



How did Howqua get its name?

Neville Shute's novel, *The Far Country*, features the small township of Howqua in the Victorian high country some 200 kilometres by road north-east of Melbourne, and about from 30kms south of Mansfield. The name is intriguing; it is not English, nor does its form suggest an indigenous Australian origin. So, whence does this name originate?

But first a little background. The Howqua district was first inhabited by the Minjambuta and Tuanguarng peoples, and was an important source for the very hard Cambrian greenstone, much prized for making axe and spear heads.

European settlement began in the 1840s when the area formed part of the Howqua run, taken up by the pastoral company Watson and Hunter.

The discovery of gold in Cameron Creek in the 1860s brought about major changes in the district. Later in the 1870s, when a gold-bearing reef was discovered mining began in earnest. The population soared, and in 1888 the township of Howqua was proclaimed. It included a post office, school, staging post and the *Carriers Arms Hotel*, reputedly, once a favourite watering hole for Ned Kelly. The gold rush was short-lived, however, and by 1905 all major goldmining operations had ceased.

Howqua was flooded with the development of Lake Eildon during the first half of the 20th century, and a new settlement was established above the waterline at Howqua Inlet. It is now a popular spot for boating, water skiing and fishing.

Now, how did Howqua get its name? There are a number of hypotheses:

- After John "Howqua/Houqua" Hunter of the Watson & Hunter pastoral company, who established a pastoral run in the area.
- After the 19th century Chinese brand of tea, *Houqua*.

- After the American clipper the *Houqua* (built in 1844), or the American whaler of the 1830s by the same name. The former was engaged in the China trade.
- After Akin Howqua (aka Ah Kin Wowqua) a Chinese surveyor and/or miner.
- A portmanteau (blend) of the names Mt Howitt (where the Howqua River rises) and *aqua* (Latin 'water').

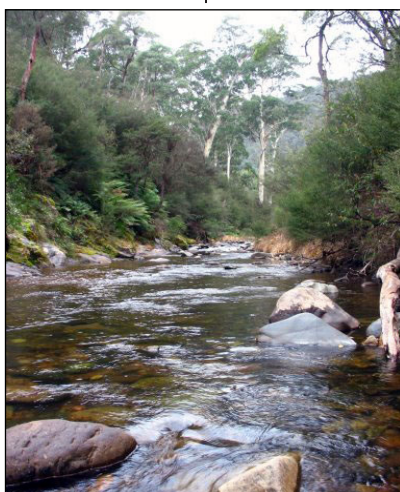
The first hypothesis seems the most likely, because we can link John Hunter to the region. His nickname derives from the famous 19th century Canton Hong merchant, Wu Ping-Chien/Bingjian, better known as 'Houqua I', Wu Ping-Chien's father). Europeans called the Wu family merchants 'Howqua'. The word gradually became synonymous with a wealthy merchant (cf. 'tycoon'). John Hunter most likely earned this nickname, because of his wealth and power, and his company subsequently named the pastoral run after him. The township, in due course, took the name of the local pastoral run, as was a common practice (cf. Khancoban).

There is no verifiable historical evidence to connect for any of the other four reputed sources to the placename. The second and third theories are nothing more than interesting contextual corroborations, whilst the fourth is probably coincidence or fiction, and fifth, more than likely than not, pure folk etymology.

Howqua is one of the very few Australian placenames (the only?) with a Chinese linguistic origin.

 Jan Tent

(Continued on Page 7)



Howqua River

From the editor . . .

“We Wish We Knew.....”

VALE OF AH (Sydney, NSW)

One of our correspondents has noticed the strangely-named **Vale of Ah** locality, in the Bankstown area of Sydney. Our enquiries so far have not uncovered anything of significance about its origin. The Vale of Ah Reserve was added to the NSW Register in 1975, after mapping fieldwork picked up its existence. The name appears on the Bankstown parish map, as well as in some early street directories. Apart from that, all is silence! Even Bankstown Council can't help—they lost all their records when the Council office burnt down some years ago.

WARRELL CREEK (Mid North Coast, NSW)

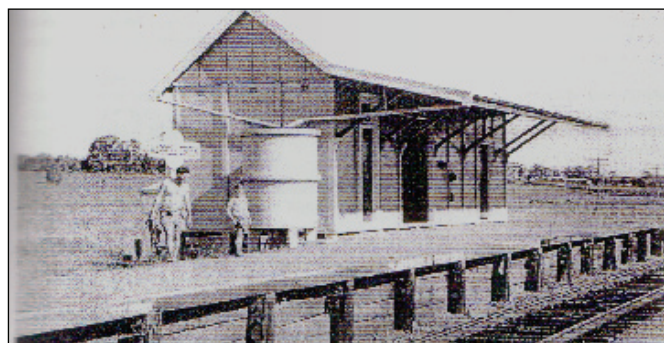
ANPS researcher Geoff Minett has been trying to unscramble the naming history of **Warrel Creek**, Geoff writes:

In March 1841 Crown Surveyor Clement Hodgkinson transversed the district now known as **Warrel Creek**, on route to the Nambucca and Bellinger Valleys. His map of the navigable arms of the Nambucca River indicates that the now **Warrell Creek** was called GURRAVEMBI by the local indigenous (Aboriginal) people. He indicated that James Taylor owned Try Station stretching from Gurravembi Creek to the south arm of the Nambucca River. The Government Gazette of 1848 records that Chapman owned the Tanban Heifer Station joining Try Station. In the 1840's William Scott leased the WERRAL RUN. He left the run in 1845 and C Steel became the lessee of some 5,000 acres. Record indicate Charles Ducat in 1844 applied for part of the Werral Run being north of **Werral Creek** and Dray Road to Double Corner and north west by Yarrahapinni Mountain. The area was 3 miles by 2 miles.

These applications and research indicate that these people used the runs for cedar getting and not grazing. Perhaps that **Warrel Creek** was a corruption of the Werral Run?

Any information would be most helpful.

If you can help in any way, please let us know!



Warrell Creek Railway Station

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Our BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH pick!

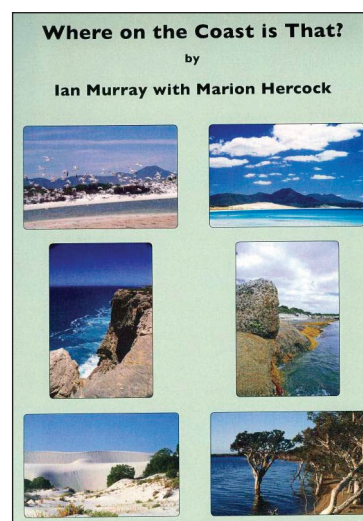
We recommend...

Where on the Coast is That? by Ian Murray with Marion Hercock. West Australian readers, especially, will be delighted with this compendium of WA coastal placenames. It's the only reference book which puts together all the information about the State's coastal features, including any known details of the name's origin.

Publishing details: Hesperian Press, 2008. xiii, 336pp.
ISBN 978-0-85905-452-2

Available from Hesperian Press, PO Box 317, Victoria Park 6979 WA
Price: \$45 + postage

Readers with good memories will recall Ian's previous volume in this series, *From Araluen to Zanthus*, which we mentioned in 2004—as well as his *Aboriginal Corporations, Communities and Outstations*, from December 2006.



A Menagerie of Placenames

Banana is the name of a well-known town in Queensland. Bananas, brought back from the Pacific Island by Queensland sugarcane growers, have been cultivated in Australia since the mid 1800s so it might be logical to assume that **Banana** was named to honour the fruit. But the obvious explanation is not always the right one, and local historians have recorded several stories accounting for the name. Governor Bowen granted approval for the township of “**Banana**”, in June 1861¹, a few years after Mr Leith-Hay obtained a lease on a run called **Bananah**.² The lease name was said to be derived from aboriginal words that sound very much like banana.³ According to Jensen, however, a bullock named Banana was said to be part of a bullock team in this area. The beast was alleged to wander, and named because of the light colour of his hide. There are conflicting stories of the bullock dying in a local gully, or being bogged down and drowned in a lagoon nearby.⁴ However, records in the Oxley Memorial Library state “Yards at Leith-Hay’s Rannes Station were used for cattle to acquire their hides and tallow. To assist in getting these wild cattle to enter the crushes, a decoy, an old dun-coloured working bullock named Banana, would lead into the crush. In time this old bullock died in a nearby gully which was known to station hands thereafter as **Banana’s Gully**.”⁵

A similar story appears to account for **Cockfighters Creek** on the convict-built Great North Road in NSW. In an account of the parish of Wollombi, A.P. Elkin explains that the name **Cockfighters Creek** was given to the lower part of the Wollombi Brook because one of an expedition’s horses named Cockfighter died as a result of being bogged down in the creek.⁶

Dead Horse Gap in the Snowy Mountains region is yet another tragic horse reference. This name appears to relate to the brumbies that sometimes became trapped during unexpected snowfalls in this area and died.⁷

Horses feature in a number of placenames – whether alive or dead. **Wild Horse Plains**, north of Gawler in South Australia, is one of several. In the late 1850s Thomas Day of Keswick and J. Hewitt of Peachey Belt were searching for pasture in the mallee scrub between the River Light and Port Wakefield when they came across a small plain with about twenty wild horses grazing, which immediately bolted. Some years later while cutting a road through the scrub, Day came to the spot where he had seen the wild horses and he christened it **Wild Horse Plain**.⁸ **Norseman** in Western Australia owes its name and fortune to a clever horse. When prospector Laurie Sinclair stopped to visit his brother on his way to Esperance in 1894, he tethered his horse, *Hardy Norseman*, overnight and in the morning was amazed to discover that it had pawed up a gold nugget which led to the ultimate discovery of a rich

gold reef.⁹ **Marvel Loch** won the Caulfield Cup in 1905 and the Western Australia town named in its honour was gazetted five years later.¹⁰

Some names are, of course, given in error. **Monkey Place Creek** in NSW, for example, was bestowed, it is said, by convicts who were building a road and mistook the strange creatures they saw in the trees for monkeys, never, of course, having seen koalas’ before.¹¹ On the other hand, there is a wonderful story about **Monkey Gully**, Victoria. According to recollections which go back to 1859 in “*Memories of Monkey Gully & Italians*”, the gully was named from a curious incident. One of the diggers owned a monkey which he kept chained up. The chain broke one day and the monkey ran down the lead amongst the diggers, and in consequence the lead was named ‘**Monkey Gully**’.¹² The name **Porcupine Flat**, Victoria, was mentioned in official reports as early as 1854 and this might be another name bestowed by early settlers unfamiliar with native animals who thought echidnas were porcupines.¹³



Statue of Hardy Norseman, in Norseman, W.A.

Placenames come and placenames go. At one time there was a **Goat Island** in the middle of Lord Howe Island’s lagoon. It was then changed to **Rabbit Island**, but subsequently reverted to its original name of **Blackburn Island**.¹⁴ **Goat Island**, in Sydney Harbour, may have got its name from goats brought out with the First Fleet, but there is no documentary evidence, and **Goat Island** in South Australia is said to have derived its name from goats on the island which provided food for boat crews.¹⁵ When it comes to

Bears Lagoon, on the Loddon Valley Highway, alas there are no bears in Victoria and the name refers to a John Bear who took up East Loddon station in 1943.¹⁶

A name is a necessary means of identification and when confronted with having to name an expanse of acquired land one good source of inspiration is the local fauna. When John Blow, a pioneering settler in 1850 cleared 300 acres inland from the NSW south coast he found a great number of flying foxes and hence the name **Fox Ground**.¹⁷ As there were so many dingoes around, there is an abundance of names relating to them, or references to native dogs – **Dingo Creek** and **Dingo Gully**. A local history records that, “The route went across this high plain, then down again to **Native Dog Creek**, and further on to cross **Native Cat Creek**.”¹⁸ However, there are dozens of places using the name “native dog” in one form or another (e.g. Gully, Creek, Flat) whereas there are only a few references to “native cat”. It is no surprise that the other animal playing a big part in place naming is the kangaroo and there is a variety of locations bearing its name in one form or another – **Kangaroo Flat**, **Kangaroo Ground**, **Kangaroo Valley** – and many more.

(Continued on Page 6)

Britain's Snigger-worthy Placenames

CRAPSTONE, England: When ordering things by telephone, Stewart Pearce tends to take a proactive approach to the inevitable question: "What is your address?"

He lays it out straight, so there is no room for unpleasant confusion. "I say, 'It's spelled 'crap,' as in crap,'" said Pearce, 61, who has lived in **Crapstone**, a one-shop country village in Dartmoor, for decades.

Disappointingly, Pearce has so far been unable to parlay such delicate encounters into material gain, as a neighbour once did.

"**Crapstone**," the neighbour said forthrightly, whereupon the person on the other end of the telephone repeated it to his co-workers and burst out laughing. "They said, 'Oh, we thought it didn't really exist,'" Pearce related, "and then they gave him a free something."

In the scale of embarrassing place names, **Crapstone** ranks pretty high. But Britain is full of them. Some are mostly amusing, like Ugley, Essex; East Breast, in western Scotland; North Piddle, in Worchestershire; and Spanker Lane, in Derbyshire.

Others evoke images that may conflict with the efforts of residents to appear dignified when, for example, opening bank accounts.

These include Crotch Crescent, Oxford; Titty Ho, Northamptonshire; Slutshole Lane, Norfolk; and Thong, Kent. And, in a country that delights in lavatorial humor, particularly if the word "bottom" is involved, there is Pratts Bottom, in Kent, doubly cursed because "prat" is slang for buffoon.

As for Penistone, a thriving South Yorkshire town, just stop that sophomoric snickering.

"It's pronounced 'PENNIS-tone,'" Fiona Moran, manager of the Old Vicarage Hotel in Penistone, said over the telephone, rather sharply. When forced to spell her address for outsiders, she uses misdirection, separating the tricky section into two blameless parts: "p-e-n" - pause - "i-s-t-o-n-e."

Several months ago, Lewes District Council in East Sussex tried to address the problem of inadvertent place-name titillation by saying that "street names which could give offence" would no longer be allowed on new roads.

"Avoid esthetically unsuitable names," like Gaswork Road, the council decreed. Also, avoid "names capable of deliberate misinterpretation," like Hoare Road, Typple Avenue, Quare Street and Corfe Close. (What is wrong with Corfe Close, you might ask? The guidelines mention the hypothetical residents of No.4, with their unfortunate hypothetical address, "4 Corfe Close.")

The council explained that it was only following guidelines set out by the national government and that it did not intend to change any existing lewd names. Still, news of the revised policy raised an outcry.

"Sniggering at double entendres is a loved and time-honoured tradition in this country," Carol Midgley wrote in *The Times* of London. Alluding to a slang word for "idiot," she added: "Half the reason for travelling to the Orkney Islands is to get your photo taken next to the road sign for Twatt."

Ed Hurst, a co-author, with Rob Bailey, of "Rude Britain" and "Rude UK," which list arguably offensive place names - some so arguably offensive that, unfortunately, they cannot be printed here - said that many such communities were established hundreds of years ago and that their names were not rude at the time.

"Place names and street names are full of history and culture, and it's only because language has evolved over the centuries that they've wound up sounding rude," Hurst said in an interview.

Bailey, who grew up on Tumbledown Dick Road in Oxfordshire, and Hurst got the idea for the books when they read about a couple who bought a house on Butt Hole Road, in South Yorkshire.



A church at Pratts Bottom, a village in Kent, England. (New York Times)

The name most likely has to do with the spot's historic function as a source of water, a water butt being a container for collecting water. But it proved to be prohibitively hilarious.

"If they ordered a pizza, the pizza company wouldn't deliver it, because they thought it was a made-up name," Hurst said. "People would stand in front of the sign, pull down their trousers and take pictures of each other's naked buttocks." The couple moved away.

The people in **Crapstone** have not had similar problems, though their sign is periodically stolen by word-loving merrymakers. And their village became a stock joke a few years ago, when a television advertisement featuring the prone-to-swearing soccer player Vinnie Jones showed Jones's car breaking down just under the **Crapstone** sign.

In the commercial, Jones tries to alert the towing company to his location while covering the sign and trying not to say "crap" in front of his young daughter.

Jacqui Anderson, a doctor in **Crapstone** who used to live in a village called Horrabridge, which has its own issues, said that she no longer thinks about the "crap" in "**Crapstone**."

Still, when strangers ask where she's from, she admitted, "I just say I live near Plymouth."

□ Sarah Lyall

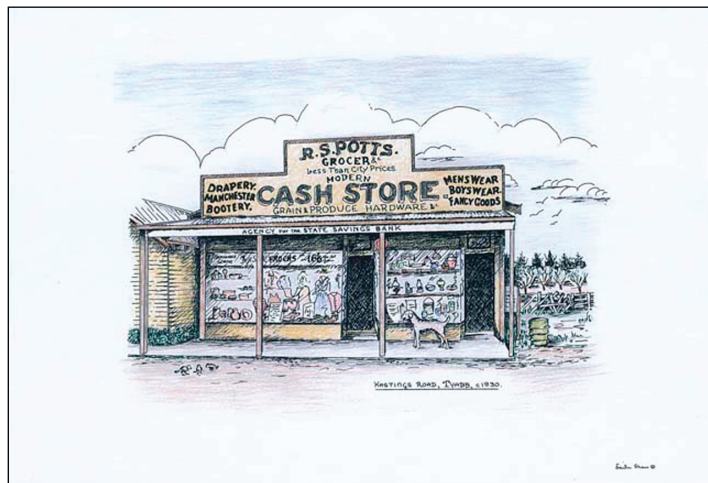
Published: January 23, 2009

International Herald Tribune. The Global Edition of *The New York Times*.

<http://www.ihb.com/articles/2009/01/23/europe/journal.php>

The Changing Names of Tyabb

Tyabb is a small township on the Mornington Peninsula, south-east of Melbourne. These days it's well-known for its craft village and range of antique shops; but in earlier days it was the centre of a thriving fruit-growing district.



Cash Store, Tyabb (still to be seen in Hastings Road)

Local historian and ANPS correspondent Leila Shaw has written extensively on **Tyabb** and its surrounding area. In her book *She's Apples*, she writes:

During the construction of Frankston to Crib Point railway, the station at 36 1/2 miles was named "Stuarts Flat". In January, 1889, a proposal was made to change it to "Stuarton". On 29th January 1889, the Traffic Manager wrote to the Chief Engineer suggesting that "Stuarts Flat" be named "**Tyabb**" instead of "Stuarton" because the latter sounded too much like "Serviceton". On 22nd February 1889, the Traffic Manager suggested that the name of the station be "Bunguyam" or that the local Shire Council be consulted on their views regarding the name. After a letter was written to Mornington Shire Council on 26th February 1889, they replied on 18th March suggesting the name "**Tyabb**" and, when it was officially opened on 10th September 1889, the station became permanently known as "Tyabb".

It is generally accepted, reports Leila, that **Tyabb** comes from the local Aboriginal word for "swamp" or "waterhole".



Tyabb Cool Store, 1935 (now an antiques store)

The process of naming the village is typical in several ways. Many of Australia's rural localities received their first officially-recognised names when the railway was constructed and stations needed to be named. First attempts were not always successful—even bureaucracies are known to change their minds on such matters, and one good reason for change is to avoid duplication or near-identity of placenames. We should note, too, that community consultation on naming has been standard practice for many years, as the correspondence with the Shire Council in 1889 demonstrates.

As well as being a historian and writer, Leila is a gifted illustrator, as our readers will see from the two sketches we've reproduced here.

□ David Blair

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OUT AND ABOUT

THE PLACE WITH THE WALLABY ON THE ROCK



Wallabadah lies on the New England Highway in the Liverpool Plains Shire, some 260km north of Sydney. The area was originally called Thalabuburi by the Kamilaroi people and later known as Manfield's Point by early Europeans.¹ It derives its current name **Wallabadah**, from a squattage formed in 1828, possibly by the Rotten Brothers and taken up by Peter Brodie in 1835. The name is unrelated to Thalabuburi and its origin is unknown, although it has been suggested that it might refer to 'stone' or 'grinding stone'.² The area is affectionately known locally as "Wallaby", which accounts for the wallaby rock sculpture.³

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Photo: Joyce Miles

¹ Neil McGarry, Liverpool Plains Shire Council

² www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/name_search

³ Neil McGarry, *op. cit.*

A Menagerie of . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

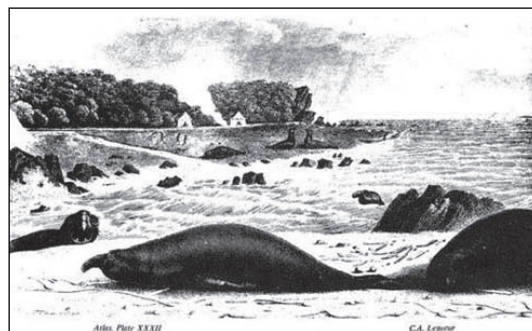
It is assumed that the names were derived from the large numbers of the animals encountered by early settlers. Not all such names have survived. **Kangaroo Point** in Tasmania, for example, was changed to **Bellerive** in 1892.¹⁹ **Pig Island** in the Shoalhaven River, NSW, was an unfortunate choice. It was named when a farmer released his pigs on the island and left them there to multiply. They were all killed by bush ticks.²⁰ **Cow Flat**, NSW, was originally known as **Limestone** or **Limestone Flat** but became **Cow Flat** in later years when John Hughes jnr. commented that the farm cows were often to be found up there, where there was good grass along the creek on the flat between the hills. He always called it **The Cow Flat** although in time "The" was omitted.²¹

In 1802 Francois Peron, a zoologist, was travelling with a French scientific expedition aboard *Le Geographe*. The party landed on **King Island**, Tasmania, and Peron recounted "The whole of this bay, when we landed, was covered with sea

elephants". He was fascinated by these massive creatures and the expedition named the bay **Sea Elephant Bay**.²²

The map of Australia is scattered with a wide-ranging collection of animal names. Some, based on sheep, goats and cows suggest land used for agriculture, some give an indication of the native animals found in abundance in the area by early settlers – kangaroos, dingoes, fruit bats, others record some piece of local history in names such as **Dead Horse Gap**. Some were inspirational – an early explorer would sight a land formation and it would remind him of a buffalo or a camel's hump. Whatever the source, these delightful names play a major role in Australia's toponymic history.

© Joyce Miles, 2009



Sea Elephant Bay in December 1802. (Engraving from *La Geographe* expedition)

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- ⁴ G. Jensen, *op. cit.* p.29
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- ²² www.kingisland.net.au/~maritime/seaelephant.htm 12/01/2009

Placenames puzzle no. 29

On the Tourist Route

The clues reveal placenames connected with international tourist sites (Disregard spelling).

E.g. (NSW/WA) One of this state's attractions is the Everglades area. Florida.

1. (WA) Football fans flock to this famous London stadium
2. (WA) Part Norman, part Roman, walled, with a Minster completed in 1474 (UK)
3. (WA) Home of Big Ben, Houses of the UK Parliament, and the Palace
4. (NSW) Early viewers of the Colossus had to travel to this Aegean island
5. (NSW) Standing here on the prime meridian, visitors check their watches (UK)
6. (NSW) Travellers to Egypt in ancient times could have visited a wonderful lighthouse here
7. (NSW) Site of the fountain made famous in Petrarch's "Laura" (Fr)
8. (NSW) See the Queen at the Highland Games (Scot)
9. (NSW) City of "dreaming spires" and universities; tumbles (UK)
10. (QLD) Wren's cathedral, built 1675-1711, survived the blitz (UK)
11. (QLD) Fly into New York via JF's airport
12. (VIC) You can visit St Helena, his S.Atlantic island of exile
13. (VIC) Motor cycle enthusiasts enjoy the races in the Isle of Man's capital
14. (SA) Not upper; millions view the pictures in Russia's Winter Palace
15. (TAS) One route to the Aswan Dam and Abu Simbel
16. (NSW/VIC) Famous for its Royal Botanic Gardens established in 1759 (UK)
17. (NSW/VIC) Bridge connecting Long Island and Manhattan Island (USA)
18. (NSW/SA) Crowds gather in the square of the largest Christian church in the world with a dome designed by Michelangelo (16thc) (It)
19. (NSW/QLD/VIC) Nearby on the Thames, is the Palace built by Cardinal Wolsey in 1515
20. (SA/TAS/VIC/WA) Arriving at this London train station, tourists will not meet Abba or Napoleon

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How did Howqua ...

(Continued from Page 1)

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Other news....

ANPS correspondent Nathan Daams is a West Australian surveyor who has recently been instrumental in having previously unnamed mountain features being officially given their original indigenous names. Nathan, while working with Rio Tinto, embarked on a consultative project with local Aboriginal people to establish whether there were indigenous toponyms for these hills and ranges.

As a result, the Geographic Names Committee in WA recently approved the Indigenous feature names of Goondoowandoo Range, Bibi Thaloo Hill, Gurinbiddy Range. Mt Ella was recognized as having the dual name Gujuwanna.

The full story appears in Landgate Magazine, issue 55. It can be downloaded from the department's website:

<http://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/corporate.nsf/web/Landmarks+Magazine>



Nathan Daams

Answers: 1. Wembley 2. York 3. Westminster 4. Rhodes 5. Greenwich 6. Alexandria 7. Vacluse 8. Braemar 9. Oxford Falls 10. St Paul's 11. Kennedy 12. Napoleons 13. Douglas 14. Lower Hermitage 15. Nile 16. Kew 17. Brooklyn 18. St Peters 19. Hampton 20. Waterloo

Placenames Australia...

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The Survey has no funding of its own—it relies on the generosity of its supporters, both corporate and individual. We will try to maintain our current mailing list, as long as we can; in the long term, priority will be given to Supporting Members of the association, to our volunteer Research Friends, to public libraries and history societies, and to media organizations.

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We say thankyou to...

our corporate sponsor, the Geographical Names Board of NSW—and to the Secretary of the Board, Greg Windsor. This year's newsletters could not have been published without the support of the GNB.



Contributions

Contributions for *Placenames Australia* are welcome.

Please send all contributions to the Editor, Tricia Mack, by email: [<editor@anps.org.au>](mailto:editor@anps.org.au)

Electronic submissions and photographic or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

Closing dates for submission 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