

HISTORIC KATOOMBA, 1870.

Kerosene Shale Deposits of N.S.W., by J. E. Carne, Mining Museum.

The author is indebted to Mr. J. B. North for the following particulars of the discovery of Kerosene Shale in the vicinity of Katoomba:

About the year 1870 Mr. Campbell Mitchell explored the country near the part then known as Jones' Wayside Hotel, between the weather-board (now Wentworth Falls) and Blackheath coal stages. (That is Katoomba.)

During the exploration of the Megalong portion of the Kanimbla Valley (assisted by Mr. J. Flynn, surveyor, of Hartley Vale), he discovered Kerosene Shale, and in conjunction with Mr. T. S. Mott, took up land embracing the area subsequently known as "The Glen Shale Mine," portions 14 and 15, Parish Megalong, County Cook.

After securing the land, the question of extension of the Kerosene Shale through the narrow Megalong Mountain (Narrow Neck), into the Jamieson Valley on the east was considered, and Mr. Mitchell proceeded alone to explore the latter, leaving Messrs. Mott and Finn on the Megalong side. Land, however, was not taken up at that time in Jamieson Valley on account of its inaccessibility from The Great Western Railway. In September, 1870, Campbell Mitchell exhibited a section of the Coal Measures of Megalong at the Intercolonial Exhibition held at Prince Alfred Park, Sydney.

In 1880, Mr. North located the Kerosene Shale seam at Ruined Castle, in the Jamieson Valley, and about two years later employed a miner named Garbutt to prospect it, and also cut a track from Katoomba, across the valley, and continued development by tunnel, etc.

In 1885 he formed the Katoomba Coal and Shale Co. Ltd., and the deposit was opened up by ten tunnels in different portions of the outcrop.

An engineer was employed to erect an elevated tramway across the valley, from near the Orphan Rock, on a plateau at Katoomba, a distance of two miles. It, however, proved a failure in construction and ruined the company. It is estimated that not more than 500 tons were despatched by this means of transport.

In 1891 the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Co. became lessees of the property, and worked in conjunction with its Glen Shale Mine (Motts) in the Megalong Valley, which was secured by purchase in 1890.

This company laid down a double cable tramway from the railway line at Katoomba to the starting point of the aerial tramway, which was superseded by an incline, then by a tunnel under Orphan Rock Point, through the top coal seam, emerging in the valley; the cable tramway then passed through Narrow Neck by tunnel in the same seam, and thence by incline into the Megalong Valley and on to the Glen Mine.

From the mouth of the tunnel under Narrow Neck in Jamieson Valley a branch horse tramway diverged following a good grade round the head of the valley to Ruined Castle Mine. The company continued operations for several years. During this period about twenty thousand tons of export shale were despatched.



Branch Horse Tramway from Mouth of Tunnel at Narrow Neck to Ruined Castle Shale Mine, about 1894.