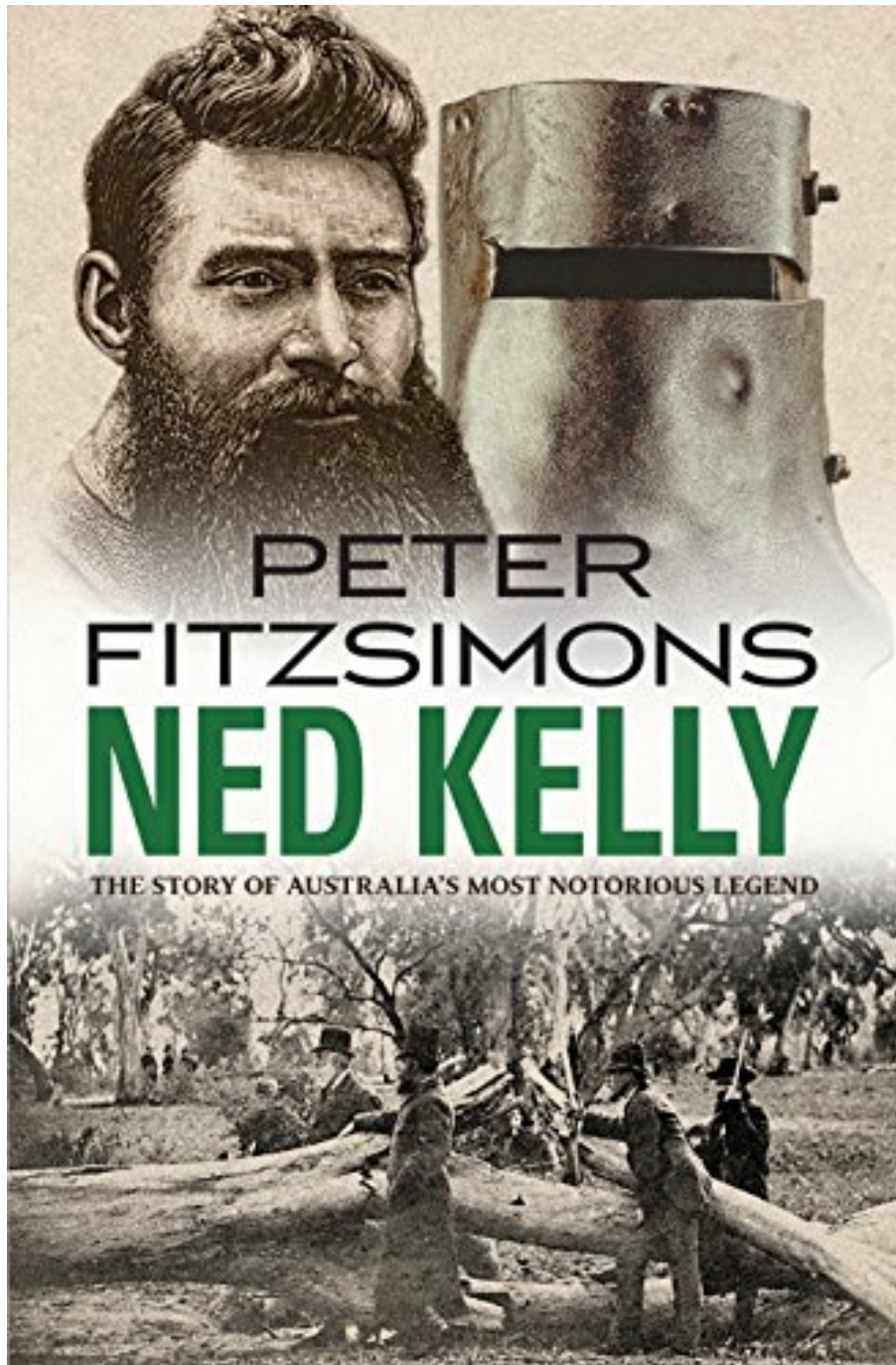


NED KELLY BY PETER FITZSIMONS



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Review

"The Kelly book that exceeds Peter Carey's novel ... completely felt, viscerally characterised ... it success as compelling historical narrative ... the bantering, zesty prose takes you in and keeps you there. But it is FitzSimons' skill at creating a sense of a fully lived inner world that achieves a consistently transformative effect on the reader's mental world - the mark of a very good book indeed." -- Alex McDermott
CANBERRA TIMES

About the Author

Peter FitzSimons is a journalist with the Sun-Herald and the Sydney Morning Herald, and the author of more than 20 books, including Gallipoli.

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Love him or loathe him, Ned Kelly has been at the heart of Australian culture and identity since he and his gang were tracked down in bushland by the Victorian police and came out fighting, dressed in bulletproof iron armour made from farmers' ploughs.

Historians still disagree over virtually every aspect of the eldest Kelly boy's brushes with the law. Did he or did he not shoot Constable Fitzpatrick at their family home? Was he a lawless thug or a noble Robin Hood, a remorseless killer or a crusader against oppression and discrimination? Was he even a political revolutionary, an Australian republican channelling the spirit of Eureka?

Peter FitzSimons, bestselling chronicler of many of the great defining moments and people of this nation's history, is the perfect person to tell this most iconic of all Australian stories. From Kelly's early days in Beveridge, Victoria, in the mid-1800s, to the Felons' Apprehension Act, which made it possible for anyone to shoot the Kelly gang, to Ned's appearance in his now-famous armour, prompting the shocked and bewildered police to exclaim 'He is the devil!' and 'He is the bunyip!', FitzSimons brings the history of Ned Kelly and his gang exuberantly to life, weighing in on all of the myths, legends and controversies generated by this compelling and divisive Irish-Australian rebel.

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Most helpful customer reviews

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Fitzsimons falls short

By Dee

For anyone unaware of the controversies and uncertainties about the historical truths of the life of Ned Kelly, this book will be an enjoyable read, as the story is well told and the details and embellishments do indeed liven it up. However, the story of Ned Kelly has been told many many times, almost universally in sympathetic terms, so one immediately has to ask, why another one? What new angle is he going to adopt? I

read Fitzsimons book "Eureka" and found it enthralling. He set the story in the widest possible context of Victorian pioneering and political and social life in the mid 19th century and so I was hoping he would do the same for the Kelly story. My hopes were raised further by pre-publication advertising for the book, claiming Fitzsimons would be "weighing in on all the myths legends and controversies generated by this compelling and divisive Australian Rebel"

In fact the book does nothing of the sort. It is unfortunately just another sympathetic and very long recounting of the same old stories everyone already knows, with a noticeable absence of any discussion of any number of the critical "myths legends and controversies": and almost nothing that is new other than Fitzsimons own embellishments designed to "bring the story to life'. For example he doesn't mention or comment on the allegations of the Kellys that Constable Fitzpatrick groped Ellens 14 year old daughter Kate, the supposed trigger for the entire "outbreak"; the uncertainties about George King and his fate are not mentioned, the forensic evidence relating to the numbers of wounds and bullets in the bodies of the dead policemen at Stringybark Creek isnt discussed, there is almost no mention of the entire "Republic" conspiracy so beloved of Fitzsimons mentor Ian Jones, and so on. It would appear that the author was trying not to offend anyone on either side of the ongoing debate about Kellys legacy - good or bad - and inevitably has produced something which neither offends nor excites. The "elephant in the room" in my opinion is his failure to read and list among the 60 or so books in his bibliography, arguably the most important and original work on the subject in the last twenty years, Ian MacFarlanes "The Kelly Gang Unmasked". Fitzsimons has said that the reason he didnt read The Kelly Gang Unmasked was because Ian Jones "hated it". This failure reduces the books authority, emasculates the story somewhat, and relegates Fitzsimons book to "just another sympathetic Kelly story" In my view its not good enough to displace Ian Jones "Ned Kelly : a short life" from the top of the pro-kelly reading list.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Great read

By RUSSELL VESSEY

Found it hard to put down. Interesting subject, well written and found out much more about Ned Kelly than I knew before.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Great book

By Jeff Fox

The English class system has a lot to answer for. By design it pitted working class (the Police) against the remainder of the the working class ensuring that all concerned are just pawns in their greater game. Parallels can be seen today where corporations use working class to do their dirty work - using workers to act without conscious against those of the same ilk. The more I read of Peter FitzSimons work the more I see we are still just miners and selectors versus the squatters.

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