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Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

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What happened to Perry's Hill?

There are several places in Australia which bear, or have borne, either officially or unofficially, the name *Perrys Hill*. One in the rural district of Bailieston in central Victoria[1] is almost certainly named for John Arthur Perry or William Perry, both of whom owned land in the area at the turn of the 20th century.[2] Another, in Western Australia, was the site of a limestone quarry and kilns in the early 1900s and is now part of Perry Lakes Reserve, a few kilometres west of the Perth CBD,[3] the hill and the reserve both taking their name from the quarry owner, Joseph Perry.[4]

In New South Wales, Perrys Hill at Alstonville, about 12 km west of Ballina, is the only one listed in the Geographical Names Register. It is named after John Perry who arrived in the district about 1870 and later served 31 years as a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly.[5] Alstonville itself was originally known as Duck Creek but was renamed for postal purposes in 1873,[6] adopting the name of Perry's property which honoured his wife, Susan McAuslan Alston.[7]

Further south, Perrys Hill at Repton is an undistinguished mound on the northern bank of the Bellinger River from which the lookout offers a pleasant, if undramatic, view over the valley towards the conspicuous peak of Picket Hill some 15 km to the south. Although a number of Perrys have been associated with the area it is not clear for whom the hill was named.

However, there is yet another 'Perry's Hill' which first appeared on a map in 1831 and is almost certainly the first place in Australia to be given the name.[8] It is located in the Hastings Valley, and lies on the Oxley Highway about 10 km west of Wauchope. Although traversed by hundreds or thousands of people each day, it is (unlike the nearby Broken Bago Range with its eye-drawing cliffs and bluffs) unremarkable, rising to only 80 metres above sea level and passing mostly unnoticed. The name appeared on maps for less than a decade before retreating into obscurity.

Perrys Hill in the Hastings Valley, from the north east. (photo: the author)

Nevertheless, the fact that it did appear on some of the earliest maps prompts one to ask: why did the hill capture attention in the first instance, why was it named *Perry's Hill*, and why did the name not survive? These were the questions I set out to answer.

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From the Editor

I have to tell you that we at PA are pretty excited at the work Stuart Duncan has been doing in getting our additional website online. Yes, indeed—not only do we have the ANPS website that you know well, we now have a *new* site that brings to the foreground the Survey's supporting institution, Placenames Australia.

placenames.org.au

I invite you to use this link to check out the website, and see how we're progressing with it. You'll find that much of our current content has already been moved across to it, so that the ANPS site can focus on the research work of the Survey. For the time being, though, you'll be able to find everything (such as this Newsletter) in both locations.

David Blair
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Placenames in the media

Trump and the Gulf of Mexico

Life is full of toponymic excitement now that the USA has a new president. As well as threatening to annex foreign territories and making Canada the 51st state, renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America is on the agenda, as you've no doubt heard. Our reader Rod Ewins has drawn our attention to this excellent article on the topic by Professor Paul Schofield. It appeared in *The Conversation* towards the end of January.

Live in the studio, for a change

The Editor reports: It's not unusual for me to do radio interviews about our placenames, though what *is* unusual these days is to do so live in the studio. When a recent *NSW Mornings* session with ABC host **Paul Turton** was scheduled, I happened already to be in Newcastle on family business at the time—it was a great pleasure to talk across the desk with Paul for a change. And a shout-out to Paul's producer **Laurise Dickson** (and to **Jennifer Ingall**, her predecessor, who was in the studio at the time). After watching Laurise control the broadcast while juggling inserts and incoming calls, my already-great respect for producers has now increased to a new level!

Feedback

ICOS online

Jan Tent has drawn our attention to a website Onomastics Online. It provides a series of online lectures 'dealing with important timely topics related to names and naming' and is hosted by the International Council of Onomastic Sciences. Recommended!

Willsons Downfall

A while ago **David McDonald**, while he was thinking about Joe Rocks (December 2024, p. 6), came across the Tenterfield locality Willsons Downfall—said to be named after a Mr Willson who had a buggy which broke down at a gully in this locality during the 1870s. 'Ah, folk etymology!' we hear you cry... You might be surprised; we'd better tell you what we've discovered. In our June issue, we promise.

***Puzzle** answers - (from page 12)*

1. Wagga Wagga
2. Mitta Mitta River
3. Wangi Wangi
4. Jim Jim Falls
5. Curl Curl
6. Bungle Bungle Range
7. Kin Kin
8. Woy Woy
9. Bindi Bindi
10. Bong Bong
11. Baw Baw
12. Bli Bli
13. Goonoo Goonoo
14. Burra Burra
15. Grong Grong
16. Lal Lal
17. Book Book
18. Gumly Gumly
19. Mooney Mooney
20. Tilba Tilba

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...from page 1

...What happened to Perry's Hill?

After the death of Surveyor General John Oxley in May 1828 his deputy, Major Thomas Mitchell, succeeded to the position, and later that year Captain Samuel Augustus Perry was appointed as the new Deputy Surveyor General of the colony.[9]

Perry—a veteran of the Peninsula War, former professor of topographical drawing at the Royal Military College and aide-de-camp to the governor of Dominica—arrived in Sydney with his wife and six children on the *Sovereign* in August 1829,[10] only a few weeks after Governor Ralph Darling had received permission to open the Port Macquarie district to free settlers.

Port Macquarie had been established as a penal settlement in 1821, although a recommendation to open it to free settlers was made to the British government by Governor Brisbane as early as 1825.[11] The recommendation was reiterated by Governor Darling in 1827[12] but it was not until July 1829, with the arrival of the convict transport *Waterloo*,[13] that Darling was given the authority to take the necessary steps.[14]

Most of the preparatory work for the opening fell to the Colonial Secretary's office, but the vital practical work of surveying the land and preparing it for selection was the responsibility of the survey department which Perry now joined.

Surveyor James Ralfe had been based in the Port Macquarie district, on and off, since April 1828 and had already traced the Hastings, Maria and Wilson Rivers, producing a map depicting their courses together with a number of Indigenous and European placenames but little other information.[15] However, in March 1830 he received instructions to extend the survey into the areas on either side of the rivers, divide the land into sections for selection, and make provision for towns, village reserves and church lands.[16] Draughtsman Frederick D'Arcy was despatched to Port Macquarie to assist him, and over the next few months they and their teams engaged in the necessary work.

Although Perry played a minor role in these preliminary steps, one of his tasks was to examine the applications for land in the district and produce a priority list for approved applicants to make their selections once it was officially opened.[17] The opening took place on 15 August 1830 and less than three months later Perry travelled to Port Macquarie to see first-hand how matters were progressing.

He arrived there on the *Mary Elizabeth* on 2 November, and, as it was the first time he had ventured outside the Sydney area, arrangements were made for Ralfe to conduct him on a tour along the Hastings River. Excerpts from Perry's personal journal, quoted in Jillian Oppenheimer's biography of him,[18] show that it was an experience he would not easily forget.

The excursion commenced on 6 November when the party set out for the proposed township of Hay which was to serve as the shipping port for the Hastings Valley. A day was spent looking over the area before they decamped on the 9th to make their way westwards on the southern side of the Hastings, Perry complaining that he was 'obliged to sit on the mutilated remains of a horse supplied me by the Commandant at the special request of the Govt.'

When they reached King's River (now King Creek) they proceeded to the crossing place some distance upstream but heavy rain had set in and they were held up for the next eight or nine days. During that time Perry determined to get a better view of the country by climbing to the top of the already-mentioned Broken Bago Range which, at its highest point, reaches well over 400 metres above sea level. His plan did not work out well and it is doubtful that he attained his objective because he and his attendants

> ...got so completely entangled in the brush that we were obliged to remain the whole night in the most uncomfortable situation, wet through, water on all sides, no means of making a fire, nothing to eat and all communication cut off…In this intricate country persons wandering from their station should always be provided with flint and steel, ammunition, a small flask of spirits in case of need and a bit of biscuit.

The team's discomfort caused by the long delay at King's River in incessant, drenching rain was amplified by the inadequacy of their equipment, Perry observing that

> ...the men are miserable. Their tent is useless so that they (seven in number) are obliged to lay in a heap under a few sheets of bark ...

Eventually, however, the weather brightened and on 18 November they were able to recommence their journey, crossing King's River and making their way westward.

continued next page

...from previous page

That day they covered some 7 kilometres over soggy but slightly elevated ground well to the south of the Hastings River which had broken its banks and inundated all the low-lying land to a considerable depth. The following day they struggled for eight hours to cover a further 5 km which brought them to 'the angle of the River called by the Natives Bahrombin' (a name spelt variously at that time but later accepted as *Brombin* after Robert Ackroyd adopted it as the name of his estate there). It was the point for which Ralfe had been aiming and where, by prior arrangement, they were to meet up with D'Arcy's team which had been travelling along the northern bank of the Hastings from their camp at Red Bank.

Under normal conditions the river was readily fordable at this place and Perry had hoped that once the two parties were united he could proceed further upstream. But his plans were thwarted when the rain returned and continued virtually unabated for the next six days. At that point Perry decided to return to the settlement, arriving there on 30 November but not until after suffering a final indignity when the bullock carrying the portmanteau containing his clothes, books, paper, instruments and 'everything else of consequence', including his bed and his gun case, ditched its entire load in King's River.

Back in the settlement, Perry undoubtedly hoped that a vessel would soon be available to take him back to his comfortable quarters in Sydney. As it turned out, he had to wait until early February for one to arrive. How he filled the time is uncertain but he produced at least one painting, now in the possession of the Port Macquarie Historical Society.[19] He might also have worked on the new town layout, and is known to have continued his observations of Aboriginal culture, something that clearly engrossed him.

Ralfe did not accompany Perry on his return to the settlement but instead remained at Brombin. It was from there that he sent in his monthly report, dated 30 November 1830, in which he described the events of the past few weeks and observed that

> ...the Deputy Surveyor General returned to Port Macquarrie having previously made arrangements for the formation of a Depot here and procured from the Settlement the necessary Materials and a Carpenter with whom the Men of both Parties are at present employed.[20]

He later added that

> ...not less than two men should be left in charge of the Depot to protect the provisions and stores against the attacks of the Natives until the district becomes a little more peopled with Europeans. And it would be very advantageous to the service if it could be arranged that supplies be forwarded from the settlement either by the Commissariat or the Engineers Department to Red Bank or the Head of the Navigation of the river at stated periods and taken from there to the Depot by the pack bullocks.

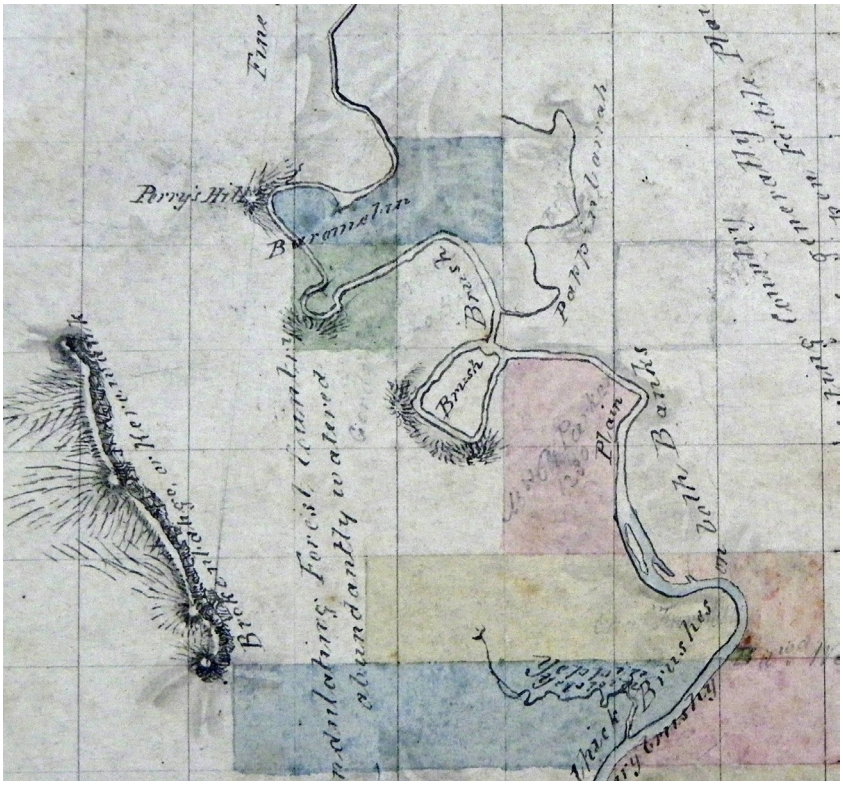
It is, therefore, clear that after Perry's departure the two survey parties managed to unite and that men from both were engaged with the carpenter in constructing the new depot. How large it was is not known, although it was probably little more than a small hut to provide storage space for the necessary supplies and shelter for the men guarding it.

Perrys Hill, from the north west. (photo: the author)

Since it lay on the existing track the depot was easily accessible and, being sited on high ground, was more easily defendable against raids. With regard to its name, since it represented not only the termination point of Perry's journey but was erected under his authorisation, it was natural to grace it with his name, *Perry's Hill*. The depot's importance to surveying parties explains why it was shown on the map created by Ralfe in 1831 (next page), the main purpose of which was to show the portions applied for or already taken up.

...Perry's Hill?

Perry's Hill has been found on only two other maps. One, produced by Ralfe in 1833 to mark the existing and projected roads running out of Port Macquarie, depicts Perry's Hill at the western end of the road leading up the Hastings Valley.[21] The other, undated and unattributed, is a more pictorial version of the 1831 map but updated to include portions taken up after that time, together with the names of the purchasers. It is estimated to have been published no later than early 1837 since a number of portions occupied in the late 1830s have obviously been added post-publication.[22]



Detail from James Ralfe's map of 1831

That, as far as is known, is the last map on which Perry's Hill is shown. A chart of the same district, again undated but apparently published in 1840 or maybe a little later, indicates a village reservation of 1 square mile embracing the location of the hill and depot, though neither is marked.[23]

Why, then, did Perry's Hill disappear from the maps so quickly? The most likely reason is that the depot was no longer needed. By the early 1840s European settlement had extended to the most distant parts of the Hastings Valley and work had already commenced on the road up the ranges to New England. As a result, supply lines along the valley to even the most outlying farms had been established. Under these circumstances it was unnecessary to maintain a depot at Brombin and, without it, the significance of the location was lost.

Indeed, by the 1850s it had also become clear that no village would be established there and over the next few years the reserved land was divided into small portions and made available for selection. Portion 19, Parish of Koree, the 40-acre lot on which Perry's Hill was located, was purchased by Samuel Johns who also acquired two adjoining lots on the flats below the hill with frontage to the Hastings River and through which the lowermost part of Gannons Creek flowed. He was to reside there for almost sixty years.

Samuel and his wife Jane (née Rowe) came to New South Wales as assisted immigrants. Both were born in Devonshire, Samuel in the Parish of Sourton[24] and Jane in the Parish of Plympton St Mary,[25] and they were married in December 1854 just six days before leaving Plymouth on the migrant ship *Bermondsey*.[26] After arriving in Sydney in April 1855,[27] they went to live in the Hunter region for a few years before moving with their two small daughters to the Hastings in 1859 and taking up the freehold of their Gannons Creek farm.[28]

As the years passed more children arrived—four boys and two more girls—and in 1887 Samuel was appointed a trustee of the district cemetery, known as the Crossroads.[29] However, his major contribution to the community came in 1895 when he donated a quarter acre of land for the erection of a Methodist church.

Samuel and Jane, probably unaware that the hill on their farm had earlier been the site of a survey depot and named *Perry's Hill*, decided to call their farm 'Brunswick Hill', though why they chose that name is unclear. The new Methodist church was erected on the summit of the hill, on or close to the site of the earlier depot, and around 150 people attended the gala opening on 3 December 1895.[30] One report described the site as 'unique, being on the top of a clear, high hill, from whence a splendid and picturesque view is obtained.'[31]

continued next page

Over the next two decades religious services and other events were regularly conducted in the church, but when Samuel died in July 1916 at the age of eighty four[32] he was no longer the owner of the farm, having sold it two years earlier to his son, Samuel Joseph Rowe Johns, for £500. After Jane's death in 1917, the Methodist Mission decided to sell the church and put the proceeds towards building a church at Beechwood, a few kilometres away on the northern side of the river.

Samuel and Jane were buried in the same plot in the Wesleyan section of the Crossroads Cemetery but the name 'Brunswick Hill' was by then attached to the farm and was retained by subsequent owners until at least 1972.[33]

At some point between the abandonment of the church and 1934, at which time the farm was in the hands of Harold Coombes,[34] the hill was excavated to supply gravel for road building. As a result, the summit of the hill is now hollowed out to a considerable depth, leaving only a narrow inaccessible rim above the cleared slopes.

The story of Perrys Hill is, like the stories of many placenames, unique but not unusual. Names were conferred for known reasons but, in the course of history, were then forgotten, lost, changed or even transferred to another place. Only the most important survive the centuries, and Perry's Hill was not one of them.

Tony Dawson

Endnotes

[1] Department of Transport and Planning, Victoria: *Survey Marks Enquiry Service* (online at https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/SmesUI.jsp); *Nagambie Times*, 6 December 1901, p. 2

[2] *Nagambie Times,* 6 December 1901, p. 2

[3] *Western Mail,* 20 June 1913, p. 24

[4] Heritage Council of WA (online at https://inherit.dplh.wa.gov.au)

[5] Parliament of NSW (online at https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/formermembers/Pages/former-member-details.aspx?pk=860)

[6] *New South Wales Government Gazette,* 24 December 1872 [Issue No. 326], p. 3326

[7] *Australian Town and Country Journal,* 26 November 1870, p. 29

[8] Museums of History New South Wales - State Archives Collection: Surveyor General's Crown Plans 1792-1886. SG Map M.606a, Item No: [3653], 1831

[9] Sir George Murray to Governor Darling, 12 December 1828. *Historical Records of Australia* Series 1, Vol 14, p. 515

[10] *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser,* 4 August 1829, p. 2

[11] Governor Brisbane to Lord Bathurst 21 May 1825. *Historical Records of Australia* Series 1 Vol. 11, p604

[12] Governor Darling to Viscount Goderich 26 September 1827. *Historical Records of Australia* Series 1 Vol. 13, p. 522

[13] *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser,* 11 July 1829, p. 2

[14] Sir George Murray to Governor Darling 26 November 1828. *Historical Records of Australia* Series 1 Vol. 14, p. 480

[15] Museums of History New South Wales - State Archives Collection: Surveyor General's Crown Plans 1792-1886. SG Map M.927, Item No. [3813], 1830

[16] Colonial Secretary, Special Bundles 1826–1832: *Port Macquarie – opening of settlement.* NSW State Archives [NRS 906: Ref 4/4568.2. Mitchell to Ralfe 26 March 1830]

[17] Colonial Secretary: Special Bundles 1826-32: *Port Macquarie – opening of settlement.* NSW State Archives [NRS 906: Ref: 4/4568.2: Report on Selections of Land at Port Macquarie notified to the Surveyor General prior to the opening of that Settlement – 27 August 1830]

[18] Jillian Oppenheimer. *Perry – Soldier and Surveyor* Ohio Productions: Armidale, NSW, 2009

[19] Samuel Augustus Perry. 'St Thomas Church, Port Macquarie c.1831'

[20] Museums of History New South Wales - State Archives Collection: Surveyor General. Surveyors letters 1822-1855. Item No. [2/1569A] Reel 3084. Ralfe to Mitchell 30 November 1830

[21] Museums of History New South Wales - State Archives Collection: Surveyor General's Crown Plans 1792-1886. SG Map R.799 Item No: [5069], 1833

[22] District of Macquarie [cartographic material]. State Library of New South Wales. Call Number Z/M2 811.22/1831/1

[23] Sketch of area between Macleay River and Manning River, County of Macquarie [cartographic material]. National Library of Australia. Ferguson Collection, Map F29

[24] 'England, Devon Bishop's Transcripts, 1558-1887'. Entry for Samuel Johns, 07 Aug 1831, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2M3-WHQJ): accessed Thu Mar 07 14:04:20 UTC 2024

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[27] Assisted immigrants *Bermondsey* 29 Apr 1855. NSW State Archives [NRS-5316: Item 4/4792, Reel 2137 Image 112]

[28] *New South Wales Government Gazette,* 16 April 1859 [Issue No. 68 (Supplement)], p. 863

[29] *New South Wales Government Gazette* 1 March 1887 [Issue No. 114], p. 1390

[30] *The Port Macquarie News and Hastings River Advocate,* 7 December 1895, p. 5

[31] *Macleay Argus,* 11 December 1895, p. 2

[32] *The Northern Champion,* 19 July 1916, p. 2

[33] *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales* 23 February 1972 [Issue No. 18 (Supplement)], p. 582,

[34] *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 5 June 1934, p. 7

Caveat, Victoria

The legal term that became a toponym

Caveat is an unusual toponym. It designates a small Victorian rural location within the LGA of Murrindindi, located approximately 140 km north of Melbourne, and has a recorded population of 41. Normally, 'caveat' is legal Latin for 'let him beware', in other words, a warning to consider something before taking any more action, or a statement that limits a more general statement, a proviso. So, how did this legal term get applied to the Victorian location?

According to Blanks (1973) it was named as the result of a legal dispute over the boundary between the 'Dropmore' and 'Switzerland' pastoral runs. It may have originally been called *The Caveat*, because the local school was known as The Caveat State School (closed 1963).

The only other reference I have been able to find that mentions Caveat's naming is an article in *The Granite News* of 2009. Unfortunately, it fails to mention the aetiology of the toponym: 'In 1902 a hall-cum–school was built and called *Fassifern Hall*. The name changed to *Highlands* about five years later. This building cost a total of £47. At the other end of the district, *Dropmore South* provided schooling for the children. In 1912 this was replaced by *Molesworth Gap*, built from local timber and renamed *Caveat* during World War 2.'

Jan Tent

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'People and Places: Highlands History N°. 3: Early Schooling.' *The Granite News*, Vol. No. 25, 17 August, 2009.

This is the first in our new series of *VIGNETTES*—short pieces on Australian placenames submitted by you, our readers. We encourage you to email us!

In coming issues **Jan Tent** will tell the story of *Pettit*, 'a tiny village located just off the Hume Highway about halfway between Coolac and Gundagai' in NSW; and *Shelley*, a locality in NE Victoria between Koetong and Corryong.

Toponymist on the loose...

Where the bloody hell are we?

The March 2017 issue of *Placenames Australia* contained my review of Eamon Evans' *Mount Buggery to nowhere else.* The article had the title 'I'm buggered if I know where I am', and I went back to it just this morning, almost eight years later. Not much has changed. I'm still often stumped about where I am, what directions I took to get there, and what placename signs, if any, helped me along the way.

A few weeks back, I was riding my bike through the Adelaide suburb of Flinders Park—thanks, Captain Matthew—along the Torrens River (River Torrens?). I turned around to double take on a street sign I'd just passed, to get a snap of it (below). 'Surely,' I thought, 'this is an Indigenous spelling of our nation's capital.' I rode on, mostly down streets whose names I don't know, finding my way implicitly and thereabouts, rather than knowing exactly where the bloody hell I was.

Kanbara St is the longest street in a small Flinders Park pocket with four other street names of Indigenous origin: *Wirringga St*, *Weemala St*, *Parukala St*, and *Parana St*. So how did they get these names? Well, we can say first of all that *Kanbara* has nothing to do with *Canberra*. The national capital's name is well documented: it comes from the language of the Canberra area, and none of the documented early spellings are anything like 'kanbara'. The lesson here, I suppose, is that coincidence does not make a good etymology!

So do all these Flinders Park names come from Kaurna, the language of the First Nations people of that area? Not so, apparently; it seems most likely that the names come from a collection of 'nice Aboriginal words' found in various parts of Australia. Perhaps I'll be able to tell you more next time.

Joshua Nash
Some Islands

Isisford...

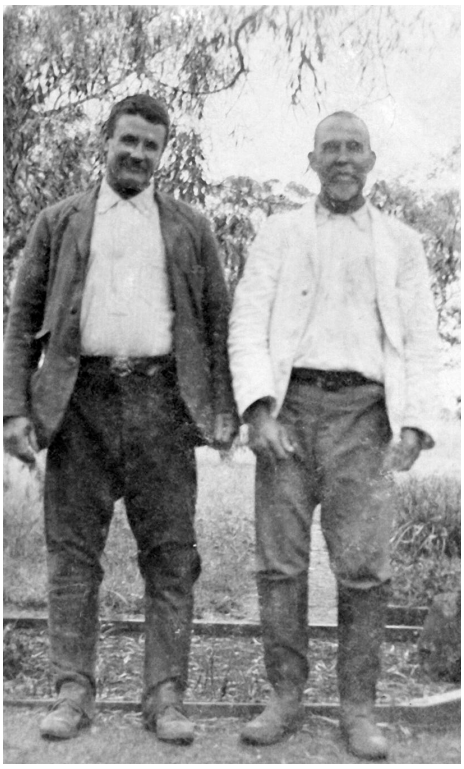
River fords and crossings are important in our history, as we've been reminded recently while we were researching some Queensland placenames. In fact, although the Survey last year downsized its feature catalogue to more accurately reflect which placename categories we actually research, we've just had to restore the feature *ford* because of its importance as the origin of subsequent names of our places. This change inspired me to investigate one of those river crossing names because of a connection to my own family.

Isisford is typical of many settlements which sprang up in central western Queensland during the 19th century—and the reason for its establishment is reflected in its name. The site was four miles from the 'Isis Downs' station homestead situated near a well-used crossing of the Barcoo River. There were huge pastoral runs in the far north towards the Gulf of Carpentaria and south through Cloncurry and Longreach, continuing past what later became the NSW border. Such river crossings were vital for the transportation of stock and wool to market, and for supplies to the stations.

The area around Isisford first came to notice when Thomas Mitchell, during his 1845 explorations, named the river *Victoria*. The name was changed shortly afterwards to *Barcoo*, when Edmund Kennedy thought Aboriginal informants told him the river's name was *Barka Amoo*. This was a misunderstanding, for Barka Amoo meant 'two rivers', and Kennedy was at a river junction at the time.[1]

During the early 1860s large areas in this part of Queensland were secured under lease from the Government. 'Isis Downs' station was taken up in 1867 and named after the Isis River, a tributary of the Thames in England. The original owners sold it in 1872, stocked with about 20,000 sheep, and in 1874 the first steps were taken to found a town.[2] The Post Office records show that by 1877 the settlement was known as *Wittown* after the Whitmans who were early settlers. The name was changed to *Isisford* in 1878, presumably a combination name reflecting the importance of both the station and the river crossing. A telegraph office opened in 1881.[3]

According to an 1898 report from the Rockhampton newspaper *The Capricornian*, the tiny settlement boomed in 1876 due to population increase in the surrounding area. A second hotel, another store and a boarding house were erected. After that, 'a large amount of business was transacted with the surrounding stations, and with the travellers and drovers who frequently took the route from Tambo and Blackall to the far west via Isisford.'[4]

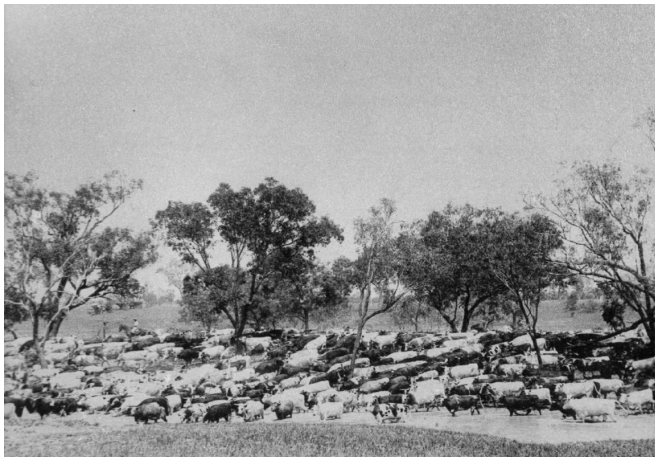


Henry (H.B.) Lane and his father

My great-grandfather, Henry Bassett Lane, was one of those 'drovers'. Known as H.B. within the family, he had arrived in Queensland from Cornwall in 1866 as a ten year old boy. The following year his father was employed on 'Daandine' station near Dalby on the Darling Downs. H.B. impressed the station manager, who educated him in the homestead at night, whilst he worked as a station hand during the day. When he was eighteen years old H.B. was promoted to stock overseer.[5] The owners of 'Daandine' also owned 'Buckingham Downs' station just south of the Mount Isa/Cloncurry district. It became H.B.'s duty to bring cattle from 'Buckingham Downs' either to 'Daandine' or to market in Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley.

There is a photo (next page) held in my family of twenty-six year old H.B. in charge of a herd of cattle crossing the Barcoo at Isisford in 1882. The cattle had come from 'Buckingham Downs' and were bound for Muswellbrook. In the picture the Barcoo looks perfect for the cattle: quite a small stream, easy to cross but with plenty of water for the stock. This was not always the case, as reported in *The Capricornian*. 'During drought the only evidence of a river are a few billabongs containing little water.' During the rainy season the Barcoo overflowed its banks and flooded the surrounding country.[6] It is evident that the

...Isisford



Crossing the Barcoo at Isisford in 1882

state of the river crossing was of major concern to the drovers. The men would be absent from home for many months, sometimes in drought or flood, and the cattle needed to arrive at their destination in good condition to gain a high price. For H.B's journey of 1882, the arrival of the telegraph at Isisford the year before was fortunate. There were families and friends waiting and worrying at home about H.B. and his stockmen, as well as investors anxious about their profits. In 1878, twelve miles from 'Buckingham Downs' homestead, four stockmen had been killed by Aborigines only a week after H.B. departed with a mob of cattle.[7]

My cousin, Greg Lane, had reason to visit Cloncurry in June 2024. His wife Penny had won the prestigious $10,000 Cloncurry prize for poetry in 2023. The theme for the competition was 'Outback Heroes' and her poem was about H.B.'s mother Mary. Penny was then appointed to the judging panel in the following year. She and Greg set off in their caravan from Nelson Bay in NSW, bound for Cloncurry. On the return journey they chose to follow the route H.B had taken with his cattle in 1882. I was delighted when they sent me some photographs taken at the crossing of the Barcoo at Isisford, a match for the old family photograph (right). At the time the river was mostly a series of waterholes as described in *The Capricornian*. There is a road with a bridge over the river, quite high because of the regular floods, and stock is now transported in trucks. This river crossing, and many others in outback Queensland, have maintained their importance to vital transportation links since H.B.'s long-ago droving days.

Today **Isisford** remains a small settlement with a population of just over 200. The residents are very proud of the town and of its origins as a crossroad to the far west. Several old buildings have been kept in original condition and are signposted with details of their history. These include an old bakery, and visitors are encouraged to inspect the interior. It is not difficult to accept claims that Isisford, situated in the 'outer Barcoo', was the inspiration for many of A.B. Paterson's works such as 'The Bush Christening' and 'Clancy of the Overflow'.[8]

Dale Lehner

Endnotes

[1] Queensland Dept. of Natural Resources Website, Placenames Search, Barcoo River, using information from T. L. Mitchell, *Journal of an expedition into the interior of Australia*. London, 1848, p. 333.

[2] *The Capricornian* (Rockhampton, Qld. 1875-1929) 12 Nov. 1898 p.17.

[3] *Queensland Post Offices 1842-1980 and Receiving Offices 1869-1927*. Joan Frew, 1981.

[4] *The Capricornian* ,12 Nov. 1898 p.17.

[5] Obituary, Henry Bassett Lane, *Dalby Herald,* August 1939.

[6] *The Capricornian*, Rockhampton Qld. 1875-1829) 12 November 1898 p.17

[7] Robert E. M. Armstrong, in *A study of an Aboriginal tribe on the Queensland frontier*. Year and publisher unknown. (ISBN 0 85568 4836) pp. 40, 88. In Obituary, Henry Bassett Lane, *Dalby Herald*. August 1939.

[8] From the *Australian Explorer* website, 'Isisford'.

The crossing over the Barcoo with its bridge at Isisford today

Qamea, land of surprises...

In this series of articles, we have looked at etymologies of the seven larger islands of Fiji and are now examining the next rank: those under 100 square kilometres. We have already considered five of those, and we now head to the island of **Qamea** (34.5 km^2), to the north-east of Taveuni and west of the much smaller Laucala. For readers who are not familiar with Fijian spelling, note that 'q' is a prenasalised velar stop; that is, pronounced like English 'ng' in 'finger' (but not as in 'singer'). On some older maps and other publications intended for non-Fijian speakers, it is spelt 'Nggamea'.

Qamea is a heavily indented island of volcanic origin, about 10 km long, varying greatly in width, due to the many bays and inlets. A number of steep hills reach some 300 metres in height. It is covered mainly in forest, with areas of grass and reeds.

Qamea was one of a small number of islands seen by the Dutchman Abel Tasman in February 1643 as he sailed from Tonga to the Solomon Islands, skirting the north-east of Fiji. He was therefore the first European to see any island in Fiji. He recorded no names, since he had no contact with any inhabitant. He named the islands *Prins Wyllems Eylanden* (Prince William's Islands), in honour of William II, Prince of Orange. However, because of the secretiveness of Tasman's employer, the Dutch East India Company, the first map bearing the name that Tasman bestowed was not published until the next century, in 1726. A painstaking study by Australian historian G. C. Henderson has identified the other islands he sighted in Fiji, roughly in chronological order, as Nukubasaga, Nukupareti (sometimes spelt Nukubalate), Nukusimanu, Laucala, Taveuni, Yanuca, Rabe, Kioa, Vanualevu and Cikobia.

Leaves of the Gnetum gnemon

It will be noted that the first three in this list all begin with *Nuku-*, and this is for the simple reason that *nuku* is generic for 'atoll' or 'cay'. There are relatively few atolls in Fiji, and as far as is known none has been permanently inhabited, unlike the many in other Pacific nations such as Tuvalu and Kiribati; but the majority have names beginning with *Nuku.* If *nuku* had been the word for 'atoll' in the Proto Central Pacific language spoken in Fiji some three thousand years ago, then the fact that many Polynesian languages have a word *nuku* meaning 'earth' or 'land' may mean that Polynesians originated from a place where people normally lived on atolls.

One of the consequences of Tasman's voyage was that the passage between Taveuni and Qamea has been named *Tasman Strait*, parallel to the somewhat larger Tasman Sea most readers will be familiar with. Tasman never actually sailed through this straight, but he did see it and judged it to be too risky to tackle, so headed north instead to exit the group.

The next visitor to record seeing Qamea was Captain James Wilson, who had been transporting missionaries of the London Missionary Society to various locations in the Pacific in the ship *Duff* in 1797. Although he saw 'vast numbers of natives assembled upon the beach', he did not land (it was not his intention to land anywhere at this point, since he had delivered all the missionaries) so he did not discover the native name of the island. The name he conferred, *Ross's Island*, has not survived.

The first visitor to record the name of the island was the London Missionary Society missionary John Davies (not one of Wilson's passengers) who passed through northern Fiji after fleeing Tahiti in 1809. He did not see Qamea, but recorded 'Kamea'—its Tongan pronunciation—as the name of one of the Fiji islands. Finally, in 1827, the French explorer Dumont d'Urville both saw the island and recorded its name, as 'Ongomea' (misanalysing the article 'o' as part of the name), though he did not set foot on it; indeed he didn't set foot on any of the many islands of Fiji that he saw, since he had no anchor.

Qamea is remarkable in a number of respects for its flora and fauna. It is one of the few islands in Fiji where *Gnetum gnemon* flourishes, a medium-sized tree

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we have met previously in our article on the island of Koro. Its leaves are highly prized as a green vegetable, usually boiled in coconut milk. In Koro and Ovalau it is called *sukau* or *belesukau* (*bele* meaning 'tender leaves'), but on Qamea it is *sikau*, locally pronounced [siʔau]. Qamea is at the eastern extremity of its distribution.

Also like Koro, Qamea is one of the few Fiji islands where jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus*, locally *toa ni cōcō*) are abundant. Indeed, they are so prominent that there is a well-known proverbial expression *veikilai na toa ni Qamea*, literally 'jungle fowl of Qamea know each other', applied to a group of people who are 'thick as thieves'. At least ten varieties of jungle fowl are recognised, and they are trapped and brought back to villages for cock-fighting (*vakavala toa*).

Qamea is also one of only three islands in Fiji where the Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) is found. Called *mekapai* on Qamea, it was introduced around 1900 in an effort to control pests of coconuts, in particular stick insects. The other islands where it was introduced are nearby Taveuni and Cicia.

Rather less to Qamea's credit is the presence of the American Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) which was deliberately introduced by a thoughtless tourist in 2000 and is now found on Taveuni, Qamea and Matagi. It is larger than the indigenous iguana and is a declared pest because of the damage it causes to crops and competition with indigenous fauna.

The jungle fowl, Gallus gallus

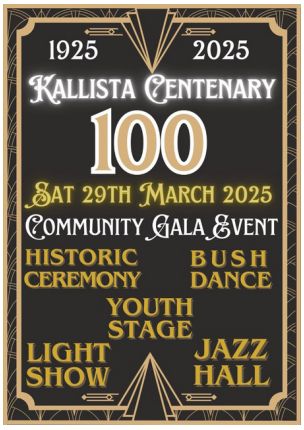
There's more to tell about Qamea: in the next instalment we will continue with its surprises, including the story of the king of the land-crabs, and the reason why, of the ten or so villages and settlements on the island, only one is occupied by the original inhabitants of the island.

Paul Geraghty

Kallista's 'name day' centenary

Our Victorian correspondent John Schauble has alerted us to something that's quite toponymically special.

The village of **Kallista** in the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne is celebrating the centenary of its 'name day' this month. On 1 April 1925, the locality changed its name from *South Sassafras* to *Kallista*. Why the change? The locals had got sick of being confused with nearby Sassafras, and thought that a name based on the ancient name of the Greek island **Santorini** (*Kallisti*, 'most beautiful') was the way to go. (If you're wondering why there's a Victorian locality named after North American trees, that's a question for another day.)



So John Schauble says that if you're anywhere near the Dandenongs on 29th March, you're invited to join the party!

Placenames Puzzle Number 93

Reduplicated toponyms *Reduplication is a linguistic process in which the root or stem of a word, or even the whole word, is repeated. It is used to convey a grammatical function such as plurality, intensification, or emphasis. There are many Indigenous-derived placenames that have this form. For example*: (NSW) A locality and rural property near Khancoban. Answer: *Greg Greg*

1. (NSW) You could stone the crows in this large Central West town
2. (VIC) A river that runs into the Murray River (Hume Dam) near Tallangatta
3. (NSW) A locality west of Lake Macquarie where artist Bill Dobell lived
4. (NT) A well-known spectacular waterfall in Kakadu National Park
5. (NSW) One of Sydney's northern beaches might be a hairy experience
6. (WA) A mountain range in the Kimberley – what a mess-up!
7. (QLD) A township between Pomona to the south and Gympie to the north; but no relation, really
8. (NSW) A suburb of the Central Coast region on Brisbane Water, as Spike Milligan well knew
9. (WA) This small town between Moora and Wongan Hills in the wheat belt region might keep you on your toes
10. (NSW) A former small township near Moss Vale, now famous for its annual picnic races
11. (VIC) A local government area, mountain and national park in the south-east
12. (QLD) A town on the Sunshine Coast, a few kilometres inland from Maroochydore
13. (NSW) A historic rural property with an unexpected pronunciation, 25 km south of Tamworth
14. (SA) It's got a creek and a copper mine, and claimed to be 'the merino capital of the world'; but the town name is no longer reduplicated
15. (NSW) A small town on the Newell Highway in the Riverina, east of Narrandera
16. (VIC) A small township on the Geelong-Ballarat railway line, 100 km west of Melbourne
17. (NSW) A rural community (with a well-stocked library?) within the local government area of #1
18. (NSW) A suburb of #1, about 8 km east of its CBD
19. (NSW) A suburb of the Central Coast, north of Sydney, where the M1 crosses the Hawkesbury River
20. (NSW) A locality with a cheesey name just south of Narooma on the Princes Highway

[Compiled by **Jan Tent**]

Answers on page 2]

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