

The End of the Gang (Front page news from *The Age*, 29 June 1880)

Immediately on the receipt of the news by Captain Standish on Sunday night that the Kelly's had at last broken cover, and committed another diabolical outrage near Beechworth, he ordered a special train at once to start from Spencer Street. He was induced to do so because of the fact that Sub inspector O'Connor had, with his black trackers, been withdrawn from the Kelly country. They were on the eve of their departure for Queensland, and were staying at Essendon. Captain Standish ordered the special train to convey the blacks to the scene of the outrage, so that they might there pick up the tracks of the dreaded gang; but no one at that time imagined that the expedition would have such a speedy and sensational termination; that, in fact, it would end in the annihilation of the band in a manner that must strike terror into the hearts of all sympathizers and men inclined to imitate the doings of the gang. When the news arrived at the station that a special train was required, all the engines were cold, and it was not till a quarter past ten o'clock that a start, was made; and the small party of press gentlemen, who in good spirits took their seats in the carriage, little thought that the journey they were undertaking was of such a perilous nature. Only one gentleman was armed. At Essendon Inspector O'Connor and his five black trackers were picked up, together with Mrs O'Connor and her sister, Miss Smith. (Those ladies intended to proceed to Beechworth and remain there whilst we went in pursuit of the gang.)

[Some material deleted here.]

The night was a splendid one, the moon shining with unusual brightness, whilst the sharp frosty air caused the slightest noise in the forest beyond to be distinctly heard. It was thought that the Kellys or some of their friends might place an obstruction on the line, and in order that danger in this direction should be avoided as much as possible, it was determined to lash one of the police to the front of the engine, so that he might there keep a good look out. At the last moment this plan was abandoned, and it is a merciful intervention of Providence that it was so. Time certainly was lost by the change of tactics, but the loss was gain. There was a spare engine in the station, and it was determined to use this as a pilot.