

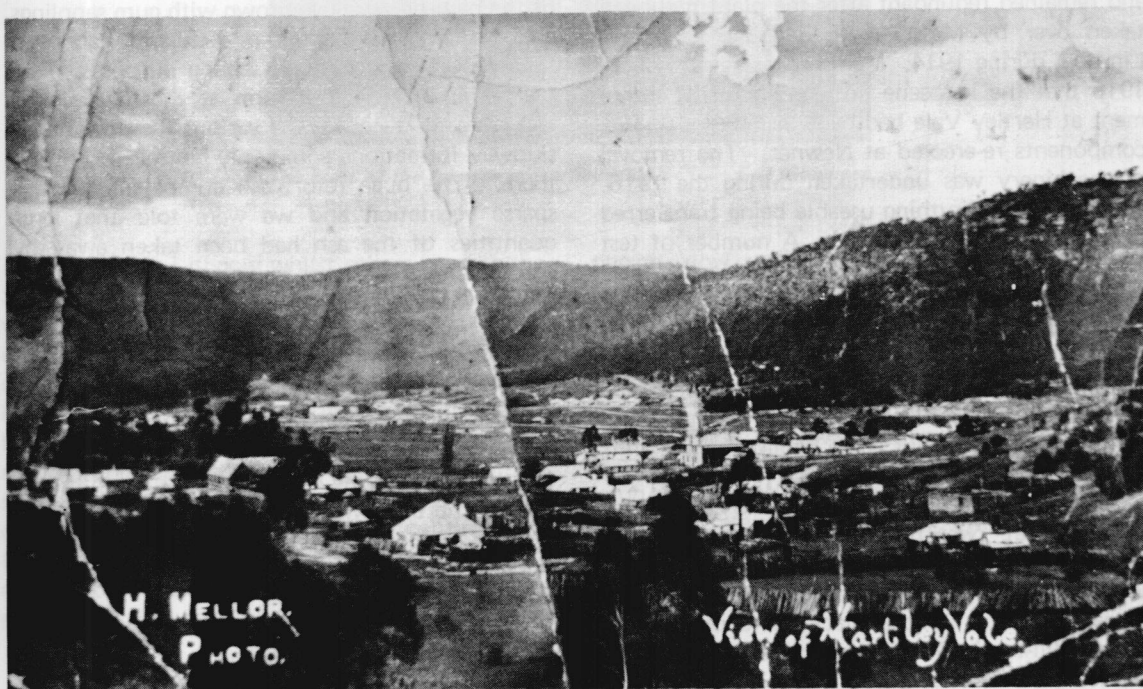
way and the refinery sidings. The "Hill-top" locomotive and the haulage winding engine were also marked at this time for similar treatment. At 1901 the outward shipment of "Export" quality shale had almost ceased and the metre-gauge tramway was mostly used by the bulk oil transference tank wagons. In 1903 shale mining by the New South Wales Shale and Oil Company ceased at Hartley Vale after a total of 382,600 tons had been mined the company now concentrating their efforts in this direction at the Torbane deposits.

Operations at the Retort Colliery ceased during 1901 and another coal adit was opened in its stead. Messrs Martin and Lockett reopened an old coal tunnel which was located in the gully adjacent to the Hartley Pass public road about midway between Hartley Vale Railway Station and the Hartley Vale township in 1904. Coal was supplied from this mine to the retorts and refinery at the adjacent oil works. At 1905 the company was obtaining some thirty or forty tons of second grade shale daily from the Australian Kerosene Oil and Shale Company's mines at West Katoomba. This shale was mixed with the local second grade commodity for retorting.

THE COMMONWEALTH OIL CORPORATION PURCHASES THE HARTLEY OIL WORKS

The English sponsored Commonwealth Oil Corporation, in order to increase its sphere of influence in the local shale oil industry, purchased the properties and stocks etc of the New South Wales Shale and Oil Company Limited during April 1906 for the sum of £35,000. The sale gave the Corporation control over the oilworks at Hartley Vale and New Hartley at Torbane. They concentrated their efforts at Torbane, transferring the crude oil from the retorts by rail to Hartley Vale Sidings where several large storage tanks had been erected for its reception. The oil was then taken over the metre-gauge tramway system to the refinery in the Valley for fractionating treatment as required.

A calamitous happening occurred on Friday January 8th 1909 when the locomotive of the "Hill-top" section of the metre-gauge tramway was propelling three tank wagons near the bankhead of the main haulage inclined way. One tank wagon was loaded with naptha and it was noticed that this vehicle was on fire. The wagons were at once uncoupled from the locomotive and separated one from another. The fire was then extinguished on a second vehicle which had also caught alight before full attention was paid to the naptha loaded wagon,



A very battered old photo showing the township of Hartley Vale in its heyday.

H. Mellor.