

# Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

an initiative of the Australian Academy of Humanities, supported by the Geographical Names Board of NSW



## Kalamunda ~ ‘a home in the forest’?

It often seems to us that the meanings of most placenames are unknown and mysterious. Does *Warsaw* have a meaning? Do *Pisa*, *Calais*, *Berlin*? It would appear, however, that **Kalamunda**, in the foothills of the Darling Ranges outside Perth, is not one of these: we're told that 'everybody knows' what it means.

Wikipedia confidently tells us that

the word is derived from two Noongar (an Indigenous Australian language) words: *kala* meaning 'home' and *munda* meaning 'forest', hence spawning the Shire's motto 'A home in the forest'.

An almost identical definition is indeed to be found on the Shire of Kalamunda website:

The name Kalamunda comes from local Aboriginal words **Cala** (home) and **Munnda** (forest). Thus Kalamunda means '**A home in the forest**'.

Is it as clearcut as that? What can we discover when we look at the languages of south-west Western Australia (known as *Nyungar* or *Noongar*)? To begin with, as Aboriginal words are generally short—mostly of two or three syllables when they have not been elaborated by the addition of suffixes to give more specific meanings—a longer word such as *kalamunda* might be assumed to be two words joined together. So 'home in the forest' would certainly fit that pattern.

In Nyungar the word *gala*, spelt variously as *karler*, *karla*, *kalla*, *kolla*, *kahla*, *carla* (indeed, in almost every way imaginable in the records of the mid-to-late 1800s), is given the meanings of 'charcoal', 'fire', 'flame', 'burning', 'hot day', 'warm', 'firewood', 'smoke', 'summer', and also 'bright yellow', as well as 'country' and 'camp'. The basic idea is 'fire' and its attributes of colour (yellow), smoke

and heat, so also yielding 'hot day' and 'summer'. A *fire* is one of the central features of a camp, as in 'camp fire', and the camp concept can embrace 'country', 'place', and 'home'. Out of fifty such records, only two (both by Daisy Bates) actually mention 'home'.

The second portion of *Kalamunda* is more difficult. First consider its pronunciation, either as /mahnda/ or /moonda/. The European sound-spellings could be standardised as *manda* and *munda* respectively. Meanings for *manda*

are mostly 'together', 'among(st)' and perhaps 'cloud' (*mandabu*).

On the other hand, the several records for *munda* offer 'the bush', 'forest', 'woody country', 'dry', 'bracken fern', 'grass tree', 'the woods', as well as 'hair, lower stomach?' (perhaps considered 'bushy'). There are also references to 'tiger shark', which seem unconnected to the rest.

So from what we know of Nyungar, it would seem that **Kalamunda** (properly pronounced /kahla-moonda/) most likely meant 'fire (in the) bush/scrub', or even 'bushfire', rather than the widely-accepted 'home in the forest'.



*Kalamunda's welcoming fountain-sculpture (photo: Lesley Brooker)*

Jeremy Steele

## From the Editor



Western Australia is the focus of our first two articles this month. Our front-page feature by Jeremy Steele looks at the Aboriginal etymology of *Kalamunda*. (Lesley Brooker's illustration shows the fountain at the entrance roundabout to Kalamunda with its sculpture based on

the nuts from the Marri tree, which is endemic to the area.) Our second feature, in contrast, is Jan Tent's look at the Dutch origin of an elusive name near the Swan River—*Dinnings Land*.

We hope you enjoy the reappearance of our occasional column *Reports from the Trenches*, this time from the Brunswick History Group.

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

## The 2017 Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting of PCPN will be held in Sydney in late October. The AGM of Placenames Australia will be held during that conference, at 4.30 p.m. on Thursday 26 October. The venue is the Boardroom at Sydney Masonic Conference & Function Centre, 66 Goulburn Street. All Supporting Members are invited to attend.

The main item on the agenda will be the election of the Management Committee: **President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer**, and up to 5 other **members**. Nominations are invited: please send to the Secretary <secretary@anps.org.au> before the meeting. It would be helpful if we knew you were planning to attend—let the Secretary know and we'll send you further details.

### New from Joshua Nash

Regular contributor Joshua Nash has recently published two articles that our readers may be interested to read:

- 'Cultural aspects of Norfolk Island toponymy' in *Onomastica Canadiana* 95 (2016): 1-21
- 'Linguistics, geography, and the potential of Australian island toponymies' in *Australian Geographer* 48 (2017) - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2017.1296749>

### American Name Society Conference

The ANS is holding its 2018 annual conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, from 4-7 January. Our printing schedule prevented us from meeting the June deadline for submission of abstracts, but we trust that news of the conference will be of interest—a winter visit to Utah to hear papers on onomastics could be irresistible! We don't have further details of the conference to hand, but if you're tempted to go, email the ANS Vice-President, Dr Dorothy Dodge Robbins at <drobbs@latech.edu>.

## Notes and queries

### Smiths Lake

The folk at the Great Lakes Museum (NSW) have asked about the village **Smiths Lake**: does anyone know the origin of the name? It does seem that the nearby lagoon got the name first, and that it was previously called *Smith Lake*; but otherwise our Database offers no clues. Anyone?

### Cape Hawke

Not far from Smiths Lake, visitors can experience superb views of the coast from the **Cape Hawke** lookout. In our March 2014 issue we admitted we were confused about the date of its naming by Captain Cook. All is now revealed—see page 9 of this issue for the answer.

This newsletter is published quarterly by  
Placenames Australia Inc ABN 39 652 752 594  
ISSN: 1836-7968 (print) 1836-7976 (online)

Editor: David Blair  
PO Box 5160  
SOUTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

# Dinnings Land -- a case of garbled transmission

In two recent issues of *Placenames Australia* I discussed some of the early names of Australia's coastal regions, such as *G.F. de Wits Landt*, *Arnhem Land*, and *Terre Napoléon*.<sup>1</sup>

There is one name near the Swan River which I didn't cover in great detail, even though it appears on a number of maps in various forms—from Djurbert (1780) to Sotzmann (c.1840)<sup>2</sup>—viz. *Dinnings Land*, *Dinning's Land*, *Dinning Land*, *Terres de Dinning*, or *Pais de Dinning* (see Figure 1 for one example).



Figure 1. Section of the von Reilly (1795) map, *Karte von des Inselwelt Polynesien odeim Funften Welttheile[...]* (Map NK 1545). Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

Who or what is *Dinning*? There was no Dutch, French or English explorer by that name, nor is there any evidence that it was the name of a ship or notable person.

It is my belief that the name is a result of misspelling or mistranscription. I believe it is based upon a map by Pieter Goos and Johannes van Keulen (c.1690) (Figure 2) on which appears the following description where the above mentioned maps show *Dinnings Land*: 'Duyning land boven met lage Ruigte Gelyk Verdronke Boomen en Bosschaghe' (roughly translated: 'Duny land/land with dunes above low scrub like drowned trees [mangroves?] and wooded areas').

The crucial word in the description is *duyning*. It was probably intended to be *duynig/duynigh* ('duny; land with dunes'), because *duyning/duining* is an obsolete word meaning 'pertaining to cloudiness; nonsense; drunkenness'—none of these make much sense as toponyms or topographic descriptors.

The description on the Goos/van Keulen map is a typical topographic descriptor seen on 17th and 18th century Dutch maps, which often show other descriptors such

as 'waterplaets' (watering place) or 'Soute rivier/Zout rivier' (Salt(y) river). Willem Janszoon's 1606 map of Cape York shows several such: 'Laegh landt' (Low(-lying) land), 'Marasich Landt' (Marshy Land), 'Modder Landt' (Mud(dy) Land), 'Rivier met het Bosch' (River with Forest/Bush). The Gerard van Keulen and Johannes van Keulen maps (1697-1726 and 1753 respectively) depicting Willem de Vlamingh's charting of a section of the Western Australian coastline also show various descriptors: near the Swan River 'Vol boomen en bossaghien' (Full of trees and wooded areas); and further north 'Heel Doragtig Landt' (Very Barren Land), 'Roode en zeer kenbare hoek' (Red and very recognisable point), 'Hooge roode schorre Zandhoek' (High red rough, steep Sand(y) point),<sup>3</sup> and 'Steyle Hoek' (Steep Point).

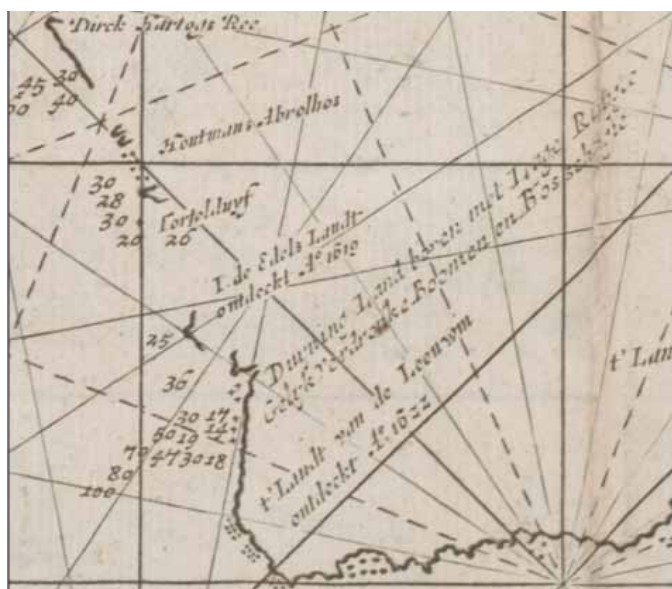


Figure 2. Section of the Goos/van Keulen (c.1690) map, *Oost Indien* (Map RM 2215). Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

Descriptions of the duny country along the west coast of the Southland are quite common and are found either on maps or in mariners' journals. Willem de Vlamingh provides one for his journal entry of 15 January 1697, noting that the low and duny country reminded him of Vlieland (one of the West Frisian Islands, lying in the Wadden Sea) (Schilder 1985:128). In addition, the entry for the same day by Gerrit Koelaart's journal (captain of the accompanying ship *Nijptang*) notes that the land seen along the coast was 'barren land and dunes not fit for animals, let alone humans, to inhabit' (Schilder 1985:157). Schilder (1985:54) also notes that Pelsaert

*continued next page*



(the captain of the ill-fated VOC ship *Batavia*) describes the coast south of the Houtman Abrolhos as ‘bare bad land with occasional sand dunes’.<sup>4</sup>

The tendency of Dutch explorers and cartographers to include topographic descriptors on their maps of the Southland is most likely due to their overall lack of interest in it, because the VOC saw no potential for profit in this land. Unlike the British and the French in the latter years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch had no territorial designs or scientific interest in exploring the Southland other than for navigational purposes to aid their ships in sailing to Batavia. On as many as 21 known occasions VOC ships ‘bumped into’ the Southland’s western coast, and on at least five did so with disastrous results. Accurate charting and description of the Southland’s west coast was seen to be vital; the abundance of topographic descriptors appearing on the navigators’ charts is, therefore, not surprising (Tent & Slatyer 2009).

Linguistically, the distinction between a topographic descriptor and a descriptive toponym can be difficult to determine. ‘Steyle Hoek’ (Steep Point) is an example. It may have been intended merely as a topographic descriptor, but it has been interpreted as a descriptive toponym because today the headland bears the calqued (literally translated) name *Steep Point*. The initial two words of the descriptor ‘Duyning land boven lage Ruigte Gelyk Verdronke Boomen en Boschaghe’ on the Goos/van Keulen map (c.1690) may similarly have been interpreted as a descriptive toponym.

The first appearance of the toponym using *Dinning* as the specific is *Terres de Dinning*, on Didier Robert de Vaugondy’s map (1756) (Figure 3). It next appears as *Dinnings Land* on Daniel Djurberg’s *Karta over Polynesien eller femte delen af jordklotet* (1780).

At least three maps seem to have taken more accurate note of the Goos/van Keulen descriptor, portraying the coast near the Swan River as ‘Ein niedriges Land dessen Baume uberschwemt zu seyn scheinen’ (A low-lying land whose trees seem to be drowned) (Plant 1793; Schneider 1808), and ‘Parched Land with stragling [sic] trees’ (Begbie 1779). Two other maps—Sayer (1787) and Laurie & Whittle (1803)—also include coastal descriptors: while still acknowledging *Dinning’s Land*, they add ‘a Low Land whose Trees appear to be drowned’ directly below the toponym.

It is my contention that de Vaugondy (and perhaps Djurberg) interpreted Goos/van Keulen’s ‘Duyning land [...]’ as a toponym and not as a topographic descriptor; the change in spelling or the mistranscription is not uncommon from one language to another. If the descriptor had been accurately translated into French, de Vaugondy would have transcribed *Terres des Dune(s)* or *Pays/Pais des dune(s)*, *dune* being the French for ‘dune’.

To complicate the issue, not only were there assorted spellings of *Dinnings Land* to be found on distinct maps, but it was also placed differently along various stretches of coast (some, for example, just north of the Swan River, and others just to the south).

I believe the descriptor on the Goos/van Keulen map (in Figure 2, above) is derived from the Gerritsz. map of 1627 where the following words appear: ‘Duynich landt boven met boomen ende boscage’ (Figure 4). Towards the south on this map is written ‘Laegh ghelijck verdroncken landt’ (Low even/level drowned land). The Goos/van Keulen map appears to have blended these two descriptions and altered the spelling of ‘duynich’ to ‘duyning’. It is the latter transcription that appears to have been the source of the *Dinning* appellation.

Such mistakes are not uncommon in cartography and toponymy, and they constitute a process through which new toponymic forms appear. It involves the garbled transmission, misspelling, mistranscription, mistaken meaning, or the mistaken interpretation of the original

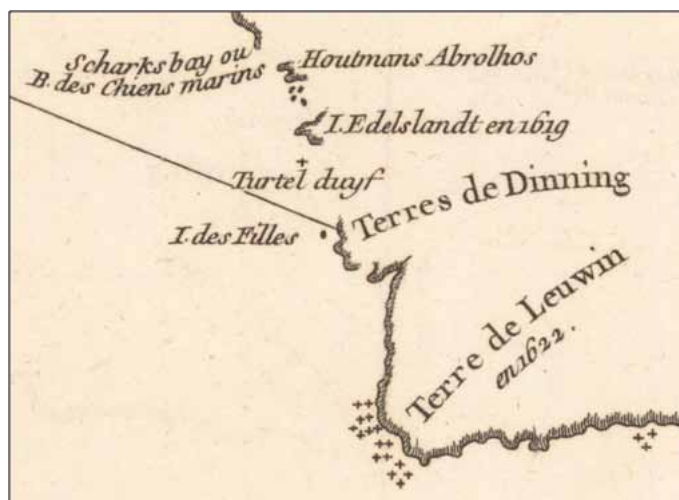


Figure 3. Section of the de Vaugondy map, *Carte Réduite de l'Australasie, pour servir à la lecture de l'Histoire des Terres Australes [...]* (Map NK 6956). Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

## ...a case of garbled transmission



Figure 4. Section of the Hessel Gerritsz. (1627) map, *Caert van't Landt van d'Eendracht* [...] (Map RM 749). Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

toponym, resulting in a distortion of its form. An example can be found on two versions of a 1753 map of Australia by the French cartographer, Jacques-Nicolas Bellin. On the French edition, there appears *Terre de Wit* (near today's Port Hedland, WA, and named after the Dutch explorer Gerrit Frederikszoon de Wit), and underneath that *Terre Blanche*. On the German edition of the map, he shows *Wit Land* (not *de Wits Land*, *De Witts Land*, or *G.F. de Wits Landt* as is usually depicted on maps), below which is written *Weisse Land*. Now *wit* in Dutch means 'white', but by translating it into French as *Terre Blanche* and German *Weisse Land* 'White Land' he has changed the meaning of *Wit* from a personal name to a descriptive adjective. It seems the translation from *Terre de Wit* (personal name) to *Terre Blanche* (descriptive adjectival name) led to the German edition of the map equating the appellation *Wit Land* (descriptive adjectival name) with its German translation equivalent *Weisse Land*.

This example and the case of *Dinnings Land* shows how one garbled translation or mistranscription can lead to a series of misnamings.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Placenames Australia*, March 2017, pp. 5-7; June 2017, pp. 7-9.
- <sup>2</sup> For full bibliographic details of these maps see Tent (2016)
- <sup>3</sup> 'Schorre' (adj.) can also refer to land/beach/sandbank with a layer of shells on top.
- <sup>4</sup> VOC 'Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie' (United East-India Company).

### References

- de Heeres, J.E. (1899) *The part borne by the Dutch in the discovery of Australia 1606-1765*. London: Luzac & Co.
- Schilder, G. (ed.) (1985) *Voyage to the Great South Land, Willem de Vlamingh, 1696-1697*. (Transl. C. de Heer.) Sydney: Royal Australian Historical Society.
- Tent, J. (2006) 'Geographic and linguistic reflections on Moent and Dubbelde Ree, two of Australia's first placenames'. *Geographical Research* 44(4): 389-402.
- Tent, J. (2016) 'Dinnings Land: A case of mistranscription?'. *The Globe*, 80: 26-32.
- Tent, J. & Blair, D. (2009, 2014) *Motivations for naming: A toponymic typology*. ANPS Technical Paper, No. 2. Revised Edition. <<http://www.anps.org.au/documents/ANPSTechPaper2.pdf>>
- Tent, J. & Slatyer, H. (2009) 'Naming places on the 'Southland': European place-naming practices from 1606 to 1803'. *Australian Historical Studies*, 40(1): 5-31.

Jan Tent

[This article is an abridged version of Tent (2016)]



**Jan Tent** is the Director of ANPS. He's an Honorary Fellow in Linguistics at Macquarie University (Sydney), and an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the College of Arts & Social Sciences at ANU (Canberra). One of his current projects is researching the placenames of Kosciuszko National Park. He now lives—conveniently—in Khancoban, a town situated on the edge of the Park.

# Toponymy 101 G...

*I am sometimes asked questions about how placenames are bestowed, who determines what names are conferred, how they are spelt, and so on... says **Jan Tent***

Why, for example, don't placenames with a possessive specific element (like *Paddy's River* and *Brown's Waterhole*) have the possessive apostrophe? Or why do we have to wait until someone has died before we can use their name in a placename?

Australia and New Zealand have tightly controlled placenaming protocols. Why? Well, if we didn't we'd have chaotic placenaming, with non-standardised spellings and signage, duplication of placenames, multiple names for the same feature, no records of placenames, and no precise data on the location of named features. But before I attempt to answer some of the specific questions people have asked me, a bit of background is required.

I've previously noted that living languages are always changing and that the only ones that don't are dead languages. Many countries have institutions (language academies) whose aim is to regulate the standard language; they often publish prescriptive dictionaries, which prescribe the meanings of words and their pronunciations. Perhaps the most famous of all of these academies is France's *Académie Française*, which is devoted to eliminating the so-called 'impurities' of language. It is the official authority on French usage, vocabulary and grammar. In particular, it has tried to prevent the anglicisation of the French language by recommending avoidance of words such as *computer*, *software* and *e-mail* in favour of French-coined neologisms.

Needless to say, one cannot legislate for language usage, and the Académie is losing the battle. However, there is one area in modern life where language-use legislation is effective and necessary—the official bestowal and registering of placenames. This is carried out by placenaming authorities.

## Placenaming authorities

In a recent issue<sup>1</sup> we noted that each Australian State and Territory has a placenaming authority, as well as the Australian Antarctic Territory (under the Australian Antarctic Division), and the Great Barrier Reef (under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority). The Department of Defence also has a role to play under the Australian Hydrographic Office and the Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation. Each of these authorities is governed by the legislation of its state/territory or

agency—hence, they have their own rules and regulations.

The Permanent Committee on Place Names (PCPN) is a permanent committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping (ICSM). Its members consist of all the naming authorities in Australia and New Zealand. Among other things, its role is to coordinate, promote and communicate the consistent use of geographic placenames throughout Australia and New Zealand. PCPN, as we noted, has published a set of principles to be followed by the various Australian authorities. In answering some of those oft-posed questions on placenaming, I shall refer to the PCPN *Principles for the Consistent Use of Place Names*.

## Spelling of placenames

The PCPN advises that placenames need to 'be easy to pronounce, spell and write; simple, concise and preferably of 50 or fewer characters; recognisable words or combinations of words; and in all respects in accordance with community standards.' (§4.7). This makes common sense.

## Spelling—possessive apostrophe

The PCPN argues that the elimination of the possessive apostrophe facilitates 'the consistent use of a single form in each case and [assists] in the rapid retrieval of place names from emergency service databases, in the light of variable community usage and uncertainty as to whether the name concerned is singular or plural.' (§4.14). This policy dates back to 1966, when it was introduced by the NSW Geographical Names Board.

The Style Guide commonly used by government agencies (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 86) concurs with this policy, declaring that placenames involving so-called possessives are all to be written without apostrophes. Australia Post has also adopted this policy in its postcode book. The USA has a similar practice, whereas in Britain a name can appear with or without an apostrophe in different parts of the country. Even though, as numerous placename signs in Australia show, the official policy is not always adhered to and some inconsistency exists, there are good reasons to maintain it. Originally, apostrophes lost favour in placename spellings because cartographers declared that they were often 'lost' on maps, especially on topographic

# ...The regulation of placenaming

maps. More recently, grammatical issues have been pressed. Can we truly say that the corner known as *Pearces Corner* really belongs to Pearce? *Pearces* is just the descriptor of the following noun; it is not the possessor of that noun. And does *Smiths Creek* commemorate one person with the surname *Smith* or a family of *Smiths*? Using apostrophes would require us to maintain the distinction between *Smith's Creek* and *Smiths' Creek*.

## Spelling—diacritical marks

English words rarely have diacritical marks.<sup>2</sup> They are omitted in placenames, even when the placename is derived from a language where diacritical marks are used, for similar reasons as for the omission of apostrophes.

## Spelling—hyphens

Hyphens are generally not used in Australian placenames, except when the placename contains a hyphenated surname (e.g. *Baden-Powell Waterhole*). Hyphens may also be used in placenames of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, where that language has a recognised writing system which uses hyphens. Like apostrophes and diacritical marks, hyphens create difficulties for cartographers and hamper rapid retrieval of names from emergency service databases.

## Structure of the name—the use of 'The'

Placenames that begin with *The...* (e.g. *The Pinnacle* and *The Basin*) are potentially confusing because it is not clear whether the *The* is truly part of the placename or merely a normal element in the grammar of the sentence. The PCPN recommends that a leading *The* should therefore not be used, unless there are strong historical reasons for doing so.

## Need to know?

Do you want to keep track of naming proposals and decisions in your State or Territory? The various placename authorities always advertise such proposals and invite submissions from members of the public. Below are the links to the relevant webpages for **Victoria** and for **New South Wales**. The NSW Geographical Names Board also has a useful page that contains a number of important Fact Sheets.

### Victoria

<https://www.propertyandlandtitles.vic.gov.au/naming-places-features-and-roads/naming-proposals>

### NSW

[http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/place\\_naming/current\\_proposals](http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/place_naming/current_proposals)

[http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/publications/fact\\_sheets](http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/publications/fact_sheets)

## Personal & commemorative names

Many new places are named after eminent people, but only posthumously. Why? One obvious reason is it eliminates one area of corruption where an influential person might want a place named after him/herself and thus might bring pressure to bear to achieve that end. The PCPN notes: 'Names of living persons are by their nature subject to partisan perception and change in community judgment and acceptance. For this reason they are not efficient or effective choices for official placenames. Alternatives are to use commemorative plaques or naming a particular community facility such as a building or oval after the person to be commemorated.' (§4.6)

In future instalments of *Toponymy 101*, we'll look at how placenames act as identity markers. We'll also begin an introduction to the nature of Australia's Indigenous toponymy.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See *Placenames Australia*, December 2016.

<sup>2</sup> A sign written above or below a letter (e.g. ā, ó, î, ö, ñ, ç) to indicate a difference in pronunciation from the same letter when unmarked or differently marked.

## References

- Permanent Committee on Place Names (2016). *Principles for the consistent use of place names* (October 2016). <[www.icsm.gov.au/cgna/consistent\\_place\\_names\\_principles.pdf](http://www.icsm.gov.au/cgna/consistent_place_names_principles.pdf)>
- Snooks & Co. (2002). *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (6th ed.). Milton, Qld: John Wiley & Sons.

Jan Tent



# Vale - Vern O'Brien OBE (1925-2017)

*We are sad to report the recent death of Vern O'Brien, often described as 'the grand old man of Australian toponymy'. Our thanks to our colleague **Stuart Duncan** and to **Trevor Menzies**, formerly Surveyor-General of the Northern Territory, for providing us with the following memories of Vern.*

After wartime service with the RAAF, in 1946 Vern started work as a clerk in the Department of the Interior, Darwin. This was not enough to satisfy his adventurous streak, so he was very happy to be appointed Cadet Surveyor within the Lands & Survey Branch two years later. In 1951 he was transferred to the Alice Springs office, which was to be his base for the next twelve years. Vern later told how, during that time, he learnt about nomenclature from his then boss, the Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, who was later to become Governor-General.

During this period he undertook exploratory surveys to assess the country from Tennant Creek west across the Tanami desert to Hooker Creek. It was on one of these surveys that the party came across the wreckage of an aeroplane about 140 kilometres south west of Wave Hill. It turned out that it was the remains of a plane named the *Kookaburra* that had made a forced landing there 32 years earlier. Both crew members had survived the landing, fixed the engine but were unable to take off in the sandy soil. An aerial search found the missing plane and a rescue party was despatched overland. However on reaching the site it was found that both members of the crew had died of thirst. The bodies were recovered but the plane was left on the site. The discovery of the plane after three decades made national news, and Vern was bombarded with requests for more information about the wreckage site, until well-known businessman and aviation enthusiast Dick Smith located it again in 1978. The *Kookaburra* is now on display at the Alice Springs Aviation Museum.

Vern returned to Darwin as Supervising Surveyor in 1963, and in short order was promoted to Surveyor-General and then Director of Lands. When Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in 1974 the devastation and the consequent restoration of properties increased the workload of the Lands Branch significantly, but for Vern the effect was also personal: he had amassed an impressive collection of historical books on the Territory which were damaged by the cyclone and had to be taken south to the National Library to be restored.

Following the granting of self-government to the Territory in 1978, Vern was appointed as the inaugural Secretary of the Department of Mines and Energy. When he retired from that position in 1980 he was awarded the OBE in recognition of his outstanding contribution to surveying and land administration.



*Vern O'Brien (1971)*

Vern had a passion for the history and heritage of the Territory which found its outlet in researching placenames. Soon after stepping down as Secretary of the Department, he was appointed to the Northern Territory Place Names Committee. For the next 35 years or so he served the Committee as chairman, member and researcher. Although his role on the Committee was, in theory, a part-time one, his contribution far exceeded that of a full-time position. He was instrumental in documenting the origin of named geographical features across the Northern Territory, and was responsible for the establishment of the Territory's first Gazetteer. Even after his retirement from that Committee, the Department provided him with office space which he continued to use for his toponymic research until his death.

He was one of the original members of the Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia (CGNA, now the Permanent Committee on Place Names); he was a Life Member of the Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory, and a Life Member of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory. In all of these roles he gave of his knowledge and expertise unstintingly, always responding to the many calls on his time in his characteristic unassuming and courteous manner.

Vernon Thomas O'Brien OBE will be fondly remembered and sadly missed.



# Cape Hawke revisited

In our issue of March 2014, we noted something interesting in the wording of a commemorative plaque. The location was **Cape Hawke** on the NSW coast, and the plaque recorded the naming of the headland by Lieutenant James Cook on ‘Saturday, May 12, 1770’.

As we remarked at the time, this wording is unexpected—Cook’s journal clearly says that the *Endeavour* passed the headland at 8 a.m. on Friday 11 May:

Friday 11<sup>th</sup>... At 8 o’clock we were abreast of a high point of land which made in two hillocks - this point I call’d Cape Hawke Lat<sup>de</sup> 32°..14’ S° Long<sup>de</sup> 207°..30 West

We wondered at the apparent discrepancy; but thanks to Trevor Lipscombe we wonder no more. Trevor (who



wrote about Cook’s naming of Jervis Bay and other features, for our June 2017 issue) has pointed out that, when Cook sailed west over the Pacific, the International Date Line had not been ‘invented’. It was not until the *Endeavour* reached Batavia later in the year that he realised the ship’s log date was a day behind the calendar date.

So the plaque’s wording is correct—whoever was responsible for it was well aware of the Cook’s log dates being out of step with the real calendar. As was Trevor, of course: he’d noted the fact long ago, in his book *On Austral Shores*. And I’m glad to say he’s promised to write an article for us, expanding on this very matter.

David Blair

## We thought you’d never ask...

... about the River Lett



There’s a bridge on the Great Western Highway, as you head from the the Blue Mountains towards the NSW towns of Lithgow and Bathurst, that crosses a small stream signposted as the **River Lett**. There are several peculiar aspects to this sign. The feature is the only stream in NSW with the generic officially placed first (*River X*, as opposed to *X River*); the stream is so small that it’s odd that anyone would call it a ‘river’; and no-one has been able to say who or what was the *Lett* honoured by the toponym.

The stream was first noted by the surveyor George Evans on 24 November 1813. His field notes reveal the following entry:

...at 1 o’clock I stopped on the bank of a Riverlett, which is a rapid stream from the N.E., its source springing from very high Mountainous;...

Evans’s spelling and grammar were unconventional, even for the early 19th century, and later readers of his journal clearly had some difficulty in interpreting his

remarks. Evans’s journals were edited for publication in the *Commonwealth Historical Records* in 1916; the editor, Frederick Watson, inserted the following ‘commentary note’ at the relevant entry:

‘Here a week’s provisions were stowed in some hollow cliffs. Three hours were occupied in descending the mountain, and camp was pitched on the banks of the river Lett.’

Watson, it appears, was responsible for a misinterpretation which transformed Evans’s ‘rivulet’ into a river named *Lett*. The mistake became so pervasive that at one stage the road sign was even changed to become ‘Lett River’!



## Reference

Evans, George William. [1916] *Two journals of early exploration in New South Wales*. In *Historical Records of Australia. Series 1. Volume VIII, July, 1813 - December, 1815*. Sydney: The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament.

# Reports from the trenches

## Brunswick Community History Group

We've recently speculated on the origin of **Upfield**, the name of the terminal station on Melbourne's Upfield Line. (See our March 2017 issue.) It was originally brought to our attention by the Brunswick Community History Group, who reported extensively on the history of the line in *Moreland History News*. Our thanks to the Group's president—and our faithful correspondent—Francesca Folk-Scolaro, for sharing the following information with us.



### The stations on the Upfield Line

The names of the stations on the Upfield line are a reflection of the history of Melbourne's Broadmeadows-Brunswick-Coburg area.

**Royal Park** Chiefly in Parkville, a suburb originally on Crown Land reserved for public purposes about 1854 during Queen Victoria's reign.

**Jewell** James (Jimmy) Robert Jewell was an MP, holding the State seat of Brunswick from 1910 until his death in 1949. The station, originally named *South Brunswick*, was renamed in his honour in 1954.

**Brunswick** The station is located in the eponymous suburb, which took its name from the property of the German land speculator W.F.A. Rucker. The land developer had named his property after Captain George Brunswick Smyth, Officer-in-Charge of the Port Phillip military police in 1839.

**Anstey** Frank Anstey was an MP, holding the State seats of East Bourke Boroughs and Brunswick from 1902 to 1910. He then held the Federal seat of Bourke until he retired in 1934. The station, originally named *North Brunswick*, was renamed in his honour in 1942.

**Moreland** The station is located in the neighbourhood of Moreland; the locality took its name from the property of Dr Farquhar McCrea who had named it in 1838 after the Jamaican estate owned by his grandfather, Alexander McCrea.

**Coburg** The station is in a locality which originally bore the name *Pentridge*, changed in 1869 to *Coburg*, to honour the Duke of Saxe-Coburg (also titled as Duke of Edinburgh).

**Batman** The station is located within the neighbourhood of Batman; John Batman was the founder of the Port Phillip Settlement in 1835.

**Merlynston** The neighbourhood is part of the City of Coburg, and was named after Merlyn, the daughter of Captain Donald Stuart Vain, former councillor and land developer.

**Fawkner** The locality was named after John Pascoe Fawkner who reached the site of Melbourne from Van Diemen's Land on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1835.

**Gowrie** The neighbourhood took its name from Gowrie Park, the estate of the Robinson family who came from Gowrie in the UK. The station was opened in 1965.

**Campbellfield (& Campbellfield North)** The Campbellfield locality was named after Charles and James D. Campbell who established a pastoral station in the area in 1840. The planned station at Campbellfield North was ultimately named as *Upfield* in 1959.

**Somerton** The locality is said to be named after Somers Town, a neighbourhood in the Camden borough of London, where the Somers family once held land. (Lord Somers was Governor of Victoria from 1926 to 1931.)

**Upfield** In the December 2016 issue of *Placenames Australia* we had wondered whether the station was renamed from the proposed *Campbellfield North* as a posthumous honor for the novelist Arthur Upfield (author of the 'Bony' novels). Upfield, however, died five years after the renaming; and our correspondent Ron Woods has sensibly suggested it's more likely that the name is an abbreviation of 'up from Campbellfield'.

# Palindromes

Way back in our September 2010 issue, Jan Tent noted that there were a small number of palindromic toponyms in Australia—ten, to be exact, according to his list.

- QLD: Aramara
  - NSW: Arrawarra, Tumut
  - SA: Glenelg
- VIC: Hattah, Lal Lal, Paraparap, Tubbut
  - NT: Parap
  - ACT: Civic

At the time, no-one answered our plea to find others. If you do know of some that we’ve missed, email the Editor—officially gazetted names preferred.

## Signs of the obvious

It’s hard to work out why some geographical features bear the names that they do. Not this one!

Jan Tent has taken this photo of **Powerline Creek**, north of Kiandra on the Snowy Mountains Highway.

Jan points out that it’s a classic example of Type 2.3 in the ANPS typology:

*Associative/Structures* - ‘indicating a manufactured structure associated with this feature’.



## Placenames Puzzle Number 63

### Avian toponyms

*In this puzzle the clues refer to birds. e.g. (WA) A shoal north-east of Broome: a small colourful arboreal parrot that feeds on nectar and soft fruits. Answer: Lorikeet Shoal*

1. (QLD) Location south of Mackay: lorikeet first named at Rose Hill, NSW

2. (QLD) The gateway to the Simpson Desert

3. (NSW) Coastal holiday location: raptor’s home

4. (WA) Bay and suburb west of Busselton: bird of prey

5. (NSW) Flat western suburb of Sydney: large flightless bird

6. (NT) Mining town of Kakadu: black-necked stork

7. (NSW) Northern Sydney suburb: black bird’s home

8. (NSW) Town near Cessnock with a ring to it

9. (NSW) Waterside location in northern Sydney: crow-like bird with yellow eyes

10. (VIC) Ballarat suburb: a carolling bird with a thieving reputation

11. (QLD) Small stream: a dangerous ratite

12. (NSW) Island in Sydney Harbour, once a shipyard: a parrot

13. (NT) Small stream: dancing crane

14. (TAS) Town on the east coast: an aquatic flightless bird

15. (SA) Isle off the west coast of Yorke Peninsula: common city bird

16. (TAS) Islet of the south-west: sea bird once collected for food and oil

17. (QLD) Reef south-east of Mackay: bird of the darkest colour

18. (WA) Island near Geraldton: coastal seabird

19. (QLD) Cove near Weipa: you wouldn’t want to kill this bird, or have it hung round your neck

20. (VIC) Small stream in the Dandenongs: nature’s most accomplished mimic

[Compiled by: Jan Tent]

5. Emu Plains

4. Eagle Bay

3. Hawks Nest

2. Birdsville

1. Rosella
10. Magpie

9. Currawong Beach

8. Bellbird

7. Crows Nest

6. Jabiru
15. Pigeon Island

14. Penguin

13. Broilga Creek

12. Cockatoo Island

11. Cassowary Creek
20. Lyrebird Creek

19. Albatross Bay

18. Seagull Island

17. Blackbird Shoal

16. Mutton Bird Island



# Become a Supporting Member!

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

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, history societies and media organisations.

Please consider carefully this invitation. If you wish to become a Member, write a cheque to Placenames Australia Inc. or arrange a bank transfer, and post this page to the Treasurer at the address below.

To ensure your continued receipt of the Newsletter, even if you are unable to support ANPS by becoming a Member, please take the time to tick the appropriate box below and return this form to us.

*Alternatively, use our website to contact us: [www.anps.org.au/contact.html](http://www.anps.org.au/contact.html)*

## Membership Details

Date: .....

Name: .....

Organisation (if applicable): .....

Address: .....

Phone: ..... Fax: ..... Email: .....

- ☐ I wish to become/remain an individual member of Placenames Australia ..... \$25
- ☐ I wish to become an organisational/corporate member of Placenames Australia ..... \$250
- ☐ I am unable to become a member at this time, but I would like to receive newsletters
  - ☐ by post OR ☐ by email
- ☐ Please remove me from the newsletter mailing list
- ☐ Please note my change of address (new address above)

## Payment Details

- ☐ Cheques made out to Placenames Australia Inc ABN 39 652 752 594
- ☐ Direct transfer to Westpac Banking Corporation  
BSB 032-089, Account 275989

## Please forward this form and payment to:

Placenames Australia  
PO Box 5160  
SOUTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074  
Email • <treasurer@anps.org.au>

## We say thank you to...

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



**Spatial Services**  
Geographical Names Board

## Contributions

Contributions for Placenames Australia are welcome. Please send all contributions to the Editor, David Blair, by email:

<editor@anps.org.au>

Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

## Closing dates for submissions are:

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