

Mount Dixon. At a distance of about a quarter of a mile west of Collit's Inn the teamsters route turned south-south-east and at the same distance it was intersected by Cox's Pass after it had made its precipitous descent from the crest of Mount York. Passing through bush country for the next half-mile the teamster's road turned westward and eventually skirted the northern boundary of Mead's Farm, crossing Buster's Creek before connecting with the Bathurst Road at the village of Little Hartley. Louis Mead built his large farm-house facing towards the Bathurst Road about 1857, and at an undetermined date the building was adapted to cater for the travelling public in particular, as the aptly named "KEROSENE HOTEL". Long deprived of its license the former hotel premises are maintained, in 1973, by Mr and Mrs William Thurlow.

Traversing the Bathurst Road towards Sydney the teamsters of old climbed the perilous grades of Mitchell's Pass to the crest of One Tree Hill, after which the meandering highway more or less followed its present course to reach the single-arched Lapstone Bridge and onwards to Penrith and beyond to Sydney-town. As it was the intention of the Kerosene Oil and Paraffine Company to erect retorts and refining equipment at Petrolea Vale the teamsters had to contend with a mass of heavy back-loading from the railway yard at Penrith, in addition to general stores and merchandise necessary for the sustenance and housing of the isolated mining community.

Fortunately we are able to quote from a contemporary source:- "The New South Wales Gazetter", the following details. "The works of the Hartley Kerosene Oil and Paraffine Company are progressing rapidly. The whole of the plant and machinery being on the ground near Little Hartley. Two iron buildings, each 30 feet long, one for the retorting house and the other for distilling etc, are finished, and a third, 60 feet in length by 30 feet in width, for refining the oils, is within a few days of completion. The bank of retorts is built. A large boiler for generating steam is set. The large steam engine is also fixed and ready. The stills, five in number, are being set; four of these are of cast iron and hold 250 gallons each; and one large one, for refining oil is of wrought-iron and holds 1000 gallons. Five iron receivers, intended to hold the oils in their different stages of preparation are ready. All the dwelling houses for the men are completed, a residence for the manager is in course of completion, blacksmiths and workshop for tinsmiths and carpenters, and cooperage have been ready for some time.

Four large vats, each holding 400 gallons, have been set up in frame, and only wait the plumbing work to be complete and ready for receiving the crude oils for chemical treatment. The large stack, into which all the flues terminate, has been finished for some time".

THE FIRST SURFACE TRAMWAY AT HARTLEY VALE

Apart from manually operated underground skipways the first mention of a surface tramway appears during 1866 when it is recorded that a track, about one quarter of a mile in length, was under consideration. Although details of this line are not to hand it may be assumed that the line would give a railed connection between the shale adits, located on the western side of Reedy Creek, and the retorts and refinery. It is unfortunate that the site of the latter installations cannot be accurately plotted at this late date but there is reason to believe that this section of the plant was located on slightly higher ground at the eastern side of Reedy Creek about a hundred yards or so south of the road bridge across this stream. If this surmise is correct the route of the tramway would lead northwards from the shale adits, driven into the base slopes of Mount Dixon, on a slight rising grade, and reaching its crest at the alignment of the present Hartley Pass Road, the line curved eastwards for a short distance before, on a descending grade, swinging southwards to cross a trestle bridge, suitably planked for horse traction, which spanned the shallow waters of Reedy Creek, and enter the precincts of the retorting area. It is possible that a short branch led northwards, after the bridge was crossed, to the brick-works. There was a short dead-end branch which lead north-westward for about one hundred yards to serve an adit located immediately south of the Comet Hotel. One can surmise that the horses placed the wagons on this latter branch at the loading point in front of the adit, and that these wagons when loaded were gravitated to the main line at the base of Mount Dixon.

Emerging from their respective tunnels the various manually operated mining skipways each passed over a short embankment, about seven feet in height to gain the upper level of a log bridge spanning, at right angles, the horse tramway placed beneath at normal ground level. The mine skips were trundled on to the bridge where their shale contents were tipped into the metre-gauge wagon waiting below. Skips of mine refuse crossed the