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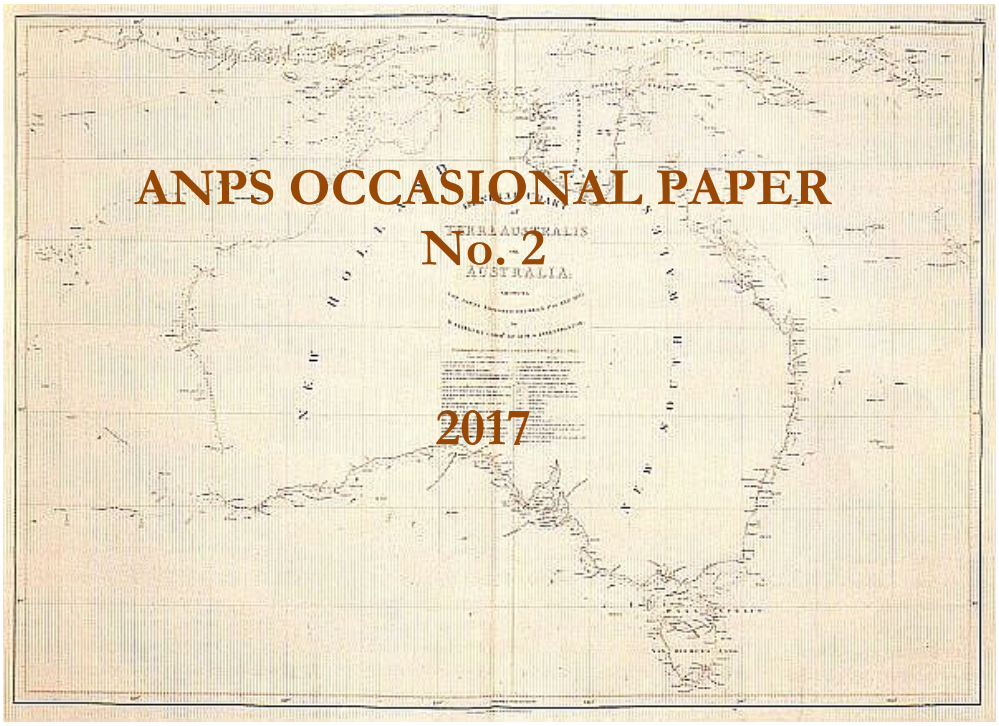
The early names of Australia's coastal regions



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PLACENAMES SURVEY

THE EARLY NAMES OF AUSTRALIA'S COASTAL REGIONS

Jan Tent

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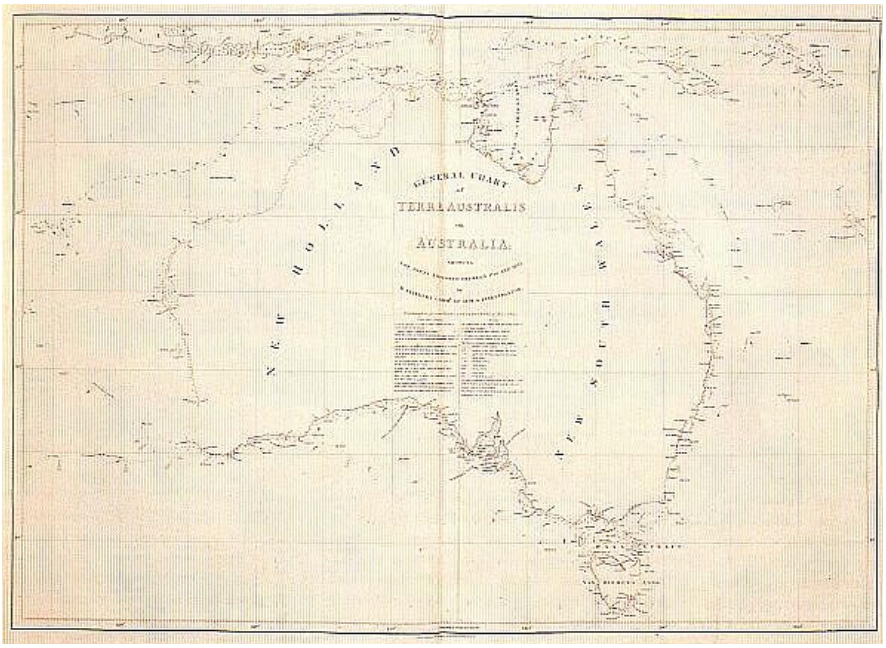

Matthew Flinders: Map Y46/1 (1804) – UK Hydrographic Office

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Introduction

In 2010 we published two articles in *Placenames Australia* on two unusual names for the Australian continent—*Notasia* and *Ulimaroa* (Geraghty & Tent, 2010; Tent, 2010). Before the whole continent had been properly charted, a number of names on early maps designated large swathes of coastal territory. I am not talking about the hundreds of names bestowed on particular natural features such as rivers, capes, mountains, bays and islands, but names, rather, that encompass whole, mainly coastal, regions. These names, like the individual feature names, were bestowed by Dutch, French and English explorers or cartographers.

Perhaps the best map depicting such coastal region names is the *Carte de l'Australie (partie sud-ouest de l'Océanie)* of Hubert Brué (1826) (Figure 1), which shows Dutch, French and English regional names. The coastline of each named region is given its own colour to show the extent of each.[1]

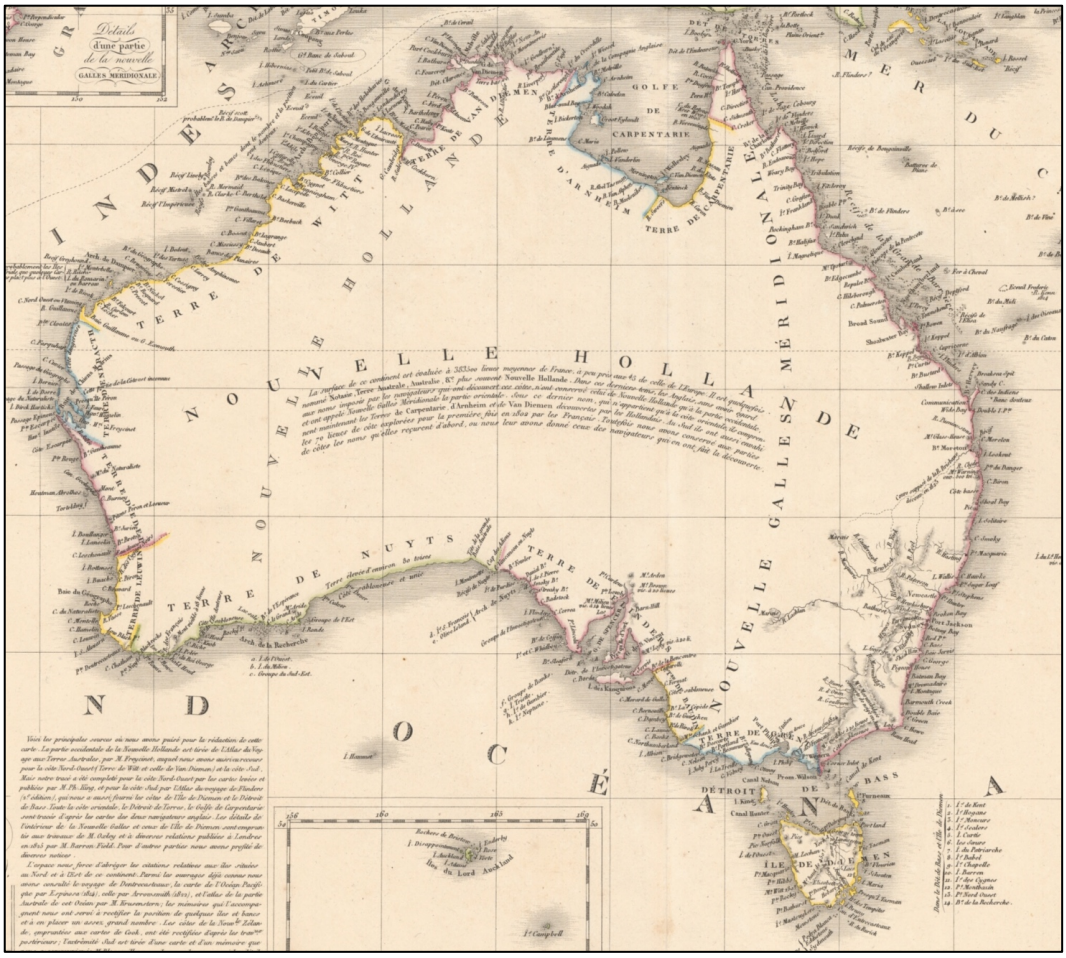

Figure 1.
Section of the Hubert Brué (1826) map, *Carte de l'Australie (partie sud-ouest de l'Océanie)*
(MAP T 259) Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

In this survey I catalogue the early coastal region names of Australia and provide a brief description and history of each. Each name will be listed chronologically under the headings 'DUTCH', 'FRENCH', 'ENGLISH' and 'MISCELLANEOUS' NAMES. All the names, bar two, are no longer extant.

Dutch names[2]

It was the Dutch who first bestowed coastal region names on their charts of the South Land. These extended (in an anticlockwise direction) from Cape York, through the Gulf of Carpentaria, around the Top End, down the coast of Western Australia, then east across much of the Great Australian Bight and down to the south and east coast of Tasmania.

't Land van d' Eendracht / Eendrachtslandt / Eendrachts Landt
This refers to the Western Australian coastal stretch from approximately the Ashburton River to Albany (about 1900 km) charted by Dirk Hartog in 1616. Hartog, on his way from the Cape of Good Hope to Batavia, unexpectedly came upon the west coast and provided us with its earliest known record of exploration. *Eendrachtsland* was in use in *VOC* documents as early as 1619. The name derives from Hartog's ship the *Eendracht* ('Concord'). It was one of the earliest European names bestowed on the Southland.

I. d' Edels Landt / Dedels Land / Edelsland
This name identified the coastal region adjacent the Houtman Abrolhos. It was charted in 1619 when the two VOC ships *Dordrecht* and *Amsterdam* under command of Frederik De Houtman, with supercargo Jacob Dedel, came across the west coast on their voyage from the Netherlands to the East Indies.

't Landt van de Leeuwin / Leeuwins Land
The *VOC* ship *Leeuwin* ('Lioness') explored part of the south-west coast of Western Australia in 1622, on its way to Batavia. It was almost shipwrecked at what is now known as *Cape Leeuwin*. *Leeuwins Land* referred to the south-west corner of the continent. The *Leeuwin*'s log has never been recovered, so unfortunately very little is known about the voyage, including the name of its captain.

Carpentaria
This was the name given to the western coastline of Cape York Peninsula (or the east coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria), after the voyage of discovery in 1623 by Jan Carstenszoon, the supercargo, in overall charge of the expedition, and William Joosten van Coolsteerdt (aka Colster) master of the *Arnhem*. The name *Carpentaria* first appears on Thevenot's chart of 1663, derived most likely from Carstenszoon's naming the *Riever Carpentier* after the then Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, Pieter de Carpentier. The west coast of Cape York Peninsula appears as *Carpentaria* on the 1663 chart and the name migrated to the Gulf by 1700 (Ingleton 1986: 209).

Carstensz. Land
This name appears on a little-known map printed and published by the printer and publisher C.W. Mieling in The Hague in approximately 1859 (Mieling 1859), and supplants *Carpentaria* with *Carstensz. Land*. It appears this renaming is Mieling's doing

because the title of his map *Golf van Carpentaria of liever Pera's Golf* ('Gulf of Carpentaria or preferably Pera's Gulf') does not shy away from his opinion that the leader of the expedition should have the honour of having this coastal region named after him, and the gulf after the ship he sailed in, not after the then Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies.

Arnhem Land
Pertained to the western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria (the east coast of the Top End) and was bestowed by van Coolsteerdt, the master of the *Arnhem*, who first charted that coastline. The region is named after his ship, which itself was named after the Dutch city of Arnhem.

Speults Lant / Van Speults Land
Herman van Speult was the Governor of Amboyna (Ambon) from 1618 until 1625. He commissioned the exploration voyage of the *Arnhem* and *Pera*. *Van Speults Land*, purported to refer to either part of Arnhemland or to Groote Eylandt, was named by Carstenszoon in 1623.

G.F. de Witts landt / Frederick de Wittsland / F De Witts Land / De Witts Land / Dewittsland
This was the name for the stretch of coastline east of the Montebello Islands. It was named after the commander of the *VOC* ship *Vianen*, Gerrit Frederikszoon de Witt, who explored that part of the WA coast in 1628. The *Vianen* ran aground somewhere near what is now Port Hedland. The ship was freed by offloading cargo. De Witt then followed the coast southwards as far as the Montebello Islands, Barrow Island and the coastal reefs to the south.

't Landt van P. Nuyts / Nuytsland
In 1627 François Thijssen and Pieter Nuyts, Councillor of the Dutch East Indies, aboard the *Gulden Zeepaerd* ('Golden Seahorse'), charted 1800 km of the South Land's southern coastline between Cape Leeuwin and the Nuyts Archipelago. They named the stretch of coastline *Pieter Nuyt's Land*. Until then, no-one had any knowledge of the south coast.

Van Diemens Land / Van Diemensland
This *Van Diemens Land,* not to be confused with the *Van Diemens Land* we now know as *Tasmania*, refers to the stretch of coastline on the west coast of the Top End, and was named after Anthoonij (or, Anthonio) van Diemen, the then Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. The name was bestowed in 1636 by the expedition of Gerrit Thomaszoon Pool and Pieter Pieterszoon on the yachts *Cleyn Amsterdam* ('Little Amsterdam') and *Wesel*.

Marias Landt / Marialand
This territory lay immediately east of Van Diemensland and west of Arnhemland. It was named during the Pool/Pieterszoon expedition of 1636, after the wife of Anthoonij van Diemen. (*Maria Island* in Tasmania is also named after her.)

Anthoonij van Diemenslandt / Van Diemens Land
Abel Tasman and Franchoijs Visscher charted the south and east coasts of Tasmania in 1642. Tasman named the island in honour of Anthoonij van Diemen, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies who had sent Tasman on this voyage of discovery. It

was often erroneously referred to as *Van Demon's Land*. The name *Van Diemen's Land* persisted until 1856 when it was changed to *Tasmania*.

Nieuw Holland / Nova Hollandia / New Holland
The original European name for the whole 'South Land' was first applied in 1644 by Abel Tasman on his second voyage of discovery. He explored and charted the northern and western coast of Australia from Cape York to Point Cloates (near Ningaloo). He bestowed the name on the western part of the continent. After 1788, the eastern half of the continent (claimed by Britain) was dubbed *New South Wales*, leaving the western half as *New Holland*, which continued to be used semi-officially, and in popular usage, as the name for the whole continent until at least the mid-1850s.

French names

The French names bestowed along the Australian coastline first appeared in Louis de Freycinet's *Voyage de decouvertes aux terres australes: Atlas historique. Plate no. 2. Carte generale de la Terre Napoleon (a la Nouvelle Hollande)*. The chart was published in 1811 as part of Francois Peron's publication on Nicolas Baudin's voyage of discovery in 1801-1802. Interestingly, there is no acknowledgement on the chart of Flinders' prior discoveries; nevertheless, the Dutch discoveries of the west and southern coastline are acknowledged. This is perhaps due to the French-English rivalry during this period, and the French desire to lay claim to at least part of the continent. The referents of the eponymous French names need no explanation.

Terre Napoléon
This referred to the stretch of coastline approximately from Wilsons Promontory to Cape Adieu. Named by Baudin, commander of the ships *Géographe* and *Naturaliste*.

On other French maps (and a few German) *Terre Napoléon* is divided into a number of other coastal regions (see Figure 2, below).

Terre de Baudin
This denoted a stretch of coastline from approximately Cape Northumberland to Encounter Bay.

Terre de Flinders
Although Flinders was a British national, the French conferred his name on part of the continent's southern coastline from Encounter Bay to Cape Nuyts. It appears on only a few maps.

Terre de Freycinet
This also appears on few maps; it referred to an area from approximately Cape Northumberland to Encounter Bay. Named after the French navigator and cartographer Louis de Freycinet aboard the *Naturaliste*. His map of Australia, published in 1811, was the first published map to depict the entire Australian coastline (Reynders & Gerritsen 2012).

Figure 2.
Section of the M. (Pierre) Lapie map of c.1820, *Oceanie ou Australasie et Polynesie: […]* (MAP RM 591). Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

English names

British navigators and cartographers conferred coastal region names on the continent independently of colonial administration.

New South Wales
Originally dubbed *New Wales* by James Cook in 1770, and subsequently altered to *New South Wales*, designated the entire east coast of the continent. This was virtually the only section of Australia's coastline that had not been charted by the Dutch. Cook named this region because it reminded him of Wales. From 1787, the name was associated with the entire eastern half of the continent. By the mid-19th century its area started to be reduced piece by piece as the new colonies of South Australia, Victoria and Queensland were established.

Terre de Grent/ Grant / Grants Land
This stretch of the Victorian coastline also bears the name of another Englishman, Lt. James Grant. It appears on few maps (but see Figure 2), and designates the stretch of coastline from approximately Wilsons Promontory to Cape Northumberland. Grant was the commander of the *Lady Nelson*, the first ship to sail through Bass Strait and thus the first to chart the Bass Strait coast of Victoria. The *Lady Nelson* was the first vessel to make its way to Sydney from England via the Strait rather than via the south coast of Tasmania (Lee, 1915). It is perhaps worth noting that Cape Grant on the Victorian coast was named by James Grant himself in December 1800, in honour of Sir William Grant (no

relation, but a British judge who after a period as attorney-general of Canada became solicitor-general in Pitt's administration in 1799).

Australia Felix
Although Australia Felix is not strictly a coastal region name, and it was conferred during the colonial period, it is perhaps worth including here. It was the name conferred by Thomas Mitchell on the pasture in parts of western Victoria he explored in 1836 on his third expedition. It is Latin for 'fortunate/happy/felicitous Australia'. It appears on numerous maps around the mid-19th century.

Miscellaneous names

There are a number of coastal region names that appear on a small number of maps that were not bestowed by explorers, but were later recorded on the maps by the cartographers or by others.

Dampier's Land
This toponym appears on Fenner's map (1835) and referred to the Western Australian coastal region from approximately Roebuck Bay to the Buccaneer Archipelago—between Van Diemen's Land (NT) and De Witts Land. Obviously named in honour of William Dampier who had visited and charted the area in 1699.

Tasmans Land
On some other maps (Arrowsmith 1838; Sharpe 1849; Weiland, 1858) the area designated as *Tasmans Land* also appears between Van Diemen's Land (NT) and De Witts Land, commemorating that section of the coast explored by Tasman in 1644.

Dinnings Land
This is an enigmatic region name and appeared on a number of maps between the mid-18th and mid-19th centuries. It most likely derives from a topographic descriptor on the Pieter Goos/Johannes van Keulen map (c.1690) which states: 'Duyning land boven Lage Ruigte Gelyk Verdronke Boomen en Boschaghe' (roughly translated: 'Dunes/dune land above Low Scrub Seemingly Submerged Trees [mangroves?] and Underwood/Boscage') (c.f. Pool 2013: 149). This descriptor seems to be derived from blending two descriptors on the Hessel Gerritszoon map of 1627 upon which is transcribed: *'Duynig landt boven met boomen ende bosage'* (Dunes/dune land with trees and underwood/boscage at top) *and 'Laegh ghelijck verdroncken landt'* (Low, seemingly submerged land) (see Tent 2016).

Ulimaroa* & *Notasia
These two other rather peculiar names were given to the continent in the late-18th and early-19th centuries (Tent 2010; Geraghty & Tent 2010). The first was the bizarre *Ulimaroa*, which was conferred by the eccentric Swedish geographer and cartographer Daniel Djurberg in 1776 in his *Geografi, sammandragen utur de nyste och tilförliteligaste auctorer* [Geography, summaries of the newest and most comprehensive authors]. He first used *Ulimaroa* on a map in 1780 (*Karta over Polynesien eller Femte Delen af Jordklotet af Daniel Djurberg Ledamot af Cosmografiska Sällsk I Upsala. Stockholm*). Subsequently, other cartographers and publishers used it on various European maps until about 1819. It is most likely a corruption of the Māori *ko Rimaroa*, meaning 'long arm' (*rima* 'arm/hand' + *roa* 'long'), and was a possible reference to the long, narrow island of *Grande Terre* of New

Caledonia. The second, *Notasia*, started appearing on a number of maps of Australia in the early-19th century. It is not known who coined the name, but its most logical meaning seems to be 'Southern Asia' and is said to be derived from the Greek *νοτος* (*notos*) 'south; the south wind'.

Discussion

The question arises as to why so many *-land* names were conferred on coastal regions of our continent, and why many of them disappeared from maps from the early to mid-1800s. If you look at the early-17th century Dutch maps of the western half of the continent, you will notice gaps along the coastline between the variously named regions. It was not known at that time whether all the named regions belonged to the same continent, hence the distinct names. The gaps are clearly visible on Hessel Gerritszoon's map of 1627.

By 1644 most of the gaps on the charts of the coastline were filled in, marking the end of these diverse names. The entire continent then became known as *Nieuw Holland*.

Greg Windsor (2014, 2015) reveals that it is notoriously difficult to delineate the margins of a region. Indeed, as many of the early maps of Australia show, there is quite a range of variability not only in the spelling of the early coastal region names but also in their exact location and extent. In essence, we are dealing with something similar to what the Permanent Committee on Place Names designates as a LOCALITY (unbounded) (LOCU), which is defined as 'an area with un-defined boundaries within a local authority or other legislative area, a sub-unit of a suburb; a rural locality' (CGNA, 1996).

Table 1 (below) illustrates how the boundaries of regions on maps can vary so radically, and shows that even the number of named regions can be dissimilar. Two maps that actually depict margins of coastal regions are the de Freycinet map of 1811, and the Brué map of 1826 (Figure 1 above). The boundaries of each region are designated. The data speak for themselves.

Table 1.

Region name	Freycinet (1811)		Brué (1826)	
	From…	to…	From…	to…
Nouvelles Galles du Sud / Nouvelles Galles Méridionale ('New South Wales')	Cape York QLD)	Wilsons Promontory (VIC)	Cape Keerweer (QLD)	Wilsons Promontory (VIC)
Terre Napoléon ('Napoleon's Land')	Wilsons Promontory (VIC)	Cape Adieu (SA)	N.A.	N.A.
Terre de Grent ('Grant's Land')	N.A.	N.A.	Wilsons Promontory (VIC)	Cape Northumberland (VIC)
Terre de Baudin ('Baudin's Land')	N.A.	N.A.	Cape Northumberland (VIC)	Encounter Bay (SA)
Terre de Flinders ('Flinders' Land')	N.A.	N.A.	Encounter Bay (SA)	Cape Nuyts (SA)
Terre de Nuyts ('Nuyts Land')	Cape Adieu (SA)	Point Nuyts (WA)	Cape Nuyts (SA)	Point d'Entrecasteaux (WA)
Terre de Leeuwin ('Leeuwin Land')	Point Nuyts (WA)	Swan River (WA)	Point d'Entrecasteaux (WA)	Swan River (WA)
Terre d'Édels ('Edel's Land')	Swan River (WA)	Steep Point (WA)	Swan River (WA)	Steep Point (WA)
Terre d'Endracht / d'Endrachth ('Eendracht's land')	Steep Point (WA)	North West Cape (WA)	Steep Point (WA)	Ningaloo (WA)
Terre de Witt ('de Witt's Land')	North West Cape (WA)	Cox Peninsula (NT)	Ningaloo (WA)	Wyndham Port Area (WA)
Terre de van Diemen ('van Diemen Land')	N.A.	N.A.	Wyndham Port Area (WA)	Arnhem Bay (NT)
Terre d'Armheim ('Arnhem Land')	Cox Peninsula (NT)	Nhulunbuy (NT)	Arnhem Bay (NT)	Nicholson River / Albert River (QLD)
Terre de Carpentarie ('Carpentaria')	Nhulunbuy (NT)	Cape York (QLD)	Nicholson River / Albert River (QLD)	Cape Keerweer (QLD)

Almost all other maps depicting coastal regions do not delineate their boundaries and therefore vary considerably as to how and where their labels are shown.

Flinders' map of Australia (1814), interestingly, does not show any of these coastal region names, and maps produced after this started to omit them. French maps seem to be the exception because the French were still interested in laying claim to the areas they explored and named.

Some of the early coastal names survive today, though the area they delineate may differ markedly from their original allocation. *New South Wales* is the most obvious one. Its boundaries have changed more than any other Australian region name. After embracing the east coast of the continent, it had grown to encompass the entire eastern half of the continent by the arrival of the British at Sydney Cove in 1788, and endured until approximately 1830 (the western half of the continent being known as *New Holland* during this time). *Arnhem Land* is the other name that has endured as a significant region name. It basically encompasses the same area that it was first ascribed to. Other early region names survive as land district names and include: *Dampier*, *Nuyts*, *Edel*, *De Wit*, and *Nuytsland Nature Reserve* (all in WA), and *Carpentaria* (QLD) a county and a locality.

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Endnotes

[1] The maps cited in this article are not the only maps that exist with the coastal region names depicted. They are simply representative examples of maps that portray the coastal region names.

[2] Because Dutch spelling in the 17th and 18th centuries had not been standardised, most names appear on maps in different forms or spellings.

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