his son Sir Louis B Baron and Mr Edward S Baron, his grand-nephew.¹²

Employing over 3,000 (mostly female) workers on

opened his first kiosk in Fleet Street in 1890. Soon after the Rembrandt takeover, Carreras-Rothmans, as the merged firm was now known, relocated gradually to a new single-storey factory in the fledgling Essex new town of Basildon, taking with it some two thirds of the workforce, for whom new housing was arranged. Also moved to Basildon was one of the bronze cats, the other being shipped to a company factory in Jamaica.

In 1984 the Essex factory was, in its turn, closed, and Carreras production was transferred to the Rothmans works at Darlington (Co. Durham).¹⁴ In 1999 Rembrandt's tobacco interests were finally merged into the multinational giant, BAT. Carreras-Rothmans survives as a legal entity, with a registered office in Mayfair.

Greater London House

After Carreras' departure the Camden Town building was acquired by the Greater London Council, which used it as offices until its abolition in 1986. The façade, was stripped of its ornamentation, and its curvaceous columns were boxed in, leaving a plain, 'modernist' frontage. In 1998-9, Resolution Property, the building's present owners, again refurbished Greater London House, whose eight floors of offices now attract firms "seeking locales in the much coveted Media Triangle".¹⁵ The original 'Egyptian' façade was largely restored, with its concealed columns re-exposed and freshly painted, and the two huge cats reinstated, in reproduction. All that is missing is the original centrepiece of the roofline frieze – a winged solar disc, emblematic of the Egyptian god Ra, and symbolic of that essential mellow of growing tobacco, the sun.

9 acres of floor space, the factory was welcomed by local people as a valuable source of jobs at a time of economic depression. Its workers were well paid by the standards of the day, and the firm was regarded as a model employer. Many workers lived locally, while others commuted from various parts of London. Often whole families were employed: Carreras was a 'family firm' in more ways than one. Its paternalism was reflected in the welfare facilities for its staff (see advert., p 35). Workforce cohesion and loyalty were further fostered by the wide range of social and sporting activities laid on. Life at the Black Cat Factory, on- and off-duty, is evoked in the compilation of reminiscences appended to this article, which also touch upon Carreras' later moved way from Camden, to Essex.

On the move again

In 1958 the firm was acquired by the Rembrandt Tobacco Co., owned by the Rupert family of South Africa and part of a Swiss-based 'Richmont' conglomerate. Four years earlier, the parent group had secured a controlling interest in Rothmans, another British independent firm founded by Louis Rothman,¹³ creator of the Pall Mall brand, who had

Notes and references

- 1 See 'Main sources', below.
- 2 Website: www.manninghumidors.com
- 3 T F C Dimmick, Curator and Archivist, Carreras Sales Ltd, in correspondence with Camden Local History Library, 16 Sep 1965.
- 4 *Streets of St Pancras* (CHS, 2002), p 37.
- 5 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Everyman's Library, 1991), p 593.

- 6 At 63 Evering Road, and later at 42 Fairholt Road.
- 7 The book was adapted from articles first published in the *St James's Gazette*. Scrymgeour, one of the smoker's club members, owned a houseboat named 'Arcadia', on the Thames at Cookham.
- 8 *Camden History Review* 13 (1985), pp 19-21.
- 9 Nikolaus Pevsner, *London, except the Cities of London & Westminster* (Penguin, 1952), p 371; *Streets of St Pancras* (CHS, 2002), p 21.
- 10 Was this, perhaps, Leslie Belisha

- (1893-1957), Liberal MP for Devonport, who later, as Minister of Transport, introduced the Belisha beacon?
- 11 Website: www.aim25.ac.uk.
- 12 Joint Stock Companies' Journal, 17 Dec 1930.
- 13 Not by Bernhard Baron as stated elsewhere (Whitehead, p 106; John Richardson, *A history of Camden* (1999), p 129; *Catching the past*, supplement to *Camden History Review* 26 (2002), p 16.
- 14 Not to Aylesbury, as stated in Whitehead, p 108.
- 15 Website: www.greaterlondonhouse.com.

Main sources

- J M Barrie, *My Lady Nicotine* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1890)
 Claire Gobbi, "The Spanish quarter of Somers Town" in *Camden History Review* 6 (1978), pp 6-9
 Alexander Howard & Ernest Newman (ed.), *London business cavalcade* (Lincolns-Prager, 1951), pp 107-108
 Robert Leon, "Last Gasp" in *NorthWest*, Issue 56 (Oct 2001)
 Lisa New (Harvard University), untitled, unpublished typescript donated to CLSAC
 Jack Whitehead, *The growth of Camden Town, AD1800-2000* (The Author, 1999), pp 104-109

- Census returns, 1841-1901
 Kellys' Post Office London directory, from 1846
 Synchronic.info, website: www.browneyedsheep.com/british-american-tobacco
Catching the past, Camden's millennium history project: Reminiscences, C (at CLSAC)

The need for an introduction to the following compilation prompted **David Hayes**, editor of this Review, to research the earlier history of Carreras, with some unexpected results.

Working for Carreras: former employees reminisce

compiled from interviews conducted by Robert Leon

As part of *Catching the Past*, Camden History Society's millennium project (2000), about 18 former Carreras employees were interviewed by the project co-ordinator, Robert Leon. Some were traced to their present addresses in Basildon, and interviewed together there at the home of Myrtle Padfield.

Unabridged transcriptions have been deposited at the Camden Local Studies & Archives Centre. The following extracts offer a taste (or aroma) of life at the Black Cat Factory during its 30-years existence in Camden Town.

Clocking on

"Employees entered the building from the north side, in Mornington Crescent. The first thing we did was to clock on; the Firm were very strict about punctuality. I started work at 8:00 am and, as I lived at Shoreditch, that mean I had to leave home at about 7:00. Sometimes I caught the bus but, if not, I got the Tube from Old Street Station. There were seven of my family, all cousins from Shoreditch, who came to Carreras to work." (*Dorothy O'Brien*.)

"Discipline was very strict as far as punctuality was concerned. At the starting time all

the doors were closed by a commissionaire. Then there was a wait for three minutes; then the supervisors of those locked out were asked whether they should be let in. Very often, if you arrived late, you lost a day's work. We commuted from Sidcup and, since we always caught the same train, we were never late. But one morning there was a very heavy fog and all the buses were held up; my father (who retired in 1964) was furious that we were locked out for the first time, even though it wasn't our fault." (*Donald Waddell*.)

Floor by floor

"The raw tobacco came into the basement. It was taken up to the fourth floor, where I worked, and made into cigarettes. The tobacco was still damp, so the cigarettes then went down to the second floor where they spent weeks drying out. Then they went back up to the fourth floor to be inspected, then down to the third floor to be wrapped in packets. Finally they went down to the ground floor to be despatched." (*Beatrice Rawlingson*.)

"Each floor was colour-coded and the staff wore the colour in their collars. Workers were supposed to stay on their own floor and not wander about the factory". (*Myrtle Padfield*.)

The basement

"I worked in the boilerhouse in the basement, maintaining the boiler system. Six maintenance men worked on two shifts. My principal job was to strip and clean the boilers. The boilers were housed at the southern end of the building, below where the tobacco leaf was stripped. They drove the air conditioning and maintained the correct degree of humidity. They were fuelled by oil, which arrived in tankers. They had previously used coal, and the men who started up the boilers and checked the temperature gauges were still known as 'stokers'." (*William Longhurst, who began work at Carreras in 1950*.)

Despite the stokers' efforts, "... the heat and humidity in the building were oppressive. Drinks were brought round at regular intervals, usually an orange drink, which we all encouraged to consume. No cosmetics were allowed for fear that the odour might taint the tobacco." (*Myrtle's Basildon group*.)

'Nicole' (aged 78 in 2000) "... first worked in the department which stripped the tobacco off the leaf. We worked individually in little stalls set in pairs along a long aisle. A low partition separated me from my neighbour. I worked in a sitting

position with my back to her, but we were able to chat a lot. We were on piecework. There was a charge-hand who came round regularly to see if we had finished our tobacco supply. He would bring us some more, or arrange for someone else to bring it. It came in big hemp sacks. You held up the leaf by the stalk and then tore the blade of the leaf away in one downward motion. Someone must have come along to take away the discarded stalks and the leaves. They were very strict about how often you could go to the loo. If you needed to exceed your regulation number of visits, or the time [allowed], you had to ask permission."

Fourth floor

"I really felt I had got somewhere when I went to Carreras. My sister was already working there. I started as a trolley girl, taking trolleys full of ready-made cigarettes to the lift to go down to the drying-room. Later I went on to the machines; during the War, I was doing a man's job and was paid extra. I was a 'catcher'. It was my job to pick up handfuls of cigarettes as they came out of the machine and arrange them in trays. These were kept in a kind of wooden frame with a fine wire mesh at the back that allowed dust to escape. There was a lad

to load the machine; he had a large bin, full of tobacco that he loaded into the hoppers. The [cigarette] paper was on a reel at the side of the machine, and as the tobacco was formed into the shape of a cigarette it was wrapped by the paper and passed along the tube of the machine to the point where it was cut with a knife to make the individual cigarettes. Then I loaded them onto the trays. There were about a hundred machines on the fourth floor." (*Beatrice Rawlins, who joined Carreras in September 1940.*)

Grace Legg, from Leytonstone, joined Carreras in 1933 at the age of 16: "I met my husband at Carreras. On his first day he asked me the way to the men's cloakroom. It was love at first sight. I began as a sweeper on the 4th floor. All the sweepings were taken to a big table where they were examined, and any shreds of tobacco which could be used were salvaged. Then I became a 'catcher', which meant gathering the finished cigarettes and arranging them in trays prior to drying out. Quality control was an important element of the job. Tobacco must be kept moist, and the machine operator had to make regular checks to ensure that the cigarettes had the correct moisture content."

Wrapping

"The wrapping process was carried out on three floors: export production was wrapped on the 3rd floor, home production on the 2nd, and loose-leaf tobacco in the basement." (*Myrtle Padfield.*)

"I got the job through my aunt who worked there for 30 years. I worked on packing loose cigarettes into packet of 10 or 20. This was all done by hand before they installed the wrapping machine. I worked there for 18 months. They had a medical department at the factory, and after examination they said I had a heart murmur and that working in the factory might not be good for me. I had to leave, though I was very happy there. We had a good bonus at Christmas and everyone got a Christmas cake." (*Florence Smith (née Goodrich), who started at Carreras in 1929, and was 87 when interviewed.*)

Lily Cannon had been living in Basildon with her widowed father, a Ford car worker: "When I heard that Carreras were coming there, I went for an inter-

view at the site of the new factory. For about a year I went up to Camden by coach before the whole of production was transferred to Basildon. I was a packer on the wrapping machines. We worked in teams of four: one fed the hopper; one fed the chute; one was a packer; and the fourth, a senior one, was the operator. The team of four kept two machines going. One machine put the cigarettes in packets, and the second wrapped them in cellophane. My job was to transfer the packets of cigarettes to the second machine for the final wrap. It was very important to keep both machines going together; we tried to avoid hold-ups on the packet machine because if it was stopped all the packets had to be retrieved and fed into the second part individually and by hand. Later on they developed a more modern machine combining both operations. After working on the machine for 6 months, I myself became an operator."

"There were about a hundred machines on the floor, some producing packets of ten and others of twenty cigarettes; I was on tens. We never handled the cigarettes. They were brought in containers to the machine and each container had 'shelves' or 'slides' made of wood, with which the cigarettes were fed into the hopper of the machine. The machine packed them into the cardboard carton, and then they passed to another machine nearby which wrapped them in cellophane. We worked in teams of three or four and each of us had her own task and responsibilities. One girl had her hand caught in a machine, but this was a very rare occurrence and the only mishap I remember. I enjoyed very much my time at Carreras. Although the work was repetitive there was a good atmosphere, and although we weren't supposed to talk there were plenty of opportunities to chat." (*Dorothy O'Brien again, a worker on the 2nd floor.*)

"I worked on the cigarette packing machines and became a 'runner'. Sometimes I would check the cigarette packets very frequently, as often as one in every 20 or 30 packets. Occasionally I went into the leaf room. I never worked there, but I loved going there; I liked the smell of raw tobacco. I remember when I came to Basildon I could smell the tobacco from the factory over a mile away." (*Balham-born Sheila Mills, née Edwards.*)

Lillian Gray (*sister-in-law to Myrtle Padfield*) lived in College Grove (Camden Town) and joined the Firm in 1953, aged 15: "I was a 'jack girl', which meant taking trolley-loads of packed cigarettes to a checker, who counted them and noted how much the team on each machine had produced."

Donald Waddell began in the late 1940s "... as a 'jack-boy', moving packages of foil, 'shells' and 'slides' for use on the packaging machines. At that time only cigarettes for export were wrapped in foil, which helped preserve them and guarded against damage by preventing them moving about inside the packet. (The slide is the cardboard piece inside the packet, on which the cigarettes rest; the shell is the outer container.)

The packaging store was in the basement, and the various materials were brought up by lift. My job was to take them to a convenient central point on the factory floor. The machine operatives, who were all women, could then handle the smaller loads and move what they needed to their machines. They used a small, narrow trolley with shelves for this.

When I first started, the Company also wrapped units of five cigarettes in paper; this basic wrapping would not have been suitable for an export-bound cigarette, so they were then packed in cartons for the British export trade. We were still unable to use cellophane wrapping at this time. Some of the cartons for export were wrapped in wax paper, similar to that used for wrapping bread. We had wrapped in polythene but were asked not to do so by Customs and Excise. Apparently it made the cigarettes waterproof; smugglers who were afraid of detection could drop their packages overboard and retrieve them later in perfect condition. In hot North African countries it was said that termites liked the sweet taste of polythene and would get into warehouses and consume it.

The wrapping machines accomplished three processes: wrapping in foil; placing on the slide; covering with the shell. When they came off the machines the packets were placed into cartons. There were three women on each machine: one to feed the hopper, one 'runner', and a third to pack into cartons. The runner was in charge of the team of women, and responsible for checking

the packets from time to time to make sure they were being wrapped properly." Mr Waddell (*who described the various stages of the wrapping process in graphic detail*) was later a mechanic: "We were only trained for the department where we worked, so I was only able to work on wrapping machines. Each mechanic was responsible for about 12 machines, which were usually of several different kinds. The Company had a huge mechanical engineering department on site, with lathes and grinding machines for sharpening the knives on all the various machines. The famous Baron cigarette-making machines were built on site."

Administration

"The Directors had their offices on the ground floor, together with their secretaries. The Sales Department was also on the ground floor. The rest of the office staff were on the first floor, in what was very much an open-plan type of office. The cash for the wages was drawn from the bank across the road. Even to go across the road the wages staff went in a van that was kept with the other vehicles at the back of the factory. There was always a gang of them; they ran in and out of the bank like Keystone Cops. Then they drove round to the back of the factory and unloaded everything in the normal Company unloading bay. We could see it all from the offices on the first floor." (*Shirley Green, née Garrod.*)

Health and welfare

"The bosses, Edward and Paul Baron, were always to be seen on the shop floor. I think they really cared for the welfare of the staff" (*Dorothy O'Brien*). "I recall being taken ill once and being sent home in the directors' chauffeur-driven car (*Eleanor Longhurst, another sister-in-law of Myrtle's, and a 4th-floor trolley-girl.*)

"Edward and Paul Baron were ... joined by their cousins Maurice and Theodore. They were always in the factory, talking to everyone. There was a story that Edward Baron once found a young girl eating sandwiches at lunchtime instead of eating in the canteen. The Company provided a very full canteen service, with heavily subsidised meals. There was a canteen on every floor, as well

THE WORLD FAMOUS HOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CORK-TIPPED CIGARETTES — *Carreras 'A'*



Working under ideal conditions each employee has the advantage of every modern facility for the betterment of health, education and recreation including:—

Full-time Medical Officer, Dentist and trained nurses, expert treatment by oculist and chiropodist. Holiday home at Brighton, Day School classes for all under 18. Financial assistance for

adults continuing their studies. Free legal advice. An H.S.A. Group and Works Library. Four canteens and tea at morning and afternoon rest breaks. Large Sports Ground at Stanmore with Bowls, Cricket, Tennis, Football and Netball Clubs; also club sections for Angling, Bridge, Darts, Horticulture, Amateur Dramatics and Swimming.

as a restaurant on the top floor. Edward Baron was therefore surprised to find this girl not eating in the canteen. Asked why she preferred sandwiches, the girl replied that, even though the meals were subsidised, she still could not afford them. A new system was then introduced whereby girls under 18 could buy tokens from the personnel department, enabling them to get a full meal for only 6d [2½p]". (*Joan Staines.*)

Edward was not always so thoughtful: "When Mr Eddy joined the Firm, he wanted a packet of biscuits every day, and I had to go out to buy them. No-one paid me for several days and I had to ask the welfare officer to get him to pay me — I was running up a big bill." (*Grace Legg, who worked for the directors, cleaning their offices and "generally looking after them".*)

"Carreras had its own Welfare Department, a dentist, chiropodist and doctor. There was a convalescent home in Brighton; every five years we

had an opportunity to stay there on full pay for two weeks" (*Irene Dessin, of Highgate New Town*). "Everyone was examined by the doctor, not only those who worked in the factory" (*Shirley Green.*)

"There was also a first aid department, and a dental service for the staff. The dentist was a lady, Miss Gregg, who was very glamorous. Her family lived in Oakley Square, where her father had a dental practice. Lots of men went to her for treatment even if they needed nothing done!" (*Joan Staines, née Cockling, raised in Somers Town.*)

"All Carreras staff under 18 had to continue their education on a day-release scheme. I won a prize at Isaac Pitman's, and also went to the Working Men's College in Crowndale Road. Later I became a junior shorthand typist, typing letters mainly. After 5½ years I left; there did not seem to any prospect of real advancement. I didn't have the right background to become a private secretary to one of the directors." (*Marlene Crilly, née*

Whyman, who lived in Kentish Town.)

"One of my duties was to look after the lending library, which was only open at lunchtimes. Any of the employees could come and read there, or borrow books to take home. The room wasn't very big, and there were only about 5000 books there. Most were light reading (Agatha Christie etc.); there were a few classics." (*Shirley Green.*)

Sport

Joan Staines, again: "Then there were the sports facilities. I joined the swimming group, which went to the Prince of Wales Road Baths; it was there that I met my husband. The annual Sports Day was held at Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, where the Firm had its own sports ground. We would take the Tube to Edgware and then the bus to the Green Man. To participate in the various events you had to obtain an entry form from the Welfare Department. My husband was very keen on

sports, and one year won the 'Victor Ludorum' cup.

Sports Day also included the Miss Carreras [beauty] competition. You didn't have to fill in a form in advance; you could enter on the day. There was a very good-looking girl in the office, called Vi, and we persuaded her to enter; she won. There were no bathing costumes then; all the girls paraded in nice frocks.

Two ladies who worked in the canteens at Mornington Crescent used to go out to the clubhouse in Honeypot Lane to provide refreshments for everyone. They were spinsters and stayed with the Firm for many years. Maybe they deliberately chose not to marry; many did, because when you married you had to leave the Firm" — a rule confirmed by *Myrtle's group*: "Once a girl got married, she had to leave. Lots of girls remained single to keep their jobs, which were considered well paid. When people learnt that you worked for Carreras, they assumed that you must be rich".

Organisation of the annual Sports Day, in June, was a responsibility of the Personnel Department. "We went to the West End to buy the prizes, which were usually household items. We posted a list of all the events on the canteen notice board, and then people would apply to the Personnel Office to enter. They had to complete an entry form. The Department had to arrange the whole day, even the catering, which was usually done by people from the canteen.

Apart from the Sports Day, the Firm had teams for all sorts of sports; they competed with other Firms. The Personnel Department arranged participation in the matches of the London Business League, though each team also had a captain who was responsible for the arrangements on the day. I was in the tennis and netball teams. I remember that we played against Hoover, Firestone and Wiggins Teape. Their grounds were nearer to the factories, while ours was out at Stanmore; we went out there by Tube. All the team met beforehand and set off to the match venue together." (*Shirley Green.*)

Drama

"While at Carreras I joined the drama group, which took the Fortune Theatre in Russell Street to put on a play once a year. The group hired a producer, and also professional backstage (e.g. make-up) staff. I think the sets were hired too. We had rehearsals in the canteen after work. We only went to the theatre on the day of the performance, so there was no final dress rehearsal on the Fortune stage." (*Marlene Gilly.*)

"What I enjoyed most about Carreras was that there were so many activities. I joined C.A.T.S. [Carreras Amateur Theatrical Society] when I was 18. I did a bit of everything: I acted, did the wardrobe and, and was assistant stage-manager. We put on plays in the canteen and could bring members of the family in to be part of the audience. Later we put on shows at the Rudolf Steiner Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, at the St Pancras Town Hall, and at the Fortune Theatre. There were normally 2 plays a year and 2 variety shows. We also put on shows at Queen Mary's Hospital in

Roehampton, and afterwards went around the wards, giving out cigarettes." (*Joan Staines.*)

Wartime

"During WWII, enormous bomb shelters were dug out and lined with solid concrete. After the War they were used for storage of wrappers and containers". (*William Longhurst.*)

"I became a machine operator, a job normally reserved for men, and I was paid extra. Only three days' training were given to women taking over the machines, but they had worked on them for some time and were already used to changing the rolls of paper. The women kept the machines much cleaner and shinier." (*Grace Legg.*)

"We had Music While You Work [on the radio] to keep us going, and once we had a visit from Princess Marina. She looked very elegant; I remember especially her beautiful earrings. Her visit gave everyone a lift. Most of the employees were girls, though the fitters who looked after the machines were men, and the bales of raw tobacco were handled by men even during the War. Work did not change much during the War, though we seemed to be under pressure to produce more. I think the machines were kept going continuously, though I was never asked to work long hours and never worked nights." (*Dorothy O'Brien.*)

"The Firm had a factory in Rock City, Canada. During the War everyone received a parcel from Rock City which, amongst other things, contained a tin of salmon and a pound of bacon. At Christmas there was always a free Christmas lunch, when a packet of cigarettes was put on everyone's plate." (*Joan Staines.*)

"Because there were three of us worked at the Firm in 1945 we got three food parcels from Canada. The factory there was in the French-speaking part; we had to record messages of thanks in French!" (*Donald Waddell.*)

To Basildon

"The move was announced very suddenly at the factory. We were ordered to turn off all the machines and listen while the Chairman spoke on the intercom. When he announced that the Firm was moving to Basildon, many people cried.

When we first came down here it was like being on holi-

day. We went for long walks in the country. I had had a friend who lived down here just after the War, and we used to come down sometimes to get out of London. But no-one seemed to know exactly where Basildon was.

The Company wanted to encourage staff to move there, so after work they would lay on coaches to bring people down here to see what kind of place it was and what the houses were like. We had never had a whole house of our own. If we wanted to move, we told the foreman, and though him the Firm, who gave our names to Basildon Corporation. After a while we received a letter advising what houses were on offer for rent. I am still renting the original house, which was in the middle of the country when I came." (*Beatrice Rawlingson.*)

"Those who moved with Carreras had an unwritten undertaking that their children would also have the right to council home. Grace Legg's daughter, Jacqui, got a council house straightaway when she married, and so did Myrtle's sisters. Later (when the local council replaced the original Development Corporation) there was a change of policy, and when Myrtle's children married no property was made available.

Although it supposed to be a secret, there were already rumours and gossip before the day of the announcement. It was a great shock; no-one knew where Basildon was. Everyone was sent home after the announcement.

It was possible to go to Basildon and choose the type of house you wanted, but not all of the houses were finished at that point. Moving costs were paid, together with a disruption allowance and money to buy carpets and curtains. All the moving was done by Pickfords. Grace cried all the way there, and remembers waving goodbye to her mother and sisters.

Some people could not stand the loneliness in Basildon and moved back. There were no shops, but Woolworths, Boots and Barclays [Bank] came round in converted buses. There was no railway station then; some people walked from Pitsea; some cycled to Wickford to get trains. At first life was boring because there was no entertainment; later the clubhouse was built, which was some help.

The core of the Basildon

factory was not new: it had previously been occupied by Rotary Hose, manufacturers of tubes and piping, who had moved back to London. There were many new additions to make the building suitable for Carreras, including a large office block and bonded warehouse.

Until the move of the factory was complete, we all commuted back to Camden [to work]. In winter the buses were very cold; some took blankets and a hot-water bottle. We all rushed into the canteen for hot toast on arrival." (*Myrtle's group.*)

"The coaches to take us to work left Basildon at 6:00am, and we got back at 7:00pm. By the time we'd had something eat, we only had the energy to tumble into bed." (*Beatrice Rawlingson.*)

"The buses which took us up to Camden were very old and very cold. The back platform was open, as on a London bus. Everyone had to pay except for the 'bus marshal', who organised the journey and kept order. We paid for our fares at work. We moved to Basildon in 1958 and commuted for a few months. I think about two thirds of the staff moved down here." (*Donald Waddell.*)

According to Lily Cannon (see earlier), "Many of the younger members of staff were moving with the Firm, but some of the older ones, particularly the operators, were not leaving Camden and there was a certain amount of resentment that we would eventually be taking over their jobs. For those who decided to go the offer of a house was the key factor... As far as I know, when the Firm moved again to Darlington [in 1984] no-one was asked to go with them."

"I lost 20% of my pension because I retired early. I don't think anyone was offered the chance to go to Darlington. They wanted to change working practices and to have more flexible labour." (*Donald Waddell.*)

Myrtle's father was "destroyed" by the announcement of the further move. William Longhurst took early retirement at 61 and didn't work again.