

THE IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS OF TORBANE RAILWAY STATION.

Torbane Railway Station, consisting of a long platform laid on the western side of the Mudgee line together with a small weatherboard waiting shed, sheltered under the eastern lee of a low densely tree-clad hill. Looking eastwards a splendid view is to be had of rolling grass-covered hillocks, surmounted here and there by a splendid tree, where sheep graze at their leisure or follow one another in single file along their narrow pads leading to the gate of the paddock or to the nearest water-hole. No habitation is in sight, the old established "Airly" homestead being situated some two miles to the south east and hidden from view by an intervening rise. It is assumed that the immediate district gained its place-name from this property. Airly Mountain, backed by the ramparts of Genowian Mountain, forms a most impressive sky-line, while far to the south may be discerned the sandstone cliff surround of the famed Capertee Valley.

The approach to Torbane Station from the Mudgee Road is by means of a bush track which winds its descending way through numerous gates of private grazing enclosures, occasionally passing through belts of forest trees. The orchard property, established by Peter Russell has a couple of delightful old-time residences and an ancient barn covered with a high-pitched roof to shed the winter snow. This edifice was originally constructed of bush timber, the sides being of hewn planks and the roof consisted of wide sheets of bark. The bush track continued through the orchard to gain the former camping ground utilised by navvies engaged on the construction of this section of the Mudgee Railway. Another hillock is crossed to gain the lonely Torbane Station.

THE ADVENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OIL CORPORATION AT TORBANE.

In May 1906 it was announced that the New South Wales Shale and Oil Company's properties, stocks and railways were purchased by the Com-

monwealth Oil Corporation, an English concern, for the sum of £55,000. The latter company was about to commence operations in the Wolgan Valley and, with the purchase of the Hartley and New Hartley properties, had virtually cornered the local market in shale and crude oil production at this period. It is thought, without proof, that under the new ownership the services of the small "N67" class 0-6-0 side-tank locomotive, No.69X, were terminated as far as the operation of the private railway at Torbane were concerned. Unfortunately further movements if any of this aged little engine have not been traced and it may be surmised that its boiler had out-lived its usefulness. It was common practice in the early days of the private line for people arriving at, or departing from, Torbane Railway Station to clamber aboard the foot-plate of No.69X when she was available, and make the journey to or from Torbane Township in some degree of comfort, particularly in cold weather. Later, under the new ownership (which had little if any consideration for human relationships with their employees) this practice was forbidden, although the company did provide a van of sorts and insisted that all persons using the conveyance had to sign an indemnity form absolving the company from all responsibility in case of an accident. One particular official was nick-named "The Crusher", it is remarkable how a nick-name will correctly assess a man's personality.

THE PURCHASE OF AN "F" CLASS 2-4-0 SIDE-TANK LOCOMOTIVE.

During November 1906 the Commonwealth Oil Corporation purchased a 2-4-0 side-tank locomotive, road number 360X of Class "F", from the New South Wales Government Railway Department. This engine was one of a batch of six built for the Sydney suburban service by Messrs Beyer Peacock and Company, of Manchester, in 1885, the work's number being 2666.

It has been stated that this engine was used by the Commonwealth Oil Corporation for the construction of the company's private railway between Newnes Junction and Newnes (in the Wolgan

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Another view of the surface works at the mine showing the skipway to the works, 1906.

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Opposite:

Entrance to the adit on the Northern side of Airly Mountain, 1906.

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