

Summary & Media Release on the murders of Special Constables John CARROLL, Patrick KENNAGH, Eneas McDONNELL and John PHEGAN at Duck Pond -Jinden, via Braidwood on 9 January 1867.

One of, if not the most atrocious crimes that stains the history of the colony and present day Australia was perpetrated at Duck Pond - Jinden, 63 kilometres south of Braidwood on the 9 January 1867. The murder of the four special constables to this day constitutes the largest mass murder of police in Australian history (Ned KELLY killed three Victorian police officers at Stringybark Creek in 1878).

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

Many in this day and age describe them as one of Australia's "bloodiest" bushrangers of all time. No one was immune from their wrath, farmers, gold escorts, store keepers, police, publicans and travellers alike.

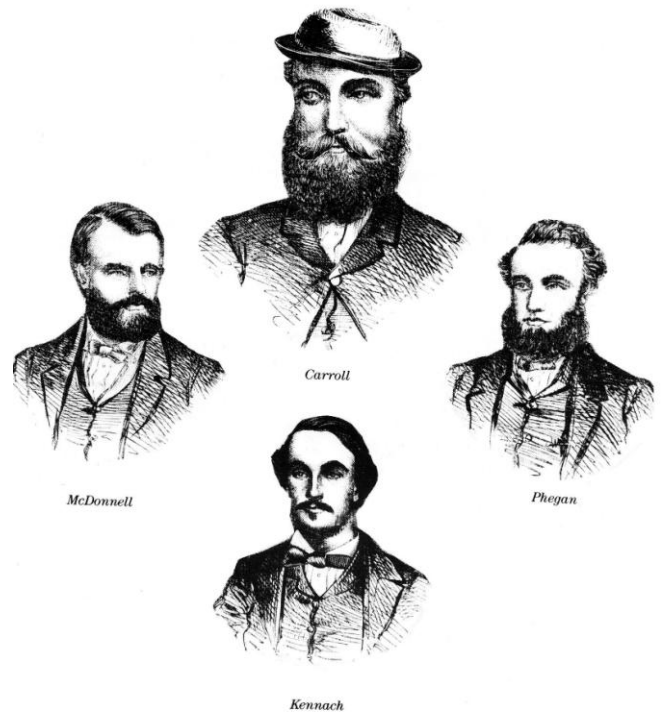
They even returned to the same local homesteads several times to rob and hold them up.

By direct authority of the Colonial Secretary, Sir Henry PARKES a group of special constables (detectives) were sworn in secretly for a special expedition to go forth, search and capture the gang of bushrangers. They were to pose as surveyors, travelled by horse and were heavily armed. The party consisted of Special Constables Patrick KENNAGH (b.1841), Eneas McDONNELL (b.1817), John PHEGAN (b.1837) and their leader John CARROLL (b.1829) (who was also a senior warder at Darlinghurst Goal).

Whilst patrolling very dense bushland in an area known today as Jinden Station (situated on the eastern side of the Cooma road near present day Deua National Park) the party were ambushed on the afternoon of 9 January 1867. Witnesses had heard shooting that afternoon but did not investigate until the following day. In a clearing in the bush McDONNELL and PHEGAN were found shot to death and about 800 metres away were the bodies of CARROLL and KENNAGH. Pinned to the body of CARROLL, their leader was a pound note. From writings at the time; there is a suggestion from their wounds that two of the special constables were executed.

Senior Constable WRIGHT and an Aboriginal Tracker Sir Watkin WYNNE (latter bestowed the title of Sergeant Major) arrested the two surviving members of the Clarke Gang at Berry's hut, near Jinden on Friday 26 April 1867 after a long shoot out. The reward at the time was £5000; one of Australia's highest rewards offered (higher than that of Ned KELLY), even to this day.

The Clarkes trial on the 28 May 1867 lasted just one day. The jury took 67 minutes to find both brothers guilty of attempted murder of Constable Walsh only. They were never tried or convicted for the murders of the police (the four special constables and Constable Miles O'GRADY of Nerrigundah d. 9 April 1886) and some 71 robberies. Thomas CLARKE, 26 and his brother John, 24 were hanged from twin gallows at Darlinghurst Goal on 25 June 1867.





A large memorial for the four special Constables was established at the Braidwood cemetery. A couple of signs on a star picket was placed at the location of the mass murder site at Duck Pond - Jinden by Mr Peter SMITH (local author) in the 1980's.

It is envisaged to commemorate the sacrifice of the four special constables on the 150th anniversary of the ambush and their murders with a special service at 2.30 pm on Monday the 9 January 2017 at the actual site, which is now private property.

The area around Duck Pond is much as it appeared 150 years ago. Not much has changed. It is also proposed to dedicate a small memorial on this hallowed ground that evening. A small group of locals has banded together to commence proceedings. This group includes the property owners of the now Jinden Station, Mr John and Mrs Jenette HINDMARSH, Braidwood's very own claimed author on the Clarke Gang Mr Peter SMITH and Sergeant Paul BATISTA from Queanbeyan Police Station.

The area is very remote and special care and conditions will be required for those that are thinking of attending. A detailed

information sheet will be posted to those guests invited to attend.

