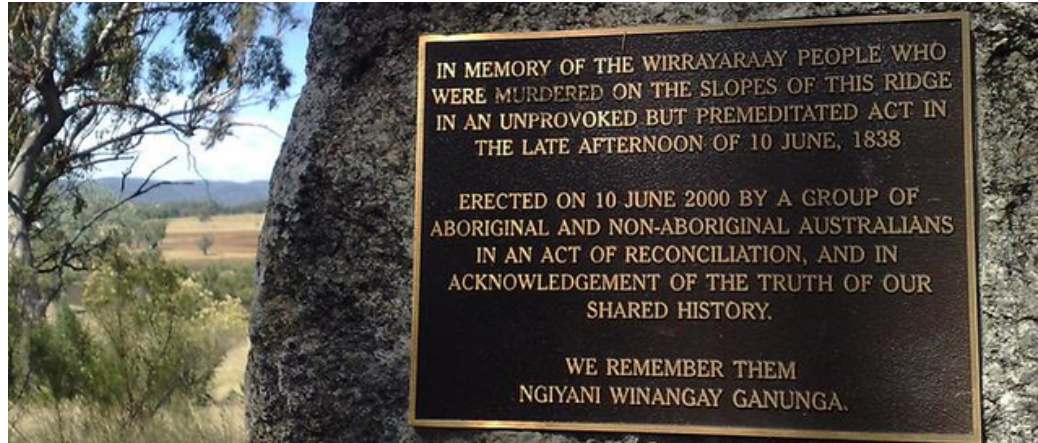


# Myall Creek Massacre

## Secondary History activity

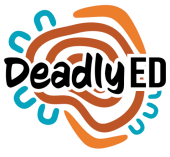
10 June, 1838



Myall Creek Massacre Memorial plaque

By the 1830s, violence on the Frontier was rife. As the colony expanded, First Nations peoples were becoming increasingly dispossessed from their homelands. The landscape of Country changed. Trees were cleared, sacred sites were destroyed, and food sources were impacted as fences were erected and sheep and cattle trampled the earth and contaminated waterholes. Violence was quick to escalate as the colonisers waged war on First Nations peoples. Yet those Europeans who fought against First Nations peoples merely saw their actions as a way of protecting and upholding the interests of the colony, with the murder of First Nations peoples by colonists, stockmen and convicts was widely accepted. In 1837, Acting Governor Kenneth Snodgrass authorised permission to Major James Nunn, a policeman, to deal with the attacks from First Nations peoples by any means he considered appropriate. With this power, Nunn and a group of colonists committed several murders around New South Wales, including the massacre of Waterloo Creek in 1838, where more than 50 First Nations people were killed.

First Nations peoples fought back against the colonisers and settlers to protect their Country, with the effects of warfare devastating many nation groups. Frontier conflict had significantly reduced the population of the Gamilaraay peoples of New South Wales, so much so that a group of Wirrayaraay people escaping Frontier conflict had set up camp at Henry Dangar's Myall Creek Station where their work on the station was exchanged for safety. However, their safety was soon cut short as a desire for blood approached.



Inspired by the legal authorisation of Major Nunn's recent atrocities, 10 colonists led by John Fleming, rode to Myall Creek Station on June 10, 1838. Upon their arrival they found approximately 30 women, children and elderly, two First Nations men – Davy and Billy, and two stockmen tending to the station – George Anderson and Charles Kilmeister. Fleming's group forced the stockmen to choose sides; Kilmeister joined the colonists and Anderson did not resist the actions of Fleming's posse. Davy watched from afar as the colonists tied up the women, children and elderly, led them away from their camp, and forced them into a stockyard where they were slaughtered, dismembered and set alight. The remains of at least 28 corpses were later found at the site, but the final death toll was never confirmed.

Following the massacre at Myall Creek, the 11 murderers were summoned and put on trial at Sydney's Supreme Court. This would be the first time in Australian history that colonists would be put on trial for the murder of First Nations people. The first trial took place on 15 November, 1838. The case, which was represented by Attorney General John Plunkett, was complicated by the fact that the only eyewitness to the killings was Davy, a First Nations man. Given Davy's status as an Aboriginal man, he was unable to testify due to the fact that he was a non-Christian, meaning he could not swear to his evidence. The jury took just under 20-minutes to acquit the men, but Plunkett immediately remanded the men and progressed by laying further charges. Plunkett put seven of the 11 men on trial again in hope that the other four men would testify against them. On 29 November 1838, seven men were tried by a new judge, William Burton, who found all of them guilty and sentenced them to a public execution. The remaining men would later be released on bail.

Even though seven of the 11 murderers were hanged, the killing of First Nations peoples continued, and Myall Creek would not be the last massacre in Australian history. And despite a warrant for his arrest, Fleming never faced trial or the repercussions for his decision to murder First Nations people in cold blood.



## **Learning Activities –**

### **Yarning about the Myall Creek Massacre:**

1. Have you heard of the concept 'truth-telling'? What is truth-telling? You can find more information about truth-telling [here](#).
2. Why is learning about the Myall Creek Massacre important in the process of truth-telling?

### **Discussing Country:**

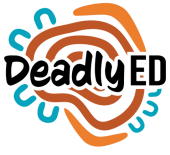
1. Using Google Maps, locate where the Myall Creek Station Memorial Site is.
2. Using the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia find whose land the Myall Creek Station Memorial Site is on.

### **Sequencing history:**

1. Create a timeline of events of the Myall Creek Massacre.

### **Thinking critically about the Myall Creek Massacre:**

1. Outline why the actions of Fleming's posse were premeditated.
2. Write a response explaining why all Australians should know about the Myall Creek Massacre.



**Teacher notes:**

This lesson contains information that may be distressing to First Nations peoples. Prior to using this resource in your teaching and learning review SBS' [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols Guide – for Teachers](#). Teachers should advise their class of the sensitive nature of the information prior to beginning the lesson.

**Australian Curriculum links:**

- the causes and effects of European contact and extension of settlement, including their impact on the First Nations Peoples of Australia (AC9HH9K03)
- the causes of First Nations Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations (AC9HH10K09)