

Ray Nelson's Great Great Grandfather was the policeman shot dead by bushranger John Dunn in Collector 1865

Death of Constable Nelson, Samuel (1827-1865)

On January 26, 1865 Hall's gang held up about thirty persons on the road near Goulburn. A group of police at Collector accompanied by Mr. Voss and a magistrate, went in search of the bushrangers.

A couple of hours later, Hall, Gilbert and Dunn, went into Collector and stuck up Kimberley's Inn. On this reaching the ears of the lock-up keeper, Samuel Nelson, who was the only policeman there, he took his carbine and went up towards Kimberley's. Dunn who had stayed outside, met him on the road, called upon him to stand, firing at the same instant. Then Dunn fired again. Both shots hit Nelson, one on the head, the other in the heart. Dunn robbed Nelson's body of money and other valuables and took his gun. After he committed this murder, Dunn went to Kimberley's Inn, and the bushrangers left the township. Subsequently the police sighted them on the brow of a hill and charged them, the bushrangers fled

Nelson had been in the police force for some years, and was much respected. He left a wife and eight children. Two of his sons saw him shot; one was holding the bushrangers' horses at the time. One son was Frederick Nelson, who was also fired upon by Dunn. Dunn was finally captured on Christmas Day, 1865 and hanged at Darlinghurst Gaol on 19 March 1866. A memorial to Samuel Nelson is at the Collector cemetery, Bourke Street, Church of England Section.

Ray says of Samuel "His salary was about 144 pounds per annum. His wife Elizabeth was eventually given a pension of 50 pounds per annum for 10 years which had to feed 9 people. However the NSW Govt. generously gave her permission to admit any of her eligible children to a Govt orphanage. How sweet! Elizabeth died at Collector in 1914".

The Late Encounter with Ben hall and his Gang. (Trove NLA)

This is a firsthand record of the events with the following extracts of a letter from Mr. District Judge Moymott to his brother. Dr. Meymott. It bears the date, Gunning, January 28th, and the writer stated:-

I am thankful to be able to tell you that I have arrived safely at this place, about halfway between Goulburn and Yass. But though my journey from Goulburn has been safe, it has not been without adventure.

I left Goulburn about eleven forenoon, on Thursday, the, 26th, escorted by two mounted troopers, one in advance, and the other immediately behind my carriage. I came by, way of Collector, partly to visit Mr. Murray and partly in hopes of avoiding the bushrangers who were known or believed to be between this place and Goulburn. However instead of avoiding them, I fell in with them. After having journeyed about eighteen miles, we had to descend rather a long hill winding through thickly wooded country. At the bottom of the hill was open country, and a lagoon called Rowe's Lagoon on the left; on the right, rising hills highly timbered near the base, but increasing in thickness of bush towards the top, where it became dense forest.

When near the lagoon, the trooper in advance galloped on towards the hill on the right, making signs to the man behind to follow, which he very soon did, and away they went at high speed up this hill, I drove gently on down towards the lake, and, on nearing it, I saw eight or ten people under a tree near the water, about fifty yards off the road, and two drays and a cart, and several horses. I drove up to them and found they had been there, some two or three of them, since six in the morning (it was then

past two), having been stuck-up by Ben Hall, Gilbert, and Dunn; the number of persons stuck-up increasing as the day wore on.

The spokesman told me that the ruffians had only a short time before lit a fire and ordered him to make tea for them, and they were about to have a meal (other prisoners being found in the cart) when Dunn, who was on the look-out, spied my advance guard through the trees about half a mile off, and called out " Here's a trap!" Gilbert said, "If there's only one let's face him. Directly afterwards, my carriage and the other trooper coming in sight, Ben Hall said, No, there's more of them, let us be off." So saying, they leaped on their horses and galloped away as hard as they could up the hill I have described, and it was on my advance guard seeing them in the distance, that he put spurs to his horse and made towards that hill. A few moments after I had joined the bailed-up party, my troopers returned, having lost sight of the bush rangers in the thickness of the bush. When the police heard who the men were, for they did not and could not know before (especially as they were fully a mile ahead when the trooper first saw them), they were desirous of going in pursuit.

Mr. Voss, a magistrate, came up at that time, and, after a little consultation, it was thought best for us to come on to Collector. So we parted from the captives, who were very glad to be released, and came on to Collector. Mr. Voss, with what force he could collect, intending to go in pursuit of the bushrangers, and myself proceeding onward to Mr. Murray's, about a mile and a half farther, which I reached in safety shortly after four o'clock.

But the exciting events of the day were not yet over, the worst part remains to be told. About eight o'clock in the evening, Mr. Edwards (Mrs. Murray's brother), came in with the news that the highwaymen had been in to Collector, and had robbed one or two stores, and that while Hall and Gilbert were in a public-house and store kept by Mr. Kindesley, or some such name, (Dunn watching outside,) a policeman was seen to approach, and Dunn shot him dead on the spot. The gang then made off from the place, and, according to rumour, fell in with Mr. Voss and his party. Some shots were exchanged, and the thieves escaped, minus one horse, saddle, and bridle, which are now in custody of the police at Collector. Mr. Edwards also said he had heard that before leaving Collector, the robbers had been heard to state that they meant to visit Mr. Murray's.

This news, of course, created some excitement, but I am pleased to say, no weak, foolish fear among the household. All the available men and arms were, as speedily as possible, collected, the entrances secured, and watch was kept by turn all night.

About ten yesterday, the police came to Mr. Murray's, to escort me onwards; but as the bushrangers were still hovering about in the neighbourhood, I thought it best not to take away two out of three policemen in the place, and that it was much better for them to stay where they were, in case their service might be needed. So we kept watch, and were all day under arms at Mr. Murray's, and the police kept a good look-out about the town ; but all remained quiet.

This morning I heard of one report, that the gang had come on this way. with the determination of attacking me for interfering with them the day before; but another report seemed to be more likely to be correct, viz. that they intended to waylay me and see me safe on the road for some miles with the police, and then to go back and finish robbing the town.

I left Mr. Murray's about 10.30 a.m. with the two troopers and a civilian who was coming this way, and arrived here in safety.

We met two villainous looking fellows on the road, whom the senior constable (Bourke) questioned, but could elicit nothing from them. They were doubtless Ben Hall's scouts, and I think it very possible these fellows would soon have told Hall that I had passed on and that the gang would return to finish their work at Collector. If they do, they will meet with a warm reception, for special constables have been sworn in, and everybody round is prepared to give them battle.

Refs

http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Hall

<http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/nelson-samuel-1513>

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13111866>