



*Temple Court Station. 1968.*

*A. Grunbach.*

being understood that the firm, controlled by Messrs. R. Towns and Company, of Sydney, was of German ownership.

There is a dearth of information throughout the war years as to whether the oil plant continued to function, a circumstance, no doubt, brought about by Security Regulations. However, according to a personal letter sent to the author in May 1957 it would appear that the oil retorts and refinery continued in operation during the war period and it is of interest to publish a portion of this particular letter (referring to the Hamilton Refinery) in full.

The relevant portion of the letter is as follows:-

Re British-Australian Oil Refinery. Well, this project originally started in 1909 or thereabouts. I started work in the Dudley Colliery and used to pass this location twice every day in the workman's train. I watched the big smoke stack being built from the train window and calculations were the order of the day about how high the big smoke stack rose in the course of the eight hours. Crude or raw oil was brought here from Murrurundi in trucks built with crude oil tanks, many of which are still in existence. I watched the works until they were completed and producing oils. Kerosene could be had for sixpence a kerosene tin full (four

gallons) and benzine, all of first class quality. These works functioned until the end of the first world war. It was a German Company which owned it and at the end of hostilities the works were seized by the Government and closed down as a war prize. Under these circumstances the plant was sold. Loads of bricks were sold at sixpence per load, clean them yourself arrangement. Boilers, engines and plant auctioned cheap. Well, one of these boilers, a "Lilley Bank Boiler", is still to be seen right now (May 1957) at the site of the Whitburn Colliery (at Greta) and was installed two years before Whitburn closed down, and is still in first class order. Demolishing at these oil-works proceeded until the storage tanks were reached. These tanks had also to be demolished. Now these tanks were all full of some kerosene, lubricating oils, petrols, chemicals, and a host of other by-products. All this good serviceable stock was turned into Throsby Creek and allowed to run out to sea. A little while after this stuff was emptied a train from Newcastle proceeding to Sydney was crossing the bridge and the fireman busy stoking in the process, hot fire and cinders fell through this bridge and set fire to the lot from this railway bridge right along the creek into the harbour. The whole creek to its full width was afire and huge patches of burning oils could be seen floating out