

European impact

European explorers visited Tasmania during the 17th and 18th centuries and the British settled in the south of the island in 1803. Thus began the assault on the Aboriginal people of Tasmania.

Aboriginal society came under attack from two separate groups of Europeans: sealers and settlers. European sealers began working in Bass Strait in 1798 and they soon began to trade with the tribes of the north coast. Seal and kangaroo skins and women were exchanged for flour, tobacco, tea and dogs. Some gangs simply raided the tribes for women and killed the men who protected them. Through the loss of women and many deaths, the once 500-strong North East tribe numbered only 72 men and 6 women by 1830.

First contacts between the settlers of Hobart Town and the Aboriginal people were often friendly, however the two parties had very different expectations. The Aboriginal people may have thought this new small group could be accommodated if they were willing to trade and share some of their very interesting foods and 'things'. The colonists fully expected the Aboriginal people to 'move over'. They felt the Tasmanians had very little right to the land because they did not really occupy it 'effectively', which, in European terms would be by practicing agriculture. Settlers, ex-convicts, run-a-ways and bush-rangers moved into Aboriginal land, abducting children for forced labour, raping and torturing the women and shooting whole parties of Aboriginal people.



Above
The Black Line - a military operation of 1830 to round up the Aboriginal people in the settled districts

Top left
Woureddy (Thomas Bock, 1832-33)

Bottom left
Truganini (Thomas Bock, 1832-33)



Below
The Conciliation
(Benjamin Duterreau, 1840)
Between 1830 and 1834 George Augustus Robinson was paid by the Colonial Government to persuade Aboriginal Tasmanians to leave their country. They were to be banished forever.



Wybalenna and Oyster Cove

In 1834 one hundred and thirty five Tasmanian Aboriginals from the mainland were settled on Flinders Island, where they were to be 'civilised and Christianised'. The settlement was called *Wybalenna* which means 'black men's houses'. They were forbidden to practise the old ways and were homesick for their lost country. Many died of respiratory disease, poor food and despair.

In October 1847 the forty seven survivors of this group were transferred to Oyster Cove, near Hobart. It was springtime, but even the warmer weather did not hide the fact that the former convict station was built in a cold, damp and depressing place. Their houses were little better than slab huts, and in poor repair

For some, this move was a return to land familiar to them from childhood. Truganini was of the *Nuenonne* tribe whose country had been Bruny Island and the Channel area of the mainland. Truganini could have stayed in the straits and lived with Lucy Beadon on Badger Island but she chose to return to her country and stay with her companions from Wybalenna. Oyster Cove was the last home of that last known group of 'tribal' Tasmanians.



Above
Wybalenna The Settlement at Flinders Island CVDL
(Simkinson de Wesselow, 1845)

Left
Plan of the station at Oyster Cove

Right
The Last of the Race Photograph showing a group of Tasmanians at Oyster Cove in the 1850's.



Far right, top
William Lanne was born in the Arthur River area in 1835. His family was the last tribal group captured and sent to Wybalenna. He was the last known full blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal male when he died in 1869.

Far right, bottom
Truganini, once believed to be the last Tasmanian Aboriginal, died in 1876. We now know that others outlived her.