

in close proximity to the gates guarding the entrance to the exchange sidings at the Hartley Vale Railway Station, evidently awaiting a buyer. Here it was noted in a very forlorn state at 1950 and, so it is believed, was eventually loaded into an "S" class Departmental wagon and taken to the engineering works of Messrs Horan and Crossman at Parramatta Road Auburn. However, at this juncture no further information is available as the above firm, now retired from business, were reticent regarding the acquisition or disposal of this once so hard-worked little locomotive.

IN CONCLUSION

An inspection of the oil works at Hartley Vale made in 1950 was a lamentable experience. The "Hill-top" tramway formation, thanks to its saturation of split oil over the years, was devoid of weeds and other growth for the most part and could easily be followed. Odd brick foundations marked the site of the winding engine and boiler house at the bankhead of the haulage inclined way. The descent of the latter into the valley, some six hundred feet below, was made with considerable difficulty over the slippery ash ballast and only a total reliance on the rooted stability of bracken ferns kept one in a vertical position. The early workings situated about half way down the length of the haulage were overgrown with gum sapplings and the entrance portal to each adit had been "blown down" for mine sealing purposes. The metre-gauge track formation at the lower levels was easy to trace but the various two-foot gauge skipway formations could only be traced here and there. The huge retort ash dumps supported a sparse vegetation and we were told that large quantities of the ash had been taken away by cosmetic manufacturers for use, after grinding to a fine powder, as the principal abrasive ingredient used in tooth paste. The workings to the west of Reedy Creek could be easily traced as they were bisected by the still trafficable laneway known as Long Alley. Here again the several adits had their entrance portals covered with earth and mullock.

North of the Hartley Pass Road the brick pits were full to the brim with water and the refinery site showed a tangled mass of broken brickwork intermingled with a wild growth of brambles. The desolation was complete.

In its heyday, when the mines were most active, there was a resident population at Hartley Vale township of over six hundred people. With the closure of the oil industry there was a mass migration to other spheres of employment, many fam-

the men using sand to smother the flames. Whilst engaged in this dangerous work the tank exploded, one man being killed and five others injured. A portion of the tank fabric was found 226 feet away from the scene of the explosion. At the inquiry it was reported that the locomotive was travelling without an ash-pan and it was surmised that some hot coals fell on the oil-saturated track causing the fire. This terrible accident led to most stringent regulations being framed to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy.

Shale mining was discontinued by the Commonwealth Oil Corporation at Hartley Vale during 1909 although the refinery still remained in production and received the benefit of electric lighting in the following year. Work was commenced on the dismantling of fifteen old type shale retorts which were no longer required as the Corporation found it more economical to produce crude oil at Torbane. The erection of additional bulk storage tanks was undertaken at Hartley Vale Exchange Sidings to facilitate the transference of oil to and from the Hartley Vale Refinery.

The financial affairs of the Commonwealth Oil Corporation degenerated to such an extent that this concern went into liquidation in 1912 and their assets placed under the receivership, with option to purchase, of Mr. David Fell. The oil industry at Hartley Vale closed at December 1913 and remained redundant after the plant had been taken over by Messrs John Fell and Company Limited, during 1914. Mention has been made in 1915 that the kerosene tin manufacturing equipment at Hartley Vale had been dismantled and its components re-erected at Newnes. The removal of machinery was undertaken during the 1916-1918 period, everything useable being transferred to the oil works at Newnes. A number of test bores were sunk at various places at Hartley Vale to prove the extent of the remaining shale deposits which, in 1921 were found to be very limited and of little value. Consequently the company decided to relinquish the site and proceeded to remove the rails from the tramway and skipway systems, together with the various cable haulage engine units etc.

No doubt the "Fowler" locomotive used on the "Valley Flat" was rent asunder after the completion of the plant stripping activities, only portions of the saddle-tank remaining in the grass where it gave comfort to the black-snake population. The "Hill-top" Dubs locomotive remained in service to the bitter end, (about 1930) and was left standing on a pair of rails immediately adjacent to the Mount Victoria to Bell Road level crossing