

Route taken by Ned Kelly and his gang from the Victorian border to Jerilderie, and return.

Local historian Councillor Laurie Henery of Jerilderie has spent countless hours pouring over maps of the original Station boundaries, the tracks that traversed those Stations, and sub-division maps that provided for settlement which occurred under what was commonly known as the Robertson Land Act of 1876. From those studies, and taking into account traditional stories handed down through generations of families, Cr Henery has produced the map displayed on the front cover which he believes best describes the route taken by Ned Kelly and his gang, when they crossed the Murray River on their way to Jerilderie to have the now famous "Jerilderie Letter" printed, relieve the local branch of the Bank of NSW of £2141, and their return to Victoria.



William Elliott

The local Schoolmaster at Jerilderie, William Elliott, was an unwilling assistant in the bank robbery and while being held hostage in the adjacent Royal Mail Hotel, fell into discussion with Joe Byrne as to how the gang arrived at Jerilderie. In 1885 Elliott resigned from the Education Department and purchased the local newspaper, the Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser. From personal diaries kept at the time to prompt his memory, William Elliott published in his paper in serial form from 4 July 1913 to 3 April 1914 his account of the raid on Jerilderie by Ned Kelly and his gang, on 8, 9 & 10 February 1879.

In chapter 3 of Elliott's account he recalls his discussion with Joe Byrne:- "they crossed the river at a point about half way between Mulwala and Tocumwal." Elliott goes on to write:- "They [the Kelly gang] rode in a northerly direction to the boundary of Barooga and Berrigan [Stations], some four or five miles to the west of the present township of Berrigan, but which at that time was a thick, scrubby forest. There they camped the night."

From that description and from recollections of Berrigan Historical Society member Consie Dalglish, it was determined by Cr Henery that the gang crossed the Murray River at a shallow crossing point immediately to the south of what is now known as Woolshed Lane. Cr Henery also concluded that in selecting this particular crossing point it also dovetailed into the original tracks that traversed Cobram Station on the southern side of the river.

By following those tracks on Cobram Station the Kelly gang was easily able to link up with their haunts in the Warby Ranges.



Consie Dalglish

Mrs Dalgliesh writes:- "My late husband's cousin Lloyd Dalgliesh lived with his parents at 'Merringreen', Wait-A-While, on the Berrigan-Finley Road. He was a young child when his parents left to live in Sydney, in 1923. He [Lloyd] has related the following stories to me, [as] told to him by his parents, Alex & Ettie Dalgliesh, the latter nee Sutton, who had come to the area in about 1886. Ned's death had occurred only 6 years before & it appears many stories filled their ears about Ned's time in this area, which they [in turn] related to their children."

"The area was all thick forest, stretching for many miles and engulfing the area where Berrigan now stands" Consie goes on to recount. "There was though, a few settlers & workers from Stations around and so as they rode through the forest at times they would come across the Kellys doing the same. And they simply ignored each other and rode past. There was never any trouble between them and apparently the settlers kept their own counsel."

Consie goes on to write:- "Ned and his gang would take their stolen stock (mainly horses) to Billy Cooper, a relation and sympathizer if not an unseen member of the gang, who lived in a slab hut on 'Merringreen'. Ned built a yard there for his stolen horses. He had a couple of very fine ones which the settlers said could outrace any others. Two were called 'Fly by night' and 'Split the wind'. Ned could always hide out here when the going got tough in Victoria. Billy, after Ned's death, appeared to have gone on to better things."



Photographs of an old hut at "Merringreen"

Consie continues to note that while at "Merringreen" Lloyd's parents occupied a new concrete house with the slab hut formerly occupied by Billy Cooper becoming a shed. "Lloyd remembers climbing into the loft of the hut one day and still remembers the slits around the walls where one could look out and see anyone coming" Consie writes. "He [Lloyd] also remembers an old pulley and tackle attached to a log, a rough affair, made by Ned and used to hang a beast that had been slaughtered. Unfortunately the hut, stockyard, and pulley, have all gone....."

After camping overnight at Wait-A-While the Kelly gang, according to Elliott's discussion with Joe Byrne:- "rode in a north-north-easterly direction through the forest, across old Berrigan Station and on to Wunnamurra Station, passing on the eastern side of that holding, and reaching the Pine Rise – about five miles east of the Jerilderie township – about four in the afternoon. Here they camped for a few hours, spelling their horses. Towards sundown they rode slowly on towards the town....."

From that description Cr Henery determined that the Kelly gang rode due north from Wait-A-While until picking up the track from Murray Hut (now known as Finley) to the Land Board Office located at Urana, and following that track until coming within sight of the coach road from Corowa to Jerilderie (now known as the Old Corowa Road), whereupon the gang followed the coach route into the Pine Rise at Four Corners Lagoon. Unfortunately, with the evolution of time only one or two Pine trees still remain at the Pine Rise.

As to the departure from Jerilderie, Cr Henery has again relied on William Elliott's account of the raid. In chapter 20 Elliott states:- "They [Joe Byrne and Dan Kelly] rode straight across [from the Police Barracks] past the Court House, south, and across the common, in the direction of the gate on the Berrigan Road (as it was known in 1913-14)."

In chapter 23 Elliott states:- "After Ned Kelly rode away from the town, he overtook Hart on the Wunnamurra Road near the Common gate." Elliott goes on to further state:- "The outlaws [Ned Kelly and Steve Hart] then rode on, and overtaking Dan Kelly and Byrne, the four pulled up at the homestead" [of Wunnamurra Station]. In the same chapter Elliott writes that after leaving Wunnamurra Station:- "... they [the Kelly gang] were seen riding in a south-easterly direction towards Old Berrigan homestead. That was the last seen of them on this side of the Murray, for they did not visit the Berrigan homestead."



Early photograph of Wunnamurra Station

After the police were reinforced, which included a blacktracker, the tracks of the gang were picked up from where they left Wunnamurra Station. In Chapters 26 and 27 Elliott describes how the tracks of the gang "...went straight across country towards where the Berrigan township is now situated, and on down the boundary fence of Nangunyah [Station], past Equity Park. From Equity Park the tracks diverged somewhat to the right, where they became indistinct."

Cr Henery maintains that from his research the Kelly gang continued southwards after traversing the 2,300 acre property of Peter Aitken's Equity Park, until they picked up the track that went from the Deniliquin-Albury Road at Barooga Station, to the Land Board Office at Urana. The gang then followed that track, leaving it to pass north of the Barooga Station homestead, where they re-crossed the Murray River into Victoria at the same shallow crossing point from which, on this particular foray, they had entered New South Wales.