

Mapping Colonial Massacre sites in NSW – a spatial truth telling

Tony Proust (Australia)

Key words: Cadastre; Land management; Spatial planning

SUMMARY

FIG Brisbane 2025

Abstract - final

Mapping Colonial Massacre sites in NSW – a form of spatial truth telling

Using air photo interpretation techniques I compare the mapping on the University of Newcastle colonial massacres website (University of Newcastle Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia 1788 - 1930) with the NSW Spatial Information Exchange (SIX) mapping website to identify significant massacre sites in NSW and position them on the cadastre.

My objective is not to embarrass or antagonise those who might own or live near these sites, after all the current owners should not be blamed for past wrongs, but to highlight the truth behind our colonial history. We need to encourage truth telling by highlighting the issue of colonial massacres of Aboriginal people in NSW between 1800 and 1850 in particular.

Of the approximately 70 massacre sites in NSW only a couple have been accurately mapped and the only one (as far as known by the author) has been fully memorialised with details of the tragic event.

One site in particular is of relevance to surveyors. Surveyor General Major Thomas Mitchell, a prominent government bureaucrat, killed a group of Aboriginal people in 1836 on the site he called 'Mt Dispersion' on the NSW side of the Murray River in far south west NSW. A euphemism which was widely copied by others during the tragic slaughter of Aboriginal people during the 'frontier

Mapping Colonial Massacre sites in NSW – a spatial truth telling

(13079)

Tony Proust (Australia)

FIG Working Week 2025

Collaboration, Innovation and Resilience: Championing a Digital Generation

Brisbane, Australia, 6–10 April 2025

wars' from the 1830s to the early 20th century. Mitchell received only a mild rebuke from the authorities and never apologised for the wrong he committed.

It is important to tell these stories as part of the necessary truth telling required if we are to achieve reconciliation between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australians.

We place memorials or plaques on heritage buildings and convict sites. I propose that we mark some of these tragic colonial massacre sites in a similar way to remind Australians of our tragic colonial history and as a step towards reconciliation.

Tony Proust

Meritorious Surveyor

Newcastle

Email: asproust@tpg.com.au

9.11.24

Mapping Colonial Massacre sites in NSW – a spatial truth telling

(13079)

Tony Proust (Australia)

FIG Working Week 2025

Collaboration, Innovation and Resilience: Championing a Digital Generation

Brisbane, Australia, 6–10 April 2025