



Myall Creek Massacre and Memorial Site

NEW SOUTH WALES

The massacre of approximately 30 Wirrayaraay people at Myall Creek, and the subsequent court cases resulting in the hanging of the seven settlers for their role in the massacre, became a pivotal moment in the development of the relationship between European settlers and Aboriginal people.

Following the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 a pattern of relations developed between Aboriginal people and European settlers that would last for more than a century. Despite instructions from the British Colonial Office to treat Aboriginal people with goodwill and kindness, competition for land and resources following European expansion inevitably resulted in frontier conflict.

In response to the intensifying conflict, the Colonial Administration ordered settlers to defend themselves and ordered Aboriginal people to stay away from European habitation. Aboriginal people were increasingly viewed as a serious threat to settlers.

The massacre at Myall Creek on the 10 June 1838 was the culmination of a series of conflicts between settlers and Aboriginal people in the Liverpool Plains region. Twelve men, including freed and assigned convicts, had spent a day unsuccessfully pursuing Aboriginal people. They came to Myall Creek station where they discovered a group of Wirrayaraay, whom they rounded up, tied together, led off and massacred. Two days later the men responsible for the massacre returned to the scene of the crime to burn the bodies.

The Myall Creek massacre was marked by a series of unusual circumstances for the time. The massacre was reported to authorities by one of the station hands and the Governor assigned a police magistrate to investigate the reports.

Eleven of the 12 settlers involved in the massacre were charged with the murders but were found not guilty. Seven of the men were re-arrested and tried again, found guilty and sentenced to death. The hanging of the seven European settlers on 18 December 1838 caused controversy throughout the colony.

The Myall Creek massacre was the first and last attempt by the colonial administration to use the law to control frontier conflict between settlers and Aboriginal people.



It was the last time that the laws of the colony were applied equally to Aboriginal people and settlers involved in frontier killings.

The descendants of the Wirrayaraay people massacred at Myall Creek, and other Aboriginal people who visit the place, continue to have a strong association with the area. The Memorial Site helps unite descendants of those who were murdered and descendants of those who carried out the massacre in an act of personal reconciliation. Each year several hundred people gather from across Australia to attend the service and commemorate those who were killed.

The bronze Memorial plaque reads:

In memory of the Wirrayaraay people who were murdered on the slopes of this ridge in an unprovoked but premeditated act in the late afternoon of 10 June 1838. Erected on 10 June 2000 by a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in an act of reconciliation, and in acknowledgment of the truth of our shared history. We Remember them (Ngiyani winangay ganunga).

National Heritage List: 7 June 2008

