

Brief notes on background for  
Preparation of Geoff Ford's Nelly's Glen map,  
published 1961 by Paddy Pallin.

I (Geoff) was a third generation mountains resident. From 19'40s, I had been visiting Megalong Valley from Blackheath with my family, knowing many of local people there. I knew Nelly's Glen as an old mining village.

While a uni student preparing the sketch for Paddy Pallin, members of SURC and SUBW clubs came on walks there with me - the activity Log Books may record some of these.

We had been doing rockclimbs around the cliffs of Narrow Neck Peninsula - often as an "add-on" for a bushwalk! Easy walking from Katoomba railway station is 'Cocktail Buttress' below Cahill's Lookout - as on the map. We climbed there with the uni Rockclimbing club. We'd go there as a 'training' site. At this location the renegade 'Rhum Dhu' group (breaking away from the more formal Sydney Rockies) were pioneering climbs in 19'50s. There, I learnt much about techniques - although my achievement grade was just the climb called 'Shandy'. For us mountaineers and caverneers, climbing provided techniques needed to achieve an objective. We practised abseiling (and did a lot of roping down waterfalls - the bigger the better) in order to explore canyons - a new outdoor sport.

Already in my family there had been an interest in Blue Mountains history. When in primary school, my brother and I had explored some of the mining tunnels (under the cliffs below Eaglehawk Rock) - getting past the old locked gates and No Entry signs (leaving an apprehensive mother outside)! I studied the history of the shale mines and their railways for cable- trams and horse-drawn trams for the map preparation, then we uni students walked the bush to locate where the tramway lines had been.

The 'Six Foot Track' - from an earlier bridle track (formed to a width of "six feet" for a horse cart) - had become difficult to follow by this time, but in order to plot it I followed it (with guidance from the property owners)!

As usual, Big Rick (Jamieson) helped with transport for uni students, driving us through Blackheath down Megalong Valley. All my life, the Blue Mountains had been my 'home country' (although we'd moved to Roseville for the education of my brother and me). I made many other trips to Nelly's Glen locality while checking on aspects - walking from Katoomba railway station.

It was in this period, when I would lead 'navigation training' for uni students, that I'd take a walk at night without lights around a narrow terrace of the cliffs of the west side of the Narrow Neck! Retrospectively, no wonder the very competent Middle Rick (Higgins) could refer in an SURC Log Book to *the obviously depraved mind of the leader.*

Geoff Ford, 2017

Nelly was Ellen North b.1862 ('Miss Nelly' until 1899 when she married), daughter of Katoomba miner John North x Clarissa (née Hack). In 1890 he connected The Glen shale mine, via a tunnel under Narrow Neck Causeway (shown on map) to his cable railway up through the cliffs. Here is historical vignette taken from 'Blue Mountains Echo' 11Dec1914:

... always had the patronage of J. B. North and many a Sunday has he taken his patron down through South Katoomba to preach to the miners who worked at the colliery then adjacent. Mr. North always stood on a rock there, which is now identified by the name, "Pulpit Rock." It was also after the daughter that the pretty Glen was named. Miss Nelly, on her gray pony, was such a constant visitor that it became known as "Nelly's Glen," she being the first lady to go down after the track was made. But to return to

Like all memoirs of old people relating to earlier times, this memo by me also should be verified for material to be used for history. In my own research studies, I'd found reminiscences and recollections to be a rewriting of events.