

Kelly was Irish to his boot heels

LEONARD RADIC learns more about a folk hero

NED KELLY not only had an Irish-type brogue. He thought with a brogue as well.

"Although Ned was born here he didn't regard himself as an Australian, any more than an Englishman born in India regards himself as an Indian," Mr. Ian Jones, the co-scriptwriter of the Ned Kelly film claimed in Melbourne yesterday.

"Critics of the casting of Mick Jagger as Ned have ignored this fact. Though he loved Australia and the Australian bush, Ned remained, I think, an Irishman at heart."

Mr. Jones, 37, a director of Crawford Productions and a pioneer of Australia's most successful drama series, *Homicide*, worked on the Kelly film script with Tony Richardson for three weeks in London in January.

"I met him first on his visit to Melbourne last November," Mr. Jones explained. "We talked Kelly for a couple of hours over lunch. We found we had a large measure of agreement on the main facts of Ned's character."

AND WHAT ARE the main facts of Ned's character? Mr. Jones, who has been a student of the Kelly gang since reading a biography of the outlaw 27 years ago ("it all but canonised him"), did not hesitate.

"Kelly's story is a classic one of a rebel, not a criminal," he said. "He was, I think, criminally guilty."

"But if you try to see him simply as a criminal, you're lost. There are so many loose ends to the story, so many non-sequiturs."

"Take his supporters, for example. If they were just a bunch of people supporting criminals in the hope of getting a share of the spoils their support should have foundered as soon as the gang was destroyed."

"In fact, the rebellion was heightened after Ned's execution and the gang's death."

"If you say that the gang's acts were those of a group of policeman-murderers or callous criminals, you have to conclude they were terribly

cowardly, terribly lazy or terribly inefficient.

"The indications are that the gang was none of these."

Mr. Jones said he and Richardson were agreed on their assessment of Kelly as "a primitive rebel".

"THERE IS MUCH more to his character than the Ned Kelly of folk song and ballad fame."

"The folk Kelly was concerned with injustice to his mother and family. But the real Kelly was a partisan or guerilla type."

"He was against British authority and also against the Irish quislings who had turned against their own countrymen and sold themselves to the Queen."

"He is an enigmatic character in some ways, but basically I find him an



Mr. IAN JONES

honest and straightforward character."

Mr. Jones was hoping to meet Richardson last night or today to discuss changes in the script since their first joint draft.

"I understand there have been changes," he said. "That is inevitable. A script like this is a developing thing. I would think Tony would make more changes still while filming is in progress."

"But I'd think there'd be no real change in the man's character as we first saw it. It doesn't make sense to see him as anything but a rebel."