

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



Local history at work ~ ~ the story of Smiths Gap



photo: Smiths Gap? at Bungendore, New South Wales, 1927. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1426830476>

Smiths Gap is a prominent NSW geographical feature: a gap in the Lake George Range through which Bungendore Road runs. It is a point where three different fault lines intersect on the edge of the Range. The current road cutting reveals the complicated folding of the gap's ancient sedimentary rocks: Ordovician turbidites of the Pittman Formation, deposited in the deep ocean to the east of the Gondwana super-continent, 460-444 million years ago (Finlayson, 2008). It is the only gap in the Lake George Range, through which a public road runs between Gearys Gap and the ACT border.

European settlement of the Wamboin/Bywong area (characterised as the wild country in the ranges at the head of Brooks Creek) commenced in earnest in the 1860s,

once people were permitted to occupy unsurveyed land by means of conditional purchases (i.e. by selection). However, there was no route for wheeled vehicles from this area down into Bungendore:

Although a surveyed road from Bungendore to Gundaroo ran close to the settlement, communications were inconvenient because the pass through Smith's [sic] Gap which today simplifies travel from Bungendore through Wyanga [i.e. the south-eastern part of Wamboin] to the modern Federal Highway was not then in existence. With Bungendore only a few miles away, the only link was by horseback or on foot. To the north it was far easier to travel to Gundaroo, about sixteen miles distant, and westward there was a rough track connecting with the busy town of Queanbeyan (Lea-Scarlett, 1972, p.7).

Although we do not know the Aboriginal name for the gap, there would certainly have been an Aboriginal walking track through it, providing a route from the headwaters of Brooks Creek down to the highly productive Lake George plain.

Early records of the name *Smiths Gap*

The first record that I have found of the use of the name *Smiths Gap* is in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* of 7 May 1867, p. 1144:

BUNGENDORE.—Impounded at Bungendore, on the 3rd day of May, 1867, from Smith's Gap: damages, 1s.—One red snail-horned bullock, top off both ears, white spots on both flanks, small white spot in forehead, illegible brand off rump, like blotch brand or whip mark near rump. If not released, will be sold according to Impounding Act. J. WILLIAMS, Poundkeeper. 2270 Is.

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From the Editor



This issue, I think, can be seen as a celebration of the work done within our local history groups. Our lead article on the story of **Smiths Gap** was developed from work done by David McDonald of the Wamboin Community Association; and, similarly, Peter McInnes of the Taralga Historical Society has been tracking the origin of names like **Turallo** that seem to have a core meaning of ‘reeds’.

Queensland historian Diana Beal returns with a rather different slant on surveying and exploration than in her earlier articles: how the movement of the continents

affects our calculations of location and distance.

To complete this issue, Jan Tent writes about something I can guarantee you’ve never heard of (‘titular toponyms’), and Jeremy Steels digs into his databases to discover what *Belubula* might have meant. By the time you read this, the dreaded initialism EOFY will be appearing everywhere. So I’ll get on the bandwagon too: to our valued Supporting Members (and any who can follow in their footsteps), we’d be delighted to have your continued support this year. The back page has the details, as usual.

David Blair
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In the media

Queensland cattle property names

The online journal *Beef Central* has reported on the many QLD properties that have curious and quirky names. You’re invited to [check it out](#), and to tell us if you know of any others.

Kiama and Bombo

ABC Illawarra had a recent [story](#) on the connection of NSW town Kiama with basalt mining: basalt was referred to as ‘blue diamond’, and Kiama was first

known as *Blue Haven*. And to add to the interest, we learn that the quarry site of Bombo had its name changed to *Bombo* ‘because *Bumbo* is a rude name’!

Longest placename in the world?

Did you too think the Welsh had cornered the market in long placenames? Apparently we were all wrong: the Kiwis have blown everyone else out of the water: 80 characters and 40 syllables in a name we haven’t got room to print. But *The Epoch Times* has the [story](#)...

Any clues?

On page 8 of this issue Peter McInnes investigates NSW placenames such as **Turallo** and **Tyreel**, many of which seem to have an Aboriginal origin relating to ‘reeds’. There is speculation that the Sydney suburb of **Turrella** somehow got its name for that reason--but we don’t actually know that. Can anyone give us a clue?

Our Taswegian informant Rod Ewins reckons that Tassie rates highly in the ‘strange names’ competition. He lives in striking distance of *Stinking Creek*, *Black Charley’s Opening* and (his favourite) *Bust Me Gall Hill*. On the last, we seem to remember that it was actually a euphemism for the bullocky’s *Bust Me Balls Hill*...

Puzzle answers - (from page 12)

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ninety Mile Beach | 6. One Tree Hill | 11. Six Mens Landing | 16. Eight Mile Plains |
| 2. Seventeen Seventy | 7. Zero Creek | 12. Ten O’Clock Bay | 17. Nine Tails Creek |
| 3. Five Ways | 8. Two Brothers | 13. Forty Baskets Beach | 18. Thirteenth Beach |
| 4. The Three Sisters | 9. Four Mile Creek | 14. Thousand Acre Plain | |
| 5. The Twelve Apostles | 10. Seven Hills | 15. Hundred | |

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...from page 1

In 1870 the colonial government had the first road constructed through the gap, although it was on a different alignment from the current road: *Queanbeyan Age*, 18 August 1870, p. 3:

Tenders Wanted FOR the CUTTING and FORMING of the ROAD known as SMITH'S GAP, near Bungendore. Plan and specification can be seen at Mr. McMahon's, Bungendore; or, at Mr Donnelly's, Bywong Gundaroo. Tenders to be opened at noon on the 20th August at Mr Leahy's, Gundaroo. Trustees. ALEX. McCLUNG J. McMAHON P. B. DONNELLY

The completion of a road through the gap greatly facilitated transportation between Bungendore and Gundaroo. The road was known as *Gundaroo Road*, but was changed to *Bungendore Road* in recent decades because, it is said, the name duplicated that of the nearby pre-existing Gundaroo Road that connects Sutton, Gundaroo and Gunning.

Apparently, the design of the road through the gap did not have traveller safety as a prominent consideration: *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 13 November 1878, page 4:

BUNGENDORE...On Thursday last Mr. David Gordon, in company with his sister and her two children, were proceeding on their way from here [Bungendore] to Top Flat, and when about half-way up the hill the horse suddenly refused to pull, the consequence being that the cart ran backward, and before Mr. Gordon had time to jump out it was capsized over the edge of the cutting into the gully. How they escaped instant death seems marvellous, as they were all under the cart, which had fallen some six feet over the edge of the cutting. With great difficulty Mr. Gordon succeeded in extricating himself, and at once set to work to free his sister and the children from their perilous position. This he effected by getting on the upper side and giving the cart another turn down the hill. He fully expected to find them dead, as he had also a bag of flour and one of sugar in the cart; but I am glad to state that beyond receiving a severe shaking they are but little worse for the mishap. This piece of road is in a most dangerous condition and should certainly be made more secure or some lives will be lost. About two years since a dray loaded with wheat went over within a few yards of the same spot. I should strongly advise the inhabitants of that part of our district to call a meeting and urge upon the authorities the necessity of erecting a substantial fence throughout the whole length of the cutting. It would not cost a great sum, and might be the means of saving life.

'Top Flat', their destination, apparently was the area where the Smiths' property was located near the top of the gap. David Gordon's daughter, Janet Smith, lived there.

...Smiths Gap

A decade later another mishap occurred in the gap, as reported in the *Goulburn Herald*, 14 August 1888, p. 3:

Mr. B. Leahy and Mr. Hayes met with an accident coming down Smith's Gap on Thursday last. Just as they were about a hundred yards down the hill in the steepest part the horse they had began kicking. Mr. Leahy, who was driving, ran the horse into the bank of the cutting. The buggy capsized and threw both occupants out. The horse managed to get clear of the buggy and bolted down the hill. Beyond a good shaking neither of the occupants was hurt. August 12.

'Mr B. Leahy' is probably Blenner Patrick Leahy who had selections at the top of the range and other parts of the parishes of Wamboin and Bywong. The Leahy family took up many selections in our area and, in subsequent years, consolidated them and others to establish the 'Clare' property, with its homestead on what is now Clare Lane. 'Mr. Hayes' was probably William John Harwood Hayes, the Post and Telegraph Master at Bungendore 1886-1888.

Who was the Smith of *Smiths Gap*?

The 'Smith' after whom the gap appears to be named was William John Smith, according to a report in the *Goulburn Evening Penny Post* (10 June 1916, p. 5):

Mrs. Ellen Jane Smith, a very old resident, died at her son's residence on Wednesday morning. The old lady was 93 years of age and had been ailing for some time. Her husband, Mr. William Smith, predeceased her by very many years, and was one of the early settlers over the range on the Bungendore-Gundaroo road. The steep hill was called Smith's Gap after the late Mr. Smith. Mr. and Mrs. Smith left a large family and numerous relations around this part. The remains were interred in the C.E. Cemetery on Thursday afternoon, and were followed to the grave by a large gathering.

William John Smith was born in 1824 in Liverpool, NSW, and died at Bungendore in 1896, where he was buried in an unmarked grave. Both his parents were convicts, who with their children moved from Sydney to Creekborough (Bywong) in 1829 (Brownlow & Jones, c. 2012; Proctor, 2001). Smith married Ellen Jane McEnally (1823-1916) in 1846 in Braidwood. He took up selections in the Creekborough area, approximately two miles north-west of the top of Smiths Gap, in the 1870s and 1880s. It would seem from the reports above that the area of Smith's property, was called 'Top Flat', adjacent to, or possibly part of, James Anlezark's 1837 original land grant.

continued next page

...from previous page

...Smiths Gap

James Anlezark purchased land at the top of Smiths Gap on 12 April 1837—one of the first land purchases in the Wamboin/Bywong area. It was one square mile in area (640 acres) and cost £160. Immediately after purchasing it, Anlezark sold his block to John Smith, the father of William John Smith. The sale of the land seems to have been a gentlemen's agreement, as no conveyancing documents recorded the sale. On John Smith's death in 1847, the land was inherited by his son, William John.



Making *Smiths Gap* official

Despite the feature being known as *Smiths Gap*, both in long-term community usage and in official use by local government, the Geographical Names Board of NSW (GNB) confirmed that it had never been registered as an official geographical name. In October 2018, I approached the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, requesting their support to have the GNB register the name; at its meeting on 22 May 2019, Council resolved to initiate the naming process.

The proposal was advertised for a month over August/September 2019 and, at the conclusion of that period, the name *Smiths Gap* was assigned in terms of the Geographical Names Act 1966 (NSW).² The entry for Smiths Gap in the online Geographical Names Register reads as follows:³

Designation	GAP
Status	Official Assigned
Description	The gap is located on Bungendore Road, approximately 5kms north-west of the village of Bungendore.
Origin	Known locally as 'Smiths Gap' since at least the 1860s. Named after a local family who lived in the area.

David McDonald
Wamboin Community Association

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Greg Lee, who generously shared with me the results of his family history research, especially regarding land conveyancing in the area settled by the Lee and Smith families.

An earlier form of this article appeared in the 'Local History' pages of the Wamboin Community Association:

<https://wamboincommunity.asn.au/localhistory/>

Endnotes

- ¹ From the NLA collection 'Early sites of the Federal Capital Territory, 1927'
- ² *NSW Government Gazette* No. 110 of 27 September 2019, pp. 4212-3
- ³ <https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/a41d2384-16a2-4258-8fa2-439584f43a24>

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Titular toponyms

David Blair and I have classified various kinds of toponyms (Blair & Tent, 2018). The most common kind are **descriptive** and **associative** (e.g. *Coldwater Creek*, *Rocky Plain*, *Round Mountain*, *Powerline Creek*, *Shark Bay*); **eponymous** (e.g. *Mt Kosciuszko*, *Adelaide*, *Endeavour River*, *Collaroy*); **commemorative** (e.g. *Cape Tribulation*, *Agincourt Reefs*, *Whitsunday Islands*); and of course **copied** toponyms (e.g. *Perth*, *Newcastle*, *Epping*, *Heidelberg*). But there is a sub-class of eponymous toponym that I have not seen labelled anywhere. These toponyms, like hagionyms (places named after saints), commemorate people (mostly royalty), but rather than using their given names, they feature the person's title. For example, *Victoria* is transparently named after Queen Victoria; but so is *Queensland*, and it's not so obvious. In this latter case only her title is featured, and that makes its referent opaque. I have termed such toponyms **titular toponyms**. A more formal term could be 'titlonym' (< Greek τίτλος *titlos* 'title' + -ώνυμον *-ōnymon* 'name').

There aren't too many of them to be found, probably because of their opaqueness. Their referents, too, could differ over time. For instance, *Prince of Wales Hospital* (Sydney) was named after Prince Edward, later King Edward VIII; but *Prince of Wales Island* (QLD) was named after an earlier Prince of Wales, George Augustus Frederick of Hanover.

We mustn't confuse a 'titlonym' with a genuine eponymous toponym, which features the actual name of a person (e.g. *Kings Canyon* (NT), after Fielder King, a friend of the explorer Ernest Giles, who named the feature). In contrast, here's a list of some real 'titlonyms' in our region.

Queen	Queenstown (NZ); Queenstown (TAS); Queen River (TAS); Queens Road (Vitilevu, Fiji)
King	King River (TAS); Kings Cross (Sydney); Kings Road, & Kings Wharf (Vitilevu, Fiji)
Prince	Princes Highway (NSW, VIC & SA)
Regent	Regents Lake (former name of Lake Coogee, in Perth); Regents Lake (former name of Lake Cargelligo in NSW)
Duke	Dukes Highway (SA)

There are also some toponyms that feature the titles of non-nobles or non-aristocrats. These include:

Governor	Governor Mountain (Antarctica), Governor Island
Doctor	various Doctors Creek (VIC)

Jan Tent

Reference

Blair, D. & Tent, J. (2018). *Methods of placenaming: A revised typology*. ANPS Technical Paper, No. 5. South Turramurra: Placenames Australia. <http://www.anps.org.au/upload/ANPSTechPaper5.pdf>

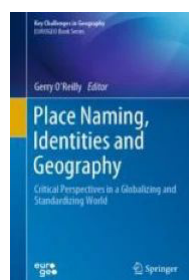


New books on toponymy

Two new books have come across the desk of ANPS Director **Jan Tent**. Jan has provided the details for readers who might be interested in updating their knowledge of toponymy.

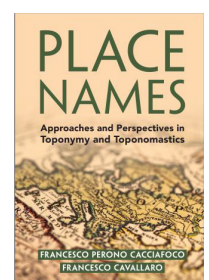
Place naming, identities and geography

Gerry O'Reilly (editor)
Springer Verlag, 2023
E-book available: Euro 16.99
View [here](#)



Place names: approaches and perspectives in toponymy and toponomastics

Francesco Perono Cacciafoco and
Francesco Cavallero
Cambridge University Press, 2023
View [here](#)



Where are we now?...

Science tells us that the continent of Australia is moving north and slightly to the east by about 7cm annually. This is because of the steady movement of the tectonic plate underlying the continent. The upshot of this is that we are often not exactly where we think we are.

Our historical printed and electronic maps often show lines of latitude and longitude which thus allow geographical coordinates for any individual point to be measured or estimated with the best information available at the time of production. On the other hand, modern electronic devices with technologies such as global-positioning systems (GPS) produce accurate contemporary positions. With continents moving at varying rates, discrepancies between positions for any particular spot calculated with differing technologies will obviously occur. Here in Australia, this problem is particularly acute, as our continent is moving at a faster rate than many others.

Geoscience Australia, an Australian Government body, oversees the management of this problem, and is involved in the official determination of geographical coordinates for Australia. The significance of the issue can be seen in the movement of Australia from 1994 to 2020, as shown in the 1994 Geocentric Datum of Australia (GDA94) and its GDA2020 counterpart: an adjustment of approximately 1.8m was necessary. This is not a problem if you are trying to find 35 Brown St; but it *is* a problem where, for example, updated electronic location packages must be installed in vehicles for accurate lane-positioning.

The issue is of interest to geographers and historians. For example, in 1859 (on 6 June) Queen Victoria signed Letters Patent which defined the borders of Queensland. In part, the southern boundary west of the mountainous and eastern-river section of the border (now the site of Mungindi) was decreed to be along latitude 29°S and, in time, this border was marked on the ground. Government officials, relying on the position of the border, got on with the business of government—registering land ownership, issuing licences, keeping the peace, etc.—with QLD to the north of the line and NSW to the south. Between 1859 and today, however, that border marked on-ground has moved more than 11 metres to the north of latitude 29°S if the rate of movement has sustained an average of 7 cm annually.

How has this problem been overcome? In 1982, the Queensland Parliament passed the *Queensland Boundaries*

Declaratory Act 1982. This act acknowledged the various letters patent which had determined historically the colonial/state boundaries, the historical marking of such boundaries on-ground, and the acceptance and adoption for survey and governance purposes of those marked boundaries. In effect, it ratified the on-ground status quo, regardless of where individual geographical points were determined to be with modern survey technology.

Apart from the continent not heeding the original assumption that it would stay 'where it was put', the marking of the state and territory borders was confounded with other problems which made the measured marks inaccurate (when compared with results achieved with modern GPS). First, there are discrepancies due to the less sophisticated technology of the times when the borders were marked or due to the rugged nature of the traversed country; second, there were instances where the 19th century equipment was found to be faulty.

The eastern end of the border between QLD and NSW was marked by Queensland Surveyor Roberts in 1863-5 through difficult country of high mountains and deep valleys. Even though a NSW surveyor had at some points established different marks, the survey by Roberts was sent to the NSW Government and both governments thereafter acted on the basis that the Roberts's survey was correct. However, in 1933, the NSW Government informed the Queensland Government that a new survey had found some QLD land titles extended into NSW. Queensland then informed NSW that QLD had issued the land titles in accord with Roberts's survey which both governments had accepted for some 70 years. NSW then found corroborating evidence that they too had relied on Roberts's survey. QLD solved the problem by agreeing to resume a small area of land from 10 titles and retain it as unallocated state land. (QLD could not transfer the land to NSW as states do not have the legal power under the Australian Constitution to transfer land to another state.)

Now we come to faulty equipment. The NT-QLD border along longitude 138°E was surveyed by Augustus Poeppel and Lawrence Wells in 1884-6 through dry and difficult country. They relied on two theodolites as they moved from Poeppel Corner due north, marking the border as they went. However, later surveys revealed at least one of the theodolites was faulty and they had in fact been moving slightly west of due north, such that the marked

...the *lat* and *long* of it all

end point of the border at the Gulf of Carpentaria was about 600 metres out of correct alignment.

In addition, vital to 19th century surveying was the surveyor's chain. [A chain was 22 yards (20.117m) long with 100 links each 7.92 inches (20.12cm) long.] Several small rings complemented the long section of each link to give additional flexibility to the chain, and the chains were made originally of a soft metal, such as brass, to allow ease of manufacture. However, the softness of the metal also meant that links and rings could deform and make the chains longer after years of use. While this problem did not affect the measurement of direction, it could have affected the placement of mile posts.

Other instances of well-known markers being out of accurate alignment with their stated positions include Haddon and Poeppel Corners of south-west QLD and, famously, the eastern boundary of WA along 129°E. In this case, the northern marker is 79.1m west and the southern marker is 49.8m east of true alignment. Interestingly, considering the 1400km length of the border, the discrepancies towards the centre of the line where the border between NT and SA at 26°S latitude cuts the longitude are 75.3m on the western side and 52.1m on the east. This is a pretty good result considering all the factors involved.

Finally, one other aspect of these shifting geographical points needs some discussion. We know now that the accurate global-positioning of, say, a state border does not necessarily locate the recognised on-ground border, and sometimes in more isolated and lesser populated areas there may be a need to find the border. In QLD, a preliminary survey of the southern border along latitude 29°S in 1984-5 sought to find the mile posts erected by Surveyor Cameron in 1879-81.

Only about 10 percent of the original posts were evident. In order to find the border, based on clear evidence of having been marked originally, the extant posts were used to construct a mathematical model which was then used to predict the most likely locations of other posts. The model was tested and found robust by fairly accurately indicating the location of mile posts where the only evidence left was underground and out of sight.

The use of modelling ushered in a new methodology for border definition. Instead of having surveyors go out to mark the whole border on-ground, the two governments

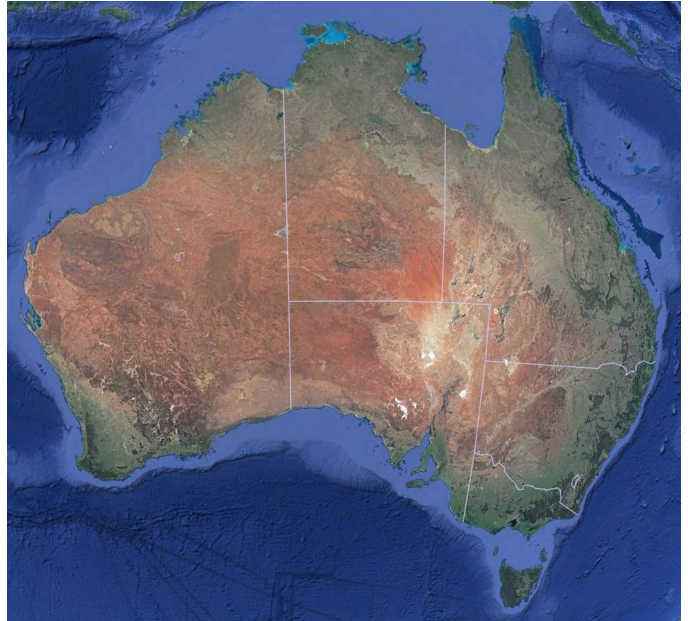


image: Google Earth

now require private surveyors measuring land adjacent to the border to explain fully what they had measured and how the border had been determined. Border definition or redefinition then requires approval by both state governments. This system ensures that recognition of the border remains current, and the system does so at almost no cost to either government [The States of QLD and NSW (2001), *Redefining the Queensland-NSW Border: Guidelines for Surveyors*].

Geographical knowledge in our community has it that the western part of the QLD-NSW border and the border of SA-NT (including the QLD-SA border) follow latitudes 29°S and 26°S respectively. This remained correct in the relatively short periods while the borders were legal constructs only before attempts were made to mark the borders on-ground. Once marking was done and accepted for land titling and governance purposes, location description by long-run fixed coordinates became impossible. The only manageable solution was to fix the borders on-ground and accept that the earth moves!

Diana Beal

Endnote

¹ <https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/search>

References

Bailliere's New South Wales gazetteer and road guide: containing the most recent and accurate information as to every place in the colony: with map. Sydney: F. F. Bailliere.

'Reedy' placenames...

Judging by the placenames of New South Wales, you might think that the state is a particularly reedy place: there are more than 160 mentions of *Reed* or *Reedy* in the on-line Register of the NSW Geographical Names Board. Most entries relate to creeks and swamps, with a smattering of rural places, reserves, flats, rivers and lagoons. In addition, there's a town and two islands. Admittedly, *Reedy* is not as common as *Spring*, which has over 500 entries; but there is no doubt in my mind that our early placenamers could, and should, have tried a bit harder. A moment's thought would have led them to choose a more distinctive name so that their creek or lagoon could stand out in what was already a very crowded field.

In fact, it may actually be the case that 160 reedy creeks, lagoons and swamps is an undercount—that there are many placenames in the GNB Register with a 'reedy' origin in an Aboriginal language, but are not marked as such. The table below lists a small sample of

possible candidates, with a particular placename in the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional local government area as a starting point. **Turallo** is the name of a creek, a range and a nature reserve near Bungendore. One of the three entries in the GNB register (oddly, the entry for the derived name of the nature reserve rather than that of the creek or the range) notes the name's Aboriginal origin; it credits two sources (Martin, 1943; McCarthy, 1963) for the meaning 'reeds growing in water; water weeds'.¹

Near Taralga, around 100km north of Turallo there is an almost identically named creek, the Turrallo, one of three tributaries that all flow into the Tarlo. The Tarlo, whose meaning has been reported to be 'river' (Barrett, 2016, p. 67), from the Gundungurra word *dharlang* 'small river', is possibly a mis-transcription of *Turrallo*. If so, it would indicate that the original emphasis was on the first syllable (**tu**-ral-o), leading to the elision of the second syllable, and producing a later pronunciation 'Turlo' or 'Tarlo'.

WORDFORM	MEANING	SOURCE OF FORM/MEANING	PLACENAME	LOCALITY	FEATURE	PLACENAME SOURCE
<i>turallo</i>	<i>turrella</i> - reeds growing in water; <i>turrella</i> - water weeds	Martin, 1943 McCarthy, 1963	Turallo Creek Turallo Range Turallo Nature Reserve	Bungendore Bungendore Bungendore	stream range reserve	NSW GNB NSW GNB NSW GNB
<i>turrella</i>	reeds growing in water ⁴	<i>Science of Man</i>	Turrella Turrella Creek	Bayside Breeza	suburb stream	NSW GNB NSW GNB
<i>turrallo</i>			Turrallo Creek Turrallo	Taralga Taralga	stream parish	NSW GNB NSW GNB
<i>tarlo</i>	river	Barrett, 2016 (pp. 97, 125)	Tarlo Tarlo Tarlo River	Goulburn Goulburn Goulburn	locality parish stream	NSW GNB NSW GNB NSW GNB
<i>tyreel</i>	a reed ⁵ <i>dreelwarrinah</i> - a reed standing up ⁶ <i>tareelaroi</i> - a reed in the river ⁷	<i>Science of Man</i>	Tyreel Creek Tyreel Bore Old Tyreel Tyreel Run	Moree Moree Moree	stream bore property	NSW GNB NSW GNB <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 25/05/1868, p.2
<i>tyrl tyrl</i>	deep valley? ⁸		Tyrl Tyrl	Taralga	parish	NSW GNB
<i>terralong</i>			Terralong	Argyle	locality	<i>NSW Govt Gazette</i> , 14/05/1844, p. 685
<i>terragong</i>			Terragong Terragong Swamp	Shellharbour Kiama	parish locality	NSW GNB <i>Sydney Herald</i> , 11/02/1840, p.4
<i>jerralong</i>			Jerralong Jerralong Creek	Goulburn Windellama	parish stream	NSW GNB
<i>terralagolong</i> ⁹			Terralagolong	Crookwell	location	<i>NSW Govt Gazette</i> , 01/02/1837, p.1117

...‘Reedy’ placenames

Often the English transcription of the Aboriginal ‘reedy’ placename appears quite differently from those recorded above. *Tyrl Tyrl*, a parish and placename near Taralga, does not resemble *Turallo* at all. The earliest record of *Tyrl Tyrl* I have found (Bennett, 1834, p. 142) is transcribed as *Turrl Turrl*. The only recorded meaning (unattested) suggests it means ‘deep or wide valley’ (Golspie Progress and Landcare Association, 2005, vol.1, p. 46). This makes some sense topographically but local knowledge suggests an alternative:

...Joe Croker bought the 660 acres of portion 1 of the Parish of Tyrl Tyrl commonly known as Lagoon Paddock. In that paddock there is a flat area between the Tyrl Tyrl Road and the waterfall gorge which becomes a lagoon in wet seasons, however in a normal summer it is usually dry and, in those times, it formed a natural cricket ground.’ (Williamson, 2004, p. 1)

So our hunch would be, based on our understanding of repetition in Aboriginal placenames,² that the original form meant ‘a reedy place’. And *tyreel* has been recorded as ‘a reed’, as far away as Moree in northern NSW.³

The vagaries of English transcription practice when recording from Aboriginal languages mean that there may be many other reedy places out there in NSW. The potential candidates listed in the table may be the tip of the iceberg, to use a rather inappropriate cliché.

Peter McInnes

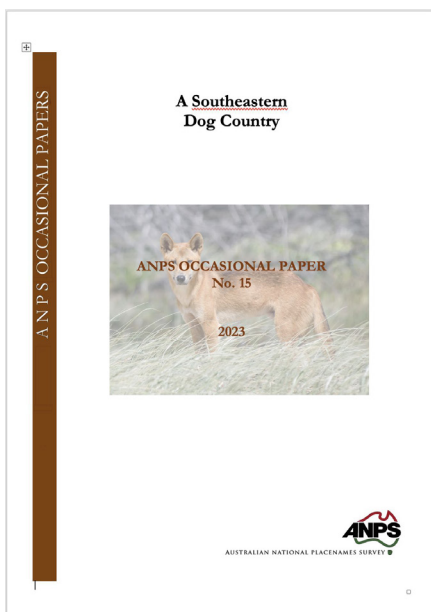
Taralga Historical Society

Endnotes

- ¹ The GNB entry fails to reveal that the two sources are referring not to *Turallo* but to the form *turrella*.
- ² Harold Koch, personal communication. Harold also provided a spelling of *jereel* (*dyiruil*) for ‘reed’ from a wordlist collected by Carr near Yass in 1887.
- ³ In one of a series of reports published by the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia in its journal *Science of Man*. The reports, from various sources such as Police Districts and Departments of Mines, appeared in various issues from 1901 to 1906.
- ⁴ *Science of Man*, 6(7), 24 Aug 1903, 100.
- ⁵ *Science of Man* 6(7), 24 Aug 1903, 101.
- ⁶ *Science of Man* 4(10), 22 Nov 1901, 166.
- ⁷ *Science of Man* 6(7), 24 Aug 1903, 101.
- ⁸ For other variants and suggested meaning, see McInnes, 2022 (p. 68, Table 8); Golspie, 2005 (vol. 1, p. 46).
- ⁹ For other variants, see McInnes, 2022 (p. 46, Table 6).

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Coming soon - a new ANPS Occasional Paper

A Southeastern Dog Country, by Jim Wafer and Tracey Howie

In the wedge of country that stretches from the mid-Hunter to Barrenjoey Head, the recorded Indigenous toponyms indicate a clear linguistic and cultural coherence. About 10% of those placenames may incorporate the word for ‘dog’—such a high proportion strongly suggests that this is Dog Country.

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Belubula River...

The Belubula River rises midway between the New South Wales towns of Orange and Bathurst, and runs westwards until it joins the Lachlan River at Gooloogong. The Register of the NSW Geographical Names Board reports the meaning of the Aboriginal word as being ‘stony river or big lagoon’ (citing Reed, 1967). However, it almost certainly does not mean this.

Belubula, commonly pronounced ‘bee-lubler’ (the second part rhyming with ‘bubler’) is composed of two Wiradhuri words *bila* and *bula*. The records (in my Bayala Databases) show that the first element has several meanings. Most commonly we find ‘creek’, ‘stream’, ‘river’; but sometimes it refers to a tree that grows by streams (commonly a river oak or swamp oak)—and sometimes even to weapons made from this type of wood, such as a shield, or spear.

Australian	respelt	quoted meaning	EngJSM	source
Beelah	bila	a creek	stream	SofM 18960912 [12.1: DDB-Dubbo] [:12.1:7] [Wira] [NSW]
Billa	bila	River	stream	SofM 19000521 [62 Tibbetts-Ulamogo Pl] [:63:179] [Wira] [NSW]
beela	bila	A creek	stream	Curr 3 #190j Cameron [3:365.8:6] [Wira] [nsw]
Bila	bila	A creek	stream	SofM 19040727 [p.88: Critchett Walker] [:90.2:40] [Wira] [NSW]
Bil-la	bila	River	stream	Bunce, Daniel 1859--Castlereagh R [:56:14] [Wlwn] [NSW]
billar	bila	Spear, wood	spear	R.H. Mathews Qld NSW Vic Languages [:187:8.1] [Ywlyi] [NSW]
Bila	bila	[scrub oak]	oak scrub	KAOL Ridley [KML] [:27:4.1] [Kml] [nsw]
beelar	bila	War-spear	spear	Curr 3 #181b Moseley [3:311.1:17] [Kml] [nsw]
bila, or bilarr	bila	Oak. (hence bilarr = spear, made of oak)	oak	AL&T Greenway (Ridley) [KML] [:235:38] [Kml] [NSW]

Table 1. Meanings of *bila* in Wiradhuri and other NSW inland languages

The second word **bula** is very common across Australia, meaning ‘two’. While it means ‘two’ just about everywhere, in distant south-west WA it indicates not so much ‘two’ as plurality, and could be translated as ‘plenty’. It even occurs in Tasmania where in the south-east it still means ‘two’ despite being separated from the mainland for 10,000 or so years.

bula	bula	two	two	Mitchell, J.F.H. CY reel 681 [:85:6] [Wira] [NSW]
bula	bula	two	two	Günther (Fraser) [:65:45.2] [Wira] [NSW]
boola	bula	Plenty	plenty	Curr 1 #27 Perks [1:373.2:28] [Wajri] [WA]
polaitch	bulady	Two	two	Curr 3 #204b EMCurr Tatiarra [3:458.2:5] [Gjmra] [Vic]
būlār	bula	2.	two	KAOL Ridley [KML] [:32:19] [Gwmu] [Qld]
Bulār	bula	Two	two	Mitchell, T.L.: 3: Karaula [:381:2] [Kml] [nsw]
Boula	bula	two [number]	two	Esperance & Recherche Tas 1793: Fier [?] [:1:14] [Llgwn] [Tas]
[\$boula]	bula	Two	two	Curr 3,#A10e,Jorgenson,Uncertain,[3:631:19.52] [TasDK] [Tas]
bura	bura	Two	two	Roth: vocabs [:18:33.3] [] [Tas]

Table 2. Meanings of *bula* or words like it.

...Belubula River

Belubula, or *bila bula* (properly pronounced ‘beeler booler’), would appear to mean ‘stream two’, or ‘two streams’. How might it have acquired such a name?

Here is a possibility: it so happens that just west of Canowindra the Belubula River divides into two streams, as the map below indicates. After the dividing, the northern branch retains the name *Belubula* while the southern branch has the name *Cucumber Creek*. After about 11km (but much more if all the twists and turns are taken into account) the stream becomes one again, as the *Belubula River*.



Figure 1. The Belubula River splits into two streams

‘Cucumber’ might not be English as it seems: it might instead come from an Aboriginal word that sounds very like it [e.g. *gugamba*]. Two examples suggest that possibility:

Gugguma	gagu-ma	a stump	stump	Günther (Fraser) [:87:46] [Wira] [NSW]
Cookamobila	gugama bila	A creek with a number of stumps in it	stump stream	SofM 19040727 [p.88: Critchett Walker] [:90.3:3] [Wira] [NSW]

Table 3. Aboriginal words resembling the English ‘cucumber’

Jeremy Steele

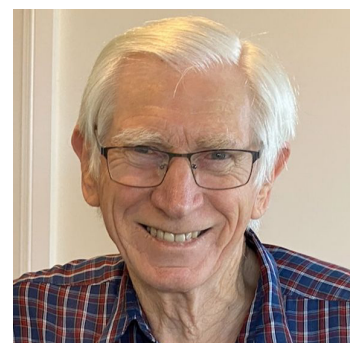
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Reed, A. W. (1967). *Aboriginal place names*. Artarmon, NSW: A.H. & A.W. Reed.

Jeremy Steele’s 2005 Masters thesis was entitled ‘The Aboriginal language of Sydney’. He has compiled the *Bayala* series of databases which contain (and make accessible) material from several Australian languages, including Biyal Biyal (the Sydney language), Wiradhuri, Dharawal and Nyungar.

Jeremy has contributed articles to *Placenames Australia* since 2011, including discussions of *Maroubra*, *Woolloomooloo*, *Bondi*, *Dee Why* and *Canowindra*.

Jeremy’s website <https://www.aboriginallanguages.com/> is a valuable resource for a number of Aboriginal languages, particularly those of eastern Australia.



Placenames Puzzle Number 86

Numerical toponyms

There are numerous placenames that have a number as part of their name. The clues reveal such placenames. Example: (WA, reef) A reef named after a handful of digits... Five Fingers Reef.

1. (VIC) A strand four score and ten miles long.
2. (QLD, coastal town.) Its commemorative name consists entirely of numbers.
3. (NSW) Two suburban junctions—you can count the exits with the fingers on one hand.
4. (NSW) A sororal troika of rocks in the Blue Mountains.
5. (Coastal VIC) Disciples counted in the duodecimal system (but now minus one).
6. (SA, hilly town) Its number is its own factorial, its own square, its own cube, and is sometimes known as *unity* or *monad* as part of its arboreal name.
7. (QLD, creek.) Nothing in it.
8. (QLD, island) Fraternal duo named by James Cook.
9. How many miles long is this creek? Its numeral tells you the number of letters in its spelling.
10. (NSW, Sydney suburb) It has the fourth prime number in its rather Roman name.
11. (SA, pier on the Murry) What did half a dozen gentlemen do to deserve this honour?
12. (TAS, bay) South of Port Davey, it's either morning tea time or supper time.
13. (NSW, Sydney Harbour beach) A generous catch of fish, perfect for celebrating a ruby wedding anniversary.
14. (north-west TAS, near Smithson) A grand plain measured in acres.
15. (SA, NT) A type of administrative division used in land titles.
16. (QLD, Brisbane suburb) This one's got a flat generic, maybe 13km from somewhere?
17. (NSW, creek) Perhaps a Shoalhaven cat had as many appendages as lives?
18. (VIC, beach) Unlucky for a swim today?

[Compiled by **Jan Tent**
Answers on page 2]

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