

Abduction and Multiple Killings of Aborigines in Tasmania: 1804-1835

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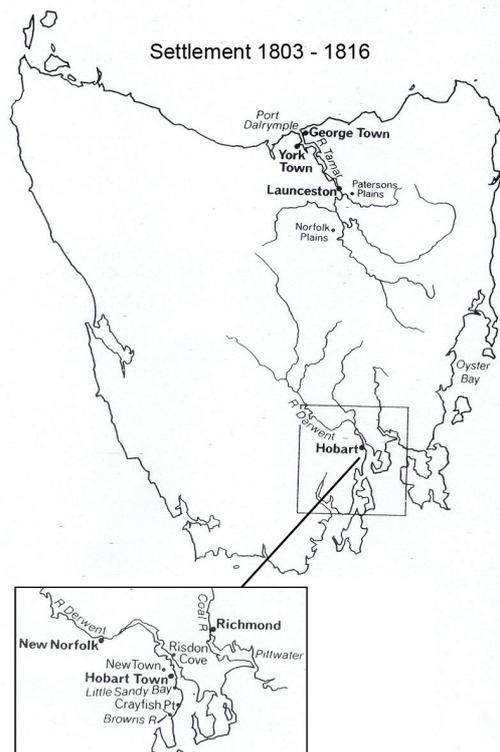
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Introduction

Tasmania (known as Van Diemen's Land until 1855) is about the same size as Ireland and a little smaller than Sri Lanka. Physically it is part of the continent of Australia but became separated from it by the formation of Bass Strait during the Holocene era about 10,000 years ago. The island was occupied for at least 30,000 years by a hunter-gatherer people, the Tasmanian Aborigines. Contrary to a long and widely held belief that they were a 'stone age' people who were destined to die out as a result of 10,000 years of isolation from the Australian mainland, recent archaeological research indicates that they were a dynamic people who not only reshaped their culture and society during the Holocene era, but were increasing in population at the moment of British colonization in 1803 (Lourandos 1997:281). Recent research estimates the Aboriginal population in 1803 at between 4,000 and 9,000 (Jones 1974:325; Butlin 1993:133-4). By 1835 however, fewer than 200 Aborigines remained. What had happened to the rest? Most historians acknowledge that a bloody war took place between the Aborigines and the British colonists for possession of the island between 1823 and 1835 but disagree about how many Aborigines lost their lives. They also disagree about how many lost their lives in the first 20 years of colonisation. By using a wide range of corroborating data this entry attempts to identify incidents of kidnapping and multiple killings of Aborigines by the colonists between 1803 and 1835.

1803-1821: British colonisation of Tasmania took two forms. Informal colonisation commenced in **1803** when small groups of British men employed in the sealing industry on the Bass Strait islands, initiated seasonal contact with Aboriginal groups along Tasmania's northern coastline. They traded seal carcasses and dogs in exchange for Aboriginal women for sexual and economic purposes. Sporadic conflict over women took place but few records exist of the details. By 1821 a permanent community of Aboriginal women, British men and their children had emerged on the Bass Strait Islands which has since become part of the modern Aboriginal community today. (Ryan 1996:66-72; Taylor 2002)

1803-1821: Formal colonisation began when the governor of the British colony of New South Wales, in a bid to forestall the French from laying claim to the island, established military outposts on each side of the river Derwent, at Risdon Cove and Hobart, in southern Tasmania and another at Port Dalrymple on the Tamar River in the north. These outposts which operated independently and took their orders from the government in New South Wales, comprised small numbers of defence force personnel, a few hundred convicts and a handful of free settlers. They were characterised by a break down in law and order enabling some convicts to escape into the bush; a shortage of food, in particular fresh meat; and an imbalance between the sexes with one white woman to four white men. These circumstances set the pre-conditions for conflict with the Aborigines. Conflict began at once and continued sporadically until 1820. It included mass killings of Aborigines, and despite the protests of the authorities, the kidnapping of Aboriginal women and children. By then the outposts had been placed under a single administration and the colonial population had reached more than 6,000 of whom about 800 were small farmers relocated from Norfolk Island. The colonists occupied less than 15% of the land between the Derwent River and Port Dalrymple and had established small farms to produce grain for export and cattle for local meat consumption. It is estimated that by then the Aboriginal population had fallen to about 2,000. (Ryan 1996:73-82)



1804 (2 January) Port Dalrymple: An exploring party led by A.W.H Humphrey shoots at Aborigines in response to their gesticulations that the party should leave.

*** (Robson 1983: 45)

1804 (5 February) River Derwent: An exploring party led by surveyor James Meehan recorded in his diary that he was halted by “a considerable body of Natives” in a steep gully who “Endeavoured to surround us” and then “several of them picked up stones”. When they pulled out one of his marking sticks, Meehan was “obliged to Fire on them”. At a campfire that evening “The Natives in a considerable Body Assemble again & Endeavoured to steal behind a hill on us. Fired another Gun & they dispersed for this Night.” At daylight numerous Aborigines appeared on the hill above the camp, armed with spears in a “very menacing attitude”. Meehan and his party quickly struck camp.

*** (Tardif 2003:111-12)

1804 (May 3) Risdon Cove, River Derwent: A large group of Aborigines, men, women and children, suddenly appeared late morning on top of a hill behind the Risdon outpost, on a kangaroo drive. Lieutenant Moore, the officer in charge, ordered two detachments of six soldiers to fire on the Aborigines in two separate engagements in which at least two Aborigines were killed. Then in a third engagement, the surgeon, Mountgarret, ordered the firing of a small, four pounder cannon loaded with grape and canister shot at the Aborigines. They “dispersed” and Mountgarret and the soldiers then chased them “some distance up the valley” where “more were wounded.”

Later that afternoon Mountgarret sent a note about the affray to the Colonial Chaplain Robert Knopwood. He said that between 500 and 600 Aborigines engaged in a "premeditated" attack on the outpost, "as their number far exceeded any that we have ever heard of." He also said that he had captured "a fine Native Boy" about two years old and whose "Mother and Father were both killed". Moore, however, took four days to prepare his report to Lieutenant-Governor Collins who appears to have advised him in its preparation. Moore said the attack by the soldiers "was the consequence of the natives own hostile appearance" and that it was not until they used "violence to a settlers' wife" and on his own servant who was returning to camp with some kangaroos "that they were fired upon." He went towards one group with five soldiers and sent two others to the settler. This latter group found it necessary to fire "and one was killed on the spot, and another found dead in the valley." After the surgeon proposed that one of the carronades be fired at them they departed. "Mr Mountgarret, with some soldiers and prisoners, followed them some distance up the valley, and have reason to suppose more was wounded as one was seen to be taken away bleeding." He also said that "a number of old men were perceived at the foot of the hill, near the valley, employed in preparing spears." In his despatch to Governor King in Sydney on May 15, Lieutenant-Governor Collins said that three Aborigines had been killed.

Twenty six years later, at a committee of inquiry into the affray, Edward White, who had witnessed the incident testified that about 300 Aborigines appeared over the hill and were surprised to see the area occupied by "strangers"; they did not attack any colonist and carried waddies for hunting rather than spears for fighting; and that the entire affray lasted for three hours in which "a great many" Aborigines were killed. Three other settlers, who were on the other side of the River Derwent at the time of the incident, also presented evidence. The colonial chaplain, Robert Knopwood, who had visited the site at Risdon Cove a week after the incident, testified that "five or six" Aborigines were killed. The harbour master, James Kelly, who was aged twelve at the time of incident, testified that about "four or five hundred Natives attacked... suddenly and unprovokedly, who were then fired on; no previous violence had been offered to them; [and that] 40 or 50 natives were killed." A settler, Robert Evans who was a marine in 1804, "heard that they came down in a great body' not that they made any attack; that they brought a great number of kangaroo with them for a Corrobbery; never heard that they interrupted any one, but that they were fired on; does not know who ordered them to be fired on, or how many of them were said to have been killed; heard there were men, women and children; that some were killed, and some children taken away".

*** (Nicholls 1977: 51; *HRA* III, I: 237-8; BPP 1831:37, 51-54)

1804 (November) Tamar River: Unknown number of Aborigines killed by military forces when a group of 80 Aborigines attacked them.

*** (*HRA*, III, I, 607)

1805-6 Hobart: River Derwent: Abduction and mutilation of Aborigines: Historian John West wrote in 1852: "A native, whom it was seemed desirable to detain, was fettered by Colonel Collins. Notwithstanding, he escaped, and was seen long after with the iron on his leg; nor can the punishments inflicted for crimes committed against the blacks, unusual as those punishments were, be given in proof that both races were valued alike. It is not, however, true, that cruelty was always unpunished. A man was severely flogged for exposing the ears of a boy he had mutilated; and another for cutting off the little finger of a native, and using it as a tobacco stopper."

*** (West 1852:9)

1807: (March 2) River Derwent: Conflict between Kangaroo Hunters and Aborigines: The Chaplain, Robert Knopwood recorded the following incident in his journal: "This aft[ernoon] my man Richardson came in from kangarooing (sic). He brought 80 wt (sic) and left Earl and Kemp in the bush. He informed me that on Saturday morning, about 9 a.m. he and Earl were out with the dogs, and that the natives to the number of 60 came down to them throwing stones and shaking their spears at them. One man came forward to Richardson and was going to spear him, but he shot him. Another came to Earl; he killed him. My men immediately made up the hill for fear the natives should surround them and kill them and the dogs. The two natives that my men shot the others took away, and made a very large fire for the purpose of burning the dead. The natives have been very troublesome for a long time, but not so desperate as they have been lately."

** (Nicholls 1977: 128)

1807-8 Southern interior: Killing and Mutilation of Aborigines: Two bushrangers, Lemon and Brown, were reported to have tortured and killed five Aborigines, two males and three females.

*** (West 1852:9; Fels 1982:61)

1809 Northern and Southern interior: Killing and Abduction of Aborigines: In a report to the governor of New South Wales, the surveyor John Oxley noted that 20 to 30 kangaroo hunters now lived permanently in the bush and were in conflict with the Aborigines: "Some of them have forced the Native Women after murdering their Protectors to live with them and have Families."

*** (*HRA*, III, I, 575)

1809-1819 Southern Tasmania: Baptism of Kidnapped Aboriginal Children: Colonial Chaplain Robert Knopwood recorded the baptism of 26 "native children" and that "in the years 1813 and 1814 a number of Natives were constantly at his door; a number of children were forcibly removed from the Natives, and they disappeared from [Hobart Town]."

*** (*HRA* III, iii: 510; BPP 1831: 53)

1810: (January 29) Southern Tasmania: A Government Notice acknowledges killing of Aborigines by stock-keepers. “There being great reason to fear that William Russell and George Getley will be added to the number of unfortunate men who have been put to death by the natives in revenge for the murders and abominable cruelties which have been practised upon them by the white people, the Lieutenant-Governor, aware of the evil consequences that must result to the settlement if such cruelties continued, abhorring the conduct of those miscreants who perpetrate them, hereby declares that any person who shall offer violence to a native, or who shall, in cold blood, murder, or cause any of them to be murdered, shall, on proof being made in the same, be dealt with and proceeded against as is such violence had been offered or murder committed on a civilised person.”
*** (Turnbull 1967:45-6)

1813: Coal River: Southern Tasmania: A Government Notice condemns the practice of killing Aborigines and kidnapping their children. ‘It having been intimated to the Lieutenant-Governor that a very marked and decided hostility has lately been evinced by the Natives in the neighbourhood of the Coal River, in an attack they made upon the herds grazing in the district, he has felt it his duty to inquire into the probable causes which may have induced them to adopt their offensive line of conduct, and it is not without the most extreme concern he has learnt that the resentment of these poor uncultivated beings has been justly excited by a most barbarous and inhuman mode of proceeding acted upon towards them, viz. the robbery of their children! Had not the Lieutenant-Governor the most positive and distinct proofs of such barbarous crimes having been committed, he could not have believed that a British subject would so ignominiously have stained the honour of his country and of himself; but the facts are too clear, and it therefore becomes the indispensable and bounden duty of the Lieutenant-Governor thus publicly to express his utter indignation and abhorrence thereof.’
*** (BPP 1831: 36)

1815: North Coast: William Stewart the commandant at Launceston, provides accounts of Aboriginal women kidnapped by sealers from Bass Strait.
*** (HRA, III, ii: 575-6)

1815 (November) Oyster Bay East Coast: Mass Killing of Aborigines: After the destruction of 930 sheep by Aborigines, recorded by Robert Knopwood the colonial chaplain, James Hobbs, a settler and government official, testified in 1830 that he had heard that a detachment of the 48th Regiment the next day shot 22 Aborigines. In 1852 the historian John West recorded that 17 were killed.

*** (Nicholls 1977: 26; BPP 1831: 50; West 1852: 10)

1817: (March 17) Hobart: Killing of Aborigines: When visiting missionary, Rowland Hassall, asked: "Why are there no natives seen in the town?" the answer given was - "We shoot them whenever we find them..."

*** (Hassall 1819: March 17)

1817: (May 24) Proclamation: outlawing "the habit of maliciously and wantonly firing at, and destroying, the defenceless NATIVES or ABORIGINES of this Island." "Whereas several settlers and others are in the habit of maliciously and wantonly firing at and destroying the defenceless natives, or aborigines, of this island, and whereas it has been commanded by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief, that the natives should be considered under the British Government and protection, these instructions render it no less the duty than it is the disposition of the Lieutenant-Governor to forbid and prevent, and when perpetrated, to punish any ill-treatment of the native people of this island, and to support and encourage all measures which may tend to conciliate and civilise them."

*** (HTG 1817: May 24)

1817 -1818: Kidnapping of Aboriginal children continues: Instances of Aboriginal boys employed as stock-keepers in outlying areas were reported in the local press. One boy, called Jacob, was arrested at York Plains for aiding and abetting the killing of another stock-keeper. Another was found dead at Pittwater, "and is at present supposed to have been murdered." In a third case, "Two black natives, who have long been among the inhabitants, named James Tedbury and George Frederick, were charged with robbing Roger Gavin of several articles, and James Goodwin of a musket, at the Coal River; after which they escaped into the woods and were there apprehended, both armed. They were each sentenced to be transported to such part of the Territory as His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor may be pleased to direct, for the term of three years."

** (HTG: 1817: Oct 25, and Dec 13; 1818: Nov 14)

1817: (August) New Norfolk: Conflict between Stock-keepers and Aborigines: The local press reported the following: "A few days ago a party of about twenty Black Natives pursued three of the Government Stock-keepers near New Norfolk, and began throwing their spears at them, when the men turned about and began firing, but at which they not regarding kept on throwing their spears: this made the Stock-keepers resolved to kill some of them, which they soon accomplished by leaving three dead in the field and taking one prisoner, and which soon made the Natives quit their military array and disband themselves - in the Engagement they threw upwards of 40 Spears, which was very surprising that not one of them hit the men."

*** (H T G 1817: Aug 31)

1819: (March 13): River Plenty, New Norfolk: Government Attempts to Curb Child Abduction. “Outrages perpetrated against some of the Native People in the Remote Country adjoining the River Plenty, though the result of the Inquiries Instituted upon these Reports has not established the Facts alleged, farther than that two Native Children have remained in the Hands of a Person resident about the Falls:It is undeniable that in many former Instances, Cruelties have been perpetrated repugnant to the Humanity and disgraceful to the British Character, while few attempts can be traced on the Part of the Colonists to conciliate the Native People....Miscreants...sometimes wantonly fire and kill the Men, and at others pursue the Women for the purpose of compelling them to abandon their Children.” The Government ordered that “With a view to prevent the continuance of the Cruelty before mentioned, of depriving the Natives of their Children” the resident magistrates at Pitt Water and the Coal River and the District Constables in all the other districts “do forthwith take an Account of all the Native Youths and Children which are Resident with any of the Settlers and Stock-keepers; stating from whom and in what manner they were obtained.” They were also to report “any Native child which shall come or be brought into their District, or Country adjoining; together with the Circumstances attending it” and that “Native Youths and Children who shall be known to be with any of the Settlers or Stock-keepers, unless so accounted for, will be removed to Hobart Town, where they will be supported and instructed at the Charge and under the Direction of Government.”

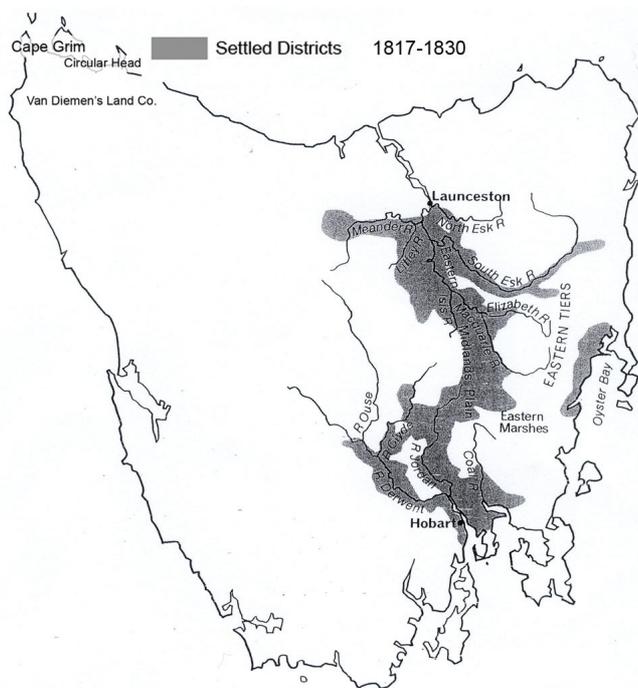
*** (H T G 1819: Mar 13)

1819: (April): Tea Tree Brush: Eastern tiers: Conflict between stock-keepers and Aborigines: The *Hobart Town Gazette* (HTG) reported the incident. “One account says that the natives attacked the stock, and, after being opposed by the stock-keepers, they came on in very large numbers; that of the three stockmen, one was killed and one wounded; that one native man was also killed; and that the hut was burned down. The other account says that a native woman, supposed to be the wife of a Chief, had been maltreated by two of the stock-keepers; that she escaped after much ill-usage; and that the tribes returned and attacked, as above described, the people and the flock. From the peculiarly ferocious manner in which they appear to have in this instance, so very different from the one before mentioned, there seems much reason to believe that some immediate and great cause had existed.”

* (H T G 1819: Apr 17)

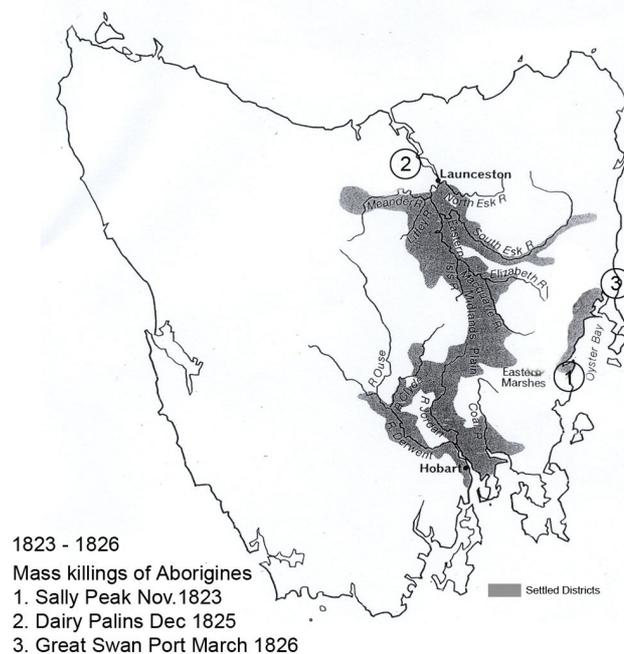
1821-1830: Pastoral expansion: The British government opened up Van Diemen’s Land to free settlers with capital. Supported by at least 5,000 convict and ex-convict stockkeepers and shepherds, it is estimated that about 4,000 free settlers took up land grants along rivers on the Eastern

Midland Plain between Hobart and Launceston, along the Tamar River north from Launceston, along the East Coast at Oyster Bay and along the Meander River west from Launceston. The area became known as the “Settled Districts”. In 1823 alone, 175,704 hectares were granted to the new settlers, the largest alienation of land in a single year in the entire history of Tasmania. (Ryan 1996:83) In 1825, a further 60,000 hectares were granted to the Van Diemen’s Land Company (VDL Co) in the north-west. In November 1825 the colony gained independence from New South Wales. (Robson 1983:140) By 1830 when nearly half a million hectares had been granted, the colony had been transformed from small-scale agriculture to a wool export economy with nearly one million sheep occupying about 30% of the island. (Hartwell: 1954:118; Ryan 1996: 83-5) The ‘Settled Districts’ and the VDL Company grant lay in the territory of six Aboriginal tribes whose combined population in 1823 is estimated at about 2,000. With a dramatic increase in the colonial population from 7,185 in 1821 to 24,279 in 1830, the pre-conditions were laid for conflict with Aborigines for possession of the land. (Hartwell 1954: 118; Ryan 1996: 83-85)



1823-1826: In the summer of 1823-4, stock-keepers broke reciprocal arrangements over the seasonal exchange of Aboriginal women and the use of food resources. Aboriginal men restored their lost prestige by killing stock-keepers and shepherds and their sheep and cattle. In response the colonial government reaffirmed that the Aborigines were within the jurisdiction of British law, so they could be arrested and charged with murder. Between 1824 and 1826 four Aborigines were hanged for these offences. The settlers and stock-keepers however took the law into their own hands and organised the multiple killing of Aborigines, confident that they would not be charged, let

alone convicted or hanged for their actions. Few incidents were recorded. (Ryan 1996:88)



1823 (November 15) Sally Peak, East Coast: When a group of about 60 Aborigines near Grindstone Bay on the east coast at Oyster Bay, confronted four stockkeepers about their abduction of Aboriginal women, they killed two of them, William Holyoak and Mammoa, employees of George Meredith and Silas Gatehouse, and wounded another. However the fourth, John Radford, escaped and ran to his master, Silas Gatehouse, at his house at Prosser’s Plains to raise the alarm. The incident created widespread panic and was reported in great detail in the *HTG*. The Aboriginal perpetrator, the Sydney Aboriginal Musquito, was later apprehended and Radford’s evidence led to his conviction. He was hanged in February 1825. But the reprisal killings that followed the original incident were not made public for nearly 50 years when historian James Bonwick published the interview he conducted thirty years after the incident with a stockman who, I have identified as James Gumm, employed by George Meredith. He told Bonwick that a party of thirty colonists – comprising constables, soldiers, and neighbours, the master of one of slain stockkeepers, John Radford and himself - set off in bloody revenge. They heard that a large group of Aborigines were camped for the night in the gully by Sally Peak, ten kilometres from Bushy Plains, on the border of Prosser’s Plains. James Gumm told Bonwick: “They proceeded stealthily as they neared the spot; and, agreeing upon a signal, moved quietly in couples, until they had surrounded the sleepers. The whistle of the leader was sounded, and volley after volley of ball cartridge was poured in upon the dark groups around the little camp-fires. The number slain was

considerable.” It is unlikely that this group of Aborigines were involved in the killings of the two stock-keepers. More recently the incident has been confirmed by the discovery of the diary of Adam Amos, district constable at Great Swanport. The entry for November 20 reads: “I have heard that a large mob of natives has killed one of Mr Gatehouse’s men at Grindstone Bay and also William Holyoak, a man belonging to Mr Meredith who was on his way here from the hospital and wounded. Another who got from then and fled to Pittwater his master and some of his men came after them to Mr Talbot’s where they found them last night and fired on them when they all scattered.”

*** (HTG 1823: Dec 3; Ryan 1996:86-88; Bonwick 1870:99; Amos 1823: Nov 20)

1824 (December) Paterson’s Plains near Launceston: On January 12 and 19 1825, the *Hobart Town Gazette* reported the visit to Launceston by 200 Aborigines in December 1825: ‘When crossing Paterson’s Plains they were wantonly fired on by the whites, and in their return some of their women were treated with indescribable brutality. When they reached the Lake River, two sawyers, who had never before suffered molestation, were wounded with their spears.’

**(*H T G* 1824: January 12, 19: West 1852: 16)

1825 (December) Dairy Plains: Meander River: John Cupit, a servant of William Stocker, alleged that he had been speared by Aborigines from Quamby Bluff. He and a “half-caste” woman, Dolly Dalrymple said they ‘fought off’ the attackers. The incident was reported in the *Colonial Times (CT)* on January 6, 1826. Further details were told to the government agent, G.A. Robinson, by a stockkeeper in August 1830 and match the information in a report of incidents in the area completed by the police magistrate in August 1831. Jorgen Jorgenson also recorded this incident in a manuscript he completed in 1837 but was not published until 1991. He claimed that Dalrymple killed 14 Aborigines, using a double-barrelled shot gun and that the surveyor, J.H. Wedge, was said to have seen 16 bodies. While Wedge’s journal confirms that he was in the area in late December 1825 there are no recorded entries for this month. Regional historian Shayne Breen notes that Cupit had shot Aborigines before.

*** (*CT* 1826: January 6; Plomley 1966:219; CSO 1/316: 1831, August 24; Plomley 1991:125; Crawford, Ellis and Stancombe 1962:24 and 35; Breen 1996:116)

1826 (March 14) Great Swanport, East Coast: Following the alleged killing by Aborigines of a servant, Roberts, of settler Buxton, at Oyster Bay, the local magistrate recorded four or five years later that a party went out after them and that one Aborigine was wounded. A few years later Buxton’s neighbour, Dr Story, interviewed Buxton’s daughter about the incident and sent her account to historian James Bonwick. She said

that the party killed several Aborigines at their camp that night. It is more likely that this incident took place in 1827, following the publication of the Government Notice of 29 November 1826.

** (CSO 1/316: 840; Bonwick 1870:117)

1826 (September 13) Government Notice: Execution of two Aborigines, who were convicted of killing a stock-keeper at Great Swan Port on the east coast. (*Hobart Town Gazette* 1826: September 13)

1826 (September 23: Northern Tasmania). A report in the *Hobart Town Gazette* stated: "it is with pain we learn that a skirmish has taken place between a numerous tribes of the black natives, and some stock-keepers, on the other side of the island, in which many of the former were severely wounded, if not slain. They made, it would appear, an outrageous attack on the cattle and persons of the stockmen, and provoked them to fire in self-defence."

* (*Hobart Town Gazette* 1826: September 23)

1826 (November 29) Government Notice: Magistrates authorised to use force against the Aborigines. Following the alleged killing of 11 colonists by Aborigines in ten separate hit and run incidents in the Settled Districts between mid September and the end of November, the lieutenant-governor of Tasmania, George Arthur, implemented British Colonial Office policy of treating Aborigines who attacked settlers and their property as "open enemies" of the state. (See *HRA*, I, xii, 21). He issued a proclamation which stated that if Aborigines had previously attacked the settlers or their property, "any person may arm, and, joining themselves to the military, drive them by force to a safe distance, treating them as open enemies." If the Aborigines were found "attempting to commit a felony" and if they appeared in large numbers, were armed in some way and attempted to employ force "for the purpose of doing any harm, short of felony, to the persons and property of anyone, they may be treated as rioters, and resisted if they persist in their attempt." "If they be found merely assembled for such purpose, the neighbours, and soldiers armed may, with a peace officer or magistrate, endeavour to apprehend them; and if resisted, use force."

"If any of the Natives have actually committed felonies, the magistrates should make such diligent inquiries as may lead to certainty of the persons of the principals, or any of them (whether this consists in knowledge of their names, or any particular marks or characteristics by which these persons may be distinguished), and issue warrants for the apprehension of such principals. The officer executing a warrant may take to his assistance such persons as he may think necessary; and if the offenders cannot otherwise be taken, the officer and his assistants will be justified in resorting to force, both against the principals and any others who may, by any acts of violence, or even of intimidation, endeavour to prevent the arrest of the principals.

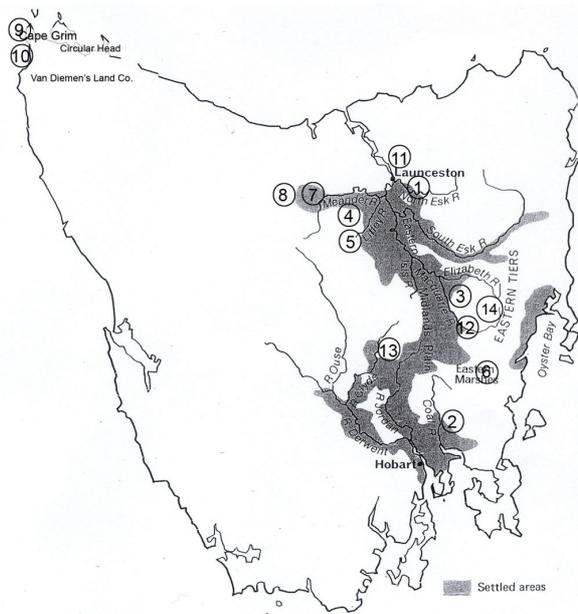
"When a felony has been committed, any person who witnesses it may immediately raise his neighbours and pursue the felons, and the pursuers may justify the use of all such means as a constable might use. If they

overtake the parties, they should bid to signify to them to surrender; if they resist, or attempt to resist, the persons pursuing may use such force as is necessary; and if the pursued fly, and cannot otherwise be taken, the pursuers may then use similar means.” (BPP 1831: 20-21)

The *Colonial Times* responded to this Government Notice by proclaiming in large letters: ‘SELF-DEFENCE IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST REMOVE THE NATIVES – IF NOT, THEY WILL BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS AND DESTROYED!’ The newspaper suggested that the two Aboriginal tribes in the Settled Districts, the “Oyster Bay” and the “Shannon parties” be removed, either to the east coast of New Holland or to King Island in Bass Strait. (*Colonial Times* 1826: Dec 1)

1826 (December) – 1828 (April)

The reports of 61 colonists killed by Aborigines over the next sixteen months are reported in 44 inquests located in the official archives in Hobart, Tasmania. In each case it was made to appear that the Aborigines were the aggressors. No inquest was ever conducted into the death of an Aboriginal person. Yet there is evidence to suggest that an estimated 260 Aborigines were killed by the colonists in 21 separate incidents in this period. Evidence is found in reports in the local press, in reports by soldiers, settlers and magistrates to the Colonial Secretary in Hobart, in settler memoirs, in the journals of government agent G.A. Robinson, in evidence by settlers to a government inquiry in 1830, in oral accounts of incidents collected by 19th century historians John West and James Bonwick and from information collected by historians in the 20th century. The evidence suggests that the colonists were more often the aggressors – in abducting Aboriginal women which led to reprisal raids by Aborigines and then further reprisal killings by the colonists. While most colonists were killed in ones and twos in their stock huts in daylight, most Aborigines were killed in groups of six or more at night in the mountains on the eastern and western borders of the Settled Districts or on VDL Company lands in north- west Tasmania. Evidence of 18 incidents of multiple killings has been found for this 16 months period – about one mass killing every three to four weeks. Most reports of multiple killings of Aborigines were vigorously denied at the time. The estimated number of recorded deaths on both sides in this period suggests an Aboriginal/colonial death ratio of more than 4:1.



Mass Killings of Aborigines Dec 1826-April 1828

- 1 Patersons Plains December 1826
- 2 Sorell Rivulet December 1826
- 3 Elizabeth River, April 1827
- 4 Quamby's Bluff, June 1827
- 5 Brumbys Creek, November 1827
- 6 Eastern Marshes November 1827
- 7 Meander River 1827
- 8 Ritchie's Hut December 1827
- 9 Cape Grim January 1828
- 10 Cape Grim February 1828
- 11 Tamar River March 1828
- 12 Macquarie River, March 1828
- 13 Jordan Lagoon March 1828
- 14 Elizabeth River, April 1828

1826 (December 9) Bank Head Farm, headwaters of Sorell Rivulet, Pittwater: When a mob of Aborigines were seen in the Pittwater area, the district constable, Alexander Laing and four soldiers of the 40th regiment went in pursuit and captured ten, including their leader, Kickerterpoller. This incident was reported by magistrate James Gordon to the Colonial Secretary in Hobart later that day and in two Hobart newspapers a week later.

** (CSO 1/331:194-5; *Colonial Times* 1826: Dec 15; *Hobart Town Gazette* 1826: Dec 16)

1827 (February 21) Eastern Midland Plain: Settler Michael Steel wrote to his brother: "We fell in with [Aborigines] and poured a strong fire into them and killed their leader and one more....had the country been even and clear we should have killed or taken the whole of them."

** (Dow and Dow 1990:45)

1827 (April 12) Elizabeth River, Eastern Midland Plain: On May 4, the

Colonial Times reported that three weeks earlier, Thomas Rawling and Edward Green, servants of settler Walter Davidson on the Elizabeth River, had been killed by Aborigines: "Several persons assisted by a small party of soldiers made immediate pursuit." The next day the

Hobart Town Courier, said that four men went after them, believing the Aborigines were led by Black Tom and that when a skirmish took place, "several of the blacks fell." A week later the *Colonial Times* reported that: "...in the affray not less than 30 of the blacks were shot dead; and that such was the powerful strength of the tribe, that the assistance of the Military was called to the spot where the skirmish took place, in the rear of Mr David Murray's farm, at the Elizabeth River." News of the affray aroused widespread interest, because two weeks later the *Colonial Times* published a letter from "A Settler" who denied the incident by claiming there was no pitched battle and he could find no Aboriginal bodies when he visited the site the next day. This incident was raised at the Aborigines Committee in March 1830 by district constable Gilbert Robertson who testified that he heard from one of the field police, Dugdale, who was with the reprisal party, that 70 Aborigines were killed and that Dugdale and Morley, the two guides who were with the soldiers from the 40th regiment should be questioned. Two other settlers, in evidence to the same committee, disputed the story. One said that "two parties fired upon the Natives and killed them by a cross-fire; but that some of them ran off." The other said that the soldiers "had been out for a long time and had done nothing." In 2000, a published memoir of settler James George, recorded the incident in the following way: "Having seen their fires in a gully near the River Macquarie, some score of armed men, Constables, Soldiers and Civilians, and Prisoners (convicts) or assigned Servants, who fell in with the Natives when they was going to their Breakfast. They fired volley after volley in among the Blackfellows, they reported killing some two score....."

*** (*Hobart Town Gazette* 1827: May 5; *Colonial Times* 1827: May 4, 11, 25; *British Parliamentary Papers* 1831: 48-9; George 2002:13)

1827 (late June) Meander River: The deaths of six stockkeepers, including William Knight, were reported by settlers in four separate incidents with Aborigines between 23 and 30 June 1827. Two different accounts of reprisal killings appeared in the same issue of the *Colonial Times*. The first account stated that: "The Military instantly pursued the blacks – brought home numerous trophies, such as spears, waddies, tomahawks, muskets, blankets – killed upwards of 30 dogs, and as the report says, nearly as many natives, but this is not a positive fact." The second account stated that: "The people over the second Western Tier have killed an immense quantity of blacks this last week, in consequence of their having murdered Mr Simpson's stockkeeper, they were surrounded whilst sitting around their fires when the soldiers and others fired at them about 30 yards distant. They report there must have been about 60 of them killed and wounded." The official report of this incident however, said that "between twenty and thirty of their dogs" were killed and one Aboriginal "possibly wounded." When the government agent, G.A. Robinson, travelled through the area in September 1830, a stockkeeper told him that William Knight was known to "kill Aborigines for sport." Regional historian Shayne Breen believes

that the accounts in the *Colonial Times*, relate to two separate incidents.

** (C T 1827: July 6; CSO 1/316: 15-45; Plomley 1966:219; Breen 2006: *pers. comm*)

1827 (November 29): Beginning of policy to remove the Aborigines from the Settled Districts. Government Notice authorises that “the black Natives may be driven from the settled districts’ with military support.(*BPP* 1831:21) Garrison Order authorises “two subalterns, two serjeants, and 30 rank and file, of the 40th Regiment” were sent to strengthen military posts at Ross Bridge, Meander River, and St Paul’s Plains. (*BPP* 1831: 21-2)

1827 (November) Western Marshes: When Aborigines were alleged to have killed three shepherds and slaughtered 100 sheep in this area, according to the newspaper, the *Tasmanian*: “two parties of military were despatched, in order to join the Field Police in putting a stop to these outrages; and we trust his Excellency will follow up this matter with such measures as will entirely prevent any future occurrences of a similar nature.” In January 1828, when the Land Commissioners arrived in the area one of them noted in his journal at the junction of Brumby Creek and Lake River that: “mysterious Murders have also been committed in this recess, and have hitherto remained undetected.”
* (*Tasmanian* 1827: Nov 16; McKay 1962:74)

1827 (November 17) Eastern Marshes: In this incident, reported in the *Hobart Town Courier (HTC)*, it was stated that: “Field police fell in with 150 Natives who attacked them with Stones, one of which struck Rogers a blow on the head. The Field Police expended 17 Rounds of ball cartridges and killed two of the dogs, but are not certain whether any of the natives were hurt, on fixing their bayonets and charging, the natives retreated.” In March 1830, district constable Gilbert Robertson, in testimony to the Aborigines Committee, said that “14 of the Natives” had been killed in this incident. He said that the Aborigines “had got upon a hill, and threw stones down upon them; the police expended all their ammunition, and being afraid to run away, at length charged with the bayonet, and the Natives fled.” One hundred and twenty one years later, a local historian, Roy Bridges, said that Laing and his men “chased the Aborigines up the Sorell Valley” where they “destroyed them.”
** (*H T C* 1827: Nov 24: *British Parliamentary Papers* 1831: 49; Bridges 1948: 69)

1827 (undated) Meander River: Travelling through this area in September 1830, government agent G.A. Robinson was told by a stockkeeper that: “Lyons and some others on horseback, who were in quest of cattle, fell in with a tribe of natives and drove them into a small lagoon and shot several, and from there they drove them to the foot of Ritchie’s Sugarloaf and shot all the others except an old man and a

woman who begged for mercy and were suffered to go away. [It is possible that this incident took place in March 1827 at Bull's Grant on Middle Plain.] At the Long Swamp, he said, several were shot by Murray or Murphy and two others; he said it was cruel thing for them in this case and they ought to have been punished." The stockkeeper also told him that at Gibson's stock hut the Aborigines had tried to spear a man who then sought assistance from other stockkeepers who surrounded an Aboriginal camp at night and shot nine of them.[This information possibly relates to the incidents that took place in June 1827.] Robinson was also informed by the surveyor of the VDL Co of an incident at "The Retreat", a cattle run on the Meander River leased by Gamiel Butler, where stockkeeper Paddy Heagon "shot nineteen of the western natives with a swivel gun charged with nails; and that a native named Quamby had disputed the land occupied by the whites and that he had successfully driven them off, but he was afterwards killed with others."

** (Plomley 1966:197-8, 218)

1827 (December) Meander River: Ritchie's Hut: According to a historian of the VDL Co, a group of its employees, taking 11 pairs of oxen from Launceston to Circular Head, were attacked by a "strong party of Natives who were however 'severely handled'."

* (Lennox 1990:170)

1827 (December 15) Eastern Midland Plain: Settler George Hobler wrote in his diary one of his servants was speared by Aborigines: "I have armed four men who I hope will get sight of their night fires and slaughter them as they lie round it."

* (Hobler 1992: 40)

1828 (January) Cape Grim, VDL Co: Richard Frederick, master of the VDL Co sloop, *Fanny*, told Mrs Hare, wife of the captain of the *Caroline*, that he and four shepherds had surprised a party of Aborigines at Cape Grim, killing 12 before retreating to their ship. Mrs Hare recorded the incident in her dairy on January 19. The manager of the Company in a report to his superiors in London on January 14 acknowledged the attack but claimed there were no casualties because "the guns mis-fired."

*** (Lee 1927:41; AOT VDL 5/1 No.2)

1828 (February 10) Cape Grim, VDL Co: Four shepherds employed by the VDL Co, Charles Chamberlain, John Weavis, William Gunshannon and Richard Nicholson, crept up on a group of Aborigines hunting and shot 30 dead and then threw their bodies to the rocks below. The incident was reported by a Company superintendent, Alexander Goldie to the lieutenant-governor in Hobart in November 1829 and he then ordered his agent, G.A. Robinson to conduct an investigation during his visit to the area between June and September 1830. Robinson interviewed two of the four perpetrators who confirmed the number killed and the location of the incident but said that only one

woman had been shot. He then interviewed an Aboriginal woman witness, who confirmed the number killed but insisted that many women were shot. However, Edward Curr, the manager of the Company, in a despatch to his superiors in London on October 7 1830, reported that only six Aborigines were killed and several wounded and then revised down the number killed to three.

*** (CSO 1/333:116-117; Plomley 1966:175, 181; AOT VDL 5/1:104-5)

1828 (19 March) Tamar River: In reprisal for killing a stockkeeper in this area, the *Hobart Town Courier* reported that: “a party of volunteers came up with murderers at Bullock Hunting Ground, where 4 men, 9 women and a child of the Black people were killed.”

*** (H T C 1828: Mar 22)

1828 (March) Macquarie River –Eastern Midland Plain – Ross:

After Aborigines killed three stockkeepers and a settler in three separate incidents in this area, the *Hobart Town Courier* reported that: “(s)everal parties went after them. One party overtook them and killed five.”

*** (H T C 1828: Mar 22)

1828 (March 5) Jordan Lagoon: A group of about 20 Aborigines attacked a settler John Franks and his stockkeeper William Walker on horseback driving sheep and cattle. They killed the stock-keeper and wounded both horses. Franks reported the incident to the Colonial Secretary in Hobart on March 5 and the incident was widely reported in the *Hobart Town Courier*. When government agent, G.A Robinson travelled the area in November 1831, he was told by another settler, Robert Barr, that in reprisal, stockkeepers “killed seventeen natives; that they had first killed seven and they then followed them to the lagoon and killed ten more. The natives could not get away.” In 1870, historian James Bonwick related that when the Presbyterian clergyman, John Dunmore Lang, visited the area in 1841: “A spot was pointed out...where seventeen ...had been shot in cold blood. They had been bathing in the heat of a summer’s day, in the deep pool of a river, in a sequestered and romantic glen, when they were suddenly surprised by a party of armed colonists who had scoured the passes, and I believe not one was left to tell the tale.”

** (CSO 1/323:113; *Hobart Town Courier*: March 15, 22; Plomley 1966:503; Bonwick 1870:67)

1828 (April 2) Elizabeth River: Eastern Tiers: Henry Beames, stock-keeper to settler William Robertson, was alleged to have been killed by Aborigines. The magistrate in the area, James Simpson, ordered a party of stockkeepers, soldiers and field police to pursue the Aborigines. In his report to the Colonial Secretary a few days later he said that: “it is believed that 17 Aborigines were slaughtered.” The incident was reported on April 5 in the *Hobart Town Courier* but did not mention the killing of Aborigines. Two years later, a settler, Dr Turnbull, disputed the incident and said that “no bodies were found”. In 1835,

Henry Melville, in *The History of Van Diemen's Land*, provided an account of the incident from an eyewitness: "A mob of some score or so of natives, men, women, and children, had been discovered by their fires, and a whole parcel of the Colonists armed themselves, and proceeded to the spot. These advanced unperceived, and were close to the natives, when the dogs gave the alarm; the natives jumped up in a moment, and then the signal for slaughter was given, fire-arms were discharged, and those poor wretches who could not hide themselves from the light thrown on their persons by their own fires, were destroyed. The writer recollects the description of one of the scenes, as given by an eyewitness. 'One man,' said the informant, 'was shot, he sprang up, turned round like a whipping top, and fell dead; - the party then went up to the fires, found a great number of waddies and spears, and an infant sprawling on the ground, which one of the party pitched into one of the fires.'"

*** (CSO 1/316:137; *HTC* 1828: April 5; *BPP* 1831: 49; Melville [1835] 1965: 71-2)

1828 (April 15) Proclamation: Van Diemen's Land was officially divided into the Settled and the Unsettled Districts. After more than a year of open conflict with the Aborigines, the government issued a Proclamation acknowledging that "those several measures have proved ineffectual to their objects; and the persons employed in the interior of this Island, as shepherds and stock-keepers, or on the coast as sealer, do still, as is represented, occasionally attack and injure the Aboriginal Natives without any authority"; ordered the Aborigines to leave the Settled Districts for their own protection, established a chain of military posts along "the confines of the settled districts" and posted 68 extra soldiers with orders to warn off the Aborigines and to capture those who attempted unauthorised entry (*BPP* 1831:22-6). By then over 100 soldiers were on duty in the Settled Districts supported by about 20 field police.

1828 (July) Eastern Tiers: A settler, Robert Ayrton wrote to the Aborigines Committee on March 1 1830 about an incident against the Aborigines that took place in the Eastern Tiers in July 1828. "On this occasion not less than sixteen of them were massacred and gathered into heaps and buried." Two weeks later he repeated his claim in a deposition at the Launceston Police Office: "A party of soldiers of the 40th Regiment and some constables went in quest of the Aborigines. On the return of the party (to Oatlands) I heard many of them boast, that they had killed sixteen of the natives, one man in particular boasted that he had run his bayonet through two of them, and that they gathered them into a heap and burned their bodies. I think that Constable Danvers stationed at Oatlands was one of the number, the soldiers do not recollect this." The two guides were never questioned about this incident. By March 1830 the 40th Regiment were preparing to depart for India. This incident does not appear to have been a reprisal killing. [It is possible that this incident relates to the incident in April 1828 at the

Eastern Tiers in which it was acknowledged that 17 Aborigines were slaughtered, or even to the incident in March 1827 in the same area.]

** (CSO 1/320: 152-4; CSO 1/330:109)

1828: July-October: From the end of July to the end of October, Aborigines appear to have killed 15 colonists in 11 separate incidents, including a daring attack at a farm near Oatlands on October 9, in which they killed the two small daughters Esther and Alicia of settler John Gough and his servant Anne Geary and severely wounded his two other daughters. On October 31 they returned and killed his wife, Mrs Gough. This incident was widely believed to have been in reprisal for the mutilation and killing of two Aboriginal women by stock-keepers employed by Gough (*HTC* 1828: October 18, November 1 and 8; *West* 1852:36).

1828 (September) Burghley, V D L Co: Aborigines attacked and nearly killed four men, employees of the VDL Co. In a reprisal raid led by Alexander Goldie, several Aborigines were killed.

** (Plomley 1966:235)

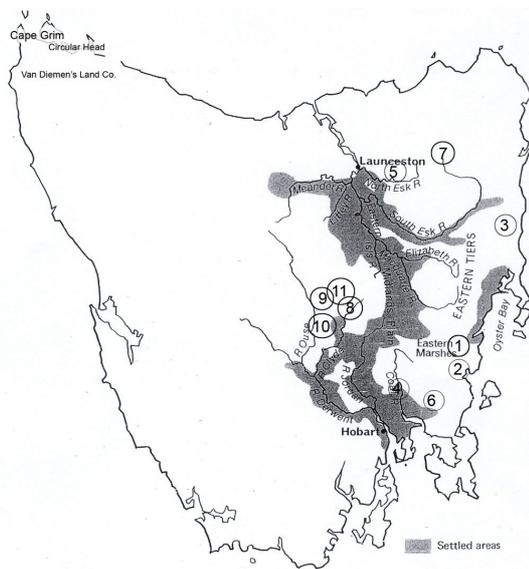
1828 (October 20) Green Ponds: Magistrate Thomas Anstey of Oatlands reported to the Colonial Secretary that earlier that day Aborigines had attacked a settler, Mrs Langford and her two children, one of whom her 14 year old daughter, died. According to the press, the Aborigines were pursued and some thought to have been killed. The incident with Mrs Langford was widely reported in the press and led to settler demands for more military protection from Aboriginal aggression.

** (CSO 1/316: 759, 762; *Tasmanian* 1828: Oct 24; *HTC* 1828: Oct 25, Nov 1)

1828 (November 1): Martial Law proclaimed in the Settled Districts: The killing of the wives and daughters of settlers by Aborigines in the Settled Districts, spurred the government to further action. The measure authorised the military to capture or to shoot on sight any Aboriginal person found in the Settled Districts (*BPP*1831: 26). The government gave substance to the measures by ordering small parties of eight to ten soldiers from the military outposts to provision themselves for 14 to 16 days at a time and to actively search for the Aborigines in the Settled Districts with a view to their capture (*BPP*1831:26). By March 1829, nearly 200 armed men in 23 separate parties scoured the Settled Districts with orders to capture Aborigines or to shoot them (*BPP* 1831:30-3). On February 26 1830, the government introduced a bounty of five pounds for every adult Aborigine captured and two pounds for every child (*BPP* 1831: 30).

1828 (November) - 1830 (October): There is evidence to estimate that in this period, at least 141 Aborigines were killed in 30 incidents, in which 116 died in at least 11 multiple killings. In the same period it is estimated that 75 colonists were killed by Aborigines in 53 incidents with an estimated Aboriginal/colonial death ratio of nearly 2:1. The fact that fewer Aborigines

appear to have been killed in this period, could suggest that fewer remained in the Settled Districts.



Mass Killings of Aborigines 1 November 1828-October 1830

- 1 Tooms Lake December 1828
- 2 East coast December 1828
- 3 St Paul's River, January 1829
- 4 Richmond March 1829
- 5 North Esk River, March 1829
- 6 Pittwater March 1829
- 7 Ben Lomond September 1829
- 8 Clyde and Ouse Rivers, October 1829
- 9 Clyde River March 1830
- 10 Clyde River August 1830
- 11 Clyde River August 1830

1828 (December 6) Tooms Lake, in mountains in Eastern Tasmania: An armed party of 9 soldiers, two constables, and a guide, surrounded an Aboriginal camp at day break. Three days later, the guide, John Danvers, reported to the police magistrate at Oatlands: "One of them getting up from a small fire to a large one, discovered us and gave the alarm to the rest, and the whole of them jumped (sic) up immediately and attempted to take up their spears in defence, and seeing that, we immediately fired and repeated it because we saw they were on the defensive part, they were about twenty in Number and several of whom were killed, two only were, unfortunately taken alive." The *Hobart Town Courier* also reported the incident: "The party of the 40th regiment which was led into the bush by John Danvers and William Holmes, is returned, bringing with them a black woman and her boy, the only prisoners made in the attack upon the Aborigines at the Great (Tooms) Lake at the source of the Macquarie River. Ten of the natives were killed on the spot and the rest fled." This incident does not appear to have been a reprisal killing.

*** (CSO 1/320: 22; *Hobart Town Courier* 1828: Dec 13)

1829 (January) St Paul's River: East Coast. A report in the *Launceston Advertiser* stated that: "Nine were killed and three were taken, near St Paul's River."

** (L A 1829: Feb 9)

1829 (February 18) West Tamar: A report in the *Colonial Times* stated that a military party was attacked by Aborigines at West Tamar and that in the engagement seven Aborigines were killed. The next day the military officer denied the incident in the *Hobart Town Courier*.

** (C T 1829: Feb 27; H T C 1829: Feb 28)

1829 (March) Richmond, Coal River: A report in the *Hobart Town Courier* stated that: "One black native was brought in on Friday being one of a party of six, the five others were shot in the pursuit."

** (H T C 1829: Mar 7)

1829 (March 13-17) North Esk River, near Launceston: A report in the *Colonial Times* noted that three colonists, Mary Mellor, James Hales and Thomas Johnson were speared and killed by Aborigines and two other stockmen were reported missing, believed killed. "(S)ome of the Aborigines were pursued and six Aborigines were killed – 4 men, a woman & child."

** (C T 1829: Mar 20 and 27)

1829 (March 28) Jones and Ouse Rivers: When Aborigines were caught digging up potatoes at Mc Pherson's farm, they wounded him. When a group of stock-keepers set off in pursuit, they fired on them and wounded an Aboriginal woman who was brought to New Norfolk.

* (CSO 1/316: 232, 239; C T 1829: Apr 10; H T C 1829: Apr 18)

1829 (May 2) White March Brushy Plains (near Pittwater): A report in the *Hobart Town Courier* stated that after the huts of settler Grant were robbed by Aborigines, his employees "pursued them" killing one and wounding another.

** (H T C 1829: May 16)

1829 (June 10) South Esk River: Surveying settler Kearney's grant, J.H. Wedge recorded in his diary: "Mr McLeod's shepherd fell in with the natives about three miles from hence and after a skirmish he shot one of the women."

** (Crawford, Ellis and Stancombe 1962:56-7)

1829 (June) Pittwater: Following a series of raids by 15-20 Aborigines on huts for food in which they killed two stockkeepers and wounded at least three others, a party pursued them, and returned with missing booty. The magistrate reported that "particular object of this non-commissioned officer [was] to capturewithout loss of life, but as they fled on the approach of the Party, I am [sorry] to state that it is supposed eight or ten of the natives were severely wounded."

** (CSO 1/316:281,832; CSO 1/321 1829: Jun 16; H T C 1829: Jun 13, 20)

1829 (August) Pittwater: The *Hobart Town Courier* reported that: A 'party' out after the Aborigines killed a least one and wounded several.
** (*H T C* 1829: Aug 15, 29; Sept 9)

1829 (August 21) Emu Bay, VDL Co : Alexander Goldie, the superintendent of the Hampshire and Surrey Hills establishments, and two of his men, Nathaniel Russell and Richard Sweetling, were responsible for the killing of an Aboriginal woman at Emu Bay. Besides murdering a woman, the party captured another woman and a girl four or five years old, possibly the daughter of the woman shot, the girl being by her when the shot was fired. In a letter to Goldie on October 8, the manager of the VDL Company, Edward Curr wrote: "In the present instance you came suddenly upon a party of people who probably never did you or any Europeans any injury, at a time when none of our people have been disturbed by them for many months. You go back to fetch your men with weapons in their hands: it is not a case of self-defence – you are the aggressors. It does not appear that any resistance was made when you commenced the aggression. The poor creatures fled, and one woman, having a child with her, is shot by one of the armed men you had let loose upon them. You add that by the time you returned from catching one of the women the men had killed the one whom the shot had wounded. I bear in mind that the men had axes in their hands, and it is impossible not to draw a picture of what occurred, at which human nature shudders."

** (Plomley 1966:235)

1829 (September 1) East of Ben Lomond: John Batman, the leader of a government roving party, made a dawn attack on an Aboriginal camp, numbering 60 or 70 men, women and children. In his report of the incident to the police magistrate at Oatlands, Batman estimated that 15 Aborigines died of wounds, and that he executed two other wounded prisoners. The incident was reported in the *Colonial Times* and depositions made by two of Batman's stock-keepers at the Launceston Police Office on 25 September. This incident does not appear to be a reprisal killing.

*** (Campbell: 1987:31-2; *CT* 1829: September 18; CSO 1/330)

1829 (September 18) Sorell: Following the killing of Mrs Coffin and the wounding of her child, the magistrate at Sorell, James Gordon ordered the pursuit of the Aborigines who "were fired on" and one Aborigine was known to have been wounded.

*** (CSO 1/316:311; *CT* 1829: Sept 25)

1829 (October) Clyde and Ouse River: After a series of Aboriginal attacks on shepherds' huts and the killing of seven colonists, the 19th century historian James Bonwick was later told that "without warning an expedition was fitted out in the night and a terrible slaughter took place."

* (Bonwick 1870:66)

1829 Clyde River: In December 1835, Tongerlongter, an Aboriginal chief of the Oyster Bay tribe, told government agent, G.A. Robinson that in the neighbourhood of the Den Hill, his group of Aborigines came across two men cutting wood. "The men were frightened and run away. At night they came back with plenty of white men (it was moonlight), and they looked and saw our fires. Then they shot at us, shot my arm, killed two men and three women. The women they beat on the head and killed them."

** (Plomley 1987:325)

1830 (March 10) Clyde River: In a report to Thomas Anstey, the police magistrate at Oatlands, the leader of one roving party said that the leader of another, "fired at a party of natives. He had no recourse left but to fire at them and by the traces of plenty of blood some of them were wounded if not mortally."

** (CSO 1/316:189)

1830 (April 1) *The Colonial Advocate & Tasmanian Review and Register* reported the following: "The reflection that so much blood is daily spoiled on both sides, must surely be very dreadful to a feeling heart. There can be little doubt that many scores of the unhappy and useless race themselves are frequently shot by the stock keepers and others, not only when attacked, but in revenge for the death of their fellow countrymen, who have fallen to the blacks. It is said privately that up the country, instances occur where the Natives are 'shot like so many crows,' which never comes before the public."

* (*Colonial Advocate & Tasmanian Review and Register* 1830: April 1:94)

1830 (April 18) Whitefoord Hills: Meander River. The police magistrate at Westbury reported that in a clash with stock-keepers employed by another magistrate, M.L. Smith, two Aborigines were shot, and one stabbed, "presumed killed."

** (CSO 1/316: 489)

1830 (July 27) Oatlands: "Mr George Anstey, son of Thomas Anstey (police magistrate) of Anstey Barton, a young gentleman of about sixteen years of age, accompanied by some of the servants captured four Blacks. The Aborigines had the afternoon before plundered Mr. Anstey's men's hut not above six hundred yards from the mansion house. The Blacks got clear off with their booty, but the ground being covered with snow, they were traced to some distance off. When the pursuing party came to a small hillock they squatted down for the night, waiting in the cold with the utmost patience until daylight the next morning, and rushed upon the Aborigines when, as above stated, four were captured, and the rest fled; these might have been shot, but Mr. Anstey did not think himself justified in so doing."

* (Plomley 1991:98)

1830 (August 22-27) Clyde River: A report in the *Colonial Times* said that the stockkeepers and servants of settler Captain Woods had killed several Aborigines and captured Petelega a “chief”. When government agent G.A. Robinson visited the area in November 1831, he was informed that the servants of settler, H.M. Howells “had shot several natives. Mr Sinnott said he saw two men and one woman laying on a hill that had been shot.”

** (C T 1830: Sept 4, Oct 16; Plomley 1966:506)

1830 (October 1 -November 30): ‘Black Line’: Martial law extended across the entire island in preparation for a ‘levee en masse’ against the Aborigines The Black Line was a human chain of about 2,000 armed men comprising 500 troops, 700 settlers and 800 convicts and former convicts, which swept through the Settled Districts, from the north to the south east, over five weeks, in the expectation of capturing Aborigines from four tribes (Fenton 1883:107). Records indicate that two Aborigines were killed and two others captured, leading the press to declare the Line a failure. But it did succeed in driving out the Aborigines from the Settled Districts (Ryan 1996:112).

1830 (December) – 1835 (February): In November-December 1830, Government agent G.A. Robinson captured about 50 Aborigines who had fled the Settled Districts. In April 1831 the roving parties were disbanded (Plomley 1991:108). In December 1831 Robinson captured 26 Aborigines from the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes. In February 1832 martial law was revoked (Ryan 1996:113). Between 1832 and 1834 Robinson captured about 150 other Aborigines from other tribes in other parts of Tasmania for deportation to Flinders Island in Bass Strait. Many died between capture and deportation (Ryan 1996:169). In February 1835, G.A. Robinson reported to the Colonial Secretary that “the entire aboriginal population are now removed” to exile at the Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island in Bass Strait (Plomley1966:926). Another Aboriginal family of seven was captured in 1842 (West 1852:65; Ryan 1996: 197-9).

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