

Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930

Colonial Frontier Massacre Groups

Listed below are groups of mass killings of Aboriginal people. These are series of massacres that were carried out in a relatively short space of time. Other massacres not listed below may have been part of a series of killings of fewer than 6 people. In some cases massacres were committed in the same region but after significant gaps of time and under different circumstances.

The group massacres were carried out across Australia.

The first recorded group massacre took place in Tasmania in 1827, and the most recent took place in the Northern Territory in 1928.

The purpose of the group massacres was to eradicate the entire Aboriginal group from the area.

Total number of group of massacres: 23

Total estimate of Aboriginal people killed in group massacres: 2606

Total number of colonists killed during attacks on Aboriginal people in group massacres: 1

Average number of Aboriginal people killed in a group massacre: 113.3

Average number of Colonists killed during attacks in a group massacre: 0.04

Each massacre in a group appears as an individual massacre on the map and the listing.

1827: Quamby Bluff, Western Marshes, VDL/TAS

The four massacres were carried over 17 days between 26 June and 13 July 1827 against the Pallitorre people from the North nation in Van Diemen's Land Tasmania (Lutruwita). The massacres were carried out by a party of seven male colonists led by two soldiers, Corporals John Shiners and James Lingan of the 40th Regiment and field constable Thomas Williams, all on foot and assisted by mounted stockmen Thomas Baker, James Cubit, Henry Smith and William White. It is estimated that 78 Pallitorre men, women and children were killed in the 4 massacres. The massacres were in reprisal for the killing of 4 colonists, including William Knight who was known to abduct Pallitorre women for sex, and for the attempted killing of another.

[Quamby Bluff \(1\), Westmoreland Falls](#)

[Quamby Bluff \(2\), Quamby Brook](#)

[Quamby Bluff \(3\)](#)

[Quamby Bluff \(4\)](#)

Estimated total killed: 78

1838: Slaughterhouse Creek

The massacres at Slaughterhouse Creek were part of an intensification of violence in Gamilaraay (Kamilaroi/Gomeroi) country involving Aboriginal resistance raids against stations, a shoot-on-sight attitude among colonists and several massacres. Accounts of Slaughterhouse Creek describe it as being part of an extended expedition during which a group of colonists rode in many directions across Gamilaraay country with the intention of finding and killing people. In many areas Gamilaraay people were effective in evading detection. Although people may have been killed at other locations, the only identifiable locations where massacres occurred on this expedition are Slaughterhouse Creek and Biniguy.

Slaughterhouse Creek

Biniguy

Estimated total killed: 220

1843: Warrigal Creek, Gippsland, PPD/VIC

The massacres that comprise the Warrigal Creek group, took place in Gippsland in July 1843, in reprisal for the killing of Donald Macalister, nephew of leading squatter, Lachlan Macalister in early July, as he was driving cattle to Port Albert. This occurred in the first few years of colonial occupation of Kurnai lands. In reprisal for Macalister's death, colonists rode from camp to camp massacring Brataualung people.

Warrigal Creek, Gippsland

Warrigal Creek Mouth

Bruthen Creek, Gippsland

Freshwater Creek, Gippsland

Gammon Creek, Gippsland

Estimated total killed: 125

1857-1858: Hornet Bank Reprisal Massacres, NSW/QLD

At dawn on 27 October 1857, a group of Yiman warriors massacred 11 colonists at Hornet Bank station on the Upper Dawson River in Central Queensland. They included 8 members of the Fraser family: Mrs Fraser, 5 sons and 2 daughters, and 3 male employees. In revenge, at least 3 large scale reprisal massacres took place.

Hornet Bank aftermath (1)

Hornet Bank aftermath (2)

Hornet Bank aftermath (3)

Estimated total killed: 170

1861: Cullin la Ringo Aftermath, QLD

On 17 October 1861, 19 colonists, men, women and children, were killed by Gayir warriors, at Cullin-la-Ringo station on the Upper Dawson River. Some of the victims were members of the Wills family from Victoria. The youngest son, Tom Wills, who was absent from the station that

day, was a survivor. This was the largest massacre of colonists by Aboriginal people in Queensland. It resulted in 4 reprisal massacres in the immediate aftermath, with reinforcements and new recruits of the Native Police being sent to the region.

Nogoa River

A sheer hill, north west of Nogoa

Mimosa Creek, Dawson River

Expedition Range

Estimated total killed: 109

1864: Mitchell River, QLD

Brothers Frederick and Alexander Jardine lead a cattle droving expedition from Rockhampton to the far north of Cape York Peninsula in 1864-65. According to their account during the journey they were challenged by Aboriginal people leading to two massacres near the Mitchell River.

Mitchell River Anabranch

Mitchell River, Far North Queensland

Estimated total killed: 38

1872: 'Maria' reprisal massacres, QLD

Following the Djuru massacre of the captain and 13 crew members of the brig 'Maria', which had foundered off Bramble Reef near Cardwell in north Queensland on 26 February 1872, three reprisal massacres took place in March 1872.

Mission Beach (1), Sabben Expedition

Mission Beach (2), Peri Expedition

Mission Beach (3), Governor Blackall Expedition

Estimated total killed: 96

1873-1874: Barrow Creek SA/NT

On 22 February 1874, Kaititja warriors killed James Stapleton and John Franks at Barrow Creek Telegraph Station in reprisal for the two men kidnapping Kaititja women for sex. Over the next 6 weeks police trooper Samuel Gasson led an unknown number of telegraph workers in 4 reprisal expeditions against the Kaititja at Taylors Creek and Central Mount Stuart. Although the official number of Kaititja killed was recorded as 11, Nettelbeck and Foster 2007, p 7, conservatively estimate the number as between 50 and 90, and other researchers estimate at least 100. The surviving Kaititja never attacked the Overland Telegraph Line again.

Barrow Creek (1)

Barrow Creek (2)

Estimated total killed: 80

1875: Roper Bar, SA/NT

A series of 5 massacres took place in the Roper Bar region in reprisal for the Mangarayi killing of Daly River Overland Telegraph station master Charles Henry Johnston, and the severe wounding of Overland Telegraph workers, Abram Daer and Charles Rickards at Roper Bar, NT, 29 June 1875. Daer and Rickards wrapped Johnston's body in canvas and left it at Roper Bar with a note about his killing and set off for Daly River Overland Telegraph station where they arrived on 13 July 1875. Daer and Rickards later died of their wounds. In reprisal mounted corporal George Montagu led a series of massacres against the Mangarayi.

Mount McMinn

Crescent Lagoon

Harris Lagoon

Calder Range

Mole Hill

Estimated total killed: 200

1879: Selwyn Range, QLD

Between 12 and 21 January 1879 a large group of Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta people were conducting ceremonies at Wonoma Waterhole on Sulieman Creek, in western Queensland. They were disturbed by stockman Bernard Molvo and 3 others. A group of Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta warriors killed Molvo and his comrades for witnessing 'secret' ceremonies and abducting Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta women for sex. In February 1879, sub-inspector Ernest Eglington led a detachment of native police and a vigilante group of colonists including Alexander Kennedy and Robert Currie from Buckingham Downs station and William Paterson from Goodwood station and carried out 5 reprisal massacres of Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta people at camps at Buckingham Downs, Sulieman Creek, Goodwood Station, Monastery Creek and Dajarra Monument. The survivors estimate that more than 100 Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta people were killed overall, suggesting that about 20 were killed at each site. Thus 100 Yalarrnga and Pitta Pitta men, women and children people lost their lives for killing 4 stockmen, averaging 25 deaths for the loss of each of the 4 colonists.

Buckingham Downs, Selwyn Ranges

Sulieman Creek, Selwyn Ranges

Goodwood Station, Selwyn Ranges

Monastery Creek, Selwyn Ranges

Dajarra Monument, Selwyn Ranges

Estimated total killed: 100

1879: Channel Country, QLD

In February 1879 a Pitta Pitta warrior killed a stockman named Scott at Murtagh station in the Channel Country. In early March 1879, sub-inspectors William Kaye and William Gough, a

detachment of 3 native police and at least one local stockman and an Aboriginal guide, set off in pursuit. Two reprisal massacres followed.

Annandale Station, Channel Country

Glengyle station, Channel Country

Estimated total killed: 67

1882: Elsey Station, SA/NT

Following the killing of Duncan Campbell at Elsey Station on 15 July 1882, and the disappearance of his body, two reprisal massacres followed.

Red Lily Lagoon

Elsey Creek

Estimated total killed: 32

1884: Anna's Reservoir, NT

In August 1884, Anmatjere warriors attacked and wounded stockmen Figgs and Coombes, at Anna's Reservoir, followed by the spearing of cattle by another group of Aboriginal warriors. Three reprisal massacres were carried out by NT police. According to Kimber (1990, p 15): "When one considers all of the official reports, independent accounts and strongly circumstantial evidence of punitive expeditions which occurred in 1884-1885 in Anmatjera territory, the early Aboriginal success in their attack on Anna's Reservoir was certainly but a Pyrrhic victory. I find no reason to disbelieve Spencer and Gillen's observation that as a result of this initially successful attack the Anmatjera were 'nearly wiped out'."

Attack Gap

Blackfellows Bones Bore

Wirmbrandt and Rembrandt Rocks

Estimated total killed: 325

1884: Mt Hayward Copper Mine, Daly River, SA/NT

Four massacres were carried out in reprisal for the Aboriginal killing of 4 colonists: 3 miners, John Landers, Harry Hauschild, Johannes Noltinius and the camp cook, Thomas Schollert on 2 September 1884. Hauschild appears to have died of wounds, about a month after the attack. Two of the reprisal massacres were recorded. Former Aboriginal Protector, Dr Robert Morice, in a letter to the *Adelaide Evening News*, 4 June 1885, said that 150 Aboriginal people had been killed in the reprisal massacres.

Daly River

Argument Flat

Estimated total killed: 76

1886: Abner Range, SA/NT

Following the Gudanji killing of station manager Ted Lenehan at McArthur River station in April 1886, two reprisal massacres took place in the Abner Range. Another occurred at Abner Range, Malakoff Creek six years later.

Massacre Waterfalls, Dunganminnie

Abner Range

Estimated total killed: 47

1886: John Durack Massacres, NT/WA

On 17 November 1886, 'Big Johnny Durack', and his cousin, John Wallace Durack of the Ord River pastoral station in East Kimberley, were allegedly ambushed and fatally speared by Aboriginal warriors near Mt Duncan in the Northern Territory, about 97 kms from the Ord River station. Two major reprisal massacres followed, the first in East Kimberley and the other at Waterloo Station in the Northern Territory. An estimated 220 Aboriginal people were killed.

East Kimberley

Waterloo Station

Estimated total killed: 220

1889: Batavia (Wenlock) area, QLD

On 11 May 1889, following the alleged Kaanju night-time killing of Edmund Wilson, a station worker, and the severe wounding of another station worker, James Evans, at Pine Tree Station (now Archer River Roadhouse), near Mein Telegraph Station, Cape York Peninsula, the native police were called in to exact revenge. On 18 May, Sub-Inspector Frederick Urquhart left Thursday Island for Mein Telegraph Station. When he arrived towards the end of May, he gathered a party of 40 armed colonial men on horseback comprising 3 detachments of native police, Wilson's brother-in-law, and overseers and stockmen from the region. In early June the party set off to 'disperse' the Kaanju on the right-hand side of the telegraph line in the Batavia (Wenlock) river area. Between 2 and 11 June 1889, the party carried out 5 massacres of Kaanju people.

Batavia area (1), Chulangun Campground

Batavia area (2), Archer River (1)

Batavia area (3), Archer River (2)

Batavia area (4), Archer River (3)

Batavia area (5)

Estimated total killed: 100

1892: Bowgan, SA/NT

On 30 January 1892, station worker George Williamson Clarke and station cook Charles Deloitte, were killed by at least two Aboriginal station workers, 'Walter' and 'Monkey Boy' at Creswell Station, also known as Bowgan Downs. 'Walter' and 'Monkey Boy' then fled the station.

The station manager, Thomas Augustus Perry, formed a posse of colonists from nearby stations and set off in search of the alleged killers. Two reprisal massacres followed.

Corella Creek, Bowgan

Fish Creek, Nicholson River

Estimated total killed: 60

1892: Willeroo, Victoria River District, SA/NT

Following the Aboriginal killing of G.S. Scott, manager of Willeroo Station in October 1892, two reprisal massacres took place. The station was abandoned in 1896.

Willeroo (1)

Willeroo (2)

Estimated total killed: 60

1893: Behn River reprisals, WA/NT

These massacres occurred following the spearing death of Police Trooper Joe Collins at the Behn River in July 1893.

Collins Creek

Behn River near Rosewood station - East Kimberley

Estimated total killed: 53

1895-1896: Bradshaw Station, NT

This group of three reprisal massacres occurred on the newly established Bradshaw Station between 1895 and 1896. They were reprisals for raids on the station store, sheep and cattle killing.

Bradshaw Station (1)

Bradshaw Station (2)

Bradshaw Station (3)

Estimated total killed: 60

1903-1908: Arafura Station

At Arafura Station in Yolngu country, the Eastern & African Cold Storage Co employed groups of Aboriginal men lead by colonists to ride around the station hunting and shooting Aboriginal people on sight. While people would have been massacred at multiple locations on these expeditions no details are available on the locations. As information on the specific sites is not known these groups of massacres are shown as a single site at Arafura Station.

Arafura Station

Estimated total killed: 200

1928: Coniston, NT

On 7 August 1928, a group of Warlpiri, Anmatyere and Kaytetye men led by Kamalyarrpa Japananglea, known as 'Bullfrog', killed dingo trapper Fred Brooks at Yurrbura, a Warlpiri, Anmatyere and Kaytetye camp 14 miles (22 km) from the homestead at Coniston pastoral station. The killing took place in reprisal for Brooks abduction of one of Bullfrog's wives. When Brooks' body was found in a rabbit hole, Mounted Constable George Murray led the first expedition of the Coniston massacres returning with two prisoners. Mounted Constable Murray then lead a second expedition about which he reported very little detail. Warlpiri, Anmatyere and Kaytetye people attacked colonists 'Nugget' Morton and Harry Tilmouth during which they each shot one of their attackers. These attacks led to a third expedition, again led by Mounted Constable Murray. Estimates vary on the total amount of people killed over all 3 expeditions. There are gaps in colonists' accounts and Aboriginal oral history records more sites than were reported. The official figure based on Murray's reports and the later inquiry was 31 while the Central Land Council estimates the true toll to be double that, ie: 62 (Making Peace with The Past, p 5). According to Paddy Tucker 200 to 300 were killed (Tucker in Kimber, 2003-04, Part 17). Kimber's conservative estimate was 70 to 80 (Kimber, 2003-04, Part 18). Ada Wade estimated 200 (Wade in Bradley, 2019, p 130). Bradley's estimate is 100 to 200 (Bradley, 2019).

Coniston (1)

Coniston (2)

Coniston (3)

Estimated total killed: 90