

CHAPTER 2

# AT THE BOUNDARIES

FIFTY YEARS OF BRITISH OCCUPATION of a tiny proportion of the Australian land-mass had made a drastic impact on all the Aborigines living in the southern parts of the continent, including those—probably a majority in 1838—who had not met the invaders face to face. European diseases spread far ahead of settlement, especially in densely populated areas like the western districts of Victoria and the Murray–Darling river basins. Some scholars now believe that Aboriginal communities in these areas lived in semipermanent villages, moving only seasonally and then not far. Each family drew its livelihood from a limited area of fertile and well-watered land, within which members had rights to hunt and gather and responsibility for the well-being of the land and its resources. Materials such as stone and ochre used for toolmaking and for ceremonies were carried or passed from hand to hand for hundreds of kilometres across country. News and songs followed the same routes, and so did European diseases. When smallpox passed through the riverflats of the Murray around 1800 and again in the early 1830s, the closely settled populations suffered heavy losses.

Direct contact with the invaders killed more surely. People whose lands the British needed were dispossessed, by force if necessary, and exiled or killed if they resisted. Of the 5000 Aborigines living in Van Diemen's Land when the British arrived, only one family retained effective possession of its island in 1838—in the wild lake country. All the rest had been killed by warfare or disease, or were living in exile on islands in Bass Strait. The people whose lands were swallowed up by Sydney and its environs fared no better. There the few Aboriginal survivors remained exiles in the streets, where their brawls and begging amused—or more often now, appalled—the white people. Many colonists were disappointed that these vagrants had not been banished to some island off the coast like their compatriots in Van Diemen's Land.

Along the eastern seaboard from Twofold Bay to Port Stephens, agriculture and grazing denied all useful land to its original owners. Survivors lived by fishing, by white charity and sometimes by wage labour. In all the officially defined 'settled



*Moyengully, 'King of Nattai'. One of those Aborigines well known to settlers in the counties around Sydney. Watercolour by Charles Rodius, 1830s.*

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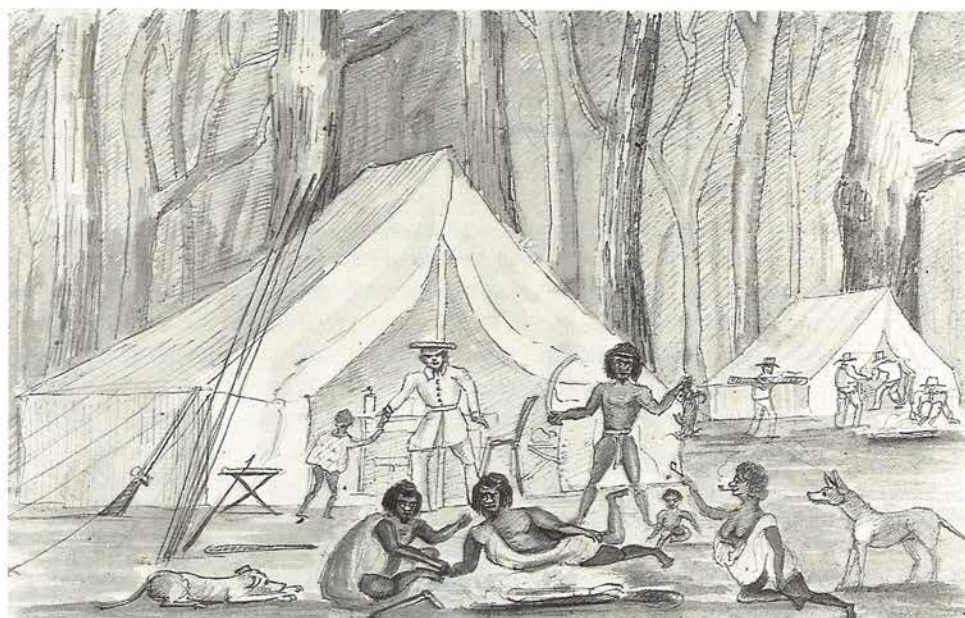
areas' of New South Wales, head counts revealed fewer than 2000 Aborigines in a population of about 80 000 Europeans. Recent research has suggested that the Aboriginal population of the fertile southeastern corner of Australia, perhaps 250 000 in 1788, might have been reduced by as much as two-thirds during the first forty years of British settlement. The survivors mostly lived, in British terminology, 'beyond the bounds of settlement'.

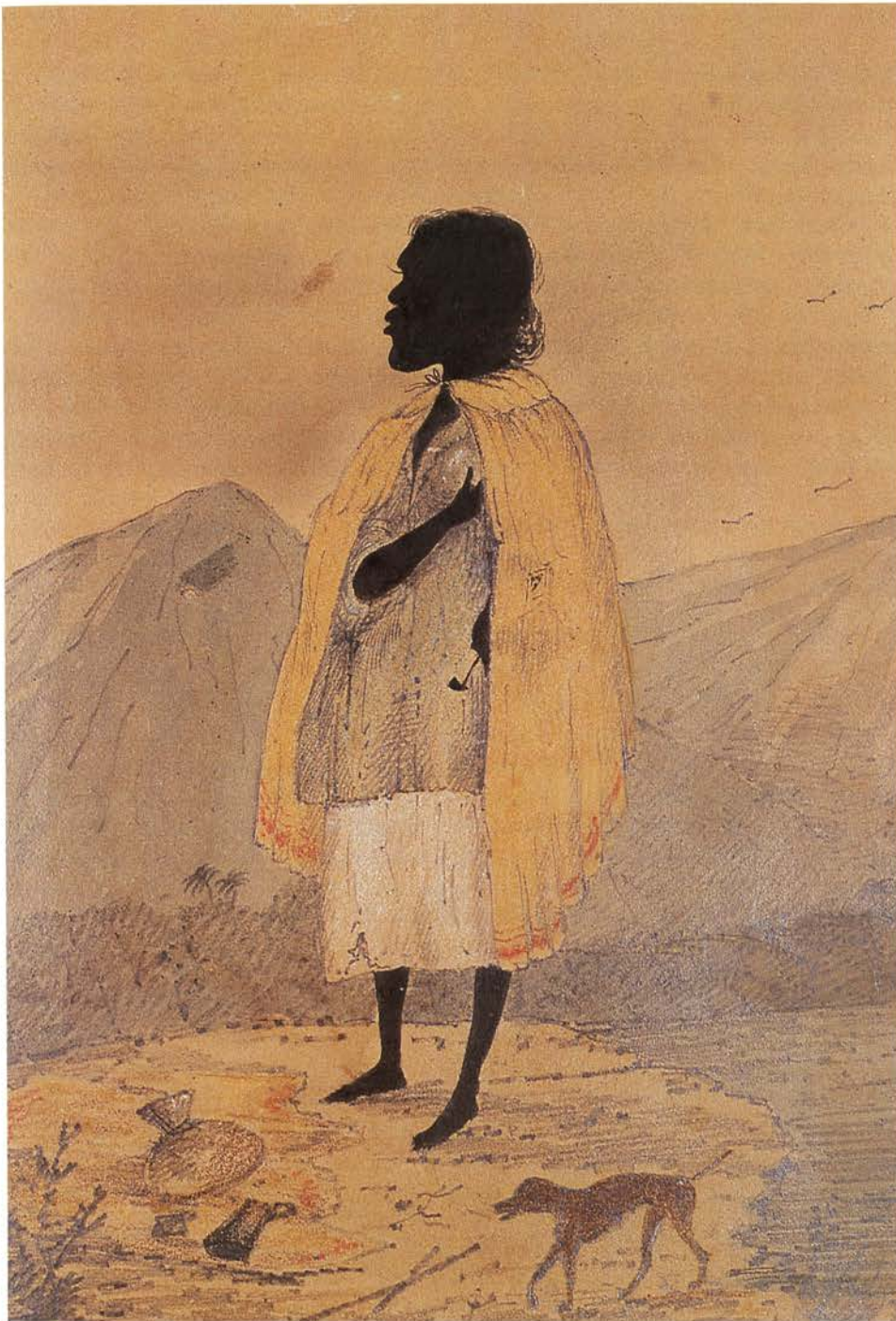
In 1838 these bounds were being pushed out rapidly. Some British settlements had previously placed little pressure on Aboriginal land. The penal establishments at Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay needed only a little land to grow food and set tight limits to the movement of their inmates. In South Australia, colonists attempted a form of concentrated settlement that initially limited Aboriginal dispossession to the area close to Adelaide. In Western Australia a static British population of only 2000 people still feared that the more numerous Aborigines on the coastal plain might drive them into the sea. But now, all those Aborigines with lands adjacent to British settlements were facing a new threat. From all these places, and especially from the new townships at Port Phillip, entrepreneurs and explorers were riding inland to assess the capacity of Aboriginal grasslands to feed their flocks. For centuries the Aborigines had husbanded their lands by annual firing to keep down scrub and foster the tender grasses that attracted native game. Now these lands seemed well suited to sheep and cattle. This new phase of the invasion was far more destructive than penal settlement.

British demand for wool, British capital flowing freely into Australia, and well-to-do British immigrants hungry for land combined to thrust people and flocks beyond the boundaries. From the 'settled areas' of New South Wales they pushed north and west from the New England plateau, and west and south from the Monaro. Sydney entrepreneurs hurried their flocks overland to Port Phillip, and men from Van Diemen's Land brought tens of thousands of sheep across Bass Strait to Port Phillip, Portland and Adelaide. In the Port Phillip district itself a three-pronged advance swept north and west from Melbourne, Geelong and Portland. In less than half a decade, tens of thousands of Aboriginal people were brought into contact with perhaps 4000 Europeans, nearly all men.

*Surveyor's camp, Blue Mountains, New South Wales. Sketch by William Romaine Govett of scenes between Aborigines, armed but in repose, and a surveying party camped in the mountains. Ink and grey wash, 1835.*

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*Mary, a woman of the 'Five Island Tribe', Illawarra, New South Wales. Her clothes, which are at least partly European, show the influence of white settlement around Wollongong. Pencil and wash by Abraham Lincoln, from his Australian Sketches, 1838–44.*

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How were so many dispossessed by so few? We look first at two British journeys 'beyond the bounds'. One is an overland cattle drive that established a crucial link in British expansion across the continent. The other is an excursion into the Western Australian bush, undertaken without flocks or herds directly in mind. Both tell much about British expansion and Aboriginal reaction. Then follows an account of racial conflict during 1838 along the great eastern arc from Portland to the Gwydir River, in which we inspect the process of dispossession.

## ENCOUNTERS

Joseph Hawdon began a journal of his new overlanding venture on the first day of 1838. On 1 January he left his cattle station southeast of Melbourne to make the first cattle drive from Port Phillip to Adelaide. His route lay along the Goulburn to the Murray, then down the Murray to South Australia. Aborigines in these areas had not met the invaders, or had been disturbed only briefly by the passages of the explorers Thomas Mitchell and Charles Sturt. Hawdon's account of the Aborigines he met reveals much about his party's attitude to the occupants of the land, as well as something of Aboriginal reactions to first contact.

Hawdon and his partner, Charles Bonney, were early examples of the breed whom the explorer and writer George Grey introduced at this time to the English reading public as 'overlanders'—'an order or class of men unknown in older lands'. In 1836 Hawdon and Bonney had been among those competing to drive the first flocks and herds from New South Wales overland to Port Phillip, nearly doubling Melbourne land values. Now they hoped to do as much for Adelaide, and to make their own fortunes at the same time. Grey's 'overlanders' were not merely young and heroic; they stood also as the agents of progress. Behind them Grey detected a figure 'in a dark and dingy counting house' in London, a merchant who, all unawares, touched

with the wizard wand of commerce a lone and trackless forest, and at his bidding, cities arise, and the hum and dust of trade collect—away are swept the ancient races . . . The ruder languages disappear successively, and the tongue of England alone is heard around.

'Away are swept the ancient races.' Grey equivocated about how the sweeping was done. At one point he described the progeny of England as 'overspreading the earth, not by the sword, but by the gentle arts of peace and beneficence'. A few paragraphs earlier he showed the overlanders proceeding by way of 'fierce and



*Setting out for Adelaide. Sketch by George Hamilton of the departure of an expedition he led from Port Phillip to Adelaide about a year after the pioneering journey of Hawdon and Bonney. Hamilton later published a series of sketches and descriptions of his expedition. His party of ten, including five convicts and two immigrants, drove 350 head of cattle across a route more southerly than that taken by Hawdon. This detail shows a mounted stockman beside one of the two bullock drays accompanying the party. Pen and ink, 1839.*

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*Breaking the journey. The Hamilton party en route from Port Phillip to Adelaide sets up camp, still—the well-worn track suggests—within territory familiar to settlers. Hand-coloured etching by George Hamilton, c1840.*

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deadly contests ... with the natives, when two or three hardy Europeans stand opposed to an apparently overwhelming majority of blacks'.

Hawdon outfitted his party for 'fierce and deadly contests'. He hired nine men at the generous rate of twenty shillings a week (compared with a normal ten shillings for shepherds), part being payable on their arrival in Adelaide. They were 'a fine set of fellows, well qualified for the undertaking, full of spirit'—and none of them assigned convicts, the usual form of labour beyond the bounds of settlement. Four men were mounted, together with Bonney and Hawdon, and all were armed with 'a carbine, a pair of pistols, and a bayonet'. The party was much better armed than most that were to follow it to Adelaide, or were already tracking down the dusty road from Sydney to Melbourne. 'It was amusing', Hawdon wrote, 'to witness the solemnity with which the men signed the Articles [of agreement]: it seemed as if they were signing away their very lives!'

Hawdon and Bonney had learnt a lot about dealing with the natives on previous journeys. Without any real understanding of Aboriginal culture, they had learnt some of the conventions that already eased communication between the races. Possibly they could read some of the gestures used by Aborigines to communicate with other Aborigines whose language was different from their own. Conversation was sometimes possible during the first part of the journey. Both leaders and some of the men were familiar with the form of pidgin that had already developed in Port Phillip, using Aboriginal grammar and a mixed vocabulary. Thus Hawdon was able to understand from an old man that he was taking his two sons to be initiated into manhood at a great ceremony on the Murray River. Whatever the means available, both leaders actively sought communication with every Aboriginal group they sighted, hoping to gather information, to placate with gifts, and to impress with the wonders of European technology.

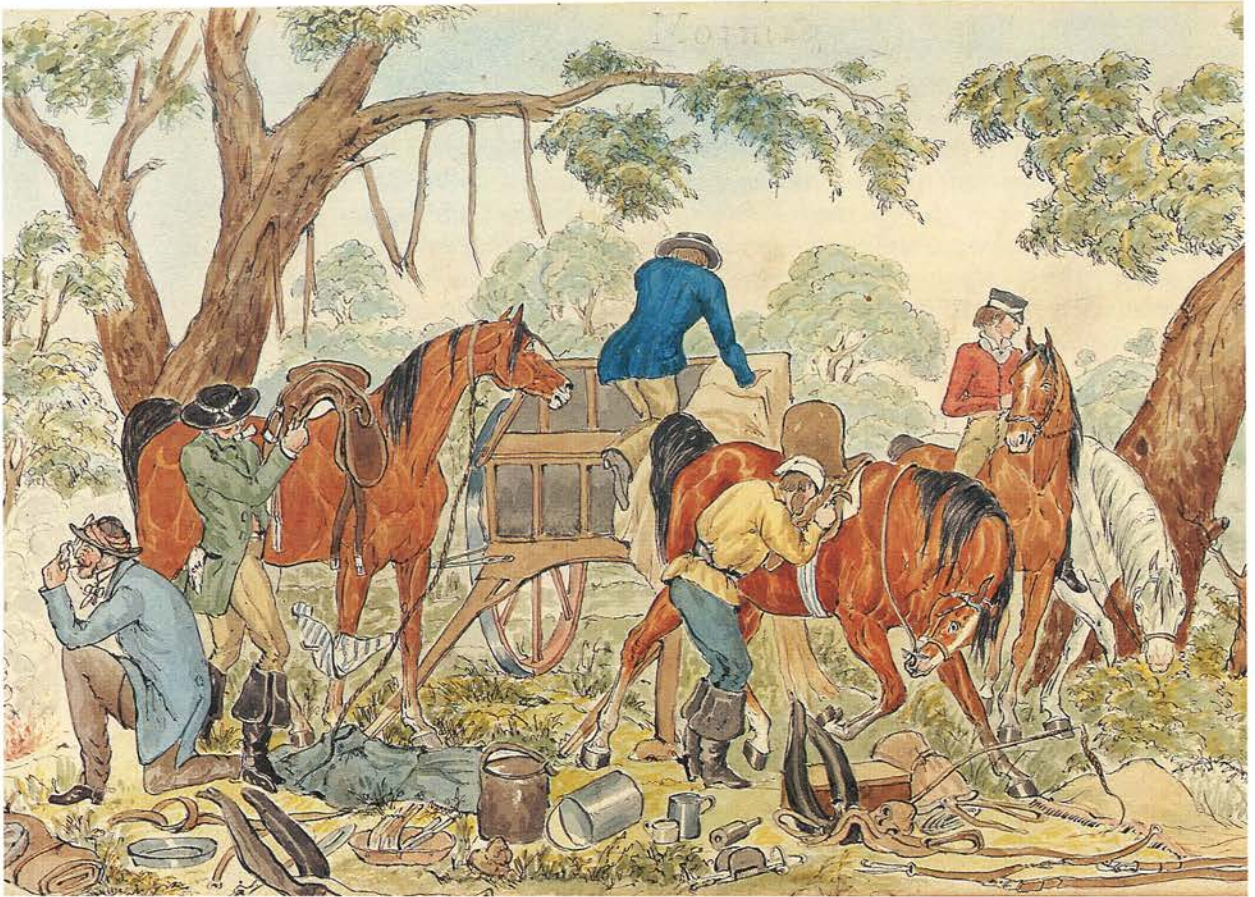
Thus at the Goulburn River Hawdon answered a 'coo-ee' and attracted a party of six men. 'They at first approached me cautiously, but shortly one of them came running up to me at full speed and shook hands with me. I had met him about six months before when on my way to Port Phillip.' Other groups were less immediately friendly. At the junction of the Campaspe a group consisting of older men, women and children—probably of the Pangerang people—accepted a bird shot by Hawdon, but told the white men to 'Yanika'—'Go away'. Next morning young men from the same group sat down about three hundred metres from Hawdon's tent. Hawdon gave them bread, of which they 'appeared to understand the value'. One carried a piece of iron, 'shaped into a rough sort of tomahawk'. This pattern of meetings continued. Family groups, surprised while gathering food, responded with alarm and sometimes panic to the strangers, refusing closer contact. But groups of men from the same families approached the overlanders with formal courtesy, sitting down near their camp until invited to approach, then advancing willingly to investigate objects they knew already by repute.

On the Loddon a group of older men courteously introduced sons and grandsons to Hawdon with 'croaking' and 'chuckling' and 'wild grimaces and contortions'. The next day a visitor to the camp demonstrated his desire for an iron tomahawk, offering in exchange a spear, a boomerang, a possum cloak and, when all else failed, his wife—or so it seemed to Hawdon. Aboriginal men offered the sexual services of their wives to guests whom they wished to relate closely to their family, and with whom they wanted to set up a long-term exchange of gifts. Europeans regarded such a proposition as immoral, to be shunned or shamelessly exploited. Hawdon refused the offer and noted that the pandering husband was then detected trying to 'pilfer some spoons' and 'sent off'. The man may have believed himself entitled to the Europeans' metal in return for their crossing his lands.



*The overlander, Joseph Hawdon.*

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES



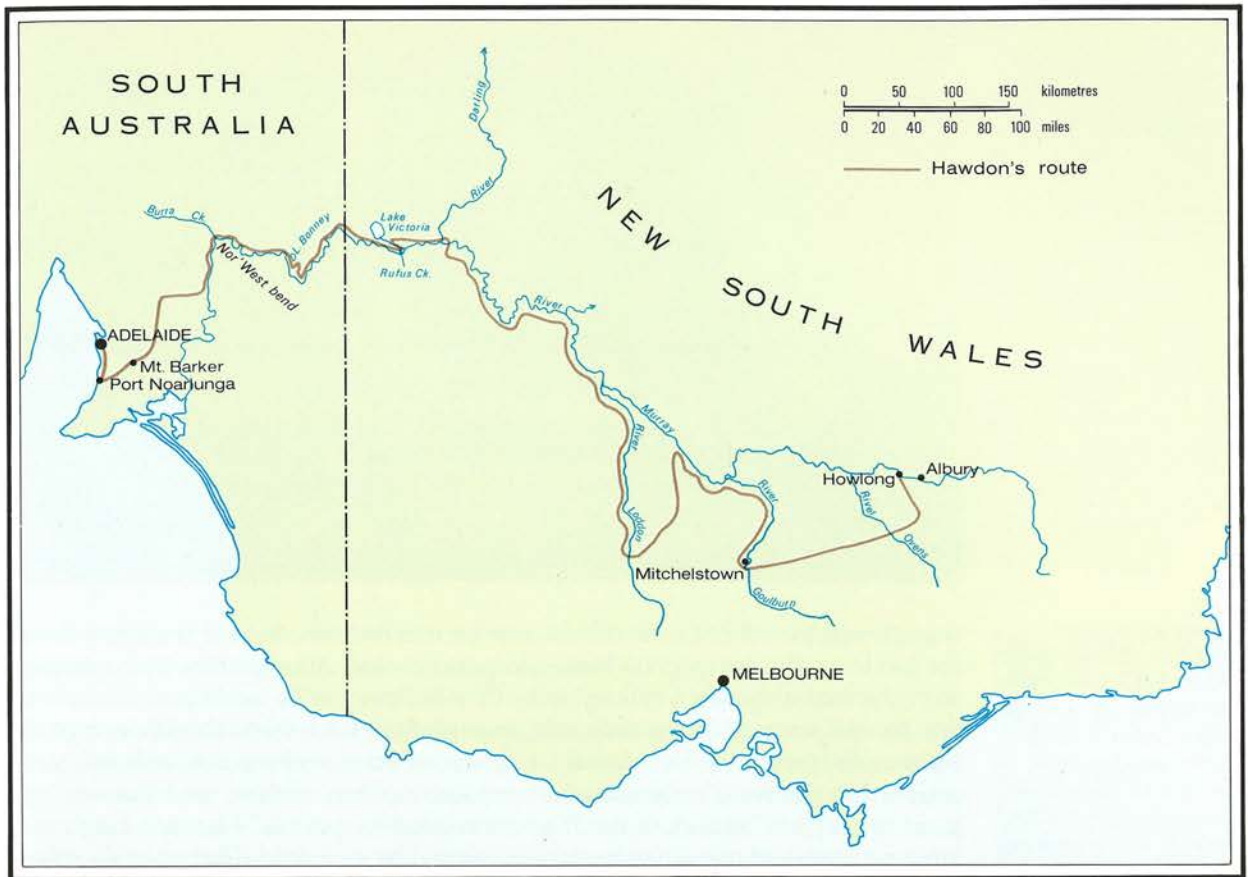
Stages in a bush journey—morning. This watercolour by George Hamilton shows stockmen saddling up for the day—though the man in the green coat appears to be taking his saddle off, and has let the saddlecloth drop to the ground. Watercolour with pen and ink.

ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Hawdon was more readily moved to give presents by what he saw as manly opposition. Near present-day Swan Hill, Hawdon and Bonney, riding ahead of the party, were threatened by about thirty men with spears. The overlanders galloped their horses at the warriors—a tactic they used several times on the journey—and the Aborigines retreated, despite the fervent efforts of ‘one, a fine tall fellow, to get his tribe to stand their ground’. That evening some of these men came to the camp. Hawdon noted that they were ‘fine, well-made men’ with features that were ‘pleasing’, though scarred by smallpox. The warrior who had been so bold in the morning was a ‘powerfully and elegantly formed man’, and Hawdon gave him a ‘trifling present’. In return the man presented him with the ‘belt of opossum down which he wore round his waist’. The encounter was charged with sexuality.

The domestic arrangements of the overlanders puzzled the Aborigines, for in their world only a party whose business was war or ritual would travel without women. One old man asked Hawdon ‘in perfect seriousness whether the heifers, pointing to the cattle, were our wives?’ The Aborigines continued to offer their own wives, ‘of whose favours’, wrote Hawdon, ‘they appeared to be not at all jealous’. Hawdon reported that his men continued to resist such offers, and that the offerers continued to show their inherent immorality by pilfering.

For all their common experience, the two leaders responded differently to the Aborigines. Bonney’s command of the dialect may have been better, or perhaps he worked harder at communicating. Hawdon became impatient and nervous. Bonney was peacemaker: Hawdon turned bully when pushed. An incident in the mallee country below the Murrumbidgee junction shows their different styles.



The party had passed that day through 'high and thick brush ... perfectly full of Natives, most of whom were yelling and shouting behind the Cattle, trying to imitate the cries of the Stockmen'. Cattle and men both grew edgy. At dinner about a hundred and fifty men sat a hundred metres off, 'nearly everyone having his spear leaning against his shoulder'. Hawdon tried to intimidate the Aborigines by showing them 'the bayonets on our muskets', and by strolling uninvited, pistol in hand, across the no-man's-land between the parties.

*Joseph Hawdon's route from Port Phillip to Adelaide. After a map in The journal of a journey from New South Wales to Adelaide, Melbourne 1952.*

N. DUFFEY, ANU

One old chief asked me where I intended to sleep; I told him when he gave me a rude push with his staff, pointing for me to return to my party; an impertinence I resented with the butt end of my pistol, when Mr. Bonney came forward, and by passing a few cheerful jokes put some of them into good humour, whilst others remained doggedly sulky.

As well as jokes—visual ones, presumably—Bonney several times amazed and delighted groups of evening visitors with 'sweet airs' played on his flute. But on this occasion his joking did not placate them for long.

The old 'chief' whom Hawdon had struck with his pistol butt stirred his friends into undertaking the most effective resistance encountered by the party anywhere on their journey. At dusk the warriors fired the patch of grass where the cattle were feeding, then lit the reeds along the river. For the next three days they moved in front of the party, setting fire 'to everything in the shape of food that would burn', so that 'the stock had scarcely anything to eat'. Other confrontations were briefer. Several times spears and muskets were raised at close quarters when one party



Natives spearing the overlanders' cattle. A sketch by George Hamilton, who took his own cattle from Port Phillip to Adelaide without losses to Aborigines, while learning nevertheless to fear Aboriginal resistance. When three of his men deserted they were killed; the overseer, afraid to continue, also deserted. In the attack depicted, the Aborigine in the foreground appears to wield a European axe. Pen and ink, undated.

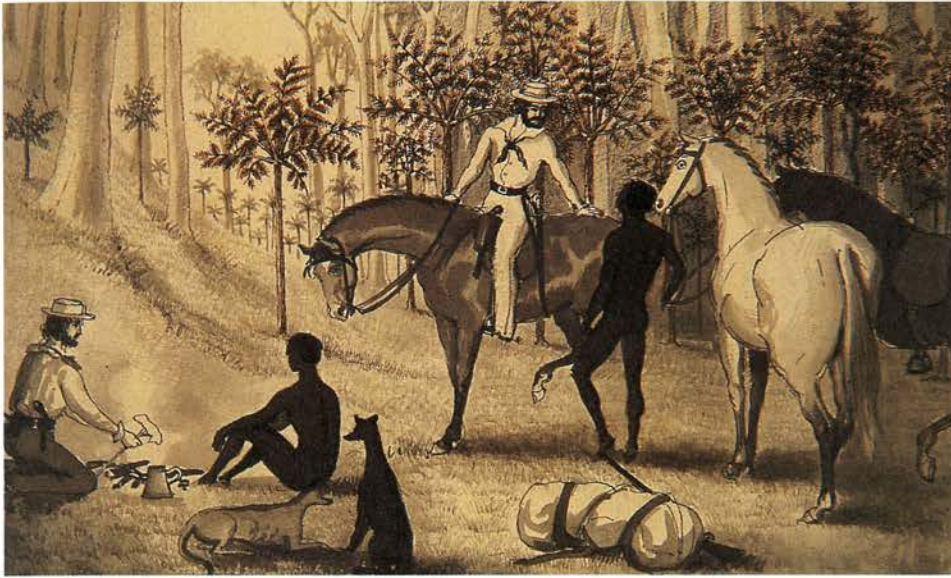
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transgressed the other's code of manners by standing too close or fingering things for too long. But tempers on both sides soon cooled. Aborigines were sometimes angry, presumably when offered what they believed to be inadequate compensation for the passage of men and cattle through their lands. Near the junction of the Murrumbidgee with the Murray, a group of men seeking a tomahawk were annoyed at receiving only some fish and a shirt. One of them told Bonney 'as a great secret' that 'after dark the Blacks intended to spear us'. Hawdon laughed at him and promised that anyone attacking would be shot dead. There was no attack; bluff had been met by bluff.

Hawdon's gifts were not intended as compensation; they were made rather to buy off Aborigines he believed to be powerful. He gave the highly prized *mundabong*, iron tomahawks, only at strategic moments, and to men whom he saw as important and reliable. He gave away his first tomahawk a day's journey from Swan Hill, after a confrontation in which spears were drawn and guns fired. Hawdon exchanged the tomahawk for two nets brought by 'a sort of ambassador' from the Swan Hill people, with whom he had already exchanged gifts. His generosity in this case was compounded with gratitude, for the coming of the ambassador had eased a dangerous situation. A second axe was presented to the man whom Hawdon took to be a chief—a 'fine goodhumoured looking fellow'. His group provided ambassadors to introduce the party to the next group downriver, a pattern followed regularly from this point until the party left the Murray to strike across country to Adelaide. A third axe was given to 'a fine old chief' of a people near the Rufus River: 'one of the most sensible men I ever met among the savages of New Holland, . . . [who] appeared to have his men in great order and perfectly under his command'. Hawdon implies that his gift recognised the leader's intelligence and friendliness, but the large number of warriors 'perfectly under his command' were clearly relevant too.

The party arrived in Adelaide early in April, having had no serious conflict with Aborigines. There is some truth in Hawdon's belief that this happy result was a credit to his leadership. The party's general observance of Aboriginal convention, whether intended or fortuitous—in greeting, in giving compensation, in accepting guides—certainly made it easier for the inhabitants to accommodate the strangers. Their heavy arsenal probably eased their passage. Whether or not it intimidated





*Amity at the boundaries. Just as Aborigines acted as ambassadors for Hawdon's party along the Murray in 1838, Clement Hodgkinson was escorted by two 'tame blacks' while journeying from the Macleay to the Bellinger River in northern New South Wales. Hodgkinson welcomed the company because the two Aborigines were at peace with the people through whose territory he had to pass. He gave them a red shirt each and plenty of tobacco; they shared a kangaroo they had killed. Wash, possibly by Hodgkinson, 1841.*

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the Aborigines, it made the stockmen more confident and less trigger-happy. Bonney's flute also seems to have been a peacemaker.

Nevertheless, the main responsibility for their peaceful passage rested with the Aborigines. The warriors were often numerous enough at least to disperse the cattle and possibly to wipe out the whole party. But their readiness to enter camps suggests both an intense curiosity about the newcomers' culture and a firm confidence that they, the landowners, were in ultimate charge. The provision of guides was as much an exercise of control as a courtesy, for in choosing the route the guides were able to keep the visitors and their cattle away from particularly important or vulnerable Aboriginal resources. Peace, in short, did not depend only on British self-restraint. An incident at Lake Bonney amused Hawdon. The party's dogs were hostile to the Aborigines, he reported:

whenever one of the tribe laid his hands upon a single article belonging to us, one or other of our canine friends would be sure to catch him by the heels; and when the fellow, on recovering himself, lifted up his spear and in his rage endeavoured to kill the dog, two or three of his companions would promptly interfere, and hold his arms until his passion had cooled down.

It was a dangerous game to play with proud warriors.

The inferences drawn here about Aboriginal motivation are conjectural. Hawdon rarely questioned Aboriginal intentions, and when he did his understanding was limited by two stereotypes—the Aborigine as immoral ugly thief, and the Aborigine as handsome noble foe. In their travellers' tales, Hawdon and Sturt and Eyre and other literary overlanders were intent on creating a myth about themselves, a myth in which the Aboriginal role was essentially antagonistic:

the savage yells, and diabolical whoops of the barbarians in their onsets, their fantastically painted forms, their quivering spears, their contortions, and shifting of their bodies, and their wild leaps, attach a species of romance to these encounters . . . As the love of war, of gaming, or of any other species of violent excitement, grows upon the mind from indulgence, so does the love of roving grow upon the Overlanders . . .



PUBLIC  
**DINNER**  
TO  
**M<sup>r</sup> HAWDON**

A number of persons having expressed a desire to testify their sense of the spirited and enterprising conduct of Mr. HAWDON in bringing CATTLE overland from *New South Wales* to *Adelaide*, it is proposed

THAT A  
**PUBLIC DINNER**  
shall be given to that gentleman, and that a  
**PIECE OF PLATE**

Shall be presented to him in commemoration of the event, and as a Testimony of the feeling of the Colonists.

Persons desirous of evincing their sentiments are invited to record their Names in a paper left for this purpose at the **POST OFFICE**.

N. B. An early day will be fixed for the DINNER, of which due notice will be given.  
*Adelaide, 4th May, 1838.*  
Printed in the office of the Southern Australian

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We learn more about Aboriginal responses to first contact by following another British journey beyond the boundaries, this time a short and unheroic venture into the coastal plains and scrubland a little to the north of Perth. Late in 1838 George Grey was stuck in Perth, frustrated and bored. Earlier in the year the ambitious young army officer had made an indecisive journey inland from the northwest coast of Western Australia, working with the survey vessel, HMS *Beagle*. Grey was keen to return to the north and its promises of scientific and commercial discovery. But first the absence of the government schooner, and then its need for repairs, kept Grey waiting in Perth for three months. He tried to profit from the delay by gathering publishable information about the land around Perth and its Aboriginal people, the Nyungar. It was in this spirit that Grey set out in November to meet a group of Aborigines living beyond white settlement to the north of Perth.

Perth in 1838 was a good base for observation. The Swan River settlement had stagnated since its foundation ten years before, and flocks and herds had not expanded far into the hinterland. Contact between invaders and landholders had often been bloody. Many whites and blacks had been killed and wounded. In 1834 more than thirty of the Pinjarra people had been massacred by British troops in a punitive expedition intended to reassure settlers that the Aborigines were under control. In 1838 those of the Nyungar whose estates lay along the Swan River and its tributaries lived in uneasy peace with the white people of Perth. Despite protests at their nakedness and violent manners, the Nyungar still frequented the town's streets and counted themselves the friends of some of its inhabitants. Some of these friends had a deep interest, both caring and scientific, in the language and manners of the Nyungar. Such men as George Fletcher Moore and Francis Armstrong had learned much about Aboriginal culture, and Grey could draw on their insight.

Even more valuable to Grey as investigator were the guidance and friendship of several brothers related to the northerners on their mother's side. Genealogical research begun by Grey on his journey enables us to see with unusual clarity the relationships of the Aborigines central to this story. A man named Helia, whose estate lay 35 kilometres north of Perth, had married among other wives a woman named Wandil from the more northerly group. They had seven children, including sons named Jenna, Warrup and Dower, and a daughter Wilgup. Wilgup had married back into her mother's people shortly before 1838. Helia died in August 1838, drowned in a mass escape of Aboriginal prisoners from Rottne Island, where he had been sent for spearing and killing Wandil's sister-in-law, Yatoobong, in a melee in the streets of Perth. This was apparently in retribution for the death of Helia's daughter Wilgup, murdered while living with the northern group. Yatoobong and her husband Bilyang, Wandil's brother and Wilgup's uncle, who was also injured in the affray, carried from the north the news of Wilgup's death. Helia's own death was promptly avenged when a son by another marriage killed an Aborigine with whom Helia had escaped, and who may or may not have been responsible for his drowning. Wilgup's brothers Jenna, Warrup and Dower, central to our story, were not concerned with any of this retribution—at least until Grey involuntarily involved them.

Grey called Jenna, Warrup and company 'friends', and they returned the compliment. He also expected them to be servants. For several months Warrup worked for Grey in Perth, and the brothers cooked for him on the journey north. Grey took Warrup to see a play in a theatre and was fascinated when he burst into tears during the singing of 'God save the Queen'. He did not accept the view that Aborigines were less than human, or that they were decadent, condemned to cultural decay. But he saw them as 'savages', trapped by divine providence within a rigid social system from whose barbarous laws they could be rescued only by the



*Defending the boundaries. Aboriginal warrior in Western Australia, spear poised. Lithograph by G. Fogg, after George Grey, in Grey's Journal of the two expeditions of discovery in north-west and western Australia during the years 1837, 38, and 39, London 1841.*



Scene on Melville Water near Perth, Western Australia. *Watercolour by W. Habgood, 1842.*  
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coming of civilisation and Christianity. He sincerely admired the manliness of his savage friends; he responded in kind to their directness and lack of deference. But although he was a friend, Grey never lost the sense that he was patronising a culture inferior to his own.

Grey probably knew nothing of Jenna's and Warrup's northern connections before he began his journey on the last day of November. Initially he took as guides two Perth Aborigines named Yen-mar and Ngen-mar, but these men decided not to go on after an incident on the first night out. At a lake a little north of Perth the party—Grey, Frederick Smith and Corporal Auger—fell in with four Aborigines, old but vigorous, who shared their supper with the visitors: several dozen large freshwater tortoises caught in the lake. After supper the old men began telling tales of past adventures and expected Grey to reply in kind.

When they conceived that they had sufficiently entertained me, they requested me to give them an account of my adventures in the northern part of the country, where they had heard from other natives, that I had been . . .

Grey obliged, having enough of their language to make himself 'tolerably intelligible to them'. When they heard that he had been wounded by the Aborigines in the far north they were sure that he was now returning to take his revenge. Not that they disapproved: their code demanded a life for a life, or at least the fair hazarding of a life in combat. But having relatives to the immediate north, they advised Grey 'not to attempt to kill anybody' until he passed beyond Nyungar territory,

and they then advised me indiscriminately to shoot everybody I saw; and were more urgent in pressing the adoption of this course upon me, from the fact of a quarrel existing between some of their relatives and the tribe dwelling there.

Next morning Yen-mar and Ngen-mar chose to return, rather than become involved in Grey's revenge. Before leaving they took Grey to a local group who could guide him north, at the same time warning him to keep his true intentions secret; they 'advised me to hold my tongue upon this point, and quietly shoot the first man I saw there'.

Some of the men in this local group were moving south when the travellers met them, carrying two wounded men on their shoulders into Perth for medical assistance. The two had quarrelled and had, in Grey's words, 'settled the dispute to their mutual satisfaction, as well as that of their friends, by spearing each other through their respective thighs'. Violence between friends was contained and directed; violence against strangers could be less inhibited.

Five men in this group 'had never seen white men' and seemed suspicious of the British until given some bread. Most, however, were no strangers to the streets of Perth, and from among his 'many friends' Grey persuaded Jenna, Warrup and Dower, and an older man, Ugat, to accompany him north. Their route ran along the line of freshwater lakes lying on the limestone plain behind the coastal sandhills. The journey was leisurely, allowing much opportunity for cultural exchange. The brothers were young, on the edge of manhood; Grey guessed that Jenna, the oldest, was not yet twenty. They were engaging companions, helping Grey build up his 'native vocabulary' and adding to their own accomplishments by riding horses and shooting guns. Ugat was already an excellent shot and the men feasted on wild duck, some shot, some speared, and all cooked by the Aborigines. Grey noted along the way much land suitable for sheep and cattle.

Five days and 65 kilometres out of Perth the party travelled across some very poor country, dry and sandy and 'thinly clothed with Banksia trees'. Then, coming on another lake, the Aborigines found signs of the people they were seeking. They sat down and prepared themselves with *wilgi*—ochre—and other decorations, for a ceremonial meeting with relatives. Grey understood only part of what was happening. By his account, the brothers were dressing up to impress potential sexual partners.

They said that we should soon see some very pretty girls; that I might go on if I like, but that they would not move until they had completed their preparations for meeting their fair friends. This being done . . . they became in high spirits, and gave a very animated description of the conquests they expected to make.

Grey was perceiving the Aborigines as savages, though engaging ones. He ignored the more solemn and ceremonial function of the *wilgi*, to make an event into an occasion. Dressing up was the first in a series of initiatives and responses. The visitors had to establish themselves as non-strangers, as kin or friendly non-kin; in welcoming them the locals exercised the right to offer an appropriate share of their camp, company and resources.

Once decorated, the group moved on and surprised three men fishing. They reacted with the same fear and flight as Hawdon's party provoked on the banks of the Murray. The Perth Aborigines called after the fugitives, telling them that Grey came from the *djanga*—literally 'the dead'—bringing presents of rice and flour. 'Am I not your nephew,' Jenna shouted, 'why then should you run away?' After much coaxing,

First one of them advanced, trembling from head to foot, and when I went forward to meet him, and shook hands with him, it reassured the others, and they also joined our party; yet still, not without evident signs of fear.

Jenna had established his own relationship with the group and had begun to establish Grey's. More signs had yet to be given and recognised before the process was complete.

Even without Grey's presence the whole body of landholders, men, women and children, would have needed to inspect the party's credentials. In Grey's case the women's witness was to be crucial. An old man, who had been watching Grey from

a distance 'with a look of eagerness and anxiety which I was unable to account for', went off to fetch the women of the family. The others led the visitors to a river valley nearby, a pretty spot with high wooded hills on either side and a few large and beautiful trees scattered on a grassy floor. While setting up camp, Grey noted,

we heard loud voices from the hills above us: the effect was fine—for they really almost appeared to float in the air; and as the wild cries of the women, who knew not our exact position, came by upon the wind, I thought it was well worth a little trouble to hear these savage sounds under such circumstances. Our guides shouted in return, and gradually the approaching cries came nearer and nearer.

CAVE PAINTINGS DISCOVERED BY CAPTAIN GREY



... on looking over some bushes, at the sandstone rocks which were above us, I suddenly saw from one of them a most extraordinary large figure peering down upon me. Upon examination, this proved to be a drawing at the entrance to a cave, which, on entering, I found to contain, besides, many remarkable paintings.

It would be impossible to convey in words an adequate idea of this uncouth and savage figure [above left];

The dimensions of the figure were:

	<i>ft. in.</i>
Length of head and face	2 0
Width of face	0 17
Length from bottom of face to navel	2 6

Its head was encircled by bright red rays, something like the rays which one sees proceeding from the sun, when depicted on the sign-board of a public house; the face was painted vividly white, and the eyes black, being how-

ever surrounded by red and yellow lines; the body, hands, and arms were outlined in red,—the body being curiously painted with red stripes and bars.

Upon the rock which formed the left hand wall of this cave, and which partly faced you on entering, was a very singular painting [above right], vividly coloured, representing four heads joined together. From the mild expression of the countenances, I imagined them to represent females. Each of the four faces was marked by a totally distinct expression of countenance, and although none of them had mouths, two, I thought, were otherwise rather good looking. The whole painting was executed on a white ground, and its dimensions were,—

	<i>ft. in.</i>
Total length of painting	3 6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Breadth across two upper heads	2 6
Ditto across the two lower ones	3 1 $\frac{1}{2}$

*Cave paintings discovered by Captain George Grey on his first expedition of discovery in the northwest of western Australia, 26 March 1838. From George Grey, Journal of the two expeditions of discovery in north-west and western Australia during the years 1837, 38 and 39, London 1841.*

Grey was unprepared for what happened next, though he recognised that he was taking part in a ceremony. The women approached in 'a sort of procession', headed by two weeping bitterly. The elder came up to Grey, looked at him for a moment, then cried 'Gwa, gwa, bundo bal,' 'Yes, yes, in truth it is him,' and threw her arms around him and sobbed on his chest. The younger women knelt at his feet, also crying. Grey was quite uncomprehending; he accepted the embrace—although the woman was 'old, ugly, and filthily dirty'—'from mere motives of compassion'. At last she kissed him on each cheek and released him, welcoming him as 'the ghost of her son, who had some time before been killed by a spear wound in his breast'. The younger woman was his sister, the old man who had watched him so hungrily his father. Only now, after the women had publicly acknowledged the blood tie, did the father come up to claim his son. Then brothers clasped him to them, and other women brought up children to be hugged. Jenna too was embraced by his male relatives, and 'this part of the ceremony was now concluded'.

Grey came partly to understand why he was claimed as a lost son, though probably he never grasped the full implication of the role thrust upon him. It was common for Aborigines at first contact to regard the invaders as ghosts—*djanga* in Western Australia, *pindi meyu* in South Australia—ancestors returning from the grave, or from the land of the dead across the sea. Pale skins—'like a peeled corpse'—and winged ships helped this belief, but Grey's comment goes to the heart of the matter:

They themselves never have an idea of quitting their own land, cannot imagine others doing it;—and thus, when they see white people suddenly appear in their country, and settling down in particular spots, they imagine that they must have formed an attachment to this land in some other state of existence; and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations.

'Likenesses, either real or imagined, complete the delusion'—and Grey was quite sure that his Aboriginal mother genuinely believed him to be her son, 'whose first thought, upon his return to earth, had been to revisit his old mother, and bring her a present'.

But the present—the rice and the flour—could not signify as much to the donor as the recipient needed it to do. The lives of individual Aborigines were largely determined by patterns of kin into which they were born. Among the Nyungar land rights, family responsibilities and marriage partners were largely determined by maternal descent. Spiritual responsibilities were inherited from one's father. Different rules governed behaviour towards *mattagyne*, kin, and *jeedyte*, non-kin. The formality of meetings between people not in daily communication was designed partly to permit people to catch up on any changes in kinship relations arising from birth, marriage or death. It was difficult to establish a relationship involving mutual rights and duties with someone whose kinship status was unclear.

Yet Aborigines were often keen to establish reciprocal relations with the white ghosts who invaded their land. Ghosts were feared but also courted. The land of the dead was evidently a powerful source of new technology. Perth Aborigines told the native interpreter, Francis Armstrong, that the example of the prosperous *djanga* had made them 'look forward to death as a positive gain, which will enable [them] to come back with guns, ammunition, money and provisions'. Perhaps they joked. But those who could establish a trading relationship with the *djanga* would themselves be powerful. So the Aborigines honoured the visitors, hoping for equal honour in return. Effectively they offered access to the whole of Aboriginal culture—land rights and family loyalties—and they expected in return full entry to European culture.

Grey could never have offered that, even if he had understood fully what was being sought. He soon found himself behaving in a way incompatible with his Aboriginal status. His new mother began to speak urgently to Jenna, pulling at his spearthrower as if to wrench it from his hands. She was urging him to take revenge on the man who had killed his sister Wilgup; 'and if you are not a man,' she said, 'and know not how to use this, let a woman's hand try what it can do.' Jenna needed little persuasion. He chose three good spears—'all the men being willing to lend him theirs'—and hurried off to an open space where his antagonist and assembled spectators awaited him. The group included sixteen men and probably as many women.

Meetings between distant groups of Aborigines often included formal combat. A public fight between the champions of warring interests or of wronged and offending parties was often necessary to restore peace. Grey found precedents in his own culture for such displays; they much resembled, he wrote, 'the ancient tournaments', being 'conducted with perfect fairness'.

The combatants fight in an open space, their friends all standing by to see fair play, and all the preliminaries, as to what blows are to be considered foul or fair, are arranged beforehand, sometimes with much ceremony.

But on this occasion Grey wanted none of it. He had persuaded Jenna to come with him, had guaranteed his safety, and 'could not bear the thought of his being now either killed or wounded'. Perhaps in that event he also feared, reasonably, the vengeance of Jenna's relatives in Perth. So Grey tried to stop the fight, first with words and then with a raised gun.

The result shows just how completely the group accepted Grey's 'rebirth' into their culture. They responded as they would have done to any misplaced display of anger. Just as the Murray River Aborigines had restrained one of their number who was raging to kill Hawdon's dog, so Grey's 'brothers' held his arms in a friendly way until his anger cooled. Again Grey recognised an element of theatre in Aboriginal behaviour. It was, he wrote,

exactly what one sees in England when two men, who have not the least intention in the world of hurting one another, declare in a loud tone their fixed determination of proceeding to the most desperate extremities; whilst mutual friends stand by, and appear with the utmost difficulty to prevent them from putting their threats into execution.—It was just in this manner that my *soi-disant* brothers held me, apparently not entertaining the least doubt but that I would easily allow myself to be persuaded not to interfere.

Thwarted, Grey tried another tack, promising that if anyone was wounded he 'would instantly pack up the flour and rice and proceed to the white men's fires'. This time he was taken seriously; the combatants were themselves dissuaded and the fight was called off.

Grey's party stayed only one night with the northerners. His account gives several reasons for hurrying back to Perth, but probably the most compelling was the burden of strange cultural expectations laid upon him. Jenna alarmed Grey by asking him to collaborate in plans to revenge Wilgup's murder. He was encouraged to call the murderer 'friend' and to give him plenty of rice and flour. 'And bye-and-bye,' Jenna explained, 'ask him to sleep at your fire; and then, in the night, whilst he is asleep, I can easily spear him; and I will off, and walk to Perth.'

Grey feared that this would endanger the whole party, and he threatened to shoot Jenna if he tried any such thing. Less complex expectations could be satisfied. Grey handed over the rice and flour from the land of the dead, and the Perth

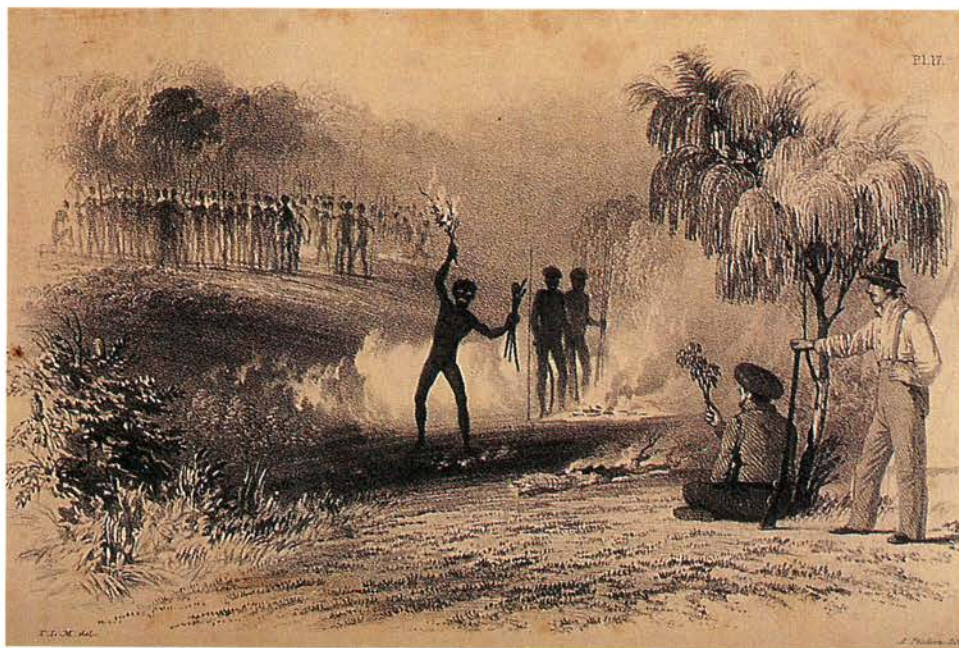
Aborigines showed their relatives how to make damper. Then the white man moved easily around the fires, mixing with men, women and children in a way impossible for non-kin. 'After various amusing conversations, and recountals of former deeds', Grey recorded, 'the natives gradually, one by one dropped off to sleep'. But the Englishmen stayed awake on watch, turn by turn, all night.

Grey returned to Perth well pleased with his anthropological investigations. The Aborigines were probably less satisfied. To their understanding, the ceremony of meeting was unfinished. Grey had refused to wait for what he understood would be 'a grand entertainment, at which all their young men would dance', which should more properly have been understood as a token and remembrance of an exchange between the parties. Nor had the exchange itself been completed. Grey had refused to accept 'the head and forequarters of a kangaroo, being the only game they had with them', in exchange for the flour. The Aborigines had hoped to set up a continuing exchange of resources; they promised that 'we should have abundance of kangaroos, if we would give flour in return'. But without Grey's acceptance there was no contract. The white men's gifts had been received with no clear understanding of what they would demand in return.

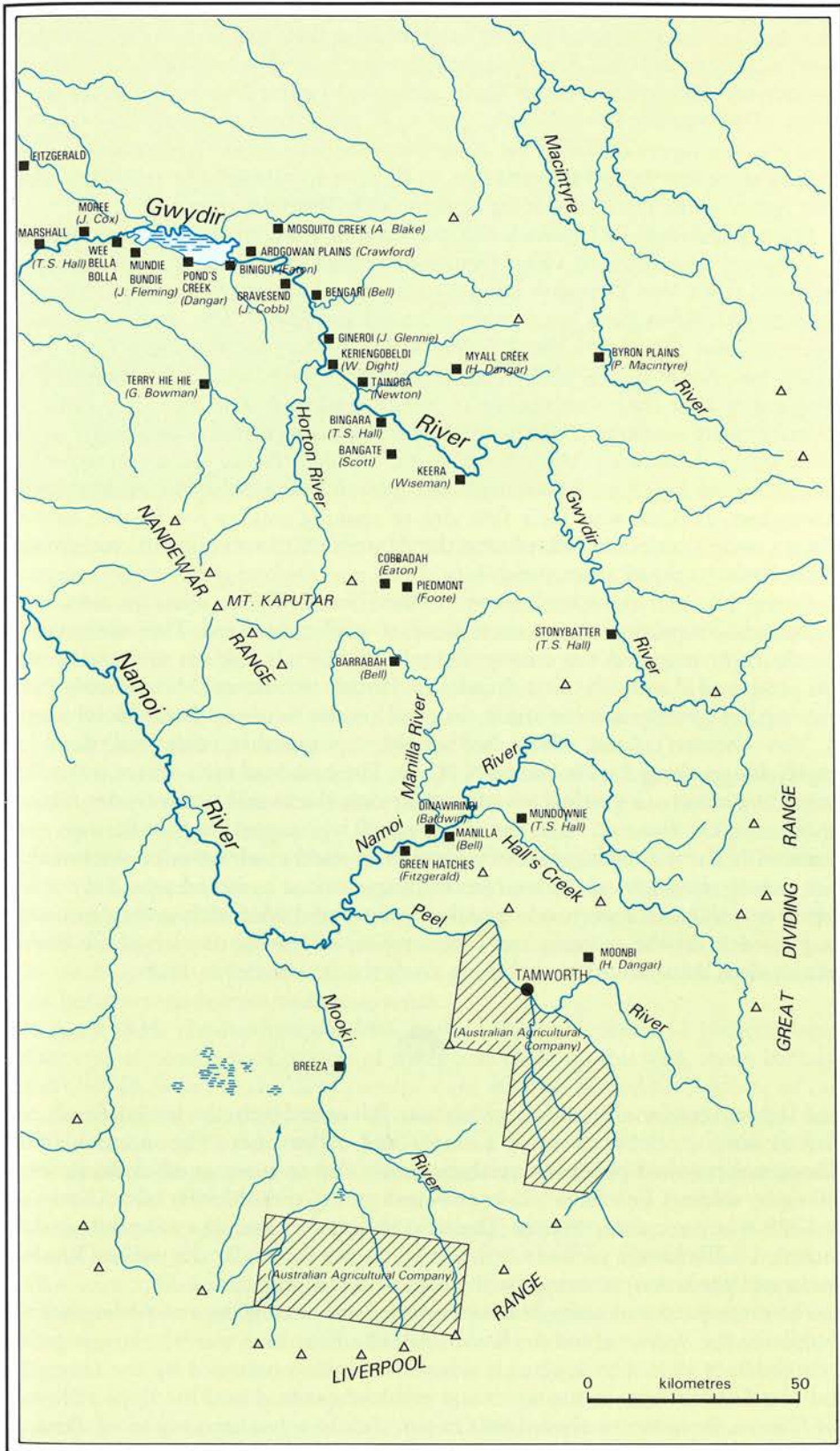
### DISPOSSESSION

The British may not have understood what Aborigines required of them, but what they required of the Aborigines was quite clear. In exchange for flour, rice and all the blessings of Christianity and civilisation, they demanded the undisturbed possession of Aboriginal lands by sheep and cattle. In 1838 that price was being exacted along a great arc of territory stretching almost unbroken from Portland on the south coast to Moreton Bay in the northeast. Behind this line dispossession was not complete: Aborigines claiming hilly and thickly timbered land unsuitable for sheep and cattle such as Gippsland and the Great Dividing Range were left undisturbed. But on stretches of plain and river valley—thickly populated by the Aborigines and long tended by firing—cattle and sheep had newly taken possession of the best hunting grounds and the permanent watering places.

*Beyond the boundaries. Near the Darling River in 1835, Major Thomas Mitchell, surveyor-general and explorer, holds out a branch to signify peaceful intentions. Aborigines wave lighted branches, flourish spears and shout angrily. Mitchell is about to rise and order his men to fire over the heads of the Aborigines, meeting their 'bravado' with a show of force. Lithograph by A. Picken, after Mitchell, in Mitchell's Three expeditions into the interior of eastern Australia, London 1839 (1838).*







Pastoral stations and owners on the Namoi, Manilla and Gwydir rivers in northern New South Wales. All these stations were taken up between 1832 and 1838.

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The invasion was driven by hopes of profit and supported by convict labour. The men initiating it varied in their origins and in their attitudes to the Aborigines they displaced, and the Aboriginal experience varied accordingly. Beyond the frontier the Aborigines retained some initiative; to some degree they could set the terms of encounters. But when the grazing herds arrived and—within a season—their resources were depleted, the Aborigines had little room to manoeuvre. Their options were simple and stark: to flee, to fight or to submit. The terms on which they had to make the choice were set largely by British preferences.

Masters and men sometimes disagreed about how to treat Aborigines, and newcomers held different views from settled residents. Portland in the south was occupied from Van Diemen's Land by colonists who shared a bitter heritage of conflict with Aborigines whom they despised and feared. The resulting brutality was mitigated slightly by the Vandemonians' preference for sheep over cattle, which meant that the Gunditchmara people were faced mainly by shepherds on foot, rather than the more mobile mounted stockmen who cared for cattle. By contrast, in the movement out from Melbourne masters from Van Diemen's Land were joined by men recently arrived in the colonies. Many were young men of means, whose English education encouraged an anthropological interest in the Aborigines, at odds with their first aim of making money for English backers. These young gentlemen often found the Aborigines more congenial companions in the bush than their convict servants.

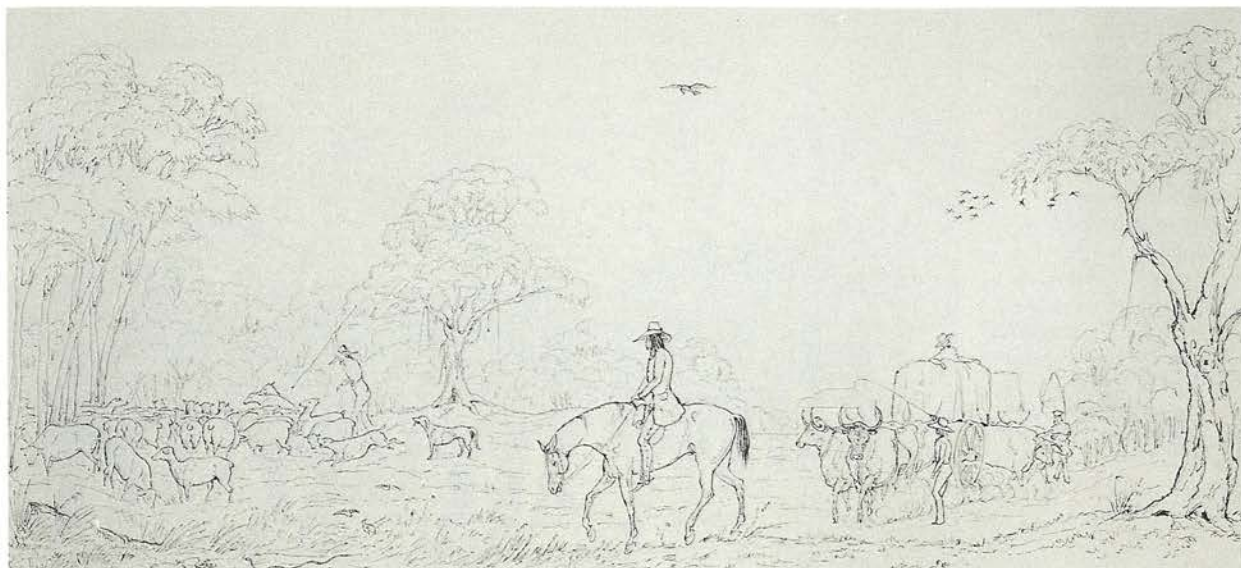
At the boundaries of settlement in New South Wales, some masters were gentlemanly 'new chums', but most were of a different breed. They were young men born or reared in the colony, the sons of officials, soldiers or convicts who had prospered during the first decades of British settlement. Men of little book learning but considerable bushcraft, they had known racial conflict as bloody as any in Van Diemen's Land. They had grown up together, many of them on smallholdings along the Hawkesbury River. They married each others' sisters, and joined as partners in grazing ventures that took flocks and herds to the furthest advances of the frontier, from the Campaspe River to the Gwydir. Perhaps most disastrously for the Aborigines, they hired as overseers and mounted stockmen an elite among the convicts and ex-convicts, experienced bushmen who did not like the native inhabitants any more than their masters did. Men such as these—masters long resident in the colonies and their employees—stand out when we inspect relationships between white and black along the boundaries in 1838.

*Contact at the boundaries in New South Wales. A warrior named Cambo poses for Major Thomas Mitchell in the Hunter valley of New South Wales in 1830. Cambo had 'but recently arrived from the wilds', and showed great fear of Mitchell. He insisted on standing with his club and boomerang. Lithograph by G. Fogg after Mitchell, in his Three expeditions.*



The fertile riverflats along the Hawkesbury River had been the scene of early and violent conflict between small farmers and Aborigines. The murder of an Aboriginal boy had provoked retaliation, and that in turn set off indiscriminate killing by soldiers. Five men had been found guilty of murdering two Aborigines in 1799, but were not executed. The next generation, unable to expand on their parents' smallholdings, pushed north to the Hunter River. By the mid-1830s their flocks and herds were moving up the Namoi River valley.

The movement encroached on the territories of three groups of Aborigines: the Kamilaroi, the Weraerai and the Kwiambal. The Kamilaroi were the largest group, a confederacy united by language, whose lands were bounded by the Liverpool and Nandewar ranges to the south and east, and encompassed the river valleys of the Namoi, the lower reaches of the Gwydir and the other branches of the Barwon to the north. The Kamilaroi were reputed to be fierce fighters and experienced



cattle thieves. During the 1820s they had sought battle with early settlers on the Liverpool Plains, losing perhaps two hundred of their people, but by the late 1830s the southern groups of Kamilaroi lived in uneasy familiarity with the invaders. Two 'tame mobs' were well known to the British: one was a group of Aborigines in the Peel River district who had good relations with the Australian Agricultural Company men at Tamworth; the other comprised Aborigines living near the Namoi River, about thirty of whom maintained an uncertain, joking relationship with cattlemen who had recently established runs in the district.

The Namoi Aborigines sometimes avoided the cattlemen by visiting the larger Gwydir group of Kamilaroi to the north, known to the British as the 'wild blacks'. They also came more frequently into contact with the Weraerai people, whose lands bordered the northern bank of the upper reaches of the Gwydir. The third group, the Kwiambal, lived in the foothills at the head of the Macintyre River, and traditionally visited the upper Gwydir in spring and summer. The Gwydir in the mid-1830s thus supported about four thousand Aborigines, most of whom had had some dealings with white men, or had encountered cattle and stockyards on the plains between the Namoi and the Gwydir.

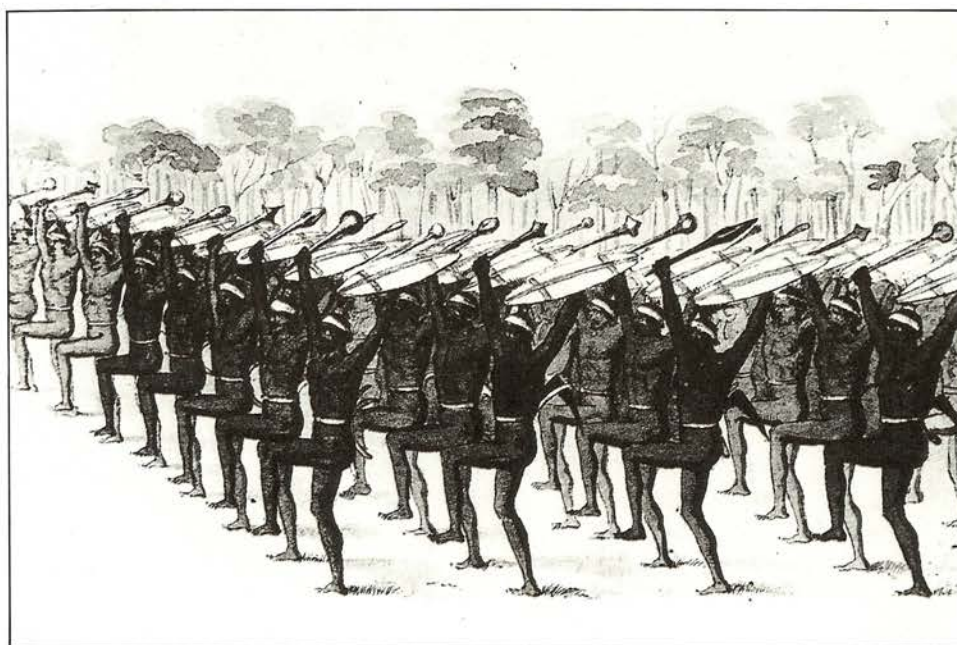
In April 1836, Thomas Simpson Hall, with a black guide from the Hunter River and several stockmen, took a mob of sheep and cattle up the track from Barraba to the Gwydir River in search of pastoral runs. As they neared the country of the Gwydir mob Hall's guide became nervous, for he did not know these people and was reluctant to proceed further. Hall decided to teach the man a lesson and, levelling his fowling piece at him, 'discharged its contents of small shot in the Buttocks of the Black!' The guide ran away and joined the Gwydir mob. In retaliation the Gwydir mob attacked Hall's camp, killed a stockman and wounded Hall and another man. For a moment the occupation of the Gwydir was halted.

That winter, Hall and a number of stockmen and squatters joined with Sergeant Temple and a party of mounted police from Jerry's plains, in a campaign to clear the blacks out of the area from Barraba to the Gwydir. They killed eighty. Occupation of the Gwydir could then begin, and in the spring of 1836 about fifty stockmen, shepherds and hutkeepers drove several thousand cattle and sheep along the track from Barraba and across the plains from the lower Namoi around the Nandewar range in search of pastoral runs.

*Room for manoeuvre. Sheep and stockmen with bullock dray, probably in New South Wales. In some parts the coexistence of pastoral activities and traditional Aboriginal hunting and foraging was short-lived, and this kind of scene soon left Aborigines with the simple, horrific alternatives of resistance, flight or submission. George Hamilton, pen and ink, c1839.*

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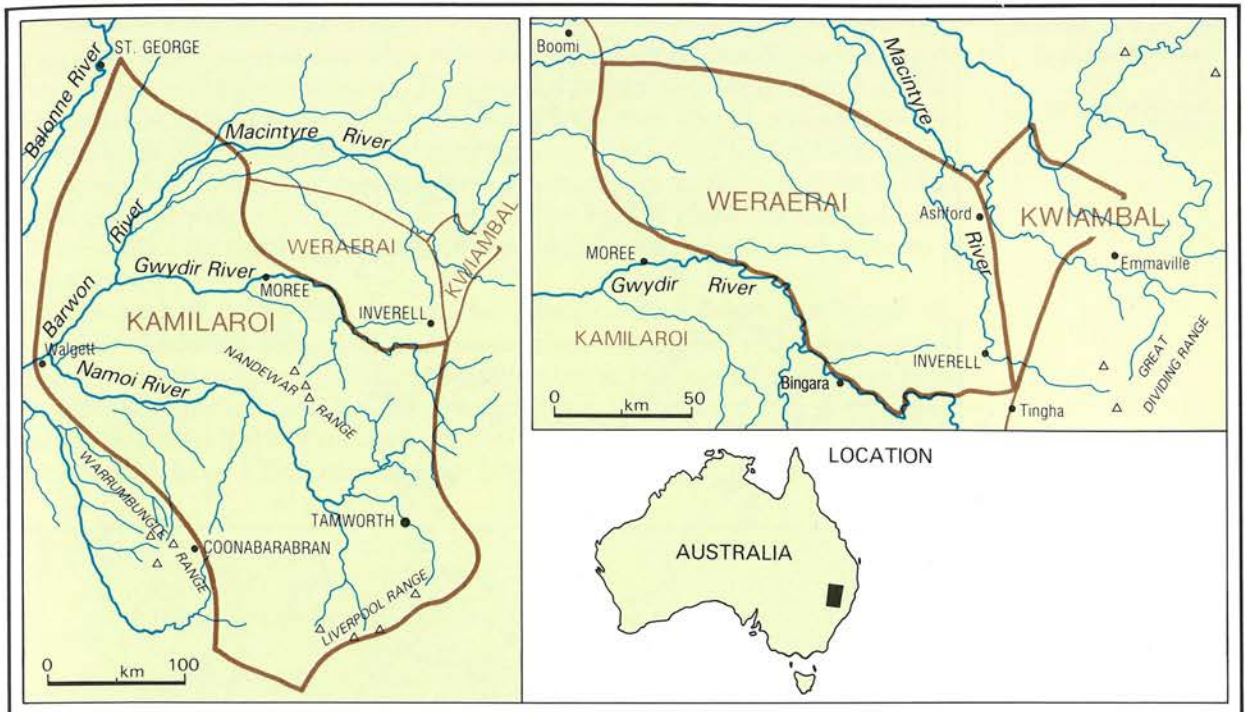
*Spectre of black war. The artist, possibly Clement Hodgkinson, calls this a 'Dance of Defiance' by the Yarrabandini Aborigines of northern New South Wales. The scene is probably more a reflection of European anxieties than Aboriginal rituals, for the serried ranks evoke images of contemporary European military formations. In fact this dance was probably a form of welcome. Engraving in Australia from Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay, London 1845.*



A Weraerai boy helped young John Fleming to select Mungabundi on the lower Gwydir as a good site for a hut, near a chain of ponds rich in birds and fish. Some of the Gwydir people helped George Bowman's stockmen to build stockyards at Terry Hie Hie, and left a woman with them for the season in exchange for rations. Others camped for several weeks near the hut established by James Lamb, the overseer of John Cobb's run; Lamb and his shepherd Henry Preece exchanged food with them and enjoyed their company. Further east the Kwiambal people at first rushed the strange cattle, but then helped Andrew Eaton and William Butler to build a hut and stockyards on the Macintyre River. By February 1837 the stockmen had established about twenty runs along 160 kilometres of the Gwydir River, from the Wiseman brothers' station at Keera to James Cox's hut at Moree.

For a season all was quiet. By the end of March most of the Gwydir and Weraerai people had moved to their winter hunting grounds, and the stockmen had the river to themselves. But in September the Namoi, Gwydir and Weraerai Aborigines met to collect waterfowl, eggs and shellfish on the lagoons between Cobb's run and John Crawford's stockyards at Ardgowan Plains. Drought was already shrinking the river and drying out the pastures, and hutkeepers and shepherds were unwilling to share their rations. When the Gwydir people called at Terry Hie Hie to collect the rations they expected in exchange for the sexual services of the woman they had left the year before, they were refused; the stockmen with whom the agreement had been made were no longer there. The Aborigines killed two shepherds and speared a number of cattle. In retaliation mounted stockmen killed a number of Aborigines at Ardgowan Plains.

A large gathering of Weraerai and Kamilaroi people met to consider revenge. A white witness estimated from the remains of their camp fires that there were about 250 of them. They ate stolen beef—no other food could have been gathered in time to feed such numbers—and marked their agreement with a corroboree. Finding it impossible to injure the mounted stockmen, they killed two more shepherds at Cobb's run and drove off sheep and cattle. Then some Gwydir Aborigines joined the Namoi people in moving southwest, spearing cattle on runs on the lower Namoi. The Weraerai and the rest of the Gwydir people remained



at the Gwydir, where they bore the brunt of another retaliatory expedition by the stockmen. White folklore says that Cobb's run took its name—"Gravesend"—from the number of Aboriginal bodies buried there after this expedition.

When Alexander Paterson, crown lands commissioner in the Hunter valley, arrived at the Liverpool Plains late in October 1837, he decided that the area was 'defenceless' against the blacks. He wrote to Sydney calling for an official party 'to suppress these outrages'. His letter was supported by correspondence from James Glennie and Robert Scott, rich men who owned large estates on the Hunter and were also squatters on the Liverpool Plains. Their letters dissociated the runholders from the actions of their employees, but called for government reprisals against the Aborigines. Glennie blamed the Aboriginal violence on the humanity of one of Scott's overseers, who had discouraged his own and other stations' stockmen from carrying guns. Scott was more inclined to blame the stockmen's lack of breeding and discipline. He urged the government to act, 'lest by being driven to desperation . . . these undisciplined men proceed to lengths what would probably be found unnecessary and avoided by responsible and unprejudiced persons'.

The acting governor, Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass—himself a runholder—shared Scott's fears and took his advice. He called in Major James Nunn, commander of the colony's mounted police, or 'troopers', and sent him into battle. 'You must lose no time in proceeding', he ordered:

you are to act according to your own judgement, and use your utmost exertion to suppress these outrages. There are a thousand Blacks there, and if they are not stopped, we may have them presently within the boundaries.

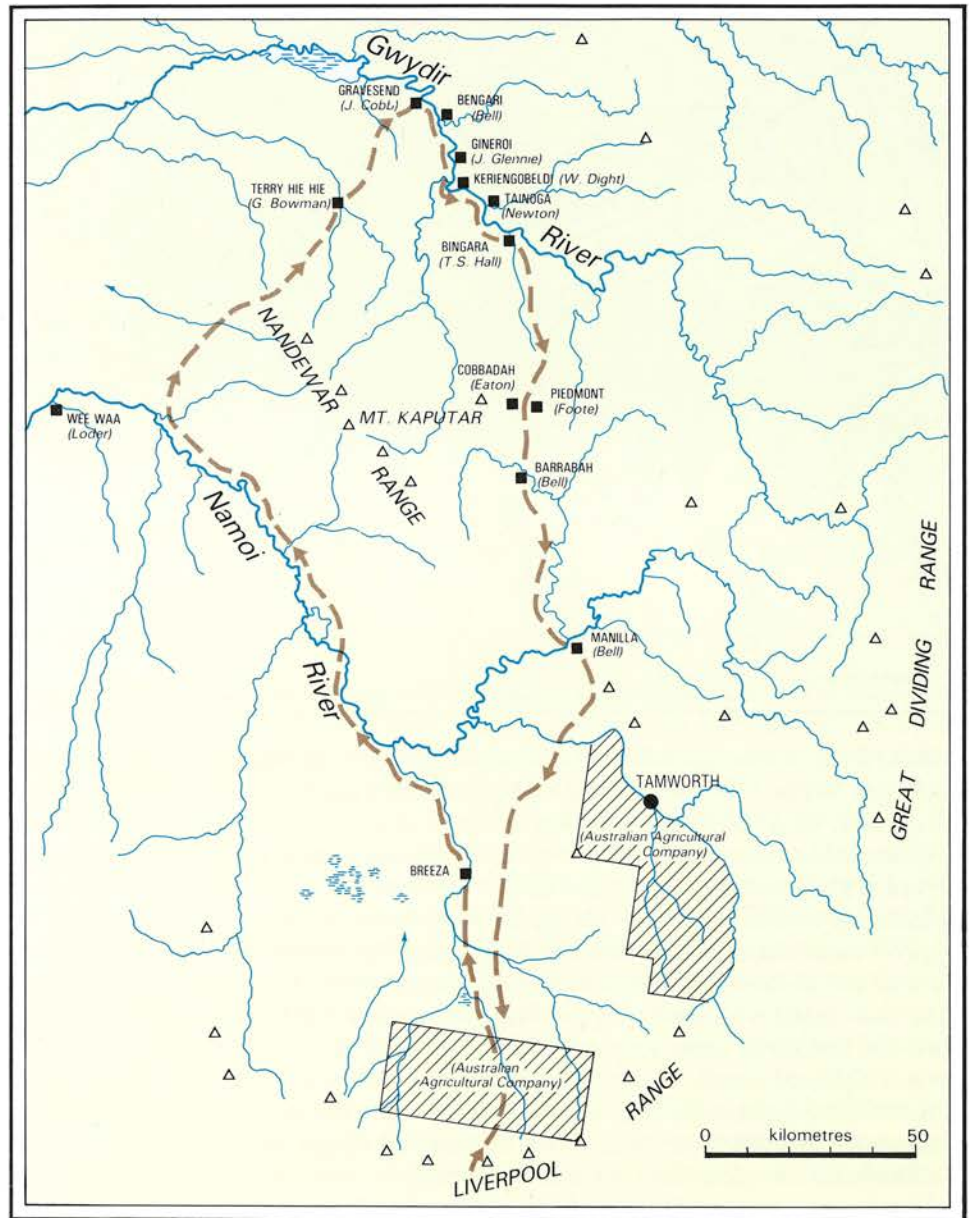
Nunn arrived at the Namoi River early in January 1838 with a party of 23 mounted men and a black interpreter. He camped at Green Hatches station, where he heard what he later described as 'very distressing accounts' of the 'outrages' committed by the Namoi and Gwydir Aborigines in December—nothing more,

*Approximate group boundaries in the area of the Gwydir and Namoi rivers.*

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*Journey made by Alexander Paterson in the spring of 1837.*

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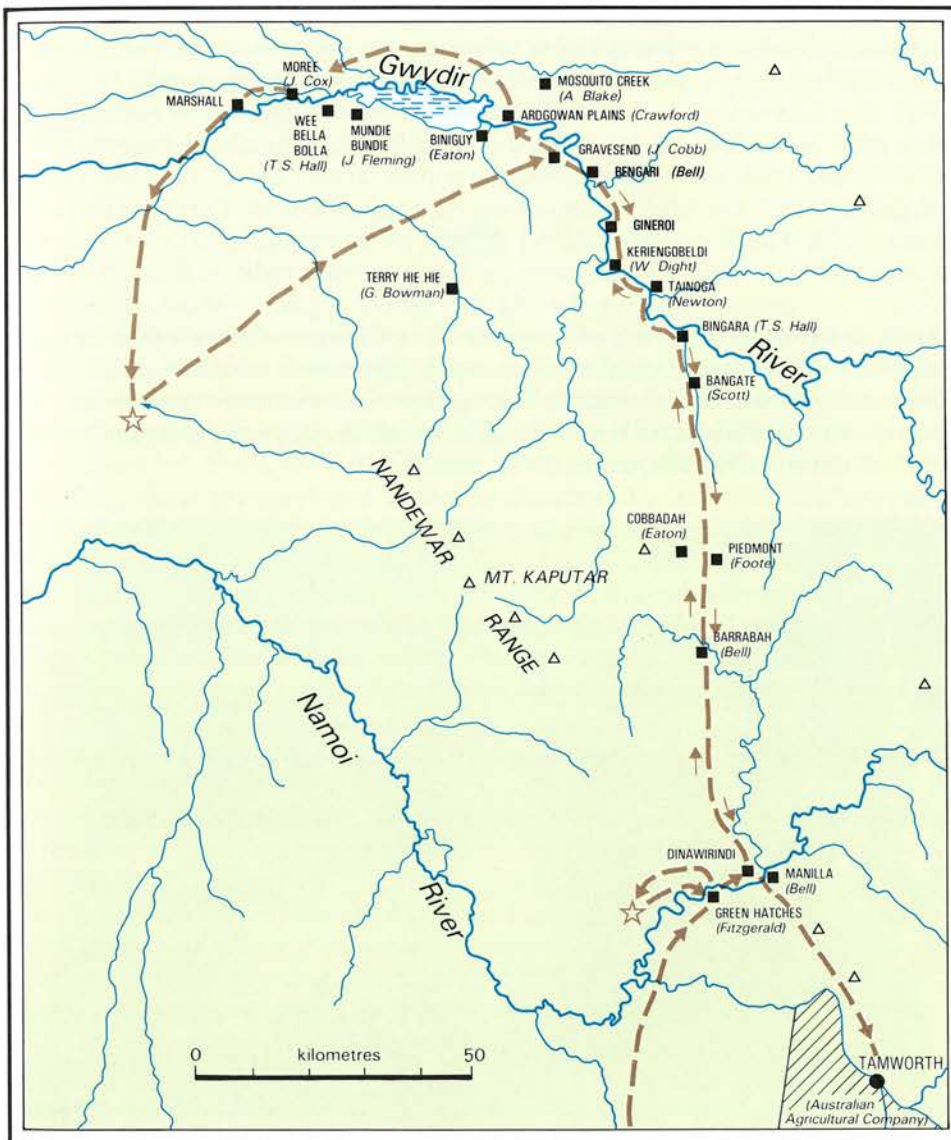
it would seem, than stealing cattle. Stockmen from several stations were preparing to move against the Aborigines, and Nunn joined them, justified by a promise from one stockman to identify the men who had murdered Hall's shepherd in 1836.

About daylight, the party saw the blacks' fires on the banks of the Namoi River, with a deep reach in front and bush behind. Nunn sent some troopers across the river to prevent the Aborigines—there were about fifty—escaping in that direction, while the rest walked their horses quietly along the riverbank. As soon as the troopers were spotted, they charged the camp. Most people surrendered. Some dived into the river, were fired on by the troopers, and were captured only when a trooper swam his horse into the river and dragged them out.

Some prisoners were Namoi people—in white parlance one of the tame mobs—and others were 'wild blacks' from the Gwydir. The interpreter told them all that they were charged with murder and with spearing cattle, and asked them

to point out those who were guilty. One Namoi man pointed to Doherty, the guide shot in the buttocks two years before, as the murderer, and identified fifteen Gwydir men as the cattle spears. The troopers handcuffed Doherty and another man, and took all the Gwydir men back to Green Hatches. The Namoi people were allowed to go after Nunn destroyed their weapons. At Green Hatches Doherty was shot dead while attempting to escape, or so Nunn reported. Nunn then let the rest of the Gwydir people go, except one whom he kept as guide and interpreter to make contact with the Weraeraai along the Gwydir. Doherty was buried in the back paddock.

Nunn pushed on to Barraba on the Manilla River where he found the runholder, Archibald Bell, making a seasonal inspection of one of his stations. Bell begged Nunn to stay for a few days, the station being 'in a state of great alarm from the depredations the blacks had been committing'. A shepherd told the troopers that the Weraeraai had stopped him the day before on his way from an outstation. They would have killed him had he not told them that the soldiers (as the



*Expedition of Major J.W. Nunn, January and February 1838, showing the sites of the two massacres (indicated by stars).*

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Aborigines called the troopers) were coming. The Weraerai let him go, boasting that they cared nothing for the soldiers. Nunn divided his forces, sending his lieutenant in search of the Weraerai. He gave up the chase after discovering them in a gorge to the east, on rocks so far up that he could not get to them. In the meantime Nunn questioned stockmen around Barraba and decided that the main body of Aborigines, including Weraerai and Gwydir people, had moved to the Gwydir River. He rode to Cobb's run on the Gwydir, where the shepherds were still afraid to take the sheep out to graze, and learned that the overseer, James Lamb, had recently followed the blacks a short distance into the interior. This was the best lead yet.

Provisioning the troopers for fifteen days, Nunn took James Lamb, Archibald Bell, some of Scott's stockmen and his captive Gwydir interpreter, and set off downriver in search of the Aborigines. After tracking them for five days they found some spears leaning against a tree and a Weraerai man asleep. He awoke and shinned up the tree. The interpreter talked him down and reported that there were four men, three women and some children gathering honey in the vicinity. The troopers found the family that day. The captives told Nunn that the people responsible for the murders at Cobb's were on a creek 'at some distance'.

After a full day's travel the party tracked the Aborigines to Snodgrass lagoon, about fifty kilometres southwest of present-day Moree. They came unexpectedly on 'a great number of blacks' camped across a creek, with a large body of water between and thick scrub behind. Some troopers crossed the creek, drew swords, and galloped into the scrub to cut off the Aborigines' retreat. This time there was no surrender. The Weraerai and Gwydir men were waiting, spears ready, in scrub so thick that they were invisible until the troopers were right on them. After one trooper was speared through the leg the others began to shoot, driving the Aborigines back to the creek and into the fire of the main party on the opposite bank. The gunfire lasted only a few minutes. Reports of casualties differ. Nunn admitted to 'a few', his lieutenant to 'four or five'. Other witnesses said the area was strewn with forty black bodies, hit by shot or cut about by the troopers' swords, 'some of them . . . shot like crows in the trees'.

*An incident on the Murray River, 27 May 1836. Aborigines retreat after being ambushed by Major Mitchell's exploring party. Mitchell, who sketched the scene, wrote that he 'gave to the little hill which witnessed this overthrow of our enemies, and was to us the harbinger of peace and tranquillity, the name of Mount Dispersion'. Engraving and description in Three expeditions.*





The party continued down Waterloo Creek, driving Aborigines into the water and shooting them. Captured women were forced to lead the party to the main camp, where more warriors were killed defending a pile of weapons. Then the party scattered into the bush and 'a stragglng fire' was heard on all sides. Lieutenant Cobban reported perhaps two Aborigines killed in the creek and 'three or four' bodies in the bush. Others said the men killed every Aborigine they found.

James Lamb recognised among the bodies various items from Cobb's—a tomahawk, a knife, two iron bolts and a tin dish, pieces of shirts, half a blanket and a bullock tail. These discoveries were taken to justify the murders. During the massacre Lamb had learned from the troopers that swords and cutlasses could be more efficient weapons than muskets, which took a long time to load. Swords were soon to be used again against the Gwydir people.

In mid-February, Major Nunn and his party returned to Cobb's to an enthusiastic reception. Nunn boasted to the stockmen of his 'popping off with his holster pistols the Blacks whenever one appeared from behind a tree'. He returned to Sydney by way of the Australian Agricultural Company at Tamworth, and bragged there as well. When Nunn presented his report in Sydney, the new governor, Sir George Gipps, was horrified at its swashbuckling tone. According to the British government, Aborigines were British subjects, not to be killed with impunity by Her Majesty's forces of law and order.

But on the Gwydir the killing continued.



Every year at the end of summer, Aborigines from what is now called central Victoria gathered near Port Phillip Bay—in their language *nairn*. They camped together in a great curve of the river they called *nairn-derp*, or *beireirung*, at a place where the ponds were rich with eels. The groups whose lands abutted the bay always attended: from west to east the Wathaurung, the Waworong and the Bunerong. These groups shared similar languages and a common kinship system based on male descent and exchanged women in marriage. Inland clans were linked more loosely into the confederacy. The Taungerong lands lay across the ranges on the headwaters of the Goulburn; they married their neighbours the Waworong and came to the autumn gatherings. The language of some Taungerong people closely resembled that of their western neighbours, the Ngurelban, though the groups were often in conflict. The Ngurelban on the Campaspe River and the Jajowrung on the Loddon both allied themselves with the Wathaurung to the south, and both groups regularly attended the gatherings. The northern neighbours of the Taungerong, the Waveroo, married Taungerong and occasionally Waworong; some may have made the long journey to the bay. More distant Aborigines who had no kinship ties with the bay people were regarded as strangers, and potentially hostile.

Early in March 1838 John Hepburn met a group of Aborigines at the Goulburn River who may well have been on their way to the gathering. Hepburn was also part of a large movement of people, nearly all men, who were pushing inland the frontier of white occupation. The Goulburn crossing place was on that frontier, for no intending squatters had yet followed Hawdon's track down the river. It was also a staging place in a route serving the frontier. In 1837 alone the ford's waters had been muddied by at least eighteen parties overlanding more than twenty-five thousand sheep and perhaps three thousand cattle, and a bark hut had been built on



Three black women weeping over a grave. William Govett was astonished by the grief displayed by three women at a graveside in the interior of New South Wales. The trees around the grave bear ceremonial markings, and the women, wailing and cutting their heads with their own tomahawks, mourned (as Govett observed) until they were 'perfectly exhausted, and can shed tears no longer'. (Saturday magazine, 5 November 1836, 183-4). Watercolour by William Govett, 1836.

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the site to serve as a public house. The local Taungerong people were by now thoroughly familiar with overlanders. The group that met Hepburn came from further afield. They spoke neither English nor pidgin, and found the white men alarming at first.

Hepburn and a companion, William Bowman, were riding ahead of their flocks when they came suddenly on a large party of men, women and children. '[I]n an instant about one hundred spears were pointed towards us', wrote Hepburn, who had made the journey before. He and Bowman dismounted and walked slowly towards the Aborigines, a gun in one hand and a green branch in the other. 'After a short parley, in which not a word was understood by either side, the natives began to lay down their spears, and approached us without fear, put their hands on us, and felt the horses skins.' After an hour Hepburn's wife and children arrived by cart, and then the party's shepherds and nine thousand sheep. The shepherds were 'dreadfully alarmed at first; but this soon wore off'. In the evening Hepburn happened to be holding his double-barrelled shotgun when a flock of parrots flew over. He fired, bringing two down. The Aborigines were alarmed at the blast, and 'all disappeared, but only for a short time'. They returned in larger numbers than before and examined the gun, asking Hepburn to fire again. He refused, although William Bowman obliged.

If Hepburn's acquaintances were bound for *nairn-derp* their camping place was already set for them, at the northern end of the site. The camp was a model of how the Aborigines understood their world. The smallest groupings were of about six bark shelters, one to a family, gathered around that of a 'married man of consequence, whose duty it is to keep order, [and] settle differences'. The largest groupings were by land and language, and were placed as if to map out their territories. A white observer sketched a layout as follows:

1. Loddon Blacks  
[Jajowrung]
2. Campaspe Blacks  
[Ngurelban]
3. Mount Macedon Blacks  
[Kukuruk?]
4. Goulburn Blacks  
[Taungerong]
5. Yarra Blacks  
[Waworong]
6. Barrabool Blacks  
[Wathaurung]
7. Western Port Blacks  
[Bunerong]

Such gatherings were occasions to settle differences, to fight, to trade, to arrange marriages, to hold ceremonies marking the stages of life and to celebrate with dancing and singing. And they were a time to talk. Women could leave their husbands' fires and talk of absent friends with parents and brothers; men could recount past adventures. In 1838 everyone would have been talking about two things—the drought, and the coming of the white people's sheep and cattle.

Those whose lands lay on the expanding pastoral frontier had similar stories to tell. The Taungerong had suffered, and several times challenged, the passage through their lands of tens of thousands of sheep and cattle, many of which now grazed, uninvited, on the lands of the Ngurelban and the Jajowrung. The Wathaurung had been invaded by flocks moving up the Barwon, Moorabool and Werribee rivers; they could report that hutkeepers sometimes gave them food and clothing in apparent recognition of their rights as landholders, but more often feared and cursed them. Attacks on huts had sometimes succeeded in driving away the shepherds and their sheep, in one case for several months. But the flocks always returned, with more armed men to guard them. There was nothing in people's shared experience to suggest that the intruders and their animals would leave.

If the inlanders looked for advice to those already living among the white people, the response could only be confusing. Leading men among the Waworong and the Bunerong had long counselled forbearance, hoping in response for recognition of Aboriginal land rights, recompense for land usage and some sharing of authority. No material recompense had been offered in 1837; flour and clothing distributed by the government mission to the Aborigines had in white terms to be 'earned' by monotonous labour. Aborigines living in or visiting Melbourne preferred to seek quicker rewards carrying or running errands, and 'white money'—silver—earned in this way made them welcome customers at Melbourne's bakeries. Coppers, perceived to be less valuable, were called 'black money'.

Other developments seemed to offer some access to white power. When Aborigines killed a white man in Melbourne in 1836, a group of Bunerong and Waworong men set out to show their understanding of British justice by avenging the death. A young South African recently arrived in the colony, Christiaan de Villiers, became close to these men, living and hunting with them and exchanging his name with two of them in a ceremony similar in intent to the one that had been thrust on Grey in the west. Most of de Villiers' friends and brothers were young men, and unmarried, but it appears that their alliance was supported by older and more influential men who understood its implications for both societies.

When Governor Bourke visited Port Phillip in 1837 he decided to formalise de Villiers' relationship with the Aborigines by organising a native police force under his control. In return for bringing to justice black and white men who broke the law—however defined—the Aboriginal troopers would receive food, clothing, shelter and guns. The British administrators gained both access to local knowledge and a visible symbol that Aborigines accepted British authority. The leaders of the Waworong and Bunerong believed that their people had gained some share of that authority. But it was a dangerously unequal exchange. Captain William Lonsdale reported to Sydney that the men being enrolled for the force agreed 'to attend to everything that should be told to them and to give up their native habits', and that,

As a further proof of their willingness to agree to our desire, they on the first evening of being embodied, broke unsolicited their spears and other native weapons, and threw them into the river, saying they would no longer be black fellows.

Whatever sense the inland people made of these attempts at accommodation, some envied the troopers' guns. Late in March a Wathaurung man named Nannymoon confronted a hutkeeper near Buninyong and demanded his pistols. Nannymoon and other young Aborigines were well acquainted with the hutkeepers, often camping near their huts and sharing their food. The whites were used to handling Aboriginal weapons—the war spears and the fierce war club, *leanquil*—and the Aborigines were probably used to handling guns.

Nannymoon had already acquired an iron tomahawk. Terence McMannis, the hutkeeper, was 'a quiet person', less intimidating than his fellow shepherds. When he refused Nannymoon his pistols, the Aborigine harassed him for days, warning that the wild blacks from the inland would come down and kill him. McMannis, 'in great dread of Nannymoon', asked one of his mates, 'what can I do if he gets hold of me?' There was no useful answer. Nannymoon caught him alone outside the hut when he went to draw water. McMannis pulled out his knife—and not, apparently, his pistols. Nannymoon warded off the knife with his shield and felled McMannis with his club, which broke with the force of impact, and finished him off on the ground with two blows of the tomahawk. Leaving club and shield, Nannymoon took the pistols, the tomahawk, a newly baked damper, a bag of flour and bedding from the hut. Here was easy access to the white technology.

In the week after McMannis died, a party of Aborigines killed seven overlanders on the Broken River near Benalla, losing perhaps two men themselves. The Aborigines were Waveroo people, landholders of the river plains drained by the Broken River, the Ovens, the Kiewa and their tributaries. The overlanders were convicts and ex-convicts in the service of William Faithfull, a runholder on the Murrumbidgee. William Faithfull's beasts and men had been brought south as part of a company led by his brother George, in search of new sheep and cattle stations. The brothers were the sons of William Faithfull the elder, a private in the New South Wales Corps and an early settler on the Hawkesbury. The family's experience there had left them with no love for Aborigines.

Overlanders were a common sight in the lands of the Waveroo. Successive flocks had eaten out a swathe of their grasslands, from Albury to the Goulburn. When the rains did not come late in 1837, white overseers led their flocks up to thirty kilometres off the track to find food. The Waveroo had met the first groups with courtesy. Overlanders commonly picked up a few 'black boys' at the Murray River, who journeyed with them as far as the Goulburn, helping them to find water in summer and to ford rivers in winter, and perhaps steering them away from anything the Waveroo wanted to keep secret.

Other approaches, perhaps made to set up useful exchanges with the white men, seemed to establish tranquil relations. In mid-1837 a young Waveroo man known as Jimmy led the overlander Alexander Mollison to Bontherambo on the Ovens River, the heartland of Waveroo territory. Jimmy tried to persuade Mollison to settle his 5000 sheep and 600 cattle on Bontherambo—'tousand birribirri [emul tousand duck,' he said. Jimmy could also ride a horse. While other overlanders were alarmed by apparently hostile bands of Aborigines at the Ovens and Broken rivers, Mollison believed that their fears were groundless. He found the Waveroo to be 'inoffensive and docile and . . . perfectly trustworthy'. His stock was never troubled, though stray cattle not being searched for were regarded as fair game.

Honesty among friends was central to Aboriginal morality, and new acquaintances were divided speedily into those who spoke straight and those who did not. Assigned convicts—conscripts to the bush—lived in a moral universe that sharply divided workmates from the rest of even the white world. They could not be expected to speak straight to black savages whom they feared even more than their masters. Some of these masters were men like Mollison, gentlemanly newcomers to the colonies, whose sense of honour and self-preservation made them take pains to fulfil promises to the Aborigines and to head off conflict with their men. But masters long resident in the colonies commonly shared their men's belief that Aborigines could not be trusted.

The Faithfull party was accompanied from the Murray to the Ovens by some Waveroo people. Some of the white men appear to have been offered, and accepted, the sexual favours of Waveroo women. Whether they made proper payment is not clear. From the Ovens, George Faithfull sent on his brother's overseer, James Crossley, in search of a suitable station for William's stock. Crossley, an ex-convict, was in charge of four stockmen, two watchmen, two bullock drivers and nine shepherds, all convicts or ex-convicts. They were droving about 3500 sheep and 400 cattle. No Aborigines were with the party when it reached the Broken River on Friday 6 April.

In a good year the Broken River overflowed into broad swamps and marshes in winter and early spring, and dried to a series of waterholes in summer. The western bands of Waveroo used the territory as winter hunting grounds. In this dry autumn the river was low. About ten Aborigines were camped there when Crossley's party arrived. One wore a blue shirt and spoke some pidgin; he said his name was Charlie and that he came from Port Phillip. He may well have been at the great March gathering, with or without his present companions. The Aborigines' approach to the strangers was relaxed and friendly. They expected to share the land's resources with them and to receive gifts and food in return, food being especially welcome in a bad season.

Crossley's ewes were lambing, and the country ahead lacked grass and water. He did not hurry to leave the river, although he was nervous of the Aborigines. They asked for bread and meat and interested themselves in the party's guns—only four muskets in all. They seemed to be offering to take the shepherds to meet their women, but the survivors swore later that nobody went. As the days passed the Aborigines seemed to want more and more. Twice during the night a blanket was stolen, though the owner retrieved it. Crossley counted the sheep and found that eight were missing. The Aborigines brought in an injured sheep, saying their dogs had bitten it. 'We began to suspect that the blacks were at no good, from their looking about and moving about during the day.'

On Monday, 'after wishing us goodnight, one of the natives struck a lamb and killed it. He was about to take it up when one of the shepherds shouted out and he desisted'. Also on Monday a shepherd found a bundle of spears concealed in the

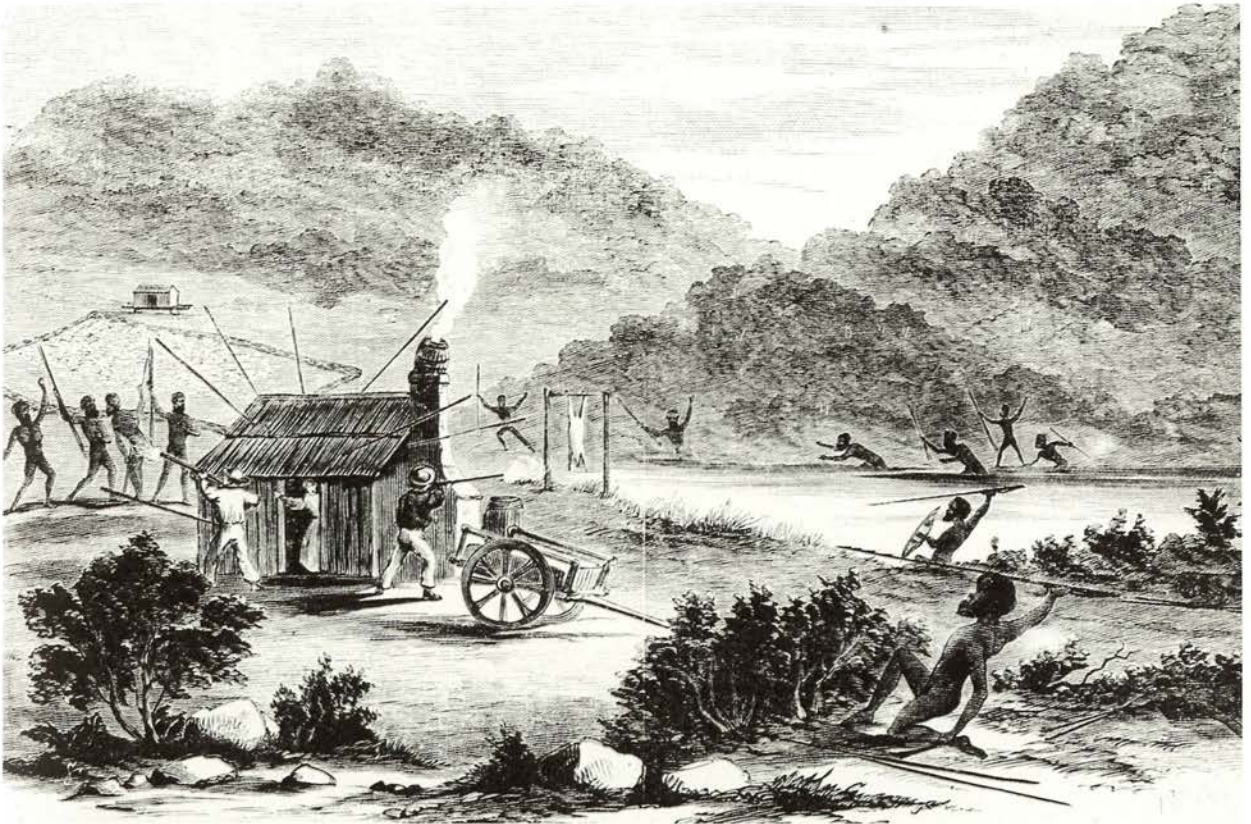
reeds near a dray, and moved them to another hiding place. Fearing that the spears and the absence of women signalled an attack, Crossley 'obliged eight or nine of the natives to lie awake [that night] and one of the men mounted sentry over them'. In the morning he told Charlie to take his men away. At first he refused but, when the whites raised their muskets, the Aborigines 'walked towards the spot where the spears had been concealed, and not finding them set up a shout and ran away'. These insults offered to men who thought themselves the white men's hosts were probably weighty enough to require avenging. Other men joined the original ten, possibly men with a grievance unresolved from earlier in the journey. In hungry times the sheep and laden drays were always a temptation. But the manner of the attack indicates that its first aim was vengeance.

On Wednesday morning, 11 April, Crossley's party prepared to move on. The Aborigines struck while the men were separated—the mounted drovers gone after the cattle, the shepherds moving out with two flocks of sheep, and the rest busy yoking the bullocks to the dray. The unarmed shepherds were attacked first. Men with muskets ran to help them, killing perhaps two of the attackers, but were stopped by a hail of spears from about twenty warriors. After one shot the guns were useless. One man tried to use his weapon as a club, then defended himself with a spear grabbed from an assailant. A larger body of Aborigines began to ransack the drays. Ten of the surviving whites broke and ran in a body. Most of the Aborigines went after them, choosing vengeance before plunder. They called after the fleeing men 'several well known English oaths', and kept hard on their heels for several kilometres. The stragglers were killed. Two men escaped by turning towards the Goulburn. Another three were chased some way into Waveroo territory before their pursuers gave up and returned to the drays.

When news of the attack reached the runs on the Ovens, the shepherds panicked. George McKay had arrived with his herds the very day of the attack. His free servants absconded, leaving him only three assigned men, 'one musket and no hut up'. Deciding that it was 'certain death to remain', he retreated with his herds to the Murray. Others tried to strike back. George Faithfull gathered his remaining sheep and shepherds in a camp on the Ovens, near his new cattle station. He and his neighbour Colonel White wrote at once to Sydney, but the distant authorities were slow to respond. Captain Lonsdale, the police magistrate in Melbourne, sent Lieutenant George Smyth and three mounted policemen to investigate, but with such a tiny force he could do no more than report that the Aborigines at Broken River were troublesome and likely to attack again.

At this point Faithfull and White—'highly exasperated'—mounted a reprisal. 'A large combined party of heavily armed men' set off for Broken River. Smyth wrote that he feared 'great slaughter' if the party met with the Aborigines. There is no record of the outcome, but, whatever their losses, the Waveroo were not deterred. Early in May they were thought to have been responsible for attacks on the Faithfull stations on the Ovens. 'The shepherds came running in from their sheep saying the blacks were after them. Mr. Faithfull was with us and called for his horse; we all ran away.' Some of the shepherds ran as far as Yass. 'Faithfull and Bowman ... left their cattle running about wild, and Colonel White buried his property in a hole dug in the ground.' When a police magistrate finally arrived from New South Wales with a full party of mounted police in mid-May, all the Ovens runs were deserted.

But this is to anticipate. The Bowman whose cattle were left running wild on the Ovens in May was the William Bowman who was droving sheep across the Goulburn with John Hepburn in March, and who had obliged the Aborigines by demonstrating the power of his gun. Bowman had grown up in New South Wales.



He had been a weaver, a wheelwright and a successful publican. He was now in partnership with his father-in-law, a wealthy ex-convict, to exploit the new pastures of Port Phillip. Hepburn was a more recent arrival, formerly a sailor and captain in the coastal shipping trade. Hepburn's green branch had got the party out of trouble on the Goulburn. Bowman was more inclined to trust guns.

Bowman and Hepburn continued to the Campaspe River, where Bowman halted his flocks. Hepburn pressed on with his family to the headwaters of the Loddon, territory of the Jajowrung Aborigines. The passage of his sheep was not entirely peaceful. Hepburn left two shepherds to tend the lambing ewes. Aborigines attacked the shepherds, wounding one badly. Hepburn believed that his men had mistreated the Aborigines and 'paid smartly for their impertinence'. He also suspected that one of Bowman's convicts had been involved, a man named Knight, who took to the bush several times and apparently lived with the Aborigines. Hepburn believed that Knight was killed on the night of the attack. In any case, Hepburn was not bothered again by the Aborigines.

Bowman took up a station on the Campaspe, a little to the north of earlier arrivals such as Alexander Mollison and William Yaldwyn. He had been settled there only a week when a shepherd had his cap knocked off by a spear. In the next weeks huts were pillaged and shepherds were threatened. In April Bowman complained to Lonsdale that his men were alarmed to the point of mutiny. Between unrest on the Campaspe and disaster on the Ovens, Bowman's resentment of the Aborigines must have been running high. In the third week of May one of his shepherds, William Jones, was found dead, with 'two long spears sticking in his body and stomach open and the inside taken away'—the removal of kidneys and kidney-fat being the customary treatment for fallen stranger-enemies. On the same

*Aborigines attack a shepherd's hut. The artist shows more than a dozen attackers and two defenders with a woman. One Aborigine (front, right) is about to hurl a spear from behind a bush at a white man's back. Undated drawing by an unknown artist from an early illustrated newspaper.*

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day a flock of Yaldwyn's was driven off and a few sheep were killed. Lonsdale sent a party of mounted police from Melbourne, to 'show themselves thereabouts for a short time in order to inspire confidence and alarm the blacks'. But the same pattern continued. Aborigines would 'come from nowhere' and drive off a flock, killing a few sheep and retiring with meat.

On 9 June one of Bowman's shepherds and one of Yaldwyn's were passing the day together, their flocks grazing side by side. A pack of dogs fell on Bowman's sheep and the shepherds ran to drive them out. As they did, they 'saw about twenty blacks coming on. They came around in a circle, by twos'. A shepherd on a distant hill 'saw the natives come down off the ranges towards the sheep. They were extended as if they wanted to surround the men and sheep'—a hunting technique traditionally used on kangaroos. The shepherds 'stood still, thinking at first they were coming to take their dogs off the sheep, but when they came a hundred yards from us they set up a shout and threw their skin cloaks off and, passing their dogs, ran towards us' with spears in their hands. Remembering William Jones, the two men ran for their lives. The Aborigines killed some of the sheep on the spot, skinning and quartering them 'as a butcher would do' and hanging the carcasses on trees. The rest they drove away.

Four men set out after them from Yaldwyn's and another five from Bowman's. The men on horseback tracking the sheep 'heard a noise like chopping wood, we looked and saw the blacks and the sheep in a bough yard which the blacks had made. Some blacks were on top of a tree cutting more boughs off. The shepherds' dogs barked, the Aborigines 'set up a great shout', a shepherd pulled his trigger and the Aborigines 'immediately manned their spears' and returned the fire. The whites sheltered behind trees; the Aborigines 'fortified themselves behind fallen trees and sheets of bark which they had set up on end'. They 'threw up their hands and dared us to come on, some said "Come on you white buggers"'. Spears and shots were exchanged for about threequarters of an hour. 'During the engagements the sheep had broken out of the brush yards the blacks had made to confine them in, but some of the blacks rounded them up just as a shepherd would do and kept them about one hundred or one hundred and fifty yards off.' At dusk the whites 'rushed the fires and took possession of the place' but could not take the sheep. In the morning the Aborigines had gone, leaving at least eight dead. No whites were injured. Even from behind fortifications, spears were no match for determined firepower.

It was said that after this Bowman 'shot every black man woman and child whom he found on the run'. The place where the sheepfold had been built became known as Waterloo Flat. In his report to Sydney on the affair Lonsdale suggested, with no evidence at all, that the Aborigines concerned were the same group involved in the attack on Faithfull's party. Waterloo Flat lay between the Coliban and the Goulburn rivers, in an area frequented by both Ngurelban and Taungerong. Given Bowman's double involvement, and the Waveroo's long-standing friendship with the Taungerong, it is just possible that Lonsdale was right. But his remark was more likely a convenient justification after the event for the deaths of Aborigines otherwise guilty only of stealing sheep.

Events closer to Melbourne provide a wry postscript to the bitter tale of April–June. During these months seven runs within fifty kilometres of the town—near Mount Aitkin, on the Salt Water River, and on the upper Werribee River—were 'attacked' by a large group of Aborigines armed with muskets. That at least was how the runholders told the story. What happened in each case was that a group of about thirty Aborigines approached the huts seeking food and conversation with the runholders, most of whom they already knew. If enough





*Above.*  
The marauders. A shepherd is speared to death in the moonlight while Aborigines make off with several sheep. The bulk of the flock appears to have been left in the sapling yard, which seems unbroken. Undated watercolour by S.T. Gill.

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The avengers. Armed white men prepare to take vengeance on a party of Aborigines, including women and children. Undated watercolour painted by S.T. Gill as companion to The marauders.

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meat was not supplied they drove off a flock of sheep and culled out forty or so, leaving the rest unharmed. Once they took out a shepherd to find the rest of his flock. They were always courteous, except at one run where they were surrounded and threatened by armed shepherds and stockmen. Here the Aborigines aimed and cocked the muskets they were carrying, but allowed themselves to be disarmed without much resistance. The only runholder who bothered to question them found that they carried licences for the guns—in the form of notes from Captain Lonsdale—and were on a specific mission. They ‘were going after the native who had killed Mr. Learmonth’s man’, Nannymoon, and ‘would bring his ears home’. The attacks marked the progress of an unofficial expedition of the Victorian Native Police.

The force had been inactive since January, when de Villiers had resigned after a bitter quarrel with the missionary George Langhorne. Langhorne disapproved of de Villiers’ swearing and drinking, and even more of the masculine ethos of weaponry and self-adornment that he shared with the Aboriginal warriors. Langhorne believed in civilisation through hard work. After de Villiers’ resignation, Langhorne attempted to take charge of the corps, but the men would not obey him. Early in April de Villiers wrote asking to be reinstated, declaring that ‘from the attachment they had formed towards me they refused to serve under any other person’. Even as he wrote, the members of the corps were deciding to act on their own. It was a logical decision for men who believed they shared some authority with the white men.

The pursuit of Nannymoon was, after all, the kind of work they had been brought together to do; and other activities could be pursued at the same time. Living off the land in the style of travelling white officials was certainly an attraction. The party included most of the fifteen policemen, an equal number of male ‘civilians’ and at least one woman. The estates of some members lay in the area to be visited; they may have been travelling to fulfil ritual obligations to the land and, where possible, to collect rent. Others were mature advisers to the young troopers, men who thought they understood the value to both black and white of pursuing justice.

The party did not capture Nannymoon. They headed north to Mount Macedon and then west across the upper Werribee towards Learmonth’s Buninyong run and the hill country into which Nannymoon had retreated. Here they stayed for two weeks. By this time they were well fed on mutton and probably droving scores of sheep. Early in May they returned to Melbourne to the complaints of the outraged runholders. At Lonsdale’s request de Villiers had to take into custody those ‘blacks who were the fondest of him . . . and the last he would wish to see any harm happen to’. There followed arrests, a moonlight rescue and more arrests, with Lonsdale and de Villiers enforcing restraint on their white troopers. Lonsdale, wrestling with an Aborigine, had his hand badly bitten. A soldier cried: ‘Let me kill the scoundrel Captain. Why should you let him hurt you?’ Lonsdale decided that six of the Aboriginal leaders should be sent away, ‘with a view to it being a terror to the others’. They were put on board the schooner *Sarah*, bound for Sydney.



Winter that year on the Gwydir was hard on stock and men. The drought left waterholes dry and grasses thin. Good overseers kept their cattle moving in search of decent feed. Early in June William Hobbs, overseer at Henry Dangar’s Myall

Creek run, sent two of his stockmen, Andrew Burrows and Charles Reid, to drove a mob of bullocks 100 kilometres and five days' journey from Myall Creek—a tributary of the upper Gwydir—to Dangar's second run at Ponds Creek on the lower Gwydir. Hobbs followed two days behind the mob, checking for stray cattle.

At sundown on Thursday 7 June the two stockmen halted the mob near the men's hut at Archibald Bell's station, Bengari. Bengari lay at the point where the Gwydir turned west, and its central position made it a popular staging post for travellers. This evening Dangar's men found four other visitors at Bell's, in addition to the two stockmen who worked there.

John Russell, Bell's overseer, was a stocky man of about thirty-three—the oldest present. Like all the rest he had been transported to New South Wales as a convict. He had been a groom in England, and his crime was 'stealing saddles and brushes'. After eleven years in New South Wales, having served his sentence, he was now free to seek employment where he chose. Russell was busy that evening using his saddler's skills to fit leather straps to a sword and making an ammunition pouch. His offsider, George Palliser, was a short man about twenty-eight years old, transported for robbery. He too had completed his sentence and was working in the bush by choice.

All the visitors came from runs downriver, at least a day's journey away. John Johnstone and Ned Foley were both from runs beyond Dangar's lower station at Ponds Creek. Like Russell, Johnstone was overseer at his run, an ex-convict and an experienced bushman. He was a black African born in Liverpool, and an ex-sailor. Ned Foley—like almost everyone else in this story—was still under sentence, in his case for 'assaulting a dwelling'. Foley was young, tall, handsome and Irish; he had been in Australia only five years. Charles Toulouse, an ex-glover, and James Hawkins, once a draper, were both city men translated to the Australian bush. Toulouse was assigned to James Glennie of Gineroi. In theory, assigned convicts lived under their master's surveillance. In fact these men were armed, unsupervised and far from their employers' home stations.

The company made Burrows nervous. They asked him whether there were any blacks at Dangar's. He said that there were. How long had they been there? Worried about the men's reasons for asking, Burrows exaggerated the length of the Aborigines' stay. '[A]bout four or five weeks,' he lied. But the pursuers seem to have been undeterred. According to Burrows' recollections his questioner replied, 'Then they were the men who did the depredations down the river.' His companion Reid remembered exactly the opposite reply. The pair gathered that the men had been searching unsuccessfully for Aborigines who had rushed some cattle downriver, and that they were expecting others to join them—in particular 'Jem' Lamb, Cobb's overseer, who had travelled with Major Nunn during the expedition earlier in the year.

On the road next morning, Burrows and Reid met a young man hurrying to join the party—riding alone, armed with a musket, a sword visible under his short coat. He was John Fleming, manager of Mungie Bundie station and Ned Foley's employer. Fleming was exceptional among those working in the district in being native born and a free man, 'never bond'. He was managing Mungie Bundie for his family. His grandfather, Joseph Fleming, a private in the New South Wales Corps, had taken up holdings on the Hawkesbury and later the MacDonalld rivers, and the next generation of the family had close links with other Hawkesbury pioneers right along the pastoral frontier. On the Gwydir the Flemings were related by marriage to the Halls of Bingara and were friends of the Bells of Bengari. All these families were associated with the Faithfull brothers, whose shepherds and sheep had been speared at the Broken River in April. Fleming told the two

stockmen that he had been out after Aborigines and that he hoped his tired mare was fit for more hard riding.

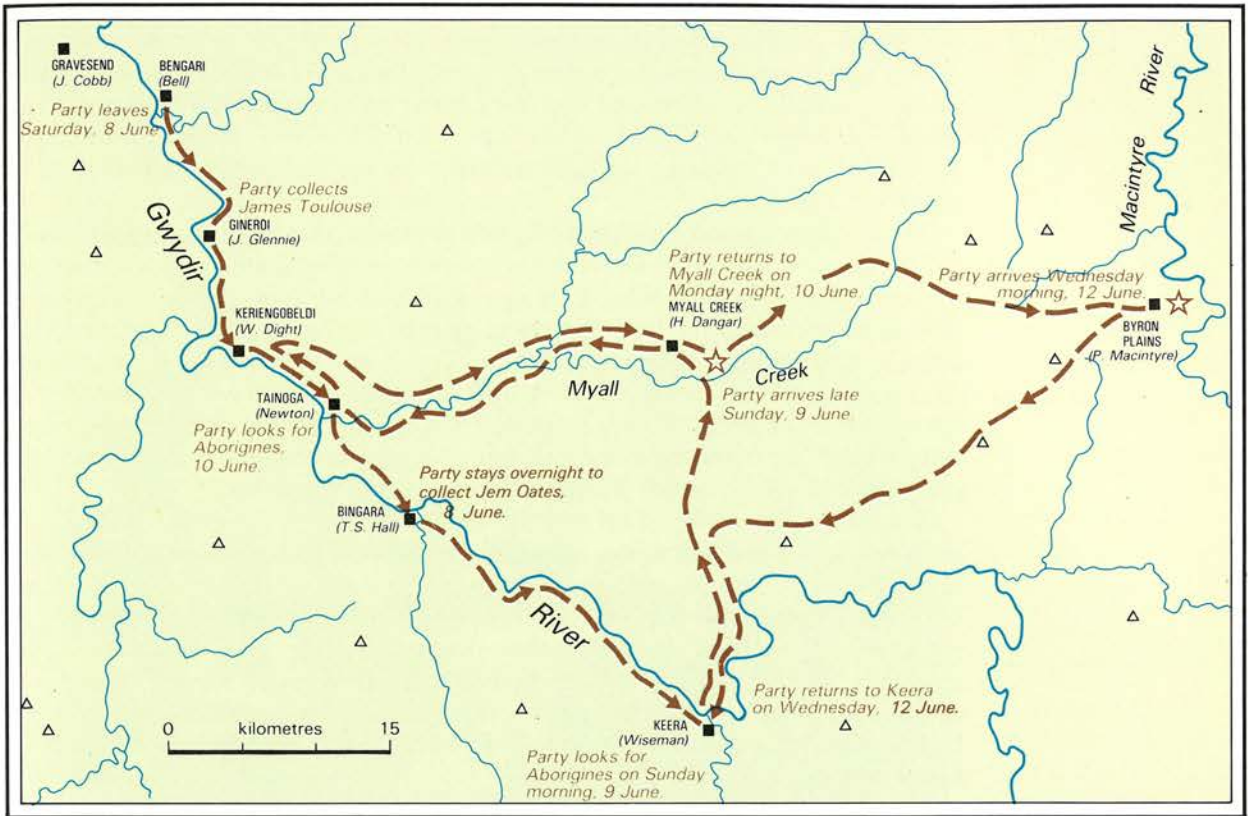
Forty or fifty Kwiambal people had in fact been camped at Dangar's station on Myall Creek for the last ten or twelve days. Before that they had camped at other stations nearby, cutting bark in exchange for rations. The Kwiambal regarded the upper Gwydir as their country and ceremonial grounds important to them lay near Myall Creek. But they traditionally came to the area in summer, accompanied by some of the Weraerai and Kamilaroi people. In winter they had no associations with these scattered groups. They had returned to the upper Gwydir at the invitation of Andrew Eaton, overseer on the Byron Plains run on the MacIntyre River 40 kilometres to the east. Eaton was a good friend to the Kwiambal, sometimes sharing his hut with them. He had given their most senior man, 'King Sandy', a breastplate to wear, declaring him friendly and trustworthy. But the bad season—and Eaton's cattle—must have made the hunting precarious on the MacIntyre, and Eaton probably had no more rations to share. Eaton had brought the Kwiambal to Myall Creek previously, 'for the purpose of making them friends with Mr. Dangar's men'.

William Hobbs, the overseer, was at first hostile to the coming of the Kwiambal. But Charles Kilmeister, a stockman described by Hobbs as 'a friendly, humane, quiet man', enjoyed their company, and he persuaded Hobbs to let them stay. Kilmeister, transported for life for housebreaking, had been in the colony for only five years. The Kwiambal hunted small game, cut bark and helped him with the cattle, and in return he and Hobbs gave them rations. The presence of the women and children broke the monotony of the single male life. Kilmeister used to 'get the children to dance and some of the women to sing'. The people were well used to British ways. Many had taken English names, which they used among themselves. King Sandy's three-year-old son, Charley, was already fluent in pidgin and soon became a general favourite.

George Anderson, convicted for life, was hutkeeper at Myall Creek. Like many of his kind he was a lonely man, made sly and defensive by imprisonment and the lash. He had been scared by Aborigines at other stations, but at Myall Creek he was attracted to a young Kwiambal woman, Impeta, who was already married—in Anderson's terms, 'a black fellow's gin'. But Anderson was allowed to take her from time to time as a bedmate, and he became genuinely fond of the Kwiambal children. The other employees at Myall Creek were two Aboriginal brothers from the Peel River, Davy, or Yintayintin, and Billy, or Kwimunga. Davy was eighteen years old, and Billy about four years younger. The brothers had a long association with the various Dangar runs and were excellent stockmen. The white stockmen saw the brothers as much more 'naturalized' than the Kwiambal, treating them more or less as fellows. But their relations with the Kwiambal were cordial, and Davy was allowed to live with the woman of his choice.

On Saturday 9 June, William Mace, overseer at Keriengobeldie, and Thomas Foster, superintendent at Tainoga, arrived at Myall Creek, hoping to hire some Kwiambal men to cut bark at their stations thirty kilometres to the west. The Kwiambal knew Foster well and agreed that ten of their able-bodied men, led by King Sandy, would return with him to Tainoga the following day.

While this Saturday morning business was being conducted at Myall Creek, George Russell and his party, having waited for John Fleming, 'Jem' Lamb from Cobb's and young James Parry from Biniguy, set off southeast up the Gwydir River in search of Aborigines. John Blake joined them at Gineroi to complete the party now comprising ten armed men on horseback. When they called at Tainoga, the stockmen and hutkeepers were impressed; armed and mounted men were



common enough in the district, but not in such numbers. One of the party asked 'if there were any blacks cutting bark'. They told John Murphy, the fourteen-year-old house servant, that they planned to stay overnight at Hall's run at Bingara and to collect another mate, John Oates, and then ride east on Sunday to the Wiseman's at Keera before turning north to Myall Creek. They made it plain that they expected to find a number of Aborigines.

When Foster and the Kwiambal men arrived at Tainoga on Sunday afternoon, Murphy told them all he knew. The Kwiambal men immediately turned back to Myall Creek, taking a short cut across the mountains, hoping to warn their people. But they were too late.

The hunting party had arrived at Myall Creek about an hour and a half before sundown. The women, children and old men of the Kwiambal were already camped for the night, while Anderson and Kilmeister sat smoking with Billy and Davy in their hut a few metres away. The horsemen divided and galloped towards the camp from different directions, as Nunn's troopers had done at Snodgrass lagoon. As they approached, most of the Kwiambal ran for protection into the hut. All the men dismounted and called to Anderson and Kilmeister to come outside while Russell uncoiled a long tether rope hanging from his horse's neck. Fearfully, Anderson asked him what they were going to do with the blacks. Russell replied: 'We are going to take them over the back of the range, to frighten them.' Russell, Lamb and another man strode into the hut with the rope, while Fleming gave orders. The handsome young Irishman Foley stood at the door of the hut with his pistol drawn.

The Kwiambal inside called on Kilmeister and Anderson to help them. Kilmeister stood outside talking with the stockmen. Anderson looked uneasy, so

*Journey of the party of horsemen along the Gwydir, in search of Aborigines, June 1838.*

AL CHANDICA, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

the men sent him away to fetch them a drink of milk. When he returned they had tied most of the Kwiambal by their wrists to the long tether rope. One man, Tommy, was handcuffed. Two very old men, Joey and Daddy, the magic-maker of the group, were left untied. But they made no resistance and followed, tears streaming down their faces, as the stockmen pulled the group outside. The Kwiambal were 'moaning the same as a mother and children would cry'—or so Anderson heard it.

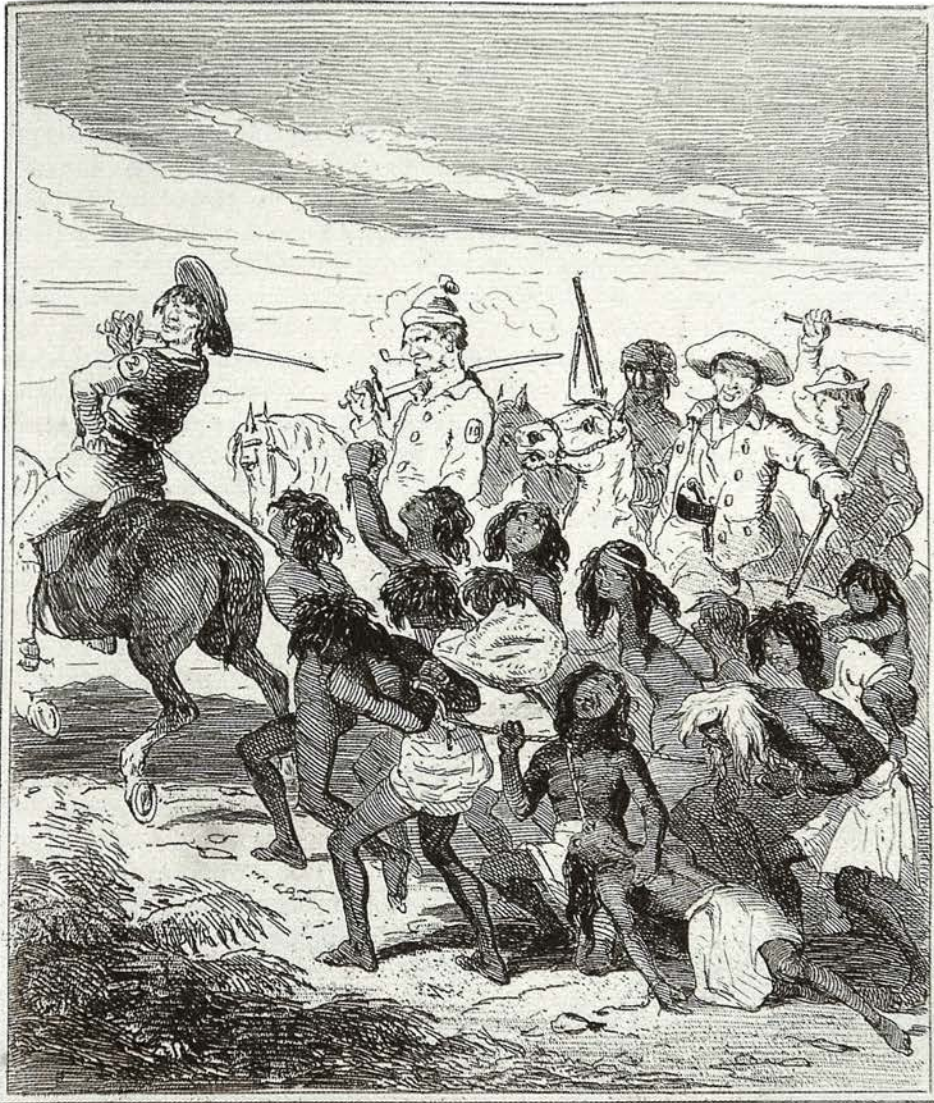
The children upset Anderson most. He was to recall that there were two or three small ones not able to walk, and 'the women carried them on their backs in opossum skins'. Toddlers who were not tied followed their mothers; 'they were crying, in and out of the hut, till they got out of my hearing'. He saved one little child by stopping it at the door of the hut. To appease Anderson, and perhaps also to compromise him, one of the party untied 'a good-looking gin' and gave her to him; it was not Impeta. Davy was allowed to keep the woman of his choice. These two women, the small child, and two young boys who hid in the creek when the party arrived were the only Kwiambal to escape the round-up.

The Kwiambal were led off towards the setting sun, with mounted stockmen in front and behind. Kilmeister found his pistols, saddled his horse and went with them. Anderson numbly watched them go. About fifteen minutes later he heard two shots, then saw smoke. Davy followed the party at a safe distance, to a large stockyard newly built less than a kilometre from the huts. When he dared approach, at dusk, he saw piles of bodies lying in pools of blood. Many were decapitated, including most of the children. Heads had been thrown far from the bodies and all were dreadfully slashed by sword and cutlass. One man had been killed by being held down on a log fire.

The hunting party did not return to Myall Creek that Sunday night. Davy told Anderson what he had seen. The hutkeeper went to bed, too sick with dread to go out and get wood for the fire. After dark the Kwiambal men arrived, 'frightened, out of breath with running'. They coo-eed before approaching the hut, and the surviving women answered. The men wanted to bury their dead, but Davy persuaded them instead to seek refuge with their friend Andrew Eaton at MacIntyre's run, 40 kilometres to the east.

The events that followed show something of how the hunters understood what they had done. One had saved another 'good-looking gin' from the slaughter. With Kwiambal blood still on their hands, several of them enjoyed her during the Sunday night. Early on Monday morning, they arrived at Tainoga looking for the Kwiambal bark cutters. Foster received them stonily, refusing any information. He was especially angry with Kilmeister, whom he had last met playing with the Kwiambal children. 'Well, Kilmeister,' he challenged, 'are you after the blacks?' Kilmeister replied: 'They rushed my cattle yesterday'—the same ready lie the hunters had offered when gathering at Bengari. Foster refused to let the men leave their 'gin' at Tainoga. The party then pushed on five kilometres to Keriengobeldi, where the men ate breakfast and told John Bates, the hutkeeper, to keep the woman for them. Parry boasted to Bates that 'they had settled the blacks'. Over breakfast they chatted about 'nonsense, and romances', and which of their horses 'could gallop best', like men who still thought they were heroes.

The party returned to Myall Creek in search of the Kwiambal men and camped there on Monday night. Anderson remembered: 'They were talking about the blacks all night, about a black gin they had in the camp with them the night before'. In the morning he asked Russell whether he was going to bury the bodies. Russell replied that he would 'bury them with a good fire'. Russell, Fleming and Kilmeister took firesticks from the hut, and all the party went to the stockyards except Foley,



*An English view of the Myall Creek massacre. Published in C. Pelham, The chronicle of crime; or, the Newgate calendar, 1, London 1841.*

who was left to keep Anderson from interfering. Foley entertained Anderson by showing him his bloodied sword. The men dragged great logs down to burn the bodies. Once the fire was going they returned to the hut, but Fleming told Kilmeister to go back to the site to 'put the logs together and be sure that all was consumed'. Kilmeister stayed all day in a vain effort to burn the rotting flesh. With growing guilt he told Anderson that he had been out trying to catch his horse.

The others had no such scruples. Realising that the Kwiambal men had headed east, they scared Billy into showing them a quick way over the mountains, promising him two women for his efforts. The Kwiambal group had arrived at MacIntyre's on Monday afternoon and told Eaton that 'soldiers' had massacred their people. Memories of Nunn's 'campaign' were as strong among the victims as among the hunters. On Wednesday morning they heard horsemen in the bush and Eaton, powerless against so many, told the Aborigines to hide in the ranges. The hunters shot a little boy and two or three men, and recaptured the women. Afterwards Eaton helped King Sandy to bury the little boy, probably the child whom Anderson had saved.

The party separated on Thursday 15 June, well satisfied with their work. They kept their word to Billy, allowing him to keep the two captured women. John Blake called back at Keriengobeldi to collect his 'gin', and was surprised to find that she had run away.

But there were some, more powerful than Anderson, who did not believe that white men had a natural right to kill and rape Aborigines. William Hobbs got wind of the massacre at Keriengobeldi and Tainoga on his way home from Ponds Creek and hurried back to Myall Creek on Wednesday 14 June to demand the truth from Anderson. The terrified hutkeeper reluctantly told him what he knew, but refused to give names. Kilmeister arrived, having left the party early. Guiltily, he denied all involvement, but Hobbs knew better. Davy took Hobbs to the site of the massacre. The stench of half-burnt bodies was horrible. Hobbs tried several times to count the decapitated bodies and heads; nausea overwhelmed him but he thought there were at the most twenty-eight. The next day he showed the site to Thomas Foster. Foster looked anxiously for little Charley's body but did not find it. The two overseers talked of notifying the authorities. Neither dared leave his station. But a runholder on the track to Barraba, a gentleman named Frederick Foote, agreed to 'call on the police magistrate at Invermein [now Scone, 320 kilometres away] and state the case to him'.

The hunters began to realise that the colonial authorities might not tolerate their behaviour. Over the next few weeks they furtively revisited the massacre site and removed as many bones as they could. When a magistrate, Edward Day, arrived at the end of July to investigate, most of the physical evidence of the massacre had gone. But the witnesses stuck to their stories and, as we see in chapter 9, eleven men—Kilmeister, Hawkins, Johnstone, Toulouse, Lamb, Foley, Oates, Parry, Pallister, Russell and Blake—were tried for murder before the end of the year. Seven were hanged.

John Fleming, the only master involved, is a notable omission from this list. Fleming took command throughout the campaign, alongside John Russell. He was never caught. Tradition has it that a network of friends and family among the runholders in the northeast helped him to hide out on the MacDonalld River—a privilege not extended to any of the stockmen. To many, Fleming was a hero and the massacre an appropriate way of dealing with the blacks.



The actions of the Myall Creek stockmen were not racist, in the sense of assuming the superiority of white skin over black. John Johnstone, a valued member of the party, was a black African. Nor did the hunting party assume that all Aborigines were less than human, and thus legitimate prey. During their trial, masters defending their actions wrote in the Sydney press that the Aborigines were cannibals and monkeys. But the hunters did not class all Aborigines together. They saw the two Peel River brothers, Davy and Billy, as stockmen. A 'naturalized' Aborigine—in Anderson's odd use of the term, one who had thrown in his lot with the invaders, who lived and worked with them—was simply not an enemy, at least while he continued in that way of life. Similarly an Aboriginal woman like the 'good-looking gin' saved from the slaughter in the stockyards might be thought of as a potential long-term companion if she was prepared to play that role. Such liaisons were not uncommon. John Blake was surprised that his chosen woman had gone back to what remained of her people. Here was tolerance of a sort—on the victors' terms.



Aborigines whose allegiance was to their own kind, who still lived by hunting and fishing, were enemies. They competed with the invaders for the land's resources. For two generations the British had been fighting the Aborigines for their land, and the fact that the battle was virtually over on the Liverpool Plains did not make them seem any less dangerous.

Warfare is the right context in which to understand the hunters' carelessness for human life and their easy appropriation of women. We need not invoke any special brutality of convicts twisted by punishment—by that logic Anderson should have led the slaughter, and Fleming should not have taken part at all. The hunters were exceptional only in their energy and efficiency. They saw themselves as employees doing their job well, with the full support of their masters. And they had a fine military model in Major Nunn. It was a bonus that they enjoyed their work.

The Aborigines also perceived the conflict as a kind of warfare. Resort to arms was an essential part of their politics, both within kin structures, as in Jenna's aborted duel, and between groups not bound by kin. The Aborigines' first response to the coming of the white ghosts was usually to try to incorporate them into kinship and exchange relationships, in which conflict was contained and formalised. At some places in 1838—in Melbourne, in Adelaide, to a degree in Perth—it was not yet fully clear to Aboriginal leaders that this aim was unachievable.

Where all accommodation was refused, Aborigines treated the whites as hostile strangers, open to attack whenever interests collided. But even in this wider context the Aboriginal notion of warfare was more confined than its British counterpart. The objectives of an Aboriginal war party raiding hostile territory were usually limited to the killing or injuring of individuals in revenge for specific wrongs. War was not normally over the control of resources—except perhaps women—and war over the control of land was unthinkable. Landowners could no more be separated from their land than from their kin.

*An Aboriginal camp. Three Aborigines rest in bark shelters. William Govett, the artist, used this scene to illustrate an article in the Saturday magazine in August 1836. Forgetting the fact of British invasion, he observed: 'the circumstances of the country not being infested with wild beasts which make man their prey, give them a feeling of security, whilst their simple weapons are sufficient for every requisite purpose'.*

*Watercolour, 1836.*





*A fight at the Murray. A mass of Aboriginal warriors is exposed to musket fire from mounted overlanders near the Murray. Superior weapons and mobility enable whites to fight major encounters on their own terms. Watercolour by William Anderson Cawthorne; although the painting is undated, the scene is typical of incidents along the Murray in 1838.*

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Aboriginal resistance to dispossession began as reprisals by family groups for specific wrongs—thefts, insults, refusals of reciprocity. Concerted reprisals involving warriors from a number of families could usually be arranged only at those times of the year when groups came together for formal meetings. But the frequency of large scale attacks on the bounds of white settlement—on the Gwydir River late in 1837, on the Broken River in April 1838, on the Campaspe River in June—may suggest a new readiness to organise out of season. Certainly a new factor in attacks was competition for scarce resources. One season—at most two—was enough for sheep and cattle to eat out roots and drive away game, and hunger probably helped to bring these warriors together.

The relative—and temporary—success of reprisals was due mainly to weaknesses within the white army of occupation. The Weraerai and Kamilaroi warriors who gathered near the Gwydir in the summer of 1837 found it impossible to visit their revenge on its proper target, the mounted stockmen in charge of the cattle. They killed two shepherds instead. The scattered, largely unarmed shepherds and hutkeepers on the newly established runs at Port Phillip were much easier prey



than the mounted stockmen of the Liverpool Plains, armed with guns, swords and a high sense of their own worth.

Nannymoon's murder of the inoffensive hutkeeper, Terence McMannis, reminds us that the war for the land fell hardest on the weakest on both sides, on the 'crawlers' and the 'hatters' as well as the Aboriginal women and children. The hunting party at Myall Creek was guilty only of too rigorous an application of the logic of dispossession. Killing would continue—by spears and axes on one side, and by gunfire, sword and poison on the other—until the British won full possession of Aboriginal lands.





### EUROPEAN IMAGES OF ABORIGINES

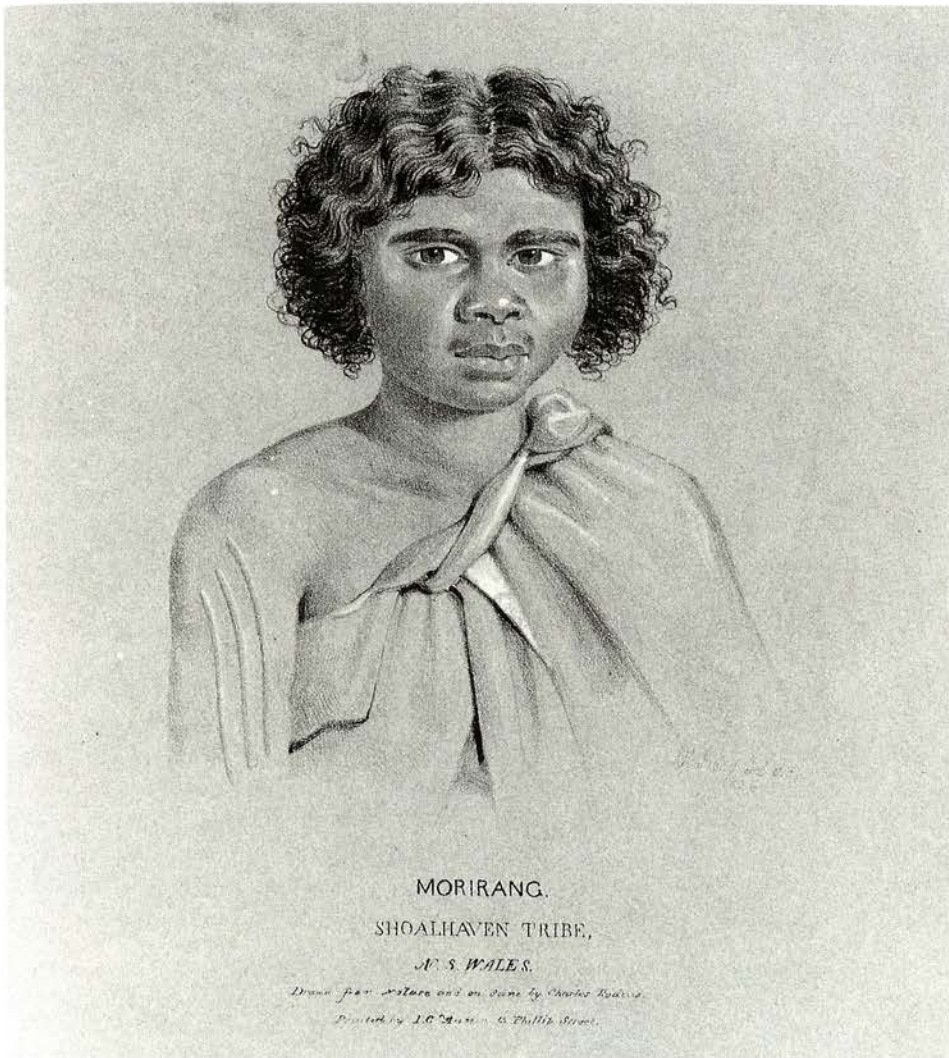
*Above left.*  
Augustus Earle, Bungaree, a native of New South Wales. Fort, Sydney Harbour in the background, oil, c1826.  
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*Above right.*  
Augustus Earle, colour lithograph of Bungaree, 1830.  
NATIONAL LIBRARY

Augustus Earle, a travelling artist interested in depicting exotic landscapes and peoples, arrived in Sydney in 1824. He was immediately commissioned to paint the portraits of leading citizens, including the retiring governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane. The subject of this portrait, Bungaree, was also a Sydney celebrity, well known for the old officer's uniform and cocked hat given to him by Governor Macquarie, and for mimicry of public figures.

This is the first known portrait in oils of an Aborigine, exhibited in 1826. The artist has tried to indicate Bungaree's intelligent awareness of his position in Sydney society, and to invest him with some dignity. In the early nineteenth century Aborigines were commonly depicted in the foreground of topographical drawings and paintings as a kind of allegory for the wildness of the Australian bush, but here Earle sympathetically concentrates on the individual, posing Bungaree in the European grand manner suitable for formal portraits of important people. Earle painted Captain John Piper—the wealthiest gentleman in Sydney—similarly posed in front of his property, though Bungaree's kingdom is a lost one, now appropriated to European needs, as Earle points out by showing Fort Macquarie.

When Earle reinterpreted the image of Bungaree after returning to England, his coloured lithograph in *View of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* (London 1830) retained the figure's pose and distinctive clothing but divested him of grandeur. Bungaree became a beggar accompanied by a 'gin' smoking a pipe, surrounded by empty grog bottles in a squalid Sydney street. The elevated pictorial conventions of oil painting were too subtle for a travel book. Earle seems to have decided that English buyers needed obvious signs of degradation to heighten the message of dispossession.



Charles Rodius, Morirang,  
Shoalhaven Tribe  
N.S.Wales, lithograph, 1834.  
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Charles Rodius, who had been transported to New South Wales in 1829, published six lithographic portraits of Aborigines in 1834 as one of the many activities intended to earn him a livelihood in the colony as an artist. The set cost one guinea. All the subjects were remarkable for their health and vitality at a time when Aboriginal people were physically deteriorating as a result of alcohol and disease. Rodius designed the series for the English market, for travellers, and for Sydney residents to send to friends and relatives (and prospective immigrants) as an indication of Australian conditions. The wistful Morirang makes a fine and sympathetic portrait, but an idealised one. Rodius subtly Europeanises her and completely removes her from her environment. Indications of group identity, such as the scarification on her arm, become smooth elegant lines.

Morirang is passive, inert. She is neither threatening as were rural Aborigines fighting to hold their land, nor devastated, like those in Sydney. Indeed, the whole set is a world away from experiences Europeans had had with Aboriginal people. Yet the portraits were conceived, and accepted, as accurate and factual likenesses. On two sheets Rodius added profile heads, allowing interested Europeans to read the portraits by the light of the new popular science of phrenology, the interpretation of character by studying head shapes.



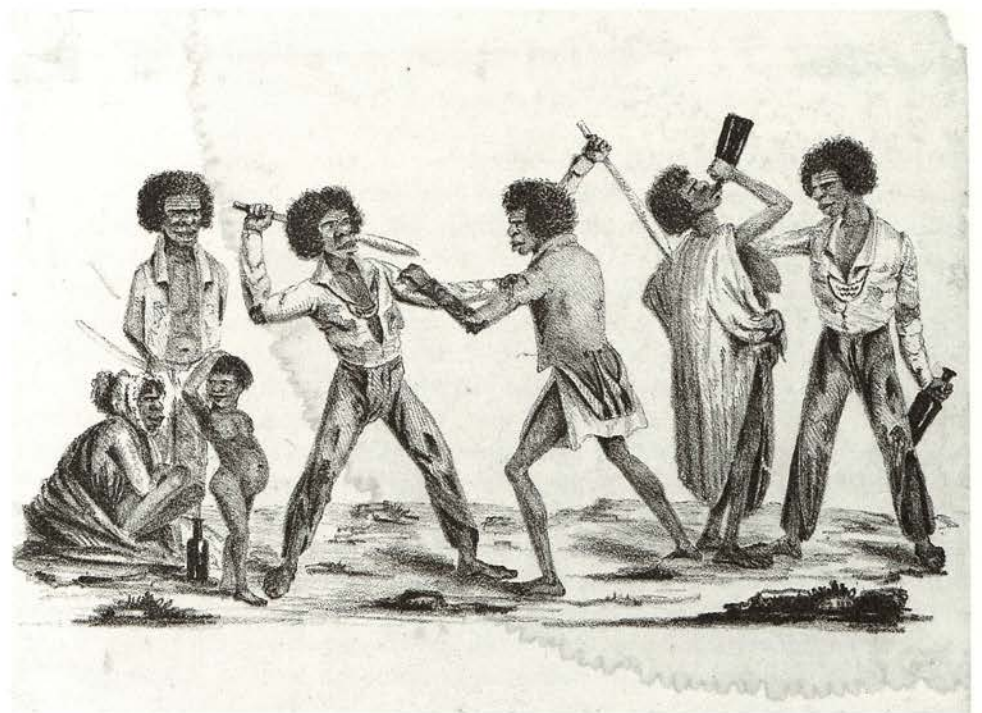
William Fernyhough,  
Boardman, Lake  
Macquarie Tribe,  
lithograph, 1836.  
NATIONAL LIBRARY

William Fernyhough arrived in Sydney free, educated and well connected, in 1836, and published that year his *Twelve profile portraits of the Aborigines of New South Wales*. His profiles, like those of Rodius, catered for phrenological taste. The *Profile portraits*, which cost 10s 6d, were advertised as a 'trifle', 'characteristic of the colony' and suitable for friends in England because of the 'correctness' of the drawing. They were successful; at least four editions appeared in eight years. The series bears likeness to a widespread interest in Aboriginal ways of life, although, like Rodius, Fernyhough showed little awareness of Aboriginal realities. Boardman's tattered European clothes give the only hint that he is a person, existing on the fringe of white society.

At the lower end of the scale in content and market, the two prints opposite, are perhaps more typical of colonists' perceptions. They, and works like them, appear to have been sold as cheap, ephemeral souvenirs. Their publication was never announced in the press. Their makers did not attempt ethnographic accuracy. The etching by Carmichael appeared in a book produced for English eyes. The text described traditional Aboriginal ways of life, then pointed to this illustration as proof that the race was destined for extinction. The next page showed two Maoris, depicted as a contrastingly vigorous and healthy people.

Such images were meant to show Aboriginal habits as the antithesis of European morality; drunken women, violent husbands and neglected children. Faces are mere caricatures with no attempt at individuality. Indeed, the figures here were repeated from earlier images, not taken from life. They reappear in *Scene in the streets of Sydney* (below). But the child with the distended stomach derives from a Rodius print, *Uncle's intended*, and that in turn was taken from an aquatint by Augustus Earle, *Natives of N.S.Wales. As seen on the streets of Sydney*, drawn in the mid-1820s and published in London in 1830. This child recurs in similar cheap prints—and even advertisements—throughout the 1840s, having become an easily identifiable symbol of degradation.

Unknown artist, *Scene in the streets of Sydney*, lithograph, 1830s.  
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The lithograph King Teapot and his two gins, Chief of the Bogen Tribe of N.S.Wales as he appeared after having a tightner, 1833, by Thomas Balcombe, is one of the few prints of the genre to survive.

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Below. John Carmichael, Male and female black natives, etching from J. Maclehoze, Picture of Sydney and stranger's guide in New South Wales, Sydney 1839.

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*A married couple, walking by the sea, stop to watch children gathering shellfish and other waterfront activities in the emerging harbour of Port Adelaide. Watercolour by S.T. Gill, c1845.*

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