

# Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

an initiative of the Australian Academy of Humanities, supported by the Geographical Names Board of NSW



## Who names our places?

The number of placenames in Australia is still increasing—new suburbs are developed, previously unnamed reefs are recorded, new roads are laid down... In the early days of colonisation, names were bestowed by explorers, settlers, surveyors, map makers and so on. But, we are sometimes asked, who names our places these days?

The short answer is—governments. But as with all short and easy answers, the truth is a little more complicated than that. Perhaps the best way to explain the process is to start at the top.

The Permanent Committee on Place Names (PCPN) coordinates placenaming activities across Australia and New Zealand. Members of the Committee come from Australian state and territory naming boards and committees, from New Zealand and from other organisations with a role and interest in placenaming (such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Australian Antarctic Division, the Australian Hydrographic Office, Geoscience Australia and the Department of Defence). The Australian National Placenames Survey is also a member.

The various naming authorities generally have a board or committee which considers name proposals (or recommends approval or disapproval to the relevant Minister), and keeps a register of placenames called a gazetteer. They have jurisdiction over names for localities and for geographical features; some are also responsible for public building names, for infrastructure and for road names. In some cases a government authority may set the

rules for appropriate naming and maintain the register, while the naming process itself is the responsibility of local councils.

In general, placenaming within each jurisdiction is a bottom-up process: proposals come from the public and local councils (or are referred to them for consultation), and then are processed by the relevant authority.



*This year's PCPN conference in Perth commemorated its 30+ years of work by cutting a celebratory cake*

To ensure consistency of placenaming across Australia, PCPN has published a set of Principles to be followed by the various authorities. This publication is available on the PCPN website, and may be freely downloaded from this web address:

[www.icsm.gov.au/cgna/consistent\\_place\\_names\\_principles.pdf](http://www.icsm.gov.au/cgna/consistent_place_names_principles.pdf)

**David Blair**

## From the Editor



We begin with an apology: due to a production issue, Paul Geraghty's promised conclusion to the Fijian island of *Taveuna* has had to be put back to our next edition in March. Paul promises that after that, he'll also have something about *Kadavu* for us in the near future.

Thank you to all our Supporting Members who have renewed for 2016-17—we are grateful for your continued support. Anyone who is in Sydney, or is planning to be there in early December, please note our AGM at Macquarie University (p. 5). If you are able to come for Greg Windsor's paper and for lunch, we'd love to see you!

David Blair  
<editor@anps.org.au>

## News in brief

### We recommend...

There's an offering within the *Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork* that our readers may not have caught up with yet. We recommend

*Toponymy: Recording and Analysing Placenames in a Language Area*

by David Nash and Jane Simpson.

The article is available at Oxford Handbooks Online:

[www.oxfordhandbooks.com](http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com)

There you'll find an abstract and how to access the article.

### An invitation

The journal of the American Name Society is planning a special issue devoted to 'indigenous names and toponyms found in former European colonies in the Americas,

Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Antipodes'. Abstracts are invited for this issue of *Names* in 2017, and we think some of our readers may be interested to contribute.

There's further information on the Society's website:

[www.americannamesociety.org/](http://www.americannamesociety.org/)

Go to the 'News' tab, and then 'Call for papers'.

### NSW Surveyor General

ANPS welcomes Ms Narelle Underwood as the newly-appointed Surveyor General of NSW. She is the State's 25<sup>th</sup> Surveyor General since Augustus Alt was appointed to the position in 1787 before his arrival with the First Fleet—and she also has the distinction of being the first female Surveyor General in Australia. One of her roles will be to chair the Geographical Names Board of NSW.

## Notes and queries

### Canning names once again

Grant Uebergang has confirmed that QLD has a number of *Canning* toponyms (Canning Downs, Canning Creek, and street names in the Toowoomba area), most of them apparently honouring **George Canning**, British Prime Minister. As for the Canning federal electorate in WA, where this ongoing saga really started—Jan Tent has come up trumps: he's found the *Report of the Select Committee on Naming of Electoral Divisions [1968-69]*, which makes it clear that the electorate was, after all, named after **Alfred Canning**, the surveyor mentioned in Jan's article (Dec. '15) and as reported by Paul Daley.

### Trafalgar names

Noel Erbs responded to our query (Sept. '16) on Trafalgar-related names with information on the towns in WA and VIC with that name and with a note on street names in the town of Rye (VIC). And Ron Besdansky told us that Sydney's Spit Junction was, for a period in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, called *Trafalgar Square*. The information has been passed on to Professor Fernandes, who expresses his thanks.

### Upfield (VIC)

We wonder if this Melbourne locality is named after **Arthur Upfield**, author of the 'Bony' novels. Does anybody know anything about its naming?

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# Turrumurra - another furphy from the naming books?

Your Editor lived for many years in the Sydney suburb of Turrumurra, and was sceptical of the oft-quoted origin of the name. So he persuaded **Jeremy Steele** to dig through his extensive records of the Aboriginal languages of the area to see what—if anything—might be discovered.

Turrumurra is located near the north-west end of the ridge on which the collection of suburbs known as the Sydney's North Shore is situated. The elevation of the railway station is 180 metres, surpassed only by its near-neighbour Wahroonga at 200 metres. This may explain the enduring popularity of the story that Turrumurra means 'high land' or 'high'. This is the meaning currently propagated by local government and community groups, and undoubtedly based on several popular twentieth-century placenames booklets. These works, unfortunately, did not reveal the original source or sources for such claims. Neither, unfortunately does Richardson (n.d.) in his manuscript lodged in the Mitchell Library. His list, probably written prior to 1950, is interesting in that he gives the name *Turrumburra* as equivalent to the wider toponym 'Lane Cove'. Records from these four 20<sup>th</sup> century works are shown in Table 1.



<i>Cited form</i>	<i>Respelt</i>	<i>English original</i>	<i>English Standardised</i>	<i>Source</i>
<i>Turrumurra</i>	daramara	'High land; small watercourse'	hill	McCarthy [:16:26] [Syd]
<i>Turrumurra</i>	daramara	'High land'	hill	Tyrrell [:39:4] [Syd]
<i>turrumurra</i>	daramara	'high'	hill	Endacott [:52:21] [ ]
<i>Turrumburra</i>	dara-m-bara	'Lane Cove'	--	Richardson [::] [Syd]

Table 1: Forms from placenames books and lists

Since these booklets do not record their sources, our only resource is to examine the extant early records from the Australian language of the Sydney area.

## Meaning from the records

Probably among the first of the records were the following, collected around 1791:

<i>Cited form</i>	<i>Respelt</i>	<i>English original</i>	<i>English Standardised</i>	<i>Source</i>
<i>Darra murra gal</i>	Dara-ma-ra-gal	'We-ran's tribe'	tree people	Anon (c) [c:5:7] [BB]
<i>Tarra-merra gal</i>	Dara-mi-ra-gal	'The name of the tribe Weran belongs to, in the district of Wanne'	tree people	Anon (c) [c:8:7] [BB]
<i>Weran</i>	Wiran	'[Names of native men]'	Wiran	Anon (c) [c:40:21] [BB]

Table 2: Records from the 1790s

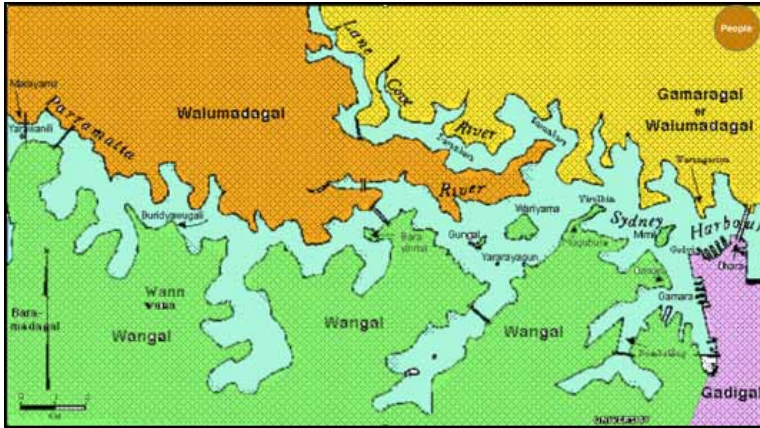
## Location of Wan

Wiran, we are informed from the above details, was an Aboriginal man living in the 'district of Wanne', which has been taken to be 'Wan' or 'Wann'. This district extended from Darling Harbour to around Parramatta, on the south side of the Harbour or Parramatta River.

The suffix *-gal* in the Sydney Aboriginal language denoted a clan or group of people. Thus the Cadi-gal were the people from the Bay of Cadi (Watsons Bay), the Gamara-gal from Cammeray, and the Wan-gal (Bennelong was one of these) from the 'district of Wanne'.

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*Territories of the main Sydney clans*

We may reasonably assume that *Darra murra gal* and *Tarra-merragal* are the same, especially given that the consonants /t/ and /d/ were not distinguished in many Aboriginal languages. And we may reasonably assume that today's *Turrumurra* is related to these names.

### Places have 'moved'

How is it that the present-day location of Turrumurra is high on the North Shore, far from the south of the harbour as the early records suggest? The answer could be that in the very early days there were few named locations in the Sydney

region, and their areas were consequently greater in extent than now. So it may be that Turrumurra has not moved at all, but that later suburb-subdividing and name-creating has shrunk its territory and left it isolated from its original point of reference.

### Turrumurra?

Today leafy Turrumurra is characterised by big eucalyptus trees as much as by anything else—although that was nothing special, for in the early days of the colony trees were everywhere. Could 'Turrumurra' have meant 'trees'?

<i>Cited form</i>	<i>Respelt</i>	<i>English original</i>	<i>English Standardised</i>	<i>Source</i>
<i>Tē-ru-mo</i>	diramu	'Trees'	tree	Anon (c) [c:20:3] [BB]
<i>Too roo ma goolie</i>	duru-ma-guli	'a Small cove'	tree point	Dawes (b) [b:42:6] [BB]

*Table 3: Tree*

The 'Anon' notebook of the 1790s gave *diramu* for 'trees'. And William Dawes, the greatest student of the language, recorded a cove called *Durumaguli*. All the same, the translation in the fourth column in Table 3 is speculative.

Nevertheless, as there are twenty or so 'tree' records beginning *dara-* or similar, the translation might not be all that far-fetched. The following six are samples of these records:

<i>Cited form</i>	<i>Respelt</i>	<i>English original</i>	<i>English Standardised</i>	<i>Source</i>
<i>Darane</i>	darani	'White gum tree'	gum white	Anon (c) [c:20:6] [BB]
<i>Dárrandea</i>	darandiya	'Black butted gum'	blackbutt	Lang: NSW Vocab [:4:105] [DG]
<i>Derebara</i>	diribara	'Iron bark'	ironbark	Bowman: Camden [:22:145] [DG]
<i>dhurrawul</i>	Dara-wul	'cabbage tree'	cabbage tree	Mathews 8006/3/7 - CRITERION [:73:10.2] [Dwl]
<i>terakii</i>	diragi-yi	'Ironbark-tree'	ironbark	Curr v. III Bk 15 §188 [354: Miller-Hunter R] [:355.2:24] [Wnra]
<i>Terr-a-gurr-a-ring</i>	diraga-ra-ring	'Palm tree'	palm	Tkld KRE c.1835 [:131:64] [Kre]

*Table 4: Other dara- 'tree' records*

The last three of these are from the south and north of Sydney.

## ...another furphy?

In summary, with regard to the present enquiry, nothing has emerged from the records cited above to lend credence to the claim that Turramurra means 'high ground'. The name might, however, have had something to do with trees, particularly given the first record in Table 3, *diramu*, meaning 'trees'. To this observation might be added the comment that while Aboriginal languages did not generally distinguish singular from plural forms, there are some instances when *-ra* was added to nouns, apparently as a plural marker. With this suffix added to *diramu*, the result is *diramu-ra*, and so very close to *diramura*, or *daramara*... or *Turramurra*: 'trees'.

### Cautionary postscript

While the hypothesis above provides a plausible explanation, we should note that the same records could also provide arguments that Turramurra meant 'big tooth', 'big foot', 'foot path' and probably more.

Jeremy Steele

### References

McCarthy, Frederick David. 1963. *New South Wales Aboriginal Place names and Euphonious Words, with their Meanings*. Fourth ed. Sydney: The Australian Museum. Original edition, 1921, compiled by W.W. Thorpe, published by the Australian Museum.

Tyrrell, James A. *Australian Aboriginal place-names and their meanings*. Sydney: Tyrrell's, 1933

Endacott, Sydney J. *Australian Aboriginal words and their meanings*. 9th enlarged ed. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1959

Richardson, H. Haywood. *Aboriginal words and names*. [manuscript vocabulary lists]. Sydney: Mitchell Library MSS 1255. c. 19??

[*Editor's note*: for those readers who wish to inquire further or who are interested to follow the author's source codes, we recommend Jeremy's thesis, which may be downloaded at [www.williamdawes.org/docs/steele\\_thesis.pdf](http://www.williamdawes.org/docs/steele_thesis.pdf)]

## Annual General Meeting

The 2016 AGM for Placenames Australia (Inc) will be held at Macquarie University, Sydney,  
on Friday 2 December at 2 p.m.

Location: Delbridge Room, Linguistics Department (C5A 558)

All Supporting Members of PA are invited to attend. A major item of business will be to elect members of the Management Committee for 2016-17, and nominations are now invited for these positions:

- President
- Vice-president
- Secretary
- Treasurer, and
- up to 5 other members

Please send any nominations for the Committee to the Secretary ([secretary@anps.org.au](mailto:secretary@anps.org.au)) before the meeting.

Prior to the AGM, at 12 noon, Dr Greg Windsor will present a paper on

**'Community considerations when deriving regions'**

A light lunch will be provided before the commencement of the AGM

Please let the Secretary <[secretary@anps.org.au](mailto:secretary@anps.org.au)> know if you're coming, for catering purposes and to advise on travel and parking.

# Esoteric placenames on Norfolk Island

Norfolk Island, as many island communities do, presents us with a set of toponyms that reflect many of the idiosyncracies of island life. We have selected just five of these NI placenames to illustrate the point.

Norf'k	English	History
1. <i>Johnny Nigger Bun Et</i>	Johnny and Nigger Burnt It	An area where two local men lit a fire that burnt out of control.
2. <i>Side Ar Whale Es</i>	Literally 'the place where the whale is'	A land feature which when looked at from a distance resembles a whale.
3. <i>Parloo Park</i>	Masturbation Park	An area young boys and girls used to frequent on their first meeting.
4. <i>Foote Nort</i>	Why not?	Eldon Foote's property; humorous and quirky allusion to common Norf'k expression 'foot nort' = English: why not.
5. <i>Em Steps</i>	The (Convict) Steps	The Norf'k name for the convict steps on Nepean Island, the small island 800 metres south of Norfolk Island; also known as 'Dem Steps'.



*The location of five places on Norfolk Island*

The first example illustrates a common trait of Norf'k phonology: word final consonant loss, i.e. Norf'k 'bun' for English 'burnt'. This is possibly a residual Polynesian feature in the language, reflecting its linguistic connection to Polynesia and Tahiti and the initial contact language that developed on Pitcairn Island after the Bounty mutiny took place in 1789. *Johnny Nigger Bun Et* further refers to two well-known Norfolk Islanders and the activity that led to the naming of the area: lighting wood fires so the whalers offshore would not lose their way back to shore at night. It solidifies an element of Norfolk's

cultural landscape into a name associated directly with a place on the north of the island few people know about.

Example 2 provides evidence of the descriptive power of the landscape and how humans name places based on their perception of a topographical feature and possibly its utilitarian nature. One informant intimated to me that *Side Ar Whale Es* looks like a whale if one looks at it in the right manner and uses a bit of imagination. It also shows how esoteric names can be known, as this name was, by only one of my informants and it was most likely he who named it. This name also illustrates various distinguishing aspects of Norf'k syntax from English—the formation of the genitive construction, e.g. 'Whale(s) Place' is one possible translation of *Side Ar Whale Es* in English. The work that Norf'k syntax does in producing such constructions in placename grammar, as well as in spoken sentences, demonstrates the power the language possesses to demarcate itself from the linguistic stranglehold of English. Here we see the strength of Norf'k in creating sociolinguistic boundaries and in how it forges strong relationships with people and place, namely the folk and people of Norfolk Island.

*Parloo Park*, literally 'Masturbation Park', is an area in the south west of Norfolk which has been known to be a haunt for young couples' courting behaviour. That locals remember and have named this locale indicates a strong event-based memory of the area, and reflects the phenomenon of action and incident in relation to place being crystallised into language use. The name also reveals

the presence of Polynesian elements in the language; and, further, the use of Tahitian lexicon for taboo elements in (particularly) human behaviour and bodily functions once again depicts a strong link between individuals and language in the Norfolk setting. This is also one of the few Norf'k placenames of distinct Polynesian origin.

Example 4, *Foote Nort*, presents a placename directly associated with a person, Eldon Foote, who used to live in the Rocky Point area. The humorous and quirky allusion to the common Norf'k expression, 'foot nort' (English: why not), is based on phonological similarity between the Norf'k adverb and the gentleman's name. This exemplifies an aspect of unofficial naming that is often overlooked—people name places for fun and to pass time. In this example Eldon Foote, a Canadian philanthropist, has been linguistically concretised in place and space in the Norfolk environment, while at the same time lexified into the folk lexicon and intimately associated with the Norf'k language, although Foote was not a Norfolk Islander or Norf'k speaker.

*Em Steps* and the variation *Dem Steps* (English: The Steps) refers to the convict steps on the eastern coast of Nepean Island, a small uninhabited island, part of the Norfolk archipelago 800 metres south of Norfolk. The steps and the subsequent English name, *The Convict Steps*, developed during sandstone excavation that took place throughout the convict settlement on Norfolk prior to the arrival of the Pitcairners in 1856. Although there is no direct relation between the Norfolk Islanders and the events that created the convict steps as a topographical feature, a Norf'k name has developed and is an integral part of the folk lexicon and toponymy of Nepean Island, especially among the local fishers. This additionally emphasises the difficulty in the semantics of delineating what constitutes a Norf'k or an English name in the complicated tapestry of language contact. That is, syntactic and phonological analysis of names will often not give us clues as to how Norfolk Island toponyms should be classified.

**Joshua Nash**

University of New England

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## New from ANPS

### ANPS Data Report No. 4

#### *Placenames of Western Australia from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Exploration*

by Lesley Brooker

Now available from our website:

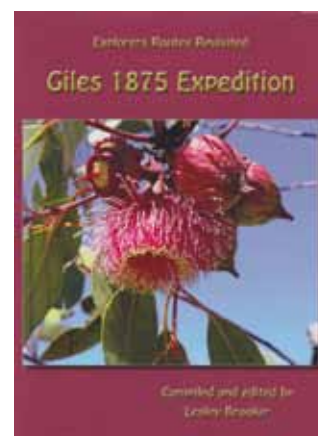
[www.anps.org.au/publications5.html](http://www.anps.org.au/publications5.html)

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### And we also recommend...

Lesley Brooker's book *Giles 1875 Expedition*, in the series 'Explorers Routes Revisited'. Ernest Giles' 1875 expedition, covering 3000 km from Beltana, S.A. to Perth, W.A., is described in detail, with both historical and contemporary maps, and colour illustrations of the places visited and plants collected by the expedition naturalist, Jesse Young.

The series, which also includes Lesley's *Roe Expedition 1836*, is published by Hesperian Press. These two titles, however, are only available from the author, at \$40 each +postage. Contact her at <[LesMikeBrooker@bigpond.com](mailto:LesMikeBrooker@bigpond.com)>.



# Toponymy 101

# D: The geographical and...

## or, Placenames Don't Lie

In this article I continue the theme of how placenames play a role in our day-to-day lives. Naturally, they play an indispensable role on maps, because without them, maps would be of little or no use. But of course, they must be accurately named and located. Care must be taken when providing maps for the military, because when British forces went to France in WWI, the maps they were carrying had discrepant names. Soldiers had much trouble aligning the English exonyms appearing on their maps with the French endonyms they saw on road signs etc.<sup>1</sup> This fiasco led the Admiralty to form the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) in 1919.

At the most basic level, toponyms are markers of geographic features—this is generally achieved by the generic element. However, this can also be achieved through the specific element, and thus toponyms can provide geographers (and geologists) with information about environmental changes. A toponym often contains an internal clue to the former state of the feature. Some examples of placenames in New York are useful to illustrate:

- *Fresh Kills* from Dutch *kille* 'riverbed/water channel'
- *Gramercy* from Dutch *krom-marisje* 'crooked marsh'
- *Greenwich (Village)* from Dutch *groenwyc* 'verdant district'
- *Wall Street* from Dutch *wal* 'wharf/dock'
- *Bushwick* from Dutch *boschwyck* 'forest district'



Another nice example from North America is that of *Salinas* (California). John Steinbeck, who was a native of Salinas, reports: "The place that was to become Salinas was a series of tule-grown swamps, which toward the end of the summer dried and left a white deposit of alkali. It was this appearance of salt that gave the place

its name.' (Steinbeck 1955: 58)

The capital of The Netherlands, Amsterdam, provides another good example. Its name derives from *Amstelredamme*, which indicates the city's origin as a *dam* of the river *Amstel*. One of Amsterdam's outer suburbs, *Koog aan de Zaan*, means 'Koog on the Zaan (River)' (a *koog* being an area of marshy land outside the dyke). There is no *koog* there any longer, since it is reclaimed dry land.

An example from the opposite side of the globe is the Fijian island *Tavua*, literally 'place of fire'.



In 1998 it was discovered that this island was an active volcano some 3000 years ago. Even though Fiji was first settled by the Lapita people some 3500 years ago, there is no Fijian oral tradition of volcanoes, nor does any Fijian language have a word for 'volcano'. (Neither did English, for that matter—we borrowed the word from Italian.) Whatever knowledge the first Fijians had of volcanoes in Vanuatu or the Solomons, where they came from, must have been lost over the generations, and the word for 'volcano' with it. However, most intriguingly, there are two mountains named *Tavuyaga* /tah-vu-'yahng-uh/ in Fiji: the name is derived from *tavu* 'burn', so it can be analysed as meaning 'burning place', hence 'volcano'. Again, the question arises: 'Could these have been active volcanoes within the last 3000 years, when Fiji was occupied?' The study of placenames certainly admits this possibility, but received geological knowledge has always denied it—until recently. If geographers had seriously looked at the study of toponymy, they would have long since discovered the error of their ways regarding Fiji's geographic and geological history. The moral of the story is 'placenames don't lie!'



## ...economic significance of toponyms

An example from our own backyard is Sydney's *Garden Island*. If you look at a modern map of Port Jackson, you will see that it isn't an island at all. But as the photo below shows, it used to be. So that's how Sydney's naval base got its name.



*Garden Island, Sydney (c. 1929)*

Sometimes, however, when humans alter the physical geography of a place or region, the placename is also changed. Such a case is the *Zuiderzee* 'Southern Sea', which was a shallow bay of the North Sea that formed a deep recess into the northwest of The Netherlands. Its name originates in the northern Dutch province of Friesland, which lies to its north (cf. the *North Sea*). In 1927 work began on enclosing the bay by constructing a 32 km long dyke or causeway (the *Afsluitdijk* 'Closure Dyke') between the southern tip of Friesland and the



*Part of the Afsluitdijk between Friesland and North Holland, The Netherlands. The IJsselmeer to the right, the North Sea to the left.*

*(Photo: Jan Tent)*

northern tip of North Holland. In 1932 work was completed closing off the *Zuiderzee* from the North Sea. The *IJssel River* (a tributary of the Rhine) emptied into the newly formed lake, thereby transforming it into an artificial freshwater lake, and subsequently obtained the name *IJsselmeer* (*Lake IJssel*).

When you look at a general reference map, or more specifically, compare a political map with a physical map or topographical map of a certain region, you will quickly see a strong correlation between the distribution of toponyms and toponym types, and that of the topographic features. For example, grassland and desert regions will have fewer toponyms overall, but certainly also fewer hydrographic and vegetation feature names. Therefore, looking at toponyms collectively is also a good indicator of a region's topography or physical geography.

### 'Money makes the world go around...'

Toponyms also have an important impact upon matters economic. They are important to brand names, produce, marketing, real estate, and tourism. In recent years, French producers of wines and cheeses have fought to maintain exclusive rights over the use of their brand names based on local placenames. Australian and New Zealand vintners and caseiculturists (cheesemakers) have followed suit. (But more on this topic in a forthcoming 'Toponymy 101' instalment.)

One economic success story concerning a locally produced product is that of the Chinese gooseberry.<sup>2</sup> In 1962, New Zealand growers began calling it *kiwifruit* to create more market appeal. It was a very clever tactic given the word *kiwi* is a colloquial reference New Zealanders and *Kiwiland* to the country itself. *Kiwifruit* has since become the common world-wide name for the fruit.

### *Location, location, location!*

This is the oft-quoted catchcry of the real estate agent or property investor. Property values are strongly influenced by location—but also, by association, the name of the location.<sup>3</sup> Some nice empirical data to support this is provided by Cameron Dark in his *Placenames Australia* article (September 2015) on toponyms and their effect on Sydney property prices.

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The region name *Sunshine Coast* was launched in 1958 by the Real Estate Institute of Queensland to replace *Near North Coast*, which was not considered distinct enough and which had 'no significance for southerners'. *Sunshine Coast* was officially adopted in 1966, signifying brightness and warmth, and providing a complementary attraction to the *Gold Coast*. Other commercially attractive toponyms coined in the region include: *Pacific Paradise* (named by P.P. Development Pty Ltd in 1959), and *Sunshine Beach* (coined and marketed after WWII by real estate developer T.M. Burke. It was previously known as *Golden Beach*, but was rarely visited until after the renaming).

The relationship between higher property values and toponyms can also work in reverse, the toponym of a location with high property values becoming a marketable asset itself. A nice example is that of the NSW Central Coast beach *Copacabana Beach*, so named by real estate developers Willmore & Randell, copying the name of the famous beach in Rio de Janeiro.

A recent notable example in Sydney is the naming of the new inner-Sydney suburb now known as *Barangaroo*. The NSW Government called for suggestions to name an urban renewal site at Darling Harbour East. One suggestion was *The Hungry Mile*, which was the colloquial name given by harbour-side workers to a stretch of Hickson Road during the Great Depression. Workers would walk from wharf to wharf in search of a job, often failing to find one. This name was ruled out.<sup>4</sup> Instead, *Barangaroo* was chosen to honour the wife of Bennelong, after whom *Bennelong Point* (the site of the Opera House) is named. These two names make for a nice symmetry of names on either side of the Harbour Bridge.

The naming and renaming of places to increase the marketability of real estate developments or holiday resorts is a common practice. So, it comes as no surprise that a number of resort islands in Fiji, especially those off the western coast of the main island of Viti Levu, have been given over to the tourist trade and developers, and have regrettably had their traditional Fijian names replaced by banal introduced names such as *Beachcomber Island*, *Castaway Island*, *Bounty Island*, *Musket Cove Island* and *Treasure Island*, with the sole purpose of attracting

tourists from Australia and New Zealand, along with their dollars.

### One man's Toorak is not that of another

The Melbourne suburb of Toorak is known as a very salubrious and upmarket area. So when European settlers in Fiji arrived at what is now known as Suva in the late 19th century, they named one of its suburbs after this Melbourne suburb. However, Toorak in Suva is certainly not a salubrious or upmarket area: in fact, it is quite the reverse. So that attempt of settlers in Suva to emulate Melbourne's famous suburb has backfired somewhat.

Since the grisly discovery of eight bodies in barrels in a disused bank building in Snowtown (SA) in 1999, property prices have slumped, making it extremely difficult to sell property there. There was talk of changing its name to Rosetown, but to no avail. In the words of the local electrician, Alan Large: 'We're Snowtown people, we just carry on.' The notoriety of the murders was such that it led to a short-term economic boom from tourists visiting Snowtown, but it also created a lasting stigma.



On a slightly different tack, though still to do with the status of a placename, is an example I remember my father telling me about. In the 1950s he worked as a manager at the IBM typewriter plant in Amsterdam, and some of his colleagues lived in Diemen, a neighbouring town, though still within the Amsterdam metropolitan area. It had the reputation of being a lower socio-economic area. Diemen is pronounced /'dee-muhn/, but many of those who lived there preferred to pronounce it with a pseudo-French pronunciation viz. /'dee-mō/ in an attempt to make the place sound more up-market. Naturally that

# ...Geography and Economics

was laughed at. This small anecdote and all the above just go to illustrate that ‘The name does matter!’

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> **Endonym** ‘a locally used placename, or a placename in one of the languages occurring in the area where the placename is located’, e.g. *Wien*; **exonym** ‘a name used by speakers of other languages instead of a native name’, e.g. *Vienna*. In other words, exonyms differ in their forms from the name used in the official language or languages of the area where the geographical feature is situated.

<sup>2</sup> See: ‘The two-way relationship between a brand and its place of origin’ <<http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/the-two-way-relationship-between-a-brand-and-its-place-of-origin/>>; Mateo, Cristina & Gildo Seisdedos (2010). ‘Different branding strategies from the use of the territory of origin by commercial brands: the brand-territory matrix’ <<http://bestplaceinstytut.org/www/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/BrandterritoryMatrix.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> See: ‘What’s in a name?’ <<http://www.yourinvestmentpropertymag.com.au/buying-property/whats-in-a-name-119835.aspx>>; ‘Property in USA’ <<http://www.property4peanuts.com/property-in-usa-news-572.html>>; ‘Crescent address adds 40% to prime London home value’

<<http://www.opp-connect.com/02/05/2014/crescent-address-adds-40-to-prime-london-home-value/>>; ‘Rude street names lead to cut in house prices’ <<http://www.scotsman.com/news/odd/rude-street-names-lead-to-cut-in-house-prices-1-3317869>>

<sup>4</sup> See: ‘Hungry Mile gets minor role’ <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/hungry-mile-gets-minor-role/2006/09/11/1157826874231.html>>

<sup>5</sup> See: ‘Snowtown living with a death penalty’ <<http://www.theage.com.au/national/snowtown-living-with-a-death-penalty-20110506-1ec90.html#ixzz30ilajpw>>

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**Jan Tent**

[In our next issue, Jan will continue his series of Toponymy 101 with ‘How placenames define our world’]

## Placenames Puzzle Number 60

### Oxymorons

*An oxymoron is a figure of speech that juxtaposes elements which seem contradictory: bitter sweet, cheerful pessimist, and civil war. The following clues reveal ‘awfully good’ examples of oxymoronic placenames. For example:*

*(NSW) the town can’t make up its mind whether it is sick or not ... Crookwell.*

- (NSW) a vale with a lofty view of itself
- (NSW) a rather deflated small valley or watercourse
- (QLD) a level knoll
- (NSW) a creek that believes its one-mile length is not enough
- (NSW, SA, TAS) an elongated dot
- (any State) a waterless watercourse
- (QLD) an inland body of water consisting of woodland
- (NSW) a marsh that believes it’s as big and as watery as a large sea
- (WA) a hummock that has visions of being an alp

- (VIC) a pass or opening that also has designs on being an alp
- (NSW) a nature reserve that thinks it’s a marine body measured in lots of 4,840 square yards
- (NSW) a cistern holding a small ocean
- (QLD) a small ocean that has aspirations of being a mound
- (TAS) a hillock that doesn’t know whether it wants to be a much larger one or simply a dale
- (NSW) a road junction that’s not satisfied with being a right angle
- (NSW) an inland body of water that wishes it were a flat landscape instead
- (NT, TAS) a vale that has sights on being convex
- (NT, SA, QLD, TAS) a cove with the same aspirations as 17
- (QLD) a pit that doesn’t want to be hollow but level
- (Australian Antarctic Territory) land surrounded by water that just wants to be an inland water feature

[Compiled by: **Jan Tent**]

- |                    |                      |                            |                 |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Valley Heights  | 6. Dry River / Creek | 11. Sea Acres Nature Resv. | 16. Lake Plain  |
| 2. Flat Gully      | 7. Forest Lake       | 12. Sea Tank               | 17. Valley Hill |
| 3. Flat Hill       | 8. Ocean Swamp       | 13. Sea Hill               | 18. Bay Hill    |
| 4. Long Mile Creek | 9. Mount Hill        | 14. Mountain Vale Hill     | 19. Flat Hole   |
| 5. Long Point      | 10. Mount Gap        | 15. Round Corner           | 20. Lake Island |

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