

There are many problems with the historical accuracy of the Hub signage and information about the Kelly outbreak. Far from adopting a neutral position, much of the text glamourises Ned Kelly and is negative or dismissive both of individual police and of the actions of the police during the Kelly hunt. It selectively omits much information that would, if given, objectively show Kelly in a negative light.

The external Introduction sign states: “The Ned Kelly Discovery Hub tells the story of the Glenrowan Siege, which took place ... on Monday 28 June 1880. The twelve hour gun battle between the infamous Kelly Gang and the police.... The siege ... led to reforms of Victoria’s police force. Kelly and gang member Joe Byrne had hatched a scheme to draw out police by murdering Joe’s childhood friend Aaron Sherritt, a police informant. ... The gang planned to derail and ambush the [police] train at Glenrowan. ... The hostages were traumatised, and three died.... Ned Kelly was later convicted of the murder of police at Stringybark Creek.... Around the town you will find markers with additional information about the events of the Glenrowan Siege.”



Comments: There was no “twelve hour gun battle” between the gang and the police, despite there being a twelve hour siege. After the Kelly gang opened fire from Jones Inn verandah at the arriving police, there were two main rounds of volleys between 3am and 3:30am when Ned Kelly escaped into the bush, then sporadic shooting with many periods of quiet, until Kelly emerged from the bush at dawn in an attempt to re-join his gang, with under 10 minutes of fire in what was later dubbed as his last stand. Byrne died from a bullet somewhere around 5am; some sporadic shooting occurred during the day, and Dan Kelly and Steve Hart suicided with poison in the early afternoon.

The siege did not lead to reforms of the police force; that claim is fatuous. A Royal Commission was set up to enquire into the management of the police force given that it had taken two years to track down the Kelly gang. The Royal Commission enquiry led to reforms of the police force because of the outbreak not the Glenrowan siege which was merely the last of a series of the Kelly gang’s criminal acts. There was no need to murder Sherritt to draw the police up from Melbourne. Any well-confirmed sighting of the gang in a town in that area would have had the same effect.

The mention of the attempted train derailment avoids making clear that the plan was to kill anyone still alive after the crash (including crew) by shooting down from the embankment, shielded by the half-suits of armour in what would have been one of the sickest mass murders in colonial history.

There was never a hostage situation at Glenrowan. Those held at the Inn were prisoners, not hostages held for a demand. The only reference to hostages is in one of Kelly’s condemned cell letters where he claimed against everything he said and did at Glenrowan that his plan had been to capture the police alive as hostages for his mother’s release from gaol. It claims that three “hostages” died: Martin Cherry, John Jones, and George Metcalf. This is wrong: Metcalf did not die in the siege, nor was he shot in it. He was shot in the face by Ned Kelly before the siege and kept prisoner; he died several months later and possibly not even from that injury.¹

Ned Kelly was not convicted broadly of “the murder of police” at SBC but of the murder of Constable Lonigan. The sign does not name Lonigan. It dehumanises that police. It provides portrait etchings of the murderers but not their victims (although the newspapers of the day provided both), in a bias towards the gang and against the police that is notable in a lot of the signage. The sign’s promotion of other signage around the town fails to realise that much of the old NKTR text is debunked fiction.²

¹ Dawson, ‘Ned Kelly’s shooting of George Metcalf, labourer’, *Eras Journal*, 2017.

² Addressed further below and in the end note.

The Hub entrance confronts the visitor with a noticeably poor reproduction of Ned Kelly's helmet (see the original below) against a bush background that I suggest is more likely to make the visitor think of Stringybark Creek than Glenrowan or Jones Inn where the siege took place. A large picture of the town in the day would be far better, e.g., the 'Glenrowan 1880' etching. The 'What Happened Here?' sign says that "on 28 June 1880, all the members of the Kelly Gang – Ned Kelly, Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart – were either captured or killed in a shootout with Victoria Police". It would have been just as easy to state clearly correctly that 'Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart were killed and Ned Kelly was captured'. That sort of confusing vagueness afflicts a lot of the Hub signage.



Contrast Ned Kelly's helmet in the SLV below with the 'replica' on the Hub wall. The eye slot is badly wrong. Nor it is any of the other gang helmets.



It is not obvious (nor is it explained) what the vertical poles are supposed to indicate. Should any particular significance be attached to them, or are they merely a decorative indulgence? Perhaps they represent the nearby bush where Kelly collapsed for 4 hours before his dawn return?

The wall signage generally:

There are numerous signs in smallish text, often on small clear Perspex panels, that convey brief and mostly fairly basic (and not objectively neutral but notably pro-Kelly) information about their various topics. "A book on a wall" as someone commented, and a rather dull and biased one in many cases.

Some panels are almost impossible to read; others also not easy to read because of the background. Even where the text is clear and easy to read, there are no sources given for the statements made:



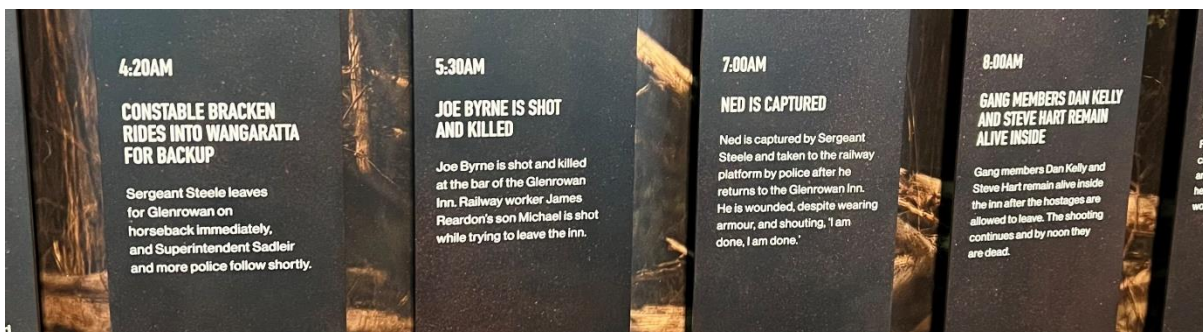
The timeline signage: The assortment of “information” thrown together here is rather bizarre:



“Ned wakes local railway workers to help lift the train tracks”. No: At gunpoint, Ned Kelly woke local workers and forced them to try and destroy the train tracks. Later, “Ned is at the Glenrowan Inn enjoying good hospitality and lively company.” A lot of the text is such romanticised Ned fan fiction.



3am, “In an opening volley of shots...”. The sign is not clear that the gang fired the opening volley. The timeline fails to note that the gang kept their captives prisoner, and that Supt Hare ordered the police to fire high almost immediately when screams were heard from the Inn when shooting began. 3:10am, “Jack Lloyd fires two signal rockets from McDonnell’s Hotel to send a message to supporters hiding in the bush around town.” This claim is fiction and was debunked in 2018.³ The timeline is woefully lacking in detail and any proper analysis of Ned Kelly’s movements; but this could be done.⁴



4:20am, “Constable Bracken rides into Wangaratta for backup. Sgt Steele leaves immediately...”. No: Steele had already left Wang with a group of police and they met Bracken headed up on the way.⁵ 7am, Ned Kelly begged for mercy but this is omitted from the narrative. The next sign implies that by noon Dan and Steve were shot dead as “the shooting continues” but they suicided by poison. In fact, little shooting took place during the day. There is considerable exaggeration (fiction) in the narrative.

³ See analysis in Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*.

⁴ The first 30 minutes is time-lined in Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*.

⁵ Sgt Steele, interview, in *The Kelly Gang From Within: Articles by Brian Cookson*, p, 32.

Other of the signs are historically problematic and the whole Hub narrative needs review/rewriting. Given the space available on the boards, the text is also remarkably light on factual information. Much more can be learned about Glenrowan from even one newspaper of the day's report in Trove.

2: The two loop videos (the main surround stage video and the 4 panel wall animation)

The surround stage video presents a series of short segments on various themes connected to the Kelly outbreak such as squatters, selectors, police, etc. Some of its commentary is surprising, such as one opening title slide, "Much of the tension that led to the Siege of Glenrowan came from friction over ownership of land following the dispossession of its Traditional Owners." Apart from noting the tendency to capitalise the word Siege at every opportunity in order to rebadge the event from the old familiar title of the Last Stand, this is drawing a very long bow. Glenrowan was not besieged: Jones' Inn was. 'The siege at Glenrowan' would be the better wording. The statement about friction over ownership of land seems indebted to the old chestnut of squatters vs selectors; but as Doug Morrissey showed against John McQuilton, such conflict was resolved long before the Kelly outbreak in favour of the selectors. Many of the voiceover narrative comments about the police are unwarrantedly critical and belong to the period before the reorganisation of Victoria Police along London Met lines as related in Sadleir's *Recollections*.

The 4 panel wide animated etchings audio narration needs a comprehensive review and re-write. An apparent attempt to simplify the story for an audience not necessarily familiar with it has led to many problematic or confusing assertions. One statement in the narration is that "the siege began with the shooting of Aaron Sherritt". No, the siege began when the police arrived at 3am and made their way across to Jones' Inn, upon which the Kelly gang opened fire at the police, who fired back.

Fortunately Constable Bracken had instructed the prisoners to lie down on the floor before he escaped from the Inn, to alert the arriving police that the gang were in the Inn and to surround it. The police were ordered to fire high once the screams of prisoners were heard, and did so,⁶ but this is omitted from many stories about Glenrowan and, as far as I could see, from the Hub's story also.

The narration persistently refers to Ned Kelly as 'Ned' while referring to others by their surname, e.g. 'Reardon', regardless whether the person's first name is given at first mention. This privileging of the murderer Kelly by constant use of his first name, and the comparative downgrading of his victims and the police by the constant use of their surnames, displays an unfortunate obvious bias in favour of the criminal and his associates. For example, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart are persistently referred to as such using their full names; whereas their victims (Reardon etc., and especially the police, e.g. Hare; Fitzpatrick; McIntyre) are demoted in the narrative by this biased presentation.

There should be a uniform practice of using people's full names and/or titles, and the avoidance of abbreviations and frequent selective reference to Kelly gang members by their first name only.

The statement that "Flares shoot out from McDonnell's Hotel where the sympathisers gather" is historically wrong and should be removed. First, no-one has claimed that flares came from the hotel, or that there were flares at all. Some have claimed that two skyrockets were fired from the ground between McDonnell's Hotel and the rail line, but this rests on one statement by a constable to the Royal Commission, yet no-one else, including the four journalists present, saw any such thing. David Dufty in his *Nabbing Ned Kelly* plausibly suggested that the sparks were from a locomotive then shunting, which is why no-one else paid any attention to them. Certainly no-one mentioned 'flares'; that is a modern appellation implying a specific type of signalling that never happened.

⁶ See source references in Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*.

Further, the language that sympathisers gathered at McDonnell's implies some form of purposive gathering, which is again wrong. Journalists, train guards and police freely wandered in and out the McDonnell's through the night and following day with not a hint of worry about any Kelly relatives, etc., who might be there.⁷ The statement also appears to draw on the now-demolished fiction that a Kelly sympathiser "army" gathered at Glenrowan (see previous footnote). Again, the whole audio narrative text needs a solid review and re-write, as at present it is riddled with debunked fantasy.

3: The upstairs installations and signage

The sight from the top of the staircase is certainly unexpected: A rambling lime green steel fence in a state of sculptured collapse, accommodating three awkwardly positioned seats roughly facing the general direction of the Jones' Inn site, with a mushroom-like table sculpture in the middle. Even with some year's knowledge of the Kelly story I had no idea what this was supposed to be.



Walking around it I found a sign that said, "The seat references the green sash that Ned Kelly wore under his armour during the Glenrowan Siege. It was presented to him by the grateful parents of Richard Shelton in recognition of Ned's heroism in saving their child's life. [From a charging bull or a fire, one wonders?] Richard's parents owned the pub at Avenel, where Red and Ellen Kelly rented 40 acres of farming land after they left Beveridge in a move that brought them closer to her family. Ned Kelly's attachment to this sash suggests he was proud of the idea of himself as a valued and useful member of society. Perhaps the memory of this act of heroism drove his subsequent actions."

That text references a romanticised tale that Ned Kelly was given the sash after he rescued Dick, aged about 7, when he got into difficulties when he fell into a waterhole. It fails to note that Ned was about 12 at the time. It gushes about heroism rather than reporting that Ned simply jumped in and pulled the boy out of calm water.⁸ It doesn't mention that Ned was already a junior stock thief

⁷ See source references in Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*.

⁸ Descendant Mrs Shelton's letter to the Benalla Historical Society, 1973.

and had previously nicked one of the Shelton family's horses and hid it until a reward was offered.⁹ It implies that the sash was something Ned was particularly attached to; yet the author who in practice made the sash famous, J.J. Kenneally in his *Inner History of the Kelly Gang*, wrote in his 1934 3rd edn. p. 299, that the sash was presented to Ned by Mr Shelton while Kelly was an outlaw, i.e., an adult.

Perhaps worst, as I advised in my response to Wangaratta Council's *Ned Kelly Alive* project report in 2017, attempts to suggest that it had some special significance for Kelly at Glenrowan are based on the hypothesis that he saw some mental link between his planned train massacre and saving a boy from drowning many years previously. As its length and design (2.2 metres x 14 cm with coarse linen interlining throughout, backed with green cotton) enabled it to be wrapped around Kelly's waist twice, it is easy to see why he wore it; to pad and protect his body from scraping by the armour. The fringe was gold thread, the kind used in school badges or blazer pockets. He never said he missed it.

As can be seen in the previous photo, sitting in the limited seating gives only a view of the treetops, and on one side, the ongoing construction of a new bridge. Walking around the outer edge of the deck one can see whatever there is through the wire birdcage-like mesh. The photo below shows all that can be seen of the siege site: on 'Siege Street', some of the empty block where Jones Inn once stood, someone's house with a pile of old furniture on the front porch, and the tumbledown old blacksmith's shop. Next to that, some open ground scattered with several historically inaccurate signage posts about the siege dating from the redundant Ned Kelly Touring Route text,¹⁰ and an old portable lockup. Indeed, the view from the 'viewing tower' shows little of any interest or appeal.

It is to be sincerely hoped that the trees on the bush side of Siege St blocking the view of the Inn site from the viewing tower are not bulldozed, as they illustrate to the many foot visitors who trek over to the site the type of bush that was there in the day and the gully in which some police sheltered.



⁹ Ian Jones, *Short Life*, 2008: 23.

¹⁰ See the end note page below.

The mushroom map:



Considerable trouble has been taken to produce a metal sculpture that conveys very little. About half of it is meaninglessly labelled 'Open forest country' and 'Grassy plain'; and the other half is an indecipherable topographic mess sparsely labelled with a handful of places the Kelly gang caused trouble in. Far better, and likely at far less cost, would have been a large map that showed what was where in the narrative and in particular explained that Stringybark Creek lay at the intersection of longstanding intercolonial stock theft routes, which underpinned and resulted in the Kelly outbreak.

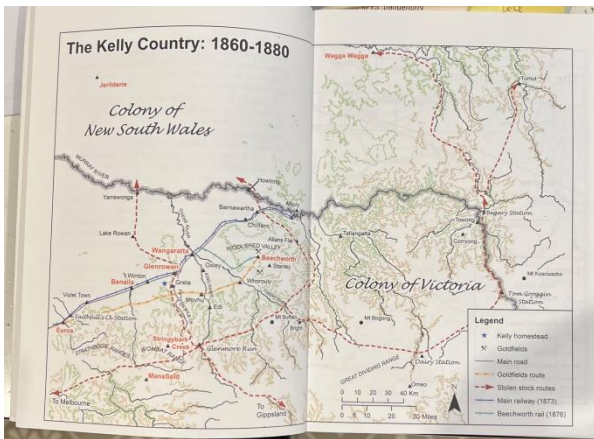


Photo from Doug Morrissey's *Ned Kelly: A Lawless Life*, 2015. By avoiding mention of the Kelly gang's origins in organised wholesale stock theft - of which Ned Kelly openly boasted - the Hub both misinforms about the cause of the outbreak and renders silent the suffering of its victims. The Baumgarten horse stealing ring which Ned Kelly led should have been prominent in the Hub signage.

First floor signage: Each of the locations named in the plaques ranged around the edge of the viewing platform is identified by direction and distance on the central mushroom-like map as significant to the Kelly narrative presented on the plaques. This results in a curiously scattered arrangement of signage.



As the Powers example here shows, there is room on the plaques to provide much more information than the skimpy stories given. The first of three text areas gives information about the place named, but this is almost entirely limited to something about Ned Kelly, and in some cases others of the gang.



One is left knowing nothing about each locality. At the very least the left hand text should indicate where the place is (e.g., 30 kms southwest of Mansfield; 90 kms north of Melbourne); its physical geography (flat, mountainous, open, rugged, river land, snow); who founded it as a town and when; what its population was in the most relevant year (1878, 1879, 1880, or perhaps Beechworth 1875); what its main industries were; and only then why it is relevant to the Kelly narrative. The only sign that comes close to providing this sort of information is the sign for Melbourne. This is basic human geography needed to understand life in the day. I will review the signs in alphabetical order.

Beechworth sign: “Beechworth was a busy gold mining town and frontier administration hub. Many members of the Kelly clan and their associates had appeared in the Beechworth Courthouse charged with petty crimes. In January 1879, 20 supporters of the Kelly Gang were arrested under the *Felons Apprehension Act* in the hope that they might provide information. They were held uncharged for three months as the police became increasingly desperate to capture the gang.”

Comments: Only pro-Kelly modern commentators capitalise ‘Kelly Gang’; papers of the day referred to the Kelly gang uncapitalised, and most often to Ned Kelly as ‘Kelly’, as was the convention. Many members of the Kelly clan and their associates had appeared in the Beechworth Courthouse charged with serious crimes including theft, common assault, unlawful assault, unlawful; wounding, assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm, intent to commit rape, multiple crimes of horse and cattle stealing, feloniously receiving, and attempted murder.¹¹ In early January 1879 the police arrested, charged and remanded 23 men thought to be actively aiding the outlaws, six of whom were held for up to three weeks, several for 5 or 6 weeks, and nine for nearly three months,¹² until increasing protests that their ongoing remand violated *Habeas Corpus* caused their release. When Kelly arrived under guard at Beechworth for his 1880 committal hearing he spat at the crowd.¹³

Benalla: “Police stationed at Benalla coordinated the search for the outlawed Kelly Gang after the murders at Stringybark Creek. Following the Glenrowan Siege in 1880, Ned was taken, along with the body of Joe Byrne, to Benalla, where a frenzied crowd of journalists and supporters (among them Ned’s sister Kate) had gathered. Joe Byrne’s body was strung up on the lock-up door and photographed by someone from the waxworks and a Melbourne photojournalist before being hastily buried in the pauper’s section of the cemetery.” [No-one looks “frenzied” in that photo.]

Comments: The most interesting thing about that photograph of Byrne is that it is a photograph of a photograph being taken of Byrne on the door, and it should have been included in this exhibition.

Beveridge: “Red Kelly ... was transported to Australia in 1841 for stealing pigs. ... He met and married Ellen Quinn They built a home in Beveridge that still stands... In 1865 the hapless [??] Red was gaoled for four months for ‘unlawful possession of a hide’. The 46 year old died of ‘dropsy’....”

Comments: Red was transported for stealing two pigs from a poor farmer; he turned informer against one of his associates who had fired at the police. He died from alcoholism. The house in Beveridge was likely a rental property built by Red but which the Kellys themselves never lived in.¹⁴

¹¹ See the court list 1871-1878 for Beechworth listings in Graham Jones, *Ned Kelly: The Larrikin Years*, 1990.

¹² See table in McQuilton, *The Kelly Outbreak*, p. 114. For *Habeas Corpus*, see Morrissey’s *Lawless Life*.

¹³ Ian Macfarlane, *The Kelly Gang Unmasked*, 2012: 180; Alex Castles, *Ned Kelly’s Last Days*, 2005:173.

¹⁴ Maikel Annalee and Bill Denheld, ‘Native Ned’, <https://ironicon.com.au/nativened.htm>

Euroa: “In 1878 ... the Kelly Gang held up the National Bank in Euroa to secure a small sum of money that allowed them to avoid capture by the police. ... In preparation, the Kelly Gang had taken hostages at nearby Younghusband’s Station, where the reportedly treated their captives respectfully and gave them a show of horse tricks as they departed.”

Comments: The gang did not aim to secure a small sum of money; they secured the large sum of £2,000 and expressed frustration that there was not the £10,000 they had hoped to find.¹⁵ They did not take ‘hostages’; they took prisoners and referred to them as such. They did not treat their captives respectfully and to say so on the Hub signage displays appalling historical ignorance. Ned Kelly’s assurances that they would not be harmed if they cooperated was backed by his threat that if anyone tried to escape, “Steve Hart and Dan will shoot you down like rabbits.” At another point he threatened to roast them alive and do “all sorts of things” to them if they attempted escape.¹⁶ Ned also said, “If you attempt to take me or get away, you will be shot, as I have plenty of men outside. If you do get away I will burn the homestead and shoot the horses.” McCauley learned later that Dan Kelly had begged Ned’s permission to shoot him because he had recognised him.¹⁷ The gang also imprisoned a passing hunting party with their wagon. When they came to the gate, Kelly ordered Mr Tennant to open it. He at first refused, and before he could look around, Kelly put the muzzle of a revolver right between his teeth, and swore that if he did not at once open the gate he would blow his brains out. Tennant afterwards declared he could feel the cold iron between his jaws.¹⁸ Both the Younghusbands saga and the Euroa bank robbery inflicted a reign of terror on hapless victims that is suppressed in the Hub’s profoundly biased and pro-Kelly story over its alleged mission of Discovery.

Jerilderie: “They stopped there to hold up the Jerilderie bank, where they took hostages and burnt loan documents. While in Jerilderie, Ned dictated to Joe Byrne the letter that is taken as his manifesto. The ‘Jerilderie Letter’ attempts to justify his actions and claims police corruption. In it, Ned argued that he had acted in self-defence at Stringybark Creek and that he represented the oppressed. Ned attempted to have the letter published in the local newspaper, but it wasn’t publicly available until 1930.”

Comments: All of this text is wrong. The gang didn’t stop there on the way to somewhere; they went there to rob the bank using Faithfull’s Creek as a staging point. They took prisoners, not hostages for something. The Jerilderie letter was not a manifesto (a public declaration of policy and aims) but a rambling disorganised rant expanded from the Cameron letter of December 1878. Jerilderie schoolteacher William Elliott, who provided the synopsis that was wired to the *Argus*, wrote that while much had then been said of the letter’s length, “it would not have occupied more than two columns space in long primer in a newspaper”, and he correctly thought “the greater portion ... little better than emanations of wild fancies from a disordered brain”.¹⁹ (See recent content critiques.²⁰)

Mansfield: “In 1878, a group of police from Mansfield set out to locate the Kellys, whom they hoped to find camping nearby. They set up camp near Stringybark Creek, less than a kilometre from the gang’s hideout at Bullock Creek. They were discovered, and three of them were murdered by the gang in a decisive moment in the search. The bodies of three dead police were returned to Mansfield for burial. A publicly funded memorial was later built there.”

¹⁵ *Argus*, 13 December 1878, 5.

¹⁶ *Australasian Sketcher*, 21 December 1878, 156.

¹⁷ *Argus*, 20 February 1923, 7.

¹⁸ *Weekly Times*, 14 December 1878, 15; *Age*, 13 December 1878, 3; *Leader*, 14 December 1878, 21.

¹⁹ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, 2 January 1914, 1.

²⁰ Doug Morrissey, *Ned Kelly: A Lawless Life*, appendix; and Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*, 8-10.

The banality of this text contrasts with the stark horror that this crime aroused both across Victoria and interstate. It was not some “group of police”; it was four police whose names have been erased from history by the writers of this sign. They were not all from Mansfield. They were looking for the Kellys, specifically Ned and Dan. It was not then known that Byrne and Hart had joined them. While the sign says three police were murdered, it does not make clear that this was an ambush murder.

The event caused widespread terror: “It is difficult for people at a distance to fully understand the scare which the recent tragedy at Mansfield has caused among a number of the residents in that district. Every drunken loafer who is in his cups and talks wildly is at once put down as a friend of the Kellys on the lookout for information. The probability or otherwise of the gang attacking Mansfield is freely discussed. It is with great difficulty that a guide to the scene of the murder can be obtained”.²¹

Stringybark Creek is mentioned casually, as though it was just some random location; but historian Doug Morrissey showed that it was at the crossroads of several major well established inter-colonial stock theft routes. In this lies the key to the whole Kelly outbreak. The sign speaks of the return of “the bodies of three dead police” out of an unstated number; it does not acknowledge the narrow escape of Constable McIntyre. It mentions the publicly funded memorial for the murdered police at Mansfield. It does not bother to note that this was initiated and largely paid for by subscription. It feels no shame in its being housed in a giant \$5.5 million dollar taxpayer funded mausoleum to Kelly. It is a sickeningly casual insult to the memories of those three brave men who lost their lives while endeavouring to capture a band of armed criminals in the Wombat Ranges near Mansfield.

Melbourne: In regard to Kelly’s trial the sign says, “The jury quickly returned a guilty verdict. Judge Redmond Barry pronounced the death penalty and refused to allow an appeal. Some believe that Ned Kelly’s trial for the murder of Lonigan was unjust, but had he survived this, it is unlikely he would have escaped conviction for shooting Sergeant Kennedy on the same occasion.”

Comments: This is a quagmire of misinformation. The facts of the murder were brought out at trial and the jury needed little time to deliberate, yet the sign implies that the verdict was rushed. An appeal could be and was made to the Governor for clemency. The sign says that “some” believe the trial was unjust. Who? Not the general public of Kelly’s day. Some modern lawyers have claimed that Kelly was not tried fairly as a self-defence argument was not considered; but once McIntyre’s first statement to Sadleir was recovered from police files before the Melbourne trial there was no case for self-defence, which is why his counsel didn’t attempt to make one.²² This point has been lost in most Kelly commentary. Had this trial not succeeded, he would have been tried for the murder of Scanlon, which he witnessed, not Kennedy, which he didn’t. Hence the prosecution files show preparation for case for the murder of Scanlon, not Kennedy. Whoever wrote this sign had no knowledge of the police files. And yet again, it gives Ned Kelly’s name, but Lonigan’s surname only.

Power’s Lookout: “Power’s Lookout was one of the bush sanctuaries where the Kelly Gang stayed during the police search between the murders at Stringybark Creek and the Glenrowan Siege. Ned knew the scrubby landscape well. At 14, he had been apprenticed to bushranger Harry Power, who had made this area his base. From Power, Ned learned to work the region, deal with authorities and survive in the bush. Power was eventually captured here.”

Comments: It should mention that it was accessed via the Quinns, and give the year Power was captured, well before the outbreak (otherwise ‘eventually’ implies the outbreak); and that Ned at 15 revealed Power’s location to the police.²³ The statement that “Ned learned to work the region, deal

²¹ *Herald*, 5 November 1878, 2.

²² See McIntyre’s autobiographical *True Narrative of the Kelly Gang*.

²³ Letter, Nicolson to CCP, 24 Oct 1870, in VPRS 4965, Con 1, Unit 1, Babington Correspondence.

with authorities and survive in the bush” is troubling. By ‘work the region’ is meant engaging in armed robbery and stock theft, hardly laudable; by ‘deal with the authorities’ is meant lying and perjuring himself in court (e.g., the Ah Fook case; the felonious receiving case). Kelly was a poor bushman and only survived by staying with widely scattered relatives and criminal associates.²⁴

Sebastopol: Sherritt and Byrne “were close mates.... Their escapades included smoking opium.... Given their history, it was shocking that at Sebastopol on 26 June 1880, Joe killed Aaron in the doorway of his home on suspicion of being a police informant. By the end of that weekend, both were dead.”

Comments: While the sign also notes that they both served six months’ gaol time at Beechworth for possession of the carcass of a stolen cow, it might benefit from a few words from Hare’s *Last of the Bushrangers*: “Steve Hart was born in 1860, near Wangaratta, he also was a horse-stealer, and was frequently prowling about of a night to pick up a stray drayman’s horse, or any other animal that did not belong to him. Joe Byrne was born in 1857 at Woolshed, near Beechworth. He was a fine strapping young fellow, but he took early in life to evil courses.” Both were members of the notorious Greta mob of larrikins.²⁵ Joe shot-gunned Aaron to death in front of his wife and mother. There is no mention of the Nov 1878 ‘Sebastopol cavalcade’ that it is best known for in Kelly history.

Stringybark Creek: “Stringybark Creek was the site of the fatal shootout between police and the Kelly Gang on 26 October 1878. Accounts of the incident vary. Ned Kelly insisted he shot Constables Lonigan, Scanlan and Sgt Kennedy in self-defence. Surviving police constable McIntyre says they were ambushed. The murders at Stringybark Creek were a turning point in the hunt for the Kelly Gang: days later, the four bushrangers were proclaimed outlaws.”

Comments: While it does refer to the SBC murders, it goes soft on apportioning responsibility, saying that “Accounts of the incident [note: “incident” for Australia’s historically worst mass murder to that date] vary.” Ned Kelly is named, but notice how the first names of the four police are obliterated from history by the Kelly-loving writers of this visitor sign. The long-discredited self-defence argument is presented as potentially valid. Kelly is textually privileged: “Ned Kelly insisted”, whereas “McIntyre says” is written disparagingly. It clearly draws on Jones’ *Short Life* which was built on his misrepresentation of Sadleir’s 1913 *Recollections* to accuse McIntyre of perjury from 1967 onward.

On the ground floor is a sign about the FAA, that claims it reversed the assumption of innocence until proven guilty. It did no such thing. It was an Act to apprehend for trial, not a default conviction. There was a proclaimed period within which the wanted person/s could surrender prior to being outlawed. Colonial outlawry was not the same as old English outlawry under which outlawry constituted a conviction. That is the radical difference not understood by many. The conditions under which an Australian outlaw could be killed (if armed or reasonably thought to be armed) were tightly prescribed and the wanton killing of an outlaw would itself constitute murder.²⁶



It is wholly irrelevant that the FAA expired the day before the siege. The warrant under which Kelly was tried for Lonigan’s murder was issued before the FAA was enacted. It had nothing to do with it.

²⁴ Ian Macfarlane, *The Kelly Gang Unmasked*, 2012: 227.

²⁵ Doug Morrissey, ‘Ned Kelly’s Sympathisers’, *Historical Studies*, October 1978, 288-296.

²⁶ S. Dawson, ‘Ned Kelly Outlawed: The Victorian *Felons Apprehension Act 1878*’, *law & history* 8.1 (2021) 134-157, <http://nedkellyunmasked.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Ned-Kelly-Outlawed-Dawson-corrected-FINAL.pdf>

Conclusion:

The Glenrowan tower is all about Ned Kelly, as indicated in its renaming from the siege viewing tower to the Ned Kelly Discovery Hub – and not about the Kelly outbreak in general. One learns little about the cause of the outbreak outside of the largely irrelevant ‘Fitzpatrick Incident’.²⁷ The police breaking up of the Baumgarten horse stealing ring was the cause, with the ‘Incident’ just a trigger.

The story of Ned Kelly as presented in the Discovery Hub is a partisan whitewash of his criminal life. We are told in the sign ‘Clan and Sympathisers’ that “Ned and Dan were part of the Quinn-Lloyd-Kelly clan [that] took up a lot of the resources of police in the region. After his father’s death, young Ned had been raised in the heart of this extended family to be hardy, resilient and pragmatic.”

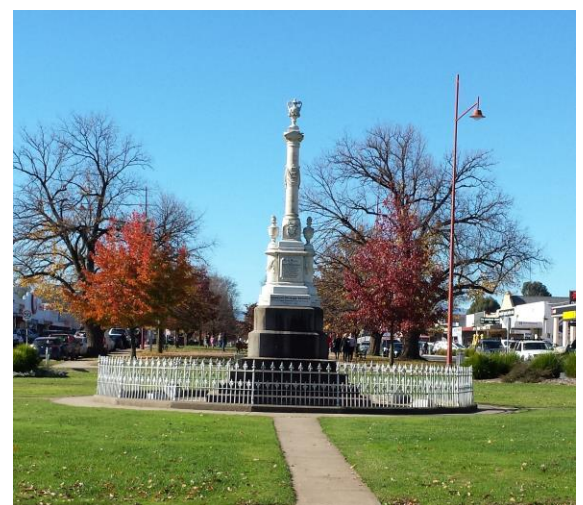
Very good, one might think, never realising that many of the clan also took up a lot of court and gaol resources, in some cases for lengthy terms of imprisonment for abhorrent crimes against their local citizenry including aggravated theft, brutal assaults, fence burning, and the mutilation of livestock.²⁸

The story of his victims via robbery and eventually murders is largely erased from the visitor’s gaze. The endless list of crime and intimidation against ordinary residents throughout the north-east by the Kelly clan and their associates that are a constant backdrop to the Kelly narrative in Kieza’s *Mrs Kelly*, are passed over, with the police frequently blamed for the free choices of habitual criminals.

Much of the Hub narrative is fictionalised history, and much of that is poorly presented and vacuous. It is hard to see why a visitor would return. Even Kelly enthusiasts can see all there is to see in about half an hour. The views from the tower are unimpressive and much of the signage is factually wrong. The least the Hub could do is condemn Kelly’s freely chosen criminality and memorialise his victims.



“cruelly murdered by armed criminals”



Above, Mansfield police monument

²⁷ See Dawson, ‘Redeeming Fitzpatrick: Ned Kelly and the Fitzpatrick Incident’, *Eras Journal*, 2015.

²⁸ See the 25 page descriptive list of court cases in Graham Jones, *Ned Kelly: The Larrikin Years*, 1990.

An end note about the old Siege Street precinct Ned Kelly Touring Route signposts

Historically inaccurate signage remains in place around the siege site as it has for years, continuing to misinform tourists with obsolete and disproven fictions. The most egregious of these is the debunked Kelly republic myth, first overturned in Ian Macfarlane's 2012 *The Kelly Gang Unmasked* and academically dismantled in Dawson's 2018 *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*. It appears most clearly on both sides of sign 5, 'The Kelly Copse' but affects others as well.



Under the subheading, 'Rockets signals to a rebel army', we are told that "Armed sympathisers readied to join the Kellys. Some accounts said there were 150 men, others only 30. The dissidents included Kelly relatives, and selectors fallen on hard times. The police despised them – and the feeling was mutual. Together, the dissidents would declare the Republic of North East Victoria, but the moment never came. Near Morgan's Lookout, Ned ordered them to stay out of the fight. They left bewildered and confused." This was taken from Ian Jones' *Short Life* by the NK Touring Route.

Jones based this claim on two oral history speculations, one for each number. There were no political dissidents; there was no rebel army; there was no plan for a republic. It is all nonsense dating back to the 1967 Wangaratta Kelly Seminar. Analysis of the source documents assembled by McQuilton (despite his best efforts to support Jones' claims) shows only one armed man not with the police seen by anyone anywhere during the entire siege. Kelly never went anywhere near Morgan's Lookout or any sympathisers that night. He collapsed alone and cold in the bush, stuck in his armour, until he attempted to call his gang out to fight the police at 7am next morning.²⁹

Under the subheading, 'A change of strategy', we are told that "Ned had no option but to call off the rallying sympathisers. He then planned to return to the Inn and rescue the others." As demonstrated there were no rallying sympathisers; and his advance to the Inn was to call the others out to take on the police in a last ditch gunfight to escape, not to "rescue" them. (He didn't know Byrne was dead.)

Under the subheading, 'Trail of evidence', we are told that "Staggering, he somehow managed to mount his horse and the rode east to meet his cousin, Tom Lloyd. Tom returned to retrieve the forgotten cap and rifle but left them behind. They were caked in blood and useless." More fiction: the next day the spot where his horse had been tethered the entire night was located by its tracks.

On another sign, under a subheading 'No surrender!', we are told that "It was hot work shooting at the police." More witless praise for Australia's most notorious gang of antisocial criminal murderers. All this old Ned Kelly Touring Route signage is historical fabrication and should be removed ASAP.

²⁹ Full analysis in Dawson, *Ned Kelly and the myth of a republic of North-Eastern Victoria*.