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Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

an initiative of the Australian Academy of Humanities

Tasmania's Tongan toponyms

Previously in *Placenames Australia* and in one of our Occasional Papers[1] I've listed some of the placenames in Australia that originated in Oceania (i.e. Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia). There aren't all that many, but occasionally I find new ones. I recently came across two in Tasmania that transparently come from Tonga, *Tongatabu* and *Mount Tonga* (formerly *Mount Tongatabu*).

Tongatapu is the name of the main island of the Kingdom of Tonga (*tonga* = 'south'; *tapu* = 'sacred; forbidden; holy; forbidden ground or object; sacredness').[2] The Kingdom's capital, Nuku'alofa, is situated there.[3] English derives the word *taboo* from the Tongan term *tapu*.[4] It was first recorded by Cook in 1777, after which it edged its way into the English lexicon:

> 1777 J. Cook *Jrnl.* 15 June (1967) III. i. 129
> [At Tongataboo] When dinner came on table not one of my guests would sit down or eat a bit of any thing that was there. Every one was *Tabu*, a word of a very comprehensive meaning but in general signifies forbidden. (*OED*)

The first toponym, *Tongatabu*, is a mountain (a peak of 573 metres), 7.7 km south of Geeveston, near Port Huon on the Huon River.[5]

Placenames Tasmania's websearch for *Mount Tonga* provides the most available information on the relationhip between this toponym and its near-relative:

> The feature to which this name is now officially assigned was shown on Plan 15 Kent, dated 1854, as Mount Thabor or Tongataboo [sic]. There was also another feature named Mount Tongatabu overlooking Port Arthur which appeared on Admiralty Chart No 1475, the result of a survey by HMS Dart in 1893. Although there is no record of precisely how or when each name was given, it is thought probable that they derived from their being likened to the shape of that Pacific island. Tongatabu is the main island in the Tonga group. It was ascertained that most local people did not use the term 'Mount' for the Esperance feature and to eliminate the duplication the smaller Tasman feature was assigned the abbreviated 'Mount Tonga'.



Tasmania's Tongatabu.
(Source: Denis, 'Hiking South East Tasmania')

The first documentary evidence of the toponym I have been able to find is in the *Hobart Town Mercury* of 1857.

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In this issue: Tasmania's Tongan toponyms – 1 • Where are all the koalas hiding? – 4 • Foxs Elbow Road – 6 • Canberra Placenamers – 8 • Linguistic & toponymic sovereignty – 10 • Puzzle 100 – 12

From the Editor



This 101st edition of *Placenames Australia* has reminded me how indebted we are to our regular readers for their contributions. It's not just the articles by David McDonald, Peter McInnes and Joshua Nash—it's the 'notes and queries' that add to our knowledge of placenames or ask questions which send us off to check our memory banks. For instance, there's two examples below: Mervyn Hopton's plea on *Geramanbulyan*, and our tip about Geoff Wharton's resource on *Weipa*. For a real puzzler or two, I can point you to David McDonald's *Goldmond* query (page 7); or Chris Woods' questions on the the pronunciation of *Canowindra* (QLD) and *Albany* (WA) on page 9.

Your appetite for tricky questions still unsatisfied? If so, we have Puzzle 100 for you on page 9—a *Canberra* special this time, thanks to Peter Phillips.

David Blair
<editor@anps.org.au>

Geramanbulyan, anybody?

Our correspondent Mervyn Hopton is researching the placename *Geramanbulyan*. Geramanbulyan Creek, near Gin Gin and west of Bundaberg (QLD), runs into the Burnett River. There are historical references to a Geramanbulyan parish, although that is now possibly encompassed by the present Gin Gin parish. What is the origin of this name? Mervyn's research in archives of plans and maps indicates that it's post-1850. We've turned our attention to it, but so far we have found no further answers,(although clearly the word is of Aboriginal origin). If you know anything that might help the quest, email the Editor and we'll pass it on.

The Weipa survey

Weipa is a town on Western Cape York Peninsula (QLD), and Geoff Wharton (one of our valued subscribers since 2005) has been running a project for the Weipa Town Authority this year. He produces a weekly post about the origins of Weipa placenames on the WTA Facebook site; the posts are then loaded as a permanent record on the WTA website. Geoff's Local Toponymy page is a fine example of toponymic reporting— we highly recommend a visit to the site for anyone interested in the names of places (particularly the street names) as they progressively developed within Weipa township.

'Nameless' places

Last time, we noted that our places occasionally have names which strongly imply that they are, in fact, not named at all. By a remarkable coincidence, we just came across confirmation of this in our photo files. The photo was unlabelled, so we don't know where it comes from. Queensland, however, does have two such 'no name' creeks (one north of Longreach, the other to its east)—so it's a fair bet that it's one of those.



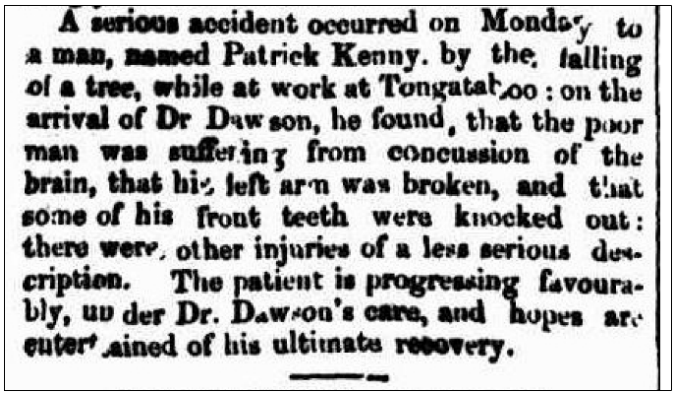
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...from page 1

...Tasmania's Tongan toponyms



A serious accident occurred on Monday to a man, named Patrick Kenny, by the falling of a tree, while at work at Tongataboo: on the arrival of Dr Dawson, he found, that the poor man was suffering from concussion of the brain, that his left arm was broken, and that some of his front teeth were knocked out: there were other injuries of a less serious description. The patient is progressing favourably, under Dr. Dawson's care, and hopes are entertained of his ultimate recovery.

'Country Districts – Franklin', Hobart Town Mercury, Monday 13 April 1857, p. 3

A news item (above) of a local workplace injury reported that it happened at 'Tongataboo'.

The Placenames Tasmania note on the origin of *Tongatabu* is part of its *Mount Tonga* entry. It seems this name has its origin in the surveying expedition of the British hydrographic survey vessel *HMS Dart.* It appears on the Admiralty Chart 1474 showing Port Arthur. Lieut. Comm.r H.E. Purey-Cust R.N. was master of the *Dart* during the survey of Port Arthur. Prior to his appointment to the *Dart* in 1892, he served as a hydrographer in the Red Sea, on the East Coast of Africa, in China, and in the Pacific, and may therefore have visited Tonga, whence *Mount Tonga(tabu)*'s name. However, according to Lavaka (1979, p. 59), prior to Purey-Cust's command of the *Dart*, the ship had cruised the West Pacific in 1884, and in the South Pacific between 1886 and 1893. Lavaka further claims that according to the (Tasmanian?) 'Nomenclature Board', 'Mt Tonga could have been likened by one of the *Dart*'s men to the main island of Tonga, from a certain direction, and called it Tongatabu. The Department said perhaps the same thing happened to Mount Tongatabu which is in the southwest of Hobart...' Although this is an attractive theory, it is unsubstantiated, and so is purely speculative.

Apart from the information outlined above, I have not been able to find any further information on the naming of these two mountain features. What is clear though is Tongatabu was named in the early to mid-1850s, and Mt Tonga(tabu) some 40 years later. Any further information from our readers would be gratefully received!

There are also several other locations that bear the name *Tongatabu* and *Tonga* in Tasmania—a Tongatabu Road north of Hobart, and a Tonga Place in Ravenswood, Launceston. However, street names are not the concern of ANPS, so we shall ignore the naming of these. There are, nonetheless, various other locations in Australia whose names are perhaps derived from the Pacific kingdom—NSW: Tonga (PRSH, HMSD), Tonga Creek, Tonga Island (LOC), and Tonga Park (RESV); QLD: Tonga Mountain and Tonga Range; SA: Tonga Bore, Tonga Well, Tonga Hill, and Tonga Creek—however, we'll reserve those for a later edition of *Placenames Australia*.

Jan Tent



Port Arthur Historic Site with Mount Tonga in the background to the left.

(Source: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Beyond_the_Neck)

references on page 7

Where are all the koalas hiding?

You might think that since the koala is regarded as an iconic Australian marsupial, its name would be well represented in the placenames of NSW. Not so: in fact, there are currently only 6 entries that include the term 'koala' in the database of the NSW Geographical Names Board (GNB), and most of these are of relatively recent origin. Three reflect the creation of koala reserves to protect dwindling populations and habitats. The *Koala Beach* entry is for a discontinued name, now replaced by the rather more prosaic *Pottsville*.

If we search for the word 'bear' we get only a slight improvement. The most prominent topographical feature explicitly linked to the koala is Bear Mountain near Armidale. According to the GNB its origins relate to a miner who threw a rock at a koala and inadvertently found gold. (It is not recorded whether the aforementioned koala lived or died as a result.)

It appears the koala was comprehensively ignored by early placenamers. But have we been looking in the wrong place? Could our 'koala' names be hiding elsewhere? We know, for example, that it was originally an Indigenous word and that transcriptions from Aboriginal languages into English spelling tend to be variable. So it is no surprise to discover that the name of the Sydney suburb of Mount Colah is believed to refer to the local koala population at the time of settlement (since in the Sydney language *gula* and *gulawany* are forms of the word for 'koala'). There may well be other spellings of the word in our placenames, and this could be a productive avenue for future searches.

To turn to a quite different route, what words other than 'bear' might reveal placename examples? We know that koalas were called not only *koala bears* but also *monkey bears*. What do we find if we search the GNB register for 'monkey', an animal not at all associated with Australia? Perhaps surprisingly, the GNB list produces 29 such entries. The following table lists some of these, together with one found in old newspaper records.

Name	Feature	Location
Monkey Station	Outstation	Nyngan
Monkey Creek	Creek	Taralga
Monkey Creek	Creek	Blue Mountains
Monkey Creek (variant)	River (Werriberri River)	Picton
Monkey Creek	Creek	Tamworth
Monkey Ropes Creek	Creek	Warragamba
Monkey Ropes Creek	Creek	Morton National Park
Mungyer Bore	Bore	Moree
Mongyer	Parish and Lagoon	Moree Plains
Mungery	Parish, Creek and Tank	Coonamble
Mungi	Parish	Moree Plains
The Monkey Scrub	Tallegar, Sandgate, Merri Merri State Forests	
Mungery Racecourse	Racecourse	Narromine
Mungery	Rural Place	Parkes
Monkey Top	Bluff	Naradhan
Monkeygar	Anabranch	Warren

A good proportion of the 'Monkey' placenames are associated with water—rivers, creeks, anabranches or intermittent water sources such as gullies. This is suggestive of early settlers sighting koalas using these water sources for hydration. Indeed, the first named Monkey Creek in Australia is a river in the Wollondilly LGA, now listed as a variant of *Werriberri Creek*.[1] An obvious problem with this evocative image is that koalas rarely seek out water. They obtain most of their water requirements from leaves, which can contain up to 50% water.[2] This removes the need for a koala to search for a drink of water, except during very hot or dry periods.

It is possible that the 'Monkey' reference was to the Monkey Gum tree,[3] and by association to koalas, as this

continued next page

tree is common in and around the Central Tablelands and Great Dividing Range.

> In the Bermagui district it has the extraordinary name of 'monkey gum'. It is stated that the 'native bears' or 'koalas' are especially fond of the foliage of this tree, as many as fifty being seen on one at one time. The native bear is, on the South Coast, often known as the Monkey Bear. [4]

This might also explain why some *Monkey Hills* exist in our data in the NSW tablelands area. Regardless of the specific tree, this seems to show that others have noted the link between 'Monkey' nomenclature and koalas. That said, there is no evidence in Trove or the GNB of any multi-element placenames such as *Monkey Gum Creek* or *Monkey Bear Creek*. This I believe is a significant gap in our evidence base for the hypothesis that 'Monkey' within placenames is a reference to koalas.

There is another variant, also associated with creeks, that is more promising—'Monkey Ropes'. This appears to reference the commonly-named monkey rope vine (*Parsonsia straminea*),[5] which occurs along Australia's east coast, from north-eastern Queensland to southern New South Wales, as far south as Mount Gulaga. Is it possible that some of our Monkey Creeks have lost the 'Rope' component of their name?

The trees and vines of those Monkey Creeks located in and around the heavily wooded ravines of the Great Dividing Range do fit the bill perfectly. However, a few of our placenames, such as *The Monkey Scrub*, are located too far inland, well beyond this vine's habitat.[6] For these locations we would require another explanation. It would be tempting to revisit the koala for this, since The Monkey Scrub is a koala habitat.[7] But this very locality raises another teasing possibility: the Scrub is located in the parish of Gandymungydel. Could it be, we wonder, that this parish name of Aboriginal origin has embedded within it an element (*mungy*) that sounds very like 'monkey'?

A Mr T. L. Richardson, previously an owner of 'Murrawombie' station (38 km north of Nyngan) and its 'Monkey' outstation on the Bogan River,[8] wrote to the *Science of Man* journal in 1899 with the following items in a wordlist:[9]

> **Monki** - Place of native willow (Mungyer —the native willow.)
>
> **Mungery** - Place of native willow.
>
> **Mungyer** - Place of native willow; a lagoon.

The Native Willow is a common name for several dryland tree species present in the far west of New South Wales, including the Wilga and the River Cooba. We should note, though, that these species are not well represented in the tablelands and ranges, as they are not particularly frost-tolerant. Richardson's *monki* report may have limited value in explaining the Monkey Creek placenames in and around the Blue Mountains.

Far to the north of Richardson's property in the County of Bernarba, we do have a remarkable confluence of Mungi (Monki), Mungyer and Mungery placenames.[10] In Wiradjuri *mungi* means 'Murray cod' which is found throughout the Murray Darling Basin.[11]

To add a complication, we know that 'monkey' was also formerly a shearers' term for sheep. Perhaps that might explain why 'Monkey' feature names are widespread?

To summarise...

How can we summarise the survey of 'Monkey' placenames up to this point? The search has found little hard evidence of any link to koalas, their habits or their habitat. It has found some evidence that the 'Monkey' element in placenames may have its origin in discourse quite unrelated to koalas.

Peter McInnes

Endnotes

[1] The GNB entry reports that the stream was 'originally recorded as Werriberri or Monkey Creek. Assigned as Monkey Creek on 23 May 1975.'

[2] NSW Government, Koala General Fact Sheet; accessed 18 July 2023.

[3] *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*

[4] 'The Genus Eucalyptus', *The Australasian*, Saturday 24th January 1914.

[5] Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants, *Parsonsia straminea*; accessed 18 July 2023.

[6] GNB Database entry for *The Monkey Scrub*.

[7] NSW Government Koala profile, website accessed 19 July 2023.

[8] 'Squatting in the North West', *Empire*, Friday 31 January 1868 p. 3.

[9] T. L. Richardson, Further linguistic information, *Science of man and Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia*, *2*(11), 1899, 212.

[10] See, for instance, Map of the County of Benarba, Central Division, NSW 1907.

[11] See the *Wiradjuri Dictionary Online* at https://wiradjuri.wcclp.com.

Foxs Elbow Road...

As I write this, it is the New South Wales school holidays. The Kings Highway, the principal road linking Canberra with the NSW South Coast, is thick with holiday traffic. Seventeen kilometres west of Braidwood, motorists bound for Batemans Bay pass a seemingly unremarkable T-intersection. A sign beside the highway marks the junction with Foxs Elbow Road, Warri, NSW.



Foxs Elbow? What a weird name for a road! I checked a road map to obtain an overview of the locality. The road is sealed, just 3.8 km long, and runs through farmland: sheep country. From the highway it runs westward and, about halfway along, makes a broad sweep of some 35 degrees towards the south-south-west. The road sign at the highway junction is mis-spelled 'Fox's Elbow'; note the aberrant apostrophe in 'Fox's'.

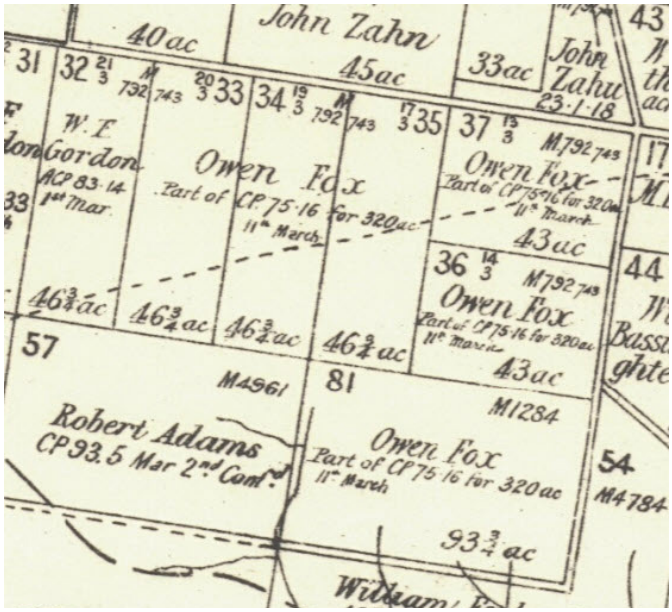
My first thought was that the road's name is linked to its shape: do foxes have elbows? The answer is yes, they do! Their elbows are on their front legs, high up near the chest, and the elbow joints point sharply backwards. But the road makes a gentle curve, not a sharp elbow-like bend.

'Elbow' is not found in the current ANPS *Feature Catalogue*, nor in the NSW Geographical Names Board's *Place Naming Glossary*. However, Western Australia's Landgate Toponymical Data Dictionary has 'elbow' as a feature class, describing it as 'A sudden turn in a channel, river, or shoreline OR a curve in the course of a stream'. No mention there of a sharp bend in a road.

In contrast, the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines 'elbow' as, among other things, 'an elbow-shaped bend or corner'. This usage is well represented in the *Composite Gazetteer of Australia* (2026). It contains 41 geographical-feature records with 'Elbow' in the name. They are concentrated in Queensland and South Australia, with 11 records each (27%), followed by Western Australia with seven (17%), New South Wales and Tasmania with five each (12%), and the Northern Territory and Victoria with one each (2%). There are none in the ACT. Water-related features predominate, with 20 of the 41 records belonging to the Gazetteer's 'Hydrology' group. Other examples include Elbow Hill, Elbow Yard and Elbow Gully.

Australia Post's list of Street Types includes 'Elbow', abbreviated as 'ELB', hence **[number] Ebony Elbow, Warnbro WA 6169, or [number] Ebony ELB, Warnbro WA 6169.**

The old parish maps often give an indication of when roads were built, or at least when old tracks became important enough to be mapped. The road in question does not appear on the old Parish of Warri maps. However, a straight track, with no elbow in it, runs WSW from the main road on the map's first edition, dated 1884. It passes through six selections, totalling 320 acres, granted to Owen Fox in 1875.



Map extract, Parish of Warri (1906). NSW State Library Collection. Record 74Vv7GKqywXM.

Today's Foxs Elbow Road has a distinct curve and runs through what was Owen Fox's land. In 1941, Foxs Elbow was being used as a local placename: the *Braidwood Review and District Advocate* referred to it as a possible site for a military camp. That and subsequent sources have referred to 'Foxs Elbow' as a general area, without mention of the road.

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...Foxs Elbow Road

Owen Fox was born c. 1818 in Sligo, Ireland and came to the Braidwood district in the early 1840s or before. He initially worked as farm overseer for Hugh Gordon of 'Manar', in the parish of Warri. After leaving that position, Fox settled on his own farm—the land he selected in 1875 through which Foxs Elbow Road now runs. His wife, Catherine, died tragically in 1884 when their home caught fire and she was trapped inside. Fox remained on his farm until shortly before his death, when he sold it to W. F. Gordon of 'Manar' and moved to the Sydney suburb of Waverley, to live with his married adopted daughter. He died there on 19 March 1903, aged about 85.

David McDonald

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'Obituary', *Freeman's Journal*, 28 March 1903, p. 21.

Western Australia, Landgate. (2026). *Geographic Names (GEONOMA) (LGATE-013) Data Dictionary,* (version 1.3, July 2026).

[*Editor:* We have now added *elbow* to the ANPS Feature Catalogue as a term within the feature set BEND, thanks to David's reporting here.]

Goldmond?

Andrew Faulkner is an accomplished military historian who doubles as a journalist. He has published a small book Death on the Somme, as a serial on Substack.

Towards the end of Part II, he writes:

> When Percy Style enlisted in Adelaide in November, 1915, he gave particulars that pointed to a restless life. Born in Goldmond, NSW. Next of kin a father in Boulder City, WA. The Adelaide GPO as his postal address. A restless life and a mysterious one too – Goldmond is not revealed by any number of search engines or online Atlases. Was it his little joke at the attestation clerk's expense?[14]

His reference [14] reads:

> Apologies to any Goldmondians if it, and you, exist, but I'm damned if I can find it. Perhaps the attestation clerk misheard 'Goulburn'.

I have checked Style's World War I service record and his place of birth is definitely given as 'Goldmond, NSW', in very clear handwriting.

This seems to leave two questions up in the air. Was Goldmond real or mythical? If the latter, is there a technical label for 'places that don't exist'?

David McDonald

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...Tasmania's Tongan toponyms

Reference

Lavaka, G. (1979). Report in *Pacific Islands Monthly*. 50(12), 1 December. p.59

Endnotes

[1] See ANPS Occasional Paper 17 (2025), *Australia's toponymic links the the Pacific*; and articles in Placenames Australia in the issues dated December 2019, September 2021, March and June 2026.

[2] Like Tonga, Fiji also derives its name from a compass direction, *viti* 'east', cf. the main island's name *Vitilevu* (lit. 'big east'), and the islands *Naviti* ('the east' lit.'rising of the sun') and the *Lomaiviti* (Islands) (lit. 'centre of Fiji').

[3] The apostrophe in *Nuku'alofa* signifies a glottal stop.

[4] Various cognate forms of the word are found throughout Oceania, e.g. *kapu* (Hawai'i) and *tabu* [ta^{m}bu] (Fiji). Note, the stress on these words is on the first syllable, unlike in English *taboo* where it is on the second.

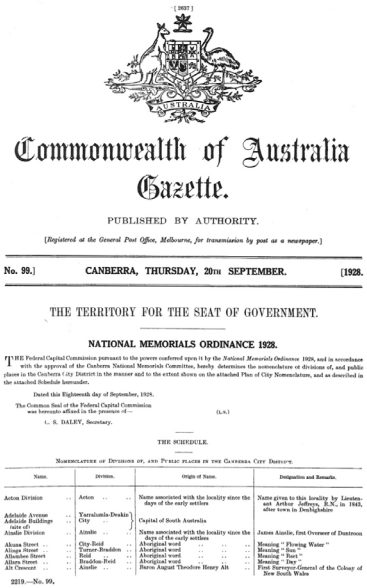
[5] Geeveston is the township where the popular ABC series *Rosehaven* was filmed.

Canberra Placenamers...

An update by Peter Phillips, former placenames officer with the ACT Government (2008-2017).

Four years ago I created a special interest group bringing together people from past and present who have played official roles in adding new names to Canberra's landscape. Those of you with good memories may recall an article in the December 2022 edition of *Placenames Australia* that reported on an inaugural **Canberra Placenamers Dinner**.

We've now met for four annual dinners. Each is set on 20 September, the date back in 1928 when the Commonwealth of Australia formally gazetted the first 300 street, suburb and other placenames for Canberra.



Commonwealth of Australia Gazette.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

[Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, for transmission by post as a newspaper.]

No. 99.] CANBERRA, THURSDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER. [1928.

THE TERRITORY FOR THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT.

NATIONAL MEMORIALS ORDINANCE 1928.

THE Federal Capital Commission pursuant to the power conferred upon it by the *National Memorials Ordinance* 1928, and in accordance with the approval of the Canberra National Memorials Committee, hereby determines the nomenclature or divisions of, and public places in the Canberra City District in the manner and to the extent shown on the attached Plan of City Nomenclature, and as described in the attached Schedule hereunder.

Dated this Eighteenth day of September, 1928.

The Common Seal of the Federal Capital Commission was hereunto affixed in the presence of—

(L.S.)

L. S. DALEY, Secretary.

THE SCHEDULE.

NOMENCLATURE OF DIVISIONS OF, AND PUBLIC PLACES IN THE CANBERRA CITY DISTRICT.

Name.	Division.	Origin of Name.	Designation and Remarks.
Acton Division ..	Acton	Name associated with the locality since the days of the early settlers	Name given to this locality by Lieutenant Arthur Jeffreys, R.N., in 1841, after town in Denbighshire
Adelaide Avenue ..	Yarralumla-Deakin	Capital of South Australia	
Adelaide Buildings (site of) ..	City		
Ainslie Division ..	Ainslie	Name associated with the locality since the days of the early settlers	James Ainslie, first Overseer of Duntroon
Akuna Street ..	City-Reid ..	Aboriginal word	Meaning "Flowing Water"
Alinga Street ..	Turner-Braddon ..	Aboriginal word	Meaning "Sun"
Allambee Street ..	Reid	Aboriginal word	Meaning "Rest"
Altura Street ..	Braddon-Reid ..	Aboriginal word	Meaning "Day"
Alt Crescent ..	Ainslie	Baron August Theodore Henry Alt ..	First Surveyor-General of the Colony of New South Wales

2219.—No. 99.

Rather than set up continuing reunions, my intent is to conduct yearly meetings, up to a finale centenary dinner in 2028.

Our recent dinner was aptly held at King Malley's Irish Pub, given Home Affairs Minister O'Malley had officiated at the 1913 ceremony when Canberra's name was chosen for the national capital. Aside from dining, the evening program allowed participants to announce what has been keeping them busy, including the latest research projects by our historian members.

I delivered a short talk revealing that one-fifth of Canberra's 121 suburb names have a Scottish association. I then subjected our toponomists to an **ACT placenames quiz** before ending with a happy group portrait.



If avid readers of *Placenames Australia* wish to test themselves, the challenging 10 questions are here—cast your eyes to the following page!

Peter Phillips

Favourites, and other things

In our September issue, we listed some of the Editor's favourite Australian placenames. Most of them, he confessed, made the list because of their alluring sound. Chris Woods has added to the list with his top two:

Belubula (River) - because it sounds like water bubbling over rapids;

Numbugga - Chris suggests it may have been named by someone camping out in winter!

As for *heterological placenames*, he couldn't resist...

Newtown, NSW - it was new when named, but when does it stop being 'new'?

Gold Coast, QLD - no gold was found there, except for property prices.

Orange, NSW - doesn't grow oranges, and isn't orange

Crooked Straight, SA - a section of the River Murray - is this a self-referencing antonym, auto-antonym, or contranym/contronym?

Puzzle 100 *The Great Canberra Quiz*

If you're not a long-term resident of Canberra (or one of the Dinner gang), feel free to Google away!
Answers on the BACK PAGE.

1 Which Canberra suburb commemorating a woman's name is located closest by road to City Hill?

2 What is the ACT's second longest urban road?

3 In which suburb is there a street that commemorates an Englishman born in the 12th century?

4 Who am I?

- I am commemorated by the name of a Canberra suburb and Federal electorate.
- There are only two Canberra suburbs that start with the first letter of my name.
- I led a distinguished career as a lawyer, attorney-general in the Victorian government and later in the Federal government.
- I was a high court judge.
- My appointment to a vice-regal position was not favoured by a British monarch.

5 By area, what is the smallest district of the Australian Capital Territory?

6 At the intersection of which two roads are the following four suburbs clearly visible?

- Mitchell
- Franklin
- Harrison
- Kenny

7 In which Canberra park are the following memorials located?

- the Indian Ocean Tsunami Memorial, and
- the National Site of Recognition for Thalidomide Survivors and Their Families.

8 In what order were the following division names officially notified?

Amaroo …….. Beard …….. Calwell ……..
Dickson …….. Evatt ……..

9 What is the name of the creek that flows from Mawson through Phillip and Curtin to the Molonglo River?

10 Which Canberra suburb is named after me?



I was born in 1847. I trained as a surveyor and led an expedition to find the missing explorer Ludwig Leichhardt. I traversed a route from Perth to Adelaide, along which a telegraph line was set up. I gave public lectures in London of my explorations in Australia. Appointed surveyor-general and later held office for a decade as premier of my colony. After knighthood and Federation I served as a minister and treasurer under five prime ministers. I died in 1918.

Pronunciations, here and there

Chris Woods obviously keeps his ears open for regional variations—in this case, for placenames pronounced differently around the country. **Canowindra** in central west NSW is pronounced kuh-NOWN-druh with a silent 'i', but he's pretty sure that **Canowindra Park** near Pimpana (QLD) is kan-uh-WIN-druh—or, in deference to the phoneticians out there, /kəˈnaʊndrə/ v /kænəˈwɪndrə/. (We do recall, though, that the pronunciation issue might not be so cut-and-dried: see our March 2019 issue.) And being a Taswegian these days, Chris can assure us that **Pirie Street** in New Town is /ˈpaɪri/, not the /ˈpɪri/ of **Port Pirie** in SA.

While we're on the subject, Chris asks, did **Albany** really change its pronunciation back in the 1960s, as he recalls, from /ˈɔlbəni/ to /ˈælbəni/? Anybody?

Stuart Duncan has also reminded us of that other contrasting duplicate: **Wauchope** (NSW) vs **Wauchope** (NT): /ˈwɔhoʊp/ v /ˈwɔkəp/.

Linguistic and toponymic sovereignty in...

Mapmakers love drawing straight lines. The ocean has a habit of bending them. As a toponymist, my eyes are inevitably drawn to the fraying edges of the atlas—specifically, Australia's external territories. From the tropical, phosphate-rich crags of Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean to the wind-scoured volcanic isolation of Heard Island near the Antarctic convergence, these remote outliers do something remarkable. They anchor Australia's vast maritime claims, stretching geopolitical sovereignty across millions of square kilometres of deep water.

Yet,true sovereignty isn't just about lines on an official map or flags planted in the dirt. It is about the language used to articulate space. In these external territories, we witness an extraordinary tug-of-war between official, bureaucratic naming regimes and the vernacular, lived-in namescapes of the people who actually navigate these waters.

Take the frozen south, where the Australian Antarctic Place Names Committee rules supreme over a vast white wedge of the continent. Down there, placenaming is structured, institutional, and explicitly geopolitical—a deliberate cartographic exercise designed to reinforce historical presence and scientific stewardship. The names are memorialised and fixed in gazetteers.

But turn your gaze northward to the subtropical waters of Norfolk Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Here, out on the water, a completely different type of sovereignty exists: *linguistic and toponymic sovereignty*.

When local Norfolk Island fishers head out past the reefs, they aren't navigating by the official hydrographic charts drafted in Canberra. Instead, they rely on a rich, unwritten network of offshore fishing ground names. These toponyms—passed down through generations in the Norfolk Island language, Norf'k—are based on lines of sight, underwater topography, and historic catches. They are fluid, functional, and deeply tied to local livelihood, land use and human personality.

Crucially, these names also carry vital ecological data. If an offshore reef name translates to a warning about shifting currents or seasonal swells, that placename functions as an organic environmental risk communication tool. It is a hardy and reliable linguistic insurance policy for a community living on the front lines of climate change and other shifting environmental concerns.

This is where standard definitions of sovereignty fail us. Bureaucrats tend to view Australia's external territories as isolated chess pieces on a geopolitical board, linking the tropical north to the Antarctic south through legal treaties and economic zones. But if we look closer



Casey Station, Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT)

continued next page

...Antarctica and Australia's external island territories

through the lens of toponymy, and particularly placenames not usually found on official maps or even written down, we see that the true keepers of these territories are the words, names and stories themselves.

Documenting the grammar of an island's language or recording the informal names of offshore fishing grounds isn't just an academic hobby. It is an act of preserving local linguistic and placename-based autonomy and freedom. By mapping the names that people actually use, we bridge the gap between Big Brother Australia's macro-geopolitics and the lived realities of isolated Australians who live in the geopolitical extremes of our country.



Norfolk Island: Offshore view looking south to Norfolk Island's north coast

The next time you look at a map of Australia's maritime borders, remember: the official boundaries might be drawn in ink, but the real territories are spoken into existence through language and placenames.

Joshua Nash

Adelaide Univerity / Some Islands

The bogongs are back

Our readers in the eastern states will have strong memories of the recent migration of bogong moths to their hibernation (or, more accurately, their aestivation) hangouts in the southern alps. Some will be thankful that a species that seemed to be endangered is now re-established; others will be crankily sweeping moth remains from various corners of attics, bedrooms and other nooks and crannies.

Some contributors to our favourite section of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Column 8, have however been moved to toponymic poetry. One (George Manojlovic of Mangerton) was clearly inspired by Lucky Starr's song 'I've been everywhere'; he wrote 'An entomologist recently informed me that the bogong moth throng navigates by singing the 'Bogong Moth Migratory Throng Song':



Museums Victoria 2019 / CC BY, creator: Cathy Powers

I've been to Gulgong Cooranbong Ettalong Kurrajong
Wollongong Bong Bong Binalong and Grong Grong
Bedgerebong Matong Yarramalong and Dandenong
So bogongs everywhere flap your wings and sing along!

The next day, one Peter Miniutti of Ashbury added:

Geelong Galong Booloogong Quorrobolong
Gerringong and Woodenbong

With such toponymic expertise on display, we're tempted to get in touch and invite them to join our placenames research team!

Placenames Puzzle Number 100

ANSWERS to the *Great Canberra Quiz for 2026*

How's your Canberra knowledge?

1. Kenny (although Bandler will be closest when it is officially notified; Franklin is the next closest)
2. Gungahlin Drive (13 km; behind Hindmarsh Drive, 14 km)
3. Parkes (where Langton Crescent commemorates the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, who was instrumental in the signing of the Magna Carta)
4. Sir Isaac Isaacs, the 9th Governor-General
5. Hall (from Districts Ordinance of 1966)
6. Flemington Road and Well Station Drive
7. Kings Park (memorial to the 2004 tsunami victims, unveiled 2015; thalidomide memorial, dedicated 2023)
8. Amaroo: 4 Beard: 5
   Calwell: 3 Dickson: 1
   Evatt: 2
9. Yarralumla Creek (originally appeared as *Yarrowlumla Ck* on the Narrabundah parish map of 8 August 1912)
10. Forrest (named to commemorate Sir John Forrest and his brother Alexander Forrest)

[Compiled by **Peter Phillips**]

Become a Supporting Member!

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

Please consider carefully this invitation. If you wish to become a Member

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Email: treasurer@anps.org.au
Website: https://placenames.org.au

Articles for *Placenames Australia*

Material for publication in *Placenames Australia* is always welcome. Please send all contributions to the Editor, David Blair, by email: <editor@anps.org.au>

Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

Closing dates for submissions are:

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