

# Glenrowan



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## Glenrowan Heritage Precinct, Victoria

With his blackened armour made from ploughshares, Ned Kelly has been an enduring presence in the Australian psyche for more than 125 years. Ned Kelly: bushranger, larrikin, and to some, hero, is one of Australia's best-known historical figures.

He is also part of the nation's mythology, repeatedly re-emerging through Australia's art, literature and music.

Ned Kelly's famous last stand in the small northern Victorian town of Glenrowan on 28 June 1880, brought to an end his bushranging crusade.

This is the most famous moment in the flamboyant history of bushranging. It has come to represent the anti-authoritarian and risk-taking bushranger that is now a part of Australian folklore.

Glenrowan is a tangible link with this important event and the vivid strand of Australia's national identity that it represents.

It has been said that the formation of the Kelly Gang was the result of police harassment combined with the rural discontent caused by inequity of land tenure between the poor selectors and rich squatters in the north-east of Victoria and in parts of southern New South Wales.

Whatever the reasons for its creation, the Kelly Gang was involved in bushranger activities, from robbing banks and holding people hostage to exchanging gunfire with police. The point of no return came in 1878 when Ned Kelly shot three police officers who had tried to capture them at Stringybark Creek, near Mansfield in Victoria. Their names were Constables Lonigan and Scanlon, and Sergeant Kennedy. For almost two years after the shootings police, in ever-increasing numbers, tried to capture the infamous band.

Using the evocative language of protest, Ned Kelly tried to tap into the underlying resentment of the day. For many, he was the champion of the underdog – the son of a poor and persecuted Irish family in search of equality for all. To others Kelly was a murderer, a common criminal. His stand against authority and injustice is part of the larger story of political unrest and protest which includes the Castle Hill convict rebellion in 1804 and the Eureka Stockade gold protest in 1854.

Today the spirit of the man, and the power of his defiant faceless armour, still stirs the creativity of some of Australia's best-known artists, writers and musicians. Sidney Nolan created his well-known Kelly series of paintings, Peter Carey won a Booker Prize for his novel, *The True History of the Kelly Gang*. Multiple Kelly feature films have been made including what is believed to be the world's first feature film (*The Story of the Kelly Gang*, 1906) and a myriad of Ned Kellys paraded in the opening ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Glenrowan is the place most identifiable with the Kelly story and with that of bushrangers in general. The eight hectare Glenrowan Heritage Precinct, includes the key sites of the final Kelly conflict, such as the original railway platform, the site of Anne Jones's Glenrowan Inn (which police burnt to the ground) and the site of Ned Kelly's fall and capture (the 'Kelly Log' site). The site allows visitors access to the actual location where the pivotal siege events unfolded and an insight into a moment which helped to shape our nation.

