

Notes on Massacres (2020)

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Introduction

My writing of history is now mostly 'reactive'. I have no time for conducting original research or even for rechecking sources. This year I have written one long essay in response to the publication of the McMillan photograph in Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*. This essay has been published in the December issue of the Victorian Historical Journal and, almost certainly, will be the last I will write or submit for peer review. Below are two responses to criticisms of my work that arose during the Wellington Shire debate about the removal of the McMillan cairns, the first to a brief criticism by Sale historian Peter Synan and the other to the Wellington Shire Heritage Network. The latter was published in the Gippsland Times on 30.6.20. Two further brief pieces provoked by the cairns/memorials debate – on the reasons for McMillan's popularity and the 'possible' identity of those in the 'Highland Brigade' - may be published next year. I must emphasize again that my study is primarily of the Kurnai and frontier conflict and that I rely heavily on Howitt for anthropological detail. I cannot give references for much of this without a whole lot of work which I am now unable to do.



The Author at the McMillan Cairn in Swifts Creek 1988 (photo Howard Reddish)

A Reply to Peter Synan on McMillan, the Cairns and the Black War (June 2020)

Recently with the world wide ‘black lives matter’ movement demonstrations, and the proposal to remove two of the memorial cairns dedicated to Angus McMillan in the Wellington Shire, the conflation, and confusion, of regional history and politics has gone into overdrive. The motion to remove two of the cairns located on Shire property failed 5 to 4 and on the following morning I did a brief interview on ABC radio with the stipulation that I discuss history only and not the politics.

About this time I received a copy of a polemic on the controversy by Sale historian Peter Synan that was doing the rounds of the social media. Whilst it is self-evident that the anti-cairn proponents are using some of my studies to support their arguments they are also using those of a number of others including Don Watson [1], whom Synan mentions, and Phillip Pepper, whom he does not. In between his opening and closing paragraphs on the cairns and their importance, Synan attempts to revise the currently accepted historical interpretations of the Gippsland frontier. What follows are my comments and criticisms on Synan’s brief essay and his words are all in quotation marks and italics unless otherwise stated.

The two page essay with brief end notes is entitled “*Revisiting the ‘Black War’ in Frontier Gippsland from ‘Heritage and History’ by Peter Synan. Unpublished manuscript, 2020*”. It was forwarded to me by a friend in a pdf of jpg images. My publication of 30 years ago about Angus McMillan, and its provocative title, appears to be one of the main targets of the paper. The first paragraph has a brief description of the monument origins, and who was involved, ending with their unveiling by the Governor in 1927 [2].

“The McMillan name and the McMillan cairns in Gippsland have been subjected to a revisionist assessment... based on the probings...” presumably by Watson, Flynn [3], and myself. I dislike the term ‘revisionist’ and it is not clear whether Synan is referring to my work, and that of Watson and Pepper, or the current political protagonists. I refute this if he is referring to my work of the 1980s. Clearly the term has at least two connotations – that of recent application and that material before it is being revised. Under this definition none of my work can be classified as ‘revisionist’; *Gippsland Massacres* was the first time anyone had looked at the frontier conflict in Gippsland in detail and was therefore new. *Through Foreign Eyes* examined the local Aboriginal tribes through European journals and diaries and likewise was something never done before. It is only with *Our Founding Murdering Father* – a title which Synan clearly, if belatedly, objects to – that there is some revision of local history, in particular with the so-called ‘discovery debate’. However I have stated clearly and on a number of occasions that this work was the negative case in an unofficial debate with McMillan’s biographer Kenneth Cox, and state clearly why the provocative title was chosen [4]. Rather than revise Gippsland history I turned it on its head.

As a result of our ‘probings’ *“it has been firmly established that Gippsland had its own skirmishes and massacres, and that Angus McMillan was involved.”* I agree, but use of the term ‘skirmishes’ plays down the importance of these events. It is also a term McMillan used. Synan then relates why the affairs were kept secret and noted the arrival of the law in the

person of CJ Tyers in 1844. Again I have commented on the secrecy in *Gippsland Massacres* and have a chapter on Tyers in *Through Foreign Eyes*. Peter continues to use the slightly insulting term ‘probings’ to describe the historical endeavour of others. One wonders whether he would approve of the application of this to his own scholarship.

“Yet one should resist an emotively driven demolition of McMillan’s reputation based on these probings alone. To denounce him as a ‘murderer’ or ‘butcher of gippsland’ is to misunderstand the times, to fail to acknowledge the dearth of primary evidence or worse still, to be selective of it, to underplay his formidable achievement as an overlander and trailblazer, and to ignore his later sympathetic interest in Aboriginal welfare.” Again it is unclear whether Synan is targeting the politicians or the historians. ‘Probings’ again. The second sentence is definitely directed at me most of which I have already answered in *Our Founding Murdering Father* or here [5]. I hope to write another essay to look at the terminology involved in this and other aspects of frontier conflict, but suffice to say at least two of the main massacre sites in Gippsland have macabre and ambiguous names – Butchers Creek and the Slaughterhouse. With regards the term ‘murder’ how does one describe the shooting deaths of unarmed old people, women and children? Even in events labelled ‘war’ there is no excuse [6]. The failure to understand the times is surely Synan’s error since he is concerned primarily with the dominant ‘European invasion’ perspective only, whilst I was, and still am, clearly interested in the Aboriginal side of our history. My early work was for a very good reason - that it was stating something that had not been said before. I will deal with ‘primary evidence’ in detail below. But much of the rest of McMillan’s career that Synan claims as ‘formidable achievement’ is debatable at best, and which I have explored in some detail in *Our Founding Murdering Father*.

Synan’s next sentence is a general statement about frontier conflict and the undeclared black war with the usual ‘emotive’ qualifier. Most of us would agree with this, at least in part, and that for the most of the time it was a *“fiendishly one sided clash”*. Of course it is far more complicated than that. For a very short time, and in different locations, the overwhelming numbers of the Kurnai made the clash more equal, but weaponry superiority and mobility and a series of massacres quickly changed this (7). Then the massed attacks and confrontations were replaced by ‘stealth’ and a form of guerrilla war which continued, in some locations, for years. Again I have written about this several times before. One wonders again who the ‘emotive’ qualifier applies to in all this - 80s historians, the politicians, or recent commentators like Flynn.

“Angus McMillan is seriously implicated in the black wars though a good deal of the evidence is tenuous and of a balance-of-probabilities kind. Compelling is the writing of Caroline Dexter, quoted by Gippsland historian Patrick Morgan in his biography of the Dexters, a bohemian couple who were neighbours of McMillan at Bushy Park.” I will attempt to answer Synan’s example of ‘tenuous’ evidence here and below. He has already acknowledged the secrecy surrounding these events and thus it follows that the evidence will mainly be secondary and circumstantial. With regards the evidence of Caroline Dexter I have already dealt with this twice before, more recently in reply to Peter Crowley’s review of the Cal Flynn book (8). Dexter’s evidence is neither ‘primary’ nor ‘compelling’ but still is

generally supportive of the black war thesis. There is no evidence that Dexter's information came from McMillan. Synan appears to have chosen the Dexter evidence to downplay other, so-called 'tenuous' accounts, which as I have noted, it does not.

"Yet in the rush to condemn McMillan some inconvenient evidence is ignored" and then continues with the next four or five paragraphs on the Warrigal Creek massacre.

"The often stated and even dramatized assertion that McMillan formed and led the Highland Brigade at Warrigal Creek in 1843 seems to lack historical credibility and prima facie probably fits more into the realm of McMillan scapegoating." (9) Synan's criticism of ignoring evidence could well be applied to his own work. Here he mentions the 'Highland Brigade' as the retaliatory vehicle at Warrigal Creek but makes no mention as to where this came from – the 1925 Gap article by 'Gippslander' – and does not mention this is one of the two main sources on Warrigal Creek. As well, as far as I am aware, none of the 80s historians ignored Dunderdale's account, and I used his account in my first essay in 1980 (10). As for McMillan leading the Highland Brigade I definitely stated this in my original essay, but qualified it 10 years later when I said there was some doubt about as to who led the Brigade but narrowed it down to either McMillan or one of the Macalisters resident at the time and noted that there is equally no proof of the leadership by Lachlan Macalister, or even of his residence in Gippsland at this time.

"At Warrigal Creek in 1843 some 50 or more Aboriginal people were indiscriminately massacred in retaliation for the killing of Ronald Macalister. This I think, is the single worst atrocity in the black wars in frontier Gippsland." Synan accepts the 'black war' and the Warrigal Creek massacre but then goes on to offer one of the lowest estimate of casualties I have seen for this event which range from 30 to 500. Synan even plumps for a lower estimate than his favoured source of Dunderdale who opts for 60 and does not consider Gippslander's estimate of 100 to 150. If this is the 'single worst atrocity' in Gippsland with only 50 casualties how does Synan reconcile this with Henry Meyrick's estimate in 1846 that not less than 450 had been killed [11]? Meyrick is a primary source that Synan failed to mention. And the only specific massacre location that Meyrick identified to assistant protector William Thomas was Warrigal Creek.

"Ronald Macalister was not a nobody". I don't know anyone who disputes this. Synan then goes on to give the Dunderdale account of the retaliatory vehicle being led by Lachlan Macalister. I have long doubted this as the earliest evidence I could find of Lachlan Macalister being resident in Gippsland was 1847. Also there was some doubt as to whether this was 'the' Lachlan Macalister. John Wilson had him as only an occasional visitor to the region [12]. More recently Peter Crowley has advanced the date of Lachlan's presence in Gippsland but not as far back as 1843.

Synan then goes on to elaborate on Dunderdale's sources, with the author arriving in Gippsland in 1869 and suggests his information came from one of the colonists present at the massacre. This is possible but Dunderdale's main source was Davy Fermaner as I have outlined elsewhere [13]. When Dunderdale arrived in Gippsland the other main Warrigal

Creek source 'Gippslander', or William Hoddinott, was 10 or 11 years old. Hoddinott was born on the Sunville run, adjacent to Warrigal Creek, and two of his sources were Aboriginal survivors of the massacre. No doubt he also had some European sources as well as he was able to identify the 'Highland Brigade' and make other observations available only to them. Unlike Dunderdale there is no evidence that Gippslander changed any details of his accounts, places, names etc. However there is no doubt there was some peer group pressure on him – hence the anonymous Gippslander – and his account had to pass the inspection and polishing of an editor [14]. Even so, Gippslander's account managed to mention McMillan twice – the only European identified in his account. However he did not state that McMillan led the Highland Brigade but only that McMillan recovered Macalister's horse that had bolted after his murder, indicating that he was very close by, unlike what we can find about Lachlan Macalister. I have a personal preference for the 'Gippslander' account suggesting that McMillan was the leader of the 'Highland Brigade' and that his account is complemented by that of Dunderdale.

The next paragraph admits McMillan was prominent in the black war but calls into doubt his leadership obviously referring to Warrigal Creek. But as I have pointed out a number of times McMillan was the leader and overseer for Macalister in the very early ventures into Gippsland in 1840-41 when at least 3 massacres were carried out – Boney Point, Butchers Creek and possibly Maffra. It is equally as possible that the latter site was identified by McMillan himself in conversation with Richard Mackay. If McMillan's claims to leadership and 'discovery' are true then surely he is also the leader in these early events.

"To describe a participant such as McMillan as a 'murderer' misses the point." Same argument as above. Plus the fact that if he was the leader then he was also an initiator.

"For generations past in Gippsland, McMillan has been remembered as a hero, in names and monuments [15]. These were times when little if anything was known about the 'black wars'". Precisely, before the publication of *Gippsland Massacres, Caledonia Australis* and *The Kurnai of Gippsland* in the mid 1980s.

The last few paragraphs deal with the politics, reconciliation, and the cairns on which I will pass. From my reading of this short piece both Synan's politics and history lies with the status quo.

With regards the importance of sources and priority in relation to the Warrigal Creek massacre I rate them as follows – Gippslander first, then Meyrick, and then Dunderdale. Caroline Dexter's is well down the list with a number of other secondary accounts. With regards the numbers killed at Warrigal Creek the same question asked of Synan above can also be asked of a number of academics who tend to offer very conservative fatality statistics for Warrigal Creek and Gippsland. Richard Broome in his history of Victorian Aboriginals suggests 'perhaps sixty' as being the numbers killed at Warrigal Creek [16]. Elsewhere I suggest that it is perhaps inevitable that academic casualty estimates would be low. In Broome's case he is to be congratulated as the first to make such an attempt at such estimates. Bain Attwood stated many years ago that his preference was for large numbers to be killed in

small groups of 2 or 3 [17]. There is little evidence to support this, although undoubtedly these small affairs did occur. The problem remains for Attwood, Broome and locally for Synan and others, to reconcile their estimates with the primary evidence of Henry Meyrick.

To demand primary evidence and to downplay the fatality numbers is approaching very close to the discredited Windschuttle thesis – if there is no primary evidence then these events did not occur. In such an absurd situation very little history could be written. Offering ‘alternative’ sources such as Dexter is also a distraction. Evidence of this kind is not ‘alternative’ but rather additional to the general body of evidence on the black wars. This ‘body of evidence’ is now overwhelming.

Finally there is no mention of Henry Reynolds in Synan’s piece. In his autobiography *Why Weren’t We Told* (1999) Reynolds posed the thesis that the frontier conflict across Australia was either ‘murder or war’ (18). Reynolds asked "How, then, do we deal with the Aboriginal dead?" and answered his rhetorical question as follows:

“If the Aborigines are to enter our history 'on the terms of most perfect equality', as Thomas Mitchell termed it, they will bring their dead with them and expect an honoured burial. So our embarrassment is compounded. Do we give up our cherished ceremonies or do we make room for the Aboriginal dead on our memorials, cenotaphs, boards of honour and even in the pantheon of national heroes? If we are to continue to celebrate the sacrifice of men and women who died for their country can we deny the admission to fallen tribesmen?" [19]

In this instance Reynolds was discussing war memorials but this could equally be applied to the McMillan cairns. My reply to Synan (and Reynolds) on the ‘murder or war’ question is that for Gippsland at least, the terms are not mutually exclusive, and that there were examples of both! Synan’s essay is itself an imperfect exercise in revision.

Notes

1. For something more like the full body of evidence see the following: Gardner, P.D. *Gippsland Massacres*, Warragul Education Centre, Warragul 1983; Gardner, P.D. *Through Foreign Eyes*, Centre for Gippsland Studies, Churchill, 1988; Gardner, P.D. *Our Founding Murdering Father*, the Author, Ensay, 1988; Watson, Don. *Caledonia Australis*, Collins, Sydney, 1985; Pepper, Philip with Tess De Araugo. *The Kurnai of Gippsland*, Hyland House, Melbourne 1985; since 2012 I have added a further 22 essays on local Aboriginal history to my website many of them relevant to the massacres and the black war.
2. As an interesting aside to this there is a claim by Hazel Atkins that the idea for the cairns being built along the McMillan route originally came from a small group of schoolgirls in Ensay State School. This story was told to me by Hazel, then an elderly woman, in the Latrobe Library in the 1970s. Historian Os Green was also present. Hazel’s claim has been verified in the 1920 issue of *The Gap* magazine. The 1927 issue mentioned that the original idea was from ‘Tissie Fraser’ and that Hazel Atkins provided a sketch of a cairn. As Peter Synan says Charles Daley was a major promoter of the cairns following the ‘exploration’ route and local committees sprang up everywhere to finance and erect them.
3. Flynn, Cal. *Thicker than Water*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2016
4. I state the circumstances surrounding the initial publication and choice of title of my McMillan book here <http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Our-Founding-Murdering-Father-Revisited-2016.pdf>
5. Ibid
6. The following is a brutal example of ‘murder’ during wartime. “The Mỹ Lai Massacre was the Vietnam War mass murder of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians by U.S. troops in Sơn Tịnh District, South Vietnam, on 16 March 1968. Between 347 and 504 unarmed people were killed by U.S. Army soldiers

- from Company C... Victims included men, women, children, and infants. Some of the women were gang-raped and their bodies mutilated, as were children as young as 12. Twenty-six soldiers were charged with criminal offenses, but only Lieutenant William Calley Jr., a platoon leader in C Company, was convicted. Found guilty of killing 22 villagers, he was originally given a life sentence, but served only three and a half years under house arrest.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Lai_Massacre
7. See here for more on the devastating effect of weapons on the frontier <http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Firearms-and-Frontier-Gippsland.pdf>
 8. http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Notes-on-a-McMillan-Review-rev.ed_.pdf
 9. The earliest account I can find of McMillan leading the ‘Highland Brigade’ is in an article generally supportive of McMillan in the 1964 Gap magazine by F.T. Midlin called ‘Angus McMillan Pathfinder’. Midlin wrote: “To avenge the murder of Macalister the white settlers were rallied and twenty well-mounted, well-armed men rode with McMillan on the trail of the natives. The blacks were surprised in their camp on the banks of Warrigal Creek by the members of ‘McMillan’s Highland Brigade’. Within a few minutes 150 of the aborigines were shot.”
 10. My first Warrigal Creek essay was published in the R.A.H.S. Journal (66:1:1980) and later included as a chapter in *Gippsland Massacres*.
 11. There is a chapter on Henry Meyrick in *Through Foreign Eyes*.
 12. John Wilson in his *Official History of the Avon Shire 1840-1900*, Shire Hall, Stratford, 1951 spoke of the ‘bogie of the cairns’ indicating that there are many errors in the inscriptions or locations of these monuments.
 13. <http://petergardner.info/publications/george-dunderdale-and-the-kurnai/>
 14. Gippslander of Bairnsdale chose to remain anonymous in his piece in The Gap of 1925, almost certainly because the McMillan ‘myth’ was in overdrive at the time, working up to the building of the memorial cairns and the publicity around their construction and unveiling in 1927. Even so he managed to mention McMillan twice in his short article, though not directly attributing leadership of the ‘Highland Brigade’ at Warrigal Creek to him. The editor of The Gap was A.R. Ramsay of Bruthen and it quite probable that he came by the Gippslander account via W.F. Wannon of Bairnsdale High School who was on The Gap committee of management. As well there was a supervising editor G.A. Osborne, then the District Inspector and a ‘McMillanophile’. With this in mind there is no way Gippslander’s account could have been accepted for publication if it had directly associated McMillan with the Warrigal Creek massacre. Under the circumstances it was quite brave of the editors to include it all. One is left to wonder whether there was much discussion about its inclusion and how heavily, if at all, it was edited. Gippslander’s identity is dealt with in *Our Founding Murdering Father*.
 15. I hope to do some further work on the reasons for McMillan’s popularity in Gippsland history – the peak of period with “McMillan as local hero” is about 80 years from 1920 to 2000.
 16. Broome, Richard. *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Melbourne, 2005 p.81 I look at Broome’s publication in this series of essays in some detail here http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Notes-on-Massacres-rev.ed_.pdf Also in this collection there is a detailed list of my own fatality estimates for Gippsland which I had forwarded to Broome about this time (c.2005).
 17. Account relayed to me of Attwood’s address to the Centre for Gippsland Studies around 1985. His estimate of total fatalities in Gippsland to Broome is also exceptionally low. See link in previous note.
 18. Reynolds, Henry. *Why Weren't We Told? a personal search for the truth about our history*, (Viking, Ringwood, 1999) p.172 See my brief comments on Reynolds done about 20 years ago here <http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Frontier-Violence-Political-Correctness-and-Memorials.pdf>
 19. Ibid

The McMillan Cairns Controversy



(image ABC)

(Published in Gippsland Times 30.6.20)

I wish to clarify some of the historical information regarding the current controversy surrounding the recent attempt in the Wellington Shire to remove two of the McMillan memorial cairns located on shire property. As the author of the provocatively titled *Our Founding Murdering Father* (1988) there has been a substantial amount of misinformed criticism, distortion, and selective quoting of my work, both in print and on the social media. This book was mainly looking at McMillan's life in relation to the Kurnai tribes, although it did have one chapter on the so-called 'discovery debate' in which the question was asked how someone can discover something that is already known.

But, in a chapter called "The Butcher of Gippsland" (another provocative title), about a quarter of the book document's McMillan's role in the frontier conflict in Gippsland. Published 30 years ago the work has received little criticism until recently, and much of that is of a political, partisan nature. The factual basis for the work remains sound. It should also be understood that this book is just part of a larger body of work on the frontier conflict in Gippsland published in the 1980s including my own *Gippsland Massacres* (1983) and *Through Foreign Eyes* (1988) and that of Don Watson's *Caledonia Australis* (1984) and Phillip Pepper's *The Kurnai of Gippsland* (1985). I have elaborated in some detail on my website on the circumstances and choice of title surrounding my McMillan book.

The Wellington Shire Heritage Network (WSHN) recently used my work to state that the evidence against McMillan is circumstantial and that there is no proof that he led any of the raids against the Kurnai. In *Gippsland Massacres* I noted that primary evidence was lacking for the frontier wars here (and for much of the rest of Australia) because the European occupation of Gippsland occurred just after the punishment by execution of those involved in the Myall Creek massacre.

Utmost secrecy was therefore imposed on the subsequent events in Gippsland. It follows that for these events there will only be circumstantial and secondary evidence. But to deny these events occurred because of the lack of primary evidence is basically the discredited Windschuttle thesis.

In many places I have stated quite clearly that for the period 1840 and 1841 McMillan and about a dozen identifiable associates were the only Europeans in Gippsland proper, and that they carried out at least 3 massacres against the Kurnai people – at Boney Point, Butchers Creek and possibly Maffra. If we accept McMillan's claims to leadership in his journals, and on which the cairns dotted across Gippsland are based, then we must also accept that McMillan led these affairs.

The WSHN then selectively quotes from my book about the question of whether McMillan was the leader of the Highland Brigade retaliation at Warrigal Creek, and 'cherry picks' a quote that it was 'just possible' McMillan may not have been in Gippsland at the time. But then in the same paragraph I add that this possible absence "was most unlikely". Nor did they mention my claim in my first Warrigal Creek essay that McMillan did lead the Warrigal Creek retaliation.

In re-reading some important material over the last week I have re-discovered that 'Gippslander', one of the main sources on the Warrigal Creek massacre, has McMillan recovering the bolted horse of the murdered Ronald Macalister, thus definitely locating him in Gippsland and very close at the time. (As an aside I may add in 1844 Aboriginal Protector George Robinson noted that the body of Macalister was unmarked and there was no evidence that the Kurnai had killed him.)

The circumstantial evidence against McMillan as leader of the Warrigal Creek retaliation mounts up. He is in Gippsland at the time and possibly nearby, he is the self-proclaimed leader of the Macalister group and European 'discoverer' of the region, he is a close associate of the dead man, the retaliation vehicle was one of Scottish ethnicity and he is clearly implicated in earlier events of a similar nature. I have stated on a number of occasions it is possible that one of the Macalisters led the retribution but, if so, McMillan was there as well, and on the whole, I favour McMillan as leader.

In statements about 'lack of proof' the primary evidence of Henry Meyrick is often forgotten. In 1846, less than 2 years after the Warrigal Creek massacre Meyrick wrote of the Kurnai that "no wild beast of the forest was ever hunted down with such perseverance as they. Men, women and children are shot whenever they can be met with." He added that at least 450 Kurnai had been killed to that date and when on a visit to assistant Aboriginal Protector William Thomas he specifically mentioned Warrigal Creek. One wonders if the shooting of unarmed women and children constitutes 'murder'.

The main source of the Warrigal Creek massacre 'Gippslander'*, who wrote in the 1925 Gap magazine, is also often neglected. 'Gippslander' wrote that after the death of Ronald Macalister that the: "brigade coming up to the blacks camped at the waterhole at Warrigal Creek surrounded them and fired into them, killing a great number...others jumped into the

waterhole, and, as fast as they put their heads up for breath, they were shot until the water was red with blood.” He notes that 100 to 150 were killed here and this estimate coincides closely with Meyrick’s estimate.

Whoever writes about this period in our history and casually dismisses much of it as ‘myth’ - the black war, Warrigal Creek and other massacres, the prominence of Angus McMillan and his probable leadership of that retaliation – is attempting to rewrite currently accepted history with little evidence or substance.

* Prior to this publication a letter by Wayne Caldow in the Gippsland Times (24.6) commenting on the ‘remove the cairns’ debate attacked ‘Gippslander’s’ account as “anonymous, unattributed and generic” - all untrue illustrating the shallowness of his research. If he had consulted *Our Founding Murdering Father* he would be aware that ‘Gippslander’ was William Hoddinott, that he was born on the Sunville Station adjoining the Warrigal Creek run a relatively short time after the event, and that he had obviously conversed with both European participants and Aboriginal survivors of the event. The details he provided were quite specific and by no measure can be classified as ‘generic’. See note 14 above as to why ‘Gippslander’ chose anonymity. Note also I have made no effort to respond to any of the other criticisms in the Gippsland Times Letters column.