

# Colonial Violence in Victoria

Dr Bill Pascoe, University of Melbourne and University of Newcastle

# Acknowledgements

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Kulin Nation

Awabakal, Worimi

Yagera, Kabi Kabi

# Warning

This presentation discusses extreme cases of historical violence.

Graphic details will be avoided.

# Colonial Frontier Massacres Project

Professor Lyndall Ryan

Commenced in 2014

Nearing completion with volunteer effort

## **Historians and Knowledge holders and truth tellers**

### **Project:**

Lyndall Ryan, Jennifer Debenham, Chris Owen, Robyn Smith, Jonathan Richards, Robert Anders, Stephanie Gilbert, Kaine Usher, Dan Price.

### **Learnings from\*:**

Lyall Munro Jnr, Gillar Mike Anderson, Boe Spearim, Rachel Perkins, Gary Foley, Marcia Langton, Clifford Possum Tjappaltjarri, Brooke Collins-Gearing, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Godfrey Stanner, Henry Reynolds, Ray Kerkhove, Stephen Gapps, Callum Clayton Dixon, Amanda Nettelbeck, Robert Foster, P Gardner,  
and many, many more.

\*doesn't necessarily imply their endorsement of this work

## Consultation & Collaboration

- Prof. Ryan's life time of experience and contacts
- Sessions at Wollotuka, UON
- AIATSIS meetings
- Advisors and staff
- Community visits
- Conferences
- Conversations
- Online feedback form

c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php

**Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1788 to 1930**

Please read the [Introduction](#) for more information about this map.

NB: Points are imprecise to approx. 250m. Sources rarely provide an exact location and some incidents took place over a broad area.

Please be advised that the *Colonial Frontier Massacre Map* has undergone regular revision. Massacre site information may be modified, removed or added to as more information becomes available. See [Updates and Changes](#).

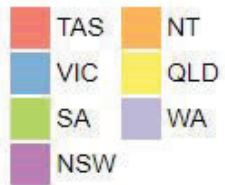
1/31/1780 - 1/31/1930

1790 1800 1810 1820 1830 1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930

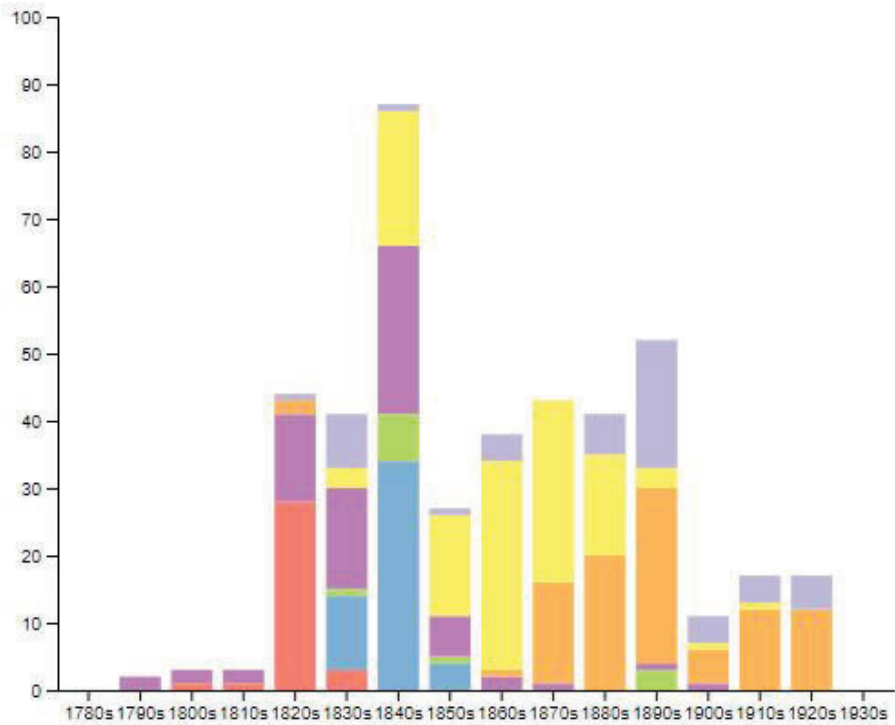
Earthstar Geographics | Colonial Frontier Massacres Team | Esri, HERE, Garmin | Powered by Esri

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>

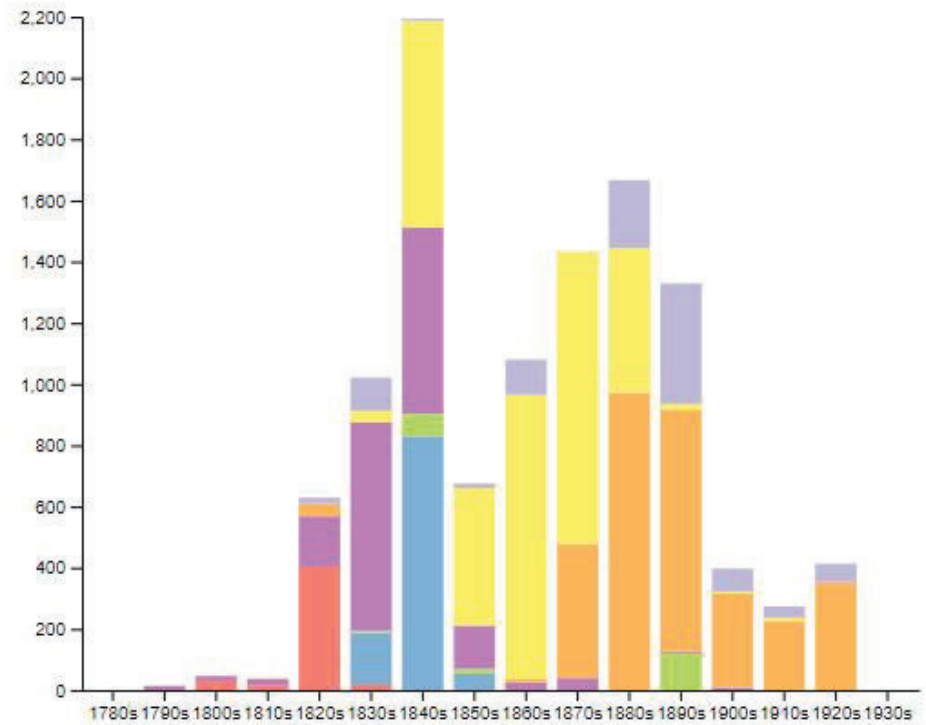
## Change Over Time



**Total Frontier Massacres by Decade and by State**



**Total Victims of Frontier Massacres by Decade and by State**



<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/statistics.php>



## Findings

(conservative estimates, of recorded massacres of 6 or more people)

	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Victoria</b>
Massacres:	<b>426</b>	<b>49</b>
Massacres of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people by Colonists:	404	46
Massacres of Colonists by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people:	13	1
Massacres of Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people:	5	2
Total Victims of Frontier Massacres:	<b>11,206</b>	<b>1053</b>
Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders victims of massacres by Colonists:	10,088	1045
Colonist victims of massacres by Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders:	159	8
Frontier massacres involving agents of the state in the attack:	216 or 51%	8 or 16%

## 8 Massacres In Victoria Involving ‘Agents of the State’

Site Name	Language Group	Victims	Attackers	Date	URL
Restdown Plains Station, Djabwurrung Campaspe River		40	Mounted Police	1839-06-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=508">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=508</a>
Victoria Range	Djabwurrung or Nundadjali	20	Native Police	1843-08-06	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=542">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=542</a>
Fitzroy River, Western District	Dhauwurd wurrung	10	Native Police	1843-09-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=543">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=543</a>
Crawford River	Dhauwurd wurrung or Wulluwurrung	9	Native Police	1843-09-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=544">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=544</a>
Clunie, Glenelg River	Nundadjali or Mardidjali	6	Native Police	1843-11-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=545">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=545</a>
Mt Arapiles / Dyurrite	Mardidjali	6	Native Police	1845-07-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=548">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=548</a>
Snowy River	Tatungalung or Krauatungalang	50	Native Police	1846-12-20	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=550">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=550</a>
Aire River Estuary, Cape Otway	Gadubanud	8	Government Surveyor	1846-08-01	<a href="https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=743">https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=743</a>

## Government Culpability

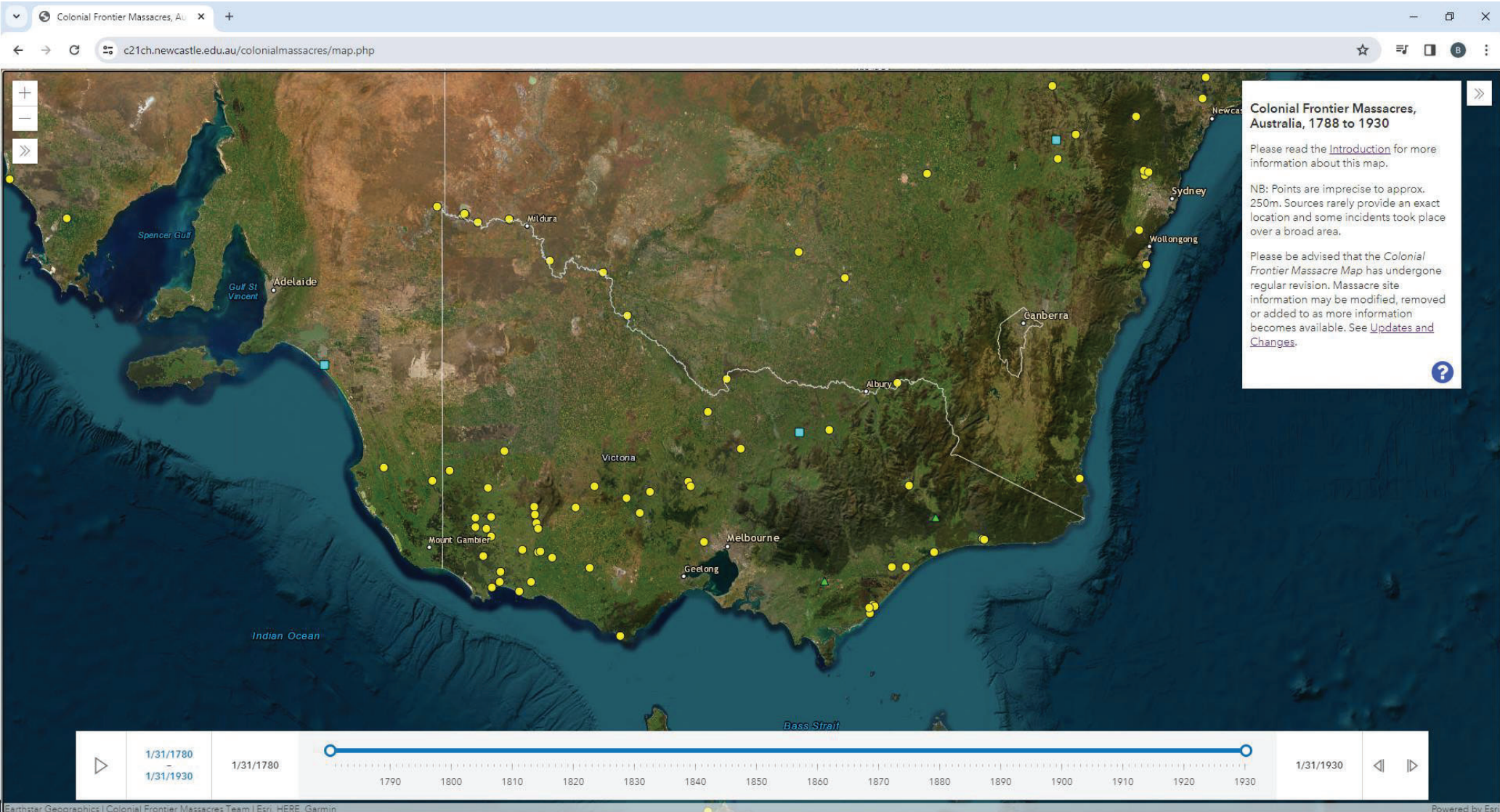
- De jure and de facto
- The Irish mounted police model
  - Convict uprising
  - Bushranging
  - Indigenous insurgency
- Limits of Location and squatting
- Gov. Gipps' dilemma
  - Squatters petition, 1838
  - Reformist British Government
  - The 'military mounted police'
  - Government 'control' of violence
  - Code of silence and Myall Creek
  - Practice established: police and militia posses as de facto military
- *Small Wars* - Major General Sir Charles Edward Callwell, 1896
- Vested interests: eg, the AA company and a blind eye

## Escalation to War

- Occupation and exploitation of resources
- Destruction of lands and waters
- Sexual violence
- Violation of sacred sites
- Draconian British law

# Indigenous Resistance

- Economic warfare
- Targeted killing
- Strategic use of lands and waters, eg: Eumeralla strongholds
- Strategic coordination of action across great distances
- Spies in colonial employ
- Tactical advantages, eg: knowledge of country, stealth, food



<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>

## War In The South East

THE simultaneous aggressive movement of the Aborigines throughout the entire colony, and along its boundaries, commenced in 1842, and continued through the two or three succeeding years, **belongs to the history of the country.**

For more than two years the **warfare** which the blacks waged upon the stations situate along the boundaries of the colony, from one extreme to the other, was universal, implacable, and incessant.

So simultaneous, indeed, and so general was the movement, that, did we not know, from the habits and condition of the blacks, that such a thing would be impossible, a belief would be encouraged that the on-slaught of the Aborigines on the lives and property of the settlers was the result of **a perfect organisation**, effected with all the aids of negotiation, secret intrigue, and general assemblies.

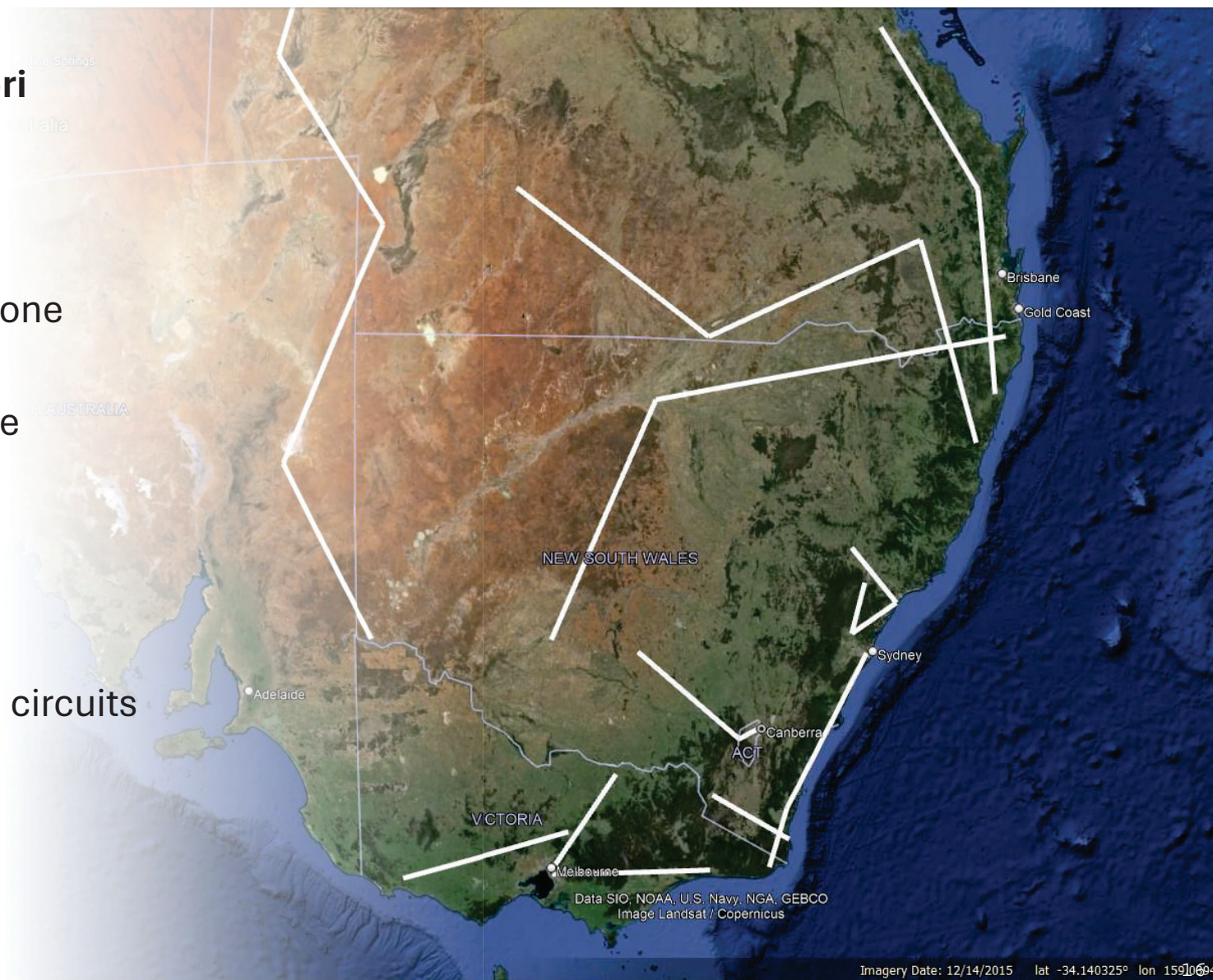
From Wide Bay to Port Phillip, the organization seemed to extend, and scarcely a day elapsed without tidings reaching the city of some remote station being driven in, some flock driven away or speared, some shepherd or hutkeeper being wounded or killed.

"THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA." Empire (Sydney, NSW : 1850 - 1875) 15 April 1854: 3. Web. 23 Mar 2024 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60151188>.

Provided by Ray Kerkhove

## Some Major Murri and Koori Journey Way Networks (trade feasts and travel)

- Smoked Eel and Greenstone
- Mallee to Pitjuri
- Kulin & Kurnai Corroboree
- Bundian Way
- Ngan Girra
- Wiradjuri Bogong
- Black Duck Way
- Whale, mullet and Yengo circuits
- Ngunnhu
- Bunya





views.tlcmmap.org/v2.0.3/collection-timeline.html?load=https%3A%2F%2Fghap.tlcmmap.org%2Fmultilayers%2F41%2Fjson%3Fsort%3Dstart

**South Road War**

Following the Wiradjuri Homeland Wars ("Bathurst Wars"), and the explorations of Mitchell, Hume and Hovell, in the midst of the Tasmanian genocide, settlers from Tasmania (Lutruwita/Van Diemen's Land) established Melbourne. The overland route between Sydney and Melbourne was one of three major inland roads in the colony extending north, west and south from Sydney. The south road is now known as the Hume Highway. Aboriginal groups along the south road were connected by traditional travel and trade routes and regularly came together at corroborees for ceremonies and to settle disputes and so were well equipped to coordinate action across large areas. 'Overlanders' herding sheep to establish

squatting runs encountered guerilla resistance from Aboriginal people along the full extent of the road in Waywurrucountry, Yorta Yorta, Bangerang, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung and the Kulin Nation (Victoria). Colonists retreated and reinforcements of mounted police failed to find any of the warriors for some time. Merriman, with his brother Harlequin, are regarded as among the leaders in this part of the resistance. Raids were primarily targetted at colonist's logistics and economics - ie: driving off and killing sheep, raiding stores and burning grain. Killings of colonists were mostly targeted at individuals according to Aboriginal law, such as killing people, rape and abduction of women, violating sacred places and protocol, or damaging economic resources, such as food and

water. This began the most intense decade of violence in the Australian wars with fighting throughout the south east and south west of the continent.

**Warning**

Includes information on violence in the history of colonisation, and links to primary sources that may contain racist attitudes and language.

[Help](#) | [Share](#)

- Aboriginal Raids on Colonists On The South Road
- Colonists Retreat From Aboriginal Raids On The South Road
- Aboriginal peoples during the 'South Road War'
- Colonist Attacks on the South Road
- Military Mounted Police Posts, Major Nunn's Report
- Gipps Announces Military Posts On The South Road

01/01/1837  
01/12/1841

1837 1838 1839 1840 1841 01/12/1841

Powered by Esri

<https://ghap.tlcmmap.org/multilayers/41>  
NOTE: Working title / provisional name only.

# The Pattern in Victoria

Whaling and Sealing

South Road War

Eumeralla War

Gippsland War

Murray River War

# Legacy of Violence

Negative spiral of intergenerational trauma.

What is inside the massacre?

What comes after the massacre?

For those who see their friends and family die, the massacres continue.

Every generation, another form of violence, another form of resistance.

Sovereignty never ceded.

‘Survival’

# Additional Material

Timeline

Example massacres

## Timeline in Victoria, 1824 - 35

1824 - Hume and Hovell.

1825 - NSW Mounted Police established, on the Irish model.

1826 - 1828 failed Western Port settlement.

1829 - Limits of Location proclaimed.

1834 - Settlement at Portland.

1834 - First massacre in Victoria, Convincing Ground.

1835 - Batman at Melbourne.

1835 – Whigg reformist government in Britain, to 1841.

## Timeline in Victoria, 1836-37

1836 - Mitchell crosses Murray into 'Australia Felix'. Massacre at Mt Dispersion.  
(First People of the Millewa-Mallee)

1836 - Massacres on the overland, 'South Road' war commences, to 1841.  
(Merriman, Harlequin) (Yorta Yorta, Taungurung, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung,  
Wadawurrung, Bunurong, Dja Dja Wurrung, Gunaikurnai, ???)

1837 - Gov. Bourke approves Hoddle plan for Melbourne. Overland mail route.

1837 - Gov. Gipps to 1846.

1837 - Langhorne appointed as 'Missionary' to 'protect' Aboriginal people.

1837 - Native Police established, firstly under de Villier.

## Timeline in Victoria, 1838

1838 - Faithfull Massacre, colonists killed.

1838 - Indigenous resistance forces colonists to retreat.

1838 - Major Nunn's massacre expedition in Kamilaroi country (NSW).

1838 - Myall Creek Massacre (NSW).

1838 - Squatters petition Gipps to send troops, threatening to take matters into their own hands.

1838 - Gipps officially refuses to levy war against Aboriginal people as 'British subjects', and refuses to sanction colonists' 'indiscriminate retaliation'.

1838 - British army no longer participate in frontier conflict.

1838 - Gipps sends 'Mounted Police' recruited from active and retired military and acts on Major Nunn's plans for more bases on the Overland.

1838 - Eumeralla War commences, to 1844 / 1854 - Tykoohe, Tarerer, Partpoarmein (Gunditj Mirring, Eastern Maar, Barengi Gadjin, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wadawurrung)

## Timeline in Victoria, 1839 - 42

1839 - Border Police established.

1839 - George Augustus Robinson appointed 'Chief Protector', to 1849.

1839 - Murray River wars to about 1848 (overland to Adelaide meets hub of songline network) (First People of the Millewa-Mallee).

1840 - Mass arrest of 200 near Melbourne, daring escape of some, 33 resistance fighters jailed, including Jagga Jagga, Winberry and Billy Hamilton. ('South Road' War)

1840 - Gipps bans supply of guns to Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people from possessing them (the ban later disallowed by Britain).

1840 - 1st surge in Gippsland wars to about 1844. (Gunaikurnai)

1842 - Henry Dana appointed leader of Native Police.

1842 - Tykoöhe, Tarerer, Partpoarmein resistance leaders raid stations, are arrested, freed and continue raids. (Eumeralla War)

1842 - Colonists continue to complain of government inaction and request protection.



## Timeline in Victoria, 1845 - 54

- 1843 - 'Highland Brigade' massacres (Gunaikurnai)
- 1845 - Colonists in the Wimmera petition for Native Police presence. (Barengi Gadjin)
- 1845 - Cpt. Dana increases Native Police to 50.
- 1847 - 'White woman' expeditions around Snowy River (Gunaikurnai).
- 1848 - 2nd surge of Gippsland Wars to 1851 (Gunaikurnai)
- 1848 - Mr Walsh and Native Police dispatched to Gippsland (Gunaikurnai).
- 1851 - Colony of Victoria declared.
- 1854 - Last massacres in Victoria: Apsley, Wimmera and Murderer's Flat, Lake Condah.

# Some Example Massacres

## **Convincing Ground**

(resources, lands and waters, 'teach them a lesson' attitude)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=503>

## **Mt Dispersion**

(Explorer, Mitchell)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=575>

## **The Faithfull Massacre**

(massacre of colonists)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=506>

## **Warrigal Creek Group**

('Highland Brigade' extermination expedition)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=537>

## **Murderers Flat, Darlot's Creek, Lake Condah Mission**

(oral history)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=556>

## **Eumerella**

(Resistance leaders, Tykoohe and Tarerer, stock raids)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=533>

## Some Example Massacres

### **Snowy River**

(complex situation, many sides, conflicting information)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=550>

### **Maiden Hills**

(skulls mounted over doors)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=512>

### **Rufus River Group**

(intersection of songlines and overland, relevant to Millewa and Mallee peoples, over NSW border but modern borders are arbitrary, SA 'Protector' involved in massacres)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=529>

### **Restdown Plains Stations**

(pursuit over 30kms over several days)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=508>

### **Connell's Ford**

(poisoning)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=524>

### **Mt Napier**

(30 men, women and children)

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=552>

# Colonial Violence in Victoria

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