DECEMBER 2022

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

Bungaree's Norah, Bullee Nogglen and *Bombora*

Lost and found Aboriginal placenames at Norah Head, NSW

A report from the Central Coast Indigenous Placenames Project, by ***Grace Karskens***, ***Jim Wafer*** *&* ***Tracey Howie***

Norah Head is the most easterly point on the long peninsula that separates Tuggerah Lake from the ocean on the New South Wales Central Coast. This is watery country, with a necklace of vast lakes stretching from Brisbane Water north to Lake Macquarie and beyond. Since 1903, the Norah Head lighthouse has cast its arm of light over dangerous waters. The headland is surrounded by an extensive rock platform, and the coast here is studded by a series of bomboras—black stone reefs and submerged pillars of rock. At least 38 ships were wrecked in this area between 1832 and 1967. There are melancholy memorials for them: an anchor remembers merchant marines lost in war, and six photographic plaques list the lost ships. Etched into the lighthouse's beautiful glass door panels are the Latin words *Olim periculum – nunc salus*, 'once perilous, now safe'.[1]

Aerial view of Norah Head/Bungaree's Norah, showing the surrounding rock platforms (photo: Matt Lauder)

Bungaree's Norah

Where does the name *Norah* come from? Was it the name of one of those foundering ships, like the *Janet Dixson*, a coal schooner wrecked just to the north in 1870, which gave its name to Jenny Dixson Beach; or the *Catherine Hill*, a schooner that ran aground in 1867 near what became known as Catherine Hill Bay?[2]

Norah Head was not named for a woman or a ship; its origin is far more significant. *Norah* is a contraction of *Bungaree's Norah*. The name remembers Bungaree, the charismatic leader, warrior and cross-cultural envoy (c1775–1830). Bungaree became a sailor, too. He voyaged with Matthew Flinders on HMS *Investigator* in 1802 and so he became the first Australian to circumnavigate the continent. He sailed on many other voyages as well. Bungaree counted Governor Lachlan Macquarie as a friend and was held in high regard if not awe by the Aboriginal communities in Sydney and the wider region. As Mark Dunn has pointed out, much of Bungaree's early life is still a mystery, but there are strong indications

continued page 3

From the Editor

One of the things I enjoy about editing this journal is the correspondence from readers. In some cases, the emails that arrive in my inbox are replies to our pleas for information; others are thoughtful responses to topics that we have raised.

Two examples come to mind this month. As you'll see in the box below and in the article on page 11, Helen Moody's recent call for advice resulted in some helpful correspondence (from Tony Dawson, in particular), and in a forthcoming publication.

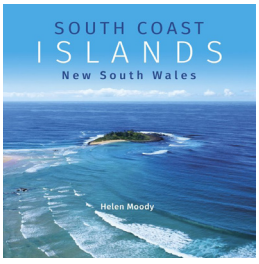
Secondly, we've lately been featuring the topic of folk etymologies for placenames, or 'apocryphal aetiologies' as Jan Tent sometimes calls them. Chris Woods had a store of nice examples in his back pocket, and accepted my invitation to write them up for you. Read them on page 7, and enjoy!

David Blair
<editor@anps.org.au>

Thomas Florance and the islands

We've previously reported Helen Moody's difficulties in finding evidence that Thomas Florance named several islands of the NSW south coast in 1828, as he was said to have done. We asked if any of our readers could suggest a way forward. Well, Helen has made progress, and we're glad to say that part of the story is told on page 11 of this December issue. More than that, Helen's book on the ***South Coast Islands*** *will soon be available. She writes:*

It will be a substantial publication of almost 200 pages with over 200 photographs supplied by 21 contributors. The book is being self-published, largely funded by two private donations and by a Shoalhaven City Council tourism grant. All profits from sales will go to environmental projects. It will cost $50 + postage if needed.

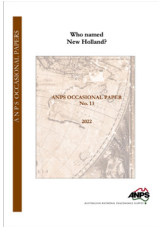


The book is currently in the editing and design phase and will be available in April or May 2023. A big challenge is to estimate a suitable print run. I don't want books under my bed for the next five years, nor do I want to sell out in a month. So I'm calling for 'expressions of interest' in purchasing a copy, so that we can estimate an appropriate print run. Email southcoastislandsbook@gmail.com for a flyer on the book, with your name and contact details, and say you heard through ANPS; we will reserve a copy for you and send you an invitation to a launch party.

Helen Moody

New from ANPS

We've recently been less than complimentary about James Cook's naming of *New South Wales*. But now, on a related matter, we might ask who was responsible for that name's predecessor, *New Holland*?



Jan Tent looks at the evidence in our new *Occasional Paper 13*, which is now available for you to download.

And in similar vein, Jan has tackled the question of who named *Groote Eylandt*. Was it Abel Tasman, as everybody says, who named the island, as well as 'New Holland'?

Download *Occasional Paper 14* for Jan's answer, as he brings his knowledge of Dutch (and Dutch cartography) into play again.

This newsletter is published quarterly by
Placenames Australia (Inc.) ABN 39 652 752 594
ISSN: 1836-7976

Editor: David Blair
PO Box 5160
SOUTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

...from page 1

...Lost and found Aboriginal placenames

that he was closely associated with the Central Coast and with Broken Bay.[3] After he and his family set up camp on Sydney's North Shore, Bungaree welcomed arriving ships, saying 'These are my people. This is my shore'.[4] He continued to travel along the coast between Sydney, Newcastle and Port Stephens as well as in the Hunter Valley. Bungaree and his second wife Carawoolgal (known to settlers as Cora Gooseberry) made at least one westerly journey to Bathurst, in Wiradjuri Country.[5]

Augustus Earle, Portrait of Bungaree, a native of New South Wales. *Bungaree is dignified in the elaborate red jacket of a Brigadier General, correctly buttoned for parade, with bicorne hat, sash and breastplate. He lifts his hat to artist and viewers as if to welcome them to Sydney. (National Library of Australia)*

Bungaree's descendants, the GuriNgai, still live in this part of the Central Coast, and have an unbroken family connection with Country. GuriNgai woman Tracey Howie describes Norah Head as —

> one of the most special places of the whole coast that we [the GuriNgai] have connections to, and that's from a traditional sense, and then followed through when Europeans came and moved into the area. The full name is *Bungaree's ngurra* – [Bungaree's] camp.[6]

Norah is the Anglicised version of the widely-used word *ngurra*, a word with broad meanings ('camp', 'place'), but also narrower ones. Most significant among the narrower meanings is the sense of 'place of origin' (whether biological or mythical). In other words, the name 'Bungaree's *ngurra*' may suggest that it is Bungaree's birth (or 'conception') place, or at least that it was his centre of operations before moving camp to the north shore of Port Jackson.[7]

Tracey and her family still know where Bungaree's camp was located —

> that area today is what we know as Cabbage Tree Bay… a nice little cove-y inlet, sheltered [with]…bomboras off from it [and] quite a large reef as well…And we're quite sure that the stone rockpool that is down there was… either a fishing trap or perhaps a secluded fishing space, just because of the location.

There is clear, fresh water in this saltwater Country too, a 'very prominent freshwater soak…it has been running… for so many years that it's got its own little drainage line… heading down into the ocean'.[8]

Aboriginal people were present on the Nepean River to the southwest 50,000 years ago. So it's very likely that their occupation of the now-coastal areas also extends deep into the Pleistocene.[9] There are shell middens at Norah Head, and fish-hook files found here strongly suggest that women fished with shell fish-hooks, known in Sydney as *burra*.[10] In 1927 and 1944, human bones exposed by shifting sands led police and others to believe that there was an Aboriginal burial ground on the beach south of the headland.[11]

Clearly Bungaree's Norah was and remains an important place on Aboriginal Country. The name, like the man, was also well known among settlers, published in reports and stories over the nineteenth century, usually with the possessive 's'. From 1863 newspaper shipping reports began to use the shortened version *Norah Head*, but both versions continued in use.[12] During the 1850s, Bungaree's Norah was briefly taken up by popular writers in racially inflected ways, perhaps echoing a vernacular spoken expression meaning 'the last place anyone would want to go'. For example, a long, ribald poem ridiculing the idea of an Australian peerage includes one character swearing that he'd 'sooner go to Bungaree's Nore / Than

continued next page

bed with Lady B.'. And in the serialised story 'The Stockman's daughter', bushranger 'Possum Jack' defies another bushranging gang, declaring: 'To Bungarree's Norah with your laws and your band'.[13]

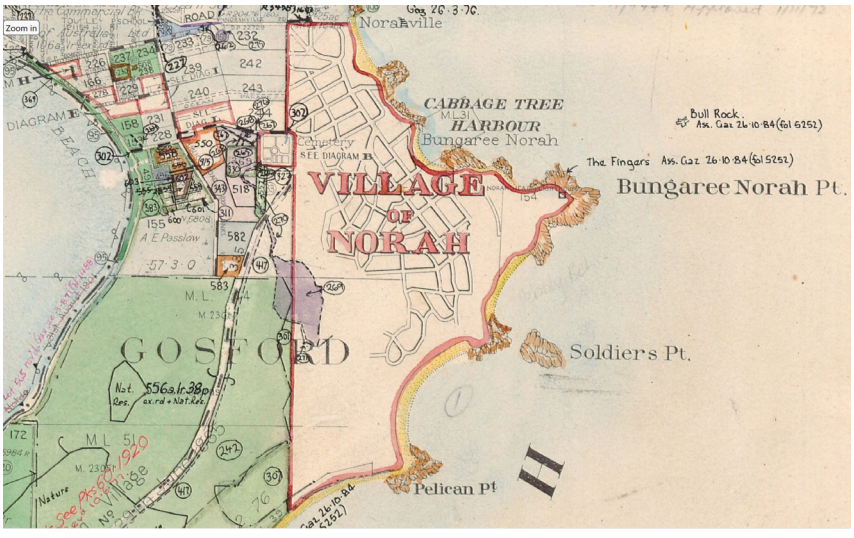
Both names were still in use when the lighthouse was built on the headland in 1903—sometimes with *Norah Head* for the point and *Bungaree Norah* for the locality.[14] The latter was still used in official published notices, and it remained on Parish and Charting Maps well into the 1950s. *Bungaree Norah* was not officially discontinued until 1972, when *Norah Head* was formally gazetted.[15] Yet *Bungaree* remains a ghostly presence in this landscape: Bungary Road is nearby, and the Trig. Station on the headland is *Bungaree Norah*. Among Bungaree's descendants, who remained on Country in this area, his name has never been forgotten.

Bullee Nogglen

Cabbage Tree Bay is typical of the simple, descriptive placenames that early white timber getters, convicts and other workers so often used for local landscapes (think *Blue Mountains, Green Hills, Pipeclay Creek, Peachtree Creek, Broadwater* and so on). Such names were repeated across the country too—in New South Wales alone there are at least 41 Cabbage Tree beaches, creeks, gullies and islands, from the Shoalhaven in the south to the Richmond Valley in the north.[16] Tall cabbage tree palms, *Livistona australis*, were landmarks and wayfinders, and signs of fresh water, too, as they grow in moist, nutrient-rich soil. The name *Cabbage Tree Bay* at Norah Head is a reminder of the original forest here, for there are no cabbage palms growing there today.

After timber getters, convicts, settlers and cattle invaded GuriNgai Country from the 1820s, the fresh water and sheltered cove at Bungaree's Ngurra attracted ships, which were loaded with cedar logs felled and dragged (mostly illegally) out of vast forests west of Tuggerah Lake. A local settler built a wharf there in the 1830s, and gradually the original *Cabbage Tree Bay* became *Cabbage Tree Harbour*.[17] The first wharf was swept away in a huge storm in 1870, after which local coalmine and coal-land owners energetically lobbied the government to resume land there and build a new wharf to service the booming coal mining industry just to the north, predicting grandly that this would 'probably double and treble the coal trade'.[18] The new wharf appeared, but mercifully the major coal port did not. Instead, the area was subdivided as the 'Village of Norah' (now Norah Head) by 1920.[19]

But quickening maritime activity was accompanied by a tragic series of shipwrecks, as vessels calling into the bay or sailing the coastal run between Newcastle and Sydney were wrecked in storms or foundered on the treacherous reefs and rocks off Cabbage Tree Bay and Bungaree's Norah.[20] Contemporary press reports on one of these accidents reveal another Aboriginal place name. In 1836, the paddle steamer *Ceres* hit a submerged rock between Bird Island and the Bungaree Norah headland. It was described as a 'perpendicular rock with deep water all round'. Mariners called it Whale Rock, and later Bull Rock. But they knew its Aboriginal name too: *Bullee Nogglen*.[21] Also spelt *Bullee Noglen, Bullee Noyden* and *Bullen Agglen* over the 19th century, this is probably the source of the current name *Bull Rock*, which was formally gazetted in 1984.[22] *Bullee Nogglen* can be straightforwardly reconstructed in Hunter River-Lake Macquarie-Central Coast (HRLMCC) Language as *puli ngatjung* or 'whirlwind water', an accurate and evocative name for the waters swirling around this rock.[23]



Detail from 'Parish of Wallarah, County of Northumberland, Branch Charting Map' c1984, showing Bungaree Norah Point, Bull Rock and the many rock platforms and bomboras off the coast. (https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/)

...Aboriginal placenames

Bombora

Another name recorded for a submerged rock or reef off Cabbage Tree Bay is *Bombora* (also *bumbora, boombora, bomboora*), an Aboriginal word which entered the shared Australian lexicon.[24] It became a noun for a natural reef feature, and the generic element that appears in placenames such as *Gowlland Bombora* in Sydney Harbour. It appears as the specific element in several others: for example, *Bumbora Point* in Yarra Bay, Sydney, and *Bombora Rock* off Long Nose Point at Jervis Bay. In the present case, we think it probably refers to that same prominent rock, *Bullee Nogglen*, where the waters whirl around. Once more, the gloss reveals the dance of water and wind, here associated with breath and blowing, for in HRLMCC *Bombora* can be reconstructed as *pumpi -rra*, where the water blows out powerfully and sprays around.[25] Bungaree and his people knew sea as well as land: both were alive and inspirited.

Plaque at Norah Head/Bungaree Ngurra remembering Bungaree (photo: Grace Karskens)

The name *Bungaree Norah* was still being used when the lighthouse was built there in 1903. But by that time, ironically, no-one linked it with Bungaree, the great Aboriginal sailor and explorer. It wasn't until about 1986 that a small plaque honouring Bungaree was installed beside a clifftop path nearby. But even this small recognition is bizarrely settler-focused, and unfortunately gets the placename wrong, claiming that 'Local Aboriginals named this headland Norah Bungaree to commemorate the honour and respect bestowed upon Bungaree *for his services to the early colonists*'.[26] Bungaree was not merely a servant of the colonists. We would argue that the name *Bungaree's Ngurra* indicates a powerful link with the most important Aboriginal leader, warrior, sailor, explorer and cross-cultural envoy of the early colonial period. It may have been his birthplace.

Bungaree's descendants, the GuriNgai, have initiated a project that may help to fill some of the gaps in the historical and linguistic record of this region. The Central Coast Indigenous Placenames Project (CCIPP) aims to document, over time, all the Aboriginal placenames that occur there. There are currently over 200 placenames in the CCIPP database, and this essay is the first of a projected series of stories reconnecting places, placenames, people and Country.

Author notes

Grace Karskens is Professor Emerita of Australian History at the University of New South Wales. Grace has worked collaboratively with Darug and Darkinyung researchers on *The Real Secret River: Dyarubbin*, a project restoring Darug and Darkinyung placenames to the Hawkesbury and Macdonald Rivers.

Dr Jim Wafer is conjoint senior lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Newcastle. He is privileged to be collaborating with both GuriNgai and Wonnarua descendants in the revitalisation of their dialects of HRLMCC. He is co-editor of *A Handbook of Aboriginal Languages of NSW and the ACT.*

Tracey Howie is a GuriNgai woman and a direct descendant of Bungaree. She is Director of Awabakal and GuriNgai Pty Ltd and Director and senior heritage officer for GuriNgai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corporation.

continued next page

...from previous page

...Lost and found Aboriginal placenames

Endnotes

[1] Shipwrecks listed on a series of photographic memorial plaques near Norah Head Lighthouse.

[2] Charles Swancott, *The Brisbane Water Story Part 4: The Rest of the Story Koolewong to Cooranbong, including The Story of Henry Kendall, T. A. Scott, E. H. Hargraves, Etc*. Woy Woy, NSW: Brisbane Water Historical Society, 1955, p. 103.

[3] See Mark Dunn, 'Exploring connections: Bungaree and connections in the colonial Hunter Valley'. In Gillian Dooley & Danielle Clode (Eds.), *The First Wave: Exploring early coastal contact history in Australia.* Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2019, pp. 228-243; see esp. p. 229.

[4] Grace Karskens, *The colony: a history of early Sydney*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009, pp.426-32, 525-9; Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: A Sydney Aborigine meets the great South Pacific explorers, 1799-1830*. Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1992.

[5] Thanks to Mark Dunn for sharing this information: see Mark Dunn, *The convict valley: the bloody struggle on Australia's early frontier*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2020, pp. 27-29, 54-55, 93, 120; Grace Karskens, *People of the river: lost worlds of early Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2020, p. 309.

[6] Tracey Howie, recorded by Grace Karskens at Norah Head, for Central Coast Indigenous Placenames Project [CCIPP], 18 February 2022.

[7] *Ngurra* or *ngura* is a word for 'camp' in numerous Languages including Darug, Darkinyung, Dharawal, Gathang and others. *Ngurrawa* was also recorded in Karree (Central Coast) as the word for 'clear ground', but this word is more likely to be reconstructed as /ngaRawa/, so the relationship with *ngurra* remains ambiguous. Interestingly, in Gaamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay, *ngurrambaa* means 'birthplace, family land'. See R. H Mathews, 'The Thurrawal language, including the Gundungurra and Dharruk languages, with vocabularies', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales,* 35, 1901, pp. 127-160; Caroline Jones, *Darkinyung grammar and dictionary: revitalising a language from historical sources*. Nambucca Heads: Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, 2008; Les Bursill, *A collection of Dharawal words, phrases, tree fern and tree names.* Worrigee NSW: Dharawal Publishing Inc., 2014; Amanda Lissarrague, *A grammar and dictionary of Gathang the language of the Birrbay, Guringay and Warrimay.* Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay, 2010; Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, 'Specimens of the language of the Aborigines of New South Wales to the northward of Sydney – Karree', [1817], in Papers 1822-1862, A382, Mitchell Library, pp. 130-40; Anna Ash, John Giacon & Amanda Lissarrague, *Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay & Yuwaalayaay dictionary*, Alice Springs: IAD Press, 2003.

[8] Tracey Howie, recorded by Grace Karskens at Norah Head, for Central Coast Indigenous Placenames Project [CCIPP], 18 February 2022. The 1942 'Army Map' locates Bungaree Norah on Cabbage Tree Bay, the only map we have located so far which does so. See Australian Section, Imperial General Staff, 'New South Wales Gosford & Norahville, no. 410 & 411, zone 8' (map), Canberra, L.H.Q. (Aust.) Cartographic Company, 1942, online at State Library of New South Wales https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VvqpNKeXRZ

[9] Grace Karskens, *People of the river: lost worlds of early Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2020, pp. 21-7.

[10] Laurence Allen, A history of the Aboriginal people of the Central Coast of New South Wales to 1874. Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle, 2021, p. 36, note 2.

[11] *Newcastle Sun*, Wednesday 7 September 1927, p.5; *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 8 January 1944, p. 2.

[12] Trove search, keywords 'Bungaree('s) Norah', 'Norah Head', 1803-1981. See for example https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/category/newspapers?keyword=%22Bungaree%27s%20Norah%22; *Australian*, Thursday 10 November 1825, p. 2 (earliest press mention); *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 4 March 1863, p. 4 (first use of 'Norah Head').

[13] 'Harry Dashboard Esquire', 'A Fun-O-Scopic view of our peerage', *Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser*, 8 October 1853, p. 4; Anon., 'The stockman's daughter, a tale of the new country', *People's Advocate and New South Wales Vindicator*, Sydney, 11 October 1856, p. 6.

[14] See *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 14 November 1903, p. 4; Monday 16 November 1903, p. 5.

[15] See Trove searches, note 12; see New South Wales Land Registry Services, Historical Lands Records Viewer, Parish of Wallarah maps, https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/; compare *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, Friday 28 February 1958, p. 561 and Friday 17 November 1972, p. 4610; New South Wales Geographic Names Board, Placename Database, https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/5cee0fff-564a-42f5-ba6a-d8579eb23327.

[16] New South Wales Geographic Names Board, Placename Database, https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/search

[17] Keith Clouten, *Reid's mistake: the story of Lake Macquarie from its discovery to 1890*. Speers Point, NSW: Lake Macquarie Shire Council, 1967, pp. 59, 86, 88.

[18] *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, Saturday 12 March 1870, p. 4; *Newcastle Chronicle*, Saturday 22 August 1874, p. 4.

[19] See Parish of Wallarah map, 1920, online at https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/.

[20] Shipwrecks listed on a series of photographic memorial plaques near Norah Head Lighthouse.

[21] *Sydney Herald*, Monday 5 September 1836, p. 2 (quote); Monday 12 September 1836, p. 2; *Australian*, Tuesday 6 September 1836, p. 2; *Sydney Gazette*, Tuesday 6 September 1836, p. 3.

[22] Ibid; *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate*, Friday 20 September 1895, p. 6; Greig Berry, *Shipwrecks of the New South Wales Central Coast* (vol. 1 1800-1899), Tacoma, NSW: Central Coast Shipwreck Research, 1994, p. 23; New South Wales Geographic Names Board, Placename Database, https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/search

[23] Amanda Lissarrague, *A salvage grammar and wordlist of the language from the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie.* Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay, 2006; reconstruction by Jim Wafer.

[24] W. S. Ramson (Ed.), *The Australian national dictionary*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988; New South Wales Geographic Names Board, Placename Database, https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/search

[25] Amanda Lissarrague, *A salvage grammar and wordlist of the language from the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie*. Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay, 2006; reconstruction by Jim Wafer. *Bombi/bumbi* 'to blow' also appear in Darug (the inland, not coastal, dialect), Darkinyung and Gathang: see R. H Mathews, 'The Thurrawal language, including the Gundungurra and Dharruk languages, with vocabularies', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 35, 1901, pp. 127-160; Caroline Jones, *Darkinyung grammar and dictionary: revitalising a language from historical sources*. Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay, 2008; Amanda Lissarrague, *A grammar and dictionary of Gathang the language of the Birrbay, Guringay and Warrimay*. Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay, 2010.

[26] Field trip, 14 August 2022.

Popular myths v Historical fact

Christopher Woods, formerly a long-time resident of the Blue Mountains area in NSW but now a proud Taswegian, had his interest piqued by our recent articles on false stories about placename origins. The Editor asked him to share his own examples of such apocryphal etymologies...

The Blue Mountains west of Sydney have a variety of myths and stories explaining the origins of names, locations and events in the area. They are all at odds with established historical facts where they exist, or with reasonable or logical suppositions where they don't. There appears to be a human need to create a story where none exists to explain some feature or event. In touristy areas it's often done to make something prosaic more colourful and entertaining—fake news is not a recent invention.

Invariably, in my 23 years as an interpretive guide in the Mountains, someone would mention a story of something or other which I felt the need to (politely) correct. Most myths seem to have a kernel of truth in them, and over time story-telling adds layers which are very hard to remove, though some are just made up from nothing at all. Here are summaries of five reasonably common stories, for which there are many versions.

Myth 1: *Govett's Leap, Blackheath*
Govett the Bushranger was on horseback fleeing from the troopers when he rode over the 200m high cliff edge to his death. In reality, William Govett was a talented government surveyor instructed in 1831 to map the very rugged terrain of the Upper Mountains and Wollemi. 'Leap' is a Scots dialect word meaning 'waterfall', and the one here was named after him.
https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/collection-items/william-romaine-govett

Myth 2: *The Explorers Tree just west of Katoomba*
One of the trees marked in 1813 by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson. In reality, no documented evidence has been found to support this claim. The earliest newspaper reference to this particular tree first appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 26 August 1867 (though the author says it was on the summit of Pulpit Hill while the current tree is on the side, conveniently next to the road). This tree has been promoted as such ever since. The three explorers would have blazed many trees on their journey west in order to mark the route and to find their way back, but verifiable identification of any one of those trees was never carried out.
https://dictionaryofsydney.org/blog/the_explorers_stump

Myth 3: *Three Sisters Aboriginal story, Katoomba*
Three sisters were turned to stone for their protection during a battle between their tribe and a neighbouring one. Unfortunately, the elder who knew the magic was killed so the spell couldn't be reversed. This story was written by non-aboriginal Patricia Stone, aged 16, and published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 1931.
https://burgewords.com/2013/04/15/the-tale-of-a-legend/

Myth 4: *The Hydro Majestic in Medlow Bath*
The plans for this hotel and one in India were accidently mixed up. I first heard this explanation in the 1970s. In reality, Sydney retailer Mark Foy joined three existing buildings by 1904 to form the now 1.2km-long structure. Rebuilding and renovations have occurred several times since a bushfire in 1922 burnt large sections. Some of the design elements could be interpreted as 'Indian' at first glance by the uninitiated, but the dome is from Chicago, and parts of the interior are Art Deco.
https://www.hydromajestic.com.au/home/our-history

Myth 5: *Donohue's Grave near King's Cave, Linden*
Donohue was a constable shot by bushranger King. Alternatively, *This is the grave of bushranger John 'Bold Jack' Donahoe (*note the re-spelling*).* John Donohue was a road gang convict who was employed building the Western Road when he upped and died near here in 1837. He's actually buried several metres from the headstone under the railway line embankment.
http://bluemountainsheritage.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BMHJI3p_1.pdf

Myths 1 to 3 are still current, well known, and publicised.

Myths 4 & 5 are generally less publicised and therefore less well known.

Every place has its own set of myths; several places have big-cat stories, hence the Penrith Panthers football team and the Tantanoola Tiger to name but two. Love 'em or hate 'em, they are a part of our cultural history.

Christopher Woods
West Hobart
Tasmania

In search of duplex generic toponyms...

When we examine the internal grammatical structure of placenames, it becomes clear that they can take quite a large variety of forms (see Tent, 2016a; 2022). The basic pattern is the sequence [SPECIFIC + GENERIC], where the SPECIFIC element is akin to a given name, whilst the GENERIC element can be likened to a family name (indicating what type of geographic or civic feature the place is). A placename that consists of just one of those elements (either a SPECIFIC or a GENERIC) is referred to as 'simplex', while placenames with both elements are 'duplex'.

In general, the two most common forms are those that have the full [SPECIFIC + GENERIC] structure (e.g. *Kangaroo Valley, Jervis Bay, Port Macquarie*)[1] or have a SPECIFIC element alone (e.g. *Sydney, Albury, Auckland, St Ives, Old Adaminaby,* etc.). We may call the latter 'simplex specific toponyms (SSTs)' (see Tent, 2020), and it is common in the names of cities, towns and settlements.

In our previous (September, 2022) issue (and see Tent, 2020), I discussed the rather rare phenomenon of toponyms consisting solely of a GENERIC (e.g. *Sugarloaf, Bluff, Basin, Cliff, River*,[2] which we can call 'simplex generic toponyms (SGTs)'.

So it turns out that we can have two types of simplex toponyms: 'simplex specific toponyms' (*Darwin*), and 'simplex generic toponyms' (*Sugarloaf*). But what about duplex toponyms? Is there such a thing, say, as a 'duplex generic toponym'?

It might seem counterintuitive to have a placename that consists of two generic elements—that is, where what would normally be the SPECIFIC slot is occupied by a geographic generic term, with a following GENERIC slot that has, in effect, a synonym of the SPECIFIC. In other words, are there such toponyms as *Brook Creek*? Well, if you look, apparently there are some; in fact, as Table 1 shows, there are 185 such toponyms in Australia.[3] I exclude toponyms such as *Island Point, Gorge Creek, Grove Creek* where the SPECIFIC and GENERIC are not synonymous. I have also excluded such cases as *Sugarloaf Hill* if the feature code of the actual toponym does not designate a HILL, but a TRIG or HOMESTEAD, for example.

A possible explanation for the surprising existence of such toponyms may be unfamiliarity with the meaning of some geographic feature terms. For example, that 'cone', 'sugarloaf' and 'tower' are alternative terms for HILL; that 'needle', 'pillar' and 'pinnacle' are alternatives for ROCK; or that 'knob, 'pyramid' and 'tor' are alternatives for MT. In all these cases, the geographic feature terms are used adjectivally to describe the named geographic feature. This is especially so for the 89 'Sugarloaf' examples. Perhaps the most surprising examples in the data set are: *Brook Creek, Marsh Swamp* and *River Creek*, where each SPECIFIC + GENERIC pair are common synonyms. As with many a toponym, their origin and motivation remain enigmatic.

Placename	Instances	FEATURE CODE
Backwater Creek	*10*	*STRM*
Bank Shoal	*1*	*SHOL*
Bar Bank	*1*	*BANK*
Bar Ridge	*2*	*RDGE*
Boulder Rock	*3*	*ROCK*
Brook Creek	*3*	*STRM*
Brook Gully	*1*	*STRM*
Burn Creek	*5*	*STRM*
Burn Gully	*1*	*STRM*
Cataract Falls	*2*	*WRFL*
Cone Hill	*9*	*HILL*
Cone Peak	*2*	*PEAK*
Gully Creek	*4*	*STRM*
Knob Hill	*4*	*HILL, MT*
Knob Peak	*1*	*MT*
Marsh Swamp	*1*	*SWMP*
Mesa Plateau	*1*	*PL*
Needle Rock	*3*	*ROCK*
Oxbow Lake	*1*	*LAKE*
Pillar Rock	*4*	*ROCK*
Pinnacle Rock	*8*	*ROCK, IS*
Pyramid Mountain	*1*	*MT*
River Creek	*1*	*STRM*
Spit Head	*1*	*PT*
Spit Point	*6*	*PT*
Sugarloaf Hill	*61*	*HILL, MT*
Sugarloaf Mount(ain)	*28*	*HILL, MT*
Summit Mountain	*1*	*MT*
Tor Rock	*1*	*MT*
Tower Hill	*16*	*HILL*
Washpool Waterhole	*10*	*WTRH*
Total	**185**	

Table 1

...do they exist?

In any case, whatever the motivation for the naming, 185 examples would seem to establish the case for the existence of duplex generic toponyms. If further evidence is needed, there is another set of examples that contain two generics, but with a twist. In 2019, David Blair and I published an article in the onomastics journal *Names* about a type of toponym which again consists of two elements referring to the same geographic feature type—but this time the elements come from two distinct languages. Examples include:

- *River Avon* (Wales), lit. 'River River', from Brythonic, spelled *afon* 'river' in modern Welsh.
- *Laguna Lake* (California), lit. 'Lake Lake', from Spanish *laguna* 'lake'.
- *Timor Leste*, lit. 'East East', from Indonesian and Malay *timur* 'east' + *Leste* 'east' from Portuguese.
- *Dreketi River* (Fiji), lit. 'River River', from obsolete *dreketi* 'river'.
- *Cowal Swamp*, from Wiradjuri *cowal* 'swampy hollow'; Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, and Yuwaalayaay *gawal* 'watercourse, swamp, billabong' (also used as a generic for the features SWAMP, STREAM, LAGOON, LAKE, and WATERHOLE).
- *Warrambool Watercourse*, from Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, and Yuwaalayaay *warrambool* 'watercourse (overflow channel), stream'.

We labelled the toponyms 'macaronic duplex toponyms', where 'macaronic' refers to a name made up of a mixture of languages (usually two). 'Macaronic' can also be used to refer to hybrid words (i.e. internally macaronic), e.g. 'television' from Greek τῆλε (*tēle*) 'far' + Latin *visio* 'seeing' (from *videre* 'to see'). We didn't explicitly say so in that academic paper, but those 'macaronic duplex toponyms' seem to be a subtype of our putative *duplex generic placenames*: toponyms supposedly of the structure [SPECIFIC + GENERIC], but where the specific is actually a matching generic from another language.

So is the case closed? Have we shown that, just as there is more than one type of *simplex toponym*, there is also more than one type of *duplex toponym*? Sadly, I have to confess that my quest has failed—and the reason is that what we see on the surface of language is not always the reality when we look deeper.

Our starting point was that the structure of a toponym consists, most commonly, of [SPECIFIC + GENERIC] elements. We knew that in some cases there were variations to the basic pattern: rather than this duplex structure, sometimes a placename was simplex, displaying only the SPECIFIC element or the GENERIC element. But we wondered whether there might be a more radical variation to the pattern, such that some duplex toponyms might follow the pattern [GENERIC + GENERIC] instead of the expected [SPECIFIC + GENERIC]. And indeed I was able to list in Table 1 more than 180 toponym examples where the expected SPECIFIC looked to be a GENERIC.

The problem, of course, is that a toponym consists of two elements that have particular functions—but we have been looking at our examples without considering the *function* of the elements! Our focus has been on the *form* of the first element. And each time its *form* was a noun that matched a generic feature term; its *function*, however, was always that of a SPECIFIC element. So all our putative 'duplex generics' are in fact standard duplex toponyms with the generic element preceded by a specific (that just happens to be a synonym of the generic).

So my suspicion that duplex toponyms might (like simplex toponyms) be represented by two significant subtypes has turned out to be unfounded. We have found no genuine 'duplex generic toponyms'. But, you might ask, what about 'duplex specific toponyms', the other hypothetical subtype? A good question! At this stage, I have not been able to find any genuine examples. If you can suggest any placenames of this type, let us know.

Jan Tent

Endnotes

[1] For a further discussion on antecedent generics see Tent (2016b).

[2] In my article on 'The' placenames in the newsletter of December 2009, I incorrectly stated that 'You don't find placenames that consist of solely of generic elements **Point, *Harbour, *Mount, *Basin* etc.'(p.3), which is clearly incorrect!

[3] Blair & Tent (2015) was used as the source for geographic feature terms (and their synonymous terms) and feature sets (and codes).

References

Blair, D. & J. Tent (2015). *Feature terms for Australian toponymy.* ANPS Technical Paper No. 3. South Turramurra: Placenames Australia (Inc.)

Tent, J. (2016a).Toponymy 101 B: The structure of toponyms.*Placenames Australia*. March, pp. 6-7. www.anps.org.au/upload/March_2016.pdf

-----. (2016b). Antecedent generics: how capes, lakes, mounts, and points are named in the Antipodes. *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, *64*(3), pp. 148-157. (DOI: 10.1080/00277738.2016.1197646).

-----. (2020). Simplex generic toponyms in four English-speaking jurisdictions. *Names: A Journal of Onomastics, 68*(1), pp. 17-31. (DOI: 10.1080/00277738.2020.1731243).

-----. (2022). Simplex toponyms: all about specifics and generics. *Placenames Australia*. September, pp. 8-9. www.anps.org.au/upload/Sept_2021.pdf

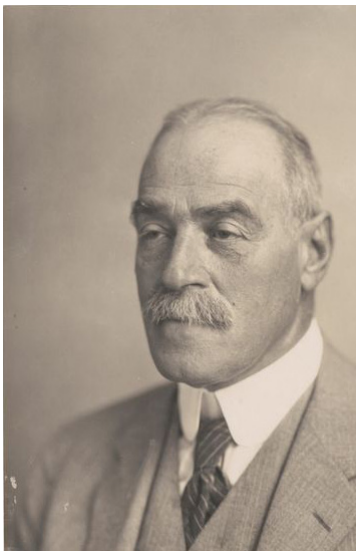
Tent, J. & D. Blair (2019). A clash of names: the terminological morass of a toponym class. *Names: A Journal of Onomastics, 67*(2), pp. 65-77. (DOI: 10.1080/00277738.2018.1452907).

Sir Matthew's dream ~ and its centenary in 2022

Early in the 20th century, the Royal Geographic Society in Queensland was well aware of problems created by uncontrolled naming of places. Several Councils had made requests to state government ministers between 1905 and 1911 recommending that a Board of Geographic Names be established, but with no success. It was not until July 1922 that a Place Names Committee was at last formed, and only after the President of the Society, Sir Matthew Nathan (Governor of Queensland, 1920-1925) suggested that one be formed to collate information concerning the origin and meaning of place names in Queensland.[1] He was known to have 'a zeal for the preservation of local historical records',[2] and stated in a rather optimistic letter addressed to the Home Secretary in Britain that 'the final result of their labours will be a full and accurate account of the names of all the places and natural features of Queensland'.[3] One hundred years later, we still have quite a way to go to fulfil Sir Matthew's dream.

Much information was indeed collected by members of the first Committee, although it ceased to function between 1928 and 1934, probably due to Sir Matthew's departure, and had to be reformed with a new membership. An important member of the new Committee (then chaired by Professor H. Alcock, from the University of Queensland), was the Honorary Secretary, Sydney May. In 1936 he was surprised to receive a request to join the Committee as the second university representative. Sydney May was a music examiner for the A.M.E.B. who travelled extensively and took the opportunity to discuss the work of the Place Names Committee with as many people as possible. The Committee lapsed during World War II and was disbanded in about 1950. Its work continued through the Surveyor-General's office and was passed on to what is now the Department of Resources.[4] For Sydney May, placenames research became a life-long interest. A series of articles he wrote from 1957 to 1964 listing the origin of many Queensland placenames was published monthly in the journal *Local Government*. These articles remain a valuable resource.

F. J. Watson, an Associate Member of the Committee, said in the Preface to his publication *Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland* (1944), that he was inspired to compile this work by discussions in newspapers on the origin and meanings



Mayo, Daphne (1925). Portrait of Sir Matthew Nathan. *(Daphne Mayo Collection, University of Queensland)*

of Indigenous place names, 'many of which were unenlightening and some actually nonsensical'. He was an itinerant officer of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock for twenty five years and as such was able to 'interview aborigines and early white settlers who had been in contact with them and were acquainted with their languages and customs'.

His notes on the Aborigines of South East Queensland and their languages, as well as his list of more than 150 placenames of Aboriginal origin and their meanings, was published as a Supplement to the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland)*.[5] It is a remarkable resource for researchers trying to unravel the meanings of the many Queensland placenames of Indigenous origin.

Were it not for Sir Matthew Nathan's forethought in establishing the first Place Names Committee in Queensland one hundred years ago, the task for current researchers in the Department of Resources and the Australian National Placenames Survey would be much more difficult. Foundation researchers like Sydney May and F. J. Watson led the way and were eventually followed by other like-minded people. Queensland researchers of today are fortunate to have a solid base on which to build towards Sir Matthew's dream of a full and accurate account of Queensland placenames.

Dale Lehner

Endnotes

[1] *Bulletin Royal Geographic Society of Queensland*, May 1990, p. 5.

[2] *Royal Historical Society of Qld Journal, XIII*(1), February 1987, p. 10.

[3] 'History of Queensland Place Names Committee', Document, author unknown. March 1958.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of Australiasia (Queensland), XLVIII*(34), 1943/4.

South Coast islands, NSW

A forthcoming book on the islands of the south coast of NSW may not seem to have a great deal of relevance for toponymists, but I think that might not be the case.

The book is about the 61 named islands between the Shoalhaven River and the Victorian border. Twenty of these are coastal islands, mostly just offshore, with the exception of Montague Island/Barunguba, which is nine kilometres offshore. Forty-one are islands in the lakes, estuaries and lagoons open to the ocean.

There is very little published information on the islands, with the exception of Barunguba and Broulee, and certainly nothing on them collectively. The book will cover many aspects of the islands, but readers of *Placenames Australia* will be especially interested that I spent countless hours investigating who named each island, when and why. I didn't always find answers. Historians have tended to be fascinated by explorers while under-valuing and under-documenting the contribution of surveyors, limiting the information resources on the exploration of the south coast.

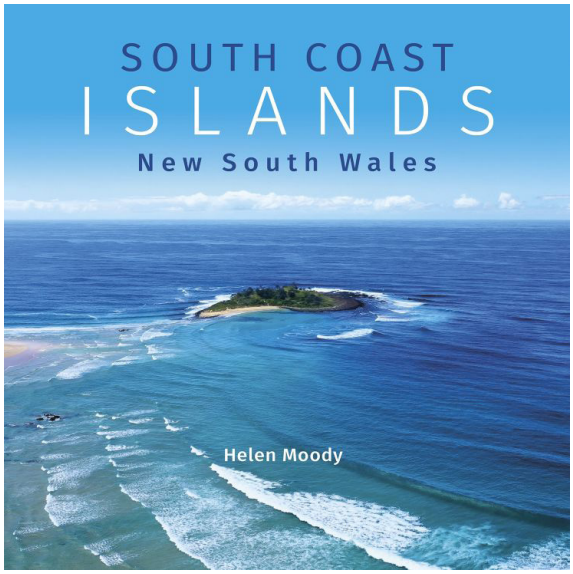
Surveyor **Thomas Florance** looms large in the book. Many of the placenames on the south coast, including the names of some of the islands, were bestowed by Florance. He named Garden and Sepulchre Islands in St Georges Basin, Green Island, Wasp Island and the Tollgate Islands. He gave the name *Casual Island* to the island we know today as Crampton Island, and *Platter Island* to the island now called Grasshopper Island. He didn't give any explanation for these names, which appear in his field books and on his subsequent maps. And several other islands that he mapped, he didn't name. Instructed to use phonetically derived Aboriginal names for landscape features wherever possible, many of the names he gave to inlets and coastal features survive today in recognisable form, often with some variation in spelling. Examples include *Mheroo, Tobowerry, Tehrmell, Bhurril Lakes* and *Inlets* and *Bhroulhee*.

Just six years later, in 1834, Major Thomas Mitchell's famous *Map of the Nineteen Counties* (also known as the *Map of the Colony of New South Wales*), gives almost all the islands on the south coast the names we know them by today. It was here that Florance's 'Platter Island' and 'Casual Island' found their current names; nearby, Florance's 'Rock' was called *Stokes Island*; and the names *Brush, O'Hara* and *Dawsons* now appeared on previously unnamed islands. There were no other surveys of the coast in this period, there is no record of settlers claiming naming rights, and I found no other books, studies, maps, field books or records that throw any light on when, why or by whom these islands were named.

We will never know whether Mitchell himself suggested some of the new names or whether he was asked to name them after particular people. But my research threw up a few clues to enable me to speculate about the origin of some names. And in two instances I believe I have made discoveries about island names that have never been previously documented.

One of these concerns the **Tollgate Islands**, the iconic pair of islands that stand sentinel at the entrance to Batemans Bay. These were named by Florance in 1828 and they are known by that name today. Yet Mitchell's map labelled them as 'Macnivens Islands'. There appear to be only two very brief mentions of this name in any books—and no explanation is given in either. In a 'Eureka moment' at NSW State Archive I believe I found the explanation.

But I'm not going to tell you here and now. You will have to buy the book to find the answer!

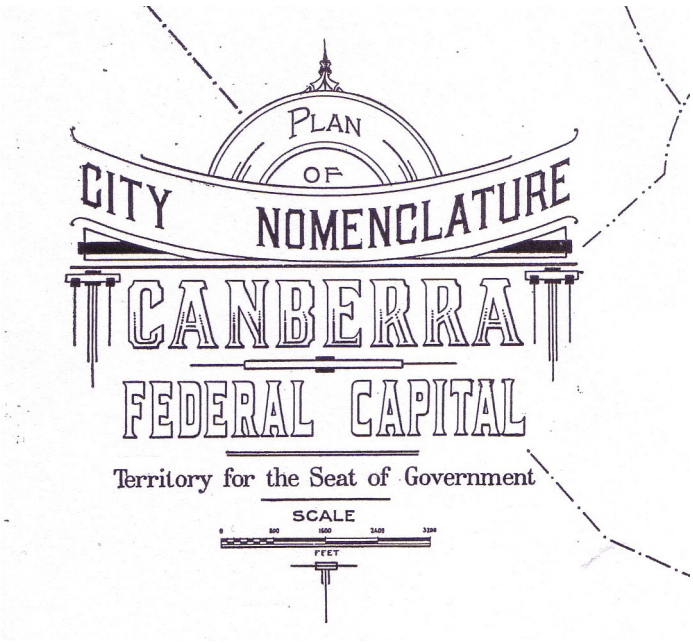


It will be a substantial publication of almost 200 pages with over 200 photographs supplied by 21 contributors. The book is currently in the editing and design phase and will be available in April or May 2023. The details of how to order are on the Editor's Page (page 2).

Helen Moody

Canberra Placenamers...

Peter Phillips, former placenames officer with the ACT Government (2008-2017) tells us about a recent initiative.



Across the broad range of occupations, placenamers are indeed a small fraternity. On retirement, when no longer bound by the pressures and deadlines of work, they may have cause to reflect on their achievements and the people who travelled with them on that journey.

My desire to stay in touch after retirement was met by arranging quarterly lunches with my closest associates. However, as more colleagues and bosses retired they too were keen to join the social circle. One solution was to hold an annual dinner. In discussion with Sharon Priestly who still heads the placenaming team at the ACT's Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, I chose a fairly broad dinner invitation list. The dinner would be open to all people who have performed a role in officially notifying new placenames in the Australian Capital Territory back to 1928.

Why 1928?

I give due deference to all those early folk who applied Indigenous, pioneering and surveying names to our territorial landscape. However, in terms of a coordinated, legislated approach to placenaming, the task took on a serious role when the National Memorials Ordinance 1928 was introduced. Under that Ordinance, the Commonwealth Gazette published on 20 September 1928 officially notified 300 names for Canberra's divisions (suburbs), roads and public places. It was the start of a process which, along with the ACT's Public Place Names Act 1989, continues to this present day. (This year the National Memorials Ordinance 1928 was repealed by the Australian Capital Territory National Land (National Memorials, Territory Divisions and Public Places) Ordinance 2022 which came into effect in April.)

So, the dinner door was open to government officers and committee members whose regular duties involved naming places in the ACT. About 10 years ago, while still working, I started compiling a list of names of my predecessors. Our very first 'placenames officer' was Dean Burgess, Chief Clerk of the Federal Capital Commission, who no doubt would have collated the information for the 1928 Gazette. The next Gazette with new placenames did not appear until 1943. Roy Corrigan MBE (1924-2015) was another government official who played a significant role in Canberra's nomenclature over several decades.

The inaugural dinner

By end of August this year I was able to email invitations to 30 people for a dinner at the Canberra Labor Club

The attendees at this year's dinner; Peter Phillips is on the right.

...the Inaugural Dinner 2022

on 20 September 2022. Regretfully a dozen keen people were unable to appear, but the 18 who did attend had a great time catching up with each other and looking through memorabilia. After dinner I asked everyone present to introduce themselves. It revealed some guests' involvement in placenaming going back to the 1970s! The evening concluded with a 20-question ACT placenames quiz. The questions appear as this month's **Puzzle** (below), as a challenge for readers of *Placenames Australia*.

Future dinners

My intent is to hold annual dinners every 20th September, until the centenary of the 1928 Gazette. Six more dinners to arrange!

Peter Phillips

Puzzle 84 *The Great Canberra Quiz*

If you're not a long-term resident of Canberra (or one of the Dinner gang), feel free to Google away! Answers on the BACK PAGE.

1 How has former PM Malcolm Fraser been officially commemorated in Canberra's nomenclature?

2 How many divisions (suburbs) are there in the ACT?
A. 67 B. 121 C. 145 D. 170

3 Which five suburbs begin with the letter 'R'?

4 What is the new name for Aspen Island?

5 Which suburb is named after an infant child?

6 Walter Burley Griffin originally gave which name to Canberra Avenue?

7 Where is the platform that was officially named in 2013 as 'Marion Mahony Griffin View'?

8 How many Canberra suburbs are named after the men in the photograph below?

9 Which of the ACT's 19 Districts was the last named?

10 Which four suburbs commemorating three federation politicians and one landholder have a suffix added to their name?

11 The shortest road name in Canberra commemorates a South Australian citrus grower. What is its name and which suburb is it in?

12 Which ACT geographical feature is named after a bushranger?

13 Two main roads in Belconnen are linked to a suburb with an aviation theme. What are the roads, and which suburb?

14 Which seven ACT suburbs have 2-worded names?

15 In which order were these suburbs gazetted?
Aranda... Conder... Coombs... Hackett... Turner

16 Name the 3-worded street that encloses Telopea Park School.

17 Prime Minister Bruce vetoed the road name *The Hexagon*. What is it now called?

18 Which twelve suburbs are named after women?

19 *Athllon [Drive]* is an acronym, from the initials of six children of the Oldfield family. Their names?

20 What was the name of the Commonwealth department that administered Canberra's placenames from December 1972 to March 1983?

Placenames Puzzle Number 84

The Great Canberra Quiz

Here's the answers to the Canberra Placenames Inaugural Quiz (previous page). Anyone who's scored more than 10 has done well!

1. Malcolm Fraser Bridge (Monaro Hwy-Molonglo River-Majura Hwy)
2. B: 121
3. Red Hill, Reid, Richardson, Rivett, Russell
4. Queen Elizabeth II Island
5. Isabella Plains (after the daughter of Governor Brisbane)
6. Wellington Avenue
7. Mt Ainslie
8. Five (from the left: 3rd Forde, 4th Curtin, 6th Hughes, 8th Fadden, 9th Holt)
9. Molonglo Valley
10. Fyshwick, Lyneham, Palmerston, Symonston
11. Ey Place in Kambah (George Heinrich Charles Ey, Campbelltown, South Australia, 1870s)
12. Mt Tennent (John Tenn*a*nt, 1795-1837)
13. Kingsford Smith Drive & Southern Cross Drive, Scullin
14. Canberra Airport, Capital Hill, Denman Prospect, Isabella Plains, Oaks Estate, Red Hill, Uriarra Village
15. Aranda ...3... Conder ...4... Coombs ...5... Hackett ...2... Turner ...1...
16. New South Wales Crescent
17. London Circuit
18. Chisholm, Denman Prospect, Franklin, Gilmore, Isabella Plains, Kenny, Macnamara, Melba, Moncrieff, Richardson, Taylor, Wright
19. Alf, Ted, Harry, Les, Lyle and Nancy (and 'O' for Oldfield)
20. Department of the Capital Territory

[Compiled by **Peter Phillips**]

Become a Supporting Member!

We realise that not everyone who wishes to support the Australian National Placenames Survey can do so by carrying out toponymic research and supplying information for our database. There *is* another way — become a supporting member of Placenames Australia! In doing so, you'll help the Survey and its volunteer researchers by providing infrastructure support. In return, you'll have the assurance that you'll be helping ensure the continued existence of this prestige national project, and we'll guarantee to keep you in touch with our progress.

Please consider carefully this invitation. If you wish to become a Member

- ❑ arrange a bank transfer for $25 to BSB 032089 a/c 275989
- ❑ or send a cheque for $25 to *Placenames Australia Inc.*

Please advise our Treasurer of the transfer by one of the following methods:

Email: treasurer@anps.org.au
Mail: PO Box 5160, SOUTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074
Website: www.anps.org.au

Articles for *Placenames Australia*

Material for publication in *Placenames Australia* is always welcome. Please send all contributions to the Editor, David Blair, by email: <editor@anps.org.au>

Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

Closing dates for submissions are:

March Issue: 15 January June Issue: 15 April September Issue: 15 July December Issue: 15 October