The Enigma of Moent

The first recorded introduced toponyms on the Australian continent were bestowed by Willem Janszoon (more commonly known as Jansz) in 1606 along the north-west coast and tip of Cape York Peninsula. Jansz was sent out from Banda in the *Duyfken* by the *V.O.C.* (Dutch East India Company) to extend their knowledge of "the great land of Nova Guinea and other East- and Southlands" and to look for potential markets for trade. Unfortunately his log is no longer extant and the only verification we have of this voyage are two diary entries, some *V.O.C.* correspondence, and some cartographic evidence in the form of an anonymous copy (circa 1670) of Jansz's original chart (Schilder 1976:43-44) (see Fig. 1).[1]

The *Duyfken* chart is held in the National Library of Austria in Vienna; however, a copy of it may also be found in the Mitchell Library, NSW. Its legend states: "This chart shows the route taken by the pinnace Duifien on the outward as well as on the return voyage when she visited the countries east of Banda up to New Guinea […]". Jansz's course is very clearly marked, and shows where he made the first recorded European landfall on the Australian continent at *R[ivier] met het Bosch* (River with Bush). It is a remarkable coincidence that Australia's first recorded European toponym should contain the word *bush*, a term which now has such a distinct Australian meaning and forms such an important facet of the Australian psyche.

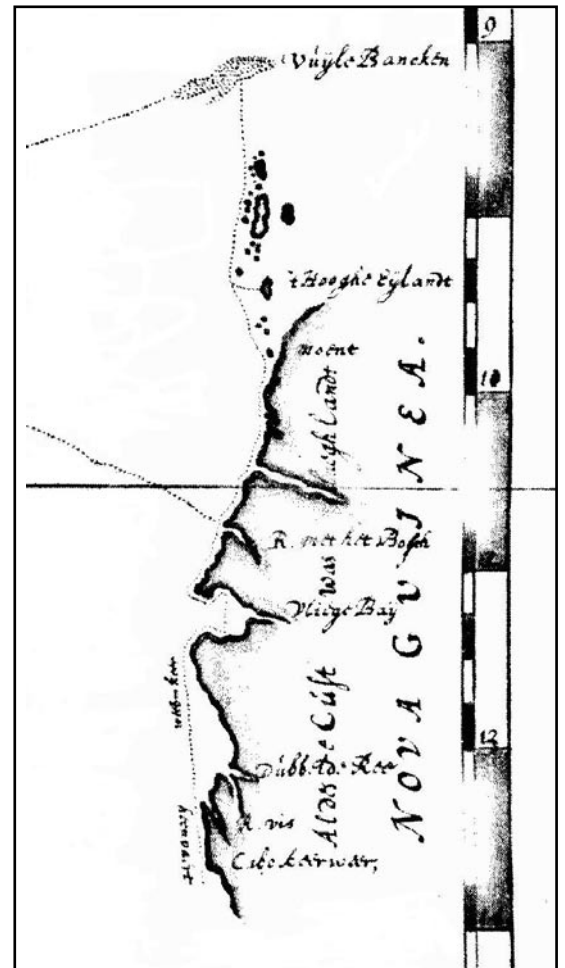The 1670 chart records the following toponyms on the coast of Cape York Peninsula:

Figure 1. Section from the Duyfken chart

I quote

William Bright, in the Introduction to his recently published *Native American Placenames of the United States* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, p7):

Very often we can speak of transfers from one state to another (e.g., Onieida, originating in an Iroquoian language of New York, has been borrowed in many parts of the nation)… Although most such transfers are from East to West, they also occur in other directions. Thus the names of some Civil War battlefields in the South were later applied to placenames in the North, such as Iuka, in Mississippi, which also occurs in Illinois. Also, Gold Rush names from California were applied in the East; Yosemite, Yolo and Yuba are all found in the Midwest. In still other cases, we cannot specify the direction in which a transfer occurred. Thus Manitou, derived from the word 'divine spirit' in Algonquian languages such as Ojibwa, has been used as a placename in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and other states. We cannot be sure whether it was first applied in one area and then transferred to others or whether it was in part adopted independently in separate areas.

Placenames in the news

Both the *Daily Telegraph*, Jan 15 2005, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Domain) Jan 29-30 2005 reported that the NSW government has now officially assigned dual names to 20 places in Sydney Harbour. Dr Michael Walsh (Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney) was quoted, explaining that most of the names don't have meanings [or perhaps the meanings have not yet been recovered], they're just names; the idea of the dual names is to give recognition to Aboriginal connection with the land; whether the names ever had a meaning or not, the recognition is still there.

Gubbuh Gubbuh	Middle Head
Gooree	Chowder Bay
Gooragal	Chowder Head
Booraghee	Bradleys Head
Goram Bullagong	Mosmans Bay
Weeyuh Weeyuh	Careening Cove
Gooweebahree	Lavender Bay
Warungareeyuh	Blues Point
Tumbalong	Darling Harbour
Meeliyahwool	Campbells Cove
Warrane	Sydney Cove
Dubbagullee	Bennelong Point
Wahganmuggalee	Farm Cove
Yurong	Mrs Macquaries Point
Muddawahnyuh	Fort Denison
Derrawunn	Potts Point
Gurrajin	Elizabeth Bay
Jerrowan	Elizabeth Point
Yurrandubbee	Macleay Point
Boowambillee	Shark Island

Readers of *Placenames Australia* (Dec 2003, Sept 2004) will be well aware that the ANPS has worked together with Michael Walsh, Jaky Troy of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and Resources Centre and Greg Windsor of the Geographical Names Board NSW in the process of consultation on the 20 names with Aboriginal community members in the Sydney basin and further, that with the support of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, we have been discussing with communities throughout NSW placenames research and the new dual naming policy.

Dear ANPS,

I read with interest and amusement Wayne Smith's article, "The Dangers of Taking Placenames at Face Value" (*Placenames Australia* Dec 2004), particularly the section on confusing misnomers. He points out that Badger Head (Tas) was not, as we might suppose, named after wombats. The same could possibly also hold for Badger Creek, a tributary of the Yarra River, near Healesville, Victoria. According to Sally Symonds (*Healesville: History in the Hills*, 1982) the creek (also called Coranderrk Creek) was named after a horse called Badger that got bogged in the creek. (The horse belonged to early graziers the Ryrie brothers.)

Just to confuse everyone further, it may be just a co-incidence but Robert Brough Smythe, in *The Aborigines of Victoria* (1878, vol 2, p 101) listed 'budjurr' as a Woiworung word for 'female'. His informant was John Green, superintendent of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve, who would have heard the word while talking with the residents, who included Woiworung, Taungurong, Bunurong, Wathaurong (all members of the Eastern Kulin group of languages) and also some Kurnai people from Gippsland.

In *Place Names of Victoria* (1977), Les Blake listed Honeysuckle Creek near Violet Town, Vic, and explained that honeysuckle was a pleasant garden climber. He may have heard the song by Flanders and Swann, *The Bindweed and the Honeysuckle*. Blake was an inspector of schools, but he had not apparently heard that 'honeysuckle' was early squatterese for Banksia.

About three years ago a cartographer friend of mine decided that Allan Peak, in the Lake Eildon National Park, Vic., was a spelling error. The Allen family were early settlers on the Goulburn River and at Ten Mile, and Allen Bay on Lake Eildon is named after Sidney Albert Allen. So a recent map of Lake Eildon shows "Allens Peak". This sounded reasonable enough until Clem Earp of South Melbourne wrote to me after reading Alan Wylie's *Gold in the Shire of Mansfield* (2nd edn., 1995). Wylie had done some metaphorical digging and had discovered that:

> *the name appears to have begun life as a result of the discovery of … the Unexpected Reef, located in 1889 by two settlers, Ross and Munro from Howes Creek… Mining leases taken out at the time, for the Howes*

> *Creek Gold Mining Company, were stamped 'Helens Peak', but other leases taken out some years later by another group bore the title 'Mount Ellen'. The original lease was worked successfully until it became unprofitable in 1894. Somehow, then, 'Helen' has been transformed into 'Ellen' and hence 'Alan' [sic].*

H'mmm! You can't be too careful!

❏ ***Nigel Sinnott,*** *Sunshine West, Vic.*

Dear ANPS,

I read with interest David Blair's article "Australia on the Map – 200 years ago" (*Placenames Australia* December 2004).

The copy of the Flinders chart discussed in this article is well known in certain circles. It is described as a "fair drawing" and has been copied under the Australian Joint Copying Project and has been available in a number of the State and National Libraries of Australia for many years.

Flinder's use of the name "Australia" was not the first time that it had been applied to a land mass in the southern continent, which includes Australia. Earlier this year the National Library of Australia acquired a 1545 German astronomical treatise *Astronomia: Teutsch Astronomei* which features a small windhead map, featuring the name "Australia" over a southern continent landmass (including both Australia and Antarctica). I have been advised that the name "Australia" is a noun form of the Latin word "Australis" which means south. Hence "Terra Australis" or "South Land".

An article about the map appeared in the Library's publication: *Gateways*, no. 67, February 2004, http://www.nla.gov.au/ntwkpubs/gw/67/html/11maps.html. [Reproduced with kind permission on page 11 of the current issue of *Placenames Australia*].

Yours sincerely,

Maura O'Connor
Map Curator
National Library of Australia

JANSZ'S NAMES	CURRENT NAMES
R[ivier] met het Bosch 'R[iver] with Bush'	Pennefather River
Vliege Baij 'Fly Bay'	Albatross Bay
Dubbelde Ree 'Double Roadstead'	Archer Bay
R[ivier] Vis 'Fish R[iver]'	Love River[2]
Cabo Keerweer 'Cape Turn-about' or 'Turn-again'	Cape Keerweer
Moent (?)	?
't Hooghe Eijlandt 'the High Island'	Prince of Wales Island

From *R[ivier] met het Bosch* Jansz sailed south across *Vliege Baij*, then along the coast to *Cabo Keerweer* where he decided to turn back to Banda. The *Duyfken* then made her way back up the coast continuing north past *Moent* and *'t Hooghe Eijlandt*. Jansz thought that the coastline now known as Cape York Peninsula was part of New Guinea as he labels it *Nova Guinea*. In all, Jansz charted some 300 kms of Queensland's north-west coast.

Only one of Jansz's names remains in use today – Cape Keerweer. This name fittingly encapsulates the general attitude of all other Dutch explorers towards the Great Southland – that it was barren and offered nothing of commercial value. Nevertheless, like Jansz, many of these mariners – Hartog, Houtman, Thyssen, de Witt, Pelsaert, Tasman, and de Vlamingh – left their toponymic mark on the Australian coastline.

The most intriguing and enigmatic of Jansz's toponyms is *Moent*[3], which has generally been assumed to refer to the tiny crescent-shaped island less than 3 kms off the mainland, just south of the western opening to Endeavour Strait (see Fig. 3). The island has been known as Crab Island from at least 1890, and probably earlier. It is cited on the *Map of Torres Strait and Islands, Queensland (1892)*, which accompanies the 1890 *Annual Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island* (Queensland Govt. 1890).

▼ The meaning of Moent

Moent is not immediately recognisable as any current Dutch word or name, although structurally and in its spelling it is decidedly Dutch. No one has yet been able to offer a plausible explanation of its meaning. One person who did attempt it was Thomas Mutch, the former NSW Minister of Education (1921-1922), and Trustee of the Public Library and Mitchell Library, NSW.[4] In his privately published book of 1942 *The First Discovery of Australia*, Mutch offers a number of possible explanations (p.34). Firstly, he speculates that Jansz "would have picked up a native pilot or interpreter at the Kei or Aru islands to facilitate intercourse with the natives in the new lands they were visiting", and accordingly, *Moent* may be the Dutch spelling of a Malay word.

Secondly, he suggests that *Moent* may be a transferred placename from the Dutch East Indies. There are quite a number of toponyms in Malaysia and Indonesia that contain the element *munt*.[5] These include: *Muntu*, *Munyit* (streams in West Malaysia), *Munde*, *Muntai*, *Munte*, *Muntilan*, *Muntjakabau*, *Muntjang*, and *Muntjar* (settlements in Indonesia), *Muntai* and *Munti* (mountains in Indonesia).

Mutch's third suggestion is that *Moent* may derive from the Dutch spelling *moenyet* of the Malay word for monkey *monyet*. He notes that the tip of Cape York Peninsula is the habitat of the spotted cuscus (*Spilocuscus nudiacaudata,* or *Phalanger maculatus*). Although the cuscus looks a little like the primitive monkeys of Africa and South America, it is in fact a very shy nocturnal marsupial, and is also found in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands (United Nations, 'Endangered Species Series').

Mutch's hypotheses have some serious flaws. Firstly, we cannot readily assume Jansz had any indigenous Malays on board the *Duyfken* to act as interpreters. We cannot rely on the few extant muster rolls of the contemporary *V.O.C.* ships

to verify whether the Dutch actually used Malay interpreters as the muster rolls rarely, if ever, list non-European hands, either because they were not considered important enough, or because they were not on the pay-roll. Moreover, Boxer (1988 I:86) claims the *V.O.C.* never sanctioned the recruiting of "coloured mariners" in the seventeenth century, and "very few Asian hands [were] aboard even their 'country-ships' [i.e. *V.O.C.* ships trading in Southeast Asia]." This view is strongly supported by Bruijn and van Eyck van Heslinga (1980:16-17), the historians Herman Ketting (pers. comm. 19/2/1997) and Femme Gaastra (pers. comm. 24/6/1997). The situation changed drastically, however, in the eighteenth century when the *V.O.C.* was forced to recruit many indigenous Malays and other Asians. This was due to the extremely poor living conditions on board its ships which made Europeans very reluctant to sail with the Company (Boxer 1988 I:86; Bruijn & van Eyck van Heslinga 1980:17).[6] Although the *V.O.C.* may not have sanctioned the use of Malay interpreters, this does not necessarily mean ships' captains complied with the rules. Captains often flouted *V.O.C.* directives. For instance, all charts and journals compiled during *V.O.C.* voyages had to be surrendered to the company so that they could be used to make up-to-date charts, and moreover, would be prevented from falling into the hands of rival seafaring nations. This instruction was often not heeded with captains holding on to their charts and journals (Schilder 1976:49).

Even if there were indigenous Malays on board the *Duyfken*, it is highly unlikely they would have been given the privilege of naming or even suggesting a name for a geographical feature. Equally unlikely is the transfer of a placename from the East Indies to the coastline of the Great Southland. The seventeenth century Dutch were certainly not in the habit of transferring non-Dutch placenames to newly discovered climes. The only instance that I am aware of (at least in Australian waters) is that of the Portuguese-named *Pedra Blanca* off the coast of China transferred to a small rocky outcrop 24 kms off South-East Cape, Tasmania. The guano-covered Tasmanian rocks reminded Tasman of those in the China Sea (Posthumus Meyjes, 1919).

Mutch's third suggestion is quite fanciful. There is no

evidence on the *Duyfken* chart showing that Jansz made landfall on either Crab Island or the adjacent mainland, something that would have been necessary for the Dutchmen to see any spotted cuscus. It is highly improbable that anyone on board the *Duyfken* would have seen any of these shy creatures from out at sea, either during the day or night.

▼ Some possible solutions to the enigma

The meaning of *Moent* has remained obscure. The Dutch cartographer Ferjan Ormeling reports that neither this or any similar name is used on any Dutch chart (pers. comm. 10/12/2004). Damsteegt's 1942 PhD thesis on Dutch names on sea charts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries confirms this.

There are only a few possible explanations for this name – some more plausible than others.

Moent could firstly be an eponym. However, eponyms consisting of single elements are rarely used on Dutch charts – *Trial* or *Tryal* (for *Trial Baij* – the bay where the English ship *Trial* foundered), *Keerweer* (for *Cabo Keerweer*), and *Tortelduyf* (for *Tortelduyf Eylandt*) are three examples on charts of the Australian coastline. Perhaps *Moent* is such a rare example, or perhaps the anonymous chart maker who copied Jansz's chart omitted the generic element of the name (e.g. *Eylandt*?). In any case, *Moent* is not a known Dutch family name. The Meertens Institute (the research institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences)[7] does not have such a name on its databases. The Institute does list *Moentje* as a given name, however. It is a diminutive form of the Friesian name *Moen* or *Moene*, itself a short form of *Simon*, *Simeon*, or *Simoon*. The name derives from the Old Friesian and Old High German name stems, *-mund* (guardian) and *–munt* (protector) respectively. Old English *mund* 'guardian, protector' is a cognate of this. Perhaps the meaning of *Moent* lies in this word stem?

A somewhat more appealing, and perhaps more plausible, explanation is that *Moent* is a variant spelling or dialectal form of a Dutch word, or perhaps one from another language.
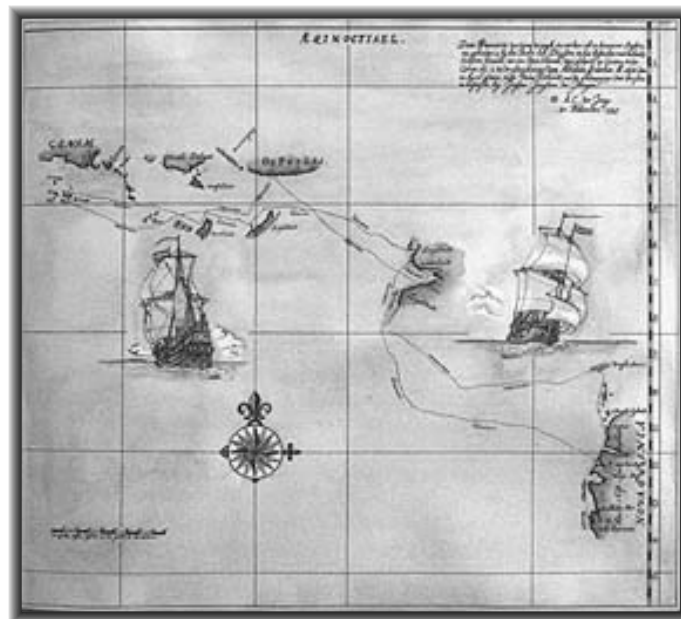
During the seventeenth century there was no standardised spelling of Dutch, and words, as well as proper names, could have a variety of representations, e.g. *eilandt ~ eyland ~ eylant ~ eijlandt* (island); *Duyfken ~ Duijfien ~ Duifjen*; *hooge ~ hooghe ~ hoog* (high); *drooge ~ droge* (dry); *Nassau ~ Naßau ~ Nassou*; *hoeck ~ hoec ~ houck ~ hooch* (bay/bight); *revier ~ rivier ~ riuier* (river); *laegh ~ laagh ~ laeg ~ laag* (low).

Moent can be a variant of a number of words (confirmed by the Dutch lexicographer Piet van Sterkenburg, pers. comm. 30/11/2004):

- *mont* (Fr.) or *monte* (Pg.) 'mountain, mount'
- *munt* (Du.) 'coin'
- *moenc ~ monic* (Du.) 'monk'
- *munt ~ moent* (Sth. Afr. Eng., Afrikaans, now derog.) 'black African, black person'
- *mont ~ mond* (Du.) 'mouth'

Mont or *monte* (mountain, mount) seems to be at first sight a credible explanation, especially since the Dutch sometimes used Portuguese generics in their toponyms (e.g. <u>Cabo</u> *Keerweer*, *Houtman* <u>Abrolhos</u>). However, the topography of this region of Cape York Peninsula is low lying and extremely flat, with some coastal stands of mangroves and the Jardine Swamps not far inland. This fact did not go unnoticed by Jansz either, as the Duyfken chart declares *Al dese Cust was laegh landt* ('All this Coast was low land') (see Fig. 1.). Jan Carstensz (commander of the *Pera* and *Arnhem* voyage of discovery in 1623) also commented on this, saying that all the while they had been exploring the land it had *gans geen geberchte oft heuvelen, so dat vastelijck te presumeren staet geenige metalen is hebbende,* [...] *ende na ons oordeel het dorste en magerste geweste, dat in weerlt soude mogen sijn* ('entirely no mountains or hills, so that it may be safely presumed that it contains no metals, [...] and in our judgement the most arid and barren country that may be found in the world') (Robert, 1973:102-103). Matthew Flinders also records the flatness of the Peninsula on his chart made during his 1802-1803 voyage in the *Investigator* (see Fig. 2.). The only notable high country in the region is Prince of Wales Island (just to the north of Crab Island and Endeavour Strait), which Jansz named *'t Hooge Eijlandt* (the High Island) to mark this fact. The highest point on Prince of Wales is Mt Scott, 247m. above sea level. There are some hills (Left Hill, Puddingpan Hill and Shadwell Peak) on the eastern side of the Peninsula, but these are between 75 and 85 kms from Crab Island and are only just over 100m. high, too low and far away for Jansz to have seen from his vantage point.

The *munt* (coin) and *moenc ~ monic* (monk) variants are even less appealing options. Neither the crescent-shaped Crab Island nor the topography of the adjacent mainland
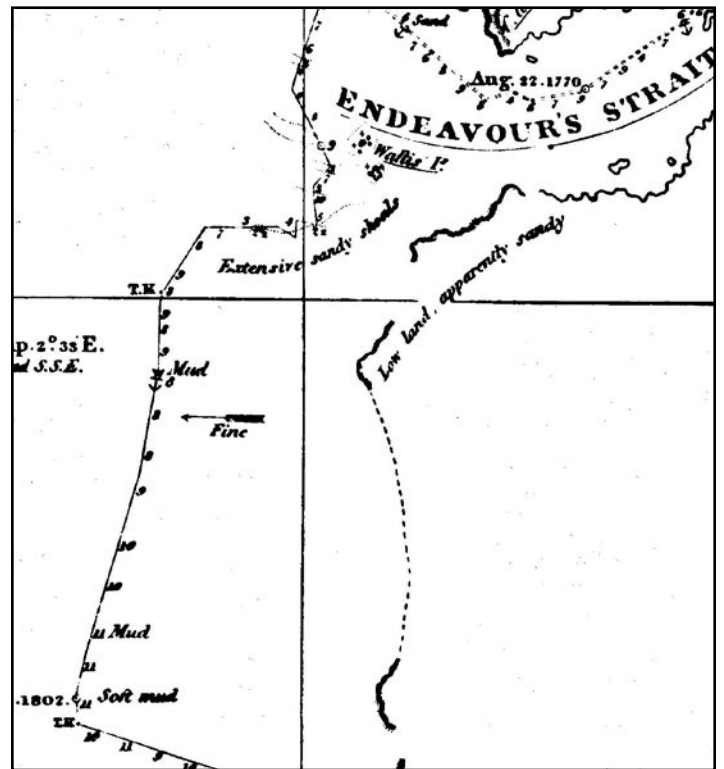

Figure 2. Section from Chart of Terra Australis by M. Flinders, Comm^r. of H.M. Sloop Investigator. 1802 ~ 1803. North Coast. Sheet I. (Flinders, 1966)

offers any clues to ascribe the meanings 'coin' or 'monk'.

The term *munt ~ muntu* (black African, black person) – as used by speakers of Afrikaans and English in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia – is a contraction of the Sintu (Bantu) word *muntu* or *umuntu* [personal noun prefix *mu-* + noun stem *ntu* 'human being, person' (pl. *bantu*)] (*Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles*), and is now a highly offensive term. The *DSAEHP* shows that this term only dates back to 1920. The Afrikaans lexicographer Willem F. Botha (pers. comm. 18/1/2005) states that the Afrikaans *muntu ~ moentoe* never had a high frequency of usage, and that the term seems to have had a much higher frequency in Zimbabwean English than in South Africa. The *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (Dictionary of Afrikaans) has only a few citations, the earliest for *muntu* being 1927 and for *moentoe* 1957. The term would, therefore, have been unknown to Jansz and could not have been the source of the toponym.

A more promising explanation might be the *mont ~ mond* (mouth) option, where *Moent* refers to what was perceived to be a river mouth. It is not uncommon for *mond* or *monde* to form the generic element of Dutch toponyms, e.g. *IJsel<u>monde</u>, Rupel<u>monde</u>, Dender<u>monde</u>, War<u>mond</u>, Roer<u>mond</u>, Leks<u>mond</u>, Wich<u>mond</u>.*

Further evidence to support this contention comes from

Figure 3. Crab Island, Endeavour Strait & Prince of Wales Island (STS038-73-108)

a photograph (Ref. # STS038-73-108)**[8]** taken from an altitude of 241 kms by the *Atlantis* Space Shuttle during its November 1990 mission (see Fig. 3.). The land mass at the north-east extremity is Prince of Wales Island, the land mass to the south-east is Cape York Peninsula, the passage of water between the two is Endeavour Strait, and the crescent-shaped islet less than 3 kms off the coast is Crab Island. There are clear water flow patterns emanating from the western end (mouth) of Endeavour Strait entering the Arafura Sea. It is not inconceivable that Jansz witnessed such a flow of water and deduced that the gap was a river mouth.

It is also quite evident on the *Duyfken* chart (Fig. 1.) that Jansz was aware of a river mouth or entrance to a channel or strait between *Moent* and *'t Hooge Eijlandt*. This opening was named *Rivier van Speult* by Cartsensz in 1623.

The only matter that now needs resolving is the use of the simple (or loose) generic element *Moent* (Mouth). Compound generic descriptors abound on *V.O.C.* charts (Ormeling, pers. comm. 10/12/2004), e.g. *vlakke hoek* ('flat bay/bight'), *ruige hoek* ('rough bay/bight'), *lange zand* ('long sand'), *Zant duijnen* ('sand dunes'), *verse spruit* ('fresh spring'), *Water plaets* or *waterplaets* ('watering place'), *Droge bocht* ('dry bight'), *Laegh lant* ('low land'). However, there are also examples of loose generics on these charts, e.g. *Droochte* ('shoal'), *Sneeberg* ('snow mountain'), or *Bergen* ('mountains').**[9]** It is, therefore, feasible that *Moent* simply means 'Mouth' referring to the opening between Cape York Peninsula and Prince of Wales Island.

Yet, there is still a catch with this hypothesis. Note that on the *Duyfken* chart (Fig. 1.), *Moent* is written on the mainland, slightly inland from the coast, at the approximate location of the Jardine Swamps. It may, therefore, not be referring to the mouth of the strait, Crab Island, but to the swamps.

For, why would the cartographer write *Moent* on the mainland if it referred to the mouth of Endeavour Strait or the islet? If it referred to the former it seems logical to have written the name in or just outside the mouth itself, and if to the latter right next to or below the islet. Moreover, why should Jansz bestow a name to such an insignificant island whilst he leaves many other and larger ones to the north unnamed? James Henderson (1999:42) also questions whether *Moent* was originally "applied to the claw-shaped island", as does the Queensland Department of National Resources and Mines Topographic Information Services Placenames Database whose entry for 'Crab Island' states: "Possibly named Moent by Willem Jansz […]." (Queensland Government, Natural Resources and Mines, 2004).

Given the often florid and sometimes difficult to decipher handwriting on charts of the era, *Moent* may therefore be an error in transcription from Jansz's original chart on which the loose generic *Moer~Moeras* (swamp), or even *Moerlant~Moer lant* (swamp land) was written. Ormeling (pers. comm. 29/1/2005) estimates that 1% of toponyms are misspelt or erroneously transcribed on copied Dutch charts. Considering its position on the chart and the topography of the region, the most viable orthographic reconstruction of *Moent* would seem to be *Moer*, *Moeras* or *Moerlant*.

Having considered all the evidence currently at my disposal, I believe it is unlikely that Jansz, or his cartographer, intended *Moent* to refer to Crab Island. More likely it refers to the Jardine Swamps, the mouth of Endeavour Strait, or to some other obscure mainland feature or event. Whatever its meaning or referent, the enigma of *Moent* is perhaps also explained by its appearance on only two of the 37 charts showing Cape York Peninsula in the extensive appendix to Schilder's book *Australia Unveiled* (1976), viz. the 1670 anonymous copy of Jansz's chart and João Teixeira's 1643 chart of the East Indies. Its conspicuous absence on the other early charts may suggest its meaning was obscure even to the seventeenth and eighteenth century cartographers and seafarers.

❑ ***Dr Jan Tent,*** *Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University* ➪

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Personal Communications

Acknowledgements

Footnotes

[1] Other cartographic evidence is found on: Hassel Gerritsz's 1622 map of the Pacific Ocean, the 1633 chart *Indiae orientalis nova discriptio* by Joannes Janssonius, and João Teixeira's 1643 chart of the East Indies (Schilder 1976:49).

[2] Formerly known as the Tokalee (or Dugally) River.

[3] *<oe>* is pronounced as the *<oo>* in *book*.

[4] Indeed it was through Mutch's efforts that the Mitchell Library obtained a copy of the *Duyfken* chart.
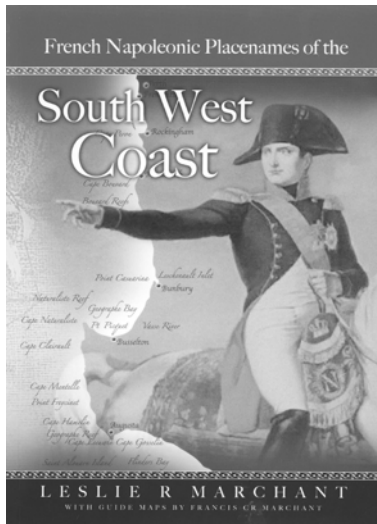
[5] *<oe>* is the Dutch spelling of Modern Malay/Indonesian *<u>*.

[6] See Tent & Geraghty (2001: 190-192) for a more extended discussion on this.

[7] Whose research focuses on structural, dialectal and sociolinguistic variation of the Dutch language, especially onomastic and grammatical variation.

[8] Source: Earth Sciences and Image Analysis, NASA-Johnson Space Centre, 15 Nov. 2004. 'Astronaut Photography of Earth – Display Record'. http://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/scripts/sseop/photo.pl?mission=STS038&roll=73&frame=108 (accessed 22/12/2004).

[9] Note, the rendering of a toponym on Dutch charts with or without capitalisation is not an issue – simple descriptors are written either with or without capitals, as are proper names.

French Napoleonic Placenames of the

South West Coast

L E S L I E R M A R C H A N T
WITH GUIDE MAPS BY FRANCIS CR MARCHANT

French names are common among the geographic features of the south west coast, however Western Australians are seldom taught of the French influence on WA history through the naming of such famous landmarks as Cape Clairault, Vasse River, Cape Bouvard, Geographe Bay and Cape Mentelle. History buffs, cultural tourists and intrepid explorers of all ages will soon be able to trace early French voyages of the early 1800s with *French Napoleonic Placenames of the South West Coast* by Leslie Marchant (2004).

Easy-to-read and compact, this book includes simple maps accompanied by directions to points of interest and historical background on the naming of landmarks from Rockingham to Augusta. Keen mariners and those wanting a more authentic experience can also follow in the wake of the French, with GPS waypoints provided for listed features.

Thomas Nicolas Baudin and Jacques Félix Emmanuel Hamelin journeyed to Western Australia in 1800-1803, as commanders of the *Géographe* and *Naturaliste* respectively. *French Napoleonic Placenames of the South West Coast* looks at the politics and personal dislikes which often influenced the naming of landmarks. It includes insights into Commander Baudin's bitter and often turbulent relationship with his crew, which ultimately saw him written out of the official history. In contrast, Baudin's enemies among the crew, including François Peron and Louis de Freycinet who wrote the history and drew the charts after Baudin's death in Mauritius on the return journey to France, feature prominently in the records with many coastal features named in their honour.

Published by Woodside Valley Foundation, *French Napoleonic Placenames of the South West Coast* retails for $19.95 and is available through bookshops, tourist bureaux, souvenir shops and selected cellar doors throughout south-western WA. It can be ordered (with $5 for postage and handling) from R.I.C. Publications, PO Box 332, Greenwood WA 6924. For further details contact Woodside Valley Foundation, ph 08 9345 4065, email: *sasha@woodsidevalleyfoundation.com.au*

Mount Remarkable

Remarkable no more, this mountain, located in the Pilbara region of WA near the Cane River is now named Mt Amy. It was renamed by Alexander Forrest in 1878 after his sweetheart, later his wife, Amy Barrett-Lennard.

Mount Remarkable was named by the explorer H. W. Venn in March 1866, and was also visited by E. T. Hooley later the same year. Venn does not refer to naming the mountain but when the early pastoralist John Brockman visited and climbed the mountain in 1875, his description of it reveals a likely reason for the choice. Brockman's description reads:

> "the mount itself was certainly appropriately named, for it was, when viewed in the light of day, most remarkable. It rose a great black mass of rocks from where it stood in the midst of a vast grassy plain stretching in every direction as far as the eye could see. I should think quite a thousand feet or more from the surrounding plain. Its great rocky and rugged sides had been washed and torn into great ravines down which the flood waters of many centuries had dashed and leaped. At the foot of one of these ravines was the pool of water already mentioned; it had been washed to a great depth by the great force of the rushing torrent from the mountain top. This climb was very steep and difficult in places, and took some hours. Upon reaching the summit, we found it rather flat, with a gradual slope on all sides towards the centre, in which was a natural tank full of water. This tank reminded me of what I read of extinct volcanoes, and I longed for a deep sea lead line to test its dark depth, for like all deep waters, it had that blue black appearance."

❏ Brian Goodchild
   Secretary, Geographic Names Committee, Department of Land Information WA

The weight of history in a name

Names reflect history and so are rarely value-free. In *Living Black*, Kevin Gilbert writes: "Ask white or black Australian kids to name a heroic Red Indian chief or a famous Indian tribe and most will be able to do so because of comics and films. Ask them to name an Aboriginal hero or a famous Aboriginal tribe and they will not be able to do so because Aboriginal history is either unknown or negative". A quarter of a century after that was written, not much has changed.

Names matter. Shakespeare was wrong to have Juliet say what she did about roses. They actually smell as good as they do in part by virtue of their name. A nose familiar with the fragrance of rose will invest the word with its knowledge so that the very expectation of rose will be invested in the word. That's why "rose" smells differently from, say, "frog".

> … I think of placenames as moments in history that are freeze-framed for posterity. As such, the values embedded in the name remain frozen and may later jar with changing social values….

That's not to suggest that in the coinage any one-to-one correspondence exists between a word (eg 'dog') and the thing the word represents (woof-emitting, tail-wagging, four-legged creature). But words over time come to mean their names. Names gather moss the way rolling stones don't.

Take placenames. Key 'Macquarie' into Google and you get 2,450,000 hits. Unsurprisingly, the colonial power-brokers who did the naming had a habit of honouring themselves. But one person's honour is another's ignominy. Names have connotations that are emotional, context-dependent and subjective. For more than 200 years, Indigenous people have put up with colonial names dominating what was once their landscape.

Do we ever think what that must be like? Yes we do – during World War I, many German placenames in South Australia were changed, in acknowledgement of the national enemy (then many were changed back in the thirties, fuelled by the prospect of commercial links with Germany).

So we know the feeling, but we rarely extrapolate.

Of course, history is written by the victors. Waterloo would not have its English significance had the victor's shoe been on Napoleon's foot. And many many local placenames have Indigenous connections, though they can be unverifiable.

I used to know a tour guide in Israel where guiding is highly prestigious, if lowly paid. There you need to know a few languages, have a deep knowledge of history, archeology and theology, among other disciplines, and a fine appreciation of how these intersect with topology and toponomy. My friend was from South Africa, and her Africaans allowed her to communicate with Dutch tour groups. These were mostly organised, church-based groups, who found it discombobulating that the scripture-book Holy Land toponomy in their heads didn't match the Hebrew placenames they encountered. That's what happens when you look at a Jewish man and his times through Christian glasses.

I think of placenames as moments in history that are freeze-framed for posterity. As such, the values embedded in the name remain frozen and may later jar with changing social values. A good example is found in recent controversies over US placenames containing the word 'squaw', of which there are 73 in Arizona alone, eg Squaw Peak. Popular belief, undeterred by lack of evidence, has it that 'squaw' is a Mohawk word for female genitalia.* Yet American Indians' petitions for 'squaw' to be replaced in official placenames have mostly fallen on deaf white ears – the request being dismissed as "silly".

To which several American Indian groups have asked: "How would whites feel if they had to live in a place called Vagina Valley?"

❑ Ruth Wajnryb

* Noted linguist William Bright in *Native American Placenames of the United States* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, pp 13, 460) states that, while some people believe 'squaw' to be an Iroquoian word meaning 'vagina', it is actually an Algonqian word for 'woman', which over the years has come to have a derogatory sense and is now considered offensive by many Native Americans. Ed.

Was Australia named in 1545?

A very rare and unusual mid-sixteenth century German astronomical work has recently been acquired by the Library, and raises an interesting question.

Titled *Astronomia-Teutsch Astronomei*, the work was published by Cyriaco Jacob zum Barth at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1545. Written in Gothic German, the work is a detailed study of astronomy as it was known at that time and features 76 leaves with 97 or so small woodcut illustrations with text showing astrological symbols, horoscopes, armillary spheres, diagrams of the constellations, astronomical and planetary diagrams. The book is bound in early vellum bindings with contemporary manuscript. Some repair and renewal of leaves and endpapers has been undertaken.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the work is a windhead world map, oriented to the south, and with the southern hemisphere landmass titled *Australia*—the proper noun form of the Latin word *Australis.* Matthew Flinders, who is generally credited as being the first to circumnavigate the Australian continent in 1802, is also credited with assigning the name 'Australia' to this continent although it did not immediately receive universal approval. Therefore, until now, the first map known to bear the name 'Australia' was Flinders' own map: *General chart of Terra Australis or Australia: showing the parts explored between 1798 and 1803 by M. Flinders Commr of*

H.M.S. Investigator (London: Published as the Act directs by G. & W. Nicol, Pall Mall, 1814 Jan.). The German map uses the term 'Australia' 259 years earlier than Flinders' map.

Prior to this date, both Antarctica and Australia, usually regarded as one combined landmass, were variously known as *Terra Australis Incognita*, Latin for 'unknown southern continent', or *Terra Australis Magellanica.* Other terms also included *Antarcticus.*

The recently acquired map thus poses an intriguing question. Was Flinders aware of the 1545 work when he suggested the name 'Australia' in 1804, when compiling his manuscript chart of Australia for his own epic work? Or was it that both authors were simply using the noun form of the Latin *Australis* as a more suitable name for one of the large landmasses in the southern hemisphere, one of which now proudly bears the name?

❏ Maura O'Connor,
  Map Curator, National Library of Australia

For more information, contact maps@nla.gov.au

GeoNames 2005 conference

Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, in the heart of the Frisian language minority area in the Netherlands, will be the venue of an international conference on minority names, indigenous names and geographical names in multilingual areas, to be held April 14-15 2005 and organised jointly by the Frisian Academy and the Dutch- and German Speaking Division

of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Themes of the conference are:

- protection of geographical names as cultural heritage
- status of minority languages/indigenous languages and placenames
- rendering of minority/indigenous names on official maps
- incorporation of minority/indigenous names into toponymical databases, gazetteers and directories, signage
- language planning for geographical names
- good placename practice regarding minority language geographical names

More details at http://geonames.geog.uu.nl

National and State Parks

All the clues reveal placenames which are also those of well-known authors (disregard spelling), e.g. (Tas – beach and hills) Opposite of black … Patrick WHITE

1. (WA/Tas – beach/creek) Stays up late with the midnight oil.
2. (WA – creek, crater, national park) Who caused Red Riding Hood's fear?
3. (NSW – beach, suburb) The heroine leased a mansion amid the wild Yorkshire fells.
4. (NSW – town, gap) Perhaps Alice sang a Christmas song in Wonderland.
5. (Vic/NSW – locality/town) An account of an aristocratic paramour got him into trouble.
6. (Vic – town) 1930s Governor General of Canada involved in a flight of nearly two score stairs.
7. (NT/Tas – town/range) His were desolate, uncultivated hectares.
8. (Qld – mountain) As well as writing thrillers, did he also make toothpaste?
9. (NT – suburb) Noble toxophilite.
10. (Vic – hill) Involved in angels, demons and code cracking.
11. NSW/Qld – town/range) Lost the first garden and found it again.
12. (Tas – town, creek) Perhaps Ella sang for Gatsby.
13. (SA – creek, gully, locality) Joyce, Peter, Oscar and Lucinda met Mr Jimson.
14. (Vic – locality) Barbara, the Yorkshire woman of substance.
15. SA/NSW – town) On a sea trip to India his cabin had a good view.
16. (NT – city) Official naturalist of H.M.S. *Beagle*.
17. (Tas – town, creek, hill, flat) Took his inspiration from the activities of Little Boy Blue.
18. (WA/SA – suburb) Find your Shangri-la in large hotels.
19. (NSW – town, mountain) Did Clancy play a guitar-like instrument at the overflow?
20. (WA – town, gap, range, river) No triffids here on any day.

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Contributions

Contributions for *Placenames Australia* are welcome. Closing dates for submissions are:

31 January for the March issue	31 July for the September issue
30 April for the June issue	31 October for the December issue.

Please send all contributions to the Editor, Susan Poetsch, at the address below. Electronic submissions are preferred, and photographic or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

Mailing list and volunteer research

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Answers: 1. Robert BURNS 2. Virginia WOLFE 3. Anne BRONTE 4. Lewis CARROLL 5. D.H. LAWRENCE 6. John BUCHAN 7. T.S. Eliot (ELLIOTT) 8. Alistair MacLEAN 9. Lord Jeffrey ARCHER 10. Dan BROWN 11. John MILTON 12. F. Scott FITZGERALD 13. Peter CAREY 14. Barbara Taylor BRADFORD 15. E.M. FORSTER 16. Charles DARWIN 17. C.S. FORESTER 18. James HILTON 19. Banjo PATERSON 20. John WYNDHAM