

412 14/11/20

From Capelee

To Newnes

Sender British Overseas Airways Weight 13 Tons

Consignee Bon Oil Corp

Wagon No. 2045 Date 13. 11. 1920

Consignment ticket for the Commonwealth Oil Corporation.

D. O'Brien.

appointed manager, surrendering his option to purchase the shale-oil undertaking. He received an annual salary of £4000, together with an understanding that the profits of the concern would be equally divided. After this announcement had been made, industrial troubles followed immediately and the oil-works were closed between November 1919 and February 1920.

THE HAPPENINGS OF THE NINETEEN-TWENTY PERIOD AT NEWNES.

A somewhat fool-hardy scheme was tried out during 1921 when, after the necessary condensing apparatus had been placed temporarily in position, the No. 2 Shale-tunnel was filled with firewood and waste oil and thus prepared for the firing of the shale seam in-situ. It is believed that at first the scheme gave promising results, as the distillation process could be obtained without mining and handling costs. Fortunately, the Mines Department intervened and forbade further experiments in this direction as, once the shale seam caught fire there would be no means of controlling the extent of the conflagration. The condensing tower and associated equipment of these futile efforts,

after laying dormant for several years, was demolished and sent to the Duck River refinery, of which more anon.

Fifty employees were discharged at the Newnes oil-works early in January 1922, a circumstance strongly resented by the local community, and one which meant that these men and their families had to leave the settlement in order to find work elsewhere. John Fell stated at the time that the company could not compete with the large quantities of cheap American oil coming into the country, and that the high cost of production at Newnes made it necessary to close a portion of the works. Consequently the shale winning and coal mining sections lay redundant for a year or so. Meanwhile, during 1923, a quantity of crude oil was imported from Borneo and treated at the Newnes Refinery with the idea of blending it with the shale oil distilled from the local retorts. However, as the latter were not then in operation, the company was unable to proceed further with the scheme, but it certainly gained experience in the distillation of overseas oil.

At this time the company made an offer, without result, to the miners, operators, and other employees at the Newnes Oil works that they form