

Linking Kelly Gang with Penwortham

Collection of credible and other stories that need to be evaluated, as no one is sure where The Kelly Gang hid between Jerilderie 1879 and Glenrowan 1880.

1. Rueben **Solly** and **James Wright** were of Penwortham, whose villagers had numbered 42 as early as **1842**. *May Mellor, historian 1947.*
2. **Solly** married, moved building 'Watervale Farm' on Eyre creek. "Mrs Solly records in letters to her relatives tells of how she feared to walk far in the bush, because of **cattle thieves** who had their camp in the hills barely a mile away" – extract from 'The Wakefield - its Water & Wealth.'
*The Wright's one dumb, had camp and yards in an area known as 'Hidden Valley' East of 'Hughes Park' and another yard behind Mt Oakden in the Pinery, Spring Gully.
The 476m point on the Stringy Bark range was known as Signal Hill; warnings were signaled to and from the ridge south of Mt Horrocks.*
3. Adelaide Observer (SA : 1843 - 1904), Saturday 16 August **1851**, page 8
LOCAL COURT, CLARE.
Thursday, 7th August.1851
CRIMINAL JURISDICTION
Michael Wilmot was brought up in custody, charged with threatening the life of **James Wright**, of Penwortham, on the 27th of June last.
James the witness, sworn-On the 27th of June last the prisoner came to his house, in **Penwortham**, and said witness had robbed him of £3; he then swore the first chance he got he would shoot witness; and he also said he kept a loaded gun at his house for that purpose. Swears solemnly that he is in bodily fear from prisoner's threats:
The prisoner, being asked if he had any defense to make to the charges, said he was drinking and did not remember anything that took place.
4. **1883**
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/92763910?searchTerm=Wright%20James%2C%20Penwortham>
Mr **Wright** applied to have roads open between sections 444 and 569, and 431 and 456.
5. **Jul 1880** Bunyip Gawler
The name of "**Wild Wright,**" or **Thomas Wright** is that of a well-known **cattle** stealer, who has already served seven years in Pentridge, and is one of the gang's firmest friends. If any further **Kelly** followers start in the line that they have so recently retired from this same Wild Wright will be amongst them.
6. [The True Story of the Kelly Gang of Bushrangers Chapter 2 page 3 - Kelly Gang](#)
"Some little excitement was caused in the town by the **arrest of two brothers, named 'Wild' Wright and 'Dummy' Wright, friends of the Kelly's, who were well known to the police and supposed to be sympathizers with the bushrangers.** They were charged, on this occasion, with using threatening language to members of the search party, and showed considerable resistance, when they were locked up."
7. **1880** Adelaide Observer.
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/160134299?searchTerm=Kelly%2C%20Wright%2C%20Penwortham#>
THE KELLY FAMILY.
Our Watervale correspondent, writing on July 2, says: —"It will, perhaps, be a surprise to most of your readers to learn that the Kelly family were once residents of South Australia, but from what I hear from those who have been long in this district, they are no other than the same family that once lived at **Penwortham**, a village about three miles from here. Their character in those days was not of the best, and it is said that the meat they consumed never cost them anything.

They and the Wright family, whose names appear to be associated, were both living at Penwortham, and left when the diggings broke out. "The Argus states " that there is another member of the notorious family who threatened to become scarcely less dangerous had not the police of New South Wales put a check on his career almost at its onset. The individual in question, James Kelly, was the first to fall into the hands of the police. In 1871 James, who was quite a boy at the time, was arrested and taken to Beechworth on two charges of cattle stealing.

8. 1880 June

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/108738355?searchTerm=Wright%20James%2C%20Penwortham%2C%20stealing%2C%20cattle%20duffing%2C%20Victoria%2C%20Kelly>

NED KELLY INTERVIEWED. (Tom Wright met with Ned after his capture)

After the house had been burned, Ned Kelly's three sisters and Tom Wright were allowed an interview with him. Tom Wright, as well as the sisters, kissed the wounded man, and a brief conversation ensued, Ned Kelly having to a certain extent recovered from the exhaustion consequent on his wounds. At times, his eyes were quite bright, and, although he was of course excessively weak, his remarkably powerful physique enabled him to talk rather freely. During the interview he said: "I was at last surrounded by the police, and only had a revolver, with which I fired four shots; but it was no good. I had half a mind to shoot myself. I loaded my rifle but could not hold it after I was wounded. I had plenty of ammunition, but it was no good to me.

I got shot in the arm and told Byrne and Dan so. I could have got off, but when I saw them, all pounding away I told Dan I would see it over and wait until morning." "What on earth induced you to go to the hotel?" inquired a spectator.

"We could not do it anywhere else," replied Kelly, eyeing the spectators, who were strangers to him, suspiciously. "I would," he continued, "have fought them in the train, or else upset it, if I had the chance. I did not care a—who was in it, but I knew on Sunday morning there would be no usual passengers. I first tackled the line and could not pull it up, and then came to Glenrowan station."

"Since the Jerilderie affair," remarked a spectator, "we thought you had gone to Queensland."

"It would not do for everyone to think the same way," was Kelly's reply." "If I were once right again," he continued, "I would go to the barracks and shoot every one of the troopers, and not give one a chance."

Mrs. Scillian to her brother: "It's a wonder you did not keep behind a tree."

Ned Kelly: "I had a chance at several policemen during the night but declined to fire; my arm was broken the first fire. I got away into the bush and found my mare, and could have rushed away to beggary, but wanted to see the thing out, and remained in the bush."

A sad scene ensued when Wild Wright led Mrs. Scillian to the horrible object which was all that remained of her brother Dan. She beat over it, raised a dirge-like cry, and wept bitterly. Dick Hart applied for the body of his brother but was told he could not have it until after the postmortem examination. The inquest on the bodies will be held at Benalla.

9. 1880 Jul

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/97282759?searchTerm=Wright%2C%20Kelly%20James%2C%20Penwortham%2C%20stealing%2C%20cattle%20duffing%2C%20Victoria%2C%20Kelly>

.... During my travels I came across an old lady at Watervale who knew the parents of Ned and Dan Kelly, and they were always regarded as suspicious characters. The relatives of the Kellys and Hart some 23 years ago used to live in that locality. In fact, the above-mentioned lady says that she attended Kelly's mother in one of her confinements, and she is almost certain it was the time when the veritable Ned came into existence. If such is the case South Australia can boast of producing one of the most despotic ruffians that ever trod the earth. There are others in the neighborhood of Sevenhill who were conversant with the Kelly, Harts, and Wrights, who were engaged in cutting slabs for the Burra Mine. There used to be a deal of cattle duffing going on in those days, and the late Mr. Horrocks was a considerable loser.

10. June 2017 "For interest my gt gt grandparents were Patrick and Mary-Anne Byrnes (nee Kelly). They lived on a property East (suggest west in Kellytown) of Mintaro. Mary-Anne died in 1873."
Regards Andrew Harding Clare

11. Kelly Gang mentioned in pages transcribed from notes by a passed MHHS Watervale Historian.

... **1800's** letter by an unknown author, possibly student at Stanley Grammar School Watervale.

"This hill was the highest point between Kapunda and the Flinders Range, a distance of nearly 100 miles. The view was magnificent away to the west Port Wakefield was discernible in the distance, northwards the ground sloped towards Broughton, eastwards the uplands intervening between the valley of the Wakefield and that of the Light appeared as though they were clouds and away to the south the Barossa Range bounded the outlook. Not until that Saturday had I ever breathed mountain air. Darwin in one of his works remarks: In the presence of nature humanity is dumb"- those words were verified on this occasion, for all of us were awed into silence. The climb had created in each of us a hearty appetite. Our leader pointed out that we were on the ridge of a watershed which divides the Hutt which flows northwards from the affluent of the Wakefield flowing in a southerly direction until they unite with other tributaries below Auburn and finally debouching on to the plains below Rhynie. Altogether we had a most enjoyable excursion. On another occasion we did the ascent of Mt. Horrocks east of Watervale, in the direction of the Burra. E.J. Eyre the explorer camped on this eminence when on his 1st journey northwards, I think in the year 1840. It was he who discovered Hutt and the Broughton, which he named. When he returned a year or two later settlements had been formed at Clare and Penwortham, by the Gleeson and the Horrocks families respectively. In the densely wooded country for some miles north the Kelly family of bushranging family of bushranging notoriety made their first Australian home. Ned and Dan spent their boyhood days there, and Billy Hayes, who made a name for himself as a south sea buccaneer was married in the Anglican church, which the Horrocks family built at Penwortham in the early '40's. Between Mt. Oakden and the hills west of Clare there is a singular depression known as Devil's Gully. During the early days of the colony some dark deeds are said to have been carried out in and around that neighborhood. In reply to my many enquiries regarding these events I learnt that cattle duffing had been common before railways and telegraph had been introduced into South Australia. Cattle mysteriously disappeared from C. B. Fisher's Hill River estate and other runs in and around Burra. The Devil's Gully was a convenient place for thieves, and it was thither that the cattle were herded, rebranded, and finally disposed of on the Adelaide market, which was reached by a circuitous route. It was said that one of C. B. Fisher's sons actually brought some of the cattle that had been stolen from his father's property. Paddy Ryan, who afterwards became one of Captain Hughes shepherds, and the discoverer of copper in the Moonta district, had his home amongst the hills bordering Devil's Gully. One of the Ryan's conducted the Black Eagle Hotel in 1872. The Ryan's and the Kelly's had intermarried, and when the place became too hot for them, they cleared away to Victoria. While I was attending school at Moonta prior to going to Watervale, I made the acquaintance of a boy named Roach, who said his home was at White Hut, 3 miles beyond Clare. It came out one day in conversation with our dux, I learnt that he and the Roach family in earlier years were neighbors..... the story continues talking of Watervale district.

12. [Search Results for "Moved from South Australia" – Ned Kelly – Australian Iron Outlaw | Hero | Legend](#)

Monday, July 5th 1880



bradwebb Bushrangers, Ned Kelly, Newspaper, The Argus

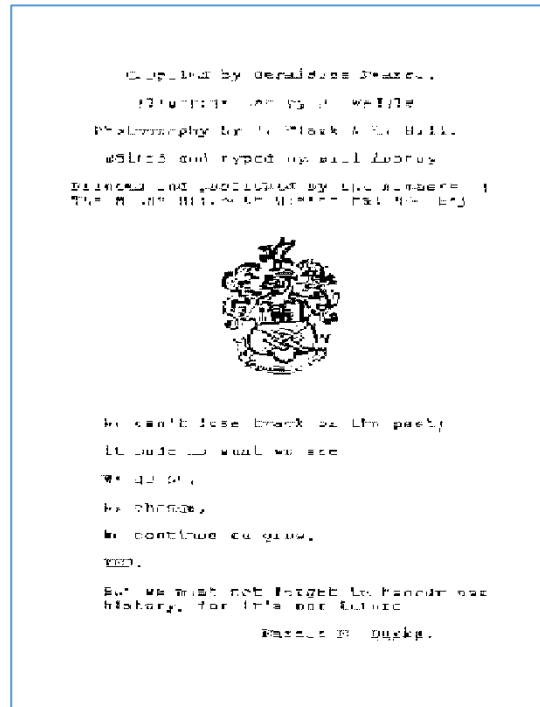
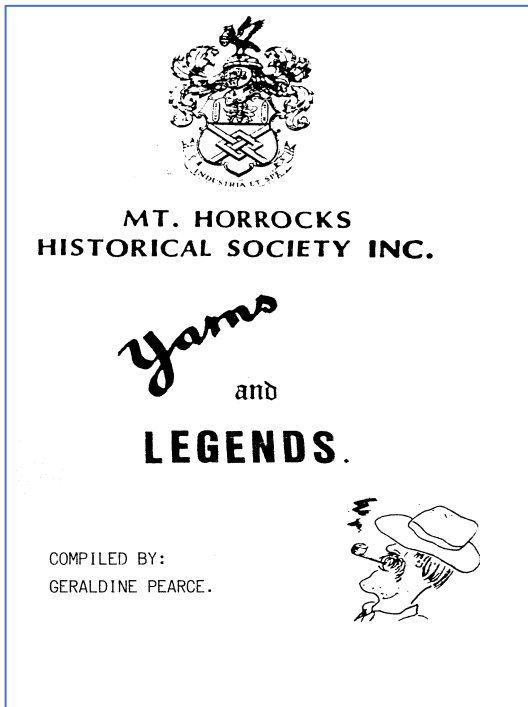
SOUTH AUSTRALIA (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT) Adelaide, Sunday. It is said that the Kelly family formerly resided at Penwortham, a village near Watervale, in this colony. The Wrights were also living there. Both families went to Victoria when the diggings broke out. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KELLY GANG Ned Kelly's Condition At a late hour [...]

13. **Digger - South Australian Births 1842-1906 (c) SAGHS - [Results List]**

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Getting Started...

Surname	Given Names	Date	Sex	Father	Mother	Birth Place/Res
WRIGHT	Thomas	1849-07-13	M	James WRIGHT	Jane RICHARDS	Glenelg



14. Tales of Penwortham's past often include references to the name Kelly, the place 'Kellytown', and even the notorious Ned himself, so it is quite understandable that over the years many of the Kelly's living in or around the area either claimed proudly to be related to the bushranger, or at least did not refute suggestions that they were.

THE KELLYS ARE COMING

Panic reigned in Penwortham; rumors were spreading like wildfire that the bushranger Ned Kelly and his gang were heading toward the district. It was said that Ned had ridden his horse into the bar of the Overland Hotel, and that he was making for Kellytown, where he had relatives. Men were afraid for their wives and daughters, and the doors were locked with heavy bars. Such was the hysteria among the women that some of them imagined they'd already been raped. One claimed that the deed had been done by Ned Kelly himself, and that it could not be a fantasy as she was four months pregnant, and her husband had been away from home for the past six months. The investigating police were puzzled, until some further enquiries revealed the culprit to be her next-door neighbors, who was supposed to have been caring for the stock during the husband's absence. It seems that the lady, learning that her spouse was on his way home, had decided to use the Kelly rumors to her advantage.

The stories circulating about the Kelly gang were of course readily seized upon by the newspapers. In 1879 the following article appeared in The Northern Argus

"Some excitement was caused in dare the other day by an enthusiastic young German, who quietly informed a select few that he knew the whereabouts of the notorious Ned Kelly, and that in a few minutes he would have the outlaw safely lodged in the police station. *"Mine vord, I vil so!"* A few minutes later he was seen engaging in a heated argument with a semi-intoxicated Irishman. Taking Paddy by the shoulder the young Teuton said to him *"Ya, mine friend, come mit me. You ish der Ned Kelly from Victoria; mine vord, I lock you up like anytings!"* The simple son of the Emerald Isle surprisingly went along quietly with pipe in mouth until nearing the lock-up, then, not liking the look of affairs, he suddenly stopped and addressed the soi-disant guardian of the peace somewhat in this strain: *"Hold on there now, will yez; wait till I put me pipe in me pocket, and by me soul, I'll knock yez German head off!"*

The young man, despite the threat, firmly held the Irishman; to let go at this critical point was tantamount to losing the reward. Lustily he called *'Police! Police!'* whereupon the man in blue appeared and placed poor Pat in 'durance vile'. The next morning, he was fined for over-indulging in beer. So much for the luck of the Irish!

THE KELLY TRYSTS

The story goes, a Mr. Nankervis owned a wine shanty which bridged the boundary line between sections 3002 and 3003 in the hundred of Stanley. (This situation later caused an ownership dispute, but that's another story)

The road past the shanty was used by the bullock-drivers of the Gulf Road era who carted ore from the Burra mines to the ships at Port Wakefield. A steep track wound its way from Mintaro through Kadlunga to the "Pink House" wine shanty owned by Joe Felz, on the eastern side of Mount Horrocks. Some say it was so named because of the pink quartz used in its construction; others claim it was because of the rough red wine ('Pinky') which was sold there. The tortuous track then went on around a steep peak and down the side of a gully to the Nankervis wine shanty, ideally placed in one respect at least, because the bullockies usually felt the need for a strong bracer after negotiating that hair-raising piece of track!

The shanty, built of local timber, was surrounded by dense scrub, and legend tells us that Ned Kelly's sister Kate would travel up from Adelaide, where she worked, to meet her notorious bushranger brother there. Ned was hiding out at 'Kellytown', a couple of miles north of the shanty. In this respect also, the shanty was sited to advantage, as a lookout positioned on the nearby peak could see for miles in all directions, making it impossible for troopers to sneak up on Ned. He and Kate are said to have met here on several occasions, spending as much time as possible together before Kate had to leave again for Adelaide.

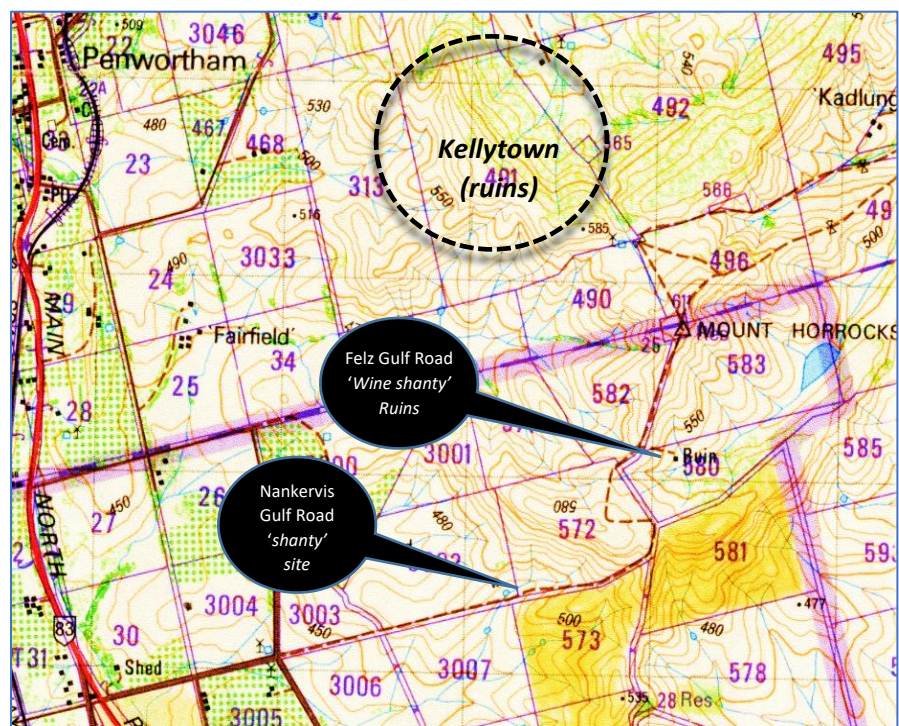
In 1879 four members of the Kelly gang crossed the border near Francis, claimed a Mr. Chittleborough of Neuarpuir, Victoria. Without giving their names, they called on Mrs. Brown, watered their horses, bought chaff, then headed north. Later they were seen at Emu Springs, where Ned had his horse re-shod, paying for this in gold coin. Heading north again, they rode into the Gilbert Valley area through the Skilly Hills and past Kirk's place.

Many older residents of Penwortham, Polish Hill River and Watervale, talk of Ned Kelly, his brother Dan and two friends, living in the area known as "Kellytown". Mr. D. Morrison was told that one of them was Steve Hart, who had family in the vicinity. When the gang were moving on, Steve's relatives begged Ned to let the boy stay, for his safety. He did stay, and later fought in the South African war, changing his name, and after the war settled in South Africa.

Some later historians, however, claim that Steve died with Dan in the Glenrowan siege. But did he? Or was it George King, second husband of Ned's jailed mother Ellen? After the fire, the remains were taken by friends and secretly buried. A 1911 Sydney newspaper claimed that Steve and Dan did not die at Glenrowan, but were saved, and later fled to South Africa.

We will never know for sure; those who could tell us are long gone.

Series of tales of our past, published in the early 80's.



MIDNORTH TRAVELER WINTER 1990

Did Ned Kelly visit the Clare Valley?

Driving through the early morning winter mists in the Polish Hill River Valley it is easy to imagine bush rangers galloping over the hills in the distance.

Call them folk heroes or ruthless criminals, the Australian history of bushranging has over the years taken on a romance all of its own.

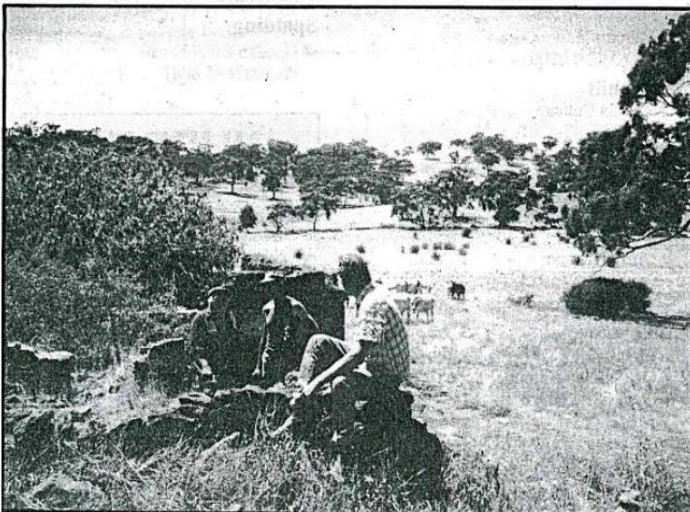
One of the most notorious of all bushrangers was the infamous Ned Kelly, and although he was only in his early twenties when he was executed for the killing of Mounted Constable Thomas Lonigan two years previously, his name appears repeatedly in the countless books which have been written about him, and thus he has gained immortality.

Although Ned's chronicled activities did not take place in South Australia, rumours have been circulating in the Polish Hill River region of the Clare Valley for many years among some of the older residents that Ned made a visit to the area during the period February 1879 and June 1880.

Even though there is no concrete evidence to prove this visit many of the local residents can remember their grandparents or parents telling them stories of Ned being in the district. There has been such a consistency in these stories that local historians are now hoping to discover more information on this supposed visit.

Ned's father, "Red" Kelly was transported to Van Dieman's Land from Ireland in 1842; Ned's mother, Ellen Quinn, was also Irish. The Quinn family had a reputation for being in constant trouble with the police, even though Ned's parents led relatively exemplary lives.

However, "Red" died when Ned was about 12 years of age, and Ellen moved to be closer to the Quinn's, and other relations, the Lloyds. It was at this time that Ned fell into bad habits. Ned and his brothers and sisters ended up in the courts for trivial things, with Ned eventually being sent to Beechworth court where he was sentenced to three years for horse stealing in August 1871 when he was only 15.



A view which may have greeted Ned from the hut.

Prior to his conviction Ned had been to court plenty of times before for other fairly trivial crimes, but each time had been released through lack of evidence, or merely given a warning.

After his release from gaol Ned did not give the police an opportunity to arrest him until September 1877 when he was fined £3.1.0d for being drunk and disorderly and assaulting police at Benalla.

A year later, Ned took to the bush with his brother Dan, and cohorts Joe Byrne and Stephen Hart after shooting Constable Alex Fitzpatrick in the wrist. The Constable had been attempting to arrest Dan Kelly at the family home, on yet another charge of horse stealing. The Constable had apparently been involved with Ned's sister Kate, and had treated her badly. An argument ensued, where Mrs Kelly abused the police officer for his behaviour with her daughter. Ned arrived home in the middle of the fight, and the shooting ensued.

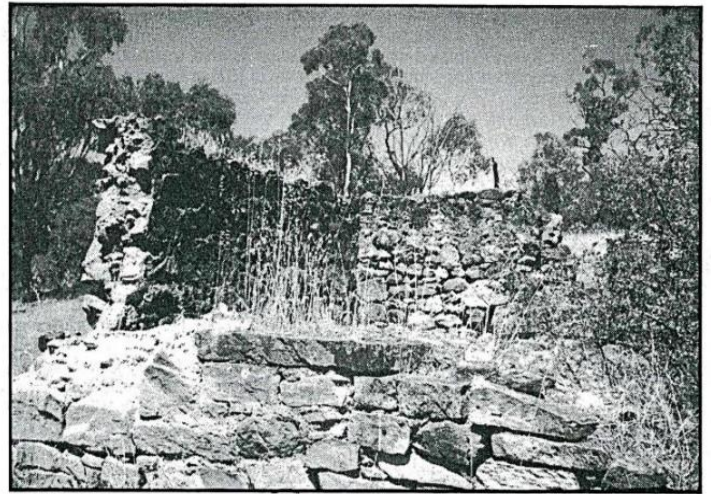
After the shooting Ned's mother, along with others, was arrested and tried for attempted murder. Mrs Kelly was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

Determined to track Ned down for the crime, a party of police ended up finding the gang near Stringy Bark Creek in the Wombat Ranges. The brief shoot out ended with Ned having killed three of the four policemen – the other carrying the tale back to headquarters.

Although the Kelly gang only comprised of four men their exploits soon became well known all around Australia. Their next escapade was to invade Jerilderie in New South Wales followed by a raid on Euroa where they robbed banks in both towns, shortly after which the gang vanished into thin air.

Many histories assume that they returned to their camp in the Wombat Ranges for the 14-16 months of their disappearance, prior to their turning up for their last stand at Glenrowan.

However, the rumours in the Polish Hill River area could have a basis for truth. It



'Ned's hut' at Kadlunga Station

has been suggested that Ned was living in the Kadlunga area near Mintaro for four to six months and that his sister Kate was at the same time living at Mount Rufus.

One of the interesting legends is that Ned may have visited South Australia twice – once with his mother when he was a young child.

Whilst in the Clare region it is suggested that Ned lived in an area called Kellytown at the base of Mount Horrocks. There is a ruin on the Kadlunga station property which has been called "Ned's Hut" or "Kelly's Place" by many generations of local folk.

Other stories suggest that Ned may have teamed up with local bushrangers in cattle duffing and horse stealing, and as interest in the story grows additional snippets of information have gradually been coming to light.

It is said that the Kelly gang were seen at Emu Springs, after they crossed the border in 1879 into South Australia. There they had a horse-shod, paying with a gold coin. Travelling northwards, local legend says that they then rode into the Gilbert Valley area and through the "Skilly Hills".

Many of the older residents of Penwortham, Polish Hill River, and Watervale talk of Ned Kelly, his brother Dan, and two friends living in the area known as Kellytown.

There is however more substantial proof that Ned's sister Kate and mother Ellen both visited South Australia after Ned's death.

On the day that her brother Ned was hanged, Kate disgraced her family by appearing on stage at the Apollo Hall (thought to be the Apollo stadium) mounted on a horse, with a bunch of flowers in her hands. The crowds cheered her as the devoted sister of Ned Kelly. The show was stopped by police, and Kate was in disgrace.

After Ellen (Ned's mother) was released from gaol, Kate, still in disgrace, was left to work as a housekeeper for a Doctor Henderson in Wangaratta. Later Kate came to Adelaide where she was

employed as a barmaid.

Kate seemed restless and the next time she wrote to her family she said that she had married William Foster, a blacksmith from Forbes in New South Wales. She was 25 years old. She died in September 1898, being survived by her four children. Kate was buried in Forbes cemetery near Ben Hall, another of Australia's famous bushrangers.

Kate's death was reported in the Mid North newspaper The Northern Argus that year.

Did Kate come to South Australia before Ned's death, or did her appearance after Ned was hung conjure the legend of Ned being here too?

A report in The Northern Argus dated February 4, 1879: Some excitement was caused in Clare the other day by an enthusiastic young German, who quietly informed a select few that he knew the whereabouts of the notorious Dan Kelly, and that in a few minutes she would have the outlaw safely lodged in the police station "mine vord, I vill so".

A few minutes later he was seen in hot argument with a semi-intoxicated Irishman. Taking Paddy by the shoulder the young Teuton coaxingly said to him, "Yah, mine friend, come mid me. You ish de Dan Kelly from Vitoria; mine vord, I locks you up loike anytings".

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David S research 2023