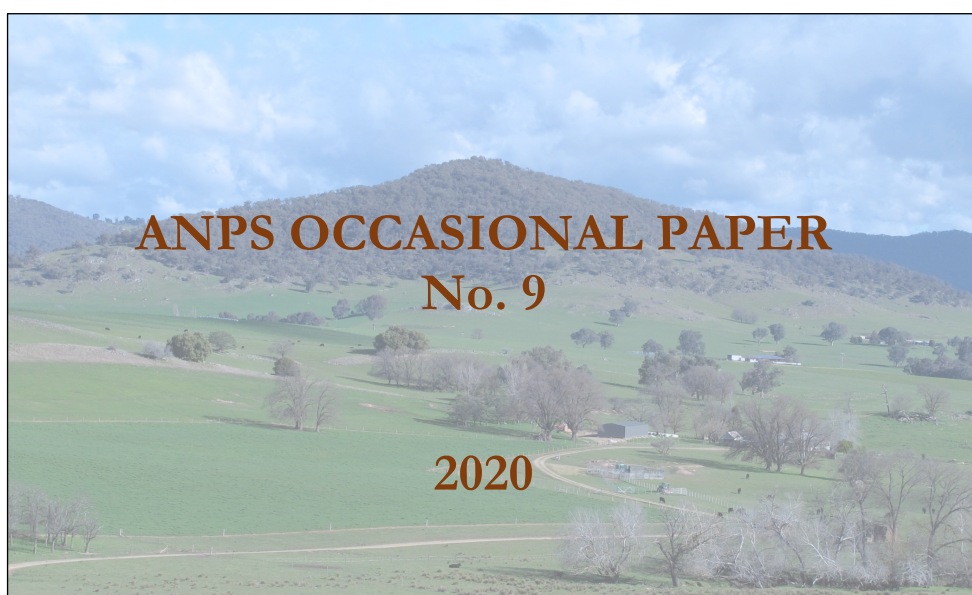


# The 'Sugarloaf'





# THE 'SUGARLOAF'

*Jan Tent*

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View of *Sugarloaf Mountain*, Corryong, Victoria  
(Photo: J. Tent)

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## 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

A vibrant, living language is constantly changing. This is the sign of a healthy language. For instance, there are sound changes, e.g. *knicht* /knɪxt/ to /nait/; changes in grammar, e.g. the use of *whom* is now largely obsolete; and changes in meaning—complete change of meaning, e.g. among other things *nice* used to mean ‘foolish; ostentatious/elegant; precise; fastidious’, a narrowing of meaning, e.g. in Old English (OE) *mete* ‘meat’ referred to any kind of food in general, or a broadening of meaning, e.g. *barn* used to denote a storage place for barley. One of the mechanisms of the broadening of meaning of a word is metaphor. When we encounter an object or shape that is similar to or reminds us of something else, we often use the name of that something else:

### *foot*

‘The terminal part of the leg, on which a person stands and walks’ and ‘The terminal part of the leg in other vertebrates. Also: a leg or distal segment of a leg of an arthropod’

[< Old English] (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

(functioning as the ‘vehicle’ of the metaphor)



### *foot*

‘The lowest part or bottom of an elevation (such as a hill, mountain, etc.), or of any object in an upright or sloping position (such as a wall, staircase, ladder, etc.); the area immediately surrounding this’

[< Middle English] (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

(functioning as the ‘tenor’ of the metaphor) (Richards 1937, p. 96)

This practice can be referred to as ‘metaphoric extension’. The *OED* refers to this phenomenon as sense or meaning ‘transfer’.

Some geographic feature terms (GFTs) when used as generic elements of toponyms provide imaginative examples of metaphoric extension. Table 1 catalogues a number of manufactured or constructed objects (column 1) that have had their meanings broadened to geographic features via metaphorical extension. The second column provides the *OED*’s original denotation/definition of the term (the vehicle) before its meaning was extended to a geographic one. The third column provides the date of the first known citation of the original denotation of the term. The fourth column records the *OED* and ANPS definitions (Blair & Tent 2015) of the term as a geographic feature term (the tenor), and the fifth column, the first known citation of the term with that designation, as provided by the *OED*.

Table 1.

GFT	OED original meaning	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation	[OED] & ANPS GFT definition	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation
<i>Amphitheatre</i>	An oval or circular building, with seats rising behind and above each other, around a central open space or arena.	1546	[OED: A natural situation consisting of a level surrounded in whole or part by rising slopes.]  A basin-shaped hollow, particularly one having steep sides. Feature set: <DEPR>	1772
<i>Basin</i>	A circular vessel of greater width than depth, with sloping or curving sides, used for holding water and other liquids, especially for washing purposes.	1220	[OED: A circular or oval valley or hollow.]  A depression or hollow in the earth's surface, wholly or partly surrounded by higher land, particularly one which is drained by a river and its tributaries. Feature set: <DEPR>	1854
<i>Cirque</i>	Circus. → A large building, generally oblong or oval, surrounded with rising tiers of seats, for the exhibition of public spectacles, horse or chariot races, and the like.	1601	[OED: A natural amphitheatre, or rounded hollow or plain encircled by heights; <i>esp.</i> one high up in the mountains at the head of a stream or glacier.]  A deep rounded hollow or amphitheatre on a mountain side formed by glacial action. Feature set: <GORG>	1874
<i>Column</i>	A cylindrical or slightly tapering body of considerably greater length than diameter, erected vertically as a support for some part of a building.	1481	[OED: A natural columnar formation, <i>esp.</i> of igneous rock.]  1. An large detached rock, taller than it is wide and roughly cylindrical in shape. Feature set: <TOR>  2. A large rock which is part of an elevated relief feature but which is prominent for its tall and cylindrical aspect. Also: pillar, rock column. Feature set: <ROCK>	1775
<i>Cone</i>	A solid figure or body, of which the base is a circle, and the summit a point, and every point in the intervening surface is in a straight line between the vertex and the circumference of the base.	1570	[OED: A cone-shaped mountain-top or peak; <i>esp.</i> a volcanic peak, formed by the accumulation of ejected material round the crater.]  → sugarloaf. Feature set: <HILL>	1830



GFT	OED original meaning	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation	[OED] & ANPS GFT definition	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation
<i>Knob</i>	A small rounded lump, bump, or protuberance on the surface of something; a rounded or spherical projection at the end of an object.	1425	[OED: Chiefly <i>North American</i> . A prominent, usually rounded hill, mountain, or peak; a knoll. Sometimes more generally: any hill.]  A prominent rounded hill, larger than a knoll. Feature set: <HILL>	1622
<i>Ledge</i>	A transverse bar or strip of wood or other material fixed upon a door, gate, piece of furniture, or the like.	1330	[OED: A shelf-like projection on the side of a rock or mountain.]  A narrow shelf-like projection on a cliff or on the side of a hill or mountain. Also: shelf. Feature set: <ldge>	1732
<i>Needle</i>	A slender pointed instrument (now usually of polished steel) for piercing and drawing thread through cloth, etc., having a hole or eye at one end for thread to pass through.	1200	[OED: A sharply pointed rock. Chiefly in <i>plural</i> in the names of particular formations, such as that to the west of the Isle of Wight or (now <i>rare</i> ) those forming groups of summits in the Swiss Alps.]  A tall perpendicular sharp-pointed rock which is part of a larger relief feature. Feature set: <ROCK>	1400
<i>Pillar</i>	A tall vertical structure of stone, brick, wood, metal, etc., usually narrow in proportion to its height, used either as a support for a structure, or as a monument or ornament...	1180	[OED: ... Also: a naturally occurring column (of rock, ice, etc.) resembling this.]  → <i>Column</i> 2. Feature set: <ROCK>	1180
<i>Pyramid</i>	1. A polyhedron of which one face (the base) is a polygon of any number of sides, and the other faces are triangles whose bases are the sides of the polygon and which meet at a common vertex.  2. A building or monument with a square or triangular base and sloping sides that meet in a point at the top	1398  1500	[OED: Any object in the shape of a pyramid; (also) a number of things arranged or piled up in this shape.]  A high mountain peak formed by three or more adjacent steep-sided <i>glacial basins</i> . Feature set: <MT>	1634

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GFT	OED original meaning	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation	[OED] & ANPS GFT definition	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation
<i>Saddle</i>	A seat for a rider, typically made of leather, which is raised at the front and rear, and which may be secured to the back of a horse or other animal by means of a girth passing under the body.	Old English	[OED: A saddle-shaped depression between two hills or summits which is concave in profile, but appears as a convex ridge when viewed from above; (also) a similar formation of ice or snow.]  A low point on a ridge between two higher-standing parts of a mountain range. Also: col. Feature set: <PASS>	Old English
<i>Shelf</i>	A slab of wood (or other material) fixed in a horizontal position to a wall, or in a frame, to hold books, vessels, ornaments, etc.; one of the transverse boards in a bookcase, cabinet, or the like.	1405	[OED: A ledge, platform, or terrace of land, rock, etc.]  → <i>ledge</i> . Feature set: <LDGE>	1807
<i>Sink</i>	A pool or pit formed in the ground for the receipt of waste water, sewage, etc.; a cesspool; a receptacle for filth or ordure.	1440	[OED: A flat, low-lying area, basin, etc., where waters collect and form a bog, marsh, or pool, or disappear by sinking or evaporation. Now U.S.]  A saucer shaped depression in the earth's surface, usually found in limestone regions, through which water may enter the ground and pass along an underground course. Feature set: <DEPR>	1596
<i>Spire</i>	1. A stalk or stem of a plant, esp. one of a tall and slender growth.  2. A conical, tapering, pointed body or part of something; a sharp point.	1000  1551	[OED: A tall, slender, sharp-pointed summit, peak, rock, or column.]  A large rock which is part of an elevated relief feature but which is prominent for its tall tapering aspect, resembling an inverted cone or a pyramid. Feature set: <ROCK>	1586
<i>Spur</i>	A device for pricking the side of a horse in order to urge it forward, consisting of a small spike or spiked wheel attached to the rider's heel.	725	[OED: A range, ridge, mountain, hill, or part of this, projecting for some distance from the main system or mass; an offshoot or offset.]  A minor linear projection off an elevated relief feature, less than 2 km in length and decreasing in altitude from the parent feature. Feature set: <SPUR>	1652

GFT	OED original meaning	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation	[OED] & ANPS GFT definition	OED date of 1 <sup>st</sup> citation
<i>Tower</i>	A building lofty in proportion to the size of its base, either isolated, or forming part of a castle, church, or other edifice, or of the walls of a town.	897	[OED: A lofty pile or material mass.] A prominent hill which is perceived as approximately cylindrical in its elevation. Feature set: <HILL>	1604

One GFT, also the result of metaphorical extension, has been omitted from Table 1. *Sugarloaf* is the topic of this Occasional Paper. It has been deliberately excluded from the table because it deserves a wider and more in-depth examination. In a brief article on the origins of the term as a GFT, Gudde (1956, p. 242) makes the following prediction:

Among our members [of the American Name Society] who are at present engaged in the study of American toponymic generics—Burrill, McMullen, Zelinski and others—one will doubtless soon present us with a contribution concerning the frequency, geographical distribution, and spelling variations of our many sugarloafs.

Unfortunately, no such a contribution has ever appeared. This Occasional Paper is an attempt to partially fulfil this want. In addition to this, there are three other reasons why *Sugarloaf* warrants some more detailed consideration:

- (a) The general obscurity of its origin to most contemporary speakers of English, which is partially dealt with by Gudde.
- (b) The considerable diversity of orographic features to which the term is applied and the apparent attenuation of the shape’s sense.
- (c) Its more frequent occurrence as a ‘simplex generic toponym’ (SGT) than any other GFT (see Tent 2020).

Each of these is considered below.

## 2 *SUGARLOAF*—THE VEHICLE & THE TENOR

In the opening paragraph of his article on ‘sugarloaf’ as a GFT, Gudde (1956, p. 241) remarks: ‘The reason for this strange generic topographical term is unknown to most people because the object from which the name is derived has long since disappeared from the typical American scene.’ This would certainly apply even more to English speakers today.

### 2.1 The vehicle

From the early 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries processed sugar came in the form of a solid cone rather than in the generally granulated form it does currently (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). It is worth citing the *OED* at some length here to obtain a broader appreciation of the etymology and use of the term *sugarloaf*.

**sugar-loaf**

1. A moulded conical mass of hard refined sugar (now rarely made).  
 1422 in J. T. Fowler *Extracts Acct. Rolls Abbey of Durham* (1898) I. 59 In 1 Sugyrlaffe, 8s. 4d.  
 ?1452 M. Paston in *Paston Lett. & Papers* (2004) I. 244 I pray yow þat ye woll vouchesaff to send me an oþer sugowr loff, for my old is do.  
 1555 R. Eden *Two Viages into Guinea* in tr. Peter Martyr of Angleria *Decades of Newe Worlde* f. 351 Teneriffa is..a greate hyghe picke lyke a suger lofe.  
 1585 T. Washington tr. N. de Nicolay *Nauigations Turkie* iii. i. 69 b Wearing on their heads a hygh yealow hatte made after the fashion of a suger loofe.  
 1604 *Wit of Woman* sig. G 4 Giue the gentelwoman a leashe of angells, to buy a sugar loafe.  
 1660 R. Boyle *New Exper. Physico-mechanicall* xxxiii. 247 A Gardiner's watering Pot shap'd conically, or like a Sugar-Loaf.  
 1707 Lady G. Baillie *Househ. Bk.* (1911) 69 For a suger lofe £3. 7s. 6d.  
 1800 B. Moseley *Treat. Sugar* (ed. 2) 113 The blue paper for covering sugar-loaves.  
 1835 *1st Rep. Commissioners Munic. Corporations Eng. & Wales* App. iv. 2896 in *Parl. Papers* (H.C. 116) XXV. 1 The High Steward..is entitled to 18 sugar loaves every year. These are worth about 9l., and are usually distributed in charity.  
 1876 W. H. G. Kingston *On Banks of Amazon* 112 The snow-capped, truncated peak of Cotopaxi, looking like a vast sugar-loaf.



**Figure 1.**

A sugar mill and the production of sugarloaves by Jan van der Straet.  
 (Source: Plate 14 from *Nova Reperta* engraved by Philip Galle ca.1600. Image ref: XJF397660. Private Collection / Bridgeman Images)



**Figure 2.**

Sugarloaves on display at the Sugar Museum, Berlin.

(Source: Wikimedia commons, User FA2010.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugarloaf#/media/File:ZuckerhüteZucker-Museum.jpg>)



**Figure 3.**

Sugarloaf on display at the Sugar Museum, Berlin.

(Source: Creative Commons, User FA2010. <https://www.cruisebe.com/sugar-museum-berlin-germany#image-87170>)

## 2.2 The tenor

The 1555 citation referring to *El Teide* on Tenerife (Figure 4) is interesting in that it is a prelude to the use of the term as a GFT.<sup>2</sup> Some of the other citations also hint at the term being used to describe the shape of other items, e.g. hats and watering pots. The *OED*’s sense 2.b. shows that the original sense of the word (the vehicle) had been transferred to orographic features and had become propriatised by 1716 (the tenor), when Tenerife’s highest peak was referred to as ‘the Sugar-loaf’.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Transferred.* A thing having the shape of a sugar-loaf.

b. A high conical hill.

a1691 R. Boyle *Gen. Hist. Air* (1692) 184 Till they arrived at the top of the sugar-loaf, or highest pile of the mountain.

1716 *Philos. Trans. 1714–16* (Royal Soc.) 29 318 The white Cloud still hiding the greatest part of the Sugar-loaf [*sc.* Tenerife].

1862 *Chambers’s Encycl.* IV. 745/2 The rock [of Gibraltar], at its highest point, the Sugar Loaf, attains an elevation of 1439 feet above the sea.

1879 R. L. Stevenson *Trav. with Donkey* (1886) 30 The outline of a wooded sugar-loaf in black.



**Figure 4.**

*El Pico del Teide, Tenerife*

(Source: OKGranCanaris <https://www.okgrancanaria.com/en/tours/excursion-tenerife-from-gran-canaria/>)

Various compound expressions are also noted by the *OED*:

#### COMPOUNDS

**C1.** General *attributive*.

**a.** Shaped like or otherwise resembling a sugar-loaf.

**sugar-loaf hill** *n.* (see 2b).

1799 T. R. Malthus *Diary* 9 July (1966) 131 We..saw Doverfield..with his sugar loaf hills covered with snow.

1808 Z. M. Pike *Acct. Exped. Sources Mississippi* (1810) II. App. 5 A beautiful little sugar loaf hill.

1859 D. Bunce *Trav. with Dr. Leichhardt* iv. 29 There are two lofty sugar-loaf hills..which may be seen from Hobart Town.

1969 J. Mander *Static Society* ii. 81 We cannot admire Rio's skyline for the squalid *favelas* nestling between her sugar-loaf hills.

**sugar-loaf mountain** *n.* (see 2b).

1866 *Chambers's Encycl.* VIII. 269/1 The peak called, from its peculiar shape, Sugar-loaf Mountain.

**sugar-loaf rock** *n.*

1712 E. Cooke *Voy. S. Sea* 384 A Sugar-Loaf Rock above Water.

In addition to these entries, the *OED* shows that sugar was being described as coming in the shape of 'loaves' as early as the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, thereby hinting at the precursor to the term 'sugarloaf':

#### Loaf

**3.** A moulded conical mass of sugar; a sugar-loaf.

1363–4 in J. T. Fowler *Extracts Acct. Rolls Abbey of Durham* (1899) II. 566 In 9 lb. Sucr. de Sipr. empt. in uno lafapud Ebor.

1373–4 in J. T. Fowler *Extracts Acct. Rolls Abbey of Durham* (1901) III. 578 In 2 lafes de Sugour ponder. 23 lib. quarteron empt...47s. 4d.

1440–1 in J. T. Fowler *Extracts Acct. Rolls Abbey of Durham* (1898) I. 78 Item 1 layf de suggir, 4s. 6d.

1589 *Voy. W. Towrson* in R. Hakluyt *Princ. Navigations* i. 98 The Isle of Tenerif, otherwise called the Pike, because it is a very high Island with a pike vpon the toppe like a loafe of Sugar.

1684 J. Evelyn *Diary* anno 1654 (1955) III. 102 Here [*i.e.* at Bristol] I first saw the manner of refining Suggar, & casting it into loaves.

1835 A. Ure *Philos. Manuf.* Pref. 9 Refined loaves.

The ANPS defines the geographic feature *sugarloaf* as: 'A hill shaped such that it has a circular base and tapers to a point at the top. Also: cone. Feature set: <HILL>' (Blair & Tent 2015, p. 21), while the *Glossary of Generic Terms* (1996) of the Permanent Committee on Place Names (PCPN; formerly Committee for Geographical Name in Australia, CGNA) defined *sugarloaf* as: 'A HILL or MOUNTAIN, conical or conoidal in shape, thus resembling a sugarloaf, i.e. a solid cone of refined sugar, the form in which it was previously distributed. e.g. MOUNT SUGARLOAF.'

### 3 SUGARLOAF—AS A GEOGRAPHIC FEATURE

*Sugarloaf* is not a geological or geographical term, but is a lexical item of general vocabulary. It constitutes either the specific or the generic element of the names bestowed upon a wide variety of cone-shaped orographic landforms. So-called ‘sugarloafs’ do not have any specific geomorphology, but may be classified under a group of orographic landforms known as *inselbergs*: ‘island mounts’, a term coined by the German geologist Wilhelm Bornhardt (1864-1946). The *OED* defines an *inselberg* as: ‘An isolated hill or mountain which rises abruptly from its surroundings, typically a plain in a hot, dry region.’ It is often claimed that *inselbergs* are found in tropical and dry regions; however, Twidale & Vidal-Romani (2005, p. 115) state they can occur anywhere on the planet. It is also claimed that they rise abruptly from surrounding plains (e.g. Twidale & Vidal-Romani 2005, p. 109) or are steep-sided (e.g. Owen 2014, p. i). As Figures 13-16 show, this is not necessarily the case.

However, Owen (2014, p. i) and Twidale & Vidal-Romani (2005) then claim that *inselbergs* have ‘many shapes and sizes’ (p. 110):

Some are low, elongate and elliptical in plan and are called whalebacks or dos de baleine. Those that are more nearly elliptical in plan and have steep bounding slopes are known as turtlebacks. A few are high, asymmetrical in profile and with little imagination reasonably called elephant rocks (dos d’elephant). Many have plan axes of similar length, approximately equal to the height of the crest above the adjacent plains and they are referred to as domes or half-oranges.

Vidal-Romani (2005, p. 110, 113)

*Inselbergs* can be further classified into a wide variety of hill and mountain types. By far the most common and widely distributed is the granitic *bornhardt* (named after Wilhelm Bornhardt). The most famous and iconic exemplar of this is *Pão de Açúcar* ‘Sugarloaf (Mountain)’ in Rio de Janeiro (Figure 5).

Depending on their morphologies and region of occurrence, *bornhardts* can also be referred to as *dwalas*, *matopos*, *morros*, *monadnocks* (< Abenaki ‘mountain that stands alone’), *nubbins*, *knolls*, *acicular forms*, *castle koppies* (< Du. *kopje* ‘little head’), and *tors* (pp. 3-4). Owen says the varying names demonstrate a diverse range of *inselberg* morphologies, and that there have been various attempts at developing a uniform quantitative morphological classification scheme or ontology, but ‘there is currently insufficient data within the literature that could be used to define *inselberg* morphology globally using a set of geomorphological terms.’ (p. 5). Consequently, we are left with a rather diverse and imprecise nomenclature for the landform, which is demonstrated by the wide variety of shapes seen in rocks, hills and mountains that bear the name element *Sugarloaf*.

The figures below show this wide variety of shapes and sizes ranging from tall pointed domes (e.g. *Pão de Açúcar* in Rio de Janeiro, Figure 5); rounded domes (e.g. *Pain de Sucre* on Guadeloupe, Figure 7); more acutely pointed elevations (e.g. *El Pico del Teide* on Tenerife, Figure 4); obtuse angled hills and mountains (e.g. Figures 10-15 and 17); to flat or concave topped hills (e.g. *Sugar Loaf Hill* on Okinawa, Figure 16). Gudde (1956, p. 242) hints at these diverse shapes of sugarloaf peaks when he observes: ‘Our topographical



[US] maps are dotted with sugarloafs, i.e. hills and peaks which resemble (with the necessary dose of imagination) the old shape of bulk sugar.”



**Figure 5.**

*Pão de Açúcar* 'Sugarloaf Mountain', Rio de Janeiro

(Source: Wikimedia Commons, Ccarelo.

CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)



**Figure 6.**

*Sugarloaf Peak*, Organ Mountains, New Mexico

(Source: New Mexico Tech Wilderness Encounter, Sugarloaf Peak/Organ Mtns, NM

<https://believesteve.org/2014/03/02/sugarloaf-peak-near-las-cruces-nm/>)

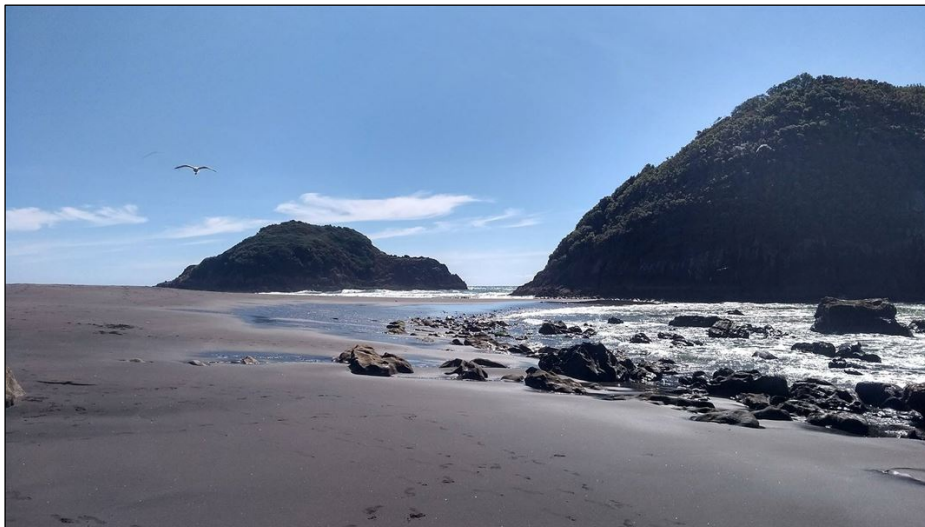


**Figure 7.**

*Pain de Sucre*, Guadeloupe.

(Source: Uncommon Caribbean.

<https://www.uncommoncaribbean.com/guadeloupe/pain-de-sucre-beach-guadeloupe/>)



**Figure 8.**

*Ngā Motu / Sugar Loaf Islands*, NZ.

(Source: Dept. of Conservation / Te Papa Atawhi. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/taranaki/places/nga-motu-sugar-loaf-islands/>)



**Figure 9.**

*Sugarloaf Rock*, Cape Naturaliste, WA

(Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sugarloafgnangarra02.JPG>)



**Figure 10.**

*The Sugar Loaf*, Abergavenny, South Wales

(Source: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sugarloaf-and-usk-valley/features/the-sugarloaf>)



**Figure 11.**  
*The Great Sugar Loaf*, Wicklow, Ireland  
(Source: Bray.ie [www.bray.ie/great-sugar-loaf/](http://www.bray.ie/great-sugar-loaf/))



**Figure 12.**  
*Mount Monadnock* (considered a sugarloaf), New Hampshire, USA  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons, Jonwmcinenrey.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount\\_Monadnock\\_as\\_seen\\_from\\_Bald\\_Rock.jpg#filelinks](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Monadnock_as_seen_from_Bald_Rock.jpg#filelinks))



**Figure 13.**

*Sugarloaf*, Christchurch, NZ.

(Source: Stuff. 'Sugarloaf: Inside the concrete eyrie high above Christchurch in the Port Hills', August 24, 2018. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/106321633/sugarloaf-inside-the-concrete-eyrie-high-above-christchurch-in-the-port-hills>)



**Figure 14.**

*Mount Sugarloaf - Great Sugarloaf*, West Wallsend, Newcastle, NSW.

(Source: Wiki Commons

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MountSugarloaf\(NewSouthWales\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MountSugarloaf(NewSouthWales)))



**Figure 15.**  
*Mount Sugarloaf, Corryong, VIC.*  
(Photo: J. Tent)



**Figure 16.**  
*Sugar Loaf Hill, Okinawa, 1945.*  
(Source: Battle For Okinawa: World War II. Sugar-Loaf the Gateway to Naha  
<http://darbysrangers.tripod.com/Okinawa/id19.htm>)



**Figure 17.**

*Sugar Loaf Mountain - Sugarloaf*, Frederick County, Maryland

(Source: <https://rootsrated.com/washington-dc/cycling/sugarloaf-mountain-cycling>)

#### 4 *SUGARLOAF*—AS A ‘SIMPLEX TOPONYM’

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of orographic features bearing the designation *Sugarloaf* is that in Australia, Canada and the United States it is the most common ‘simplex toponym’ derived from a GFT.

Toponyms, as they appear in English, are often regarded as a combination of ‘specific’ and ‘generic’ elements (Kadmon 2002, pp. 12, 24). The **specific element** is akin to a given name (functioning as the ‘identifier’), whereas the **generic element** is analogous to a classifier or family name indicating to which class or ‘family’ the named place belongs (e.g. *Botany Bay*, *River Thames*, *Rocky Mountains*). Generic elements are based on common nouns designating geographic features, which I have referred to above as GFTs. Other authors (e.g. Harvalík 2012; Room 1996) refer to these as ‘(terrain) appellatives’ or simply ‘generic terms’ (Kadmon 2002, 12).<sup>4</sup> Another class of toponym is made up of those that consist of a specific element alone, perhaps best termed ‘simplex specific toponyms’ (SSTs), e.g. *Darwin*, *London*, *Boston*.<sup>5</sup>

Ignoring for the moment the issue of capitalising the initial letter, unattached GFTs (at least in theory) such as *basin*, *breadknife* or *waterhole* cannot normally form toponyms because they are simply seen as common nouns (or appellatives), not proper names. They neither grammatically nor pragmatically identify any particular geographic feature.

## The ‘Sugarloaf’

Considered from this perspective they are counterintuitive name forms. However, they do exist (e.g. *Bluff*, *Basin*, *Cliff*, *River*, all appearing in the USA). Harvalík (2012) terms such toponyms ‘proprialised terrain appellatives’. Another, perhaps more descriptive way of labelling such toponyms is ‘proprialised simplex GFTs’. However, since this is a rather convoluted terminology, and given they are in essence the converse of SSTs, I shall refer to them as ‘simplex generic toponyms’ (SGTs).

There are 662 toponyms in the Gazetteer of Australia that contain the name element *Sugarloaf* or *Sugar Loaf*, either as a generic or a specific element. Five hundred and twelve of them can be classified as orographic landforms (372 x HILL + 92 x MT + 16 x PEAK + 15 x TRIG + 5 x RDGE + 4 x IS + 4 x ROCK + 3 x RNGE + 1 x SLP ‘hillside/slope/terrace’).<sup>6</sup> This leaves 150 toponyms that designate non-orographic features (e.g. 74 x STRM, 23 x HMSD, 8 x RESV, 6 x LOC, 6 x PT). many of these features would be associated with a nearby elevated feature bearing the specific or generic *Sugarloaf-Sugar Loaf*, or otherwise a hill or mountain without that designation but still recognised as a kind of inselberg shaped like a traditional sugarloaf. Twelve percent of the 662 (*n.* 80) are SGTs—either *Sugarloaf* or *Sugar Loaf*.<sup>7</sup> What is perhaps even more intriguing is that it is the most common SGT type of any natural geographic feature in Australia (63 x HILL/MT/PEAK/TRIG, 1x PT, and 1x STRM). Indeed, it is also the most common SGT toponym in Canada and the United States (see Table 2).

Regarding the spelling of the name, Gudde (1956, p. 242) claims that ‘When the name is used alone it is often spelled Sugar Loaf, but when it is used with a generic like hill, mountain, creek, point, etc., the spelling is ordinarily Sugarloaf.’ He does not provide any quantitative evidence for this. With the exception of New Zealand, Table 2 shows that in fact the reverse is true, not only in the US, but also in Canada and Australia.<sup>8</sup> For the sake of completeness, Table 2 also includes the generic preceded by the definite article, where the same kind of pattern is revealed.<sup>9</sup> In such toponyms the definite article can be considered to function as (or to replace) a specific element, leaving the ensuing GFT to be the expected generic element of the toponym, and thus retaining the base SPECIFIC + GENERIC structure. This notion is echoed by Zinkin (1969, p. 183), who also regards the definite article in such cases as a specific element because ‘[...] the definite article serves as the specifying element which modifies the generic member’.

Table 3 details the number of instances of spelling ‘sugarloaf’ as a closed compound noun and as an open compound noun for ‘Sugarloaf’ toponyms of all grammatical structures in the four jurisdictions. (There were no occurrences of hyphenated compounds.) As can be seen, a similar pattern of spelling emerges as that displayed in Table 2. This suggests the spelling of ‘sugarloaf’ is not contingent upon the toponym being simplex or not, as suggested by Gudde, but rather simply as a matter of spelling style, as in ‘stone<sup>y</sup>’ vs ‘ston<sup>y</sup>’, or the variant spellings of ‘placename’, ‘place-name’ and ‘place name’.

Given the rarity and the counterintuitive nature of SGTs, it can be imagined that Gudde was perhaps thinking that the open compound construct was more common in these forms because they seemed to imitate or fit the standard SPECIFIC + GENERIC structure of toponyms, with *Sugar* functioning as the SPECIFIC element, and *Loaf* the GENERIC element.



Table 2.

Jurisdiction	SGTs		'The' Toponyms	
	<i>Sugarloaf</i>	<i>Sugar Loaf</i>	<i>The Sugarloaf</i>	<i>The Sugar Loaf</i>
Australia	65	15	35	11
Canada	12	9	3	3*
New Zealand	4	32	0	3
United States	119	27	3	0
<b>Totals</b>	200	83	41	16
	(70.7%)	(29.3%)	(71.4%)	(28.7%)

\* Including 1x *Le Sugar Loaf*

Table 3.

Jurisdiction	Spelling of all 'Sugarloaf' Toponyms	
	<i>Sugarloaf</i>	<i>Sugar Loaf</i>
Australia	602	60
Canada	67	28
New Zealand	10	42
United States	603	115
<b>Totals</b>	1282	245
	(84.2%)	(15.8%)

It is perhaps also worth noting that in her book about *Sugar Loaf Mountain* in Maryland not far from Washington DC (Figure 17), Choukas-Bradley (2003, p. 11) briefly outlines the geology of the mountain. It is worth citing her at some length:

Sugarloaf Mountain is a monadnock, a mountain that stands alone after the surrounding countryside has eroded away around it. Sugarloaf is made up of very hard, erosion-resistant rock called quartzite. The summit of the mountain is composed of a quartzite slab that may be as much as 200 feet thick. [...] Sugarloaf stands 800 feet above the surrounding countryside to the east, and slightly higher above the Frederick Valley to the west. On the western side of the mountain, 150-foot cliffs rise above piles of fallen rock called tallus [*sic*].

What is at first intriguing is her vacillating use of *Sugarloaf Mountain* and the singular *Sugarloaf*. Notwithstanding that the official name of the feature is *Sugar Loaf Mountain* (US Geological Survey), Choukas-Bradley uses the simplex *Sugarloaf* more often than any other spelling in her book.<sup>10</sup> What needs to be noted here, however, is that Choukas-Bradley's simplex *Sugarloaf* in this instance is *not* a SGT because technically it is a SST: the generic *Mountain* has been omitted, thus retaining the toponym's specific element *Sugarloaf*. When names of many other mountains are considered, especially well-known ones, this is not an unusual phenomenon. Consider for example the colloquial use of: *Everest*, *Kilimanjaro*, *Matterhorn*, *Erebus*, *Kosciuszko*, *Ruapehu*, *Tarawera* etc. Such truncated forms are suggestive of hypocoristic names, perhaps also indicating the personification of these features. Mountains are not the only geographic features that

undergo such colloquial name truncation, with other prominent or conspicuous features also experiencing such name pruning, but only when the truncated name cannot be confused with another feature, e.g. *Old Faithful (Geyser)*, *(Lake) Eucumbene*, *Sow and Pigs (Reef)*, *Kakadu (National Park)* etc.

Choukas-Bradley’s use of the SST naturally raises the question of how many of the so-called *Sugarloaf* SGTs are in fact SSTs. As a small case study, I shall consider the situation in Australia.<sup>11</sup> The Composite Gazetteer of Australia shows 264 toponyms where *Sugarloaf* is the specific element, of which only 6 (3x HILL, 1x MT, 1x PT, 1x STRM) have the SST *Sugarloaf* as a variant name. The remaining 23 simplex *Sugarloaf* variant names are all SGTs. Of the 80 Australian SGTs tallied in Table 2, only two have variant names where *Sugarloaf* is a specific element. All things considered then, *Sugarloaf* does not appear to be more prone to become a SST via name truncation than any other name—unless, of course, more of the 80 simplex *Sugarloafs* counted in Australia were intended to be SSTs in the first place. Unless the motivation and/or mechanism of the naming a feature has been recorded, it is impossible to know the process and intention of the naming. This issue must therefore remain unresolved. However, a number of pertinent questions still remain:

1. Why is *Sugarloaf* by far the most common SGT?
2. How common are SGTs among the other GFTs listed in Table 1?

To answer question 1, it would help to settle question 2 first. In answering question 2, I shall once again only deal with the Australian toponymic landscape. Table 4 enumerates the number of toponyms in the Composite Gazetteer of Australia that contain the GFTs of Table 1, as specific elements, generic elements or as simplex.<sup>12</sup> What is at first striking is the absence of simplex toponyms for nine of the toponym classes, and the small number of instances where it does occur. However, when we consider how counterintuitive it is to name a geographic feature using a simplex GFT, it is perhaps not that surprising. For one, it violates the common toponym structure SPECIFIC + GENERIC. Other reasons may include: simplex toponyms are often eponymous, they are some other known proper name, or they are copied from other regions. Moreover, common nouns (or appellatives) rarely form proprialsised simplex toponyms.

Table 4.

GFT	Total number of toponyms comprising the GFT	Number of simplexes
<i>Amphitheatre</i>	47	6 (12.7%)
<i>Basin</i>	312	0
<i>Cirque</i>	13	0
<i>Column</i>	5	0
<i>Cone</i>	82	0
<i>Knob</i>	573	0
<i>Ledge</i>	93	0
<i>Needle</i>	52	2 ( <i>Needles</i> ) (3.8%)
<i>Pillar</i>	41	0
<i>Pyramid</i>	84	7* (8.3%)
<i>Saddle</i>	324	1 (TRIG) (0.3%)
<i>Shelf</i>	13	2 (15.4%)
<i>Sink</i>	2	0
<i>Spire</i>	19	1 (TRIG) (5.3%)
<i>Spur</i>	676	0
<i>Tower</i>	97	1 (TRIG) (1.0%)

\* None of these 7 simplexes designated natural geographic features.

We saw above that there are 662 toponyms that had *Sugarloaf* or *Sugar Loaf* as an element, 80 of which (12.1%) were simplexes. A similar number of toponyms have the GFT *Spur* (676) and *Knob* (573) but neither have any simplex forms. Without knowing the motivation for the naming of these 80 simplexes one can only speculate on the popularity of the *Sugarloaf* simplex. When the GFT *Sugarloaf* is compared to the others in Table 4, we see that it is transparently bimorphemic (i.e. consists of two meaningful elements). In other words, it is a compound noun. The fact that it is sometimes rendered as an open compound noun supports this. None of the other GFTs in the table are transparently bimorphemic or can be split. Is this the underlying basis for its attractiveness as a simplex toponym? Or is it that the term is aesthetically pleasing, has positive connotations, or perceived to be euphonious?

Another conceivable explanation could be that prominent, isolated, cone-shaped orographic features may be more geographically commonplace, or may simply be seen as more conspicuous to the average eye than any of the other geographic features listed in Table 4. Certainly some, such as columns, needles, or cirques, are not ubiquitous. Perhaps this, together with the attractiveness of the name, makes *Sugarloaf* an appealing name choice.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Ignoring the apparent inconsistency in meaning and designation of inselberg terms in the geological and geographic literature, what emerges is an equally inconsistent application of the term 'sugarloaf' to orographic features. What may have started as a fairly clear application of the term to inselbergs (specifically to bornhardts) shaped more or less like *Pão de Açúcar* in Rio de Janeiro, the sense and designation of 'sugarloaf' seems to have attenuated over time to a more flattened, spread out, and less upright elevation. Notwithstanding this, the *OED*'s 1555 reference to the volcano *El Pico del Teide* on Tenerife (Figure 4) as 'a greate hyghe picke lyke a suger lof' suggests sugarloaves had such a shape also. This makes sense because as sugar is scraped or cut off a traditional sugarloaf, its tall cylindrical shape would gradually have become blunted, thereby giving it the shape of an archetypal volcano. As more and more sugar is scraped off, the loaf would increasingly resemble a low profile shield volcano similar in shape to many of the *Sugarloafs* represented in Figures 10-17.

When images of *Sugarloafs* in general are considered, the majority are relatively prominent hills or small mountains, roughly round in circumference, and either have a dome, or an acute- or obtuse-angled cone shape. In addition, they are generally isolated elevations (in other words inselbergs) that stand above the surrounding area even if their insularity is not immediately discernible from ground level. For instance, the *Mount Sugarloaf* in Figure 15 does not appear to be insular; however, when viewed from above (Figure 18) it is clear that it stands alone in a relatively level landscape. The aerial view of this mount does not show the archetypal conical shape of a Sugarloaf, thereby demonstrating that variability also exists in this dimension of the feature. Nevertheless, when viewed from ground level it does appear to have an obtuse conical shape. It is, after all, from this perspective that it would have initially been given its name.



**Figure 18.**  
*Mount Sugarloaf, Corryong, VIC.*  
(Source: Google Maps)

I shall let Burrill (1956, p. 129) have the final word on the subject because she sums up the *Sugarloaf* situation most aptly:

[Toponymic generics] are the terms that are identified with specific individual features by layman and professional alike. Jones Prairie may look like a marsh to you, but if enough people call it prairie, that is what a prairie is to them (or that area), and that is what you will call it if you want to communicate to them an idea about it. Undoubtedly, one of the most important factors in the spread of topographic terms has been the naming of individual features. Actual or fancied resemblance of a strange natural feature and a familiar object is enough to start the process. An apt term, applied to more features of comparable appearance and with different specifics, becomes a toponymic generic. Once established it tends to persist even though its connotation may come to be almost the opposite of the original application, and even though the original resembling object passes out of use and generations arise who never saw one or heard of one.

All this may similarly have contributed to an attenuated sense of the *sugarloaf* shape.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Acknowledgement*: Many thanks to David Blair for his insightful comments and suggestions for improvement on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of *Teide* is unknown.

<sup>3</sup> 'Proprialisation' refers to the process of an appellation (common noun) becoming a proper name.

<sup>4</sup> I draw a distinction between (a) 'generic term', i.e. a common noun designating a type of topographic feature, and (b) 'generic element', i.e. that part of a toponym that consists of a generic term. A 'generic term' should be viewed in the same light as a common noun, a lexical item that can be defined grammatically or morphologically, whereas a 'generic element' should be seen as an element of a toponym (i.e. a proper name) that functions as a classifier.

<sup>5</sup> There are numerous other toponymic forms, these may include: solid compounds, e.g. *Rutherglen*, *Bankstown*, *Forestville*, *Brookvale*, *Alberton*, *Ellendale*; hyphenated compounds, e.g. *Tomato-Stick Cave*, *Bob-a-Day Park*, *Brighton-Le-Sands*; open compounds that include binomials, e.g. *Coal and Candle Creek*, *Sow and Pigs Reef*, *Linger and Die Creek*; participial forms, e.g. *Rotten Swamp*, *Unnamed Corner*, *Disputed Plain*, *Felled Timber Creek*, *Rising Fast Creek*, *Murdering Creek*; phrases, e.g. *Chain of Ponds*, *Valley of the Giants*, *Leg of Lamb Bank*, *Butt of Liberty* (PT), *Run o' Waters Creek*, *Bust Me Gall Hill*, *Meeting of the Waters* (LOC), etc.

<sup>6</sup> I count TRIG stations among them because they are always on top of hills or mountains. I also include the 4 x IS in this category because they are all named *Sugarloaf Rock*, indicating they are steep prominences.

<sup>7</sup> There are an additional 29 instances of the 662 toponyms where *Sugarloaf* is a variant name.

<sup>8</sup> The data in Table 2 were extracted from the online gazetteers of Australia (Geoscience Australia), Canada (Natural Resources Canada), New Zealand (Land Information New Zealand), and the United States (United States Geological Survey).

<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia provides an interesting list of some of the world's orographic features that bear the name *Sugarloaf* (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_mountains\\_named\\_Sugarloaf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mountains_named_Sugarloaf)).

<sup>10</sup> The USGS also lists: *Mont de Sugarlov*, *Pain de Sucre*, *Sugarloaf*, and *Sugarloaf Mountain* as permissible name variants.

<sup>11</sup> The gazetteers of Canada and New Zealand do not provide variant names for features. The gazetteer of the USA only provides variant names in its individual 'Feature Detail Report' for every toponym, not in its 'Feature Query Results'. Searching for variant names in each 'Feature Detail Report' would be a task too arduous to undertake.

<sup>12</sup> Many toponyms that contained the elements *Pyramid* or *Tower* designated buildings. These were not included in Table 4.