THE SANDY CREEK BUSHRANGER
A Definitive History Of Ben Hall, His Gang And Associates

by EDGAR F. PENZIG
THE SANDY CREEK BUSHRANGER

A Definitive History Of Ben Hall, His Gang and Associates.

by EDGAR F. PENZIG

For the first time an historian tells the true story of the notorious bushranger, Ben Hall, proving with facts and figures that the romantic image built up around this villain for over one hundred years is completely false.

The book, packed with fine detail, including never before published material and illustrations, clearly shows that the truth is far more interesting and exciting than the thousands of words of fiction which have been written previously about this colonial criminal.

Careful research reveals much information regarding Hall's early life, and his involvement in unlawful activities, while the illustrations include every known photograph of the bushranger and members of his immediate family. Likewise the firearms used during this period are covered in detail, both illustrative and written. These sections alone expose the errors made by every other author when writing about Ben Hall and the bushranging period.

In all, a fascinating study of one of the most notorious figures from that period of history which has become known as Australia's wild colonial days.
INTRODUCTION

I have written this book in an attempt to correct the erroneous writings of many past author-historians, who for decades have presented a completely false image with regards to Ben Hall the bushranger, someone who plagued the western districts of New South Wales during the early 1860s.

Using primary source material, which incidentally was available to all preceding historians (but apparently never used) it can be proved that Hall was nothing more than a thieving, robbing, arsonist, who was also guilty of attempted murder, shooting with intent to murder, being an accomplice to murder, beating a man and possibly a woman, and holding people for ransom under threat of death. It is unfortunate that past and present author-historians have in numerous cases inadvertently, and in others deliberately, re-written our history so as to make Ben Hall appear as some wronged person, forced into battle with an unjust system.

The oft repeated fallacy of Ben Hall being a victim of police persecution is also demolished with the evidence contained in this manuscript, clearly showing that he was heavily involved in both of the crimes for which he was originally charged, and which have always been used as the basis for the excuse of him turning to criminal activity.

The person most responsible for the web of respectability which has been created around the character of Ben Hall, is the late Frank Clune, who in his book "Wild Colonial Boys", which was first released in 1948, purported to present to the people what he stated was the true story of the bushranger. Packed with dates and figures, which everyone took to be correct, it became an Australian classic, and is still being sold as such to this day.

In this book Clune wrote that the text was "authentic history throughout", and that "no liberties had been taken with facts", and that is there were any errors they were "derived from the sources of information" he had relied upon.

I must strongly dispute his statements, because during my years of research preparing this manuscript, I have found many cases where the original incident involving Ben Hall, or other such criminal characters, was reported in every press and official document word for word in unison with each other, yet Clune appears to have re-written them to show the villains in a favourable light. Such a case was Hall's attempted murder of Sub-Inspector Norton. The Clune version completely leaves out the attempted shooting of the policeman. On top of that, many of Clune's quoted dates can be proved to be nine months, a year, two years, and even six years out, plus important characters are given incorrect names of classifications.

However it is not only Clune who has sinned in this area, because for years many journalists and folk-singers have also assisted with misguided enthusiasm to paint a picture of bushrangers as some sort of proletarian freedom fighters, who were battling the bourgeoisie.

Nothing could be further from the truth. They did not just rob the rich, they robbed everyone, the majority of which were ordinary working class people, and this fact is vividly presented all throughout this manuscript. Yet this is the type of person which has been held up to the uninformed as folk heroes. No, they were not heroes. They were bush criminals who shot, wounded, bashed, burnt, and committed murder, unless their commands were obeyed, and the evidence presented throughout the following pages clearly shows Ben Hall involved in all of these crimes.

Also, for the first time in any bushranging publication, the firearms used by the civilians, bushrangers, and police, are fully explained. As nearly every one-storied bark hut contained up to six pistols and longarms, these items are an important part of our history, and are invaluable as a means of dating photographs, etc.

A classic example of this is a photograph I once saw in a southern districts country museum. It was of a group of armed mounted troopers, two of which were marked with crosses, naming them as policemen who had been killed by bushrangers in 1864. However this assumption was easily disproven by pointing out to the curator that while some of the troopers pictured were in fact armed with weapons of that period, several others were holding Alexander Henry carbines which were not manufactured until 1875.

Now, while authors and historians on every other subject have studied all facets of what they were researching (for example, if they were writing about early wood-workers, then they researched the tools used on those days) it is a sad but true fact, that all previous author-historians have completely failed to do any research into the tools of the bushrangers and the police — their firearms. This has led to the most ridiculous statements throughout their manuscripts, thereby ruining what would otherwise have been excellent publications. In a similar fashion, they also ignored vital information re the clothing and uniforms of the period.

Finally, Ben Hall has to be the greatest example of a combined and continual white-wash campaign carried out over a long period by authors and others, who in many cases deliberately changed historical facts so as to create a romanticized and fictional character like Robin Hood. But unfortunately for them, the facts, all obtained from primary source material, prove otherwise.
The author, Edgar F. Penzig. In recognition of his considerable contribution to Australian history, he was made a Fellow of the Australian Institute of History and Arts in 1980.