

## **THE SUN KEROSENE SHALE AND OIL COMPANY, MOUNT KEMBLA**

Evidently a move was made in September 1872 to take over the affairs of the Pioneer Kerosene Works and establish a concern, to be titled as "THE SUN KEROSENE SHALE AND OIL COMPANY", with a projected capital of £25,000 divided into shares of £1.00 each. The provisional directors were John Graham (manager), Thomas Hale (of Bellambi Colliery fame), Lawrence Kendall, and J. Stewart, M.L.A. When financial commitments and legal adjustments had been finalised the new company took over the management and assets of the Pioneer Kerosene Works. It would appear that managerial troubles of a serious nature soon developed which eventually led to John Graham selling his interest in the new company established on his land for £10,000. He was a most popular man, as witnessed by his employees arranging a farewell banquet in his honour. Soon afterwards his brother Edward Graham also retired and at his particular farewell banquet he implied "this his relinquishing the management of the company was not altogether voluntary."

Operations at the oil-works were suspended in 1875 and remained in this condition until early December 1876. In the following year Mr John Fell took over the managership and endeavoured to place the local oil industry on a sound footing. Unfortunately industrial unrest, coupled with a series of destructive fires on the premises, thwarted his intentions. Then came another reorganisation of the managerial side of the company's activities when Mr Andrew Armstrong became responsible for the operation of the oil-works and the sale of its product, which was now marketed under the trade name of "STAR KEROSENE". However, sustained competition against "COMET OIL" which came from the oil-works at Hartley Vale, together with the price undercutting methods of agents for American imported oils and kerosene, finally forced the kerosene manufacturing industry at Mount Kembla to close, the assets being sold about June 1878. It was said at the time that the company's shale seams were nearing exhaustion.

## **THE MOUNT KEMBLA OIL AND COAL COMPANY**

Late in 1878 it was announced that an English company was formed to take over the oil-works property at Mount Kembla, under the title of "THE MOUNT KEMBLA COAL AND OIL COMPANY". Little, if any, attention was paid to the then redundant oil-works equipment as the new concern intended to develop the coal-mining propensities of the immediate area. These people engineered a standard gauge railway, some seven miles in length, to connect with their shipping jetty at Port Kembla, but these activities are outside the theme of this essay.