

Land Invasion

The Invasion Of Tasmania

The Invasion Of Tasmania - Aboriginal Land

From: The Commonwealth of Australia booklet 'Aboriginal People of Tasmania'.

First Contacts

In 1642 the Dutch navigators Abel Tasman landed on the coast of Tasmania. He saw fires and heard human voices, but did not see any people. Tasman's arrival signalled the end of 12 000 years of isolation for Aboriginal Tasmanians. **Settlers**

In 1803 the first Europeans came to settle in Tasmania. From the beginning tragic misunderstandings arose between Aboriginal people and new arrivals. Aboriginal society is based on sharing and exchange. In return for allowing Europeans to share their resources, Aboriginal people expected dogs (which quickly became highly prized), tea, sugar, blankets and other European goods.

This expectation became more insistent as the Europeans hunted out traditional foods. Europeans did not understand what was expected of them. They saw the Aboriginal people as beggars and thieves. Moreover they did not believe that Aboriginal people had any claim to the land because it was not farmed or fenced and the people only roamed the bush. As happened elsewhere in Australia, the very intense, unique bond that Aboriginal feel to particular areas was not recognised until too late.

The first massacre of Tasmanian Aboriginal people occurred at Risden Cove in 1804, when Lieutenant John Bowen and his troops fired on a group which included women and children. By 1806 clashes between Aboriginal people and settlers were common. The Tasmanians speared stock and shepards; in retaliation Europeans gave them poison flour, abducted their children to use as forced labour, and raped and tortured the women.

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