



## Fact Sheet

### The Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum

One of Australia's oldest museums, Beechworth's Burke Museum boasts a fascinating and historically significant collection of more than 30,000 individual items, many dating back to its establishment more than 150 years ago and some linked to famous and infamous figures of history such as Ned Kelly, Dame Nellie Melba and of course, the museum's namesake, Robert O'Hara Burke.

The Burke is a must-see for school groups of all ages. Students are given a short introduction to the Museum and a 'seek and find' sheet that takes them on a self guided tour of the amazing collections. These include the extensive collection of **Aboriginal artefacts** purchased from R.E. Johns in 1868 which is of major national cultural significance. It is one of the oldest and most comprehensive single collections of its type surviving in the 21st Century and comprises 96 items, including finely crafted and richly decorated wooden weapons, digging sticks and baskets. The artefacts are considered to be important early examples of weaponry/objects, some in use prior to European contact showing the great skill of the Aboriginal craftsmen using pre-European technologies and materials.

Other highlights of the Burke Museum collections include:

- **The Chinese Collection.** Reflecting the history of the Chinese mining community in Beechworth from their arrival following the Buckland Riots in 1857 when they were driven away by the European miners. The Burke's collection presents their subsequent settlement and involvement in local community affairs in the first half of the 19th century.
- **Goldmining Collection:** The discovery of gold at Beechworth in 1852 dictated the course of history and the dramatic development of the town and surrounding area. The Gold Collection presents the rushes in the area, including Spring Creek, Pennyweight Flat, Woolshed, Nine Mile and Three Mile.
- **Natural History Collection:** The Burke Museum was established at the height of the period between 1820 and 1870 when the pursuit of scientific knowledge through the collection of specimens taken from nature was most popular. The main elements of this collection are the bird and mammal items from local and regional areas as well as from overseas. The endangered Regent Honeyeater, which is a visitor to the nearby Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park, is one of the important bird specimens of the collection. A rare example of the now extinct Tasmanian Tiger is another highlight of this collection.
- **Ned Kelly Collection:** Beechworth and the Ned Kelly story are inextricably linked. All four members of the Kelly Gang spent time in Beechworth Gaol, Ned for a total of two years. Ned appeared in the Beechworth Courthouse on August 6 1880 on a charge of murder. He was committed to stand trial here before returning to Melbourne for his Supreme Court trial and subsequent hanging. The Burke Museum Ned Kelly Collection includes a life-sized copy of Ned Kelly's armour and one of the four death masks taken of Ned after his execution. These objects are presented within their local and regional historical context through copies of original documents and photographs that present the life and times of the Kelly Gang.
- **The Street of Shops:** This 19<sup>th</sup> century recreation of a Beechworth streetscape is a unique visitor experience which includes a sound-scape and a regular program of temporary exhibitions.



**Open daily 10am to 5pm (closed Christmas Day)**

**Booking enquiries phone 1300 366 321, email [visit\\_beechworth@indigoshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:visit_beechworth@indigoshire.vic.gov.au) or visit [www.beechworthonline.com.au](http://www.beechworthonline.com.au)**

**Duration: One hour**