

Another Gippsland Massacre - Hollands Landing?

By P.D. Gardner

‘Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk’
Henry David Thoreau

Some time ago I received an intriguing folk account of a possible massacre at Hollands Landing from Ray Scott of Sale. I have been aware for a long time that there were possible massacres in this district from the comments of "Bushman" who, whilst writing on the general frontier conflict and specifically on the Butchers Creek massacre, stated that "much of what befell at Roseneath, Hollands Landing and the western end of Lake Victoria is lost history..."[1] Ray Scott's account is as follows:

"The story he told to me as a kid as my grandfather is now long gone. The district squatters and their men on horse back drove the H(ollands) L(anding) blacks to the mouth of the straits northern side. A trading boat lay offshore with a cannon, when the blacks congregated on the point they were fired on. Many years later when my grandfather came to H.L. a few blacks, survivors of the massacre, were camped on a small rise at H.L. in a clearing amongst tall tea tree, where years later grandfather built his house which still stands. I was told the names of these blacks but can remember only one. 'Hoppy Lil' who was shot in the leg but swam the straits with a broken leg to safety. I was told the 'massacre survivors' were buried on Joe Hyens Hill H.L."[2]

This story, and specifically the mention of the involvement of a boat and a cannon, sent me scurrying for my Dunderdale.[3] Dunderdale recounts in detail the story of the McMillan boat trip that occurred almost certainly between June 1842 and June 1843. Dunderdale's source was Davy Fermaner, who, as a mariner, had rigged the sails of the boats and was a member of the trip. Others were as follows: Angus McMillan, who either owned or had the boats at Bushy Park; John McLennan overseer of The Heart run; one of the Loughnan brothers of the Lindenow run; William Pearson squatter of Kilmany Park; John Reeve squatter of Snake Ridge; Captain Orr of Orr's Survey near Port Albert; R.B. Sheridan, overseer for William Odell Raymond of Strathfieldsaye and Stratford stations. [4] A number of features were named after members on this trip, or those associated with it. Examples include McLennans Strait, McMillan Strait and Raymond Island. Dunderdale notes on the return trip that: "The boats then sailed away with a nice easterly breeze, and in McLennan's Straits hundreds of blackfellows were seen up in the trees shouting and shaking their spears: but the boats were kept away in mid-stream, out of reach of the weapons."[5] This event occurred very close to the location of the Hollands Landing massacre specifically identified by Ray Scott at Medusa Point. (see Maps below)

Thus there were definitely boats, albeit small, on the lakes at the possible time of this massacre, in late 1842, early 1843. The details of these boats are unavailable but they may have been from the wreck of the SS Clonmel and carried overland from Port Albert by bullock dray or built on McMillan's station as Dunderdale implies.[6] The two

cannon from the wreck of the Clonmel were both held in properties adjacent to Lake Wellington at this time; at Glencoe station (south of present day Sale) and at Strathfieldsaye. The latter was there for protection from attacks by Aborigines but was supposedly either never fired in anger or fired but never loaded with projectiles. It is most likely that the Strathfieldsaye cannon was the one used, implicating Odell Raymond in the massacres. This cannon is held today in the Port Albert Maritime Museum sitting in a new timber carriage.



Clonmel Cannon Port Albert Museum

<http://yarrampa.customer.netspace.net.au/pamm.html>

With regards who actually claimed this area a glance at Billis & Kenyon tells us that the Roseneath station was not taken up by B.A. Cunninghame until 1845. Prior to 1844 this area was on the eastern periphery of Strathfieldsaye station and on the extreme south west of the Lindenow and Emuvale runs. Of the latter runs both were controlled by one, or some combination of, the following individuals - J.M. Loughnan, H.N. Loughnan and Frederick Taylor. Emuvale, midway between Lindenow and Lake Victoria was 'officially' controlled from 1844-1857, whilst Lindenow was controlled from August 1842 to 1850. The Deighton No. 2 run on the shores of Lake Victoria was not taken up by Thomas Blackburn until 1844.[7]

There were a number of connections between Loughnan and Taylor of the Lindenow run and Odell Raymond of the Strathfieldsaye run. It is of note that Odell Raymond and Loughnan and Taylor brought their flocks from the Monaro into Gippsland together along with Frederick Jones of Lucknow, and thus were travelling associates before becoming neighbours. Henry Loughnan and Frederick Taylor had met in India and probably were previously involved in some business ventures in the Western District.[8] It was at the latter location that George Augustus Robinson, Protector of Aborigines, stridently asserted that Taylor had been involved in atrocities against the local tribes.

Robinson noted that Taylor was "notorious for killing natives" and a "nefarious individual" who thought it opportune to "abscond" after "the last transaction which was of such an atrocious nature". [9] On this account the affairs of Fred Taylor were examined in detail in Phillip Pepper's *The Kurnai of Gippsland* (Hyland House, Melbourne, 1985) but no specific charges in relation to the Kurnai were made against him.[10] Pepper noted the conflict between C.J. Tyers and Frederick Taylor over the latter holding a crown licence, or managing any such property, in 1844. By 1845 however Taylor was part licence holder, with the Loughnan brothers of the Lindenow run, and he appears to have easily avoided the perils of the law and the bureaucracy. However the work of Pepper has firmly established that Taylor had a reputation, which extended from Robinson to C.J. Tyers, for "killing natives" .

In a well researched article entitled "In Pursuit of Frederick Taylor" published in The Black Sheep No. 69 Florance Charles noted three specific charges of Taylor's violent actions against the Aborigines. The first was the murder of an Aborigine named Curracoine. On 17 October 1836 this native was taken prisoner by Taylor near present day Geelong. The native was then murdered by assigned servant John Whitehead during Taylor's absence and he was then charged with the murder. Taylor was placed on a fifty pound bond as witness. Nevertheless he failed to appear at the trial and Whitehead was acquitted. Captain William Lonsdale wrote of witness Taylor: "I had some difficulty in getting him to make anything like a statement, and entertained a strong suspicion that he had given strong encouragement to the prisoner to commit the murder and pending the time I was waiting to get another witness, he left the district clandestinely, I believe to Van Diemen's Land." (11) Secondly Charles notes on 12.11.1839 that "Taylor and Lloyd are mentioned as having shot a member of the Gulidjan tribe near Lake Colac". (12) Thirdly, and most importantly, that Taylor "sometime in late 1839, is reputed to have led his shepherds and some of his neighbours in the massacre of about 35 sleeping aborigines in a gully off Mount Emu Creek...now known as Murdering Gully.."(13) Finally general evidence is offered in "Gray's Reminiscences": "I went out kangaroo shooting one day...and riding over the run I came upon the scene of one of the numerous conflicts Fred Taylor was said to have had with the natives, who are numerous and daring in this district."(14) After the Murdering Gully affair Taylor again went to Van Diemens Land and then to India.

In chapter 11 of my *Through Foreign Eyes* (15) I outlined a number of different types of 'evidence' supporting the general massacre 'thesis'. Of these two are relevant to this essay; the murder-retaliation scenario and the layout of the massacre site. With regards the latter criterion the Hollands Landing location fits my thesis of a likely massacre site: that it was a feature up against which the Aborigines could be driven and trapped.(see map) With regards the former thesis where large scale retaliation followed the murder of Europeans the Hollands Landing massacre was possibly one of a number of retaliations following the murder by Aborigines of two shepherds on the Lindenow Run. Beyond the brief report in the Port Phillip Patriot where one of the shepherds was dead and the other seriously wounded there is little detail of this event.[16]

Thus the details of the folk account of the Hollands Landing massacre certainly fit with circumstances of the time. It appears that following the first murder of the Lindenow shepherd an organised and co-ordinated drive by the owners of the Lindenow and Strathfieldesaye stations, and possibly others, took place. The numbers involved were limited as the participant's 'security' was very tight and no specific stories from any of the participants appear to have 'leaked out' about this event. The event most likely

occurred in late 1842 and involved a boat with one of the Clonmel cannon mounted in its bow, and was probably manned by men from the Strathfieldsaye run. And those driving across the land, on the west from Strathfieldsaye and the north and east from Lindenow, no doubt were directed by the 'notorious' Frederick Taylor.

It is most likely that a number of massacres occurred around the Gippsland Lakes in the period 1840-1850 especially during the early part of the decade. Only one of them - Boney Point - is substantially documented. The others, including Hollands Landing, The Heart, Lakes Entrance, Boole Boole and Boomerang Point are, aside from a mention in the Tyers diary about Boole Boole, supported only by a few words of folk history. The amount of detail provided in the Scott account is unusual. However these names, and others we have never heard of, are of places at which events of brutality and savagery otherwise unknown in our history occurred. The Tatungalung tribe formerly occupied all the lands surrounding the Gippsland Lakes and in 1840 they conservatively numbered at least 500 people.[17] By 1855 when the last "battle of the clans" was occurring, they numbered just a handful of adults and boys.[18]

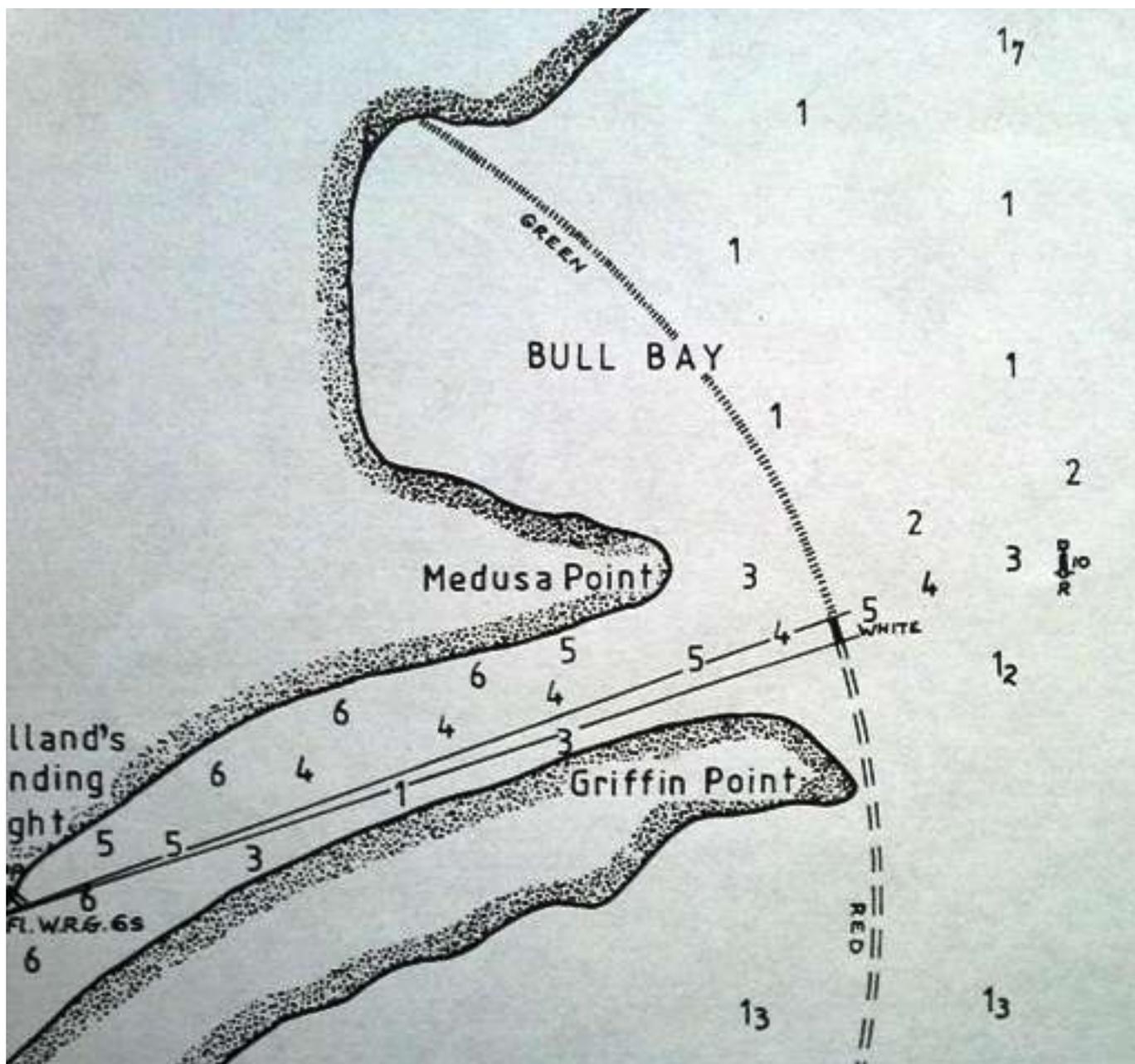
Postscript This article was originally written and accepted for publication by the Gippsland Heritage Journal in 2008.

Notes

1. Gardner, P.D. *Our Founding Murdering Father*, The Author, Ensay 1988 p. 38
2. pers. comm. from Ray Scott. He possibly meant 'massacre victims' in the last sentence.
3. Dunderdale, George. *Book of the Bush*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1973
4. *ibid.* p.280. Sheridan appears to have had the same Christian names as the dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan [1751-1816] and may have been a direct descendant
5. *ibid.* p.283. It would seem that substantial environmental changes have occurred at this site. For example the trees today appear to be much smaller than that described in this quote.
6. There were at least two quarter-boats from the wreck of the Clonmel at Port Albert. What happened to them is not known.
7. Billis & Kenyon. *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Stockdale Press, Melbourne, 1974. It is interesting to note that Judy Richardson and Margaret Treasure in their *History of Lindenow and District*, Lindenow Primary School Press, Lindenow 1992 claim that the Loughnans and Taylor were either agents, or employees, of John Davison Smith "previously of India". The Smiths commenced legal action against the Lindenow squatters and eventually took over the run in 1850. This has been confirmed by Charles' article below.
8. *ibid.* Billis & Kenyon have Henry Loughnan in partnership with Lewis Innes Lynch at Green Hills, Hamilton and Port Fairy 1840-1844 (p.98) but inexplicably have no details of the pastoral pursuits at any of these locations. Likewise Frederick Taylor is listed as being in Port Fairy in 1839.
9. quoted in Pepper, P. *The Kurnai of Gippsland* Hyland House, Melbourne, 1985 p.37
10. On this matter I was originally, and perhaps unfairly, quite critical. See my review "The Black Sesquicentennial" in *The Age Monthly Review* Dec.85
11. Charles, Florance. "In Pursuit of Frederick Taylor" published in *The Black Sheep* (Journal of the East Gippsland Family History Group) No. 69, pp.6-9
12. *ibid*
13. *ibid*
14. *ibid.* Unfortunately Gray gives no indication of what he had observed that led him to this conclusion.

15. Gardner, P.D. *Through Foreign Eyes*, CGS, Churchill, 1988
16. Port Phillip Patriot Sept 1842. The latter shepherd appears to have eventually succumbed to his wounds.
17. A number of sources suggest that the pre-European Aboriginal population around the lakes was in the thousands, including C.J. Tyers.
18. Bundawal, a Tatungalung, was A.W. Howitt's main source of information on these events. The lack of warriors was one of the reasons that forced Tatungalung like Bundawal into joining with other Kurnai and brajerak in a most unusual alliance. Elsewhere Howitt in Howitt & Fison *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra 1991 pp.181-2 gives the numbers of the Tatungalung as the second highest number of adults amongst the Kurnai in 1879. Since we have no idea of the age spread of these individuals and the numbers compared are more than 20 years apart it is possible that this is not a contradictory statistic.

MAPS



Map 1 Massacre Site at Medusa Point (from Richard Hawkins *Creeks and Harbours of the Gippsland Lakes* 1984)

<http://www.lawlingpress.com.au/Lakes.html>



Map 2 Early Squatting Runs (from Meredith Fletcher *Avon to the Alps*,)