



A 1955 photo of the few remaining ruins at the Newnes oil works.

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families who wished to find employment elsewhere were stranded and appeals to the management met with a stony-hearted refusal. The people, in some cases, had to leave their furniture and belongings and follow the long winding thirty-mile bush track to Lidsdale and beyond as best they may.

All rolling stock fit to travel was sent to Newnes Junction where a number of open wagons were stored awaiting disposal. The oil-tank wagons were sent to the Clyde Refinery for further service. In October 1926 John Fell applied to the Warden's Court to have the leases held in the Newnes area by the Commonwealth Oil Corporation cancelled, with an idea of taking the leases under his own control. Then, on August 12th, 1927, there was an announcement that the Commonwealth Oil Corporation had decided to close its interests in Newnes and call for tenders to dispose of all their assets. It is evident that some form of agreement had been made before hand with John Fell as a portion of the refinery equipment, together with several large storage tanks, had already been transferred to Duck Creek. On August 22nd, 1927, there was a disastrous retort explosion at Fell's Oil Refinery at Duck Creek when three men were killed, including John Simpson Fell, the son of the director, John Fell. It has been stated that this calamity marked the end of the John Fell regime in the oil industry and in 1928 the Duck Creek Refinery was taken over as a going concern by the Shell Oil Company of Australia.

In certain industrial quarters the closing of the oil-works at Newnes was regarded as a national disaster, placing the country in the hands of outside oil-importing interests. Many unpleasant home truths were voiced both outside and inside the State Parliament of New South Wales and the Federal Parliament at Canberra. Unfortunately the closure happened during the Great Bank Depression of the late nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties when money was not available, or not made available. In 1929 a new company became interested in the then abandoned oil undertaking at Wolgan but, on finding that the bounty given for local oil production was about to be withdrawn, the directors decided to await developments in this direction.

THE HAPPENINGS OF THE NINETEEN-THIRTY PERIOD AT NEWNES.

During 1930 Mr. A.E. Broue took over the leases at Newnes and a company was formed including the directors of certain mining companies operating at Broken Hill. Towards the end of the same year this latter support was withdrawn. Mr. Broue then formed a new company known as "OIL PRODUCERS, NEWNES, LIMITED". Forty-eight men were employed during February, 1931 to place the railway and plant in working order, after which over one hundred men found employment. After working three weeks it was found