

A bloody ambush

Sergeant Paul Batista of Monaro Local Area Command is organising the unveiling of a plaque at Duck Pond, Jinden on 9 January 2017

On the evening of 9 January 1867, Special Constables John Carroll, Patrick Kennagh, Eneas McDonnell and John Phegan were ambushed and murdered at Duck Pond, Jinden whilst searching for the notorious Clarke Gang.

The murder of the four special constables to this day constitutes the largest mass murder of police in Australian history (Ned Kelly killed three Victorian police officers at Stringybark Creek in 1878).

The Clarke Gang, made up of relatives and friends, headed by Thomas and John had been rampaging, robbing and killing around the district (including Michalego) and the far south coast (Bega) since about 1865. So notorious they were; that the Felons Apprehension Act of 1865 was amended (to incorporate Outlawry and killing of criminals on sight by citizens).

Up until the 31 October 2016 reward for William Tyrrell they also represented the largest reward offered by a single government in Australian history of £5,000 (Ned Kelly's was £2,500 each by NSW & Victoria).

By direct authority of the Colonial Secretary, Sir Henry Parkes, a group of special constables (detectives) were sworn in secretly for a special expedition to go forth, search and capture the gang of bushrangers. They were to pose as surveyors, travelled by horse and were heavily armed. The party consisted of the Special Constables

and their leader John Carroll, who was also a senior warder at Darlinghurst Gaol.

Whilst patrolling very dense bushland in an area known today as Jinden Station (situated on the eastern side of the Cooma road near present day Deua National Park) the party was ambushed on the afternoon of 9 January 1867. Witnesses had heard shooting that afternoon but did not investigate until the following day.

In a clearing in the bush McDonnell and Phegan were found shot to death and about 800 metres away were the bodies of Carroll and Kennagh. Pinned to the body of Carroll was a pound note. From writings at the time there is a suggestion that, from their wounds, two of the special constables were executed.

Senior Constable Wright and an Aboriginal tracker Sir Watkin Wynne (later bestowed the title of sergeant major) arrested the two surviving members of the Clarke Gang at Berry's hut near Jinden on Friday 26 April 1867 after a long shoot out.

The Clarkes' trial on the 28 May 1867 lasted just one day. The jury took 67 minutes to find both brothers guilty of attempted murder of Constable Walsh only. They were never tried or convicted for the murders of the four special constables. Thomas Clarke, 26 and his brother John, 24 were hanged from twin gallows at Darlinghurst Gaol on 25 June 1867.



THE MONUMENT AT BRAIDWOOD HISTORIC CEMETERY.

Memorial service in January 2017

A large memorial for the four special constables was established at the Braidwood cemetery. A couple of signs on a star picket was placed at the location of the mass murder site at Duck Pond, Jinden by Mr Peter Smith, local historian and author, in recent times.

It is envisaged to commemorate the sacrifice of the four special constables on the 150th anniversary of the ambush and their murders with a special service at 2.30 pm on Monday the 9th of January 2017 at the actual site, which is now private property. The area around Duck Pond is much as it appeared 150 years ago. No much has changed. It is also proposed to dedicate a small memorial on this hallowed ground that evening. A small group of locals has banded together to commence proceedings. This group includes the property owners of the now Jinden Station, Mr John and Mrs Jenette Hindmarsh, Braidwood's very own acclaimed author on the Clarke Gang, Mr Peter Smith and Sergeant Paul Batista from Queanbeyan Police Station.

The area is very remote and special care and conditions will be required for those that are thinking of attending. A detailed information sheet will be posted on the Monaro Local Area Command Facebook site closer to the date.

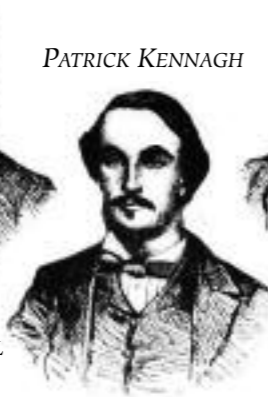
JOHN CARROLL



PATRICK KENNAGH



ENEAS McDONNELL



JOHN PHEGAN

Clarkes to be retried

Local historian Peter Smith previews the preparations for the re-enactment of the Clarke brothers' capture and trial on 29 and 30 April 2017

The capture of the Clarke brothers on 27th April 1867 brought an end to the series of daring bushranging gangs that had plagued New South Wales since the beginning of the decade. Although Thunderbolt continued at large in northern New South Wales for another three years, the murders of police and civilians and large scale plunder ceased as police gained the upper hand and society in general rejected any sympathy felt for bushrangers.

The Clarke Gang were arguably the worst and most troublesome bushrangers of all time. They terrorised the southern district of New South Wales, from October 1865 to April 1867, in an area extending from present day Canberra to the coast and from Goulburn to Cooma. Robberies of mail coaches, stores, travellers and homesteads were almost a daily occurrence. But worst of all was the grim tally of murders — a policeman, four special police, at least one of their accomplices and a half caste Aboriginal mistaken for a black tracker.

The Clarkes' downfall came about as a result of the loss of support of their harbourers. Many were tempted by the huge rewards on offer and feared the likelihood of being convicted under the Felons Apprehension Act after Tommy Clarke and Patrick Connell had been declared Outlaws. This ultimately led to betrayal. Tom Berry informed the police that his cousins, Tommy and John Clarke, would be at his house on the night of 26th April 1867. The hut was located on Jinden Creek about 60 km south of Braidwood. That night Berry's hut was surrounded by a party of five police and later re-enforced by eight more police.

The gun battle that took place before surrender involved hundreds of shots being fired over several hours. John Clarke was wounded in the shoulder, Tom Clarke was wounded in the buttock, the black tracker was wounded in the arm and Constable Walsh was wounded in the hip.

The Re-Enactment

Next year marks 150 years since the Clarkes were captured.

A hut built of slabs with a bark roof will be erected on site in the middle of the showground to serve as Berry's hut, with a section of fence with slip rails at the front of the hut and a haystack and other items such as logs to give cover for the police.

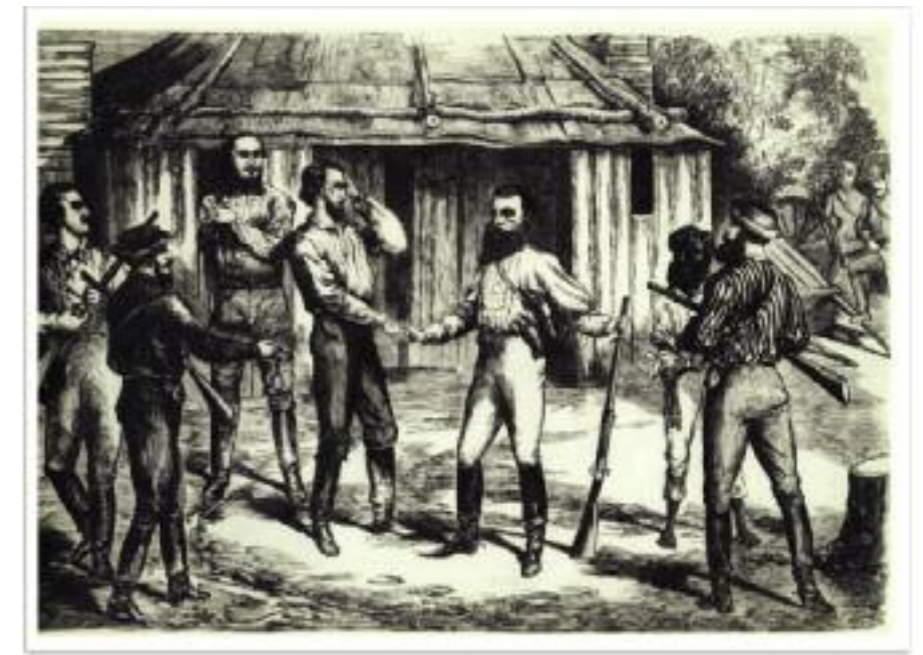
A public address system to keep a full commentary of the proceedings and deliver safety warnings as required.

No member of the audience will be permitted inside the perimeter fencing (already existing).

On the day

The activity will begin with the cast walking around the area while the commentary begins with safety warnings and will describe the characters in the re-enactment, their clothing and firearms and the circumstances leading up to the capture of the Clarke brothers. The actors then take their positions. Tommy and John Clarke arrive on horseback, greeted by Thomas Berry.

'THE SURRENDER OF THE CLARKES' FROM THE ILLUSTRATED SYDNEY NEWS, MAY 1867. THE IMAGE MAY HAVE BEEN MIRROR-REVERSED IN THE PRINTING.



After they hobble the horses they all go into the hut.

The first party of police arrive on foot. They take up positions around the hut and behind the haystack. They examine and position the bushrangers' horses.

The bushrangers emerge from hut, go through the slip rails and proceed towards horses. The police call on them to surrender. The police open fire as the bushrangers retreat towards the hut. The Berry family run from the hut. John Clarke returns fire and is shot in the shoulder. Both Clarkes fire at police with their revolvers.

Before the bushrangers reach the hut they are confronted by Constables Walsh and Egan who have run in from the side. Walsh is shot in the hip.

The bushrangers reach the hut where they have rifles and soon after black-tracker, Sir Watkin, is shot in the arm. Many more shots are exchanged.

Senior Constable Wright orders wounded Constable Walsh to catch one of the bushrangers' horses and go for re-enforcements.

Random shots are fired after Walsh's departure.

In due course nine mounted police arrive on the scene including the return of Constable Walsh. They take up positions around the hut. Walsh goes to the front of the hut and calls on the bushrangers to surrender.

The Clarkes emerge the hut with hands in the air. John Clarke can only hold up one hand. They are handcuffed and shake hands with the police. The commentary will then tell the end of the story.