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<https://www.smh.com.au/national/ned-kelly-saved-our-drowning-dad-the-softer-side-of-old-bucket-head-20010801-gdfn0j.html>

### **Ned Kelly saved our drowning dad ... the softer side of old bucket head**

Harold and Britton Shelton have many yarns collected over most of the 20th century but underpinning them all is a story from another century - of the day 135 years ago when a larrikin lad saved their father from drowning.

The lad would later gain infamy as Ned Kelly.

Edward Kelly was 11 when - at some risk to himself - he plucked seven-year-old Richard Shelton from Hughes Creek in Victoria. The boy was to become the father of four daughters and eight sons. Harold, 91, and Britton, 87, who live in Melbourne, are the youngest and last survivors of Dick Shelton's large brood.

The brothers don't recall their father ever expanding on the story, although local folklore and the reminiscences of their older siblings ensure that sketchy details of that day are preserved in stories of Ned Kelly's life.

But the brothers do remember that all his life their father was asked about Ned Kelly and he always replied brusquely: "He was all right."

Esau and Elizabeth Shelton - proprietors of Avenel's Royal Mail Hotel, near Seymour - presented Kelly with a green sash, fringed with bullion, in recognition of his bravery in saving their son. Kelly was wearing the sash under his armour at his last shootout at Glenrowan.

The story of the brave young Ned was recalled yesterday as the State Library of Victoria paid more than \$200,000 for Kelly's left shoulder guard, shot off during the 1880 siege at Glenrowan.

It was the last piece of Kelly's fatal battle gear still in private hands. The State Library will display it with the Kelly helmet and breast-plate it already owns.

The piece fetched the high price at a Christie's auction, after being valued between \$150,000 and \$250,000.

State librarian Ms Fran Awcock said she was "thrilled and delighted" the armour was back in public ownership. She said the Federal Government had used heritage funds to help the State Library buy the piece, but would not specify how much.

The library, criticised by historians in the past for neglecting Kelly relics, now has a policy of acquiring Kelly items and has its eye on other pieces of armour.

Kelly's other shoulder piece is owned by Museum Victoria, while the Police Museum has his backplate.

The shoulder piece, fashioned from the mould board of a plough, is 25 centimetres long and weighs 2.37 kilograms. It was authenticated with the help of Kelly historian Mr Ian Jones.

Constable Patrick Charles Gascoigne, a member of the police party, claimed it after the battle and it was passed on to his descendants.

Other items of Ned Kelly paraphernalia sold yesterday included a transcription of the Jerilderie letter, a confession dictated by Kelly - which he intended to have printed - of his gang's hold-up of the Riverina town. It sold to an undisclosed bidder for \$50,000.