

Who was Bogong Jack?

According to Harding he was the greatest bushranger and bushman ever to swing into a saddle. One could counter both claims quite easily. Personally, I don't consider him a bushranger. He was certainly a highly successful horse thief and he certainly travelled extensively around the backblocks. However, I don't consider he meets any of the normal criteria for bushrangers, including in the 1850s.

Is it correct that he was John Payne/John Paynter?

His name most likely was John Payne, Paynter, believe it or not, seems to have been an alias.

Was he ever convicted of any crime?

No. He was never convicted, although his gang was broken up by some fairly smart police work. He disappeared from view and his final whereabouts/fate is unconfirmed. Even Harding can only surmise. I suspect he probably left the colony under an assumed name.

Could you refer me to any other books in print on Bogong Jack?

As far as I know Harding's is the only book devoted to Bogong Jack. John Sadlier in "Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer" devotes two pages to him. Allan Nixon in "Stand & Deliver" has a page on him and Wannan's "Australian Folklore" has a small segment. Both Nixon and Wannan use Harding as a primary source. You may also find something in Stephan Williams "Dictionary of a Thousand Bushrangers" on the Web.

Of interest is that the bushranger Harry Power used some of Payne's tracks to elude Police when he left the north-east and headed down to the Omeo District. The Police were also concerned that the Kellys may also use these routes to escape the area after the Stringybark Creek murders and kept them under surveillance for quite some time. Although the Kellys didn't leave their own area, this concern split available police assets for the hunt.