



Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930

THE CENTRE FOR
21ST CENTURY
HUMANITIES

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Site Name	Warrigal Creek Waterhole, Gippsland This massacre is part of a group of massacres
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Place Name	
Language Group, Nation or People	Brataualung
Present State/Territory	VIC
Colony/State/Territory at the time	PPD
Police District	Gippsland
Latitude	-38.465
Longitude	147.011
Date	Between 1 Jul 1843 and 31 Jul 1843
Attack Time	Day
Victims	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander People
Victim Descriptions	Aboriginal
Victims Killed	75
Victims Killed Notes	
Attackers	Colonists
Attacker Descriptions	Settler(s)
Attackers Killed	0
Attackers Killed Notes	
Transport	Horse
Motive	Reprisal
Weapons Used	Firearm(s), Double-barrelled Purdey(s)
Narrative	In early July 1843, Donald Macalister, the nephew of squatter Lachlan Macalister, was killed by Brataualang Aborigines, near Port Albert in Gippsland. According to GA Robinson, who first heard of Macalister's killing from Crown Lands Commissioner



Charles Tyers on 9 May 1844, he 'was alone it seems and on horseback and supposed riding serenely along and either the blacks took him by surprise or he must have been parleying with them at the time it happened. He had a brace of pistols in his holster, [when] his body was found. He was on his way to the Port [Albert] with cattle and [a short] way on ahead' (Robinson 19 May 1844, in Clark 1998d, p.70). Robinson later found that Aboriginal people were regularly shot and killed by a cluster of men at the old town of Port Albert and that Macalister was killed in reprisal (Clark 1998d, p.99, p.110). According to Gippsland historian Peter D Gardner, Macalister's death was at least the fifth killing of a colonist in Gippsland within 12 months (Gardner 2001, p.53). According to historian Michael Cannon, when news of Macalister's death became known, Angus McMillan, Lachlan Macalister's former overseer, formed an avenging party of 20 horsemen, known as 'The Highland Brigade' and was 'sworn to secrecy' (Cannon, 1990, p 170-1) . The clearest account of the events that followed is provided by Willy Hoddinott, also known as 'Gippslander' and published in *The Gap* magazine in 1925 and 1940: 'The brigade coming up to the blacks camped around the Waterhole at Warrigal Creek surrounded them and fired into them, killing a great number, some escaped into the scrub, others jumped into the waterhole, and, as fast as they put their heads up for breath, they were shot until the water was red with blood. I knew two blacks, who though wounded came out of the hole alive. One was a boy at the time about 12 or 14 years old. He was hit in the eye by a slug, captured by the whites, and made to lead the 'Brigade' from one camp to another' (quoted by Gardner 2001, p. 55). McMillan used 'a double-barrelled Purdy, a beautiful and reliable weapon, which in its time had done great execution', (Dunderdale, 1973, p 225). McMillan showed Robinson his gun on 5 June 1844. It had 'seven barralls (sic): all go off at once' (Clark 1998d, p.94). Hoddinott initially claimed that 60 Aborigines were shot but later claimed to have spoken to two survivors and revised up the estimate to 150 blacks shot: 'as fast as they put their heads up for breath, they were shot until the water was red with blood. Everyman who could find a gun or a horse went after the blacks, and came up with them around a large waterhole which was surrounded by the whites. They killed the blacks as long as their ammunition lasted [some say about half an hour]. Many escaped into the bush. Others sought cover in the waterhole, but often, as one raised his head for breath, he was shot. More than a hundred blacks were killed' (Hoddinott in Bartrop, 2004, p 201). In reviewing every known account of the massacre in 2001, Gippsland historian Peter Gardner considers that the Highland Brigade went on a rampage through the district, possibly over five days, killing Kurnai people at four different locations. He considers they killed about 75 Kurnai at Warrigal Creek Waterhole and a further 25 at the mouth of the Warrigal Creek where it empties into Smith Lake, and then shot 25 more at Freshwater Creek and a further 25 at Gammon Creek. In all about 150 Kurnai were slaughtered. Human remains have been found at each of these sites on several occasions.



Maxar | Source: Airbus,USGS,NGA,NASA,CGIAR,NLS,OS,NMA,Geodatastyrelsen,GSA,GSI and the GIS User Community

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Sources Dunderdale, 1973, p.225; Pepper and de Aurugo, 1985, p.24; Cannon, 1990, p.171; Shaw,1996, p.133; Clark, 1998d, p.70, p. 99, p.110; Gardner, 2001, pp 53-61; Bartrop, 2004, pp 199-205 . ([Sources PDF](#))

Corroboration Rating ***

Please be advised that the *Colonial Frontiers Massacre Map* stage 4 is the final stage of the research project. [Updates and changes](#) have occurred throughout the life of the project. Stage 4.0, 2022. The information on this site represents the best evidence available to the research team. It remains subject to change from ongoing feedback, community consultation and research. The research team invites [suggestions and corrections](#).
[Research Team](#): Ryan, Lyndall; Debenham, Jennifer; Pascoe, Bill; Smith, Robyn; Owen, Chris; Richards, Jonathan; Gilbert, Stephanie; Anders, Robert J; Usher, Kaine; Price, Daniel; Nevley, Jack; Brown, Mark; Le, Le Hoang; Fairbairn, Hedy.
 (Stage 4 team: Ryan, Lyndall; Pascoe, Bill; Debenham, Jennifer; Owen, Chris; Smith, Robyn; Usher, Kaine; Le, Le Hoang; Fairbairn, Hedy.)
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