Royal Mail Hotel – Chas. Cox, Licencee
Adjoining businesses of J D Rankin, H D Harkin, and Bank of NSW

At approximately 10.30am on Monday, 10 February 1879, Ned Kelly, Joe Byrne and Trooper Richards entered the front bar of the Royal Mail Hotel, where Trooper Richards introduced Ned to the licencee, Mr Charles Cox. Ned informed Cox that he required a room for a few hours to put the people in as they came along *"for I have come here to stick up and rob the Bank today"*.

Meanwhile, Dan Kelly and Steve Hart had ridden their horses into the yard behind the hotel, stabled their horses and proceeded to round up the employees and others (including sympathisers) that were in the yard.

Dan and Steve herded the captives into the back parlour of the hotel and, from then on, every customer (subsequent captive) was placed in the back parlour and kept under the watchful eyes and guns of Dan Kelly and Steve Hart.

Ned Kelly and Byrne then went out to the back verandah of the hotel which was also common to Harkin's store, the Bank of New South Wales, and the hotel, and entered the bank through the back door. Walking up the passageway, Ned went to the left into the Bank Manager's office, while Joe Byrne went to the right into the Teller's office and counter, bailing up Teller, Edwin Living, and Junior Teller, James Mackie who was at the front door looking out for the return of the Bank Manager, Mr John Tarleton, returning from an overnight stay on a station a few miles out of town.

Ned then came into the banking chamber from the unoccupied Bank Manager's office and ordered Living to open his cash till, which contained £691. As the safe holding the reserve cash required two keys, and the Bank Manager having the other, Ned and Joe Byrne retraced their steps, escorting Mr Living and young Mackie out the back door of the Bank and back into the bar parlour.

After a short time, Ned ordered Steve Hart to get the Bank Manager, who by this time had returned and was having a bath. After getting dressed (minus his watch and chain which had been lifted by Steve Hart), Tarleton was escorted to the bar parlour.

Meanwhile, Joe Byrne and Mr Living had returned to the bank front office, when William Elliott, the local schoolmaster, entered the bank and was bailed up. Ned Kelly walked in with Tarleton and the second key. Elliott was ordered to jump over the counter and hold the moneybag whilst the £691 of the teller's cash till was scooped into it, along with a further £1,450 from the safe.

Ned rifled through various bank papers, deeds etc announcing his intention to burn them. Mr Living pleaded with Ned not to destroy his life policy, to which Ned agreed and handed it to Living.

The five men then returned to the bar parlour. Joe Byrne handed the bag of money to Dan Kelly, went out the back, mounted his horse and went to the Post and Telegraph Office.

After a drink, Ned Kelly, in company with the hotel's groomsman Mr Herbert Tiffen, returned to the Bank, whereupon Ned ordered Tiffen to take all bank documents out into the back yard and burn them; a task which Mr Tiffen carried out with great efficiency.

Ned decided to change from the police uniform into some clothes belonging to the Bank Manager and, while doing so, into the Bank walked the storekeepers of the adjoining shops, James Rankin Snr and Hugh Harkin, along with Samuel Gill, the proprietor of the Jerilderie Gazette, who had earlier alerted the two storekeepers that something was wrong at the Police Barracks, and decided to consult with the Bank Manager.

On hearing a rap on the counter, Ned came into the bank chamber area and bailed up Rankin, with the other two gentlemen making their escape.

Mr Gill set out for 'Carrah Homestead' to seek help in raising the alarm at Deniliquin. Harkin returned to his adjoining store to search for his revolver. Unfortunately for Mr Harkin, Ned, with Rankin, had followed him, and he was subsequently 'captured' and escorted back to the hotel bar parlour, along with a customer in Mr Harkin's store, and the chemist, Mr Rudolph Gartman.
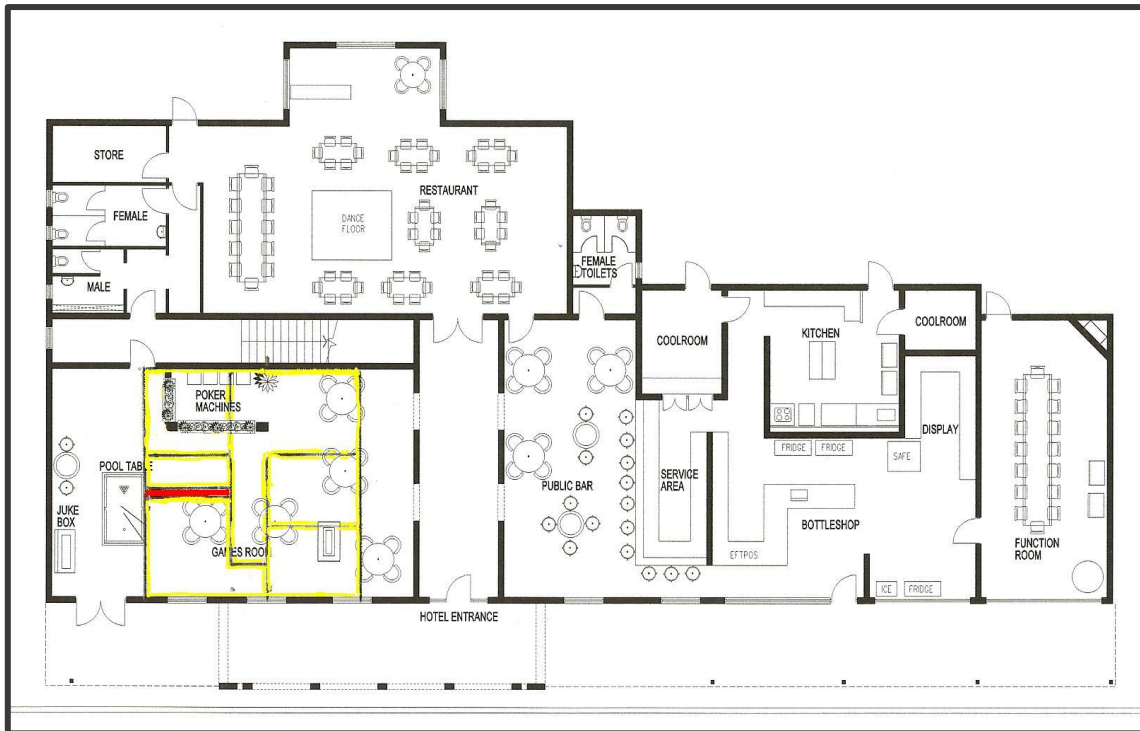
Trooper Richards and Mr Living then accompanied Ned Kelly across to the residence of Samuel Gill and, from there, to inspect a racehorse at the stables of the Traveller's Rest Hotel, which Ned had been made aware of.

On return to the Royal Mail Hotel, Ned left Richards and Living under the guard of Dan Kelly and Steve Hart, whilst he walked over to the Post and Telegraph Office, returning with Joe Byrne, Henry Jefferson, James Rankin Jnr, James Monohan - an unlucky customer at the Post Office - and bootmaker John Roe, the owner of a rather blunt axe.

Whilst Ned Kelly delivered a speech to approximately 42 of his 'captive' audience (including sympathisers) on the tyranny and deceit of the police and squatters alike, Joe Byrne and Dan Kelly mounted their horses and, with the bank money, proceeded towards the Police Barracks.

Steve Hart went and found Mr Living's saddle and walked over to the Traveller's Rest Hotel stables, saddled up the racehorse and rode it to the Police Barracks. On finishing his speech Ned Kelly, in company with Trooper Richards, Jefferson and young Rankin, started walking towards the Police Barracks, to the intersection of Jerilderie Street with Powell Street, where they hitched a ride with a passing hawker.

The hostages were free to leave the Hotel when they liked.

Floor plan of current Royal Mail Hotel premises, depicting in yellow outline the location of the Bank of New South Wales.

J D Rankin's store was located on the showroom of Jerilderie Motors, to the left of the photograph. H D Harkin's store was located on the hotel driveway and part of the 1928 two storey section. The first two archways of the two storey section are concealing where the Bank of New South Wales was located. The single storey section of the hotel on the right is the renovated original part of the hotel, as are outbuildings located immediately behind the single storey section.
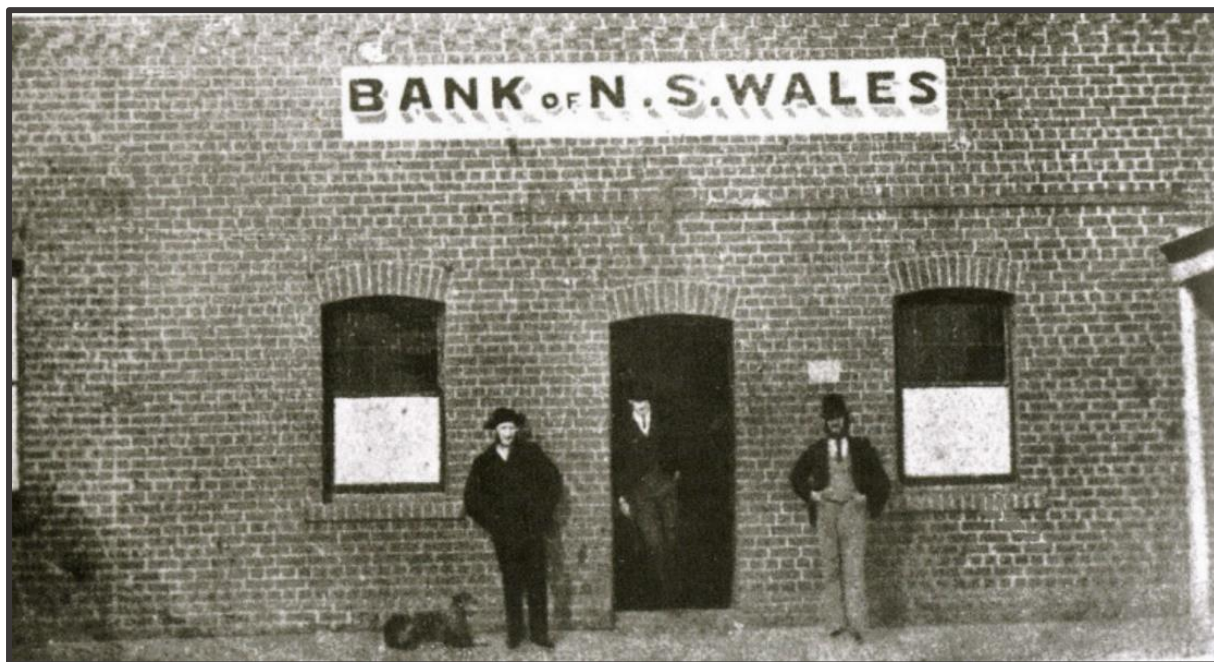
Early History of the Royal Mail Hotel

On 26 April 1865 the land on which the hotel is situated was purchased by a Mr Edward Quin, for the sum of £8. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Quin first built a store on the eastern end of the allotment, which later became Harkin's store.

In 1868 the Hotel was constructed on the western end of the allotment, with Mr Decimus Lamb being the first licencee.

Therefore, originally there were two separate buildings located on the allotment, separated by an access to the rear of the hotel and the accommodation area.

Between 1872 and 1875 the access between the store and the hotel was built on so as to provide a venue for meetings and entertainment activities. The Assembly Hall, as it became known, was renovated in August 1875 for occupation by a branch of the Bank of New South Wales.

The Bank continued to operate on this site until occupying their own premises in "Ye Olde Bank" opposite, towards the end of 1879.
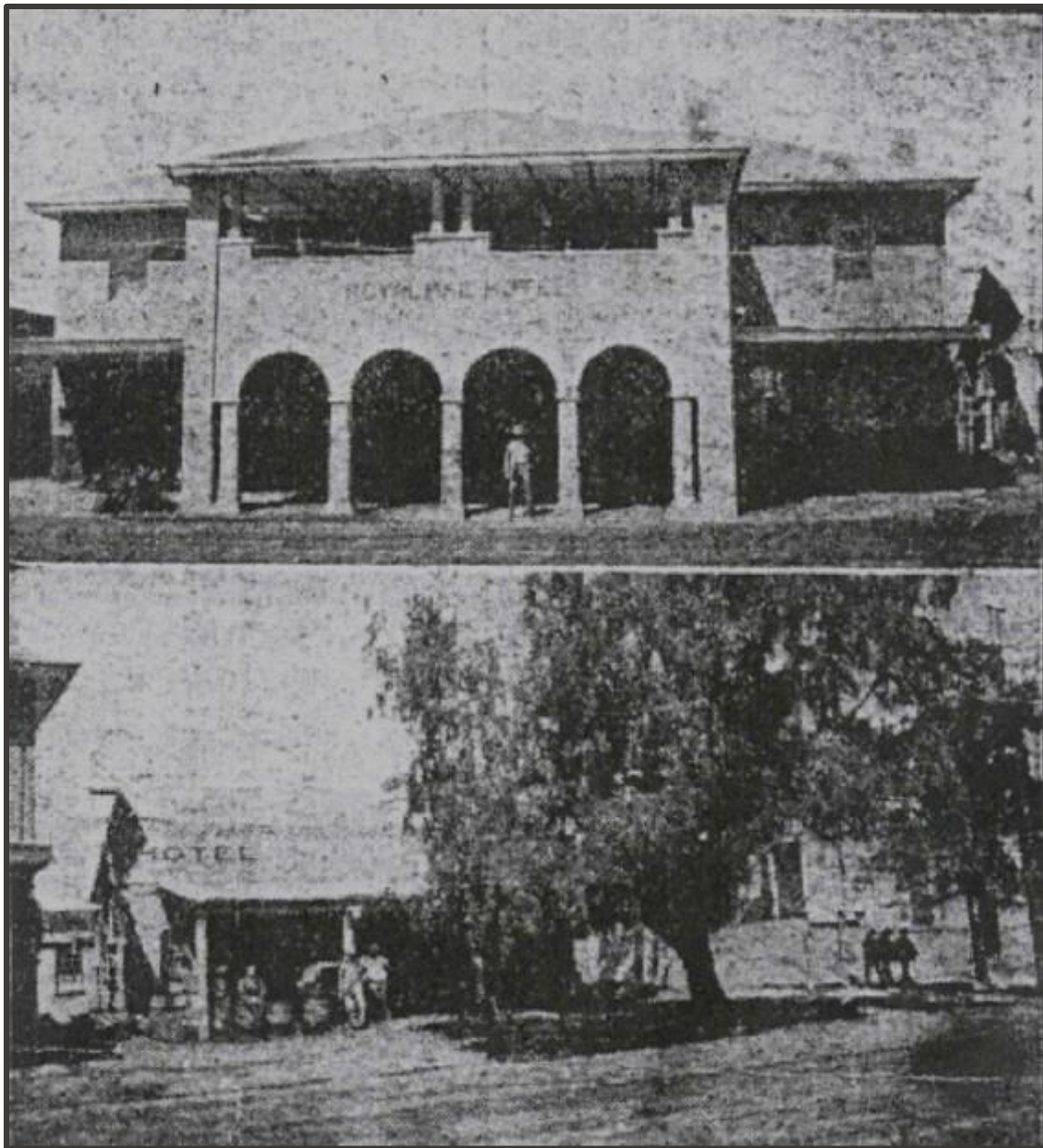

Photograph of the Jerilderie branch of the Bank of New South Wales without the verandah, which dates it as being taken prior to the Ned Kelly raid of February, 1879. Bank archives date the photograph as 1875; the Branch opening for business on 25 August, 1875.

Some books on Kelly and his Gang have identified the persons in the photograph as from L to R - Junior Clerk James Mackie, Teller Edward Living, and Bank Manager John Tarleton, who were the employees of the Bank at the time of the hold up by Ned Kelly. Tarleton was not appointed to the Jerilderie Branch until 1878, which suggests some confusion as to either the date of the photograph, or the persons in it.

On 26 January 1926, plans were first submitted to the Licensing Court for the total redevelopment of the Royal Mail Hotel. Amended plans were finally approved on 4 November 1926, with demolition commencing in January 1927. The store and old bank section were demolished first, while the hotel continued to trade in the remaining single storey section on the western end.

Some difficulties must have been experienced in raising finance for the total redevelopment of the hotel as, during 1928 through to 1930, various amendments to the original plans were submitted to the Licensing Court, including an application for, and approval being given on 3 April 1928, for the excision of three shops from the licenced premises.

Photographs of the Royal Mail Hotel during the course of reconstruction

On 10 October 1929, the Licensing Court noted that renovations had been completed to their satisfaction so, apart from some cosmetic alterations to the façade, the dimensions and site of the single storey section are the same as what existed at the time of the Ned Kelly raid on Jerilderie, as is the original accommodation quarters situated behind.

Photo courtesy of Alexandrina Jones collection

JAMES DENNY RANKIN was born at Craignish, Argylshire, Scotland, in 1834, migrating to Melbourne, Victoria in 1853. In February 1877 he purchased the General Store that was once located on the site now occupied by the showroom/spare parts section of Jerilderie Motors and Tyre Service.

In March 1881, Rankin disposed of his store and pursued a career in Auctioneering and Real Estate. In the same year he was elected the inaugural President of the Mechanics Institute Free Library, inaugural President of the Cricket Club, followed by being elected the inaugural President of the Progress Association in 1882.

In the lead up to incorporation of the Municipality of Jerilderie in 1889, he was appointed Trustee of the land on which the first Council Chambers and Town Hall was eventually to be erected, appointed to the local Public School Board, and was the Government appointee responsible for preparation of electoral rolls, etc, relating to incorporation, and then appointed the Returning Officer for the subsequent elections

On proclamation of the Municipality of Jerilderie on 1 October 1889, James Denny Rankin was appointed the first Town Clerk of the Municipality of Jerilderie, continuing in that capacity until his untimely death on 7 April 1896, from peritonitis.

Mr Rankin is buried in Row U Lot 11 of the Presbyterian section of the Jerilderie cemetery, alongside one of his sons, James Ewan Rankin, who was also involved in the Ned Kelly Raid (refer to notes on Post and Telegraph Office).

HUGH DUFFIN HARKIN purchased the store, bank premises, and Royal Mail Hotel in 1877 and, although departing from Jerilderie approximately 10 years later, he retained ownership of the premises as well as land in North Jerilderie, until transferring ownership to a niece, Miss Sarah Margaret Monica Dunphy, in 1924.

While in Jerilderie Mr Harkin was instrumental in establishing the Mechanics Institute in 1881, and was also an inaugural member of the Progress Association.

CHARLES COX was born in Great Bookham, Surrey, England, on 6 May 1832, and arrived in Australia during the 1840's as a 12-14 year old boy. On his marriage to Phoebe Batt in Goulburn on 20 February 1863, Cox's occupation was listed as innkeeper at Gundagai, NSW. From Gundagai he went into the Squatters Hotel at Wagga Wagga, from 1866 until 1868, and during this period came into contact with a butcher known locally as Thomas Castro. Cox subsequently became involved in Casto's claim to be the heir of Lord Tichborne, who was lost at sea off South America in 1854.

For more information on the famous Tichborne Trials contact the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga, or refer to Robyn Annear's book titled *The Man Who Lost Himself.*
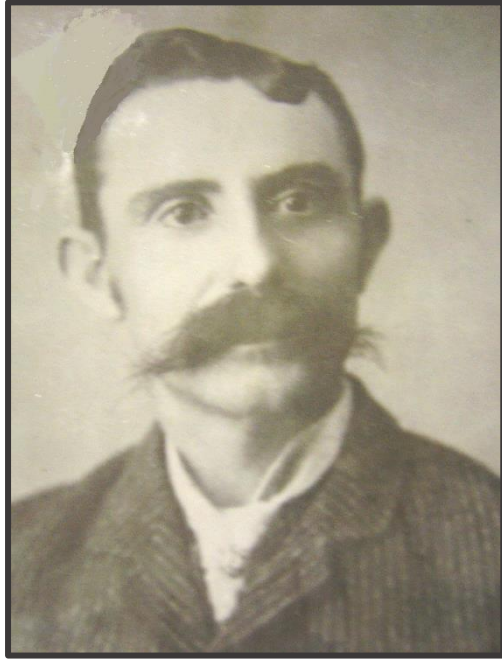
After Wagga Wagga, Charles Cox became licencee of the Caledonian Hotel in Hay, from 1869 to 1877, before taking over the licence of the Royal Mail Hotel in Jerilderie in 1877. In September 1882 Cox became the licencee of the Urana Hotel, where he stayed for at least three years, before surfacing again as licencee of the South Hay Hotel, Hay in August 1887.

Charles Cox died in Hay on 2 June 1889 and is buried in the Church of England section of the Hay cemetery. Phoebe Cox continued to run the South Hay Hotel until 1895, whereupon she moved to Coonamble to live with her daughter and son-in-law. She died on 25 January 1898 and is buried in the Coonamble cemetery.

In the Weekly Times of 10 July 1880, there is a report of an interview between Charles Cox and Ned Kelly at the Melbourne Jail, wherein it is reported that Cox was seeking information from Kelly as to the whereabouts of some jewellery belonging to a Mrs Edward Maslem that had been taken out of the Bank of New South Wales in Jerilderie. The jewellery in question was a child's gold watch that belonged to the deceased daughter of Mrs Maslem, who was most distressed at it being taken, and had advertised extensively in papers circulating throughout the north-east of Victoria.

HERBERT "SQUIZZY" TIFFEN was born in Castlemaine, Victoria on 13 August 1859, and arrived in Jerilderie in early 1877. He was regarded as an expert at training and riding horses. At the time of the raid on Jerilderie by Ned Kelly and his Gang, Tiffen was employed by the licencee of the Royal Mail Hotel, Mr Charles Cox, as groomsman at the hotel and private trainer/jockey for the two race horses owned by Cox. After Cox left for Urana, Tiffen remained at the Royal Mail Hotel in a similar position with the new licencee, Mr William Mackenzie, until August 1887.

For some time, Herbert Tiffen was employed as a Surveyor's Assistant on the Broken Hill railway line, until 1898 when he moved to Hay, and then in 1899 married Priscilla Seabrook Biggs.

The married couple returned to Jerilderie in 1900, where Mr Tiffen was employed by Cobb and Co Coaches on the Jerilderie/Oaklands run. Mr Tiffen later became a horse breaker and drover in the Jerilderie district. He died in the Jerilderie Hospital on 8 August 1931. He is buried in Row E Lot 10 of the Church of England section of the Jerilderie cemetery.

Photograph of J T Mackie courtesy of Julie Sleigh

JAMES THOMSON MACKIE was employed as a Junior Teller with the Bank of New South Wales from the opening of its doors in Jerilderie on 25 August 1875, until he resigned in 1883 to take up a position with Messrs Petersen and Sargood as bookkeeper/overseer of their Wunnamurra Station, 10 km south of Jerilderie.

From there he was appointed Manager of South Gunambil Station near Urana, before being appointed Manager of another Petersen and Sargood property, Ellerslie Station, near Adelong. In August 1912, J T Mackie returned to Wunnamurra Station to manage the property and to oversee the gradual dispersal of the station on behalf of the Estate. This was finally achieved by 1917, with J T Mackie acquiring the "home" block, of some 18,116 acres. Mr Mackie was born in St Kilda, Victoria and died in the Jerilderie Hospital on 24 January 1942, at 81 years of age. He is buried in Row W, Lot 12 of the Presbyterian section of the Jerilderie Cemetery.

EDWARD LIVING (pronounced Ly-ving) was born in Castlemaine, Victoria, in 1856 and grew up in that town, joining the Castlemaine branch of the Bank of New South Wales. Living was transferred to Melbourne, Adelaide, and Wilcannia, before coming to Jerilderie. From Jerilderie he was transferred to Ararat and then to Malmsbury, before being posted to Wangaratta where he remained for 30 years. Living died at Wangaratta on 30 May 1936 and is buried in the Wangaratta Cemetery.

JOHN TARLETON was appointed Branch Manager of the Bank of New South Wales, Jerilderie in 1878, resigning two months after the robbery by the Kelly Gang in February 1879, having received very severe criticism from the Bank's Board of Directors and General Manager.

Tarleton attempted to join the special task force set up by the Victoria Police to specifically hunt down Ned Kelly and his Gang, but was unsuccessful. Tarleton left for New Zealand shortly thereafter and, at the time of Ned Kelly's trial, he was working in a bank in Christchurch, New Zealand.