Woy Woy and *Wauwai*, the 'monster fish'

Probably every Aboriginal placename is connected to a traditional story, which has in most cases not been recorded by non-Aboriginal people. Sometimes, it is possible to deduce the deeper meanings behind placenames by utilising careful linguistic analysis and examining their geographical and cultural contexts. One such placename whose meaning can be clarified is the New South Wales Central Coast locality of **Woy Woy**. This is one of a number of placenames in the state which originated from Aboriginal beliefs in feared giant predators that lived in deep waterholes. The author Robert

Holden lists 11 local names for them in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.[1] The name *bunyip*, from the Wemba Wemba people of western Victoria, was adopted into non-Aboriginal folklore as a generic term for these beings. There was an example from Dharug country in Western Sydney, near Penrith, recorded in 1899.

Woy Woy Bay from Spion Kop (photo: Andrew Harvey, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

They believed that it frequented calm, clear and deep-water holes on starlight nights, rolling, splashing, diving and roaring; and woe to the darkie it saw, for it would surely eat him up.[2]

One of the names from Holden's list, *Wauwai*, has a surprisingly wide distribution, being found in the vocabularies of Kamilaroi, Awabakal, Dharug, Wayilwan, Dhanggati and Wiradjuri people. Jim Wafer reviewed 16 usages of this name from primary sources recorded between 1834 and the 1940s, thirteen of which are from Wiradjuri country.[3] However, there is actually an earlier record, from Wiradjuri people at Bathurst, passed on in the 1820s by botanist Allan Cunningham to French explorer Dumont D'Urville. This was published in France in 1830: *'Dans l'eau, War-wi, monstre amphibie qu'ils decrivant comme un crocodile…'*[4]

Although fifteen of Wafer's records have the vowel 'a' in the first syllable, there are records with alternative transcriptions, and the name *Woy Woy* is one of them. Popular books of placename 'meanings' claim that Woy Woy means 'deep water'. Thorpe spelled it as one word: *Woywoy*.[5] Tyrrell agreed with this meaning.[6] McCarthy has 'deep water; a lagoon'.[7] Reed added another intriguing possibility with his 'deep water, much water, or, porpoise'.[8]

From the Editor

Occasionally there's a serendipity in publishing that comes as a delight to an editor. We'd only just finished editing our Occasional Paper No. 15 on 'dog-related' Aboriginal placenaming in south-east Australia (by Jim Wafer and Tracey Howie), when Jim Smith and Peter Ridgeway produced our lead article for this issue—on *Wauwai*-related names in the same area. As you'll discover, each article puts forward a suggested origin for *Woy Woy*; and although the hypotheses are different, each is compelling and each is the outcome of careful work by some of the top linguists in their field. Placenames Australia is privileged to have access to such high-quality research.

And there's much more to read in this issue—I'll let you get on with it!

David Blair
<editor@anps.org.au>

We recommend...

... a new article by Jan Tent in the latest issue of the journal *Frontiers of Biogeography*: 'Historic placenames as a source in identifying bygone faunal distributions: a double-edged sword', vol. 15(4), 2023. He says that while historic placenames may reveal important things about fauna and flora, equally they may not. Some examples from 1705 in northern Australia show that care needs to be taken in interpreting the data. The article will shortly appear at

https://escholarship.org/uc/fb

Super quiz—did you know the answers?

We have to admit that we didn't do very well with Patrick O'Brien's query in September about who was honoured with Australia's earliest placenames. We couldn't come up with answers to most of them, even when mining the deep knowledge of our readers as well as the ANPS filing cabinet.

We did, though, answer one or two for him, and added a few more interesting ones from the files: the first places to be named after...

- a military First Fleeter: **Dawes Point**, named after Lieutenant William Dawes

- an Indigenous person: **Bennelong Point**, named after Bennelong, the interpreter for the First Fleet

- a woman: **Maria Island**, named by Abel Tasman in 1642 after Anthony van Diemen's wife

- a settler from the First or Second Fleet: the Sydney suburb **Balmain** got its name from surgeon William Balmain's 1800 land grant

- a shipwreck: **Tryal Rocks** in Western Australia, named after the *Tryall* which was wrecked there in 1622

And then there's the first introduced placename of all: **Cape Keerweer**. It means 'Cape Turnagain', and was named by Willem Janszoon in 1606: he was sailing south down the Carpentaria coast in the yacht *Duyfken*, and this was as far as he got before he had to 'turn again' back to Java.

*Puzzle answers - (from page 12) [the short form is in **bold** type]*

1. **The** Bendi**go**
2. **Belco**nnen
3. (**The**) Leon**gatha**
4. **Girra**ween
5. **Nuri**ootpa
6. **Kal**goorlie
7. **Maroochy**dore
8. **The** Can**berra**
9. **The** Cicular **Quay**
10. **Subi**aco
11. **Nuna**wading
12. **The** Tam**worth**
13. **The** Mount **Bark**er
14. **The** Warrnam**bool**
15. **The** Clon**curry**
16. Cro**nulla**
17. **The Mount** Gambier
18. **The** Wilsons **Prom**ontory
19. **Cabra**matta
20. **Meeka**tharra

However, a researcher of Central Coast Aboriginal place names, John Joseph Moloney (1866-1937), discovered its deeper meaning. In October 1933 Moloney included this in a list of place names and their meanings which he attributed to the 'Awabakal dialect': 'Woy Woy (Wauwai) was the name of a dreaded fish, most probably the shark'.[9] In the following year, in response to local controversy about the meaning of *Woy Woy*, Moloney wrote:

> I contend that it is a true Awabakil [sic] word, but wrongly spelled. If spelled 'Wauwai' and pronounced likewise it means a huge voracious fish dreaded by the natives, and in my opinion – the shark.[10]

Moloney has some credibility for his interpretations of local Aboriginal culture as he clearly had contact with knowledgeable informants, as well as being an advocate of justice for Aboriginal people.[11] . Unfortunately, he did not name his Aboriginal sources of information in his published articles. At the end of his 1933 list, he mentioned 'Queen Margaret, recognised as the last full-blood of the Awabakal nation.' 'Queen' Margaret White, whose Aboriginal name was Awabakalin, died in 1894, so it is possible that Moloney had contact with her. Moloney claimed that the 'Awabakal dialect' was spoken as far south as the Hawkesbury River, and (although some language distribution maps show other languages between these two places) Jim Wafer and Tracy Howie have recently written:

> Recognition of the linguistic unity of the coastal region between the Hunter and Hawkesbury rivers in New South Wales has been slow, but it is supported by an ever-increasing body of evidence…[12]

The missionary Lancelot Threlkeld described another Wauwai, well to the north of Woy Woy:

> In the vicinity of Lake Macquarie, betwixt it and the mountains to the west, called the Sugar Loaf range, there is a hole of fresh water, said by the blacks to be bottomless, and named by them, Wau-wa-run from wau-wai, the name of a monster fish, much larger than any shark, and which it is said inhabits the contiguous swamps, and occasionally kills the Aborigines.[13]

Wafer locates this freshwater lagoon at Freemans Waterhole.

Another record by Moloney links *Woy Woy*, north of the mouth of the Hawkesbury River, to stories of 'giant fish' related by Dharug and Gundungurra (also spelt Gandangara) people along the course of the inland Hawkesbury-Nepean and Wollondilly Rivers. In his 1933 article, Moloney wrote:

> The Hawkesbury River was called Deerubbin, and has reference to the legend of the great eel who forced his way from the Burragorang Valley to the open sea, leaving his trail behind him.

This 'great eel', or *Wauwai*, not only made it as far as the ocean but continued northwards, into Brisbane Water, ending up in the deep water of Woy Woy Bay. Perhaps this is the origin of the associative or descriptive meaning of 'deep water' for the placename *Woy Woy*.

It is significant that Awabakalin and her people in the Lake Macquarie district were aware of the cultural significance of the name *Woy Woy*, as well as the place of origin of this *Wauwai*, about 140km to the south, from the country of Gundungurra speaking people.[14]

In his 1934 article Moloney stated:

> The name of the Hawkesbury River varies in different places. Above Penrith it is known as 'Warragumba,' meaning 'the mixing of the waters,' i.e., the water of the Nepean and Wollondilly. Nearer to the ocean the name 'Venrubbim' applies and the legend is a wonderful bedtime story.

There does not seem to be any evidence that Moloney published this 'bedtime story'. In contrast, the story of another 'great eel', *Gurangatch* of the Burragorang Valley, as related by Gundungurra people, is well known, having been published by R.H. Mathews in 1908 and often reprinted since then.[15]

Dharug people knew the 'great eel' which formed the Hawkesbury River as *Wauwai*. In 1829 Rev. John McGarvie recorded an Aboriginal placename near Sackville in a list of localities along the Hawkesbury River. The handwritten word has been interpreted by linguist Jim Wafer, part of 'The Dyarubbin: The Real Secret River' group, as *Wow-aw me*, referring to the eye of the Dharug people's 'ancestral monster fish', with *wowaw* being a version of Wauwai, and the suffix *me* a version of the Dharug word for 'eye'.[16]

This team has asserted that the Hawkesbury's 'monster fish' was called *Gurangatty*, a version of the Gundungurra people's word *Gurangatch*, but it is actually a different creature.[17] The word *Gurangatty*, and the story of its
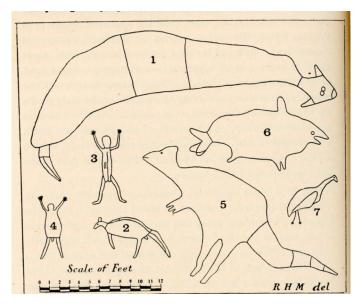
hunting by a quoll-man *Mirragan*, are the cultural property of Gundungurra people. The Burragorang people's story describes how *Gurangatch*, on reaching the northern end of the Wollondilly River, turned westward, excavating the course of the Cox River, eventually crossing the Great Dividing Range and ending up on the upper Fish River. As that story stands, there was no connection that allowed the combined waters of the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers to flow eastwards and join the Nepean River. That connection, which we now call the Warragamba River, was made by another creature, a *Wauwai* from the Burragorang Valley which 'forced his way' through, later forming the channel of the Hawkesbury River as far as the sea, and travelling northwards to Brisbane Water where the local Aboriginal people's name for it was recorded as *Woy Woy*. At Sackville, where the Hawkesbury sandstone begins (not far from *Wowawme* waterhole), an enormous rock engraving depicts *Wauwai* as a giant eel. At least seven similar huge engravings occur throughout the subsequent 100km of the journey to the sea, five of which are within 10km of its final destination at Woy Woy.
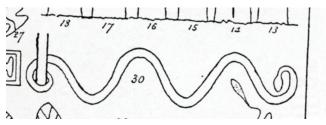
Perhaps all Aboriginal placenames in south-east Australia with two initial syllables that each begin with a 'w' could be examined for associations with 'monster fish'. The Eora knew a *Wauwai* in Sydney Harbour, naming Careening Cove as *Weeawya*.[18] Other possibilities are: Wowagin, near Taralga; Wee Waa Lagoon, on the Namoi River; Wah Wah Creek, near Griffith; Wah Way Creek, near West Wyalong; Way Way Creek, north of Kempsey; Weah Waa Creek, near Berrigal; Weah Waa Creek, south

of Moree and Wee Wee Creek, east of Kentley. Three of these names were adopted by towns or localities.

Wafer speculates on the relationships between *Wauwai*s and the travelling and stationary 'Rainbow Serpents' of central and northern Australia.[19] *Gurangatch*, and the *Wauwai* that formed the Hawkesbury River, are examples of creatures who formed landscapes during their journeys, like the northern 'Rainbow Serpents'. In most cases, we don't know the origin stories of apparently localised *Wauwai*s and other 'bunyips'. They may have always been in their waterholes, or their prior travels were not recorded by non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal descriptions and artworks provide some clues to the appearance and features of *Wauwai*s. Moloney's speculation that *Wauwai* was a shark is unlikely to be correct, as some of its known habitats, such as Freemans Lagoon, are not connected to the sea.[20] The Burragorang Valley people described *Gurangatch* to Mathews as an amphibious creature 'partly fish and partly reptile', recalling the metaphor of Cunningham, who described it as a 'crocodile'. Aboriginal petroglyphs in the Hawkesbury River catchment, which appear to portray these creatures, depict eel-like forms but which are much larger in their girths in relation to their length than are real eels; for example, the Dharug petroglyph of *Wauwai* beside the Hawkesbury River at Sackville reproduced by R.H. Mathews.[21] This is typical of the regional depictions of *Wauwai*s in appearing to show a dorsal view of a gigantic eel with a very large girth. The head and pectoral fins are stylised together into an 'arrowhead' shape.

Variation in anatomy of creatures called Wauwais *in Dharug and Wiradjuri country recorded by R.H. Mathews*

*(**a** - **left**) Dharug petroglyph found near the locality of Wowaw beside the Hawkesbury River from Mathews (1910). The relevant image is numbered 1 at the top of the diagram.*
*(**b** - **above**) Wiradjuri earth sculpture of* Wahwee *near Bulgeraga Creek from Mathews (1896), plate XXVI.*

...and *Wauwai*

Wafer noted that paintings of Rainbow Serpents in northern Australia often have 'blended morphology', i.e. combine anatomical characteristics of different species. The Hawkesbury petroglyph (Figure *a*) does have at least one apparently anomalous anatomical feature that could be interpreted as a pair of vestigial hind limbs, rather like the flippers of a Leopard Seal, a species occasionally reported from the Hawkesbury River. What is usually interpreted as a pair of close-set eyes on top of the head could also be seen as the upward facing nasal openings of the Leopard Seal. In contrast, the earth sculptures of *Wauwai*s at Wiradjuri initiation grounds (Figure *b*) are snake-like in their morphology.[22] This demonstrates that the perceived anatomy of *Wauwai*s can vary significantly.

It is possible that many more Aboriginal placenames will be discovered to have connections to stories about *Wauwai*s and their relatives.

Jim Smith and Peter Ridgeway

Endnotes

[1] Robert Holden, *Bunyips. Australia's folklore of fear.* Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2001, p.2.

[2] "Pialli", 'Shadows of the past'. *Nepean Times*, 28 January 1899, p.2.

[3] Jim Wafer, 'Why Waway? The Proctor map and the getting of song in New South Wales'. In Peter Austin, Harold Koch & Jane Simpson, (Eds.), *Language, land and song.* London: EL Publishing, 2016, pp.287-303.

[4] Translation: 'In the water, the War-wi, an amphibious monster which they describe as like a crocodile because of its length and which they say inhabits calm water in rivers, from which it comes out when it pleases, to seize children, and then returns under the water to devour them.' The full citation of the French publication is in Neil Gunson (Ed.), *Australian reminiscences and papers of L.E. Threlkeld. Missionary to the Aborigines 1824- 1859.* Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974, p.78.

Other records of this name from the Wiradjuri language are in J. Gunther, 'Grammar and vocabulary of the Aboriginal dialect called the Wirradhuri'. In John Fraser (Ed.), *An Australian language spoken by the Awabakal the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie (near Newcastle, New South Wales). Being an account of their language, traditions, and customs: by L. E. Threlkeld.* Sydney: New South Wales Government Printer, 1892, p.104, which has *wawe* 'a monstrous water animal'. And in Stan Grant and John Rudder, *A first Wiradjuri dictionary.* O'Connor, ACT: Restoration House, 2005, which has: *waawii* 'bunyip, a large water snake.'

[5] W. W. Thorpe, *List of New South Wales Aboriginal place names and their meanings.* Sydney: The Australian Museum, 1921, p.7.

[6] J. Tyrrell, *Australian Aboriginal place-names and their meanings.* Sydney: Simmons Ltd, 1933, p. 51.

[7] F. D. McCarthy, *New South Wales Aboriginal place names and euphonious words, with their meanings.* Third edition. Sydney: The Australian Museum, 1959, p.17.

[8] A. W. Reed, *Place-names of New South Wales. Their origins and meanings.* Sydney: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1969, p. 154.

[9] John Moloney, 'The Awabakal'. *Bank Notes.* October 1933, p.43. Linguists now refer to this language as the 'Hunter River and Lake Macquarie language'.

[10] John Moloney, 'Aboriginal Name Places'. *Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate*, 4 January 1934, p.12.

[11] John Maynard, 'John J. Moloney. The Voice of the North'. In James Bennett, Nancy Cushing and Eric Eklund (Eds). *Radical Newcastle.* Newcastle: University of Newcastle Press, 2015, pp.94-105.

[12] Jim Wafer and Tracy Howie, *A Southeastern Dog Country.* ANPS Occasional Paper, No.15, 2023, p.7. These authors have another interpretation of the meaning of *Woy Woy*, spelling it as *wayi-wayi*, and see it as one of a regional complex of placenames related to dogs. (pp. 6, 14.)

[13] L. Threlkeld, 'Reminiscences'. *The Christian Herald*, 17 February 1855, p.5.

[14] This distance is between Swansea and the junction of the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers.

[15] R. H. Mathews, 'Some mythology of the Gundungurra tribe, New South Wales', *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie*, 40, 1908, pp.203-206. Also online in Martin Thomas, *Culture in translation. The anthropological legacy of R. H. Mathews.* Canberra: ANU Press, 2007, pp.133-141.

[16] Other interpretations of the handwriting, particularly of the suffix, are possible. The interpretations of Grace Karskens' team, working on 'The Real Secret River, Dyarubbin' project can be found on The Dictionary of Sydney website. The document 'McGarvie's list and Aboriginal Dyarubbin' (accessed 29 April 2021) includes the interpretation of the word 'Wowawme' on page 4. A published summary is in the booklet edited by Cathy Hammer, *Dyarubbin*, Sydney: State Library of New South Wales, 2021, p.18.

[17] The sole reference to Gurangatch residing in the Nepean-Hawkesbury River, at Bents Basin, is in William Russell, *My recollections.* Camden: Camden News, 1914, pp.22-23, and can be demonstrated to be the result of a misunderstanding between Russell and his editor A. L. Bennett.

[18] Val Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal past.* University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, p.9.

[19] Wafer, 2016, p.297.

[20] The Awabakal word for the shark is 'kurra-koiyog'. John Maynard, *Awabakal word finder.* Southport, Queensland: Keeaira Press, 2004, p.41.

[21] R. H. Mathews, 'Some Rock Engravings of the Aborigines of New South Wales', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 44, 1910, p.404. Also reproduced, and online, as Figure 1 in Martin Thomas, 2007, p.82 (see note 15 above).

[22] R. H. Mathews, 'The Burbung of the Wiradthuri Tribes'. *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 25, 1896, pp.295-318. Plate XXVI.

Dr Jim Smith is an independent researcher who has spent over 50 years walking in Gundungurra country. He is the author of numerous books and articles about their history and culture, including *'If we left our valley our hearts would break'. The Aboriginal People of the Burragorang Valley*, second edition. Lawson: Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, 2017. **Peter Ridgeway** is a professional ecologist, a keen explorer of Dharug and Gundungurra cultural landscapes, and the author of *A Wide and Open Land. Walking the Last of Western Sydney's Woodlands,* second edition. Wentworth Falls: published by the author, 2022.

Geometric names that don't work...

Our reader Chris Woods agrees that some so-called geometric placenames aren't really so (September '23). He's recalled the stories behind a couple of them, and I can offer some explanations as to why this is the case.

Circular Quay[1]

Circular Quay is located in Sydney Cove, the initial landing site of the First Fleet in Port Jackson on 26 January 1788. The quay was constructed between 1837 and 1844 by creating an artificial shoreline at the southern section of cove. It was originally known as *Semi-Circular Quay*, the actual shape of the quay (Figure 1), but was shortened for convenience (Sydney Ports Corporation, 2006). True to the tendency of most toponyms, it has retained its name-form, despite environmental changes.

City Circle

Despite its name, Sydney's **City Circle** rail line has the shape of a horseshoe, with trains operating in a U-shaped pattern. Its constituent stations are (clockwise): Central, Town Hall, Wynyard, Circular Quay, St James, Museum and back to Central. To explain the name we must go to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. One of its senses for *circular* explains that a *circular tour* is 'one which is completed at (or near) the place of starting.' And in a figurative sense, *circular* means 'moving or occurring in a round or cycle of repetition' and 'forming a link in a circular chain', as shown in Figure 2.[2]
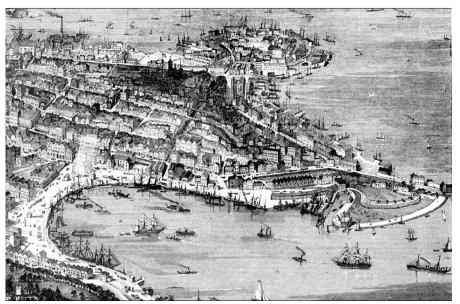

Figure 1. Semi-Circular Quay. (Source: Sydney Walks. 2023. 'When Circular Quay was circular' www.sydneywalks.com.au/when-circular-quay-was-circular/)

Australia Square, Green Square, Taylor Square and Madison Square Garden

Indeed the literal shapes of these structures are not square. But this is to miss the point. Let's go to the *Oxford English Dictionary* again and see what it says regarding the sense of 'square' as it is used in these toponyms:

Square *n.*

1. An open space or area (approximately quadrilateral and rectangular) in a town or city, enclosed by buildings or dwelling-houses, esp. of a superior or residential kind, frequently containing a garden or laid out with trees, etc.; more generally, any open space resembling this, esp. one formed at the meeting or intersection of streets; (also) the group of houses surrounding an area of this kind. Also *attributive*.

2. A rectangular building or block of buildings; *U.S.* a block of buildings bounded by streets.

It is by these definitions of the established senses of the word that we ought to interpret the toponyms. A 'square' need not be literally square. Let's look at each toponym in turn.
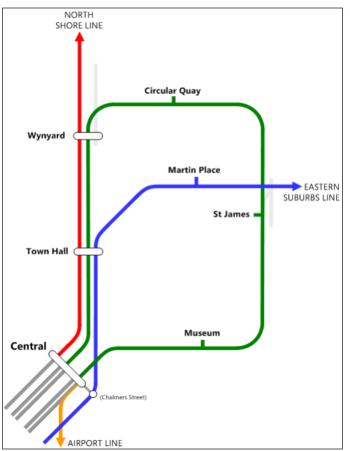
The 50-storey round building in Sydney that we know as **Australia Square** is officially known as *Australia Square Tower*, and occupies only 25% of the city block upon which it stands. The remainder of the site is publicly accessible outdoor space, with trees, a fountain and outdoor restaurants. The block, or should we say 'square', is bounded by George Street, Bond Street, Pitt Street, and Curtin Place. So the tower owes its name to the public space (i.e. square) upon which it was built.

Green Square is a triangular precinct in southern Sydney bounded by Botany Road, Geddes Avenue, and O'Riordan Street. Likewise, **Taylor Square** in the city also has a triangular shape. These two public spaces are not shaped with four right angles, but they do conform to sense 1 of the Oxford entry for *square*.

Madison Square Garden (New York) has an interesting and convoluted history. It is informally known as 'the Garden', and is a multi-purpose indoor arena. There have been four venues that

...and why they don't

Figure 2. Diagrammatic 'Beckian' map of the City Circle line.[3]

bear the name. The first two were on Madison Square (on East 26th Street and Madison Avenue); the third, further uptown (on Eighth Avenue and 50th Street); and the current MSG (which, by the way, is a round building), is between 7th and 8th Avenues (from 31st to 33rd Street). The original venue was rectangular in shape, thus conforming to both sense 1 and sense 2 of the OED entry for *square*.

But, where does the 'Garden' element of the name come? The venue, which would ultimately be named *Madison Square Garden*, had various functions before it became an entertainment centre. First, it was a passenger depot for the New York and Harlem Rail Road. It then stood

vacant between 1871 and 1873, when it was leased to P.T. Barnum, who converted it into an open-air circus. In 1875, the site was sub-let to band leader Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, who planted trees, flowers and fountains in it and named it *Gilmore's Concert Garden*. Ultimately, it was renamed *Madison Square Garden* in 1879 by William Kissam Vanderbilt, who presented sporting events there (Burrows & Wallace, 1999). This is another example of toponyms' resilient nature.

There are numerous examples around the world of toponyms not reflecting their literal senses (or, as I prefer to call them, 'non-literal toponyms'). Another Australian example in Sydney Harbour is **Garden Island**; it used to be both a garden and an island, but is no longer either.

So, the moral of the story is: don't take the meanings of toponyms too literally. There are always backstories to them.

Jan Tent

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Kent, A. J. (2021). 'When Topology Trumped Topography: Celebrating 90 Years of Beck's Underground Map'. *The Cartographic Journal*, 58, 1–12. www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/00087041.2021.1953765?needAccess=true&role=button

Sydney Ports Corporation (2006). 'Sydney town and port established 1788–1900'. Chapter 1. https://web.archive.org/web/20060821040053/http://www.sydneyports.com.au/Mediaroom/FirstPort/pdfs/Centenary%20book%20Chapter%201.pdf

Endnotes

[1] A *quay* is a constructed 'bank or landing stage, typically built of stone, lying alongside or projecting into water for loading and unloading ships.' (OED).

[2] A similar sense is conveyed by the expression 'circular argument', which cannot be said to be literally circular, but progresses in a cycle of repetition and forms links in a repetitive chain.

[3] The diagrammatic map (lacking geographical fidelity), designed by Harry C. Beck in 1931, made famous by the London Underground map (Kent, 2021).

Searching for...

Tapitallee is a suburb in the Shoalhaven area of the NSW coast. We're researching the origin of its name in response to a request, but with limited success so far. We guessed that it was most likely a Gundungurra or Dharawal word, from the early days of settlement, but we had no records of it. However, there is a story from the *Cumberland Argus* in 1933 (20th February, in a column headed 'Australianities') that might offer a clue:

'About eighty years ago, a fine young aborigine of the Tappatilla tribe named Sam Condywight, worked for a farmer named Livingstone at Broughton Creek (Berry), where old King Tappatilla flaunted his cherished copper crescent of royalty.'

If anybody can reveal a connection between *Tappatilla* and *Tapitallee,* our enquirer would be delighted.

'Indigenous' or 'Introduced'?...

In Part I of this topic (September, 2023), I considered some of the issues involved in determining whether a toponym is 'Indigenous' or 'Introduced'. In this second instalment, I should like to delve into the question in some more detail, and from a slightly different perspective.

Australia is not the only region in the world that has parallel toponymic systems: all post-colonial nations that have First Nations societies have such toponymic systems. We see them in New Zealand, North America (the US and Canada), Africa and South America. We noted last time that under the parallel toponymic schema, toponyms may be classified as 'Indigenous', 'Indigenous-derived' or 'Introduced'. The terms 'Indigenous' and 'Introduced' are fairly transparent in their meanings, though 'Indigenous-derived' needs some explanation. Most of the so-called 'Aboriginal' placenames in Australia have been rendered in the Latin script under English orthographical conventions, thus obfuscating their original pronunciations. Moreover, Indigenous names and words were often applied by the English to features that were not related to their original Indigenous names. Hence, we cannot label such toponyms as 'Indigenous'; rather, they should be referred to as 'Indigenous-derived' or 'Indigenous-based' toponyms.

In New Zealand, the situation is somewhat different from that in Australia. In New Zealand, there was essentially a single Indigenous language, te reo Māori, and many toponyms that existed before European occupation were readily adopted by the English.[1] Moreover, a largely standardised Latin orthography for Māori had been established by the mid-nineteenth century which was readily accepted by the Māori speech community. This resulted in a fairly accurate representation of the original Māori pronunciation, in most cases. There are some exceptions, *Petone* being one. It stems from *pito* 'end' + *one* [ɔnɛ] 'sandy beach', and should therefore be considered as an 'Indigenous-derived' toponym.

The process of determining how to classify a toponym as one of the two categories 'Indigenous' or 'Indigenous-derived' is not as straightforward as it may first appear. There are several structural and semantic issues to consider, and one of the most important has to do with the distinction between simplex and complex toponyms. A placename that has only the specific element is 'simplex'; a placename that has both specific and generic elements is 'complex'. (We recall that the specific element of a toponym is akin to a 'given name', whilst the generic is like the 'family name' which identifies the type of feature named.)

It is obvious that toponyms with an Indigenous-derived specific element should be counted as 'Indigenous-derived'. And, if they have a generic term, whether it is Introduced or Indigenous-derived does not need to be considered for further categorisation. As examples from Australia and New Zealand, see *Kiandra, Unawahlurk Billabong, Ningaloo Reef; Maungarei, Haikai Pa, Ruakākā Bay*.

But what about those toponyms that consist of an obviously Introduced specific paired with a generic that was originally an Indigenous geographic feature term? Is the nature of the generic relevant to how we categorise the toponym? Are they to be regarded as 'Indigenous-derived', or 'Introduced'? I'm thinking of such Australian examples as:

- *Black Creek Billabong, Ironstone Billabong*
- *Boggy Cowal, Rigleys Cowal*
- *Maitland Bombora, Margaret River Bombora*
- *Red Gilgais*
- *Murray Mallee*
- *Camel Gnamma Hole, Dinner Gnamma Hole*
- *Dead Bullock Warrambool, Shepherds Warrambool* [2]

The clue to the answer lies in my words 'a generic that was originally an Indigenous geographic feature term.' In those examples of complex toponyms, both the specific and the generic now sit firmly within Australian English, even though the generic term was at some stage derived from an Aboriginal language. When a feature term from an Indigenous language (as in Australia, a *billabong*) comes into general use, it has been incorporated into the lexicon like any other word that has an etymology from another language (as, for example, *kangaroo*). So we ignore the linguistic background of the generic in a complex toponym when categorising toponyms, and it is the specific that determines whether the placename falls into the category 'Introduced' or 'Indigenous-derived'.

Unsurprisingly, such toponyms also exist in New Zealand, with *Blackburn Pakihi, Craigieburn Pakihi*, and *Bridge Pa, Tower Hill Pa*, being some typical examples.[3]

...Part 2

The New Zealand Gazetteer (https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz) has an interesting feature in that it classifies all entries as either 'Māori' or 'non-Māori' (by implication 'Introduced').[4] The above four examples are classified as 'Māori'. However, the question may be asked (*pace* New Zealand Geographic Board – Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) whether such a categorisation is justified.

To reiterate, toponyms with a clearly Introduced specific and accompanied by an obviously Indigenous(-derived) generic (in particular when that Indigenous term has become embedded into Australian or New Zealand English, as with the above examples), then *Blackburn Pakihi, Craigieburn Pakihi*, and *Bridge Pa, Tower Hill Pa* should *not* be classed as 'Māori'.

There is another interesting habit of toponym creation that involves generics. When an Indigenous-derived specific enters into the Introduced system, it often obtains an English generic in order to identify the feature type. Māori toponyms are no exception, and although they often have 'inbuilt' generics, nevertheless they often have English generics added (e.g. *Mount Maunganui* < *maunga* 'mountain, hill' + *nui* 'big'; *Lake Rotorua* < *roto* 'lake' + *rua* 'second, two'). This, of course, has no effect on how we categorise each toponym: as long as they have an Indigenous-derived specific, they belong to the 'Indigenous-derived' category.

Another challenge comes in the form of transliterated toponyms. The New Zealand Geographic Board also counts *Wikitōria Bank* (a Māori transliteration of *Victoria*) as 'Māori'. Again (*pace* New Zealand Geographic Board), this reasoning also seems flawed. Firstly, the bank is found in the Ross Sea at the mouth of McMurdo Sound (Ross Dependency, Antarctica) meaning it cannot have been named by Māori, so it cannot be a Māori toponym. Secondly, although the name-form of the specific may indeed be seen as the te reo Māori name-form or transcription for *Victoria*, it cannot be considered a te reo Māori word.[5] What seems to be lacking here is a clear definition of the term 'Māori'. Is what is meant in the NZ Gazetteer 'a name bestowed on a place by Māori, and therefore a Māori toponym', or 'a name perceived to be in te reo Māori, not necessarily bestowed by the Māori'? There is an important difference.

Also of interest are hybrid toponyms, that is, where an Indigenous-derived word or name has been blended with an Introduced one to create a simplex name-form. Australia has a number of such names, with *Bundaberg* (*bunda* 'important man' + German *berg* 'mountain') and *Yarraville* (*yarra yarra* 'flowing' + 'town') being just two of the most familiar placenames. There is some variation in whether the generic is placed first or second and whether it is a simplex or open compound name (e.g. *Colovale* v *Colo Vale*). New Zealand also sports such toponyms, e.g. *Gleniti, Glentui*, and *Glenomaru*, all of which are classified as 'Māori' in the New Zealand Gazetteer. All of these examples, either from Australia or from New Zealand, were not bestowed by Indigenous people, so 'Indigenous' would not appear to be an appropriate category. We might suggest 'Introduced' or, at most, 'Indigenous-derived'.

The picture becomes even more complicated when a toponym is formed from the blending of elements from at least two Indigenous or Indigenous-derived names, as in the Perth suburb of Wangara (< *Wanneroo* + *Gnangara*). Should these be labelled 'Introduced' or 'Indigenous-derived'? The process of blending was within the Introduced system of toponymy, so it would be defensible to use that label. On the other hand, the name-form is constructed from two Indigenous words, so perhaps the category 'Indigenous-derived' may be more appropriate. To add to the mix of blended names, we have in New South Wales the small settlement of Kurmond, which owes its name from melding elements of the neighbouring *Kurrajong* and *Richmond* (Kurmond lying between the two). In this example we have an element

Bundaberg Post Office, 1936 (photo: Queensland Places, https://queenslandplaces.com.au)

...'Indigenous' or 'Introduced'? Part II

of an 'Indigenous-derived' name and an 'Introduced' one. How should *Kurmond* then be classified? These two examples certainly belong to the 'Introduced' toponymic system, but are also 'Indigenous-derived'.

Ultimately, all toponyms that appear in a gazetteer, on official maps published by government agencies etc., road signs, and general literature, are classified by ANPS as 'Introduced', since they have become part of Australian English. This is the most clear-cut solution. Perhaps the New Zealand Geographic Board should consider doing the same? If we must have a binary classification scheme, I propose we describe toponyms with a specific that clearly derives from an Indigenous-derived word as 'Indigenous-derived', and toponyms with an obvious non-Indigenous specific accompanied by an 'Indigenous-derived' generic as 'Introduced'. The latter category also seems to fit best for all the hybrid and blended toponyms.

Postscript

An article by New Zealand linguist, Winifred Bauer, in the 2010 *New Zealand Association for Comparative Law Yearbook 16*, discusses some of the issues I have raised above, and offers alternative ways of looking at them. It not only illustrates how vexed the issues regarding the orthographic representation of Indigenous(-derived) toponyms can be, but also shows the need for them to be considered from both a linguistic and political standpoint. I thoroughly recommend you read this article. It is written with non-linguists in mind, so should be easy to follow.

Jan Tent

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Endnotes

[1] Prior to the British occupation of New Zealand, there were, according to Biggs (1988), two main varieties of te reo Māori spoken (North Island Māori and South Island Māori) which were very similar. South Island Māori became extinct relatively quickly.

[2] See Nash (2011) 'What's a warrambool?'. https://www.paradisec.org.au/blog/2011/06/what's-a-warrambool/

[3] *Pakihi* 'barren area of open land, typically swampy or surrounded by bush'; *Pa* 'fortified Māori settlement; Māori village or marae'.

[4] No gazetteer in Australia labels toponyms as 'Indigenous' or 'Introduced'. However, most Australian placename dictionaries do label Indigenous names as 'Aboriginal'.

[5] Labeling *Wikitōria Bank* as 'Māori' is analogous to counting the name of the Fiji village Lodoni as a Fijian name—the village deriving its name from *London*. *Lodoni* pronounced [londoni] is merely the Fijian transcription, and no Fijian would consider it a Fijian name.

Nowhere Else—more than we thought possible!

In our previous issue, after Joshua Nash recalled being distracted by Nowhere Else Road during his trip on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, we remarked that Tasmania had surely trumped SA by having *two* places with that name.

Chester Schulz has raised the stakes and restored South Australia's reputation, by pointing out that his State has at least three Nowhere Elses. In addition to the Nowhere Else Road that Joshua drove past, there's another on Fleurieu Peninsula which actually crosses Nowhere Else Creek, a tributary of the Yattagolinga River at Rapid Bay. Interestingly, this road at Delamere has a bit of an identity crisis. Although many road signs and navigation apps point you to *Nowhere Else Rd*, its formal name is *No Where Else Road*.

And to pile on the humiliation, Chester points out that Google Maps shows two more Nowhere Else Roads in South Australia—one at Mookra and one at Hammond, both in the Mid-North of the State. Admittedly these two roads are not gazetted, but that still makes *five* by our count. And we've just discovered a Nowhere Else Well in SA, near Joshua Nash's wanderings on the Eyre Peninsula... and now we're up to *six*.

Tasmania, and any other State or Territory that wishes to compete, has a bit of catching up to do. (We do know that Victoria lays claim to a Nowhere Else Swamp, and Western Australia has a Nowhere Else Dam...)

Walcha revisited

We recently received correspondence from Ian Donovan from Hamilton, NSW, regarding the article by Jan Tent on **Walcha** (*PA*, December 2021). Jan had noted that the original settler at Walcha, Hamilton Collins Semphill, had a Hunter Valley connection, and there might possibly be a link to the languages of that region. However, he'd not been able to identify any Hunter languages that may be the source of the name.

Ian notes that there's a locality in Maitland known as *Walka*, named for the former Walka Waterworks which used to supply drinking water to Newcastle, and is pronounced the same way (viz. /ˈwɒlkə/) and taking its name from an early property, the origin of which is outlined by Mark Dunn (2020):

> Houston Mitchell, brother of Sir Thomas Mitchell, took the name Walka for part of his estate directly across the river from Bolwarra near Maitland. As he explained:
>
> *The Aboriginal name for the hilly part of my grant is Walka and the lake is called Potay. This information I distinctly received from about 50 natives who were seated at their respective fires on the prettiest part of Walka. 25 (pp. 142-3)*
>
> 25 Houston Mitchell to Thomas Mitchell, 9 April 1831, Papers of Sir T.L. Mitchell, vol. 3: 1830–1839, SLNSW, CYA292.

Ian notes that Maitland is at the zone of transition between the Lower North Coast and Hunter River Lake Macquarie languages (using the geographically-based terms employed by Wafer & Lissarrague, 2008). Both languages include the word /ˈwaka/ 'above, up; west' (Lissarrague, 2006; Lissarrague, 2010), which agrees well with the name or description given by the First Nations informants, as a reference to the hilly part of the property, elevated above a nearby swamp (photo below).

As to whether Semphill's *Walcha* has any connection to Walka (Maitland), to Houston Mitchell or his brother Sir Thomas Mitchell, Ian cannot say. Nevertheless, this information may provide another lead.

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Walcha and its waterworks, from above

Annual General Meeting—Placenames Australia (Inc.)

The next AGM will tbe held on **Thursday 7th February 2024**,
by teleconference

The exact time and logon details will be emailed shortly to Supporting Members, who are encouraged to participate via screen or phone

Nominations are welcome for office bearers
(President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and up to five Committee Members)

Brian Lehner, Secretary <secretary@anps.org.au>

Placenames Puzzle Number 88

Ellipsis in placenames (2)

Australians have a predilection for ellipsis: shortening personal names and placenames by simply deleting syllables or words, e.g. Khancoban > Khan. *Many shortened placenames are preceded with 'The …' The following clues reveal such placenames. (We are excluding hypocoristic names like* Brizzie *for Brisbane, or* Freo *for Fremantle).*

1. (VIC) A city once famous for its gold deposits and whose name is associated with a British pugilist.
2. (ACT) A Canberra suburb known for its Westfield shopping centre.
3. (VIC) A town in South Gippsland whose name begins with Trotsky's first name.
4. (NSW) A western Sydney suburb with an Indigenous-derived name, once part of D'Arcy Wentworth's estate.
5. (SA) A town at the northern end of the Barossa Valley; its short form rhymes with a courtroom panel.
6. (WA) The state's premier goldmining town. Officially, it now has a double-barrel name.
7. (QLD) A town on the Sunshine Coast whose full name is the sixth town mentioned in the original version of the song 'I've Been Everywhere'.
8. (ACT) Said by the unkind to be a meeting place for national galahs.
9. (NSW) A geometric anomaly in Sydney Harbour.
10. (WA) An inner western suburb of Perth, the WA home of AFL, whose name derives from a town in Italy.
11. (VIC) An eastern residential suburb of Melbourne (between Box Hill and Mitcham) with an Indigenous-derived name that makes you think it could do with padding a bit more.
12. (NSW) Home of the Golden Guitar.
13. (WA) A town 350km south of Perth and 50km north of Albany, that you might think is a hilly refuge for dogs.
14. (VIC) A city at the western end of the Great Ocean Road, and is the home of the purported Mahogany Ship.
15. (QLD) A town on the Barkly Highway; very spicy, you might think.
16. (NSW) A southern beach suburb of Sydney; are there really no crows there?
17. (SA) A south-eastern town known for its deep holes and craters, despite its generic.
18. (VIC) A conspicuous outcrop into the sea; ellipsis makes it a ball, of sorts.
19. (NSW) A Sydney suburb now noted for its vibrant Vietnamese community.
20. (WA) A former goldmining town, 770km NNE of Perth; will ellipsis make it inherit the earth?

[Compiled by **Jan Tent**]

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Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

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