

HURRAY FOR THE JCBs!

STORY 60

One vehicle which has been at the centre of Singapore's changing landscape for decades is the JCB excavator. During the years of the building boom, these mighty yellow diggers could be seen parked at construction sites all around Singapore.

It was developed in the UK by Joseph Cyril Bamford (Mr JCB) who, in 1945, used his engineering skills to make this new machine for handling construction materials. He started by making a Tipping Trailer. Shortly afterwards he began work on a Backhoe Loader, a machine that was to change the construction equipment

market forever.

Wealco's Anthony Wong, who was supplying the market here with JCBs, says the Backhoe Loader was the first JCB machine introduced to the Singapore construction industry. Everyone was calling it the JCB and the name stuck. It was instantly accepted. For one thing, it had wheels, so it did not damage the roads. During the construction boom, it was used to lay telephone lines, power cables, construct drains and do maintenance work.

Wong recalls that the biggest customers were construction companies. "There wasn't one single large fleet then, but numerous owner-opera-

tors, who bought the machines and leased out the JCBs. They offered their services as operators, as you needed to know how to operate these machines." But when the construction boom ended, Wong says many of these owner-operators lost their source of income and turned to driving taxis for a living.

Over the years, JCBs have acquired a strong reputation in the industry as reliable workhorses. The UK company currently manufactures more than 130 different machines and sells them to more than 150 countries worldwide. It is still a private family-owned company, now run by the founder's son, Sir Anthony Bamford.

