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MEDIA RELEASE – for immediate release

Old bones and new science - Ned Kelly's story lives on.

This morning's announcement by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) completes another chapter in the story of Ned Kelly, yet the question still remains - if it's not the skull of Ned Kelly, then whose is it?

VIFM has been able to positively identify some of the remains exhumed in an archaeological dig performed by Heritage Victoria at Pentridge in 2008.

In 1978 a skull, thought to have been that of Ned Kelly, was stolen from its display case at the National Trust's Old Melbourne Gaol and was lost for more than 30 years. That was until West Australian farmer Tom Baxter handed it back to authorities in Victoria in 2009. A team of forensic scientists at the VIFM were then given the task of confirming its identity.

The announcement today by VIFM and Attorney-General Robert Clark, brings to an end years of speculation over the authenticity of the skull, and opens a new chapter in Ned Kelly's story.

"Whilst we now know that the skull stolen from our collection is not Neds, we are still more than delighted with the results of the VIFM investigation and The Trust is proud of its part in uncovering the story of Ned's bones. The unexpected discovery of so much of Ned's remains during this investigation is simply amazing.

As for the skull, the National Trust has an ethical policy for the treatment of human remains and we no longer collect, curate or display them. We believe that all the remains now held that have been removed from Pentridge, just some of the more than 135 prisoners executed at Old Melbourne Gaol should be reunited as appropriate and in due course reinterred. We have of course not given up hope that the identity of the skull will in due course be discovered." says Katie Symons, Curator at the National Trust of Australia (Vic).

Simon Dalton, Programs Development Manager, at the Old Melbourne Gaol says "Ned Kelly is a legendary Australian outlaw who was put to death on November 11, 1880 at the Old Melbourne Gaol. What happened to the body of one of Australia's most iconic figures after he died has been a huge source of controversy ever since.

One of the major leads the scientific team had is Ned Kelly's death mask, currently on display at the Old Melbourne Gaol made just an hour after he was put to death.

Confirmation that many of the bones exhumed did belong to Ned Kelly means that another piece of the puzzle has been put in place."

The Kelly family story is one that continues to intrigue us all. The Trusts ongoing commitment to telling the story of Crime and Justice, with the Old Melbourne Gaol showcasing Ned's Story, as well as the story of the other 134 men and woman who were put to death, with daily tours and displays makes it easily accessible for the public to follow the stories.

The Trust is planning an exhibition in 2012 called *The Kelly Remains: 1880 to 2011*. The main focus of the exhibition will be the story of Ned Kelly's remains and the investigations conducted by the VIFM. The exhibition will look at the process of capital punishment, burial and the eventual exhumation of remains at Melbourne Gaol and Pentridge Prison, and the modern forensic investigation undertaken to solve the mysteries surrounding Kelly's skull and bones.

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For further information or to arrange an interview please contact: Cassandra O'Brien, Media & Communications Coordinator on 0416 009 271 or 03 9656 9805.

Available for Interview

Martin Purslow - CEO of the National Trust of Australia (Vic)

Katie Symons - Curator, Collections and Interpretation Team the National Trust of Australia (Vic)

Simon Dalton – Programs Development Manager, the Old Melbourne Gaol

