

Appendix 6c. Analysis of the Braidwood Police Diary.

We are very fortunate to have one of the two last surviving NSW Police Diaries still in existence.¹ Key points from the *Braidwood Police Diary*, starting from the day of the incursion at Nerrigundah, 9 April 1866, and concluding on the 27 April 1867 when the last members of the gang Tommy and Johnny Clarke were captured, has been summarised in a Police Diary spreadsheet. The time period covers 54 weeks in total. It can be found by accessing the website www.braidwoodbushrangers.com. I have confined this summary to the police activities related to the gang.

Often the police, sometimes one, two or three policemen would look for the bushrangers from one night up to a few days. Constable Walsh spent all of February 1867 searching in the bush. He was the only policeman from Braidwood to do so. One would assume he was with other police from the out stations.

It would be assumed that patrols also went out from all the police stations in the district but we have to remember these outstations did not have many police attached. If discovery ended in a shooting match, the police might not come off too well. Although it has to be noted that the police had so far escaped, unannounced and unscathed.

O'Sullivan² states that at Ballalaba there were three troopers, at Major's Creek two, at Araluen three, at Redbank had four foot police, at Fairfield three troopers, and at Mongarlowe two troopers. The Ballalaba police did show what could be accomplished, despite the odds of distances and lack of man power. They had captured Tom O'Connell and also, in the end, with the Fairfield police, captured Tommy and Johnny. Even so, they could probably have captured the boys a lot earlier if they set up watch on the comings and goings at Mick O'Connell's Traveller's Home. It appears that Mick had been providing sustenance to his brother, Tom and indirectly to his nephews, Tommy and Johnny, for a long time before Tom was captured in November 1866.

The Braidwood Police were criticised heavily, both locally and in the Royal Commission, for their lack of success in capturing the gang. In April 1866 the gang was composed of Tommy and Johnny Clarke, together with their uncles, Tom and his brother, Pat O'Connell. Pat and Tommy were outlawed on the 5 June 1866 for failing to surrender to police. Pat was killed in July 1866 after which James Dornan joined the gang. Tom was captured in November 1866 and James left the district sometime after November 1866. Bill Scott was next to join the gang. Bill left the gang sometime in March 1867. After this, the gang was only made up of Tommy and Johnny. Pat's murder and Tom's capture did not involve the Braidwood police. This was accomplished by the police attached to the out stations of Ballalaba and Fairfield.

1 Source: NSW State Records, *Braidwood Police Diary*, 4/5520.

2 O'Sullivan, *The Bloodiest*, page 126.

Lack of resources.

In defence of the Braidwood police it has to be acknowledged that they lacked the resources necessary for such a daunting enterprise. Undertaking the search for the elusive bushrangers would, for safety and success, require at least six police. The availability of rugged, bush hardened and fresh horses would be a total necessity. It would have been a good idea to have suitable horses available from the police out-stations. The police needed a thorough knowledge of the whole district, and they needed to be very capable riders. Unfortunately this was not always the case.

Hunting the bushrangers was the main concern of the Braidwood Police but normal every day jobs also needed their attention. Town patrols, gaol lock-up keeper, superintendent's groom and clerical duties together with patrolling around district for the benefit of all inhabitants were needed. Other jobs, not covered in the spreadsheet were attendance at church on Sundays, collecting fuel from the bush each week in winter and each fortnight in the other months of the year, preparation for and attendance at Police Court sessions usually every two weeks, and attending Quarter Sessions, accompanying the Nelligen and Foxlow Gold Escorts every month, coach cleaning which appeared to take the greater part of the day, prisoner escort to and from Braidwood, collecting evidence, delivering summons and warrants throughout the district, (although in the Police Diary executing warrants were only mentioned on 11 occasions, but there were almost 100 people going to Braidwood gaol in these weeks.) Despite these extra duties much time, but not enough man power each time, was able to be given to the bushrangers.³

Police were briefly trained then stationed in this lonely, large district. As a guide, there was a Braidwood Police District map published in 1859 which showed the locations of many tracks and properties but once the police went bush to search for the gang, they would have no idea where they were or how far they had travelled on horseback. These locations and distances were never recorded. To patrol off the beaten track might easily result in being lost. The thick bush coverage of the area then is not reflected in the aerial maps of today.

Superintendent John Waistall Orridge, for the Braidwood district, had to inspect the out-stations every few weeks - Araluen, Major's Creek, Ballalaba, Mongarlowe, Foxlow, together with Bungendore once and Fairfield when it opened. Orridge's irresponsible attitude to his whereabouts was reflected in the fact that his times and distances were seldom given to the Diary recorder. His movements could only be ascertained from the information recorded from those accompanying him. One must remember that travel by horse was slow (averaging 5 - 6mph over a distance) and his inspections sometimes necessitated an overnight stay for himself and his aide.

3 See *Time and Manpower* below the spreadsheet, on the web.

Other factors contributing to the lack of success of the Braidwood Police as evidenced from information in the Police Diary.

A variety of different police were on patrol most days. Usually two police per patrol, but I contend not enough if they were looking for the gang members that knew the lie of the surrounding area since childhood. I have included the patrols that were solely devoted to searching for the gang. In the spreadsheet on the web I have added in patrols that took longer than usual and/or were made up of more than two police. Perhaps these patrols were looking for the Clarke gang even though it was not specifically stated. Perhaps some patrols were accompanied by men from one of the out-stations.

Times of absences from the station were recorded and it can be calculated how long the police were at each location - often not very long at all before they started returning home. The actual distance to and from each place is recorded in the first column on the *Police Diary* spreadsheet. The distances recorded at the time, where available, are in the spreadsheet cells.

Safety for the many miners in the gold mining encampments, became a sheer necessity for providing a police presence, as often as possible. Intelligence gathering was paramount to any movements of the gang around these areas. Although it must be stated that there were no reports of the bushrangers frequenting the actual diggings. More time spent at each location, getting to know the inhabitants, would have served the police well and would have helped in overcoming cultural barriers as the miners were from very mixed cultural and racial groups.

Superintendent Orridge's overseeing skills of leadership needs to be examined. From the entries shown in the Diary he spent only 75 days of the 54 weeks, searching for and/or gaining reports of the Clarkes. This figure amounts to only 20 per cent of the 54 weeks. It seems that most of that time was spent in gaining reports of the bushrangers as he was often by himself or with only one other policeman. His time away from Braidwood was often only for part of the day. The vast amount of his time was confined to visiting either Araluen, Jembaicumbene, Reidsdale, Major's Creek or Ballalaba. If the *telegraph situation* was as Parkes and Carroll suggested it could be stated that these, more densely populated areas, had a higher number of the gang's sympathisers. Therefore the relative success of the police presence was unlikely as far as the gang was concerned. Orridge ventured once only to Jinglemoney, Manar, Mongarlowe, Jingera and Bungendore, Gundaroo, Mac's Reef and the Shoalhaven. It wasn't until the four Special Constables were murdered that he travelled to the Jinden and Stony Creek localities. Orridge was only in the *Bush* on two occasions.

In my opinion, this doesn't convey strong *lead-from-the front* qualities. He sent out his men to the *Bush* for 60 single days over this period, sometimes two or three groups in any one week. There were 33 different nights that his policemen stayed out in the bush during this time as well as another eight times the men were out for the whole week. One hundred and eighty-two days in total which is nearly 50% of the 54 weeks examined. It seems that his force, at various times, were in the bush without proper supervision by a promoted officer. The police achieved little success in catching the Clarke gang. Only on one occasion, was it reported that the Braidwood police crossed paths with the gang. I wonder whether Orridge's practice of demonising the gang made those police under his command hesitant and uncomfortable when on their patrol duties? Further more, was Orridge himself too scared to lead his men into these outlying areas?

After the Specials were found murdered in early January 1867 police numbers were increased and initially stationed in Braidwood before some were transferred to the out-stations.. The Government's response led to a large increase in patrols undertaken throughout the *Bush* around Foxlow, Ballalaba, Bungendore, Manar, Major's Creek and Stony Creek. These areas should have been the initial areas of interest for the police to patrol instead of wasting time and effort in safe places close to Braidwood. If it was worth establishing these out stations then it was worth staffing them adequately.

The *Braidwood Police Diary* further indicates that the police were on duty any day or night of the week unless prevented by sickness. Orridge was absent from Braidwood over many nights and weekends, not supervising his police in town. There were rumours in the township that some police were associating too well with the criminal elements of society, which of course, drew criticism from the law-abiding citizens and the Orridge was questioned in the Royal Commission into Crime in the Braidwood District. Senior Sergeant Duffy may have been perfectly capable of gaining information on the gang and inspecting the out-stations. Another Senior Sergeant, Philip Smith was also attached to Braidwood.

Orridge had replaced Chief Constable Thomas Hogg on 9 February 1864. Hogg had been shown to be quite capable of capturing future members of the gang and bringing them to court on 12 different occasions in the seven and a half years dating from July 1856.⁴ Unfortunately, much like Orridge, he often could not provide enough solid evidence for a conviction. Hogg and Geelan had not let any fear of confrontation prevent them from going after these future gang members.

Presumably Hogg and Geelan knew the district extremely well. Orridge perhaps should have made more use of Geelan's bush skills. This may indicate a clash of personalities, perhaps Geelan criticised Orridge for not actively searching for the bushrangers as Hogg had done. Geelan was dismissed from the force on 15 February 1867.⁵

The *Braidwood Police Diary* is also very useful for relating Braidwood police involvements in numerous investigations, at the time of the various suspected robberies. In the 54 weeks from 9 April 1866 to 27 April 1867, eight suspected crimes were issued with warrants. Of these only two crimes were examined in court. There were 33 more suspected crimes that did not attract a warrant. Only 14 of these crimes deserved the attention of the Braidwood police. Only one of these crimes, that of Tom O'Connell wounding John Emmott at Nerrigundah, was ever tested in a court of law. Tommy and Johnny were never questioned about their suspected crimes, when later arrested.

One has to ask on what basis were the suspicions of seven murders and 92 robberies made?

4 See *Suspected Offences and Consequences* on the web page.

5 NSWPG, 6 March 1867 and *Braidwood Police Diary*.