

did not improve matters and considerably delayed all activities at Newnes. However, in spite of all obstacles the first refined oil was despatched towards the end of August 1911.

Originally the refining process of mineral oil was concentrated on the production of Kerosene and paraffin wax for the manufacture of candles. The lighter products of distillation, such as petrol and benzine, etc., and the heavier products (now used as lubricants), were discarded as being of little commercial value, consequently they were run into the pellucid waters of the Wolgan River, to its detriment. Incidentally, there was no accepted standard for kerosene, then in great demand for illuminating purposes, and the manufacturers occasionally added the lighter oils which gave a high flash-point, a circumstance which often caused fatal accidents when this impure oil was used in domestic and other lighting equipment.

In December 1911, representations were made to the New South Wales Government to purchase and operate the Wolgan Railway as a part of the State railway system. The directors of the Corporation were of the opinion that, if the sale was effected, the money so gained would enable the fuller development of the shale mines and associated oil-works. However, the Railway Commissioner strongly reported against the acquisition of the railway as in his opinion the line would not prove to be a paying proposition.

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OIL CORPORATION.

Press mention was made on January 3rd, 1912, that the Commonwealth Oil Corporation, Limited, had gone into liquidation. It is evident that their financial affairs had reached a low ebb and a substantial influx of new capital would be required before operations could be continued and reasonable profits attained. The works were closed in 1913 and the train service between Newnes and Newnes Junction was limited to one trip weekly, run on Fridays. Further newspaper reference was made on February 16th, 1914 regarding the appointment of David Fell as receiver for the administration of the Corporation's activities and, as was later stated, bring them to a conclusion. Application was then made for a partial suspension of labour conditions, which was duly granted, much to the mortification of the industrial trade unions involved.

During this period the shunting locomotive at Newnes was sold to Messrs. Hoskins of Lithgow, and the light track laid between Newnes Station and the oil-works was strengthened with additional sleepers to permit Shay locomotives to work over this section. A further economic measure was the closing of the locomotive depot at Constance (although the reversing triangle was retained) and the transference of the locomotive servicing facilities to a group of three short dead-end sidings, provided with engine pits, established close to the workshop in the oil-works area. However, as the Constance engine-shed was not re-erected the locomotives were serviced and repaired under open-air conditions, a most unsatisfactory arrangement for the employees engaged on this work and also for the well being of the Shay engines. The change-over was completed in March, 1915.

The task of administration was not an easy one for David Fell and there were many difficulties to overcome before the oil-industry at Newnes was placed on a proper footing, an operation which became most urgent with the advent of the 1914-18 War. At this stage John Fell, a brother of David Fell and an acknowledged expert in shale-oil distillation processes, was brought from England and, with his wide experience, readily found employment redesigning the Newnes oil-retort bench and its associated equipment, fortunately, with great success. He was also responsible for re-timbering of No. 2 Shale tunnel which was regarded by the miners in particular as being unsafe. The plant used for the manufacture of kerosene tins, etc. was transferred from the oil-works at Hartley Vale to Newnes for re-installation. Machinery and other materials were brought from Torbane and Glen Alice (later Glen Davis) for a similar purpose.

Towards the end of April 1915 the Court approved of a legal arrangement whereby John Fell and the Commonwealth Oil Corporation were associated in their business dealings under the name of John Fell and Company, Limited. Work on a small scale was carried on at the Torbane shale adits, the mineral being railed to Newnes for treatment between February 1916 and March 1918. Further quantities of machinery and equipment commenced to arrive from Hartley Vale, obviously it was John Fell's plan to concentrate the manufacturing part of the local oil industry at Newnes.

In September 1919 the Commonwealth Oil Corporation was reformed and Mr. John Fell was