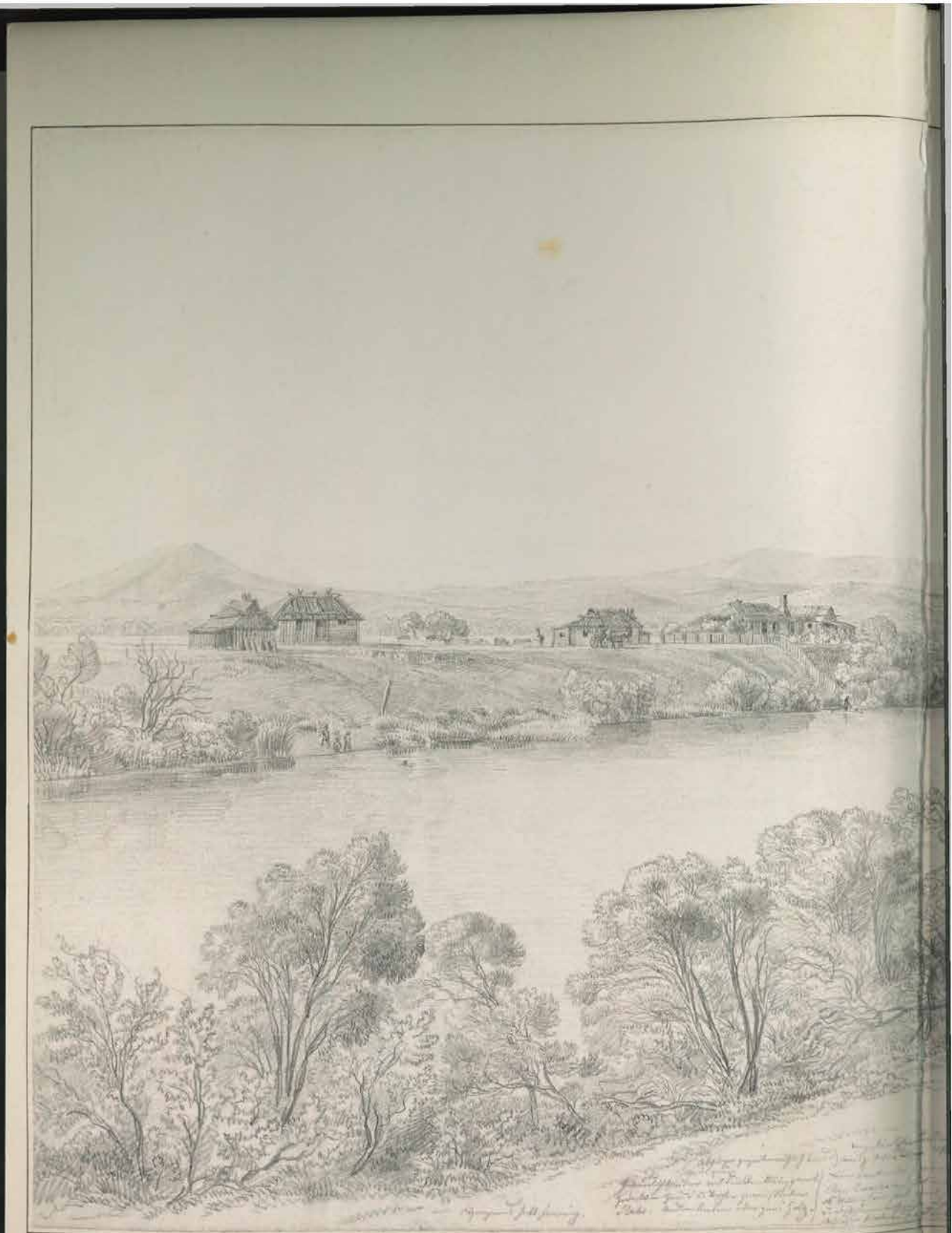
A CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT

ANGUS McMILLAN AND THE GIPPSLAND MASSACRES

BY ROB CHRISTIE



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Front cover background: Nicholas Chevalier 1865, Dargo Valley Gippsland, State Library Victoria. Gunaikurnai in traditional skins and blankets, Angus McMillan, Fight between aborigines and mounted whites, Samuel Calvert.

Inside front cover: Guérard, Eugen von, 1811-1901: Bushy Park. 27 & 28 Dec. 1860. Gippsland Australian sketches.1860-1861. Ref: E-337-f-027. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

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Prelude and Apology

When Europeans settled Australia in 1788 they referred to the land using the Latin expression 'terra nullius' meaning nobody's land. This allowed them to deny the indigenous peoples prior claim of occupation and connection to the land and to occupy it without a treaty or payment to the original inhabitants. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the European Australians referred to the original inhabitants in disparaging terms and treated them with disdain.

These attitudes were accepted by the majority of the population and there was no acknowledgement of the inhuman acts perpetrated on the indigenous population which at the time were accepted and carried out to guarantee the safety and continued prosperity of the settlers. In discussing this period in our history it is necessary to investigate these actions and acknowledge their occurrence whilst recognising that times have changed and what were accepted as legitimate actions over one hundred years ago are not acceptable today and are now seen as clearly racist.

Across Victoria there have been many claims of indigenous massacres and numerous sites where these events took place have been identified. In Gippsland Angus McMillan, who up until the 1980s was hailed as the discoverer of the country and friend of the Aborigines has now been accused of numerous racial crimes. These accusations were made by former school teacher and historian Peter Gardner in a small volume entitled *Our Founding Murdering Fath*er which he published in 1987. Gardner has completed a detailed study of the Gippsland Massacres and written a number of books and articles on the subject.

Although his writings are a valuable source of information, he has drawn a number of conclusions regarding Angus McMillan from limited evidence and accounts written well after the events took place. McMillan has been a focus for continued notoriety because of the cairns distributed across Gippsland that identify his exploration of the country. There is no doubt that massacres did take place across Australia and in Gippsland in the nineteenth century but McMillan's part in these requires closer scrutiny.

Whilst acknowledging events that took place in the nineteenth century have no place in today's society at the same time it is a mistake to impose our moral viewpoint on the past. History cannot be erased and it is dangerous to do so, the cairns reflect a different view of our past and have prompted much thought and discussion about the persecution of the GunaiKurnai in the nineteenth century.

In 2020 there was a move to remove the cairns because they commemorated McMillan and his possible connection to Gippsland's violent past. Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Ken Wyatt at the time commented on the debate to remove the cairns in the Gippsland Times 23 June 2020 said:

'In order for us to heal the past, we need to have genuine conversations and understand the history of our nation.

We don't believe removing the statues contributes positively to this conversation'

Angus McMillan: A Convenient Scapegoat aims to set out a balanced account of events in Gippsland in the 1840s ensuring a genuine conversation takes place. We do not deny that McMillan may have had an involvement in some of the actions but believe he was not as Gardner portrays 'the Butcher of Gippsland'.

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In the nineteenth century, European Australians used disparaging and patronizing terms to describe the Indigenous Australians. These terms and attitudes are now considered racist. I have included some of these terms and attitudes, not with the intent to offend any readers but to provide a reflection of attitudes prevalent at the time and to retain the authenticity of the original writing.

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I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land the GunaiKurnai on which this book is based. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Acknowledgements

The following people have assisted greatly in the production of this work, Rachel Dawkins for the hours she has spent meticulously proof reading, Lynn Robinson and the staff at Maffra Library, Joanne Hodge from Ramahyuck for her advice and help with Aboriginal customs, Rob Hudson a Kurnai Monero Ngarigo man and cultural manager of the Krowathunkooloong Keeping place in Bairnsdale, Sale Historical Society, Jillian Hiscock and the staff at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Simon Gregg at the Gippsland Art Gallery for his assistance with photographs and making available copies a selection of paintings by Chevalier. Marguerita Stephens for generously providing a digital copy of William Thomas's Journals. Helen Armstrong and Dianne Reilly from the LaTrobe Society for their assistance in the preparation of an article for publication in La Trobeanna as a precursor to this book. Heather Garner from the Society of Australian Genealogists for her encouragement and advice in researching the McMillan family. Debbie Squires from the East Gippsland Historical Society. The Skye and Lochalsh Archive centre in Scotland for their assistance in researching the Macalister family. Helen Montague and members of the Wellington Shire Historical Network. The staff of the Port Albert Museum for their assistance with early shipping records. Sarah Christie for the maps she has drawn. Greg Lee for allowing access to the remains of McMillan's home at Bushy Park. The staff at the Public Record Office of Victoria for their assistance in accessing early pastoral maps. The State Library of Victoria and the Mitchell Library of NSW. To Maurie Killeen for his local knowledge and diligent research which he has been prepared to share. Laurie Manning for the vast body of research and notes that he made on people and places in Gippsland.

Peter Gardner for the work that he has completed over many years bringing awareness to the general public of the treatment inflicted on Aborigines in the early years of the settlement of Gippsland.

List of main character

Angus McMillan - Scotsman, explorer, early squatter member of Parliament, Protector of the Aborigines, road maker.

Lachlan Macalister - Scotsman, military man, in charge of mounted police, magistrate and one of the largest landowners in NSW, backer of exploratory parties to Port Phillip.

Augustus Robinson – Chief Protector of Aborigines Port Phillip. Arrived in Australia in 1824 and set himself up as a builder. He was appointed to act as a mediator between the Aborigines and whites and was responsible for the removal of the Aborigines from the mainland Tasmania. Arrived in Port Phillip in 1839.

William Thomas – Assistant Protector of Aborigines and Guardian. Initially a teacher he was appointed one of four Assistant Protectors for Port Phillip by Lord Glenelg. He was responsible for the Westernport area and the region to the east later known as Gippsland. He kept extensive notes recording names, numbers and deaths of those he was responsible for and created extensive lists of language. Although his attempts to bring the Aborigines into civilisation failed, he worked on conciliation and keeping them alive.

Charles Joseph La Trobe – appointed Superintendent of Port Phillip in 1839 - one of his many duties was to see to the welfare of the Aborigines.

Charles Tyers – First Crown Lands Commissioner for Gippsland, a surveyor and public servant he determined the boundary between South Australia and the Port Phillip District. Appointed Surveyor at Portland in 1842 and Commissioner for Gippsland in 1844.

Chapter 1

Terra Nullius

Gurung Gubba a greedy fellow who needed watching.

Warren Foster Djiringani Yuin Man and traditional knowledge holder

When James Cook stood at the rails of the *Endeavour* on April 19 1770 and looked across the water to what we know as Point Hicks, we can be certain that the Bidwell people, members of the oldest culture on earth observed what they considered to be a mystical apparition. According to Warren Foster a Djiringanj Yuin man and traditional knowledge holder, his ancestors believed Cook's ship, with its large white sails was swimming on the ocean and resembled Gurung-gubba the pelican. Foster said the Gurung-gubba 'was a greedy fella and when you're fishing would steal your fish' and so had to be watched.[1]

As the ship travelled up the coast, the crew saw fires burning on the land. The watchers on the shore knew there was something strange about what they were seeing. Today, members of the Bidwell Clan assert that these were signal fires warning other tribes of the coming of the ship.[2] At times the vessel sailed close enough to the shore to enable those on board 'to distinguish several people upon the sea beach - they appeared to be of a very dark or black colour'.[3]

Little were these people, viewed from afar to know that within 100 years their land and culture were to be drastically changed and their population decimated by a people who adapted the environment to their particular needs, with little concern for the land or its original inhabitants.

Point Hicks is located in the south-eastern part of the State of Victoria in the region known as Gippsland. This area covers more than 41,000 square kilometres and extends from the mountains of the Great Dividing Range in the north to the waters of Bass Strait in the south. For at least 18,000 years prior to the arrival of Europeans the five major clans of the Gunaikurnai and the Bidwell people inhabited the region. They lived in harmony with their environment and harvested their food from the land, taking only what was needed.[4]

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[1] ABC News, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-18/captain-james-cook-first-sighting-of-endeavour-yuin-people/ (accessed 21 December 2022), Vanessa Milton, 2020, 'The first sighting of James Cook's Endeavour as remembered by the Yuin people of south-eastern Australia',

[2] Discussion with Phillip Stuart, Bidwell 16 December 2022.

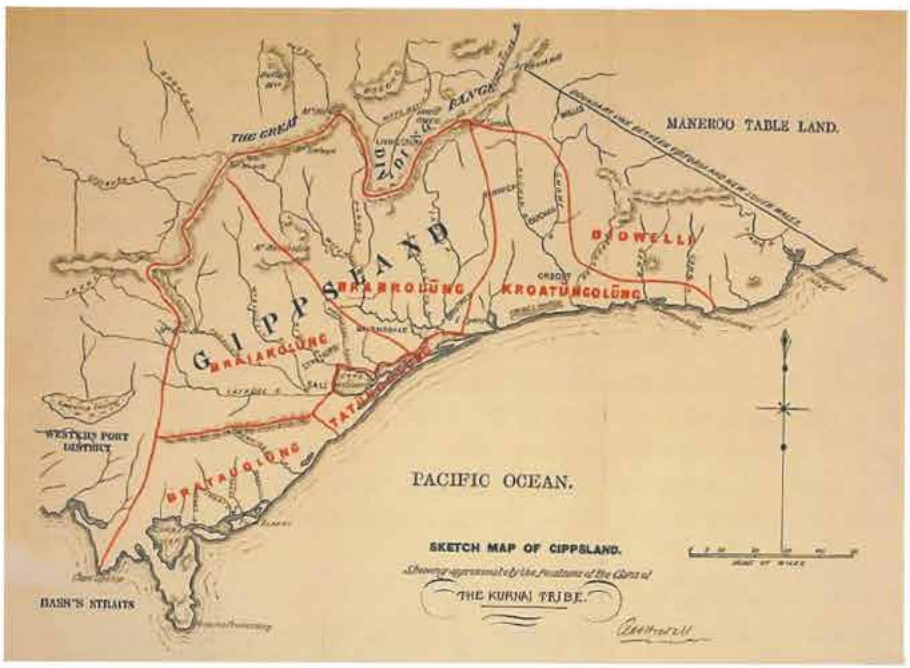
[3] James Cook Endeavour Journal *https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-228959488/view*. 22 April 1770, accessed 21 December 2022.

[4] Hodges, Untitled document, (unpublished, no date), held at Ramahyuck Corporation, 117 Foster St. Sale, Vic 3850.

They were a resourceful people, their diet consisting of kangaroo, possum, wallaby and a variety of birds, fish and goannas which were trapped and eaten. It was supplemented by the many different plants found growing in the bush. Underground tubers of water ribbons were a popular food, soaked silver banksia flowers made a sweet drink, pig face was eaten for salt and the leaves were eaten as a green vegetable.

The bush provided everything they needed for life, including medicines. Old man weed and river mint were for chest and breathing problems, tea tree would treat cuts, bruises and sprains, poultices were made from wattle bark and milk thistle was an anaesthetic.[5] Their wants were simple as they travelled across their country and their possessions consisted only of what was necessary to maintain their lifestyle. Ancestors played an important role in their culture, beliefs and traditions.

The lands of the Gunaikurnai encompassed most of central Gippsland, bounded by the lands of the Bidwell to the east of the Snowy River, the Kulin



Sketch map of Gippsland showing the position of the Clans of the Kurnai Tribe, drawn by AW Howitt, published in *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, AIATSIS, 1991

[5] Hodges, Untitled document

Nation to the west and to the north in the mountains were the Jaitmathang. There was limited interaction between these tribes but they met for ceremonies, trade and at times conflict.

Angus McMillan told George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines that 'all the tribes from Gipps Land, the Dodoro, Omeo, Maneroo and all others assemble during the month of (blank) (sic) at Boogon mountains, part of the Alps at Omeo and feast upon a fly which are found in that locality'. [6] Tribal wars occurred, involving the separate clans or shields of the Gunaikurnai but not the nation as a whole.[7] The Brayakaulung, Brataualung and the Tatungalung Clans spoke Nulit, the Brabralung spoke Muk-thang and the Krauatungalung near the Snowy River spoke Thangquai.[8] These divisions created by language were to make effective opposition to the coming European invasion almost impossible.

By August 23 1770 Cook had sailed far up the east coast of what was then known as New Holland and had the opportunity to observe the occupants of the land from a distance. His reaction to them was mixed: on the one hand he saw them as some of the most pitiful people on earth yet at the same time acknowledged that they were completely happy.

Hunting kangaroos before European settlement

[6] Ian D. Clark ed., *The Journal of Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Aboriginal Protectorate*. Vol. 4. 1 January 1844 – 25 October 1845, 1 June 1844.
[7] Ibid
[8] Hodges, Untitled document.

> '...they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans: being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe... They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the Inequality of the Condition.'[9]

In August 22 1770 Cook named 'Possession Island' on the far north eastern coast where he landed and claimed the east coast of the continent for Britain, naming it 'New South Wales'. However, he could see little value in the country and wrote: '... the Country itself so far as we know doth not produce any one thing that can become an Article in trade to invite Europeans to fix a settlement upon it ...'

It was to be a further eighteen years before Britain colonised New South Wales. Whilst it was believed that the land held few benefits, Joseph Banks who had travelled with Cook in 1770 convinced a committee of the House of Commons in 1779 that this new land was the obvious place to send convicts and thus solve the problem of Britain's overcrowded jails. He said: 'it was not to be doubted that a Tract of Land such as New Holland, which was larger than the whole of Europe, would furnish Matter of advantageous Return'[10]

The problem of overcrowding stemmed from the defeat of the British in the War of Independence which ended in 1783. Britain could no longer dispose of her convicts there. There were other commercial reasons that reinforced the argument to colonise the country. On nearby Norfolk Island Cook had seen flax growing which could be used for ropes and sails. He also noted the straight Norfolk Island pines which it was believed could be used for masts and spars. Settlement there would give Britain a base for refitting her ships in the Pacific, thereby curbing France's expansion into the area.

The Devilfish 1882, American cartoon depicting John Bull (England) as the octopus of Imperialism taking land on every continent.

British Imperialism

When it was finally decided to establish a penal colony there in 1786 the existence of the original inhabitants was ignored. The principle later used by the British to justify their occupation of New

[9] James Cook's Endeavour Journal *https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-228959488/view*. 23 August 1770. (accessed 21 December 2022)
[10] *Journals of the House of Commons,* 19 Geo. III, 1779, Vol. 37, p. 311.

South Wales was the Latin phrase '*Terra nullius*'[11]. It meant they saw the land as uninhabited and did not acknowledge they were invading a country that belonged to an Aboriginal people. As a result, there were no treaty negotiations and the original inhabitants were not treated as equals. Britain was one of the most powerful nations in the world in the eighteenth century and the British believed that they had a God-given right to rule, subjugate and re-educate those who they considered to be their inferiors.

British society in the eighteenth century supported this view and was divided strictly according to class, from the nobility and wealthy at the top of the pyramid to the poor in the overcrowded cities and small tenant farmers at the base. The Industrial Revolution which took place during the period gave the British an overall sense of material superiority and their evangelical Christianity reinforced this view with a desire to civilise what they considered to be the baser cultures. The public school system created a superior elite destined to rule.[12]

This superior and arrogant attitude was to be prevalent up until the First World War, at which time Britain, with a population of over 40 million citizens ruled an 'alien' colonial population of 340 million citizens across the world.[13]

It was expected that with the arrival of the first fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788 the Indigenous population would recognise and adopt the 'benefits' offered by European civilisation and law. Initially relations between the two groups were cordial but once the Indigenous population showed no interest in adapting to a new lifestyle and realised that these white men were here to stay, relations deteriorated.

After six months the Aborigine was seen as 'a creature deformed by all those passions which afflicted and degraded a human nature, unsoftened by the influence of religion, philosophy and legal restriction'.[14] Relations continued to deteriorate around Sydney as the settlement expanded and interaction with the local tribes increased. In 1803 a small number of free settlers and soldiers arrived in Van Diemen's Land to prevent French encroachment in the area. The first convicts arrived aboard the *Indefatigable* in Hobart in 1812. The settlers were initially urged to treat the native population with charity and compassion. However, conflict was inevitable as the settlement spread and competition between the two groups arose over resources such as land, food and water.

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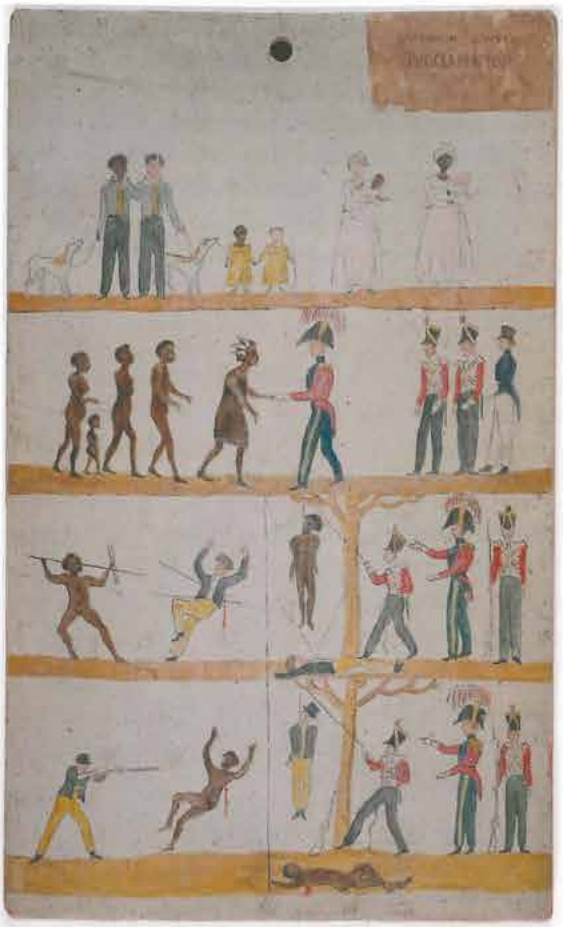
[11] Terra nullius is a Latin expression meaning nobody's land.
[12] Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of Empire,* Faber and Faber , London, 1982.p.13
[13] Ibid, p. 15.
[14] Michael Cathcart, *Manning Clark's History of Australia, abridged,* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993, p.15.

By the time that Lieutenant Governor George Arthur (Lt. Gov. 1823 – 1836) arrived the problem had escalated, with Europeans taking the law into their own hands. Arthur originally tried a conciliatory approach and endeavoured by a pictogram to explain to the Indigenous population that those who committed violent crimes would be punished by British law in the same way whether they were white or black.



Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines, ca. 1828-1830, State Library of NSW.

By 1826 the constant depredations by the Indigenous population perpetrated on the white community resulted in a call for action from the government. There was no acknowledgement of the treatment that was being meted out to the native population. Andrew Bent, writing in his *Hobart Town Colonial Advocate*[15] in 1828 wrote that the solution was to exterminate or remove the 'blacks' and only by these means would their aggression cease. He went on to say: 'all the conciliations – all the entreaties and endeavours that have been bestowed to render these unhappy tribes sensible of the benefits of civilization have been thrown away, and the only return they have made is to murder and plunder…'[16]

Following the Cape Grim massacre in 1828 in which it was reported that 30 Aborigines had been killed, the government acknowledged that something had to be done to solve the ongoing conflict. Augustus Robinson, a builder who

[15] State Library of NSW https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/governor-arthurs-proclamation-aborigines

[16] *Hobart Town Colonial Advocate,* 1 May 1828.

arrived in Hobart in January 1824 and had investigated the Cape Grim massacre in 1830 was appointed to act as a conciliator between the two groups. His solution was to round up the Indigenous population and resettle them on Flinders Island, which he had accomplished by 1835.

Van Diemen's Land was a small island and as more settlers arrived and convicts served out their terms and took up land there was little opportunity for the larger graziers to expand their holdings. The settlers in Van Diemen's Land were aware that across Bass Strait there was a vast tract of uninhabited land that could be suitable for occupation and grazing. In 1835 the Port Phillip Association was set up by leading colonists in Van Diemen's Land to 'acquire a large tract of land from the Aboriginal people on the south coast of New South Wales'. John Batman, a co-founder of the Association had initially sought land grants in Port Phillip, but these requests were rejected by the authorities in Sydney. Frustrated by this he sailed for the mainland in the *Rebecca* and explored Port Phillip.

Batman and the settlement of Port Phillip

Batman's approach to the Indigenous population here was very different to that which he had employed in Van Diemen's Land. There, between 1828 and 1830 he had actively hunted down and shot native Tasmanian Aborigines. [17] He participated in the 'black line' – the formation of a human chain across the island to drive the Aboriginal people from their lands to an area specially designated for them.

When he arrived at Port Phillip in May 1835 he negotiated with the Kulin people on the banks of Merri Creek and acquired 240,000 hectares of prime land in exchange for 40 blankets, 30 axes, 100 knives, 50 scissors, 30 mirrors, 200 handkerchiefs, 100 pounds of flour and six shirts. He determined this 'his place for a village' and named the place 'Batmania'.

It is certain that the Kulin people did not understand the transaction that was taking place as there was no common language and they would not have willingly given away their land. Despite this, Batman's treaty is unique, being the only attempt by a European to engage with the existing inhabitants of the land in a treaty rather than simply claiming land outright.

Batman did not to retain the land as the government in Sydney declared the treaty void on 26 August 1838. It was determined that Batman had no right to enter into any negotiations as he was not a representative of the government. The government in fact did not acknowledge the right of the Traditional Owners to sell the land. Governor Bourke issued a proclamation on 10 October 1835 which

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[17] Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian War*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1995, p.50

declared the land belonged to no one prior to the British Crown taking possession of it. The doctrine of '*terra nullius*' was thus established.

Attitudes to the original inhabitants

To European eyes the traditional occupants of the land were primitive, they did not farm the land, had developed few tools and appeared to wander about with no fixed place of abode, living day to day. From a European viewpoint they had no real claim on the land. The Indigenous people were to be pitied and civilised if possible and this was a view that prevailed for more than 150 years.

In 1895 Mark Twain, the noted American author visited Australia and his writing reflected that in the 100 years since first settlement, attitudes towards the Indigenous population had not really changed. Twain wrote: 'They were lazy... Surely they could have invented and built a competent house... they could have invented and developed the agricultural arts, but they didn't. They went naked and houseless, and lived on fish and grubs and worms and wild fruits, and were just plain savages...'[18]

This hunter-gatherer concept has been challenged in recent years by writers such as Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu* 2014, Bill Gammage author of *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia* 2012 and Rupert Gerritsen who published *Australia and the Origins of Agriculture* in 2008. These writers attempt to provide evidence disproving the traditional view that Aboriginal people were essentially hunter-gatherers and in fact farmed the land.[19]

Bush life, William Dexter, Ladies Almanack, 1858 p.30.

Pascoe, using the early journals of explorers, cites evidence of existing agriculture, engineering skills including the building of weirs and fish traps, game management, cropping and land management as well as a complex social structure. The book has been criticised however, claiming his evidence is very selective and that what he had written was not supported by Aboriginal Elders.[20]

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[18] Mark Twain, *The Wayward Tourist,* Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp.102-103.
[19] Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu,* South Australia: Griffin Press, 2018, Magabala Books.
[20] Rachael Dexter, 'Difference of Opinion is not a bad thing': *Sydney Morning Herald,* 13 June 2021.

As is evidenced by Twain's writing, few early Europeans, with the exception of Alfred William Howitt (a civil servant who spent much of his life in Gippsland and studied the Gunaikurnai), took an interest in the Aborigines, studied their lifestyle or could see or appreciate the way in which the Traditional Owners managed the land.[21] Even after Federation in 1901 the segregation of Indigenous Australians was the main driver of Aboriginal policy until the 1950s. Each newly established state acquired the power to make laws regarding Aboriginal people through a Chief Protector. Colonial and State Aborigines Protection Acts were passed in each state. The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 in NSW enabled them to move Aboriginal people out of towns and into managed reserves or 'missions'. It could block the movement of people in and out of the reserves (including non-Aboriginal visitors).

Later amendments to the Act allowed the Board to remove children of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents from their homes and place them into homes where they would be raised 'white'. This was a period of 'enforced assimilation' for 'part-Aboriginals'. In 1940, the Aboriginal Welfare Board replaced the Aborigines Protection Board and continued the policy of 'assimilation', closing reserves and encouraging people to move into the towns.

Aboriginal Australians were finally given the right to vote in 1962 but for them it was not compulsory. It was to take a referendum in 1967 before Aboriginal people were counted in the census and the laws were then made for them by the Commonwealth, finally making them part of the Australian Community.

Effects of settlement and early exploration

Despite Batman's treaty being declared invalid, his 'village' continued to grow and resulted in the original inhabitants being forced off their traditional lands. By May 1836, 177 settlers were grazing stock around 'Bearbrass' as Melbourne was originally known.[22] Aboriginal people camped in and around Melbourne were displaced, as were those further to the west in the country called 'Australia Felix'. Thomas Mitchell, the Government Surveyor gave the area this name after he travelled across the country in 1836 and noted the lush pasture and its potential for graziers to the west of Melbourne, resulting in squatters taking up vast tracts of the land.

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[21] Alfred Howitt was an explorer, natural scientist, self-taught anthropologist and an acknowledged authority on the native tribes of south-eastern Australia. His book *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* written with Lorimer Fison gave a comprehensive account of the social systems of the Kurnai.

[22] Governor Bourke renamed the village Melbourne Following a visit there in March 1837.

Conflict in the new settlement was inevitable and it was not long before news reached Sydney that these colonisers were perpetrating outrages against the Aborigines. Although the Port Phillip District was outside the limits of settlement as defined by the government in Sydney,[23] Governor Bourke was forced to act and appointed William Lonsdale as Police Magistrate for the new district. As the settlement was only small, Governor Bourke thought that a police magistrate would be sufficient to deal with any matters requiring government authority. Lonsdale took up the position in October 1836 and was in effect the Superintendent of the new settlement. All local authority emanated from him but he was still subordinate to the Governor in Sydney. With regard to the Indigenous population he was charged:

> '...to protect the aboriginal natives ... from any manner of wrong and to endeavour to conciliate them by kind treatment and presents... to improve by all practical means their moral and social conditions to maintain friendly intercourse with them and to improve by all practical means their moral and social condition... you will endeavour to establish them in a village and to induce them to offer their labour in return for food and clothing. Should the conduct of the natives be violent or dishonest, you will endeavour to restrain them by the gentlest means, informing them they must consider themselves subject to the laws of England.'[24]

These instructions reinforce the prevailing nineteenth century attitudes that the natives were to be treated almost as one would a child. They could be bought, educated and manipulated so that they would fit into the newly developing society and discard their previous ways.

A further instruction was that Lonsdale was to discourage any person from occupying land before acquiring a title. However as more and more people settled in the area, the Sydney administration realised that someone with more authority to make decisions than a police magistrate was required. In 1839 Charles La Trobe was appointed Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. When Governor Gipps in Sydney received advice of the appointment from London it was emphasised that one of the most important aspects of La Trobe's role would be the state of relations between the Aborigines and the settlers.[25]

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[23] From 1826 the limits of location or 19 counties were defined and beyond these areas land could not be squatted on or sold.

[24] Fay Woodhouse, 'Not Merely the Magistrate but the Principal Officer of the Government: William Lonsdale and the Development of Early Melbourne, 1836-1839', *LaTrobeana*, Vol.19 no. 3 p.18.

[25] John Barnes, *LaTrobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor,* Braddon A.C.T: Halstead Press, 2017, p. 232.

La Trobe had grown up in the Moravian faith which stressed the importance of missionary work among the heathen. He saw the Indigenous population as 'savages'. His attitude was much the same as other Europeans of the period but he believed the only way they could be civilised was through the teaching of Christianity. In his last years as Lieutenant Governor, he was instrumental in promoting the work of the Moravian missionaries who had come to the colony in 1849.

La Trobe was also subordinate in all important decisions to the administration in Sydney. When he arrived in October 1839 in Melbourne it was described as a town of 'no very attractive appearance. It had few houses, many of these wood with large, vacant spaces between most.'[26] On taking office in Melbourne, La Trobe was fully occupied establishing himself in this new role and overseeing the rapid growth of the fledgling town without looking much further afield. Unbeknown to La Trobe however, there were changes taking place to the east of Melbourne in an area unexplored and isolated by virtue of its swamps, mountains and dense scrub to the west, impenetrable mountains to the north and jungle-like bush in the east.

Although no Europeans had ventured into the interior of this area, charts had been made of its coastline. Bass had sailed along the coast in 1797 followed by James Grant in 1800, John Murray in 1801 and then Matthew Flinders in 1802 and all completed detailed charts. They were not the only men to have ventured along the coast; sealers had found a rich source of plunder in these waters.

In 1802, following his trip along the coast, Lieutenant John Murray brought several casks of sea elephant oil with him from King Island and sold them in Sydney at 1 shilling a gallon. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the only source of pure clean oil for lamps came from elephant seals or whales. This was much better than smelly tallow or costly beeswax candles.[27] By 1803 the industry was well established and one enterprising sealer sent 2000 skins and eight tons of sea elephant oil to England. In 1804 an American vessel, the *Union* obtained 600,000 skins in these southern

Sealers in Western Port, the earliest printed image of Victoria circa 1833 State Library of Victoria, Accession number: H90.20/2

[26] John Leonard Forde, *The Story of the Bar of Victoria,* Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., 1891, p.36.
[27] Australian Heritage Group, *South Gippsland Heritage Study,* vol. 1, 2004, p.24.

waters.[28] It was estimated that by the end of the 1820s more than 1800 sealers were hunting along the Victorian coast.[29]

This was the first contact that the local Indigenous population – the Gunaikurnai – had with Europeans. It was not to be a positive experience. Sealing vessels adopted the practice of leaving gangs of men on the islands and along the coastal beaches for several months from which to conduct the slaughter of seals. The camps were isolated, far from civilisation and the law. Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore* states that the area:

> 'affords constant shelter and secure retreats for runaways and villains of the worst description... and seem to present one continued scene of violence, plunder and the commission of every species of crime'. He goes on to say that 'the rapparees and bolters who formed their bloody, troglodytic island colonies kidnapped hundreds of black women from their tribes not only because they needed sex, but because many coastal aborigines were expert seal hunters'.[30]

These men stayed on the coast - there was no need to venture far into the land of the Gunaikurnai and Bidwell peoples. They were unaware of the rich natural resources which lay beyond the coastal fringe: the large rivers in the east, the morasses, lakes and open plains teeming with all manner of wildlife. The Gunaikurnai living in the interior were safe from the predatory behaviour of the sealers.

Charles Tyers, who became the first Commissioner for Crown Lands when Gipps Land was proclaimed a District in 1843 wrote that:

> 'The aborigines of Gipps Land are supposed to exceed in number those of any other known part of the colony... this supposition is favoured by the circumstances of their isolated position being as such, in a great measure, to prevent their being destroyed by wars made upon them by other tribes, as well as of their having had no intercourse with Europeans.'[31]

This comment is probably more reflective of the period prior to the arrival of the white man, after which their numbers quickly diminished. The Gunaikurnai and Bidwell people were never able to present a united front to the Europeans who were coming. They were divided by clans often speaking different dialects, 'more or less unintelligible to each other'. Further divisions saw the clans divided

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[28] Historical Sub-Committee of the Centenary Celebrations Council, *Victoria The first Century, An Historical Survey,* Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1934, pp. 36-37.
[29] Australian Heritage Group, p. 25.
[30] Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore (* London: Collins Harvill, 1987), pp. 331-333.
[31] Thomas Francis Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers,* South Yarra: Lloyd O'Neil P.L. 1983. Charles Tyers to La Trobe, p. 233.

into smaller groups, with each having their own areas for hunting and food gathering.[32] There was no overall governing structure encompassing both nations and as a result opposition to the newcomers was to be sporadic but often deadly.

Change came in the late 1830s and 1840s when a prolonged drought north of the mountains resulted in graziers looking for new pastures across the mountains to the south. These men brought with them the prevailing attitudes of nineteenth century society. They saw an untouched landscape and could see no reason for not implementing their grazing and farming practices across the region. The practices of the local Indigenous populations were ignored. This progression of white settlement into what was to be known as 'Gippsland' and the nineteenth century attitudes towards Indigenous people meant the Gunaikurnai and Bidwell were to be dispossessed of their land and their traditional way of life destroyed.

[32] A.W Howitt., *The Native Tribes of South East Australia* Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp.73-76.

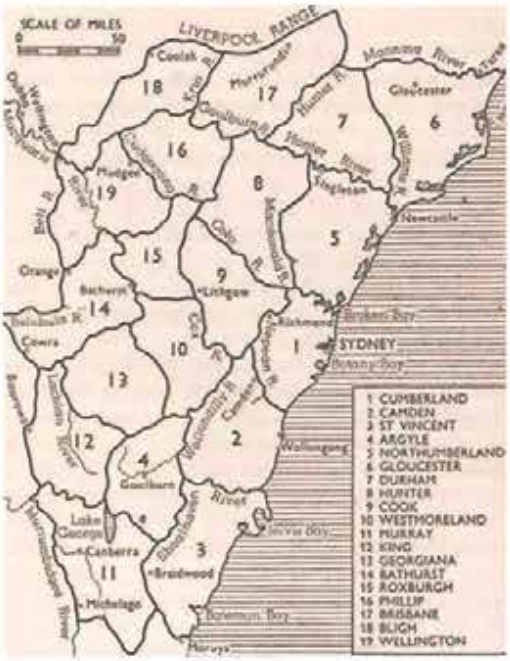
Chapter 2

Lachlan Macalister and the search for new pasture

'Mr Macalister... would have hunted the scoundrels for days or weeks till he(sic) had taken or driven them out of the district'

The Sydney Herald 18 October 1837

The colony which was established at Sydney Cove in 1788 had continued to grow, with the arrival of more convict ships that also included soldiers and their families. The first free settlers who made the decision to migrate to Australia arrived in 1793. By 1800 the settlement at Sydney Cove had grown to 3000 people, and eleven years later there were 36,000 Europeans in the colony although 40% were still convicts. There was also a growing number of 'emancipists' - convicts who had served their time, and their children known as 'currency lads and lasses.'



19 Counties as proclaimed by Governor Darling 1829
New England history the Nineteen Counties
http://newenglandhistory.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-nineteen-counties.html

Convicts continued to arrive until 1840 when transportation to New South Wales was abolished, but with them also came free settlers lured by assisted passages, land grants and the prospect of a better future. As more arable land was required to feed the growing population, farmers and graziers began to move away from the close confines of Sydney. However, settlement was mostly restricted to what was called the 'nineteen counties'. The boundary of these defined the limits of location and settlers were only permitted to take up land within the boundaries because of the dangers that existed outside these counties. These boundaries were defined by Governor Ralph Darling in

1829 and mapped in 1834. Nevertheless, this did not stop squatters from moving outside these areas to graze their expanding herds.

Recognising that it was impossible to stop this expansion in 1836, it was made legal to occupy land outside the nineteen counties providing a £10 fee was paid. In 1847 this was changed again to allow leases outside the limits of location to be for fourteen years.

To the south of Sydney and beyond the limits of location was an area situated on the southern highlands known as the Monaro. It was originally occupied by the Ngarigo, the Indigenous people of the Snowy Mountains. This area, consisting of extensive well-grassed plains was one of the first areas graziers sought to occupy following its European discovery by Captain Curry in 1823.

Discovery and settlement of the Omeo Plains

In 1835 George MacKillop travelled from Hobart to Sydney and then to the Monaro. He was engaged in business in Van Diemen's Land and had been involved in establishing the settlement at Port Phillip. He set out to explore south of the Monaro and commented that although the land 100 miles south of Sydney was suffering from drought, dry with little grass or vegetation, having reached 'Monera' he said that he had not seen pasture finer anywhere in the colonies, with good water and feed. The only drawbacks were the snow that would fall in winter due to the high altitude and the fact that it was far removed from the nearest shipping port. When MacKillop travelled through in 1835 he said *t*here were 50,000 cattle and 150,000 sheep owned by gentlemen in Sydney grazing there[1].

MacKillop continued to move south west with two other squatters: James MacFarlane, Livingstone and an Aboriginal guide. They crossed the Snowy River and reached plains that he called *Strathdownie* but known to the natives as 'Omio'. He believed there were more than 60,000 acres here and that the country through which they travelled had never been visited by a European.[2] One of his companions, James MacFarlane established an outstation there. MacFarlane had already taken up the stations on the Monaro in about 1833: *Currawong*, *Wallendibby* and *Tombong*. *Currawong* was to be the base from which further exploration to the south would commence.

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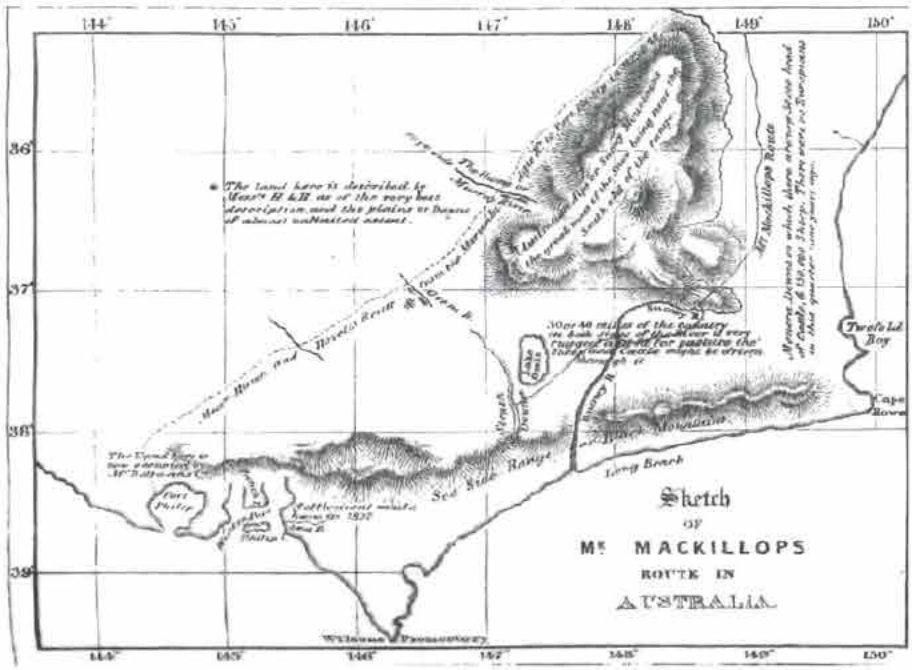
[1] G. MacKillop. 'Australian Colonies', *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture,* Edinburgh, 1837, p.162.
[2] Ibid. pp.156 – 169.

MacFarlane, who had arrived in Sydney on the *Triton* in 1824 aged 28 years, came from a farming family at Arrochybeg on the banks of Loch Lomond in Scotland. In 1836 in the company of John Pendergast, John Hyland and Edmund Buckley he again visited *Strathdownie* and on his return to the Monaro



MacKillop's Map of his Route in Australia, Quarterly Journal of Agriculture Edinburgh 1837

drove a large mob of cattle down to graze on the pasture there. He was granted a licence in the same year. MacFarlane never lived on Omeo[3] but employed managers, the first being Matthew Macalister, Lachlan's nephew.[4]

Although there was good pasture, shipping stock and wool to market was almost impossible as there was no nearby port and transport costs were excessive. As the land was outside the limits of location it had not been made available for sale. MacFarlane believed that if this happened then a road could be cut through the mountains to the port at Twofold Bay on the east coast where Ben Boyd had established his whaling settlement. Despite the difficulties associated with selling stock, squatters were quick to move in, the following year Pendergast, Hyland and Buckley also brought cattle onto the plains.

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[3] He resided at 'Inverlochy' near Goulburn.

[4] Jane Vince Pendergast, *Pioneers of the Omeo District,* Melbourne 1968 p. 14.

Edmund Buckley established the Bindi Run, James MacFarlane Omeo B, the Pendergasts and Hyland Omeo A. Others followed but because most of the Omeo plains were taken up they were forced to find land further to the south. Lachlan Macalister established a run at Numbla Munjie (Ensay) and Patrick Coady Buckley at Tongio Munjie. [5] Severe drought in 1839 would force these squatters to again look for fresh pasture and move into the lands of the Gunaikurnai.

Lachlan Macalister

The man whose actions were ultimately to have the greatest impact on the Gunaikurnai was Lachlan Macalister. He was a well-connected Scot from the Isle of Skye who had arrived in Australia aboard the convict transport *Matilda* in August 1817 as an Ensign with the 48th (Northamptonshire) Regiment of Foot. Several of Lachlan Macalister's uncles were military men and a commission had been purchased for him by the family.

Macalister was one of thirteen children born at Glasnakille Farm on Strathaird Estate to Dr Duncan Macalister and Janet Macalister. Janet was the daughter of Alexander Macalister who had purchased the estate in 1786. Although the property was to pass to one of his four sons, all predeceased him. To ensure that the estate continued in the Macalister name he married his daughter Janet to her first cousin Duncan, thereby guaranteeing the continuation of the Macalister name.

Alexander and his family lived in *Strathaird House* and in the 1850s he was responsible for the eviction of 500 tenants from the land. The estate of 16,000 acres was situated between the estate of Lord MacDonald and that of MacLeod of MacLeod. Only 600 acres of this land was arable, the rest was moor and hill pasture more suited to sheep than small strip farms.[6]

In 1818 Lachlan Macalister saw service in Van Diemen's Land before moving to Newcastle on the mainland where he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 1821. The 48th Regiment was to be deployed to India in 1824, but the authorities wanted to reduce the number of regimental officers before they embarked. To encourage some to remain in New South Wales they were offered a position on half pay and were entitled to receive a land grant of 2000 acres.

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[5] Merryn Stevens, *List of Runs in Gippsland 1830s-1859*. [unpublished]
[6] Email from Skye and Lockalsh Archive, 3 November 2022.

Whilst in the colony, Macalister had become an intimate friend of John Macarthur's sons, James and William. The MacArthur's had obtained land grants at Taralga and influenced by his friends, Macalister decided to also take up pastoral pursuits. In January 1824 he received a land grant of 2000 acres at Myrtle Creek about five miles from Taralga in the county of Argyle within the limits of location. Over the next thirteen years Macalister acquired a substantial pastoral holding. He quickly acquired another grant of 4000 acres for the purchase price of £1000.By 1837 the Macarthur brothers had acquired 18,440 acres and Macalister 16,300 acres which he called *Strathaird.*

Macarthur and Macalister land

He established a homestead on the southern road from Sydney at Picton which he called *Clifton.*

Macalister became well known throughout the district as a leading grazier and in 1826 was appointed a magistrate. The following year he was placed in charge of the Mounted Police at Goulburn Plains.[7] Macalister appears to have been an efficient policeman and commanded respect from his men. Despite being the resident magistrate of Argyle district and having regular court duties, he particularly savoured his role as head of the Mounted Police.

In 1830 he was out searching for the notorious bush ranger Jack Donohoe who had arrived in Australia as a convict in about 1827 but almost immediately escaped and took to the bush. He was apprehended after committing a robbery and sentenced to death. However, as he was being returned to the jail he again escaped into the bush. He killed a man and then took up with two accomplices before being sighted by a police patrol under Sergeant Hodson of Macalister's 57th Regiment. Three men were seen leading a packhorse and, following a brief gun battle Donohoe was shot in the head and killed. The other

[7] John Wilson, 'The Beginnings of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 15 May 1947, p.7.

two men escaped.[8] Although Macalister was not at the final confrontation it certainly appears that he liked to be in the bush hunting miscreants.

Macalister was tenacious in his efforts to track down any bushrangers and was personally involved in the apprehension of a further twelve malefactors in October. He met with the criminals with his mounted police on the River Lachlan where a gunfight ensued. Macalister and several others were wounded but the offenders were captured.[9] In the same month he was responsible for the arrest and capture of two hut keepers who had bludgeoned to death the foreman responsible for building the local Scots Kirk.

Detail of Land owned by Macalister and Macarthurs in Argyle... Mitchell Library NSW. Volume 95 Image 38 Macarthur family papers relevant to Lachlan Macalister

In December 1832 Macalister was again involved in the capture of bushrangers who had stolen property from Mt Badgery. One man was shot dead and another captured. It was believed that these men were part of a larger gang.

Macalister's efforts in upholding law and order were appreciated. Five years after his retirement from the position of commandant an article appeared in the *Sydney Herald* discussing the inadequacies of the Mounted Police and lamenting the fact that Macalister was no longer a member. The writer said 'How different it would have been in Mr Macalister(s)...time they would have hunted the scoundrels for days or weeks till they had taken or driven them out of the district'.[10] The tracking down and capture or killing of these bushrangers was something that Macalister chose to be involved in and gained approbation from the community for his efforts.

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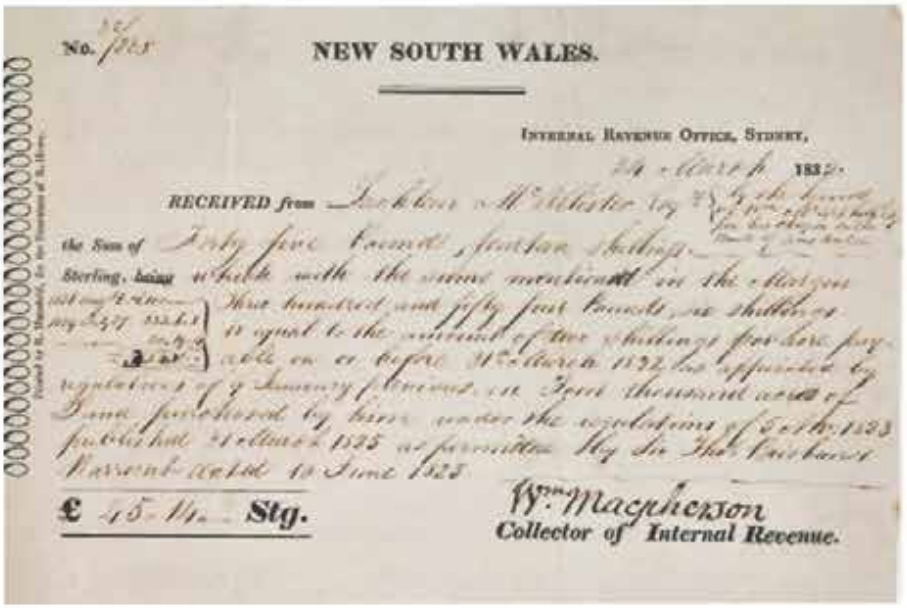
[8] *Sydney Gazette and N.S.W. Advertiser*, 17 September 1830, p.2.
[9] 'Bathurst' *Sydney Gazette and N.S.W. Advertiser*, 23 October 1830, p.3.
[10] 'Mounted Police', *The Sydney Herald*, (NSW 1831- 1842). 26 October 1837, p.3.

In April 1831 Lachlan Macalister, with his good friend and adjoining property holder James Macarthur were appointed Justices of the Peace. However, the decision to appoint Macalister was not met with universal approval. A letter was sent to the Editor of the *Sydney Monitor* in July 1831 complaining about breaches of the law and abuses carried out by Macalister. The letter also noted that he was not always available to adequately carry out his judicial responsibilities.[11] The author signed himself 'looker on' and said that for Macalister to perform all his duties he would need to be superhuman. He then



No. 585

NEW SOUTH WALES.

Internal Revenue Office, Sydney,

March 1832.

RECEIVED from Lachlan M'Allister Esq

the Sum of Forty five pounds fourteen shillings

Sterling, being which with the sums mentioned in the Margin

amounting to £ 37 13 3 1/2 / 7 9 / 2 0 0 / 45 14 0 / three hundred and fifty four pounds six shillings

is equal to the amount of two shillings per dozen pay-

able on or before March 1832 he appointed by

regulations of 9 January Persons in Sum thereunto

Sum purchased by him under the regulations of Oct. 1823

published 1st January 1825 as permitted by the Ordinance

Warrant dated 10 June 1825

£ 45 14 1/2 Stg.

Wm. Macpherson

Collector of Internal Revenue.

Receipt for funds from Lachlan Macalister, Macarthur family papers relative to L. Macalister 1828-1857 State Library NSW, Vol. 095

listed all Macalister's duties: J.P., Police Magistrate for Argyle, Commandant of the Mounted Police, Superintendent of Mr Macarthur's estates and cattle at Taralga, besides being a grantee and rentee. The latter referring to the property of more than 2000 acres that he had been granted.

The criticisms do not appear to have unduly worried Macalister as he continued to build his empire throughout the 1830s and was constantly acquiring land in the counties of Argyle and Georgiana. However his personal affairs and frequent absences were seen to be compromising the effective carrying out of his civic duties and he was further accused of maladministration and neglect. The writer said that on one occasion Macalister travelled to a farm and arbitrarily

[11] To the Editor, *The Sydney Monitor* 6 July 1831, p.2.

sentenced a man to fifty lashes then fifty more the following day without a proper inquiry. On another occasion, being in a hurry, Macalister sentenced a man to fifty lashes after asking the overseer one question without a trial and promised him another 150 lashes if he came before him again.[12]

Similar complaints were made in October of 1833, claiming that he was too often absent to deal with insubordinate convicts and petty crimes. The comment was made 'that a resident PM who has nothing to with farming but who would attend to the duties of the court would be a great advantage'. It appears that Macalister, although willing to take on roles, preferred the more exciting life of a mounted policeman and that of making money to the mundane existence of a magistrate.

In June 1831 Macalister was in the Supreme Court charged by a free labourer with 'maliciously, unlawfully and without reasonable cause sentencing him to six months jail and getting all his wages forfeited.' The labourer was seeking damages due to a court ruling that Macalister had made. The court found in favour of the labourer and that Macalister should review his conduct and tender amends to the free labourer, but due to a technicality he avoided any recompense.[13]

Macalister ruled his fiefdom with an iron rod and was not prepared to compromise under any circumstances. In September 1833 a report from the police benches stated that 247 persons had received corporal punishment. Of those it stated that 184 suffered severely, 50 were punished with a worn out instrument and 13 didn't feel or care for punishment. Nine magistrates witnessed the punishments and were questioned as to their effectiveness. Seven of the nine said that the number of lashes administered was sufficient and that the instrument was sufficient. Macalister alone did not consider 'the standard instruments' are 'sufficient' he considered them inefficient.[14]

Whether the criticisms of Macalister made an impact or he was looking to further expand his pastoral pursuits is unknown, but in November 1834 an article appeared in the *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser* advising that Lieutenant Macalister was leaving the Goulburn Mounted Police. Several testimonials followed from residents of the area thanking him for his services particularly in relation to his activities with bushrangers. In a response Macalister said that his success was due to the 'unwearied co-operation of the men under my command and the uniform support of the magistracy and Gentlemen of the

[12] *The Sydney Monitor*, 6 July 1831, p.2.
[13] 'Domestic Intelligence, Wynne v Macalister', *Sydney Monitor*, 25 June 1831, p.23.
[14] *The Australasian*, 8 November 1833, p.2.

district'. On the completion of his police service he was entitled to use the rank of Captain and on his retirement was given a plate in recognition of his services.[15]

Macalister was intent on increasing his grazing runs. In December 1835 the *Government Gazette* recorded him applying for a further 1160 acres near Myrtle Creek. The property was bounded on all sides by land he had already acquired and totalled 860 acres at 5/- per acre. The following August the *Gazette* recorded purchases for Macalister in the County of Georgiana of 1280 acres for a total of £288/16/-.

Macalister realised that the acquisition of land was the way to financial independence and knew that investment in the new town of Melbourne would in time pay a handsome dividend. In June 1837 Macalister travelled to the fledgling town of Melbourne for the land sales that were to take place there. He purchased a number of allotments in block 6 including allotment 6 between Flinders, Collins, King and Elizabeth Streets. He also purchased lots 6, 7 and 9, part of block 4 between Flinders, Collins, Queen and Lonsdale streets. Macalister had done well from investing in his farming pursuits.[16]

Controversy was to continue to follow Macalister. In February 1837 he published a letter to the Editor of the *Sydney Gazette* and was charged with libel for bringing the legal administration of the colony and the Attorney General into contempt.[17] The case was resolved a year later when Macalister was found guilty of publishing the article, but under provocation and was fined £50.[18]

Macalister was always on the lookout for a financial opportunity. In February 1839 he purchased ten shares at a total value of £500 to form a steam packet company which would sail between Australia, South Africa and London. Whether this enterprise was a success is unknown.

Throughout his life Macalister appears to have had an aggressive streak. In 1846 John Michael Loughnan of Lindenow appeared before John King, Justice of the Peace and stated that on the 24th July 1846 Lachlan Macalister had sent him a challenge to fight. William Pearson, a squatter had delivered the challenge to him at Tarraville in Gippsland. The dispute arose from a letter that Macalister claimed Loughnan had sent to the Colonial Secretary on February 1 1845 in which 'direct dishonourable imputations were cast about him without foundation'.

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[15] *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser,* 6 November 1834, p.2.
[16] *The Argus,* 27 May 1933, p.4.
[17] 'Mr Plunkett and the Great Unpaid', *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser,* 11 November 1837, p.3.
[18] 'Supreme Court', *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser,* 20 November 1838, p.2.

Loughnan also claimed that Macalister was a bully.[19] The matter was resolved without any further violent action.

Lachlan Macalister was not the only member of the family to settle in Australia. Matthew, his brother born in 1805 arrived sometime prior to 1835 and received land grants in 1835 in the County of Argyle. Matthew spent most of his time on his properties and died near Goulburn aged only 42 years in November 1847.[20] Another brother Colin, aged 22 years arrived in Sydney aboard the *William Nicol* in October 1837.[21] He however did not join his brothers in taking up land but worked as an overseer for Lachlan for £30 a year plus rations. He was later employed on Lachlan Macalister's *Boisdale Station* in Gippsland in October 1840. The only land he acquired was in the town of Goulburn where he purchased a block in 1849.

Lachlan's eldest brother, Dr Alexander MacDonald Macalister also settled in Australia after a period of time in St Kitts, Georgetown Guyana. When he arrived is not known although records show he returned to Scotland and his children were born there. He stayed in Scotland until 1839 after which it can be assumed he came to Australia.

His son Thomas Mewburn came to Australia in about 1838 and was involved in the exploration of Gippsland with Angus McMillan. Another son, Dr Alexander John Macalister practised medicine in Sale and was one of the first doctors there. William Garnett, another son worked as a stockman and was killed in 1865 when thrown from a horse on Dargo station. He was probably working for his brother Matthew Macalister, the fifth son who was working on *Boisdale Station* as an overseer after Lachlan Macalister had sold it to John Foster. After the death of John's nephew William Foster, who was managing *Boisdale Station,* Matthew married his widow Sara in 1865.

Ranald Macalister, a nephew of Lachlan Macalister's also came to Australia. It is possible that his father was also Ranald Macalister who had been living in Demerara British Guiana on the north coast of South America. On his Ranald seniors death in 1819 he may have lived with Alexander's family before coming to Australia and working for Lachlan, however there are no existing records of his life to confirm this. Lachlan Macalister obviously had an extensive family in Australia who assisted him with his properties in NSW and Gippsland and who also established themselves in the new district of Port Phillip.

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[19] Public Record Office Victoria, 'Loughnan v Macalister', VPRS 30/P0029 NCR24 1847.

[20] *The Australian Journal,* 30 November 1847, p.2868.

[21] Ancestry.com , 'Immigrants per William Nicol', https://www.ancestry.com.au

The search for new pastures

In 1838 Angus McMillan, a distant neighbour of the Macalister's from the Isle of Skye, also joined them. The McMillan's did not own land in their own right in Scotland but lived over the western side of The Cuillin mountain range which bordered the *Strathaird* estate. Angus McMillan quickly took on the role of overseer at *Clifton* and was the man largely responsible for further extending the Macalister holdings in the south.

The search for new pasture was an ongoing topic of conversation among the squatters and the obvious direction for expansion was to the south. James MacFarlane, a close associate of Lachlan Macalister's with land in the County of Argyle near Macalister also had the run at Omeo. It is likely that these men would have discussed the possibility of finding new pastures to the south and so drought proof their holdings. They would also have discussed the need to find a suitable port in the south to enable them to ship their stock to Van Diemen's Land.

MacFarlane and Macalister were not the only men looking for fresh grass. Other men had already taken the initiative and ventured south of the Monaro in search of new pasture. By October 1838, Edward Bayliss had explored as far south as Buchan but received a hostile reception from the local tribes. The Reverend William Spence Login, one of the early Gippsland Ministers kept a diary while in Gippsland and commented on some of the first attempts to penetrate to the south. In reference to Edward Bayliss, Login wrote: 'They seem to have been deterred by the number of blacks that were then scattered throughout the lower country and in the vicinity of the lakes.' [22]

William Morris, a pastoralist from Moruya took up the *Nungatta* run on the Upper Genoa River in about 1836. He made several journeys south in search of new pasture but had difficulty finding a crossing point on the Snowy River. In 1838 drought forced Morris to send Charles Hutton and five companions further south with 500 head of cattle, looking for pasture.

Hutton, who was born in Edinburgh in 1803 had been convicted of housebreaking and theft in 1822 and sentenced to fourteen years transportation to Australia. In 1830 he received a ticket of leave and obtained employment on William Morris' station at *Nungatta*. The property was situated on what was to become the Victorian – NSW border north of Cann River. The journey was not an easy one as they were constantly harassed by the local Bidwell tribes. Eventually the constant attacks became too much for the drovers and fearing for their lives they retreated back to *Nungatta*, leaving the cattle for the natives.

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[22] Reverend .William Spence Login, Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 68/5.

Login had spoken with Hutton who, '... assured me that a party of which he was one has penetrated as far as Tambo Bluff and seen the lakes the year before McMillan reached them, but in consequence of the numbers and fierceness of the blacks the party was compelled to retire...'[23]

This was the only attempt that Morris instigated to bring cattle into Gippsland from the northeast. The hostility of the natives convinced him that he would face constant aggression from the local populace and abandoned the project.[24] In 1840 Morris sold the property to Abercrombie and Company.[25] Fear of the wild and aggressive Bidwell to the south-east prevented any further attempts to settle and bring stock into far East Gippsland.

A nephew of MacFarlane's, Walter Mitchell, another relative Edward Thomson and Edward Bath, along with a native companion travelled from *Currawong* to the area of present-day Lakes Entrance in April of the same year but did not take up land.[26] This was further to the west and in the land of the Gunaikurnai.

Macalister was issued with a Depasturing Licence in September 1839 for *Macalister Station* in the district of Maneroo. He never resided on the property and his address always remained at *Clifton.* The area was south of the Strathdownie or Omeo runs and it was known as '*Numbla Munjie*', later to become the *Ensay Station.* Macalister was now in a position to push further south in the quest for new pasture and the man with whom he entrusted the task of finding and opening up this new country was the newly arrived Scotsman, Angus McMillan.

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[23] Ibid.
[24] N.A. Wakefield, *Snowy River Mail,* 9 June 1954.
[25] Hutton later worked for Angus McMillan and died in Sale on 3 November 1881.
[26] The Clan MacFarlane Arrochybeg to Australia – Part 1.
http://clanmacfarlane.org.au
'Edward Thomson', *Gippsland Times* 6 June 1890, p.3.

Chapter 3

McMillan and the exploration of Caledonia Australis

'I(sic)...intended to form stations on this promised land, and would have a strong party to occupy it, and with the assistance of whites would conquer the wild blacks'

McMillan speaking to the Aborigines on the Monaro

Angus McMillan, Macalister's overseer was born into a farming community at Glenbrittle on the Isle of Skye in 1810. His parents, Ewan McMillan and Marion MacLeod were not landowners. Ewan was a 'tacksman' and paid yearly rent on land (his 'tack') but was different to the lowly crofters in that his tenure might last for several generations. Tacksmen were often related to the landlord and had the ability to sublet the land to the small crofters who strip-farmed the ground.[1]

Skye is the largest of the Hebridean islands and faces the North Atlantic Ocean. Glenbrittle is on the western coast and experiences extreme weather. Rain and wind sweep in from the Atlantic Ocean, there is little vegetation and the few buildings that are still in existence are very isolated, even in the 21st century.

Following the Battle of Culloden in 1746, massive economic and political upheaval took place in Scotland resulting in the destruction of the old Highland ways and the clan structure.[2] The growing demand for and profitability of wool production resulted in landowners evicting tenants so they could consolidate the small holdings for grazing. These events, referred to as the 'clearances' caused great hardship for the small farmers who were evicted. The reduction in available rents also affected some of the tacksmen, who departed for America.

Old farmhouse on Glenbrittle photo R Christie 2022

[1] John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances,* London: Secker & Warburg, 1971, p.193.
[2] Skye's Hidden Heritage.
http://www.rubh-an-dunain.org.uk

Glenbrittle Valley photo R Christie 2022

The McMillan family was not greatly affected by these changes as some tacksmen were still needed to help run the estates and Ewan was prepared to move his family to where there was work. Ewan was initially a tacksman at Glenbrittle and Cracknish on Skye. When his lease ran out in 1825, he crossed to South Uist and took up Killbride where he lived in the mansion previously occupied by Hugh MacDonald of Boisdale. The family then moved to Barra where he was again tacksman at Eoligarry and Vaslan. Although the family had not been threatened by the clearances and were not forced to leave the country, as the children grew up there was little future in Scotland for them.

The islands were small, arable land was limited and often controlled by absentee landlords who were not interested in subdividing their properties to accommodate a younger new generation. Without access to farmland their options for earning a living were almost non-existent. There were two possibilities: either relocate to mainland Scotland or England and hope to find work there or make a new life in America or Australia. The McMillans had a large family and four of their children moved to mainland Scotland in search of work. Of the remaining children Norman went to the Amazon, Donald went to Jamaica and Angus came to Australia. Only Elizabeth and William remained on Barra with their parents.[3]

Voyage to Australia

Angus McMillan's decision to migrate to Australia entailed more than a three month journey, either as a paying passenger or with the passage paid for by a government scheme. McMillan has often been portrayed as a poor emigrant, however he did not qualify for an assisted passage. In September 1837 aged 27 years he travelled to Greenock to embark on the *Minerva* but on arrival found that there were no first-class berths available. He wrote to his brother John: '...all berths in the first were taken up. As for in the hold I could never dream of it.'[4] He

[3] Graeme MacKenzie, Ancestors of Angus MacMillan, explorer in Australia', *Clan MacMillan International Magazine*, 4 June/July 2005, pp.1-2

[4] Angus McMillan Gippsland's Great Discoverer. A Journal of a Cruise from Greenock to New Holland, Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 129/4.

finally secured a berth in the captain's cabin for £55. In equivalent terms today in Australian dollars this amount would exceed $5000.[5]

The McMillan children had received some education on Skye, although it was possibly home-based due to their isolation. Formal education, if available was through parish schools. It was basic, of short duration and not compulsory. Angus had received possibly more than a basic education as he was literate and regularly wrote letters home.

On his voyage to Australia he kept a detailed diary of daily events aboard the *Minerva*. He was to continue to write journals to record his achievements for the rest of his life.[6] McMillan was bilingual, speaking Gaelic as well as English and at one point on the voyage commented: '...I was quite delighted to hear worship in my own tongue.'[7]

Religion played an important part in the lives of the McMillan family and reading his shipboard diary it is obvious he had received a strict religious upbringing. He noted in his diary before boarding the *Minerva* that he had forwarded copies of New Testaments to his brothers and sisters, indicating that his siblings were also literate. The journal he wrote on the *Minerva* emphasises his religious views and he quotes at length from the Bible.

In November 1837 he wrote out a list of 27 resolutions by which he vowed to live his life. The following five resolutions are particularly important when considering what his actions were later in his life in Australia:

> 1. Resolved to do whatever I think to be most to God's glory and my own good profit... to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.
>
> 3. Resolved never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.
>
> 6. Resolved never to do anything out of revenge.
>
> 9. Resolved to maintain strict temperance in eating and drinking.
>
> 10. Resolved whenever I do any conspicuously evil act to trace it back to its original cause, and then both carefully endeavour to

[5] http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/RDavies/arian/current/howmuch.html Current Value of old money

[6] Discussion with Susan Keen great great granddaughter of McMillan, 2020.

[7] Angus McMillan Gippsland's Great Discoverer. A Journal of a Cruise from Greenock to New Holland, Manuscripts collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 129/4. p.7.

do so no more and fight and pray with all my might against the origin of it.[8]

These values were relatively easy to abide by in the comparatively civilized environment of Scotland and aboard the ship. In a new and what was considered barbarous land, with dangerous and unpredictable natives, unscrupulous, powerful and wealthy men around him and faced with dangers and difficulties he could not have imagined, these resolutions may not have been so easy to uphold.

Life on board the *Minerva* was hard and deaths were a frequent occurrence. On 29 November McMillan recorded that a woman who was recently married had died. The death affected him and the comment in his diary gives an indication of a compassionate side to his personality. He wrote: 'I understand her remains were dropped over the side, for my feelings would not bear to see the last ceremony performed.'[9]

When it came to his religious principles, McMillan appeared to be intolerant of any variation. The Presbyterian Church was opposed to working on Sundays and McMillan was a strict adherent to this rule. Whilst at sea in December 1837 he recorded that a sheep had been slaughtered on the Sabbath. When offered some of the mutton for dinner on the following day he refused to partake of it.[10] The captain chided him for not eating and McMillan recorded that the captain said '...if he met me 40 years hence I would be of a different opinion'. McMillan 'assured him that I hoped to be guided by the same guide', namely his religious views and that his attitude would not have altered.

There is no doubt that in the ensuing years McMillan's approach to death and life was forced to change as he adapted to his new environment. Although the McMillan family had experience as middlemen dealing with the lords of the land and poor strip farmers, this did not prepare him for defending himself and his property from a hostile Indigenous population that resented the invasion of their lands. Nothing is recorded in the diary about McMillan's expectations of the new land he was sailing to, but his values and attitudes towards Indigenous peoples were probably very similar to the general European opinions, which were not generous.

Angus McMillan had embarked on the *Minerva* with other Scots including Malcolm MacFarlane (nephew of James), Edward Thomson, Walter Mitchell and Alan MacAskill, all with whom he would have ongoing

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[8] Angus McMillan Gippsland's Great Discoverer. A Journal of a Cruise from Greenock to New Holland, Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 129/4.
[9] Ibid p.5.
[10] Ibid p.22.

relationships. McMillan and Walter Mitchell were the only ones to have the luxury of a cabin. McMillan's shipboard diary however makes no mention of his travelling companions.[11]

The ship carried over 220 immigrants consisting of mechanics and labourers destined to be employed on arrival by wealthy settlers who had been encouraged to take them on by the introduction of a 'Bounty Scheme'. They had been selected by Dr JD Lang, a Scottish born Presbyterian clergyman who arrived in New South Wales in 1823. He argued strongly for an end to transportation to the colony and an increase in free migrants through immigration schemes.[12] The Bounty Scheme was one such stratagem, introduced to improve the skill level of the Australian population and to give settlers the financial support needed to encourage them to meet the cost of bringing new workers and women out to the colony.

In Scotland the scheme was enthusiastically supported. The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland saw emigration from the Highlands and Islands as 'not only practical but necessary.'[13] Also on board the *Minerva* were German missionaries sent out to establish a mission amongst the Aborigines at Moreton Bay.

There were many risks associated with travelling on a sailing ship: fire, shipwreck and disease were constant threats. On arrival in Sydney on 24 January 1838, the ship and all aboard were immediately placed in quarantine at Spring Cove due to an outbreak of typhus. The disease had broken out on 5 December, causing twelve deaths and thirty passengers were ill, but none in the cabin accommodation were affected. The confined spaces of the ship's hold were an ideal breeding place for the disease which was carried by rats and passed on to humans by the bite of a flea or lice. Initially the sick were contained on the ship and the healthy were allowed on shore, but still quarantined and prevented from entering the town. By 3 February a further twenty cases had developed and another death recorded. As the outbreak continued it was decided to move the sick on shore so the hold could be fumigated. The deaths continued and by 13 February another fourteen of those quarantined had died, making a total of 28 deaths.

Once the fumigation of the ship was completed it was decided there was no need to detain the healthy passengers further as there had been no disease evident in any of the passengers from the poop cabins. McMillan and his

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[11] Dr. T.A. McLean, 'A Dauntless Man: Angus McMillan, 14th August 1810 – 18th May 1865', *Traralgon and District Historical Society*, July 1972, p.23.

[12] 'Ships News', *Sydney Herald,* 22 January 1838, p.2.

[13] *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 1 March 1838, p.2.

companions reboarded the *Minerva* which sailed up the harbour on 14 February with her cabin passengers and crew finally out of quarantine.

Another early Gippsland settler, Hugh Buntine suffered a similar experience. He was influenced to come to Australia by Dr JD Lang and left Greenock in May 1838, arriving in Sydney in October 1838. Fever claimed the lives of 65 passengers, including his wife and son who was born at sea. Unlike McMillan, Buntine did not have waiting employment and could see no point remaining in Sydney so he boarded the *Bright Planet* which docked in Melbourne in March 1840.

Employment with Lachlan Macalister

McMillan was assured of employment when he reached New South Wales as he carried with him letters of introduction to Lachlan Macalister. He had most probably received the letters from Macalister's family at Strathaird who lived a day's walk from McMillan's birthplace in Skye and were acquainted with the family.[14] After a short time in Sydney he travelled to Macalister's property *Clifton* which was situated to the south at Picton near Camden. The fact that McMillan was taken on with no experience of bush work is an indication that the introductory letters he carried were of significance. Perhaps it was his Scottish background combined with his aptitude for learning and ability to adapt to new surroundings that saw McMillan rise to a position of responsibility within twelve months.

Even with the Bounty Scheme in operation, free labourers were in short supply in New South Wales, however the abundance of free convict labour partially offset the problem, even though many were unskilled. There was a major advantage in employing convicts as the only cost involved was supplying them with rations. Lachlan Macalister made the most of the opportunity to employ convicts on his properties. In the period June to August 1832 his convict workforce consisted of a stableboy, bellows maker, blacksmith, a sawyer, a tailor's boy and a ploughman. He was constantly adding to this workforce: in 1833 he took on an errand boy, a calico printer and a general labourer. There would have been other farm workers and domestic servants present on the property as well.

Macalister was a harsh task master and his military experience would have resulted in an expectation of being obeyed without question when an order was issued. An article written in the *Gippsland Times* of 1862 stated that station labourers were nearly always convicts who ' ... were used in the most cruel manner by their tyrannical employers.'[15]

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[14] Don Watson, *Caledonia Australis* Sydney: William Collins Pty. Ltd., 1984, p.109.
[15] 'The Discovery of Gippsland ' *Gippsland Times,* 28 November 1862, p.3.

It was not long before McMillan was to see for himself that Macalister had an authoritarian and cruel streak. On a particularly wet day at *Clifton,* the overseer rang a bell to turn out the men for work, but the rain was so heavy they refused to move which resulted in them being chained and taken to the nearest magistrate's bench. McMillan, who observed the proceedings, was put in the witness box to testify as to their insubordinate behaviour. When he was questioned however, he supported the convicts' story saying that he would not ask anyone to work on such a day.[16] The police magistrate who was probably an associate of Macalister's either did not believe McMillan's statement or had no consideration for the conditions they were ordered to work in. Each of the men was given 50 lashes for their disobedience.[17]

McMillan in this instance was prepared to stand up for those less fortunate than himself when he saw an injustice, even if it brought him into conflict with his employer. He showed some empathy for his fellow men even though they were not considered his equals.

McMillan was not destined to remain at *Clifton;* in November 1838 he was instructed to select 300 heifers at Shoalhaven and then proceed with them to the Portland District. However, when he returned to Goulburn with the cattle his instructions changed and he was ordered to proceed to James MacFarlane's *Currawong* station on the Monaro Plains. MacFarlane had also established a run at Omeo and an outpost further south west of *Currawong* at MacFarlane's Flat.

McMillan arrived at the station on 26 February 1839, accompanied by three of Macalister's convicts. Whether Macalister was sending McMillan to assist his friend in the management of the cattle or because of a disagreement that McMillan had with his employer over the earlier treatment of the convicts at *Clifton* is unknown.

It was while at *Currawong* that McMillan 'first met a tribe of native blacks'[18] and according to John Shillinglaw a public servant and historian he became friendly with them. He said that McMillan spent a considerable time around the natives' campfires and learnt something of their history and traditions. This included details about the warlike tribes to the south.

Shillinglaw was a friend and later a strong supporter of McMillan's claims to be the discoverer of Gippsland. Writing in 1874, Shillinglaw said: 'His discreet conduct and amiability of character... won the confidence of the neighbouring tribes of blacks and in a few months, he mastered a good deal of their language.'[19]

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[16] Ibid. p.3.
[17] *Gippsland Times,* 24 May 1865, Supplement.
[18] 'Discovery of Gippsland' *Gippsland Times,* 28 November 1862, p.3.
[19] John Shillinglaw, *Gippsland Times* 10 September 1874, p.4.

How much credence we can put on Shillinglaw's statements about McMillan's relationship with the local Indigenous population is open to question. However, as the Monaro was plunged into drought in 1839 new pasture was urgently needed for the survival of the graziers. According to McMillan's later correspondence with James Bonwick,[20] he said that while he was residing at *Currawong* in 1839,[21] he had discussions with the blacks and was made aware of 'fine country' to the south west. He also spoke with other graziers who had been in the area for some years and travelled into the country to the south.

Inspired by what he heard, he climbed a mountain that he called the Haystack and had a view of the sea. After further negotiation and discussion with the local natives, McMillan left *Currawong* in late May 1839 with one companion and a packhorse loaded with four weeks supplies. He could not persuade a fellow Scotsman to go with him due to the perceived dangers, so his companion was a local Monaro native named Jemmy Gibber. Gibber however, was also afraid of the hostile natives to the south and was only persuaded to go when McMillan demonstrated the three guns that he would take with him.[22]

McMillan also told the Monaro natives that he

'...intended to form stations on this promised land, and would have a strong party to occupy it, and with the assistance of whites would conquer the wild blacks, and then the Maneroo blacks might live in peace and quietness.'[23]

McMillan's exploration

Whether on his own initiative or with the blessing of MacFarlane it seems he followed MacKillops track across the Snowy River in the direction of Omeo. On 31 May McMillan wrote in his journal: 'my friend (Jemmy Gibber) is quite pleased that I am picking up the language so fast and says that I must have once been a blackfellow'. However, as they progressed south, McMillan claimed Gibber became frightened and he awakened one night to find Gibber standing over him with a raised club. After disarming him and warning that his tribe would suffer if any harm came to himself, they pushed on and came to the Omeo plains on 6 June and James MacFarlane's *Omeo Station*. On the return journey to *Currawong* on 12 June, they had to force their way through metre deep snow.

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[20] James Bonwick (1817-1906), was a teacher, author, historian and archivist, for a time he lived by his writing, and published *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip* (1856).
[21] James Bonwick, *Port Phillip Settlement*, London: Samson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883, p.489.
[22] 'Angus McMillan', *Gippsland Times, Supplement*, 24 May 1865 p.1. n.b. there are varying versions of this found across a number of accounts.
[23] 'The Discovery of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times* 28 November 1862, p.3.

McMillan's horse knocked up and had to be left, and as Gibber's feet could not stand the cold McMillan let him ride the second horse.[24]

From *Currawong* McMillan travelled on to report to his employer at *Clifton.* The decision was made to further explore the new country, set up a station there and hopefully find a route through to the coast. In August a party including Matthew Macalister, Lachlan's nephew took a bullock wagon to Omeo and then south to *Numbla Munjie* on the Tambo River, where the station had been formed for Macalister. Walter Mitchell had also registered a station called *Mitchell Station* there.

Drought continued to persist and new pasture was desperately required if landowners and their stock were to survive. By this time McMillan would have had a reasonable idea of the potential worth of the land in the south. However, to fully exploit the new grazing lands a port was needed to ship the stock to Van Diemen's Land. It was just not practicable or financially viable to take the cattle from the Monaro, Omeo or the unsettled country further to the south back to ports in the north.

A number of slightly differing accounts have been published detailing the expeditions McMillan made to the south in search of pasture and a route to the coast. Richard MacKay in *Recollections of Gippsland Goldfields* first published in 1916, states that he copied his account from McMillan's own diary shown to him in 1862.[25] The *Gippsland Times* also published a series of articles entitled *The Discovery of Gippsland* commencing on 28 November 1862 to explain to readers of the paper: '...in what way the isolated portion of Australia in which we reside and have found a home was first opened for settlements to Europeans.'[26] The *Australian News* also published a version commencing 22 July 1864. Another abbreviated account written by McMillan is to be found in *Letters from Victorian Pioneers.* This is a collection of letters written at the request of Lieutenant Governor La Trobe in 1853 asking for information about the early settlement of the colony and was first published in 1899. An account also appears in James Bonwick's book *Port Phillip Settlement,* published in 1883.

There is some variation in all these accounts and some inaccuracies, but it appears they all have their origins with Angus McMillan. No other record of these events has been found to date.

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[24] 'Angus McMillan', *Gippsland Times Supplement,* 24 May 1865. p.1.
[25] MacKay Richard, *Recollections of Gippsland Goldfields,* LV Printers, 1977, p.87.
[26] 'The Discovery of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 28 November 1862, p.3.

McMillan made a total of eight journeys of varying lengths into what is now known as Gippsland and in addition to his European companions he usually had Aboriginal guides. As he travelled through Gippsland he encountered members of the Gunaikurnai who had never seen a white man before and they often fled as he approached.

View from Mount Kent similar to what McMillan would have experienced, pencil sketch by Eugene Von Guerard December 1860, State Library of NSW

In December 1839 while on horseback, he met with a large Indigenous tribe. When he dismounted to try and talk with them they fled, initially believing the horse and man to be one beast. McMillan's response was condescending and typical of nineteenth century Europeans. He commented:

> 'These little incidents…at least shows the abject wildness, the childlike intellect and the simplicity of rude nature that I found in the natives when I first broke ground amongst them.'[27]

In January 1840 another party was formed to attempt to reach the coast. McMillan commented that there were natives in every direction and while they were having their dinner near a river he named the 'Mitchell' they came closer, but when the party mounted their horses they ran off and set fire to their camps. In their haste to get away they left their rugs and Cobbon Johnny, one of McMillan's guides wanted to take these. McMillan was either afraid of the consequences if they were taken or showed some respect for the natives and said, 'I would not have them disturbed'.

Later that same afternoon he said several attempts were made to communicate with the natives, but language was a problem for the Omeo guides who spoke a different dialect and could not converse with them. No record exists of what happened.

On 22 January they travelled down a large river which McMillan had named the 'Macalister' until they came to the junction with another river which he named the 'Glengarry'. A large tribe of natives was camped around the waterway but again fled after setting fire to their camps on seeing the approaching

[27] 'Exploration of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 5 December 1862, p.2.

white men. It was here that McMillan had his first attempt at communication with an individual member of the Gunaikurnai. The party managed to surround an old lame man in the morass and made signs to him that they wanted to get to the sea.[28] Instead of pointing them in the right direction, he pointed to where they had come from and indicated that the explorers should return from where they had come.

The man was given a pocketknife before the party moved on.[29] Bonwick's account says he was also given a pair of trousers and on leaving, having shaken hands with the whole party did the same with the horses, shaking their bridles.[30]

McMillan was certainly wary of the natives, but the different accounts indicate that at all times he tried to communicate with them and at no point showed any hostility towards them. The party was however carrying weapons and they were therefore prepared if natives attacked. From the descriptions given, the Aborigines generally avoided the Europeans and were genuinely frightened of these newcomers with their strange four legged beasts.

Caledonia Australis

McMillan and his companions were greatly impressed with the land they were travelling through. After the January 1840 expedition McMillan travelled to the Maneroo to tell Lachlan Macalister of the country he had found and termed *Caledonia Australis*. He said that it was prime undulating country, timbered but with grassy plains which provided an abundant food source for the local population, the Indigenous occupiers of this country. McMillan told Macalister 'that with all the friends he ever had he could not half stock it – land rich and climate good.'[31]

Macalister appears to have been initially enthused by McMillan's report of the new country and in June 1840 sent McMillan out with a dray and seven men to clear a dray road over the range, taking with them 400 head of cattle to establish a station at *Nuntin* on the Avon River (to the south west of the current site of the town of Stratford).

Although Macalister initially agreed that it was advisable for McMillan to explore the new country and find a route to the coast, his confidence in the man appears to have wavered. The party had only reached the Tambo River when they were met by Lieutenant Ross, who had instructions from Macalister to return the cattle to the *Numbla Munjie* and not proceed further until a road to the coast could be found.

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[28] Bonwick, *Port Phillip Settlement,* p.491.
[29] 'Exploration of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 12 December 1862, p.3.
[30] Bonwick, p.491.
[31] Richard MacKay, p.91.

The despatches also informed McMillan that Ross was to lead the party back in an effort to find a coast road. The party reformed at *Numbla Munjie* but progressed only as far as the current site of Rosedale on the Glengarry River before returning. (Strzelecki later renamed it the LaTrobe River). McMillan decided to disobey his instructions and took possession of country along the Avon River for Macalister, which he referred to as *Nuntin*.[32] Without cattle this probably meant that McMillan defined the area by natural features or blazes on the trees.

Caledonia Australis, William Dexter drawing in Caroline Dexter's Ladies Almanac 1858, p. 36.

Macalister had another change of heart in October, probably as grass was becoming scarcer and sent McMillan back to the Monaro with a mob of cattle for the south. Tom Macalister, Dr Alexander Arbuckle, a native and party of ten accompanied McMillan as he cleared the remainder of the road and brought down 430 head of cattle, as well as a dray with ten bullocks. They arrived at *Nuntin* on the Avon River in twelve days.

Again, McMillan was not trusted with the task of finding a road to the coast. Colin Macalister, another nephew (or brother) of Lachlan was instructed to find a route to the coast at Corner Inlet where a port could be established. A start was made but a disagreement with McMillan led Macalister to abort the trip, saying that he knew the country so well he could sail to Corner Inlet and make his way inland from there. After only twelve days they returned to *Nuntin* before heading north to the Tambo.

First conflict with the Gunaikurnai

Matthew Macalister, Lachlan's nephew was left at *Nuntin* in charge of four well- armed men, tasked with finishing a hut and guarding the cattle.[33] As McMillan headed back to *Numbla Munjie* he was attacked by about 80 natives at Clifton Morass near present day Bairnsdale. Until this point the local Indigenous population had largely kept their distance from the European interlopers; this attack was a definite change in attitude. The reason for the attack can only be surmised but perhaps it was provoked by the introduction of the cattle which

[32] Bonwick, p.493.
[33] Ibid p.493.

could be seen quickly destroying the native grasses, driving off game and making hunting more difficult.

Only Arbuckle and McMillan were armed. They turned their horses towards the natives and McMillan fired off both barrels of his shotgun as they were throwing their spears. The attackers quickly dispersed and McMillan said: 'some of them might have received a few drops of buckshot.' No mention is made of any deaths which would be unlikely at the distance the guns were fired. McMillan later said that the natives thought the report came out of the horses' nostrils.

A different version of events was published in 1864. In this article it was said that 400 'blacks' met the McMillan party at Clifton Morass, of whom 80 were armed with spears and waddies. McMillan rode forward alone, reined to a halt and, placing his shotgun between his horse's ears fired. The Aborigines lay down and a second shot passed over their heads, after which they ran off.[34]

On his return to Maneroo McMillan tried to get some protection from the Crown Lands Commissioner but was told that as he was outside the civilised boundaries no protection could be given. Lachlan Macalister had previously written to Governor Sir George Gipps on 21 July 1838 requesting action to be taken to protect the 'memorialists': Lachlan Macalister, his brother Matthew Macalister, James MacFarlane and Duncan MacFarlane. Macalister wrote that there was no white provocation of the Aborigines but the atrocities that they carried out could be ascribed to the 'cupidity ... and their want of moral principles'. He concluded by saying: 'the settlers will undoubtedly take measures to protect themselves.'[35] An ominous warning of what was to follow.

On returning to *Numbla Munjie,* McMillan received news that Matthew Macalister (the MacKay account says Tom Macalister) and the men he had left at *Nuntin* had also been attacked and driven off and the camp stripped. McMillan was under no illusion as to what had to happen: he picked a party of eight men, which included John McDonald, Dr Arbuckle, Old Bath, Old Sam, Colin McLaren and Gilbert and headed back to *Nuntin* armed 'with plenty of ammunition.'

On arrival they moved the hut further from the creek and cut port holes all round it through which to fire. On 22 December 1840, while Dr Arbuckle was killing a wild dog near the creek he was rushed by natives and only just escaped back to the hut. The men were obviously concerned about confronting a large number of natives in the open.

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[34] 'Angus McMillan' *The Australian News,* 22 July 1864 p.11.

[35] 'Port Phillip despatches 1835 -1839, Miscellaneous papers re the early settlement of Melbourne No115' Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 24/4.

They barricaded themselves in the hut as the natives approached carrying green bows, which it was assumed was a sign of peace. McMillan told the men not to fire and went out to meet the leader whom he had seen previously at the morass.

McMillan placed his rifle on the ground as a sign of goodwill and the native dropped his spear but he deftly picked it up between his toes. McMillan surprisingly says he did not see this because of the long grass, but his men whom we must assume were further away saw that he was in danger and five of them fired. The natives surrounding the hut dropped to the ground but quickly rose and 'made a bolt of it in great confusion' as they realised that their leader with the spear had been shot and killed.

McMillan and several others rode after the retreating natives and he later said that 'this bold skirmish gave them a lesson which frightened them from attacking the station again.' This he referred to as the 'Battle of Nuntin'.[36] Whether any more were killed is not known. How far they rode after them is also unknown but assuming some men were left at the hut, the small group would not have pursued them far into relatively hostile country when they were heavily outnumbered.

After the first *Nuntin* attack, John McDonald had proposed to go after the Gunaikurnai but could not get anyone to accompany him, indicating that they were not confident of following the natives into the bush.[37] Even with more men it is unlikely they would have ventured far from the relative security of the hut.

A slightly different version of the attack was related in the *Gippsland Times* of July 1864 from an article reprinted from *The Australian News.* In this account it was said that 'a spear thrown with great force by the chief removed all doubts as to the real intentions of the blacks'.

To emphasise the difficulties in accurately assessing the events surrounding the *Nuntin* incident, another version is to be found in an interview with Ewan McMillan given to *The Herald,* written by Bernard Cronin in 1927. Ewan said that his father, having arrived on the Sale plains decided to build a hut.

> They were putting up the rafters one night when 'Clifton', McMillan's own horse, who had a strange aversion to the blacks, galloped up with every sign of uneasiness, causing McMillan to exclaim: 'Lads we will have to get ready for the niggers. They will be on us by daybreak....

[36] 'Exploration of Gippsland' *Gippsland Times*, 19 December 1862, p.3.
[37] 'Exploration of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 19 December 1862, p.3.

On my father's instructions Big Ivo bored loopholes in the walls while the rest saw to their weapons. Dr Arbuckle was assigned to the fireplace to load the rifles as required.

Just at dawn some 500 blacks appeared at a run. They halted about 200 yards from the hut. It took two volleys to send them to the rightabout. But for the hut it is certain the whites would have all been killed.'[38]

Although this varies from the earlier account it does emphasise that the hut was seen as the safest refuge. There is no indication that any of the men pursued the fleeing Gunaikurnai.

Macalister had another change of heart and when supplies reached *Nuntin* in the charge of Thomas Macalister, McMillan was ordered to abandon *Nuntin* and sell the cattle in Melbourne.[39] This seems a highly unlikely scheme as there was no road to Melbourne or access via the coast. Instead it appears McMillan took the initiative, and with Tom Macalister and several others pushed for the coast which they finally reached on 13 February 1841 at Old Port, near what was to become Port Albert. This opened the way for European expansion over land, ensuring that further conflict with the original inhabitants was unavoidable.

McMillan was one of the earliest Europeans to visit the land of the Gunaikurnai and for more than 150 years he was solely credited with its discovery. Bonwick however acknowledged that others had penetrated into the wilds of Gippsland at about the same time. He said Edward had reached Buchan further to the west in early 1839 and that John Rhodes Wilkinson had established a station there in April 1839.[40] Cox claimed that Andrew Hutton reached the eastern side of the Gippsland Lakes in 1833 [41] but none of these expeditions resulted in the development which followed McMillan's journeys. In 1840 however, a dispute as to who really discovered Gippsland was about to unfold and would continue for the better part of 100 years.

Strzelecki and the wreck of the *Clonmel*

The discovery of these new grazing lands referred to as 'Caledonia Australis' by McMillan was not made public and as a result the area received no attention.

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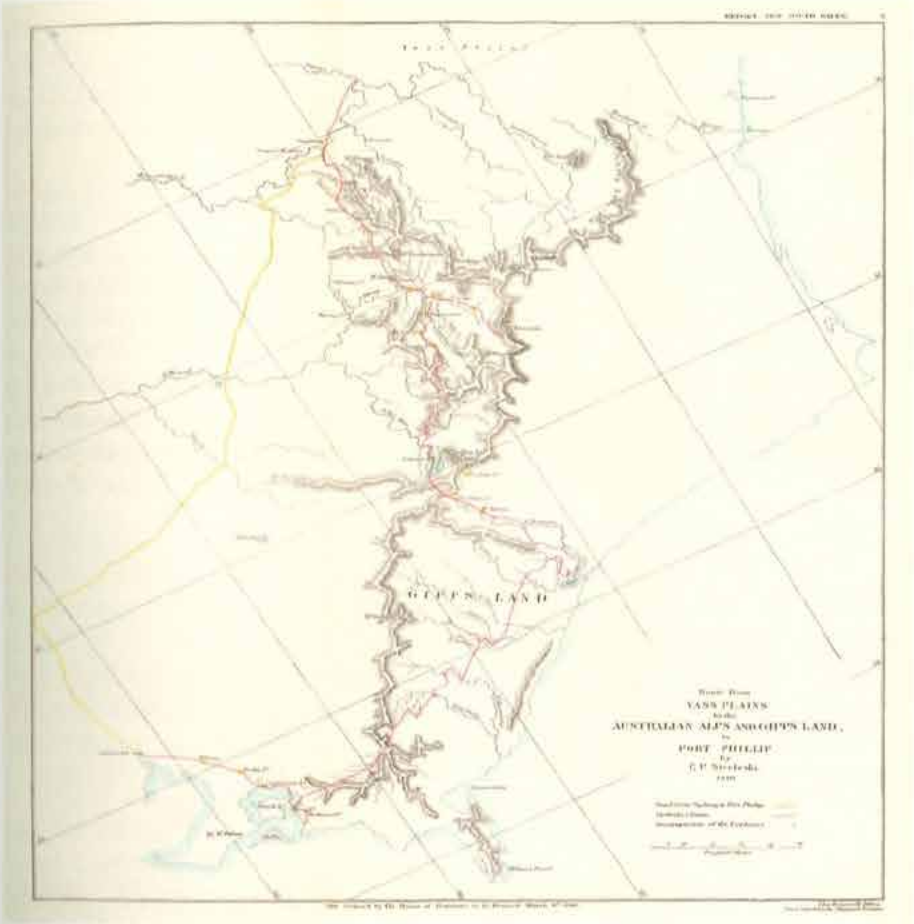
[38] Bernard Cronin, 'How Gippsland was Discovered', *The Herald*, 14 May 1927, p. 17.
[39] MacKay p.93.
[40] Bonwick p. 494.
[41] Rev. George Cox, *Notes on Gippsland History: The Exploration of Gippsland vol.1*, Yarram: Port Albert Maritime Museum, 1990, p.7.

But two events were to follow which would have a huge impact on the development of the area. In early 1840 explorer Count Paul Strzelecki reached Melbourne, having journeyed overland from the Monaro part of the way with James Macarthur, an old friend of Lachlan Macalister's.[42] Macarthur had previously travelled around the Gippsland coast by ship as he was returning to Sydney from Van Diemen's Land. He looked at Wilsons Promontory and



Route from Yass Plains by the Australian Alps and Gipps Land, to Port Phillip/ by E.P. Streleski, 1840.
Published by John Arrowsmith for the House of Commons 1841, National Library of Australia

[42] 'Discovery of Gippsland' *Australasian Chronicle*, 7 July 1840, p.2.

assumed there had to be valuable grazing land further inland and passed this information on to Strzelecki.

Macarthur had mentioned this proposed trip: 'to my old friend Lachlan Macalister and from his withholding information from me assumed that at the time he was really ignorant of the fine grazing country that his friend Mr McMillan subsequently occupied with his (Mr Macalister's) stock.'[43]

Following a two month journey which left Strzelecki and his companions exhausted after struggling through dense scrub, appalling weather and with almost no provisions, they reached Melbourne in May 1840. Strzelecki quickly published the account of his journey, describing in glowing terms the land that he had travelled through. *The Colonist* of July 1840 said that graziers would be delighted with the new country that had been discovered by Strzelecki.[44]

This was the first public acknowledgement that new grazing lands were waiting to be taken up in the east and Strzelecki took full credit for the discovery. *The Colonist* however later qualified its comments by saying that a letter dated 18 February from McMillan to Macalister, written from *Currawong* made it clear that McMillan was in fact the first person to visit this country.[45] Whether Strzelecki was aware of McMillan's journeys and the names he had bestowed on salient features is not known but Strzelecki also named significant landmarks. As a result many of McMillan's original place names were changed, including *Caledonia Australis* which was renamed 'Gipps Land' in honour of the current Governor.

The publicity Strzelecki generated in Melbourne created excitement and resulted in great interest in the new region. The expedition caught the attention of La Trobe who, in writing to Governor Gipps in June 1840 said: 'I wish we had a few more of his class of idlers in the Colony.'[46] It was probably this journey and the excitement it created among the squatting class that was eventually to result in the district of Gipps Land being legally defined and La Trobe being made responsible for it.

The second event of importance was the wreck of the *Clonmel* off the Gippsland coast at Corner Inlet in January 1841. The *Clonmel* had been commissioned to run mail between Sydney and Melbourne when it ran aground near the entrance to Corner Inlet. The passengers were safely landed on nearby Snake Island and a boat was despatched to Melbourne for a rescue party.

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[43] 'The Discovery of Gippsland', *The Argus,* 14 March 1856, p.4.
[44] 'Progress of Discovery' *The Colonist,* 9 July 1840, p.4.
[45] Ibid
[46] John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller Writer Governor.* ACT: Halstead Press, 2017, p.192.

Robert Russell, (1808-1900,) Makeshift huts of the survivors of the wreck of the Clonmel, May 1843, Pencil on paper, State Library of Victoria MS Collection, MS 9555

Meanwhile those who were stranded explored the coastline and quickly became aware that a channel suitable for navigation with a good depth of water led inland. When news of this harbour reached Melbourne, a group of entrepreneurs chartered the barque *Singapore* for the purpose of establishing a settlement there. They followed the channel, which was deep enough to take a 400-ton vessel and when they found abundant grass for grazing and good timber, built a log cottage at what they called 'Port Albert'.[47]

These events were taking place unbeknownst to McMillan, who continued to search for a route to the coast which he finally reached in February 1841, close to the settlement that was later to become Port Albert. There was now a good harbour from which to ship cattle to Van Diemen's Land and a route from

Robert Russell, (1808-1900), Settlement at Port Albert, April 1843, Copy at Gippsland Art Gallery

the interior to the port along which cattle could be moved.

Once it became known that Gipps Land had an accessible port, with good pasture and fresh water nearby, wealthy and influential men could see the potential of establishing enterprises there, and others the opportunity to acquire land for little cost. The Melbourne firm of Turnbull Orr and Company quickly

[47] Charles Daley, *The Discovery of Gippsland,* Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1960, pp.14-15.

established a store and a monopoly over shipping from the port and it was not long before further ships with settlers and supplies began to arrive at Port Albert.

The Port Phillip Patriot 1842 explained the strategic importance of Port Albert:

> '[B]eing much the nearest shipping place to Hobart Town on the coast of New Holland. The cattle and sheep shipped there will arrive in much more wholesome state for slaughtering than those that have undergone the long confinement in a crowded vessel, by which the flavour of Port Phillip meat is so much injured. The Water Witch was only three days from weighing anchor in Port Albert until she dropped it off Macquarie Point; of course, the flesh of the animals is not likely to be in that feverish state consequent on long voyages.'[48]

The first Gipps Land cattle were exported to Hobart in June 1842 when James MacFarlane chartered the schooner *Water Witch.* The second shipment came from McMillan but whether they were his or Macalister's cattle is unclear.

Hostile encounters with the Gunaikurnai

Several attempts were made to reach Port Albert from the north west. In May 1841 Alick Hunter and a party from the Goulburn River came as far south as Glenmaggie before turning back. Others, including William Brodribb searched for an overland route to take cattle to Melbourne but the country proved too difficult.[49]

As Port Albert was being established, McMillan had several more encounters with the Gunaikurnai. The only reference is recorded in the *Gippsland Times* 'Exploration of Gippsland' article number IV. McMillan with Colin McLaren, Old Lawrence, Sam and a native had started for Port Albert with a dray in May 1841. They spent three weeks clearing a road along the banks of the rivers and also cut down the banks to clear a road suitable for stock.[50]

According to McMillan, the natives were now hostile and at the Glengarry River crossing place he estimated there were between two and three thousand waiting for them. McMillan said they formed a battery and cleared the scrub within gunshot of the camp. Although the natives remained on the eastern side of the river they had to fire at them as McMillan's party crossed the river.

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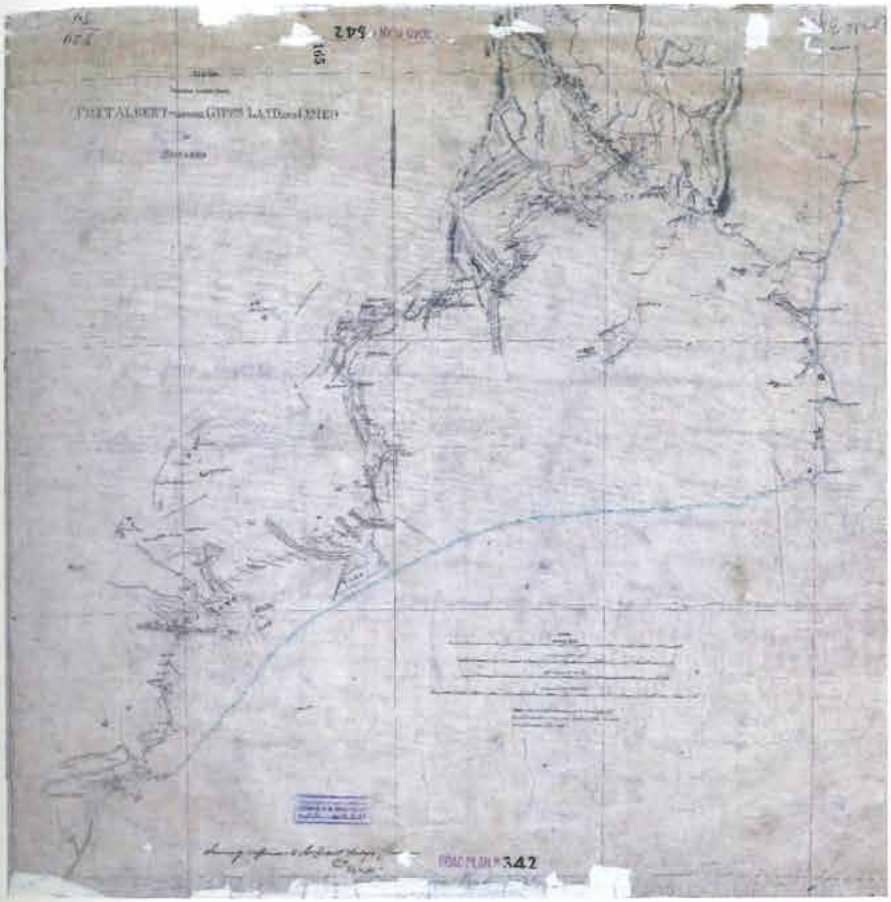
[48] *Port Phillip Patriot*, 29 August 1842, p 2.

[49] Wells, John, *Gippsland people a place and their past,* Drouin: Landmark Press, 1986, p.20.

[50] 'Exploration of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 4 May 1841. p.3. This forms part of a series of articles in which McMillan relates his exploration of Gipps Land.

On the banks of the Thomson River 'they came upon us again... headed by an old woman.' McMillan said they were bold, hostile, treacherous people who had to be continuously watched and requiring quick and decisive defence. McMillan then said: 'we had here to pursue the same plan of intimidation as on the Glengarry, and by the aid of powder and shot, clear our way back to the



Port Albert to Moneroo in Gippsland, PROV. Historic Plans Collection Plan 342.

station.'[51] No mention is made of casualties although the Aborigines seemed to have kept their distance and McMillan's use of the word 'shot' indicates that the weapons were shotguns, which certainly did not have a long range. These forays marked a more aggressive attitude by the Aborigines in their relations with the new settlers.

[51] 'Exploration of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times,* 4 May 1841, p.3.

First Stations Formed

The establishment of the port and track into Gipps Land ensured a steady movement of population eager to take up the land around the two existing stations. However, in 1840 the only licences issued were to Macalister for *Boisdale* and McMillan at *Bushy Park* at a cost of £10 each. No licence was ever issued for the original selection of land at *Nuntin* after McMillan moved cattle onto the run, as it was outside the recognized boundaries of settlement.

Bushy Park and Stratford runs, PROV, Historic Plans Collection Run 176, VPRS 8168/POOO2 .

Today it is difficult to determine the exact location of the original *Nuntin Run.* This was still the name being used in the district in June 1844. As Augustus Robinson made his progression through Gippsland in June 1844, he travelled from 'Fosters' or 'The Hart' and went 'to *Nuntun(sic)* a sheep station of Mr MacAllister'. He then said that he travelled over several plains before reaching Macalister's home station on the Avon.[52] When he left he commented that the main road ran by *Nuntun(sic)* on the Avon River. With this information it is likely it was aligned with the Avon River and included Nuntin Creek to the south west of Stratford. It appears to have been the southernmost point of Macalister's land. Gardner is correct when he says: 'the site of the original settlement was soon abandoned and the run appears to have been absorbed into Lachlan Macalister's *Boisdale*.'[53] It was still recognised by its original name as a distinct run five years after the original settlement.

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[52] Ian D. Clark (ed), *The Journal of Augustus Robinson,* June 1844.
[53] Gardner, Peter, *Names around the Gippsland Lakes,* Ensay: Ngarak Press, 1991, p.13.

There was no formal pegging out of these lands that the early settlers occupied: they were merely defined by natural features such as water courses, timbered ridges or mountains. The 9 March 1847 Order in Council however, formalised these arrangements and the *Government Gazette* listed persons requesting leases and their boundaries. Lachlan Macalister's run of 57,000 acres was defined to the north by the Avon River and the ranges, to the south by the Macalister River and to the east by a plough furrow across the 'big plain' from the Macalister and a continuation of the same line nearly east and west to Lake Wellington.

It has always been assumed that McMillan took up his *Bushy Park* run of 16,000 acres at the same time as he claimed Macalister's *Boisdale.* However, there is no evidence to say when this occurred except that he was issued a licence in the same year as Macalister in 1840. The next licence was issued to James MacFarlane for the *Hayfield Run* in 1841 after his nephew Malcolm inspected the land following a sea voyage to Port Albert. On reporting back to his uncle, Malcolm was despatched with 500 cattle to stock the run and act as manager.[54]

Port Phillip was split into two distinct districts in June 1840: Portland to the west and Westernport to the east. The eastern portion did not extend as far as Gippsland but only reached the Yarra Ranges and Westernport Bay. It was to be another three years before Gippsland would become a legally defined area and the responsibility of La Trobe, but it was apparent to the government that the establishment of a port in the east was going to result in increased settlement beyond Westernport District.

In August 1843 Governor Gipps appointed CJ Tyers Commissioner of Lands for the newly declared District of Gippsland, although it was still beyond the boundaries of location for the Port Phillip District. This appointment effectively gave Tyers full powers to deal with any issues arising in the new district to do with occupation of the land, collection of licence fees and also to protect the security of all persons in the area.[55] However it was to be 1844 before Tyers arrived and by the time he did, the best lands had been taken up by the squatters.

Although others had travelled into Gippsland it was felt that McMillan, through his constant journeys into the region had made the most significant contribution to its development. In 1927, over eighty years after McMillan reached the coast he was formally acknowledged as the discoverer of Gippsland and eighteen cairns roughly marking his route were erected across the country

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[54]Peter Cabena, , *Grazing in the High Country, An Historical and Political Geography of High Country Grazing in Victoria 1835 – 1935,* p.9. www.highcountryhistory.org.au.

[55] Government Gazette Appointments Issue, *NSW Gazette*, Sydney NSW. 1832 – 1900, 15 September 1843, p.1190.

acknowledging his achievement. These statements only reflect a European perspective and do not take into account the fact that the Gunaikurnai had inhabited the land for thousands of years. Today McMillan could probably more correctly be referred to as an 'early European explorer' of Gippsland.

John Wilson, a historian from Stratford in Gippsland disputed the McMillan claim and in a series of articles written for the *Gippsland Times* in 1947 attributed the beginnings of Gippsland to Captain Lachlan Macalister: 'it is substantially correct to look upon him as being the founder.' He says that this is reflected in Commissioner Tyers' report to Superintendent LaTrobe in July 1844 when he wrote: 'A part of this country is in the occupation of the discoverer, Mr Macalister.'[56]

Regardless of who had discovered Gippsland, McMillan was to attract far more fame and notoriety than his wealthier and more influential employer, Lachlan Macalister.

[56]John Wilson, 'The Beginnings of Gippsland' *Gippsland Times* 15 May 1947, p.7.

Chapter 4

First European settlers in Gippsland and social order

The class system perpetuated in Gippsland with the Indigenous population on the lowest rung

While Angus McMillan was exploring the country south of the Monaro in September 1839, changes were taking place in the administration of the Port Phillip District. The small population had grown rapidly since the appointment of Captain William Lonsdale as Police Magistrate and Chief Agent of Government in 1836 and now required someone with more authority than a police magistrate but with less power than a governor to oversee the continued development of the district. The Colonial Office, under Lord Glenelg made the decision to appoint Charles Joseph La Trobe to the position with the title of Superintendent. In some respects, he was an unusual choice; he was a man with little administrative experience and without the usual military or naval training that characterised the early governors.

His father Christian Ignatius La Trobe was a clergyman in the Moravian Church and Charles was educated at the Moravian school at Fulneck in Yorkshire. He had travelled widely and written a number of books detailing his experiences in Switzerland, the Tyrol, North America and Mexico. La Trobe also worked as a tutor to Count Albert de Pourtales but despite connections in the Moravian church he had no official occupation until 1837.

The Moravians were closely aligned to the anti-slavery movement and it is possibly this relationship which resulted in his first government appointment. He had been sent to the West Indies to write a report for the British Government on the condition of the recently freed slaves. The report was well received on his return to Britain and he was interviewed for the Port Phillip position. The work he had completed in the West Indies indicated that he was conscientious and reliable. His Moravian faith emphasised the importance of missionary work with Indigenous peoples and the Government believed he would display a compassionate attitude to the native inhabitants of Port Phillip. He received an official letter of appointment as Superintendent on 4 February 1839 and by July of the same year was in Sydney.

The treatment of the Port Phillip Indigenous population was of concern to the Government. Superintendent Charles La Trobe had been given specific instructions by the Colonial Office: '... to prevent as far as possible collisions between them and the Colonists.'[1] La Trobe himself believed that the law and the

[1] General Instructions to the Superintendent of Port Phillip, 11 September 1839, https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/vic2_doc_1839.pdf (accessed 30 September 2022).

primary object of Christianising the Aboriginal people would ensure peaceful co-existence.[2]

In October he travelled to Melbourne, which was described as a town of 'no very attractive appearance. It had few houses, many of these wood with large, vacant spaces between most.'[3] While he was to supervise the rapidly growing town of Melbourne and its immediate surrounds, he was still subordinate to Governor Gipps in Sydney who controlled the sale of land, official appointments and revenue for the newly established Port Phillip District.

Within twelve months of his appointment, the occupation and development of the region to the east of Melbourne greatly increased the area of La Trobe's responsibility. New challenges awaited him in the east which to date had been unexplored, isolated by virtue of its swamps, mountains and jungle-like bush and inhabited by a people who had had no contact with Europeans.

The publication of an account of Count Strzelecki's journey from the Monaro to Melbourne through the vast grazing areas which he called 'Gipps Land' was the stimulus for this expansion. The interest created by his report and the subsequent settlement of Gipps Land was to result in heightened conflict between the new arrivals and the original inhabitants, something La Trobe was to have difficulty controlling.

Whilst Strzelecki quickly publicised his journey, seeking acknowledgement for his achievement, Lachlan Macalister had forbidden McMillan to discuss what he had found. Macalister did not want to publicly acknowledge the discovery of the new pastures as he feared a rapid influx of squatters that such an announcement would bring. His was a selfish attitude, he envisaged the creation of an extensive run for himself, which would bring him greater wealth. However, this was dependent on a route to the coast being found which would enable him to ship his stock directly to the market in Van Diemen's Land.

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[2] John Barnes, 'A Moravian Among the Heathen, La Trobe and the Aboriginal People'. *La Trobeana,* vol.16, no.1, March 2017, p.16.

[3] John Leonard Forde, *The Story of the Bar of Victoria,* Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, 1891, p.36.
Excerpt from the diary of Edward Jones Brewster First Chairman of Quarter Sessions and Commissioner of the Court of Requests.

McMillan was obliged to follow the orders of his employer but was cognizant of the possibilities afforded by this country and reflected that: 'this was a land sufficient to feed all my starving countrymen.'[4]

McMillan also realised that in this country he had an opportunity to better himself. After the establishment of Macalister's *Boisdale Station* (*Nuntin*) to the west of the Avon River, he occupied the country on the eastern side and called it *Bushy Park*. Although McMillan and Macalister occupied almost 80,000 acres between them, the country was outside the Nineteen Counties, so they had no legal claim to it and initially no licence fees were paid to the Government in Sydney to legitimise their occupancy. Their only entitlement to the land was the fact that they occupied it and defined the boundaries; there was no one to challenge them except the original inhabitants, the Gunaikurnai.

Despite McMillan claiming a portion of the country he was still just an employee working for a wealthy squatter and his actions were largely determined by Macalister's wishes. Macalister, through his extensive holdings to the north had the capital to stock his 60,000 acres. McMillan was dependent on his salary and credit to purchase stock for his 16,000 acre property.

McMillan's place in the new social order in New South Wales was very similar to his family's position in the 'old country'. He was essentially still a 'tacksman' working for the wealthy gentry, however his occupation of *Bushy Park* indicated that he was not satisfied with this status and could see himself as more than an employee in the new country.

Macalister and McMillan were to be the sole European occupants of this remote part of the Port Phillip District for only a short time. The accessibility of the new grazing lands was to provide the perfect opportunity for drought stricken squatters in the north to bring their flocks and herds south. No thought was given to the original inhabitants whose lands were being invaded. Gippsland was to be transformed and the new arrivals would bring with them old ideas and create a new social structure.

The Gentlemen squatters

The open plains to the west of Melbourne were the first taken up in the Port Phillip District by squatters who came from all ranks of society in Britain, the colonies and Van Diemen's Land. Many of them considered themselves 'gentlemen' due to their birth and breeding and thought themselves to be

[4] MacKay, *Recollections of Early Gippsland Goldfields*, p.91. These were notes transcribed by MacKay from McMillan in 1862.

Thomas Scott Townsend Surveyor, Gippsland Rivers 25, 1844, Early map of squatting runs PROV

leaders in the new country.[5] In Britain, what traditionally separated the gentlemen classes from the general population was their ability to own land, but in the Port Phillip District, outside the limits of location, land could not be purchased however it could be settled upon. It was to be 1847 before the Waste Lands Act gave them some security of tenure through leaseholds.

There were broadly two categories of squatter: those with money, position and standing in the community who could be referred to as 'gentleman squatters', and those of more lowly origins who were prepared to brave the difficulties of the bush to get ahead. Gippsland was settled by both types of men and both initially faced difficult times, but the former were destined to have an easier path to success. These men were not, as has often been portrayed all Highland Scots who were forced off their lands and emigrated to Australia.[6] These early settlers were English, Irish and Scottish and in some cases from the upper classes and wealthy in their own right.

Paul de Serville, in *Port Phillip Gentlemen* created three categories of 'Gentlemen' squatter. The first was 'Gentlemen by birth' who came from 'titled, landed or armigerous families.' In Gippsland, Alexander Boyd Cunninghame, John Foster, Aeneas Ranaldson MacDonnell and Henry Meyrick qualified.[7] The second category of squatter was 'Gentlemen in Society', that is 'gentlemen by profession, commission and upbringing, prominent in society and noted by contemporaries.'[8] These included John Campbell, Henry Loughnan and his brother John Loughnan. The final category he referred to as 'Colonists claiming Gentle Birth', but whose right to this claim had not been fully established. These included William Odell Raymond.[9] The remainder of the early settlers were men hoping to improve their status and prospects by taking up land initially at no cost and hoping to prosper. Unfortunately, the book concentrates on the Western District and a number of prominent settlers in Gippsland were ignored.

Initially land was taken up around the two existing stations at *(Nuntin) Boisdale* and *Bushy Park*. By 1841 runs had been established at Hayfield, *Mewburn Park, Kilmany Park* and *Fulham*. To understand the development of Gippsland society and those who influenced its direction it is useful to have some background on the early squatters, using de Serville's categories and the Gippsland men he included in them.

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[5] Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press,1980, pp. 82 -83.
[6] Cal Flynn, 'Thicker than Water' *The Guardian*, 2 June 2016.
[7] De Serville, Appendix 1, pp. 171 – 187.
[8] Ibid Appendix 2, pp.188 – 196.
[9] Ibid Appendix 3, pp 197 – 208.

Gentlemen by birth

Boyd Cunninghame Photo courtesy Sale Historical Society

Boyd Alexander Cunninghame (1814–1860) and his brother Robert (1816–1888) were born in Renfrewshire Scotland, the sons of John Cunninghame whose father-in-law was Sir William Cunninghame, Bart of Robertland.[10] They were brothers to the Dowager Countess of Argyle. They grew up on the family estate *Craigsend.* The family was wealthy, with rent acquired from tenants and from the West Indies where they owned *Grandville* slave plantation. Both Robert and Boyd had reason to leave Scotland: Boyd, who was a midshipman in the navy, deserted his post in 1833 and his brother was dismissed from the law firm he worked for. Boyd arrived in Sydney in 1835 and his brother Robert arrived in 1838. Boyd Alexander Cunninghame occupied *Roseneath* and *Mosquito Point* runs in 1845 and built the house known as *The Fulton*, near Sale. Robert settled on a run in Newry in 1842 but was moved off by Commissioner Tyers in 1844 and took up *Clydebank*.[11] He was in partnership with Robert Thomson and also took up *Marley Point* in 1844.

The man who attracted the most attention in Gippsland was Aeneas Ranaldson MacDonnell (1818–1851) 16th chief of Clan MacDonnell of Glengarry who sold his Scottish estates and transplanted his family and workers to what today is Yarram.[12] The country which he occupied in 1841 was low lying and swampy and his attempts to set up a feudal style court there failed. He did not remain in the district and in June 1842 a public dinner was held at Port Albert to farewell him.[13] It was attended by a number of prominent squatters. William Odell Raymond JP presided over the night and Angus McMillan was toasted as the first settler. Thomas Macalister, Frederick Jones, John Loughnan, Alex McLean, Alexander Arbuckle and Frederick Taylor were present.

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[10] De Serville, p. 175.
[11] Meredith Fletcher, 'The Cunninghame Letters', *Gippsland Heritage Journal,* June 1994, no. 16, p.42.
[12] De Serville, p.181
[13] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 1842, p.4.

John Foster (1792–1875) fits into the class of a gentleman squatter: he was the second son of the Right Honourable John Foster Baron of the Exchequer.[14] He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in June 1823 on the *Berwick*with his mother and youngest brother. He was granted 500 acres. Over the ensuing years he acquired more land and then developed cattle and sheep properties in Gippsland from *The Heart* near Sale to *Dargo* totalling over 180,000 acres. He was to build up a small fleet of ships and was a JP and Magistrate for the Sorell and Prosser River districts in Van Diemen's Land. *The Heart* property in Gippsland was managed by William Montgomery and when he acquired *Boisdale* it was managed by his nephew William. Despite considerable wealth, when William Thomas the Assistant Aboriginal Protector met him in December of 1860 at the Club Hotel he was not impressed. He said Mr Foster of Van Diemen's Land and Gippsland was beastly drunk and betting to run 100 yards with anyone for £100, 'he appears a low blackguard tongue'![15]

John Foster, Picture collection State Library of Tasmania. **J.W. Beattie, photographer**

Another early arrival was William Pearson (1818 –1893) who arrived in Port Phillip in March 1841 aboard the *John Cooper.*[16] His grandmother was the daughter of Sir James Campbell of Aberuchill, 4th Bart.[17] He was the son of Captain Hugh Pearson RN, born in Fifeshire Scotland in 1818 and educated at Edinburgh High School before going to sea. He worked aboard an American timber ship and then an East Indiaman where he rose to the rank of Third Mate before coming to Australia in 1841.He first went up to the Murray and then followed the Mitta Mitta till he reached the top of Mount Gibbo. From here he saw the Omeo Plains and made for them where he stayed for some time. He then made his way into Gippsland and initially thought of taking up *Lindenow* in June 1841 but having no provisions moved on and then took up *Kilmany* in his

[14] De Serville, p.177
[15] Marguerita Stephens *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip and Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839-1867*, p.287.
[16] William Pearson to Rev. W.S. Login 1889, Manuscript Collection, Sale Historical Society.
[17] De Serville, p.183

William Pearson, photograph , courtesy Sale Historical Society

mother's name in September 1841. Pearson must have had some financial backing as he immediately stocked stations that he occupied in Gippsland. Pearson had a temper and in March 1849 caused an uproar and according to Charles Tyers, Commissioner for Crown Lands he behaved disgracefully. Pearson insulted a number of attendees at the races and horse whipped and assaulted Mr Desailly. Tyers instructed him to be bound over to keep the peace.[18]

Gentlemen in society

John Michael Loughnan (1806 –1875) who had travelled into Gippsland with William Odell Raymond was born in England in 1806 and served in the 10th Bengal Cavalry. He was Fort Adjutant and Aide-de-Camp to the Governor General of India, Lord Auckland and left the army with the rank of Captain. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1837 and with the capital he had accumulated decided to invest in the new Gippsland area where in 1842 he took up the Lindenow run of 40,000 acres on the Mitchell River. He also opened a store at Old Port (near Port Albert). His brother Henry Nicholas Loughnan (1818-1891) was also in partnership.

Colonists claiming Gentle Birth

John Campbell of Glencoe (1815–1883) was born in Tiree, Argylleshire into a farming family. He was the son of Duncan Campbell of Feuer, a cadet of Campbell of Lochnell.[19] He arrived in New South Wales in 1839 and made his way to Melbourne where he found work on a station at Mount Macedon. After twelve months there he returned to Melbourne and joined the firm of Turnbull, Howden and Brodribb who had chartered the *Singapore* to take supplies to the settlement at Port Albert. Campbell was employed as the storekeeper. Eager for a change and a chance to improve himself he began to look for a suitable piece of land and settled on what he called '*Glencoe*'.

John Campbell, photograph courtesy Sale Historical Society

[18] Diary of CJ Tyers 1842 & 1849, State Library of Victoria, ML ref A1428 March 1849.
[19]De Serville, p.200.

William Montgomery (1821 -1901) was born at Manor Cunninghame near Londonderry and arrived in Port Albert in October 1841. He was educated with a view to taking up a literary career but a family friend, Lord Londonderry persuaded him to join the army. However after a short period he renounced his commission and sailed for Port Phillip on the *Frankfield.* His obituary said he spent considerable time looking for country and suffering many hardships and privations 'including attacks from the blacks'.[20] He arrived in Port Phillip in 1841 and managed *The Heart* for John Foster before leasing it for fifty years. It was claimed that Mr Montgomery was 'the first of the early settlers to hold out his hand of friendship to the uncivilized blacks, bringing them to *The Heart* homestead, and supplying them with food.'[21] In 1857 he became a Justice of the Peace.

William Odell Raymond (1811–1859) was also well connected. His father James had come out from Ireland and held several government positions including Postmaster and then Postmaster General to the colony and owned considerable property at Wellington. William was managing his father's stations but ongoing drought from 1839-1841 forced him to look at taking half his sheep to pastures in New England. In 1842 he received a pamphlet published by Count Strzelecki with a favourable description of Gippsland so he changed his plans and arranged to move 8000 sheep to the new area. Other men were also enthusiastic about the new prospects and Raymond commented that Curlewis's and Reeve's sheep had preceded him south. From Omeo he travelled with Loughnan, Taylor and Jones all eager to avail themselves of new runs. Raymond took up runs in 1842 which he called *Stratford* and *Strathfieldsaye*.

Eugene Von Guerard, Raymond's Strathfieldsaye Station, Collections, State Library NSW, DGB 16/vol.11

A number of other men would qualify as 'Gentlemen of Port Phillip' but for some reason have not been included by de Serville.

James MacFarlane (1796–1860) was a Scotsman from Stirlingshire and an associate and friend of Lachlan Macalister who already held extensive land in the colony. He arrived in the colony in 1824 and formed a station between

[20] *The Gippsland Farmer,* An Old Gippsland Pioneer, 10 September 1901. p.3.
[21] Ibid.

Malcolm Macfarlane,
photograph courtesy of Sale Historical Society

Goulburn and Queanbeyan before relocating to the Monaro. His nephew Malcolm (1814-1899) arrived in Sydney on the *Minerva* in 1838, the same ship that brought McMillan to New South Wales. Unlike McMillan he caught typhus and was quarantined until April 7 when he was released. According to Stratford historian John Wilson, James Macfarlane had contributed £500 towards the cost of financing the McMillan expeditions.[22] As a result of these James sent Malcolm into Gippsland to take up land in September 1841 at what was subsequently known as *Hayfield.*

John Reeve (c1804), a wealthy Englishman from a landed family in Suffolk took up *Snake Ridge* near Rosedale in 1842. Prior to this he carried out a Special Survey at Tarraville. He married one of the daughters of William Charles Wentworth who was an explorer, emancipist, politician and one of the leading figures in early New South Wales. He installed John King (1824–1863) as his manager. King was the grandson of Phillip Gidley King, third Governor of NSW. He had been educated in England and returned to Australia in 1831 to learn the squatting business on his father's estate. His father was a retired Rear Admiral in the English Navy and had substantial land grants in NSW. He also acquired the *Fulham Park* run.

Alexander Arbuckle (1810–1874) would have been classed as a gentleman by profession. Born in North Uist in Scotland in 1810 he was the son of a Church of Scotland minister. He graduated from Glasgow University in 1834 and practised medicine at Portree, Skye. He arrived in Sydney in 1839 and then, in partnership with Lachlan and Thomas Macalister formed a depot at what became known as *Doctor's Flat* adjoining *Numbla Munjie* in Gippsland. Dr Arbuckle, who had been with McMillan at the Battle of Nuntin was so impressed with the country he saw in Gippsland he brought 1100 head of cattle down from the Monaro and formed a station at *Mewburn Park* to the west of *Boisdale.*[23]

Alexander Arbuckle,
photograph courtesy Sale Historical Society

[22] Wilson John, *The Official history of the Shire of Avon 1840 – 1900* Stratford: Shire Hall, 1951, p.11.
[23] *Gippsland Times*, 'Death of Doctor Arbuckle'. 10 September 1874. p.3.

Lachlan Macalister would also be classed in this category of gentlemen squatters.

The Working Class Squatters

Frederick Jones (1803-1856) took up his run *Lucknow* in 1842 and was granted a lease for occupation in November 1847. According to John Adams who wrote the Shire of Bairnsdale History, he was the earliest squatter in the area. He previously had leases at Tarcutta in the County of Camden and in 1843 acquired a depasturing licence for Maneroo. His residence was given as Gippsland. It appears that he had some capital as he also purchased land at Big Coogee now known as Randwick in 1840. Adams maintains that he and his mother Hannah were teachers in a school in Castlereagh Street, Sydney.[24] Jones was a bachelor and devoted to the church, his mother died in March 1843 aged 54 years.

Patrick Coady Buckley (1816–1872) was born in Dublin in 1816 and took his stepfather's surname. He arrived in New South Wales in 1818 and by 1831 had established a station in the Monaro on the Snowy River near the present site of Dalgety with his half-brother Edmund. In 1842 he travelled into Gippsland and took up the area to be known as *Coady Vale*. He applied for a lease of 53,740 acres in 1847 and stated that he had been in occupation of Merriman's Creek near Ninety Mile Beach since December 1844. His brother followed him onto the district and took up *Tarra Creek Station* in January 1848, which he had held since early 1843.[25]

Patrick Coady Buckley, photograph courtesy of Sale Historical Society

Frederick Taylor (1810–1872) was born in Scotland but nothing is known of his early life prior to coming to Australia. In 1836 he was in charge of a grazing enterprise on the Barwon River and was implicated in the murder of an Aborigine; however Taylor had gone to Van Diemen's Land and despite a subpoena being issued did not return. Three years later, accompanied by a man named Lloyd it is believed he shot a member of the Gulidjan tribe near Lake Colac.[26] In March 1839 he was engaged in establishing a sheep station called *Strathdownie* at Emu Creek near

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[24] John Adams, *Path Among the Years,* Bairnsdale: Bairnsdale Shire Council, 1987, p.15.

[25] Ancestry.com. Pastoral Runs, *Tarra Creek Station.* https://www.ancestry.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60672/images/44777_349632-00904?ssrc=&backlabel=Return&pId=118915

[26] Florance Charles, 'In Pursuit of Frederick Taylor', *The Black Sheep, Combined Journal of the East Gippsland Family History Group Inc. & East Gippsland Historical Society Inc.,* no. 69, 2006: pp.6-9.

Terang. Sheep were being killed by the natives so Taylor organized a party of shepherds to retaliate. The Aboriginal camp was found with the inhabitants sleeping and the group opened fire killing approximately 35 people. Some escaped to report the massacre.[27] Taylor fled the country to India in 1840 when a warrant for his apprehension was issued.[28] He returned in 1842, this time settling in Gippsland having met his future business partner Henry Loughnan in India. The map shows both *Deighton* and *Emu Vale* being taken up in 1844 when they were licensed to Loughnan and Taylor, however like most squatters they occupied the land before a formal licence was issued on their arrival in 1842. In the 1840s Taylor was associated with the Loughnans in a number of runs *including Lindenow, Deighton, Deighton East and West, Swan Reach* and *Emu Vale* totalling over 169,000 acres.

Joseph Samuel Varney (1793–1897) was a shoemaker who was transported to New South Wales for seven years for stealing two silver teaspoons. By 1827 he was free and living in Inverary Argyle New South Wales again practising his trade as a shoemaker. In 1839 he leased a run on the Snowy River known as *Varney's Station,* beyond the Limits of Location. He married and then sometime prior to 1844 he moved his family and 640 head of cattle via McMillan's route to *Warrigal Creek* and *Ninety Mile Beach.*

These were some of the first men to establish runs in Gippsland but over the ensuing years all of Gippsland was taken up for grazing, forcing the Gunaikurnai into the bush and swamps.

In August 1842, William Odell Raymond wrote: 'There are already in Gippsland about seven thousand head of cattle belonging to Messrs. Macalister, MacFarlane, Arbuckle, Cunningham, Pearson, Jones, Taylor and Loughnan, and some small squatters... who do not hold licences...'[29] These men, with perhaps the exception of Taylor, by definition form part of the 'gentleman class' of squatter, those who would consider themselves to the forefront of the new colonial society that was developing in the east. The working class men are not mentioned and neither is Angus McMillan, who despite his exploration of the country was still just a worker and employee. Other men such as Spark, Hoddinott and Johnson were to follow.

McMillan, with 16,000 acres falls into the class of small working class squatters; he was not one of the wealthy gentry when he took up the *Bushy Park* run. He had previously held no land in his own name and had not participated in public

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[27] Ibid

[28] Ian D Clark (ed)., 'Scars in the Landscape', 'Letter from George Robinson to La Trobe, 14 December 1844, *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies,* 1995 p.114.

[29] Rev. George Cox, *Notes on Gippsland History, vol 4, Gippsland in the 1840,s* Yarram : Port Albert Maritime Museum, 1990, p.7.

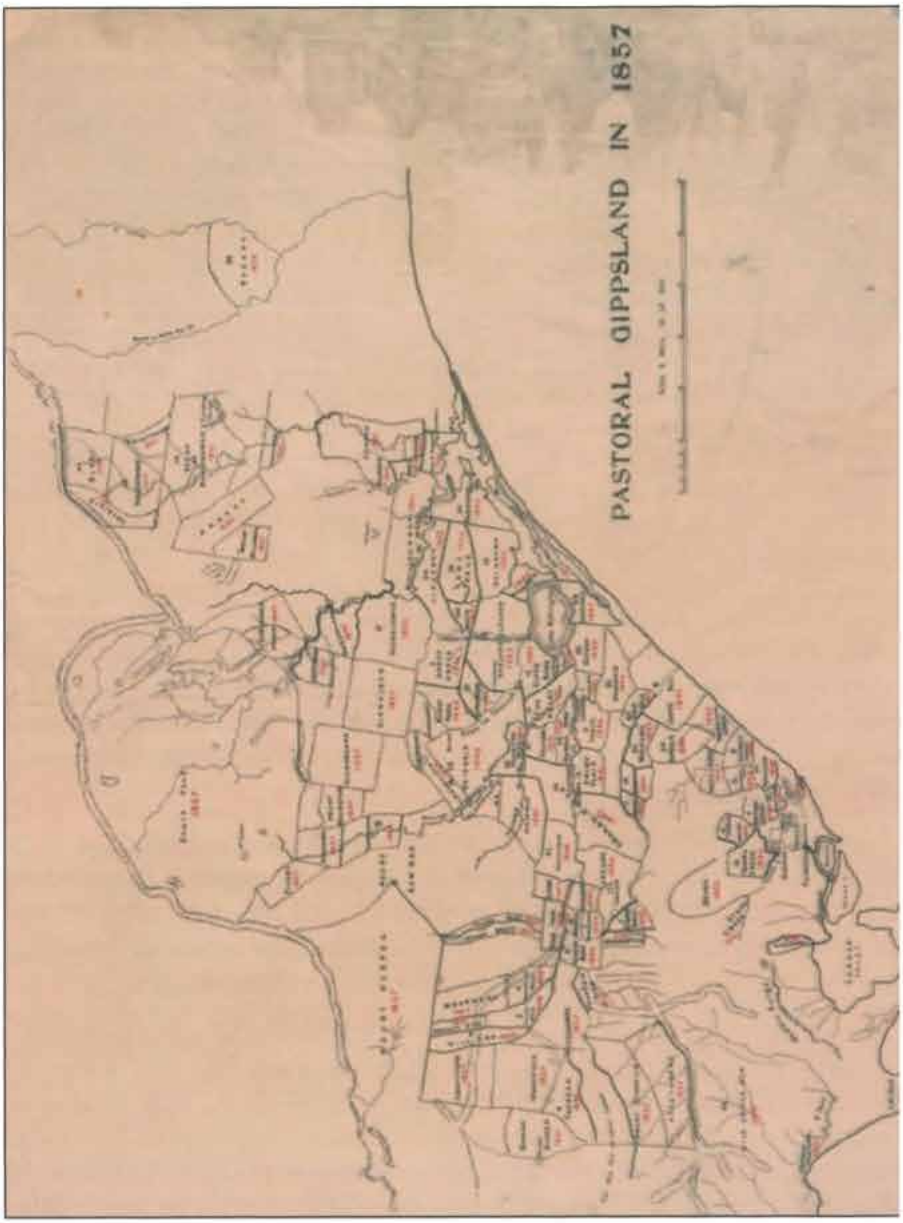
office. At this point in time McMillan would have had little in common with any of these men. The only man with whom he had a prior association other than Macalister was Dr Alexander Arbuckle who remained a lifelong friend.

Where McMillan fits into this social scheme is difficult to say. While he may have been accorded respect for his endeavours in opening up the country for settlement it is hard to see him being accepted as an equal or leader among his peers. In 1844 he is still listed as an overseer for Lachlan Macalister's *Boisdale* run as well as Bentley's *Sandy Creek*. In the 1845 Survey, Commissioner CJ Tyers showed that McMillan was employing three men and a woman and had six acres under cultivation. At this time he was running six horses and six hundred cattle, nowhere near the capacity of the property. In these years his main focus was to survive and work towards building his property into a viable enterprise.

It was only in the late 1840s and 50s when he acquired additional runs and with them the capital or the ability to borrow larger sums of money that he grew in stature and began to take a more prominent role in the affairs of the district. At *Bushy Park* in later years it was said he entertained men from all walks of life: ministers of religion, government officials, explorers, fellow squatters and his native Scotsmen. According to *The Gippsland Guardian* of 16 September 1859: 'McMillan's station at *Bushy Park* might well be called the 'Benevolent Asylum of Gippsland.' The article was referring to the hospitality he gave to all travellers and was part of a speech recommending his nomination to the Victorian Parliament, which he entered the same month. He was renowned for helping struggling Scotsmen.

Despite the differences between McMillan and his contemporaries such as Macalister, MacFarlane, Pearson, Loughnan, Raymond and MacDonnell, they all represented the broader European view which saw the occupation of the Gunaikurnai lands as nothing more than the natural progression of white settlement.

As he ventured into Gippsland McMillan does not seem to have been overly aggressive in his approach to the Indigenous tribes, but they were not considered when it came to establishing a station for himself. He attempted to make contact with the Gunaikurnai and it appears that he only responded to them with weapons in a defensive manner when he was attacked. Unlike the other squatters he was to have a large permanent camp of natives at his property on the banks of the Avon and unlike most of the other squatters he was to lose everything he had built up.



Pastoral Runs in Gippsland 1857

Chapter 5

Attitudes to frontier violence

'some excuse might be found for shooting the men by those who are daily getting their cattle speared, but what they can urge in their excuse who shoot women and children I cannot conceive'

Henry Meyrick 30 April 1846

The Gunaikurnai reacted to the coming of the Europeans with a mixture of fear, hostility and incredulity. They seem to have been intent on avoiding contact with the white men as they travelled through the country. However, when cattle were introduced the Gunaikurnai could see that their lands were being permanently invaded, their grasslands and hunting grounds destroyed and their way of life disrupted, resulting in a vastly different response. The arrival of cattle seems to be the spark that ignited their fury.

Both cultures believed they had the right to occupy the land, but for very different reasons, and their manner of occupation differed greatly. The Gunaikurnai believed that the land they had dwelt on for thousands of years had been entrusted to them by their ancestors and they were bound to it and its preservation.

Conversely, the Europeans sought to own the land because in Britain ownership of land signified wealth and power. It was something to be bought and sold and was a means to provide a livelihood and advancement for its owners, concepts that were completely alien to the original inhabitants and which would ultimately lead to conflict and be a factor in their demise.

Peter Gardner documents Indigenous massacres

Prior to the 1980s, the decline of the Gunaikurnai in Gippsland was attributed to disease, alcohol, tribal warfare and the coming of the Europeans. It was not until Peter Gardner; a teacher and historian began a detailed investigation of their demise that the physical conflict between white and black was highlighted and resulted in the identification of massacres of the Indigenous population.[1]

Gardner maintained that these massacres took place in retaliation for stock losses and the deaths of stockmen and shepherds at the hands of the Gunaikurnai. In *Gippsland Massacres* published in 1983 he lists potential massacre sites across Gippsland at Boney Point, Warrigal Creek, Bushy Park, Maffra, Butchers Creek, Slaughterhouse Gully and Brodribb River.

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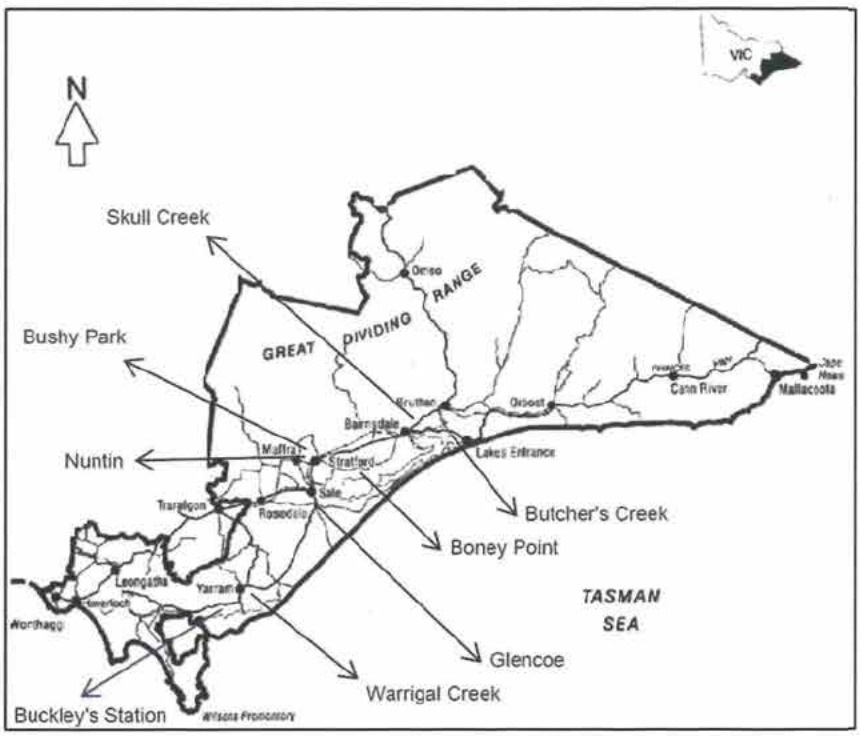
[1] Gardner, P.D. *Gippsland Massacres ... The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribe 1800 – 1860.* Warragul: West Gippsland and Latrobe Valley Education Centre, 1983.

Other sites such as Skull Creek and Snowy River have since been identified. Gardner's work has influenced the interpretation of European – Indigenous conflict for the past 35 years.



Massacre Sites drawn by Sarah Christie

There is no disputing that massacres did occur at a number of these sites but there is very little primary source material surviving about these events indicating the time or the numbers killed and by whom. There are many articles published since the 1860s acknowledging the conflict but not giving any indication who was responsible for carrying out the atrocities. Allan McLean, a future Premier of Victoria whose father worked for Lachlan Macalister and spent his early life in Gippsland was an observer of what occurred.

In his *Personal Reminiscences* written years later when living in Melbourne he said that the attacks on stock 'produced for many years an ill feeling between the settlers and the Aboriginals which led to many of the natives being shot down.'[2] Like other commentators he gives no indication as to who was involved.

[2] Hon. Allan McLean, Personal Reminiscences, Manuscript Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 125/7.

In *Our Founding Murdering Father* Gardner investigates the life of Angus McMillan and raises a number of allegations about his life, asserting that many of the attacks on the Gunaikurnai were carried out by McMillan and his men.[3] The ferocity of the settlers' response to the Gunaikurnai can be partly understood as a reflection of the British attitude to what they referred to as 'inferior cultures' and also by the problems faced by the invading settlers who were struggling to survive.

What follows is a summary of the attitudes to the Indigenous population in Gippsland and across the country.

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The first white settlers who arrived in Gippsland were faced with enormous difficulties. They had come into an unknown and hostile environment, hundreds of miles from the settled regions and the security found by living in close proximity to others. Supplies were brought with these new arrivals on bullock wagons, but once these ran out they had to wait for new supplies from the north or source them from the land.

They were faced with a huge workload, a suitable site for a dwelling had to be found and some form of shelter had to be quickly built. The stock roamed across the countryside, the only restriction to their movement were natural features such as rivers or mountains. To manage their stock, fences and stock yards were required in close proximity to their home, posts had to be cut and rails split. There was also the constant peril of fires and flood. With hardship and possible failure constantly before them it is not surprising that when their security was threatened and their stock killed they responded so violently to the Gunaikurnai who they considered to be savages.

It is also understandable that the Gunaikurnai responded in the way they did to try and resist these invaders of their traditional lands. Violence was not just a feature of the newly discovered Gipps Land it was prevalent across the older settled areas of New South Wales as squatters expanded their holdings into new areas. However, it was usually the original inhabitants who were blamed as the initiators of the violence.

Throughout the 1830s and prior to settlement in Gippsland the newspapers were quick to report constant aggression by the 'blacks' murdering both shepherds and stockmen as well as spearing stock in New South Wales. One writer suggested that the proprietors of stations should form a militia corps. The most humane course he believed to bring the marauders into line would be to shoot a few of the ringleaders caught in the act of 'committing their outrages'.[4]

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[3] Peter D. Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father,* Ensay: Vic, 1987, p.33.
[4] *The Colonist*, 4 July 1838, p.2.

Frontier violence was widespread in the 1830s and the murder of Aborigines by stockmen, convicts and settlers was generally accepted and went unpunished. In June 1838 however, 28 Aborigines who had sought refuge and were living peacefully on Henry Dangar's property at Myall Creek were murdered. The massacre was reported by three Europeans, and following two trials seven white men were executed in December 1838 for the unprovoked killing of the 28 natives at Myall Creek. They were the first Europeans to be executed for murdering Aborigines and the executions meant that any further actions taken against the native population were hushed up.

Following the executions the Editor of the *Sydney Herald* questioned whether the law was equal for black and white. He said that although whites were executed for killing 'blacks', no 'blacks' had been executed for killing fifteen whites between 1832 and 1838. He believed the money spent on Aboriginal Protectors could be better spent in establishing a police presence as there was no frontier force to keep the natives in 'subjection'.[5]

Not everyone was in favour of the reprisals. A letter to the *Australasian Chronicle* in 1839 said: 'some of the west country settlers issue out in a body of armed cavalry, scour the country and in their wisdom take the life of a man for the carcase of a sheep.' The writer questioned who the real aggressor was: the white man taking the land of the black or the black man stealing goods and sheep.[6] However this was the view of a small minority.

Subjects of the Queen

In England the government had concerns about the treatment of Aborigines in New South Wales. Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies in a despatch to the Governor Sir Richard Bourke stated that the Aborigines inhabiting 'New Holland' must be considered subjects of the Queen and as such give them certain rights and protection. 'To regard them as aliens, with whom a war can exist … is to deny that protection to which they derive the highest possible claim from the sovereignty which has been assumed over the whole of their ancient possessions'.

Glenelg concluded that if any were killed by an Officer of the Crown or someone acting under their orders then an inquest should be held to establish the causes of death. Whether this could be extended if the act was committed by a private person is not specified. Broadly, an attempt was being made to give Aborigines the same rights as a British citizen.[7]

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[5] *The Sydney Herald*, 10 December 1838, p.2.
[6] *The Australasian Chronicle,* 4 October 1839, p.4.
[7] Extract of despatch from Lord Glenelg to Sir Richard Bourke, 'Australian Aborigines' Copies or extracts of Despatches relative to various Massacres in Australia in the Year 1838, 27 July 1837.

The following year Glenelg sent a despatch to the new Governor Gipps which stated that to better protect and civilise the Aborigines of the Port Phillip District, a Chief Protector in the person of George Robinson and four assistant Protectors would be appointed to oversee the welfare of the Aborigines. Among their many duties they were to act as magistrates and watch over the rights and interests of the Indigenous population.[8] If an Aborigine committed a crime it was the Protector's duty to organise his defence.

Although set up with the best of intentions the scheme was flawed from the outset. Distance was a major problem for the Protectors, as was communication, only a small number of police were available and obtaining evidence from Aborigines was impossible. In most cases unless the person could speak English then their evidence was not admissible. A New South Wales Supreme Court judge advised the Colonial Office in 1839 that the Aboriginal evidence could be ignored if the person could not speak English or no interpreter was available, and secondly if the person was ignorant of the European concept of God and a future state.[9] In effect this meant that although Aboriginal people were officially seen as British citizens, in reality they had no rights and even fewer rights in the wilds of Gippsland.

Tensions between original inhabitants and settlers escalate

In Gippsland the new settlers were also having problems with the original inhabitants. In August 1840 John Rhodes Wilkinson wrote to the *Sydney Herald* from Buchan in far east Gippsland. Since March he had found the remains of seventy cattle killed by the natives. On 20 August they found one hundred 'blacks' driving away 600 head but could do nothing as they were unarmed. The settlers returned later to find the natives camped in heavy scrub which prevented the settlers from 'coming up with them'. Of the 1349 cattle mustered at Buchan in the summer scarcely 300 remained. Wilkinson warned against the 'erroneous opinion which is too generally entertained respecting the quietness and harmlessness of the "poor blacks".'[10]

The establishment of a settlement at Corner Inlet (Port Albert) following the arrival of the *Singapore* in February 1841 resulted in encroachment upon the lands of the Gunaikurnai from the south as well as the north.[11] The effect of the settlement meant there was now pressure being exerted on the Gunaikurnai from two directions. The initial contact that the new settlers made with the Indigenous population around the Port however was friendly.

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[8] Ibid. Copy of Despatch from Lord Glenelg to Governor Gipps 31 January 1838.
[9] W.W. Burton to Henry Labouchere, 17 August 1839, Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, vol. XX, pp. 302-305.
[10] *The Sydney Herald*, 18 September 1840, p.1.
[11] *Tasmanian Weekly Despatch*, 9 April 1841, p.4.

> 'The natives seemed at first to be timid and distrustful, but upon reconciliation to the presence of strangers, resembled the other tribes in the colony in their general conduct towards Europeans.'[12]

In one incident at Port Albert 30 blacks had drawn up in a line brandishing their spears but Charlie Tarra, a native with the *Singapore* party had been able to make them understand that 'the intentions of the party were pacific' and they laid down their spears, lit fires and had a corroboree. In the morning they were given tokens and they left peaceably.[13] These friendly exchanges were to be the exception rather than the rule.

In 1843 HB Morris travelled through Gippsland with George Robinson, the Aboriginal Protector for Port Phillip and stayed at Glengarry's former Station on the Tarra River which 'consists of five or six miserable looking huts, covered with bark'.[14] Morris had been informed that 'ill blood' existed between the Indigenous population and the settlers, that four or five shepherds and stockmen had been murdered and that it was unsafe to travel alone. However after spending time with some natives who regularly frequented the station he found them friendly: 'they have virtues...and are not deficient in intellect'.

He was of the opinion that an address from the Governor:

> 'Calling upon the settlers as men and Christians to repress the wanton outrages inflicted by lawless stockmen and ruffianly convicts' would do more to establish peace between the settlers and the natives 'than all that has hitherto been attempted.'[15]

As more settlers arrived in the district with stock, tensions between the two groups increased. By the early 1840s Europeans were grazing their flocks and herds across a substantial part of the lands that had once been the hunting grounds of the Gunaikurnai. *The Geelong Advertiser* of December 1841 reported:

> 'The blacks we understand have assembled in great numbers in Gippsland and openly menace the lives of the settlers who are unprotected. A party of not less than 600 recently attacked a station belonging to Mr Macalister but were fortunately repulsed.'[16]

This was no doubt in response to the grazing of 6000 sheep that Matthew Macalister brought into Gippsland in May 1841. Another letter addressed to the

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[12] *Tasmanian Weekly Despatch,* p.4.
[13] *Sydney Herald,* 31 March 1841, p.2.
[14] H.B. Morris, *Launceston Examiner,* 10 June 1843, p.8
[15] H.B. Morris, *Launceston Examiner,* 14 June 1843, p.7.
[16] *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 December 1841, p.3.

Governor and printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* records the deteriorating relations between the two groups:

> 'We have only settled down here for a few short months and in that period of time there have been no less than three of our servants who have paid the awful debt of nature – whose mangled bodies have been imprinted on our minds a lasting impression – without any aid from the government to bring them before a competent tribunal.' [17]

The letter was written on 26 October and signed A.B.C.D. Port Albert. Despite the complaints from the Europeans the violence was not confined to the Indigenous population. An open letter to Governor Gipps appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 6 September 1843 from A.B. C.D. (sic). The writers claimed that murder, rape, robbery, forgeries, cattle stealing and sly grogging were flourishing in Gippsland due to the lack of legal protection. Alberton they claimed was a den of iniquity, with many people living there with no means of support.[18]

The letter was particularly scathing about the government's neglect of the Gippsland District. The letter was especially critical of the government's response to the Indigenous population who were cynically referred to as 'harmless, innocent denizens of the wilds of Gippsland, bearing the anomalous cognomen of Her Majesty's most liege subjects, (we give it as our gratuitous opinion, most bitter enemies).

The letter bore the influence of Lachlan Macalister when referring to the 'cruelly murdered' Ranald Macalister 'nephew of the allegorical author'. Within the last eighteen to twenty months it stated that five lives had been 'sacrificed at the shrine of these implacable savages…all gone down the stream of oblivion, without one question being asked or given on authority'. The lack of police protection was having a deleterious effect on both black and white alike[19].

The unusual signature of A.B.C.D. appears to indicate a nom de plume for Macalister particularly when it is remembered that he was a regular and influential correspondent in the papers of the day and was not reluctant to give advice to governments. Earlier in 1843 he had addressed a letter to *The Capitalists of Great Britain Who Have Invested Money in New South Wales* arguing for an increase in immigration.[20] The *South Australian Register* in a preamble to his letter on 5 August 1843 referred to him as one of the largest land and stockholders in NSW.

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[17] 'Gippsland', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 29 December 1842, p.2.
[18] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 6 September 1843, p.2.
[19] Ibid.
[20] 'Mr Macalister's Letter', *Port Phillip Gazette,* 15 April 1843, p.4. (signed Sydney March 1843)

The A.B.C.D letter written from Port Albert also strengthens the argument that Lachlan Macalister spent time in Gippsland. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of May 11 also listed him travelling to Hobart Town via Corner Inlet.

Despite the fact that Gippsland was being rapidly settled from 1841 onwards the government did not see the need to reinforce the area with a police presence, despite numerous requests from squatters. If government officials had arrived earlier in the district then perhaps some of the conflict may have been avoided. George Augustus Robinson who was appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip in March 1839, did not venture into Gippsland until 1844. On his journey through Gippsland then, he wrote that before law and order was established:

> 'There is however reason to fear that ... a large amount of mischief had been inflicted on the original inhabitants by the lawless and depraved who had infested the Port.'

He further commented on the original white inhabitants of the Port before the establishment of any legal authority:

> 'Today walked with Mr Tyers to see site of old settlement... This was the spot occupied by parties before any magistrate or authority came. Fifteen persons or souls were living here then and carrying on all unlawful and nefarious practices: debauchery, drunkenness, sly grog shops, robbery and vices were practised.'[21]

The settlers who arrived at Port Albert from Melbourne were not the only newcomers to the land. Some of the men referred to by Robinson and A.B. C.D. were convicts or ex-convicts and would have had very little respect for the local Indigenous population. In January 1842 five convicts escaped from Hobart Town, stole a boat and made for Corner Inlet. The isolation and lack of police at Corner Inlet meant that it was an ideal place to disappear and provided a safe haven for escaped convicts from Van Diemen's Land and for bond servants (someone bound to an employer without pay). The Melbourne press commented that a few of the 'non est inventus' (persons in question not to be found on the issue of a writ) were now heading towards Port Albert. [22]

Hugh Buntine, a native of Argyleshire, his wife and five children had erected a slab hut at Port Albert where they were threatened by convicts. One evening a man appeared at the door of the hut and took their guns, distributing them to his two accomplices outside. They were escapees from Van Diemen's

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[21] Ian D. Clark, ed. *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845: 20 May 1844.

[22] *Weekly Free Press and Commercial Advertiser,* 10 July 1841, p.3.

Land who had seized a boat and forced the boatman to take them to the mainland.[23]

In addition to the guns they took rations, wine and a few other sundry items before heading north. One of the men, Hogan was later hanged in Sydney.

Phillip Pepper who was born in Gippsland in 1907 corroborated the stories of atrocities carried out by convicts and ex convicts in the new territory. His mother's people were members of the Kurnai Nation and he was told that because the convicts did not have any women of their own '...they shot the tribesmen and chased the women – and they got 'em too. They never just shot at them, they slaughtered a lot of Aborigines to get the women...' Phillip Pepper's grandfather told him of these events which he called 'gin hunts'.[24]

Jessie Harrison, daughter of Reverend William Spence Logan who arrived in Gippsland in 1853 noted that the 'white fellow had been in possession for twelve years when we came and had fully proved to the Blackfellows his superiority...'. She said that there were 'many stories of tragic happenings...and wholesale butchery and of murders in lonely huts or on the wayside. But for the death of every white the blacks suffered terrible reprisals...'[25]

Henry Meyrick, an unsuccessful squatter told a similar story to his mother in a letter dated 30 April 1846:

> 'The Blacks are very quiet here now, poor wretches, no wild beast of the forest was ever hunted down with such unsparing perseverance as they are; men women and children are shot whenever they can be met with, some excuse might be found for shooting the men by those who are daily getting their cattle speared, but what they can urge in their excuse who shoot women and children I cannot conceive.'[26]

Although he sympathised with the natives' plight he went on to say he would shoot them if he found them killing his sheep. Neil Black, a squatter from the Western District held a similar view. He said that once a new run was established it was only a matter of time before the natives began stealing and killing sheep: 'I believe they cannot be easily checked till a few of them are shot'. Once they

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[23] Robert Buntine, Mr Robert Buntine's Recollections, Manuscript Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 78/2, MS 000229.
[24] Phillip Pepper, *You Are What You Make Yourself To Be,* South Yarra: Hyland House Publishing, 1980, p.40.
[25] John Leslie & Helen Cowie, ed., *The Wind Still Blows: East Gippsland Diaries,* Sale: Gippsland Times, 1973, p.27.
[26] Jeremy Hales and Marion Le Cheminant, *The Letters of Henry Howard Meyrick* Maffra: JJB Publishing, 1997, p.34

were frightened they could be kept in their place and he believed with continued threats of violence they could be civilised but never trusted.[27]

William Adam Brodribb, a member of the *Singapore* party later wrote in regard to the local Aborigines:

> '... we gave the overseer full instructions should they ever make an attack... Not to fire over their heads but to shoot at their legs, and if hard pressed to kill one. My experience tells me that half measures will not do. Show them at once you are determined not to trifle with them, and above all keep them at a distance. They are never to be trusted in a new and unexplored country.'[28]

William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip and Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria wrote in his diary in late 1843: 'From respectable and common people I have heard reports the amount of all that the Gipps Land Blacks have been dealt very hard with.'[29] No one however was prepared to identify who was responsible for the reprisals and there is no information in official documents about what was going on, although it must have been common knowledge in the isolated district.

The following year Thomas, after meeting with a labouring man named Hatcher who had just returned from Gippsland, quoted him as saying:

> '...no fear of Gippsland Blacks there were few of them left, he said that on his brother's station, the station adjoining Macalister's old station, that you might take a cart and fill it with Black bones...'

He stated that his brother had been in Gippsland from the first and lived at the 'Dirty Waterholes', kept a public house and had a cattle station adjoining Macalister's. Thomas concluded by saying: 'And nothing can be made of it yet it is one of many others I have heard tho none can bring the inhuman perpetrators of such deeds to light...'.[30]

Throughout the 1840s the newspapers across the colony continually reported in inflammatory terms the 'depredations carried out by the blacks'. Heading such as 'Outrages by blacks'[31], 'More aggressions by blacks'[32] and

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[170] Barnes, p.247.

[28] W.A.Brodribb, *Recollections of an Australian Squatter 1835 – 1883.* Sydney: John Ferguson P.L. 1978, p.33.

[29] Ed. Marguerite Stephens, *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip and Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839 -1867:* Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. Melbourne 2014. Vol. 1 1839 – 1843 p.561.

[30] Ibid 22 April 1844

[31] 'Outrages by blacks', *The Australasian,* 4 November 1842, p.3

[32] 'More aggressions by blacks', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 November 1843, p. 4.

statements such as 'aggressions upon settlers by aborigines are now coming thick and fast'[33] did little to calm emotions in the towns or the bush. The search for the 'white woman' supposedly captured by Aborigines in Gippsland ensured that these emotions persisted to almost the end of the decade. These sentiments motivated the Melbourne public to fund and equip a private expedition to find the white woman and save her from what was considered a fate worse than death.

There is no doubt that large scale murderous events took place across the colony and Gippsland and thanks to the press undoubtedly received tacit support. However who was responsible for carrying out these reprisals can only be guessed at due to the lack of first-hand accounts. Those in official positions who were present too often sided with the squatters or were not prepared to incur the consequences if they revealed the names of the perpetrators. The prevailing attitude of many of the settlers of the day was that the Gunaikurnai were a menace and a threat and if they were to successfully manage their runs violence was the only way to control that threat.

In addition to what can be referred to as 'massacres', that is the killing of a large number of people, there were numerous individual murders and the killing of smaller groups of people across the region. There is no record of many of these other than bones that have been uncovered over the years. Some stories and documentation do exist which enable us to identify a small number of perpetrators who were involved in the violence which transformed those original inhabitants, proud and independent people into a state of subservience.

[33] *Portland Guardian,* 10 September 1842, p.2.

Chapter 6

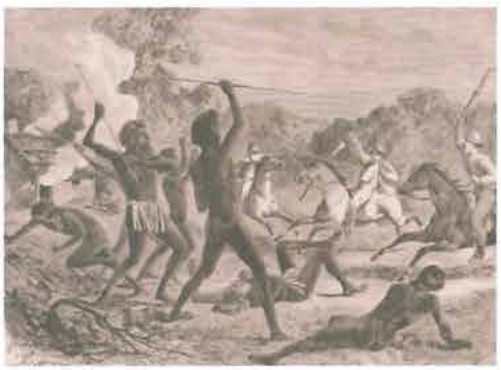
Boney Point and Warrigal Creek massacres

'The white settlers thinking it necessary for their own safety to convince the Blacks that such crimes could not be committed with impunity assembled in full force, went in pursuit of the murderers and wreaked a terrible vengeance on them.

Mr Robert Buntine's Recollections – Buntine's station

Massacres have occurred throughout history and on all continents. The English writer Christopher Marlowe is credited with being the first to use the word 'massacre' in the English language when referring to the killing of Huguenots in Paris by Catholics in 1572 (St. Bartholomew Day Massacre). According to the Compact Oxford Dictionary a massacre is described as 'a brutal slaughter of a large number of people', however it does not define the term 'large'. In London only seven deaths occurred when British troops fired on a crowd protesting the imprisonment of John Wilkes who had criticised King George III. This became known as the Massacre of St. George's Field. In the period 1894- 1896 between 100,000 and 300,000 Armenians were killed in massacres across the Ottoman Empire.[1] The number killed can therefore vary greatly when classifying a massacre.

It is not surprising that in a remote and uncivilised part of the Port Phillip District European settlers took the law into their own hands to eradicate what they conceived as a threat to their safety and livelihood. In Gippsland, killings ranged from the larger scale at Warrigal Creek to individual murders by stockmen and convicts. With few exceptions there is no hard evidence in existence to prove exactly when massacres took place. However, many of the stories that relate to these confrontations are corroborated by evidence in the form of bone finds at specific



Fight between aborigines and mounted whites, Samuel Calvert

[1] Wikipedia, List of Events Named Massacres, - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_events_named_massacres

locations. The following accounts attempt to investigate all available commentaries and evidence.

Boney Point

Boney Point is situated at the junction of the Perry and Avon Rivers near their entry into Lake Wellington part of the Gippsland Lakes. From the stories and evidence recorded by those who later visited the site, a large number of the Gunaikurnai were killed here in the early days of white settlement. The accounts that have survived from those who were present indicate that the response to the attack by the Gunaikurnai was largely a defensive action. Angus McMillan and his party had retreated into the shelter of a hut which had been prepared with rifle slots, allowing them to defend themselves as they were threatened by approaching natives.

In *Gippsland Massacres,* Peter Gardner argues that after the skirmish at *Nuntin* in December 1840 the stockmen followed the Aborigines to what became known as Boney Point and a massacre ensued.

The site of the Boney Point massacre is over 40 kilometres from *Nuntin*. It is difficult to believe that a small party of men, assuming some were left at *Nuntin* to guard the hut and stock, would travel this distance through country that was not familiar to them in pursuit of a large number of Aborigines who could have ambushed them at any time. Admittedly the accounts that remain are all variations of what McMillan related over a number of years.

It is possible that the massacre may have taken place at a later time. William Odell Raymond took up the *Stratford* and *Strathfieldsaye* runs in 1842; the latter included the site of the massacre at the confluence of the Perry and Avon Rivers. Raymond brought with him 8000 sheep to stock the runs, which would have been an attractive food source for the local Gunaikurnai. In August 1842 he wrote to Crown Lands Commissioner Tyers who as yet had not arrived in Gippsland and said: 'I have not fallen in with any of the aboriginal natives, but from what I can collect respecting them, they are a wild race, and have already committed some outrages on the settlers'.[2]

It appears that initially he had no trouble with the Gunaikurnai, but as his stock devoured the pasture and the native game was pushed further away in search of grass, the docile sheep provided an easy source of food.

T.G.H. (sic) writing in 1907 in the *Gippsland Times* provides an alternative scenario to the pursuit theory. He related how two shepherds and a 'blackfellow' had a hut on what later became known as Boney Point. The hut was situated on a high bluff and at its base a narrow flat was bordered by the river. On

[2] Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* 1899, William Odell Raymond, Letter to Charles Tyers, 24 August 1842. p.132.

returning to the hut one evening one of the shepherds was found dead, the hut pillaged, the sheep scattered and a number left with broken legs (this was done by the Aborigines to keep them close and alive until they were to be eaten). The remaining shepherd reported what had taken place to the main house and the next morning a party of men set out for the spot where they found the 'blacks' eating the sheep. The writer then says: 'a curtain is best drawn over what followed'.[3]

James Morrison's diary of 1872 recorded a story related to him about a battle between the blacks and whites where bones were left to bleach on the sands, referring to the area as 'Boney Point'. In *Gippsland Massacres,* Gardner related two alternative scenarios about the massacre. One was that the bones were from kangaroo hunts and the other that it was an Aboriginal burial ground. Gardner discounted the former theory and quoted Dr Clive Disher, a subsequent owner of *Strathfieldsaye* who clearly stated that the skulls were human and because he could find no evidence of bullets determined that it could be a burial ground. AW Howitt, the noted nineteenth century anthropologist who studied the native tribes of south-eastern Australia provided the evidence to discount the second theory. In his book *The Native Tribes of South East Australia* he said that the Gunaikurnai did not bury their dead in one place but that the family carried the bodies with them for a time before burying them or placing the bones in a tree.[4] Therefore the only alternative explanation for these bones was that it was a massacre site.

It is possible that the aftermath of the massacre may have been witnessed by two government officials. Crown Lands Commissioner Charles Tyers recorded in his diary on 21 April 1844 that he went down the Avon River in the *Tom Thumb* to ascertain the boundaries of Raymond's run. This would place him in the vicinity of the massacre. As they approached the bank of the lake looking for firewood, they encountered an overpowering stench. On closer examination they found that under the wood was a pile of rotting corpses.[5] He attributed the deaths to the Black Police but does not give a source for this information and there are no accounts of a second massacre in this area.

George Robinson, the Aboriginal Protector also commented on a site as he travelled by horse from the Avon River to Loughnan's *Lindenow* station in June 1844. This journey took him along the northern shore of Lake Wellington where his party saw the remains of bones and skulls. Robinson remarked: 'I saw many human bones and skulls on the margin of Lake Wellington'.[6] He did not however venture closer to discover the cause of their deaths or specifically state their exact location. A massacre had taken place but who was responsible and

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[3] *Gippsland Times*, 15 April 1907, p.3.
[4] A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia*, pp.430 – 440.
[5] George Dunderdale, *The Book of the Bush 1898,* facsimile ed., Ringwood: Penguin.,1973, p.267
[6] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845: 7 June 1844

exactly where was not determined. If this site referred to by Robinson and Tyers was Boney Point, then it would date the incident to either late 1843 or early 1844 and would not have been a reprisal for the 1840 *Nuntin* attack.

So who was responsible? One would assume that as the massacre took place on the *Strathfieldsaye* run and that the stock belonged to William Odell Raymond, he would have played a part in organising the reprisal. At the time he lived on the *Stratford* run and his manager Brinsley Sheridan was on *Strathfieldsaye,* the properties bordering each other. Raymond could not have carried out a reprisal without additional assistance, and one man who had experience dealing with Aborigines also had the adjoining *Lindenow* property.

Raymond had travelled into Gippsland in the company of three other squatters: Henry Loughnan, Frederick Taylor and Frederick Jones. A letter written by Raymond to Tyers in August 1853 stated that he arrived at the Mitchell River on 20 June 1842 and that 'Messrs Loughnan and Taylor, with sheep, cattle and horses, joined company with me at Maneroo... and we travelled in company to the Mitchell River'.[7] Being close neighbours on the adjoining *Lindenow* property they would have been the obvious people to ask for assistance, particularly with Taylor's previous record of dealing with the native populations in the west of the Port Phillip District.

Robinson, the Aboriginal Protector was well aware of Taylor's violent past and as he travelled through Gippsland in May 1844 he commented:

> 'Taylor of native notoriety Portland district is squatting with Lufnon (Loughnan), a bad character, and Mr Tyers will get rid of him.'[8]

Commissioner Tyers had observed firsthand Taylor's callous and inhuman treatment of those he thought beneath him. When Taylor returned from India, he had brought eight coolies to work for him in Gippsland. Tyers met these men after they had crossed the mountains on their way to Gippsland. They told Tyers that they had been left to sleep in the open with no suitable tent or covering when crossing the Snowy Mountains.

Robinson had also heard from Tyers and another squatter named Crooke about Taylor's treatment of the coolies: '...all the whitemen had tents but the coolies eight in number, one woman among them, had no tent lay in snow before fire and rain'. At Limestone (near Omeo) Taylor took a blanket from one of them and put it on his working bullock.[9] One coolie stated that Taylor had struck him and kicked him, and that they had been given a little wheat instead of rice for food as had been agreed. He had supplied them with clothing for which he charged

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[7] Bride, p.130.
[8] Clark, 20 May 1844.
[9] Clark, 27 June 1844.

them and then paid them a minimal wage, so they were getting into debt every week.[10] The coolies absconded.

Taylor later had further charges laid against him for running sheep on McLeod's *Bairnsdale* run and with Loughnan was involved in a number of boundary disputes with adjoining properties. With Tyers' knowledge of Taylor's past he objected to Taylor being on the *Lindenow* run and ordered him off. He believed he was unfit to hold a licence or occupy the land and forwarded this information to La Trobe who initially said that the government could not allow Taylor to have his own station or the management of one.[11] However, following correspondence with La Trobe, Loughnan convinced the Superintendent of Taylor's right to hold property and in March 1846 La Trobe advised Tyers that all the charges had been explained and Taylor was allowed to take out leases.

Taking into consideration Taylor's past and attitude to those he considered beneath him, he is an obvious candidate to have participated in the Boney Point massacre and possibly a number of others.

Gardner's opinion has vacillated with regard to those responsible for the massacre. In a later article he wrote that Odell Raymond of *Strathfieldsaye* is identified as the 'perpetrator' of the 'affair' and no mention is made of McMillan. But he follows this statement by saying: 'I still prefer the latter individual (McMillan) as the one most likely to be involved'.[12] No reasons are given for these conflicting statements. The location of the massacre, the distance from *Nuntin* and Gardner's own statement about the perpetrator of the affair must cast doubts on major involvement by McMillan.

Warrigal Creek

Gardner believes that this massacre provides the strongest proof that McMillan was involved in the slaughter of natives and from this incident and others has named McMillan the 'Butcher of Gippsland'.

The Warrigal Creek massacre is probably the largest massacre that took place in Gippsland and followed the killing of Ranald Macalister, nephew of Lachlan Macalister. His Christian name is often recorded incorrectly as Ronald, Donald or Kenneth which was probably a second name. The original lease that included Warrigal Creek where the massacre took place was taken up by Aeneas Ronaldson Macdonnell Lord Glengarry in June 1841.[13] The run was initially

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[10] Clark, 10 June 1844.
[11] La Trobe to Loughnan, 29 July 1844, Outward Correspondence, Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 16,
[12] Peter Gardner, *Some Random Notes on the Massacres 2000-2015.* https://petergardner.info/wp-contentuploads/2012/11/Notes-on-Massacres-rev.ed.pdf
[13] R.V. Billis & A.S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip,* Melbourne: MacMillan. 1932, p.249.

called *Greenmount* and then became *Snugborough*. It changed hands following his departure and was taken over by Mashfield Mason, a Sydney merchant from the firm Thacker Mason and Co. who held it until April 1844. It was in his hands when the massacre took place, but it is unlikely that he was personally managing the property at the time. *Snugborough* or *Greenmount* probably encompassed most of the areas later broken up into smaller runs. [14]

Ranald Macalister was killed by Aborigines near Port Albert in July 1843. . The first report of the killing was in the *Port Phillip Herald* of 20 July 1843, and their information came from a letter sent from Port Albert to a 'merchantile house in town'. It said that the 'blacks' had commenced fresh outrages within half a mile of the Macalister station at Port Albert:

> 'The blacks have commenced fresh outrages and a few days since killed Mr Kenneth McAllister (sic) within half a mile of his station at Port Albert. He was on horseback at the time, and armed with a brace of pistols... It has been reported that Mr Macalister was decoyed from his station by a party of blacks on pretext of having found a flock of sheep that had been missing, and that having got him to a spot favourable for their murderous purposes, they set about him with their waddies and despatched him under circumstances of the utmost barbarity.'[15]

Writing in 1912, Gippsland historian Reverend George Cox stated that Lachlan Macalister occupied land at Alberton East as a camping ground. This he used as a staging point in connection with shipping of cattle to Van Diemen's Land. There was a bark hut on the land that his stockmen camped in, near where the killing occurred.[16] There is no evidence to say that Macalister had a run here, it is most likely that the yards and holding paddock a short distance from the shipping point at Port Albert were for common use.

Billis and Kenyon in their book *Pastoral Pioneers of the Port Phillip* list Kenneth Macallister (sic) as being killed by 'blacks' in July 1843 at *Port Albert* station.[17] The entry does not suggest that he owned a station and they have no listing for such a station. Similarly there is no listing for such a station in the Public Record Office of Victoria Pastoral files so it was most likely a common holding yard used by those about to ship stock to Van Diemen's Land.

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[14] Ancestry .com., Pastoral Runs Warrigal Creek Run 1373 Jacket 831. Joseph Varney held Warrigal Creek 1 and James Taylor held Warrigal Creek 2 from 1845. Varney's tenure was short-lived as he was declared insolvent in December 1848 owing rent on the property. It does not appear that Sunville was occupied as a separate run at the time and may have been part of Warrigal Creek or Snugborough.

[15] 'Murder at Gipps Land' *Port Phillip Herald*, 29 July 1843. p.2.

[16] Rev. George Cox, 'Bloodshed', *Notes on Gippsland History, Alberton District 1842 – 1843*, vol. 3, p.11.

[17] Billis and Kenyon, p.84.

Gardner suggests the reason for such a violent reprisal was because 'Ronald' Macalister was one of the most important men in Gippsland in July 1843.[18] There is no evidence to substantiate this claim. Although there are numerous mentions of Lachlan Macalister and his brother Matthew as well as Colin, Thomas and Matthew junior in newspapers and government correspondence of the day, the only reference to Ranald is in relation to his murder. If he was one of the most important men in Gippsland, then one would assume that his name would be found in other documents or newspapers, which is not the case. Why Gardner determines he was so important is not known. In an article published in 2020 Gardner claimed that McMillan was a 'close associate' of Ranald, but there is no document or evidence that links the two men, although as McMillan was working for Lachlan Macalister at the time they would have worked together.[19]

Prior to the research carried out by Gardner, the story of the massacre was first published in a 1925 school magazine called *'The Gap'*, printed by the teachers of the Bairnsdale Inspectorate. The article was written by 'Gippslander' who described the murder of Ranald Macalister and the events that followed which resulted in the massacre.[20] Gardner alleges 'Gippslander' was William Uriah Hoddinott who was born at Port Albert in 1857, 14 years after the events took place. According to Billis and Kenyon, William's father Uriah (1818-1885) leased the property *Sunville* from September 1847.[21] The family was therefore not

Sunville homestead of Uriah Hoddinott c.1862, Royal Historical Society of Victoria

[18] Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father*, p.34.
[19] Peter Gardner 'Warrigal Creek: Reply to Wayne Caldow.' https://petergardner .info
[20] Gippslander, 'Warrigal Creek', *The Gap: A School Magazine by the Teachers of the Bairnsdale Inspectorate 1925,* p.6. Gardner uses the name Ronald but the inscription on his tombstone is Ranald which was also a family name.
[21] Ibid. P.69.

living on the property at the time of the massacre. If Gardner is correct about the identity of the author, then he received his information at a much later date, possibly more than twenty years after the events occurred.

Gardner believed the reason 'Gippslander' did not sign his real name to the article at the time was because he feared condemnation, as McMillan was a revered local hero. However, this argument does not have much credence as 'Gippslander' does not accuse McMillan of being involved in any way. That Gardner can conclude that McMillan played a major role in the events that followed the murder of Ranald Macalister requires considerable imagination.

One of the difficulties in forming any firm conclusions about the events surrounding Macalister's murder is the multiplicity of accounts that have emerged. 'Gippslander' attributes the murder to a reprisal for hot coals thrown on the feet of the natives when they refused to leave the hut occupied by Macalister's hut keeper. According to the article, the man responsible was a 'ticket- of- leave' man who had been in the habit of inviting the natives into his hut. He stated that Ranald Macalister used to visit Port Albert and return home after dark and that the blacks were aware of this. 'Gippslander' alleged that in revenge the natives made up their minds to kill Macalister: 'Three of them waited for him as he returned, putting three spears through him and killing him at once'.

According to 'Gippslander', Macalister's horse bolted and McMillan found the horse the following day while travelling with cattle between Sale and Woodside.[22] This is the only mention of McMillan in the article.

It must be remembered that 'Gippslander' was writing for a children's magazine. He was telling a 'colourful' story that would appeal to a certain audience; it was not a serious historical journal.[23] The magazines carry a large number of articles, many written by school children in the 1920s and provide an interesting insight to many aspects of life at the time. But in all cases I believe they have to be read as informative passages designed to entertain a particular audience.

Another version of the events was published in *The Australian* of 2 August 1843 from the Captain of the *Agenoria* who reported: '... the blacks to be in a very riotous state. On the 13th Ultimo Mr Ronald Macalister was removing his sheep station about two miles from the settlement when he was attacked and murdered: his body was found the following day by a native in his employ'.[24]

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[22] Formal settlement did not take place at Sale until 1844 and was initially known as Flooding Creek.

[23] Whilst I use the word 'colourful' this does not detract from the fact that a massacre took place at Warrigal Creek but in the way it is written it is obviously designed to capture the attention of young readers.

[24] 'Shipping Intelligence', *The Australian*, 2 August 1843, p.3.

In September A.B. and C.D. wrote to Governor Gipps through the medium of *The Sydney Morning Herald* complaining about the lack of legal protection afforded to the pastoralists. The anonymity of the authors and the use of the term 'nephew of the allegorical author' in reference to Ranald implies that the actual author was Lachlan Macalister. Dr Wayne Caldow in his article *The Warrigal creek Massacre: True Story or Apocryphal* states that Macalister was the author.[25] The letter related that 'Mr Ranold (sic) McAlister, nephew of the allegorical author, was dragged off his horse and killed at Alberton, his head being so disfigured that he was unrecognizable even to his closest friends'.

The writer was bitter about the fact that the Indigenous population were regarded as subjects of the Crown and ironically refers to them as 'harmless innocent denizens of the wilds of Gipps Land bearing the anomalous cognomen of Her Majesty's most liege subjects'. He states that they are 'most bitter enemies' and that there are other instances 'of the sacrifice of Christian blood by these liege subjects'.[26] A total of five white lives had been lost in the last eighteen months but it was acknowledged that the problems were not only due to Aborigines: '...runaways from settlers and others make Alberton a dangerous place to be'.[27]

The murder created a huge impact on those living in Gippsland, so much so that it was still being talked about twelve months after the occurrence. Chief Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson wrote in his diary dated 19 May 1844:

> 'Mr Macalister was murdered about six months ago by the natives; he was alone it seems on horseback and supposed riding serenely along and the blacks took him by surprise, or he must have been parlaying with them at the time it happened. He had a brace of pistols in his holster, his body was found on the way to the Port with cattle and cattle a short way on ahead.'[28]

On June 1, 1844, he commented on the incident again:

> 'Reginald Macalister was the gentleman killed by the natives: they are supposed to have killed him with sticks, there was no spear wounds no person saw it done or saw natives; hence there is no direct proof. He was nephew to old Macalister and a cousin to Tom Macalister.'

The comment: 'no person saw it done or saw natives hence there is no proof' creates some doubt as to whether the attack was actually carried out by natives, however Robinson is relating this from second hand information. If

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[25] Dr. Wayne Caldow, 'The Warrigal Creek Massacre: True Story or Apocryphal', *Quadrant.*

[26] Ibid

[27] 'Original correspondence', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 6 September 1843, p.3.

[28].Clark, vol. 4, 1 January 1844 – 1845.

Macalister was murdered by someone else, then this just served as an excuse to attack the Gunaikurnai.

Later Robinson was told that: 'some depraved white men had in a fit of drunkenness shot at and killed some friendly natives. Mr Macalister being the first European met after the perpetration of this revolting barbarity was in accordance with their usages murdered'.[29]

William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines writing in his diary on 21 April 1845, also related his version of the events leading to the murder of Macalister. He had met with a man named Hatcher, a relation of Hugh Buntine of *Bruthen* run who stated that:

> 'The blks were fond of Mr Macallister and Mr Macallister of them, but in Mr Macallisters absence some of his Men had stolen some Lubras, and on the blks wanting them they deliberately shot the blacks that this was unbeknown to Mr McAllister & when he returned they met him on the road and killed him. I asked him if he thought that such was the case, he said yes, it is well known, in the neighbourhood of his brother. The man who gave me this unasked for statement said his name was John Hatcher.'

From the above accounts written within two years of the murder there is very little consistency about what actually took place. The reasons for the murder are varied; the only certainty that comes out of the event is that retaliation did take place against the Gunaikurnai. At the time these statements were made the knowledge of who was involved in committing the atrocity would have been well known. It is most likely at this time that the names were suppressed because of feared recriminations.

Allan McLean has yet another version of events which he believed occurred after Macalister called into their property at Glenaladale as he was taking cattle past. This account can be discounted as the McLean brothers and Simon Gillies did not occupy *Glenaladale* run until 1845. Max Milton Macalister, a distant relative of the murdered man claimed that Macalister was on his way back from Port Albert where he had replenished supplies for the hut when he was murdered. He incorrectly claims that Ranald was the brother of Lachlan, so the reliability of his information is open to question.[30]

A Brutal reprisal and those involved

In 1925 'Gippslander' described what happened after the murder and says that:

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[29] George Mackaness, (ed), 'George Augustus Robinson's Journey into South Eastern Australia – 1844,. *Australian Historical Monographs,* Volume XIX, p.10.

[30] This information is taken from Ranald Macalister's headstone at the Alberton cemetery which was erected by Max Macalister.

> 'The settlers were so enraged at this murder that they determined to give the blacks a lesson and formed what they called the Highland Brigade. Every man who could find a gun and a horse took chase after the blacks.'

A further article published in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* in 1940 which described what took place which confirmed Gardner's view of the identity of 'Gippslander'. William Uriah Hoddinott wrote a story for the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* of 23 May 1940 which told of his family's arrival in Australia and Gippsland, as well as the massacre. The only mention of McMillan in the story inaccurately refers to him as first settling in Gippsland in 1844, when the 'blacks were very numerous and treacherous'.

In 1952 another article in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* claimed that Macalister was killed when riding from Boisdale to Port Albert. His body 'was found in a tree by John Morrison and employee at *Boisdale*' and an accomplice of McMillan on his early journeys into Gippsland. The information was attributed to a number of sources including James Slater, a relative of the Campbell's of *Glencoe*.[31] In revenge the author said that a great host of 'blacks' was shot on the banks of the Latrobe River.

That a massacre took place there is no doubt. Robert Buntine, whose family had established *Bruthen Creek* Station in the 1840s said: 'The event brought on the savages a terrible retribution'. He continued: 'The whites assembled in full force and went in pursuit of the murderers and wreaked a terrible vengeance on them'.[32] Robert Buntine does not mention a 'Highland Brigade'.

> 'The white settlers thinking it necessary for their own safety to convince the Blacks that such crimes could not be committed with impunity assembled in full force, went in pursuit of the murderers and wreaked a terrible vengeance on them. The particulars of that said, were never made public; nor did those engaged in it ever care to refer to it.'[33]

According to 'Gippslander' the Brigade found the natives camped around a waterhole at Warrigal Creek where they surrounded them, 'killing a great number'.[34] This information was related to him years later by two survivors who were about twelve or fourteen years old at the time of the massacre, named 'Club Foot' and 'Bing Eye'. Gardner, writing in 1979 says that during the third expedition looking for the white woman, a native named 'One Eye' was savagely

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[31] 'The Story of Lachlan Macalister', *Bairnsdale Advertiser,* 7 April 1952, p.9.
[32] Mr Robert Buntine's Recollections, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 78/2 MS 000229.
[33] Ibid.
[34] 'Gippslander', *The Gap,* 1925, p. 6

assaulted by native troopers and subsequently died.[35] He says it is highly likely that 'One Eye' was one of the survivors of Warrigal Creek. If this is the case he is probably referring to 'Bing Eye'. If Gardner is correct and 'Bing Eye' or 'One Eye' died in 1847 then 'Gippslander' could not have spoken directly with him, and the information received would most likely be third hand, casting further doubt on the veracity of *The Gap* article.

William Thomas' diary corroborates that the wholesale killing of a large number of Gunaikurnai took place. In the same 21 April entry relating his conversation with Hatcher, he was told: 'That after McAllister's murder a great slaughter of the blacks took place, and that on his brothers Station a cart Load of Blks bones might be gatherd up…' He is not stating that a cartload was gathered up as has been alleged but that there were a great many bones at the site.

In relation to the comment referring to his brother's station, Hatcher is talking about Buntine's *Bruthen* Station. Whether this indicates the site of another massacre is not certain but it does not appear to relate to Warrigal Creek.

Reflecting on the incident after meeting Henry Meyrick in 1847, Thomas recorded in his diary of 22 January that the squatter Meyrick advised him 'that the aborigines had been cut off in awful numbers'. Meyrick told him that the slaughter that took place after the murder of Macalister was 'awfully reckless and merciless'. We then have a statement in the diary that is the closest anyone comes to naming a perpetrator of the massacre: '…he gave a reported act of a Scotchman who went out with a party Scowering'.[36] No mention is made of a 'Highland Brigade' or of McMillan or anyone else specifically except that it was a Scotsman which of course could be McMillan, or any one of the Macalister family wanting revenge.

The first and only mention of a 'Highland Brigade' in any of the literature is by 'Gippslander'. The question must be asked whether this was just a colourful name adopted by 'Gippslander' to define the group most likely commanded by the leading Scot in the district, Lachlan Macalister.

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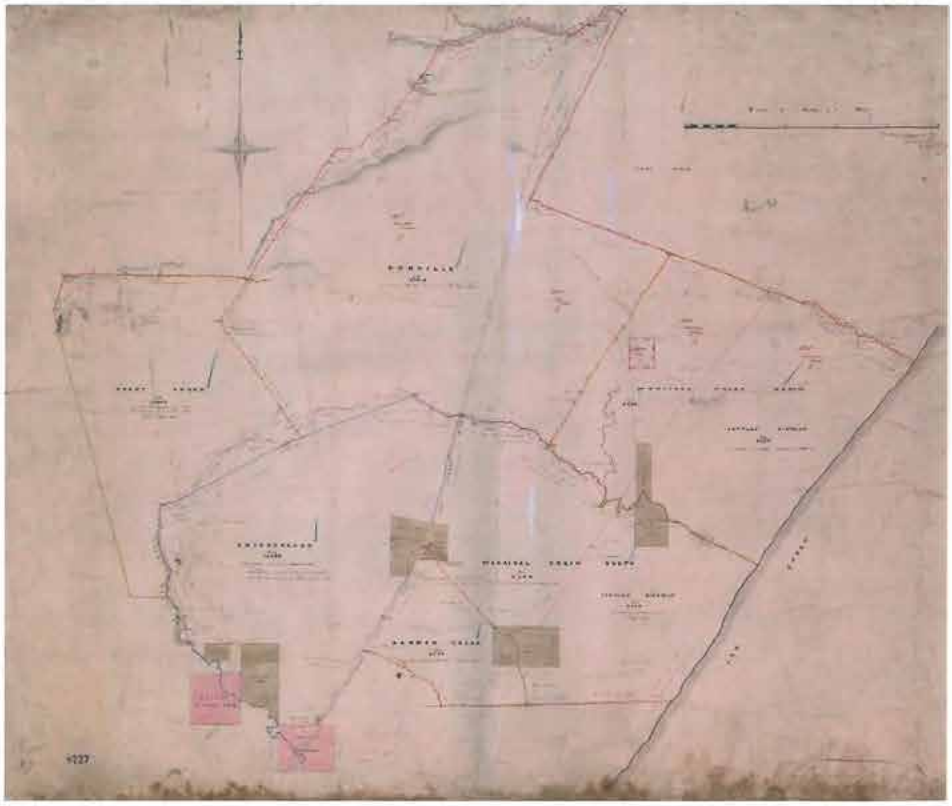
[35] Peter D. Gardner,'The Journals of De Villiers and Warman', *Royal Historical Society of Victoria Journal*, vol. 50 No.2. May 1979. pp. 95-96.
[36] Stephens, 22 January 1847.

Gardner admits that the evidence implicating McMillan in the massacre is circumstantial.[37] He says that his conclusion about McMillan's involvement was based on his close association with and employment by Macalister, the fact that the use of the term 'Highland Brigade' implied an ethnic association, and Gardner's assumptions of McMillan's supposed participation in earlier massacres. Because of the level of rage at the murder, Gardner believes it would be unlikely for any Highlander of note to have been absent and those who had authority would have led the reprisal.[38]



Run map Public Record Office Victoria. Run 37 Reedy Creek, Snugborough, Sunville, Gammon Creek, Warrigal Creek South and Warrigal Creek north. VPRS 8168/P0002

Gardner has always attributed the leadership of the reprisal party to McMillan. In a paper that Gardner wrote: *Warrigal Creek – A reply to Wayne Caldow* he states that McMillan 'is the self-proclaimed leader of the Macalister

[37] Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father*, p.38.
[38] Ibid, p.39.

group and European discoverer of the region'.[39] While there is no doubt that McMillan claimed and defended his claims to the discovery of Gippsland there is no evidence or assertion by him that he was a leader of Macalister's group.

Gardner goes on to say that if, as some assert Lachlan Macalister or a relative led the reprisal then 'Angus McMillan rode by his side'.[40] This is possible but no evidence is submitted for any of these claims. Being a participant, although not acceptable by today's standards certainly puts McMillan in a different position to being responsible for organising and leading the attack.

A different version of the events which implicates Lachlan Macalister as the leader is related by George Dunderdale in his '*Book of the Bush*'. Dunderdale arrived in Australia in 1853 and came to Gippsland as a Clerk of Courts at Alberton. He lived at Tarraville between 1869 and 1889 and collected local stories. According to Reverend George Cox, much of the information obtained by Dunderdale came from an old man named Simmonds whom Cox had spoken to.[41] In a letter dated 30 March 1912 Cox says that Simmonds accused Dunderdale of distorting what he had given him. While he may have embroidered the detail it is unlikely that he would have changed the main facts.

Dunderdale refers to Ranald as 'Donald' and says he was killed a day after he had fired on some 'blacks' at a distance, without provocation, as he was moving stock to Port Albert for shipping. This partially agrees with the account given on 19 May 1844 Aboriginal Protector George Augustus Robinson who says he was 'moving cattle to Port Albert and must have been parleying with them at the time it happened'.[42]

Dunderdale maintains that a stockman found Ranald and sent a messenger to Lachlan Macalister 'who had a long experience dealing with blackfellows and bushrangers'. The murder of his nephew gave him both a professional and family interest in organising a party to track down the perpetrators.[43] According to Dunderdale, a revenge party was organised by Macalister who found a group of natives near a waterhole. Dunderdale refers to it as Gammon Creek.[44] (the above 1864 map held in the Public Record Office shows a Gammon Creek but no Warrigal Creek only Hoddinott Creek. Gammon Creek is also much closer to the *Bruthen* run than Warrigal Creek) Here the

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[39] Peter D. Gardner, 'The Warrigal Creek Massacre – A Reply to Wayne Caldow' petergardner.info › wp-content › uploads

[40] Gardner p.39.

[41] Reverend George Cox, Letter from Cox to Greig, 18 May 1911, Manuscripts Collection, Gippsland Early Settlement Collection, Box 148/21 Item 873, Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

[42] Clark, vol. 4, 1 January 1844 – 1845, 19 May 1844.

[43] Dunderdale, p. 225.

[44] Dunderdale, pp.224 – 225.

Aborigines were shot down and thrown into the waterhole, a similar scenario to the earlier massacre in the western district which involved Frederick Taylor. [45]

Dunderdale said about 60 men, women and children had been killed, but believed this was an exaggeration.[46] Dunderdale said: 'The gun used by Macalister was a double-barrelled Purdy, a beautiful and reliable weapon, which in its time had done great execution', implying it may have been used in similar circumstances elsewhere.

Gardner completely rejects Dunderdale's account and wants to substitute names, saying:

> 'It would appear that he was mistaken when he referred to 'old Macalister' of *Nuntin* and that the person he was most likely referring to was McMillan of *Bushy Park*. It is possible he meant Tom Macalister who was in Gippsland at this time, but certainly not Lachlan Macalister.'[47]

Although the detail about Macalister and his weapon are very specific, Gardener is quite content to say that Dunderdale got the names and the places mixed up and gives no reason for assuming Dunderdale really meant McMillan.

Further doubt is cast on McMillan's leadership of the reprisal in Gardner's book *Through Foreign Eyes* where he quotes from a talk given by former Victorian Premier Allan McLean at Nyerimilang near the Gippsland Lakes and reputedly held in the Melbourne University Archives.[48]

Allan McLean came to Gippsland early in 1842 aged two years and was a distant relative of Lachlan Macalister who employed his father. Born in Scotland, McLean arrived in Sydney with his parents. Macalister asked his father Charles to travel to Gippsland 'to manage his sheep stations under Mr Angus MacMillan'.[49] The Dictionary of Biography says Allan McLean grew up in the relative isolation of a settlement whose only communication with Melbourne was by sea. By 16 he was said to have graduated as a bushman, a 'dashing young station hand [who] could tame a warrigal, put a mob of cattle over a river, dance a reel, play the bagpipes until the skirl came screaming back from the hills, or

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[45] Clark, 'Scars in the Landscape, a register of massacre sites in western Victoria 1803 – 1859' p.107.
[46] Dunderdale, pp. 224 – 225.
[47] Gardner, *Gippsland Massacres*, p.59.
[48] Although this work has been quoted by Peter Gardner and Patrick Morgan in *The Settling of Gippsland* the original document has not yet been found
[49] 'Personal Reminiscences of the Hon. Allan McLean', Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, No.536 Box 125/7.

sing a Scottish ballad in broad Gaelic with the fire and pathos of an ancient minstrel'.[50]

McLean gave the speech at Nyerimilang homestead in 1907 in which he said he knew the early pioneers. Ranald Macalister was supposedly the person who lifted young Allan McLean from the boat on his arrival at Port Albert.[51] He referred to Ranald as a popular man, not the most important and this is perhaps where the misconception that he was the most 'important man' in Gippsland comes from. He said:

> 'One day they killed Ronald Macalister, the most popular young man in the settlement. Captain Macalister determined on a black raid. He mustered all the good shots and they kept up the chase till they found Ronald Macalister's clothes, killing over five hundred blacks on the trip.' Allan McLean said he had seen hundreds of skulls near the beach south of Sale, many showing bullet holes.

Although there may be some exaggeration in this account, Macalister is again named as the leader of the expedition, although Gardner claims that he could not have led the reprisal as he never permanently resided in Gippsland. Macalister however appears to have had a detailed knowledge of the recently opened up country. In October 1842 he was questioned by the Immigration Commission and provided extensive detail on Gippsland regarding crops, wages, process of cattle and problems with labour: 'He said there is a larger tract of land there available for agriculture than I have seen anywhere in this colony'.[52] The detailed information that he gave to the Commission seems to indicate that he was well acquainted with the potential of the country and had spent considerable time in the area. In 1865 an article in the *Gippsland Times* referring to Lachlan Macalister said: he 'subsequently was for many years a resident of Gipps Land'.[53]

Macalister was constantly travelling between Sydney, Port Albert and Van Diemen's Land between 1841 and 1847. Newspapers published at the time provide information about ships arriving and leaving Sydney with their destinations and passengers. Historian Ian Hughes also compiled a list of cabin passengers specific to Port Albert between 1841 and 1845 during which time Lachlan Macalister was a regular passenger.[54] Unfortunately not all journeys and passengers are listed but in May 1841 he travelled to 'Westernport' (we can take

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[50] Australian Dictionary of Biography, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mclean-allan-7413

[51] Gardner, Peter, *Through Foreign Eyes,* Ensay: Centre for Gippsland Studies, 1988, p.95.

[52] 'Minutes of Evidence taken before Immigration Commission' 27 July 1842. *Australian Chronicle,* 18 October 1842, p. 2.

[53] *Gippsland Times,* 26 May 1865, p.2.

[54] Ian Hughes, *Passengers to Port Albert 1841 - 1845*, Melbourne, 1986.

this to mean Gippsland) aboard the *Jane and Emma.* In September of the following year he travelled to Hobart with cattle on the *Portenia.*[55].

In the first part of 1843 Macalister spent considerable time travelling between his properties and the markets in Van Diemen's Land. If he was supervising the selection of stock for the markets, then he would have remained at *Boisdale* for extended periods of time. He made the trip in February aboard the *Coquette* with Odell Raymond, then in early April he again travelled to Port Albert aboard the *Coquette* from Sydney with Dr Arbuckle and Mr McLean. According to *The Colonial Observer*, Lachlan Macalister, accompanied by John Reeve (*Snake Ridge*) left Sydney on 6 May aboard the *Agenoria* destined for Hobart via Port Albert. [56]On June 1 Macalister and Colin McLaren arrived in Hobart with twenty head of cattle and 160 head of sheep.[57] From the reports in the papers it is apparent that Macalister travelled to *Boisdale* on an almost monthly basis.

Unfortunately, the records of shipping and passengers are not comprehensive, and there is little detail for the latter part of 1843 and 1844. The 1845 records show that he was travelling with stock aboard the *Agenoria* in 1845 and it is feasible to suggest that this pattern would have been well established by then.

Even as a private citizen Macalister held considerable sway in Gippsland, which would seem to indicate his ongoing presence there. He was in Gippsland in January 1847 as Sergeant Windridge of the Border Police received orders from him to search for 'some wild blacks who had speared seven head of cattle on his run'.[58] Macalister still had the authority to have the police follow his orders. He later also attended social functions. In 1849 he was a witness with Archie McLeod at the wedding of John Campbell and Susan McNaughton, indicating he must have formed a relationship with them as they were permanently resident in Gippsland.

To say that Macalister could not have been present to take revenge on the Gunaikurnai for the murder of his nephew Ranald cannot be proven.

If Macalister was at *Clifton* at the time of the murder, then the news of the murder would have taken some time to reach him. On 16 July Colin McLaren arrived in Hobart with stock aboard the *Agenoria,* three days after Ranald's

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[55] Ibid, p.15 & 50.

[56] 'Shipping Intelligence', *The Colonial Observer,* Sydney 6 May 1843.

[57] 'Shipping News', *The Australian Asiatic Review and Tasmanian and Australian Advertiser,* 9 June 1843, p.2.

[58] Statement from Windridge sworn before Charles Tyers, Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 24 1847 Nos 46,47. NB It is interesting to note the word 'orders' is used implying that Macalister had considerable influence in the district and was used to being obeyed.

murder. She sailed for Port Albert again on 19 July and then would have made her way back up the coast to Sydney. Macalister could have received the news of Ranald's death on McLaren's return to *Clifton*. He would then have had the option of waiting for a ship to take him south or riding to *Boisdale* to take revenge, as he did in his police days when hunting bushrangers. There is no way of knowing whether or not the decision to take revenge was made on the spur of the moment. If Lachlan Macalister was involved then his military and police background would have ensured that he had a well-formed plan.

Macalister's reputation for dealing with those operating outside the law was well known even in Port Phillip. Augustus Robinson referred to Macalister's ability at a meeting for the formation of a society in connection with the London Aboriginal Protection Society in 1838. His name arose following a discussion about Aborigines and the murders that were taking place. Robinson's suggestion was to '...raise...a permanent colonial corps... and vested with the power of acting under martial law... Let us have a body of men under the control of Colonel Snodgrass with men such as Lachlan Macalister...and the settlers need have little dread of bushrangers or blacks'.[59]

Lachlan Macalister had no confidence in the official government response to the attacks by Aborigines. In evidence he gave to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council inquiring into Land Grievances he said there was no effective protection from attack in Port Phillip. In reference to the Border Police, he said: 'They are 100 times worse than nothing, they are a perfect nuisance'. He then mentioned the death of Ranald and went on to state that for £100 '... he gets grass but suffers from want of protection'. He said the commission did not have sufficient power to afford security from the blacks and that the Border Police should be abolished and the Mounted Police expanded.[60] These statements support the fact that individual squatters were forced to take the law into their own hands. The degree to which Macalister may or may not have been involved in everyday clashes is not clear but when it came to the death of a relative it is likely that he was involved.

If the reprisal was a spontaneous response and Lachlan Macalister was not present then it is more likely to have been organised by one of the other Macalisters such as Matthew, Colin or Thomas. Gardner does have doubts about McMillan's involvement in *Our Founding Murdering Father,* where he acknowledges that:

> '...It is impossible to state with complete certainty that McMillan led the 'Highland Brigade'...It is just possible that McMillan may have been absent from the region at this time...One reason for this is that McMillan, as well as establishing his own Bushy Park Run, was the overseer for

[59] 'Adjourned Public Meeting,' *The Australian,* 23 October 1838. p.2.
[60] 'Land Grievances' *Port Phillip Gazette,* 28 September 1844. p.2.

both Lachlan Macalister's huge Boisdale run and Godfrey Bentley's Sandy Creek Run adjoining Bushy Park... McMillan, probably starved for capital, was still at this stage very much the working man and thus most likely to be resident at or near the place of his employment... Other evidence implicating McMillan is equally circumstantial...'

Another possible participant in the events could be Patrick Coady Buckley whose run *Coady Vale* adjoined the *Snugborough* run where the massacre took place. His diary relates that he regularly carried out Aboriginal hunts.[61] The question remains as to who led the reprisal, as Gardner himself admits the only evidence implicating McMillan is circumstantial and there is certainly no evidence that he led the attack. Who else was engaged in the killing can only be surmised but being an employee of Macalister, one would imagine that McMillan could have been called on to play his part.

Coadyvale showing proximity of Lake Reeve, PROV Merrimans Creek to Lake Reeve VPRS 8168, P0002 CS6

A final comment on the incident comes in a letter written by historian Reverend George Cox of Yarram to Alfred Greig, co-founder and first secretary of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Cox had been told of a quantity of animal bones found on Warrigal Creek which he said '...was supposed to be the site of the massacre of blacks after the murder of young Macalister'. Twenty skulls had been found at the site. Following a discussion about the massacre with a local of long standing, a Mr Lucas he was informed that the massacre did not take place there but at another creek miles away. Here Lucas claimed seven skulls had been found but they showed no signs of shooting as each skull was fractured. The skulls were left in situ the finders intending to come back and collect them at a later time, but when they returned they were

[61] 'Buckley, Patrick Coady', Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1816 – 1872, Box 37/4

gone. According to information one skull had survived and '...now adorns the bar of a public house in Sale'.[62]

Whether this relates to Warrigal Creek or is an entirely different massacre site is unknown, however considerable retribution was carried out by the white settlers to the south of Warrigal Creek against the Indigenous population.

Gardner's informant - Gippslander – William Uriah Hoddinott 12 November 1857 – 10 January 1942

Before leaving the Warrigal Creek massacre it is necessary to investigate Gardner's source for information on the events that took place, namely William Uriah Hoddinott. William's father Uriah arrived in Australia aboard the *Mary Nixon* in late 1841 with his wife Martha. He initially worked in Melbourne as part of the Immigration Board inspecting newly arrived emigrant ships with La Trobe, Lonsdale and Dr Cussen.[63] On 1 September 1842 Uriah Hoddinott was recommended by Superintendent La Trobe for the position of overseer and storekeeper at Goulburn River Aboriginal Protectorate station, Murchison. He took up the position from 25 July 1842.[64] He was not to remain in the position very long as problems arose with the overall administration of the settlement by William Le Souef who stood aside in June 1843 pending an official inquiry. Uriah resigned on 26 January 1843 on the grounds of ill health.[65]

Throughout 1843 Uriah corresponded with Augustus Robinson and he gave evidence to the inquiry into Le Souef's conduct at the Goulburn Protectorate. In June he offered to again work in the Aboriginal Protectorate but specified it could not be with Le Soef. [66] The family was at Kinlochewe near Kalkallo north of Melbourne from mid-1843 where they appear to have been tenant farmers. In November 1843 Uriah wrote to his father in England advising him that they had left Melbourne in February and were now living 200 miles to the southeast in Gippsland.[67]

The family was therefore not living in the district when Ranald Macalister was killed and they heard of the incident at a later date. With the number of different

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[62a] Letter from Rev. George Cox to Alfred Greig', 16 May 1912, Manuscripts Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 117/5, MS 000311.
[63] Dianne Reilly, *Charles Joseph La Trobe Australian notes 1839 – 1854*, Tarcoola Press 2006, p.83.
[64] Ian D. Clark, *Goulburn River Aboriginal Protectorate*, Ballarat Heritage Services 2013, p.115.
[65] Ibid, p.116
[66] Ibid, p.65.
[67] Midge Beesley, *Raymond Island Past, Present, Future*, Bairnsdale: Midge Beesley Raymond Island, 1986, pp.39-40.

accounts of what took place at the time it would be interesting to know what they were told. If a veil of secrecy surrounded the reprisal as has been alleged, then it is difficult to accept that details of what went on would have been revealed to these outsiders, especially when Uriah Hoddinott had worked for the Aboriginal Protectorate.

William Uriah Hoddinott ('Gippslander') was born at Port Albert in November 1857, fourteen years after the events. He would probably not have comprehended what had happened until he was at least six years of age – twenty years after the original events. Hoddinott's story is similar to other accounts of the events written soon after 1843 but it does not in any way implicate Angus McMillan. At best it is a secondary source. If his Aboriginal sources are correct, they still did not mention McMillan or a 'Highland Brigade'.

The multiplicity of stories and the absence of any mention of McMillan make it difficult to believe that he played a leading role in the events. That Gardner's argument has prevailed for the past forty years is quite remarkable when taken in the context of his discussion about McMillan's involvement, and that he accepts the evidence concerning McMillan is at best circumstantial.

Ranald Kenneth Macalister

An Isle of Skye pioneer of Gippsland
Ambushed and speared by Blacks
Near Brewery Paddock Alberton June 1843
Manager 'Boisdale' station for brother Capt. Lachlan Macalister SM
of 'Clifton' Picton NSW Discoverer of Gippsland 1839/40 who
arrived in the Colony in 1817 as Ensign in the 48th Regt. Foot
This murder triggered the formation of the Gippsland Brigade and
retribution at Warrigal Creek
This gravesite has been lost since 1912
After a bushfire passed through, and has been resurrected
By Max Milton Macalister, a distant relative
At Rest far from Skye. But not forgotten.
Per Mare Per Terras 2004

The above is the inscription from the headstone erected in 2004 to commemorate Ranald Macalister. Unfortunately not all the information included is correct. The Latin inscription reads 'by sea and by land'.

Chapter Seven

Other massacres and killings

'Heard ... that the police and Omeo blacks had been killing warrigals near a place called Green Wattle station'.

Port Phillip Herald, 29 March 1847

Warrigal Creek and Boney Point are the most well known massacre sites but there are a number of other sites where killings were carried out in Gippsland. Anecdotal evidence, bone finds and brief statements in newspaper articles indicate atrocities took place, but there is little detail available to ascertain the number of lives lost or who was involved.

Attacks on stock continue

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Charles Tyers arrived in Gippsland in January 1844 and his duties were far reaching. He was responsible for the regulation of the boundaries of pastoral runs, for dealing with applications for depasturing licences, for preventing conflict between settlers and Aborigines, and for directing the employment of the Border Police and collecting licence fees and the stock assessment tax which funded his activities. He was also required to prepare regular returns for the Colonial Secretary of the District.

In June Tyers advised Superintendent La Trobe that there were forty stations established with 227 free male employees, fifty-one free females and forty-seven male and two female prisoners. 20,157 cattle and 62,455 sheep were grazing across the country with 410 horses.[1] Tyers was essentially responsible for maintaining law and order with the assistance of the Border Police. The cost of maintaining this small force was met by the annual stock tax of one halfpenny per sheep, one penny halfpenny per cow and three pennies per horse.[2]

The number of police however was not great enough to patrol the whole of the vast District and protect squatter and Aborigine alike. They were to be joined by the Native Police Corps but this body was required to patrol across the whole of the Port Phillip District, not just Gippsland. Tyers not only had to establish order across the European communities that were springing up, but also attempt to reduce the conflict between the Europeans and Aborigines. Despite the savage reprisal carried out at Warrigal Creek, attacks on stock continued throughout the District, although no further European deaths were recorded.

Tyers makes numerous references to these attacks during his first twelve months in Gippsland. He noted that in April 1844 three cows had been found dead

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[1] Bride, p. 231.
Billis & Kenyon, Part VI.

on the *Boisdale* run with spear marks in them and two on *Bushy Park*. In early May Tyers was informed that more cattle had been speared within a mile of McMillan's head station and that McMillan and some of his men pursued the offenders and found them in the ranges. 'Blacks raised their spears party fired unknown if any blacks were killed. Number of natives said to be 200'.[3]

A letter to the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* complained:

> The blacks are still continuing their outrages – burning huts, robbing people's gardens and slaughtering cattle by wholesale. Messrs. Pearson and Cunninghame have been the latest sufferers by those cannibals. It is not only the stock they kill we feel the loss of, but of running the remainder off their runs and the expense that the proprietors are put to in collecting their cattle and procuring guns and ammunition for everyone engaged in their employment.[4]

The conflict continued after the murder of Ranald Macalister and the writer of the letter made it quite clear that resistance to these attacks was to come from the proprietors and employees who were being armed. If this is accurate, then there were a large number of workers across the District who could be engaged in defending the properties or making reprisals.

In June Tyers said that at *Boisdale* the 'blacks' had not been troublesome for three weeks, but a month later gave orders for the Native Police to patrol *Boisdale* station as natives were supposed to be coming down to spear cattle.[5] From his comment it might be that the Gunaikurnai had retreated into the foothills and were only coming down to procure food. According to historian Marie Fels these attacks were taking place mainly in winter because the Gunaikurnai were hungry and troopers were being despatched at that time to the stations considered most at risk. She says these stations were rarely attacked and the Aborigines would know this and concentrate on stations that were undefended.[6] In a letter dated 21 July 1844 to Superintendent La Trobe, Tyers said: 'The natives have been very troublesome, killing 90 head of cattle belonging to Mr Sparks (*Swan Reach)*, at various times, and many belonging to Mr Jones (*Lucknow)'*.[7]

In September John Reeve at *Snake Ridge* had eleven cattle killed. Tyers also commented that 'blacks' had not been seen on Pearson's *Kilmany Park* for some time, or on MacFarlane's *Hayfield* since a spearing in March. The question

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[3]Charles J Tyers Diary February 2 1844 – February 15 1846 State Library of Victoria, ML. refB657c, 4 May 1844.

[4] 'Gippsland' *Sydney Morning Herald,* 15 April 1844, p.4.

[5] Charles J Tyers Diary February 2 1844 – February 15 1846 State Library of Victoria, ML. refB657c, 29 July 1844.

[6] Fels, pp.127-128.

[7] Bride, Charles Tyers to Superintendent La Trobe 21 July 1844, p.200.

needs to be asked why they had not returned during this time and the answer can only be that they had been driven off.

George Robinson, Protector of Aborigines recorded the remarkable events following the spearing of cattle on *Rosedale* leased by David Parry Okeden (April 1844-September 1847). He had lost two cattle to spearing: '... some natives threw spears at him, he was alone dismounted chased them into the bush, and got into the midst of a large camp of them he knocked down a gin put his foot on her neck the men jumped into the water and he let her go...'(sic)[8]

In January 1845 he was told that fourteen head had been killed at Campbell's *Glencoe* and at Bloomfield's *Tanjil* runs and twelve head had been speared. Another run had ten killed in February. At the end of 1845 in a report to La Trobe, Tyers wrote:

> '...since the return of the Native Police to Headquarters... the depredations of the Aborigines of the District on the property of the settlers, including horses as well as horned stock, have increased to an alarming extent...'

The only solution Tyers could see was to continue to make the most of the services of the Native Police.[9]

There are few other mentions of attacks on stock for the duration of the diary. Tyers' attitude to the Gunaikurnai however is very negative. Writing to La Trobe in 1851 he said that no advance had been made in civilising them and that their position in relation to the Europeans had not altered. He said that the 'wild blacks' or 'warrigals' seldom visit the stockholders except for the purpose of killing cattle. He blamed their enmity towards the neighbouring tribes as the chief cause of the decimation of their numbers.[10]

These constant attacks on stock ensured that brutal retaliation continued. The site which is best documented through anecdotal evidence is at Butcher's Creek where the waterway enters Lake King in the Gippsland Lakes.

Butcher's Creek

The story of the Butcher's Creek massacre has several different sources. One is from Colin McLaren, a stockman purported to have first-hand knowledge of what took place there. According to Richard MacKay, McLaren was with McMillan's party when they returned from *Numbla Munjie* to retake *Nuntin* in

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[8] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 41 January 1844 – 1845: 30 May 1844.

[9] Tyers to La Trobe Inward Correspondence, Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 46/219.

[10] C.J. Tyers, Report re the Progress of Civilisation of the Aborigines in the District to La Trobe

1840.[11] He worked for McMillan at *Bushy Park,* Lachlan Macalister at *Boisdale,* John Johnson at *Mewburn Park* and as an overseer for Malcolm MacFarlane at *Glenfalloch.*[12] McLaren later retired to Rotamah Island on the Gippsland Lakes where he met James Burnett Box, a County Court judge and told him the story of the massacre.

Judge Box had come to the Lakes in 1873 looking for a harbour for his boat and a place to build a house. He found the entrance to a Y-shaped inlet known Butcher's Creek (later known as Box's Creek) east of Metung and established himself there in the same year. McLaren told Judge Box that Butcher's Creek took its name from a massacre of Aborigines which occurred there after the 'blacks' took cattle from *Bushy Park.*[13] He said that *Bushy Park* had been attacked twice in 1841 by natives and the stock scattered. On the second occasion stockmen pursued the natives and trapped them on the creek where they were shot.[14] Unfortunately the original material is in the form of a few notes held by the East Gippsland Historical Society and there is no reference as to its source. The typed document states that Box passed the story onto Frank Bury, a long-time resident of Metung who recounted the events in a paper presented to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria in 1961.

Bury wrote that in 1841 McMillan's *Bushy Park* station was attacked twice and that following the second attack the 'stockmen pursued them'. The swam across the Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers before they were trapped and shot at the creek on Bancroft Bay to the east of Metung. There is no mention of Angus McMillan participating in this action, the only reference is to his stockmen. The pursuit of over 110 kilometres from *Bushy Park* seems unlikely given that the

[11] Mackay, pp. 92-93.
[12] 'McLaren notes', Pioneer's File, *East Gippsland Historical Society*, Manuscript Collection,(there is no source for where these notes came from) [unpublished].
[13] Ibid
[14] F.C. Bury, 'History of Metung on the Gippsland Lakes', Manuscript Collection, Box 125/14, MS 000387, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 25 March 1961.

Aborigines usually sought refuge in the morasses or mountains, however they could be tracked by the Native Police.

Bury's daughter Gay Halstead wrote a history of Metung in 1977 which is different to her father's account. She claimed that Box obtained the information from an Aborigine named 'Big Joe'. Gay Halstead offered a similar but more detailed account of what followed. She claimed McMillan was out exploring when he returned to find that his station had been attacked. She then says: 'It was only after one of his stockmen was speared that this normally kind nature was stirred to wrath'.[15] Then:

> A group of armed volunteers (some of whom lived along the northern shores of Lakes Wellington and Victoria and had also been attacked), decided to 'teach the blacks a lesson'.[16]

Using two Omeo natives from *Bushy Park,* they tracked them down to the creek on Bancroft Bay where they shot them. Aldo Massola in *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria* also mentions Butcher's Creek as a massacre site. He said the massacre took place close to a small creek that ran into Chinaman's Creek not far from Metung. This was a popular camping spot for the Gunaikurnai because of a well of fresh water. Here they 'were surprised by McMillan's men and all shot as retaliation for alleged spearing of cattle'. From then on the creek was known as 'Butcher's Creek'.[17] These accounts all refer to the attackers as 'McMillan's men', implying that McMillan may not have been present.

Allan McLean also related a story of the massacre while speaking at Nyerimilang on the Gippsland Lakes in 1907:

> Another massacre of blacks was started at Newlands backwater close to Paynesville. They had been very aggressive and the whites set upon their camp, drove them round through where Bairnsdale was now, swimming the backwater, the Nicholson and the Tambo, and rounded them up at the head of a little creek where Judge Box had his country house. There they killed every man woman & child, and the place was known to this day as 'Butchers Creek'.[18]

Although there is no way to date when these events took place, from 1847 the *Swan Reach* run which included what is now known as Butcher's Creek in its

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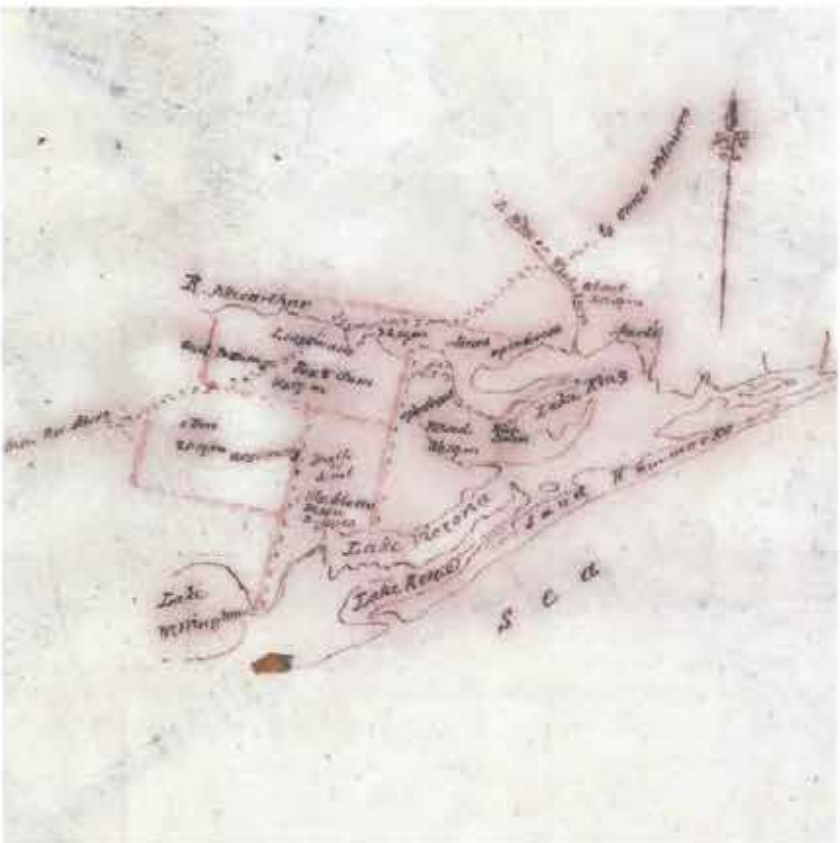
[15] Gay Halstead, *The Story of Metung,* Halstead Publications, 1977, p.20.
[16] Ibid
[17] Aldo Massola, *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria,* Melbourne: Rigby 1969. Chapter 21 Sale- Bairnsdale.
[18] Patrick Morgan, 'Gippsland Settlers and the Kurnai Dead', *Quadrant,* October 2004, p.27.

south western corner, was officially occupied by the Loughnan brothers and Frederick Taylor.

Bearing in mind Taylor's previous history in the Western District it is interesting to see how often he appears in the close proximity of massacres or attacks on natives. He had an interest in the following stations: *Lindenow* 1842, *Emuvale* 1844, *Swan Reach* 1847 and *Deighton* 1857.

The only information relating to Butcher's Creek is in the form of stories handed down. To date there have been no bone finds in the area. No specific individual is named in any of the accounts, the only specific mention of persons is the two *Bushy Park* trackers, but again they are not named.

As the attack occurred on McMillan's station, he could have been a participant,



Run Plan 458 Bairnsdale 1851 Public Record Office Victoria

but Gardner concludes that:

> 'The identity of those who participated in these massacres is not in question. The following individuals participated... they were Angus McMillan, Dr Arbuckle, Tom Macalister, Colin Macalister, Colin McLaren, McDonald, Bath, Connors, Lawrence and Gilbert.'

These names are pure speculation and contradict Halstead's comment that a group came from the northern side of the Lakes, which is where Taylor and Jones and earlier Sparks had runs. There is no dispute that a killing took place here but what is in question is who was involved and when.

Looking at a current map there are in fact two Butcher's Creeks which may indicate that there was a second massacre site a short distance to the west of where the Tambo River enters Lake King. This creek is a large watercourse known as Slaughterhouse Creek and has the smaller Butcher's Creek running into it from the west. Constant depredations by the Gunaikurnai on *Lucknow* and *Swan Reach* runs in the early 1840s may have resulted in a reprisal here.

In June 1844 Robinson recorded a conversation in his journal that he had with Angus McMillan about an incident at Jones' *Lucknow* station, which he occupied in October 1842 and leased until October 1847: 'The natives seized a shepherd and was carring (sic) him away when his mate fired shot two natives and they dropped him...'[19]

The same month a comment was made that Jones had 'suffered greatly by the blacks killing his cattle since November last lost 26'. Octavius Batten Sparks on the adjoining *Swan Reach* run which he held from September 1844 until March 1847 had lost fifty head. In April Tyers heard from Brindsley Sheridan on *Strathfieldsaye* that Jones had lost more cattle to spearing.[20] When Tyers arrived on Jones's *Lucknow* run in July another cow had been speared and a further three had been killed on Sparks' run. On 7 April fearing more attacks, Tyers sent Corporal Taylor and Trooper Lindsay to Sparks' run to 'protect his station against the incursion of the blacks'.

Whether these incidents led to a violent reprisal is not known, however the names given to the creeks at the western end of the *Swan Reach* run indicate something took place in the vicinity.

Jones's outstation

Perhaps a more likely scenario and one that Tyers records in his diary details the murder of eight Gunaikurnai. In June 1849 Charles Tyers received information

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[19] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845: 3 June 1844

[20] C.J. Tyers Diary February 2 1844 – February 16 1846, State Library of Victoria, ML ref B657c, 19 April 1844.

from a 'Mr Laing' (sic)[21] of a massacre that had taken place in about 1846 some eight miles from McMillan Strait near Jones' outstation on the *Lucknow* run. This would place the scene of the atrocity somewhere near the western side of Slaughterhouse Creek, which according to a modern map would place it on the *Swan Reach* run. The information he was given said that thirteen or fourteen whites headed by Yal Yal killed eight warrigals. The whites stretched a rope between two trees with eight nooses. The informant said that 'T....mile and Tootgong could give more information about when Yal Yal was there'.[22] There is no indication in the diary that Tyers ever followed up on the information that he was given.

A number of Indigenous bodies were found: two in the tea tree in the lower part of McMillan's Straits, one skeleton near an outstation of McLeod's station (*Bairnsdale* run bordering *Lucknow)* second point from McMillan's Strait, and two bodies were found in the Straits near Lake Victoria at what was then known as Betsy's Creek.

Given the uncertainty of exactly when this killing took place, if it was in 1847 then the *Swan Reach* run was occupied in May by John Michael Loughnan and his brother Henry Nicholas and Frederick Taylor who may therefore have had some involvement.[23]

Skull Creek

Very few details are available about the events that took place on John Michael Loughnan's *Lindenow* station which he acquired in August 1842. Taylor was also involved with the management of the property but did not officially become a partner until 1845. A news item appeared in the *Southern Australian* 25 October 1842:

> 'Gippsland – A brutal murder has been committed in this district by the blacks. They attacked the station of Mr Taylor, murdered one of his shepherds, and so severely wounded another that his life is despaired of.'

An article in the same paper on 4 October said: '...they must be infinitely worse off in Gippsland (than Portland District) if the blacks begin to commit

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[21] Possibly Charles or William Laing who had been at Westernport up until 1843 1844. Billis and Kenyon p.79.

[22] C.J.Tyers, Diary of C.J.Tyers 1842 & 1849, State Library of Victoria, ML ref 1428. 21 June 1849.
Tunmile was a native policeman as was Tugendun.

[23] Ancestry.com 'Pastoral Runs'. Run 757, p.1001.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/60672/, Victoria Australia Selected Trial Briefs Correspondence and other Images 1837 – 1993.

depredations, seeing they have not a solitary constable, mounted or border policeman, or soldier in the district'.

George Augustus Robinson also commented on the murder of two shepherds at *Lindenow* station on the Mitchell River. He stated that two shepherds went to round up sheep that the natives had scattered. One man with a gun was walking ahead of another who was armed with a pistol. The natives rushed out and grabbed the second man and carried him off into the bush. The first man fled without firing a shot and when the other man was found his 'legs had been cut off at the knee joints, hair taken away, head broken and speared'.[24]

The next comment in the journal may indicate some sort of reprisal took place or that the other workers did not want to continue. It states: 'The men who were for the most part convicts rebelled. At whom they rebelled can only be guessed at'.[25]

The only other reference to Skull Creek comes in *The Gap* of 1921 which refers to the creek running through the Lindenow Flats where the skulls were found: '...it was given that name because "blackfellows" skulls were found there and it was thought to be a battleground of the natives'.[26] No evidence is presented to justify this conclusion and the story was being written for children to entertain. However Taylor had a reputation for killing Aborigines, so it is possible that the skulls found belonged to the perpetrators who murdered the shepherds.

Hollands Landing December 1842

Peter Gardner received a story from the descendant of an early settler who claimed that a group of Aborigines at Hollands Landing was fired on by a cannon from a nearby boat. The natives, who were supposedly responsible for the killing of the Lindenow shepherds had been driven across country to that point. Gardner concluded that the boat was 'probably' manned by men from *Strathfieldsaye* and the drive organised by Frederick Taylor.[27]

The only recorded altercation between men in boats and natives is found in Dunderdale who tells the story of an expedition on the Lakes to find an outlet to the sea. Two boats were rigged and then manned by Angus McMillan, John McLennan, one of the Loughnan brothers,

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[24] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845: 1 June 1844

[25] Ibid 1 June 1844

[26] 'Skull Creek', *The Gap: A School Magazine* by the Teachers of the Bairnsdale Inspectorate, *1921,* p.45

[27] P.D. Gardner, 'Another Gippsland Massacre - Hollands Landing?', https://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Hollands-Landing-Massacrerev.edpdf_.

William Pearson, John Reeve, Captain Orr, Davey Fermaner and RB Sheridan.

After succeeding in finding a passage through to the ocean, on the return trip 'hundreds of blackfellows were seen up in the trees shouting and shaking their spears' threatening the two craft as they returned through the McLennan Strait. Dunderdale says the craft were kept mid-stream and out of reach of the spears. No mention is made of any action taken against the hostiles or whether there was a cannon mounted on any of the boats.[28] The likelihood of firing a cannon from a small vessel allowing for the recoil of such a weapon seems unlikely.

Maffra

The only reference to an altercation between whites and Aborigines at Maffra comes in the writings of Richard MacKay, but he provides little detail as he says there was a legend about a fight but: 'I could never obtain any information (from the pioneers) beyond that the blacks were troublesome, and that there had been a fight. They appeared to avoid the subject'. The fight had apparently taken place behind Gibney's Hotel and Mackay commented that many of 'the blackfellows then numerous…fell before the guns of their white brothers'.[29]

In discussion with members of the Ramahyuck Aboriginal Corporation in Sale mention was made of two killing sites both in the township and near Maffra, however no details were known.

Following La Trobe's visit to Gippsland in early 1845 with Henry Dana, 640 acres of the *Boisdale* run were set aside to be used as a Native Police reserve called Green Hills which was the site of the future town of Maffra. According to Jeremy Hales in his article on the Native Police he identified the area as being in the centre of Maffra between Foster and Thomson Streets. In March 1847 the police camp at Green Hills came under what was claimed to be a siege by the Gunaikurnai. A small group was driven off – no mention was made of casualties but several days later more than 200 Aborigines gathered and eventually departed peacefully following a parley with two white troopers.[30] Although there is no proof, perhaps there is a connection between MacKay's information detail and the Native Police.

Bundalaguah

Bundalaguah is situated half way between Sale and Maffra and is marked by one of the many cairns acknowledging Angus McMillan's journey. There is

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[28] Dunderdale, pp.230-233.
[29] MacKay, p 24.
[30] Jeremy Hales, *The Native Police Force and the Maffra Connection*, Article held by R. Christie

only one reference to a massacre or killing at this site. Gardner, in *Gippsland Massacres* mentions a massacre on Green Wattle Station at a place called 'Spring Hill'.[31] According to Billis and Kenyon, Spreadborough and Anderson and the Pastoral Runs website on Ancestry there was no station by that name or any derivation of it in the area.

An early pastoral map of *The Heart* run held in the Public Record Office of Victoria however shows both *Spring Hill* Station and *Green Wattle* Station. The map identifies the rivers by the names that Strzelecki gave them. The Macalister is the 'Barney', the Thomson the 'Maconochie' and the Avon the 'Dunlop', indicating that the map is very early and shows survey lines drawn in 1847.

The lower portion of Macalister's run is shown and near where the Macalister River meets the Thomson is Macalister's *Spring Hill* Station. A little to the south just below the junction of the two rivers is Foster's *Green Wattle* Station which he occupied in February 1842. The river here winds and twists its way south and as Gardner writes, any one of the hairpin bends on the river would form a 'natural feature that enabled the aboriginal quarry of the retaliators to be easily trapped by their pursuers'.[32] If a massacre took place here the river would have provided the ideal place and the site may further implicate Macalister and Foster's superintendent William Montgomery.

In a report to the *Port Phillip Herald* of 29 March 1847, while searching for the white woman in Gippsland, James Warman stated:

> 'Heard ... that the police and Omeo blacks had been killing warrigals near a place called Green Wattle station, and that a large quantity of beef was found smoked and cured in the camp of the Warrigals, supposed to be Mr Macalister's cattle; also; a white infant;...the number said to be slaughtered is fourteen, men women and children; it took place in a scrub between Summer Hill and Spring Hill...'[33]

Where this information has come from and how Warman received it is unknown but the only reason for its inclusion must be the mention of the child. It does give credence to the possibility of a massacre taking place at Bundalaguah if this is the same Spring Hill.

Another possible provocation for a massacre in this vicinity is contained in an article written by Allan McLean in 1905. McLean said that in Gippsland the Aborigines were very troublesome and 'every whiteman was compelled to carry

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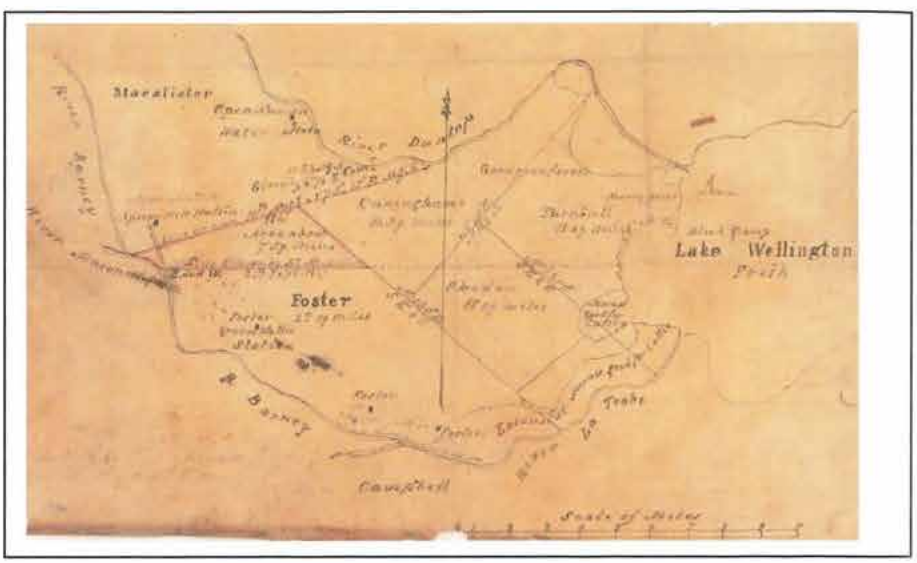
Gardner, *Gippsland Massacres,* p.89.
[32] Ibid p.98.
[33] *Port Phillip Herald,* 29 March 1847

a gun for self protection'. He then went on to list five persons whom they killed including '...a shepherd at Spring Hill near Sale'.[34]

The killing of the shepherd is further elaborated on in Macalister's letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 6 September 1843. After briefly discussing Ranald's murder he goes on to mention five other white deaths that had occurred within the last eighteen months. The only other killing that he describes was of '... a servant, in the employment of Mr Foster, a settler here, (who) was killed, his body mangled, and some of its members carried off...'



Map showing Green Wattle Station and Spring Hill Station the area of the possible Bundalaguah massacre PROV Run map The Heat no. 725

The detail that has been included here seems to indicate that this was a significant event and because of its barbarity would possibly have resulted in retaliation. None of the other white deaths were described, the implication being that the writer may have had a personal association with the man and was justifying what may have followed.

The only other reference to a massacre at Bundalaguah is from Robert Lewis Bell, a Scotsman who came to Australia in the 1850s and took up a grazing property at Mount Mercer near Ballarat. Bell had a connection with Gippsland through Thomas Maher who was involved in a claim to PC Buckley's Prospect (Coady Vale) estate. Writing in relation to the will claim in 1874 he said that the aggressions by the blacks reached a peak in 1843: '... and it was 1843 that ended by wholesale destruction, the massacres at Warrigal Creek and Bundalaguah

[34] Allan McLean,'Reminiscences of Early Gippsland', *Gippsland Times*, 2 February 1905, p. 3.

Swamp...'[35] This is the only mention of a massacre at Bundalaguah and Bell gives no further details and none have been found elsewhere to support the claim.

Today the closest identifiable name is the Green Wattle Racecourse on the Sale-Maffra Road a short distance to the south . The area was originally called 'Green Wattle Hill' and consisted of open plains and patches of wattle tree scrub and was located opposite the current course.

Lake Reeve

In 1846 a private expedition was organised and funded by the citizens of Melbourne to search for the 'white woman' who was allegedly held by the Gunaikurnai. The expedition was led by Christian De Villiers, a former policeman and James Warman. With the use of a boat they made their way down the Glengarry (Latrobe River) on 5 November, entered Lake Wellington and travelled on to Raymond's *Stratford.* From here they continued on to Boyd Cunninghame's station *Roseneath* on the eastern shore of the lake. Their search began in earnest after they passed through the McLennan Strait and entered Lake Victoria. They put into a small cove and De Villiers set off 'to scour Lake Reeve'.

When De Villiers returned to the main party he reported that he had not found any trace of the 'white woman' but:

> 'They found in many places recent remains of fires, and also came across a great many skulls and human bones, which were the remains of the Warrigals who had been shot...'[36]Warman commented that he had also found several skulls. If their description is accurate then they were searching the narrow strip of land between Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve, an area well removed from the other massacre sites. The report by Warman was repeated in a number of other newspapers including the *Cornwall Chronicle* and the *Maitland Mercury* but they omitted the portion of the article referring to the bones. The area in question was further to the east of the Buckley run and directly south of Hollands Landing.

Anthropologist Aldo Massola could be referring to this incident when he says that there was a slaughter of Aborigines at Boomerang Point to the south of Sperm Whale Head which is at the northern extremity of the spit of land separating Lake Reeve from Lake Victoria.[37] Unfortunately he gives no source for this information but it could be related to one of the Coady Buckley hunts whose property was to the west of Lake Reeve.

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[35] 'The Buckley Will Case' *The Age,* 8 August 1874. p.7.
[36] Gippsland expedition to find the White Woman, *The Port Phillip Patriot and the Morning Advertiser.* 22 January 1847. p.2.
[37] Massola, Chapter 21, Sale – Bairnsdale.

The Glencoe Canon and Staghound

John Campbell was descended from a farming and grazing family in Tiree, Argylleshire Scotland. He came to Port Albert in 1841 and worked as a storeman for the Port Albert Company with Turnbull and Co. before taking up the Glencoe property (now Longford) to the south of Sale in 1843 in partnership with another Scot Alexander Fraser.[38]

According to Dunderdale he was a member of the party sent to Snake Island at Corner Inlet to salvage the cargo from the wrecked *Clonmel*. While the main party were at the *Clonmel*, Donald Kennedy and his wife at the Old Port were attacked by four Aborigines and knocked senseless. The party returning from the *Clonmel* disturbed the attackers looting a tent and they fled into the bush. Captain Leebrace who was in charge of the party organised a pursuit and when they caught up with them three were shot dead.

The next day a large party of about forty Aborigines approached the camp 'brandishing their spears and shouting defiance at the whitemen'. John Campbell decided to 'give them a taste of the nine-pounder'. He wrapped powder in calico and rammed it home then added nine pound shot and broken glass and nails. However, due to the constant movement of the natives, when it was fired the charge apparently went over their adversaries' heads as no bodies could be found afterwards.[39]

Another version of events was retold on Campbell's death in 1883. He had arrived at Port Albert in 1841 but found:

> ...the hostile attitude of the blacks whose spears came at times unpleasantly close, so close indeed that on one occasion he barely escaped with his life, a flint-headed spear being thrown so violently as to penetrate the door of his hut and lodge in the opposite wall, only a few inches above his head as he was lying
> upon his bed. Before leaving the district, he decided to give the local aborigines a 'parting salute'.

He loaded a seven-pounder ship's cannon which he had retrieved from the *Clonmel* with pebbles, a few bullets and nails, pointed at the Aborigines' camp and fired it at sundown. It was said his object was intimidation, not slaughter. Whether this is true cannot be ascertained but evidently the natives fled and were not seen for some time after.[40]

In his Recollections, Robert Buntine, son of Hugh Buntine of *Bruthen* run related that John Campbell captured some canoes belonging to Aborigines. Robert was eleven years old at the time, in about 1841 when the family were

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[38] 'Mr John Campbell', *The Gippsland Times*, 10 November 1913.
[39] Dunderdale, pp. 217-218.
[40] 'Death of Mr John Campbell', *Gippsland Times,* 27 August 1883, p.3.

living at Port Albert. Robert had been playing in one of the canoes and found a chemise in it – part of a woman's underclothing with clay stopping up a leak. Whether this was another story about the 'white woman' or was the provocation for the attack on the station itself is unknown.

Inspector Sadleir of the Victoria Police, writing about the 'Corps of Native Troopers' from their files related an entry that told of an officer and party of troopers being sent to Flooding Creek (Sale) to inquire into the reported killing of some blacks.[41] The incident had taken place at *Glencoe,* the Campbell's station, the residents of which he stated had always been 'injudiciously kind – to the blacks and had allowed them to come freely about the homestead'. It was alleged however that the chief plotted to loot the homestead and kill the occupants.

The Campbells had acquired a cannon from the *Clonmel* and when the attack began they loaded it with powder and fired it to frighten the attackers. After recovering from the first explosion which passed harmlessly over their heads, the natives prepared for a second attack. This time:

> 'The Campbells did not take further risks. They loaded up with broken bottles and whatever they could find handiest with the result the blacks never troubled the homestead at Glencoe again.'[42]

The implication, although not stated was that the second shot was fired into the natives.

In an article that Sadleir wrote on the Danas he gives a more graphic account of the attack which may have occurred in 1847. He wrote: 'Amongst the records I find the following entry: "The commandant and party go to Gippsland to investigate the reported slaughter of blacks"'. [43] The Native Police Day Book of January 23 1847 relates that the Commandant Henry Dana accompanied by an orderly O'Brien and a native Trooper went to Gippsland to investigate 'the reported slaughter of the blacks...'[44]

It appears likely that this is the entry that Sadleir was referring to and dates the incident to early 1847. In the article Sadleir gives a far more graphic account than that in his book:

> Once or twice the gun was discharged with blank cartridge against the blacks in the hope of driving them off, but after their first alarm they resumed the attack more boldly than before. At last it became a matter of

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[41] John Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer* , Facsimilie edition, Penguin Books Ringwood 1973, p.295.
[42] Sadleir, 295 – 296.
[43] John Sadleir, 'Old Time Memories The Brothers Dana', *The Australasian* Melbourne: Vic. 1864-1946, 23 March 1898, p. 46.
[44] Native Police Day Book, Public Record Office of Victoria, 23 January 1847.

> life or death with the settlers, when the Campbells loaded the gun to the muzzle with nails, broken bottles, and anything they could lay their hands on, and awaited the final charge of the enemy. As was expected the blacks in a large body, and armed with their native weapons, made a determined rush to force their way into the building, when the gun, with its miscellaneous loading, was discharged right in amongst them. I do not remember hearing that any of the blacks were killed on the spot, but many of them were fatally wounded.[45]

Phillip Pepper's account also agrees with the latter article when he says '...many of them were fatally wounded'

Campbell had another means of dealing with predators. According to Dunderdale, Campbell trained a savage deerhound 'to chase human game'. The dog would seize the native by the heel and throw him, keeping him on the ground until Campbell came up on his horse. What happened next is not noted but the result was that the dog 'expelled the natives from *Glencoe'*. Campbell then lent the dog to Curlewis of *Holey Plains* to assist with his problems. Ten heifers were paid for the loan of the dog.[46]

Marjory Kilpatrick, daughter of Alexander Fraser who joined Campbell on *Glencoe* between 1843 and 1845 also recounted the story of a large dog that was on the property. His name was 'Luby', a cross between a staghound and some broader – jawed dog, with the body of a kangaroo dog, and a broad head. She said he was very courageous and 'had marvellous power of scenting or of divining the presence of a blackfellow anywhere in the locality' and a war like ardor in assisting to fight off the 'blacks'.

His body bore the marks of many spear wounds and he would 'lead the settlers where the maurauding and murdering blacks were hiding'.[47] It can be assumed that this was the same dog mentioned in the earlier account.

Patrick Coady Buckley

Patrick Coady Buckley, who arrived in New South Wales in 1818 'paid a visit of exploration' to the newly settled District of Gipps Land in June 1842 and selected a tract of land on Merriman's Creek near the present day town of Seaspray. RL Bell, writing in 1874 after Buckley's death stated that Merriman's Creek was surveyed by Townshend in 1842 as he was defining run boundaries.[48]

In 1843 Buckley obtained a depasturing license for the land and established the *Coady Vale* run of 53,760 acres. Warrigal Creek abutted the

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[45] John Sadleir, 'Old Time Memories The Brothers Dana', 23 March 1898, p. 46.
[46] Dunderdale, p. 230.
[47] 'Pioneers All', *Bendigo Independent*, 6 February 1913, p.6.
[48] 'The Buckley will Case: To the Editor of the Age'. *The Age,* 8 August 1874, p.7.

property to the north east and this proximity gives rise to the possibility of his involvement in the massacre there. He then took up the *Tarra Creek* run of 23,020 acres on the western bank of the Tarra River.[49]

Buckley commenced writing a diary on 1 January 1844 which concluded with his death in 1872. Although the diary was rewritten in later years, the original now resides in the State Library of Victoria and gives a slightly more graphic account of his views and treatment of the native population:[50]

> Mar 27 1844 – at Bayliss' place shown where blacks took the sheep the night before – found remains of two. As returning to house saw 5 blacks, 150 yards away. I fired so did Marshall a black that wore a coat made a sort of tumble. 'We ran them about 100yards when they got into the scrub just as the last fellow was getting in I fired again.

There is no note as to whether he hit anyone but the incident was evidently commonplace as the only other comment was that Buckley had a double barrelled gun and 'the day was cool'.

> 'March 30 1844 – got ready to go up Merryman's Creek when Sgt. And the Border Police came. Marshall young Bayliss and young Mc went up Bayliss' side of the creek. Sgt. Peacock and his party up other side for about 5 miles.
>
> April 1 1844 – At Bayliss' for day went out in afternoon with a party down the creek 'could not see any blacks. We must have struck terror in them the first morning.[51]
>
> 9 April – Marshall George and I started along the beach – to go as far as the lake – had a double barrelled gun
>
> Jan 20 1845 – went out on run near the beach to see if any blacks about found a cow the blacks had killed. Just as I got to the beach I saw 2 blacks coming along the beach' about ½ a mile, waited till opposite then rushed them and they went into the sea.
>
> I kept them there for about 5 hours when the blackfellow began to get weak, they parted the gin kept walking towards the bottom of the creek I had 2 pistols I fired at the blackfellow when I first rushed him into the

[49] 'The Late Mr P C Buckley', *Gippsland Times,* 18 June 1872, p.3.
[50] Patrick Coady Buckley. Journal, January 1844-1872, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 37/4 MS 000097 & Patrick Coady Buckley's diary Jan 1 1844 -. MS 4159/2, State Library of Victoria.
[51] Ibid.

water and missed him the other I fired at him in the surf at last I got hold of him and pulled him out I left him on the beach the gin I let escape.'

Buckley thought he had killed him, the sanitised diary said that he pulled him from the surf with the reins around his neck. He left him on the beach and continued:

Buckley's Pre-emptive right showing proximity to Ninety Mile Beach 1854. PROV.

'The black lay down and feared death he must have been very weak from being too long in the water.'

Assuming he was going to die, Buckley left him on the beach but when he went to find him on the following day, he discovered that he was gone. Whether the man regained his strength and left or had died and was carried away by others of his tribe is not known.

'Jan 30- went after blacks on foot found their camp 4 miles from Varney's we tried to sneak up on them but they saw us we then made a rush towards them caused them to leave their spears and all their implements behind.'

The beef they found in the camp and all their belongings were burnt to teach them a lesson.

'Aug 10 1847 – Sowed some wheat then pursued some blacks who came to kill my cattle with William Scott, Dan Bloore found their camp they saw us before we got near enough to shoot any of them'.[52]

A further entry in the original diary of 14 October says that they had been tracking the 'blacks' for a day when they found the camp and two women. There is then a

[52] Ibid

blank line with two words at the end: 'the day'. One wonders what may have been included in that blank space.

> Buckley's activities were evidently well known. James Hogan in his book *The Irish in Australia 1888* said of Buckley: '...by his bulldog bravery and determination, soon struck such terror into the marauding blacks of the neighbourhood that they wisely gave his homestead a wide berth...'[53]

There are numerous other incidents of cattle being speared on adjoining properties and Buckley and others riding off in search of the offenders. Because of the isolation there was a lot of interaction between the squatters: purchasing and selling cattle as well as visiting those around them. Buckley records visits to King, Buntine, Bloomfield, McDougall, Scott, Bayliss and Loughnan which usually involved an overnight stay.

There are numerous other mentions of hunts along the creeks and beaches and on several occasions, he travelled as far as twenty-five miles searching for natives.[54] Although not specifically mentioned, from the number of hunts undertaken by Buckley he must have inflicted casualties on the Gunaikurnai even though he does not specifically mention them.

Possible further evidence of Buckley's activities was uncovered and reported by a Sale resident in 1876. The Buckley homestead was named *Prospect* and after Buckley died the name was given to the area before its current name Seaspray was adopted in 1915. In the 1870s the area became a popular visitor site for residents of Sale. In March 1876 a Mr Webb brought home with him a collection of bones that he had found whilst bathing in the 'burnt waterhole' at Prospect. He said:

> They are those of natives, and bear pretty distinct evidence of having been hastily buried in the sand hummocks. The aborigines in the earlier days of our history were extremely troublesome and the settlers had little compunction about shooting them down. Two perforations in the skull of one support the assumption that shot was the immediate cause of death.[55]

Although there is no evidence to conclusively state that Buckley was involved, as the bones were found on what had previously been his property and he recorded Aboriginal hunts he undertook, he is an obvious suspect.

In his book *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria,* Aldo Massola claims that Buckley was responsible for a massacre at what was called Boomerang Point on Lake Reeve across the water from Sperm Whale Head which is today part of the

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[53] James Hogan, *The Irish in Australia,* Melbourne: George Robertson, 1888, p.127.
[54] Patrick Coady Buckley's diary Jan 1 1844 -. MS 4159/2 Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, 22 January 1845.
[55] *Gippsland Times*, 28 March 1876. p.3.

Lakes National Park. The area was inhabited by the Tatungalung Clan who mainly lived on the fish, shell fish and birds that inhabited the area. According to Massola, on one occasion they may have speared some of Buckley's cattle. Buckley and his men chased them to the end of Boomerang Point. With nowhere to go they plunged into the lake and attempted to swim across the lake to Sperm Whale Head, 'but they were leisurely picked off one at a time, by the whitemen armed with guns...'[56] Unfortunately Massola does not give a source for his information.

Other early squatters

Although some Europeans can definitely be identified through stories and documents as participating in the destruction of the Gunaikurnai, the activities of others who became very prominent men in the colony are not so easy to delineate. William Pearson of *Kilmany Park* was an extensive landowner from 1841 until his death in 1893. His obituary said: '...in those early days he was a strong and courageous young man, and he did not mind roughing it, but he had a good deal of trouble with the blacks who had a fancy for spearing his sheep...'[57] The entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography goes further and says: 'Despite trouble with the Aboriginals, with whom he is reputed to have dealt severely ... his pastoralist interests prospered.'[58] Another paper referred to 'the wild blacks with whom he had many a brush'.[59] A further entry says 'He himself successfully concealed from all but a few old Gippsland cronies his involvement in one of the darkest episodes in the history of Australia'. No detail is available about how he dealt with the Gunaikurnai or which incident is referred to but from the comments he was definitely involved.

John King initially managed *Snake Ridge* for John Reeve in 1842 before purchasing the property for himself. The King family papers, although lacking in much detail do describe difficulties with the Aborigines. On a trip through Gippsland in February 1844, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Charles Tyers was riding through King's run when he was met by four stockmen who reported that 'blacks had speared and driven away a great number of cattle ... and that about 50 calves were missing'. The following day, with fresh horses and Mr Powlett's Aborigines they got on the tracks of the 'blacks'.[60] Tyers was accompanied by McMillan working on the edge of the scrub, with King, Brodribb and Hobson tracking through the river. No contact was made, however the following day the 'blacks' were found in thick scrub.

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[56] Massola, Chapter 21, Sale – Bairnsdale.
[57] 'The Late William Pearson', *The Australasian* p.15. 12 Aug 1893.
[58] Pearson William Australian Dictionary of Biography, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/pearson-william-4384
[59] *Gippsland Mercury,* 14 August 1893.
[60] Cox, *Notes on Gippsland History,* vol. 5. 'Tyers Journal'. p.14.

At this time it appears a different party was in pursuit, as Tyers said: 'I issued orders to the Border Police and the blacks not fire except in self defence'. (The previous day he had sent a message to Sergeant Peacock who was returning to Port Albert with his men, it is possible that these were the men who had now joined him). As they approached them one of his party fired, resulting in all shooting. He later found out that one native had brandished a spear which resulted in shots being fired. The natives fled into the bush, no mention was made of casualties, although he made a comprehensive list of what they had abandoned. Tyers then headed for Foster's Station at *The Heart* and the police were sent back to the Port.

Another note in the King papers on 22 October 1845 stated that the 'blacks had killed a beast'. The following year there is a little more detail. The entry for 13 October 1846 records: 'returned home found that the natives had been among the cattle and speared three head. On the 16th started in pursuit of the natives, searched the Thomson but could not find them'.[61] King, like the other squatters was prepared to track the offenders with armed support. One can only surmise the outcome if they had caught up with them.

Other sites

There are a number of other massacre sites in Gippsland but these are outside the scope of this study and have no relevance to McMillan. They are at Murrindal near Buchan further to the east, the Snowy River, Butcher's Ridge and the Brodribb River. The Murrindal massacre followed the kidnapping of an Aboriginal girl by Dan Moylan, a cook on McLeod's station at Orbost. Moylan was eventually speared. The white settlers took revenge on the Aborigines at the junction of Milly Creek and the Brodribb River.

William Thomas, the Assistant Aboriginal Protector referred to the latter incident after meeting Dr Hedley on his journey through Gippsland in December 1860.

> Mr Hedley states Snowy River tribes once very numerous and the dread of Omeo and other blacks, he thinks all murdered. A stockman of Mr McLeod long time ago was killed and a regular massacre took place.[62]

A Mr Day from Omeo on his trip through Gippsland in December 1860 said that 12 years ago there had been 200 aborigines about Omeo but now there were only four. 'Omeo blacks all but 4 dead or shot.

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[61] 'King Family' Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria Box 4551/6 MS 11396
[62] Stephens, vol.3, p.286.

McMillan's involvement

While it is likely that McMillan may have played a role in Aboriginal killings in Gippsland, the only definitive comment that ties McMillan to massacres was written by Caroline Dexter in *The Ladies Almanack* of 1858. Caroline arrived in Sydney in 1854 two years after her husband, the artist William Dexter. Both were controversial figures. In 1853 William travelled to Bendigo and became part of the Red Ribbon movement protesting the imposition of the gold licence. In England Caroline had become an outspoken advocate for an early form of women's rights, 'Bloomerism'. On her arrival in Gippsland in 1856 the *Gippsland Guardian* announced that: 'Mrs Dexter, the somewhat notorious lecturer on Bloomerism and kindred subjects has arrived in Gipps Land...'.[63]

The Dexters settled in a small cottage at Stratford, situated on what had been Raymond's *Stratford* run. In December of 1856 it was taken up by McMillan. Historian and lecturer Patrick Morgan says that the Dexters became well acquainted with McMillan, living in close proximity to him and perhaps even renting their house from him. According to Morgan Caroline Dexter also gave him medical treatment.[64] She wrote that McMillan was 'of a kind and affable nature, unobtrusive manners and liberal views'. On the matter of natives she said: 'he was compelled in his early struggles to destroy numbers of more treacherous natives'.

She concluded by saying that he was looked on by the 'remnant of the aborigines as Father, Priest and King' and that the weaker tribes felt secure on his run from attacks of their powerful neighbours.[65] This latter statement was supported by Jean Gamel, a worker at Sigismund Frankenberg's Store at Stratford, who wrote in his diary that:

> 'Mr Angus McMillan of Bushy Park was the Protector of Aborigines and distributor of rations and blankets. As a consequence, there was always a camp around the homestead. He was much liked by the blacks for his kindness and was known to them as 'Father Mac'. He had several of the younger ones working at the station as stockmen and assistants to the fencers and splitters.'[66]

The only specific reference regarding McMillan pursuing Aborigines is found in Tyers' Field Books. In early May 1844 Charles Tyers learned from 'Mr Sheridan that Mr McMillan's cattle had been killed by the blacks. Mr McMillan

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[63] 'Local Intelligence', *Gippsland Guardian,* 11 April 1856, p.3.
[64] Patrick Morgan, *folie a deux,* Quakers Hill: Quakers Hill Press, 1999, p.80.
[65] Dexter, Caroline, Ladies Almanack the Southern Cross or Australian Album and New Year's Gift 1858: W. Calvert East Melbourne. p.37.
[66] Diary of Jean Gamel held by R Christie.

and others pursued them and caught up with them in the ranges – Blacks fixed their spears, party fired, not known if any blacks were killed'.[67]

Despite this activity, in 1850 when McMillan applied for the lease on *Tabberabbera* which Meyrick said he transferred to McMillan in February 1850, Tyers either ignored or didn't consider this activity significant. He wrote the following: 'I have reason to believe the applicant Angus McMillan to be of good character, and a fit and proper person to hold a lease…'[68]

There are few references to McMillan's actual involvement in the destruction of the Gunaikurnai - his actions at *Nuntin* appear more defensive in nature. Later comments indicate that he may have taken the fight to those who were killing his stock. Although others openly acknowledged their actions against the Gunaikurnai, there is no indication that McMillan was a participant in such activities.

Aboriginal historian Phillip Pepper gave a very different view of McMillan's involvement in 1984. He presented a submission to the public hearing of the Inquiry into Compensation for Dispossession and Dispersal of the Aboriginal People. He related an incident that involved his grandmother at a place near Red Hill close to Lake Wellington.

There is no identifying feature on any maps today called Red Hill but there is a Redbank Road several kilometres north of the Lake and an area still known as Red Morass less than a kilometre from the Lake to the east of where Taylor's Deighton run was situated bordering Roseneath.

Pepper related that many Aboriginal people were killed in the area and his grandmother escaped with her arms and legs 'riddled with pellets.' The women and children fled into Lake Wellington and remained concealed in the reeds until darkness fell and they escaped over a bluff.

> A week later more Aborigines were shot. Preparing for another attack, the white settlers were prevented by squatter Angus McMillan.[69]

Assuming that Pepper's information is reliable it originated with a Gunaikurnai person who was a victim in the shooting and therefore can be considered a primary source. Phillip Pepper a Gunaikurnai Elder has no reason to lie about McMillan's involvement in the killings. The statement regarding McMillan's actions and attitude here are in stark contrast to the picture painted of

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[67] Charles Tyers Field Books, Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, 4 May 1844.

[68] Ancestry.com. Pastoral Papers Tabberabbera, 23 February 1850 p.102.

[69] 'Submission to Compensation Inquiry', *Bairnsdale Advertiser,* 25 June 1984.

him by later day writers and raises questions about the supposed role he played in other incidents.

By the 1850s the Gunaikurnai had been broken and their number so reduced as to have been effectively eliminated as a threat to the white population. They no longer had the means or ability to continue their harassment and began to settle around the stations such as McMillan's at *Bushy Park* and were subsequently treated with much more sympathy.

However, what the previous ten years had failed to achieve, the close association with the white community did. Their numbers continued to decline, their culture was suppressed and they contracted previously unknown diseases such as colds, pneumonia, and respiratory illnesses.

The missions

As their threat disappeared so did the Native Police and the Protectorate, to be replaced by the missions at Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers, which further discouraged their previous way of life and culture. Although according to Aboriginal Elder Phillip Pepper in *You Are What You Make Yourself To Be:*

> Only for the missionaries there wouldn't be so many aborigines walking around today. They're the ones who saved the day for us. Our people were finished before the mission men came. I'll tell you what upset the whole applecart. When the Europeans first came here they didn't know what the blackfella was. Old Hagenauer took them sick ones in and gave them medicine and food too. And they learnt to be Christian. Their tribal business was messed up before that. I mean their full tribal life, 'their culture'.[70]

The missions forced the people to give up their native language and traditional ways. Rev. Hagenauer, a Moravian at Ramahyuck wanted to civilise the Indigenous population in much the same way as La Trobe thought fit fifty years earlier. Corroborees and tribal laws and habits were not tolerated and their traditional implements and weapons were burnt.

In 1877, Ramahyuck was known as the most successful of all missions in Victoria. Average attendance at the station rose to eighty-five with up to two hundred natives from five different tribal groups. The total number of buildings at the station was twenty-five, of which eleven cottages housed Aborigines.

A Melbourne newspaper, *The Argus*, had described the station as 'a pretty settlement of white painted weatherboard buildings..., which are supplied with such evidence of civilisation...(purchasing) stoves, water tanks, meal safes and

[70] Pepper with De Araugo, p.15.

sewing machines...out of the earnings of the husbands and fathers from shearing and other work'.

Numbers declined at Ramahyuck after the passing of the Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria in 1886 which disqualified anyone of mixed parentage, i.e. having white blood from remaining on the Mission. By 1907 only a few residents remained and as a result the Mission closed and those remaining were sent to the Lake Tyers Mission.

In 1916 the Victorian Government took over the running of Lake Tyers and decided to relocate all Victorian Aborigines there. Under the Board for the Protection of Aborigines this decision was rescinded in 1957, then in the 1960s the Victorian Government decided to try to close the settlement and assimilate residents into the general community. In 1965 however, the mission was declared a Permanent Reserve.

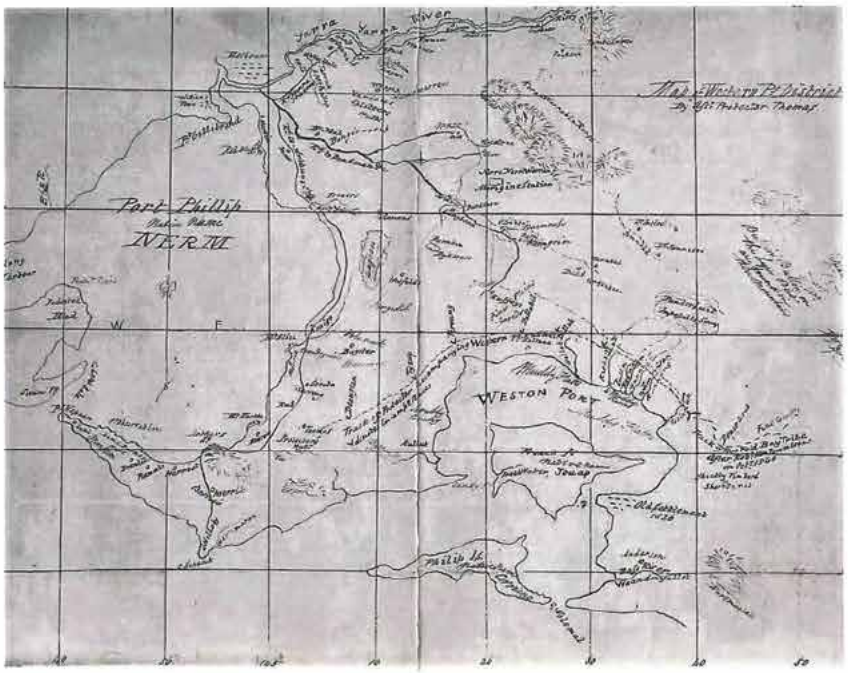
Chapter 8

Indigenous battles

'Two miles above the crossing place upstream is a spot where a great slaughter of Gippsland blacks by the Omeo and the Mokeallumbeets and Tinnermittum their allies took place'

George Augustus Robinson

In his journals William Thomas refers to conflict between Indigenous groups taking place across his district. In evidence he gave before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines in 1858, he said that the 'Gipps Land blacks and the Western Port blacks... have been continually at enmity... from time immemorial'. This animosity can only have been enhanced by the spread of European settlement around Port Phillip Bay and the subsequent loss



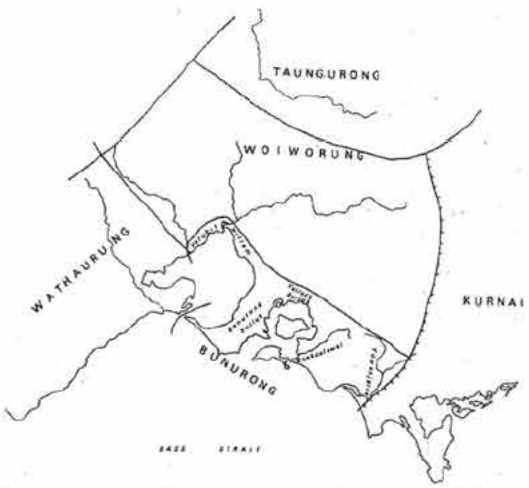
William Thomas map of his district PROV VPRS 11 P0000,365.

of traditional tribal lands.

Thomas pointed out the lack of food in the district. In August 1839 he observed that the grazing of sheep and cattle was responsible for the decline in

the numbers of kangaroo and emus.[1] The introduced hoofed animals not only reduced the native fauna but had disastrous effects on plant foods, particularly yams. Thomas recorded an Aboriginal viewpoint: No Murnong, no yam all Port Phillip, No much byone white man Bullock and sheep, all gone Murnong. [2] Thomas wrote in his Journal:
'. . . I do not think that of the five tribes who visit Melbourne that there is in the whole five districts food to feed one tribe ... '[3]

Prior to 1840 the government was not aware of who inhabited the country to the east of Melbourne. The first official mention of native people living outside the known area came in October 1840, when Superintendent La Trobe sent a despatch to the Colonial Secretary advising him that an unknown tribe had been found forty miles from Melbourne at the head of Western Port. This report followed an attack on Jamieson's station situated at the head of the bay by 100 natives in October 1840. The tribe it was said 'has hardly had intercourse with whites'. The real object of this unknown raiding party was to conduct a retaliatory attack on the Wavorongs, (Wathaurung) one of the groups of Melbourne-based blacks who had earlier killed a number of their group.[4]



Thomas ML Item 23 Language and customs of the Australian Aborigines Miscellaneous papers, 91-92
Aboriginal History 1984 8:1 D Gaughin & H Sullivan

The country surrounding Melbourne had been occupied by five main Indigenous groups. Three of these groups Wavorong, (Wathaurung), Taungurung and the Bunurong occupied the land that incorporated the rapidly growing town of Melbourne and bordered the lands of this unknown tribe.

There had been no white interaction with these people from the far east, their language was unknown

[1] Thomas ML Item 9 Letter to Robinson, 6 August 1839
[2] Thomas, La Trobe Library, Original MS, undated in R.B. Smyth Papers Box 1176/6a.
[3] Stephens, 11 August 1844.
[4] Despatch from La Trobe to the Lord John Russell, Papers Aborigines Australian Colonies, ordered by the House of Commons, Appendix B, 7 October 1840, p. 90. http://hdl.handle.net/11343/21358

and as a result they were known as the 'Twofold Bay blacks'. The name for this group derived from the closest white settlement, Ben Boyd's whaling station at Twofold Bay on the south coast of New South Wales.[5] Even prior to white settlement an enmity existed between these eastern 'wild blacks or warrigals' and those surrounding Port Phillip Bay.

In a letter to Superintendent La Trobe, William Thomas said that the population around Melbourne had suffered severely from the Twofold Bay blacks. In about 1836 seventeen were killed about nine miles from Melbourne, and five years prior to this another two were killed at Western Port. The largest massacre of Melbourne natives he said, took place '...about 28 or 20 years back nearly half the tribe were killed between Kangerong and Arthur's Seat.[6]

Augustus Robinson also commented on the killing, saying that the '...Yowengerre section of the Boongerong, now extinct, (was) extirpated by the Borro borro willum or Gippsland blacks... the natives of Gippsland have killed 70 of the Boongerong at Brighton.[7]

In the early months of 1840 Thomas was travelling east with some of his Melbourne natives when at Kunnung (possibly Koonang creek in Melbourne's east) twenty of them left him allegedly to hunt 'bullen bullen' or lyre birds. As they were close to entering the territory of the Two fold Bay blacks Thomas was concerned that his natives may have been a party out for revenge '...as many deaths had taken place among the tribes and knowing that they always avenge death...'. He impressed upon them before he left that they should not kill 'any blackfellows they met and if they did he would tell the Governor'.[8]

When they finally returned he was certain that they had been involved in a conflict as they had been away much longer than initially intimated to him. It was to be several days before they confessed that they had followed the tracks of a group as far as the Snowy River where they came upon a camp of fourteen.

> Most of them were asleep and all were laid by the Snowy River they killed 9 viz 1 man 2 lubras and 6 boys. They run 16 spears into the man and b?'d his head to pieces with a tommyhawk, the woman and boys were speared, they brought portions of the man and woman's body away the

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[5] At the time it was assumed all the natives to the east were from the one tribe. It was later discovered that two distinct groups existed in Gippsland the Kurnai and the Bidwell.

[6] William Thomas letter to Charles La Trobe, William Thomas Letterbook 1 January – 26 August 1840, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 214/vol. 8/item 2, 6 June 1840.

[7] Clark, *Journal of Augustus Robinson,* 27 April 1844. By 1844 the area was known as Gippsland and the Aborigines referred to as 'Gippsland Blacks'.

[8] William Thomas letter to Charles La Trobe, William Thomas Letterbook 1 January – 26 August 1840, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 214/vol. 8/item 2, 6 June 1840.

thighs, arms and fat about the kidneys – 2 of the children were quartered and brought away (next line crossed out "that the children might taste the flesh")'.[9]

Intertribal conflict was normal. Chief Protector Robinson was told when talking with one of his natives, Mumbejinn that the Gippsland natives were no good as they had killed his father and he now wanted to kill one of them.[10]

Aboriginal Fight S Calvert 1862, NLA, pic-au 10267866-72-

In June 1844 George Augustus Robinson recorded in his journal that when he arrived at Bruthen: 'Charley ...informed me that his tribe killed ten Tangil Blacks'. A.W. Howitt, the noted Gippsland anthropologist, explorer and man of science recorded the last great battle of the Gippsland clans which occurred at Bushy Park in about 1856-7. The details were related to him by Bobby Brown, a Gnarrawut Tatungolung man who participated in the event.[11] The conflict originated with a Briaka woman being obtained by an Omeo man, Billy Blew who mistreated her. A number of smaller altercations took place prior to the main battle. At The Heart near Sale (Flooding Creek):

> 'We found a number of Dargo, Briaka and Brataua there, and we fought; but we were beaten, because they had guns as well as spears, and were helped by two black police and a white trooper.'[12]

[9] Ibid. This quote is taken directly from Thomas's Journal and includes parts of the narrative that he has crossed out.
[10] Clark, *Journal of Augustus Robinson*, 5 May 1844.
[11] Lorimer Fison & A.W. Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai,* Melbourne : George Robertson, 1880, p.217.
[12] Ibid, p.218.

Bobby Brown described the Bushy Park battle as follows but gives no real indication of the number of casualties on either side: 'There was a running fight; they ran off ... Bye and bye I shot one man, and others were speared'.

From his interaction with the last of the Kurnai, Howitt said that such a blood feud would be prosecuted by the whole division of the mother and also the father of the tribe, not just the close relatives.

Howitt said the most frequent cause of a quarrel was the stealing of a woman: 'Such an instance was that when some of the Taungolung stole all the women from a camp of Briakolung on the Upper Avon River, the result being that a great battle was fought'.[13]

He says combats were a frequent occurrence between the clans of Gippsland and refers to the 'slaughter of the Brajerack by the Briakolung and the slaughter of the Brajerack by the Brabrolung'. In relation to the former battle, Howitt's informant said:

> 'Then they all ran in; they speared away, they speared away! They only speared the men and perhaps some children. Whoever caught a woman kept her for himself. Then they eat the skin from the Brajeracks.'

The Brajerack were of a different clan and as a result parts of their bodies were flayed, roasted and eaten.[14]

McMillan also reported on the incident which he said was caused by a quarrel in which a party of Kurnai had taken away two girls belonging to the buffalo tribe and killed the children. McMillan described a 'serious affray' having taken place between 'blacks' of the Buffalo tribe and those in Gippsland in the vicinity of his station. Some were killed and others wounded.[15]

William Thomas also had the incident related to him when he visited *Bushy Park* on a tour of inspection of Gippsland in December 1860. '...one shew me spot where Buffilo &c kill great many come on at night & attack at Day Break, but he said [rejoi[c]ing??] all kill'd or dead now but one...'[16]

Whether the Howitt story and the McMillan/Thomas stories refer to the same incident cannot be determined however both occurred about the same time and were caused by a similar quarrel.

One of the last reported conflicts took place near *Kilmany Park* as a result of a woman and child being stolen from *Bushy Park*. The *Bushy Park* men accompanied by Swan Reach and Mitchell River men attacked the party camped

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[13] Fison & Howitt, p.224.
[14] Fison & Howitt, p. 223.
[15] 'State Aid : Aboriginal Fight', *Mount Alexander Mail*, 14 November 1856, p.3.
[16] Stephens, p.287.

and speared 'Toby' in the back who died immediately and 'King Charley who was speared in the abdomen and also died. After the attack the woman and child were returned to their tribe.[17]

Tambo Crossing 1843

Although this massacre has been attributed to Europeans on the strength of an interpretation of a statement by Peter Gardner, it is more likely the result of an intertribal conflict. Chief Protector George Robinson who travelled through the area in 1844 wrote in his journal:

> 'Two miles above the crossing place upstream is a spot where a great slaughter of Gippsland blacks by the Omeo and the Mokeallumbeets and Tinnermittum their allies took place... saw the human bones strewed about bleached white. I thought it appalling best forget the wholesale slaughter by Christians...five women spared but I believe killed some time after. All the old women and children killed. Two young men escaped.'[18]

Charley, an Aborigine who accompanied Robinson showed him the site and said upwards of seventy had been camped there. In a document published by George Mackaness in 1941, written by George Robinson, the latter emphasises the hostility between the Aborigines of the north and those of the south:

> The Yattmittongs are the original in habitants with whom the Mountain Tribes as far Eastwood as Maneroo downs are in Amity. A deadly animosity exists between them and the natives of the Coast. A Whole tribe having been destroyed by the Yattewittongs and their allies a short time previous, blanched bones strewed the surface and marked the spot where the slaughter happened.[19]

In an article published in the *Gippsland Times of* 1874 reference was made to McMillan's discussions with the local Aborigines at *Currawong* and the writer related:

> '...the Omeo tribes made another incursion caught their enemies on the Tambo and slaughtered scores of men, women and children; and McMillan saw the battlefield covered with their bones.'[20]

In an article published in the *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, Peter Gardner claimed that 'the event at Tambo Crossing had few if any of the features of a traditional

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[17] 'Aboriginal Conflict resulting in two deaths', *Gippsland Guardian,* 10 May 1861, p. 2.
[18] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson, vol 4,* 15 June 1844.
[19] Mackaness, p.13.
[20] 'The Discovery of Gippsland', *The Gippsland Times*, 10 September 1874.

tribal clash. Almost certainly it was organised and instigated by Europeans'.[21] In this case he does not go so far as to imply that McMillan was involved. The two points of contention for him were:

1. The high number of Aboriginal deaths 'upwards of seventy' was not customary in Aboriginal society.
2. Robinson's statement "best forget the wholesale slaughter by Christians" was a clue to the organisation of the slaughter by white people.[22]

On the first point the number killed may be unusually high, but there other examples of high numbers of deaths in intertribal warfare as evidenced by the deaths of seventy of the Boongerong at Brighton'.[23] Thomas, writing to La Trobe in June 1840 also refers to a massacre near Arthur's Seat in about 1820 in which nearly half the Bunurong tribe were killed by Gippsland Aborigines.[24]

With regard to Gardner's second point I believe it is far more likely that Robinson was reflecting on other massacres by whites rather than what he was seeing before him.

Phillip Pepper traces his Gunaikurnai ancestry through his mother's line and in his book reinforces the earlier Robinson account. He says the last big fight was at the mouth of the Tambo River between 'Billy Thorpe's Swan Reach tribe and the South Gippsland mob – the Port Alberts'. The Port Alberts had started 'swan egging' in the Swan Reach hunting area, leading to the conflict which lasted into the night: '...the tribes met at the mouth of the Tambo River and they had a terrible battle, a lot of them killed and wounded on both sides... My parents were both dead in the battle...'.[25] These were Phillip Pepper's great-grandparents who were killed.

With the available evidence of Robinson and personal reminiscences of Pepper it is highly unlikely that the massacre at Tambo Crossing was carried out by whites.

Crown Lands Commissioner Charles Tyers wrote that he had heard '...of 150 having been killed in one night at Pawl Pawl Island, by the Melbourne blacks, headed by the notorious Billy Lonsdale'.[26] This took place on Boole Boole Peninsula on Lake King.

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[21] Gardner P.D. 'Some Notes on Tribal Warfare and an Event at Tambo Crossing', *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, 19 1996, pp 49-51.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Clark, 1998, vol 4, p. 49.
[24] Thomas to La Trobe, 6 June 1840, from Arthur's Seat, Letter book 2, Thomas Papers, set 214/8, item 2, CY 2946, ML.
[25] Pepper, Phillip, *You are What You Make Yourself to Be,* pp.37-38.
[26] C.J. Tyers Letters Outward 1849 -57 microfilm La Trobe Library Melbourne .222.

The hostility between the Omeo tribes and those to the south was still evident in 1857 and clashes were still taking place. The *Gippsland Guardian* reported that Flooding Creek (later Sale) had been disturbed by 'the howlings of a few poor Gippsland Blacks and their gins who are lamenting the loss of a number of their tribe, who have been mercilessly slaughtered by the Omeo tribes at a place called Tongie'.[27]

In 1911 Reverend Cox of Yarram, founder of the Historical Society sent a letter to the secretary of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria regarding a fight between two groups of 'blacks'. He related that he had spoken to a man whose mother witnessed a fight between two tribes of blacks on the road between Alberton and Tarraville. She was friendly with the local blacks and was an eyewitness to the battle which lasted five hours – a number were killed and wounded on both sides.[28]

The Reverend Bulmer who established the Church of England Mission at Lake Tyers in 1862 was aware of conflict between different Aboriginal groups. He wrote: 'The blacks were by no means peaceable among themselves. In the early days of my mission in Gippsland I think they had fights about four times a week, they would fight at the slightest ?..'.[29] He said that in most cases they were caused by superstitions and sometimes women.

It is unlikely that the conflicts he was referring to were on a large scale. From his descriptions they appear to be more aligned with domestic disturbances.

The Gunaikurnai were always feared by the surrounding tribes, but with the arrival of the white man encroachments took place on their lands by other Indigenous groups leading to conflict and they themselves were forced into the bush and attacked the stock, which resulted in bloodshed.

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[27] *Gippsland Guardian* Sale 16 January 1857

[28] Letter from Cox to Greig 21 April 1911, Gippsland Early Settlement Collection, *Royal Historical Society of Victoria,* Box 148/21.

[29] Reverend B. Fraser, 'Aborigines Lower Murray, Wimmera, Gippsland, Manero', *Royal Historical Society of Victoria*, Box 118/12 MS 000335, p. 32.

Chapter 9

The Native Police Corps

'I would rather meet a black with a gun than a spear. The native police however have lamentably thinned their race in Port Phillip and Gippsland through their possession of them'

William Thomas, *Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines*

Superintendent La Trobe was aware of the clashes between the cultures that were arising across the Port Phillip District due to the increased settlement of Indigenous lands. In a despatch to the Colonial Secretary in July 1840 he said, 'I am ready to believe that many acts of aggression, and of subsequent retaliations, have been, and perhaps are completely hidden from the government'.[1] The Aboriginal Protectors were of little assistance in maintaining order, being inexperienced as magistrates they did not have the time or resources to collect evidence of crimes.

The Crown Commissioners who represented the only form of law in many districts, even with a full complement of Border Police could not keep the peace and prevent disorder. The amount of paperwork they had to complete and their constant need to travel the country to settle disputed run boundaries restricted their ability to respond to outbreaks of violence.

In 1837 Lonsdale tried to address the problem, by forming an Indigenous Corps under European Superintendents. He aimed:

> To make them useful to society … gradually weaning them from their native habits and prejudices, of habituating them to civilised customs, and from thence if possible to place them upon higher grades of temporal and religious knowledge. It would be impossible to accomplish these objects by any abrupt means or sudden change from their present condition and it is therefore thought the most effectual method will be to form some of the Natives into a Police Corps, as in that situation they will not be tied to any definite labour or irksome routine of employment, they will it is hoped, whilst they are enjoying a change of scene and occupation, and the occasional recreation of hunting, be

[1] Charles La Trobe to the Colonial Secretary, *Papers – Aborigines – Australian Colonies* Ordered by the House of Commons, Appendix B, pp. 104-105.

> under proper management imperceptably to themselves, acquiring the change which is desired.[2]
>
> The House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines was not sure that this

was a good idea and argued that 'uncivilized men' enlisted 'in defence of order' would 'become the victims of their own zeal'. An initial attempt to organise such a force took place in 1837 under Christian De Villiers but was unsuccessful and abandoned.

La Trobe could see that the problem was only going to intensify due to the large number of stations now scattered over the interior, so in 1842 made funding available to underwrite the cost of the force. He authorised Captain Henry Pulteney Dana, a former member of the British Army to make another attempt to organise a corps of Native Police.[3] La Trobe said that the objects of forming such a police force were twofold:

1. The civilisation of the younger natives.
2. The creation of a force which would be better adapted to check, if not prevent the aggressions of the tribes upon the lives and property of the scattered European population.[4]

Henry Pultney Dana 1817 - 1852 Wikitree photographer unknown.

Dana initially selected twelve men from the Yarra Yarra tribe and their duties covered the whole of the Port Phillip District. Twenty-five troopers were subsequently enrolled in the force. At first they were involved in patrolling the bush, finding bushrangers, intercepting suspicious persons on the roads and checking the passes of prisoners. In patrolling the bush however, they were

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[2] Regulations proposed by Mr Lonsdale Police Magistrate for the formation of an aboriginal police corps, Melbourne 25 October 1837, http://www.law.mq.edu.au/research/colonial_case_law/nsw/other_features/correspondence/documents/document_54/

[3] 'Domestic Intelligence' *Port Phillip Gazette*, 2 March 1842.

[4] Bride, Charles La Trobe to the Executive, 22 January. p.266

responding to attacks by natives on stock and the white settlers, which involved the suppression and killing of the Indigenous population.

The majority of the men who took up positions with the Native Police Corps were from the Melbourne tribes and were long-standing enemies of the Gippsland blacks. According to the records only five men are known to have joined the corps from Gippsland.[5] This enmity went back generations and James Clow who had settled to the east of Dandenong described it in a letter to La Trobe: '... the Gipps Land Blacks attacked some five and twenty of the Western Port tribe in the grey of the morning and cut off everyone of them...'[6]

This took place in 1835. The attack was not forgotten and in 1838 a number of the Western Port tribe acquired weapons from the settlers supposedly to shoot lyrebirds. They proceeded into Gippsland, found a camp of Gippsland Aborigines, surrounded it and took the old men and children prisoner. They found the men fishing some way off, they opened fire killing or wounding most of them. Those that escaped swam across the river 'but the second volley brought them all down'.[7]

George Haydon, on his journey through Gippsland with Augustus Robinson in 1844 wrote of the hostility between the Gippsland and Western Port natives. Haydon said that the natives who accompanied them listened to the stories of skirmishes between the settlers and the Gunaikurnai. As they were native police and employed to subdue these disturbances they saw it as an opportunity of retaliating on their 'old and formidable enemies'.[8] This was because the Gippsland 'tribes' had invaded Western Port some years earlier and nearly annihilated a whole tribe.

One of the old men had told Haydon that the Gippsland or 'wild blacks' had surrounded his tribe one night, killed nearly all the men, stole the women and destroyed the children. The remnants of the tribe had joined the Native Police.

Haydon went on to say: 'There is very little doubt that when the opportunity offered, they would execute their commission most effectually by shooting them, and what else could be expected from those who were still half savages, whose education had been commenced under the protectors'.[9] Robinson claimed that it was this spirit of revenge that kept the Native Police together and probably made them such an effective force against other Indigenous groups.[10]

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[5] Fels, p.121. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24054597. Accessed 7 Apr. 2023.
[6]Bride, James Clow to Charles La Trobe, p.111.
[7] Ibid
[8] Mackaness, pp. 63-64.
[9] Ibid. p.64.
[10]Clark, *Journal of Augustus Robinson*, 5 May 1844.

The Native Police were a controversial force who patrolled across the whole of the Port Phillip District or where disturbances were reported. The Native Police under Dana were not afraid to confront the natives and take drastic action. In August 1843 Dana and seven of his black troopers caught up with natives who had been spearing sheep on the Wannon in the Western District. One of the natives attacked a trooper with a tomahawk and was promptly shot dead, then 'Captain Dana's troop fired simultaneously upon the savages, four or five times, seven or eight of whom were shot dead on the spot, and many wounded...it was supposed about twenty of their number had been shot in the affray....'[11]

Trooper attack, Mitchell library NSW.

Another affray occurred in the Grange (Geelong) where Dana and four of his black police came up with thirty natives who had driven 150 sheep from a property. The natives were hemmed in and attempted to flee before finding themselves trapped and so turned to fight. The report said that 'the first volley brought down several of the savages... but it was not until... a considerable number of the blacks were killed... that they retreated'.[12]

From reading the daily correspondence in newspapers of the early 1840s it is quite obvious that Dana and his troopers killed large numbers of Aborigines across the Port Phillip District. These killings were sanctioned by the newspapers and the public of the day. Much of their time was spent in the Western District from where most of the reports came. But if Dana followed similar practises in Gippsland no doubt many natives would have been killed there too.

Another comment about Dana's methods and his troops is to be found in the Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines. In August 1843 a short note simply states: 'Blacks terribly frightened of the native police'.[13] Although not relating to Gippsland, an entry in November of the same year relating to a discussion had with several black troopers at Portland gives some indication of the brutal methods used by Dana:

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[11] 'Domestic Intelligence: Affray with the Blacks', *Port Phillip Gazette,* 26 August 1843. p.2.
[12] 'Port Phillip' *The Colonial Observer,* 13 September 1843. p.7.
[13] Stephens, p.530.

'Troopers Turnmile and Warworong admitted to shooting natives, Warworong stated that 17 had been shot including one by Captain Dana'.[14] Thomas was told that they did not want to shoot but were threatened by Dana that if they did not, then they would be handcuffed and sent to Melbourne.[15]

In 1858 Thomas was asked by the Select Committee set up to enquire into the condition of the Aborigines whether it was safe for them to have guns. Thamas responded:

> I would rather meet a black with a gun than a spear, I never knew any harm to arise from their possession. The native police however (using them officially and under orders) have lamentably thinned their race in Port Phillip and Gippsland through their possession of them.[16]

Thomas went on to record that in Gippsland, Henry Meyrick said the 'Manuro Blacks (encouraged he believed by the early settlers) had been very instrumental with the Black Police of awfully thinning their numbers…' This last statement does not appear to relate to Warrigal Creek.

In January 1844 Assistant Protector Thomas charged Dana with the killing of several natives.[17] Although the charges were not proven there must have been some good reason for Thomas bringing the charge. *The Port Phillip Gazette* supported Dana and implied that he had done nothing wrong by responding to 'certain blacks who merely attempted to destroy a few hundred sheep and spear the worthy captain for interference'.[18]

In 1845 William Thomas, following a discussion with one of the native police who had returned from Gippsland said: '…he had seen a number of Gippsland Blacks and that he shook hands with them he says they no come near whiteman too much frightened'. He went on to say the best way to control them was '… band of police on foot or mounted to keep them in awe no mediation between the black and the white'.[19]

Augustus Robinson recorded an incident involving Dana after talking with Fulton, the government blacksmith. Dana had come into Fulton's shop and

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[14] Bride, p.75. (Thomas said that Tomiel was a 'young steady and faithful policeman' who continued in service until his death at Narre Warren in 1850. Woworong may be the tribe the member belonged to, not his nam)e.
[15] Stephens, pp.558-559.
[16] William Thomas, *Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines; Together with the Proceedings of committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices,* Melbourne: Government Printer, p.56.
[17] 'Melbourne', *Geelong Advertiser,* 8 January 1844. p.3.
[18] 'Domestic Intelligence' *Port Phillip Gazette,* 13 January 1844, p.2.
[19] William Thomas Vol. 2 1844- 1853 p.89.

asked to have his sword sharpened. Fulton commented on the two notches in the blade. Dana responded: 'Awful work... bones will turn steel you know'. The implication was that the blade had been used on Aborigines.[20]

In his 1925 article, 'Gippslander' says that after Warrigal Creek the blacks kept to the coast but claimed there were still many blacks being killed, principally by the Native Police.[21]

Commissioner Tyers must have been aware of the killing of Aborigines when speaking with Robinson but he made the comment that it was better for the Native Police to come into 'collision' with the natives rather than the policemen as they could not be charged with murder. The implication being that a Native Police officer killing a black was not likely to bring the same repercussions that would arise if the killing were done by a white.[22]

In his journal Robinson quoted McLeod of *Bairnsdale* run, saying if the blacks troubled him he would send his two blacks after the natives as they could not punish them.[23] Lachlan Macalister had considerable influence with the Native Police when it came to attacks on his property. In February 1847, Macalister instructed Sergeant McLelland with the Native Police to protect the stock on his run. There had been a series of spearings on the property and when the offenders were found '...heaps of beef and several dead beasts were observed in their camp'. According to McLelland it was impossible to capture 'the depredators' due to the dense scrub and backwater. He reported that one or two shots had been fired but without he believed any loss of life.[24]

On 2 February 1847 Commissioner Tyers wrote to William Dana after it was reported to him that '...the native police under your command while on duty on Mr Macalister's station on Sunday week last, came up with and killed a number of Aborigines'.[25] Tyers demanded a full report stating that such incidents had to be reported to him so they could then be forwarded to the government. The duty of investigating the death of any Aborigine he said fell on the Crown Lands Commissioner and added that he had received no report of the altercation on the Snowy River.

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[20] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845, 27 April 1844.
[21] Gippslander, 'Warrigal Creek', p.6.
[22] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845, 10 June 1844.
[23] Ibid, 10 June 1844.
[24] Report of Mr William Dana's proceedings with the 2nd Division of Native Police, Public Record Office of Victoria, to Henry Dana, VPRS 19/000047/36, 10 February 1847.
[25] Ibid Crown Lands Commissioner Tyers to William Dana, 2 February 1847.

Nothing further is to be found about the outcome in the correspondence however the comments by McLelland were reported. Whether this related to the above incident or another is not known.

Dunderdale said he had heard Tyers relate measures that he and his Native Police had taken to controlling troublesome natives. Hearing that cattle had been speared he found the killed and wounded beasts and then got his black troopers to search for tracks. When they found their likely hiding place Tyers dismounted holding two pistols and entered the bush with his two troopers, who each had a carbine. Although not aware of any natives near him the two troopers discharged their weapons and then showed Tyers the mortally wounded natives. 'Mr Tyers sent a report to the government and that was the end of it'.[26]

In official circles there appeared to be no desire to punish those guilty of killing Indigenous peoples. In 1842 a group of Western District squatters petitioned La Trobe to provide them with protection against aggressive Aborigines. At the same time three Aboriginal women and a child had been murdered by whites. La Trobe's reaction was to ask the perpetrators to be brought forward, although it does not seem he was proactive in seeking them out, and he said:

> 'Will not the commission of such crimes call down the wrath of God, and do more to check the prosperity of your district, and to ruin your prospects, that all the difficulties and losses under which you labour.'[27]

Appealing to the squatters in moral terms must have been viewed with amusement when considering the everyday hardships they faced.

In referring to the Native Police, La Trobe had an almost naïve attitude. In a letter to Sir John Pakington, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, he wrote:

> It at once formed a link between the native and the European and gave opportunity for the establishment of friendly relations.
>
> ... The marked success... gave confidence to the settler, removed the pretexts under which he would feel justified in taking redress into his own hands, and left no excuse for the vindictive reprisals which have been a blot on the early years of settlement.
>
> The native ... saw ... in yielding to his natural aggressive impulses he would be opposed to those who were not only his equals,... but his superiors by alliance with the Europeans.[28]

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[26] Dunderdale, pp.265-266.
[27] John Barnes, 'A Moravian Among the Heathen: LaTrobe and the Aboriginal People. *LaTrobeanna,* Vol 16. No 1. 2017, p.18.
[28] Bride, C.J. La Trobe to Sir J. Pakington 22 January 1853. p 440.

There is no doubt that the 'black police' created havoc across the Port Phillip District including Gippsland, but were sanctioned by the settlers in their actions, and officialdom largely turned a blind eye to their activities.

Hunt for the White Woman

The hunt for a white woman supposedly held captive by Aborigines resulted in deaths across Gippsland at the hands of different search parties involving the Native Police.

The issue arose following a letter which appeared in *The Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser* on 18 January 1841 from 'Augustus' McMillan. It related that he and his friend Dr Arbuckle were attempting to find a road to the coast and Corner Inlet when they came on a camp of about twenty-five blacks. They were mainly women who fled as the Europeans approached. Their camp was deserted and McMillan and Arbuckle found items of European clothing, women's apparel and a child's frock, as well as Aberdeen newspapers and a bible. As the natives ran away, McMillan and Arbuckle thought they saw a white woman being driven before them.

Closer investigation led them to kangaroo skin bags which held the remains of a dead child who was certified as being a white male by Dr Arbuckle. Because of the numerous blacks in the area McMillan and Arbuckle returned to the station.

The Editor of *The Patriot* was not convinced about their find. He said the artefacts could be explained by a retaliation raid by Melbourne natives that had recently taken place at Jamieson Station on Western Port Bay. As to the dead child he wrote: 'The dead child and living woman, are we suspect mere creatures of the imagination'.[29]

Nothing more happened until 1846 when an eight year-old boy, Jackawadden who lived on *Boisdale* station with the storekeeper told him that his tribe had a white woman with two half-caste children. Commissioner Tyers initiated the first search with Sergeant Windridge commanding ten native police, commencing in April. Despite finding the tribe and being promised that the woman would be returned, nothing happened.

Windridge remained in the area searching and in October 1846 was sent to investigate a cattle spearing on Macalister's station. On the 20th they found 100 blacks carrying away beef. Windridge was attacked and he ordered his men to fire on the natives, killing two and wounding one. In September, William Dana, brother of Henry Dana and second in command of the Native Police tracked the

[29] 'Augustus McMillan', *Port Phillip Patriot*, 18 January 1841, p.3.

tribe to a small island on the Snowy River where the white woman was supposed to be.

William Dana 1866
photographer Eugene Wilhelm Ernst De Balk 1838-1870

The general public however did not believe that enough was being done to release the woman from captivity. In September 1846 a private expedition was organised by a group of Melbourne citizens dissatisfied by the way in which the government was conducting the search. A public subscription raised money to equip the private expedition and Christian De Villiers, a former Superintendent of the Native Police was appointed leader with James Warman. They also made their way to the Snowy River, with six natives and three warrigals[30] as guides where they met with Dana's party. William Dana advised them that his party had surrounded several camps of natives on the river and had captured one old man, a woman and three children. The adults were restrained by means of handcuffs which had been attached to their legs.

In the evening De Villiers was informed by his '...blacks and also from the warrigals that some of the natives on the Snowy River had been shot'.[31] The next morning as he approached Dana he realised that the handcuffed natives had fled. He did not question Dana about the shooting but instead demanded a key to the handcuffs so that he could release the prisoners if he found them. Dana refused.

De Villiers continued up the river and found the dead body of a 30 year old male, he had cuts on his head and had obviously been shot. The manacled natives were also found hiding in the reeds and released with some difficulty.

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[30] Wild blacks -from Gippsland

[31] 47/249 Transmits copy of depositions taken with reference to the collision between the Native Police and the Aborigines at the Snowy River: Depositions of Christian De Villiers James Warman extracts from journal of trooper Owen Cowen 16 to 24 December Notes : Part of file 47/1394 (top-numbered); Sender : Crown Commissioner of Gippsland; Location : Alberton
Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 19/P0000/9489, 47/249, 1847-01-09 - 1847-01-09

Peters, one of the party also found part of a broken carbine with black hair and blood on the stock.[32]

When De Villiers returned to Tambo Bluff he was informed by Richard Hartnett, one of his men that he had been told by blacks on Raymond Island that some of the blacks on the Snowy River had been shot by Dana's party.

De Villiers made depositions before Tyers, the Crown Lands Commissioner at the Border Police station at Lake King on 30 December 1846 and Warman made his statement at Strathfieldsaye before Tyers and Raymond on 1 January 1847.

An extract of Trooper Owen Cowen's journal was also submitted to Tyers. He had arrived on the Snowy River on December 18. Cowen had been instructed to go to the head of a lake where he came upon a camp and was attacked: '...the blacks threw several spears at us...' He initially secured five prisoners but a fresh party of natives attacked him and knocked him down and speared him in the hand. His rifle misfired but he discharged his pistol then managed to regain the carbine and struck the native on the head with it allowing him to escape.

After complaining to Commissioner Tyers about what they perceived had occurred, they swore out affidavits stating: 'There is no excuse that they were protecting the squatters and their property, for there is no cattle or sheep at that place whatever'. Numerous rumours were spread about the number killed. It is likely to have been five although only one body was found, but it was rumoured that another four had been shot by the Native Police.

James Warman 1798-1873

On returning to Melbourne Warman unleashed an attack on Dana and the Native Police in the press, however it appears unrelated to what he wrote in his deposition.

'Any lengthened statement of the slaughter of unoffending natives, by those harpies of hell, misnamed police, and ... one or two Europeans were not a whit behind these demi civilised wretches.'[33]

Tyers took the allegations in the depositions and journal seriously and in a letter to La Trobe said: 'I regret to observe that Mr William Dana's proceedings have not been guided by prudence; and

[32] Ibid, Warman evidence

[33] James Warman, 'Gippsland Expedition', *The Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser*, 22 January 1847, p.2.

fear that his recent expedition has tended to retard rather than forward the rescue of the unfortunate white woman'.[34]

Tyers said that Dana should not have charge of another expedition and should confine himself to protecting settlers.

In 1847, with no success in finding a white woman, Tyers decided to take hostages and captured Kurnai man Bungelene and his family, who had supposedly kept the white woman. The search was discontinued but the natives, who had been taken to the Narre Warren Camp all subsequently died.

A later article said that the Native Police sent out under the command of Mr Walsh 'committed awful destruction of aboriginal life'.[35] In a report to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines in 1859, Tyers stated that: 'At least fifty were killed by the native police and other aborigines attached to the parties in search of a white woman...'[36]

A final note to the saga appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser,* copied from the *Port Phillip Herald* in November 1847 when it was reported that the body of a white woman and child had been found at Jemmy's Point on the Gippsland Lakes. Angus McMillan conducted the Inquest at Tyers' residence at Eagle Point and reported to the paper that he was certain that the body was that of a white woman.[37]

The story concluded that the woman had been in the custody of Bungelene, but when he was arrested his brother acquired the woman, a dispute arose over her ownership and Bungelene's brother killed her to prevent the other man having her. Whether this was the mythical woman is unknown and unfortunately the Inquest report is not available.

The assignment of the Native Police to search for the mythical white woman was not met with approval by the settlers in Gippsland. On 31 December 1846 Lachlan Macalister wrote a strong letter to Superintendent La Trobe from Gippsland complaining about the deployment of the corps to the search for the

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[34] Letter from Charles Tyers to La Trobe 47/249 Transmits copy of depositions taken with reference to the collision between the Native Police and the Aborigines at the Snowy River: Depositions of Christian De Villiers James Warman extracts from journal of trooper Owen Cowen 16 to 24 December Notes : Part of file 47/1394 (top-numbered); Sender : Crown Commissioner of Gippsland; Location : Alberton Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 19/P0000/9489, 47/249, 1847-01-09 - 1847-01-09.

[35] *Gippsland Times* 18 October 1861.

[36] Charles Tyers, *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines 1858-59,* p.77.

[37] 'Murder of the Captive White Woman at Gipps Land', *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 November 1847 p.1.

white woman. He said that the Native Police were the only protection that was to be had in the district and that Tyers employed the police '...on duties so foreign, to the purposes for which that valuable little corp was organised and still maintained'.[38]

His long experience of the character of the Aborigines led him to believe that any interference with the Native Troopers, except by their own officers would affect their usefulness. The implication being that their methods were the most effective in curbing the attacks by the natives.

A further letter was sent to La Trobe in December from ten settlers, including a number of prominent men: Raymond, Wilkinson, MacFarlane, Brodribb, Montgomery, Loughnan, McLeod and three others. They stressed the '...great inconvenience and loss arising from the absence of the Native Police from the district... herds are daily exposed to the aggression of the wild blacks which are most frequent at this season of the year'.[39] It is worth noting that McMillan's name does not appear amongst these prominent settlers.

The Warman allegations

The privately organised search party took a more conciliatory approach with the natives, found them to be friendly and commented favourably on them. In talking with them around Lake Reeve they found that the natives were forced to winter in the mountains but came down to the Lakes in summer for eels. However, they did not dare show themselves in the forest country but resided in the swamps.[40]

Warman's attitude towards these people was definitely sympathetic and he commented: 'It is a great pity that powder and ball seem to be their fate, as the settlers think no more of shooting them than they do of eating their dinners and from what I can learn, some fearful slaughter have taken place'.[41]

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[38] Letter from Lachlan Macalister to Superintendent La Trobe, Inward Correspondence Register, Public Record Office of Victoria, 47/97 A communication on the subject of the Native Police stationed in Gippsland Notes : Part of file 49/16 (top-numbered); Sender : Mr Lachlan McAlister; Location : Gippsland VPRS 19/P0000/11754, 47/97 1846-12-31 - 1846-12-31

[39] 48/2592 Request the assistance of the Mounted Police against the Blacks Notes : Part of file 49/16 (top-numbered); Sender : Certain Persons in Gippsland; Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 19/P0000/11754, 48/2592, 1848-12-19 - 1848-12-19

[40] Gippsland expedition to find the White Woman, *Port Phillip Patriot and the Morning Advertiser.* 22 January 1847. p.2.

[41] Ibid

Despite the paucity of damning evidence in Warman's deposition to Tyers and Raymond, in the press he mounted a broader attack on Dana and the Native Police based on what he heard in Gippsland.

He blamed the killings on the Native Police and squatters and was scathing in his comments about the commanders of the Native Police:

> '...but as long as such persons as Messrs. Dana and Walsh are in command of the native police nothing can stop their extermination for the native blacks are the most cruel blood thirsty wretches alive, and nothing gives them so much pleasure as shooting and tomahawking the defenceless savages....'[42]

He maintained that they could not be trusted with any form of weapon and should only be used for tracking. He also stated that he believed Tyers was unaware of what was actually taking place.

The squatters did not like the way Warman and De Villiers had befriended the natives: 'MacAllister, Sparks and a few others say we ought to be sent out of Gipps Land for having made friends with the natives...' It is not certain which Macalister this is, but if Angus McMillan was still managing *Boisdale* then it could easily be Lachlan.

'...what is wanted by some of the squatters nothing more or less than their extermination, which they don't hesitate to say that they all should be shot.'

Warman went on to stress that the leaders of the Native Police were only too willing to accommodate them: 'Dana and Walsh are the parties to suit the settlers, and when they get into any disgrace with the government... they have no...difficulty in getting documents signed by the squatters recommending them for their efficiency'.[43]

The allegations made about the police and residents of Gippsland raised the ire of the settlers. A public meeting at Alberton in 1847, chaired by William Odell Raymond roundly condemned what had been printed and several resolutions were passed:

> It was unanimously resolved, that the settlers of the district have been grossly belied and slandered in the said publication, and that they unequivocally allege that the statements made by the said James Warman are false and unfounded, and that a direct denial of the same be conveyed

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[42] Ibid

[43] Gippsland expedition to find the White Woman, *Port Phillip Patriot and the Morning Advertiser*. 22 January 1847. p.2.

through the chairman to the editors of the Port Phillip journals for their immediate insertion.[44]

According to *The Australian* the government ordered the Native Police to be withdrawn following the affidavits received from De Villiers and Warman but no charges were ever laid for the killings on the Snowy River and no inquiry was ever held to investigate their claims. With reference to saving the 'white woman', *The Port Phillip Patriot* attacked the conciliatory actions they had proposed and insisted that force was the only way 'to release a British subject, and a helpless woman from a slavery worse than death'.[45]

DeVilliers was attacked in the press for his handling of the expedition and within a short time a third equally unsuccessful expedition was arranged by the Government. The true number of deaths that occurred will probably never be known but some writers claim that it was as high as fifty.

[44] *Port Phillip Herald,* 18 February 1847.
[45] 'The Captive White Woman', *Port Phillip Patriot,* 22 February 1847. p.2.

Chapter 10

Recording the bloodshed

'led initially by Peter Gardner, investigations have revealed the true story of the Aboriginal interaction with the white settlers'.

Following the retribution that was visited upon the Gunaikurnai at Boney Point and Warrigal Creek, there were brief pauses in their attacks on stock. Mary Cunninghame, the wife of Boyd Alexander of *Roseneath* and *Mosquito Point* wrote to her sister in Edinburgh in 1846 and commented on their absence: 'The blacks have not been heard of for months, even Boyd saw nothing of them whilst down at the coast, it is supposed they have taken refuge in the mountains to avoid the hardship of being driven into the morasses'.[1] However, the need for food and the ready availability of cattle and sheep as the source meant that these respites were only brief.

Charles Tyers recorded nine attacks across the region between April and September 1844, in which stock had been speared however in some cases the losses were significant.[2] George Augustus Robinson, writing in June 1844 claimed that Sparkes on S*wan Reach* run had lost fifty cattle and his neighbour Frederick Jones on the adjoining *Lucknow* run had lost twenty-six head.[3] From *Lucknow* Robinson travelled to Eagle Point where the Mitchell River enters Lake King. Commissioner Tyers had a residence there and at the time it was known as 'Commissioner's Point'. Robinson commented that he saw the bones of bullocks at Two Tree Points which although not stated were probably killed by the natives. He said that it was a native camping ground on the lake but that the natives had been driven off by Sparkes. 'I suppose shot driven also from Two Tree Points'.[4]

Robinson wrote that he believed the natives were 'anxious for peace with the whites; I believe they have been badly used'. His next comment, poorly phrased implies a number of natives were killed at the Point. He says: 'A dray load went into the settlement at the Point. Some were shot'.[5] Unfortunately no further information is available about the incident.

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[388]Compiled by Meredith Fletcher, 'The Cunninghame Letters' *Gippsland Heritage Journal,* no 16. June 1994, p. 47.

[2] Charles J. Tyers Diary, 1844 – 1845. ML ref B657c. State Library of Victoria.19 April 1844 – 6 September 1844

[3] Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson* Vol 4 1 January 1844 – 1845: 8 June 1844.

[4] Ibid 10 June 1844.

[5] Ibid 10 June 1844.

Allan McLean, writing a brief reminiscence in 1910 attributed the continued violence against the Gunaikurnai in Gippsland to the fact that: 'The blacks were very troublesome and would often spear cattle and sheep' and that five of the early settlers including Ronald(sic) Macalister were killed by them. He unreservedly blames the Gunaikurnai saying: 'These attacks produced many years of ill feeling between the settlers and the Aboriginals which led to many of the natives being shot down'.[6]

Little effort was made by the European population to understand the Gunaikurnai and the consequences of the changes they had forced upon their lifestyle and environment. According to Charles Tyers, the problems that beset them were their own fault for not assimilating. Writing to Charles La Trobe in January 1849 he said that no improvement had taken place in the condition of the Aborigines, as they made no attempt to become acquainted with the white population but continued to live 'in the same wild state as formerly in the mountains and among the scrubs and morasses... often visiting settler's stations at night and committing depredations on their stock'.[7]

When an effort was made to interact with the Gunaikurnai it was not done to understand them but only so they could be exploited by the white settler. In his *Recollections* Robert Buntine wrote that after Glengarry sold his property to Sydney merchant, Mashfield Mason, his brother Arthur managed the property for him and tried to bring the Gunaikurnai in to work for him.

According to Buntine he 'was one of the first to bring in the wild blacks and to try and make them serviceable'. He supposedly captured eight of them single-handed, bringing them to the station without a weapon for his own defence. The reason for his success was given as his height - he was a very tall man and the natives were 'seized with a superstitious dread of him'.[8] How successful this venture was is not recorded but one could imagine that the Gunaikurnai would have fled at the first opportunity.

It was too easy for officials to blame the Gunaikurnai for the violence in Gippsland. The officials in Melbourne were European and had little personal interaction with or understanding of the Indigenous population. Addressing the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines in 1845, Commissioner Tyers said that the hostile relations with the settlers were due to the aggression of

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[6] McLean Allan *Personal Reminiscences of the Hon. Allan McLean,* Manuscripts Collection, . Box 125/7, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 25 July 1910

[7] Charles J. Tyers Diary, 1844 – 1845.. State Library of Victoria. ML ref B657c Entry 4 January 1849.

[8] Robert Buntine, Mr Robert Buntine's Recollections, Manuscript Collection, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 78/2, MS 000229, p.4.

the blacks.[9] In a letter to La Trobe, Charles Tyers wrote that the depredations by the Aborigines were continuing and with the small force of Border Police at his disposal he could not stop them.

He then listed six incidents when Europeans were either attacked or killed by the natives (See Appendix B). There was no mention of the mass killing by the Europeans at Warrigal Creek or Boney Point. He went on to say that he wasn't in possession of any facts that would assist the Committee in its endeavours to promote the welfare of the Aborigines of Gippsland until some means of communicating with them could be achieved. Protectors had no impact on their welfare and Chief Protector Robinson, when he visited the region in May 1844 had no communication with them as he could not procure an interpreter.

The view that the government was getting was completely one-sided and the focus was on controlling the Aborigines. Tyers' solution was to establish two police stations, each with five border police: one on the Latrobe River and another on the Macarthur (Mitchell) River where the 'natives had been very troublesome killing 90 of Mr Sparke's cattle'.[10]

In his evidence to the Committee and speaking generally, Robinson said that the decrease in Aboriginal numbers could be attributed to:

> Collisions with Europeans, to internecine strife, to feuds, but principally to the effect of European disease; and in some instances there is reason to fear the Aborigines have been poisoned and the ends of justice defeated or want of legal evidence; the only witnesses to be obtained in such cases being the aborigines, who are disqualified on account of their legal disability.[11]

His discussions were only with the settlers of the District whose version of events promoted their cause and of course did not mention any retaliatory attacks on the Aborigines. Since then and led initially by Peter Gardner, investigations have revealed the true story of the Aboriginal interaction with the white settlers.

Documenting the massacres and McMillan's alleged role

In 2017 the University of Newcastle under Newcastle historian Professor Lyndall Ryan headed up the Colonial Frontier Massacres Project team, which over four years documented more than 150 Aboriginal massacres that occurred in eastern Australia. More than sixty sites were identified in Victoria, many in

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[9] Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines 13 October 1845. p.45.
[10] Bride, p.232.
[11] Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines 13 October 1845, p.45.

Gippsland, Professor Ryan maintained that this was the first time the sources for supporting these massacre sites had been included.[12]

The sources included settlers' diaries, newspaper articles, Aboriginal evidence and a variety of material and government documents drawn from state and federal archives. The map, last updated in March 2022 lists nine sites in Gippsland, including one which was a massacre of Aborigines by other Aborigines. Some of the information is open to question as it quotes the murder of Ranald Macalister as occurring at both Gammon Creek and Warrigal Creek after a five day 'rampage'. There is nothing in any reports that indicates that this took place.

Peter Gardner is cited as the main reference for the Gippsland incidents, but when recounting the Warrigal Creek massacre the study refers to Dunderdale's account. This implicates Lachlan Macalister and mentions the double barrelled Purdy shotgun used by him.

Culture Victoria produced a map in 1991 compiled by the Koori Heritage Trust which lists a further eight massacres that took place in Gippsland between 1836 and 1853.[13] In both documents Angus McMillan's name features prominently, but the entries are not supported with any concrete evidence.

Colonial Frontier Massacres University of Newcastle		**Massacre Map Culture Victoria**	
Site/Location	Alleged Perpetrator	Site Location	Alleged Perpetrator
		Oct/Dec Nuntin Unknown	McMillan
Oct. 1840 Boney Point 15 dead	McMillan	22 Dec 1840 Boney Point Heavy toll	McMillan
1841 Butcher's Creek 30 dead	McMillan	1841 Butcher's Creek 35 – 40 dead	McMillan
		1842 Skull Creek unknown	Unknown
1842 Hollands Landing 6 – 10 dead	McMillan and others		

[12] Mapping the Massacres of Australia's Colonial frontier 5 July 2017, https://www.newcastle.edu.au/newsroom/featured/mapping-the-massacres-of-australias-colonial-frontier

[13] Massacre Map, Culture Victoria, https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/indigenous-stories-about-war-and-invasion/massacre-map/

		1842 Bruthen Creek 100s killed	Unknown
1843 Tambo Crossing 70 dead	Unknown		
July 1843 Warrigal Creek 25 dead	McMillan	June 1843 Warrigal Creek 60 & 180 dead	McMillan
July 1843 Gammon Creek 25 dead	McMillan		
		1844 Maffra unknown	Unknown
		1846 Gippsland 14 dead	Unknown
		Dec 1846/7 Snowy River 58 dead	Captain Dana
1850 Brodribb River 15 – 20 dead	Unknown	1850 Brodribb River 15 – 20 dead	Unknown
		1850 Gippsland 15 – 20 dead	Unknown
		1850 Murrindal 16 poisoned	Unknown
1850 The Slaughterhouse 15- 20 dead	Unknown		

The Newcastle study also lists the Latrobe Valley as a site of a massacre in 1840, but this was a massacre of Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people.

Unfortunately it appears that very little new research was undertaken on the Gippsland massacres when compiling these tables. At best they provide a list of massacre sites but even this list is incomplete. There is no indication as to how the numbers killed at each site were reached and McMillan is the only person, with the exception of Dana who is held accountable. The University of Newcastle study sources only reiterate Gardner's comments and other secondary material that state McMillan was involved. There is new nothing in this study that ties him to the massacres.

The above table is incomplete and does not include sites that have been identified in this work through thorough researching of original dairies, journals and contemporary newspaper reports. The additional evidence that has been presented of other massacres and their locations makes it clear that the responsibility for carrying out these atrocities did not rest with one person. It also calls into question the amount of detailed research that was actually carried out by the research teams and to what extent they relied on material that was already completed.

Chapter 11

The rise and fall of a squatter 1845 to 1864

'He seems a well disposed, steady man; religiously brought up and I trust a servant of God'

Reverend Francis Hales Anglican Clergyman 1822-1900

The discovery of the port at Corner Inlet (Port Albert) and the establishment of a road from the interior to the coast ensured that the Gippsland squatters could provide a constant supply of beef and mutton to the convict settlement in Van Diemen's Land. Although public agitation by free settlers in NSW resulted in the cessation of transportation to that colony in 1840, the practice continued to Van Diemen's Land until 1853. Between 1840 and 1853, 26,000 convicts arrived in the colony making up approximately 34% of the population which required feeding.[1]

James MacFarlane of *Hayfield* sent the first shipment of cattle to the convict settlement aboard the *Water Witch* in June of 1842 and Angus McMillan delivered his first shipment in August.[2] It is likely that these were cattle for Lachlan Macalister who later accompanied his stock to Hobart and began to make the trip from Sydney on a regular basis visiting *Nuntin* station or *Boisdale* en route.[3]

McMillan begins to build his properties

Unlike Macalister, McMillan did not have the ready capital to purchase a large quantity of stock. Gippsland historian John Wilson estimated he was earning only £30 per year at *Clifton*.[4] His stock was most likely purchased on credit through Turnbull and Orr, Melbourne merchants who had set themselves up in Port Albert in 1841, or as Ken Cox alleges in *Angus McMillan Pathfinder,* through loans from his friend Dr Alexander Arbuckle.[5]

McMillan was working as an overseer for Macalister at *Boisdale* (as the *Nuntin* run had been renamed) and for Godfrey Vaughan Bentley on his *Sandy Creek* run.[6] The first application for a lease for the *Bushy Park* run appears in the *Port Phillip Gazette* on 13 August 1843. In March 1844 a licence was issued to occupy 16,000 acres, however he had been in occupation since 1840.

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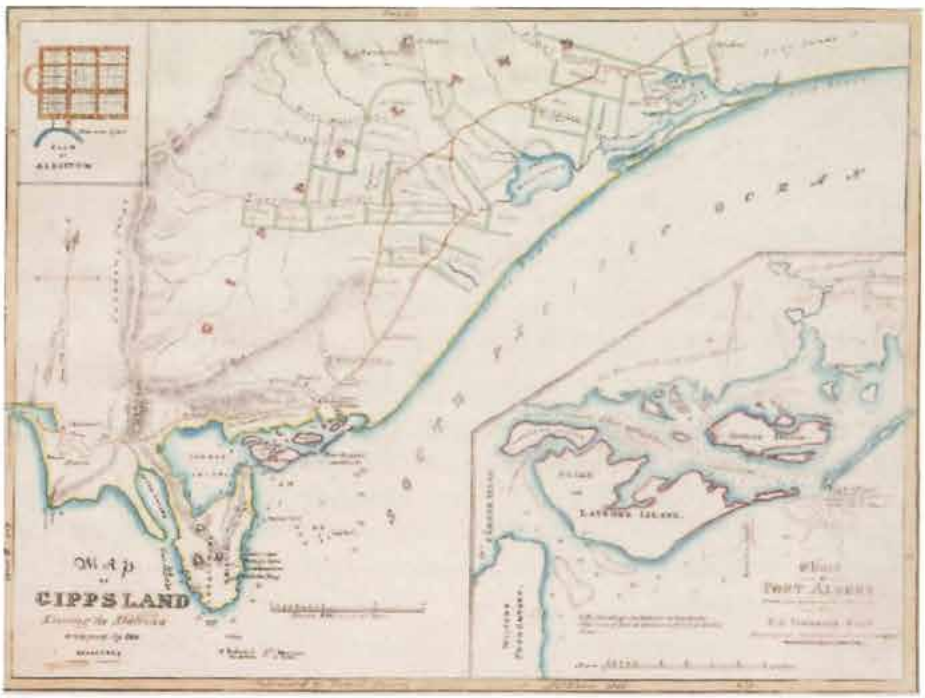
[1] Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* p.162.
[2] Ian Hughes, *Passengers to Port Albert 1841 – 1845,* Port Albert Museum. p.40.
[3] Ibid, p.50.
[4] John Wilson 'The Beginnings of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times*, 22 May 1947, p.6.
[5] Ken Cox, *Angus McMillan Pathfinder,* pp. 113-114.
[6] C.J. Tyers, 1845 Survey, Copy held at Port Albert Museum, Port Albert, Vic.

As time passed and McMillan's stock numbers grew, the trade in livestock with Van Diemen's Land allowed him to accumulate capital and expand his enterprise. When Commissioner for Lands Charles Tyers visited *Bushy Park* in 1844 he noted that McMillan had six horses and 600 head of cattle and was becoming a more significant player in the stock trade.[7]



Map of Gippsland Showing Stations National Library of Australia, Robert Dixon, *Map of Gippsland shewing the stations occupied by the squatters, 1845*, Map F 480, https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229963607

By 1847 an Order in Council established regulations governing the occupation of 'waste lands' in the colony and provided for squatters to license and lease pastoral runs that were outside the settled districts.[8] The settled districts in Gippsland included areas within three miles of the sea or ten miles of the Port and had annual licences. In the intermediate districts, which included the remainder of Gippsland up to 1,600 acres could be leased for eight years. The remote unsettled areas could be leased for fourteen years for runs of 3,200 acres.[9]

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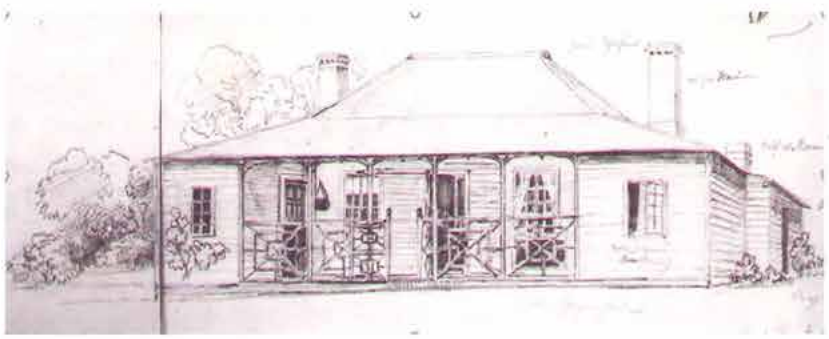
[7] C.J Tyers, Diary, Feb 2 1844, State Library Victoria.
[8] Peter Cabena, Heather McRae and Elizabeth Bladin, *The Lands Manual: A Finding Guide to Victorian Land Records 1836-1983* Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1992, p.2.
[9] Joseph M Powell, 'The Squatting Occupation of Victoria, 1834-1860, *Australian Geographical Studies,* vol. 7, 1969, pp.26-27.

Leases were granted for various terms for pastoral purposes only. During a lease the lessee could at any time purchase the freehold at the upset price of £1 an acre, and on the expiration of the term he had a pre-emptive right at the same price over all or any part of the land that had been improved.

Depasturing licences of £10 per annum which permitted settlers to graze stock on Crown Lands 'beyond the limits of location' were issued under the Act to restrict the unauthorised use of Crown Lands outside the 19 Counties. On publication of the *Land Act 1847* all persons occupying land had to apply for a lease, ensuring some regulation of the spread across the country.

In late 1846 McMillan acquired the licence for *Cungmundi* on the Dargo River to the north of *Bushy Park.* It was estimated that this new run could carry 800 head of cattle or 5,000 sheep. He was now well established at *Bushy Park,* however the distance between his two properties was over 70 kilometres. Time was spent travelling between the two runs and this meant that that one or other of the properties was left in the hands of foremen.

Very little is known of McMillan's activities during the latter part of the 1840s but the regular sale of stock allowed him to build a substantial house at *Bushy Park*, expand his holdings and become a comparatively wealthy man. By 1856 he had twelve men working for him, including his brother Donald each being paid £100 per annum. Angus McMillan was one of the largest stock-holders in Gippsland with fifty horses and 1,500 cattle on *Bushy Park* and six horses and 800 cattle on *Cungmundi*.[10]



McMillan's home at Bushy Park State Library of NSW, Sydney, Eugene Von Guerard, Vol. 11: Sketchbook xxxii, No. 13-14. Australian, 1860-1861. Image 40. https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/1Drmypv9/a4vGLj6rmKmGA

[10] '1856 Electoral Roll for Gippsland and Stock Assessments Payable', *East Gippsland, Gippsland Historical Society,* 1977.

1856 Electoral roll for Gippsland Legislative Assembly showing Bushy Park employees			
Dougald Cameron	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
Evandel Campbell	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
Robert Enimett	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
Andrew Hutton stockman	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
George McKay	Bushy Park	Salary	£100
Donald McDonald	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
John Morrison	Bushy Park	Wages	£100
Peter McIntyre	Bushy Park	freehold	£100
Angus McLevan	Bushy Park	shepherd	£100
John McLean	Bushy Park	Farm servant	£100
Harvey Morrison	Bushy Park	wages	£100
Donald McMillan	Bushy Park	Salary	£100
John Robertson	Bushy Park	shepherd	£100
Angus McMillan	Bushy Park	freehold	Vote in Legislative Council

[11]

With several stations under licence he was required to pay an assessment on stock. On 23 April 1856 this amounted to £800 on *Bushy Park*. At the Dargo property *Cungmundi*, the amount came to £4012. The *Sandy Creek* run was also in his name and was stocked with 9,000 sheep requiring a fee of £75. Only James MacFarlane on *Hayfield* with 10,000 head had more sheep,.

Across Gippsland seventy-two runs were now licensed and three of these had between 2,000 and 4,000 cattle grazing on them. The largest cattle producer was John Foster who had succeeded Macalister at *Boisdale* and *Dargo.* He had acquired 180,000 acres across Gippsland and was running 4,600 cattle on properties from the mountains to the sea. By 1856 Holt and Croft of *Rosedale* and *Snake Ridge* had 6,500 cattle.[12] McMillan had become a significant player with 2,300 cattle, 1,500 of those on *Bushy Park.*

The population of Gippsland had grown substantially and small settlements such as Bairnsdale, Flooding Creek (Sale) and Stratford were developing into towns, but the majority of the population was still centred around

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

the stations.[13] Census results for 1854 listed a total of fifty-four people living at *Bushy Park;* this number included thirty-four men and twenty-three women[14]. In the Victorian Census of 1851 the Police District called Flooding Creek, which incorporated Sale and its surrounds to the east comprised 885 people. To the south at the same time there were 904 people but just over half were living in the longer established towns of Port Albert, Tarraville or Alberton.[15]

Community involvement

The significance of McMillan's exploratory work was recognised with a

Bushy Park Gippsland (McMillan's Station) Eugene Von Guerard, Australian Sketches, 27 - 28 December 1860, Alexander Turnbull Library Wellington NZ. ref E 337-f-027.

dinner held at Gellion's Hotel, Port Albert on 14 March 1856 which complimented McMillan on his discovery of Gippsland and marked the 'Gippsland Anniversary'.[16] Tickets for the event cost 30 shillings. Fifty people attended and the toast to 'Angus McMillan Discoverer of Gippsland' followed closely after the toast to the Queen.

GD Hedley, chairman for the evening proposed the toast to McMillan, stating that they were there to honour the man who was responsible for opening up '...the district we inhabit...and appreciate ... the excellent qualities of the man to whose exertions we are indebted.'[17] Succeeding toasts were to the 'Chairman and Stewards' as well as 'The Land we Live in', but all acknowledged and

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[13] Angus B. Watson, *Lost and Almost Forgotten Towns of Colonial Australia,* 2003. (In 1854 Bairnsdale had 20 residents, Sale 116, and Stratford 61).
[14] Ibid, p.74.
[15] Victorian Government Gazette, Census 1851.
[16] 'Local Intelligence', *Gippsland Guardian,* 7 March 1856, p.3.
[17] Ibid, p. 3.

complimented McMillan on his achievements. This dinner was to become an annual event in the following years.

McMillan began to develop a more public persona as his employees took on everyday tasks and allowed him the time to become more involved in the local community. He became a trustee for a number of organisations including the Sale Cemetery[18] and the Presbyterian Church Combined School in Stratford[19]. He was appointed judge at the Green Wattle Racecourse at Sale and in January 1858 was appointed to sit as a magistrate on the bench of the police and licensing courts at Tarraville.[20]

Being a prominent Gippsland citizen and explorer, McMillan was well known in Melbourne and was an obvious choice to give the official welcome to Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Victoria, and Bishop and Mrs Perry when they arrived in Gippsland in February 1859. After their formal duties they visited *Bushy Park* where McMillan had 'mustered about 100 'blackfellows' for a corroborree'.[21]

The Dothwaite murder

Throughout the 1850s Angus McMillan maintained a benevolent interest in the local Gunaikurnai people. When two Tarra Aborigines, Tarra Bobby and Dan were arrested for the murder of sawyer Richard Dothwaite near Sale on 17 August 1858, McMillan acted as their interpreter at the inquest. Tarra Bobby implicated another Aborigine, William Login in the murder, accusing him of hitting Dothwaite. The inquest was carried out by McMillan's friend Dr Alexander Arbuckle. After hearing from more than twelve witnesses he concluded that Dothwaite had died from several blows to the head but stated: 'there is not sufficient evidence to show by whom the blows were inflicted'.[22] Despite the fact that no one was identified as having dealt the blows, Tarra Bobby and William Login were committed for trial in Melbourne.

Angus McMillan accompanied the two men to Melbourne by ship. Both men were handcuffed for the journey which McMillan insisted be removed, saying that he would be responsible for any consequences that followed.[23] William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines visited the two men in the Melbourne Jail and was concerned at their despondent state. He attempted to see La Trobe with McMillan who he said could 'throw much unpleasant light on the condition and usage of Blks in Gipps Land'. McMillan had told Thomas that the

[18] *Gippsland Guardian,* 29 February 1856, p.3.
[19] Ibid, 28 May 1858, p.1.
[20] *Victorian Government Gazette,* No.14, 29 January 1858, p.197.
[21] 'Governor's Tour of Gippsland', *Geelong Advertiser,* 11 March 1859.
[22] Inquest Deposition Files, Richard Dothwaite: Inquest, Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 24, 1858/950.
[23] Stephens, 15 September 1858, p.161.

men in question were not near where the incident took place but at work on a station at the time.

On 20 September Thomas and McMillan were successful in seeing the Minister for Lands, Gavan Duffy.[24] Thomas wrote that he was thankful for 'your honours humane consideration' and another man, Jemmie Scott was subsequently released apparently on bail supplied by McMillan.[25] The case was finally dismissed after three consecutive sessions of the Criminal Court due to the absence of Aboriginal witnesses. Tarra Bobby and Billy Logan were released on 11 November.

Impact of religion

As civilisation slowly made its way into Gippsland travelling preachers began to move about the region visiting stations and small settlements, baptising infants and performing marriages. The first church was not built in Gippsland until 1856 when the construction of an Anglican Church at Tarraville was commenced. In the 1840s and 1850s Gippsland was still part of the Church of England's Parish of Cooma in the Diocese of Sydney. During this time there were travelling preachers who were either Church of England or Catholic. Being a Presbyterian there was little chance that McMillan would have had a minister of his own denomination visit Gippsland. He seems to have developed a close rapport with a number of visiting clergymen though, particularly those of the Church of England.

The Reverend EG Pryce was one of the first to visit Gippsland in about 1844[26] and spent time with McMillan. In April 1848 the Reverend Francis Hales spent five nights at *Bushy Park* and wrote of McMillan: 'He seems a well disposed, steady man; religiously brought up and I trust a servant of God'.[27] He enjoyed McMillan's company and said that he could converse with him with freedom on religious subjects, and the servants came in when evening prayers were said.[28] On the afternoon of the 19th McMillan assembled some of his men and Hales read the evening service and preached on the Gospel of John. Hales again commented that he had a pleasant conversation with McMillan after family prayers.[29]

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[24] Stephens, 20 September 1858, p.161.
[25] Stephens, 21 September 1858, p.162.
[26] Cox, '*Notes on Gippsland History*', vol. VI, 1990. pp.12-13.
[27] Francis Hales, 'Transcript of the diary of Reverend Francis Hales', Manuscript Collection, January 1848–March 1851, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 22/4m, entry for 22 April 1848.
[28] Ibid. p.84 21 April 1848
[29] Ibid 19 April 1847 p.83

He did not have this easy relationship with some of the other squatters that he met or stayed with. Frederick Taylor he found 'well disposed but with a warped sense of the divine and ignorant of the truth'. The Cunninghames did not want to partake of communion and appeared to be not in the slightest religious. At Raymond's station Hales preached 'with difficulty' and said that 'Mr Raymond listens like a gentleman but does not seem to feel what I say and makes no reply'. When discussing life and death with Raymond, Hales said he agreed but didn't really believe what was being said.[30]

Reverend Willoughby Bean was also a regular visitor to *Bushy Park* and seemed to use McMillan's property as a base. He commented on 2 February 1849 that: 'I... started for my headquarters in the Upper District, viz. Mr McMillan's Bushy Park...'.[31]

The first Presbyterian minister to venture into Gippsland was Reverend Walter Robb in 1851 who also used *Bushy Park* as a base between 1851 and 1854.[32] The Reverend William Spence Login was a regular visitor too and became a great friend of McMillan; he and his family stayed with him on numerous occasions after they arrived in 1854. Login's daughter commented that in 1854 they spent a week at *Bushy Park.* The station was in a central location and was a convenient base when visiting further outlying stations and settlements. She said: '...like all other station homes of the time, it was practically a small village – a Chinese cook in the house – spotlessly arrayed in white,...overseers' and shepherds' huts nearby, with a suburban environment of blackfellows' camps'.

According to Ken Cox in *Angus McMillan: Pathfinder,* the Reverend Login also arranged for a housekeeper in the person of Christina McNaughton to come to *Bushy Park.* McMillan developed a close relationship with Christina and in 1861 they were married by Reverend Login. Login was also to officiate at the end of McMillan's life when he presided over his funeral service in 1865.

Because there were no towns in what was called the Upper District, all the outlying stations were like small towns with their own workforce and families. Marriages and baptisms were carried out at these properties, so McMillan was not the only one to receive these visits.

Undoubtedly the McMillan who boarded the *Minerva* in 1837 was a very different person to the man who married Christina twenty-four years later. He

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[30] Francis Hales, 'Transcript of the diary of Reverend Francis Hales', January 1848–March 1851, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, entry for 22 April 1848, Box 22/4m.
[31] 'Rough Journal of Rev. W. Bean', 15 January–23 February [1849], *Gippsland Standard,* 8 July 1914, p.2. for greater detail Albert E Clark, *The Church of Our Fathers,* Rialto Press Melbourne 1947 pp.29-50.
[32] Cox, pp.134-135.

certainly enjoyed a drink and a smoke, and the strict doctrines with which he swore to abide by would have mellowed over the years. Nevertheless it is difficult to reconcile the picture of a man engaged in wholesale killing of the Indigenous population with one who understood Christian principles and who maintained a close connection with the Church, albeit several years after the massacres took place. In the wilds of Gippsland there is little doubt that he was a man prepared to defend his property and track down those who killed his stock.

Parliament

A petition appeared in *The Age* of 24 August 1859 signed by Port Albert publican John Gellion and seventy-three others requesting that McMillan stand for the parliamentary seat of South Gippsland. Although he was confident to join committees in the local area he did not feel as self-assured in taking up a position on a much larger stage. Whether he felt that he might struggle with the position or was being modest he said: 'I feel bound to serve you, I only regret that my ability to serve you is of limited character, but I will do my best'. He went on to say that he would aim to promote the prosperity of the District.[33]

Although a popular candidate, some said that an attempt was being made to force a squatter with parochial interests on the public. It was said they should 'allow Angus McMillan to remain as he is respected, a kind indulgent employer, good friend and pleasant company'.[34]

McMillan was eventually persuaded to stand and was elected with little competition. He took the oath of office on 13 October 1859 in the second Parliament of the Colony of Victoria. The high expectations that accompanied his election were not to be realised, he made no maiden speech and *Hansard* does not record him taking part in any debates.

Although reticent about speaking in parliament he was involved in numerous committees, including the Royal Society of Victoria's Exploration Committee, responsible for the future Burke and Wills expedition, and the Committee of Management of the Zoological Gardens. He was also a member of the Acclimatisation Society whose advocate Baron Von Mueller wrote to McMillan in May 1865 requesting his and other settlers support for the introduction of salmon into the local streams.[35] In March 1860 he was appointed to a committee of six to report on the best means of protection and assistance to

[33] 'Advertising', *The Age*, 24 August 1859, p.3.
[34] 'South Gippsland – Letter to Electors', *Gippsland Guardian*, 19 August 1859, p.3.
[35] 'Town Talk', *Gippsland Times,* 3 May 1865, p.2.

the Aborigines of Victoria.[36] He also gave advice to the newly established Prospecting Board charged with discovering goldfields in the colony.

McMillan's reluctance to participate in debates rankled with some in Gippsland. One complainant said they never saw Angus McMillan's name in the divisions of the Legislative Assembly and assumed he 'must be ill or have some other cause'. There followed a grudging acknowledgement that McMillan was not a good speaker: 'Though he may be no great orator his experience may still be of the greatest service...'.[37]

McMillan the Member of Parliament - card in R Christie collection

On 2 May 1860 in *The Argus* he refuted their claims, submitting two letters, the first from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly who said no formal record was kept of attendances in the house but: 'I know that I have observed your being a very constant attendant in the House'. The second was from the Chairman of the Committee of Roads and Bridges who stated: 'Re my department no member of the House has been more indefatigable both in affording information and urging the claims of his district than you have been'.[38]

McMillan outlined what he had achieved while in Parliament, which included working with Governor Sir Henry Barkly to put aside 6,000 acres and £5,000 for Aborigines in Gippsland. He concluded by saying: 'It is not necessary that every Member of Parliament should be a debater or an orator to be useful to his constituents' and offered to resign if they were not happy.[39]

The *Gippsland Guardian* responded on 11 May with a heading: 'Lost Member Found'. They recounted that McMillan had only voted in 39 out of 89 divisions but said: 'This when compared with other members is on the whole not much out of the way and quite as much as the majority of the House have done'.[40]

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[36] Legislative Assembly', Aboriginal Protection, *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 March 1860. p.2.
[37] 'Local Intelligence', *Gippsland Guardian* 23 March 1860, p.2.
[38] 'Advertisement To the Constituents of South Gippsland', *The Argus*, 2 May 1860, p.3.
[39] Ibid.
[40] 'Lost Member Found' *Gippsland Guardian,* 11 May 1860. p.2.

In May 1860 he was given leave of absence for the remainder of the session due to ill health and urgent private business.[41] Back at *Bushy Park* in June he was involved in equipping the Gippsland Prospecting Party which was to investigate the headwaters of the Mitchell River and the Dargo River, hoping to discover a new and productive goldfield.

Parliamentary life was always going to be a challenge for McMillan with his extensive and widespread pastoral interests. In December 1856 he had taken over the 16,000 acre *Stratford* run, in 1858 he acquired the 32,000 acre *Eaglevale* run to the north west of *Cungmundi* and in 1860 he took over the 16,000 acre *Tabberabbera* run to the south of *Cungmundi*. In addition to these he still held 16,000 acres at *Bushy Park* and 20,000 acres at *Sandy Creek*. Perhaps he realised that successfully managing his properties and the requirements of being a Member of Parliament were not compatible.

On 2 November 1860 an advertisement appeared in the *Gippsland Guardian* advising that 'failing health compels me to resign'. His last day in the Parliament was 12 September. At fifty years of age the constant travel between his properties to and from Melbourne and the harsh conditions of his early life were most likely taking their toll on his health. In the last years of his life rheumatism was a constant complaint and he suffered several falls.[42]

His short term in Parliament created little comment. The *Gippsland Guardian* wrote:

> 'Whatever feelings may have actuated our remarks from time to time on Mr. McMillan's public career must now lie buried in the regret which we, in conjunction with all who know the private worth of that gentleman, must feel as the reason assigned by him for placing in the hands of the electors the duty of again returning another representative for South Gipps Land.'[43]

Life after Parliament

Despite the pressure of his pastoral interests and poor health McMillan continued to travel to Melbourne to attend meetings as President of the Caledonia Society, a member of the Zoological Committee as well as the Acclimatisation Society, and continued to act as a judge at Sale's Greenwattle Racecourse. He also supported the work of Government Botanist Dr Mueller, who spoke of the

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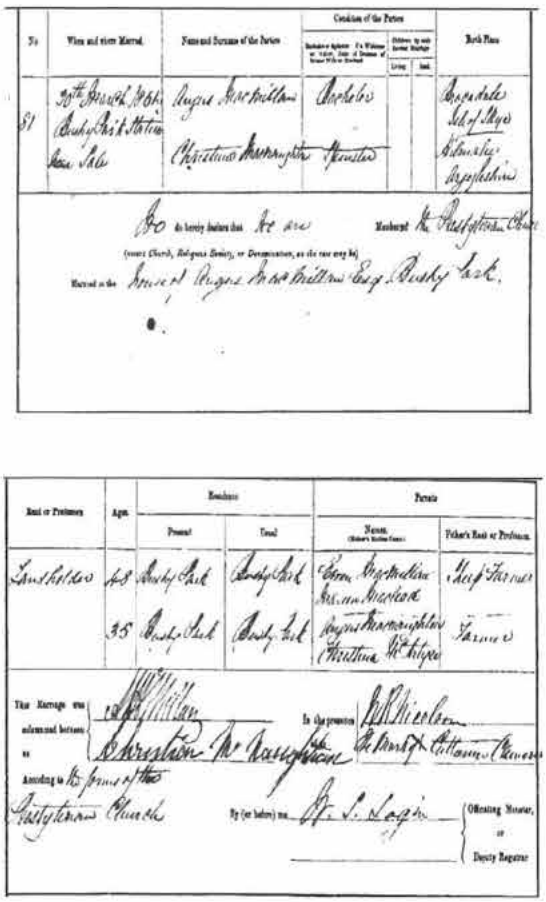
[41] *The Victorian Hansard containing debates and proceedings of the Legislative Council and Assembly of the Colony of Victoria Vols. V – VII* (Melbourne: Vic), 17 May 1860. The private business may have related to his struggling pastoral holdings.

[42] Angus McMillan, 'Alpine Expedition Journal', [unpublished], 1864. Copy held by R. Christie.

[43] *Gippsland Guardian* 2 November 1860. p.2.

generous interest and assistance which McMillan 'always gives to scientific men'.[44]



Marriage Certificate of Angus McMillan and Christina McNaughton Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate for Angus McMillan and Christina McNaughton 1861, No. 801.

On 30 March 1861, at the age of 51 he married 35 year old Christina McNaughton who was most likely either a housekeeper or cook working at *Bushy Park*. The couple already had two children: Ewan born in 1858 and Angus born in 1861. There is some speculation that a daughter may have been born earlier but no records exist to verify this.[45]

Christina McNaughton

Christina was the daughter of Angus McNaughton and Christina McIntyre and according to Scotland Select Births and Baptisms 1564 -1950 was probably born in early 1819 as she was baptised at Kilmallie, Argyll on September 2 1819. This made her 42 years old when she married McMillan not 35 as stated on the marriage certificate.

She travelled to Australia alone aboard the *Mahomed Shah* which departed London on 17 June 1849 and arrived in Port Phillip on 10 October 1849 with 246 immigrants. Her place of residence in Scotland was listed as Fort William, Argyllshire and her occupation was given as a housemaid. The adjustment to her birthdate was made as she was an assisted immigrant, that is her passage was paid for either by the government and

[44] 'Mt. Wellington', *Herald,* 8 April 1861, p.6.

[45] A search of newspapers and Victorian Birth Deaths and Marriages failed to locate the birth of a daughter.

immigration scheme or in Christina's case most likely by an employer. There was a preference for unmarried women because of the imbalance in sexes in the colony and the preferred age for these women was between 15 and 30 years. Christina enhanced her chances of being accepted by reducing her age by a couple of years.

First-class Stations in Gippe Land.

KAYE and BUTCHART have been instructed by Angus M'Millan, Esq., to OFFER for SALE by PUBLIC AUCTION, at their rooms, 56 Bourke-street west, Melbourne, on Friday, November 15, at twelve o'clock,

the following splendid station properties, namely:—

BUSHY PARK, (area, 25,000 acres,)

on the Avon River, together with 1,000 head of well-bred cattle; 2,572 acres of purchased land, all of the richest black mould, 10ft. deep in places, equal to anything in the colony, and securely enclosed by a new and most substantial post-and-rail fence.

The purchased land embraces the entire frontage of the Avon, a distance of six miles, with a depth of from one to two miles, and the remainder of the run, extending back to the Providence Pond Ranges, consists of well-grassed open forest country, but quite unfit for agricultural purposes.

The improvements, in addition to the fencing, comprise a wooden and brick cottage of eight rooms, another new four-roomed cottage, nearly finished, kitchen, stable, store, barn, men's hut, garden, and orchard of six acres, large stock-yard, three cultivation paddocks of 30, 50, and 15 acres, sown with English grasses. The whole run is abundantly watered at all seasons, and the climate and scenery render it a most delightful place of residence.

LITTLE PLAIN STATION, (area, 12,000 acres,)

On the Avon River, and Adjoining Bushy Park.

Together with

1,000 head of well-bred cattle, now fattening

2,750 acres of purchased land of the richest description, embracing the entire frontage of four miles to the Avon, with a depth of one mile back.

The purchased land is all fenced in, and the back country is similar to that of Bushy Park, exceedingly grassed open forest, quite unfit for cultivation, and plentifully watered all the year round.

STRATFORD, (area, 16,000 acres,)

On the Avon River,

Together with

800 head of cattle, in excellent condition

1,760 acres of deep rich black mould, embracing the entire frontage to the Avon, a distance of three miles, by a depth of one mile, all securely fenced in.

The remainder of the run is similar to the back portion of Bushy Park.

The improvements comprise two cottages—one of five, the other of two rooms; woolshed, stock-yard, pre-emptive section of 640 acres, fenced in, cultivation paddock, and horse paddock.

SANDY CREEK,

Adjoining the above three stations on the east side, comprises about 30 square miles of undulating box forest, good, sound, well-grassed country, plentifully watered, and adapted for sheep. The improvements are a five-roomed cottage and kitchen, orchard, horse paddock, huts, hurdles, and every essential for working a sheep station.

With this run will be sold,

13,000 clean healthy sheep of mixed ages and sex.

GUAGUNDI and TARREVARRARA,

With an area of about 72 square miles around the junctions of the Dargo, Mitchell, and Wentworth rivers.

The country consists of open forest, low granite ranges, and timbered plains, all well grassed, and extremely adapted for sheep.

There are a three-roomed cottage, sheep-yard, horse paddocks, cultivation paddock, and garden.

With these runs will be sold,

600 heifers, all over 12 months old.

EAGLE VALE,

Without Stock.

This run contains 11,000 acres of well-grassed plains, table land, and open forest, on the head of the Wen-

When she arrived in Australia she was assigned to a Mr Bennett in Gippsland, who we can assume is William Bennett of *Hazelwood* station. *Hazelwood* had an area of 17,330 acres and from 1844 – 1847 was run by Bennett and Albert Brodribb and then by Bennett on his own until 1860. Christina was paid 15/- per year and was contracted to Bennett for 12 months. Unfortunately there is no further information about Christina until the birth of Ewan in 1858, which would determine that Christina was at *Bushy Park* no later than 1857. Her second son Angus was born during the year 1861, but her life at *Bushy Park* was to see a huge disruption as McMillan was in serious financial difficulty.

Decline

The reasons for the decline in McMillan's fortunes can be attributed to poor investments, a deterioration in stock prices, outstanding debts to agents and the fact that McMillan was not a great book keeper. As a result an advertisement appeared in *The Argus* on 19 September 1861 advising that his agents Kaye and Butchart had been instructed by McMillan to sell all his properties and stock on 15 November at their rooms in Melbourne.

The Age later attributed his downfall to the loss of a considerable amount of money due to a poor

Sale Notice for McMillan's properties, *The Argus,* 19 September 1861.

investment in cattle by an agent. Whether it was Kaye and Butchart is not known. There was no interest in purchasing the runs as the Victorian Government passed a *Land Act* in 1860 which entitled settlers (selectors) to acquire smaller allotments of land at £1 per acre on half the property. They then paid rent on the balance for seven years and at the expiration of this time they could purchase the balance with improvements. As a result Kaye and Butchart foreclosed.

The properties did not change hands immediately and in mid-January 1862 the *Gippsland Times* reported that bushfires 'prevailed all over North Gippsland'. On the 15th it was said that the whole plain from Maffra to Nuntin was ablaze: 'Nearly the whole of *Bushy Park* and the *Strathfieldsaye* runs were on fire, and the greater part of the former was completely burned'.[46]

Officially McMillan's properties were no longer in his hands as Depasturing Licences were issued to Kaye and Butchart for *Tabberabbera* £10, *Bushy Park* £17/10/-, *Cungmundi* £10, *Sandy Creek* £12/10/-, *Stratford* £15 and *Eaglevale* £15.[47]

Despite losing his station in January 1862 he retained some racehorses and entered his three-year old *Firefly* in the Sale Turf Club Handicap to be run in February. He still took part in community affairs, both in Melbourne where he remained a leading figure in the Caledonia Society, and also in Gippsland where in November he attended an anti-pleuropneumonia meeting in Sale and seconded a motion for a subscription to pay inspectors to examine cattle for the disease.

In May 1862 a claim was made by the merchants Turnbull and Howden of Port Albert for a bill of exchange that had been made out to John Campbell of *Glencoe*, Matthew Macalister and Angus McMillan, due on 11 January 1862. The court requested McMillan to pay his share of £87/12/0. The Bank of Victoria also took action in April for the repayment of a promissory note issued in August 1861 for £1,250 to the same men.[48]

There is no record of the outcome of these actions and how he covered these debts when he was forced off *Bushy Park* is not known. However, he retained the station until at least April 1862 as his brother Donald was a witness in the Sale Police Court on 9 April 1862 in a case of trespass. Kaye and Butchart had appointed a Mr Henderson to take possession of *Bushy Park*. Donald refused to give up charge of the station. Following discussion: 'the bench considered the

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[46] 'Local News', *Gippsland Times* 17 January 1862. p.2.

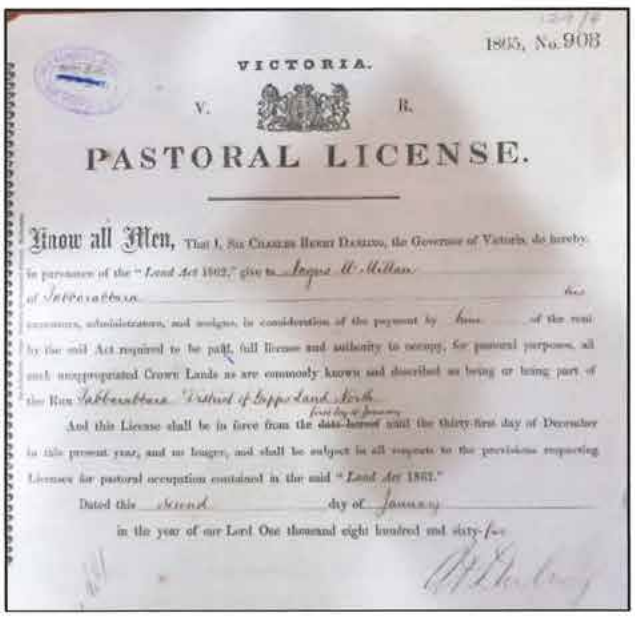
[47] Miscellaneous Papers of exploration and settlement of Gippsland by Angus McMillan. Including original documents re pastoral licence to Angus McMillan for the Tabberabbera run 1864 and 1865. Manuscripts Collection, Box 129/4, Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

[48] Bank of Victoria v McMillan Item 1862, Public Record Office Victoria, Supreme Court of Victoria, Civil Case Files, VPRS 267/P0007.

complainant had failed to make out his authority to expel McMillan's men from the property' and dismissed the case with six guineas costs.[49]

A month later on 9 May the case was back in court. Henderson had appeared at *Bushy Park* with a letter from Kaye and Butchart authorising him to take charge. It was stated that Donald was in charge for his brother. Henderson discharged some of the men but two refused to leave until they were paid their wages and Henderson summoned them for trespass. On this occasion a power of attorney from Kaye and Butchart was produced authorising Henderson to act for them but no document authorising them to take possession so the case was again dismissed with costs of six guineas.[50]

Although Kaye and Butchart retained the main stations, by 1863 the licences for the remote *Cungmundi* and *Tabberabbera* stations were reissued to McMillan. It is probable that Kaye and Butchart found them to be uneconomic to run. Where McMillan and his family were between the sale of *Bushy Park* in 1861 and 1863 is unknown however he must have had access to some property as the Melbourne stock report for 22 May 1862 listed McMillan from Gipps Land selling 132 head of cows at £3/8/-.[51]



1863, No. 903

VICTORIA.

V. R.

PASTORAL LICENSE.

Know all Men, That I, Sir Charles Henry Darling, the Governor of Victoria, do hereby, in pursuance of the "Land Act 1862," give to Angus McMillan of Tabberabbera &c., executors, administrators, and assigns, in consideration of the payment by him of the rent by the said Act required to be paid, full license and authority to occupy, for pastoral purposes, all such unappropriated Crown Lands as are commonly known and described as being or being part of the Run Tabberabbera situated in Gippsland North, for the term of seven years.

And this License shall be in force from the date hereof until the thirty-first day of December in the present year, and no longer, and shall be subject to all requirements of the provisions respecting Licenses for pastoral occupation contained in the said "Land Act 1862."

Dated this second day of January in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and sixty-four.

Pastoral licence for Tabberabbera Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 129/4

Between November 1863 and February 1864 George Balthasar Von Neumayer a magnetician, hydrographer, oceanographer and meteorologist was in Gippsland carrying out a magnetic survey as part of a project to survey of all Victoria. He was accompanied by the artist Nicholas Chevalier. On the 11th of January they reached Foster's station on

[49] Sale Police Court 9 April 1862, *Gippsland Times,* 16 May 1862. p. 3.
[50] Sale Police Court 9 April 1862, *Gippsland Times,* 16 May 1862. p. 3.
[51] Melbourne Stock Report, *The Star,* 22 May 1862, p.1.

the Dargo River and were met by Angus McMillan who Neumayer noted: '...is now living on this desolate station of his, being driven by adverse circumstances from his homestead at *Bushy Park*, his kind and great hospitality having in great measure brought him to this position'.[52] The station that McMillan was on was his own *Cungmundi* although Neumayer refers to it as *Quackmungee.*

Neumayer had a long conversation with McMillan about Gippsland including the Indigenous population of which he reported that McMillan said '...on his opening up of this country, it was peopled with thousands of Blacks, of whom there are now scarcely 120 to be counted in the whole Gippsland territory'. Unfortunately he did not record the reasons for this decline except to say 'Such are the results of civilisation'.[53]

The Alpine Exploration Expedition

Despite advancing years, a less than favourable financial position and deteriorating health, McMillan's role in opening up the Gippsland region for new settlers was not over. In 1864 he was appointed by the government to lead a party to cut a track linking the three main Gippsland goldfields: Omeo, Crooked River and the Jordan. Government contracts were usually tendered for, but John Wilson the Stratford historian who wrote the *History of the Shire of Avon* suggested that being in dire financial circumstances McMillan received the appointment through the influence of Charles Tyers and his friend John Shillinglaw.[54]

McMillan's Party clearing Road to Wood's Point, from a lithograph R. Christie collection.

On Tuesday March 15 1864 having assembled a party of fourteen men including Aboriginal man Jeremy Raymond, the expedition left Stratford for the mountains. Work on the track commenced near *Cungmundi* on the Dargo River. The foreman Mr Short with six men was instructed to cut and clear a dray road sixteen feet wide to the goldfield on the Crooked River. Mr Jones with four men was to clear a road to the Upper Dargo and join the Harrietville track and

[52] George Neumayer, *Results of the Magnetic Survey of the Colony of Victoria Executed during the Years 1858-1864,* p.113.
[53] Ibid p. 114.
[54] 'The Beginnings of Gippsland', *Gippsland Times*, 24 July 1947.

McMillan with the remainder was to clear and mar an eight foot road from Omeo back to the Crooked River.

The work had nearly been completed when on 11 April two of McMillan's men found a piece of quartz heavily impregnated with gold on the Crooked River.[55] This reef was named *Pioneer* after McMillan's horse. The reef appeared to be fabulously rich and in July McMillan was offered £5000 for his share. [56]A gold rush soon began but McMillan continued with his task and completed cutting 207 miles of track eight foot wide, suitable for packhorses. On May 12 he reached the outskirts of the Jordan goldfield at Edward's Hill (later known as Donnelly's Creek).[57]

The Gippsland Exploration Party -Discovery of the Pioneer Reef at Crooked River 1865 Nicholas Chevalier - wood engraving

McMillan's health was failing and the hardships that he had endured over the years were taking their toll. He recounted that on 24 April he had a severe fall when leading a packhorse.[58] As they made their way back to Sale on 23 May he was struck down with rheumatism and was forced to remain in a hut where they camped until he was well enough to travel again on 3 June.[59]

Despite having some income from the Alpine Expedition McMillan's finances did not improve. In January 1865, Sigismund Frankenberg who had a store in Grant, the capital of the new Crooked River goldfield issued two summonses against McMillan for outstanding debts of more than £130.[60] It is possible that these were outstanding amounts for supplies issued for the track cutting expedition. Accounting problems continued to plague McMillan who was out of favour with the government. When the streets and the Grant township were

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[55]R.W. Christie & G.D. Gray, *Victoria's Forgotten Goldfield* p.33.
[56] 'Table Talk', *Gippsland Times,* 8 July 1864, p.2.
[57] Alpine Exploration Expedition, *The Age,* 7 July 1864. p.5.
[58] Alpine Exploration Expedition, p.5.
[59] Alpine Exploration Expedition, p.5.
[60] Public Record Office Victoria, Supreme Court of Victoria, Civil Case Files, VPRS 267/P0007, 1865/42. Writ of Summons for Sigismund Frankenberg and Co. against Angus McMillan, 1865.

renamed in January 1865 after a visit by several notable personages, including Angus McMillan, his name did not appear on any features of the town plan.[61]

Despite support a year earlier from his friend John Shillinglaw, the Government Shipping Master at Port Albert, something happened in the relationship and on 29 April 1865 Shillinglaw issued a writ of summons against McMillan for slander. Shillinglaw demanded recompense of £500. What McMillan said or wrote and the outcome of the matter is unknown.[62]

Sudden death

Although only 55 years of age, McMillan died suddenly in May 1865. In a letter written to George Cox in 1912 it was stated that McMillan died on the way back from Bulgoback near Castleburn, south of Dargo. He had reached Simon Gillies' Iguana Creek Hotel on the Crooked River road on 18 May where he was taken ill and died. The news of his death reached towns by means of a short telegraphic despatch saying: 'The explorer of Gipps Land, died this morning at Iguana Creek, Crooked River road'.[63] The *Leader* said of him: 'Few men have experienced more of the adventure and vicissitude of an Australian career, and scarcely any have passed through the ordeal with so stainless a reputation'.[64] This article was republished in newspapers across the colony and also in NSW.

During the last five months of his life McMillan spent twenty-eight nights in residence at the Club Hotel in Sale, while the family remained at Tabberabbera. On his final night, 10 May he gave the publican a cheque for £40, reducing his debt to £27/7/0. The cheque was dishonoured and returned, but McMillan was not to know of this.[65] His friend Dr Arbuckle carried out an autopsy and McMillan was buried in Sale several days later, the official cause of death given as endocarditis.[66]

McMillan died intestate; the Victorian Supreme Court listed his assets as £1140/4/10, including cash in the Bank of Victoria of £105/4/10.[67] Remarkably

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[61] Christie & Gray, p.46.
[62] Public Record Office Victoria. Writ of Summons for Sigismund Frankenberg and Co. against Angus McMillan, 1865.
[63] 'Telegraphic Despatches' *Bendigo Advertiser,* Vic: 1855 – 1918. 20 May 1865, p.2.
[64] 'Death of Angus McMillan', *Leader,* 27 May 1865. p.17.
[65] Public Record Office Victoria. Probate and Administration Files, VPRS 28/P0001, 5/335, Angus McMillan Grant of Administration, 14 September 1865. https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/1F6B535A-F1DB-11E9-AE98-F3F5A4353144?image=21
[66] Endocarditis usually occurs when germs in the body travel through the blood and attach to damaged areas of the heart. People with damaged or artificial heart valves or other heart conditions are most at risk.
[67] Public Record Office Victoria. Angus McMillan Grant of Administration, 14 September 1865.

his only recorded debt was to the Club Hotel in Sale which was settled by his estate. The stations were valued at £500, his other assets amounted to £180 for horses and cattle and £5 for pigs and poultry. He was also owed £200 but whether the estate received these funds is unknown.[68]

William Pearson MLA believed McMillan left his wife and family in poor circumstances and moved a motion in Parliament that £2,000 be placed on estimates for the family as he said they were destitute and dependent on the charity of friends.[69]

Debate ensued as to whether he had been compensated adequately for his work on the Alpine Expedition. There was veiled praise for his achievements, but these were overshadowed by concerns about his accounting practises. Mr Sullivan MLA said that 'he was a good and useful man but no bookkeeper'.[70] A number of McMillan's cheques had been dishonoured by the government as he had not provided vouchers for his expenses and he overdrew the amount appropriated for the work.[71] Despite some disagreement, the amount of compensation requested was finally agreed to as a gratuity to the widow and children, to be invested in trustees for their benefit.

In June 1865 a letter was sent to the Curator of Intestate Estates by McMillan's wife Christina. While Christina signed her marriage certificate in 1861, this letter does not appear to have been written by her. It was written in a flowing hand but signed 'Christan' in a shaky hand, and then 'McMillan' was written with the same flourish as the earlier part of the letter.[72] The letter stated that Christina was not prepared to take out letters of administration and requested the Curator take the necessary steps to finalise her husband's estate.[73]

Very little is known about Christina's life after the death of Angus. The family lived in Sale and were joined there by McMillan's brother Donald who had been with the family at *Bushy Park*. Donald however was not well and was an added responsibility for Christina as he suffered from regular fits and a heart complaint. He died on May 23 1869 while in a fit and from natural causes at the house. Both Christina and young Ewan gave testimony at the inquest.[74]

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[68] *History of Prices*, (London: Spottiswoode and Company, 1856), p.840.
[69] *Victorian Hansard* 1864/5, pp. 1163-4.
[70] *Victorian Hansard* 1864/5, pp. 1163-4.
[71] *Victorian Hansard*, 13 July 1865 pp. 1179-1180.
[72] Public Record Office Victoria, Angus McMillan Grant of Administration VPRS 28/P0001, 5/335 Letter to Curator of Intestate Estates.
[73] Public Record Office Victoria, 5/335 Letter to Curator of Intestate Estates.
[74] Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS24/P000, 1869/428.

As they got older, both McMillan's sons planned to move to Queensland and create a home for their mother.[75] However Angus junior, who was employed in a solicitor's office in Sale was the only one to go to North Queensland. Ewan remained in Victoria and was employed in the Bank of Victoria for ten years.

Christina however was not well; the cause of her 'disquietude' was said to be in relation to an amount of £2,000 plus accumulated interest which her two sons were to receive from trustees, but due to a difficulty had not been paid.[76] This appears to be the exact amount that the Parliament allocated to the family, which was to be placed in the boys' accounts after they turned 21.

On 31 January 1884 Christina drowned herself in the Latrobe River. She had been staying at the Victoria Hotel near Sale. Her death was barely reported, apart from a transcript of the inquest in the *Gippsland Times* and one article in the *Maffra Spectator*.[77]

Neither son showed the enterprise displayed by their father, remaining private people and taking no part in community affairs. Only Ewan was to marry and have a family but neither son was ever to rise to the heights achieved by their father.

Angus McMillan had risen from being an employee to a substantial property owner and then returned to more humble circumstances. What actually caused his demise will probably never be known. From modest beginnings he grew in stature and took a role in the affairs of the District. He entertained men from all walks of life: ministers of religion, government officials, explorers, fellow squatters and his native Scotsmen. All were welcome and many were employed on the station. He appears to have been a generous man. In *Caledonia Australis* Don Watson says he was one of the 'very few Europeans in the 50s who took a philanthropic interest in the Aborigines and that 'no squatter in Gippsland was more generous'.[78]

Although McMillan's later personal life is not well documented, some detail is provided by the numerous surviving accounts detailing the standing in which he was held by his contemporaries. These are difficult to reconcile with the allegations made over 100 years after his death of his apparent involvement in systematically hunting down and killing the Indigenous population.

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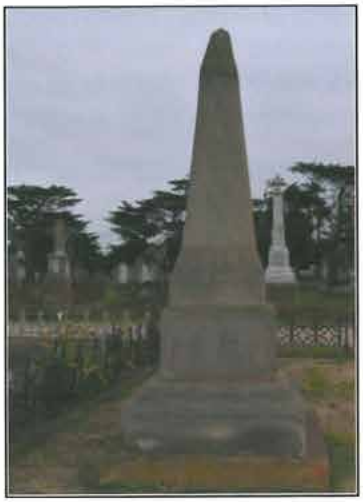
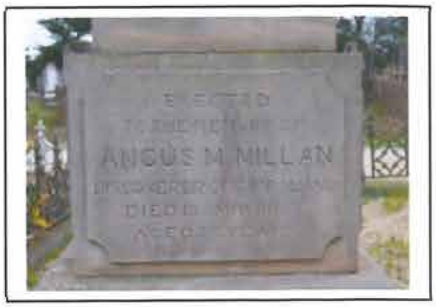
[75] 'Death of Mrs Angus McMillan' *The Maffra Spectator* Maffra, Vic, 31 January 1884, p.3.
[76] 'Death of Mrs Angus McMillan', p.3.
[77] 'The Late Mrs McMillan, The Inquest' *Gippsland Times,* 1 February 1884, p.1.
[78] Watson, pp.190-191.

McMillan Grave
Sale cemetery





Chapter 12

Protector and distributor of stores

'unprecedented reduction in the number of Aborigines' was due to the occupation of the country by the white population'.

Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines

Despite William Thomas's attempts to keep the Indigenous population away from the town of Melbourne it was a central place for the members of different tribes to meet and hold corroborees. The availability of alcohol was the main reason Thomas did not like their presence in town. In 1861 after a quarrel in the new Princes Bridge Hotel (renamed Young and Jackson's in 1875) a group of eight Aborigines was ejected and responded by sending half a dozen spears through the windows. [1]

The town did however offer members of the different tribes the opportunity to converse. William Thomas met with two Gippsland 'blacks' in Melbourne in June 1859 who had been talking with members of the Goulburn tribe. The Gippsland natives told Thomas that they wanted a 'tract of land like the Goulburn blacks', meaning a reserve. Thomas told them he would contact Angus McMillan who would pursue the matter with the government.[2]

McMillan responded promptly on June 13 whilst resident at the Port Phillip Hotel in Melbourne. He wrote to the Surveyor General C.W. Ligar and said that:

> '... the Aboriginal Natives of the Gipps Land District... have ...for some considerable time been living in a state of open warfare, by which means and owing to the alarming prevalence of many virulent disorders among them their numbers are becoming so rapidly decimated as to threaten their almost total extinction...'[3]

McMillan suggested that science would benefit by extending the knowledge of the 'peculiarities and modes of existence of this very interesting portion of the human race'. He concluded by saying that 'a lamentable state of ignorance prevails. With regard... to their social habits as well as moral and physical existences'.[4]

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[1] Jean Gamel unpublished diary held by R Christie.

[2] Stephens, pp.211-212.

[3] Angus McMillan, 'McMillan Proposes an Aboriginal Station, 13 June 1859'. *Maffra and District Historical Society Bulletin*, 18, no. 65, June 1990, p.5.

[4] Angus McMillan Proposes an Aboriginal Station, Letter dated 13 June 1859, *Maffra and District Historical Society,* Vol 18. No. 65. June 1990.

Thomas agreed with McMillan, saying that: 'The internecine wars that they are constantly waging are one great cause of their disappearing so quickly from amongst us…'

McMillan obviously had a concern for this Indigenous population possibly enhanced by his association with those living on *Bushy Park.* He is the only Gippsland squatter who appears to show more than a passing interest in the Kurnai and saw a benefit in studying their customs and culture perhaps with a view to improving their circumstances.

McMillan was not equipped with the skills or means to carry out such a study and any knowledge he gained through his interaction with the Kurnai was lost when he died. However, in his travels across the colony William Thomas recorded a substantial compendium of material on the Indigenous tribes including their languages and customs. Unfortunately the information he collected only remained as notes and was never compiled into a book. The first methodical study of the Kurnai was undertaken by Alfred William Howitt and published in 1880 with Lorimer Fison in their joint work *Kamilaroi and Kurnai.*

The question of creating a reserve in Gippsland for the Kurnai was raised with William Tennant Dawson who had come to Gippsland in 1849 as assistant surveyor. McMillan suggested that he should 'mark out and define a portion of Land in the Locality of the parishes of *Bundalaguah* and *Wah de lock* of an area, say 6000 acres' for the Aborigines, to be managed by trustees.[5]

Thomas supported the idea and outlined a plan to support the Aborigines across the colony. In Gippsland he said that three depots should be set up to accommodate the mountain tribe, the swamp and lagoon tribe and the flat country tribe. He also recommended an area of 6000 acres to be developed under a trusteeship as he said there were many adults and children still left in Gippsland. He advised that McMillan and McLeod from the far east would render every assistance to the government in developing this proposal.[6]

The area that was suggested as a reserve included the northern part of Foster's *Heart* run and the southern part of his *Boisdale* run. William Foster objected strongly saying there were fewer than fifty Aborigines in Gippsland and that they congregated around the Lakes and *Bushy Park*. He suggested that McMillan should resign a section of his run for their benefit. Foster commented that his (McMillan's) 'philanthropy would I am sure induce him cheerfully to resign a corner of his run for the benefit of a tribe which he has of late years constituted himself the protector'.[7]

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Stephens, p. 219.
[7] Report by W.T. Dawson, 'McMillan Proposes an Aboriginal Station', *Maffra and District Historical Society,* Vol 18. No. 65. June 1990. pp. 6-9.

Surveyor Dawson took Foster to task over his comments, saying that there were fifty Aborigines inhabiting the Boisdale area independent of the rest of Gippsland. He also said that McMillan's philanthropy accounted for the

State Library of NSW, Sydney, Eugene Von Guerard vol. 11: Sketchbook xxxii, no. 13-14. Australian, 1860-1861, Image 7.

numbers around *Bushy Park* as 'whenever a number assemble on his station (he) is in the habit of killing a Bullock and distributing meat and clothing amongst them'.[8]

Establishment of the Central Board to watch over the interests of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria

The Victorian Government was aware of the declining Indigenous population and in 1858 a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was established to enquire into the condition of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. The Committee first met in October 1858 and a report was completed and presented to Parliament in February 1859. The result of this report was the establishment of a *Central Board to Watch over the Interests of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria.*

Information for the report was obtained after a number of witnesses were examined by the Committee. These included William Thomas and the Reverend F.W. Spieseke a Moravian who had briefly established a mission at Lake Boga. A circular with questions was also circulated to residents across the colony whom

[8] Report by W.T. Dawson, *Maffra and District Historical Society,* Vol 18. No. 65. June 1990. n.b. the letters had been found by John Booth of the Maffra Office of the Department of Conservation's file on *Ramahyuck.*

they believed could provide information on the Aborigines. There were however few responses from those in Gippsland, only G.D. Hedley from Palmerston and Andrew McCrae, a magistrate in Gippsland in 1852 contributed. The questions were in the main negative, such as 'can they be saved from extinction?'.

Many of the replies indicated that they were a race destined to die out, a view expressed by William Hull J.P. from Portland Bay area. He had no sympathy for the Indigenous population and said, 'I believe that it is the design of Providence that the inferior races should pass away before the superior races and that independently of all other causes, since we have occupied the country, the aborigine must cease to occupy it'.[9]

Even William Thomas who had spent years working with the Indigenous population and probably had a better understanding of their needs than anyone else responded in a negative manner. Thomas was convinced that in the settled districts the Aborigines would become extinct within a few years. The only hope he believed was to remove the children from their tribe and educate them. The prevention of their return to the tribe would improve their condition and 'avert the extinction of the aboriginal race'.[10] Charles Tyers was of a similar opinion and that taking the children from their parents, not allowing them any intercourse with their race and educating them and placing them on a reserve under proper supervision was the only way they could be saved from extinction.[11]

Andrew McCrae agreed and said 'it is surely most desirable that they should be separated, if possible, from their aboriginal parents and assigned to persons known to and approved by the Board.[12]

After assessing all the information received the committee concluded that the 'unprecedented reduction in the number of Aborigines' was due to the occupation of the country by the white population. The problem was exacerbated by hunger as a consequence of the scarcity of game, vices acquired by contact with the white race i.e. alcohol and cruelty and ill treatment of them.[13] The Committee concluded that great injustice had been perpetrated on the Aborigines and proper provision should have been made for them after they lost their hunting grounds

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[9] Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines; Together with the Proceedings of committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices Melbourne: Government Printer, p.9.

[10] Ibid p.40

[11] Ibid p.76

[12] *First Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over The Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria,* 1861. p. 22.

[13] Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines 1858 -9, p.iii.

As there was no way that the country was going to be returned to its original inhabitants, the initial recommendation from the report was to allow Aborigines to settle on reserves on their own hunting grounds. This may have been sound in theory but many of their hunting grounds had ceased to exist and were now populated by cattle and sheep. The report also required them to abandon their traditional lifestyle and establish gardens, agriculture and pastoral pursuits. Missionaries or in their absence lay men would try to foster an interest in occupations of 'civilized life' and convert them to Christianity.[14]

Following the publication of the report the Board met for the first time in June 1860 and then met on a regular basis, often more than once a month. From the information they had received it was apparent that they had to supply food and clothing to the Indigenous population across the colony. Initially it was thought that local committees would manage this distribution for those not on reserves to address 'the imperfect manner in which the physical wants of the 'blacks' had been previously attended to. However these committees were dysfunctional as the distances between the members involved were too great to make regular meetings viable. The committees were therefore abolished and a number of 'Honorary Correspondents' appointed to watch over the interests of Aborigines, monitoring their health, furnishing them with stores and clothing and generally it was hoped improving their overall position wherever they were situated as far as funds allowed.

In Gippsland six correspondents were appointed G.D. Hedley MLA at *Palmerston*, John Johnson Gippsland (*Mewburn Park*), Angus McMillan *Bushy Park*, John McLeod *Lucknow*, Archibald McLeod *Bairnsdale* (also had property at Buchan and Orbost or Snowy River) and J.W. Simmons *Swan Reach*.

Thomas estimated that 221 Gunaikurnai were still living in Gippsland in 1860 but gave no further details . He did detail births and deaths across his Yarra and Westernport District. Between April 1839 and December 1859, he estimated that there had been 210 deaths, 121 males and 17 females. More concerning was the birth rate where he claimed there had only been 11 male and 17 female births. These figures reflected a population in serious decline. It could be surmised that a similar decline was taking place in Gippsland.

The role of the Correspondents

While the issue of the location of the reserve in Gippsland was being discussed McMillan submitted a request to the newly established Committee of the Central Board for stores on behalf of the natives of Gippsland. The Secretary authorised him to spend £100 to purchase blankets, tea, sugar and other

[14] Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines 1858-9,p. v.

essentials.[15] A month later he requested a further allocation of £750, however this amount was refused due to financial constraints imposed on the Board. McMillan estimated that there were 250 Aborigines in Gippsland from eight tribes including those at the Genoa River in the far east.

However, there were problems with the issue of supplies, particularly the distribution of blankets. Thomas had been contacted by McMillan who he referred to as a 'very respectable man' and told that the first issue of fifty blankets had to be torn in half by McCrae to ensure a sufficient number received them. [16] The blankets were to become an issue as they were not waterproof unlike the rugs the Gunaikurnai made for themselves. In wet weather the blankets were damp resulting in diseases further decimating the population.

Following this initial allocation of stores to McMillan the Committee

STATEMENT of the total cost of all Clothing, Provisions, &c. (including transport thereof) supplied for the use of the Aborigines from the commencement of the year 1860 to the present time (August, 1861).

Station.	1860.			1861.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Melbourne (guardian's office)	28	1	1	51	7	6
Swan Hill	210	3	4	231	3	4
Mount Franklyn ...	267	16	6	33	2	11
Upper Goulburn... ...	127	9	6			
Acheron River	366	0	4	536	8	10
Portland	103	2	6	168	1	8
Coast Tribe	52	10	6			
Yarra Tribe	37	12	2	128	7	3
Gipps Land	246	9	4	815	3	4
Geelong	68	14	7	80	14	8
Sandford	65	17	11	164	14	8
Lake Hindmarsh ...	74	17	3	647	14	2
Loddon	61	6	2	27	5	4
Mount Shadwell... ...	35	11	0	216	17	11
Darling and Murray Junction	115	7	0			
Yelta, Lower Murray ...	235	12	10	625	16	7
Tooram...	41	6	0	259	13	2

Station.	1860.			1861.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Bacchus Marsh... ...	31	12	3	30	15	5
Chiltern	110	2	0	33	2	11
Warrnambool	48	14	0			
Camperdown	164	14	0			
Palmerston	...			33	2	11
Yering						
Echuca ...	...			66	17	11
Little River	...			47	10	1
Hamilton	...			79	5	0
Buchan	...			192	1	5
Cobram	...			29	3	10
Western Port	...			11	6	10
Belfast	...			21	15	0
Upper Murray	...			6	8	0
Yackandandah	...			33	2	11
	2,493	0	3	4,571	8	7

First Report of the Central Board appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria p.35.

requested a census be carried out to determine numbers of men women and children in his area and the condition they were in. They also requested a schedule showing how he had disposed of the stores already received. No response was received from McMillan so in late November Thomas was ordered to travel to

[15] Minutes of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines, 7 June 1860 – 29 July 1861, 25 June 1860.

[16] Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines; together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices Melbourne: Government Printer, p.2.

Gippsland and report generally on the condition and number of the natives with a view to the establishment of a reserve.

BUCHAN AND SNOWY RIVER, ETC.—J. C. Macleod, 8th July, 1861.-70 pairs blankets, 70 red and blue shirts, 30 pairs trowsers, No. 4 ; 10 pairs ditto, No. 2; 2 tons flour, 10 cwt. sugar, I chest tea, 1 cwt. tobacco, 30 lb. Epsom salts, 50 lb. sulphur, 12 chipping hoes, 144 fish-hooks, assorted ; 1 doz. tomahawks, small; 24 lb. twine for lines and nets, 6 lb. thread for sewing rugs, 2 doz. pairs boots, 1 doz. felt hats, 70 twilled shirts, 6 doz. hair combs, 3 doz. tooth combs, 3 doz. camp looking-glasses, 6 pocket knives, 112 lb. soap, 1 box pipes, 6 doz. woollen comforters, 3 doz. pint pots, 3 doz. quart pots, 1 gross needles, No. 3 ; 6 doz. coarse huckaback towels.

PALMERSTON—G-. D. Hedley, 26th December, 1860.-6 bags flour, 3 bags sugar, 1 chest tea, 25 lb. tobacco. 9th May, 1861.-20 grey blankets, 20 guernsey shirts, 15 pairs trowsers.

GIPPS LAND—A. McMillan, 16th July, 1860.-125 pairs of blankets, 188 twilled shirts, 100 pairs moleskin trowsers, a ton sugar, 24 tons flour, 2 chests tea, 112 lbs. tobacco. 26th December, 1860. -5 cwt. sugar, 1 ton flour, 2 chests tea, 50 lbs. tobacco. 3rd June, 1861.-100 pairs blankets, 50 pairs small size ditto, 144 blue serge shirts, 48 small size ditto, 60 pairs moleskin trowsers, 48 leather belts, 144 Scotch twilled shirts, 72 ditto for boys, 48 pairs trowsers for boys, 48 pairs boots, 72 felt hats, 288 fish-hooks, 60 pocket knives, 288 fishing lines, 50 lbs. twine for nets, 144 tin quart pots, 144 tin pint ditto, corks and sinks for nets, also small rope ; 48 2-gallon tin camp-kettles, 12 iron buckets, 72 tomahawks, 1 medicine chest, with directions ; 30 lb. salts, 20 lb. sulphur, 6 tons flour, 1 ton sugar, 2 boxes tea, 4 cwt. soap, 4 cwt. tobacco, 1 gross pipes.

MISSION STATION, GIPPS LAND—T. Bulmer, 8th July, 1861.-1 ton flour, 3 cwt. sugar, chest tea, cwt. rice, f cwt. tobacco, 1 gross pipes, 70 pairs blankets, 70 pairs trowsers, 70 shirts, 70 serge shirts, 100 yards

As Thomas travelled east he counted the number of Gunaikurnai in different camps and recorded the names and genders of those he met. McMillan was away from Bushy Park when Thomas arrived but was greeted by a number of Gunaikurnai camped on the property. They complained about the distance that they had to travel to either *Bushy Park* or McCleod's property at Buchan or Snowy River for blankets and rations. Thomas called at Bushy Park on his return trip and found fifty-four Aborigines living on the property. He also obtained from McMillan J[r] (sic) a list of the blankets, clothes and rations that were distributed in 1860.[17]

In the First Report of the Central Board published in 1861 two allocations of supplies were made for 1860. G.D. Hedley at Palmerston received supplies and rations but no value is entered in the cost statement. Gippsland received an allocation of £246 9s 4d and from the table it appears that the amount was to be

[17] Stephens, 19 December 1860.

distributed between McMillan at *Bushy Park* and Hedley at Palmerston as both these were referred to as Gippsland. Although not listed according to Thomas an allocation had also been made to McLeod at Buchan and Snowy River in 1860.

The remaining allocations were all made in July 1861. Hedley received a small allocation of £33 2s 11d but no detail is provided as to what this was made up of. On July 8 McLeod at Buchan and Snowy River received an allocation of £192 1s. The statement of total cost allocates £815 3s 4d to Gippsland on 16 July 1861, both Angus McMillan and the Gippsland Mission Station coming under this heading. At this time it is likely that McMillan still had a considerable number of Aborigines living at Bushy Park.

The following allocations were made for the period 1 September 1861 to 31 July 1862:-

Swan Reach Gipps Land	£160 15s 10d
Bushy Park Sale	£423 16 9d
Palmerston	£28 6s 1d
Buchan Snowy River	£355 10s 10d
Mission Station Gipps Land	£274 18s 10d
Mafra(sic) Gipps Land	£13 4s 0d

[18]

The system of supplying stores was not satisfactory as most goods were shipped to the correspondent's stations from Melbourne entailing a considerable freight cost. The suggestion was made that the heavier stores such as flour and sugar should be purchased locally where they were required. The Board was also concerned that blankets and other items of clothing were being bartered for liquor after reports to that effect by the correspondents. To alleviate this 1600 pairs of blankets and 800 shirts had been made with a distinct pattern.

If the shirts and blankets were being bartered then this could have been the reason for high orders of the certain goods.

Questions were raised about McMillan's bookkeeping and on 5 May 1862 the Board said: 'McMillan should be written to for a statement showing what was done by him last year: and how the stores at his dispersal were used'.[19] McMillan was not the only Correspondent to have questions asked about the distribution of supplies. A request was also made to Dr. Hedley to report on the distribution of stores for the past year. In November J.C. McLeod also received a letter asking for returns showing how the stores were distributed in his care. A report for McLeod was finally submitted in the following January.

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[18] *Second Report of Central Board: Appendix 3 Distribution of Stores since 31 July 1861.* p.21.

Peter Gardner has suggested that McMillan was involved in corruptly 'dispersing' the stores as he made no reports to the Board and this lack of records at a time of financial distress could have been a cover up.[20] There was no response from McMillan or Hedley regarding the issue and it is impossible to tell whether Gardner's allegations are correct as it is not known how many Aborigines were being catered for. The Second Report in 1862 commented: 'The old system of

GIPPS LAND (EAST OF LAKE KING), SWAN REACH, J. W. SIMMONS.-4th April, 1862

8000lbs flour, 150lbs tea, 2000lbs sugar, 150lbs tobacco, 50 pairs blankets

GIPPS LAND, F. A. HAGENAUER.—March, 1862.-8000 lbs. flour, 100 lbs. tea, 2000 lbs. sugar, 100 lbs. tobacco, 250 lbs. soap, 576 pipes, 100 pairs blankets, 80 pairs trousers, 24 pairs boots, 360 yards print, 20 papers needles, 6 lbs. thread, 144 quart pots, 144 pint pots, 62 toma-hawks, 48 camp kettles, 144 fish-hooks. June 27th-48 serge shirts.

MISSION STATION, GIPPS LAND, REV. J. Bulmer.—March, 1862-8000 lbs. flour, 100 lbs. tea, 2000 lbs. sugar, 400 lbs. rice, 100 lbs. tobacco, 224 lbs. soap.

PALMERSTON G. D. HEDLEY.—Stores sent to W. R. Belcher, Customs department, Port Albert.-7th May, 1862-600 lbs. flour, 200 lbs. sugar, 50 lbs tea, 20 lbs. tobacco, 9 pairs grey blankets, 9 Guernsey shirts, 6 pairs trousers.

ORBOST, SNOWY RIVER, J. C. MACLEOD.—March, 1862-8000 lbs. flour, 100 lbs. tea, 2000 lbs. sugar, 500 lbs. rice, 100 lbs. tobacco, 2 gross pipes, 40 pairs blankets, 30 pairs boots, 100 yards print, 50 yards calico, 24 billies, 24 tomahawks, 864 fish-hooks, 36 fishing lines.

2nd Report of the Central Board, Appendix 3, Distribution of stores since 31 July 1861, p.21.

furnishing supplies for the use of the blacks to the settlers in Gippsland was most unsatisfactory'.[21] It went on to say that two settlers had acquired large quantities of supplies but had not accounted for their distribution. No names were mentioned.

McMillan received an allocation to the value of £423 16s 9d for the period September 1861 to July 1862 however in Appendix 3 of the report stores were distributed to the Gippsland stations and missions from March 1862. There was no distribution of stores for *Bushy Park.* Whether or not McMillan was involved in some corrupt enterprise will probably never be proven but he remained a correspondent to the Board until his death in 1865.

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[20] Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father*, pp.78-79.

[21] *1864 Third Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria* 1864. p.7.

A Reserve for the Gunakurnai

Foster had been successful in preventing the development of a reserve in the Bundalaguah area despite the fact that when Reverend Hagenauer visited Gippsland he found a large camp of Brayakoloong at Bundalaguah a short distance from Maffra (Green Hills) and within half a day's walk to *Bushy Park*. Maffra or Green Hills, several kilometres from *Bushy Park* but closer than Bundalaguah was suggested as a possible alternative site for a reserve.

McMillan who by now had lost the *Bushy Park* run pushed for a portion of it to be allocated for a reserve. Kaye and Butchart, who now owned the property accused him of putting forward this proposition in a 'spirit of malice' and attached a statutory declaration from their manager of the station which said: 'That he was determined to show his teeth to the said Kaye and Butchart, do all he could to give them trouble'.[22]

McMillan continued to fight for the rights of the Gunaikurnai to have their own land. In the Legislative Assembly May 1862, a supply bill was put forward to grant £6,000 to meet all expenses for rations, clothing, stores, medical attendance, buildings and salaries of guardians and teachers for the Aborigines. Several amendments to increase the amount being allocated were put and lost and it was left to McMillan's successor in Parliament, G.D. Hedley to speak with regard to Gippsland.

He said: 'The scheme of setting apart land reserves was frustrated in Gipps Land by the land reserved being taken up under the occupation licence system; and it was only by the influence of Mr Angus McMillan that the aboriginals were not turned off altogether'.[23]

This point was reinforced when an attempt was made to establish a reserve at Maffra. Reverend Hagenauer contacted the Central Board about the Maffra land in March 1862 and although the Board was accepting of the proposal, they advised him to apply to the Department of Lands and Works to have it gazetted a reserve. The land was situated to the north of Maffra and *Mewburn Park* station close to the Macalister River. It was an ideal situation for a reserve as the Report stated that 'the blacks most frequently congregate in the neighbourhood of Mafra (sic) or Bushy Park…'

The Second Report of the Central Board published later in the year stated that the Moravian Missionary, Reverend Hagenauer had taken up the option of Maffra and formed a mission station there on 6000 acres that had been set aside

[22] Australian Archives Brighton B313 Item 158. 2 June 1863 ref Gardner not found on website

[23] The Victorian Parliament, *The Argus*, 22 May 1862 p.6.

for a reserve. [24] In March 1862 he said that the natives were showing a desire to settle down and had stripped bark for their huts at Green Hills (Maffra). He estimated the total population of Aborigines from Port Albert to Buchan and the Snowy River to be 229.[25] William Thomas also believed the area was appropriate as it was not suitable for farming but did have good game on it and the Aborigines could indulge in their old occupations and habits... without impacting on the settlers.[26]

Despite his initial enthusiasm for the Maffra site the Department of Lands and Works would not reserve the site because it fell within an area considered suitable for agriculture.

On 2 December Thomas met with McMillan, who was not happy with this outcome. Thomas said he had protested strongly against the action which had come about due to a new Land Act that he said was making awful inroads on the 'blacks'. His protests held little weight against those who wanted to farm the land.

Thomas appears to have held McMillan in reasonably high regard in his dealings with the Gunaikurnai referring to him as someone 'who has ever been a friend to the blacks in Gippsland'.[27] McMillan was supposed to meet with Thomas and the Secretary of the Central Board the next morning but did not keep the appointment.

The settlers ultimately won the battle and the Maffra land was not reserved for the Aborigines. Instead, in late 1862 Reverend Hagenauer found land on the Avon River near where it entered the Lakes system. It comprised about 2,000 acres and in January 1863 a deputation to the Board of Land and Works requested the reservation of the land for 'the blacks'.[28] Hagenauer said it was well suited, remote from white settlement with good hunting and 'well liked by the blacks'.[29] The following year, with the Mission being established Hagenauer stated there were 210 natives still in Gippsland. There was still opposition to the new site as the government said it had been surveyed at considerable expense and it was also within an area set aside for agricultural settlement. Angus McMillan

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[24] *Second Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria* 1862. p.6.
https://rest.neptune-prod.its.unimelb.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/e4cf2a34-52eb-5526-a1dc-dc8fe67d4a6c/content

[25] *Second Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria* 1862. p.17.
https://rest.neptune-prod.its.unimelb.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/e4cf2a34-52eb-5526-a1dc-dc8fe67d4a6c/content

[26] 'McMillan Proposes an Aboriginal Station', pp.6-9.

[27] Stephens, 2 December 1862, p.395.

[28] 'Deputations to Government. *Leader,* 31 January 1863. p.12.

[29] 'Colonial News', *Gippsland Guardian,* 6 February 1863. p.4.

objected and informed the Board 'that a slaughter of blacks had taken place on it some time ago, and on that account the blacks would not occupy it on any consideration'. He believed the siting of the station was too close to the site of the massacre at Boney Point.

Ramahyuck Image courtesy of State Library of Victoria

The initial objections were dismissed, saying the Central Board would be willing to defray the costs and secondly that the Board of Land and Works had the ability to appropriate the land for whatever use it determined. With regard to McMillan's concerns, it was stated that Reverend Hagenauer from the Ramahyuk Mission[30] said: 'That the ground in question the blacks were particularly fond of, and he pointed out that though a slaughter had taken place a number of years ago on perhaps one acre the piece of land could be in no way objectionable'.[31]

Robert Brough Smyth, Secretary to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines and author of *The Aborigines of Victoria* 1878 said that it was a question 'of how much McMillan had been impressed with a slaughter which took place about fifteen years ago.'[32] This comment is interesting and the word 'impressed' suggests that McMillan had not been present at Boney Creek but that the actions undertaken there had deeply affected him. Brough Smyth's comment

[30] J.E. Hutton, *A History of Moravian Missions,* London: Moravian Publication Office, 1922.
[31] 'Colonial News', *Gippsland Guardian,* 6 February 1863, p.4.
[32] Ibid

about the date of the massacre is obviously incorrect but may indicate that it took place later than 1840.

Hagenauer concluded by saying:

> '...that the natives settled there in numbers, and were fond of the place, and surely that was sufficient proof that the slaughter which was said to have taken place had not operated on their minds up to the present time'.[33]

McMillan may have opposed this site for purely personal reasons as he had recommended his old property of *Bushy Park* as a suitable site, now in the hands of Kaye and Butchart. Ramahyuck was already underway so Hagenauer was not interested in a move.

The Missions take over control of supplies

Although McMillan was still listed as a correspondent in the 1864 report for the period recorded between August 1862 and July 1863 he received no funding and was probably no longer resident at *Bushy Park*. In January 1863 Hagenauer was authorised to 'remove the stores now lying in a damaged state at McMillan's station. A letter was sent to McMillan advising him of this action.[34]

Group of Gunaikurnai - courtesy Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation - note traditional cloaks being worn by men at rear and blankets by those in front.

The Third Report of the Central Board presented in September 1864 again commented that the old system of supplying rations and clothing was most unsatisfactory in Gippsland. It referred to two settlers who had received large quantities of food and clothing but had not supplied any returns as to their distribution. The system for allocating rations had changed and Correspondents were no longer receiving goods. Again no names were mentioned.

The colony was now divided into six regions Gippsland became the southeastern region and stretched from Port Albert to Buchan and the Snowy River. Hagenauer

[33] Ibid.

[34] Minutes of the Central Board appointed to watch over the interests of the Aborigines, 7 June 1860 – 29 July 1861, 12 January 1863

estimated that there were 221 Aborigines across the area. Apart from Swan Reach which received rations and clothing to the value of £63 1s 1d the 'Sale Gippsland (Mission Station)' was the only other recipient of provisions which totalled £323 12s 6d. It can be assumed that these funds were divided between Reverend Bulmer's Mission which was established at Lake Tyers and Hagenauers on Lake Wellington.

McMillan's life in the public domain was finished and he no longer had any influence over the lives of the Gunaikurnai. The two missions now dominated and controlled the lives of the local people for the next fifty years. He had acknowledged the plight faced by all Aboriginal people and for several years had attempted to improve their lives by the establishment of a reserve and as an honorary Correspondent. Those living at *Bushy Park* were looked after and were content to stay about the homestead. Whether he was complicit in pilfering the government stores cannot be proven. Regardless of his successes and failures as a Correspondent he maintained a relationship with members of the Gunaikurnai who were prepared to assist him in what was to be his final task. On the Alpine Expedition an Indigenous companion named Jeremy was his constant companion on the trip.

Chapter 13
McMillan's Legacy

The revision of Australian settler histories to acknowledge frontier violence has led to the amendment of some monuments and the creation of 'counter-monuments' to recognise Aboriginal peoples and histories.
Jane Lyndon 'Driving By' 2005.

From the time of Angus McMillan's death in May of 1865 until the 1980s he was hailed as 'the Discoverer of Gippsland' and revered as a local hero. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries articles about his exploratory feats appeared in the Gippsland and Melbourne papers. As part of the Gippsland Centenary celebrations in 1940 *The Age* published an illustrated article *The Finding of Gippsland, McMillan's Journey, Centenary of its Start*.[1] It said that his trek 'made Gippsland in the space of a century of time, one of the richest, most productive provinces in Australia.'

McMillan with two Gunaikurnai men, a post card celebrating the centenary of the discovery of Gippsland Copy of original post card held by R Christie

[1]'The Finding of Gippsland, McMillan's Journey, Centenary of its Start', *The Age* 11 January 1940, p.8.

McMillan was honoured as the 'Discoverer of Gippsland' in a number of different ways. Many Gippsland schools recognised him by naming a student house after him and the study of his explorations formed an integral part of local history classes. Mrs Whitelaw the head teacher at Myrtlebank State School was particularly interested in perpetuating McMillan's memory and in 1923 organised a pilgrimage to his grave. This became an annual event at which the school children laid wreaths and speeches were made by prominent members of the community. [2]

Charles Daley was a teacher, historian and naturalist who developed a great interest in Gippsland history when he was working at Sale State School from 1910 to 1915. As a President and member of the Victorian Historical Society he wrote a number of articles on McMillan, as well as *The Early Days of Sale*, *The Oldest Road in Gippsland* and the book *The Story of Gippsland* published after his death in 1960. [3]

The City of Sale celebrated its centenary in April 1940. As part of the celebration, Charles Daley gave an address at the grave of Angus McMillan in the Sale cemetery, recounting his life and the early history of Gippsland. The Australian Natives Association flag flew over his monument and an exhibition of Gippsland relics was opened by Mary Grant Bruce famed local author of the *Billabong Books* who was born near Sale in 1878.[4]

Briagolong author Tarlton Rayment published *The Valley of the Sky* in 1937 which ran to nine editions. Rayment's book is loosely based on fact and reads more like a novel than a detailed history. He gave the lead character a fictional name but made it clear in an author's note at the beginning of the book that he was writing about McMillan when he said: 'I would glorify the 'Spirit of Endeavour', rather than mortal flesh, and who personifies that spirit better than the picturesque pioneer Scot, with his kilts and bagpipes, venturing into the great *terra incognita* of the south.[5]

In 1973 *Angus McMillan Pathfinder* by Kenneth Cox was released and continued to glorify McMillan's achievements. This book relies more on fact and quotes appear throughout as Cox also had access to the McMillan papers through his connection the Blanshard family. It can be assumed that this book gives a more accurate account of McMillan's life although there is still an element of storytelling present.

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[2] 'Pilgrimage to McMillan's Grave', *Gippsland Times*), 29 November 1923, p.2.
[3] Dayley, Foreword.
[4] 'Centenary of Gippsland The Sale Celebrations', *The Argus* 16 April 1940, p.5.
[5] Tarlton Rayment, *The Valley of the Sky,* Whitcombe and Tombs, Melbourne. 1945, p.7.

Dr T.A. McLean's compilation for the Traralgon Historical Society *A Dauntless Man – Angus McMillan* has more merit as an historical account as some of the material for his paper was also obtained through personal communications with Angus McMillan's great grandson William McMillan Blanshard.[6] From the information obtained McLean still viewed McMillan in a very positive light and concluded '…this account …has enabled one to open a metaphorical window to the character of a great Gippsland man and a dauntless man at that'.[7]

In 1983 the then Mayor of the City of Sale, Peter Synan commissioned Gippsland artist Annemieke Mein to create six bronzes of historically important Gippslanders. The six bronzes collectively called the Wall of Fame were initially displayed in the new Sale Pedestrian Mall. The bronzes featured author Mary Grant Bruce, Allan McLean early settler and politician, Alfred William Howitt, public servant, explorer, naturalist and anthropologist, Nehemiah Guthridge, businessman, Ada Crossley international singer and Angus McMillan.

Annemieke spent about a year researching the characters and their backgrounds. She believed that McMillan was worthy of a place in the collection but because of Gardner's book and *Caledonia Australis* by Don Watson 'she therefore felt uneasy about depicting McMillan as a blameless hero character and wanted to hint that there was a dark side to his story'.[8] This was a brave step at a time when McMillan was still revered as a local hero.

The bronzes are now part of the permanent collection at the Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale. Simon Gregg the Director of the Gallery is quick to point out that Annemieke never meant to suggest that McMillan literally carried Aboriginal skulls around in his saddlebag. [9] However that is not the interpretation that is necessarily applied to the bronze and marks a turning point in the attitude to McMillan.

It is not however the articles or books that have continually reminded Gippslanders of McMillan's presence, but a line of stone cairns erected across Gippsland in 1927. In March 1920 a letter appeared in the *Gippsland Times* asking whether enough had been done to acknowledge the 'great' contribution that McMillan had made to the area. Streets in a number of towns had been named after him and McMillan Strait on the Gippsland Lakes bore his name but it was

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[6] Dr T.A. McLean, *A Dauntless Man – Angus McMillan*, Traralgon: Traralgon and District Historical Society, 1972, p.19.

[7] McLean, *A Dauntless Man*, Sources of Information.
https://trove.nla.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-images/Help-Searching-Search-byURL.PNG

[8] Simon Gregg email to R Christie 17 July 2023

[9] Ibid.

felt that this was not enough.[10] To remind the public of his achievements the *Gippsland Times* reprinted numerous articles on McMillan throughout 1923 and 1924 that were published at the time of his death in 1865.

Annemieke Mein's McMillan Bronze courtesy of Gippsland Art Gallery Sale

[10] In 1948/9 a Federal electorate in Gippsland was also named after him.

The McMillan Cairns

In May 1925 Charles Daley presented a paper *Notes from a Pioneers Journal* to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. The first part of the talk was based on the journal McMillan wrote on his journey from Greenock to Australia in 1837. The second part was an account of his station life at Bushy Park and taken from the *Bushy Park* daybook. [11] Daley argued a chain of memorials were needed across Gippsland to mark the journeys of both McMillan and Strzelecki.[12]

Local Gippsland organisations were quick to support the idea of greater recognition for McMillan's achievements. The Sale City Council, Sale Pioneers Association and Yarram Traders all thought something further and more significant should be done to acknowledge his contribution to the district. To further press the point Charles Daley published an article in *The Argus* of 12 September 1925 entitled *How Gippsland was Found*. In it he referred to the successful campaign to erect memorials marking the track of Hume and Hovell across Victoria and the possibility of creating a similar trail in Gippsland.

There was overwhelming support for Daley's proposal and a committee was formed in Melbourne in March 1926 to 'perpetuate the memory of the explorers; Angus McMillan, Count Strzelecki and Captain Sturt'.[13] The committee was chaired by Sir James Barrett from Town Planning, National Parks Section who was also an eminent ophthalmic physician and surgeon involved in a multitude of community based organizations. It had representatives W. F. Gates Dr J. Leach and C.R. Long from the Education Department, H. O. Allen and H. Hansford from the Department of Lands and Survey, C.H. Holmes from the Railways Department, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria represented by Charles Daley, Mr Corben from the Tourist Bureau and A.S. Kenyon an engineer who knew much of the post-settlement history of rural Victoria,[14] Councils in co-operation with schools and others wanting to be associated with the project formed local committees to provide funds to erect either stone or concrete cairns.[15]

Following a request from the Maffra Shire the Country Roads Board set aside a triangle of land for a monument near Boisdale at Bushy Park opposite McMillan's homestead.[16] Residents at Briagolong a short distance from Bushy

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[11] 'Gippsland Pioneers', *The Age*, 5 May 1925 p.12. Unfortunately after contacting the descendants of McMillan it was found that this second part of the journal had been destroyed some years previously and there is no record of the talk at the RHSV.
[12] 'Gippsland Pioneers', *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic), 5 May 1925, 12.
[13] 'Historical Memorials Committee', *Great Southern Advocate*, 1 April 1926, p.5.
[14] 'Historical Memorials Committee', p.5.
[15] 'Historical Memorials Committee' *Great Southern Advocate*, 1 April 1926, p.5.
[16] 'Tenders Accepted' *Gippsland Times*, 7 February 1927, p.4.

Park were quick to form a committee and raised £100 to build a suitable memorial.[17] At Yarram moves were afoot to create a memorial on the mountain that McMillan had named Tom's Cap after Thomas Macalister a nephew of Lachlan.[18] This was supposedly the site from which McMillan's party first saw the sea.

In December 1926 the Melbourne Committee spent three days following the tracks of the Gippsland explorers from Benambra in the north to Port Albert on the coast to determine the best sites for the memorials. The Sale Council wanted to further acknowledge McMillan by changing the name of the river that flowed through the town from Thomson to McMillan.[19] Although the suggestion met with some approval the name remained unchanged.

A line of eighteen monuments was subsequently built of concrete and local stone, most of which had an inscription which said 'In honour of Angus McMillan discoverer of Gippsland' or simply: 'Angus McMillan passed this way' or 'Angus McMillan Explorer of Gippsland'.[20]

On 4 April, 1927 members of the Historical Memorial Committee and the Governor Lord Somers arrived in Gippsland to unveil the first memorial at Benambra. On 6 April they travelled to Bushy Park to unveil the local community funded memorial, by the 9 April all the cairns had been unveiled. Lord Somers gave an address at each cairn praising the early settlers for what they had done 'in opening up the fertile Gippsland territory'.

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[17] 'Correspondence Tribute to Great Pioneer' *Gippsland Times*, 8 November 1926, p.3.
[18] 'Pilgrimage to Toms Cap', *Gippsland Times*, 18 February 1926, p.5.
[19] *Gippsland Times*, 24 February 1927, p.4.
[20] Eighteen cairns or tablets to McMillan were erected at Benambra Omeo, Swifts` Creek, Ensay, Bruthen, Mossiface, Sarsfield, Lucknow, Calula (2), Bushy Park, Stratford, Bundalaguah, Sale, Rosedale, Tom`s Gap, Yarram, Port Albert.

McMillan Monument at Bushy Park with inscription detail taken by R Christie January 2022

Viewed by today's standards such sentiments represent a very one-sided view and do not acknowledge the Indigenous people who had been here for thousands of years. At the unveiling of a monument to Strzelecki, Lord Somers said 'he hoped they would keep Australia white, and not allow coloured races to take control'. This view accepted at the time as the official Federal Government position today is seen as being racist and unacceptable.

One hundred years ago attitudes and beliefs were very different to those held today. At that time the government sought to restrict the entry into Australia of non-European people, especially Asians. The 'White Australia Policy' had its origins during the goldrushes of the 1850s and 1860s when large numbers of Chinese were entering the country.

This policy also affected First Nations Peoples who were seen as second class citizens with few rights. It was to take until 1969 before a referendum was held which changed the Constitution enabling Aboriginal people to be counted as part of the general population and technically acknowledged as equal citizens. Voting rights were extended to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1962 but voting was not compulsory. The 'White Australia Policy' was finally abolished in 1973. It was to be 1984 before voting became compulsory for First Nations people finally bringing their voting rights into alignment with the rest of the population.

Tracey Banivanua Mar an associate professor at La Trobe University and a leading scholar in the field of colonial and post colonial history argues that this discrimination which had its beginnings in the colonial era is being perpetuated by the cairns which 'naturalise and legitimise settler sovereignty'. [21] Tony Birch an Aboriginal author and academic goes further and says that such memorials are not just records of history. He asserts that they 'legitimise the dispossession of the Indigenous population and affix local memories to white identity, belonging and pride'. [22] Aunty Doris Paton in a submission to Wellington Shire Council said that the McMillan cairns 'repress the truth by instead celebrating his "explorations"'.

According to Birch any attempt to recognise Indigenous history creates 'insecurity, paranoia, even hysteria' because it threatens over 150 years of British or white heritage. The monuments it is argued can be seen as physical sites of dispossession that suppress Indigenous possession and seek to 'eliminate or erase Indigenous peoples to create a "cultural *terra nullius*"'.

Whether Indigenous history has been actively repressed or just ignored is open to question. However throughout the latter part of the last century no attempt was made to acknowledge them when teaching history in schools. Mar explains it by saying, the prevailing metanarrative has fixed Aboriginal people in a primitive time and place unable to retain sovereignty over their land and expected to passively die their history along with them.

In 2021 Birch questioned whether the monuments held any value and were needed at all. He said 'The stories of country we need to hear, experience and learn from are infinite. They are held in the soil, water – salt and fresh- in the night sky above'. Beside them he said that 'statues to great men remain puny and petrified'.

This may well be the case but for those who do not have such a connection to Country the monuments must remain although with some modification. Grattan Mullet general manager of culture at GLaWAC said he was prepared to work with government bodies to ensure a more appropriate recognition of both Indigenous and non Indigenous history in Gippsland.

If these monuments remain as sites of white historical consciousness, then we also need to acknowledge the experiences of Indigenous people in the same landscape. Their story prior to the coming of Europeans and the subsequent

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[21] Tracey Banivanua Mar, 'Settler-colonial Landscapes and Narratives of Possession, *Arena Journal*, issue 37/38,January 2012, p.176.

[22] Tony Birch, 'Nothing has Changed, The Unmaking of Koorie Culture' , *'Blacklines'*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2003, pp148-158.

frontier violence that decimated their population and destroyed their lands must be told.

Whilst the argument that the memorials to men like McMillan inhibit the potential for truth telling and a more honest history their removal will leave a void. If they remain and a counter monument or sign can be added to the site which will tell the whole story to white and black of what has occurred in Gippsland.

The monuments can therefore have a positive legacy in that they have raised recognition of the plight of Indigenous people since white settlement. Additional information at the sites must tell the full story and if this happens will create a parallel history allowing for both stories to be told and ensuring constructive discussion can take place.[23]

Impact of Gardner's writing

The structures erected across Gippsland however have given McMillan a prominence not accorded to other successful, wealthier and more powerful early settlers. When Peter Gardner began to write about the Gunaikurnai in the 1980s the general public knew little about them. The name of McMillan however was already well known and respected.

Gardner made an important contribution to Gippsland history when he wrote *Gippsland Massacres* in 1983 which recorded the persecution of the Gunaikurnai. A second book *Through Foreign Eyes* was published in 1988 by the Centre for Gippsland Studies Gippsland Institute for Advanced Education. The book comprised eleven chapters dealing with an analysis of the Gunaikurnai as seen through the letters, diaries and records of Europeans from the 1830s until the 1900s. In 1987 Gardner published his most controversial work *Our Founding Murdering Father,* a provocative account, which laid the blame for indigenous massacres squarely on McMillan. This book was self-published and distributed throughout Gippsland, the title ensured its popularity.

In 2016 Gardner wrote *Our Founding Murdering Father Revisited* and stated that the original title was chosen to be deliberately 'provocative and controversial' as his financial position was precarious and he needed the book to make 'a splash'.[24] Essentially, he argued that he was putting forward a case to

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[23] Parallel Histories is a new way to study the history of conflict – history that is still contested, controversial and relevant. It is a popular way to teach history in Europe, laying out competing narratives and challenging students to examine evidence and alternative interpretations.

[24] Peter Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father Revisited 2016.* Our-Founding-Murdering-Father-Revisited-2016.pdf (petergardner.info)

counter the benign views presented in Kenneth Cox's book *Angus McMillan Pathfinder*. Gardner claimed *Our Founding Murdering Father* to be an examination of the subject's life in connection with the Gunaikurnai people. In *Some Random Notes on the Massacres 2000 – 2015* he says 'I… have never claimed it to be a complete or balanced biography.[25] If this is true it is unclear how the book has become the main authority for condemning McMillan considering there is little evidence to suggest that he had a significant involvement.

The influence that Gardner's book has had is profound. In October 2019, following a vigorous campaign the name of the Federal electorate of McMillan was changed to Monash in a redistribution of boundaries.[26] More than sixty submissions were received by the Electoral Commission from Aboriginal groups, local members of the community and church organisations, requesting a change because of McMillan's alleged crimes. Many suggested the name be of Indigenous origin, but this was disregarded when it was decided to honour World War I General Sir John Monash.[27]

Gardner is referred to as the main source in these submissions which gave rise to misleading and inflammatory statements such as: 'it is now well known and accepted that Angus McMillan was responsible for the massacres of many indigenous Australians…'[28] and with reference to the Gunaikurnai, 'these people were and still remain directly affected by the appalling legacy of almost complete genocide of their people which is left from the life of Angus McMillan'.[29]

The Australian Electoral Commission accepted the arguments put forward although it is difficult to know if they completed any independent research to verify the claims made about McMillan before the change took place. In reference to this change Paul Daley of *The Guardian* wrote a scathing article entitled 'What's in a Name? A lot when we're admiring murderers', referring to McMillan 'as a mass killer of the local First People'.[30]

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[25] Peter Gardner, Some Random Notes on the Massacres 2000-2015. https://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Notes-on-Massacres-rev.ed_.pdf

[26] 'Profile of Electoral Division' AEC.gov.au 22 October 2019 https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/federal_elections/2019/profiles/vic/monash.htm

[27] ABC https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-24/aec-conciders-mcmillan-name-change/9183272

[28] Australian Electoral Commission, Gayle McHarg Suggestion 42 Suggestion 42 (aec.gov.au)

[29] Australian Electoral Commission Viki Sinclair Suggestion 32 Suggestion 32 (aec.gov.au)

[30] Paul Daley, 'What's in a Name. A lot when we're admiring murderers'. *The Guardian.* P.2.

The plight of the Gunaikurnai was brought before the public again with the killing of George Floyd in America in 2020 resulting in the Black Lives Matter campaigns. The movement extended to Australia and in Gippsland the McMillan cairns were targeted as the most visible and distressing reminder of what was inflicted on the Gunaikurnai. The cairns, it was alleged, were honouring a man who had wreaked great havoc on the original population of Gippsland. Numerous letters were written to the local Sale paper the *Gippsland Times* in July 2020 requesting their removal in a campaign largely driven by two Wellington Shire Councillors. [31] The issue became emotional and the letters written were not based on any knowledge of events that actually occurred in Gippsland but on the broader issue of black lives.

At short notice a motion was tabled for the June 2020 Wellington Shire Council meeting by Councillors Crossley and McCubbin. They wanted to remove the cairn on Council land in Sale and then seek further approval to remove other cairns in the Shire.

Two years previously Councillor Crossley as mayor had advised the Wellington Shire Heritage Network (a body established by Council) that Council was gradually making progress [on a position regarding the cairns] and hoped to hold a series of conversations on the issue with the Network's involvement. No further discussion eventuated until the weekend before the Council meeting when the position to remove the cairns was presented as a 'fait accompli'.[32]

Letters appeared in the *Gippsland Times* both for and against the proposal. At Bushy Park a group was formed to protect the memorial that had been built with community funds in 1926. A total of 128 public comments were submitted to Council of which approximately 50% wanted the cairns removed and 50% wanted them to remain but in many cases with additional cultural information about the Gunaikurnai and the massacres being added to the sites to inform the public of what had taken place. A small number wanted more consultation with relevant parties before any further action was taken.[33] There were only a couple of statements that questioned the role McMillan played in the massacres.

In a letter to the *Gippsland Times* Dr Wayne Caldow an historical geographer said: 'Demi-politicians and social media warriors may feel extra

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What's in a name? A lot when we're admiring murders and murderers | Paul Daley | The Guardian

[31] *Gippsland Times* 7 July 2020, pp.11,13.

[32] Wellington Shire History Network, *Gippsland Times,* 22 June 2020.

[33] Minutes of Wellington Shire Council, 16 June 2020.
https://www.wellington.vic.gov.au/council/meeting-minutes-and-agendas

virtue by campaigning for the removal of the McMillan cairns, but it is a campaign founded on a false premise, one without any basis in fact. Black lives matter and reconciliation matters – they just have nothing to do with the McMillan cairns'.[34]

When the motion to remove the cairns was put to Council four councillors voted in favour and five voted against.[35] Councillor Crossley was disappointed with the vote and said: '…the early explorer monuments were the project of a small group of 'misguided' and self-interested business people who did not understand the significance of the explorer's actions'.[36] Unfortunately, Crossley was as mistaken about the process by which the cairns were built as she was about the extent of McMillan's role in the violence that was unleashed in Gippsland.

The Historical Memorials Committee formed in Melbourne specifically to investigate erecting a line of cairns was broadly based, with support from communities across Gippsland. Local emphasis came from district inspectors of schools, head teachers and other local groups who raised funds for the erection of the cairns.

An interview with Gardner following the Council vote resulted in him admitting 'that for most raids "there is no proof" that McMillan led or was even involved, but that the evidence is circumstantial'. In reference to one massacre (Warrigal Creek) Gardner said, 'McMillan may have been absent from Gippsland.'[37] Gardner states this in *Our Founding Murdering Father* and justifies it by saying that at the time McMillan was probably 'starved for capital' and was working at *Sandy Creek* and *Boisdale* in addition to his own property and 'although unlikely may have been absent from the region at the time' of the attack due to work.[38]

He states that one of the Macalister's may have led the attack but if this was the case then McMillan would have ridden with them. Concluding on the basis of McMillan's alleged involvement elsewhere, then 'McMillan was definitely a participant if not the leader'.[39] Unfortunately the circumstantial evidence has been taken as fact.

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[34] Dr. Wayne Caldow, *Gippsland Times,* 20 October 2020.
[35] Wellington Shire Resolutions in brief 16 June 2020 Item A4.
https://assets-global.website-files.com/6021ed7c89cc1c1c01fccf29/6021ed7c89cc1cdb50fcdeef_Meeting_Minutes-160620.pdf
[36] *Gippsland Times*, 19 June 2020.
[37] 'Opinion', *Gippsland Times*, 23 June 2020, p.8.
[38] Peter Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father*. p.38.
[39] Ibid. p.40.

Even the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* has revised its 1967 article on McMillan, replacing it in 2017 with one incorporating the views of Gardner.[40] Because of the sensational nature of *Our Founding Murdering Father,* the general public and other writers have accepted without question what has been put before them. Incidents involving other significant members of the Gippsland squattocracy have been ignored.

A blog created about William Pearson squatter and later MLA highlights this when it says: '...the elder William Pearson certainly took part in the terrible massacres of the Kurnai.' The writer surmises that from time to time Pearson joined McMillan's 'vicious armed posse's' and may have assisted in the massacre at Butcher's Creek, or '... on McMillan's punitive raid on the mountain tribesmen, which evidently resulted in as many as two hundred killings... Almost certainly William joined McMillan's self-styled 'Highland Brigade' which carried out...the massacre...at Warrigal Creek'.[41] Again there is no verification as to where this information was obtained and no comment on the fact that Pearson 'certainly took part in the massacres.'

Noted journalist Tony Wright writing in *The Age* reinforced the unsubstantiated claims about McMillan in an article *A Time for Truth: Dispossession* when he wrote: '...a Scot called Angus McMillan assembled his feared 'Highland Brigade' and began murdering First Nations people, sometimes entire clans'.[42] He provided no source for his claims but with a wide audience his writing continued to reinforce the view that McMillan was responsible for untold massacres. These ill- informed and emotive publications have done nothing to assist with uncovering the truth of what took place in Gippsland.

In his book *Blood on the Wattle* published in 1988, Bruce Elder further extended Gardner's case against McMillan, but again with no evidence to support statements such as the following:

> McMillan decided to teach the Kurnai a lesson in frontier law... he formed a posse of stockmen and for the next few days marauded the countryside killing many aboriginal people... Once again McMillan, self -appointed scourge of the Kurnai decided to teach the people a lesson. McMillan let it be known he was forming a posse and those interested should meet at his property at Nuntin where he warned them of the Myall Creek and swore them to secrecy. McMillan gave instructions to surround the camp. The posse split, McMillan gave the order and simultaneously from every direction the men opened fire. Over the next

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[40] Cheryl Glowrey, 'Angus McMillan', https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcmillan-angus-2416

[41] Angus Trumble, 'Trumble Diaries', http://angustrumble.blogspot.com/2009/03/kurnai.html

[42] 'A time for truth Dispossession', *The Sunday Age*, 10 October 2021, p.26.

couple of days the posse moved through the area leaving a trail of bodies and blood. They killed at every opportunity.43

Where these very specific details have come from is not stated, however after contacting Bruce Elder he advised that all his information, apart from visits to Sale and the various places where there are monuments, had come from 'that remarkable book *Our Founding Murdering Father*'.[44] He goes on to write: 'The whole of Gippsland had been won by violence. The settlers just killed and killed and killed. Massacres, rapes and casual killings were so normal, they barely deserve discussion'.[45]

Undoubtedly such events did occur but Elder implies they were an every day event and took place on a large scale, without providing any evidence or sources as to his very detailed information.

Also influenced by Gardner was Scottish writer Cal Flynn whose interest in her great great uncle Angus McMillan was piqued, when on a visit to the Isle of Skye she found his name on a map of squatting runs in Victoria. Further investigation led her to discover that her relative had been branded a mass murderer. She travelled to Australia to discover the real story behind her relation and subsequently wrote the book *Thicker than Water* which she refers to as 'a memoir of family secrets and history'.[46]

Published in 2016 the book is not a history but a journey which she undertook following in McMillan's footsteps. She spent time with Gardner and relies heavily on him as a main source of information, presenting his views as fact. Like Gardner she concludes that McMillan was a key instigator and participant in the massacres.[47]

As mentioned previously in Chapter 10, the most recent attempt to record and detail the massacres that took place in Australia was undertaken by what was called the *Colonial Frontier Massacres Project Team*. Comprising journalists from *The Guardian* and academics from the University of Newcastle under the leadership of Professor Lyndall Ryan their aim was to map massacre sites across Australia. The sites it assures readers 'have been painstakingly identified and

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[43] Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle* (Sydney: New Holland Publishing Pty. Ltd., 1988), pp.97-99.
[44] Reply to an email from R Christie on messenger 25 January 2022.
[45] Elder, 97-99.
[46] Cal Flynn, *Thicker than Water* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2016), front cover.
[47] Flynn, p.337.

corroborated by a wide range of sources, diaries, journals, newspaper reports, government sources and much more.'[48]

Nine sites are identified in Gippsland and in all but one, Gardner is identified as a main source. For this work the project was awarded the New South Wales Premier's History award for Digital History and whilst the sites have been mapped the research on Gippsland is certainly open to question.

There is still uncertainty as to what extent McMillan was involved in any of the massacres or killings that took place in Gippsland. In his chapter 'The Butcher of Gippsland' in *Our Founding Murdering Father,* Gardner believes he leaves the casual reader in no doubt as to who was the key player. This chapter titled is twenty-five pages long, yet only seven pages deal with the massacres and McMillan's alleged role in them. Gardner appropriately comments that 'lives of the created heroes of our past be more critically examined', however this needs to be carried out objectively.

He refuses to accept Caroline Dexter's comment about McMillan's involvement in killing 'a number of treacherous Aborigines'. Gippsland historian and lecturer, Patrick Morgan makes the comment that 'this is the only known primary source which confirms speculation on this point'.[49] Gardner however questions whether Dexter is a primary source as 'she is only repeating a rough summary of events that happened sometime – ten to fifteen years – before she came to Gippsland'. He also questions whether the source was McMillan whilst acknowledging that the Dexters were friendly with him. Caroline Dexter is in fact the only contemporary source that identifies McMillan as being involved in killing Gunaikurnai although it doesn't specify the occasion or occasions where this happened. Gardner's fixation with 'Gippslander's account of Warrigal Creek and his determination to prove McMillan's involvement has created a distorted view of history

Gardner believes 'Gippslander' is a more reliable source but seems to forget that he was born fourteen years after the events and that the family was not even resident at Sunville when the events took place. Gardner says he is a primary source of great importance 'because he is fairly specific in the detail of the event and also implicates McMillan'.[50] The only part McMillan played in the 1925 article was catching the horse. In the 1940 article he isn't mentioned at all. Gardner writing in 2015 says that 'Gippslander's' source is not identified,

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[48] The Killing Times: a massacre map of Australia's frontier wars'. *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/series/the-killing-times

[49] Patrick Morgan, *Folie a deux William and Caroline Dexter in Colonial Australia,* p.80.

[50] Peter Gardner, *Some Random notes on the Massacres* 2000 – 2015. Accessed on line June 2020

however the original 1925 article clearly identifies two Aboriginals 'Bing Eye' and 'Club foot' who were present and described their injuries and the aftermath to him.

His reference to McMillan riding from Sale is also interesting as Sale or Flooding Creek as it was originally known did not come into being until about 1844.[51] Research into the Gippsland massacres has revealed another person with a history of killing Aborigines. In reviewing a chapter on Frederick Taylor in Phillip Pepper and Tess De Araugo's *The Kurnai of Gippsland* Gardner says Frederick Taylor is condemned for killing Kurnai on the basis of a statement by George Augustus Robinson which said he was 'notorious for killing natives' in the Western District.

There is substantial evidence to prove this and his proximity to many of the incidents in Gippsland may be more than coincidental. Gardner suggests that ' ...a widening of research to local and contemporary sources would have added some substance, albeit circumstantial, to the case against Taylor. Taylor could well have played a much greater role in the attacks on the Gunaikurnai in Gippsland on the basis of his earlier history.

In *Through Foreign Eyes* Gardner lists the different types of evidence he uses to prove his arguments: 'primary sources, secondary sources, folk history, Aboriginal folk history, suggestive place names (Butcher's Creek), bone finds and the topography of murder sites', the cumulative effect resulting in a massacre site.[52] According to Patrick Morgan this mixture of evidence is not reliable as 'vagueness and contradictions are a feature of many accounts.[53] While Gardner's evidence is useful in identifying possible massacre sites it does nothing to identify the perpetrators of the massacres that took place.

Gardner says evidence that McMillan and his men were involved in at least four massacres comes from the 'gleanings of McMillan's own accounts and other records'.[54] McMillan certainly had confrontations with the Gunaikurnai but if he was involved in massacres, we require more than 'gleanings' for verification.

The lack of written primary sources has contributed significantly to the difficulty in interpreting events in the 1840s. While records of Europeans killed are quite accurate, records for the deaths of the indigenous population are almost non-existent[55]. The killing of stock, shepherds and stockmen was seen by the

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[51] Peter Synan, *Gippsland's Lucky City,* City of Sale, Sale 1994. p. 23.
[52] Gardner, *Through Foreign Eyes,* p.94.
[53] Patrick Morgan, 'Gippsland Settlers and the Kurnai Dead', *Quadrant,* October 2004: p.26.
[54] Gardner, *Our Founding Murdering Father,* p.39.
[55] Refer to Appendix B

Europeans as criminal acts, to the Aborigines they were simply a means of protecting their lifestyle. The killing of Aborigines was seen as a defence of property and not reported. In his report to the Select Committee on the Aborigines in 1845, Charles Tyers attributed the hostile relations between black and white to the aggression of the Aborigines.[56] No thought was given to the aggression by the whites invading their lands.

Whilst the Gunaikurnai may not have had written records their history has been passed down by word of mouth. The old people who are now gone knew the names of the perpetrators of the violence, but in speaking with current members of the Gunaikurnai who can trace their ancestry back generations few if any specific Europeans are named - there were too many. Gunai man Stephen Thorpe in *The Age* of 8 February 2012 referred to 'a gang of white settlers on horseback' who pinned down Indigenous men women and children at Warrigal Creek and shot them.[57] Thorpe's only reference in this article relating to McMillan says '…there are more than a dozen monuments …to Angus McMillan, who is widely believed to have led this and other massacres', certainly not a definitive statement.

Dr Aunty Doris Paton is a Gunai Elder and educator living and working in Gippsland who when asked about those most responsible for perpetrating violence in Gippsland identified Henry Dana as one of the most cruel and aggressive men in the way he dealt with First Nations people in his role as leader of the Native Police.[58]

Even today Indigenous people brought up in the Gunaikurnai culture will not visit certain places in Gippsland because of the knowledge that has been passed down to them. These places are considered sacred because of the violence that took place there.

In the current climate it is difficult to challenge the views that have been accepted for the best part of forty years and in this context revision is often seen as having a racist base. Stuart MacIntyre and Anna Clark in *The History Wars* put forward the view that historians are not prepared for public controversy and that 'since 1996 they have found it increasingly hard to be heard … the prejudices of the columnists and commentators who dominate the national media pass largely

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[56] Charles Tyers, Reply to a Circular Letter from the Select Committee on the Aborigines (Sydney, NSW 31 October 1845), p.45. https://hunterlivinghistories.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/1845-condition-of-the-aborigines.pdf

[57] Carolyn Webb, 'The water turned red: Remembering the Indigenous victims of the Warrigal Creek massacre, *The Age,* 8 February 2021.

[58] Conversation with R. Christie 9 November 2023

unchallenged'.[59] The views of the general public can be swept up by current sentiment and without questioning adopt a position expressed in the media with little factual evidence to support the events. In the political context of the Black Lives Matter campaigns, McMillan's guilt has been assumed and he provides a suitable focus for condemnation.

Not everyone believes that the cairns acknowledging Angus McMillan should be removed and this was made clear in the submissions to the Wellington Shire Council. Jeannie Haughton is a playwright, producer, freelance writer and facilitator who tours socially resonant, contemporary works in Gippsland. She highlights many of the views expressed to Council in her theatre and presentations. Although agreeing with the basic principles of Gardner's arguments she sees some merit in the cairns remaining. She acknowledges that McMillan was not the only person involved in killings and believes that although the removal of the cairns would satisfy a number of people this action would only continue to obscure what actually took place. She believes these cairns could be a new beginning in the telling of Gippsland history. Using a variety of historians, artists of all genders, races and backgrounds storyboards could be created telling the whole story of Gippsland.[60]

Ken Wyatt, the former Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs also believed the cairns should remain. He said 'In order for us to heal the past we need to have genuine conversations and understand the history of our nation'.[61] Removing 'the statues' as he referred to the cairns did not contribute positively to the conversation. He, like Haughton wanted to see a focus at the sites on Indigenous history as well as European history. The controversy surrounding the cairns and fuelled by Gardner's writings has touched all levels of society. Preserving the cairn sites and adding display boards, as suggested by Haughton and supported by Wyatt, would provide an opportunity to tell the real story of what happened and give a more balanced perspective of Gippsland's past.

McMillan's legacy and the impact of white settlement on the Gunaikurnai

McMillan's journeys into Gippsland were to herald the beginning of the end for the traditional ways of the Gunaikurnai. It was Strezelecki however not McMillan who promoted the area through the publication of his journey in the Melbourne papers resulting in the movement of settlers into the district.

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[59] Stuart MacIntyre & Anna Clark, *The History Wars,* Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003, p.12.
[60] 'Time to Unite on Indigenous Issues' 22 June 2020.
https://darrenchester.com.au/time-to-unite-on-indigenous-issues/
[61] *Gippsland Times*, 23 June 2020, p.8.

They who had lived in the Gippsland area for thousands of years were to be fatally impacted by the arrival of the squatters and their stock. Gardner estimates that in 1839 prior to white settlement there were between 2,500 and 3000 members of the different clans living in the region.[62] In 1860 after twenty years of conflict with the new arrivals and natural attrition brought about by European diseases, William Thomas counted 222, men, women and children.

For many years there was a callous disregard for the lives of the Indigenous population. Reverend John Bulmer from Lake Tyers mission recounted the unprovoked cold-hearted killing of a native at Lake Tyers who was merely offering a white man some of the surplus fish he had caught. [63]

The staple foods of the Gunaikurnai were no longer available with the loss of their lands. The Gunaikurnai were forced to spear stock for food and the settlers responded with guns killing offenders and at times massacring large numbers of the population. Death and the destruction of traditional life were the legacies bequeathed to the Gunaikurnai.

In *The Kurnai of Gippsland,* Phillip Pepper says that when white settlement became more intensive and goldfields particularly around Omeo were opened up, remaining First Nations people were driven further from their own territories resulting in tribal conflicts.

He related that in late 1854 a group of Tatungoloong had left the Lakes and were hunting along the Avon River when they came across a camp of Jaitmathang from Omeo. He said 'They "rushed" the camp and killed four men'.

The Tatungoloong expected payback and when they heard that men from the Omeo district were coming they moved their families into the infant settlement of Sale (Flooding Creek) assuming they would be safe. However in January 1855 the young men were away from the camp leaving only women, children and old men who were attacked at night when the 'Omeo blacks sneaked in on the camp'. Several were killed and others were wounded.[64]

Being dispossessed of their lands meant that the First Nations people were effectively homeless. The government believed the solution was to put the remnants onto missions which tried to eliminate their culture through education and religion. What had been an exceptionally healthy diet with very little fat was

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[62] Peter Gardner, *Gippsland Massacres,* Ngarak Press, 2001, p 12.
[63] A Campbell & R Vanderwal, *Victorian Aborigines John Bulmer's Recollections 1855-1908,* Occasional Papers Museum of Victoria, No. 1. 1994, p59.
[64] Phillip Pepper, *The Kurnai of Gippsland,* pp. 105-106.

supplanted by handouts from the Europeans. As a race they were expected to die out according to the commonly accepted theory of Darwin's Natural Selection.

One of the defining features of a culture is its language. The policies of assimilation and education adopted by the missions left the Gunaikurnai without linguistic definition. The congregating of Aboriginal people at Lake Tyers from across the colony resulted in the traditional language of the Gunaikurnai not being spoken on a daily basis and therefore lost to generations.

However, the spoken language did survive with certain individuals into the 1980s. Rob Hudson Cultural Manager of Krowathunkooloong, The Keeping Place in Bairnsdale recalls that his grandfather's first language was Gunai, his second language was English. He remembers a corner in Orbost where the old men gathered to speak in their own language. With their deaths the language was no longer spoken in everyday conversation.

The Woolum Bellum Koorie Open Door Educational School was established in Morwell in 1995 to begin to address this loss of language and culture. The curriculum was based on the *Bataluk Cultural Trail* through which Gunaikurnai language and the culture of Traditional Owners of the land was taught. Unfortunately the century old negative impact of white attitudes prevailed. The European based system did not recognise the importance of an educational system targeted specifically to Aboriginal children allowing them to be taught their traditional culture and the school was closed down in 2012.

Dr Aunty Doris Paton an Elder says that although progress has been made with language it will be some time before traditional language will be used for conversation.

Perhaps the greatest legacy that white settlement has bequeathed to the Gunaikurnai is fear. The savage reprisals that took place across the country forced the Gunaikurnai into evermore remote and inhospitable country. Portions of their original lands were now not accessible to them because of the atrocities that had been carried out on them.

Government actions accentuated this fear by forcing families onto mission, then the removal of those of mixed blood and finally the removal of children to be brought up as whites. These actions instilled a fear and feeling of uncertainty about their future.

This was most evident in one family where a child missed a day of school when a roundup of Aboriginal children was undertaken. The family was too scared to remain so moved up the east coast, living rough in camps and carrying out itinerant work. The girl who was absent on that fateful day never attended

school and to this day is illiterate. This story is not unique and is quite common amongst people living on the south east coast in centres such as Wallaga Lake.

Even in the 1980s the older people were still fearful of the policy of removal. One man related that on the birth of his first child in a hospital the old people insisted he stay with his wife and child until they could return home.

Today those who have been brought up in their culture and have knowledge of the massacres that took place accept them for what they are, part of their history. These things cannot be changed by dwelling on them.[65] Younger people however who are just learning about their culture have a tendency to express anger about what went on, particularly when it is denied or omitted from white history.

Perhaps the most damning legacy of the white occupation has been the way in which the original inhabitants of this land have been ignored and not recognised as part of the community. It was not until the 1967 census almost two hundred years after the first settlement that Aboriginal people gained some recognition, being given a vote and for the first time being counted in the census.

First Nations people still have not been recognised in the Constitution as being the original inhabitants of this country, despite having occupied it for more than 60,000 years.

[65] Interview with Rob Hudson, Cultural Manager Krowathunkooloong, 27 October 2023.

Chapter 14

Conclusion

A convenient scapegoat?

Some controversy will always surround Angus McMillan and his relationship with the Gunaikurnai people. A lack of primary source material documenting McMillan's life and the early history of Gippsland in the mid-19th centuries makes it impossible to accurately determine the events that took place and who was involved in them.

Both Kenneth Cox and Allan McLean mention additional unpublished primary sources of information.[1] In Dr McLean's article: *A Dauntless Man – Angus McMillan,* reference is made to William McMillan Blanshard, a great-grandson of Angus McMillan who assisted McLean with personal information about McMillan. Cox also mentions the diary that was kept on the voyage to Australia and a journal written at *Bushy Park.*

In an attempt to find these documents, contact was made with two stepdaughters of William McMillan Blanshard. They were aware of McMillan and had heard of his alleged crimes but advised that the notes and the *Bushy Park* daybook which may have shed further light on McMillan's activities had been inadvertently destroyed by their mother on the death of William. Fortunately, the shipboard diary, the journal of the Alpine Expedition and his notes on the exploration of Gippsland have survived.

We are therefore forced to rely on the few sources written close to the time of the events and secondary sources that were written in the years after McMillan's death.

Peter Gardner has completed the most detailed research on the plight of the Gunaikurnai in Gippsland but he assumes that massacres and McMillan are synonymous, and the media, academia and the general public have taken these unfounded assertions as fact. Gardner's book *Our Founding Murdering Father* investigates all aspects of McMillan's life but the essential question of his mistreatment of the Gunaikurnai takes up only seven of its ninety pages.

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[1] Dr. T.A McLean, *A Dauntless Man – Angus McMillan.*. Sources of Information. Kenneth Cox, *Angus McMillan Pathfinder.*

Those seven pages, which have resulted in the controversy about McMillan are based on one article in *The Gap,* written approximately eighty-two years after the alleged events took place. McMillan is only mentioned as the person who found the body of Ranald Macalister – there is nothing linking him to the subsequent killing of the Gunaikurnai at Warrigal Creek and the mythical 'Highland Brigade', the existence of which has never been proven.

McMillan does have to take some responsibility for the demise of the Gunaikurnai, who had inhabited Gippsland for thousands of years. His exploration led to the subsequent invasion of Gippsland by Europeans and resulted in the destruction of the complex social structure of the Indigenous peoples and their ability to live in harmony with the land. The establishment of stations across the country resulted in great change and the eventual decline and decimation of the original inhabitants.

Devastated by introduced diseases, cultural disorientation, massacres by whites and tribal conflict, the Gunaikurnai were all but annihilated. The traditional usage of the land was also changed forever, the effects of which we are still experiencing today. Introduced animals, weeds, erosion, the raising of salt levels by overgrazing and irrigation and the introduction of superphosphates have seen a degradation of the land from the pristine environment prior to white settlement.

McMillan's success in creating a track to Port Albert, which allowed stock to be shipped to Van Diemen's Land ensured that the country would be settled and the Indigenous population displaced. The line of cairns marking his journey has kept him in the public eye, while other men such as Allan McLean or William Pearson who perhaps made a greater contribution to the development of Gippsland have been overshadowed or forgotten. Strzelecki, who publicised his journey resulting in the spread of settlers across Gippsland has been largely overlooked. Others such as Frederick Taylor who have a proven connection to the killing of First Nations people have also been overlooked or ignored.

How then should we remember McMillan? He was a man of many parts: traveller, explorer, squatter, politician, Aboriginal protector and perhaps a friend of Aborigines. In his early days as an employee of Lachlan Macalister, he worked with members of the local tribe to establish a route into Gippsland and Port Albert. In later years a large group of Gunaikurnai camped on *Bushy Park* and from the limited information available it appears that he treated them well.

McMillan has been painted as a mass murderer in the early 1840s, but this is inconsistent with the early principles he laid down in his shipboard diary and his later actions. Perhaps McMillan was involved in massacres, he certainly defended his property against Aborigines who attacked and killed his stock and

threatened his men. Caroline Dexter, who knew McMillan wrote in her *Ladies Almanack* of 1856 that he was 'forced to kill some treacherous natives' but she doesn't describe him as an indiscriminate killer.

The way that we look at past events has changed in recent years, particularly when considering Gunaikurnai history. We are not looking at the past from a purely historical perspective and in many cases the moral viewpoint of the present has been imposed on events in the past. In Gippsland the community's attitude to the perceived wrongs done by McMillan is one of responsibility and guilt and somehow by proposing the removal of the cairns and any trace of McMillan the present generation is attempting to remedy what has gone before. The cairns could be used as a focus for telling the true story of what happened during the settlement of Gippsland.

Peter Gardner's body of work has been instrumental in bringing to the fore some of the most tragic events that have taken place in Gippsland. His writing has influenced several generations and with few exceptions his conclusions have remained largely unchallenged. He is referenced as a main source by the NSW University study of massacres in Australia for Gippsland. He is listed as a key source for McMillan in the Australian Dictionary of Biography and Wikipedia. The name of the McMillan electorate was changed to Monash on the basis of McMillan's actions, based on the public's knowledge which was largely derived from Gardner.

Angus McMillan Sennotype completed by Alfred Bock held at Sale Historical Society 1872

Emotive articles and letters appeared in *The Age, The Guardian* and *The Gippsland Times* during the Black Lives Matter campaign, calling for the removal of the cairns. The majority of these were written in support of and influenced by Black Lives Matter but with very little knowledge of what actually took place in Gippsland.

Angus McMillan needs to be remembered as an ambitious man who created a small empire for himself before losing most of what he had built up. He needs to be remembered for his connections to the Aboriginal people, both good and potentially bad. The cairns, which have stood for almost 100 years have kept him in the public eye and should be the focus for telling the largely untold story of the first custodians of Gippsland. If this includes the darker side of white settlement then it must be included. The story of the

massacres stands alone and is not dependent on McMillan, there were many others who played a significant role in the persecution of the Gunaikurnai. Through the cairns McMillan can be a conduit between the present and what we need to know of the past, but there is insufficient evidence to warrant him being portrayed as the 'Butcher of Gippsland'.

Appendix A

What happened to the major characters from the 1840s

Lachlan Macalister

A number of features in Gippsland now bear his name including streets and the Macalister River as well as the Macalister Irrigation District. In 1850 the lease was transferred to John Foster ending Macalister's association with Gippsland. In 1851he married Christina McInnes and they had one daughter Ann Janet Macalister. He died at *Clifton* in 1855 and was buried at St David's Church Campbelltown.

Colin Macalister

Colin was a brother to Lachlan Macalister. Colin appears to have returned to Goulburn and in 1844 paid a deposit of £6/5/- for land at Argyle but did not have the purchase price as the land was forfeited in 1844. In 1849 he was in court over a dispute of land from the estate of his brother Matthew who had purchased land in Goulburn before his death in the same year. He was opposed in his claim by Lachlan and Matthews wife who had remarried.

Colin married Agnes MacKay in 1841 and subsequently had fourteen children. In 1867 he moved to Gordon Downs in Queensland and then to the Palmer River where he applied for a Miners Licence in 1874. He died there in 1877.

Matthew Macalister

Matthew married the widow of William Foster and travelled to England to give evidence in the Tichborne Case. He farmed with his cousin on the station called *Mibost.* He drowned in the Nicholson River in February 1871 while trying to cross it in a dogcart.

Frederick Taylor

Taylor maintained his association with the Loughnan brothers taking on a run of 54,000 acres north of Bendigo with them, then 84,000 acres on the Murrumbidgee near Hay in 1860 and then in 1863 the Mulberrygong run. In 1864 he was appointed a Commissioner of the Peace. Taylor also owned a property *Bonally* a mansion set on five acres with expansive gardens in Elsternwick. He died at the property on 14 January 1872 and was buried in the St Kilda cemetery.

Taylor never married and left real estate valued at £4,554 and personal estate of £19,935 to relatives in Scotland and to Henry Nicholas Loughnan and Octavius Batten Sparks. Mt. Taylor near Bairnsdale and Taylor's Lakes are thought to be named after him.

> Mr Frederick Taylor, who, in; the early goldfields days;, occupied the Strathloddon pre emptive right, near' Guildford, is dead. Mr Taylor 'was an illustration" of what perseverance and thrift can accomplish. Some years ago he visited his native land; Scotland, but the climate not 'agreeing with his 'enfeebled' constitution, he returned.a confirmed invalid, and after lingering for a long period, at his beautiful residence; Elsternwick, he succumbed to his.malady. His income exceeded £40 per week. Mr Taylor was very prominent in the early gold days, and had many a scrimmage with the miners. But time, which produces wonders, dropped Mr Taylor out of sight, and brought in new generation. The few remaining of the early, days, who were brought in contact with him, still had the curiosity to learn what became of him. It is reported that he left-£100,000 to his old partner, Mr Loughnan.

Mt Alexander Mail 30/1/1872 p.2

William Pearson.

Pearson of *Kilmany Park* was perhaps the most successful of the Gippsland squatters. He married Miss Eliza Travers in 1859 and had a family of seven children. His large shareholding in the Long Tunnel mine at Walhalla made him a substantial fortune and this with his successful pastoral business allowed him to indulge in horse racing. He was a member of the Victorian Racing Club and also the Legislative Assembly and then the Legislative Council. He died at his property *Craigellachie* in East St Kilda on 10 August 1893 while still a member of the Victorian Parliament.

> Those early days. required men of no ordinary metal to face the difficulties besetting them at every turn. In the case of Mr Pearson he went down to an absolutely unknown district of the colony, and successfully fought his way alone. He was a man who did not know the meaning of retreat. Whatever the difficulties, he met them bravely, and, as had been seen, successfully overcame them. As time went on he entered public life, and although not what might be called an active politician he was always ready with advice, and spoke also upon subjects with which he had a more particular acquaintance. He would be remembered as a man of sterling worth, and as one of those of whom few were now left to whom the colony owed a great deal of its
> present greatness.

'The Late William Pearson', *Gippsland Times* 18 August 1893, p3

William Odell Raymond

Raymond left the district after a farewell dinner at the Royal Exchange Hotel, attended by thirty-one people. He then went to the Loddon River at Strathloddon before returning to England for medical treatment. He died at Paddington in London on 19 June 1859 aged just forty-nine years. Raymond Street Sale and Raymond Island were named after him.

John Foster

Foster originally settled in Tasmania but then came to Gippsland and controlled a number of properties including The Heart 1843, Tangel 1848, Glenfalloch 1850, Boisdale 1850, Dargo 1850, Glencoe 1850, Erinvale 1852, and Castleburn 1856 at total of over 72,000 ha. He died in Tasmania in June 1875.

> He established himself at Fosterville, near Campbell Town. At an early period he
> exported grain to Mauritius, and became an importer of British goods. He was the owner of property at Cape Portland, and more recently of properties at Gippsland.
> Mr. Foster has been identified with public companies for many years; as a shareholder in the Douglas River Coal Company, the property owned by that Company gradually passed into his hands. He has been a director of local companies for years, and in connection with Askin Morrison, Esq., he has been instrumental in bringing the Mersey and Deloraine rail or tramway to the state of completion in which, it now is, though still incomplete. In the neighboring colony of Victoria, Mr. Foster has long
> been identified with the Bank of Victoria, the Colonial Bank, and with several insurance companies established there in local interests. Mr Foster was included in the Commission of the Peace on 22nd September, 1830. Upon the death of Mr J. H. Wedge, in 1868; he succeeded to that gentleman's representation of the Huon district in the Legislative Council. Failing health compelled him to retire from political life on the 23rd July, 1874. He married late in life, and has left several children. The late Mr.
> William Foster, the "father of the Sydney bar," was a brother of the subject of
> these remarks.
>
> 'The Late John Foster Esq' *Launceston Examiner*, 1 July 1875, p.2.

William Uriah Hoddinott

William was born at Port Albert in 1857, married Mary Hodge Brown in 1885. Died in Bairnsdale in 1942.

> He followed grazing and farming pursuits, was well known in the district and was a great worker for the Bairnsdale Agricultural Society as well as other charities.
>
> *Gippsland Times*, 15 January 1942, p.1.

Uriah Hoddinott

Uriah was born in 1818 and married Martha Child on 4 May1841 in Bristol England. He arrived in Australia aboard the *Mary Nixon* in 1841. He was appointed to the Goulburn River Aboriginal Protectorate in September 1842 but within a short time was suspected of dishonesty and the distribution of stores was taken out of his hands. He and Martha had eight children.

In 1863 he placed a notice in the Gippsland Times stating that anyone travelling through his properties of *Warrigal Creek*, *Sunville* or *Reedy Creek* would be prosecuted. In 1865 he lost 500 sheep off the *Sunville* property and in 1869 the 9 March *Gippsland Times* reported that 160 acres were for sale at *Sunville* station including a house, barn, stabling and overseers cottage. In 1870 it was announced that *Sunville* would be sold by auction.

He eventually moved to Paynesville where he died in 1885

George Augustus Robinson

The Port Phillip Protectorate was abolished in December 1849. With the exception of a daughter Robinson was alone in the world his wife having died in 1848. He was reasonably well off with a pension so in May 1852 sailed for London. He remarried in 1853 and had more children. After living on the Continent for a number of years Robinson returned to England to live in Bath where he died on 18 October 1866. There was no obituary, only a simple statement in the English press announcing his death and that he had been Chief Protector of Aborigines in Australia.

William Thomas

Although the Protectorate was terminated in 1849 La Trobe retained Thomas as Guardian in the counties of Bourke, Mornington and Evelyn. Until his death in 1867 he was the Chief Government Adviser on Aboriginal Affairs and was a key figure and the most influential witness at the 1858-59 Select Committee on Aborigines. His recommendation regarding Aboriginal Reserves and depots was accepted in a modified form for Victoria and implemented by the Central

Board for the Protection of Aborigines. He was more successful than any other first generation settler in attempting to understand Aboriginal society.

> On arriving at Melbourne, Mr Thomas was directed to take charge of that district, including the Yarra and Western Port districts. Mr Thomas faithfully fulfilled his functions, camping and frequently travelling with the blacks. Shortly afterwards the protectorate was abandoned by, the Home Government, and the protectors, with the exception of Mr Thomas, dismissed.
>
> At the time of the marriage of the Prince of Wales it will be remembered that aborigines of the tribes of Wawoerong, Boonoorong and Tara-Waragal, accompanied by Mr Thomas, presented an address to the Governor, with presents to be transmitted to the "Great Mother, Queen Victoria." Amongst the presents were included a boomerang and reed spear for H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh. Of late Mr Thomas has frequently taken part in the discharge of judicatory duties on the suburban benches. He was a man of genial temperament and universally beloved, especially by the blacks. By his death they have lost a friend who conscientiously and persistently strove to ameliorate their condition. He labored amongst them even to the teaching of their children, and we fear that to them the death of Mr Thomas will prove to be a great disaster. He died at his house at Merri Ville, at the advanced age of 74.
>
> 'The Late William Thomas', *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers*, 20 December 1867, p.3.

Boyd Cunninghame

Cunninghame was not successful as a squatter and in 1849 relinquished control over both *Roseneath* and *Mosquito Point*. The advertisement for the sale appeared in *The Argus* of 12 December 1849. *Mosquito Point* had stockyards and a hut whereas *Roseneath* had a seven roomed cottage, dairy, huts, stockyards, milking yards, calf pens and gardens. It was producing 150lbs of butter a week. It was said that he had plenty of stock but no capital and was forced to pay his men with either a filly or several calves. He was eventually declared bankrupt. Around 1856 he built *The Fulton* at Bundalaguah north of Sale. He died on board the steamer *Salsette* during a passage through the Red Sea as he was returning to Australia from Scotland.

> Mr. Cunningham was amongst the first settlers in Gipps Land, where he was deservedly esteemed for his many good qualities. This melancholy occurrence will
> cast a deep gloom over a large circle of connexions and acquaintances, who were anxiously expecting his return, from Scotland. Mr.

Cunninghame was brother to the Dowager Countess of Argyle and was in the prime of life. He has left a widow and a large family to bewail his loss.

'Miscellaneous', *The Age*, 22 October 1860, p.5.

Patrick Coady Buckley

Buckley acquired other stations in latter years including *Maryvale* and *Woodside.* He was unmarried, and we believe had no relatives in the colony. Mr. Buckley was a man of almost gigantic stature, and nearly everything around him partook of this particular feature in his personal appearance.

The fencing of his paddocks and around his homestead was larger and more substantial than any one else's, and it was his habit to put corner posts in with block and tackle. As a business man he was prompt, energetic, and truthful, guileless as a child, and most conscientiously industrious. For integrity and honour he bore the very highest character, and of the numbers who have had dealings with him all will admit.that his word was his bond in the fullest sense of the term. He was of a singularly genial and kind temperament, always dispensing the cheerful hospitalities of his ample homestead with that ready tact and courteous attention to his guests that made them feel thoroughly at home. Mr. Buckley kept studiously aloof from the turmoil and excitement of public life, but he took a warm interest in politics, and especially in everything relating to the progress of Gippsland. To say, however, that there was not a more influential man in the community, is to say what every one who knew the deceased and the people of this district will admit. The deceased gentleman was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, yet he was in habit and conversation as tolerant and unsectarian as
a truly generous man could be. If the old adage be true that "charity covereth a multitude of sins" then any shortcomings on this score must have sat lightly upon him, for there was not a convent, church nor school which solicited his assistance, but it was freely accorded. Indeed these donations of his to public charities connected with his own denomination have been valued at L500 per annum,
and yet this did not prevent him from freely subscribing to other charities He died on the 16th of June from diptheria having attended the funeral of long time friend David Turnbull the previous week in cold and damp weather.

The Late Patrick Coady Buckley', *Gippsland Times*, 18 June 1872, p. 3.

Frederick Jones

Held *Lucknow* from 1842 until 1858 when it was taken over by Edward Crook of *Holey Plain.* He returned to London where he died aged only 53 years on 13 October 1856 at St. John's Wood. His mother had come to Australia with him and had died in Sydney in 1843 aged 54 years. He was a strong churchman and a keen supporter of establishing a church at Tarraville. His nickname was 'Sterling'. On his death all his property including his land at left to the Rev Robert Allwood of St James Church Sydney and Stephen Greenhill. They were required to divide his estate into four parts and build a Episcopalean Church at Big Coogee. Another share would go to the Sydney Dispensary and Infirmary and another to the Sydney Benevolent Asylum. The final portion was to be held in trust until the church was completed and then a marble tablet was to be installed in the church with the following inscription.

In Memory

Of

Mrs Hannah Jones

Who Died 6th March 1843

Aged 54 years

"Her children rise up

And call her blessed"

Proverbs C31. V. 28.[1]

[1] PROV, VPRS 7591/P0001, 2/145, Frederick Jones Will, Grant of Probate 07 May 1857

Appendix B

As detailed on page 11, McMillan kept a diary on his voyage to NSW. The following is a transcript of the full list of resolutions he wrote.

McMillan's Shipboard Resolutions

Remember to read over these resolutions once a week, and may the Lord give me the strength to keep them

1st – Resolved that I will do whatever I think to be most to God's glory and my own good profit, and by leasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of time, whether now or hereafter, to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this whatever difficulty I meet with, how many and how great sorrows, may I continually be endeavouring some new invention and contrivance to promote the foresaid things resolve.

2nd -Resolved never to lose one moment of time but to improve it the most profitable way I can.

3ed – Resolved never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

4th – Resolved to live with all my might, while I do live.

5th – Resolved to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and the common consistency which attend death.

6th – Resolved never to do anything out of revenge.

7th – Resolved never to suffer the least motions of anger to irrational in beings.

8th – Resolved I will live so I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

9th – Resolved to maintain the strictest temperance in eating and drinking.

10th – Resolved whenever I do any conspicuously evil action to trace it back to the original cause, and then both carefully endeavour to do so no more and to fight and pray with all my might against the origin of it.

11th – Resolved to read the scripture with attention constantly and frequently, as that I may find and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.

12th – Resolved to strive to my utmost every week to be brought higher in religion, and to a higher exercise of Grace than I was the week before.

13th – Resolved to be strictly and firstly faithful to my trust, that in Proverbs xx,6 – A faithful man who can find, may not be aptly in me.

14th – Resolved to enquire every night as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent, what sin I have committed, and wherein I have deceived myself. Also at the end of every week, month and years.

15th – Resolved never to speak evil of any, unless I have some particular call.

16th – Resolved never to speak anything that is rediculous, or matters of laughter on the Lord's Day.

17th – Resolved to ask myself at the end of every day, week, month and year, wherein I could possibly in any respect have done better.
18th – Resolved never hence forward till I die to act as if I were in any way my own, but entirely and altogether God's, and agreeable to his will.
19th – Resolved never to allow the least measure of fretting uneasiness to my father, mother, brothers and sisters. May I be mindful of writing to them in whatever line of life the Lord may chance to cast my lo and may the Almighty enable me to help them in some future day. His will be done and not mine.
20th – Resolved to endeavour to my utmost to deny what is not the most agreeable to a good and universally sweet and benevolent, quiet, peaceable, contented, easy, compassionate, generous, humble, diligent, meek, modest, submissive, obliging and industrious, charitable, even patient, moderate, forgiving, sincere, tempers, and to do it at all times what such a temper would lead me to examine strictly every week whether I have done so.
21st – Resolved constantly, with the utmost sincerity and diligence and the strictest scrutiny to be looking into the state of my soul that I may know whether I have an interest in Christ or no that when I come to die I may not have any negligence respecting this to repent of.
22nd – Resolved to endeavour to my utmost to act as I think I should do if I had already seen the happiness of heaven and hell's torments.
23rd – Resolved never to give over, nor in the least to slacken my fight with my corruption, however unsuccessful I may be.
24th – Resolved when I fear misfortune and adversity to examine whether I have done my duty, and resolve to do it and let it be just as providence orders it. I will as far as I can be concerned about nothing but my duty and my sin.
25th – Resolved never to do anything but duty and then according to Eph. 6-5,7,8 Do it willingly and cheerfully as unto the Lord and not to man. Knowing that what ever good thing man doeth, the same he shall receive of the Lord.
26th – Resolved very much to exercise myself in this all my life long days with the greatest openness I am capable of to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him, all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires and everything and every circumstance according to God's will.
27th – Resolved after affliction to inquire what I am the better for them what I have got by them. O may the blessing of God guide and direct me to keep the above Resolution, without this I am unable to do any good.
Tuesday 14th November 1837
The above Resolutions were written this day and I hope I may get strength to keep them.[2]

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[2] Angus McMillan, Journal of journey from Greenock to New Holland. Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Box 129/4

Appendix C

Report from The Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines 31 October 1845 Sydney

This report highlights that only one side of what was happening in Gippsland was being recorded and all the information received was from the Europeans as is stated no communication was possible with the Gunaikurnai as no one was able to interpret for them. It is noteworthy yet that another reason for the murder of Macalister is outlined here in the fourth point, namely the theft of a shotgun by a native.

'The aborigines are in hostile relations with the settlers; the hostility has probably arisen from the aggression of the blacks:-

First: The first party said to have penetrated into Gipps Land, was one of Lachlan Macalister's , under the direction of Mr Macmillan, about five years ago. At a morass near the River Mitchell, or Macarthur, it was attacked by a large body of natives, but I have heard that no lives were lost on either side.

Secondly: Mr Macmillan, with a party of seven men, was again attacked at his homestead on the River Avon, or Dunlop, by about one hundred natives, on the 22nd of December, 1840, when one aborigine is said to have been shot.

Thirdly: On two other occasions, Mr Macmillan was attacked by large parties of natives, while proceeding with his drays to Port Albert.

Fourthly: Mr R Macalister was killed near Port Albert, about four years ago, by a small party of aborigines, apparently without given any provocation. It is possible however, that the blacks were instigated to the committal of this murder in consequence of a dispute having occurred a short time previous, between a resident of Port Albert and a native, owing to the latter having stolen a double barrelled gun from the residence of the former.

Fifthly: A shepherd in the employment of Mr L. Macalister was killed in December,1841, while endeavouring to protect his master's property from the depredations of these savages: his legs and the muscles of one arm, were cut off, and carried away by them.

Sixthly: A hutkeeper of Mr. Foster's was killed in 1842, while in the act of shifting his hurdles. No cause is assigned for this murder.

Seventhly: Two men in the employment of Mr. J. M. Loughnan were killed on that gentleman's station by a party of aborigines, while in the act of removing their goods from one hut to another. In this case also no cause seems to have been assigned for the perpetration of this deed.'

Appendix D

Speech made at Gellion's Hotel Port Albert honouring Angus McMillan the 'Discoverer of Gippsland' and extolling the virtues of the country he opened up for settlement.

Gippsland (From Our Own Correspondent)
Port Albert, 6th March, 1856.
Angus McMillan Esq.

The entertainment given to Angus McMillan, Esq., came off on Monday evening last, and brought together about fifty gentlemen. The dinner which was entrusted to the care of Mr Gellion, reflects the highest credit on the gentleman; and, in truth, it must be very gratifying to hear the praises of everyone lavished upon the excellence and good taste that characterised this- one of the most sumptuous entertainments ever given in Gippsland.

After the cloth was withdrawn, the Chairman proposed the toast: "Mr McMillan, and the discovery of Gipps Land'. The Chairman said:

> Gentlemen – we are assembled here to-night to do honour to the man whose enterprise laid open to us the district we inhabit, - an enterprise, the difficulties of which can be but imperfectly appreciated by us who enjoy the fruits of it; but that we do appreciate the advantages thus afforded us, as well as the excellent qualities of the man to whom we are indebted for them, is shown by our presence here tonight. To those very obstacles which opposed a mighty barrier to the inroads of civilisation, and stayed the advancing progress of the white man, until McMillan, undeterred by the difficulties and dangers, led the way, we are indebted for some of the principal advantages we enjoy as dwellers in Gipps Land.
>
> The gigantic granite ramparts which seclude us from the rest of Australia shelter us also from the scorching winds of the desert, and give rise to numerous rivers, which, flowing in every direction through the land, fertilise the soil and give the superiority we claim for it as an agricultural and grazing district.
>
> From our situation between those mountains and the sea, we enjoy a climate which I consider approaches more nearly to perfection than that of any spot on earth. Unchilled by frosts – sheltered from hit winds – knowing no dread of drought – the heat of the day followed invariably by cool refreshing nights; a climate to which not only no disease is to be ascribed, but which is calculated to retain the body in perfect health where no other disturbing cause is in action; a climate not only enabling the settler to endure the severe toil that ever must accompany the conversion

of the forest into the farm, but fulfilling in the plenty of harvest the hopes with which he laboured in seedtime.

We have lately made a great stride in advance, and I confidently believe that the time is not far distant when the few gaps made in the forest by the present settlers will extend over the whole of the lower district, when in place of the sombre gum forest and tea-tree scrub, the makeshift hut, and the half cleared paddock, the eye of the traveller will rest for miles on waving corn-fields, interspersed with the substantial dwellings and well stocked homesteads of a prosperous and happy race of families, whose industry will relieve us from our present state of dependence on foreign countries for our food. When the vast mineral treasures of our granite ranges shall be worked by thousands instead of hundreds of sturdy miners, guided by science and aided by machinery, the valuable products of their industry and enterprise, brought to the coast by railway or canal, for the construction of which this country seems expressly formed.

When above all other resources we shall be found to possess in abundance, as I believe we do, that gift of provident nature, 'more valuable than gold' – the food of the mighty steam-engine, coal.

Then, with unequalled climate, a fertile soil, numerous valuable mineral productions, safe and convenient harbours, it needs no prophetic vision to foresee that this district, the fortunate discovery of our honoured guest, shall hold a most important rank amongst Australian settlements. (Cheers).

But I trust should we live to see Gipps Land rise from her present obscure to her future proud position, we may never see her people lose their characteristics which mark them now; the hospitality that welcomes everywhere the stranger and the traveller; the honesty that makes a locked door at night a rarity in the district; the energy that led the way, and has continued to distinguish the squatter and the farmer in their struggle ever since; the unity and friendly feeling that will never let a Gipps Lander stand by and see a neighbour beat for want of a helping hand either here, at home, or as I have often experienced myself, on the distant gold-field.

Let us continue to cherish those feelings and we may then rejoice in the present and trust confidently in the 'Land we live in', whilst our children's children shall learn to honour, as we do, the name of McMillan its discoverer. (Loud and continuous cheers).

Published in *Gippsland Guardian* 7 March 1856, p.3. Local Intelligence. Gippsland Anniversary Dinner.

Appendix E Descendants of Ewan McMillan 1858 - 2022

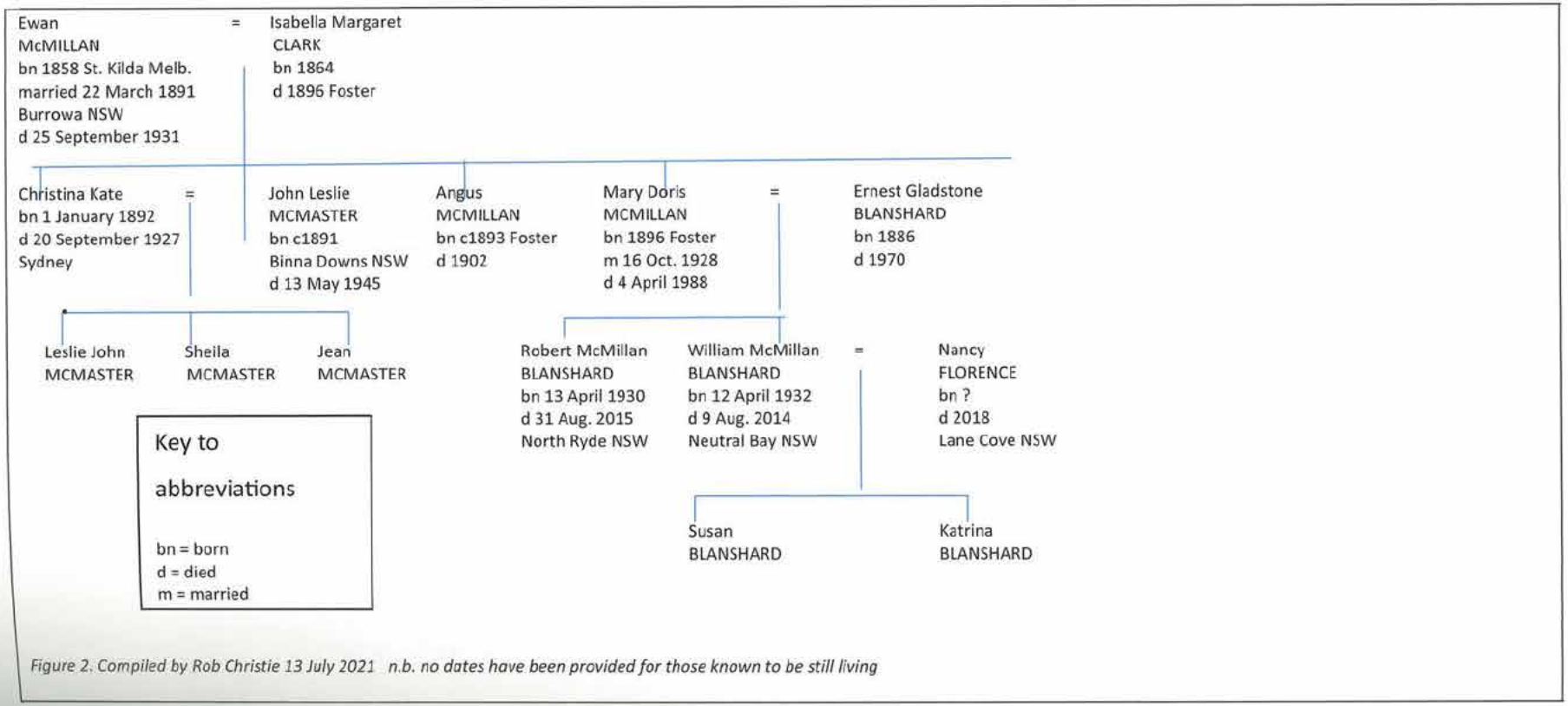

Figure 2. Compiled by Rob Christie 13 July 2021 n.b. no dates have been provided for those known to be still living

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Angus McMillan was once seen as a heroic and revered explorer who opened up Gippsland for European settlement. There are monuments recording McMillan's progress across Gippsland, giving him a prominence not accorded to other settlers.

However, in recent years he has been cast in the role of 'the Butcher of Gippsland' for his treatment of the Gunaikurnai people.

A Convenient Scapegoat investigates whether this title is fully justified. There is little evidence to support the claim that he was the leader and instigator of the massacres that took place across Gippsland. Other settlers were complicit in the dispossession and devastation of the Gunaikurnai people.

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