

concern with interests at Joadja (near Mittagong), which had leased the West Katoomba property from J.B.North in 1891. However, one is loth to differ from the earlier authority, which may have been penned in 1885 or earlier.

## THE KATOOMBA COAL AND SHALE COMPANY LIMITED, WEST KATOOMBA.

The discovery of two payable seams of Kerosene shale at the base of the massive sandstone cliffs ranged along the eastern side of the lengthy Narrow Neck Peninsula, embracing the upper regions of the Jamieson Valley, the Ruined Castle dividing ridge, and the adjacent valley of Cedar Creek, has been credited to Campbell Mitchell. However, he made no effort to acquire an interest in this new shale deposit area, presumably because of the seemingly difficult transport conditions brought about by the rugged nature of the terrain. Campbell Mitchell had previously found three seams of this mineral on the western, or Megalong Valley side of Narrow Neck, and in conjunction with T.S.Mort, had acquired some 640 acres of mountainous land in order to establish the Glen Shale Mine. Then, to ascertain if the shale deposits extended through Narrow Neck and out-cropped in the adjoining Jamieson Valley, he made the investigation as mentioned above.

A close examination of the Ruined Castle area of the Jamieson Valley made by John Britty North during 1880 revealed two out-crops of Kerosene shale and on the strength of this find he was instrumental in forming the KATOOMBA COAL AND SHALE COMPANY LIMITED. An order was placed with the German firm of Adolph Bleichert, of Leipzig, for the supply of mining and transport equipment, including an overhead ropeway (or Flying Fox) which stretched between the company's Engine Bank and the Ruined Castle, a distance of about two miles. Sections of this rope-way are said to have been over one thousand feet above the floor of the Jamieson Valley. It is thought that there may have been several intervening support towers, each erected at the crest of the low tree-covered hills which rose beneath the straight route followed by the wire cables.

The strong and possibly low built tower at the Engine Bank formed the anchorage for the two large sized "Carrier" cables which were fixed one at each side of the structure, and a circulating "endless" cable, which passing over a series of double-flanged pulleys to change its direction, led to and from the winding engine. It is unfortunate that detailed information of the overhead ropeway

is not to hand, but consideration of the requirements of such an installation suggest that the loaded buckets outward bound from the Ruined Castle terminal would traverse the western carrier rope. The bucket unit would be detached from the circulating rope at the Engine Bank terminal where the bankman, operating from a platform, would tip the bucket to allow its contents to drop into



*The main incline at Katoomba at an early period prior to the laying of the second track. N.S.W.P.T.C.*

one of the skips waiting beneath preparatory to its journey over the outbye line of the double-tracked surface tramway leading to North's Siding. After the tipping operation the bucket unit would be hand pushed over a connecting crossover arrangement to the eastern carrier rope and there clipped to the circulating rope for the return journey to the Ruined Castle terminal.

The buckets in use on the rope-way were constructed of thin wrought-iron plate and had a length of 39 inches, a width of 30 inches, and a semi-circular shaped base with a maximum depth of 26 inches. They were end pivotted to an iron