



*The crude oil retorts of the British Australian Oil Co. at Temple Court.*

*E.M. Stephens colln.*

## **The British-Australian Oil Company's Railway, Murrurundi**

Mention has been made that a large deposit of Kerosene Shale was located at a distance of some seven miles to the north-east of the old established railway town of Murrurundi. The shale band had an average thickness of fourteen inches and rested on a bed composed of nearly eight feet of coal and clay. To commercially exploit the deposit before and during the year 1886 an influential concern known as the Murrurundi Petroleum Oil Cannel Company was formed. Tunnels were driven into the seam and a large quantity of first class shale was won, the mineral being stored "at grass" pending transport arrangements being made to link the mine with the Great Northern Railway.

However, the provision of a bush roadway through the rough terrain and steep hillsides of the surrounding Liverpool Range was beyond the financial resources of the company, consequently further mining operations were suspended, for the time being at least. It appears from the meagre evidence available that the mine workings lay more or less dormant until about 1905 when the Australian Shale Syndicate became interested in the project. This latter concern had been opera-

ting the Genowlan Shale Mines at Torbane and possessed sufficient capital to construct an aerial ropeway, described as a wonderful example of engineering ingenuity, between the mine at Mount Temi and across the intervening hilly region to the floor level of the Page River Valley, terminating at a point approximately half a mile north eastwards of the Temple Court Railway platform. This wayside halt, situated on the Great Northern Railway, was opened in 1878, at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile from Murrurundi Station, and 121 miles from Newcastle.

The syndicate contracted with Messrs. Champion and Dunbar, during May 1910, for the construction of a private railway, about one mile in length, connecting the Temple Court terminal of the aerial ropeway with the Great Northern Railway, the junction, facing towards Down trains, being located about one quarter of a mile north-west of Temple Court platform. It was obvious that the initial junction arrangement left a lot to be desired from a shunting point of view, consequently the Railway Department, in June 1910, laid in a loop siding on the Up side of the Great