

THE CAPTURE OF THE KELLYS

by

John Charles Lowe



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THE CAPTURE OF THE KELLYS

by

John Charles Lowe, 1861-1950

This transcript was made from the original document, handwritten by the author in 1939. Some punctuation was added in the text but care was taken not to intentionally add, leave out or change wording and expression.

Preface

Yarrawonga 1/3/39

I have been asked many times and by many people to write my version of the Capture of the Kelly gang but have always refused. What I write will be facts and not in any way exaggerated. I was there from start to finish and for some time after.

As I am now 77 years of age and it is getting near to 60 years ago there will be a lot I have forgot but there is some I never will.

The Capture of the Kellys

I was not twenty years of age at the time and lived with my parents in Benalla. Had a horse and dray of my own and was engaged to go to Glenrowan to cart metal for the main street in Benalla. There were seven of us all told and we pitched camp about two chains from Mrs Jones' hotel and about 3 chains from the Railway Station almost in a direct line. We were there about a month when on a Saturday night we were having a bit of a jollification and we were late before we went to bed it was about 12 o'clock. The occasion was one of our mates had a female visitor from Benalla with him in his tent and we were doing all we could to annoy him and having some fun.

My tent was on the railway fence, the others on the back of it. Between one and two o'clock I was awakened by a man at my tent door who ordered me to get up. I told him to go to ----- as I thought it was one of my mates keeping up the joke. Then a voice from the back of the tent said 'Put a bullet through him Straughen if he resists.' He then said, 'we are police you had better get up', which I did. When I got outside I recognised both of them as I knew them before they went out – Steve Hart and Ned Kelly.

Kelly asked me if I knew them. I said I did and had often seen them in Benalla. He then told me they had shot Sherrit near Beechworth and that there would be a train load of police along at any moment and he wanted men to help him pull up the line so as to wreck the train. He cautioned me very severely and assured me he would do me no harm as long as I obeyed him. He then asked how

many men were in the other tents. I told him. He said 'Tell them to get out...' which I did. He was with me at each tent door and had a look in at the last tent. They refused to move. There was some argument and Piazza the boss was one of them. He lifted his gun which he kept beside his bed and sat up threatening to shoot. Kelly ripped the tent door open and said, 'you -----! You lift a gun to me?' and fired his rifle at Piazza. As he fired, Piazza knocked the gun with his arm and the charge went down beside his leg and through his bunk into the ground and the visitor from Benalla gave a terrible scream as she was in the bunk with another Italian. He asked all hands did they know him, when the female said, 'I know you Ned Kelly' and put her arms around his neck and attempted to kiss him, to which he objected.

Kelly then turned on me for telling him in the first place there was two in the tent and not letting him know there was a female there, and he was very annoyed but I excused myself by saying she was not a regular.

All out, he then repeated what he told me re what he wanted and the police and train and further cautioned us and that he would not harm us. He thought we were line repairers and that we knew all about the job. We told him we were not and had no tools that would do the job. We then went over to the linemen's toolshed and directed him where the repairers lived about a quarter of a mile up. He then went and brought two or three of them and their families also while Hart stayed with us. We then proceeded along the line, the whole of us, women and all and did the job. We took up a length of rails, sleepers and all and slid it down a steep bank into a creek. Went into the bush and broke saplings and branches to cover the break.

At this point we all had a great chance to get away. I myself was fully 100 yards off the railway fence and heard others breaking limbs and talking further out still.

The job done we then returned to the station. It was then pretty near clear day it being Sunday morning. There was no one about and we were all expecting the train so we lolled about for some time and as near as I can remember went over to the Hotel and by this time Dan Kelly and Joe Byrne had turned up from where we did not know but we all thought from Beechworth where Sherrit was shot.

We stone men were allowed to go to our tents to get our breakfast. What the rest did I don't remember but I think Mrs Jones was the good Samaritan as they were not allowed to leave the hotel.

As the morning rolled on we wandered about like lost sheep, looking for the expected train to come while the gang was busy gathering up their horses and accoutrements, armour etc. which they brought from across the line and put it in a back room leaving the horses in the back yard and paying full attention to any stragglers that came along and made them prisoners. They gave all of us a lot of liberty and we were allowed to roam about very freely up and down to the railway gates looking for the train; putting our ears to the rails to see if we could hear it. On one occasion we were pretty well all of us down at the gates when 3 or 4 lads came along walking from Greta about 4 miles distant. They came over as they had done once or twice before for the purpose of going in to kill kangaroo and wallibe hunting of which there were a fair few at the time. The attraction was that I had two very good dogs that very rarely missed their game but circumstances altered cases for the day. There was no hunting. One or two of them was named

Delaney. Their father was a blacksmith at Greta and once lived in Benalla. He and I went to school together.

When Ned Kelly asked them their name. It caused a great sensation in the crowd as it was a fact that some time previously the elder Delaney and his sister were going into Wangaratta in a spring cart and horse and on the way they overtook a police patrol. The elder Delaney had sometime before tried to join the police force but was not accepted. Many people believed he was an informer and often gave information to the police. If this was true or not, I do not know but Kelly did, saying he would kill Delaney for they would all be police lovers.

Just then the school teacher came up [in a buggy with his family. Kelly told them to get out and join the rest of us and continued to abuse Delaney in front of us all but he decided not to kill for now.

Kelly at the time had his body armour on and I think we were fully convinced that he intended to carry out his threat. Delaney was crying and I am pretty certain he was not the only one. We all pleaded hard for him, specially the women. When Kelly gave in and took his revolver back and further cautioned him and the rest of us never to do anything for a policeman.

It was now about dinner time. We went to our tents; the remainder to the hotel still wondering what happened to the train for by this time there was a fair number of us gathered in.

During Sunday sometime Ned and one of his mates went to the Police Station which was about a mile on the Benalla side and brought back the man in charge, his name I think was Bracken.

Shortly after dinner, amongst others there came Mr. Curnow the school teacher with his wife and two small

children in a buggy out for a drive for the evening. They were gathered in with the rest of us far against their wish. We put in the evening, some playing cards others up the yard jumping and various games of skill; revolvers being used for weights to jump with and on the whole we passed the time real well

Night was drawing near and we were all very anxious to see the end of it; no train, no police. We were curious to know what was going to happen. Different ones pleaded to get away but there was no hope. The school teacher was the only one, he pleaded hard with Kelly and said his wife and children had been very poorly of late and he begged to get them home. In the end he succeeded and was cautioned not to leave his house or communicate with anyone and that one of them would go to watch him and if he moved out would be shot dead. His school was about one mile on the Benalla side of Glenrowan and opposite the police station. As you will read further on you will see the mistake Kelly made in letting him go as it upset his (Kelly's) plans for further on, which as far as I know they did not divulge to anyone although during the time we were in their company they spoke very freely of the past as to how they lived, evaded the police, how at times they were very close to them and not seen. Said they were getting good gold and was well satisfied but the police would not leave them alone.

Now we were all looking for sleep. The hours seemed very long and as near as I can remember it was somewhere about 2 o'clock when we heard the train a good distance away which caused a bit of uneasiness amongst us as we were all expecting to see it go through. We did not think for a moment it would stop, expecting it to go on to where we made the break and make a terrible

smash and very likely kill every person in it as it was at the most dangerous part of the line, where they would go through a small cutting, around a sharp corner, down hill and a drop of 15 or 20 ft off an embankment into a dry creek where we had previously put the set of rails.

When we heard a whistle, also the train stop for a short time, then start again and come along slowly.

This set us all thinking. We could not account for the stopping and was well beat to know what was going to happen next. We were all on the move. The Kellys busy getting their armour on as we thought to go away to where we made the break in the line but we found out when we got free how it was the train had stopped.

The schoolteacher which Kellys had let go home in the early part of the night was the cause. He was a brave man and took the risk of his life to save the lives of those on the train.

There are not many men that would have done it, especially after the cautioning and threats he got when he left us. I believe he left his wife and children in the house alone, took an ordinary house lantern, a piece of red cloth when he heard the train coming and he was the cause of the stopping. The train, to our surprise, came to standstill at the platform. We heard the dropping of truck doors, unloading of horses, of men talking and things were all of a bustle for a short time. We could see objects moving, it was a fairly clear night, no moon.

A good few of us went out the back door of the pub and was watching the movements at station. We saw a number of police coming towards us as though they were making for the pub. They had come only a few yards when the Kellys, who were standing at the end of the house nearest to Wangaratta, opened fire on them which

they returned and made for whatever cover they could get. There was a few washaways and culverts over them close by and the police rushed for them. We prisoners who were having a look on from the back got very rough orders to go inside if we didn't want to get shot. After that we saw very little but heard a very large amount of shooting. I think it was Superintendent Hare that got shot in the wrist in the first volley, which was fired from the east end of the house and not off the front veranda, which the papers' pictures showed at the time. Also there was only three of the gang there, the forth I don't know where he was. There was then a bit of a lull for a short time.

No shooting. I take it the police were getting round the house and it was then about 3 o'clock Monday morning and from that onward there was plenty of shooting. There was more police arrived. I was told after there were over sixty men there.

The shooting, from the inside, seemed to be at intervals of from 10 to 15 minutes and there was a very good volley each time we could hear the bullets hit the house and through the walls. Those through the roof made quite a different sound. At times we used to roam about from room to room. Our main room was on the southeast corner of the building close to the bar. The Kelly's room was at the back of us but none of us went in there after the shooting started. We used to do so before as I remember them showing us their armour which they kept in there.

When each volley started we all laid flat on the floor till it was over. There was somewhere about 40 of us in the house at the time but I would say about half of them got away during the early shooting, 3 or 4 of them getting

wounded, one fatally. Some rushed out but came back in again being afraid of getting shot by the police.

Joe Byrne, one of the gang, was shot early in the piece. Some say he was getting a drink at the bar and that the whole of them was drinking and that was their downfall but they are wrong for there was little or no drinking by them or the prisoners the whole of the time. It was true he fell at the bar counter end in a passage as we had to step over him when going from room to room as no one took the trouble to move him.

Daylight came and we could then see police moving about at some distance away. We used to look out the windows which by this time were well shattered. One of my workmates and I opened a door and held out a white cloth and a bullet came through the panel of the door beside us. We got back very quickly. At times we would call out to cease firing and that there was no one in the place but civilians, women and children but the firing kept going, perhaps not so frequently until I think very near nine o'clock when we heard a voice from the outside, that all inside were to come out in five minutes. We made a rush and was scattering a bit when we got orders from a large number of police that were at our tents to come this way which we did and when about 20 yards from them, we got orders to kneel down, the next order was to lay down, when a big burley policeman cries out, 'we will shoot this lot first, they are all sympathisers.' When about a dozen or more levelled their rifles on us I thought the end had come. We lay there a while when we were called up one at a time for examination. They held some of us for a time. I got passed very easy and was told by one that knew me that my horse was full of bullets as he had been galloping

about all night through the firing but I found him alright later. There was four horses shot dead in the encounter and I got 7/6 per head from the police to burn them.

Now we were free and we found out Ned was taken earlier in the morning. He must have been well outside the police cordon as he was taken some 4 or 5 chains from the house. It was supposed he was making back to his mates. Byrne we knew was left in the house dead and Dan and Hart, I am certain, was also dead for as I mentioned before they were in the adjoining room to us and in the early part of the night we could distinctly hear them shooting at intervals until near or after daylight. After that their shooting ceased and it is my opinion (also some of my mates) that long before we left, that they had shot themselves because in the early part we could hear them talking and moving about but later we heard nothing and as we had not the liberty to go in, we were afraid.

When we got clear of the police we were told to go over to the train and we would get something to eat there which the most of us did, and I think did justice to. I believe it was tucker they had with them.

Then for the next hour or so we watched them still firing on the house, which was a wreck and well riddled with bullets and it was said by many that it was a great pity it was not left standing as Mrs Jones (the owner) would have made a pot of money out of those that came later to see it.

At this stage a priest came along in a train and was making straight for the house with I believe the full intention of going in. When he got fairly near he was ordered back and he returned.

Also Kate Kelly who attempted to go but was stopped. Then came the setting fire to the house. A policeman rushed to one end with a bundle of straw, under very heavy firing by the others and set it alight. Before it got a fair hold, the crowd of whom there was by this time a big number as they had been coming from everywhere all the morning, made for the house with the priest leading and he was the first man in.

They carried Byrne out and made through to the kitchen which was detached, where in an end room they found laying on a bed an old line repairer (I think his name was Sherry) seriously wounded whom we carried out to the back and I with others watched him die in a very short time. By this time the place was well alight and burning well. When it had got well burnt and cooled down a bit, all hands were busy looking around when in the room where we had left Dan and Hart, two bodies were seen laying side by side, one with his head towards the north and the other to the south, very badly burned and well beyond recognition.

Now as I have often since heard it said, and also have read it in different papers, that Dan Kelly was still alive, I say without the slightest doubt that they are wrong as there were some 40 odd as prisoners in the place and I myself knew every one of them. Also we were all well known to one another, is it likely that if any two of us were missing that some of us would not miss them and make known the fact there is nothing surer than that those two bodies were no other but Kelly and Hart.

At about 4 o'clock that evening I went in home to Benalla by train and had my mind made up to hunt up some of my pals and tell them all about it but I was pretty well worn out by the time I was ready to go. When the

neighbours all round gathered to our place there were never such a number of visitors there before. They asked me all kinds of questions and as a matter of fact, talked me to sleep on the chair when my mother had to hunt them and made me go to bed. I think I had had just quite enough. The next day I went back to Glenrowan to my job, which took us some five or six weeks more to finish. While there, the number of people that came to see the place was enormous. On every train there was a lot, as many as 50 getting off, besides others that came by road. It was the same every day for about 3 weeks when it began to ease off and up to the time we left there were still a few that came along. It was surprising to see the various things they would take away as mementos. Bits of iron, saucepans, pots, dishes, pieces of half burnt furniture, legs and sides of bedsteads etc, but the most valued was the bullet that was cut out of a tree and there was a great number of them. Every tree had some in, some well up in the limbs where you had a good climb to reach them. I got up to two shillings a piece for them. Others, I believe got more. On the platform was a great place to sell them to the passengers as they were travelling through but there was a time came when they got scarce – hard to get. There was a line repairer, he had a single barrel and made bullets with a hammer, put them in the gun, fired them into a tree and told me he got 1/6 for them, easy.

For 2 or 3 weeks after we were very much pestered with the visitors. They were not content to walk round and see for themselves but was very fond of coming to our camp especially at meal times, often a dozen or more at a time, asking all kinds of questions and a lot that we could not answer.

The detectives paid us great attention after the affair was over. They were very inquisitive. I don't know what their object was other than to get a case against Mrs Jones for harbouring the Kellys, which they afterwards did. One day two of them rode back with me up the hill in the dray when they thought what I was saying was very much against them and their mates, one of them advised me to be more careful as to how I expressed myself, it may cause me trouble. I might tell you I had no time for them after they had the night's shooting at me and perhaps I may have spoken to plainly.

Some time later Mrs Jones' case came on at Wangaratta. I with some 25 others was subpoenaed as witnesses and as far as I can remember we were mostly all in her favour. As the first few witnesses were called they asked for their expenses but were refused and told they had to travel 25 miles to defend their crown. They were all from Glenrowan which was about 12 miles.

When my turn came I asked for my expenses as I had a bit up my sleeve on the others for by that time I had shifted to another job 4 mile the other side of Benalla. I got them. I think I was the only one.

I am now at the end of my story. What I have written is quite fresh in my memory but there is a lot more partly forgotten which would have made interesting reading. 59 years is a long time to think back to. I should have written it years ago.

APPENDIX 1.

A TRANSCRIPT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES handwritten in 1939 by the author as background to his account of *The Capture Of The Kellys*.

1861 Nov 14, born on the Black Dog Creek near Chiltern. In '62 moved to Dockers Plains where my parents had selected land in '70. Sold out and move in to Wangaratta and when I came to school age had to walk 2½ mile to school (no motor cars then).

While there I went to school regular but at every chance I got I would sneak away to a black's camp situated a little below the present show grounds on the river bank and put in many a day in bark canoe on the river and many a time eat roasted possum.

From there into Benalla early in '71 where I finished my schooling at the age of 13. I had my certificate and was sent to a store to learn the business. I was there for a few months when Good Friday came and the usual Easter holiday arrangements were made for a shooting party for the Friday. There were five adults each having a gun and three other boys like myself. On the way home the elders decided to let us boys have a shot to see who was the best shot. They put a bottle on a tree. Myself and another boy tied and we were to shoot off. I had first shot. The gun, a muzzle loader, burst and shattered my hand and it had to be amputated. I was taken to Wangaratta hospital where I was more than well treated and was back home in 3½ weeks time. A short time after I was sent back to school for a couple of years and at the same time made numerous applications for clerical situations but failed to get one. The last was to the Education Department to

become a pupil teacher. The reply I got was that they did not employ anyone that was in any way disabled. That killed me. I wrote no more.

At this time my grandfather (my mother's father) was living with us. He used to cart wood and did jobs of carting about the town and I took to going with him for wood and he had bought me a pony previously and I used to look after his cows, of which he always had a few. Also the neighbours' cattle, I used to bring them in and out of the bush for which I would mostly get a few shillings. At that time there was lots of open country around Benalla. I used to do a fair amount cattle droving from the Sale Yards for different people.

In 1876 my grandfather died and left his horse and dray to me. The horse being a new one he had just bought; a 3 year old and not properly broken in. I worked him around Benalla for some 4 or 5 years and made him the most tractable horse that I ever seen. Without reins you could drive him either forward or backwards by word of mouth and not put a hand on him. Everybody knew him and he would follow me like a dog in or out of harness.

The sergeant of police had a farm at Nalinga 20 miles down the Broken River. I would bring his cattle back and forward. I had the run of the station (police) yard where there was no other boys allowed in and as it was the time the Kellys were out, there was always a lot of mounted police there and I used to have a good time with them. It was great seeing them getting ready to go bush looking for the Kelly's. Pack horses getting loose and bucking around the yard spilling the packs and from six to ten mounted men with pack horses would leave at the one time and you could see them miles away. They

always had a bright, shiny dish, bucket or frypan tied on top of the packs. This was in '78 and '79. In '80 the Kellys were caught at Glenrowan. I was well there and as I have written of their capture there is no need to make further mention of it here.

How I came to be there is thus. The council was remaking the main street in Benalla. I was working on it with my horse and dray and the contractor got me with 6 or 8 others to go to Glenrowan to put metal for the job in the railway trucks.

Early in '81 my father went to work on a tin mine at Jingellic on the Upper Murray and shortly after my mother and the youngest of the family moved to there also. Myself and two elder sisters remaining in Benalla.

My next move was to Norvanan Station in NSW where I and two mates went in the dray to kill kangaroo. We each had rifles and 8 or 10 good kangaroo dogs. We stopped 3 months and done no good. We were getting 6 pence for each of the skins but at that time, a very low price. There were far more kangaroos than sheep on the station. We many a time fired at a kangaroo not 10 yards off and he would hop away and later we would find them lying dead and too far gone to skin. As it was summer time the dogs were not much good to us and we left the station slightly in debt and made back to Benalla with about 300 skins, 40 of them weighing 4 lbs each but the weevils had got to them and made them almost valueless. We were mugs at the game.

I then sold my horse and dray and made my way up to Jingellic where my parents were and got a job engine driving on a tin mine for a few months. Then I crossed the Murray River to Mount Alfred where I worked mining for a good while and I think it was the happiest

time of my life. When I was not working or sleeping I was dancing. At the time there were no motor cars, gigs or buggies. The travelling was all done on horseback, girls and men alike, very often two on the one horse.

I then went to sheep station called Arara where there was a bit of gold mining doing and put in a few months prospecting and hunting. I always had a couple of good kangaroo dogs with me. Had a lot of fun but done no good. From that I went across the hills to Yarra Yarra Station and was groom there for nine months.

I then decided I would make for Wagga where in the interval of about two years, my parents had removed.

I did not stay long there. Work was scarce. I did a job of brick paving in the main street in New Town – a contract from the council. Also a couple of rooms I put down the floors which were the first in the carpentering line.

I then got word from Yarrawonga that a race horse that I had previously left with a friend had got hurt in a hurdle race at Mulwala. I then came to Yarra with the intention of taking him back to Wagga but he was not fit to travel which upset my intentions. I was going to ride him back to Wagga. It was now the first week in March 1884 and my funds were very low so my friend who was a publican at the time sold out and he decided to start a livery and letting stable and offered me a job grooming. I worked for 12 months for him drawing very little money as I wanted to save. Things did [not] go too well for him; he got to owe money all over the town and done no good. He was a great gambler and did not attend to his business. After 12 months he did a moonlight flit (with all the horses, vehicles etc) to Shepparton. Looking to get my money, I thought it best to lend him a hand and to go

with him. I still had my horse. We got to Shepparton and he sold the lot in the yards and told me to ride my horse to Benalla and he would square up with me. I waited a few days. He never turned up. Nobody saw him so I rode back to Yarra to get a few belongings I had left behind, clothes etc. At the hotel where the stable was I had later to pay for board I had some time previous, my boss having sent me there when he was away.

APPENDIX 2.

SCANNED IMAGES OF THREE DOCUMENTS HELD BY THE LOWE FAMILY. THESE DOCUMENTS CONFIRM THAT *THE CAPURE OF THE KELLYS* WAS INCLUDED IN *THE AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC RECORDS REGISTER* HELD AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, PARKES, CANBERRA, ACT



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Australian Bicentennial Historic Records Search


Jan Edwards
Director, Special Events

THE CAPTURE OF THE KELLYS



Australia
1788-1988

21 March 1989

The
Australian
Bicentennial
Authority

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FAX (02) 234 6761



Dear Owner of Historic Records,

I am writing to all the owners of historic records that are described and entered on our Australian Historic Records Register, to confirm that we have been able to include them.

In total, there are 3,524 descriptions of record collections entered on the Register, and enclosed is a print-out of yours for your information and reference. The number in the top left-hand corner is the entry number on the Register.

It is most important that this letter be kept with your records as a form of identification. Would you please ensure that beneficiaries of your estate are aware that the records included on the Australian Historic Records Register are historically significant. I ask you to be mindful that your records should not be destroyed, in the case of death or any other circumstance.

The National Library of Australia will maintain the Register for future use by researchers, and all contact details of owners will be kept up-to-date. It is essential that the National Library be advised if ownership changes, or of any change to the location of the records. Your contact at the National Library is:

Manuscript Librarian
Australian Historic Records Register
National Library of Australia
Parkes
Canberra ACT 2600

Please keep your records in a safe place. Early next month you will be sent a special brochure produced by the Bicentennial Authority explaining "How To Care for Your Records". I'm sure this will be of interest.

My thanks for your support of this major Bicentennial heritage project. It will be a treasured legacy of 1988.

Yours sincerely,

JAN EDWARDS
JAN EDWARDS
Director - Special Events

Enclosure

THE CAPTURE OF THE KELLYS



The
Australian
Bicentennial
Authority

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21 March 1989

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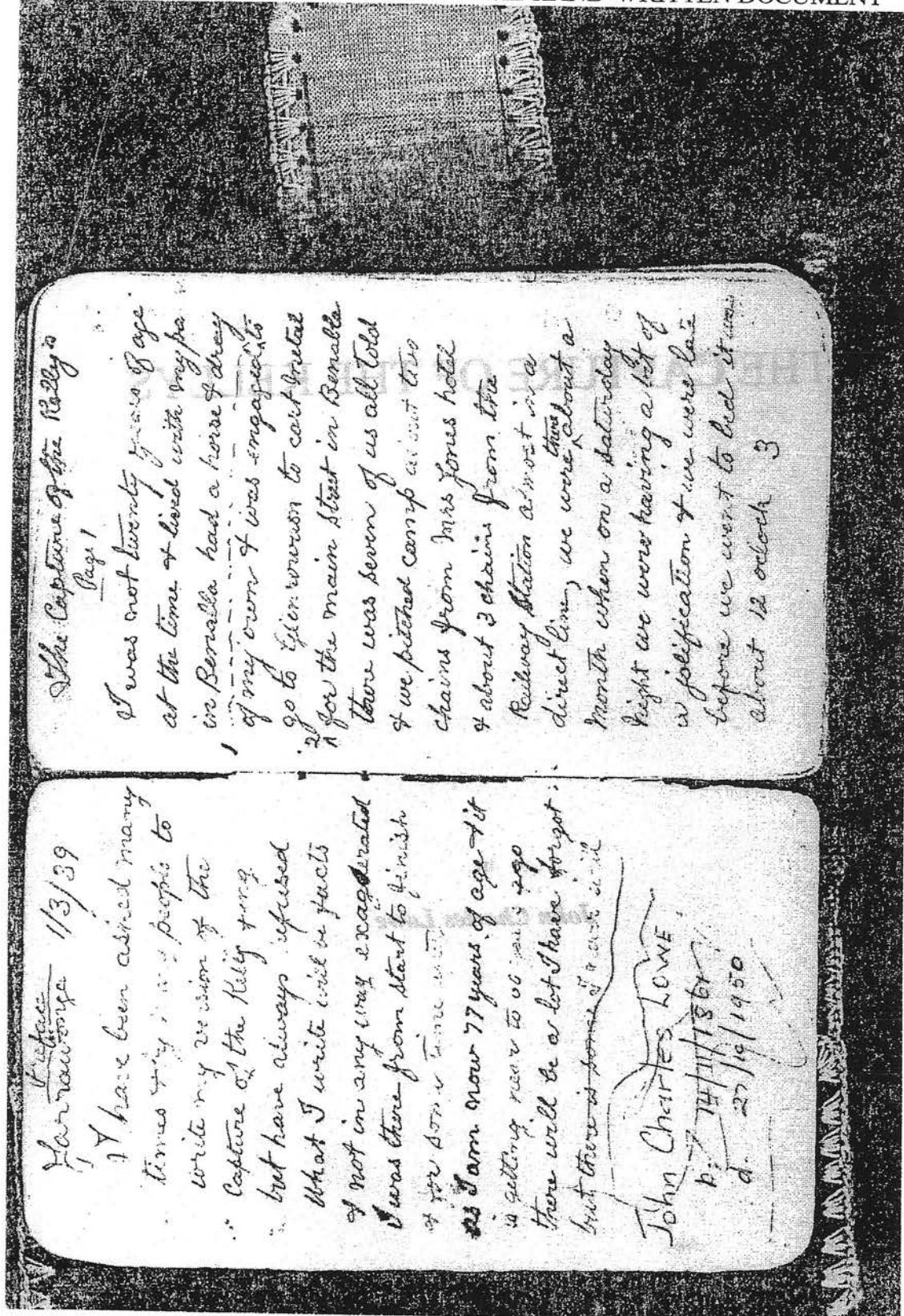
Yours sincerely,

JAN EDWARDS
JAN EDWARDS
Director - Special Events

Enclosure

APPENDIX 3.

SCANNED IMAGE OF THE ORIGINAL HAND-WRITTEN DOCUMENT



OBITUARY

MR. J. C. LOWE

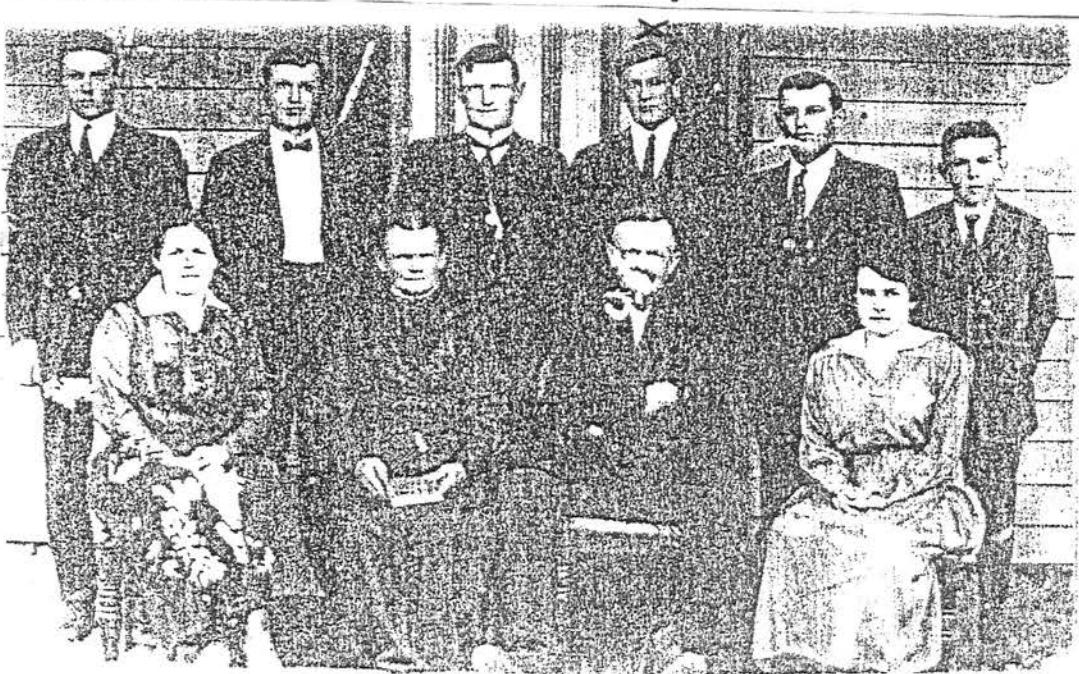
The death occurred yesterday evening of Mr. John Charles Lowe, of Yarrawonga (V.), father of Mr. William Lowe, of 16 Docker Street, Wagga, at the age of 88 years. Mr. Lowe, before his death, was the last survivor of those persons who were present at the capture of the Kelly Gang at Glenrowan (V.). He was captured by the gang and, with a number of other men, forced or put up guard on the railwayline in an attempt to derail a train carrying troopers to the spot. Mr. Lowe is survived by a family of seven children—Mrs. J. N. Scott (Lucy Elizabeth) of Ungarie, Irene of Melbourne, William of Wagga, and Thomas, Arthur, Albert, Frederick, all of Yarrawonga. He is also survived by many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. The funeral will take place at Yarrawonga today, as advertised.

Ex-captive Of Ned Kelly Dies

MELBOURNE, Thursday.—John Charles Lowe, 88, believed to be the last survivor of the people imprisoned in the Glenrowan Hotel before Ned Kelly was captured, died at Yarrawonga to-night.

He was 18 at the time of the Glenrowan fight.

He moved to Yarrawonga 60 years ago, and was secretary of Yarrawonga Football Club for many years, and a leading member of the Racing Club. He is survived by seven children, 19 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.



Your grandfather.
↓

189 - 1952

Row 1. Fred, Thomas, Bert, William Charles, Arthur "Oak", Scott.

Row 2. Lucy, Grandma, Grandpa
Maggie(Moore) John Charles
1861-1950 Irene "Rene"

John Lowe
Jack Stewart
Tom Lowe
1886



David,
This "John Lowe"
could be your
great grand-fath.
(see above picture)
Seems to me he
is hiding his
damaged arm in
both photos.

Bernadette

Your guess, what
are the clothes?

Space
Barrowonge

1/3/39

The Capture of the Katty's

I have been asked many times by people to write my version of the Capture of the Katty today but have always refused what I write will be facts & not in any way exaggerated was there from start to finish of your son's time as I am now 77 years of age & it is getting near to us some ago there will be a lot I have forgot but there is some of which as I

Page 1

I was not twenty years of age at the time & lived with my parents in Benalla had a horse & dray of my own & was engaged to go to Glen Innes to cart metal for the main street in Benalla there was seven of us all total & we pitched camp each time chains from Miss Jones hotel & about 3 chains from the Railway station almost in a direct line, we were there about a month when on a Saturday

night we were having a bit of a jollification & we were late before we went to bed it was about 12 o'clock 3

1.8

3 the occasion was one of our
mates had a female visitor from
Benalla with him in his tent and
we were doing all we could to
annoy him & harry some fun

my tent was on the railway
line the others at the back of
between one & two o'clock I
was awakened by a man at
my tent door who ordered me
to get up I told him to go to
as I thought it was one of my men
keeping up the joke, then a voice
from the back of the tent ~~said~~
said put a bullet through him
stranger if he resists he then said
we are police you had better get
up, which I did, when I got
outside I recognised both of
them as I knew off both of
them before they went out
Steve Hart & Ned Kelly

2

3

Kelly asked me if I knew them I said I did & had often seen them in Benalla he then told me they had shot him near Beechworth & that he could be a traitor of police along at any moment & he wanted men to help him pull up the line so as to wreck the train he cautioned me very severely & assured me he would do me no harm as long as I obeyed him he then asked how many men were in the other tents I told him he said tell them to get out

34

which I did he was with at each tent door & had a look in at the last tent they refused to move there was some argument & Piayya the boss was one of them he lifted his gun which he kept beside his bed & sat up threatening to shoot Kelly slipped the tent door open & said "you — you left a gun to me & fired his rifle at Piayya as he fired Piayya touched the gun with his arm & the charge down beside his leg & through his bunk in both ground & the visitor from Benalla gave a terrible screech as she was in the bunch with another stolen

X 5

If he asked all hands did they know him when the female said I know you Ned Kelly and put her arms around his neck & attempted to kiss him to which he said no

Kelly then turned on me for telling him in the first place there was a female ~~there~~ two in the tent & that one was not letting him know there was a female there & he was very annoyed but I excused myself by saying she was not a regular

4 all outside then repeated what he told me re what he wanted & the police & train & further cautioned us of that he would not harm us he thought we were here repairers & that we knew all about the job we told

856

him we were not & had no tools that would do the job we crossed them over to the timbers finished & directed him where the repairers had about a quarter of a mile up the track where they were not to be found & took his place who article first stayed with us we then proceeded along the line the whole of us women & all of did the job we took up a long load of rails sleepers & all & slid it down a steep bank into a creek went into brush & broke saplings & branches to cover the break

857

At this point we all had a great chance to get away if myself was fully 100 yds off the railway fence & heard others screaming times of running scatter about until the first shot we were still in station & as pretty near clear day it being Sunday morning there was no one about & we were all expecting the train so we loaded about for some time & as near as I can remember went over to the hotel by this time Sam Kelly & Joe Ryan had turned up from where we did not know but we all

X 8

Bracken

thought from Beechworth
where Sherrit was shot
we stone men were allowed to go to
our tents to get our breakfast
what the rest did I don't remember
but I think Mrs Jones was the good
woman as they were not allowed
to leave the hotel

As the morning rolled on
we wandered about like lost
sheep, looking for the expected
train to come while the gang
was busy gathering up their
horses and accoutrements
Armour &c which they brought
from across the line & put it in
a back room leaving the horses

X 9

in the pack yard and saying
full attention to any stragglers
that came along & made them
prisoners, they gave all of us
a lot of liberty & we were allowed
to roam about very freely up and
down to the railway gates looking
for the train putting our ears
to the rails to see if we could hear it.
On one occasion we were pretty well
all of us down at the gates when
3 or 4 lads came along walking from
yester night 4 miles distant
they came over as they had
or twice before for the purpose
of going in to kill Kangaroos
& Wallabies hunting of which there

Q 10

were a fair few at the
alarm. The attraction was that
very good dogs that very
missed their game but circumstances
altered cases for the day there was no
finishing, one or two of them was
named Delaney their father was
a blacksmith at Grata and once
lived in Benalla then I went
to school together.

When Ned Kelly ~~was~~ there name
it caused a great sensation in
the crowd as it was a fact that
some time previously the elder Delaney
of his sister were giving into
Warragatta in a spring cart
of horse on the way they overtook

Nelly at the time had his body armoured
on & I think we were fully convinced
that he intended to carry out his threat
Delaney was crying & I am pretty
certain he was not the only one
we all bleaded hard for him especially
the women. when Nelly gave in
& took his revolver back of further
cautioned him & the rest of us

never to do anything for a policeman.
It was now about dinner time
we went to our tents the remained
to the hotel still wondering what
had happened to the train for by
this time there was a fair number
of us gathered in
shortly after dinner there came

X 12

5 during Sunday some time
that & one ~~one~~ of his mates went
to the police station which was about
a mile on the Benalla side &
brought back ~~the~~ the man
in charge his name I think was
Bracken

Mr Burnow the school teacher with his
wife & two small children in a buggy on
for a drive for the evening they were
gathered in with the rest of us far
against their wish
we put in the evening some playing
cards others up the yard jumping
& various other games of skill
however being used for weights to
jump with & on the whole we passed
5 the time real well;

Night was drawing near &
we were all very anxious
to see the end of it, no train,
no police, we were curious to know
what was going to happen
different ones pleaded to get away

1314

But there was no hope, the school teach
was the only one, he pleaded hard with
Kelly & said his wife & children had been
very poorly of late & he begged to get them
home in the end he succeeded & was
cautioned not to leave his house or
communicate with anyone and that
one of them would go to watch him
& if he moved out would be shot
dead, his school was about one mile
on the Benalla side of Glenrowan
and opposite the police station
as you will read further on you
will see the mistake Kelly's made
in letting him go as it upset
~~his~~ Kelly's plans for further on, which
as far as I know they did not

1415

deserve to any one although they
during the time we were in their
company they spoke were freely of the
past & to how they lived, evaded
the police, how at times they were
very close ^{to them} & not seen
said they were getting good gold
it was well satisfied but the police
would not leave them alone.
Now we were all looking for ^{for} Bluff,
the hours seemed very long, & as
near as I can remember it was
somewhere about 2 o'clock when
we heard the train a good
distance away which caused
a bit of uneasiness amongst us
as we were all expecting —

1516

to see it go ^{the} through did not think
for a moment it would stop
expecting it go on to where we
made the break & make a
terrible smash & very likely kill
every person in it as it was at
the most dangerous part of the
line where they would go through
a small cutting around a
sharp curve down hill & likely
a drop of 15 or 20 ft ~~into a dry creek~~
off an embankment into a dry
creek where we had previously
put the set of rails
where we heard a whistle
also the train stop for a short
time then start again and —

Feb 17

came along slowly & stopped us all thinking we could not account for the stopping & was well bent to know what was going to happen next we were all on the move the Kelly's busy getting their carriage on as we thought to go away to where we made the break in the line but we found out where we got free how it was the train had stopped

The school teacher which Kelly had let go home in the early part of the night was the cause he was a brave man & took a risk of his life to save the lives of those on the train.

Feb 18

there is not many men that would have done it especially after the cautioning & threats he got when he left us, I believe he left his wife and children in the house alone, took an ordinary house lantern, a piece of red cloth when he heard the train coming & he was the cause of the stopping. The train to our surprise came to stand still at the platform we heard the dropping of truck doors unloading of men talking & things were all of a bustle for a short time we could see objects moving it was a fairly clear night no moon

Aug 19

A good few of us went out the back door of the pub & was watching the movements at station we saw a number of police coming towards us as though they were searching for the pub they had come only a few yards when the Kellys who were standing at the end of the house nearest to town parratey opened fire on them which they returned fire for whatever cover they could get, there was a few washaways of culverts over them, close by a the police rushed for them the prisoners who were

Aug 20

having a look on from the back got very rough orders to be idle if I did not want to get shot after that we saw very little but heard a very large amount of shooting I think it was Superintendent Hare that got shot in the wrist in the first volley which was fired from the east end of the house & not off the front verandah which the papers pictures showed at the time also there was only 3 of gang there the fourth I don't know where he was, there was then a bit of a lull for a short time.

no shooting & take it the police were getting round the house & it was then about 3 o'clock Monday morning and from that onward there was plenty of shooting there was more police arrived, I was told after there was over 60 men there

The shooting from the inside, seemed to be at intervals of from 10 to 25 minutes & there was a very good volley each time we could hear the bullets hit the house & through the walls those through the roof made quite a different sound, at times we use to hoan about from room to room our main room was on the southeast corner of the building —

close to the bar the Kelly's room was at the back of us but none of us went in there ~~after~~ after the shooting ~~was~~ started, we used to do so before as I remember them showing us their armor which they kept in there when each volley started we all laid flat on the floor till it was over, there was somewhere about 40 of us in the house at the time but I would say about half of them got away during the early shooting 3 or 4 of them getting wounded, one fatally, some hustled out but came back in again being afraid of getting shot by the police —

Joe Byrne one of the gang was shot early in the peace some

say he was getting a drink at the bar & that the whole of them was drinking & that was their downfall but they are crazy.
for there was little or no drinking by them or the prisoners the whole of the time it was true he fell at the bar counter end in a passage as we had to step over him when going from room to room as no one took the trouble to move him.

Daylight came and we could then see police moving about at some distance away we used to look out the windows which by this time were well shattered one of my workmates & I opened a door

and held out a white cloth & a bullet come through the panel of the door beside us, we got back very quickly at times ~~so~~ time we would call out to cease firing & that there was no one in the place but civilians women & children but the firing kept going perhaps not so frequent until I think very near nine o'clock when we heard a voice from the outside, that all inside were to come in five minutes we made a rush & was scattering a bit when we got orders from a large number of police that were at our tents to come this way which we did & when about

2425

20 yards from them got orders to
Kneel down, the next order was
to lay down, when a big burly
policeman cries out we will shoot
this lot first they are all sympath-
izers with that when about a
dozen or more leveled their
rifles on us I thought the end
had come, we lay there a while
when we were called up one
at a time for examination
they held some off for a time
I got passed very easy & was
told by one that before me
that my horse was full
of bullets as he had been
galloping about all night
through the firing but I

6 he must have been well outside
the police cordon as he was taken
some 4 or 5 chains from the house.
it was supposed he was making
back to his mates

7 found him alight later
there was power ^{no} shot dead
in the encounter & got 7/6
per head from the police to burn
them, now we were free & we
found out Ned was ~~was~~ taken
earlier in the morning. Byrne we
knew was left in house dead. &
Sam & Hart I am certain was
also dead for as I mentioned before
they were in the adjoining room
to us and in the early part of
the night we could distinctly
hear them shooting at intervals
until near ⁷ day light
after that their shooting
ceased & it is my opinion

26.27

also ~~had~~ some of my mates
that long before we left that
they had shot themselves
because in the early part
we could hear them talking
of moving about but later we
heard nothing & as we had
not the liberty to go in we were
afraid,

When we got clear of the police
we were told to go over to the
train & we would get something
to eat there which the most of
us did & I think did justice
to, I believe it was tucker
they had with them
then for the next hour or so

28

we watched them still firing
on the house, ~~at~~
which was a wreck and well
riddled with bullets & it was
said by many that it was
a fact ⁱⁿ ~~fact~~ it was not left
standing as Mrs Jones (I believe)
would have made a pot of
money out of those that came
later to see it.

At this stage a priest came
along in a train & was making
straight for the house with
I believe the full intention of
going in where he got
fairly near he was ordered
back & he returned

Aug 29

Also Kate Kelly who attempted to go but was stopped when came the setting fire to the house at police corner rushed to the one end with a bundle of straw under very heavy firing by the others & set it alight before it got a fair hold the crowd of whom there was by this time a big number as they had been coming from everywhere all the morning made for the house with the greatest leading & he was the first man in they carried by one out and made through to the

Aug 30

which was detached kitchen where in a end room they found laying on a bed an old time recipient I think his name was Sherry seriously wounded whom we carried out to the back of it with others watched him die in a very short time by this time the place was well alight & burning well when it had got well burnt I cooled down a bit all hands were busy looking around when in the room where Dan & Hart were had left a ~~the~~ two bodies were seen laying side by side one with his head

wards the north & the other to
the south very hardly burnt
& well beyond recognition,
now as I have often since
heard it said & also have
read it in different papers
that Sam Kelley was still
alive & say without the
slightest doubt that they
as there were some 40 odd as
prisoners in the place & I myself
knew every one of them
also we were all well known to
one another is it likely that
if any two of us were missing
that some of us would not
miss them and make

known the fact there is nothing
sever than that those two
bodies were no other but Kelly
& Hart

At about 4 o'clock that evening
I went in home to Benalla
by train & had my men & made
up to hunt up some of pals
& tell them all about it
but I was pretty well worn out
by the time I was ready to go
when the neighbors all round
gathered to our place there
was never such a number
of visitors there before they
asked me all kinds of question
as a matter of fact talked

One to sleep on the chair when my mother had to hunt them and made one go to bed & think I had had just quite enough. The next day I went back to El Dorado to buy fish, which took us some five or six more to finish, while there the number of people that came to see the place was enormous. In every train there was a lot as many as 50 getting off some of them besides others that came by road it was the same every day. For about 3 weeks when it began to ease off & up to the time we left there were still a few

that came along it was surprising to see the various things they would take away as mementos bits of iron, saucepans, pots dishes, pieces of half burnt furniture, legs & sides of bedsteads &c but the most valuable was the bullet that was cut out of a tree & there was a great number of them, every tree had some in some well up in the limbs where you had a good climb to reach them, myself got up to two shillings apiece for them others I believe got more, on the platform

35

was a great place to sell them
to the passengers as they were
traveling through but there
was a time come when they
got scarce & hard to get,
when there was a discrepancy
between he had a single
barrel gun he made bullet
with a hammer bent them
in the snow fired them into
a tree & told me he got $\frac{1}{16}$
for them easy
for 2 or 3 weeks after we were very
much pestered with the visitors
they were not content to walk round
& see for themselves but was very

fond of coming to our camp especially

36

at meal times often a dozen or more
at a time asking all kind of questions
& a lot that we could not answer
The detectives paid us great attention
after the affair was over they were
very inquisitive I dont know what
their object was other than to get a
case against Mrs Jones for harboring
the Kelly's which they afterwards did.
one day two of them rode back with me
up the hill in the dray when they thought
from what I was saying was very
much against them & their mates
when one of them advised me to be more
careful as to how I expressed
myself it may cause me trouble,
I might tell you I had no time for

them after they had the nights shooting at me and perhaps I may have spoken to plain by some time later Mrs. Jukes case came on at Wangaratta & with some 25 others was subpoenaed as witness. As far as I can remember we were mostly all in her favor as the first few witness were called they asked for their expenses but were refused & told they had to travel 25 miles to defend their crown, they were all from Glen-
bowron which was about 12 miles. When my turn come I asked my expenses as I had as bit up my sleeve on the others' for by that time I had shifted to another

Job 4 mile the other side of Benalla. I got them, I think I was the only one.

I am now to the end of my story what I have written is quite fresh in my memory but there is a lot more partly forgotten which would have made interesting reading 59 years is a long time to think back to & I should have written it years ago