



Railway bridge at Torbane Works.

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THE NEW SOUTH WALES SHALE AND OIL COMPANY'S RAILWAY, TORBANE.

The northern portion of the Genowlan Shale Deposits, located beneath the rugged northern and north-eastern escarpment of Airly Mountain appear to have been worked in a small way as from about 1883. In January 1893 the lease was taken over by Mr. F. W. King, and in August 1896 the area came under the control of the New South Wales Shale and Oil Company. This concern had successfully operated the shale deposit at Hartley Vale where they had established a large bench of retorts and an oil refinery. As the seams at Hartley Vale were becoming exhausted the company sought fresh fields of supply, hence the decision to commence operations in the Capertee District where their lease was given the name NEW HARTLEY. A private township was established to the north of the retorts to accommodate the employees amidst mountainous surroundings and in splendid isolation, the climate being intensely hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter when snow conditions were not unknown.

In their planning the company arranged to build a standard gauge railway, one mile sixty-eight chains in length, to connect with the Wallerawang to Mudgee Government Railway at Torbane Siding. This private line followed a circuitous route to connect with the company's retort installation located in the upper regions of the Capertee River Valley. From this latter terminus a narrow-gauge tramway,

which was carried over a high northern out-spur of Airly Mountain, served to bring the shale forward to the retorts. The shale adits were ranged along the top of the talus slopes in the neighbouring Genowlan Valley.

THE TORBANE STANDARD GAUGE PRIVATE RAILWAY

The New South Wales Shale and Oil Company's standard gauge railway connected, at a facing point to Down trains, with the Departmental line immediately opposite to the Torbane Railway Station. From the junction the company's single-tracked railway curved over an embankment to the North-east, traversing the gentle lower slopes of a tree-dotted grassy hillside which formed the northern water-shed of the wide grass-covered valley of Airly Creek. After passing through a cutting excavated to a maximum depth of 15 feet in clay shale, the track on a falling gradient followed the lay of the land until it reached an embankment which bisected a large dam. Across the embankment and on the northern side of the line a high rubble foundation supported two 400 gallon square-shaped "Ship's" tanks which supplied water to the Company's locomotive. A small steam-driven pump was mounted at the base of the tank structure to elevate water from the dam to the tanks. It is