

Ned Kelly, A Musical Story

by Craig Waldron

Featuring Nick Koukoulas on guitar

Ned Kelly has been hanged. It is 1880 and in the streets of Melbourne two opposing groups are expressing their views about the hanging- those who believed Ned was a criminal and those who saw him as a hero. (*'Ned Kelly is a Legend'*)

Ned Kelly was the son of an Irish ex-convict and the third child of 'Red' and Ellen Kelly. 'Red' died leaving Ned to be the 'man' of the house, helping his mother to run a farm and keep food on the table for his many brothers and sisters. A poor family, as were many others, the Kelly's committed crimes such as cattle branding when a cow strayed onto their property. This was a common occurrence among the settlers as they struggled for survival.

One of the troopers, Fitzpatrick, harassed Ned's sister, Kate. Ellen Kelly, Ned's mother, hit him over the head with a shovel, hurting his pride. (*'Get Out'*) She was sentenced to three years gaol for attempting to murder Constable Fitzpatrick. Everything that happened, the troopers wanted to blame the Kelly's (*'Blame it on the Kelly's'*).

Ned's sister, Margaret rushes to tell Ned that he is also being blamed for the attack on Fitzpatrick. Ned leaves with his brother, Dan and his two friends, Steve Hart and Joe Byrne to avoid being captured. (*'They Want You Dead'*)

After some months of hiding out, Ned and the gang find the camp of the troopers who have been hunting them down. Ned shoots three of the troopers in self-defence. He didn't intend this to happen, but he is now a murderer, running from the police. Ellen Kelly is in gaol with her baby and has fears for her sons' safety. (*'An October Morn'*)

Ned and the gang commit a series of robberies, (*'Bail Up'*) and take townsfolk hostage in the local hotel who grow to like him when he tears up their mortgages (*'Have a Drink on Me'*). They encourage him to write a letter to the Governor of Victoria explaining that the troopers are corrupt and that he didn't mean to kill the three troopers. (*'This Letter'*)

Ned's sisters, Kate and Margaret, take Ned to the docks to try to get him on a boat to America, but there are troopers present and the attempt is not successful (*'Don't Come Home'*).

Ned learns that one of his friends, Aaron Sherritt, is a police informer. (*'Aaron Sherritt, he's the Fool'*). One of the gang, Joe Byrne, goes to Aaron Sherritt's house and shoots him dead (*'Ballad of Aaron Sherritt'*).

Ned has a blacksmith make some suits of armour from ploughsheds so that bullets won't penetrate (*'Stand Tall'*).

A train full of troopers heads towards Glenrowan to capture Ned and the gang. Ned is holding the townsfolk hostage in the inn and prepares for the shootout. (*'We Shall not be Moved'*). Ned and the gang dress in their armour (*'Man of Iron'*).

Ellen Kelly, still in gaol, senses the fight is about to happen and urges her sons to fight 'like Kelly's' (*'Spotlight on Ellen Kelly'*)

A fierce gun fight ensues, injuring Ned, killing Joe and trapping Steve and Dan inside the inn along with the hostages. A fire breaks out in the inn. Ned circles around the troopers and fires at them from behind. He has been bleeding profusely and is confused. Finally, the troopers shoot his legs and bring him down. They arrest him (*'Fire'*.) He is tried and found guilty. Ned Kelly is hanged age 31.

The 'Mates' discuss his last words, 'Such is Life' (*'C'est La vie'*). They dream about riding with the Kelly gang (*'Such is Life'*)