

The Oil Industry Development at Hartley Vale

As previously mentioned the presence of kerosene shale, then mistakenly thought to be a form of coal, was noted by William Lawson when his convict workmen cut through a seam whilst engaged on the construction of a bush roadway. This track known as Long Alley, descended from the heights of One Tree Hill (now Mount Victoria township) into the narrow steep-walled confines of the valley of Reedy Creek, a tributary of the River Lett which in turn, flows into Cox's River. The valley of Reedy Creek, later called Petrolea Vale, runs in a north-south direction for some three and a half miles before entering the upper water-shed of the River Lett, spoken of as the Vale of Clwydd and latterly as Hartley Valley or Hartley Vale. This area is typical of the Blue Mountain scene, a land of tortuous sunken valleys and gullies, each surrounded by abrupt ramparts and vertical escarpments of weathered sandstone, and buttressed by steep sided and tree covered talus slopes.

Although William Lawson forwarded a sample of "coal" from what may be regarded as the Hartley Seam, together with his report to the authorities at Sydney-town, no action was taken, evidently coals brought by sea from Newcastle were more than sufficient to cater for the then meagre requirements of the colony. The next mention of Hartley deposit appears to have been made in 1854 when Henry Buckley sent a sample to the Paris Exhibition. This gesture aroused local interest and in the following year Saul Samuel engaged the services of Mr. Dixon of Newcastle, New South Wales, to delve into the lower hill-slopes against the western side of Reedy Creek in order to prove the extent of the seam. At the 29 foot level Mr. Dixon located a seam some 4½ feet thick, the prospecting shaft being placed on the lower eastern slopes of the wooded spur, projecting from Mount York, which is now known as Mount Dixon; This find was also reported as coal instead of shale. We quote — "Kerosene shale looks like coal; it is much lighter in weight, burns freely when lighted with a match and has a much denser smoke. Organically, however, it is very different being what is described as bituminised mud or clay, whilst coal is carbonized plant tissue. As all shales

are not bituminised it is better to refer to those that are as kerosene-shale".

HARTLEY KEROSENE OIL & PARAFFINE CO. LTD.

The Kerosene Oil and Paraffine Company, Limited., was established on July 31st 1865 and later, incorporated as the Hartley Kerosene Oil and Paraffine Company Limited with a capital of £50,000. Included in the company were Messrs. Isaac Isaacs, Sir Saul Samuel, J. Want, and a number of local residents. At first the company concentrated its attentions on the supply of oil-shale to the Sydney and the Melbourne gas-works, the mineral being sent by horse teams to the then rail-head at Penrith. Here it was transferred to Departmental wagons and taken to the goods yard at the Redfern terminal and given further transit by horse drawn dray to the Kent Street works of the Australian Gaslight Company. The mineral destined for Melbourne being carried from the Sydney wharves, no doubt, in the holds of sailing colliers. It is reported that at this juncture an attempt was made to establish a refinery at Penrith where ample supplies of fresh water were available, for condensing purposes, from the Nepean River.

The horse-team transport of the shale from Petrolea Vale to Penrith was long and arduous, the route entailing at first a journey westward along the flats at the northern base levels of Mount Dixon and Mount York. Below the latter out-jutting eminence the old established Collit's Inn was placed, with its memories of Pierce Collit and Sir Thomas Mitchell, and, in more recent years, the discomforture of the late Cyril Singleton when he was chased from the premises by an irate crippled lady who greatly desired to hit him on the head with the business end of her crutch. "Sing" took the incident very badly and said that the irate lady had mistaken him for an emissary of the Main Roads Department.

The track from Petrolea Vale, in reality a western continuation of Lawson's Long Alley Road, made a junction with Lockyer's Road after the latter had made its steep descent from the crest of