

the steep grades associated with their crossing of the Airly Ridge. There was a tendency for the cables to straighten out with the tension stresses and thus tip the skips pell-mell off the track. To overcome this ever-present hazard it was decided to have the main haulage cable placed over the top of the skips, the latter being connected at the cable by a short length of wire rope thus giving considerable flexibility of movement. Under the new arrangement the cable, at each base of the climb over Airly Ridge, passed under a sturdy wooden framework supporting wide cast-iron rollers, free to revolve at a height suitable to enable the skips to run beneath.

The four-wheeled skips in use on this haulage way had wooden longitudinal frames and 12 inch diameter wheels. The wrought-iron semi-circular shaped body had stiffening bead-iron rivetted around the top edges, the length of the body being 54 inches, the breadth 36 inches, and the depth 22 inches. At least five of these small vehicles were noted in 1955 laying derelict in the depth of the fern gullies near the place where they had tumbled off the line at different times and proved too difficult to salvage.

In service, the skips, after being loaded at the Airly staith, were attached singly to the main haulage cable at about forty foot intervals. It is surmised that the wrought-iron bodied skips were transferred from the West Katoomba mining system after its closure. There were also a number of wooden-bodied skips in use which had capacity for about a cubic yard of shale.

It would appear that the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company utilised the existing horse tram lines in the Genowlan Valley, and also the self-acting inclined way leading to the loading staith at Airly, adapting the latter structure to permit the shale to be loaded into the skips traversing their new haulage way to Torbane. It has been said that the latter system saw comparatively little service as the affairs of the company were taken over by an English concern, named as the

Commonwealth Oil Corporation, in 1908. However, by 1914 the mines at Genowlan were practically idle, a circumstance brought about by the political withdrawal of the "Shale Oil Bounties Act", which expired on June 30th, 1913, and was not extended. The Commonwealth Oil Corporation went into liquidation in 1912 and its interests at the Genowlan mines were purchased early in 1916 by the Commonwealth Oil Federation (under the direction of Messrs. John Fell and Company). A Departmental report issued during June 1918 states that "The Airly mining of shale ceased. Prior to this year the shale mined at Airly was sent to Newnes and the Railway gas-works at Macdonaldtown, near Sydney".

About 1930 the Airly-Torbane haulage system was dismantled by Mr. Albert Lamb and the various adits in the Genowlan Valley had their portals "blown down" to prevent access to the underground workings. In the nineteen forties a certain amount of prospecting took place within the tramway tunnel near the crest of Airly Ridge. A short length of wooden-railed tramway was laid along the tunnel floor so that the spoil could be dumped over the cliffs at the portal. This line was intact in 1955.

The course of the haulage way, at April 1972, could still be easily traced over the grass covered terrain and through the picturesque rain-forest country east of Airly Ridge. The formation of the self-acting inclined way was still apparent amongst the ferns, but the horse tramway section had been largely reclaimed by the bush verdure, with the exception of that part within the Upper Genowlan Valley which serves as the roadway leading to Burnett's farm, the only occupied residence left in the Airly mining township. Apart from the barking of cattle-dogs, the cackle of triumphant hens, and the occasional raucous screeching of parrots, a profound stillness broods over the place which was once filled with mining and transport activity, coupled with the comings and goings of its resident population.