

Comparison of the Battle/Massacre of Pinjarra and the Risdon Cove Affray/Massacre

Parameter	Pinjarra	Risdon Cove	Comments
Sources	1	2,3,4, 5	For a suggested map of the Pinjarra battle site see Ref 1, page 81 (File attached). For a suggested animation of the Risdon Cove site see <a href="#">here</a>
Year of Battle/Massacre/Affray	1834	1804	
Year of Archaeology (Yrs since massacre)	1998 (164 yrs after massacre)	1978 174 yrs after massacre)	About the same length of time between the affrays and their archaeology.
Deaths – Aboriginal	20 (15 -30)	3 ,20, 30, 50 or 100	Risdon Cove Death Toll Claims = Official (3), Ryan (20-30), Committee of 1830 (up to 50), <i>Hansard Tas</i> (ca100)
Deaths – British*	1	0	*In one sense this descriptor is not satisfactory in distinguishing between the two combatant groups given that the notion that Aboriginal people were also British subjects was finally accepted in law by ca1836. 'Government forces' may be thus preferable to 'British', which would also allow for Aboriginal (Native) Police combatants to be part of the anti-Aboriginal force.
Weapons actually fired	24 guns – Baker Rifle flintlock muzzle-loading, possibly double-barreled shotguns and pistols	2, 5 or up to 20 Brown Bess flintlock muskets & one 12-pound carronade out of the two on site	At Risdon Cove - Only one carronade was fired once. No firm evidence as to whether it was loaded with shot, one cannonball, 'pieces of iron and broken bottles', or just blank powder. There were about 20 armed military personnel on site but the actual firing against the Aborigines may have only been by 2 or 5 of the soldiers, based on the official records of the affray.
Length of Battle Time	1 hour	30-60 minutes or up to 3 hrs	We estimate a duration 30-60mins at Risdon Cove based on the <i>HRA</i> official reports (Ref 2). Edward White's testimony supports 3hrs.

<b>Number of combatants</b>			
- British	25	20	
- Aborigines	70	160 - 600	Johnson & McFarlane est. 160 (Ref 6) Mountgarrett claimed 500-600 (Ref 7)
<b>Aboriginal Bodies/Skeletons found – Lot 1</b>	Skeleton #1- Aboriginal Male, ca19yrs old, killed by musket ball (retrieved). Found in 1922/23	2 or 3 dead bodies found on the day in 1804.	For Risdon Cove, official reports say 2 or 3 bodies found dead on the day.  For details of skeleton #1, see Pinjarra Report (Ref. 1) <b>page 82 (File attached)</b>
<b>Aboriginal Bodies/Skeleton found – Lot 2</b>	Skeleton #2 - Aboriginal Male, 30-45yrs old, killed by musket ball (lodged in chest cavity retrieved). Found in 1946/7	No skeletal remains found during archaeology in 1978	See interview notes below with Risdon archaeologist Angela McGowan. (Ref 8)  For details of skeleton #2, see Pinjarra Report (Ref. 1) <b>page 83 (File attached)</b>
<b>Other Bodies/Skeleton found – Lot 3</b>	Skeletons #3&4 were said to have been found in 1940s in the battle area – oral history and no proof they were Aboriginal or killed in the Pinjarra affray.	Remains of 4 convicts found	For Risdon: TMAG have confidential report which is said to confirm they were the 4 convicts who died during the early days of the Risdon Cove settlement.  For details of skeleton #3&4, see Pinjarra Report (Ref. 1) <b>page 83 &amp; 85 (Files attached)</b>
<b>Bodies/Skeletons found – Lot 4</b>	Skeletons #5&6 - leg bone found in battle area in 1970s's – oral history and no proof the leg bone was Aboriginal or from the Pinjarra affray.		For details of skeleton #5&6, see Pinjarra Report (Ref. 1) <b>page 85 &amp; 86 (Files attached)</b>
<b>Year of Archaeology (Yrs since massacre)</b>	1998 (164 yrs after massacre)	1978 174 yrs after massacre)	There is about the same length of time between the affrays and their archaeology in both cases.

<p><b>Musket Balls found in Battle area</b></p>	<p>2 Muskets balls found in skeletons 1 &amp; 2. Another found in 1949. Oral history is that many were found by children in area over the years.</p> <p>3 further musket balls were found by metal detection during the 1998 archaeological survey. These 3 were determined to have been from the massacre with the probability that many more were washed away as the river eroded the banks over the years.</p>	<p>3 'long rifle' balls ca 14mm. Found in house and store rubble. None were found lodged in skeletons. Numerous lots of lead shot (13), (33) and pistol shot (13) No evidence that any of the above was related to the affray on 3 May 1804. All could have just been just detritus from hunting ammunition, in cooked animals, etc. found in the 'destruction debris' of the buildings.</p>	<p>Risdon details see Ref 5.</p> <p>For details of musket balls &amp; axes see Pinjarra Report (Ref. 1) <b>page 85 &amp; 86 (Files attached)</b></p>
---	---	--	--

### References

1. Contos, N. *et al*, *Pinjarra Massacre Site, Report Stage 1*, June 1998. [including pages 80-86 attached as separate files]
2. Lt Moore to Lt-Governor Collins, 7 May 1804, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, pp242–3; Lt-Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 May 1804, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, pp237–8
3. Ryan, L, Colonial Massacre map, University of Newcastle – Risdon Cove: <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/detail.php?r=462>
4. Parliament of Tasmania, *Hansard*, 5 May 1992, p90ff
5. McGowan, A., *Archaeological Investigations at Risdon Cove Historical Site, 1978-1980*, Occasional Paper No. 10, National Parks and Wildlife Service.
6. Murray Johnson & Ian McFarlane, *Van Diemen's Land*, UNSW Press, 2015
7. Mary Nicholls (ed), *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803–1838*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1977
8. The following is a transcript [from memory] by Tasmanian amateur historian, Scott Seymour [and co-author of the book, *Truth-Telling at Risdon Cove*] of a conversation he had with Angela McGowan, archaeologist and author of '*Archaeological Investigations at Risdon Cove Historic Site 1978-1980*', *Occasional Paper No.10, Hobart: National Parks & Wildlife Service, 1985*.

Scott writes,

'On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013, in company with **Prof. Michael Asten** [Monash University] and **Brad William** [Tasmanian archaeologist], we met **Angela McGowan** at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The purpose was to ask questions regarding the Risdon Cove Archaeological Survey that took place between 1978 and 1980. The most extensive report written was of course by Angela McGowan, who led the dig at the site'.

'My first question was not very complex at all,

*'do you believe you found any evidence on the site to suggest a massacre had taken place'?*

'McGowan's answer very much surprised me because her response was immediate,

*'No', 'no we didn't'.*

'I asked her about the cannonball and the various shot found on site, and she explained, (as does her report (*ibid*),'

*'The cannon ball and various led shot were all found in various hut/house sites in the remains of where fireplaces once were. Not unusual at all and quite expected.'*

[*Scott surmises*] 'When the Risdon settlement was most active (Sept. 1803- July 1804) hunting was a daily venture. As a result of the shooting of the game, lead shot or ball would, as expected, be later found in meat cuts while preparing, cooking or eating, and many of these were simply flicked into the fireplace when found. Lead ball and shot was also hand-made in many instances and the obvious place to melt lead was in the fireplace. Casting of lead shot/ball was commonplace and indeed, the archaeological report details evidence of this also happening.

None of this should surprise anyone and the presence of lead shot certainly doesn't constitute proof that a 'massacre' occurred.

A solitary cannon ball, also found in a fireplace is, likewise, no surprise and again, certainly not evidence of a massacre - it simply evidences that cannon ball were on the site, which is well known anyway. It is also well worth remembering that even Prof. Ryan herself describes what she assumes was fired at Risdon Cove being grape and or canister shot, not cannon balls.

[*Scott continues by asking himself*] In what area or areas of the Risdon Cove site was a concentration of fired musket balls/lead shot found?

Quite simply there wasn't one.

**John Presser**, Forensic Scientist, Tasmania Police (retired) was part of the ground team during the time of the archaeological survey of the site, who, with help, sectioned off the site and with metal detectors they searched for ballistics.

Of course, they were expecting to find many, and were shocked when they were struggling to find any. Aside from the accessional one here or there, on its own, they found less than a

handful and could find no evidence whatsoever that a massacre, supposedly taking place over several hours, actually happened.

**Thus, in my opinion [Scott Seymour's] the archaeological evidence provides no evidence at all of what Prof. Ryan is suggesting - that the site was a massacre site .**

*- (supplied to Dark Emu Exposed by email 29 Oct 2022)*