Placenames Australia

ANPS

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PLACENAMES SURVEY

The Joys (and Sorrows) of Toponymic Research

"Thursday, 5th Decr. (1811). Travelled through Meehan Valley (named so by me) …… to very fine beautiful extensive plains… which I have now named York Plains in honor of H.R.H. The Duke of York". Lachlan Maquarie's Journals, 1810-1822.

I f only all research into placenames were so easy! It is perhaps fortunate as Governor Macquarie named many places that his records are so meticulous. However, this is not always the case when researching a placename.

Nevertheless, fieldwork can be enjoyable and rewarding. Name plaques at the entrance and exit to a settlement, often very decorative, sometimes display the meaning of the placename, but usually this requires further research. Millfield (NSW), for example, has an attractive sign proclaiming "Millfield - Town of Mills and Bridges", so I photographed it as the origin of the name seemed obvious, but when I came to write it up, I had to think – did I actually pass any mills? The Internet confirmed the town has a timber industry, but were there timber mills when the town was named? I still hesitated to record "named on account of its timber mills". Just as well as later I was reading W.A.G. Bloomfield's Cessnock 1826 – 1954 and discovered that in the 1840's flourmills were erected along the Maitland Road "which gave the name to Millfield".

Recently I was on holiday and came across a whole string of

Millfield NSW. Photo: Joyce Miles

intriguing placenames, but it was Sunday, the villages were too small to merit a library in any case, and a notice on the community centre door informed me that a Historical Society did indeed meet on Sundays in the nearest big town, but not for another two weeks. If, on such occasions, you consult likely looking local inhabitants, they have usually just moved in from Zurich or San Francisco.

The Mitchell wing of the NSW State Library has a wealth of information, for both hands-on and Internet research and there is usually plenty of information in the Local History section of a town's library, but I have found it wise to consult as many sources as possible. Muswellbrook (NSW), for example, is a fascinating example of just how many variations there can be on one name. A considerable amount of work has been done by the Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Historical Society and local historian G.J. Benson to reveal a very tangled tale. On record there are: Muswellbrook, South Muswellbrook, Musclebrook, Muscle Brook, Muscletown, and Musswellbrook. Which is the correct one? Should they all be recorded? It is claimed that early settlers gave the name Muscle Brook to the district as they found muscles (mussels) in the creek, which still bears the name Muscle Creek. Other sources claim that mussel shells had been left on the banks by former inhabitants centuries before. Nineteenth-century official records used both Muscle Brook and Muswell Brook. It has

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IN THE NEWS

This month David Blair begins a short, regular timeslot on ABC local radio Rockhampton. The program presenter plans to talk with David about local and other Queensland names each week.

AUSGEO News (issue no. 72, December 2003, p17) reported on topographic map checks by Geoscience Australia staff, where on the ground field work complements satellite mapping of features and verifies the accuracy of the 1:250 000 scale maps of the continent.

The *Adelaide Advertiser* (Jan 8, 2004) reported on the dramatic increase in the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school students in South Australia choosing to study Aboriginal Languages, including Pitjantjatjara, Antikirinya, Kaurna, Arabana, Adnyamathanha, Ngarrindjeri, Yankunytjatjara and Narrunga. Demand for Aboriginal languages summer courses for adult students has also increased.

A local newspaper in British Colombia, the *Duncan News Leader* (Jan 2004), reported on a project of the Quw'utsun' and other First Nations peoples in Canada to translate their oral traditions onto maps, combining community knowledge which has been handed down for generations with GPS and GIS technologies. See http://www.cowichanewsleader.com

ON THE WEB

The Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines placenames database is now available online. At http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/property/place_names.html you can search for individual names and discover their type, status, local authority and map location, as well as any information held on their history, origin and meaning.

FeedBACK

Dear ANPS,

I was interested to read the article 'Naming the place we live' (*Placenames Australia*, June 2003). In the article it is asserted that Myall Crossing was surveyed in 1853 by Captain Perry, the NSW Surveyor-General. Perry was deputy to Thomas Mitchell for many years, and was acting Surveyor-General on a number of occasions, but was never Surveyor-General! In early January 1853 Perry asked that a Medical Board be appointed to examine him; later that month leave for six months was granted on the recommendation that of the Executive Council. Unfortunately, recovery did not occur, and in July Perry sought retirement, which was granted in October 1853. Perry died on 15 January 1854. I think it highly unlikely that Perry would have carried out the survey of Myall Crossing in 1853 or in any other year: prior to his illness he ran the survey office back in Sydney during the many absences of the Surveyor-General. Field surveys would have been carried out by lesser mortals.

There is also an implication in the printed article that the naming of geographical and cultural features by surveyors was arbitrary and subjective. However, Thomas Mitchell, soon after becoming Surveyor-General, laid down quite strict rules for the naming of places by surveyors, and woe betide anyone who transgressed! This is covered in chapter 7 of my book *Major Mitchell's 1836 'Australia Felix' Expedition: a Re-Evaluation*, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, 1992.

Gregory C. Eccleston
20/11/2003

ANPS NEWS

We congratulate Clair Hill on her AITSIS grant and wish her all the best for her fieldtrip to Cape York. She will be working on two related languages, Umpila and Kuuku-ya'u, collecting oral histories from elderly speakers and preparing materials useful for the teaching and learning of these languages. She also hopes that the fieldtrip will provide opportunities to ask about local placenames. Clair has done a lot of work in preparing this issue of *Placenames Australia* and we look forward to her return to ANPS in a few months.

InBRIEF

The NSW State Committee of the ANPS was successful in its application for a Department of Aboriginal Affairs NSW Large Grant to run 6 regional workshops from March to August 2004. The workshops will be run in conjunction with the Geographical Names Board NSW and the NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre. The purpose of the project is to discuss placenaming issues with members of NSW Aboriginal communities, and to facilitate their work in recording Aboriginal placenames and researching the linguistic and cultural background belonging to them. Representatives of several Aboriginal groups have expressed interest in such workshops following presentations in 2003 on the work of ANPS and the GNB to the Advisory Board of the NSW ALRRC and to the Governing Committee of the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Unusual and colorful Tasmanian names

Tasmanian places have some most unusual and colourful names. When you focus on some of the smaller features, they are even quainter. Without closely examining maps or the Nomenclature Gazetteer, you might go through life oblivious to their existence. Sometimes there is a bevy of strange names together, such as where Nutting Garden Rivulet flows through Tiddlewantie Gorge and Possum Pole Flat on its way to join the Little Swanport River. Whatever is a nutting garden?

The Nomenclature Board records shed no light on the derivation of these three names other than that they date from 1897. Figure of Eight Creek flows into the Mersey near Devonport, and in contradiction to its name seems to follow quite a straight course.

East of Rossarden, you find evocative names like Flitch of Bacon (named after the colour of a cliff) near Queer Street (a flat scrubby plain where it is easy to get lost).

Some creeks reflect what people ate or didn't have when they were there. Examples of these are No Tea Creek (a small tributary of the Ouse River near Mike Howes Neck) and Muesli Creek and Cornflakes Creek near Waratah.

No No Hole is a billabong or oxbow on the Meander River about 8 kms north of Hagley, and the map suggests it is rather a soggy place – probably a place to avoid if at all possible.

Octopus Marsh, draining into the Iris River near the Cradle Mountain Road, sounds much wetter than the neighbouring Camel Marsh. Pig Village is a name recorded (rather than assigned) for a thick patch of bush on Smilers Spring Creek, about three kilometres inland from the Spiky Bridge, south of Swansea. According to Mrs E. F. Cotton of 'Kelvedon' (the property on which the feature is located), a big sow escaped and had a succession of litters there.

Relatively small hills sometimes attract forbidding names like Punchs Terror (dating from James Scott's map of 1839) near Dunorlan and The Gaol next to another knob called Rag Nelson, just south of Waddamana.

Castle Cary (named by Frankland after a place in Cornwall) is a very prominent granite knob north of Avoca that you see as you drive along the Esk Highway. While Bare Rock, further east along the highway, is referred to by locals as The Vertical Acre.

Adamsons Peak. Photo: Maria Grist

Sharksjaw Reef is a descriptive name for a fang of rock poking out of the sea north of the Port Davey mouth and next to another reef called The Coffee Pot, which alludes to the tannin-stained water that drains out from button grass plains.

Punk Plain near Hampshire conjures images of spiky hairdos and loud music. The derivation was quite different. According to Quaker missionary George Washington Walker, it was named after the prevalence of a fungus the settlers used for tinder and the natives sometimes ate – punk.

Caverneers are renowned for ascribing outlandish names but Swiss Cheese Cave near Honeycomb Cave west of Caveside conjures up a strong image while nearby Crack Pot may describe those who would attempt to descend it. Awesome Wells is another troglodite name with a resonance about it.

When researching derivations of names, the obvious answer sometimes is not the correct one. For example Beauty Point sounds very much like a descriptive name but not so. The name was applied, according to a submission to the Nomenclature Board of Tasmania by a local resident, after the landowners' house cow "Beauty" which was found dead on the point. It had earlier been called Kings Jetty after the postmaster who had his own jetty where the mail for the area was dropped off from the river vessels. Matthew Flinders had landed less than one kilometre north at Inspection Head in 1798, and applied that name to the headland. The adjacent Ilfraville area near Redbill Point has been known as Port Lempriere and Ilfracombe in the past. Old names can be recorded on the Nomenclature Board database but only the current name is actually assigned and used on maps.

Badger Head wasn't named after the local wombat population but after a convict Charlotte Badger who played an active role in hijacking a ship there in the early years of settlement. She was seen in Tonga some years later with a young child.

The early surveyor Henry Hellyer seems to have named peaks after the day he climbed them: St Valentines Peak, Mayday and Sunday (the latter being climbed by his colleague Lorymer). But Mayday had to be changed because of the possible confusion with the international distress signal. It was then named after Beecroft, a fairly obscure trapper. Even Nic Haygarth's detailed history of the area in "The View to Cradle" makes no mention of Beecroft.

John Hayes who explored the Derwent River in 1794, named several of the peaks he saw along the coast. He named Pindars Peak after Peter Pindar: the nom-de-plume of John Wolcot (1738-1819), a noted English satirist and poet. Wolcot, in turn, had taken his name from the Greek lyric poet Pindar. Hayes originally gave the name of Brothers Peak to the imposing mountain now known as Adamsons Peak. Adamsons Harbour (named after a friend) was what he called the body of water now known as Port Esperance. The name was therefore transposed to the peak.

❑ *John Cannon, Member, Nomenclature Board of Tasmania*

The Joys (and Sorrows) of Toponymic Research

been suggested that the latter spelling was preferred by the chief justice, Sir Francis Forbes, as a reminder of his early life (or perhaps that of his wife) in Muswell Hill, UK, but although local historian Gordon Benson has undertaken extensive research through correspondence with London, he has been unable to establish any such links with the London suburb of Muswell Hill in the relevant period. Mussell (Hill) derives its name from Old English *meos* moss + *wella* spring. In his *Journals of Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia,* Surveyor General Major T. L. Mitchell records that on November 30th, 1831 "….we encamped beside a small water-course near Muscle Brook….". According to NSW Government Gazette of Wednesday, October 23, 1833 (Mitchell Library), a letter from the Colonial Secretary's Office dated two days earlier concerning the sale of building land, confirmed that the Plan for the Township of Musclebrook had been approved. The NSW Government Gazette of July 14, 1838 quotes a letter from the Colonial Secretary's Office referring to Special Petty Sessions to be held in September at Muswell Brook. However, the Governor, the Earl of Belmore, proclaimed on 13 April, 1870 that a Municipality had been constituted under the name and style of "The Municipal District of Musclebrook." The use by officials of a variety of spellings led to a plea in the *Muswellbrook Chronicle* of 3rd May, 1905 asking for information from readers on the name's origin, and suggesting that it might have had some connection with the port of Musselburgh in Scotland. This seems to be highly unlikely and nothing I have unearthed so far suggests that this is a likely source, but who knows what may eventually transpire? Under the Local Government Act of 1919, on the 16th February, l949 Lieutenant-General John Northcott, Governor of the State of New South Wales, officially altered the name of the Municipality of Musclebrook to that of the Municipality of Muswellbrook. In l979 this was amalgamated with Denman Shire Council to become Muswellbrook Shire Council.

Not all names have such complicated

Monkey Creek Place NSW. Photo: Joyce Miles

roots. Some have perfectly straightforward names – Singleton, named after Benjamin Singleton, an early settler in the area; Elizabeth Town (later renamed New Norfolk) after Governor Macquarie's wife; Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Flinders, Sturt – details of their origin can easily be checked, although if the name is an early one the primary source may involve some deciphering of diarists' handwriting.

Sometimes, however, quite interesting stories about how placenames arose emerge almost by chance. On passing through Monkey Creek Place (NSW) I was fortunate enough to encounter someone who knew the local legend – that it obtained its name because when convicts were building the road they saw strange creatures in the trees they thought were monkeys, which were, in fact, koalas. Citations in the Australian National Dictionary show that early settlers commonly referred to koalas as monkeys.

It sounds quite a plausible story, but needs a bit more digging to see whether this account was ever recorded.

There are however, certain ominous phrases the fieldworker would prefer not to hear: "Yes, we did have a good book on the area once, but it seems to have gone missing"; " I don't really know, but it is said that … but don't quote me"; "Why don't you go and talk to the oldest inhabitant who knows *absolutely everything* about this place and would love to spend the afternoon talking to you" – the latter information not obtained until you have only got half an hour left.

But it is all fun. You meet lots of interesting people. It is a stimulating pursuit and, above all, you are contributing to Australia's recorded history which will, we hope, be of use for a very long time

❏ *Joyce Miles*

▌ QUOTE

"Maps are more than pieces of paper. They are stories, conversations, lives and songs lived out in a place. Maps are inseparable from the political and cultural contexts in which they are used."

http://www.signup4.net/Public/ap.aspx?EID=INTE14E&OID=50 Home page of the International Forum on Indigenous Mapping to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, March 11-14, 2004. This conference will bring together 200 representatives of Indigenous peoples engaged inn mapping, as well as individuals who assist them in these efforts.

Araluen to Zanthus: A Gazetteer of Perth Suburbs and Western Australian Towns by Ian Murray and Brian Goodchild, 2003, published by Freemantle Arts Centre Press in association with the WA Department of Land Information

Have you ever wondered where Woop Woop is and how to get there? Did you know there was a place called Xanthippe and that Xanthippe means an *ill tempered, nagging wife or shrew*?

Araluen to Zanthus is the what, where and how of the suburbs and towns we live in and visit – a comprehensive record of the origins of the names of Perth's suburbs and of all the gazetted towns throughout the state. It is an accessible and fascinating companion when travelling and a useful and entertaining resource for everyone interested in the history of Western Australia.

Available through: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, PO Box 158, North Freemantle, WA 6159.
Order online at: http://www.facp.iinet.net.au
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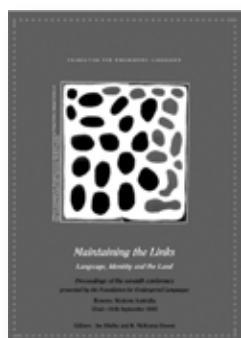
Maintaining the Links: Language, Identity and the Land. Proceedings of the Foundation for Endangered Languages VII International Conference, Broome, Western Australia, 22-24 September 2003, edited by Joseph Blythe and R. McKenna Brown

Minority language groups around the world are endeavouring to maintain their languages, traditions and identities in the face of growing pressures from more dominant languages and cultures. Throughout the world the relationships between language, land and identity are varied and complex, especially for indigenous communities. For some coastal and seafaring communities the 'sense of place' may be felt in connection with the sea as well as the land.

The seventh international conference of the Foundation for Endangered Languages and the collection of 20 papers published in the conference proceedings aim to better understand the relationships between language, the culture and identity of its speakers, and the land. These understandings can then provide an important guide to establishing priorities, when choosing approaches to documentation and revitalisation of endangered languages.

Proceedings of this and all previous FEL conferences are available through the FEL website http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm or by writing to Nicholas Ostler, Batheaston Villa, 172 Bailbrook Lane, Bath, BA1 7AA, England. Cost approximately AUD$48.00
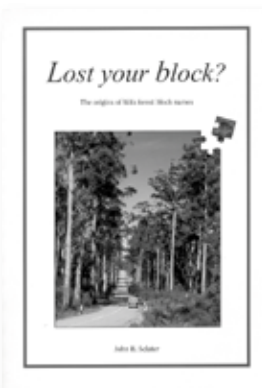
Lost Your Block? The origins of WA's forest block names, compiled and published by John B. Sclater, February 2001

A forest block is a defined and named area of the State Forests and, as of mid 1997, the National Parks of the south-west of Western Australia. The delineation and naming of blocks of native forest was initiated in WA from the early 1920s. Complete with maps, index and an exhaustive reference list, including archives of the WA Forests Department and Department of Conservation and Land Management, *Lost Your Block*? contains the origins of over 550 of these names and traces changes made to them.

The names are very catholic in their origins. There are many obvious choices such as native flora, Aboriginal names and links with the colonial past. The names of Forests Department officers features and forest workers are honoured in life and in death. Timber industry connections abound, and through them an English atheist who never came to Australia. The military connections range from an English Admiral to a Sergeant-Major of the British Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the name of a very big army camp in Yorkshire, to a ship which fought under Nelson at the Battle of the Nile. Group Settlement names appear as well as those of some of the original pioneers. WA's best known bush-ranger is honoured, while a Fenian convict and a simple convict carpenter also have their names recorded.

The names themselves are in many ways a record of the history of the development of the south-west of WA.

Available from John B. Sclater, 20 Hubbard Place, Safety Bay, WA 6169; $35 plus $7 postage

Mount Arapiles/Djurite –
What names can reveal

Mt Arapiles is a north-western outlier of the Grampians range, located near the town of Natimuk in the Wimmera region of Victoria. These mountains are composed of sandstone, laid down over 400 million years ago, and are situated at the very south-western extremity of the Great Dividing Range. Despite their spectacular appearance rearing up from the plain, they are not of volcanic origin as is often thought. During a marine incursion around 14 million years ago, Mt Arapiles was probably an island, while the Grampians was probably part of a southerly projecting peninsula.

"equivalents" by various writers, and in his work Ian Clark substituted dju for choo to better represent the sounds involved.

In *The Aborigines of Victoria* (1878), Robert Brough Smyth included a word-list collected by the surveyor Thornly, entitled *Some Words of the Language of the Western Tribes of Victoria*. Amongst these words, Thornly recorded "Cowan or Cowah" as the indigenous name for Mt Arapiles. Aldo Massola used Cowan in his book *Aboriginal Place Names of South-east Australia and their Meanings* (1968), and said that the word meant, "standing up, the head", although he did not record

Consequently, it was still possible to collect information about traditional names, from people who were present before Europeans arrived. However, it seems that Robinson recorded an actual name for the mountain (Djurid/Djurite forms part of the clan name), while Thornly collected a generic term meaning mountain; neither mentioned who their informants were.

As Mt Arapiles is a very prominent feature, it is reasonable to speculate that it would have been a rich source of mythological stories (none seem to have survived) and associated names. Furthermore, Mt Arapiles would have been known (and visible in many instances) to other Jardwadjali clans and they might have used different names? However, only Choorite and Cowan/Cowah seem to have survived in the written record from the first generation of European contact with the area. Allan Lockwood has written that Yaw Eeep was the Aboriginal name used for The Basin at Mt Arapiles, but the source of this information is not given. Neither Robinson nor Thornly mentions this name.

> ... when the historical and oral sources are examined, a far more complex story often unfolds, which provides much greater insights into human occupation and perception of the landscape...

Aboriginal people were living in the area of Mount Arapiles before the arrival of Europeans, as evidenced by archaeological finds and the records of the first explorers and squatters. In *Aboriginal Languages and Clans* (1990), Ian Clark summarised the historical evidence and identified the Djurid (Djurite) balug clan of the Jardwadjali language group, as occupying the Mt Arapiles area.

Fortunately, several Aboriginal names associated with Mt Arapiles were recorded, and have survived to intrigue present-day investigators. When George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, arrived at Mt Arapiles in April 1845, he ascended the summit and noted the smoke from a native fire to the north, possibly at Lake Hindmarsh. In his journal Robinson wrote that, "the mountain is called by Natives, Choorite". Other spellings have also been recorded, such as Churite. Today, the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative in Horsham uses the spelling Djurite. The spellings ch, ty and dj have been used as

the source of his information. When Allan Lockwood published the history of Natimuk in 1972, he used Cowah as the Aboriginal name for Mt Arapiles. The *Dictionary of Aboriginal Placenames of Victoria* (2002), prepared by Ian Clark and Toby Heydon, includes Cowan and Cowah as spelling variants of Kawa, a word commonly used in Kulin dialect areas, meaning a high mountain or big hill. It is considered to be a descriptive word for such features, rather than being a specific placename.

When Robinson visited Mt Arapiles in 1845, it was less than a decade since Major Thomas Mitchell had travelled through Australia Felix (1836), and there were many Aboriginal people amongst whom inquiries could be made about the traditional names of geographical features. By the time Brough Smyth was writing (1870s), many of the remaining Aboriginal people from the Wimmera were living at the Ebenezer Mission operated by Moravian missionaries at Antwerp, although some were working on various properties in the region.

When Mitchell arrived in the area in 1836, he first sighted Mt Arapiles from Mt Zero on 20th July, and decided to travel there, before heading south to the coast. On the 22nd the exploring party camped to the west of the mountain, and Mitchell ascended the western heights in the evening. The following day (23rd), he ascended to the highest summit on the mountain (eastern side), from where he saw numerous circular salt lakes (which are a feature of this area) and tried to ascertain the course of the Wimmera River. Mitchell speculated, incorrectly, that this river flowed to the Southern Ocean, when it actually empties into Lake Hindmarsh. However, he was intrigued by the fact that the river had turned to the north (rather than south), after flowing west past the Grampians.
In his book *Three Expeditions into the*

View from Mt Arapiles. Photo: Chris Richards

Interior of Eastern Australia (1839), Mitchell states, "I ascended this hill on the anniversary of the battle of Salamanca, hence the name". Mitchell had joined the crack 95th Regiment of Wellington's army on the Iberian Peninsula in 1811 during the Peninsular War. The 95th were then considered the most prestigious regiment in the British army, and Mark Urban has written an account of their role in pioneering modern infantry tactics (*Rifles,* 2003). Mitchell is believed to have been present at the strategically important Battle of Salamanca in central Spain on 22nd July 1812, when the British and their Portuguese allies comprehensively defeated and routed a French army under the command of Marshall Auguste Marmont. The publicists of this victory, claimed that "forty thousand Frenchmen had been defeated in forty minutes". However, the actual battle took place over a much longer period of time. This victory opened the way for the allied army to enter the Spanish capital of Madrid unopposed on 12th August, to scenes of jubilation, as the Spanish saw them as liberators from the French. Some commentators claim that Salamanca was Wellington's greatest victory from a tactical viewpoint.

While the battle was named for the ancient university city of Salamanca, the allies had previously entered this city on 17th June. The actual battlefield was on the plain nearby, above which rise two small flat-topped hills, named the Greater Arapile and the Lesser Arapile. A small village called Los Arapiles is also in this locality. It is said that Wellington was in a farmyard at Los Arapiles, when he observed that the divisions of the French army were sufficiently strung out to provide an opportunity for the allies to attack, which they did with devastating effect.

It has also been asserted that Mitchell was inspired to name Mount Arapiles, because his brother was killed at the Battle of Salamanca. This claim was made by Charles Long in *Stories of Australian Exploration* (1903), and subsequently repeated in a number of historical works dealing with Mitchell and the Wimmera. However, in William Foster's book *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and his World* (1985), the author points out that neither of Mitchell's two brothers, John and Houston, served in the Peninsular War, and that both lived long lives, dying in 1865 and 1881, respectively.
It has also been pointed out that the 95th

Regiment only played a peripheral role at the Battle of Salamanca, skirmishing with the French on the left flank of Wellington's battle formation, and firing at the enemy as they retreated from the battlefield. Furthermore, I have not been able to ascertain whether Mitchell was actually with his Regiment, or elsewhere on (or around) the Salamanca battlefield. Nevertheless, the significance of the victory was enough for Mitchell to remember the battle and the Spanish hills when naming Mount Arapiles.

Greg Eccleston points out in his book, *Major Mitchell's 1836 Australia Felix Expedition: a Re-evaluation*, that the Peninsular War was a significant source of inspiration for the names applied by Mitchell in present-day Victoria. For example, Mitchell named the Australian Pyrenees north-west of Ballarat, after the mountain range that separates Spain from France. While we did not have Spanish navigators to bestow Spanish names around the Australian coast (unlike the Americas and the Pacific Islands), the Peninsular War led to Spanish names being applied to the interior of Victoria. Other names honour people who fought in the Peninsular War. For example, Mitchell named Mount Kincaid near

Dr Ruth Wajnryb

Let's call it…

If you'd told me a few years ago I'd be writing a book about Australian place names, I'd have said `not likely!'.

But that was then. And this is now – and it's precisely what I'm doing this year. It's not a conventional pursuit for me, as I mostly work in researching and writing about language, with a spot of teaching thrown in to keep me sane (itself open to question).

In 2003, I was approached by the commissioning editor of Lothian Books, a Melbourne-based publisher. Averill Chase, with whom I was acquainted through an earlier book of mine that she'd published, when with Thomas Nelson, was enthusiastic about the interest in Australia and among visitors to Australia, about our place names.

To be honest, I needed some convincing. Until that moment, I'd not given much

thought to the subject, other than to note in passing both the strong indigenous flavour and the dominant colonial influence in naming conventions around this vast land.

But realising that toponomy was actually a logical point of nexus for an applied linguist with a passion for history, I agreed to the project, which at the time of writing this, goes by the working title of *Let's Call It…* – but that too is open to suggestion.

The book will be arranged alphabetically and include names from all states and territories in Australia. It is not intended as a scholarly work, nor as a comprehensive reference, although that said, I must acknowledge the

Portland after Lieutenant John Kincaid of the 95th Regiment, who subsequently wrote two books about his wartime experiences. War it seems, is a very potent source of inspiration for those who apply names.

Mitchell's book gives the impression that the naming of Mt Arapiles was a relatively uncomplicated exercise, the anniversary of the Battle of Salamanca coinciding with his arrival at a mountain projecting above a plain. However, his journal, survey field notes and plot of survey, reveal that the following names were also considered before Arapiles was finally chosen – Mt Broughton, Mt Salamanca, Mt Last Ditch and Mt Last-of-all.

Granville William Chetwynd Stapylton, the second-in-command of the exploring party, refers in his journal to the names Mt Broughton and then Mt Salamanca, being applied to the mountain by Mitchell.

The name Mt Broughton was probably considered by Mitchell to honour William Grant Broughton (1788-1853), the Anglican Bishop at Sydney; this view is supported by the fact that Mitchell named the nearby Mitre Rock, because it resembled a bishop's hat. The latter two

names probably refer to Mt Arapiles being located at the south-western terminus of the Great Dividing Range; these names reveal a lighter side to Mitchell, to that of the serious surveyor generally portrayed in biographies. To complicate matters further, Mitchell's survey field notes refer to Mt Broughton as being high ground on the summit plateau, south east of the highest point, rather than being a name for the whole mountain.

The example of Mt Arapiles is a reminder to toponymists to look at original journals and log books, as well as the published accounts of journeys made by explorers and navigators. The best known example of the sometimes convoluted process followed by explorers/navigators in choosing a name, is probably that of Captain Cook in the naming of Botany Bay (which he was first going to call Stingray Harbour). This story is analysed in Paul Carter's *Road to Botany Bay* (1987).

Finally, John Arrowsmith's map of the South East Portion of Australia (1837) shows Mt Arapiles bearing the name Mt Howick. It is not known how or why this occurred. This name presumably honours Charles Grey, the second Earl Grey (1764-1845), who served as British

Prime Minister from 1830-4 (who had previously held the title of Viscount Howick), and/or his eldest son Henry George Grey (1802-1894), who was Viscount Howick from 1807-45. Henry was born at Howick House near the village of Howick in Northumberland, and served as Under Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1830-3.

There is something definite and final about a single name attached to a prominent geographical feature on a map. However, when the historical and oral sources are examined, a far more complex story often unfolds, which provides much greater insights into human occupation and perception of the landscape. This theme will be continued in the second part of this article, which will deal with the micro-toponymy of Mt Arapiles.

I generally commence researching an article with a belief that it will be relatively straightforward, and finish up with a bewildering array of often conflicting information. Mt Arapiles has conformed to this pattern. Perhaps there is no such thing as a simple toponymic story?

❏ *Chris Richards*

strong influence of the taxonomic work by Flavia Hodges of the APIT. I am grateful to Flavia, and to David Blair, for welcoming me into toponymy!

If the book isn't strictly scholarly or a reference work, what is it? Perhaps the best way to answer this is to take a philosophical position. Although as a culture we're primarily `now-' and `future'-oriented, we have a past. To state the obvious, people were here before us. Yet you can live all your life in Bathurst or Fremantle or Wollongong and never know why they're named as they are. I've come to see place names as a window on the world of the people who were here before us. Sometimes, the name is the most `actively living' remnant of that world. Sometimes, it's

There are over a dozen theories about how Dee Why got its name!

barely all that's left and is therefore a natural place to start.

And, while it's a truism, where there are/were people, there are/were stories. The criterion for inclusion in this book is the human interest of the story behind the place name. This doesn't mean the stories have to have been conclusively verified. There are over a dozen

theories, for example, about how Dee Why got its name!

Anyone with knowledge of a place name with an interesting story behind it, is invited to contact me at ruth@laraconsultancy or
Dr Ruth Wajnryb,
PO Box 8 Waverley
NSW 2024.

ANPS Research Friend

In each issue of Placenames Australia we keep up to date with the work of a current Research Friend. This issue it is Alexandra Orr.

Alex Orr

For most of my life I have lived in Prospect Parish, an old geographical territory encompassing all suburbs between Quakers Hill at its northernmost point, Wentworthville at it eastern border, to Doonside at its most western point, and Greystanes and Prospect along its southern border. One of Australia's fastest growing cities, Blacktown, lies at its heart. Having commenced a local placenames research project as an undergraduate student, I have now begun working on the origin and

history of placenames within the parish. I became so fascinated by what I had found that I have turned it into a postgraduate project in the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University. My thesis will provide an account of the history of placenames lying within the parish from the earliest time. This has not always been easy, since the data can be quite limited and even lost altogether through time. On the other hand, for some names I have enough data to devote an entire project to!

People sometimes take the mickey out of the western suburbs of Sydney, but few would know just how important it has been to developing Australia since the days of the first settlement in Sydney Cove in 1788. It boasts Sydney's 3rd settlement, Toongabbie, as well as harbouring the home of one D'Arcy Wentworth, who worked his way up from convict associations to become Australia's wealthiest colonial gentleman, owning land across the country, and whose family became a renowned dynasty, with his son William Charles the first to cross the Blue Mountains with Blaxland and Lawson and being a patriotic advocate for

the improvement of Australian legal rights and free speech. This family is inadvertently responsible for the origin of very many Australian placenames.

The Parish itself, named after Prospect Hill, was the starting point for many of the earliest inland explorations. The hill, the parish's little mountain, has a fascinating history of its own, being one of the first names in Sydney, having already undergone a name change around the time of the Napoleonic wars. It seems each name in the parish has its own rich history, and the parish includes many names based on Aboriginal terms, including Toongabbie.

Names have altered over time like the appearance of the places they refer to from the earliest time even up to today, each having their own story to tell. Prospect Parish is just one area where looking at the history of placenames can tell you much about the history and culture of the people who lived there over time and its own story is as rich and fascinating as any other.

❑ Alex Orr

Naming Places and Placing Names

David Blair recently delivered the Macquarie University Alumni Lecture (9/10/03). We reproduce here the introductory section. The full version will appear in the journal, *Australian Folklore* (editor, John Ryan).

Most Australians have a strong memory of a song entitled "I've been everywhere," which had lyrics by Geoff Mack and was sung by Lucky Starr:

> *I've been to Tullamore, Seymour, Lismore,*
> *Maroochydore, Kilmore, Nambour, Moolimbah,*
> *Birdsville, Emmaville, Wallaville,*
> *Cundamunda, Cundabine, Strathpine, Proserpine,*
> *Ulladulla, Darwin, Gin Gin, Deniliquin,*
> *Muckadilla, Emmaville, Kullavilla, I'm a killer…*

The song was so popular that Hank Snow wrote an American version which was a big hit for Johnny Cash:

> *Been to Reno, Chicago, Fargo, Minnesota,*
> *Buffalo, Toronto, Winslow, Sarasota,*
> *Wichita, Tulsa, Ottawa, Oklahoma,*
> *Tampa, Panama, Mattawa, La Paloma,*
> *Bangor, Baltimore, Salvador, Amarillo,*
> *Tocopilla, Barranquilla, and Padilla, I'm a killer…*

And there was a New Zealand version, written by John Grenell:

> *I've been to Kaparoa, Whangaroa, Akaroa, Motueka,*
> *Taramoa, Benmore, Pongaroa, Horoeka,*
> *Rimutaka, Te Karaka, Whangarei,*
> *Nuhaka, Waimahaka, Motuhura, Waikaka,*
> *Motonui, Hokonui, Papanui, Wainui,*
> *Matawai, Rongotai, Pikowai, I'm a guy…*

Each of these versions bears a heavy cultural loading; none could be mistaken as belonging to another country. Placenames have a *flavour* that locates them within their particular environment. This is true even, or especially, of placenames that are mythical, such as *The Black Stump* or *Bullamakanka* or *Woop Woop*. Australia's version of the fabled El Dorado is the elusive Lasseters Reef, no longer a target of optimistic expeditions but an enduring symbol of this continent's habit of leaving its pioneers with dashed hopes and broken dreams.

Placenames are not just facts about the world or word-objects that we manipulate. They have a life of their own, and they have a living place in our culture. They are part of our cultural and social history. They act as cultural signposts revealing much about our cultural history, if we care to look.

Or, to change the metaphor, researching placenames is the process of writing their 'biographies'. Each placename has a story behind it: the name was given by somebody to a particular place, at a particular time, for a particular reason. In some cases, the story will never be revealed: too long a time has passed, and the necessary documents (if they ever existed) have disappeared. In many cases, however, the materials that will provide the details for the 'biography' are still there, waiting to be read by the historian or linguist. The Australian National Placenames Survey (ANPS) is a cooperative endeavour sponsored by the Australian Academy of Humanities to carry out this task for our nation's placenames.

The Survey takes its place alongside two other great national works: the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* records brief histories for prominent Australians; and the *Australian National Dictionary* presents the stories behind the words of our language. Those two projects, begun many years ago, now have a proud publishing history; but the work of the ANPS is only just beginning.

What is a placename?

A placename, or toponym, is a linguistic object of a highly specialised kind. It is not merely 'a word for something' – it has much in common with the Saussurian concept of a *linguistic sign*. The Swiss structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure defined the linguistic sign as the indissoluble relationship between the signifier and the signified – that is, between the linguistic object (or word) and what it stands for. In the same way, a toponymn is a relationship – 'a place and its name', not 'a name for places'.

The implications of this definition are significant. Burwood (New South Wales) and Burwood (Victoria), for example, are *different placenames*, not the same placename appearing in different places. Each has to be researched separately, for each has its own story. There may well be a relationship between the two placenames, but that connection will be recounted in each of the two 'biographies' that need to be written. We cannot write a single entry for a placename BURWOOD that includes the histories of all its representations, any more than a national Dictionary of Biography could contain a single JOHN SMITH entry that represented all the John Smiths of Australian history.

Toponyms can be applied to the whole landscape, both to natural features and to those elements which result from human intervention. The scope of the ANPS includes names of geographical features and names of habitations (the built environment and its administrative structures). It excludes names of streets and roads and names of parks, reserves and buildings, not for any reason of principle but solely because of the weight of numbers.

Each toponym is identified uniquely by a set of three elements: name, feature type and location (latitude/longitude). For example:

Name	Feature Type	Location
Gulgong	Locality	-31 21 54 / 139 32 04
Mt Brandon	Hill	-31 41 30 / 150 47 00
Sandy Well	Bore	-33 30 00 / 136 55 00

How many toponyms?

Even within the restricted scope set by the Australian National Placenames Survey, nobody knows for certain how many placenames there are. It is conceivable that there may be as many

as five or six million, if we judge by the ratio of toponyms/km^2 that survey of other countries have reported. Our uncertainty is partly for two reasons that are specific to Australia. Firstly, we are dealing with placenames both past and present; Australia's history is unique, and the period of written history is shorter than that of other countries whose data we might take as normative. Secondly, we do not yet know how many placenames are used, or were used, in indigenous Australia; nor do we know whether the data from other indigenous placename systems is comparable.

One characteristic of local toponymy that Australia shares with many other countries is the existence of multiple naming systems. Australia has two: an indigenous system, which was in place long before European colonisation, but which has now (like the languages on which it was based) fallen into disuse throughout most of the continent; and an introduced system, which is largely government-sponsored and formalised. The two systems are almost totally independent of each other, and contrast in several ways. The indigenous system, as its dependence on the various indigenous languages implies, is actually made up of many independent toponymic networks. It was, and largely still is, an orally-transmitted toponymy. The introduced system, on the other hand, is quite monolithic; it is for the most part a nationally-standardised and database-stored system of naming – except at the level of microtoponymy, where local communities and individuals hold idiosyncratic sway.

❑ David Blair

The Naming of Como

Como is a quiet, leafy suburb of Sydney which, being almost surrounded by the waters of the Georges and Woronora Rivers, has many fine water views from its homes. For many years it appears to have been generally accepted that James Murphy, manager of the Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company Limited, named the area Como because of its similarity to the appearance of Como in Italy. Both areas are beautiful with a wide expanse of water forming the focus of the view but similar? No.

It is more likely that Murphy, like modern entrepreneurs, saw the name as being a means of promoting the sale of land to those who found the mystique of foreign places difficult to resist. Whatever were his true motives, there is no doubt that the name was first put forward by the Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company over the name of James Murphy.[1]

Some publications, widely distributed, set the timing as "c. 1888".[2] However, the Illawarra Railway was opened to traffic to Sutherland on Boxing Day, 1885, and Como was advertised as one of stopping places.[3] Thus the name must have been selected earlier.

Many have accepted that the name was given to the railway station when it was opened to the public in 1885, but that was not the case.

In 1882 a workmen's camp had been established on the south bank of the Georges River at the site selected for construction of the bridge to carry the extension of the colony's railway system to Illawarra District. It was the main camp for that section of the line and, at end March, 1883, contained approximately 200 people.[4]

The residents 'found it inconvenient and the source of much lost time that there was no postal service direct to the area'. Letters and papers were delivered to the Woniora Post Office, South Hurstville, and transported from there, as a favour, by boatmen from the river who visited the post office for other reasons. Because of its nature the arrangement was unreliable and often delivery delays were extensive. The newly licenced publican of the Woronora Hotel, Thomas Hanley, was interested in operating a postal service, including conveyance of the mail from Woniora Post Office.[5]

A petition dated 2 January, 1883, signed (or marks made) by approximately 160 individuals, was addressed to the Post Master General. After some delay, the petition bore fruit and the offer made by Thomas Hanley was accepted on 23 April, 1883.

Obviously James Murphy kept closely in touch with any events affecting his sphere of influence and wrote the following letter.[6]

HOLT-SUTHERLAND ESTATE LAND COMPANY LIMITED
40 HUNTER STREET
SYDNEY 24 APRIL, 1883

G Unwin Esq,
Postal Inspector,
Sydney.

Dear Sir,
Referring to our interview yesterday with regard to the choice of a name for the new post office at the Railway Crossing, Georges River, I have now to say that we would like to have it named "Como".
If there is any objection to this will you please let me know and we shall substitute another.

Yours faithfully
J Murphy

The proposal was supported by Mr Unwin and the Post Master General approved the name on 26 April, 1883.

❑ Ralph Stilgoe

This article first appeared in Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc. Quarterly Bulletin, May 1997, p427-428 (Endnotes)
[1] Letter 24 April, 1883, Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company Limited to G. Unwin, Postal Inspector, Australian Archives Office, Series SP32 Accession 1, Post Office Como, 1883-1917
[2] Sutherland Shire Council, Shire Place Names, Sutherland Shire Council, 1994, p2; and Kevin Hilferty, Sutherland: Australia's Birthplace, Sutherland Shire Council, 1986, p60
[3] New South Wales Department of Railways advertisement, Sydney Morning Herald, 25 December, 1885, p10
[4] Report of G Unwin (Postal Inspector) to Post Master General, 5 April, 1883, Australian Archives Office, Series SP32 Accession 1, Post Office Como, 1883-1917
[5] Letter T Hanley to Post Master General, 5 April, 1883, Australian Archives Office, Seres SP32 Accession 1, Post Office Como, 1883-1917
[6] Letter James Murphy to G Unwin, Postal Inspector, 24 April, 1883. Australian Archives Office, Series SP32 Accession 1, Post Office Como, 1883-1917

Placenames Puzzle No. 9:

Musical Placenames

All the clues reveal a placename with a musical reference. Disregard the spelling. eg (ACT) Famous Australian singer's toast … Melba

1. (Qld) See ya before long at this creek
2. (NSW, Qld, Tas, Vic) About 500,000 attended this NY rock festival in 1969
3. (Vic) A guy who was a recent Australian Idol
4. (SA) It is just over 24k to the park of Lonnie Donnegan's Gap
5. (NSW/Tas) Occupant of Mendelsohn's cave in the Hebrides
6. (Vic) New York concert hall named after a Scottish library philanthropist
7. (Tas) (Town) First name of the Beatles' lead guitarist
8. (Vic) Duke Ellington's violet-blue state of feeling
9. (Vic) A sheep in a swagman's tucker-bag
10. (Qld) Mick gathers no moss
11. (NSW) Dame with a town and a shire to sing about
12. (Vic) Louis blows his own trumpet
13. (Tas) Author of the Dictionary of Music and Musicians
14. (Qld/Tas) Ohio's international orchestra on the shore of Lake Erie
15. (Tas) Glenn had a point
16. (SA/Tas/Vic/WA) Wellington defeated ABBA's battle here in 1815
17. (NSW) The UK Promenades gather in the hall
18. (WA/Vic) Return to this Italian seaport on the Bay of Naples
19. (NSW) A square with a singing nightingale
20. (Vic) Eileen's piano playing was never up to this

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Answers: 1. Alligator Creek 2. Woodstock 3. Sebastian 4. Cumberland Park 5. Fingal 6. Carnegie 7. George Town 8. Indigo 9. Jumbuk 10 Rollingstone 11. Sutherland 12. Armstrong 13. Grove 14. Cleveland 15. Millers Point 16. Waterloo 17. Albert 18. Sorrento 19. Berkeley 20. Joyces Creek

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