



*Ruins of German miner's hut at Airly with Tyar Pic in the background.*

*G.H. Eardley sketch.*

## **The Genowlan Shale Company, Airly**

Perhaps the most isolated and uninhabited portion of New South Wales is represented by the mountainous region embraced by the upper watersheds of the Colo River, a major tributary of the Hawkesbury River. Few roads penetrate this vast area, which is bounded on the north by the Hunter Range, on the west by the Main Divide, and on the south by the rugged Blue Mountain Range and its off-shoot spurs. The eastern aspect is also a land of ridges which form the boundary of the string of coastal lakes bordering the South Pacific Ocean. It is a most inhospitable country which only encouraged a sparse settlement around its outer fringe.

However, the coming of the Wallerawang to Mudgee Railway, the first section of which opened to the small village of Capertree on May 15th 1882, encouraged an invasion of potential land-hungry settlers and prospectors to investigate the possibilities of the region. They found an undeveloped

terrain which seemed practically worthless, apart from its scenic beauty, although large areas of the neighbouring Capertree Valley were subsequently cleared for grazing purposes. This wide though sunken valley, drained by Airly Creek and numerous tributary streams, is most picturesque, being surrounded by steep walled mountains displaying the fantastic sandstone escarpments of the Hawkesbury series, the tree-covered wilderness being dominated by the abrupt cliffs of the isolated Crown Mountain.

The prospecting fraternity paid meticulous attention to the geological formation underlying the sandstone escarpments and were attracted by the eastern off-shoot of the Main Divide, known as the Morandurey or Genowlan Range, a high water-worn plateau which borders the northern side of the Capertree Valley. The ramparts of Airly Mountain are located on the western portion of the Morandurey Range and its rugged escarpments and