

Friday 12th November 1880

NOTORIOUS NED

A PROFILE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST INFAMOUS OUTLAW



Australia's most notorious bushranger, Edward 'Ned' Kelly, was hanged at the Old Melbourne Gaol yesterday, Thursday 11th November 1880. At twenty-five years of age, the outlaw and bandit of the bush lived a life committing crimes, spending much of his youth in and out of jail. But who was Ned Kelly? What were the events that led to his execution?

Kelly was born in 1854 in Beveridge, Victoria. The eldest son of Irish immigrants, John and Ellen Kelly, he was one of eight children. Ned's father, John (Red) Kelly, died when Ned was eleven years of age. Consequently, Ned was forced to care and provide for his mother and siblings, who had

often been in trouble with the police. He and his brothers were found guilty of crimes such as horse and cattle theft, stealing from wealthy landowners of northern Victoria, bank robberies and assault.

In April 1878, after years of run-ins with the law, Ned and his brother Dan managed to escape police, while other family members were not so lucky. The brothers consequently went into hiding. Kelly explained in a letter left after a bank robbery in Jerilderie that he became an outlaw because he and his family were always mistreated by police. They remained on the run in the Victorian bush near their family home in Greta and were joined by two friends, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart. The four later formed 'The Kelly Gang'. The Victorian government passed a law in October of 1878 to rid the four men of any legal rights after a series of offences were committed. A reward of £2000 dead or alive was placed on offer for anyone who was able to capture the men.

WANTED!

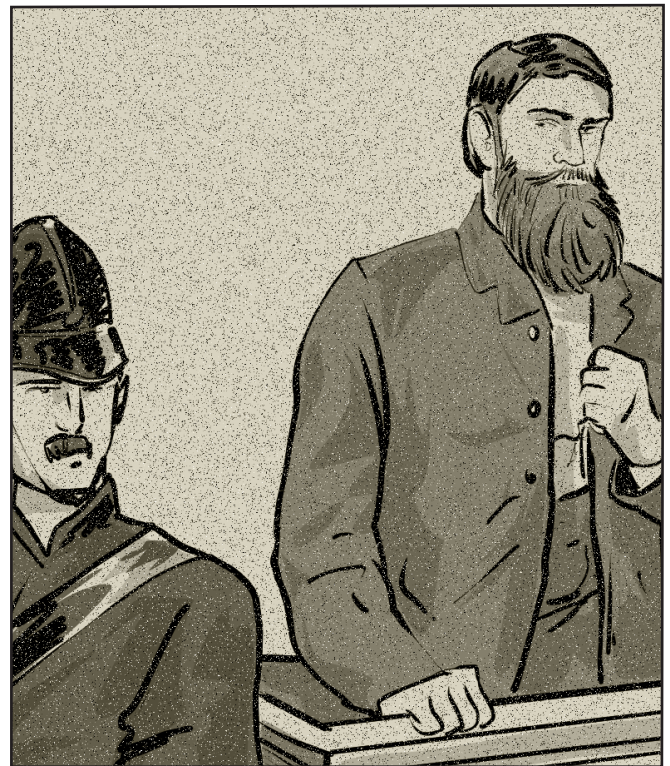
The Kelly Gang made suits of armour from steel parts. Ned Kelly's armour, which weighed forty-five kilograms, included a steel helmet as well as back, chest and shoulder plates. It acted as protection during hours of police gunshots in the last stand that took place in Glenrowan.



NED KELLY'S STEEL ARMOUR.

The other three members of the Kelly gang died on June 28, 1880. Ned's armour saved him and he was only wounded in the legs. Once captured, Kelly was taken to Melbourne to stand trial.

Kelly was found guilty of murdering a police officer at Stringybark Creek. As Judge Sir Redmond Barry sentenced Kelly to death by hanging, he stated, as is customary in a court of law, 'May God have mercy on your soul'.



NED KELLY IN COURT.

Kelly had always been seen by some as a hero for standing up to the police; however, by others he was viewed as nothing more than a criminal. Those who believed Kelly to be heroic pleaded for his life to be spared; however, their attempts were unsuccessful. His hanging yesterday was witnessed by police, prisoners and some journalists. It was reported that Kelly's last words were 'such is life'.