

# 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



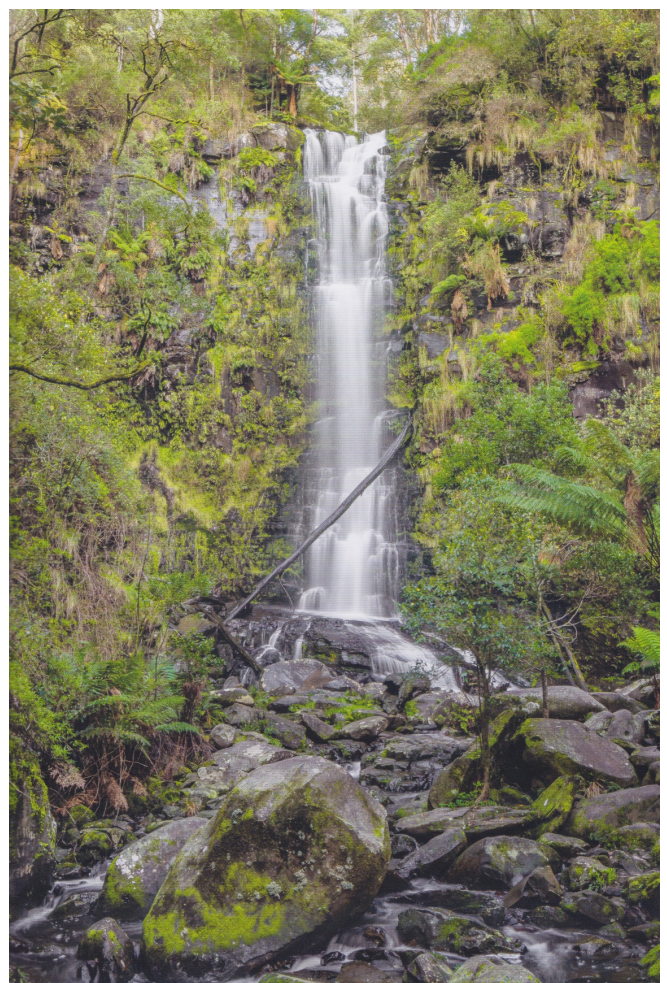
## The Erskine River and its Falls

In Victoria's Otway Ranges, there is a river... The Erskine River connects the rainforest to the coast at Bass Strait, flowing through the town of Lorne. A hike along the river reveals a feature that has been called one of the Otways 'greatest treasures'—the Erskine Falls. To most Australians, however, neither the river nor the cascade is well known: the name **Erskine** rings few bells these days, despite the fact that several natural features in Australia have taken the Erskine name. The records of colonial history reveal several dignitaries who have been honoured that way.

*Thomas, 1st Baron Erskine* (1750-1823), was an English lawyer and reformer who was appointed Lord High Chancellor in 1806-07. Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, in charge of the voyage from Port Jackson to Norfolk Island in 1788, named the small Erskine Valley on Lord Howe Island after this dignitary.<sup>1</sup>

*John Elphinstone Erskine* (1805-1887) was senior officer on *HMS Havannah* which undertook several voyages in the South Pacific in 1849-50. He was later appointed Vice Admiral and was elected to Parliament; he was prominent in the anti-slavery movement and the protection of aboriginal peoples. Erskine Range in Tasmania is said to be named after him.

His nephew, *James Elphinstone Erskine* (1838-1911), was also a naval officer. As commodore of the Australian station he declared the protectorate of New Guinea in 1884; he was later appointed Admiral and ADC to the king. Erskine Island, off Rockhampton, is probably named after him.



*Erskine Falls (photo: the author)*

But if we're looking for an Erskine who gave his name to a river and a cascade in the Otways, we have to look elsewhere. *James Augustus Erskine* (1812-1885) was at the centre of Melbourne's administration in the 1840s when the Erskine River got its name.<sup>2</sup>

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# From the Editor



In the days when I was editor on a well-known Australian dictionary, people used to say to me ‘I just *love* etymologies!’ But they meant interesting stories about word-origins, not the nitty-gritty of how words change over time. Well, we’re testing you to see which category you fall into! Jan

Tent (on **Pin Pan Pa**) gives us *phonetics*, *phonology* and *morphology*; Paul Geraghty (on **Ovalau**) hits us with some detailed linguistics too. See how you go!

Anthony Car’s lead article is about *history*—based on an entry in his new book on the **Otway Ranges** (see our description on page 13). We hope to have more extracts for you in the future.

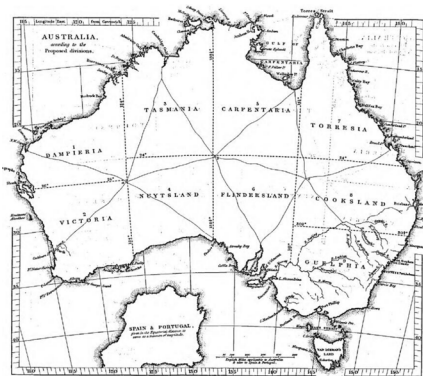
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## Placenames in the media

### Inventing and naming the states

We were reminded recently (9 August, *Sydney Morning Herald* / *The Age*) of the rather quirky suggestions of Captain James Vetch in 1838 for dividing Australia into 10 states. The Federation would be rather different if, 60 years later, his ideas had been taken up. ‘Tasmania’ would be in the north, while the island state would still be ‘Van Diemens Land’. And ‘Guelphia’? his suggestion for NSW!

We are rather taken with the idea of a special issue of *Placenames Australia* devoted to Federation and the naming of states and territories. Stay tuned—contributions welcome!



### Coon Island

Lake Macquarie City Council has just recommended that Coon Island and Coon Point should be renamed. It is thought that the features took the name of Herbert ‘Coon’ Heaney, a coal miner. A community consultation revealed that 56% wanted to retain the names, but Council decided that the racist connotations were too strong. (A familiar story—somehow we feel we’ve been there before!) The recommendation is now with the NSW Geographical Names Board; we’ll keep you informed...

## Long Tunnel Creek Bridge

Our reader Alex Allchin is intrigued by the signage for **Long Tunnel Creek Bridge**, near Junee, NSW. How does a tunnel relate to a creek? And are there many longer placenames than this? We thought these were good questions, and Jan Tent has researched the answers—his article will appear in our December issue. (Spoiler alert! — a gold mine is involved, and ‘bridge’ is not actually part of the placename.)



### Puzzle answers - (from page 14)

- |                       |                     |                        |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Cape Bowling Green | 6. Green Point      | 11. Green Mountains    | 16. Blue Gum Forest |
| 2. Green Patch        | 7. Blue Bay         | 12. Blue Cow           | 17. Greenmount Hill |
| 3. Blue Lake          | 8. Blue Mountains   | 13. Blue Rock Lake/Dam | 18. Green Valley    |
| 4. Green Point        | 9. Big Green Island | 14. Green Bay          | 19. Blue Range      |
| 5. Blue Point         | 10. Blue Ridge      | 15. Blue Haven         | 20. Green Head      |

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## ...The Erskine River and its Falls

Lieutenant Erskine was one of the military and naval personnel present during George Gipps's installation as Governor of New South Wales on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1838. There is a suggestion that, as a ship's officer, he was involved in coastal survey work. In the early 1840s he became Deputy Assistant Commissary General (D.A.C.G.) based in Melbourne, and in this role would have assisted both Governor Gipps and Superintendent La Trobe. The river at Lorne (or Loutit Bay, as it was then called) was known as *Erskine River* by 1849: correspondence to Surveyor in Charge Robert Hoddle dated 26<sup>th</sup> May of that year refers to it by that name.

James Augustus Erskine was born on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1812 to Henry David Erskine and Mary Anne Erskine (née Cooksey) at Warkworth in Northumberland, England. Before coming to Australia he was married on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1837 to Fanny Dalacombe, daughter of General Henry Ivatt Dalacombe (C.B.) and Fanny Macarthur. James and Fanny had five children, all born in Melbourne: Henry David (1841, died first day), Augustus (1843), Caroline (1845), Mary Anne Craig (1847) and Emmaline (1848). Sadly, Fanny Erskine died in Melbourne on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1851 at the age of 34.

Lieutenant Erskine returned to Britain and married Elizabeth Bogue Brodie (born 1814) on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1852, at Fetteresso, Kincardine in Scotland. They had 10 children together. In 1866 he was granted the rank of an earl's younger son and a knighthood in the Order of St Ferdinand of Spain. He died on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1885 in London aged 73. Elizabeth had predeceased him by 3 years.

Erskine Falls are the most visited and recognised falls in the Otways. They were discovered around 1876 by an exploration party of three Lorne residents, W.A. Mountjoy, F.M. Straw and H. Jebb. As the first-discovered and the most spectacular cascade on the river, they naturally became known as the Erskine Falls.

Many accounts of the trip to Erskine Falls appeared after their discovery. One which represents the experience comes from the talents of a travelling reporter expressed in beautiful detail on the pages of the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1888. The following is an extract:<sup>3</sup>

### A Favourite Victorian Seaside Resort. Lorne.

...The first day we were there a party determined to walk to The Erskine Falls, a distance of several miles. Accordingly luncheon was provided for the full number, and the male members of the excursionists were soon loaded up. A few more preparations were made; and finally all was arranged satisfactorily. A start was made, the party being enlivened by the company of a few ladies...

We pushed on to our destination, gradually working our way to the Erskine Falls. When those were reached, we found ourselves amply repaid for all the toil and trouble. Here there was a precipitous face of rock, about 120ft in height. From the summit of this the waters of the Erskine Creek poured down, dashing over the various projections on its way to the pools beneath, where the watercourse was heaped with huge trunks of trees and other debris. The dark hue of the eucalypti was relieved by the bright green of the gigantic tree ferns, while the smooth rocks formed welcome resting places for our party...

An hour or so was spent in exploring the locality, and then our small force was marshalled together for the homeward journey. Lorne was regained in ample time.

Not long after this, in November 1891, Rudyard Kipling visited the area. His poem 'Flowers' references both Lorne and the Erskine:

Buy my English posies!  
You that will not turn --  
Buy my hot-wood clematis,  
Buy a frond o' fern  
Gathered where the Erskine leaps  
Down the road to Lorne --  
Buy my Christmas creeper  
And I'll say where you were born!  
West away from Melbourne dust holidays begin  
They that mock at Paradise woo at Cora Lynn  
Through the great South Otway gums sings the great  
South Main  
Take the flower and turn the hour, and kiss your love  
again!

The falls continued to be a subject of enthusiastic poetic description. In 1924 a full-page spread in the Melbourne Herald encouraged tourists to visit Lorne:<sup>4</sup>

*continued next page*

...from previous page

## Lorne's Great Attractions for Holiday Makers

### SCENIC BEAUTIES

#### Coastline, Bush and Waterfalls

#### A LAND OF PERENNIAL ROSES

...There are 27 waterfalls of surpassing beauty within easy walking distance and several miles of tree fern gullies. Lorne is pre-eminently the land of waterfalls, and their beauty is remarkably and consistently great. A popular vote would probably give first place to Erskine Falls. About 130 feet in height, at an elevation of nearly 1,000 feet above the sea level, these falls are constant all the year round, as indeed are most of the Lorne falls, though the volume of water varies with the seasons. A finer setting than the scenery around Erskine Falls is almost inconceivable, every variety of tree, shrub and fern, lending aid to make the picture complete.

It was not until the mid-1930s that discussion took place for a road to the Erskine Falls, completed around 1937. This makes it quite easy nowadays for many tourists to visit the falls. However, the falls can still be visited by foot from Lorne. My son Julian has taken this path, fishing along the way for trout. Trout were introduced into some of the streams of the Otways around 1878, and more in later decades. Prior to the introduced trout a native fish inhabited the rocky pools of the Erskine; it was referred to as mountain trout but is known today as

spotted galaxias or trout galaxias (*Galaxias truttaceus*). It is a shame that these fish have been displaced from many of the Otway streams.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Erskine River flows into Loutit Bay, which explains why (as noted above) *Loutit Bay* was the previous name of Lorne. The name was changed in 1869 in honour of the Marquis of Lorne, son-in-law to Queen Victoria. Loutit Bay has had several spellings over the years and still has today (Loutit, Louttit, or Loutitt). The master mariner referred to by the name was Captain James Loutit. He was born in Walkerburn, Peeblesshire, Scotland in 1816 and married Ann Irvine Robertson on 25th May 1854 at Stromness, Orkney, Scotland. They had one son, James Irving Loutit, born 9th May 1860. Captain Loutit died in Sydney on 12th February 1870, aged 53. The last vessel under his command was the 345-ton barque *Euromedha*.

**Anthony Car**

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Blair, D. (2015). *Lord Howe Island*. ANPS Placenames Report, No. 3, p. 25.
- <sup>2</sup> *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 August 1849, p. 1. Accessed at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93138827>
- <sup>3</sup> *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 23 June 1888, p. 17. Accessed at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71099160>
- <sup>4</sup> *Herald*, 18 October 1924, p. 14. Accessed at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/244845326>



*The Erskine River at Lorne. (Photo: musskloproz, Wikimedia Commons)*



# How *Pin Pan Pa* became *Pimpampa*

Many of Australia's toponyms had various spellings before they obtained a standardised spelling and were gazetted. This is especially true of Indigenous-derived placenames, because before European occupation Indigenous languages were not codified (i.e. they did not have orthographic systems, and were not written). Two examples of such placenames are: **Coogee** (NSW—*Cudjee, Kudjee, Coojee, Koojah*; and WA—*Kou-gee, Koojee, Coojee, Kudjee*), and **Lake Cargelligo** (NSW—*Cudjallagong, Gagellaga*).

The New South Wales Government Gazette record of 'Crown Lands, within the Settled Districts' (1852) lists properties to be reserved from lease. One of those listed is the intriguingly named *Pin Pan Pa* (Figure 1).

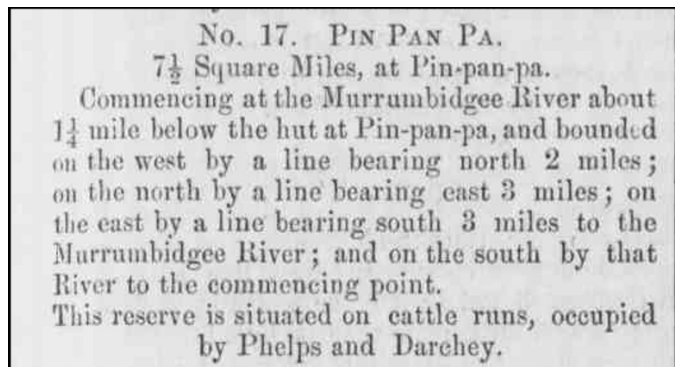


Figure 1. *New South Wales Government Gazette, Monday 25 October 1852, No. 104 (SUPPLEMENT) Crown Lands Office, CROWN LANDS, WITHIN THE SETTLED DISTRICTS. Reserves from Lease* <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article230053042>

However, four years before that date the *New South Wales Government Gazette* listed<sup>1</sup> two claims where the property has two different spellings *Pimpampa* and *Pimpayinpa* (Figure 2). The Pin Pan Pa reserve was taken from Phelps and Chadwick's 'Pimpampa' and Thomas Darchy's 'Budgee Budgee' runs, and was to be used as the site for a township.

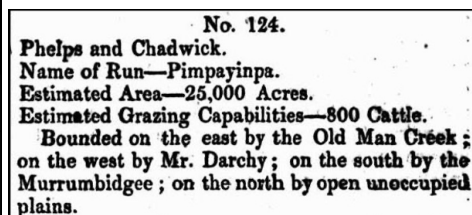
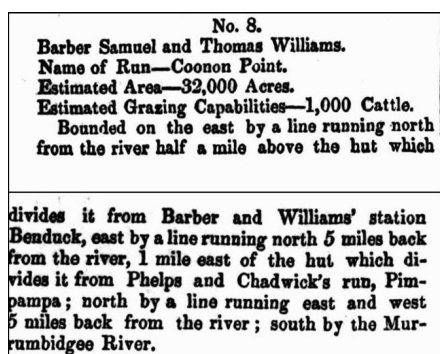


Figure 2. *NSW Government Gazette (extract)*

In 1861 a newspaper article<sup>2</sup> reported the declaration of a new township to be established on Pin Pan Pa Reserve. The name *Pimpaympa* was submitted, but it was not approved by the Executive Council; instead they chose the name of *Maude*, for reasons unknown. The township was to be situated on the north bank of the Murrumbidgee River, between Hay and Balranald. Maude marks the traditional boundary between the Mathi-Mathi (or Muthi Muthi/Madhi-Madhi) and Nari Nari peoples. Today *Pimpampa* is listed in the National Gazetteer as a parish and a homestead. And like many other toponyms I have come across, it has also been a name for a racehorse—this one ran in the Melbourne Cup of 1880.

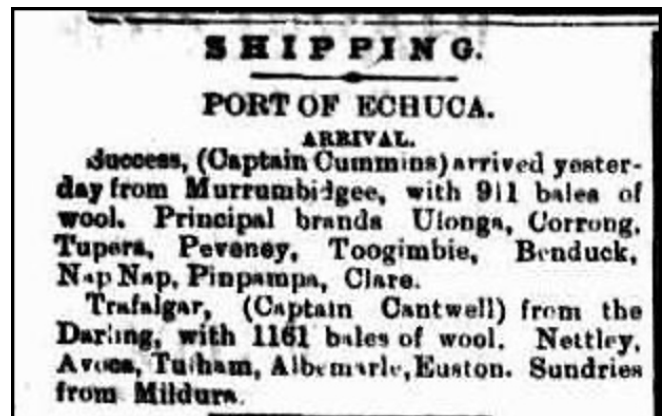


Figure 3. *NSW Government Gazette (extract)*

One other spelling of the toponym can be found as late as 1881 and 1896. The first<sup>3</sup> is in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* announcing the sale of Coonoon Point Run near the Pimpampa Run. The second,<sup>4</sup> in *The Riverine Herald*, reports on the arrival of wool bales at the Port of Echuca among which were bales from Pimpampa (Figure 3, above). These examples show that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was still no real agreement as to how to spell the toponym.

It is interesting that *Pimpampa* should pre-date *Pin Pan Pa*, at least in terms of it appearing in print, but

this does not prove the former actually pre-dates the latter. It is also rather surprising that the spelling of the reserve should differ from that of the run, because it is very common for such features as locations,

*continued next page*

townships and parishes to be named after rural properties without a spelling change, e.g. *Khancoban* (township) < 'Khancoban' station; *Lakemba* (suburb) < 'Lakeba', pronounced /la'ke<sup>m</sup>ba/ (Benjamin Taylor's 22 hectare property in 1880s named after the Fiji island of Lakeba). So why was the reserve not called *Pimpampa*? The reason may be found in what the local Indigenous name for the place might have been.

All evidence suggests the name derives from the Paakantyi language and its various dialects (including Berri-ait or Parintji, a southern variety of Paakantyi) spoken adjacent to Mathi-Mathi country. Hercus (1989, p. 51) notes *pinpah* as the Berri-ait word for 'pine tree'; *pinpa* is the corresponding form in the other Paakantyi dialects, as far west as Arabana country (in SA, on the western side of Lake Eyre to Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy).

Blake et al. (2011) catalogue placenames along the Murrumbidgee River from the junction of Lachlan to the junction of the Murray. The names are cited from the very detailed map produced in the survey of the Murrumbidgee River by the surveyor Francis MacCabe in 1849.<sup>5</sup> On his map he recorded up to 6-8 Indigenous placenames every mile or so along the river. Blake et al. presume that the names refer to places within the Mathi-Mathi area. See Table 1 (below).

Placename	Location	Run	Source <sup>6</sup>	Comments
Pinnpa	Due west of Gundi, sth side of river.		McC	This looks exactly like <b>pinpa</b> , the word for 'Murray pine' in all Paakantyi dialects, and over a vast area beyond, but in Wemba-Wemba the 'Murray Pine' is <b>marrung</b> and in Mathi-Mathi <b>marrinhi</b> . It could well be a borrowed placename

**Table 1.** Reproduced section of Table 28, Blake et al (2011, p.50)

The Murray pine (or white cypress pine, *Callitris glaucophylla*, *Callitris gracillus* ssp *Murrayensis*) is found on sand hills along the Murray River (Local Land Services Western Region, 2016, p. 11). It provided valuable resin for waterproof adhesive and its wood was

used for making woomeras, canoe poles and spear shafts. Its leaves contain pinene (an antiseptic oil) and were smoked over fire or soaked to make a wash, or mixed with fat to make ointment for colds.

Given Blake et al. cite the toponym *Pinnpa*, it is not so surprising that we find *Lake Pinpa* (near the SA-NSW border to the east of Lake Frome), well within the region between Paakantyi and Arabana country as delineated by Hercus (1989). Intriguingly, there is also a *Pine Dam* closer to the SA-NSW border, as well as a *Pine Creek* further south along that border, both suggesting the abundance of cypress pines in the region. Manning (2012) notes that *Pinpa* is 'Aboriginal for "native pine" – many pines grow on the lake's western side.' He also lists *Pimba* 'A railway station on the Trans-Australia line, 176 km North-West of Port Augusta. The Pimba School opened in 1948 and closed in 1951. Aboriginal for "pine trees".'<sup>7</sup> Other locations with Indigenous cognate names for 'pine tree(s)' in Manning's compendium are:

**Pimbaacla** - A railway station 93 km east of Ceduna. Aboriginal for 'many pine trees'. The Pimbaacla School opened in 1936 and closed in 1947.

**Pimbanyerta** - Shown on a map prepared by J.B. Austin in 1863; corrupted to 'Benbonyathe'.

**[Benbonyathe Hill]** - In the Gammon Ranges (North Flinders), derived from the Aboriginal words *pimbanyerta* and *abna* – 'native pine high ground'.]

**Bimbornina Hill** - Aboriginal for 'pine tree hill'.

**Bimbowrie** - Derived from an Aboriginal word *pimbawri* meaning 'pine tree water' and applied to Bimbowrie Hill, north of Olary.

**Pimpala** - A railway station near Reynella. Pimpala School opened in 1975. Aboriginal for 'place of native pines'.



**Figure 4.** The approach to Pimba, near Woomera SA. (Source: <http://traveloutbackaustralia.com/driving-from-adelaide-to-alice-springs.html>)



## ...became *Pimpampa*

In addition to these toponyms, the South Australian Gazetteer Property Location Browser<sup>8</sup> also records *Urupinpanya Creek* and *Urupinpanya Rockhole*, north-west of Coober Pedy and west of Marla respectively. No further information is provided. Nevertheless, both names are suggestive of being cognates with the above examples.

The abundance of pines in the south-western region of NSW was noted on several occasions in the journals<sup>9</sup> of William John Wills and Ludwig Becker during their traversing of the Balranald district in September 1860, and was noted on a ‘Sketch of route from Balranald to Scot’s station, roughly drawn by dead reckoning’, 25 September, 1860 (Becker, 1860): ‘The whole country a sandy loam, the greater part covered with Casuarina, Mallee Pine, stunted eucalypt etc; [...]’ Ryan (2014, p. 303) also notes that early maps of the region show that Murray pines were plentiful.



**Figure 5.** Murray cypress pines. (Source: [wikidata.org/wiki/Q7177505](https://wikidata.org/wiki/Q7177505))

Nevertheless, it must be noted that *Pin Pan Pa/Pimpampa* is in neighbouring Mathi-Mathi country, where the word for the Murray pine is *marrinhi/marini* (Hercus, 1986, p. 224). This is not a problem, however, because it could well be a copied placename. Indeed, the practice of copying Australian Indigenous names and applying them

to places far away from their origins has been common among settlers. Phelps and Chadwick’s *Pimpampa* may well be another example of this practice. The copying and ‘displacing’ of Indigenous names makes it difficult, and often impossible, to determine their origins and meanings.

So how can we explain the change from *Pin Pan Pa* to *Pimpampa*? Good old fundamental phonetics, phonology and morphology provide the solution. It is most likely a simple case of assimilation—that is, sound change due to the influence exercised by one sound segment *A* upon the articulation of a neighbouring sound *B*: this results in *B* becoming more like, or even identical to, *A*. Assimilation is one of the means by which fluency and rhythm are maintained in natural speech, and occurs intuitively in all languages. For example, in the phrase *ten bikes*, the natural form in spoken colloquial speech would be /tem barks/ not /ten barks/, which would sound somewhat ‘careful’. The /n/ has come under the influence of the following /b/ and has adopted /b/’s bilabiality (i.e. articulation employing both lips), thus becoming /m/. Sometimes these natural changes in articulation become reflected in the spelling. An example of this, where an /m/ becomes an /n/, can be seen in the word *ant*. In Old English its form was *æmete*, but by the 17<sup>th</sup> century had become *ant*, because over time the middle vowel had been deleted and the resulting places of articulation for the now contiguous /m/ and /t/ were too dissimilar, resulting in the /m/ becoming /n/ to mirror the place of articulation of /t/.

However, you may well ask: ‘If *pinpa/pimba* is the word for ‘pine tree’ where does the extra syllable in *Pin Pan Pa* and *Pimpampa* come from, and what does it mean?’<sup>10</sup> I have not been able to come to a definite conclusion. However, several possibilities may be hypothesised.

1. An earlier form (e.g. *Pinpayinpa*) had the extra syllable and was lost over time.
2. The final *-pa* may be a filler commonly used to avoid a final consonant. But therein lies a problem: where does the *-n*, *-yin*, or *-yn/ym* come from? Perhaps the original was *pinpan* or *pinpany/pinpayn* and in one language the nasal was dropped.
3. The middle syllable is a reduplication (i.e. a repetition) indicating the PLURAL. Support for this could lie in what Hercus (1986, pp. 26-27) writes about the expression of NUMBER in the Wembawemba language (a neighbouring

*continued next page*

language to Mathi-Mathi and Parintji). She explains there are five ways to express number, three of which seem to be of most interest to us:

- (a) A plural can be formed by repetition of the word. This method was not used frequently and appeared to be confined to inanimate objects: e.g. /maruŋ/ 'Murray pine' (*Callitris columellaris*)... /maruŋ-maruŋ/ 'a forest of Murray pine'.
- (b) There is a specialised form of the plural (based on internal reduplication). This was attested only in one word: /baingug/ 'child', plural /bembengug/.
- (c) The postpositional forms /-bula/ and /-bara/ were used for the dual and plural respectively[...] The plural marker /-bara/ is not a true postposition, it is also an independent noun of quantity, and was generally associated with the possessive affix /barug/. Thus /barug wile/ was heard as well as /wile-bara/ 'a lot of possums', but both these expressions were distinctly emphatic. /marug/ and /lambrug/, both meaning 'many', generally preceded the noun which they qualified – /lambrug wile/ 'many possums'. None of these methods of expression was common; the plural with /-bara/ was perhaps the most usual.

Hypothesis 3 seems to be the most feasible, and if accepted we can create a scenario illustrating the formation of *Pinpampa*. It would go something like this:

*pinpa* 'pine' > *pinpinpa* 'pines' [partial reduplication] > *pimpimpa* [assimilation] > *pimpampa* [vowel harmony]<sup>11</sup>

There is one caveat to this scenario: the extent to which vowel harmony occurs in the language areas of interest is currently unknown. Vowel harmony is not all that common in Australian languages; however, Yallop (1982, p. 68) notes that a few Australian languages exhibit limited application of it. Two notable examples are the Northern Territory languages Warlpiri and Jingulu. It has also been noted to some extent in other languages along the continent's northern periphery: Worrorra (WA) (Clendon, 2014); Guugu Yimidhirr (QLD) (Haviland, 1979); Anguthimri (QLD) (Crowley, 1981); and Djapu (a Yolngu dialect, NT) (Morphy, 1983). It has even been noted, by Steele (2005, p. 142), to have a limited presence in Biyal-Biyal (a language of Sydney).

One small issue remains regarding the two SA toponyms *Urupinpanya Creek* and *Urupinpanya Rockhole*. I have not been able to ascertain the meaning of the specific element. If the <pinpanya> element refers to 'pine', then <uru> looks to be a prefix. However, Australian languages are of two types—prefixing and non-prefixing, though there is considerable overlap between these terms with

the distinction between non-Pama-Nyungan (NPN) and Pama-Nyungan (PN) languages. NPN have prefixes and suffixes, whereas PN languages just have suffixes. Since these two toponyms occur in the middle of SA, they are PN languages and this would suggest that <uru> is not a prefix.

All the above is plausible, but speculative. I shall conclude with the very apt observation of Hercus (2002: 63):

There are few topics as challenging as the study of Australian [indigenous] placenames. Their formation varies from region to region, they may be analysable or not, they may refer to the actions of Ancestors, they may be descriptive, or 'indirectly' descriptive [...]. We can also never be sure we are right about a placename unless there is clear evidence stemming from people who have traditional information on the topic. In the absence of such evidence we have to admit we are only guessing.

Unfortunately, the latter is too often the case.

Jan Tent

*Acknowledgment:* Many thanks to Barry Blake for the valuable reference and comments. Also a big thank you to Michael Walsh for his suggestions on the formation of *Pimpampa*.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazette* of Wednesday, 27 September, 1848 [Issue No.109 (Supplement)] 'Claims to Leases of Crown Land Beyond the Settled Districts. Lachlan District'.
- <sup>2</sup> 'Lower Murrumbidgee'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April 1861, p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazette* of Monday 25 April 1881 [Issue No.171 (Supplement)] 'Sale at the Land Office, Hay, Wednesday, June 1, 1881. Country Lots'.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Riverine Herald* of Friday 18 September, 1896, p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> MacCabe Corner is the point at which the borders of the states of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales meet, and was named after Francis MacCabe.
- <sup>6</sup> McC = 'MacCabe'. No bibliographic details are provided for this source.
- <sup>7</sup> As early as 1908, Cockburn (1990 [1908]: 175-176) lists *Pimba* and *Pimbaacla* as railway sidings with the meaning of '(many) pine trees'.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://maps.sa.gov.au/plb/>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.burkeandwills.net.au/index.php>
- <sup>10</sup> The extra syllables following *pimba* in the SA toponyms most likely indicate NUMBER, 'hill', 'high ground', 'water' and 'place of'.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Vowel harmony' refers to long distance assimilation of vowels. In other words, vowels in successive syllables must agree in certain features, for example, a word cannot contain both front and back vowels, or both rounded and unrounded vowels.

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continued next page



# Toponymic slips of the pen

Some of our best friends here at the Survey are cartographers, surveyors and sundry editors—and far be it from us to feel superior when it comes to matters of accuracy and transcription. We've made bloopers of our own from time to time. However... We recall noting recently how a surveyor's 'rivulet' in the Blue Mountains became the *River Lett* through an editor's assiduous interpreting (September 2017 issue). And now Jan Tent has drawn our attention to another editorial slip.

The **Bellinger River** runs through the town of **Bellingen** in NSW. What accounts for this seeming inconsistency? The answer was easy to find, thanks to the Bellingen and Urunga Museums website. The article 'Origins of the name Bellingen' (Sweeney & Snyder, 2014) holds the answer.

The Government Surveyor, Clement Hodgkinson, whilst surveying the area in 1841, bestowed the local Indigenous-derived name *Bellingen* to the river. Its meaning is not really known and is said to mean 'clear

water', 'winding river', 'quoll, or even 'cheeky fellow'. It was originally spelled *Billingen* on Hodgkinson's map, but *Billengen*, *Bellengen* and *Bellingen* were also used later on.

Sweeney and Snyder claim the origin of *Bellinger* derives from the fact that '...a draughtsman who was compiling the Colony map from original documents misread Hodgkinson's final handwritten 'n' as an 'r'...' Thus the Bellingen River officially became the *Bellinger*.

The river, and now the town, are in Gumbaynggirr country, and the Indigenous name for the region is *Baligin / Baalijin* or *Baliijin*. According to Sweeney and Snyder, this is also the Gumbaynggirr name for the marsupial known as the eastern quoll.

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## ...Pin Pan Pa

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## Nestled in Ovalau?

In the previous issue of *Placenames Australia*, I left you with a bit of a cliff-hanger. We had been discussing the island of **Ovalau** in the province of Lomaiviti, the sixth largest island in Fiji and site, until 1882, of the nineteenth-century capital Levuka. I had proposed plausible etymologies for *Levuka*, *Lovoni*, in the centre of the island, and *Moturiki*, the island to the south. However, I admitted that the etymology of *Ovalau* itself is something of a problem. It clearly has two parts, and the latter segment, *lau*, equally clearly means ‘east’ or ‘seawards’, since it has that meaning in many other placenames in Fiji and the Pacific, and is apt for an island lying east or seawards of the great land-mass of Vitilevu. But the meaning of the first segment, *ova*, is elusive: it doesn’t mean, nor has it ever meant, ‘land’ or ‘island’, so I must move into the realm of speculation, confident nonetheless that I will not be the first toponymist to have done so!

My best guess is as follows. Recall that the two large islands of Lomaiviti we have already studied are named after their general shape—*Gau* meaning something like ‘log’ or ‘trunk’, befitting its solid bulky profile, contrasting with *Koro* meaning ‘mountainous’, telling of its ruggedness. So my speculation is that the name of Ovalau (or *Naova*, in some cultural contexts) was also based on its distinctive shape, which as already noted is that of a mountainous rim surrounding a caldera, at the centre of which is the valley of Lovoni.

My proposal is that the names *Ovalau* and *Naova* derive ultimately from a word for ‘nest’, which the island resembles in shape. (*Na-* is the Fijian article, hence ‘the nest’.) Now *ova* is not the Standard Fijian word for ‘nest’—which is *sova*—so I will attempt to argue that *ova* was the word for ‘nest’ three thousand years ago, when the island was named.

To do this, I start with the claim that for the Lapita people, who spoke a language we now call Proto Central Pacific, there was a verb *ō*, meaning ‘brood’, in the sense of ‘sit on eggs’. This word is still used in parts of both western and eastern Fiji, and in Polynesian languages such as East Futunan. Now, those among you who have been following this column for a long time may recall that a number of years back I pointed out that the language of the Lapita people had a regular process of forming nouns from verbs (or other nouns)

## Placenames of Fiji - 17



*Beach Street, Levuka, on Ovalau*  
(photo: Wikimedia commons)

by adding a suffix *-a*, optionally preceded by one of a small number of consonants, and that such nouns often became placenames. So, for example, *tavu* meant ‘burn’ and *tavua* meant ‘burning place’ or ‘volcano’; it was the name given to a number of places in Fiji, as well as Tafua in Samoa and Tofua in Tonga, because they were active volcanoes, or somehow volcanic in appearance. Similarly, *namu* meant ‘mosquito’, so places that abounded with mosquitoes were named Namuka in Fiji, Nomuka in Tonga and Namu’a in Samoa.

When this process was applied to the verb *ō* meaning ‘brood’, it yielded *ova* meaning ‘brooding place, nest’. This word has disappeared in eastern Fiji, but it is still used in the northwest, in places such as the Yasawa Islands, Vuda and Ba. In some Polynesian languages, a similar bisyllabic suffix was applied, yielding the word *ōfaga* ‘nest’ in languages such as East Futunan, Samoan and Niuean.

It is indeed curious that the word for ‘nest’ in parts of eastern Fiji is *sova*, very similar to *ova*, but there is no regular historical process that can be invoked to account for such a change. It is also the name of a large kind of wicker basket, and may well have become an element in placenames, meaning ‘a bay’; it is conceivably the root of the placename *Nasova*, a small bay just south of Levuka on Ovalau which was the site of the signing of the Deed of Cession in 1874, by which Fiji became a Crown Colony, and was the residence of the earliest Governors. So the historical site Nasova may have ultimately the same etymology as the island on which it is situated, **Naova** ‘the nest’ or **Ovalau** ‘eastern/seaward nest’.

**Paul Geraghty**



# Bergen-op-Zoom

I thought I was quite familiar with most Dutch and Dutch-linked toponyms in Australia, but there are always ones hiding in the undergrowth waiting to be discovered. One such is **Bergen-Op-Zoom** (pronounced locally as /'bɜːgən ɒp ˌzuːm/) in the LGA of Walcha on the south-eastern edge of the Northern Tablelands, NSW. The traditional owners of the land are the Dhanggati people. It was the conversation David Blair had with the author of the *Historical Guide to New South Wales*, Phillip Simpson (*Placenames Australia*, June 2021), that alerted me to this toponym's existence.

I have not been the first to be surprised at the existence of a *Bergen-Op-Zoom* in NSW. The author of a short article in the *Dutch Australian Weekly* of Friday 5 April 1963 (p. 2) was perplexed by the existence of the name and asked if any readers could enlighten the newspaper of its origin. A later incarnation of this weekly newspaper, the *Dutch Weekly*, also ran a very short piece on the name (24 May 2004, p. 18), once again expressing surprise at its existence in Australia, and hazarding the wild guess that a Dutch farmer may have been the source of the name. However, a Mrs L.C. Davidson had already replied to the *Dutch Australian Weekly* (3 May 1963, p. 9), where she revealed the origin of the toponym by citing Campbell (1922).

The Gazetteer of NSW lists a *Bergen-Op-Zoom Creek* and a *Bergen-Op-Zoom* parish. Like so many other geographic features, they take their name from a pastoral run. The creek is situated along the Oxley Highway east of Tamworth and west of the town Walcha. The name derives from the Dutch city **Bergen op Zoom** (/ˈbɛrɣə(n) ɒp ˌsoːm/) [lit. 'Hills on the Seam/Edge'] just

north of Antwerp, in the province of North Brabant. The city was built on what is known as the Brabantse Wal ['Brabant Ridge'], an abrupt geological transition forming a steep ridge between higher sandy soils and lower lying marine clay. The ridge was produced by erosion caused by the river Scheldt; ejection by the sea and run-off water may also have played a role.<sup>1</sup> It forms the transition between two geological eras—the Pleistocene and the Holocene—and has a maximum height of 22 meters. *Zoom* refers to the 'seam', 'edge' or 'border' of the ridge. The Dutch etymological dictionary, the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT),<sup>2</sup> cites the earliest written attestation of the toponym as 1289.

The NSW Geographical Names Board provides the following information on origin of the name:

Named after the property through which the creek runs. One of the very early original sheep runs in the Walcha District, it was taken up in 1834 by Capt John McLean from Scotland. It is believed that it commemorates his ancestors exploits whilst engaged with the Dutch in defence of Bergen op Zoom in 1747. (Walcha Historical Society)

The entry also notes that although the toponym was hyphenated when adopted in 1834, and is still so represented in the gazetteer, modern signposting renders the name in an unhyphenated form (see Figure 2, over).

It is not clear whether John McLean was a Captain (either in the military or in maritime services). Campbell (1922, p. 260), who provides a short biography of McLean, includes the rank but post-modifies it with a question mark. All other references I have found regarding McLean do not mention this rank, so the available evidence suggests he was not a Captain.



Figure 1. The Brabantse Wal [*the Brabant Ridge*] (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

*continued next page*



Figure 2. *The Irish Town Bridge* (Source: <https://indebuurt.nl/bergenopzoom/genieten-van/mysteries/bergs-mysterie-bergen-op-zoom-buitenland-26600/>)

The *Newcastle Sun* (28 August 1953, p. 4) ran a story that echoes the GNB's statement of origin:

[...] In 1834 a man named McLean followed and took up a holding to the north of Walcha which he called 'Bergen-op-Zoom' in honor of his ancestors, Allan and Francis McLean, who were helping the Dutch to defend the city of that name in 1747 against the French. They put up a great fight, but did not win the battle and were taken prisoners by the French, who sportingly gave them parole for their gallantry. (From the records of Mr. W. Goold.)

The Wikipedia article on Walcha echoes this origin, but differs in one significant fact (and adds a spelling error):

[...] in 1834, John McLean took up a run he called Bergen op Zoom, reportedly named in tribute to relatives Allen [sic] and Francis McLean, who had assisted the Dutch in the defence of that town against the French in the War of the Sixth Coalition.

The War of the Sixth Coalition was one of the Napoleonic Wars and occurred between March 1813 and May 1814. During this war Bergen op Zoom was besieged by the British in a failed attempt to dislodge the French garrison there.

The Walcha Visitor Information Centre's website has a page on the town's early history (<https://walchansw.com.au/portfolio/history/>) provided by the Walcha District Historical Society. It claims the name *Bergen-Op-Zoom* was well-known 'to the early settlers because of a major campaign of 1809 called the Walcheren Expedition, fought during the British wars with Napoleon [sic].' This was an unsuccessful British expedition to the Dutch island of Walcheren in 1809 intended to open another

front in the Austrian Empire's struggle with France during the War of the Fifth Coalition (Howard, 2012; Yonge, 2018). Walcheren lies just to the west of Bergen op Zoom.

Accordingly, there were three occasions when the British joined the Dutch forces against the French, once in 1747, then again in 1809 and 1814.

Belshaw (2020) also recounts this origin and the apparent connection between Allan and Francis McLean and the naming of John McLean's 44,800 acre run. However, Belshaw omits to mention in which campaign the McLeans were engaged.

The question one has to ask is: 'On which occasion did John McLean's relatives fight in Bergen op Zoom?' Campbell (1922, pp. 260-261) provides the answer (though not definitively) in his article 'Discovery and early pastoral settlement of New England' when he presents biographical sketches of southern New England pioneer squatters:

John McLean, familiarly called 'Jock' McLean, by his confreres, arrived in Sydney on or about March 17, 1829, and settled on the Williams River, Hunter district. He evidently belonged to the McLeans of the Isle of Mull, Scotland, and the name of his New England occupancy, Bergen-op-Zoom, would suggest a reminder of the exploit of his relatives while engaged with the Dutch in defence of that city in 1747.

More detailed intelligence is supplied by Stanley (1979) and Wickwire (1979).<sup>3</sup> Both Allan and Francis have entries in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Stanley's entry for Allan states the following:

Like many of his Highland contemporaries, Allan Maclean joined the Jacobite army in 1745. He served as a lieutenant in the Clan Maclean battalion and was present at Culloden. After the defeat of Charles, tire Young Pretender, Maclean fled to the Netherlands and enlisted in the Scots brigade of the Dutch army in May 1746. In 1747 he and his kinsman Francis McLean were captured by the French at the siege of Bergen op Zoom (Netherlands). Allan Maclean returned to Great Britain in 1750 following the amnesty granted by George II to all Jacobite officers willing to swear allegiance to the house of Hanover.

So, there we have it: it was in the 1747 war, and the evidence suggests that McLean named his run in honour of his relatives' role in that war.

Campbell (1922, pp. 261-2) recounts that John McLean was unfortunate in his speculative transactions:



## ...Bergen-op-Zoom

[...] and whilst struggling against these misfortunes he, like many others, was overtaken by the bad times of the forties. Evidently disheartened by the prospects of bankruptcy, [...], McLean on October 22, 1843, tragically terminated his life at Port Macquarie while on his journey from Sydney to New England.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported McLean's death in November 1843 (Figure 3).

Although there does not seem to be any documentary evidence showing the circumstances of McLean's naming his pastoral run 'Bergen-op-Zoom', anecdotal evidence suggests it was named to honour his two relations Allan and Francis.

Jan Tent

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Stichting de Brabantse Wal, <https://brabantsewal.nl/>; Geologie van Nederland, <https://www.geologievannederland.nl/landschap/landschapsvormen/steilranden>; van Berkel & Samplonius 2006:19

<sup>2</sup> This is the Dutch equivalent to the *Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*.

<sup>3</sup> Notice that Stanley spells Allan's surname *MacLean*. All other instances of the surname are spelled *McLean*.

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### NEWS FROM THE INTERIOR.

(From our various correspondents.)

#### PORT MACQUARIE.

We are sorry that it is our melancholy duty to record the untimely death of John M'Lean, Esq., an extensive sheep farmer in New England, who committed suicide at the Hotel Royal, in this town, on Sunday morning, the 22nd instant, by cutting his throat, arm, and temple artery. An inquiry was held on Monday, the 23rd instant, before Dr. Carlyle, J.P., as to the cause of death; the result of which was, a decision that the deceased had destroyed himself while labouring under a temporary fit of insanity. The deceased had been staying for several days at the Hotel Royal, where he had been drinking to great excess, and on Sunday morning he was discovered in his bed with the wounds above described. Medical assistance was obtained, but the unfortunate gentleman only lingered till eleven o'clock on Sunday night.

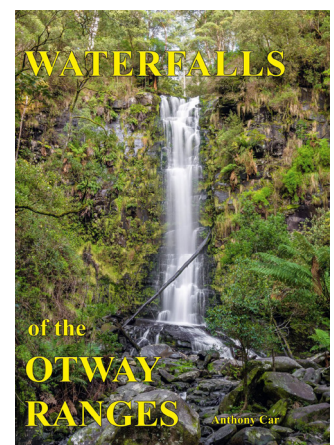
Figure 3. Report of John McLean's death, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 November 1843, p. 4

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## Waterfalls of the Otway Ranges

The source of this month's lead article by Anthony Car is his newly-published *Waterfalls of the Otway Ranges*. It documents the nature and history of 226 waterfalls in the Otways, and is lavishly illustrated by historical photos and by Anthony's own photography. The book has detailed maps, with suggestions on which waterfalls to visit. (You probably wouldn't want to carry it with you: it's not a small volume—321 pages and nearly 2kg!) We heartily recommend it for its detailed records of this aspect of Victoria's landscape.

You can pick up a copy at various bookshops in the Ranges, or order online (\$55) from bookstores such as the Paperback Bookshop or Great Escape Books.



# Placenames Puzzle Number 79

## Green & Blue

*Green and blue are the colours embedded in this issue's quiz. Example—(TAS) A sweet hill east of the town of Ross in the Midlands: Answer: Green Sugarloaf*

1. (QLD) The longest spit in Australia, 30 kilometres from Ayr, named by James Cook.
2. (Jervis Bay Territory) A picnic area and camping site within Booderee National Park.
3. (SA) A lake in Mt Gambier.
4. (NSW) A south-eastern suburb of the Central Coast region, adjacent to Brisbane Water.
5. (NSW) A small peninsula in Bermagui.
6. (TAS) A peninsula on the far north-eastern coast.
7. (WA) A cove west of Mandurah.
8. (NSW) A mountain range west of Sydney.
9. (TAS) A small island with a rather grandiose name off the west coast of Flinders Island.
10. (ACT) An elevation due west of Canberra on the NSW border.
11. (QLD) A mountain range, part of the Lamington National Park.
12. (NSW) A ski field at Perisher Ski Resort.
13. (VIC) A lake/dam NNE of Moe.
14. (SA) A small cove north-east of Victor Harbor.
15. (WA) A small beach south-west of Esperance.
16. (NSW) A forest near Blackheath.
17. (QLD) A knoll on Point Danger (Coolangatta) that can't quite make up its mind what it is.
18. (NSW) An outer-western suburb of Sydney just east of the M7 motorway.
19. (VIC) A range NNE of Marysville.
20. (TAS) A headland on the tip of the Tasman Peninsula.

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

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Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

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