



## The Kelly Gang

John 'Red' Kelly born in 1820 in Tipperary, Ireland (d. 1866) and was transported from Ireland to Van Diemens Land in 1841 for stealing pigs. He and his wife, Ellen Quinn (b.

co Antrim, Ireland, 1832) had four children Edward b June 1855, James b 1860, Daniel b 1861, and a daughter, Kate. Their rebellious spirit, resentment of the wealthy and contempt for authority was passed to their children growing up in a closely knit community near Greta in north-eastern Victoria.

When hard working small farmers could only make a meagre living, the Kelly boys found it easy to justify stealing horses to make extra money and they were pursued by the police from their teenage years.

The family stuck together. Even Ellen was jailed in 1878 for attempted murder when the constable who arrived to pick up Dan was injured.

With friends Joe Byrne and Steve Hart, they took to the hills to escape the police. Unlike many other bushrangers the Kelly gang robbed banks, hotels and rich property owners, not the locals and travellers.

Other members of the Kelly Gang were Steve Hart and Joe Byrne. Despite the heroic light cast by posterity, they were all quite prepared to kill to escape arrest. Two police were murdered in October 1878 at Stringybark Creek provoking public outrage and a bounty of £2000 was offered.

After hiding out in the hills for a couple of months the gang rode into Euroa and stuck up the bank taking £2000, this time without killing. Early in 1879 they held up the Jerilderie Police Station, Hotel and Bank where Ned handed the accountant his 'Jerilderie' letter full of impassioned reproach for past injustices. Despite huge rewards, planting of spies and intimidation of 'sympathisers' the police were unable to find the gang.

Meanwhile the gang lay low and planned a showdown at Glenrowan which began on 26 June 1880 when Byrne shot informer Aaron Sherrit dead. The gang sang and talked to sixty-two hostages all day while they waited in the hotel for the arrival of a trainload of Melbourne police. The police surrounded the hotel in the small hours of the morning. At dawn there was a shoot out, started by Ned in his famous suit of armour.

Byrne and two hostages were mortally wounded in a gun fight reportedly witnessed by six hundred spectators. The bodies of Steve Hart and Dan Kelly were burned when police set fire to the hotel and Ned was taken prisoner.

Ned was sent to Melbourne for trial and sentenced to death. He was hanged on 11 November 1880. The next year the Kelly outbreak was the subject of a Royal

Commission which heavily reprimanded police handling of the affair. Ned was survived by his mother Ellen, sister Kate, and younger brother Jim.