

# THE KELLY

# UNCOVERED

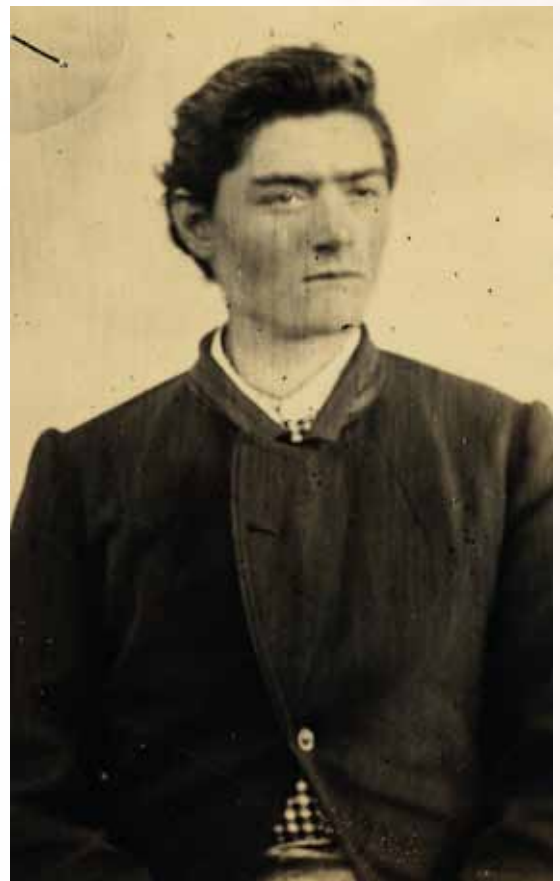
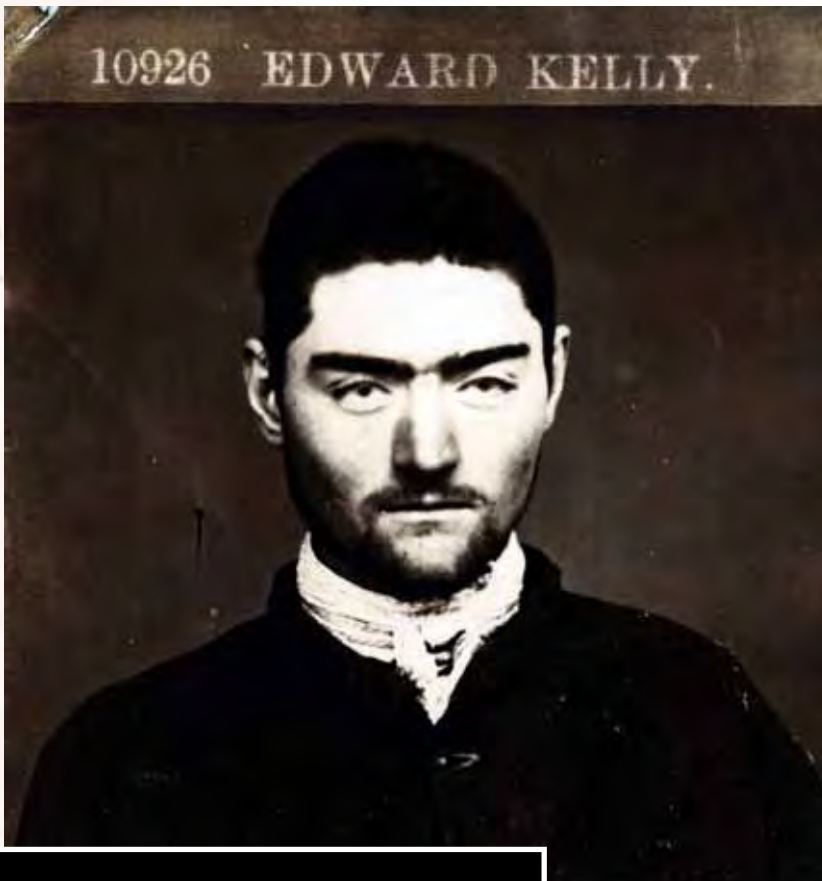
A **STUDY GUIDE** BY MARGUERITE O'HARA



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## Ned Kelly Uncovered



**'ARCHAEOLOGY BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE. IT'S THE MARK OF ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE LANDSCAPE.' – TONY ROBINSON, PRESENTER OF *NED KELLY UNCOVERED***

### INTRODUCTION

**N**ED KELLY – 'Iron Outlaw', hero or villain, champion of the poor and oppressed or just a common criminal, member of a murderous gang of thieves? No other figure in Australian history has had such a powerful influence on our visual and literary culture. He has been the subject of paintings, films and documentaries, novels and plays, poems and historical speculation. What he is believed to represent has become as important as who he was – the mythical figure and the reality are intertwined. But is it possible to establish the facts about Kelly's final days, leading up to the siege at Glenrowan in June 1880, through an archaeological dig at the site of the Glenrowan Inn?

*Ned Kelly Uncovered* provides an account of the Kelly story centred on the final siege and capture at Glenrowan. The program also provides an overview of the frequently contested views of who Ned Kelly was. This is both a history mystery story

and an examination of how archaeologists can fill in the gaps and provide new evidence about what might have happened at Kelly's last stand when he donned the famous iron armour.

### SYNOPSIS

Join Tony Robinson on an archaeological dig unearthing details of Ned Kelly's infamous last gun battle in 1880. *Ned Kelly Uncovered* follows the first ever excavation of the Glenrowan Inn site where the iconic Australian bushranger and his gang holed up for a showdown with police. The dramatic siege – which lasted over 24 hours – ended with Ned Kelly's capture and the death of gang members Joe Byrne, Dan Kelly and Steve Hart. Nearly 130 years later, can a team of archaeologists and historians reveal new insights into Ned Kelly's final moments of freedom?

More than a century after the Kelly Gang rode the ranges of Victoria and NSW, holding up towns and stealing thousands of pounds, opinion remains

**ABOVE: PORTRAITS OF NED KELLY AGED FIFTEEN AND AGED NINETEEN. REPRODUCED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE KEEPER OF PUBLIC RECORDS, PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE VICTORIA.**  
**COVER: OPENING TITLE GRAPHIC FROM *NED KELLY UNCOVERED*. © SCREEN AUSTRALIA, FILM VICTORIA, RENEGADE FILMS.**



**TOP/MIDDLE:** ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THOMAS OSWALD MADELY IN JUNE 1880. THE FIRST SHOWS FOUR MEN (TWO HOLDING GUNS) STANDING ALONGSIDE THE FALLEN TREE WHERE NED KELLY WAS TAKEN AFTER THE SIEGE; THE SECOND SHOWS POLICE IN POSITION TO FIRE. IMAGES COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA.

**BOTTOM:** ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY JOHN BRAY IN JUNE 1880 SHOWING A GROUP OF MEN STANDING ON THE GLENROWAN RAILWAY STATION. JONES'S HOTEL IN THE BACKGROUND IS WHERE THE FINAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN NED KELLY AND THE VICTORIAN POLICE TOOK PLACE. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA.

passionately divided between those who love Kelly as a persecuted champion of the poor and those who dismiss him as a cold-blooded killer and thief.

Will the dig site shed new light on the motivations of a man cast into legend by history? Or have souvenir hunters destroyed any chance historians have of uncovering the truth?

With expert commentary from Kelly experts Ian Jones and Alex McDermott, this one-hour documentary follows a seven-week dig led by archaeologist Adam Ford.

As the archaeologists unearth a host of artefacts including cartridges and bullets, the team conducts tests with fascinating results. Meanwhile, the historians strip back the myth, piecing together the clues to give a detailed new look at an iconic Australian, literally from the ground up.

### CURRICULUM LINKS

*Ned Kelly Uncovered* would be of interest and relevance to secondary students of English, Australian History, Australian Studies, Studies of Society and Environment/Human Society and Its Environment (SOSE/HSIE) and Media as well as for tertiary level subjects such as Archaeology. Some of the learning outcomes teachers and students could address through this documentary include:

- Distinguishing between fact and opinion through an assessment of a range of historical evidence
- Hypothesising about the motives of the Kelly Gang and the police involved in the final shootout at Glenrowan
- Assessing the value of an archaeological dig at a crucial site to establish what happened 130 years ago
- Evaluating the quality of a documentary as a way of representing history.

As the story of the Kelly Gang has long been a staple of Australian history teaching, teachers could choose from the background information and activities in this guide that best suit their students. This will depend on their level of understanding about how historical records are used to construct accounts of people and events from the past.

### BACKGROUND

#### Heritage Listing of Glenrowan site

The site of Ned Kelly's last stand, at Glenrowan in northern Victoria, was added to the Australian Government's National Heritage List in 2005. Then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, in making the announcement, said:

Ned Kelly has become a part of the Australian story – both as one of our best-known historical figures and also as a mythological character – to some a bushranger, some see him as a larrikin and some a hero.

The eight hectare Glenrowan siege site being listed today played a defining role in both the story and the myth of Ned Kelly. This is where the Kelly Gang, after being hunted by the law for almost two years, laid siege to this small rural town and finally confronted the Victorian police on 28 June 1880. The ensuing battle between gang members in heavy armour made from ploughshares, and the Victorian police, led to the ultimate deaths of all four gang members.

Three were killed that day and Ned Kelly was wounded, captured and hanged five months later (on 11 November 1880) in the old Melbourne Gaol for the murder of three policemen at Stringybark Creek, north of Mansfield, two years earlier. More than 125 years later, we are all familiar with the figure of a faceless bushranger in heavy blackened armour. This is an image that has haunted and inspired many of the nation's greatest talents to express his story through art, literature, film, music and other forms of popular culture. That is why the Glenrowan site is of outstanding national significance.

The National Heritage List has a set of nine criteria by which all potential inclusions on the List are measured. These criteria were created to ensure that all of the places that are on the register help us to tell stories about people or about the land. These places should have 'outstanding heritage values' and help us to understand something about the nation's past.

In relation to the Glenrowan site, Heritage Council chairwoman Chris Gallagher said: 'We will look to see if there is a story to tell through spent bullets in the soil and artefacts from the demolished pubs.'

Once a site is placed on the national Heritage Register, it is under the control of the Federal Government and any inappropriate development is prohibited.

## How Ned Kelly Uncovered was made

For program maker Alex West, *Ned Kelly Uncovered* is the end result of a determination to bring the story of the dig at Glenrowan to the screen.

A trained archaeologist, West first heard about plans to excavate the Kelly siege site at Glenrowan from archaeologist Adam Ford, and went to investigate. On site he met a film crew – Reece Rayner, Paul Terry and Neal Kelly – who had committed



**TOP: PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY JOHN BRAY IN JUNE 1880 OF THE REMAINS OF ONE OF THE OCCUPANTS OF JONES'S HOTEL AFTER THE FINAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN NED KELLY AND THE VICTORIAN POLICE. THE OCCUPANTS AT THE TIME OF THE FIRE WERE DAN KELLY, STEVE HART AND JOE BYRNE. BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY JOHN BRAY IN JULY 1880 OF THE BURNT-OUT REMAINS OF THE GLENROWAN INN. IMAGES COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA.**

their own time and resources to filming the dig from the start. They joined forces and West, the head of factual programming at Renegade Films, set about getting an international television documentary commissioned.

'The archaeology of Glenrowan gives the opportunity to reveal new things to the audience that we all think we're familiar with,' West says of the subject's appeal.

*I don't think anyone would have been interested in doing yet another film on Ned Kelly, but I was interested in what the archaeology could tell us about this story that was new, while presenting archaeology in a new way, especially for Australian television audiences.*

The British-born producer had previously worked with actor and writer Tony Robinson, host of archaeology series *Time Team*, and developed the documentary knowing Robinson's involvement would be an important element.

'What we set out to do was to make a television program that was engaging and that's all about Tony's unique style,' he says. 'He's the world leader of this kind of thing and has a huge following internationally.'

The November 2008 excavation was unexpectedly hit by inclement weather.

‘Rain was a fairly significant problem for the archaeologists,’ West says. ‘Conditions at the dig are very difficult when the ground is wet ... We had no room to stop so it meant the whole thing was incredibly tight.’

The tight timeframe and inability to predict exactly what might be found also kept the program makers on their toes:

*At the beginning of the shoot, I wrote a road map outlining roughly what I thought might happen but there was a sense of uncertainty. No one knew whether the site had been completely looted and picked over by the souvenir hunters.*

As well as the archaeologists and Ned Kelly experts – historians Ian Jones and Alex McDermott – the filmmakers were assisted by historical re-enactors and antique weapons collectors including Rupert Hammond, who owned a gun thought to have belonged to Kelly himself.

*The amount of bullet evidence that we found of the actual gun fight was amazing and far beyond my expectations. And by doing some interesting tests on some of those remains, we were able to link beyond reasonable doubt significant findings with things that must have been owned and handled by Ned Kelly himself.*

West hopes the program will show viewers the power of archaeology to engage them, while revealing new information about a story they thought they already knew.

*I’ve heard about Ned Kelly until I’m sick of hearing about Ned Kelly but this is really interesting and new. It’s why we called it Ned Kelly Uncovered. If you watch this program you’re going to learn things that you never imagined.*

## Glossary

When we write about people and events from the past, it is always best wherever possible, to work with primary sources, such as the materials unearthed at the dig site at Glenrowan. Here is a checklist of key terms to refer to in relation to any historical enquiry (SEE GLOSSARY THIS PAGE).

As you watch this documentary, make notes about which are the most significant findings made by the dig team.

### PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Share your knowledge of Ned Kelly as both a

## GLOSSARY

**ARCHAEOLOGY** – a scientific way of discovering new information about people who lived in the past by finding and studying the things they left behind.

**CREDIBILITY** – believability or trustworthiness

**EVIDENCE** – something which tends to prove or disprove something; ground for belief; proof.

**FACTS** – something known to be true: something that can be shown to be true, to exist, or to have happened.

**FORENSICS** – the use of science and technology to investigate and establish facts in criminal or civil courts of law. The term ‘forensic examination’ is often used to describe a thorough examination of materials.

**HEARSAY** – something heard but not proven to be true; can be like gossip (a mixture of truth and untruth) passed around by word of mouth or something heard from someone else rather than directly.

**OPINION** – view based on available information and personal beliefs.

**PRIMARY SOURCES** – a source directly from the era you are studying. For example if you’re studying Ned Kelly, a primary source could be the letter Ned wrote known as the Jerilderie Letter, court records, photographs taken at the time, Ned’s armour or something like the bullet cases found at the Glenrowan siege site.

**SECONDARY SOURCE** – usually something written about the events at a later time, such as a historian’s account, or a newspaper article written some time after the events and the period. The author will use primary source material to make an analysis and to re-tell the story.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF ARTEFACTS** – some objects and artefacts are more significant than others, e.g. the iron armour could be seen as more important than the bullet cases in telling the Kelly story.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF EVENTS** – the weighting of importance that one event has compared to another. For example, not everything known about the Kelly Gang and their activities is equally important.

real and mythologised figure in Australian history.

- List any visual and written representations of the Kelly Gang that you are aware of.
- Which of these representations present Ned Kelly in a sympathetic light?
- What archaeological digs are you aware of that have revealed information about societies and individuals from the past?
- What kind of historical records in the form of primary materials are available to people interested in understanding Ned Kelly?
- Why do you think opinions about Ned Kelly are still as divided today as they were in the 1880s?
- What does the Kelly story reveal about society in Australia in the mid-1800s?
- Who are some other figures from Australian history that have entered into the popular imagina-

## PEOPLE APPEARING IN THE FILM

**TONY ROBINSON**  
presenter of this program. British actor, author and host of television archaeology series *Time Team*, currently screening on ABC Television.

**ADAM FORD**  
an archaeologist with DIG International and Director of the Glenrowan dig, Ford previously worked in the siege precinct and spent months researching the site. He has worked on a range of sites, including prehistoric desert camps, Cold War rocket bases, mediaeval castles and desert island shipwrecks.

**IAN JONES**  
historian and author. Jones is considered to be an expert on the subject of the Kelly Gang which he has studied and written about for most of his life. He wrote the script for the 1970 feature film *Ned Kelly*, starring Mick Jagger and has been involved in the writing and production of many other programs about the Kellys.

**ALEX MCDERMOTT**  
Historical consultant for Dig International’s original Glenrowan dig, McDermott is a historian whose theories about Kelly challenge Jones’ perception of the Kelly family as poor Irish farmers driven to crime by the persecution of corrupt police. McDermott has worked on many history documentaries and television series as project historian and researcher, including *Constructing Australia* and *Rogue Nation*.



MAP OF KELLY COUNTRY IN NORTH-EASTERN VICTORIA (From <<http://www.kellycountry2000.com/tours.htm>>.)

tion? Do they share any common qualities with Ned Kelly?

- How are the much-publicized criminal activities of today's so-called *Underbelly* crime figures both like and unlike Ned Kelly's activities?
- Which of these words and phrases used to describe Ned Kelly are positive, negative or neutral – rebel, iron outlaw, criminal, champion of the poor, whinger, hero, villain, legend, celebrity?

### Glenrowan 1880 and Glenrowan 2008 – same place but different time

The north-eastern area of Victoria where Ned Kelly spent his short life is also known as The High Country because it is rugged and mountainous and includes the snow country of the Great Dividing Range. Jerilderie, where Ned tried to get his famous letter published, is in NSW. While maps can give us a sense of scale and distance, and photos and footage shot in the region give some sense of the terrain, we need to imaginatively put ourselves in the region at the time to have a sense of the terrain and the society.

This excerpt from the beginning of Kelly's Jerilderie Letter gives some sense of the conditions. Ned's vivid expression, spelling and grammar are just as the letter was written:

*Dear Sir*

*I wish to acquaint you with some of the occurrences of the present past and future. In or about the spring of 1870 the ground was very soft a hawker named Mr Gould got his waggon bogged between Greta and my mother's house on the eleven mile creek, the ground was that rotten it would bog a duck in places so Mr. Gould had abandon his waggon for fear of loosing his horses in the spewy ground. he was stopping at my Mother's awaiting finer or dryer weather Mr. McCormack and his wife. hawkers also were camped in Greta the mosquitoes were very bad which they generally are in a wet spring and to help them<sup>1</sup>*

While most modern readers would find so much rain that the ground 'would bog a duck in places' a miserable affair, it's important to remember that heavy rain would have meant something quite different for the settlers at the time. A heavy winter

rain means strong spring growth, providing plenty of forage and grass for livestock to eat, and a healthy crop.

At first glance, Ned's description makes us think of bleak country, with fewer settlements and only rough tracks connecting to small towns. But appearances can be deceptive, and we should be careful about just assuming that people living in the past were automatically the victims of deprived and backward circumstances. The historical records suggest that here the opposite was the case. The great gold finds in the Ovens Valley twenty years earlier made nearby Beechworth one of the biggest towns in the colony. Hawkers (travelling traders) were a vital part of an interlinked economy, along with nearby stores, and a busy Sydney-Melbourne Road. This road, in many sections close to the modern Hume Highway, ran near Greta and connected the other big towns of Benalla and Wangaratta with Beechworth.

There were in fact so many settlers, traders, and workers in the region that in 1873 a modern railway line was put through the area to meet the demands of a large and in many ways thriving population. This of course was the same railway line that Kelly would tear up at Glenrowan seven years later.

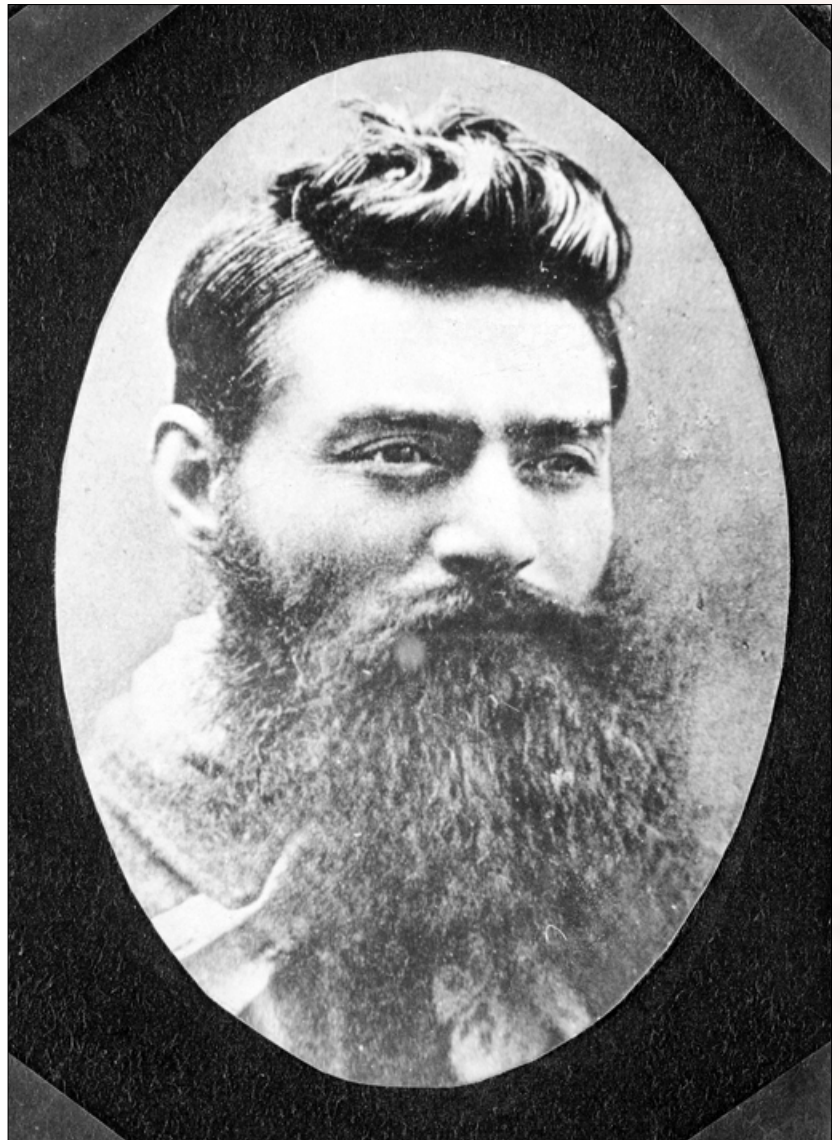
So Kelly Country 130 years ago combines elements we both would and wouldn't expect to find. Much of the region had then, as it does now, forbidding and remote ranges and inaccessible mountain country (which would make for perfect hideaways if you were trying to elude police and knew the area well). But at the same time you would have seen busy towns, highways and expanding settlements, with large buildings going up and modern railways being constructed.

## The Jerilderie Letter

Only two original documents by Ned Kelly are known to have survived. The most significant of these is the Jerilderie Letter, dictated by Ned Kelly to Joe Byrne in February 1879. It is the most important document providing a direct link to the Kelly Gang and the events with which they were associated.

Approximately 8000 words long, this letter has been described as Ned Kelly's 'manifesto'. It passionately articulates his pleas of innocence and desire for justice for both his family and the poor Irish selectors of Victoria's north-east. Donated to the State Library in 2000, the Jerilderie Letter brings Ned Kelly's distinctive voice to life, and offers readers a unique insight into the man behind the legend.

Ned Kelly began writing this letter at Jerilderie while on the run from police to explain his actions



and justify his previous criminal activities, including killing three policemen at Stringybark Creek. He outlines his beliefs and presents himself as the victim of mistakes and bullying by police. This letter is crucial to our understanding of Ned Kelly and is the most important primary document in relation to Ned Kelly.

The original letter is in the collection of the State Library of Victoria and can be viewed and read in a typed, but unchanged transcript at <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/collections/treasures/jerilderieletter1.html>.

Alex McDermott, a Kelly historian, describes Ned as one of the most extraordinary individuals in the entirety of Australian history. He says:

*For a native-born Aussie growing up in the backblocks of colonial Victoria to come up with a document as powerful and viscerally affecting as the Jerilderie Letter – it could only have been produced by a truly extraordinary individual – and then he backs it up with his exploits as a bushranger.*

**ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPH OF NED KELLY TAKEN BY CHARLES NETTLETON ON THE DAY BEFORE HE WAS HANGED IN 1880. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA.**



## STUDENT ACTIVITIES



### After watching the film

- What is the first task of the archaeologists working on the Glenrowan site?
- What are they hoping to find?
- How do the remains of other buildings constructed on the site of the original Anne Jones' Inn complicate the task of those excavating the site?
- As the dig proceeds, the historians reflect on what is known about Ned Kelly and his activities. Which events do they consider to be crucial in the creation of the outlaw Kelly?
- What evidence is offered to suggest Kelly was 'a poor, brave, misunderstood boy with an alcoholic father', harassed by the police and looking to redress perceived wrongs done to his family?
- What contrary evidence is offered to suggest that Kelly was a common criminal, thief and murderer, stealing horses and robbing banks indiscriminately from the rich squatters and poorer selectors alike?
- What was Ned jailed for when he was only sixteen? How is this three-year sentence thought to have hardened his resolve against the authorities?
- What happened in 1878 at Ned's family home that triggered increased hostility towards the police?
- How did the killing of the police at Stringybark Creek seal the fate of the Kelly Gang?
- Given that Graham Berry, the Premier of Victoria at the time, was regarded as left-wing and radical (described as 'the Outlaw Premier'), on the side of the poor and the selectors rather than the privileged squatters, who and what did Kelly have to rebel against?
- What would be the approximate current value of the £8000 reward for the Kelly Gang today?
- What was the gang's plan in relation to the expected arrival of a police train from Melbourne coming to Glenrowan?
- How do the archaeologists' findings at the dig help them to digitally reconstruct the Glenrowan Inn and the progress of the final siege?
- What happened to Ned's nineteen-year-old brother Dan and fellow gang members Joe Byrne and Steve Hart as the shootout continued?
- What does Kelly's final stand at Glenrowan when he comes out to confront the thirty-four assembled police in his iron suit suggest to you about him?
- What does the petition estimated to have been signed by up to 60,000 people calling for Kelly's reprieve from execution tell us about the level of support and sympathy there was for Kelly at the time?

**PRESENTER TONY ROBINSON STANDS ABOVE THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION SITE OF THE GLENROWAN INN. PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE BAKER © SCREEN AUSTRALIA.**



## Ned's short life – an evidence file

Here is a brief chronology of what we know about some significant events in Ned Kelly's short life (See **Table 1** on page 10). Write in column 3 what you think is the source of each piece of information and whether this makes it likely to be true. Keep in mind that the actions of individuals and families with criminal convictions and long association with the law are likely to be well documented.

### Forming opinions from what is known

Our knowledge of Ned Kelly comes from a variety of sources. These include official records, contemporary newspaper reports and photographs, the Jerilderie Letter and a number of artefacts such as the green silk sash and the iron armour. Using this material, historians, artists and filmmakers have constructed profiles, stories and representations of Kelly.

- Of all the things we know about Ned Kelly from contemporary records and through reconstructions of his final days from the archaeological dig at Glenrowan, choose three incidents reported in primary sources, and three artefacts that you believe are very important in constructing a vivid and accurate picture of Ned's life and times.
- 'Common criminal or revolutionary?' Are these the only ways to characterize Ned Kelly? What is the major source used by writers on which to base their judgements about his motivation and character?
- Ned Kelly attracted a lot of press coverage during his life. This makes it possible for us to know quite a lot about what happened, and also keeps his mythical status alive. What evidence is there, as suggested towards the end of this film, that 'Kelly was acting out a dramatic outlaw role, conscious of his place in history'?

**LEFT: ON SITE DURING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF THE GLENROWAN INN. L-R: ARCHAEOLOGIST ADAM FORD, HISTORIAN AND SCHOLAR ALEX MCDERMOTT, PRESENTER TONY ROBINSON, AND AUTHOR AND NED KELLY EXPERT IAN JONES**  
**RIGHT: FILMMAKER ALEX WEST WITH TONY ROBINSON. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE BAKER © SCREEN AUSTRALIA.**

- Visual symbols are important in etching an historical figure into the popular imagination. What is the visual and symbolic power of Kelly's armour?

## The archaeologists' tools, challenges and successes

An archaeologist uses many different tools during the course of an investigation, before, during and after the excavations. The tools used during the progress of an excavation vary, and include everything from a garden trowel and a sieve to a computer database. Much of the work is painstaking and slow and requires patience and care in sifting through materials. While many hands are important on an archaeological dig, so too is the overview of the historians and archaeologists who have a sense of what happened and what might be unearthed.

- How does some prior knowledge about what happened at Glenrowan in June 1880 direct and narrow the search for artefacts?
- What part can weather play in the progress and success of an archaeological dig?
- Describe some of the ballistics materials found at the site.
- What is the importance of the skills of Henry Huggins, the ballistics expert, in analysing the bullet cartridges and other ballistics materials found at the site?
- What can fragments of utensils and pottery tell us about the society and way of life of people at the time?

DATE	KEY EVENTS	SOURCE OF INFORMATION OR EVIDENCE OF ARTEFACT
1854 or 1855	Edward (Ned) Kelly born to John (Red) Kelly and Ellen Kelly (formerly Quinn) near Beveridge in Victoria.	No official birth certificate or record exists.
1865–66	Ned Kelly said to have saved Dick Shelton, a child, from drowning in a creek. Presented with a green silk sash.	
1866	Ned's father 'Red' Kelly dies.	
1867	Widowed, Ellen Kelly moves to farmland near Greta with her seven children.	
1870	Ned arrested, convicted of assault and sentenced to a year in prison.	
1871	Re-arrested for horse theft and sentenced to three years hard labour.	
April 1878	Constable Fitzpatrick injured while attempting to arrest Dan Kelly. Ned and Dan go into hiding in the bush. Ellen is jailed for attempted murder of Fitzpatrick.	
October 1878	Three policemen killed at Stringybark Creek by the Kelly Gang. Gang declared outlaws to be shot on sight.	
December 1878	Euroa bank robbery.	
February 1879	Ned tries and fails to get his 'Jerilderie Letter' printed and published while robbing a bank in Jerilderie.	
26–28 June 1880	Siege at Glenrowan. Ned wore iron armour and a helmet at the final siege.	
27–28 June 1880	Press photographers record the scene at the hotel and photograph Joe Byrne's body. Ned is captured and the hotel burnt with Steve Hart and Dan Kelly's bodies still inside.	
11 November 1880	Ned Kelly is hanged at the Old Melbourne Jail.	
1881	Royal Commission into the Kelly outbreak. Many police shown in a less than positive light. Kelly Gang actions neither excused nor sanctioned.	

TABLE 1



**LEFT: PRESENTER TONY ROBINSON IN FRONT OF THE 'BIG NED' STATUE IN THE VICTORIAN TOWN OF GLENROWAN**

**RIGHT: TONY ROBINSON AND ALEX WEST INSIDE OLD MELBOURNE GAOL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE BAKER © SCREEN AUSTRALIA.**

- At every archaeological dig there is expectation, disappointment and exhilaration. Here are some of the best moments for the archaeologists at the Glenrowan dig:

*Finding the cartridges in the rear room of the inn and knowing then that we'd actually identified a safe refuge where the gang went back into the rear rooms to reload; to find that in its location and to know that the last people who held it were members of the gang in their final moments.*

– Adam Ford, archaeologist

*The humble scale of the inn brought the whole thing back to reality ... the legend makes everything a hell of a lot bigger than reality, but this brought it back to human scale.*

– Adam Ford

'The excavation shed new light on the nuts and

bolts of colonial life and the way people had lived in the Kelly's world ...'

– Alex McDermott, historian at the dig

'With the excavation bringing up the shrapnel and bullets, you start to get a material sense of the reality of the siege.'

– Alex McDermott

- Apart from the obvious excitement felt by those involved in unearthing artefacts from the Glenrowan site, how do you think the information uncovered about the final hours at Glenrowan, as well as the digital reconstruction of the inn, might modify/add to/enrich our view of Ned Kelly and his gang? Does a clearer understanding of how the siege was played out support the view of Ned as brave hero or Ned as a desperate criminal on the run? Conduct a discussion about what this excavation and reconstruction adds to our knowledge and understanding of Ned Kelly.

Not everyone in Glenrowan, a town of about 350 people, was so excited about the dig at the Glenrowan siege site. Some residents believed that the site had been so thoroughly searched that nothing new would be found. However, other locals were happy to have the film crew and archaeologists in Glenrowan to boost the local tourism and accommodation industries.

- Do you think there can ever be any strong arguments to leave historical sites undisturbed?

- If they are to be dug up and turned over for historical evidence, who should be in charge of the sites and the issuing of permits – local authorities, national heritage councils, relatives of those whose remains may lie buried on the sites, a local committee?

## Who owns the past?

While most of us keep some records and mementos from our past in the form of visual and written images such as photos, film and letters and diaries, few of us have the opportunity to conduct an archaeological dig in our own backyard.

### Scenario 1

Your house and others in the town you live in has been destroyed by fire. The town was first settled in the 1860s though your family have only been there since the 1930s. While your family are waiting to rebuild on the recently cleared site, a number of family members do some digging and sifting through the flattened rubble and find bits and pieces, including coins, bottles, metal objects and bones that seem to pre-date your house. As you dig down further, you find the brick foundations of an earlier house and what look like the wheels and shafts of a horse buggy, amongst other things.

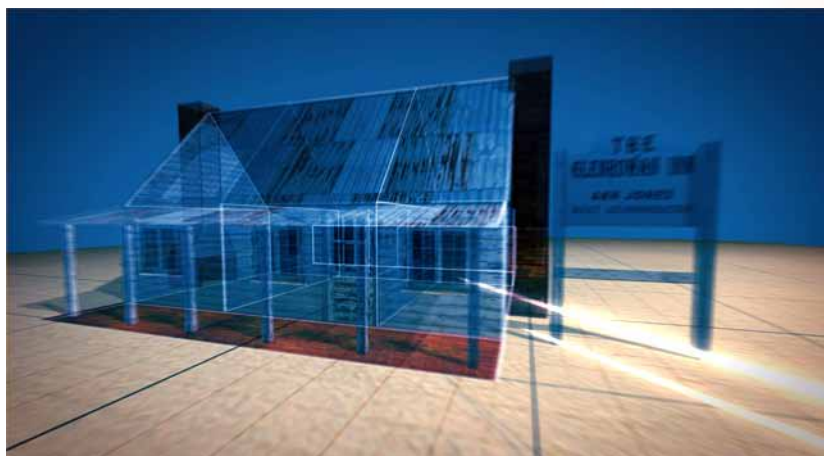
As you wait for the permits to come through to build your new house, you find many more bits and pieces and more of your family and friends join the dig at weekends.

- What are you going to do with your collection of artefacts from the past?
- How could they best be preserved and displayed?
- Where could you take them to have them dated and identified?
- Could any of them be incorporated into your new house?

### Scenario 2

You are holidaying in a small country town and helping a neighbour re-organise the stock in her second-hand shop. You come across a metal box inside an old wooden desk eaten by termites and destined for the tip. Inside the box there is a bundle of letters, faded but legible, which appear to be love letters addressed to someone called Ned. They are dated in the late 1870s and most are postmarked Beechworth. What are you going to do with this material? Here are some options to consider. Discuss what would be the advantages and disadvantages involved in each of these options?

- Keep it a secret from the shopkeeper who may not have known it was in the desk



- Take it to the local historical association
- Contact a television station
- Discuss what you could do with the letters with family and friends
- Find a private place to read them slowly while you think about what to do
- Try to ascertain what legal constraints there are on people finding potentially significant historical records
- Offer them to your State Library to be conserved and put on public display.



### Who should own the past?

Scenario 2 raises a very important issue sometimes called 'who owns the past'? Should any individual be able to profit from ownership of significant historic artefacts and who should have control over the care, control and conservation of potentially significant items?

Under *The Shipwrecks Act of 1976*, off-shore wrecks, of which there are many scattered around the Australian coastline, are protected from interference or looting of any kind. Divers may not remove material from shipwrecks.

- Should commercial divers be permitted to investigate shipwrecks and bring to land any artefacts that are worth preserving? Is 'finders keepers' a fair policy?

**TOP: A COMPOSITE SEQUENCE FROM *NED KELLY UNCOVERED* SHOWING CGI IMAGE OF THE GLENROWAN INN OVER THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG SITE**  
**MIDDLE: A CGI 3D GRAPHIC FROM *NED KELLY UNCOVERED* DEPICTING THE GLENROWAN INN AND THE TRAJECTORY OF BALLISTIC FIRE BY POLICE**  
**BOTTOM: A CGI 3D GRAPHIC SHOWING ONE OF THE ANGLES FROM WHICH POLICE SHOT INTO THE GLENROWAN INN.**  
 © SCREEN AUSTRALIA, FILM VICTORIA, RENEGADE FILMS.



**TONY ROBINSON STANDING NEXT TO NED KELLY'S ARMOUR, WHICH IS ON DISPLAY AT THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA. PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE BAKER © SCREEN AUSTRALIA.**

- Why do you think governments around the world passed Shipwreck Acts prohibiting commercial investigation of wreck sites?
- Apart from being the final resting place of a ship and its cargo, what else often goes down with a ship?

Recently there has been renewed interest in another aspect of the Kelly story – his remains. The discovery in May 2008, of Kelly's last resting place by historians and Heritage Victoria archaeologists in a previously unknown gravesite in the former prison grounds of Pentridge Prison attracted worldwide publicity. Pentridge Prison in Melbourne has recently undergone conversion to apartments. Read the article below outlining the situation of Ned's remains (and those of other prisoners).

*Ned Kelly's remains should be returned to his family and he should be given a decent burial says former Pentridge Prison chaplain, Fr Peter Norden, AO.*

*Fr Norden says that in the 12 years since the former Pentridge Prison closed and moved into the hands of private commercial developers, nothing has been*

*done to recognise the grave sites of those buried in the prison grounds.*

*Ned Kelly's remains were moved from the Old Melbourne Gaol in 1929, after they were disturbed by building works for the Melbourne Working Men's College (now RMIT University), along with more than 30 other persons executed in the city gaol. They joined the remains of the 10 executed and buried at Pentridge Prison.*

*'Forensic Services are now assessing the human remains buried at Pentridge Prison. These are not unknown persons, but the remains of those the Victorian Government executed,' Father Norden says.*

*Because of the lack of recognition of the Pentridge gravesites, Fr Norden arranged for the exhumation of Ronald Ryan 40 years after his execution. His remains were returned to his family last year, and Fr Norden is now calling for the same treatment for Ned Kelly's remains.*

*'Female descendants of Ned Kelly's family have expressed to me an interest in providing assistance for DNA testing and I believe they should decide where Ned gets buried, certainly not back in the former Pentridge Prison site.'*

*'Ned Kelly's family's descendants should have the same rights as Ronald Ryan's,' insists Fr Norden. 'It would be fitting to conduct a private memorial service for the family, as his remains should not be controlled by private commercial interests.'*

*'Let's give Ned Kelly a final resting place with his deceased family members and insist that the Victorian Government recognises the human remains of those who cannot be identified, by providing a memorial at the gravesites at Pentridge.'*<sup>2</sup>

- Why do you think it is important for descendants of executed prisoners to be able to bury the remains of their ancestors once their final resting place is identified?
- Should being a convicted and executed criminal remove the rights of families to have a burial ceremony?
- Is this interest in Ned's bones just as ghoulish a response to other aspects of his violent life and violent death or is there something more important to be considered here?

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> From the Jerilderie Letter at <<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/collections/treasures/jerilderieletter/jerilderie01.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> From <<http://newsroom.melbourne.edu/news/n-3>>.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### Books

- Peter Carey, *The True History of the Kelly Gang*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001
- Robert Drewe, *Our Sunshine*, Pan Macmillan, Chippendale, 1991
- Ian Jones, *Ned Kelly: A Short Life*, Lothian, Port Melbourne, 1995
- Ian Jones, *The Fatal Friendship*, Lothian Books, South Melbourne, 2003. (About Joe Byrne and Aaron Sherritt)
- Alex McDermott (ed), *The Jerilderie Letter*, Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 2001

### Films

- The Last Outlaw*, television miniseries, 1980 (DVD 2006)
- Ned Kelly* (Gregor Jordan, 2003). (Based on *Our Sunshine*)
- Ned Kelly* (Tony Richardson, 1970), 99 minutes
- Outlawed: The Real Ned Kelly* (Windfall Films & Look Television, 2003), 55 minutes
- The Story of the Kelly Gang* (Charles Tait, 1906)  
The film survives only as a sixteen-

minute version restored by the National Film and Sound Archive from fragments of its original seventy-minute length. The DVD and monograph box set is available from ATOM's The Education Shop <<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>>.

### Websites

- Australianscreen Online – The Story of the Kelly Gang clips and resources  
<http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/story-kelly-gang>
- DEWHA – Glenrowan Heritage Precinct  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/glenrowan/index.html>  
See also 'more information' tab.
- HyperHistory  
<http://www.hyperhistory.org>  
At this Commonwealth Government Teaching History site, you will find online units about different aspects of the Kelly story:
1. ozhistorybytes – Issue One: Taming or Blaming Ned Kelly
  2. Ways of Seeing: Photographs as Historical Evidence
  3. Ned Kelly's armour: Whose heavy metal is it anyway? (Primary level)

Ned Kelly Australian Iron Outlaw  
<http://www.ironoutlaw.com/index.html>

State Library of Victoria:  
Explore History – Rebels and Outlaws – Bushrangers – The Jerilderie Letter:  
<[http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/ergo/the\\_jerilderie\\_letter](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/ergo/the_jerilderie_letter)>  
Read the Jerilderie Letter: <<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/collections/treasures/jerilderieletter/jerilderie01.html>>

### Film Credits

Produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Produced by Renegade Films. Developed and produced with the assistance of Film Victoria. A Screen Australia National Documentary Program.

Executive Producers: Mark Hamlyn (Screen Australia); Alex West, Joe Connor, Ken Connor (Renegade Films)

Producers: Alex West, Lucy Maclaren

Writer/Director: Alex West

Year: 2009

Duration: 55 Minutes



RENEGADE  
factual



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