

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc.

Minutes of General Meeting

Tuesday, 20th November 2007 at 7.30 p.m.
at the Ashfield R.S.L. Club

Tracks and Access - Wilf Hilder

Katoomba's Mining Tramways Michael Keats (Bush Club) sent me an email on this subject. Web site http://www.infoblueMountains.net.au/rail/ksr/kat_tram.htm. A feature of this article was a map borrowed from Eardley and Stephens "Shale Railways of NSW", published by the Australian Railways Historical Society in 2000. This misleading map was modified to show two long trestles (bridges) over Diamond (Spray) Creek and Corral Creeks on the Nellies Glen Shale Mines Tramway in Megalong Valley (strictly speaking Nellies Glen). This endless cable hauled double tramway which ran from what is now the terminus of the Scenic Railway to the depot below the Glen Shale Mines. At the Scenic Railway end the shale skips were unhooked from the haulage cable and transferred to a self actuating double tramway where the loaded skips running downhill would pull the empty skips on the other side of the tramway, whose cable ran over a pulley wheel at the top.

On being connected to the endless circulating cable which pulled the skips through the Mount Rennie Tunnel under Malaita Point following the gently rising coal seam to emerge at what is now the Landslide (accessible until the 1961 landslide closed it). On its track to Narrowneck the tramway passed through two short tunnels (now collapsed) fairly easy to find on the Katoomba side of the current walking track to Ruined Castle etc. Just before reaching Narrowneck the tramway ran across a trestle (see Shale Railways of NSW by Eardley and Stephens page 60 for photograph.) The trestle has of course long gone, but the cut footings to support the trestle poles are still visible in the rocks in the gully.

The tramway then entered the Daylight Tunnel following the gently rising coal seam but unlike the Mt. Rennie Tunnel is little over a metre high and about 4 metres wide. The tramways telephone line insulators are still visible in the tunnel which becomes much higher towards the western end where it leaves the coal seam and is cut in solid rock. The western portal of the tunnel was blown in (blasted) probably before World War 1. It was reopened by the late Dr. John Sutton and myself in January 1966 and has been well used since despite its wet and muddy conditions. Just past the western portal of the Daylight Tunnel the tramway ran over a short trestle to follow an undulating but straight track to the large turning wheels where it changed direction and the skips had to be disconnected and reconnected again as they did at the terminus at either end.

The tramway ran along Megalong Valley – really Nellies Glen – to descend after a short cutting to run across another trestle (a long one) across the unnamed shallow creek which drains Blue Mountaineers Pass (Herbaceous Gully). The next stream the tramway had to cross was Diamond (Spray) Creek. The internet map shows a

long trestle over this creek, it was actually a short trestle over the entrenched creek. On the next section the tramway rises (lots of recently fallen trees over this section of the tramway) to a deep cutting about 20 metres in length and 4 metres deep before gently descending to the (men only) Nellies Glen Shale Miners Village on Corral Creek with yet another short trestle across that creek and rising gently across two more trestles to the terminus at the Depot – the stockpile of shale below the self acting tramway that transported the shale from the horizontal horse tramways that serviced the mines.

Giff Eardley and Philip Hammon (CEO Scenic World) have pointed out that the necessary tensioning station for the endless cable that hauled the tramway was situated at the Depot. It is pleasing to report that the large turning wheel at the top of the self actuating tramway that serviced the horse tramway is still there. The stationary steam engine which powered this tramway was located at the site of the present Scenic Railway complex.