

Site of the Woolshed Inn

Re-named the Pastoral Hotel

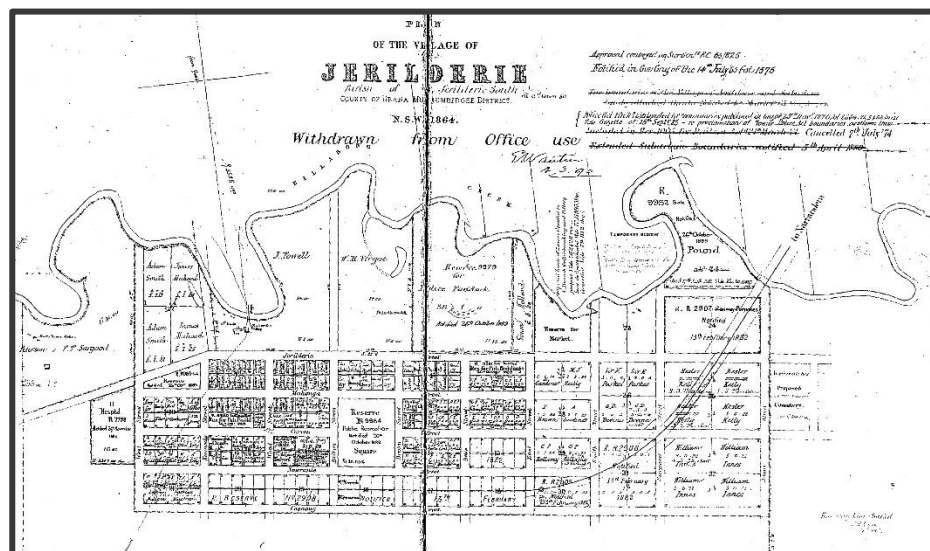
At sundown on Saturday 8 February 1879, Ned Kelly and his Gang arrived at the Inn seeking a meal and some conviviality. The barmaid, Mary Jordon, who was better known as *Mary The Larrikan*, entered into the festive atmosphere, answering the many questions posed by Ned regarding the police presence in Jerilderie.

On leaving the Inn at about 11pm on the pretext of continuing their journey from Tumut on to Deniliquin, Ned “tipped” Mary a florin, possibly for being such a “good sport” and answering his many questions, but more likely for obeying his instructions to not serve Joe Byrne any more whiskey.

Some historians writing on the raid have Ned returning to the Woolshed Inn on the Sunday night on his own, for a bit more conviviality – other historians claim it was Joe Byrne returning to make up for lost drinking time, while other historians make no mention of the incident at all.

In 1859 an enterprising man by the name of William Davidson (1828-1875) of Tumut, noted that the “Cape” area had been surveyed in 1852 as a likely site for a town, and so he built the Inn, a blacksmith shop, and then a store from bricks made on site by himself. Later, he built a bridge over the Billabong Creek in an attempt to divert the passing traffic past his establishments.

History has proved that the town of Jerilderie did not develop on this site, but where it is today, necessitating a new survey of a site adjacent to an 1864 Land Grant ceded to Davidson’s rival businessman. The 1864 survey involved alienating 995 acres from a lease held by squatter Virgoe, in the process possibly suggesting that bribery of officials is not a new phenomenon.



Plan for the Village of Jerilderie, dated 14 July 1865

The Woolshed Inn changed its name to the Pastoral Hotel with the annual renewal of licences on 12 September 1879. It was closed as a hotel in name, but granted a wine licence which it operated under until its closure in 1889.

It is believed the cancellation of the hotel licence was caused by the ceiling of the accommodation on the verandah being deemed too low, and an order was placed on the owner of the hotel for its rectification.

On a subsequent inspection of the premises, it was noted that rather than the ceiling being raised, the floorboards and two feet of earth had been removed – perpendicular thinking to fix a problem, and not lateral thinking!

Over the years, particularly around 2003 when the Ned Kelly film starring Heath Ledger was released, there have been several enquiries asking after the authenticity of family legends, variously stating that one of their dearly departed had been involved in the raid in one form or another, usually claiming to be descendants of either the farrier who shod the Kelly Gang's horses, or the barmaid who served them liquor in one of the many pubs in Jerilderie.

One enquiry received, which was vastly different to the others, occurred in 2010 when a lady researching the family tree of her husband enquired as to if and where had a Pastoral Hotel been located in or near Jerilderie.

When confirming its location as being in “the Cape” area and its relationship to Ned Kelly and his Gang's raid on Jerilderie, the lady was to write back:

The Moir family knew nothing of their rich history until I started to do a bit of fishing around. I've been researching my family history for years, but have never found anything so exciting as the Moir's heritage. They certainly didn't know anything about Margaret Moir and the Ned Kelly connection. When I first married Greg (Moir) he told me a story that his father had had Ned Kelly's watch, but smashed it to bits with a hammer when he was a boy. It was a tale taken with a pinch of salt. But now it seems Margaret (widow of William Davidson, who married Francis McRae Moir in 1881) could have been given a watch by one of the Kelly gang, so the story could be true!

In 1881, the widow Margaret Davidson married Francis McRae Moir, who became licensee of the Pastoral Hotel until its closure in 1889, whereupon they moved to Narrandera. Frank Moir obtained employment with the Railway Department at Narrandera, and their only child – a son – was also employed by the NSW Railways Department, becoming an engine driver.

The story does however, once again raise the question of the supposed fixation for watches, by various members of the Kelly Gang.