

The Myall Creek trials (1)

The first trial

In the first trial 11 men were captured and charged with the murder of one of the Aboriginal men. Although it was difficult to get evidence the local police magistrate built a strong case. The evidence only linked them with the murder of one Aboriginal man.

The judge included these words in his speech to the jury:

I must tell you that the life of a black is as precious and valuable in the eye of the law, as that of the highest noble in the land.

Adapted from the *Monitor* 19/11/1838

The jury returned a verdict of 'not guilty' after having retired to consider the evidence for **15 minutes**.



Phiz. 1815-82. Australian Aborigines slaughtered by convicts. In the *Chronicles of Crime*, ed Camden Pelham. National Library of Australia

An illustration drawn for a book published in England shows the 'criminal' faces of the murderers.

Responses to the verdict in newspapers of the time

1 *The verdict of acquittal was highly popular! The wealthy free people of the Colony, for once, joined heart and hand with the prison population, in expressions of joy.*

Adapted from the *Monitor* 19/11/1838

2 *The interests of humanity, the character of the colony, and the honour of the British name, are alike outraged and degraded.*

From the *Australian* 20/11/1838

3 *The government is responsible. It has neglected to regulate relationships between the black and the white residents of the colony.*

Adapted from the *Sydney Gazette* 20/11/1838