

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



Coopernook and Goonook

In our previous issue (March, 2024), I made reference to some toponyms that appear to be English names but are in fact corrupt forms of Indigenous names—*Collector* and *Tom Groggin*. In the same issue Tony Dawson gave us a detailed history of the ‘Nellies’, in which he mentions **Coopernook** (a small township on the mid-north coast of NSW, 24 km north of Taree and 11 km west of Harrington). As it happens, I had come across this intriguing name while driving to Tweed Heads some time ago, and had decided to investigate.

Like most toponyms, the etymology and aetiology of this name is opaque. At first reckoning it looks suspiciously like a quaint English name. On the surface it seems to have two elements: *cooper* + *nook*, which orthographically look to be English terms (*cooper* ‘a craftsman who makes and repairs wooden vessels formed of staves and hoops, as casks, buckets, tubs’¹ + *nook*, see below). But is it an English name?

In cases like this it is always wise to discover who the traditional owners of the region are. They are the Biripi people (*aka* Birpai-Birrbay). And indeed, the toponym is said to derive from the Biripi word for ‘elbow’, and purportedly (Manning Valley Historical Society, 2002) refers to the bend in Lansdowne River which looks like an elbow of an arm (see Figure 2, overleaf) where the township is located.² The meaning is echoed by Thorpe (1931), Martin (1943), McCarthy (1963), Reed (1965;



photo: the author

1967; 1969; 1973), and Currawong Press (1981), who, in the tried and true tradition of lexicographers, all seem to have copied from one another.

It is unwise to solely rely on etymologies provided by authors of popular placename dictionaries, as all of these sources are. They often prove to be quite unreliable. So, a search through more reliable linguistic sources and the local language dictionaries is in order. These sources indeed show that the first element is an anglicisation of the word for elbow or (upper/lower) arm in Biripi, Gathang (*aka* Gadhang-Kattang), Kamilaroi and some other languages,³ as noted by the following writers:

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From the Editor



We're covering a bit of territory again in this issue: recalling Boer War memories in Victoria and NSW, then South Australia's Kangaroo Island, and even off to Fiji again. (Yes, we *do* know Fiji's not actually in Australia; but judging by your feedback we'd be thought remiss if Paul Geraghty's account of the islands' names didn't continue!)

One other piece of news: Jan Tent has been battling some health issues lately, and he's let us know that he'd appreciate being able to recuperate for a while (see below). But that doesn't mean his byline is missing from this issue: his research reports appear as usual, with our lead article on *Cooperbrook* and *Goonook*, and his account of *Spion Kop* and *Zeerust* beginning on page 9.

David Blair
<editor@anps.org.au>

New appointments in Placenames Australia

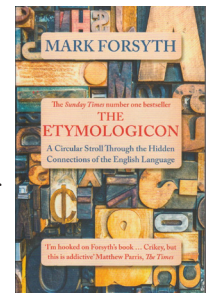
- In March, Placenames Australia appointed **Maria Vassallo** and **Brian Goodchild** to fill two casual vacancies on the Management Committee. Both have long experience of placenaming issues in State-based jurisdictions (in SA and WA respectively), and we welcome their background and expertise on the Committee.
- Jan Tent let us know that he'd be unable to serve as Director of the Survey in 2024, and the Committee was grateful for **Stuart Duncan's** acceptance of the Directorship for this year. See page 5 for the drum on Stuart!

We recommend...

The Etymologicon by *Mark Forsyth*

It's been around for over ten years, but this book still makes great reading—even for those who've never been interested in etymology. Subtitled 'A circular stroll through the hidden connections of the English language', it does include some placenames—including a brief section on double-names (p. 156) that explains how Pendle Hill means 'hill-hill hill'.

Our copy is an Icon Books paperback, a 2016 reprint from the original 2011.



In the media

There's plenty of toponymy in the media if you know where to look—but here's our pick of the month. It's a 12-minute tour of some of the world's silly-sounding placenames, on a language-interest YouTube channel called *RobWords*. Click [here](#) for a brief divertissement.



Puzzle answers - (from page 14)

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Lion Island | 6. Dead Cow Point | 11. Goat Island | 16. Rabbit Island |
| 2. Mount Buffalo | 7. Mount Elephant | 12. Shorn Sheep Creek | 17. Mole Creek |
| 3. Shark Bay | 8. Tiger Range | 13. Dog Island | 18. Badger Creek |
| 4. Seal Rocks | 9. Turtle Reef | 14. Bird Rocks | 19. Rat Point |
| 5. Camel Island | 10. Pig Creek | 15. Snake River | 20. Toad Island |

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...from page 1

- Ridley (1875, p. 124) [lower Hunter]: **kōpa** ‘arm’.
- Branch (1887): **Copar** ‘arm below elbow’ (p. 344); Ooner ‘elbow’ (p. 348).
- Spencer (1887): kooroong ‘elbow’ (p. 335); **koopay** ‘arm’ (p. 335).
- Lissarrague (2006, p. 119): **kupa** ‘upper arm’; Threlkeld [1834, p. 95]: **ko-pa**; Hale [1846, p. 505]: **kopa**.
- Lissarrague (2010: 236): **Gupanuk** *noun* placename: *Cooperbrook*. See: **gupa2**, **gupin**. RAS: **coopernook** ‘elbow’; Walker: **Cooperbrook** ‘the elbow’; Enright: **koopin** (*Kooperbrook*) ‘sleepy lizard’; Connors: **coopernook** ‘bend, elbow’.
- **gupa2** *noun* ‘arm’. Branch: **copar** ‘arm below elbow’; Rogers: **copark** ‘arm’; Holmer [1967; 1967]: **guba** ‘(upper) arm’; HRLM [Lissarrague 2006]: **kuba** ‘upper arm’.
- Hercus (2011: 39) **kupu** ‘elbow’

Amanda Lissarrague’s (2010, p. 236) entry is intriguing in that she is the only author claiming it is a toponym. She, however, does not supply a gloss for the suffix *-nuk*. The other authors she cites are not helpful in this regard either. Is her etymology a *post hoc* one?

However, the following sources also show:

- Lissarrague (2006, p. 128): **nguNa** ‘elbow’. Threlkeld [1834, p. 95]: **ngún-na**; Hale [1864]: **ngona**; Mann [n.d]: **noona**.
- Lissarrague (2010): **nguna** *noun* ‘elbow’. Branch: **ooner** ‘elbow’; Enright: **nun’-nâ** ‘elbow’; HRLM [Lissarrague 2006]: **nguNa** ‘elbow’; Dh: **nguuna** ‘elbow’; Dark: **nguna** ‘elbow’. (p. 261). **wapay** *noun* ‘elbow’. See: **nguna**. Gibons: **wupai**, **wupai** ‘elbow’. (p. 336).
- Threlkeld (1834, p. 95): **Ngún-na** ‘The elbow’.
- Greenway et al (1878, p. 246): **ngunūka** ‘elbow’ (Wailwun).
- Threlkeld (1892, p. 56): **Guna** ‘the elbow’; **Ngunna** ‘the elbow’ (p. 93).
- Enright (1900, p. 113): **Nun’-nâ** ‘elbow’.
- Haviland (1979, p. 170): **ngaaguul** ‘arm’ (in Guugu Yimidhirr).
- Mathews (1903, p. 280): **Nguna** ‘elbow’ (in Darkinjung).
- Mathews (1904): **nyuna** ‘elbow’ (Wiradjuri, p. 300); **nhurung** ‘arm’ (Ngunnawal, p. 303).
- Mathews (2007, p. 176): **Ngunuga** ‘elbow’.
- Ridley (1875): **ṅunga** ‘wrist’ (Kamilaroi, p. 19); **ṅunuka** ‘elbow’ (Wailwun, p. 48).

...Cooperbrook and Goonook

- Grant & Rudder (2010): **ngunha** ‘elbow’ (Wiradjuri)
- Ash, Giacon & Lissarrague (2017): **ngunuugaa** ‘elbow’.

According to Lissarrague (pers. comm. 1/6/2022), the *nguna* term for ‘elbow’ ‘may be a shared cognate, or a word which has travelled post-invasion.’ In addition, the confusion regarding which part of the arm is referred to for *kupa-gupa*, may explain the existence of *nguna*. ‘The words may describe different parts of the arm, or they may be cognates which have travelled.’

Lissarrague reminds us that we need to ‘view historical records with an understanding of the context in which they were collected, in both colonial and later times. The exactness of cross-cultural understanding of intended meaning, and the impact of social and cultural disruption on languages, means that the evidence should be described without judgement as to what goes where. As communities mixed, the memory of languages probably did too.’

The question arises as to the meaning of the *-nook* element of the toponym. I have not been able to determine whether it, or some form of it, derives from Biripi. However, Lissarrague (pers. comm. 1/6/2022) adds there is no known evidence of *nook* in any language data except for Gathang. She is probably referring to *Goonook Nature Reserve*, incorporating *Mt Goonook* (also mentioned in Tony’s ‘the Nellies’ article). *Goonook* ‘is probably a derivation of the Kattang [Gathang] word *gunang* which refers to excrement (Brereton, pers. comm., 2007; Muurrbay Aboriginal Language Co-operative and

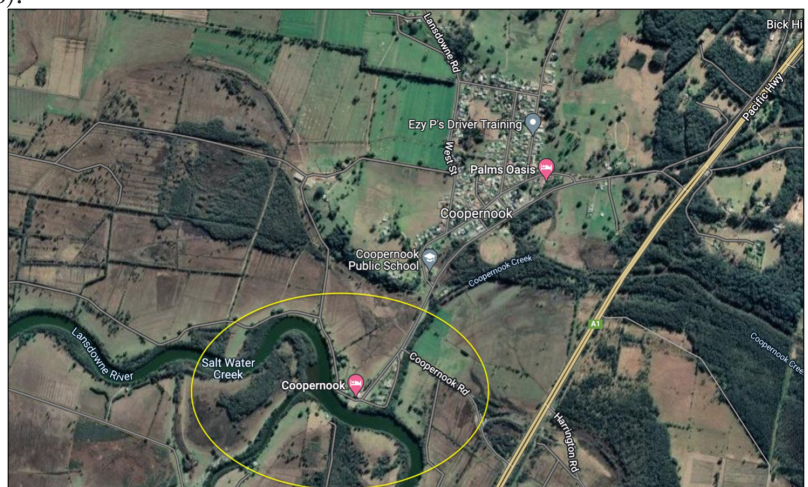


Figure 2. The bend in the Lansdowne River (circled).

(Source: Google Maps)

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...Cooperook and Goonook

Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre, 2005)' (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2011). The reserve is 40 km west of Cooperook and 16 km north of Taree. This, unfortunately, does not bring us much further to determining an etymology.

So, is it possible it is the English word *nook*? It fits quite nicely given the geography of the location and its relative isolation.

The OED provides a number of senses for *nook*, among them:

A place or spot having the character of a recess shut in by rocks, trees, etc.; a secluded or sheltered place among natural or garden scenery.

A corner or angular piece of land; a small triangular field. *rare* in later use.

A piece of land projecting into an adjacent holding and ending in a point. Also *figurative*. In later use *English regional (northern)*. Now *rare*.

A point of land running into the sea; a headland, a promontory. *Obsolete*.

Since the blending of **Indigenous(-derived)** words or names with English or other language words or word elements is not unheard of, e.g. **Bundaberg** (QLD) **Colovale** and **Burravale** (NSW), **Yarraglen** and **Yarravale** (VIC), and **Glenunga** (SA), it is conceivable that *Cooperook* could also be an example of this. However, my gut instinct tells me, no—because if *Goonook* is Indigenous-derived, which in all likelihood it seems to be, then *Cooperook* is also likely to be Indigenous-derived, with the etymology of the *-nook* element remaining obscure.

Tony concluded his article last time with the declaration that the origin of the 'Nellies' 'remains wide open' and appealed for 'further intelligence on this [...]'. I echo his conclusion and similarly appeal for *Cooperook* and *Goonook*.

Jan Tent

Endnotes

¹ From medieval Latin *cūpārius*, *cūperius* from *cūpa* 'cask'. *OED*.

² According to Koch (2009, 146), it is not unusual for the names of human body parts to be used in First Nations placenaming strategies.

³ A probable cognate is found in the Margany and Gunya languages of south-west Queensland, *viz.* **gupu** 'elbow' (Breen, 1979, p. 355).

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ANPS Director for 2024

At its first meeting of each year, the Management Committee has to appoint the Director for the Australian National Placenames Survey. In March the committee appointed **Stuart Duncan** to that task for 2024. We thought we should get Stuart to introduce himself to our readers, so your Editor asked him a few questions.

Ed: How did you get into this placename business, Stuart?

SD: I am not an academic, but just somebody who became interested in placenames and their origin due to my appointment as the Secretary of the Northern Territory Place Names Committee in 1991, a position I held until my retirement in 2011. Prior to 1991, I had been a Government Survey Technician for 17 years working across the Top End of the NT.

Ed: You've clearly been retired for a fair while now. So how have you been filling in your time?

SD: I am currently a resident of the Gold Coast, and travelling and tinkering with cars keeps me occupied. In fact, I'm the President of the Gold Coast MG Car Club. Of course, I've been a supporting member of PA since 2013 and I've been researching NT placenames for the Survey for quite some time now, particularly looking at the journals of Philip Parker King.

I recently came across, at a lookout in the Laidley Valley west of Brisbane, a poem by Terry Moore. The first verse reads:

*The vision of those before us,
When explorers were subject to fame,
Left their mark on this land in passing,
Giving each new discovery a name.*

It was great to see that inscription, because our role at the Survey is to flush out these very placename origins.

We were keen to find a photo of our new Director, but the only ones we could find were fuzzy shots of him standing beside MG sports cars of various colours... until we unearthed this 2004 photo of Stuart at our Bathurst conference. Stuart is on the right, with Bill Watt (then his counterpart in South Australia) looking on admiringly.



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Naming, history, and cultural change...

Here's a definition of history I heard recently: it's the discipline concerned with writing the science of change in past events and human affairs. Born in South Australia, I am surrounded by documentable change and evidence of previous happenings. As an example of that, this article considers the names of fishing ground names off the Dudley Peninsula of Kangaroo Island—specifically, it deals with those between Penneshaw and American River, and looks at them as both local ephemera of the island and as part of its historical inheritance. I chose Dudley Peninsula in 2009 as a comparative island case study for my PhD dissertation in linguistics at the University of Adelaide.¹ Dudley Peninsula has a colourful and varied placenaming history. My brief was simple: compare the placename data from my major toponymic study of Norfolk Island (where I had already been twice by the time I conducted the Dudley Peninsula in February 2009) to the placenames in and around Penneshaw and on the rest of the peninsula. During my first days on Kangaroo Island and in Penneshaw, it became clear that there was a similar system of naming fishing grounds (Figure 1) to that which I'd seen on Norfolk Island.

or academic, of fishing ground placenaming in the state. Within these 54 previously unrecorded names and their appearance on the tapestry of a two-dimensional map, there lives an account of a neighbourhood-based narrative of fishing history; it's a name-inscribed cartographic imprint of the area's history and its offshore lifestyle, culture, and humour, and it reveals the way names grip to the landscape-cum-seascape against the passing of time. It is almost as if these names want to be recorded, that they are crying out to be remembered, not lost. Such work requires someone to bear witness—historian, linguist, ethnographer, or whoever—to bring to life this layer of oral culture and collective memory.

Fishing is an important livelihood and defining cultural activity on Dudley Peninsula. However, modern GPS technology and a decreased dependency on fishing mean that many of these names are a quickly fading memory. Kurlansky's depiction of pioneering fishermen in North America illustrates the need to document the cultural significance of fishing ground names against the inevitability of loss over time:

Only today, having forgot a pencil [for documentation], they head over to the other boat where the three-man crew is already hauling cod with handlines. After a few jokes about the size of this sorry young catch, someone tosses over a pencil. They are ready to fish.³

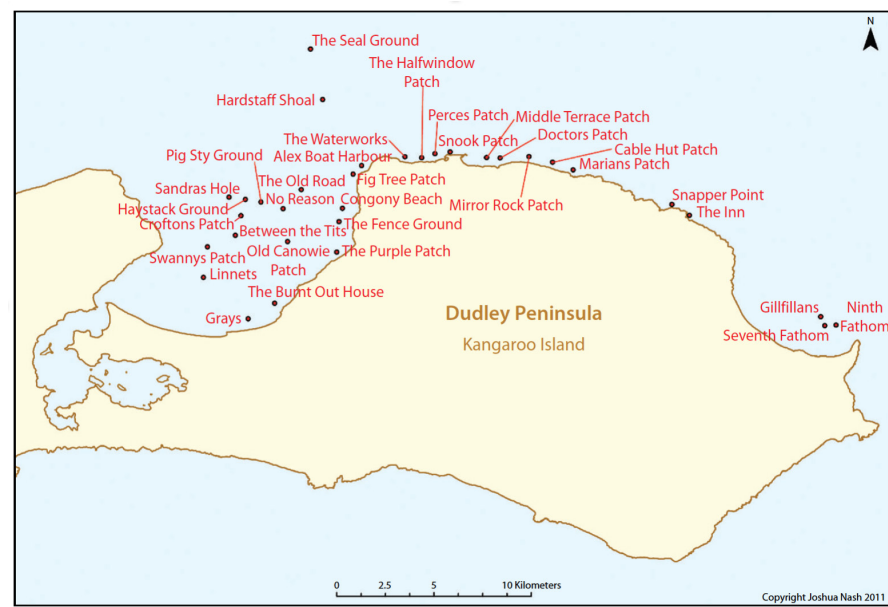


Figure 1. Dudley Peninsula fishing ground names (2011)

Here was an aspect of placenaming that had scarcely been documented in the literature. Apart from Capel's popular description of colloquial names for fishing grounds in coastal South Australia,² this Kangaroo Island research was to my knowledge the first documentation, popular

usage leading to loss of cultural memory, or secrecy within the fishing community. Dudley Peninsula fishing ground names exist within the toponymy of a people who are connected to sea and land for their livelihood. Handwritten journals and scratchy accounts are rare.

...on Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island

Mental records are the main repository of the remaining documentable pointers. In my investigations I am making previously invisible archives visible, turning the obscure into the distinct.

Places like **No Reason** came into being through trial and error from actual fishing experience. These names were passed down through generations. They exist as non-exact and transient offshore locations created through intimate knowledge of the sea and events:

Jeff Howard stopped the boat one day when he was out with Shorty Northcott, put the anchor down and people asked, 'Why did you stop the boat?' and Jeff said, 'No reason'. This is one of the best fishing grounds in the area and it is still used today. It was named approximately 20 years ago and is about half a mile out from shore. (Shorty Northcott, personal communication, Dudley Peninsula, 2009)

Capel's diagram of **Fred's Ground**, named after the shark which was once seen in an area offshore from Adelaide (Figure 2), illustrates how names of fishing grounds prior to GPS have been located and remembered:

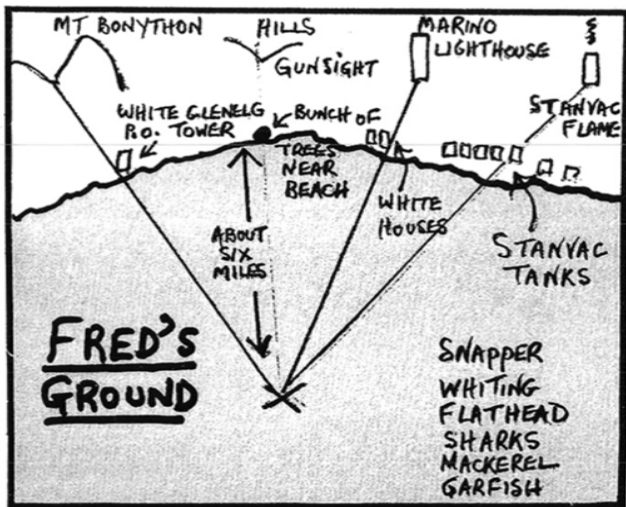


Figure 2. Fred's Ground off the coast of Adelaide (Capel 1997, 5)

Knowledge of these fishing marks is exclusively the realm of older community members, typically men. Few women fish offshore around Dudley Peninsula, so they have less access to fishing ground knowledge. Typically, their knowledge consists of a few common names they overhear when spoken by male relatives or associates. Much of this knowledge has been passed down to the fishermen from family members. Modern tracking

systems, sonar and GPS have rendered a lot of the spatial orientation and name information obsolete.

Fishing is an important livelihood and a defining cultural activity in this remote island community. Kangaroo Island's fisher folk use an intricate system of naming and locating areas which is extremely accurate and existed long before GPS technology. To locate a fishing ground or patch, the fisher has to know approximately how far out at sea they are. They then take two visual markings, lining up obvious facets of the landscape that can be seen offshore. These two marks form a triangle with the offshore point being the location of the fishing ground. This primitive method of triangulation is very precise and reliable. Fishers will never let anyone know their marks lest they give their favourite spots away to others. When interviewing fishers on Dudley Peninsula, I often had to reassure my informants. 'I don't want to know your fishing spots so I can fish there. I really just want to know the names and what they mean. I'm a linguist, not a fisher,' I would say.

Two local names for these fishing grounds are typical of their nature and origin. **Between the Tits** is a ground known to a few local fishers. Off Kangaroo Head, it uses the space in between The Tits, a local feature with a name describing the undulating landscape in the area, in lining up the ground. An old name, it has been used for ages. **The Purple Patch** is just a couple of hundred yards out from shore. The area at sea appears purple due to an underwater reef there. It is a great fishing spot and the name also alludes to the expression, 'you've struck a purple patch,' meaning 'you've done well'.

As the now-late fisherman Nils Swanson narrated to me in February 2009 in his quiet and remote shack in American River,

the fishing ground The Gums is in the American River area, just off the coast. It's about 400 metres north-east from Edgar's Ground. It was named such as some big gum trees in by Deep Creek were used as marks. It was named by locals around World War II. Eight hundred metres back from The Gums you come to The Front Door Patch. It was named by the old timers a long time ago, as you use the front door of The Burnt Out House in the mark. From The Front Door you go out 400 metres to the south-west and you come to Gray's. It was given that name because Gray, a butcher on KI, had built the house. It's a really old name.

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Nils's sharp memory and locational prowess of these offshore locations is reflected on the map in Figure 1, as I have recorded the oral history entrusted to me by him and many other fisherfolk of the Peninsula.

This map now stands as a linguistic and historical artefact, a map representing language-in-place, and an aesthetic representation of the Peninsula's cultural self. The archived record of those fishing ground names which lies behind the map is one significant element of Dudley Peninsula's cultural history. In this case, toponymy provides pointers as to how humans learn to speak about, manage, and orientate themselves in new and unfamiliar environments. Kangaroo Island provides an excellent case study for learning about unofficial naming and understanding the history of settlement, land use, and events in South Australia.

Joshua Nash

someislands.com

Endnotes

¹ Nash, Joshua. Insular Toponymies: Pristine place-naming on Norfolk Island, South Pacific and Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, South Australia. PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2011. Published as Joshua Nash (2013). *Insular Toponymies: Place-naming on Norfolk Island, South Pacific and Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

² Capel, Dave. (1977). *Dave Capel's 50 favourite offshore fishing spots*. Adelaide, Advanced Marketing.

³ Kurlansky, Mark. (1999). *Cod: A biography of the fish that changed the world*. London: Vintage (p.3).

Chop 'em up, we say!

Bill Forrest (Tamworth, NSW) writes that he's been collecting shortened forms of placenames that are well-known, at least in the eastern states. As examples, he gives the variants of places near him:

Boggabri as *Boggy*, Collarenebri as *Colly*, Brewarrina as *Bree*, Gilgandra as *Gil*, Coffs Harbour as *Coff*, Kootingal as *Kooty*, Bendemeer as *Bendy*, Coonabarabran as *Coona*.

Bill also reminds us of some well-known variants from further afield:

Thargominda as *Thargo*, Rockhampton as *Rocky*, Wollongong as *The Gong*, Woolloomooloo as *The Loo*, Alice Springs as *The Alice*, Mount Isa as *The Isa*.

There are a couple he's aware of that don't quite fit the normal pattern:

Woolgoolga as *Woopy*, Werris Creek as *The Crick*.

And some never seem to be abbreviated, he reckons: 'Gunnedah, Narrabri or Moree; and I'm certain nobody would dare abbreviate Wee Waa, or for that matter Tom

Uglys or Curl Curl.'

We linguists love our technical terms—we call these shortened forms of words **hypocoristics**; and Bill's letter jogged our memory of the research that Jane Simpson and David Nash carried out on hypocoristic placenames. A quick look at our ANPS library was all that was needed to find Jane's 2001 report on these toponyms: there were 346 of these alternant names used in Australia at that time.

We'd be very pleased to hear more of these short forms used for Australian places, especially those that might be unknown to the wider community even though they're common in local use. Drop a line to the [Editor](#), and we'll add them to our collection!

David Blair

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Two copied Anglo-Boer War placenames

Spion Kop

The image of Woy Woy in Jim Smith and Peter Ridgeway's article 'Woy Woy and Wauwai, the "monster fish"' in our December 2023 issue has the legend 'Woy Woy Bay from Spion Kop'. The name *Spion Kop* immediately caught my attention, since I'm a native Dutch speaker and it's obviously a Dutch name¹ meaning 'Spy Hill / Outcrop'. It's an apt name for the feature. But how did a Dutch name get attached to a hill overlooking Woy Woy Bay and the township of Koolewong? The [Hiking the World](#) website claims it was named after an Anglo-Boer War battle site (fought 23–24 January 1900, 38 km west-southwest of Ladysmith, Natal Province). The Woy Woy hill is said to bear a close resemblance to its South African counterpart when viewed from a distance. The name has been copied to numerous locations around the world in slightly different forms: *Spioenkop*, *Spioen Kop*, *Spion Kopje*² and *Spioen Cop*.³ Our database lists 34 toponyms in Australia of the form *Spion Kop*—unsurprisingly, mostly hills and mountains (17 in VIC, 7 NSW, 6 TAS, 2 SA, 1 WA, 1 QLD).

Zeerust

Zeerust is a small township in northern Victoria about 16 km directly north of Shepparton. The traditional owners of the region are the Yorta Yorta people. It is pronounced by the locals as [ˈzi:rɑst] (zee-rust) or [ˈzi:rəst] (zee-ruhst). It is an interesting name in that it appears to be a Dutch name; and well it might be, because there is a Zeerust Hotel and Zeerust holiday apartments in the Netherlands—but there is no village or town by that name. Nevertheless, analogously formed names are found for the Dutch localities and buildings: *Heirust* ('Heath Rest'), *Vrederust* ('Peace Rest'), and *Zeldenrust* ('Seldom Rest').⁴ *Zeerust*, in Dutch literally means 'sea-rest', pronounced [ˈze:rɪst], or more freely translated 'rest by the sea' in the same vein as *Bay of Rest* (WA) or *Anglers Rest* (VIC, SA). On the face of it then, Victoria's *Zeerust* seems quite an unusual name given it is so far from the sea. However, the story is linguistically and historically quite convoluted.

Where does the name come from? The principal of Zeerust Primary School, Dr Peter Farrell, writes on page 3 of the *Zeerust Primary School 90th Birthday* celebration newsletter that the township was 'originally destined to

be called *Cromer*... [However] on March 22 1928, the area was officially named *Zeerust* after a settlement in South Africa.' The time of the naming of the township is corroborated in the *Shepparton Advertiser* of July 2, 1928 (page 7), which states:

Zeerust Letter

On and after July 1, the centre formerly known as Gibbons' Estate will bear the name of Zeerust. [...]

We then find that James Green (1903, p. 77), a chaplain with the Australian forces during the Anglo-Boer War, wrote the following on the origin of the South African *Zeerust*:

It is interesting to know how the place got its name. 'Coetzee' came here land-grabbing in the early days, and, having shot down the natives and generally cleared them out, he rested from his labours, and called the place from which he had driven out these Canaanites, Hittites, etc., 'Coetzee's-rest' (rust). Those who came after dropped the first syllable, and so we have 'Zeerust.'

If Green is correct in his claim regarding this Coetzee's activities, he seems to have been quite an unsavoury character, especially given the motivation for the name of his property.

The *Dictionary of South African Place Names* (Raper et al., 2014) states *Zeerust* is the:

Principal town of the Marico district, 67 km north-east of Mafikeng and 102 km west-north-west of Koster. It was laid out in 1867 on the farm Hazenjacht, formerly Sebatlani, proclaimed a town in October 1880 and acquired municipal status in 1936. The name is derived from *Coetzee-Rust*, 'Coetzee's rest', after the owner of the farm, Diederik J Coetzee.

Everett-Heath (2019) claims Coetzee's farm was first known as Coetzee's Home 'from the personal name and Afrikaans *rust* "rest" in the sense of "home".' Then there is the website of the *South Africa – Northwest Province*, which states:

Zeerust was originally Coetzee-Rust, named after Diederick Coetzee, the owner of the farm Hazenjacht. On 20 March 1867, the first erven^[5] of the newly established Coetzee-Rust were sold per public auction in Potchefstroom. The name Coetzee-Rust was later abbreviated to Zeerust. Municipal status was however only obtained on 18 March 1936. Zeerust is situated in the farthest western section of the old Transvaal (north-west in the current Northwest Province), 1187 m above sea level, 241 km west-north-west of Johannesburg and on the main railway line to Zimbabwe and Botswana.

continued next page

...from previous page

...Anglo-Boer War placenames

The origin of the name therefore seems to be pretty well attested.

So, how did the name come to be bestowed upon a place in Victoria? I have only been able to find one reference that provides a clue. The 'Country News' column in *The Argus* (2 July 1928, p. 16), says the following about the naming:

SHEPPARTON

[...] By the postal authorities, Gibbon's estate, the home of many overseas settlers, has been named Zeerust.

If we put two and two together, we can fairly assume that the so-called 'overseas settlers' may either have been South African expats or returned Australian soldiers from the Anglo-Boer War. Green's (1903) memoir mentions the South African town of Zeerust many times, as does Bufton's *Tasmanians in the Transvaal War*. The Australian Light Horse Association website page on the 'Siege of Elands River Post', and Cameron Ross' blog post (2014) on 'The Siege of Elands River' both show the significant role Australian soldiers played in this battle. The siege was significant in that the Elands River location functioned as a supply depot and a staging post between the British

headquarters at Zeerust and their next objective, the town of Rustenburg, 80 km away.

The map below (Figure 1) shows the close proximity of Zeerust to Elands River and therefore its strategic significance.

So, to return to our original question: is the name Zeerust a copied Dutch toponym (as hinted by the hotel names and analogous toponyms in the Netherlands)? Clearly not, as we have discovered. We have seen that it is an Afrikaans linguistic innovation involving the apheresis (i.e. the clipping of the first syllable) of the name *Coetzee* (under the mistaken assumption that *coet-* and *-zee* are/ were meaningful name elements, i.e. morphemes) and blending it with *rust* 'rest'. The Victorian *Zeerust* is thus a copy of a South African toponym, most likely motivated as a commemoration of the siege of Elands River in which the Australians played such a significant role.

Ultimately, the name *Coetzee* has nothing to do with *zee* (the sea). The Dutch Meertens Institute, which conducts research on the Dutch language and culture, provides the following etymology: It is fundamentally a South

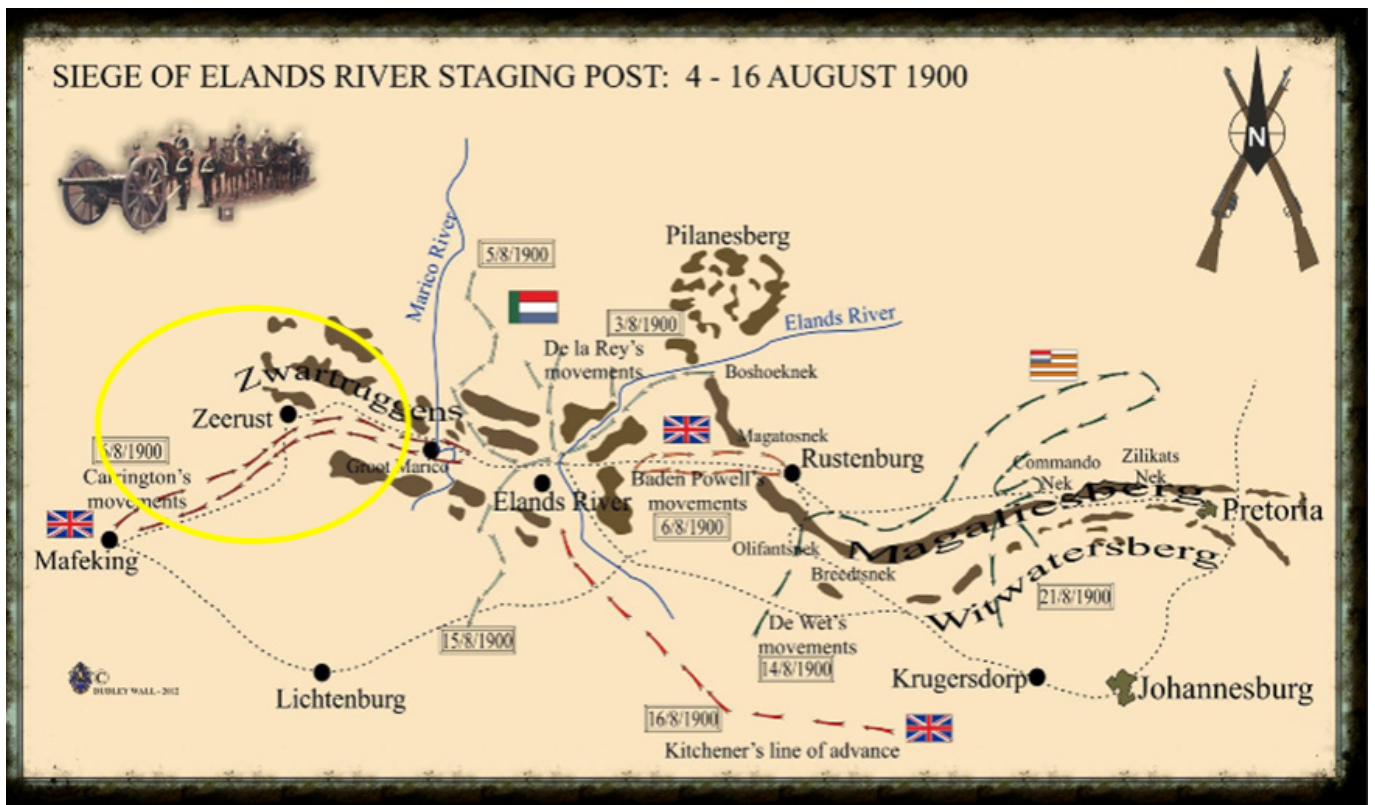


Figure 1. Source: The Rhodesian Soldier <http://www.rhodesiansoldier.com/hist-boer-war-eland-s-river.html>

...Anglo-Boer War placenames

African family name which can be traced back to Dirk Coetzee of the city of Kampen (the Netherlands) in the 17th century. The name is possibly related to the name *Goetzee*, which has been associated with the French name *Gaucher*; or to the name *Kuzee*, which goes back to the Zealand toponym *Cudsee*.⁶ In addition, a connection could be made with the name *Koetze*, which possibly goes back to the German name *Kötz*. Dirk's name had various other spellings: *Coetsee*, *Coetse*, *Couche*, and *Coussé*. He was born in Kampen (NL) ca. 1655 and died in Cape Town in 1725. He was both a soldier and a farmer (*boer*) (Meertens Institute).

Endnotes

- ¹ Pronounced in Dutch as [spion kɔp].
- ² *Kopje* is the Dutch diminutive form.
- ³ The *Dictionary of the Dutch language (Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal)* states that *Spioen* is possibly the same word as *spion* but more likely a corruption of *spiljoen* 'a long-haired, usually white with brown spotted hunting dog, slightly smaller than a setter; partridge dog.'
- ⁴ The last is a popular, and appropriate, windmill name.
- ⁵ 'Erven' ['ɛ:vən] 'ervuhn' plural form of 'erf' [ɛ:f] which refers to a South African a plot of land < Dutch erf [erf] 'property'.
- ⁶ I have not been able to find any historical reference to *Cudsee*, either as a toponym or family name.

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Jan Tent

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Naviti, the first island of Fiji?...

In this series of articles we have offered etymologies of the names of the seven larger islands of Fiji—two very large—and are now examining the next rank: those under 100 square kilometres. We have already looked at Rabe (officially misspelt Rabi, 67 km²), Muala (officially misspelt Moala, 65 km²), Lakeba (60 km²), Vanuabalavu (57 km²), and Beqa (37.5 km²), and the next in line, at 35.03 km², is Naviti, in the Yasawa Islands of western Fiji.

Naviti is almost the most westerly island in Fiji, beaten only by Waya to the south and the small raised coral island of Viwa, some 20 km to the west, after which the next stop is the Solomons. Indeed, a number of boats have drifted to the Solomon Islands from Naviti and nearby islands. It is quite high (388 m) and irregular in shape, with sequences of long peninsulas and bays. There are seven villages on Naviti, divided into two *vanua* (traditional polities), each with a distinct dialect, and one community of descendants of a Scotsman, Jack Stark, who arrived in Fiji in 1873 and married a local lady. Despite its rather sunburnt and barren appearance,

it is relatively fertile and the most populous of the Yasawa Islands.

Unlike many islands of central and eastern Fiji, which were mentioned by Tongans or early European visitors in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, there are no early records of Naviti, and it only made it onto maps in 1845, when it was charted by the American explorer and naval officer Commodore Charles Wilkes.

Now to etymology. We've already met at least one island that is named after a wind: *Kadavu*, meaning 'west wind'; and there are many other placenames based on names of winds, such as *Naceva* 'south wind' and *Natokalau* 'north wind'. Note that in Fijian it is the winds that are named, not the compass directions, whereas in English compass directions are named (*north, south, east, west*) and the winds are usually named after compass directions (*north wind, etc*). Of course there are also English placenames based on compass directions: in my home town I was born and brought up next to the *Sow Brook* (from 'south', lying south of the town centre of Rugby); the names of



The beach at Soso village (photo: Geraldine Triffit)

...Placenames of Fiji 23

the counties *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* in England mean ‘north folk’ and ‘south folk’; *Austria* means ‘kingdom of the East’, and so on.

Also common in placenaming in English and Fijian is referring to the rising and setting of the sun, corresponding to east and west, such as *Levant* for the eastern Mediterranean, and *Japan* for ‘land of the rising sun’. We will discover later in this series that the island of Malolo in western Fiji probably means ‘land of the sunset’.

To understand the etymology of *Naviti* we must move to Aotearoa. The first Maori dance I ever saw was performed by the boys of a school in Fiji I was teaching at, many years ago. It included the words ‘Ka whiti te rā’, which the boys very patriotically Fijianised as ‘Kai Viti tera’, meaning ‘Fijians are terrors!’ The same words occur in a version of the haka, the challenge performed by the All Blacks before every game. The meaning of the Maori is, ‘the sun shines’. The word for ‘sun’, which is *rā*, is related to the Western Fijian word *drā*, meaning ‘sunshine’, and the Maori word for ‘shine’, with reference to the sun, is *whiti*.

This word is not confined to New Zealand Maori, but is found throughout Polynesia, where it more commonly means ‘sunrise’ as in Tahitian and Rennellese *hiti*, and Tikopia *fiti*. In New Zealand Maori, it can also mean ‘the east’. So, although it is not currently used in this sense in Fijian, it is reasonable to assume that it did have that meaning among the first settlers of Fiji, from whom Polynesians are descended.

Most prehistorians believe that the first inhabitants of Fiji, now called ‘Lapita people’, set out from the eastern Solomon Islands or northern Vanuatu approximately three thousand years ago. Approaching Fiji from that direction, the settlers would have probably sailed past the relatively uninviting Viwa, having already seen two prominent volcanic islands ahead. The southerly

one was the mountainous Waya and the northerly one the more gently sloped island of Naviti, which no doubt would have been viewed as an attractive landfall.

It would not then have taken them long to discover that there was a much larger land, indeed the largest in the group, not very far to the southeast. Naturally, they called it *Navitilevu*, meaning ‘larger Naviti’ or ‘the larger island to the east’, which is now often shortened to *Vitilevu*.

Western Polynesia (Tonga, Samoa and some smaller islands) was settled very soon after Fiji, whereas Eastern Polynesia remained unpeopled for another two thousand or so years. When some Western Polynesians, or perhaps inhabitants of the northern Polynesian outliers in what is now the Solomon Islands, finally decided to look for land to the east, they discovered a large island which they called *Tafiti*, meaning (unsurprisingly) ‘sunrise’ or ‘the east’, *ta* being a Polynesian definite article. This *Tafiti* then changed to *Tahiti*, the name by which it is now known. So Naviti, Vitilevu, Fiji and Tahiti are all named after the same ancient word, *viti*, meaning ‘sunrise’ or ‘east’.



Vaturua (‘two rocks’), from Malevu village, Naviti (photo: Geraldine Triffit)

Next time—back to the Lau islands in eastern Fiji and the almost circular island of **Cicia**, at 35 km² only slightly smaller than Naviti.

Paul Geraghty
University of the South Pacific

Placenames Puzzle Number 90

Animalian toponyms

The clues in this puzzle reveal the names of places that have names of animals as their specific elements. For example: (NSW) A Sydney northern suburbs beach with a cetaceous name. *Whale Beach*.

None of the toponyms contain iconic Australian animals (like *kangaroo*, *dingo*)—that would make it too easy!

1. (NSW) A big cat island in Broken Bay
2. (VIC) A water-loving bovine mountain
3. (WA) A bay with dangerous fish
4. (NSW) Pinniped (from L. *pinna* 'fin' and *pes, pedis* 'foot') rocks
5. (TAS) An island with the same name as a brand of cigarettes
6. (SA) A deceased bovine headland
7. (QLD) A pachyderm mountain
8. (TAS) A feline mountain range
9. (NT) A sea-dwelling reptile reef in the Gulf of Carpentaria
10. (NSW) A porky stream
11. (NSW) A satanic island in Sydney Harbour
12. (QLD) A fleeced ovine stream
13. (SA) A pooch island
14. (WA) Avian rocks
15. (TAS) A serpentine stream
16. (WA) An island that babbles incessantly
17. (TAS) A stream with a name for a clandestine informant
18. (VIC) A stream with a name of an animal that lives in a sett
19. (WA) An island with a name of a disease spreading rodent
20. (NT) A warty amphibian headland

[Compiled by **Jan Tent**
Answers on page 2]

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