

1933, sought to form and finance an investigation committee to inquire into the commercial possibilities of Newnes. The sum of £10,000 was allotted for this work. "If satisfactory a company will be formed" was stated in the directive. It was further stated that "If the oil-companies declined to assist the inquiry into petrol costs a Royal Commission will be appointed". It was mentioned that an independent oil company sold Newnes petrol in Sydney blended with three parts of American imported petrol and this blend was equal to the best aviation petrol. The miners, according to report, could not supply enough shale to keep the retorts at Newnes fully occupied. Labour troubles at this period were non-existent. It was thought that the shale tunnel should be driven through to the Glen Alice Valley for further shale supplies and this project was partly carried out. The 1933 Investigation Committee went into all aspects relative to aerial ropeways and surface tramways and made surveys for such transport facilities, and were also responsible for cleaning out various tunnels to ascertain the extent of the shale seams that were still available. It was suggested that there was sufficient inducement to continue with the undertaking at Newnes, and samples of shale were sent to America, England, France and Scotland for tests, and in every case good results were obtained.

The oil-works at Newnes were closed through the major part of 1934. The Federal Government asked Imperial Chemical Industries to take over and operate the Newnes project, but this firm declined the offer "owing to its lack of technical knowledge". Another English concern was then approached in 1935 to make further investigations and it is remarkable how their independent estimates coincided with those previously given. In May 1936, the Federal Government announced that it would nationalise Newnes and called once again for tenders from approved companies to take over and operate the oil-works.

THE NATIONAL OIL COMPANY, NEWNES AND GLEN DAVIS.

An agreement was reached during April 1937 between Mr. George Davis and the Federal and State Governments for the operation of the oil industry at Newnes. The Federal Government undertook to contribute £334,000 and the New South Wales Government £166,000. In addition Mr. Davis was to form a company to be known as the "NATIONAL OIL COMPANY", with a capital of £600,000. This new company, in its wisdom, created a new oil-works in the neighbouring Glen Alice Valley which was now renamed Glen Davis, evidently preferring to start from the "grass-roots" upwards. The equipment from Newnes was taken over seventy-miles of indifferent bush roads to the new site of operations. The transport cost of low-loaders for this heavy duty must have been enormous. Retorts, refinery and even the power-house, were demolished for re-erection. The railway was abandoned to its fate and an expensive pipe-line laid along its course to Newnes Junction where it discharged its petrol content into either of two storage tanks ranged against a dead-end siding where the petrol could be loaded into railway tank-wagons. The problem of a water supply at the new works was overcome, so it has been stated, by laying another pipe-line to a reservoir on the Fish River near Oberon, a distance of some fifty miles away as the crow flies.

The national tragedy associated with the Glen Davis installation lies outside the theme of this book. It may be mentioned, however, that the demolition of equipment at Newnes was thoroughly carried out and only odd brick foundations placed here and there, together with the road-beds of various sidings remain to mark the site. The works area in general was so razed with fire and overgrown with scrub that its features can scarcely be recognised, even by those people cognizant with the place in the hey-day of its activities. Information has come to hand that the rails of the Wolgan Railway were taken up, per medium of motor-drawn trolleys running on flanged wheels, and sent to Tobruk in North Africa, where they were possibly used in the construction of the defences surrounding this battle area in the Second World War.

Later than 1953 sundry components of the Shay locomotives were spread over the ground in

Opposite:-

View of Glen Davis taken 1-8-1939, whilst under construction.

• N.S.W. Govt. Printer.