

THE PERIOD

1890s

COMMEMORATIVE PICTORIAL HISTORY

Much of northern NSW was underdeveloped when the management of a London-registered company known as The Sulphide Corporation (Ashcroft's Process) Limited set their sights on establishing an industry in Cockle Creek in 1895.

They were confident their process of producing zinc by electrolytic means would be commercially viable and so set about transforming the site into one of the State's key industries.

The reasons for choosing the Newcastle area were explained by the Corporation's first Chairman, the Earl of Kintore, a former Governor of South Australia:

"The place selected for the erection of the company's works

is Newcastle, New South Wales, which offers exceptional advantages for the purpose, being situated on the sea, with good port and harbour facilities, and having ample supplies of coal in the immediate vicinity. It has also the advantage of possessing good wharfage and railway accommodation and an abundant supply of salt and fresh water, all of them essential for our purpose. Newcastle is also a port of call and coaling station for steamers to and from all the leading Australian ports so that freights can be easily arranged for both in respect of plant and machinery and the company's ores and products."

The company needed a steady supply of zinc ores for its project so the decision was made in late 1895 to purchase the Central Mine of the Broken Hill Central Silver Mining Company.

The first stage of the Cockle Creek Works was constructed between March 1896 and the following February and the operation of the Ashcroft Process began in March 1897.



Newcastle Harbour 1890s - most of the machinery for the new Cockle Creek plant was transported to Newcastle by ship and then railed to the site.