

SETCH 'OILFIELD' CHIMNEY DEMOLISHED

End of a West Norfolk Landmark

ONE of West Norfolk's best-known landmarks; the 160-foot chimney of what was once the processing plant of English Oilfields Ltd., at Setch, near King's Lynn, is no more.

After dominating the little village on the A.10 to Cambridge for 40 years the giant stack now lies a river of redbrick across the shrub-covered common.

It was yesterday morning that two workmen from Nottingham, Mr. Raz-

mond Abdulla and Mr. Arthur Pearson, started to demolish the chimney. At the base the stack was already pierced by a nine-foot high arch, so that it seemed to stand on two semi-circular feet.

It was on the foot bearer to the common that the drill went to work, so that when it fell the chimney would fall away from the group of prefabricated bungalows in its shadow.

Man Injured

By midday a large hole had been bored by the pneumatic drill in the support and only two slim stems of brick remained on this side. Shortly after 3 p.m. a crowd began to gather, mostly of people to whom the chimney had been familiar all their lives, to watch the death of the giant.

Before it died, however, the chimney claimed a victim. One of the demolition men, Mr. Abdulla, was struck by a falling brick while clearing away some of the rubble in the hole in the chimney base. A brick struck Mr. Abdulla, opening a cut on his head. He was taken

to Lynn General Hospital, and after having stitches put in he went home.

Towards four o'clock everyone except Mr. Pearson moved well away; he stayed on, chipping away brick after brick. His drill growing into the remaining supports like a small, angry roder with one tooth nibbling at an elephant's foot.

Dead on four the stack came down. Mr. Pearson said later, "I was surprised it stayed as long as it did. I knew it was coming at last when the brick remaining in the two stems of the right-hand leg started to crack and splintering small flakes of masonry hit my face."

"Then, I took my drill and ran in the opposite direction to the way it was going to fall."

Silent Watchers

The silent watchers saw the weakened supports buckle and collapse. The chimney, grossly top-heavy, swung towards the common. For a second a thousand tons seemed poised in suspended animation; then it stretched shadow far over the brambles and crashed down. As it came the twenty feet of brick detached themselves in mid-air.

The thump as the 220,000 bricks fell made the earth shake. As the dust fell down the excited spectators ran forward to examine the ruin.

HISTORICAL NOTE—English Oilfields Ltd. was founded in 1918 for the manufacture of crude oil from the shale found in the vicinity of Setch. Several local people bought shares in the company, but the first dividend was paid out only this year when the site of the works was sold.

The chimney was to have been for the furnaces of the plant which was built at its foot, and was finished in 1921. In the 1930s oil production came to an end there although certain experimental work did go on until 1952. The rest of the plant has long since been demolished and nettles and brambles grow over the site. The firm went into voluntary liquidation last December.

STANDING
AND
FALLING

