# Australia's German placenames

German and German-linked placenames are not something that one immediately associates with the toponymy of Australia, yet there are (and were) many of them and some may be a surprise to us. For instance, did you know of the following four?

• The Sydney Harbour-side suburb of *Pyrmont*: its name is that of the spa town *Bad Pyrmont*, 50km south-west of Hannover. Apparently, there was a spring of cold fresh water bubbling from a rock at the site of Sydney's Pyrmont which led to the suggestion that it take the name of the famous spa town of Germany.

• The Sydney suburb of *Sans Souci*: although the name is a French phrase (with the oh-so-Australian meaning of 'no worries'), the suburb took its name from 'Sanssouci', the summer palace of Friedrich the Great in Potsdam.

• *Engadine*, an outer southern suburb of Sydney: it was named after *Engadin* (lit. 'Valley of the Inn people'), a valley in Switzerland through which the River Inn flows.

• The former name of Kata Tjuta, *The Olgas*, and its tallest peak, *Mount Olga*: the peak was named in 1872 by explorer Ernest Giles at the behest of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, in honour of Queen Olga of Württemberg (Figure 1).

The most well-known German and German-linked toponyms, however, are those of South Australia. At one stage there were at least 75 of them (see Table 1, below). The most prominent of these, although not widely known, is the state's capital, *Adelaide*, named after Princess Adelheid Amalie Luise Therese Carolin of Meiningen, Germany (Figure 2), who in 1818



Figure 1. *Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna of Russia, the future Queen Olga of Württemberg (Portait by Vladimir Hau, 1846; from Wikimedia Commons)*

married the heir to the British throne (later King William IV). She anglicised her name to 'Adelaide'.[1] When the Colony of South Australia was officially proclaimed in 1836, its capital was named after her.

The first German arrivals of South Australia's immigration program settled in the village of *Klemzig*, which became a staging camp for new arrivals. *Hahndorf* was the second village to be settled. Although the name is German, it is actually named after Dirk Meinerts Hahn, the Danish captain of the *Zebra*, the ship upon which many of the

# From the Editor

You'll already have noticed that our front-page article by Jan Tent is on Australia's German-related placenames. Jan has offered to continue this theme in forthcoming issues: Chinese toponyms in September and Oceanic in the December issue.

We did hold back one item from this June issue, for reasons of space: we had promised an article on such well-known suffixes as the *-up* that ends many Western Australian placenames. Now coming up in September, honestly! (And notice I just wrote 'Western Australian', not 'West Australian' or 'Westralian'... See page 6!)

*David Blair*
*<editor@anps.org.au>*

# The James Cook Heritage Trail

Trevor Lipscombe reminds us that in April next year it will be 250 years since the arrival of Lt James Cook and the crew of *Endeavour* on the eastern coast of Australia. In anticipation of that anniversary, the *Restoring Cook's Legacy* project has created The James Cook Heritage Trail-—a virtual trail along the coasts of Victoria and NSW. See the Trail website for all the information:

www.jamescookheritagetrail.com.au

And don't forget our ANPS Placenames Report on Cook's toponyms of eastern Australia:

www.anps.org.au/upload/ANPSPlacenamesReport1.pdf

# Notes and queries

## Sutherland Shire suburb names

Alex Allchin noted our reader responses on street names recently, and alerted us to the work of Sutherland Shire Council (NSW) on its suburb names. The publication, 'Origin of Suburbs', is a 2018 revision of work originally published in 2003 and is accompanied by a two-part publication on the origin of other placenames in the Shire. The research is of high quality, and all three publications can be downloaded as PDFs from the following site:

www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/Council/About-the-Shire/
Shire-Suburb-Origins

## Coads Tank (and Daysdale)

Our reader Alan Jones has given us more historical information about Coads Tank and we've been pleased to pass that on to Col Kohlhagen, the author of our original article on the placename (June 2015). Furthermore, Alan has revealed the story behind **Daysdale**, near Corowa (NSW). In the 1870s, mail that had been addressed to the village at Coreen Station often turned up at the Coreen Wine Shanty instead— so the GPO established a post office there by the name of *Daysdale*. Alan tells us that it was the name of James Day Snr, who owned the station at the time.

*Puzzle answers - (from page 12)*

1.  Woolloomooloo > The Loo
2.  Wollongong > The Gong
3.  Alice Springs > The Alice
4.  Snowy Mountains > The Snowies
5.  Wangaratta > Wang
6.  Coffs Harbour > Coffs
7.  Tumbarumba > Tumba
8.  Wagga Wagga > Wagga
9.  Kings Cross > The Cross
10. Noosa Heads > Noosa
11. Condobolin > Condo
12. Parramatta > Parra
13. Port Macquarie > Port
14. Shepparton > Shepp
15. Deniliquin > Deni
16. Byron Bay > Byron
17. Surfers Paradise > Surfers
18. Woolloongabba > The Gabba
19. Mount Isa > The Isa
20. Dimboola > Dim

# ...Australia's German placenames



Figure 2. *Princess Adelheid Amalie Luise Therese Carolin of Meiningen (Portrait by William Beechey, c. 1831; from Wikimedia Commons)*

town's original settlers arrived in 1838. Other villages followed, with the majority being established in the Barossa valley. German immigrants tended to settle beyond established areas, isolating themselves from English colonial settlements; the various times of the English and German settlements can be seen in the map below (Figure 3). The German settlers became Adelaide's main suppliers of vegetables and dairy produce; they are probably best known, though, for their vineyards.

Other large-scale German settlement also occurred in Queensland. From 1850 until 1914, German settlers and their descendants comprised the largest non-British or Irish group of Europeans in Australia. Although the early German settlers were found in all parts of Australia, the settlements in South Australia and Queensland maintained very strong German customs and traditions, a corollary of which was the bestowal of German names on their communities. Most of these names were either eponymous or copied from Germany.

More German names were given to Australian features during the nineteenth century by scientists from German-speaking countries who were conducting exploratory expeditions. Various locations and mountains in Central Australia are named by and after them: *Finke, Haast's Bluff, Hermannsburg, Mt Feldtmann, Mt Heuglin, Mt Leichhardt, Mt Liebig, Mt Mueller, Mt Sonder* and *Mt Von Mueller*.

At the outbreak of World War I, a groundswell of anti-German sentiments swept across the nation, with many German settlers being interned and discriminated against. As a result of the South Australian Nomenclature Act of 1917, many German names were expunged from the map.[2]

The German names were anglicised (i.e. calqued 'literally translated into English'), given Aboriginal derived names, or were changed to honour notable generals and battles of WWI. All of this was carried out by local councils or the postal authorities, often as the result of a petition by locals.



Figure 3. *German settlement in the Mount Lofty Ranges (Source: Young 1987)*

It is somewhat ironic that those which were anglicised only minimally obscured their German origin. These include:

    Bethanien > Bethany
    Kaiserstuhl > Mount Kitchener > Kaisers Seat (1975)
        > Kaiserstuhl
    Oliventhal > Olivedale
    Petersburg > Peterborough
    Rosenthal > Rosedale
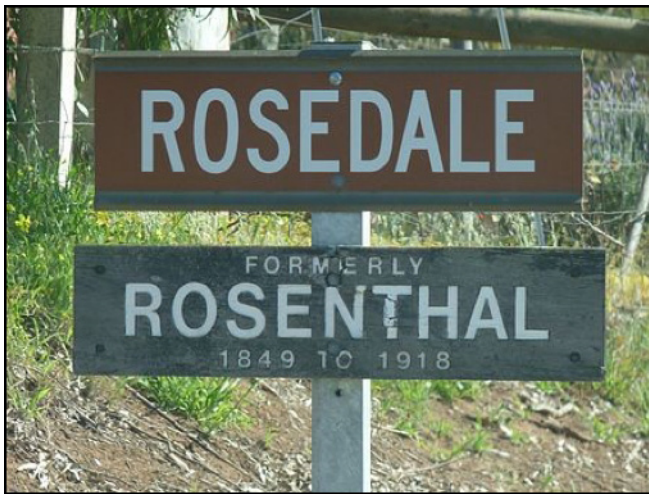    Steinfeld > Stonefield > Steinfeld (1986)
    Summerfeldt > Summerfield



Figure 4. *A roadside sign showing the former name of Rosedale as being Rosenthal (Photo: fairv8, from Wikimedia Commons)*

Some places that were renamed after generals or battles of WWI include:

    Blumberg > Birdwood
    Germanton > Holbrook
    Germantown Hill > Vimy Ridge
    Grunthal > Verdun
    Hundred of South Rhine > Hundred of Jutland
    Hundred of Homburg > Hundred of Haig
    Hundred of Von Doussa > Hundred of Allenby
    Kaiserstuhl > Mount Kitchener
    Klemzig > Gaza
    Rhine River (North) > The Somme > Somme Creek
    Rhine River (South) > The Marne > Marne River
    Rhine Villa > Cambrai

The atmosphere of anti-German sentiments was so highly charged in South Australia that the humble 'jam berliner' was renamed the 'kitchener bun', showing the lengths people were prepared to go to erase the German



Figure 5. *Cambrai, South Australia. The new name refers to a battle in France in 1917 during WWI.*
*Source: website* German Australia *(David Nutting)*
*www.germanaustralia.com/e/ww1.htm*

influence in South Australia. Furthermore, authorities were so blinded by anti-German sentiments that they renamed *Cape Bauer* to *Cape Wondoma*, not realising it was actually named by Matthew Flinders in 1802, after his Austrian painter of natural history on the *Investigator*. Flinders' name, however, was reinstated in 1948. One is left wondering why some places across the country (like *Adelaide, Leichardt, Heidelberg, Hermannsburg*) were not earmarked for renaming. What local factors or sentiments were at work that saved these German placenames?

By the late 1920s there was a move for the restoration of the original German placenames, but few (approx. 20%) were actually reinstated. And at the commencement of World War II, there were renewed calls from some quarters to remove German toponyms from the map.

| State | Original number of names | Number of extant names |
|---|---|---|
| NSW | 10 | 7 |
| QLD | 27 | 10 |
| SA | 75 | 23 |
| TAS | 13 | 11 |
| VIC | 17 | 6 |
| WA | 4 | 3 |
| NT | 15 | 1 |
| Totals | 161 | 61 |

Table 1. *Numerical summary of German toponyms in Australia by state*

# ...German placenames

Table 1 outlines the number of German and German-linked toponyms I have been able to find in each state. I do not claim to have been able to find all such names; nevertheless, the figures are probably representative. Column 2 enumerates the original number of names, and Column 3 the number of extant names, either because the name never changed or because it was reinstated at some time between the 1920s and 1980s. The table shows that of the original 161 names, we only have 38% left, and that some jurisdictions were far more enthusiastic during WWI in the expunging of German and German-linked names from the map.

From time to time there are calls to reinstate more former German placenames. For example, Davies (2013) reported that South Australian-German history expert Ian Harmstorf wanted to see dual-name recognition for the towns, with their original German names displayed on signs beneath their English names, along with a short explanation of why the changes were made.

What Table 1 doesn't show are all the current toponyms in Australia that contain the word 'German', e.g. *German Gully, Germans Creek, Germantown, Germanton*, etc. There are 82 such toponyms, many of which (34) designate a stream. The majority of these toponyms are located in SA (25) but there are 21 in VIC, 19 in NSW, 8 in QLD, 7 in WA and 2 in TAS. According to the SA Department for Transport, Energy & Infrastructure website, two of the current German toponyms were changed during World War I but were later reinstated. I do not know how many of the other current *German* toponyms in the country were in existence before WWI or whether any were bestowed later. What is interesting is that the majority of these names occur in SA, the state that was most active in eliminating such names.

As I have noted in the past, toponyms form an integral part of a nation's cultural and linguistic heritage, and they often reveal the chronology of settlement. On an emotive level, toponyms may offer insights into the belief and value systems of the name-givers, as well as political and social circumstances at the time of naming, or indeed of renaming. The motivation for the latter is most often political, and this chapter in our toponymic annals provides clear evidence that this is so.

**Jan Tent**

## Endnotes

[1] *Adelheid* 'nobility / nobleness'.

[2] The South Australian *Government Gazette* of Thursday, January 10, 1918 (page 37) (http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/sa_gazette/1918/2.pdf) lists 69 such changes.

## References

Davies, Nathan (2013). Push to revive South Australian towns with German names lost under WWI act of Parliament. *The Advertiser*, October 11, 2013. https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/push-to-revive-south-australian-towns-with-german-names-lost-under-wwi-act-of-parliament/news-story/2714315c7f071f494a645453e41de51f

Young, G. (1987). German settlement, South Australia. In J.C.R Camm & J. McQuinton (Eds.), *Australians: a historical atlas* (p.80). Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates.

## What we're working on

The Survey's volunteer researchers are working on various topics, as well as attempting to answer our readers' queries.

*David Blair:*
- coastal beach names of southern NSW (to appear shortly as ANPS Data Report No 8)
- Sydney's north shore suburb names—currently, *Warrawee*

*Jan Tent:*
- a theoretical paper on what makes a toponym, with the tentative title of '*Topographic descriptor* or *toponym*—what's the difference and why should it matter?'
- 17th and 18th century Dutch toponyms in the Pacific; three papers on this topic are now accepted for publication

Do you have evidence that shows **when** a place got its name, or **who** named it, or **why** it got that name? Or would you like to start collecting that information for your town or regional area? Let us know—we have easy-to-follow instructions that'll get you started entering that information on our website.

Email David Blair

<research@anps.org.au>

and we'll help you join the happy band of ANPS researchers and informants!

# Westralia and...

*In our previous issue (March 2019), Jan Tent's article on the demonyms of Australia raised the existence of the variant forms of* Western Australia *and* Western Australian. **Bruce Baskerville** *has recently returned to the western side of the continent after many years away, and has given some thought to the terminological variants. (Readers will no doubt note, and enjoy, Bruce's use of the term 'Othersider'!)*

The formal name for Western Australia is *Western Australia*, not *West Australia*. The shorter 'West' is used in the main State-wide newspaper title, but otherwise, from my observation, is not in common local use. Many locals would probably recall premier Sir Charles Court's (1974-1982) strongly emphasised, almost serpentine *'Wesss-Tern' Australia*.

The more interesting term, from my perspective, is *Westralia*. A Trove search suggests the earliest use of the word was in 1888, when 'Westralian-bred fillies and geldings' were invited to enter the 'West Australian Derby' at the 'Western Australian Turf Club' annual race meeting, thus also getting all three variants on the name in one reference. By 1890 the word had acquired a patriotic meaning, with 'Rouse Thee Westralia' becoming the slogan of those campaigning for self-government, and a verse that begins

> Rouse thee, Westralia! awake
> From thy 'Swan's nest among the reeds';
> Cast thy broad shadow on the lake,
> And strongly glide where Fortune leads!

The new word was instantly controversial but quickly gained wide usage, and in 1897 local journalists were charging t'Othersider *Bulletin* writers with stealing the word and claiming they had invented it. I understand this contraction originally dates from telegraph usage when telegram costs were charged per letter or word. *Westralia* and the demonym *Westralian,* along with occasional use of a feminine form *Westralienne*, have been frequently used from the late 19th century onwards, both as a source of local pride and as a pejorative by Othersiders frustrated with local people and conditions.

The 1930s secessionist movement was formally named the Dominion League of Western Australia, and members would have been horrified to be described as republicans (as the *Placenames Australia* article infers in the term 'Republic of Westralia'). Their aim was independence as a dominion within the British Empire, on an equal footing with Australia, Canada, Eire, New Zealand and other dominions as well as with Britain. They frequently used the term *Westralia/n* to evoke their emotional and cultural distinctiveness from *Australia/n* (frequently invoked in their slogan 'Westralia Shall be Free'), but they never proposed that their new country be called Westralia. Their favoured terms were the Dominion of Western Australia or the Free State of Western Australia. They easily won the secession referendum in 1933, but their objective was ultimately thwarted in 1935 by Canberra and London.

In the 1960s, with the beginnings of the modern built heritage conservation movement, the preface in a seminal local publication, Ray and John Oldham's *Western Heritage* (1961) captured the spirit in the sentence 'Western Australia still wears many of these things [loved old buildings] that make her "Westralia" and not just the west of Australia'. This was reinforced with section headings such as 'WA history unlike other States' and 'Right sort of patriotism'.

In the introduction to *Sandgropers*, a 1973 anthology of local poetry, poet-editor Dorothy Hewett writes

> We only joined Federation because the t'othersiders on the Goldfields voted us in, and there is nothing quite like the tone in which a bred and born West Australian of my generation says 'eastern-stater' … Old enough, too, to remember the celebratory bunting strung high across St George's Terrace with SECESSION in big brave capitals. … this anthology does not seek to parade 'write Westralia' deliberately across its pages, but I do think there are certain themes and preoccupations that do engage writers living in this part of the continent … some of our eastern [States] brothers have an idea that writers in Western Australia live in some kind of Arcadian innocence … [but] like

# ...Westralian

an anachronism we remain, a white chauvinist outpost closer to South-East Asia than to the rest of Australia.

Ironically, Hewett lived much of her adult life in Sydney.

The 1970s secessionist movement did take the formal name Westralian Secessionist Movement (WSM), but during my research I have never found any WSM proposal for a specific name for their proposed independent country other than Western Australia. They were not republicans either, and all of the secessionist movements that I know of, right up to today, would refute any such claim. The secessionist itch was being scratched again in the early 2010s, by what an Adelaide commentator described as a coalition of billionaire miners and xenophobic libertarians:

> That's the thing about the Westralia dream: it is mostly about money … the Scots have a few things going for their campaign that are kind of important, like an actual national identity forged over centuries, and a history of conflict with other areas of the UK.

'Typical othersider' would be the likely Westralian dismissal of that sort of condescension.

The recent program for the 2019 Perth Festival includes a map of festival venues around the metropolitan area, with the empty fringes of the map labelled 'Greater Westralia'. It was produced just a few months after the closure of inner-city hipster bar, 'Dominion League' (1935 redux). This recent example indicates Westralia's continuing usage in popular culture. The word remains much more than a simple contraction of two nouns. It does serve as a demonym and an adjective, but is inflected with a quietly subversive quality (although perhaps less-so in the presence of non-Westralians). In this sense it has more in common with the ways Norfolk Islanders refer to themselves than with other state or territory demonyms.

The *Placenames Australia* article lists some contemporary uses of *Westralia*, and there are many more in business and institutional names. It is a widely-used term. There are at least three *Westralia* streets in Perth that I know of and more in country towns. There is also one in Darwin, named I believe for the coastal steamer *Westralia*, rather than any irredentist claim to the old 135th meridian border!

On the subject of a New South Wales adjective or demonym, I did occasionally encounter New South Waler when I lived there, perhaps derived from the Waler horse (or is it the other way around?). I thought the reluctance to seek a more graceful demonym really came from an easy conflation of state and national identities, so that *New South Welsh/Waler* and *Australian* meant the same thing, along with the demographic dominance of Sydney and its own moniker of *Sydneysider*.

**Bruce Baskerville**

# Les Murray's places

Les Murray, the great poet of Australian landscape and language, died in April this year. Murray was born in Nabiac, rural New South Wales, and grew up on his father's dairy farm at Bunyah. Often referred to as the 'bard of Bunyah', he lived much of his adult life there and drew heavily on the towns and characters of the Taree region as inspiration for his work.

The placenames of the NSW mid-north coast frequently appear in his poems. Recently Les had asked us what we knew about the placenames around Bunyah, including **Wang Wauk** and **Bucca Wauka**. With the help of Amanda Lissarague and her dictionary of Gathang, we told Les:

**Wang Wauk** represents Gathang *waang wawuk*. Interestingly, *waang* and *wawuk* are merely variants of the same word, which means 'south, southward' or 'downriver (southwards?)'. So, if *waang wawuk* was the response to a question such as 'what's that place there?' or 'where did X happen?', it may have meant 'southwards'. And perhaps the reduplication meant 'a long way south'.

**Bucca Wauka** represents Gathang *baka waka*, where *baka* is the word for 'knee', and *waka* can mean 'on top, above' or 'up'. The phrase is translated as 'knees high', referring to a particular burial practice: warriors and elders were buried in a sitting position with the chin resting on the knees. So the question 'what's that place?' could elicit the response *baka waka*, indicating such a gravesite or burial ground.

We were unsuccessful in finding an answer to Les's question about **Bulby Brush**—a possible connection to bilby was all we could suggest!

# Currabubula...

*In our previous issue we raised the question of the NSW village of **Currabubula**. Surveyor Major T. L. Mitchell had recorded the name of the stream at that site as* Carrabobbila; *later spellings included* Carabobbela, Currububla *and* Carrabobila. *As for the meaning of the Aboriginal word, suggestions have included 'two-forked tree', 'two forked trees' or 'meeting of ranges at different angles'.*

*We recalled that the surveying team had transformed Mitchell's original transcription of the Aboriginal word* Carrabobbila *into 'Terrible Billy', and wondered whether our readers could enlighten us on any 19th Century meme that might explain such a modification. No-one has come up with a brilliant answer so far! But **Jeremy Steele** has searched his databases for clues on the meaning of the word. Is it possible, he asks, to support those earlier suggestions?*

Aboriginal place names ending in 'bula' often indicate 'two', or plurality. So *Currabubula* would at once suggest two somethings.

If, on the other hand, it were a transcription corruption of a word ending in 'bila', then that would suggest 'stream', or a tree growing in a stream (such as a forest oak), or a spear (possibly made from such timber). These interpretations of 'bila' come from the inland NSW languages Wiradhuri and Kamilaroi.

A search in the Bayala Databases[1] using the 'word' g@r@b@*, where @ is any single letter, and * any number of letters, yielded around seventy responses for the sounds in the highlighted first part of *Currabubula*; a few of the seemingly most relevant are reproduced in the table on the following page.

Examples 1-3 suggests that the 'something' referred to above might be a tree of some kind. This is confirmed in Example 7. The idea of 'two' appears in Example 5.

Nearly thirty of the examples related to birds, which accounts for Example 6. As these were mostly of the form *guriban* or *guribang* 'curlew' (i.e. with extra sounds/ letters beyond *garaba)*, they were deemed not relevant to this enquiry.

From these seven examples in the table, perhaps the most likely interpretation for Currabubula, respelt as *garaba bula*, would be 'two trees (of a particular type)'.

**Jeremy Steele**

## Endnote

[1] For *Bayala Databases,* see www.aboriginallanguages.com/bayala-databases

# Ston(e)y Point

In our March 2018 issue Jan Tent explored the adjectival suffixes *-y* and *-ey* on placenames. He noted the unpredictable variation that occurred, mentioning a creek in the Alpine National Park which, according to the signposts was either 'Stony' or 'Stoney', depending on which direction you were travelling. Our Victorian reader Roger Stanley then told us that in order to get to **Stony Point** he had to drive along **Stoney Point Road**!

Roger has now updated us on the situation (and supplied the photographic evidence): the Mornington Peninsula Shire has been on the job and has recently added a road identification sign (complete with their official 'shell' logo) for 'Stoney Point Road'. Follow the sign and 3km later you'll get to Stony Point!

# ...what did it mean?

| | Original text | Respelt | Translation with the text | English: JS | Source of text |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | "Goorooba" | guruba | "Native fig" | fig | SofM 19010321 [26 Thomas–Wiraiari] [:27.2:3] [Wira] |
| **2** | "gurabā" | garaba | "pine" | pine | KAOL Ridley [45 Wlwn] [:49.2:9] [Wlwn] |
| **3** | "kurrabar" | garaba | "Pine tree" | pine | Mathews NYMBA 1904 [:229.3:13] [Nymba] |
| **4** | "{Curra-bubala}" | garabubala | "A spring of water. Berrima district. There are several other place names derived from the same root. **Curra-bubala, co. Buckland**; Curra-thool, co. Sturt; Curra-wan, co. St. Vincent; Curra-wong, co. Hardin; Curra-wanana, co. Bourke." | | SofM 19011022 [148 MINES–NSW] [:149.2:16.1] [Kml] |
| **5** | "Currabubula" | garabu bula | "Two-forked tree, meaning two ranges meeting" | two-forked timber, meaning two ranges meeting | SofM 19030824 [100a POLICE] [:100.2:56] [Kml] |
| **6** | "Carabobola" | garabubula | "Leather-head, honey sucker." | bird | Mitchell, J.F.H. Woradgery Dictionary 1906 [:13:8] [Wira] |
| **7** | "Corobimilla" | garabimila | "tree struck by lightning" | | SofM 18960912 [12.2 JJB-Narrandera] [:12.21:16] [Wira] |

# Coogee

*Coogee* is well-known as a name for features in both New South Wales and Western Australia, and has long been the subject of toponymic inquiry. Is it a coincidence that the name appears on each side of the continent, or are the toonyms related in some way? Is it really true that *Coogee* means 'smelly place'?
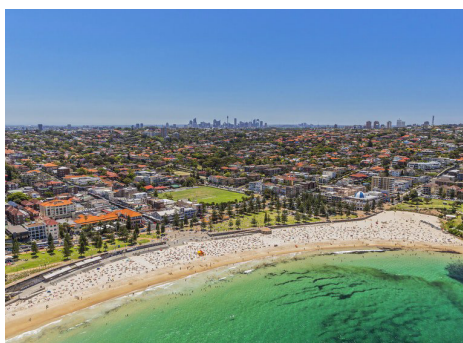


*Coogee Beach, NSW (photo: Destination NSW)*

**Jan Tent** deals with these questions, and comes up with some answers, in the latest of our ANPS Occasional Papers.

On the scent of *Coogee*?
ANPS Occasional Paper No 6

www.anps.org.au/upload/ANPSOccasionalPaper6.pdf



*Coogee Beach, WA (photo: beachsafe.org.au)*

# The island of Koro...

*It is a great pleasure for me,* says **Paul Geraghty**, *to return once again, after a brief hiatus, to the (now exclusively electronic) pages of* Placenames Australia*, and I hope that I can continue to interest readers with my ramblings on placenames of the distant archipelago of Fiji. As I mentioned a few issues ago, to give the impression of a modicum of organisation I have been looking at the names of the islands of Fiji in decreasing order of size; the last island I had a stab at was* **Gau** *in central Fiji, number five in size—so this brings us to its northerly neighbour* **Koro***, which is number six.*

Koro is a wedge-shaped island, about 16km (10 miles) in length, tapering to the south, and has a number of claims to fame. Unusually for Fiji, there are parts of the island without a surrounding coral reef and in those parts surfing, known locally as *totokai*, has been practised for centuries. Koro is also famous for its jungle fowl (Gallus gallus), of which there are a number of varieties, and the sport of cock-fighting is still occasionally practised. Also emblematic of the island, though present with a curiously patchy distribution in other parts of Fiji, is the tree Gnetum gnemon, known locally as *belesukau*, whose leaves make a delicious green vegetable and are sent as care packages to Koro people in Suva and other urban centres where they are unavailable.



*The leaves of the belesukau*



*The Fiji jungle fowl*

On the tectonic front, many columns ago I pointed out that the placenames *Tavua* and *Tavuaga* both mean 'burning place'—composed of *tavu* 'burn' and the nominalising suffix *a* or *aga*—and a plausible explanation for this is that such places were named when there was an active volcano there. So while Koro is not currently volcanically active (indeed nowhere in Fiji is), the fact that Tavua is a village on the western coast and Tavuaga a mountain close to the eastern coast suggest that it may have been volcanically active during the past three thousand or so years of human occupation.

There is no doubt about the antiquity of the name *Koro*, or at least its existence over the last two centuries, since it was recorded by a number of early European visitors. One of the earliest was British sandalwood trader William Lockerby, who visited it in 1808, and referred to it as 'Mygoora' or 'Migora', unwittingly prefixing the preposition *mai* to the island's name, as was commonly done to placenames at that time by English speakers. The American trader Edmund Fanning, who was there about the same time, recorded it more accurately as 'Gorroo'.

Those of you with long memories will recall that I suggested—rather more tentatively than usual—that Koro's southerly neighbour, Gau, was named after the noun *gau*, a term for a body part that meant (and still means) something like 'trunk', since the shape of the island when viewed from the main island of Vitilevu is rather like the trunk of a tree or a human body. This, I proposed, would contrast with the other large island to the east of Vitilevu, Koro, which is high and rugged. In order to bolster this argument, I need to spend some time arguing first about what Koro *doesn't* mean.

To come straight to the point, the island name *Koro* does not mean 'village'. This will come as a shock to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of Fijian, since *koro* is an everyday word in the contemporary language, and everyone in Fiji knows that it means 'village' (or

'town'). It's also been used since the nineteenth century as a component in placenames, especially *Korovou* 'new village', of which there are many. It's even been borrowed into Fiji English and Fiji Hindi, so you can hear people talking about how nice life is 'in the koro' and so on. Quite true.

You might think then that I am going to come up with a historical argument: that the meaning 'village' is a recent one. Maybe—but I would have to go a long way back, because the word has been recorded with that meaning since the early nineteenth century. Charles Wilkes, the commander of the United States Exploring Expedition that visited Fiji in 1840, used the word many times in his account, always equating it to the English word 'town', as did the German botanist Berthold Seemann who travelled round Fiji extensively in 1860.

It also occurs in the earliest Fijian dictionary, the unpublished manuscript dictionary of Lakeba in Lau compiled by the missionary David Cargill and colleagues from 1835 to 1840—but with a significant addition: *koro* is defined not just as 'town' or 'city', but also as 'fortification'. So perhaps 'fortification' is an earlier meaning that was lost during the course of the nineteenth century. As Fijians accepted Christianity, they gave up warfare, and moved from fortified places back to peace-time villages by river-banks and sea-shores, but still called their residences 'koro', even though they were no longer fortified.

Further evidence for this argument is found beyond Fiji—among its western Polynesian neighbours lying to the east. Archaeologists have determined that a few hundred years ago, an age of warfare began in Fiji, the causes of which can only be speculated on, and people started living on mountain-tops and similar defendable places. It appears that Fiji then became famous—or notorious—for warfare in the subsequent centuries, for

when William Anderson, Cook's surgeon, visited Tonga in 1777 he wrote:

> Feejee is the only place they [the Tongans] know that does not bend to their authority, and they are themselves obliged in some measure to acknowledge the superiority of Feejee, a circumstance they always express by bending the body forwards and covering the face with their hands.

> The inhabitants sometimes visit Tonga and the other isles in a hostile manner, and carry off their hogs and other things, where they are much dreaded from their fighting with bows and slings, but more so from the unnatural practice of eating their enemies whom they kill in battle. This practice is detested very much by the people of Tonga, who cultivate the friendship of those of Feejee apparently out of fear, though they sometimes venture to skirmish with them on their own ground and carry off red feathers as their booty, which are found in great plenty there, and highly valued at Tonga.

The reason I quote this account is simply that it explains why the Tongans called their fortifications *kolo*—they borrowed the word from Fiji. The inhabitants of East Futuna and East 'Uvea (Wallis)—two small islands between Fiji and Samoa—also called their fortified towns *kolo*, and Samoans called theirs *ʔolo*, since the sound /k/ became /ʔ/ (glottal stop) in Samoa. All this evidence suggests that the Fijian word *koro* meant 'fortification' over the past few centuries and until the middle of the nineteenth century.

But this is still not the origin of the name of the island Koro! For that we have to look for an even earlier meaning of the word *koro*, and since we have once again run out of space, we will have to do that in the next issue of *Placenames Australia*.

**Paul Geraghty**

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# Placenames in the Modern World

We had hoped to be able to offer our online unit in toponymy this year, through **Open Universities Australia** and with the cooperation of **Macquarie University**.

It hasn't worked out that way, unfortunately. Some logistical difficulties arose, and there weren't quite enough pre-enrolments to ensure its viability. We intend to work towards running it in 2020; if you'd like to keep in touch, email Jan Tent <director@anps.org.au> or Helen Slatyer <secretary@anps.org.au>

# Placenames Puzzle Number 70

## Ellipsis in placenames

*Australians have a predilection for shortening personal names and placenames by simply deleting syllables or words, e.g.* Khancoban > Khan. *This is called ellipsis, and sometimes these toponyms are preceded by 'The'. The clues refer to these shortened forms. (Note that familiar forms with added endings like* -i *or* -o *are different:* Brizzie *for* Brisbane, Freo *for* Fremantle. *They are called hypocoristics.)*

1.  (NSW) Sydney harbour-side suburb shortened to a toilet
2.  (NSW) coastal city that has a certain ring to it
3.  (NT) this girl about town has lost her bounce and no wonder
4.  (NSW) mountain range whose shortened name is hoary
5.  (VIC) town with the same name as the most common family name in China
6.  (NSW) a town that sounds as if it's got a bit of a cold
7.  (NSW) you could beat out a rhythm on this town
8.  (NSW) where have all the crows gone in this Riverina city?
9.  (NSW) the suburb's royal intersection belies its seedy reputation
10. (QLD) change the final vowel and you wouldn't want to hang at this holiday destination
11. (NSW) town that's a prestige unit
12. (NSW) forget about the eels in this suburb - think sails and chutes and medics instead
13. (NSW) this coastal town is a suitcase
14. (VIC) town reminiscent of Elvis's faithful old dog
15. (NSW) the utes muster at this Riverina town
16. (NSW) a Romantic poet's grandfather gave his name to this coastal town
17. (QLD) heaven might have gone but the beach lovers remain
18. (QLD) cricketers' suburb for a chatty man
19. (QLD) the eyes are on this mining town
20. (VIC) this town shines not brightly

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

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# Become a Supporting Member!

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## Articles for *Placenames Australia*

## Closing dates for submissions are: