

Stringy Bark Creek



interpretation strategy

Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

prepared by Nature Tourism Services, October 2017

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1: project background

On 3 March 2017 the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) announced a new project to further enhance infrastructure and signage at the historic Stringybark Creek Reserve, near Mansfield.

This interpretation strategy for the site is being produced as part of this project.

The public statement from DELWP noted that: “it is working with Victoria Police and other stakeholders to better reflect the historical importance of the site.

“Stringybark Creek Historic Reserve is the site where three policemen, Sergeant Michael Kennedy, and Constables Thomas Lonigan and Michael Scanlan were killed while on duty on October 26, 1878 by a group that became known as the Kelly Gang.

“The project includes the construction of a new walking trail in the locality of where the fourth member of the police party, Constable McIntyre escaped and Sergeant Kennedy was later killed,” DELWP Goulburn District Manager Lucas Russell said.

“This is an extremely important site from both a historical perspective and for the families of the policemen who were killed,” Mr Russell said.

“Next year, marks the 140th anniversary of the deaths of the policemen who were shot while searching for Ned and Dan Kelly in the Toombullup State Forest after warrants were issued for their arrest for horse theft in March 1878. The deaths of the three policemen marked an escalation in the search for the Kelly brothers and their associates Joe Byrne and Steve Hart.

“The four were declared outlaws and became known as the Kelly Gang. Following an extensive 20-month manhunt across Victoria and NSW, Ned Kelly was captured during the final confrontation between the Gang and police at Glenrowan on June 28, 1880.

“Ned was later tried and hanged for the murder of Constable Lonigan, while his brother Dan, and associates Joe Byrne and Steve Hart perished in the siege.

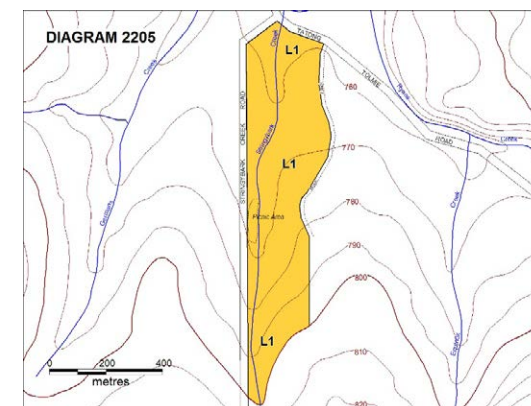
“The project will build on works completed in 2009 as part of a major upgrade at the site which attracts in excess of 20,000 visitors annually.

“Following consultation with stakeholders, and approval from Heritage Victoria, the works are expected to commence later this year.”

2: place details



The Stringybark Creek Historic Reserve sits within Toombullup State Forest some 20km north of Mansfield. The site is managed by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The Stringybark Creek Site is also registered on the Victorian Heritage Database.



Victorian Heritage Database place details -

Location: STRINGYBARK CREEK ROAD and TATONG-TOLMIE ROAD ARCHERTON, BENALLA
Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H2205

Extent of Registration: An area of approximately 28 hectares bounded on the west by Stringybark Creek Road and to the north by the Tatong-Tolmie Road and to the east by a bush track which runs more or less parallel to Stringybark Creek and to the south by the 800m contour line and being part of Crown Allotment 38A Parish of Toombullup.



Above: 1884 Surveyor Map showing location of the “Scene of the Police murders by the Kelly Gang.”

Map source: <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13107/download-report>



“The Stringybark Creek site consists of swampy ground, ferns and speargrass along Stringybark Creek, rising to a timbered woodland of gum and blackwood.

The area has a rich timber harvesting and mining history, and remnant gold workings and open shafts are visible across the site. The archaeological ruins of two miner’s huts are located on the west bank of the creek, between the creek and Stringybark Creek Road.

The site includes the “Kelly tree” in which the names of the three police officers were carved in the early 1930s. An iron helmet has been set into the scar of the tree, which has now been obscured by the tree’s regrowth.

A stone memorial with a plaque dedicated to Sergeant Michael Kennedy, Constable Michael Scanlan and Constable Thomas Lonigan was unveiled on the site on 26 October 2001.

A number of historical documents exist which provide evidence for the location of the Stringybark Creek site. The site location is shown on an 1884 surveyor’s plan, marked “Scene of the Police murders by the Kelly Gang”.

The plan also shows a hut on the opposite (west) bank of the creek, which may correlate with the archaeological hut remains that survive. The site is depicted in a photograph taken by the police a few weeks after the shootings.”

Extract from: <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13107/download-report>

3: *statement of heritage significance*

The Stringybark Creek site is historically significant as the place where an encounter between the Kelly Gang and the police took place which resulted in the death of three police officers, and the gang being declared outlaws.

It was for the murder of Constable Thomas Lonigan at Stringybark Creek that Ned Kelly was found guilty and hanged in November 1880.

Following the events at Stringybark Creek a reward of £100 was posted for the capture of Ned Kelly. The reward for the capture of the gang members rose to £8000 by the time of the Glenrowan siege.

Stringybark Creek is archaeologically significant for its potential to contain archaeological artefacts and deposits that relate to the police shootings.

The Stringybark Creek site is important to Victoria's cultural history as the place where the events of the exchange between the Kelly Gang and the police escalated, leading to the issuing of large rewards for the capture of the bushrangers, an extensive police hunt which culminated in the dramatic siege event at Glenrowan, and the hanging of Ned Kelly in 1880 at the Old Melbourne Gaol.

The Stringybark Creek site has the potential to contain historical archaeological deposits and objects, including ballistics, that relate to the events of the shoot-out.

The Stringybark Creek site is strongly associated with the members of the Kelly Gang (Ned Kelly, Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart), and with the four police officers (Thomas Lonigan, Michael Scanlan, Michael Kennedy and Thomas McIntyre) who fought the bushrangers at the site.

Heritage Victoria database: <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13107/download-report>

The purpose of delivering an interpretive response at heritage sites such as Stringybark Creek is to communicate the heritage significance of the place to visitors.

Accordingly the statement of significance as provided in the Stringybark Creek listing on the Victorian Heritage Council Heritage Database [opposite] is the crucial point of reference for any site interpretation response.

The immediate issue to note in this regard is that it is the place itself that underpins its heritage significance.

The people who may be associated with the site are not the primary point of connection. Rather they are here to be understood and connected with on the basis of their connections to the site itself.

4: a point in time

The leading statement in the site's assessment of cultural significance is that "Stringybark Creek is important to Victoria's cultural history as the **place** where the **events** of the exchange between the Kelly Gang and Police escalated."

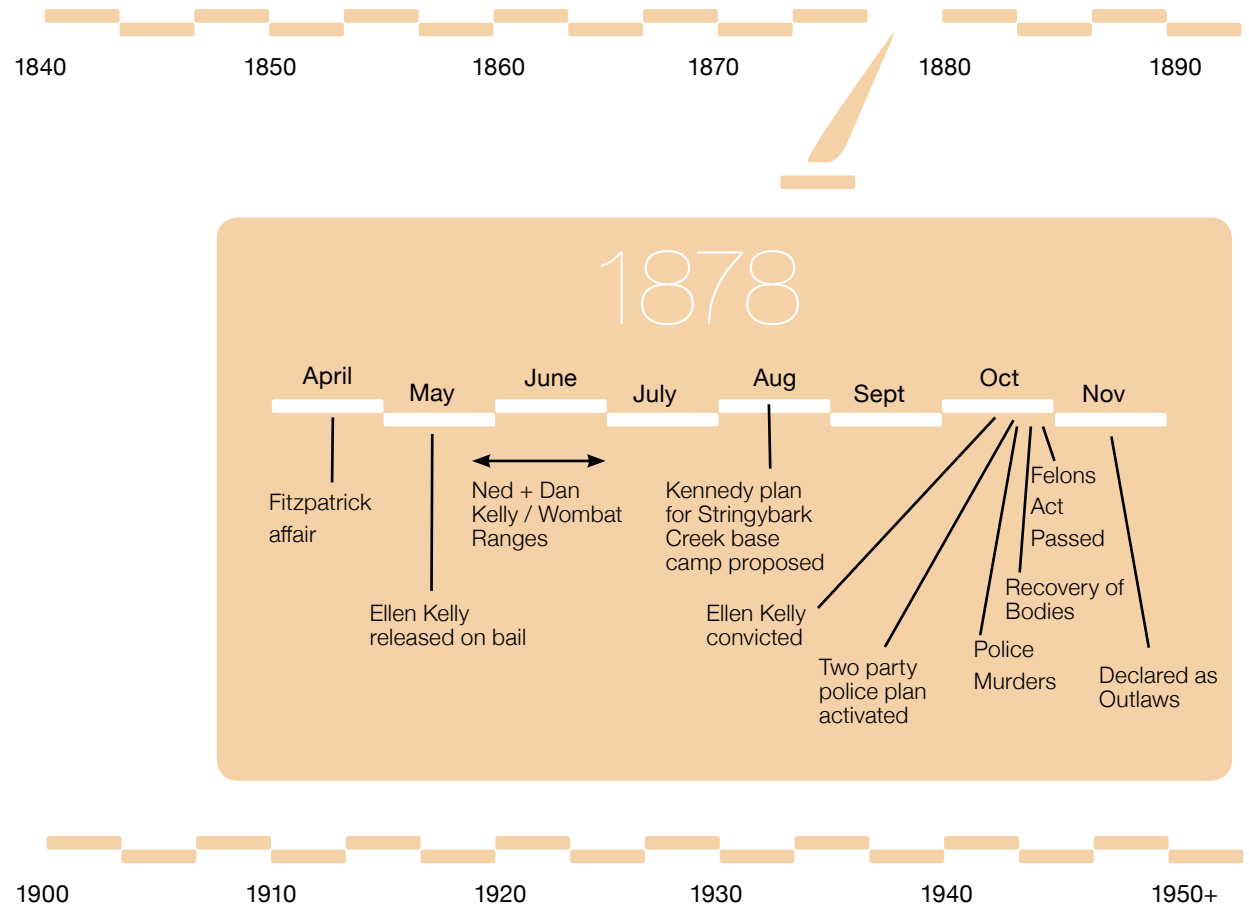
There is a key aspect which flows naturally from using this statement as the point of entry from which to approach the interpretation of the site.

Stringybark Creek is a **place** where **events** happened. This apparently simple and self evident statement has significant implications when applied to developing an interpretive context for the site.

In the first instance it requires the visitor to be invited to share a sense of the place they are visiting. Why is it where it is – how does it relate to the surrounding countryside? In the second it then seeks to isolate a point in time at this place wherein the events being focussed on took place.

Together these simple schema provide a clear structure upon which to drape the interpretive experience. Neither of these approaches is based upon a need or presumption to specify the location of where events are today presumed to have occurred on site. This issue actually distracts from the essential messages to be interpreted.

Stringybark Creek

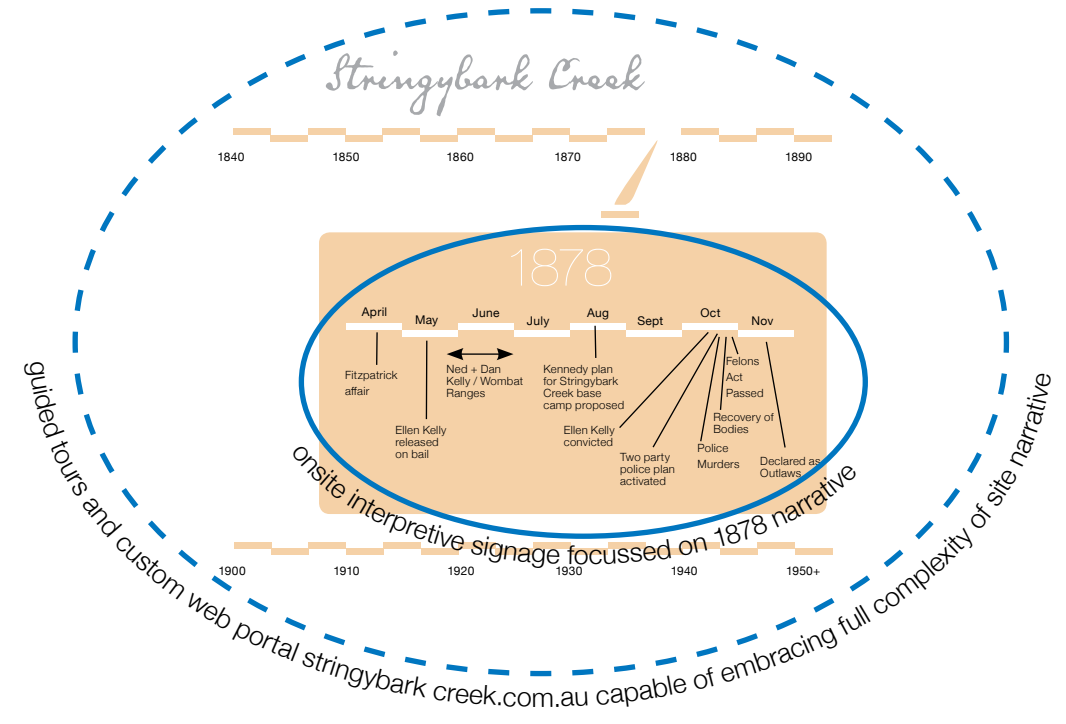


5: interpretive media

There are two essential ways of connecting with Stringybark Creek. Onsite by way of a visit either as a free and independent traveller or as part of a group in the company of a guide. Offsite by means of digital and print platforms.

As laid out in the introduction, this interpretive strategy is focussed on the delivery of an enhanced on site visitor experience to be delivered by DELWP as part of its site upgrade. It is not within its brief to articulate or define the types or structures of offsite collateral that could be developed by a broader Stringybark Creek stakeholder collective.

It is however important for the strategy to have a clear idea of how the interface between these two elements could work in the event of future uptake to develop offsite web based support options. While the opportunities to deliver digital support solutions on site are noted, the lack of internet coverage in the remote forest setting means that either a local area wi fi hub would need to be set up to deliver a quality mobile experience with video support, or else visitors would have to have embedded a large data rich app (probably including video content) onto their mobile device prior to arrival on site. Neither option is here under discussion.

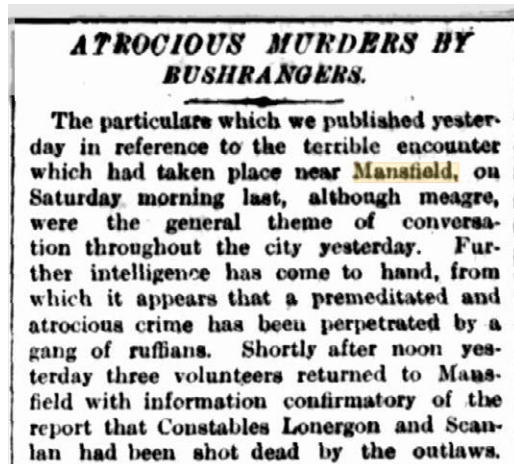


One scenario to visualise in the case of interpretation at Stringybark Creek is one where a local school group from one of the many towns across the north east region undertook an excursion to the site. Prior to arrival they could undertake curriculum linked research via a detailed, customised stringybarkcreek.com web portal. They would then be accompanied on site by a guide (either their teacher who had also used the website for their own in depth research or else a third party guide). In this context, the signage would be there by way of providing a focus around which to understand the specific events from the 1878 perspective in which they occurred.

For a casual, free and independent visitor, the ideal model would be where the signage on site explained clearly the timeline and significance of events that occurred in such a way as to encourage them to learn more about these matters at their leisure via the site's website and also by visiting other local places of interest.

In both instances the clear role that must be played by signage is for it to be the bedrock that delivers the simple facts of the events on site as they were understood by the community c. 1878. Any matters relating to broader social issues and interpretations predating and subsequent to the events of that year are second order derivative themes open to be explored by either guided tours onsite or web enquiries offsite.

6: peeling back historical patinas



As this 29 October 1878 extract from the Melbourne newspaper – The Argus – clearly shows, the murders at Stringybark Creek were from the very outset dramatic events that shocked the Victorian community.

Of the 33 policemen to die on active duty up to that time since the creation of the Victorian police in 1853, only 5 were killed by felons – the last of these being Const. Daniel Boyle in 1863 who was struck by a hammer by a prisoner on remand. The other deaths largely occurred as a result of accidental misadventure.

The murder of three members of the four man police party at Stringybark Creek created a firestorm of public interest in further understanding and analysing the events surrounding that terrible day. Additionally the need to justify and explain this event crops up many times in the actions of Ned Kelly over the following two years up to the time of his being hanged for the murder of Const. Lonigan in November 1880.

Today this attempt to understand and explain the circumstances surrounding this event continues in the public sphere. This process further adds to the layers of historical patina that have been draped over the Stringybark Creek site since 1878.

The ongoing social dynamic surrounding this place creates a special challenge for its interpretation as the ever present heritage site risk of being drawn into providing people with “the meaning” of what happened at the location is very real in relation Stringybark Creek.

In accordance with well recognised interpretive best practice of sharing questions and answers, whilst inviting people to form their own conclusions and understandings of such matters, the path ahead for the site leads directly back to the past.

The starting point for any personal connection with Stringybark Creek lies in the events of 1878. On this bedrock questions can be asked and answers given within the construct of those times thanks to the judicial processes and subsequent Royal Commission proceedings having run their course.

The key questions can be summarised as follows.

- What happened here?
- When did events happen?
- Where was the general precinct where things happened and how did these relate to each other?
- Why did things happen here?
- Whose lives were changed here?
- What happened after here?

The way in which the answers to these questions will be shared onsite, comprises the functional component of this interpretation strategy. The meanings which people may in turn choose to ascribe to such matters is specifically avoided in this interpretive construct.

7: the patina of Ned Kelly

Of all the historical patinas draped across the locale of Stringybark Creek, none is so dominant as that of Ned Kelly. The current interpretation on site is actively enveloped under this mantle.

Accordingly it is appropriate for this Stringybark Creek interpretation strategy to elaborate upon its response to the subject of Ned Kelly.

Section 6 states that the site interpretation will focus on letting the visitor connect with and reimagine the setting directly in its c.1878 garb.

From this perspective we can then question how the contemporary society of the day viewed Ned Kelly, in order to inform both the manner and extent to which this subject is dealt with onsite.

When looked at in this way, an immediate disconnect between the historical figure and the contemporary Ned Kelly stands out. In real life Ned Kelly was a “Scarlet Pimpernel” style figure – the “Where’s Wally” of the north east who could hide in plain sight surrounded by his contemporaries.

In short Ned Kelly was a man often sought after but never found except when he chose to reveal himself. Beyond his origins in the “Greta Mob” and his family ties with his mother’s small selection to the west of the Greta township, he was attached to no place but rather was an ethereal presence across an entire region.

This association was directly borne out in the 1881 Police Royal Commission report which focussed not on the person of Ned Kelly as such but rather on “Kelly Country” which it defined as “That portion of the North-Eastern District lying between the points formed by the townships of Mansfield, Benalla, and Beechworth, together with the country lying to the west of the line of railway which extends to the Murray.”

Nor was Ned Kelly the dominant policing issue within this region. Rather according to the commissioners “it was the operations of such lawless characters as the Quinns, the Lloyds, and the Kellys, who, if pursued by the police, could seek refuge in the vastness of the mountains and defy all the attempts of the authorities to arrest them.”

The Royal Commission defined the local problem as being the organised crime syndicates that stole horses and livestock from both small and large landholders alike. Having grown up within this clan structure, Ned Kelly was not an isolated phenomena. Rather he was just another in a long line of “Quinns, Lloyds and Kellys” to rob from their neighbours.

The take out summary from this perspective is that if you were looking to track down Ned Kelly during the last two years of his life prior to his capture at Glenrowan, then you’d have no idea where to start looking for him and virtually no chance of actually finding him.



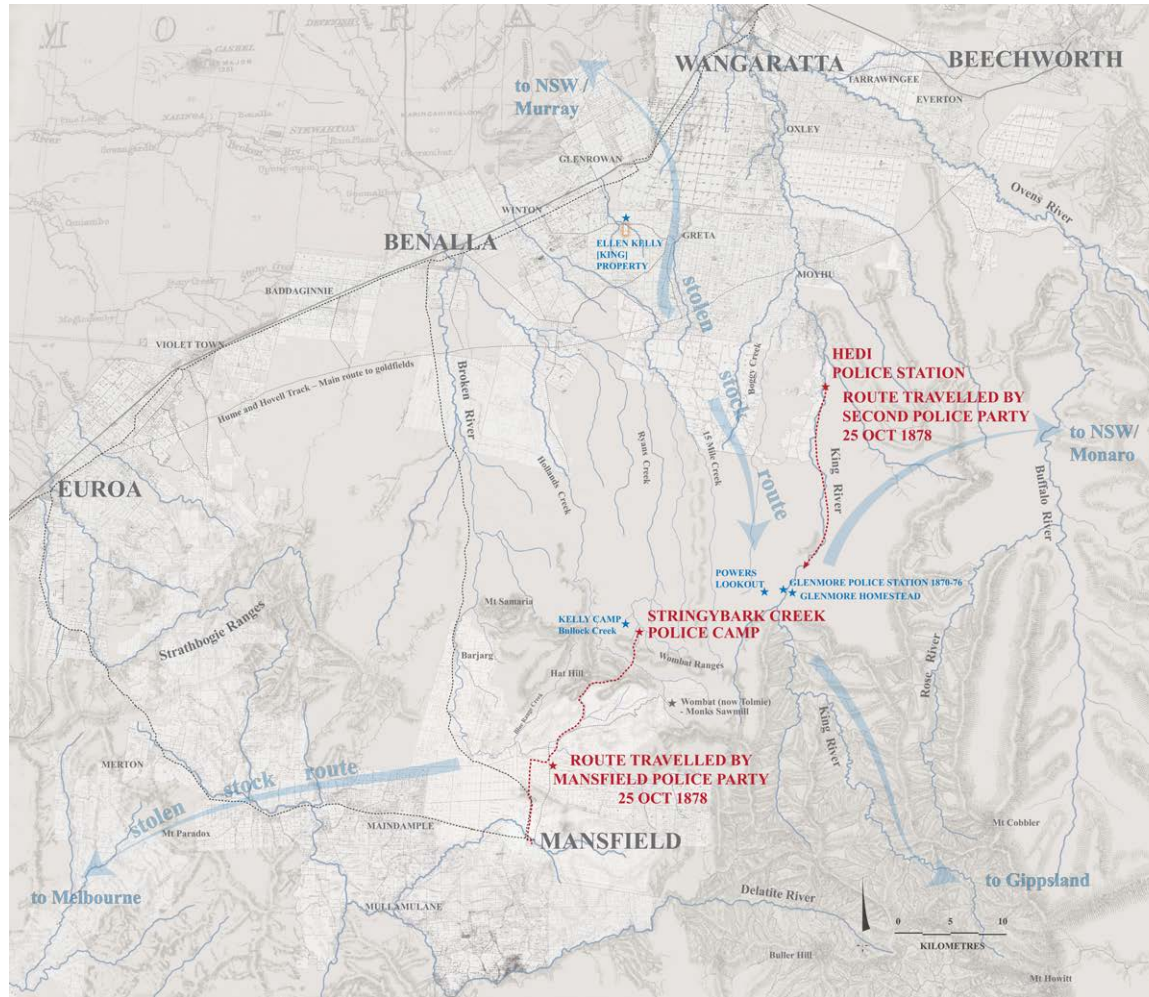
This historical setting stands in marked contrast with the contemporary way in which Ned Kelly has been portrayed across the region today – including as currently presented at Stringybark Creek [above].

Now he is codified by the locations that he left behind him, anchored to specific settings in death in a way in which he never was in real life – his story easily found and understood in “ready to wear” packages closely aligned with Ned Kelly’s posthumous mythical persona.

The implications of this dichotomy for this interpretation strategy are both simple and very significant.

Ned Kelly is a lead actor in the tragedy that is Stringybark Creek, but he is not the story. Other characters are not there simply to facilitate the central actor’s journey narrative after the manner of Shakespearean tragedies like Macbeth and Hamlet.

8: north east – kelly country



If as the above section 7 posits, it is unacceptable to reduce a site of such cultural significance as Stringybark Creek to being a stage prop supporting a hero narrative, the question then arises of how to deal with the subject of the Kelly Gang on site.

The answer here lies in approaching the site not from a modern perspective but rather from its overall context in the late 1870s. Here as the Royal Commission report made clear Kelly Country was a de facto geographical entity at that time.

Then the notion of “*hiding out in Kelly Country*” was not an abstract tourism proposition. Rather it was a very real behavioural mode that underpinned the region’s subversive trade in stolen livestock.

Getting a simple visual fix on these geographical circumstances is a vital element to understanding why it was that events happened where they did at Stringybark Creek.

Accordingly the map opposite has been compiled from historical components in order to assist the visitor to immediately understand the place of Stringybark Creek and its central location in the heart of Kelly Country close by the back country stolen stock routes long used by: “such lawless characters as the Quinns, the Lloyds, and the Kellys”.

The central tenet here is to always interpret the place – not the person. It’s not about what Ned Kelly did to put Stringybark Creek on the map. Rather it’s about how the location of Stringybark Creek alongside a pivotal junction in Kelly Country set the scene for the tragedy which unfolded here.

SETTLEMENT IN THE KELLY COUNTRY.

(BY OUR SPECIAL REPORTER.)

The King River takes its rise in the Wombat Ranges near Mansfield, and flows almost directly north to Wangaratta where it joins the Ovens. It traverses a country which has for many years been associated in the public mind with cattle-duffing, horse-stealing, and bushranging. In it, as in most parts of the picturesque North-Eastern district, the robber found the means of gratifying his rapacity, as also safe places of retreat and concealment. A thickly timbered mountain range on the right-hand side has a bald-headed peak called "Morgan's" look-out, and a few miles southward is a gully or gap which is called after the highwayman Power, who is passing the remnant of his days in Pentridge Stockade. Later still, in the time of the Kelly gang, the valley of the King was looked upon as an uncanny place, and its industrious settlers had not only to live in dread of the young outlaws, but had to bear the odium of being classed with the sympathisers of the gang. Quietude and a feeling of security has now been restored to the North-Eastern district, and agricultural settlement has acquired a new impetus along the King River, and what the farmers there are now most interested in is obtaining railway facilities for the conveyance of their produce to market. At the invitation of the Moyhu Railway League, Mr. Graves, M.L.A., started on Saturday for a three days' trip to the Upper King. He had first to hear the views of the league stated in public meeting assembled at Moyhu, and had afterwards to be driven further up the King than ever he had been before, so that as member for the district he might be able from personal knowledge to speak of the goodness of the land. Mr. Graves was accompanied on the trip by an *Argus* reporter.

9: the kelly country divide

A significant feature of transitioning from the personal Ned Kelly branding to the more generic place centred motif of “the North East – Kelly Country” in the interpretive treatment of Stringybark Creek, is the way in which it moves the current on site focus from the Ned Kelly centric, channelled narrative into that of being an open ended platform capable of supporting a wide array of expanded interpretations and associations.

As the newspaper and photographic examples shown here illustrate, the Kelly Country brand remained in common use for several years into the 1880s as law and order was restored across the region. By the end of the decade however it seems to have been discarded as the north-east sought to put its turbulent past behind it.

For a brief time at least, Kelly Country was the banner under which the regional recovery sailed as new railways were built and new selectors were able to confidently move in and take up land holdings in areas that had previously been aligned with the trafficking of stolen horses and livestock.

This is an important aspect for the Stringybark Creek story to embrace. The police murders at Stringybark Creek on 26 October 1878 ushered in 18 months of regional chaos up to the time of the Kelly Gang's finale at Glenrowan on 27 June 1880.



Scene near Mansfield, Kelly country
(1870s-1880s)
Nicholas CAIRE

Medium	albumen silver photograph
Measurements	20.6 x 29.0 cm (image and sheet)
Inspection	inscribed in ink (in image) 11: DEVILS RIVER MANSFIELD / N.J. CAIRE PHOTO. inscribed in pencil on reverse 11: Some near Mansfield - Kelly Country - stamped in purple ink on reverse 17: N.J. CAIRE / (LANDSCAPE PHOTO (.img) PHER / 4 DARLING (.img) T. / (.img) YARRA, VICTORIA.
Accession Number	1987.1.1984

Beyond the tragedy however came both renewal for the region and the reality of many lifetimes spent coping with the grief of what happened for the families of the murdered police officers.

Here in this simple observation sits the divide that lies at the heart of so much of the binary nature of the Kelly debate that has raged over subsequent decades. For some Kelly Country was a land of hope and new opportunity in the wake of the gang's demise. For others it was an ever present reminder of the tragedy and pain their broken families were left to deal with in its wake.

10: the other kelly country divide

One of the biggest challenges for a modern day visitor trying to connect with Stringybark Creek c. 1878 lies in understanding what the police party were venturing into when they set out from Mansfield on 25th October to flush out Ned and Dan Kelly.

Today the modern day landscapes of the region are mostly defined by open, easily accessible places that one travels freely across, with little sense that it may not always have been thus.

In the 1870s, Mansfield was an isolated outpost of a settlement located in the middle of the Kelly Country mountain stronghold territory along a back country stolen stock route.

The challenge faced by the local police operating in the Kelly Country mountain strongholds was such that when Sergeant Kennedy wrote to Supt Sadleir outlining his plan of how to search for Kelly he noted that:

"The distance from Mansfield to the King River is so great, and the country impenetrable, that a party of men from here would, in my opinion, require to establish a kind of depot at some distance beyond the Wombat—say Stringybark Creek—seven miles beyond Monk's [sawmill]".

The passage from Benalla to Mansfield through the heart of the Strathbogie Ranges was sufficiently perilous that when an official party made their way into town to open the police memorial in Mansfield in April 1880, they were given an escort of "two mounted fully armed constables".



Ned Kelly reportedly commented to McIntyre as they awaited the return to camp of Kennedy and Scanlan that he was amazed that the police should have been so foolhardy as to look for him in the ranges. This was the level of confidence the Kellys had in the security of their mountain strongholds and their ability to hide away in them.

This binary divide between the rangelands and mountain strongholds in Kelly Country was the very basis for the October 1878 police operation to set out with two parties – one approaching up the valleys from Greta, the other across the ranges from Mansfield.

Given the focus of this interpretation strategy is squarely on the onsite interpretive responses needed at Stringybark Creek, it is not appropriate here to look into how an appreciation of the binary nature of Kelly Country could be communicated to visitors prior to their arrival on site.

11: in memoriam



It was raining on Thursday morning 22 April 1880 in Mansfield as a smaller than expected crowd gathered in a sea of mud to unveil the town's memorial to the three police killed at Stringybark Creek some 18 months previously.

Sergeant Kennedy [top left] was survived by his wife Bridget and their five children – a sixth child having died in 1877 aged 11 months. Bridget had been pregnant when her husband was murdered but the traumatised woman lost her unborn child. Const. Thomas Lonigan [middle left] was survived by his wife Charlotte and their four children. Like Bridget, Charlotte was also pregnant at the time of the murders and she also miscarried.



Const. Michael Scanlan [lower left] was a bachelor. Before leaving his lodgings to join the search party he had told his best friend to look after his dog if he did not make it back. The men knew the danger they were heading into. Ned and Dan Kelly had vowed not to be captured and that any police who tried to bring them in would be shot.



There was never any question as to where the memorial would be set up. The notion of putting up a major structure on site at a remote bush location at a time when the Kelly Gang was still at large was never an option.



The Mansfield Police Memorial.

(FROM OUR OWN REPORTER.)

MANSFIELD, THURSDAY.

The Chief Secretary, accompanied by Captain Stansish, the Chief Commissioner of Police, and Messrs. Zosi, Gannon, Graves, and Hunt, M.L.A.'s, arrived at Benalla by the first train from Melbourne Wednesday morning, for the purpose of attending the unveiling of the memorial erected here by public subscription to the three members of the police force who were murdered by the Kelly gang in the Wombat Ranges, on the 26th October, 1878. Rain fell steadily from an early hour in the morning, and made the weather very uninviting for the forty-mile drive which intervened between Benalla and Mansfield, but the party made the best of the circumstances, and about noon they started on their journey. Whether or not, it was thought that the passage of the Chief Secretary and the Chief Commissioner of Police through the heart of the Strathbogie Ranges would prove sufficient temptation to the outlaws, if they be still in this neighbourhood, to descend from their mountain fastnesses and obstruct the road, did not transpire, but certain it was that on the outskirts of Benalla an escort of two mounted constables fully armed, but in plain clothes, joined the small procession, and never left it till Mansfield was reached. Were it not for the heavy weather a beautiful view of the Strathbogie ranges might have been obtained on the road, but their crests were in cloudland, leaving only the dark rocky bases visible in the misty background. After a very acceptable luncheon at the neat half-way house situated in the valley of the Broken River, and of having a back and front prospect of high frowning hills, the Ministerial party made haste to reach Mansfield before dark, but the incessant rain had made the roads very heavy, and their destination was not reached till half-past 6 o'clock. All idea of unveiling the memorial that day was abandoned long before the journey ended, and 10 o'clock on Thursday morning was fixed as the hour at which the ceremony should take place. In sunshine and in shower,

the area of plain country surrounded by hills, presents very different appearances, and unfortunately on this occasion, the Chief Secretary and his travelling companions saw only the dark side of the picture. The rain fell incessantly the whole of Wednesday night, and on Thursday the showers were heavy and frequent, making the place a field of mud. The movement for erecting a memorial to the three murdered policemen was started by the Mansfield people very shortly after the tragedy, and subscriptions rapidly came in from Victoria and New South Wales till a sum of about £900 was collected, and Mr. J. Hanson, of Melbourne, was entrusted with the work of erecting the monument, his tender amounting to £850. The memorial, which has now only to be raised in, is placed in the very centre of the township, at the intersection of the Benalla and Epsom roads. Down the former, at a distance of about a mile, lies the pretty little graveyard where rest the remains of the murdered troopers, and from the grassy top of a roundly swelling hill that closes the view to the north from the township can be seen the locality of the camp in the rugged ranges where the murder was committed, the cemetery enclosing the graves of the victims, and the memorial raised in their honour. A wide view certainly, but embracing all the last scenes of three lives' history, and a history whose dark spots can only be even partially wiped out by the delivery up to justice of the outlaws who helped to make the history. The monument stands on a heavy base of bluestone, which, compared with the light marble shaft that surmounts it, has, at first sight, an ungraceful appearance, but a closer study of the design brings it out in a better light. Five bluestone steps lead up from the ground to a square block of toolled bluestone, on which is placed the marble block bearing the inscription tablet. The marble pillar, which then rises to a height of about 25ft. from the ground, is surmounted by a mortuary urn, two others being placed one on each side of the base of the shaft. The tablet facing the Epsom road is inscribed as follows:—“To the memory of three brave men, who lost their lives while endeavouring to capture a band of armed criminals in the Wombat Ranges, near Mansfield, 26th October, 1878.”

The opposite tablet is thus inscribed:—

IN MEMORIAM.
Michael Kennedy, born at Westmeath, Ireland, aged 36 years.
Thomas Lonigan, born at Sligo, Ireland, aged 34 years.
Michael Scanlan, born at Kerry, Ireland, aged 35 years.

This monument is erected by subscription from the inhabitants of Victoria and New South Wales, 1880.

On a broad ribbon round the base of these tablets is another inscription, stating when the three men entered the Victorian Police Force, viz.:—Sergeant Kennedy, 19th August, 1864; Mounted-constable Scanlan, 22nd December, 1865; Mounted-constable Lonigan, 4th July, 1871.

Captain Stansish, as head of the police force, was called upon to perform the ceremony of unveiling the memorial, and having done so in the presence of the Chief Secretary, and some hundred persons, he spoke as follows:—“Allow me, on behalf of the members of the police force, to express my cordial thanks to the residents of the Mansfield district for the generous sympathy which prompted them to erect this handsome memorial in honour of the brave men who were murdered in the Wombat Ranges by the gang of outlaws, a fortunately still at large. Of the many combined causes which have prevented the capture of the cowardly assassins, this is not the occasion to speak. I will merely express a hope that the day is not far distant when justice will be satisfied. This public testimony to the worth of the men who fell victims to these leaders of a rising criminal class cannot but have a beneficial influence on those whose duty has to be carried out at considerable personal hazard. In some localities it may be said that a constable carries his life in his hand, and to men so placed this enduring evidence of respect and sympathy from the worthy and respectable portion of society gives moral support of deep significance and value. I am aware that many here present were well acquainted with the late Sergeant Kennedy, and fully

recognised his efficiency whilst stationed in this district. For my part, I can say that in the police department there was not a better and truer man, or a more trustworthily and energetic member of the force than Sergeant Kennedy, and it was with sincere sorrow that I received the announcement of his sad and untimely fate. It is well known that in his encounter with the outlaws he behaved most gallantly and fought to the bitter end against overwhelming odds. Constables Scanlan and Lonigan were also good and deserving men. The brutal and revolting manner in which they were shot down naturally sent a thrill of horror through the whole community. It is therefore all the more surprising that the perpetrators of this fearful crime have met with so much strange sympathy and material assistance from many persons in the district. It must of course be satisfactory to our fellow colonists to know that the Legislature has made substantial provision for the widows and orphans of the brave fellows who lost their lives in the discharge of their duty. I sincerely hope that the mellowing hand of time will soothe the great affliction which has befallen Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Lonigan. I must not omit gratefully to acknowledge the warm-hearted sympathy of the New South Wales police in subscribing so liberally to the memorial unveiled this day. It is a proof, if need be, of the cordial feeling which I trust will always exist between the police of the two colonies. Once more let me convey to the residents of the Mansfield district my earnest appreciation of their generosity and sympathy.

The ceremony was then completed, and the Ministerial party shortly afterwards returned to Benalla, where they took the evening train to Melbourne.

In connection with the unveiling of the memorial, it only remains to be added that the Government has nearly completed the work it has undertaken of erecting handsome headstones over the graves of the three victims of the Stringybark tragedy in the Mansfield Cemetery.

12: on site memorial

holds. The loveliness of the place without a touch of the loveliness of Nature suggests curious ideas, and the tragedy enacted here some years ago comes pressing on one's memory like a horrid nightmare. That monument erected in Mansfield in memory of the murdered policemen should be here. It is an eyesore in Mansfield, but would serve as a landmark of the tragedy at Stringybark Creek.

The North Eastern Ensign Fri 6 Jan 1893

One of the first recorded visits of a free and independent traveller to the Stringybark Creek site comes from 1893 in the Benalla's North Eastern Ensign newspaper. There the writer lamented the lack of a memorial to the police officers on site and the incongruity of them being remembered only in an offsite capacity.

Whilst a small plaque has today been erected at Stringybark Creek, the issue of creating a meaningful memorial place alongside the scene of the police murders remains unresolved. The take out point from referring to the historical observation here is that the memorial is not something separate from or antithetical to the visitor experience. Rather it must be the very foundation of the visitor experience – that thing upon which the broader, more elaborate interpretation of the site must rest. This in turn requires a fundamental re-evaluation of the site in terms of determining what new elements are required and what parts of the existing infrastructure can be adapted to deliver a more layered, nuanced visitor precinct.

Bendigo Advertiser Sat 10 May 1884

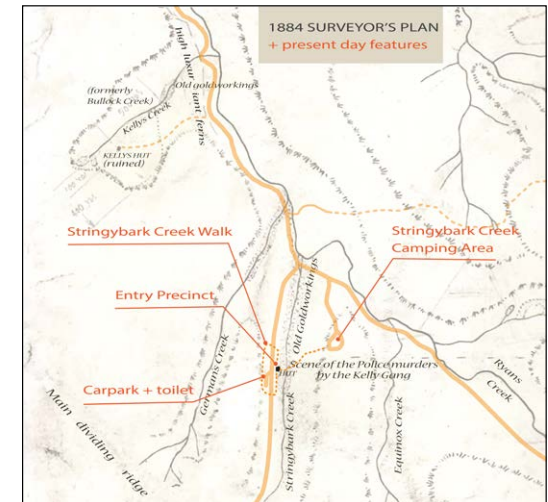
A RIDE TO THE "KELLY CAMP."
[By Celt.]
A party consisting of a lady and three gentlemen (of whom I was one) started from Mansfield on Sunday last to ride to the Stringybark Ranges to see the "Kelly camp." When they reached Wombat they were joined by six gentlemen; and a start was made for the camp from the latter place at 12.45 p.m. Our route was in a north-westerly direction from start to finish. After a short

Things it seemed were much simpler in 1884. Stringybark Creek was owned by its police identifier locations and if you wanted to connect with Kelly you rode on across to his hut site.

The need to reassert a sense of this historical balance in terms of each set of players having their own space and context underpins this interpretive response.

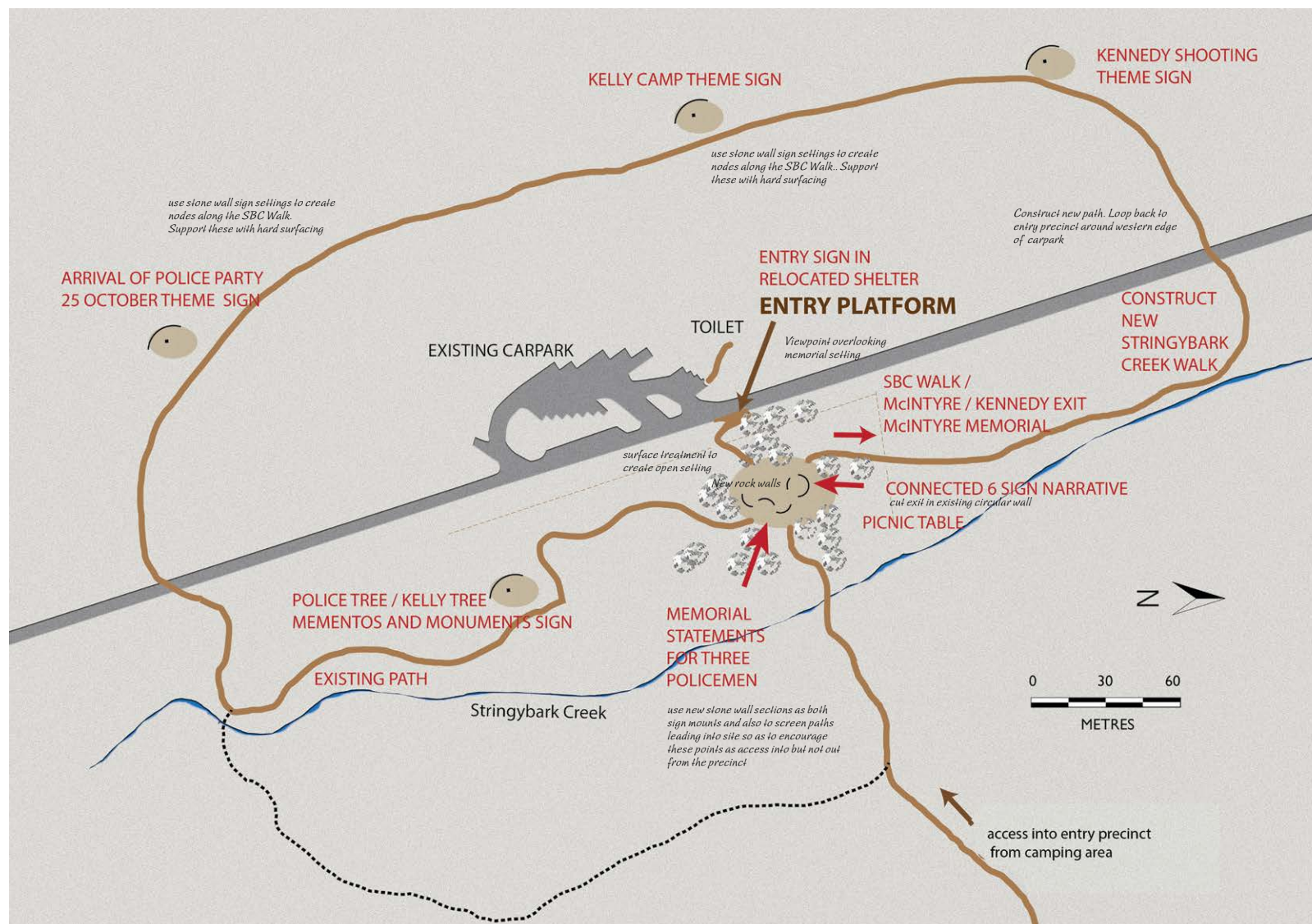
What then is the best place to locate the memorial / foundation platform that must underpin the site experience? Clearly its location needs to be within the precinct that embraces the police camp, McIntyre escape route and Kennedy shooting site.

The crucial thing to take out from this approach is the realisation that Stringybark Creek is not one place. It is a collective of many places that together unite to tell a complex and poignant narrative. As far as this group of travellers in 1884 were concerned for example, Stringybark Creek was just a spot you rode through on your way to the main attraction of the Kelly Camp some 2 miles further on.

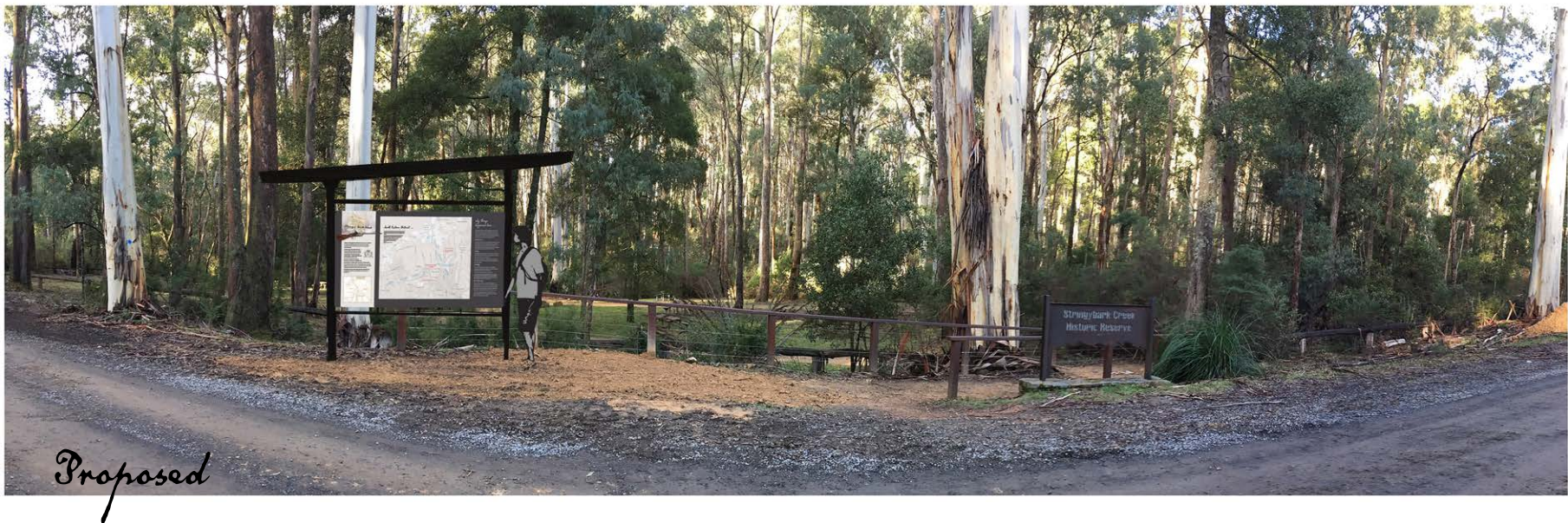


A relative representation utilising the existing infrastructure and radiating from the existing clearing is practicable. The present day picnic area's open grassy setting with wheel chair access from the nearby carpark is a practical and affordable site to continue to utilise.

13: entry precinct



main site entry from carpark



main entry panel artwork



Welcome to the Stringybark Creek Historic Reserve – home to one of Australia's most significant historical places. It was here on the evening of Saturday 26th October 1878, that three policemen were shot and killed.

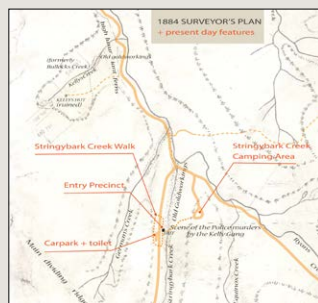
Constable Thomas Lonigan and Constable Michael Scanlan died near their tent at the police camp. Sergeant Michael Kennedy was killed a quarter of a mile north west from that location. The fourth member of the police party – Constable Thomas McIntyre – escaped and managed to get back to Mansfield to report the crime.



His evidence was central to the subsequent prosecution case and resulted in Edward [Ned] Kelly being hanged on 11th November 1880 for the murder of Constable Lonigan.

These simple facts record the substance of what happened here on that tragic springtime evening.

The exact sites of where the police camped and the police officers were killed in this location are now not known. Research and debate is ongoing.

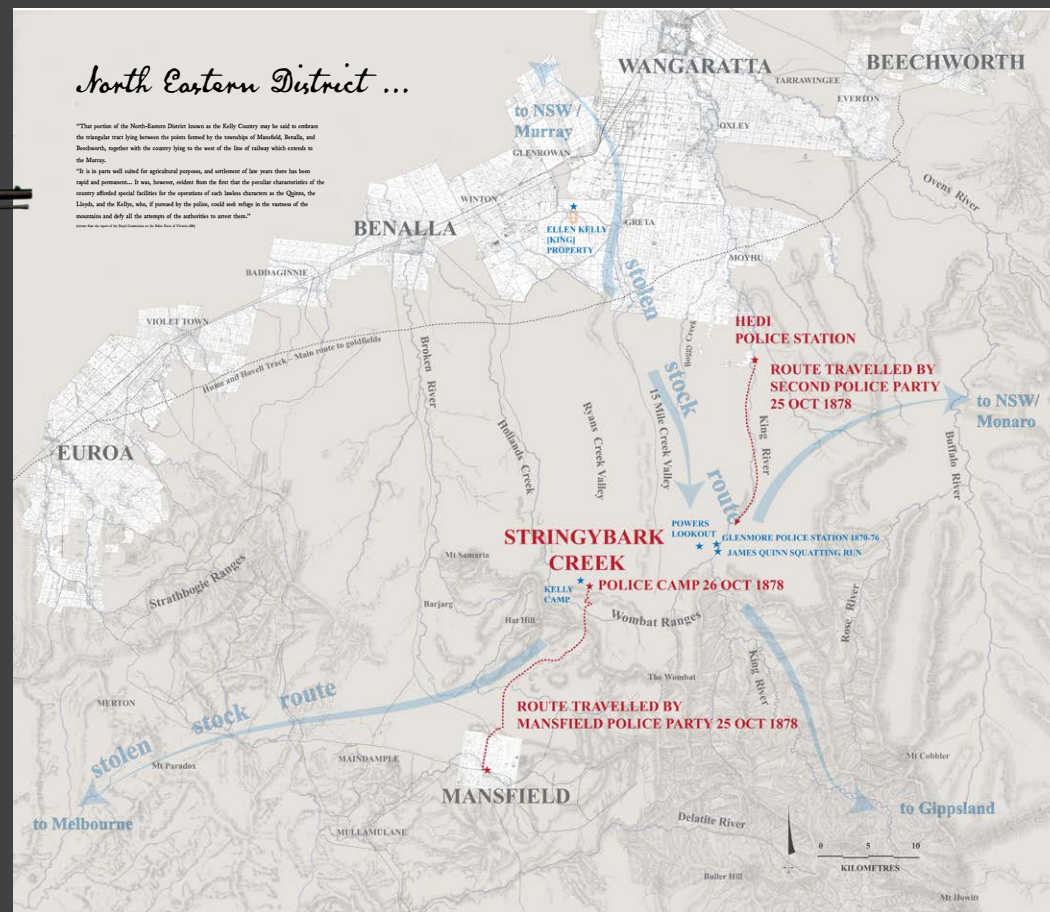


North Eastern District ...

"This portion of the North-Eastern District known as the Kelly Country may be said to embrace the triangular tract lying between the plains formed by the townships of Mansfield, Benalla, and Beechworth, together with the country lying to the west of the line of railway which extends to the Murray."

"It is in years well suited for agricultural purposes, and settlement of late years there has been rapid and permanent... It was, however, evident from the fact that the peculiar characteristics of the country afforded special facilities for the operations of such lawless characters as the Queens, the Lloyds, and the Kellys, who, if pursued by the police, could seek refuge in the corners of the mountains and defy all the attempts of the authorities to arrest them."

Quoted from the report of the Royal Commission on the Kelly Case of 1881-82.



understanding Stringybark Creek ...

To appreciate why the district around Stringybark Creek was such a pivotal area in the back country stolen stock trade, we need to look back to the origins of European settlement locally with the arrival of squatters here in the 1830s-40s. These new arrivals took up large land holdings at a time when the district was still part of NSW.

gold discoveries

The discovery of gold in the 1851 coincided with the creation of Victoria with the Murray River as the colonial boundary between it and NSW. The gold rushes brought in a second wave of fortune seekers to the district. Goldminers were at first hungry to try their luck on the diggings and thereafter to take up a block of land to call their own.

owning land

New legislation was brought in the 1860s to allow these new arrivals to select small blocks of land as part of a colony wide drive to open up ten million acres of pastoral country to selectors. By the 1870s, the district was a complex patchwork of areas that had been opened up for selection, surrounded by the vastly larger pastoral runs of the squatters.

stock theft

While simmering issues surrounding land equity divided the community, one problem that both selectors and squatters alike shared was livestock theft.

As the 1881 Police Royal Commission later described it –

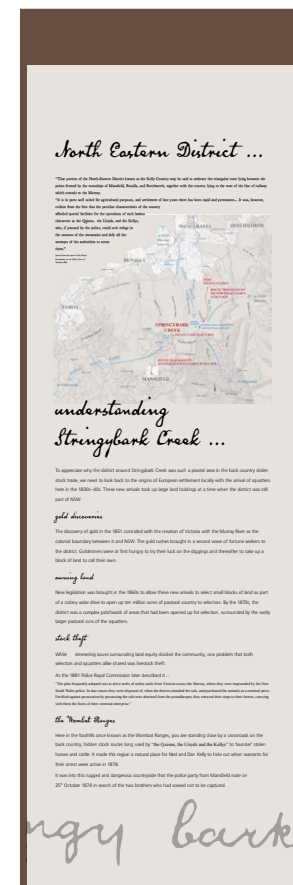
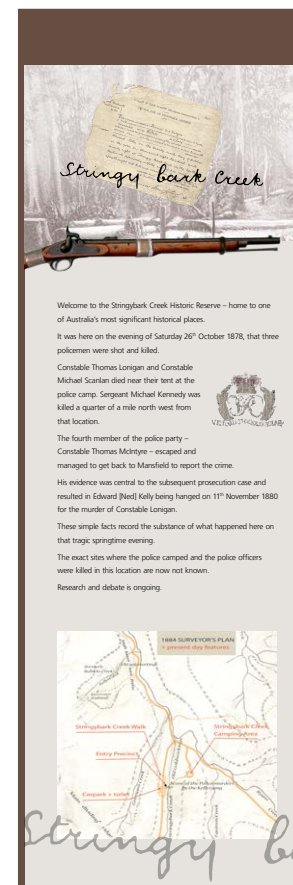
"The plan frequently adopted was to drive mobs of stolen cattle from Victoria across the Murray, where they were impounded by the New South Wales police. In due course they were disposed of, when the thieves attended at the sale, and purchased the animals at a nominal price. Furfled against prosecution by possessing the sale note obtained from the poundkeeper, they retraced their steps to their homes, carrying with them the fruits of their criminal enterprise."

the Wombat Ranges

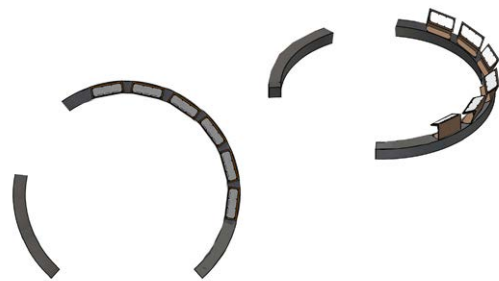
Here in the foothills once known as the Wombat Ranges, you are standing close by a crossroads on the back country, hidden stock routes long used by 'the Quinns, the Lloyds and the Kellys' to 'launder' stolen horses and cattle. It made this region a natural place for Ned and Dan Kelly to hide out when warrants for their arrest were active in 1878.

It was into this rugged and dangerous countryside that the police party from Mansfield rode on 25th October 1878 in search of the two brothers who had vowed not to be captured.

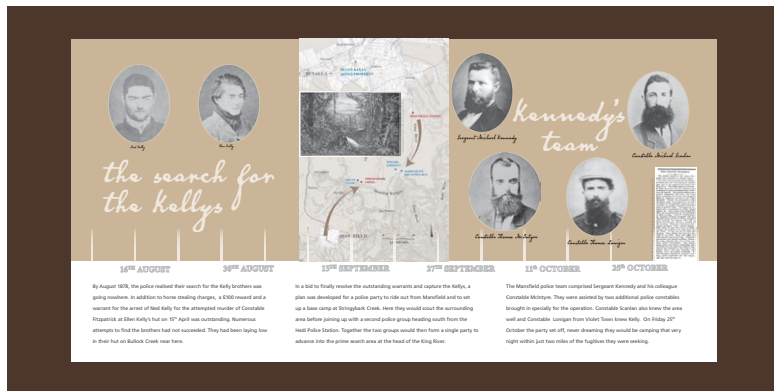
minor site entry from campground



memorial precinct layout



artwork for signs around circular setting





police memorials

This single sided panel response, coupled with the precinct entry signage that prominently identifies the deaths of the three policemen, is intended to replace the current metal plaque affixed to a rock on display as you enter the memorial precinct.



The plinth commemorating Thomas McIntyre is incorporated as part of a double sided plinth located at the entry to the Stringybark Creek Walk where the sign describes the exit of McIntyre and Kennedy from the police camp.



Trackpost markers



14: kelly camp

THE KELLY HAUNTS.

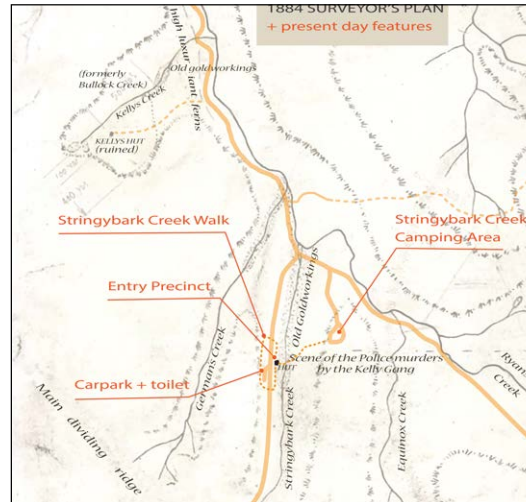
THE FORTIFIED HUT OF THE GANG.

The following description of the fortified retreat of the Kelly gang is supplied by a trustworthy correspondent:—

Leaving Melbourne one day last week, I took train to Longwood, and from thence coached it to Mansfield, the township which derived so much notoriety through the outbreak of the Kelly gang. Procuring a horse well used to rough country, and obtaining the services of a guide, who, I may state, was intimately connected with the Kellys and their friends, and had undertaken to conduct me to several of their haunts, I started early in the morning from Mansfield, and so as to avoid observation, made a slight detour before finally getting on the direct track to the Wombat-ranges. Thence we made our way across country to the scene of the police murders, which, I was informed, was near to the fortified hut of the outlaws. Traces of the murders are still visible; on every side are bullet-marked trees, and a few old posts of Waller Lynch's hut can be noticed almost in the centre of the cleared space, which the Kellys and their confederates approached by creeping up under the shelter of the tufts of spear-grass. Whether Kennedy was aware of it or not, all the time he was retreating and dodging from tree to tree, firing as best he could, and sternly contesting every inch of ground, he was making almost in a direct line for the hut in which the Kellys and their mates had lived for many months before they committed the crime which caused their outlawry.

A ride of about half a mile from the spot where Kennedy's body was found brought me and my companion to the stronghold of the Kellys, situated on a small rise situated in the midst of a basin, bounded on the east by Ryan's Creek, on the west by a very high and steep mountain, forming part of the Wombat Ranges, on the north by a small creek flowing down from between the hills, and on the south by a medium sized ridge, which, however, is high enough to effectually conceal the hut from view in that direction. Reining in my horse on the crest of this ridge, and taking a glance at the scene which lay before me, I could not but be struck with wonderment that such a perfect settlement should have existed so long within half a dozen miles of selections without its existence being discovered. A farmer named Jebb lives within four, and another named Harrison within six miles of it, and yet neither—at least so they assert—were even aware that the Kellys were in the locality, although the latter must have lived on this spot many months, or they could never have got matters into such an improved state. The plateau contains altogether, I should say, about 20 acres, and this is fenced in on three

"Whether Kennedy was aware of it or not, all the time he was retreating, dodging from tree to tree, firing as best he could and sternly contesting every inch of ground, he was making almost in a direct line for the hut in which the Kellys and their mates had lived for many months"



Bendigo Advertiser Sat 10 May 1884

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The above Section 11: onsite memorial, made a significant observation in passing about the importance of the Kelly Camp to the Stringybark Creek Story. It noted that:

Things it seemed were much simpler in 1884. Stringybark Creek was owned by its police identifier locations and if you wanted to connect with Kelly you rode on across to his hut site.

The need to reassert a sense of this historical balance in terms of each set of players having their own space and context underpins this interpretive response.

The following section 12 then went on to detail the interpretive response proposed for the memorial site. In this section it is important to examine in more detail the significance of the Kelly Camp location for interpretation at Stringybark Creek.

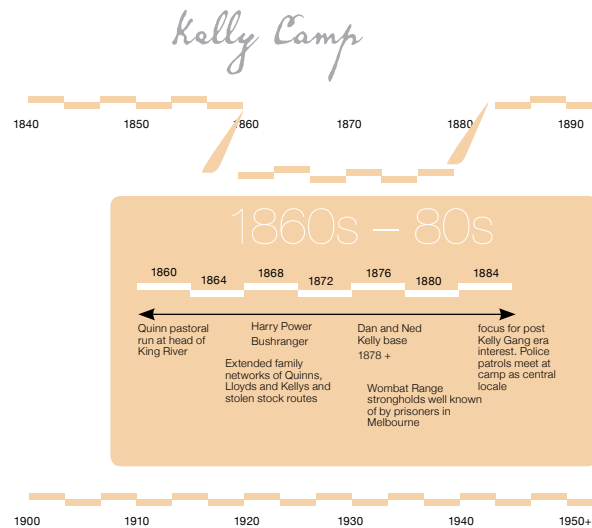
The key distinction to note in the Kelly Camp / Stringybark Creek divide is that they are essentially two totally discrete sites that just happen to sit alongside each other.

In the context of the timeline theme already explored it has been noted that Stringybark Creek is significant for a discrete point in time. It is an event site wherein an appreciation of the 6 month band surrounding it is essential to understand THE events that took place there.

The Kelly Camp by comparison is a locale that whose relevance changed over time and as such has a very different historical narrative and perspective to offer. It's storyline is not one day understood within a six month window, but rather three years understood within the context of two decades.

Just as the Stringybark Creek narrative is diminished by reducing it to the context of a stage prop in a Ned Kelly saga, so to is the Kelly Camp story diminished by viewing it from the perspective of being the place the Kelly Gang rode across from to ambush the police party.

Both sites stand as heritage sentinels in their own right that must be understood and interpreted within their own space and context. This was simply a statement of fact to the 1880s visitors who saw the places as quite separate. The 1884 correspondent who visited the Kelly Camp for example also noted that the police parties from Wangaratta and Mansfield met up on site at the camp during their monthly patrols.



This observation is significant here for the light it sheds on how each space had its own inherent meanings and associations in an 1880s setting.

Bendigo Advertiser Sat 10 May 1884

I may mention in conclusion that the police of Mansfield and Wangaratta patrol this district monthly, meet at the Kelly Camp, interchange civilities, and then return to their respective stations. What the object of the patrol is I fail to understand—perhaps to put young troopers on their mettle by reminding them of the reign of terror of the outlaws, or, mayhap, for the benefit of sluggish livers caused by less active duty in the towns at which they are stationed. Whatever the cause may be, it certainly breaks the monotony of ordinary duties.

The reason this issue is a pressing one for this strategy to address is that the fact that one of the three true feature sites with major Ned Kelly connections [i.e. Glenrowan, Stringybark Creek and the Kelly Camp] is not currently an active part of the Kelly narrative. This omission has placed, and continues to place, undue pressure on the Stringybark Creek site to be interpreted in the context of it being a Kelly icon.

This was not how the 1880s visitors saw their visit to the precinct, and neither should it be the way in which we move forward in relation to these two places in a modern context.

A key recommendation of this strategy is hence that some simple visitor access walking access be provided along the short track leading off from the Tatong - Tolmie Road [C517]. This would establish a resource that is easily accessible to people camped at the Stringybark Creek Campground as well as casual day visitors.

It is not recommended that a walking track link be established from the Stringybark Creek Walk across to the site. This for a start would innately imply a level of connectivity between the two that never existed in practice given the very dense forest that stood between them.

It is also noted that the Kelly Camp site exists within the Toombullup Historic Area as managed by DELWP and as such its conservation is not an issue.

It is recommended that DELWP develop a site interpretation / management response that provides for meaningful, appropriately interpreted visitor access to the precinct as a priority for any stage 2 heritage works in the precinct subsequent to the roll out of these Stringybark Creek initiatives.

Stringy bark Cree