

# Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

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



## Skeletons in the toponymic cupboard

In my article on ‘Mutating Placenames’ in the previous issue of *Placenames Australia*, I referred to the Queensland placename *Coen* as an example of a name that has a nativised English pronunciation (i.e. an anglicised pronunciation), from the monosyllabic Dutch /koon/ [kʊn] to the disyllabic English /'koh-uhn/ ['kɒʊən]. I was recently watching the 2012 Dutch television series *De Gouden Eeuw* (‘The Golden Age’) about the Dutch golden age of the seventeenth century. The 13-part series traces the origins and ultimate demise of this period of Dutch prosperity and, in so doing, necessary reference is made to Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the fourth Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (30 April 1618–1 February 1623), and the founder of Batavia (later to become Jakarta). It was after this man that Jan Carstenszoon, the navigator of the ship *Pera* of the Dutch East India Company (usually referred to as the *VOC*), named a river on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. The river was later renamed the *Archer River*, while the name *Coen River* was bestowed on one of its tributaries. The dark history of Jan Pieterszoon Coen warrants some airing, I believe, given that his name is attached to several geographic locations in Queensland: *Coen River*, *Coen* (County), *Coen* (Township), and *Coen Lake*.

The township of Coen (named after the river) is in the Shire of Cook which lies inland on the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula on the main road of the Cape, the Peninsula Developmental Road, which runs roughly north to south through the locality. The township was established in 1877 after gold was discovered in the river.



Nowadays, Coen is a service centre to the region, and is an important supply point on the long unpaved road leading to Weipa and other northern communities. It's also a popular stopping point for tourists driving to the tip of the Cape.

Now what do we know of this Jan Pieterszoon Coen? He lived from 1587 to 1629; he was an officer of the VOC in the Dutch East Indies in the early seventeenth century, holding two terms as its Governor-General. He is known for providing the impulse that set the VOC on the path to dominance in the East Indies. His motto, *Dispereert niet, ontziet uw vijanden niet, want God is met ons* (‘Despair not, spare your enemies not, for God is with us’), clearly illustrates his single-minded ruthlessness, as well as his unshaking belief in the divinely-sanctioned nature of the VOC project. He was well-known for strictness towards subordinates and cruelty to his opponents, and his willingness to use violence to obtain his ends

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## From the Editor



Our former ANPS Director, Jan Tent, has demonstrated that his retirement to the Snowy Mountains is productive by having two articles in this issue: the lead article on unfortunately-bestowed names, and the essay 'What is a toponym?'. The latter is the first in a series entitled *Toponymy 101* which we commissioned him

to write on basic placenames theory.

Jan, by the way, offers a correction to his piece on musical lyrics from December 2013. Roman Staniferti from Vienna points out that *Ratibor* was not a German version of *Trinidad*—rather, it was the historic endonym for the Polish city *Raciborz*. Jan humbly promises never to do such a thing again!

**David Blair**  
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## Tasmanian review

The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment has announced an extensive review and modernisation of placenaming practices and legislation. These will reflect contemporary standards and enable more rigorous practices across the spectrum of official placenaming activities. Included among the many proposed changes to the legislation are: the introduction of requirements for the development and maintenance of published guidelines; the provision of an unambiguous

definition of 'place' that acknowledges all natural and manufactured features; the specification of descriptions of placename categories; and the acknowledgement that Placenames Tasmania is the official register for Tasmanian placenames.

An issues paper has been released, and the Department welcomes submissions:

<http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Placename%20Proposal%20Guidelines.pdf>

## Can you help?

*We've had several requests from our readers for assistance with finding the origin of placenames.*

### Trunkatebella

David Elliston asks about this area on the NSW South Coast. We know it was a property name that goes back to at least the 1840s, and is probably indigenous in origin. Does anyone know anything more?

### George Boyd Lookout

Ewan Lawson asked us who this feature (near Nowra NSW) is named after. We wonder if the *Kanangra-Boyd National Park* honours the same person?

### Ruth Park Walking Trail

Cheryl Toohey is intrigued by the Ruth Park Walking Trail, a feature of the Heysen Trail at Victor Harbor (SA). Did the author Ruth Park have any local connection?

*Please email the Editor if you can help: we'll pass the information on, and add it to the ANPS Database*

## Our 2015 AGM...

...was held at Flinders University on 25 September, following the ANPS Workshop (reported on page 5). Apart from the reception of various reports, the two main agenda items concerned determination of membership fees for 2015-16, and the election of the Management Committee. It was determined that fees would remain

unchanged (at \$25 for an individual, and \$250 for institutional membership). The meeting elected Dr Greg Windsor as the new President of the Association, with Dr Dale Lehner as Vice-President; all other positions on the Committee remain unchanged. Minutes of the meeting are available to members: email the Editor!

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# Brisbane city street names: a right royal theme

*As with many populated places, **Stuart Duncan** points out, Brisbane's city street nomenclature is based on a theme. Which theme? The clue is in the photo below...*

Brisbane was established in 1825 as a convict penal settlement on the banks of a river previously charted by John Oxley in December 1823.<sup>1</sup> Oxley is believed to have named the river after the New South Wales Governor at the time, Sir Thomas Brisbane (1773-1860), and the new town took its name from the river. Until June 1859, Queensland was part of New South Wales.

The earliest official plans of Brisbane—one dated 1839 by Major George Barney,<sup>2</sup> and another by Robert Dixon in 1840<sup>3</sup>—show what existed at the time but include no names on any of the roads.

However, following Governor George Gibbs' visit to Brisbane in March 1842, and four years after the settlement was opened to free settlers, Surveyor Henry Wade produced a plan<sup>4</sup> of Brisbane which showed seven street names (*Albert, Queen, George, Parker, Edward, Thomas and William*).

The current road names must have been agreed upon by September of that year, since a report to the Surveyor General in Sydney from Surveyor Wade, Survey Office Moreton Bay, mentions 'western Anne Street, Albert Street, Adelaide Street and George Street'.<sup>5</sup>

The tracing attached to the report also shows the names *South Brisbane* and *Melbourne Street, Russell Street, Grey Street* and *Stanley Quay*.

In the following year Wade produced a revised plan<sup>6</sup> of Brisbane showing the street names *Anne, Adelaide, Queen, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Mary, Margaret, Edward, Albert, George* and *William* within the then-proposed colony of Brisbane.

Brisbane River is a meandering stream, and Brisbane (city) is sited on a bend with roads laid out in the standard grid pattern. Since the area was constrained between the



*Statue of Queen Victoria in Queens Gardens, Brisbane.*

*Photo: Stuart Duncan*

reaches of the Brisbane River, the topography restricted Wade's design and limited the number of roads. Wade chose rectangular blocks with the shorter side running in a northwest/southeast direction and the southwest/northeast side being roughly double the northwest/southeast length. This layout created twice as many roads running southwest/northeast as those running northwest/southeast. According to J.G. Steele,<sup>7</sup> Governor Gibbs visited the town of Brisbane in March 1842 and reportedly said it 'will be nothing but a paltry village'.<sup>8</sup> As the street names did not appear on maps prior to his visit Gibbs probably selected or approved the names of the streets as we know

them today.

Interestingly, maps of the city of Brisbane show that streets running northwest/southeast have male names, whereas southwest/northeast running streets have female names. But whose were the names that were chosen?

Since Queen Victoria was the reigning monarch at the time, it can be assumed that *Queen Street*, the main street in the town, was named after her.

In 1842 Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert had two children: Victoria, the Princess Royal (b. Nov. 1840) and Prince Edward (later Edward VII) (b. Nov. 1841).<sup>9</sup>

Queen Victoria's family tree shows (in addition to her parents Edward, Duke of Kent, and Princess Victoria) her uncles and aunts as King George IV (r. 1820-1830), Caroline Princess of Wales, King William IV (r. 1830-1837) and Queen Adelaide. Her grandparents were King George III and Queen Charlotte. When Victoria came to the throne all these relatives were deceased. These names taken together account for *Edward, George, William, Adelaide, Elizabeth* and *Charlotte Streets*.

*continued on next page*

# ...Brisbane's street names

...from page 3

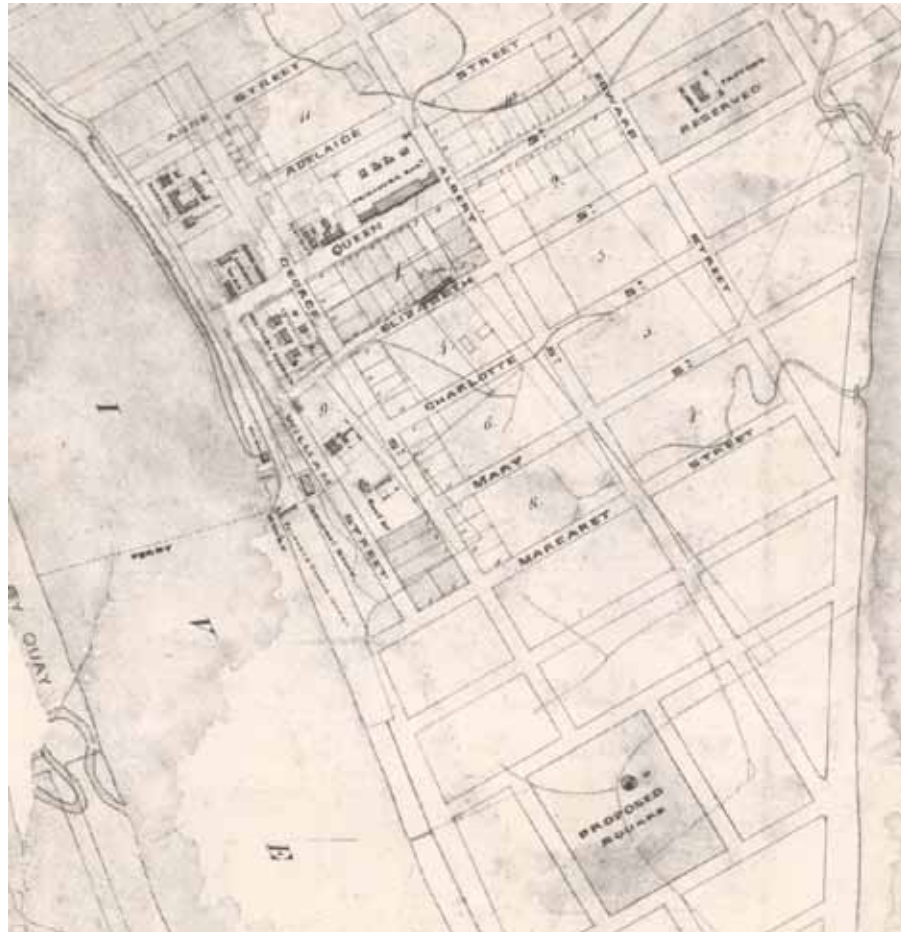
Earlier British monarchs were Anne (r. 1702-1714); Mary II (r. 1689-94); Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) and Margaret (r. 1286-1290). Names of these previous monarchs would account for the remainder of the street names shown on Wade's plan of 1843.

It is generally accepted that Brisbane's city streets were named after British royalty.<sup>10</sup> However, on Wade's 1842

during the construction of the Brisbane City Hall in 1930, the section of Albert Street between Ann and Adelaide Streets was named *Albert Square*. This itself did not last long: it was renamed *King George Square* in 1936 after the death of George V.

Queen Victoria's family, both predecessors and descendants, were well-commemorated in the naming of Brisbane's city streets. We might well be surprised, in that case, that not one of those streets was named after Victoria herself (apart from the allusive *Queen Street*). The statue of her in Queens Park, erected in 1906, and the nearby Victoria Bridge are the only Brisbane monuments to Queen Victoria.

**Stuart Duncan**



*Wade's plan of Brisbane, 1843 (detail). Courtesy of Queensland State Archives, and Department of Natural Resources and Mines*

plan there are two obvious exceptions: *Parker Street* and *Thomas Street*.

The most likely explanation is that *Thomas Street* was named in honour of Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane, and that *Parker Street* was named after Henry Parker, Private Secretary of Governor Gibbs, who is believed to have accompanied Gibbs on his 1842 Brisbane visit.

Not all of the royal names remained unchanged. Strangely, within 25 years of Wade's original plan, the spelling *Ann Street* was being used instead of his *Anne Street*.<sup>11</sup> And following the widening of Albert Street

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Oxley, John. *John Oxley notebook and letters, 1815-1823, 1888, 1895*. (microfilm CY1569, frames 56-139) – State Library of NSW.

<sup>2</sup> Barney, George. *Plan of Brisbane Town, Moreton Bay*. 1839. MS13 Queensland State Archives (copy); State Library of NSW (original).

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, Robert. Assistant Surveyor. *Town of Brisbane*. March 1840. MT3 Queensland State Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Wade, Henry. Surveyor. *Proposed plan of the Town of Brisbane*. 1842. MT6 Queensland State Archives.

<sup>5</sup> *Surveyor General's Office: correspondence received 42/7155 (QSL Reel A2.12, pages 542-546, and NSW State Records Reel 3093, Item 2/1585.2 Wade)*.

<sup>6</sup> Wade, Henry. Surveyor. *Plan of Brisbane Town, situate in the County of Stanley*. 1843. MT8 Queensland State Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Steele, J.G. *Brisbane Town in Convict Days 1814 – 1842*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975.

<sup>8</sup> Steele's information appears to be derived from John Wheeler *Further Notes on Moreton Bay Settlement* (pp 69-75), quoted in *Volume and Proceedings of Second Australian Planning Conference*, Brisbane, 1918, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> The official website of The British Monarchy. 2015. <http://www.royal.gov.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> Johnston, W. Ross. *Brisbane, the First Thirty Years*. Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1988.

<sup>11</sup> *Slater's Pocket Map of the City of Brisbane*. 1865. (BCA\_P004) [https://library.brisbane.qld.gov.au/client/en\\_GB/search/asset/43424](https://library.brisbane.qld.gov.au/client/en_GB/search/asset/43424)

## Recent events

*Two of the regular events in Australia's toponymic year took place in September. Townsville (QLD) was the location for this year's meeting of the Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia, where David Blair represented ANPS. The Annual Workshop which the Survey often runs in conjunction with the CGNA meeting happened three weeks later this year, in Adelaide.*

### CGNA Annual Forum, Townsville, 3-4 September

This year's meeting was hosted by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and held at the Reef Headquarters Aquarium.

CGNA operates as a permanent committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping (ICSM), and as such includes representatives of placenaming authorities in Australia and New Zealand.

Among the many technical issues on the agenda, a considerable length of time was given over to dual-naming policy, to achieve some clarification on the intent of the policy as it was implemented by the various Australian authorities. Various issues to do with the recognition of indigenous names were raised, in preparation for a discussion at the next meeting. Avoiding the duplication of placenames in address localities was another point of discussion, with a focus on how to ensure that names under current consideration by one authority might be communicated to other States and Territories.

The Committee also recognised that a current problem with the Gazetteer of Australia is the existence of duplicated information across entries. The publisher of

the Gazetteer, Geoscience Australia, is going to assist the relevant jurisdictions to review the problematic entries.

In one of the final agenda items of the conference, the Committee agreed to a name change rather more central than usual—it recognised that its own name was rather cumbersome and styled differently from those of comparable committees. CGNA will recommend to ICSM that it become the Permanent Committee on Place Names.



*CGNA delegates pose in Townsville, surrounded by distinctive Reef Aquarium decorative art*

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### ANPS Workshop in Adelaide, 25 September

ANPS Director Dymphna Lonergan hosted this year's Workshop at Flinders University, Adelaide.

Dr Lonergan bravely—and successfully—planned a day of 15-minute presentations for the thirty or so participants. We began the program at 10 a.m. and completed the sixteen sessions on time at 3 p.m. This, we suspect, set a world record for conference time-keeping.

The drawcard paper was presented by archeologist Dr Alice Gorman, who reported on 'Placenames in Outer

Space'—a highly acclaimed session which set the standard for the remainder of the day.

The papers which followed included some on Aboriginal placenames (including Kaurana), and others on historical, linguistic, cultural and poetic aspects of placenames in Australia.

Full details of the day's program are available: an email to the Editor or to the Director will receive a timely response.

*This is the first in a series of articles we have dubbed 'Toponymy 101'. In the ensuing issues of Placenames Australia I shall present a sequence of short vignettes on the background and some of the theoretical issues of toponymy. They will cover such topics as: the structure of toponyms (both morphological and syntactic); how toponyms help define our world; the geographical and economic significance of toponyms; and the politics of toponyms. To start with, however, we must first consider what a toponym is.*

*Jan Tent*

The term 'toponym' comes from a combination of Greek *topos* 'place' and *onoma* 'name'. Toponyms (placenames or geographic names) are like personal names, and are distinct names in a similar way. In other words, they are proper nouns (or proper names, as some call them).

The theory of names has a long and complicated history within philosophy and linguistics which we won't go into here, but suffice to say that many theories exist.<sup>1</sup> One theory of names that I rather like is the 'descriptive theory' of which Bertrand Russell was a proponent. He sees proper names as abbreviated definite descriptions: that is, they are a kind of shorthand for a definite description or a conjunction of two or more descriptions (Russell 1905). In other words, the toponym Ballarat is merely a way of describing that Victorian city, which has definite legally sanctioned boundaries, is situated on the Yarrowee River, is the most populated inland town in the state, was named by Archibald Yuille in 1837, is one of Australia's most famous gold rush towns, is the site of the Eureka Rebellion on 3 December 1854, and was proclaimed a city in 1871. All this is encapsulated in the name Ballarat. No other place in the world has that location and associated history.

To put it another way, a placename expresses the indissoluble bond between a place and what we call it: a toponym is 'a place and its name', not 'a name for places'. For instance, *Camperdown* (NSW) and *Camperdown* (Vic.) are **different** placenames, not the **same** placename appearing in **different** places. In other words, you wouldn't have a single entry for **Camperdown** in a gazetteer or a placenames dictionary, any more than you'd have a single entry for **John Howard** (which represented all the John Howards) in a dictionary of biography or an encyclopedia.<sup>2</sup> The different 'John Howards' are **distinct** people with **distinct** histories. The same applies to toponyms: different toponyms belong to distinct places or locations, with distinct histories. Toponyms *make* places, because a geographical area or feature without a designated toponym is merely space. A toponym is

therefore a *sine qua non* for the existence of a place.

Chomsky (1964, 1965) outlines, to my mind, a very important principle of linguistic theory. That is, it must realise three main objectives: observational adequacy, descriptive adequacy, and explanatory adequacy. Since linguistics has a significant role to play in toponymy, I consider these objectives to be paramount in toponymy as well. The toponymist must therefore, observe (identify) the toponyms he/she wishes to describe; have an appropriate method of simply and accurately describing the toponyms observed; and be able to account for the new manifestations (facts associated with the toponym—the *wh*- questions<sup>3</sup>) of the toponyms encountered and which require description. As Nuessel (1992:6) points out, such objectives are worth following 'because [they] can shed light on the problems of a theory of names.' I would add to this that they are worth following because they can bring rigour and form to the study of toponyms.

What else might we say about the nature of placenames as they occur in English? Firstly, placenames are generally considered to have little or no meaning beyond the power of referring to a unique or specific place. That is, they have 'denotative meaning'. We have to recognise, though, that this ignores the fact that many placenames also have a 'connotative meaning': for instance the *Gaza Strip*, *Tiananmen Square*, *Dallas*, *Auschwitz*, *Leningrad*, *Hiroshima* and many others all are associated with significant events and situations, and all have negative connotations.

Secondly, in alphabetic languages that distinguish between lower and upper case there is generally an association between proper names and capitalisation (one notable exception being German, where all nouns are capitalised).<sup>4</sup> The capitalisation of placenames in English is of course their most transparent feature.

Thirdly, there are some grammatical peculiarities shared by most placenames. In their primary application, they cannot normally be modified by a determiner (e.g. *the*,

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a, these, any, many, another), although some exceptional examples are premodified by *the*—as in ‘the Netherlands’, ‘the Azores’, ‘the Levant’, ‘the Gap’ etc.<sup>5</sup> (Although proper names functioning as toponyms cannot be grammatically modified, they themselves can function to modify common nouns, as in ‘his China escapade’.) In addition, placenames normally lack number contrast (that is, they can’t appear in the plural form); the exceptions are those that occur exclusively in plural form, such as ‘the Snowy Mountains’, ‘the Netherlands’, ‘the Pleiades’.

You will be pleased to know that the next episode of ‘Toponymy 101’ will be less theoretical than this one!

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See for example the works by: John Stuart Mill, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, John Searle, Tyler Burge, Saul Kripke, Charles Sanders Peirce, Ludwig Wittgenstein, David Kaplan, Jacques Derrida, Eugeniusz Grodzinski, Jerrold Katz and John Algeo, to name but a few.
- <sup>2</sup> There are more than 20 John Howards listed in Wikipedia. Some

include: *John Howard* former Australian PM, *John Howard* the Australian actor, *John Howard* the US middleweight boxer, *John Howard* US physician, professor, and public health administrator, and *John Howard* US Olympic cyclist, etc.

- <sup>3</sup> See *Placenames Australia* December 2012 ‘The five questions of Montville’ and March 2015 ‘Two ways to do it: A note on toponymic methodology’.
- <sup>4</sup> However, the details of capitalisation in alphabetic languages are quite complex, and vary from language to language, e.g. French: *Australie*, *australien(ne)*, *mercredi*, *chrétien(ne)*; English *Australia*, *Australian*, *Wednesday*, *Christian*.
- <sup>5</sup> Notice, however, that the article is not capitalised. For more examples of ‘The’ placenames in Australia see the September and December 2009, and December 2014 issues of *Placenames Australia*.

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- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. ‘On Denoting’, *Mind*, 14 (56): 479-493.

# A book for twitchy toponymists

Our colleague Bill Stinson recently alerted us to the following book:

*The History of British Birds* by W.D. Yalden and U. Albarella (OUP, 2008).

At first sight, this book might not seem to be of much relevance for the toponymist, but Bill quickly saw that chapter 6 ‘Monks, Monarchs and Mysteries’ would be of considerable interest, since several pages deal with landscape features that were bestowed with names that referred to birds.

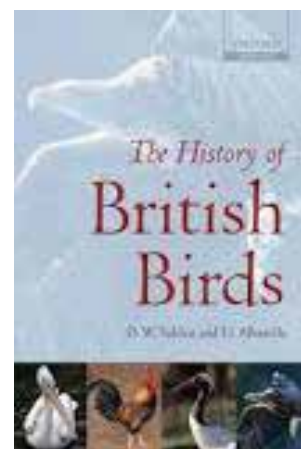
Table 6.1 lists a sample of bird-derived placenames and their etymologies, extracted from Gelling and Cole (2000). The table includes five Sydney suburb names – **Arncliffe** (OE *earn*, *clif* ‘eagle cliff’), **Cromer** (OE *craue*, *mere* ‘crow lake’), **Croydon** (OE *craue*, *denu* *dun* ‘crows valley/hill’), **Enmore** (OE *ened*, *mere* ‘duck lake’), **Putney** (OE *puttoc*, *hyth* ‘kite’s/hawk’s landing place’), as well as **Gosford** (OE *gos*, *ford* ‘goose ford’) in the Central Coast (just north of Sydney).

Other references mentioned by Yalden and Albarella which combine a toponymic interest with ornithology are: Boisseau and Yalden (1999), Gelling (1987), Moore (2002), and Pickles (2002).

This book is well worth a browse, as are the other references mentioned. Thanks for this advice, Bill!

## References

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- Pickles, I. (2002). Place names and domestic birds. Unpub. B.Sc. project report. School of Biological Sciences, University of Manchester.



...from page 1

was too much for many, even for that violent period of history. Between 1614 and 1618, Coen secured a clove monopoly in the Moluccas and a nutmeg monopoly in the Banda Islands. The inhabitants of Banda had been selling nutmeg to the English, despite contracts with the VOC which obliged them to sell only to the VOC, at very low prices.<sup>1</sup> In 1621,



Jan Pieterszoon Coen

he led an armed assault of Banda using Japanese samurai mercenaries, and took the island of Lonthor after encountering some fierce resistance, mostly by cannons that the locals had acquired from the English. Coen had many thousands of inhabitants killed (men, women and children alike) and then replaced them with

slave labour from other islands to make way for Dutch planters. Of the 15,000 inhabitants it is believed only about 1000 survived; a further 800 were deported to Batavia. Coen took more than forty Bandanese leaders prisoner when he discovered a plot against him; they were tortured before being hacked in half and beheaded by the Japanese samurai mercenaries. The sole purpose of Coen's malicious acts of violence and destruction was to create a scarcity of natural produce in order to maintain price levels.

Because Coen possessed a great deal of administrative and military ability, he contributed significantly to the expansion of Dutch influence in the East Indies, and was therefore long considered a national hero in the Netherlands. A statue of him remains, controversially, in a square in his birthplace of Hoorn. Many Dutch now consider him a murderer and terrorist, a view that has always been maintained in Indonesia.

History is strewn with examples of people who were considered heroes in one age (or by one group of people) and scoundrels in another (or by other groups of people). There are some embarrassing contemporary examples of well-respected entertainers who have fallen from grace. But there are other much more monstrous examples from last century, after whom numerous places were named. Immediately there come

to mind Joseph Stalin, Hermann Göring, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini. Their toponymic legacies were quickly wiped off the maps soon after World War II. Numerous towns in Russia, Poland, the Baltic and the Slavic countries bore the name of Stalin (e.g. *Stalingrad* now *Volgograd*, *Stalinabad* now *Dushanbe*). Hitler and Göring had numerous streets, squares, and other geographic features named after them (e.g. *Adolf Hitler Straße*, *Hermann Göring Platz*; but also *Adolf-Hitler-Koog* now *Dieksanderkoog*, and *Hermannsbad* in Poland now *Ciechocinek*), whereas Mussolini seems to have only had a mere canal devoted to his moniker (*Canale Mussolini* now *Canale Moscarello* or *Fosso Moscarello*). A few more, perhaps less well-known examples, also come to mind: in South Africa the town of *Centurion* used to be named *Verwoerdburg*, after Hendrik Verwoerd, the father of apartheid. Then there is the Spanish town of *Ferrol*, the birthplace of General Francisco Franco, that for the time of his rule was dubbed *El Ferrol del Caudillo* ('del Caudillo' referring to the official title of dictator). Finally, the man who instigated and prosecuted the Inquisition in Spain and much of Europe in the sixteenth century, Philip II (known as *el Prudente*), provided the name for the Republic of the Philippines.



Most countries discard their eponymous toponyms when they become embarrassing or are no longer PC. It is interesting to note that the two of these toponyms that are still in use (the *Philippines* and *Coen*), were bestowed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively. Perhaps the passing of four hundred years has had the effect of concealing the unsavoury history



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of these men. I am not advocating the removal of Coen's name from our toponymy, nor that of Philip from the Philippines—I am merely highlighting the history that lies behind the toponym Coen, as a reminder that eponymous toponyms may be cultural remnants of a darker and more unsavoury past than we realise.



### Postscript

On Saturday 5 September 2015, *The Guardian's* Paul Daley wrote a poignant article with the heading 'A dark chapter of history is tied up in the name of the Canning electorate'. It is a timely and further reminder of yet another name on the Australian map with an unsavoury foundation. Daley's article highlights the brutal history behind the Federal Electorate of Canning. In brief, Alfred Canning was employed by the Western Australian Government in 1906 to survey a stock route across the continent's western deserts, 'linking 54 wells between Halls Creek in the Kimberley and Wiluna on the edge of the Gibson Desert.' Daley writes: 'Some of the desert people agreed to help Canning blaze the track and find

the water so that as many as 800 stock could be watered at each well, a day's walk apart. Others were coerced—chained by the neck and fed salt so that maddening thirst would force them to lead Canning and his men to the water. [...] Monuments, buildings, streets, whole suburbs—federal electorates!—are dedicated to them ["frontiersmen", "history's untouchable heroes"], even though many of the most esteemed pioneering and civic names are also synonymous with cruelty and acts of barbaric hostility against Aboriginal people.' Canning is such a name. I strongly recommend you take a few minutes to read this most heart-rending article.

Jan Tent

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> A superb and gripping account of the struggle between the English and the Dutch in the Banda Islands can be found in Giles Milton's *Nathaniel's Nutmeg: How One Man's Courage Changed the Course of History*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999. It's a ripper of a read and I thoroughly recommend it.
- <sup>2</sup> You will find Paul Daley's article at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2015/sep/05/a-dark-chapter-of-history-is-tied-up-in-the-name-of-the-canning-electorate>>

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## News from the GNB...

**Barangaroo** is an inner-city suburb of Sydney, now being redeveloped from shipping and stevedoring facilities to a commercial and recreational area. As we reported in our previous issue, the NSW Geographical Names Board has recently announced new names for features within the precinct. Since we went to press for September, a further name has been assigned:

**Hickson Park:** a reserve situated along Hickson Road at the southern end of the suburb.



The name (of both the park and the road) acknowledges Robert Hickson who worked as a civil engineer and was the first president of the Sydney Harbour Trust.



# Steamrolled again!

*In our June 2015 issue Jan Tent noted the wide distribution of what he called 'steamroller parks'. Our correspondent Erik Halbert has identified just such a park in Blackheath, a village in the Blue Mountains of NSW.*

There was a time when the bush block at the corner of Hat Hill Road and the Great Western Highway in Blackheath was simply bush, waiting for Governor Macquarie and his entourage to stop there in 1815, to water their horses and declare 'This place reminds me of London—I will call it Hounslow'. On his return journey he said 'I have changed my mind, I'll call it Black-Heath'. What he really meant was 'It is cold and wet and bloody windy', but he was too polite to say that. So *Blackheath* it was, and that name has stuck.

Roads were put through and Blackheath experienced successive waves of settlers and growth. Houses gradually appeared in the few streets, the single train line came through in the 1860s and twenty-five years later in 1885 Blackheath was formally declared a village.

Over time human nature prevailed and in 1894 a working bee was formed with the intention of making our little block into a lake. This never came to pass, and by 1900 the block was still just two triangular bits of bush split by a walking track.

By now, though, the area was well defined and people used the old block for recreation: it was called a *reserve*. It was close to the hotel and a convenient place to park the kids while the adults partook of the serious business of the day. By 1920 a war had come and gone and in 1921 the block was named *The Gardens*. Other names had been proposed (*Blackheath Gardens* and *Blackheath Memorial Gardens*), but *The Gardens* was simple and stuck. Besides, Blackheath already had a memorial park underway. An active Blackheath Soldier's Memorial Committee had been set up, and it had collected money to begin developing a large site in a swampy area downhill to the east of Blackheath. This became *Memorial Park*, also dedicated in the early 1920s.

The Gardens did get to host the Memorial Arch, built and dedicated in 1929. This could easily have been an occasion to trigger a name change to *Memorial Gardens* or to *Memorial Arch Gardens*, but this did not happen. Some time after the war a large mortar, possibly war surplus, was set up in the centre of the gardens. It was

hardly a souvenir, given that it was one metre high by 1.5 metres long and symbolically split the old track in two as it went round the gun.



*The roadroller in 'The Gardens', Blackheath, 2015. Imperial Super Diesel Road Roller, Model KV*

The mortar was later removed for whatever reason—perhaps for scrap to re-use in the next war, or because it was thought not to fit the Blackheath image. In any case it was removed and its place taken in 1934 by a sundial on a cylindrical polished-granite pedestal. The gnomon of the sundial has gone now but the sundial's memory lives on in an early Rose Series postcard.

Over the coming years The Gardens got a sign proclaiming its name. It got flowers and trees, flagpoles, a picnic shelter, and rhododendrons. It was a good park. More time went by, people picnicked, children played and a set of swings was erected for the more adventuresome. Even an outdoor chess set was laid out, though few people were ever seen using it. And then one day—suddenly, the roadroller appeared in the park.

The arrival must have been an advancing slow-moving tsunami of clanking and banging, with the sharp cracking of crushing rocks, the lurches over sandstone ribs and the accompanying *punka - punka - punka* of the giant flywheel-driven engine. It would have taken some hours to come about.

## ...The Gardens at Blackheath

Decades later none of the locals admit to seeing it or hearing it arrive, but its presence is indisputable. Twelve tonnes of heavy metal with rollers, flywheels and chains (now gone). It was green and had a nameplate which proudly stated that it was (and is) an 'Imperial Super Diesel Road Roller'—not to be confused with your common steamroller which, as its name implies, runs on steam. This green machine had an internal combustion engine and ran on diesel oil. It was proudly Australian, being born in the workshops of the A. H. McDonald engineering company in the years between 1922 and 1929. The company built 162 of these machines.

The Blackheath Municipal Council bought their one in the 1920s and used it for heavy work on the roads around Blackheath and to transform the old railway dam to build the Memorial Park. The date when it retired is

not clear and it was in the park for a couple of years before its official unveiling in 1997. I believe kids played on it for many years but the advent of the 'nanny era' brought a wrought iron fence and now the machine stands forlorn, largely forgotten and certainly untended.

Like some other parks this one should not really be called a 'steamroller park' but rather a 'roadroller park'. However, I'll leave that one for someone else to fight over.

**Erik Halbert**

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## Placenames Puzzle Number 56

### Animals (2)

*Our second puzzle on the theme; this time, it's a two-way street because some of the placenames have been the source for animal names.*  
--Jan Tent

1. (NT) This river's reptile doesn't exist here, but it does call south-eastern USA home
2. (NSW) James Cook changed his mind from fauna to flora for this bay
3. (NSW) You can have a huge amount of fun in your time on the sand here
4. (QLD) The township bears the name of an indigenous actor
5. (WA) A macropod-honouring town on the Yorke Peninsula
6. (SA) The island was named when Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh mistook cute marsupials for something much less attractive
7. (TAS) A waterfowl named after an island in the Furneaux Group in Bass Strait
8. (NSW) A medium-sized parrot named after the initial name given to Parramatta, now the name of an adjacent suburb
9. (NSW) A small harmless shark, named after a famous harbour
10. (NSW) A Sydney Harbour island, named after a bird whose name came into English from Malay via Dutch
11. (SA) Macropods are honoured again by Australia's third largest island
12. (SA) The closest point to the mainland of (11) is named after this fish species
13. (WA) William Dampier named the bay for the abundance of this fish species
14. (QLD) A reptilian island, named by James Cook
15. (NSW, VIC). This endangered fish species takes the name of a river which is no longer the Hume.
16. (QLD) An edible crustacean bearing an insectine name from a bay near Brisbane
17. (NSW) Half our coat of arms, this flat area of land west of Sydney was first thought to be an island; now it's the name of a suburb
18. (WA) A river named by the Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh, who originally noted the surprising colour of these birds
19. (Qld.) A microscopic bug, lethal to equines and humans alike, named after a Brisbane suburb

- |                                   |                        |                     |                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Alligator River                | 5. Wallaroo            | 10. Cockatoo Island | 15. Murray River cod   |
| 2. Sting Ray Harbour (Botany Bay) | 6. Rottnest Island     | 11. Kangaroo Island | 16. Moreton Bay bug    |
| 3. Whale Beach                    | 7. Cape Barren goose   | 12. Snapper Point   | 17. Emu Plains         |
| 4. Dingo                          | 8. rosella (Rose Hill) | 13. Shark Bay       | 18. [Black] Swan River |
|                                   | 9. Port Jackson shark  | 14. Lizard Island   | 19. Hendra virus       |

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## Closing dates for submissions are:

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