Naming Camden Haven

The name *Camden Haven* is officially recognised by the Geographical Name Register of NSW as the name of a parish, river, estuary and inlet, trig. station, two parks and a school, all situated on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, approximately 30km south of Port Macquarie (see Figure 1, page 3). However, in the past confusion must have been common. The villages currently named *Kendall* and *Laurieton* have both been named *Camden Haven,* and Laurieton was once named *Peach Orchard*. The names shifted over time between villages and became somewhat confusing for some, such as postal services and telegraph lines.

Camden Haven, showing the entrance at top, with the village of Laurieton in the foreground (photo: the author)

This naming of Camden Haven began in 1818. Surveyor explorer John Oxley (1784–1828) was on his second expedition, during which he prudently named places after prominent people. After following the course of the Macquarie River, Oxley tracked east to the coast along the Hastings River, which he named for the recently deceased Governor General of India, Warren Hastings (1732-1818). On reaching the coast he named the estuary Port Macquarie after his employer, Governor Lachlan Macquarie (1762-1824). In October 1818, Oxley left Port Macquarie and travelled south down the coast until (without a boat) he was blocked by a wide estuary mouth. Oxley then explored around the entrance into what he described as 'the haven, which we named after Lord Camden.'[1] A haven, in the British

naval language of the day, described a harbour or port. Lord Camden was John Jeffreys Pratt, 2nd Earl and First Marquess of Camden (1759-1840), who at the time was Teller of the Exchequer. Oxley also named the two lakes on this estuary: Queens Lake to the north and Watson Taylors Lake to the south, the latter after Lord Camden's Private Secretary, George Watson Taylor (1771-1841).

Although the name appeared on maps of the colony after Oxley's expedition, Camden Haven was still beyond the limits of settlement. After 1818 colonials mostly travelled from Sydney or Newcastle to the penal colony at Port Macquarie or up to Moreton Bay by ship, so bypassing the haven. Over the years occasional lime burners came to reap shell for lime for Port Macquarie, and oysters were

From the Editor

We all love those wonderful stories, so believable, about how places got their names—especially when those stories are good fiction. Well, without really intending to, we seem to have embarked on an expedition into what Jan Tent calls 'apocryphal etymology'. His long article this month sets the scene, and our next (June) issue will cover five examples in Victoria and NSW of dubious or fictional stories.

This month we return to **Norfolk Island** and to **Fiji**; and our lead article from Diane Solomon Westerhuis is on **Camden Haven** in northern NSW. (See Diane's plea for help, too, in the *From our readers* box below.)

David Blair
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From our readers

Koppin Yarratt, anyone?

Diane Westerhuis is researching the origin of the placename *Koppin Yarratt* which appears on several features in the Camden Haven area (NSW). Amanda Lissarrague has confirmed that the language of origin is Birrbay; but we, and Diane, would be grateful for more of the story.

'New' placenames

Bill Forrest reckons the old habit of naming with 'New' (as in *New South Wales*, and indeed *New Zealand*) was regrettable, and he has a few ideas about innovative renaming. We've promised him that, if we ever get around to doing our proposed 'States & Territories' special issue, we'll give him room there to spruik the message!

Placenames in the Media

'Living with country'

An ABC Radio podcast on using Indigenous country names in addresses, and the development of an online database of traditional placenames. (Thanks to David Nash for drawing this to our attention.)

www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/blueprintforliving/living-with-country-rachael-mcphail-place-names-in-addresses/13648166

Why no apostrophes in placenames?

A NZ webpage explaining Aust/NZ practice.

www.stuff.co.nz/national/127363190/why-there-are-usually-no-apostrophes-in-place-names-and-on-street-signs

Placenaming in WA used to be a free-for-all

From ABC Radio Perth... the story from the beginning of settlement to today's Geographic Names Committee.

www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-06/until-1936-place-naming-in-wa-was-a-free-for-all/100801638?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web

Puzzle answers - (from page 12)

1. Seventeen Seventy
2. Centennial Park
3. Centenary Heights
4. Bicentennial Park
5. Christmas Island
6. Easter Group
7. Pentecost Island
8. Michaelmas Island
9. Whitsunday Passage
10. Acension Park
11. Good Friday Mtn
12. Ten Sixty Six
13. Federation Square
14. Armistice Bore
15. Australia Day Hill
16. New Years Day Cave
17. May Day Creek
18. Easter Monday Creek
19. Encounter Bay
20. Mothers Day Tank

...Naming Camden Haven

frequently harvested and shipped to Sydney. Convicts and bushrangers were intermittently reported in the area, described in these reports generally as *Camden Haven*. It was not until the 1870s, when timber getters travelled through the hinterland and down the rivers, that people began to settle, and it was then that *Camden Haven* became a more flexible name for various locations. We can follow the name changes through government publications of the times.
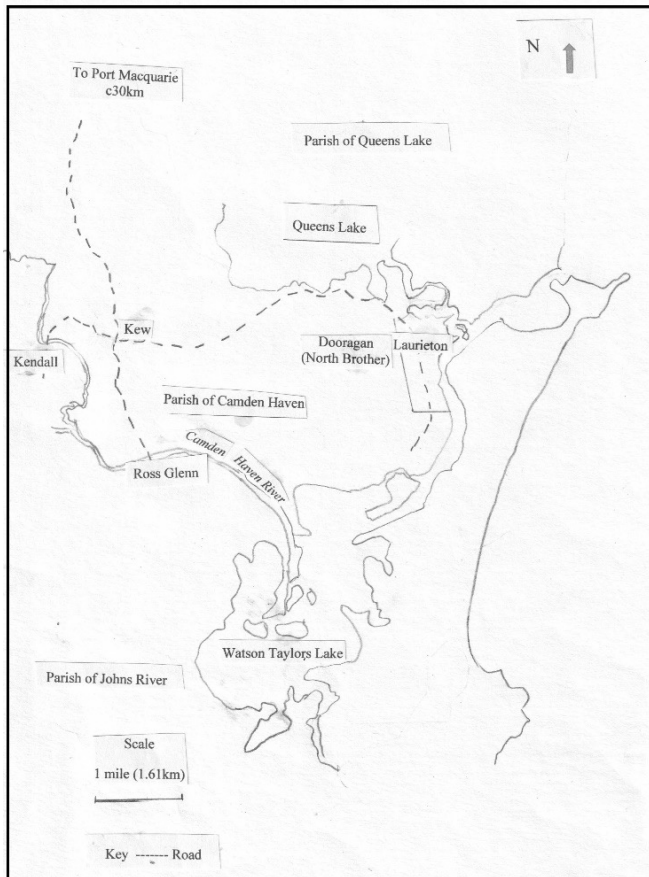

Figure 1. Parish of Camden Haven showing location of sites discussed in the text

Parish names

In 1825 new regulations required surveyors to divide the colony into counties, hundreds and parishes. Hundreds are no longer used in NSW, but we still use counties and parishes, identified on cadastral maps. The earliest available official maps include a map of The Village of Camden Haven, proclaimed in 12th January 1889, and a 2nd edition Parish Map of Camden Haven of 1889. These maps locate the village of Camden Haven at the foot of the North Brother (Dooragan) mountain, on the banks of the Camden Haven River at the Inlet, leading

to the estuary mouth. This is the location of the village now known as *Laurieton*. Other potential villages are reserved but unnamed on this map, including the sites of a village further up the Camden Haven River, now named *Kendall*, and the site of the Camden Haven Punt.

Post Offices and village names

In 1875 the Post Office asked for tenders for mail delivery *To and from Camden Haven and (Peach Orchard) Laurieton, twice a week*.[2] This clarifies that at that time, Camden Haven and Laurieton were two different places and that Laurieton was also known as *Peach Orchard*. The *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 1882 explained that

> Peach Orchard consisted of a post and telegraph office, a public school, several dwelling houses, and a sawmill… The settlement came into existence about seven years ago, and received, from the Postmaster-General of the day, the name of Laurieton, in compliment to Mr. Laurie, the proprietor of the mill, together with other public works on the Manning.[3]

In 1889, the *New South Wales Government Gazette* proclaimed this village as *Camden Haven*, describing the boundaries as 'Commencing at the waters of Camden Haven Inlet at the north-east corner of portion 72, Robert Kelly's conditional purchase of 76 acres 2 roods 17 perches…. and between Austral, Norman, Castle and Short Streets.'[4] This is today the village of Laurieton.

In 1891 the village further up the river changed its name, to honour the once-resident poet, Henry Kendall, and so the names of post offices were changed. Even officials of the time became confused; for example, in 1890 when considering a petition for a telephone connection, a petitioner sent the Superintendent of Telegraphs a sketch map of the locations to clarify placenames (see Figure 2, next page). Mr A. Thomson wrote 'that the petition refers to a place locally known as the 'Stables', which is situated 6 miles from Laurieton 2 miles from Camden Haven Punt and 1½ miles from Camden Haven.'[5]

Following this, an attempt at clarification was made by the Post Office, with these three notices in the *New South Wales Government Gazette*:

> *General Post Office, Sydney, 10th September, 1891,*
>
> *On and from the 1st proximo, the Post and Telegraph Office at present known as "Laurieton" and the Post Office known as "Camden Haven", will bear the designations of*
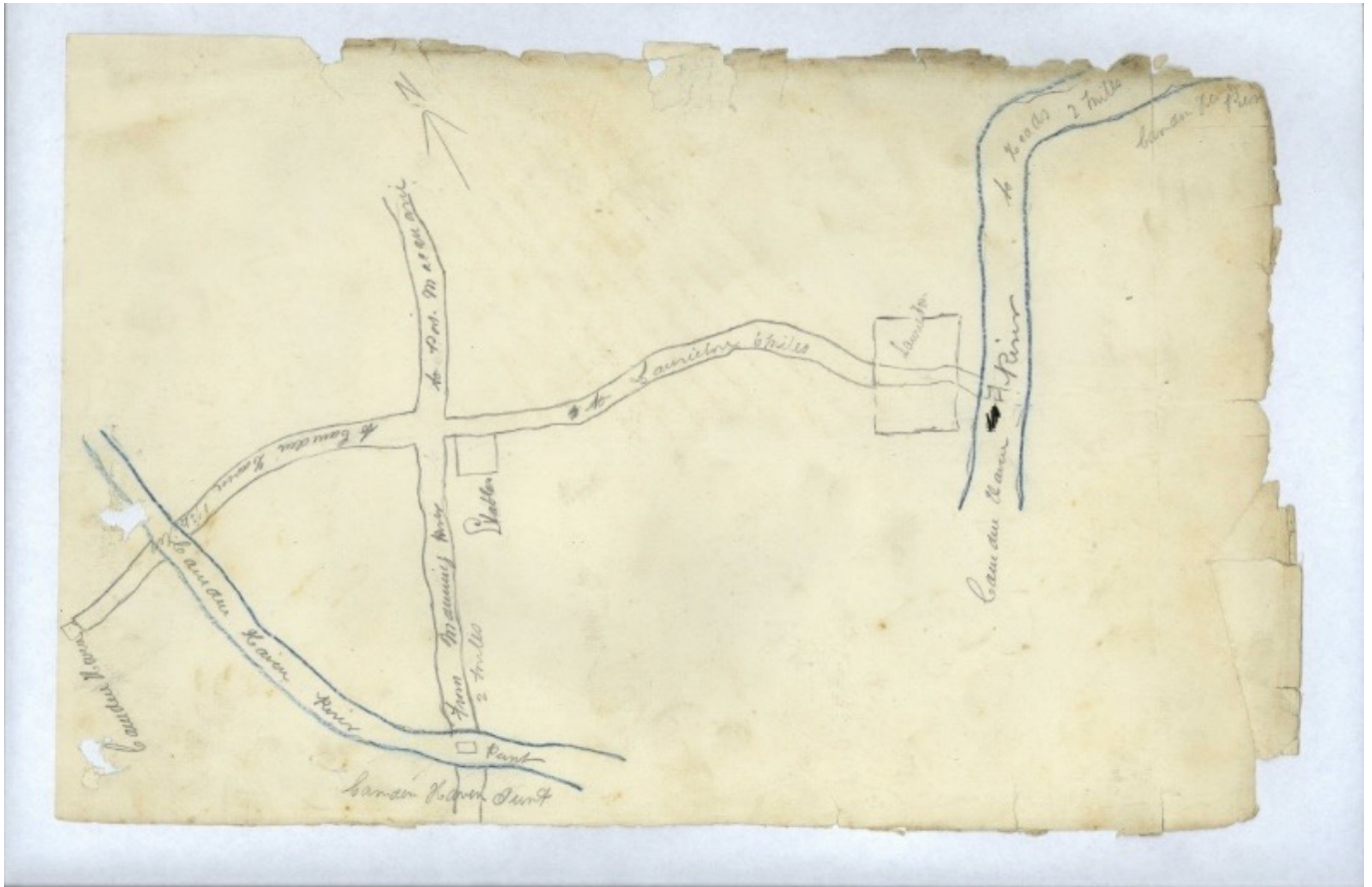
Figure 2. Thomson, 1891. Sketch map of Camden Haven

"Camden Haven" and "Kendall" respectively.

General Post Office, Sydney, 21st September, 1891,

It is hereby notified that the designation of the Post and Telegraph Office at Laurieton will not be changed to "Camden Haven" as intimated in a notice dated 10th instant, but remain at present "Laurieton".

General Post Office, Sydney, 23rd October, 1891,

On and from the 1st proximo, the Post Office at present known as "Camden Haven Punt", will bear the designation of "Camden Haven".

Yet it was not until 13 December 1946 that the Minister for Lands officially declared the alteration of the name of the village of Camden Haven to *Laurieton* in the *Government Gazette*.[6]

So today we have the villages of Laurieton (on the inlet) and Kendall (up the river), in the Parish of Camden Haven. There is no village named *Camden Haven*. Other villages in the parish have interesting place names. Ross Glen was named in 1921 after Frederick D. Ross, postmaster in 1880, at what was then known

as *Camden Haven Punt*. Logan's Crossing was also named after another early postmaster, John Logan, who was postmaster at Kendall (then *Camden Haven*). Kew, located on Thomson's map as 'The Stables' (where the Royal Hotel now stands), was the main intersection for traffic on the road from Port Macquarie south to the Manning River and Cundletown, then a major centre for trade. It makes you wonder if people at the time ever received their mail.

Diane Solomon Westerhuis

Endnotes

1   Oxley, J. (1820). J*ournals of two expeditions into the interior of New South Wales, undertaken by order of the British Government in the years 1817-1818.* London, J. Murray. Entry for October 15, 1818.

2   *New South Wales Government Gazett*e, 24 Aug 1875, p.2584.

3   *The Australian Town and Country Journal,* 15 July 1882, p. 26.

4   *New South Wales Government Gazette,* 12 Jan 1889 p.309.

5   A. Thomson, April 2nd 1890, *Letter to The Supt. Telegraphs,* unpublished

6   'Alteration of the name of the village of Camden Haven to Laurieton' *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, 13 Dec 1946 [Issue No.138] p. 2860.

Placenames, prepositions and space on Norfolk Island

Placenames can be formed in many ways, but one of the most unusual is by incorporating prepositions. There are several examples of this process in Norfolk, the Norfolk Island language. Figure 1 shows some cases well-known on the island.

Figure 1. Map of incorporated prepositions in Norfolk toponyms (adapted from Edgecombe, 1999, p. 102)

Some of these placenames, plotted in blue, indicate general areas of the island; others, plotted in red, are precisely located names. Table 1 below gives English translations of these toponyms:

Norfolk	English
Out Yenna	Out Yonder
Out ar Station	Out at the Cable Station
Out ar Mission	Out at the Melanesian Mission
Out ar Windmill	Out at the Windmill
Down a Town	Kingston
Round Country	The area around the airport
Up in a Stick	Up in the mountainous wooded area in the north
Up Chats	Up at Chat Evans' house
Cross ar Water	Across the water

Table 1

Incorporated prepositions in Norfolk toponyms (adapted from Edgecombe, 1999, p. 102)

It is notable that the incorporated prepositions in these examples are markers of spatial orientation. Apart from *Out Yenn*a, which can only find its English equivalent in 'Out Yonder', the translation equivalents for these examples can be spatial prepositions such as *in* or *at*. Norfolk does not have a single calque for *at* but must employ other prepositions; *in* cannot be used at all in these contexts in Norfolk.

Interestingly, there is a large amount of crossover in the use of this spatial system into Standard Australian English, which is also spoken on Norfolk Island. That is, when Norfolk residents speak English, they use absolute spatial descriptors, e.g. 'we're going out Steels Point', inspired by the Norfolk, *we gwen out Steels Point*, instead of 'we're going to Steels Point'; and 'we've been up Up in a Stick', derived from *we bin Up in a Stick,* instead of 'we've been up in the mountainous wooded area in the north of the island'.

Specific descriptions of location and place in Norfolk were historically more practical for way-finding than the use of the cardinal system, and these terms of reference, location, and movement have become an integral part of Norfolk grammar. This reliance on these few prepositions and their importance in creating linguistic and cognitive space on and of Norfolk Island have resulted in an orientation system which does not use the cardinal axes of *north, south, east,* and *west* common in English, but instead has established its own colloquial system unique to this island setting. The incorporation and lexicalisation of these few prepositions into a concise yet useful corpus of placenames is a fascinating toponymic side product.

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From misinterpretation to myth interpolation --

Linguistic legends are like Santa Claus, god or the virtuous politician; sometimes the myth is more comforting, satisfying or exciting than reality –Gary Nunn

The etymology of a word or name is its origin and history. Etymological studies have a very long tradition dating back to the seventh century (Hartman & James, 1998, p. 52). When there are no texts from ancient periods of a language available, we are severely restricted in unearthing the evidence of words' etymologies. It is, therefore, often very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the precise etymology of a word. Because of this, lexicographers, historical linguists and toponymists frequently have to make an educated guess as to a word's origin. However, the linguistic scholar is not always immune to falling for a spurious etymology touted by some popular, non-scholarly source (Jespersen, 1922, pp. 307-309).[1] Such etymologies are known as 'popular' or 'folk etymologies'. They are created through a process by which a word form is perceived to resemble another word form, or sequence of forms, already in the language.[2] The process, which is well-known to linguists, is generally a result of people inventing, not always consciously, a plausible explanation for a word or name whose real origin they don't know. Abram Smythe Palmer, as early as 1882, compiled a 700-page dictionary of words with folk etymologies.

I would like to suggest there are at least two types of folk etymology. The first is where the form of a word or name doesn't change, but its etymology has been contrived through erroneous popular beliefs about its derivation or original meaning. The second is where a foreign word is introduced into another language, which then changes its form in order to accommodate the receiving language's sound, spelling or semantic system. An oft quoted example is *cockroach* derived from Spanish *cucaracha* which was folk-etymologised as *cock* + *roach*. Another force in this process is the copied word's resemblance (either in spelling, sound or meaning) to a word in the receiving language; it then undergoes a change to accommodate the receiving language's spelling, sound or semantic system. A nice example is *female* (< Old French *femelle*, diminutive of *femme* 'woman'), by assimilation with *male* (< Old French *masle* < Latin *masculus*). Of course, language change itself can foster folk etymologies, as in *crayfish* (< Middle English *crevice*, *crevisse* < Old French *crevice*), due to a perceived association with *fish*. Folk etymologies are therefore a rich source of language change.

Like ordinary words, placenames are not immune to being furnished with folk etymologies. We need to accurately research a placename's origin in order to determine its proper 'placename type' (see Blair & Tent, 2020), and avoid drawing assumptions purely from the name's form. Take for instance, *Black Bobs Creek* (Wingecarribee, NSW). One might be tempted to speculate that Black Bob was an Indigenous man (which is what is sometimes assumed). However, he was not. The creek was 'supposedly named in honour of Major General Robert Craufurd, who served with [Major Thomas] Mitchell and died in the Peninsular War c. 1812. […] Craufurd had the nickname 'Black Bob', which referred to his habit of heavily cursing when he lost his temper, and his noticeably dark and heavy facial stubble.'[3] I find this acknowledged etymology is every bit as interesting as any folk etymology could be.

Some examples of folk etymologies in toponyms

A critical issue when considering toponymic etymologies is often the flimsiness of toponymic knowledge and the associated difficulty of determining the origins of placenames. In many cases we are no longer privy to the circumstances in which places had their names bestowed; this makes it difficult, often impossible, to determine the *who, what, why* and *when* of a placename.[4]

Anyway, let's start our sample with a toponym from ancient antiquity, *Hellespont*. Stewart (1975) claimed that it originally meant something like 'narrow Pontus' or 'entrance to Pontus', *Pontus* being an ancient name for the region around the Black Sea, and by extension, for the sea itself. In fact, Hellespont was named after Helle, daughter of Athamas, who drowned there as she crossed it with her brother Phrixus on a flying golden ram (Hammond & Scullard, 1973, p. 405).

-- beware the apocryphal etymology

Amery (2002, p. 165) states that folk etymologies are 'rampant' among Kaurna (SA) placenames. Moreover, Clark (2014, p. 251) reaffirms this in declaring etymologies of Aboriginal placenames (in general) are either grounded in attested historical evidence, or explained by folk etymology. Unfortunately, the latter is all too often the case. As an illustration of this, we need look no further than his chapter, where he traces the etymology of 26 indigenous toponyms in Victoria, 13 of which are instances where 'despite the earliest evidence attesting to an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal origin they have been subject to speculative or spurious etymology.' (p. 267). Let's look at one of his examples.

Darnum

image: https://www.expressway.online

On page 259 Clark cites three sources that profess to give its etymology:

• Martin (1944, p. 29), who claims 'it is generally believed that it was derived from an exclamation frequently used by Thomas Bent, Victoria's rugged premier' in 1904.

• Blake (1977, p. 79), who claims it is the 'ancient n[ame] for Doncaster, Eng., but is also Abor[iginal]. word for parrot', and

• Gardner (1992, p. 12) who claims 'it almost certainly refers to the crimson rosella *Platycercus elegans* or the eastern rosella *Platycercus exemius*.'
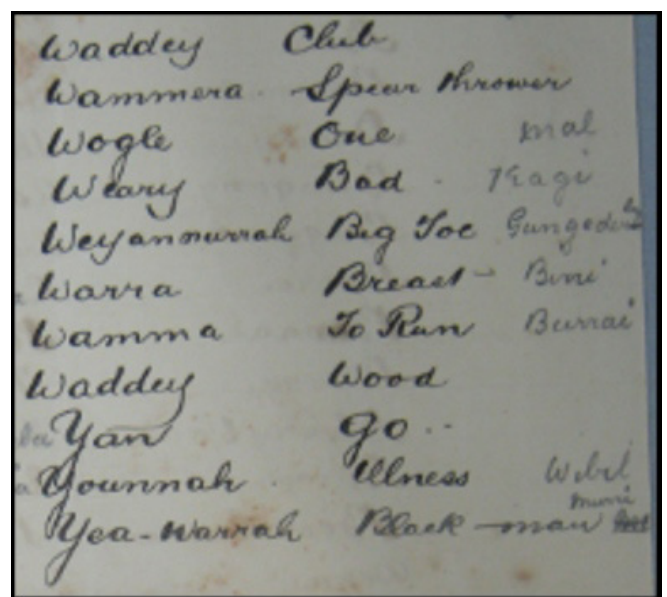
Martin's suggestion is a classic example of a folk etymology, and Blake's first suggestion is likewise without historical foundation. Gardner supports the accepted origin, that the name comes from a Woiwurrung word for a parrot.

Eora

Heiss and Gibson (2013) provide the example of *Eora*, which was the name given by the British to the coastal Aboriginal people living around Sydney. The word,

according to Heiss and Gibson, simply means 'here' or 'from this place', and was used by the local Aboriginal people to explain to the British where they came from. Eora came to define the local Indigenous people and their area of residence, and the name is now 'proudly used by the descendants of those same people.' Today, central Sydney is often referred to as 'Eora Country'. I took this etymology to be accurate, given it appeared on the website *Barani: Sydney's Aboriginal History.*

However, Michael Walsh (p.c. 9/12/2016), explained to me that most Australian languages do not allow vowel-initial words, nor do they allow vowel clusters. He suggests that *Eora* comes from the hypothetical word *YiwaRa*.[5] The initial glide, *Y*, can be elided (deleted) to give *iwaRa*. The *i* is likely to be similar to that in English *pit* or *peat*, whilst the second vowel would be like that in *wall* or *wallet*. Once you elide the other glide, *w*, you end up with *Eora*. Glides do indeed get elided, particularly in rapid (i.e. normal) speech, as in the two language names *(W)ungarinjin* and *(Y)idindji*. So *YiwaRa* is a perfectly plausible word shape, as demonstrated by an entry found in a manuscript word list of the coastal Port Jackson (Sydney) language as spoken around 1800 (Walsh, 2015). This manuscript is a copy of words originally recorded by the Rev. Henry Fulton, most likely in 1800 or 1801, at Port Jackson.[6] The entry reads '*Yea-warrah* Black –man'. The form *Eora* only works as a surface manifestation of an underlying *YiwaRa*.

Extract from Fulton's Port Jackson language word list
(Image courtesy of Michael Walsh)

So, not only does it look like the form of the word *Eora* is inaccurate, but it seems the *Barani* website has presented us with a folk etymology of the word as well.

The following examples are two of my favourites, and are from Vanuatu.[7]

Tanna & Erromango

Captain James Cook visited the island of Tanna in August 1774. It is said that when the accompanying naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster set foot on the island, he gestured to the ground endeavouring to find out what the locals called their island. They supposedly replied 'Tanna'. Forster and Cook interpreted this to signify the name of the island, and thus it was recorded in Cook's journal and on his chart as the island of *Tanna* (Adams, 1984, p. 1; Humphreys, 1926, p. xv; Inglis, 1887, p. 21). The name remains. The term actually means 'ground, soil, earth', for apparently the Tannese thought Forster wanted to know their word for ground, soil, or earth... or so the story goes.

Cook's journal for Wednesday 10 August 1774, declares: '[…] Yesterday Mr Forster obtained from these people the Name of the Island (Tanna) and today I got from them the names of those in the neighbourhood. […]' (Edwards, 2003, p. 383). Johann Reinhold Forster (1982 [1778], Vol. IV, p. 586) himself gives a parallel report: 'They [the Tannese] said the name of their Isle was Tānnā.' Forster's son, Georg, who accompanied him on the voyage, remarked upon the incident thus: 'They [the Tannese] also told us, that they call their own island Tanna, a word which signifies *"earth"* in the Malay language. This last we looked upon as a great acquisition; for the indigenous name of a country is always permanent.' (Forster, J.G.A., 1777, Vol. II, p. 267). Georg was correct: *tana/tanah* means 'ground' in Malay/Indonesian and, indeed, there are places in Indonesia that bear the element *tana* in their names, e.g. *Tana Toraja* 'Land of the Toraja' and *Tana Tidung* 'Land of the Tidung'. Moreover, in other Austronesian languages, one will find varying forms of the word, all meaning 'ground, land, earth', e.g. *tanah, tana tana, tanaq, taneq, taneh, tano* and *'ano*.

This is an example of a folk etymology, not of its meaning based on its form, but of the circumstances of the bestowal of the word itself as the name of the island.

Then there is the story of the naming of the island of Erromango. Its 'real' name is *Unelocompne*.[8] Once again, the story revolves around Cook's setting foot on the island. The locals brought some yams to present to him, and again Cook supposedly pointed to the ground, enquiring about the name of the island. The Erromangans apparently thought he was querying the quality of the yams, and therefore said 'Aremai-ŋo' 'good (PLURAL)' (i.e. 'they're good'). Cook then wrote in his journal: 'The natives call their island *Erromango*.'

These are very interesting stories, but I have found no evidence to support them. In none of the journals kept by members of Cook's second voyage is any mention made of either Forster or Cook pointing to the ground in a gesture of enquiring of the name of the islands. It seems to me a strange gesture to make in any case. It is possible that in order to find an explanation for the names of these islands, seemingly plausible stories were concocted. In other words, the explanation of the naming of these islands looks like a case of *post hoc* theorising (or an *ad hoc* fallacy, otherwise known as an 'aetiological myth'). Lindstrom (2011, pp. 151-152) is less categorical and observes that it is probably a 'just-so story'.[9]

Finally, I do not wish to discredit all names that have colourful and intriguing origins, as many names indeed do; rather, I want to encourage a healthy scepticism regarding some of the explanations found in the more popular placename dictionaries, or told by self-professed experts. Occam's Razor seems to have been invoked in the creation of many toponymic folk etymologies. Such etymologies seem to be easier to understand and are more attractive under the layman's belief that 'the simplest explanation is usually the correct one'. The simplest explanation of a thing, rather than a complex one, is more acceptable if the simplest will cover the facts as well as the complex explanation. Occam's Razor is a useful heuristic in modern physics, but not necessarily so when determining a name's etymology.

Jan Tent

Endnotes

[1] '[…] among the etymologies found in dictionaries and linguistic journals some are solid and firm as rocks, but others are liquid and fluctuate like the sea; and finally not a few are in a gaseous state and blow here and there as the wind listeth.' (Jespersen, 1922, p.307).

[2] Such a form is sometimes referred to as a 'paronym'. It is linked to

...etymologies

another by similarity of form or meaning which may cause confusion in reception or production. They can be seen as 'sound-alike' or 'look-alike' words.

[3] See the entry in the Geographical Names Register, at <https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/place_naming/public/geonames/search>

[4] See: Tent & Blair (2009, 2014), p. 1

[5] The *R* indicates that we do not know for sure whether the r-sound is similar to English *r*, or a tap/flap/trill (so common in Australian languages) and usually written as *rr*. The *i* is likely to be similar to that in English 'pit' or 'peat'.

[6] Although the manuscript declares 'Some Norfolk Island Aboriginal words and their meanings […]', this cannot be, because Norfolk Island was uninhabited before 1788 with the arrival of the British. The word list was clearly compiled at Port Jackson and was of the Port Jackson language.

[7] As Paul Geraghty rightly points out, these are strictly speaking not folk etymologies, more like simple misunderstandings. Cook and the others did not arrive at these names by etymologising.

[8] Where *c* is a 'voiced velar fricative' /ɣ/, as in the Scottish Gaelic *laghail* /ˈɫɣɣal/ 'lawful'; Dutch *gaan* /ɣaːn/ 'to go'; or Catalan *figuera* /fiˈɣeɾə/ 'fig tree'.

[9] For another interesting folk etymology of a Pacific Island, see Geraghty (2008).

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Next time....

...Jan recounts the wonderful story of how **Orange** (NSW) got its name... not!

In fact, we find such apocryphal or doubtful stories of placename origins so entertaining, we've asked him to give us even more. You'll be able to read in our June issue his article 'Dubious Origins', tellling of how four places in Victoria and New South Wales maybe—just maybe—got their names.

Moala—or is it Muala?

Those of you who follow this series of articles will know that we have dealt with the names of the larger islands of Fiji and are now ambling through the third rank of islands, those under 100 square kilometres, most of which have fewer than ten villages. Our previous subject under the microscope was the largest of these, Rabe, situated off south-east Vanualevu, and next in line is Moala—or is it Muala?—in western Lau.

Rabe and Muala (yes it *is* Muala, of which more anon) have in common not only their size—Rabe at around 67km², Muala at 65—their mountainous interior and irregular coastline, but also the curious fact that neither is found on any map under its real name. As I explained in the previous article, Rabe always appears as *Rabi* (or *Rambi*) on maps and official documents, because of English-speakers' inability to pronounce 'e' at the end of a word—they will always change it to 'i' or 'ei'.

The misspelling of Muala, however, has nothing to do with English-speakers, It is due to the fact that a number of islands in Lau, Fiji's eastern islands, were first recorded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by their Tongan names, since the earliest European visitors frequently came from Tonga and had Tongan-speakers on board. Tonganised island names also include *Fulaga* (Fijian *Vulaga*), *Katafaga* (*Katavaga*), *Avea* (*Yavea*) and *Aiwa* (*Yaiwa*).

The first written record of the name of the island is, unsurprisingly, from a Tongan source. In 1777, William Anderson, the surgeon on Cook's third voyage to the Pacific, collected a list of 95 names of islands known to the Tongans but unknown to Cook and his men, most of which are identifiable, thanks to Anderson's skilful recording, and many of them are clearly islands in Fiji. Among the Fiji islands was *Komoala*, and since *ko* is a Tongan article and was commonly recorded before place-names, we can delete it and we end up with *Moala* as the Tongan name for this island.

As with Rabe, it was the French explorer Dumont d'Urville who first recorded the name of the island correctly in 1827, as *Mouala*, French 'ou' representing the vowel /u/ (commonly spelt 'oo' in English). However, he would be the last to do so. The Tonganised form *Moala* prevailed and appeared on the map of the United States Exploring Expedition in 1840 and the missionary linguist David Hazlewood's combined Fijian-English dictionary and gazetteer in 1850. It has remained in use since, with so far as I know barely a word of dissent from anyone, including the inhabitants of the island who, while continuing to pronounce the name of their island 'Muala', dutifully refer to it as *Moala* for official purposes.

Even the renowned British anthropologist of the early twentieth century, Arthur Hocart, meekly followed the now 'standard' spelling in his book *Lau Islands, Fiji*, as did the learned geographer R.A. Derrick in his reference book *The Fiji Islands*. In the 1950s American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, who sadly passed away last year, similarly went with the flow: after nearly a year of fieldwork on the island he entitled the resultant volume *Moala* and used that spelling in subsequent work. Many years later, after I had given a talk in which I mentioned this and other mangled placenames, he came up to me with a wry smile and said simply with a nod: 'It *is* Muala!'.

The above observations on the use of 'Moala' apply to maps and publications in English, but not initially to publications in Fijian. A quick look through the only Fijian periodical of the late nineteenth century, the government gazette *Na Mata*, reveals that it was mostly *Muala* that was used. The same is true of the writings of the historian Epeli Rokowaqa, who published a history of Fiji based on a series of articles in the *Methodist Church Magazine* in the 1920s. The fact that he used the spelling *Muala* may indicate that he was aware that that was the name used by its inhabitants, but may also result from an implausible etymology he proposed (one of many in the work) that the island was named after the words of an ancestor who said 'ki Mua-la' meaning 'straight ahead' while arguing with sailing companions about the course they should take. Subsequently, use of *Muala* even in Fijian has declined and is very rare today.

So, how was Muala named? There are a number of possible etymologies, but to me the most likely is as follows. Those of you who have been following this column for a while may recall that a number of years back I pointed out that the language of the Lapita people, the first settlers of Fiji and Polynesia, had a regular process of forming nouns from verbs (or other nouns) by adding a suffix -*a*, optionally preceded by one

of a small number of consonants, and that such nouns often became placenames. So, for example, *tavo* meant 'to haul a boat over land' and gave rise to *tavola* meaning 'the place where boats are hauled over land', ie 'intertidal flat'; *tavu* meant 'burn', so *tavua* meant 'burning place' or 'volcano' and was the name given to a number of places in Fiji, as well as Tafua in Samoa and Tofua in Tonga, because they were active volcanoes, or volcanic in appearance. Similarly, *namu* meant 'mosquito', so places that abounded in mosquitoes were named *Namuka* in Fiji, *Nomuka* in Tonga and *Namu'a* in Samoa.

What, then, might Muala have abounded in? It is a fertile island, famous for

its taro, yams and kava, but there are countless other islands with such produce. What is relatively unique in Muala, being found in profusion in only a small number of other islands (Vatulele, Koro, Taveuni, Qamea, Kabara) is the **jungle fowl**, *Gallus gallus*.

But there is a problem: the Fijian for jungle fowl, or indeed any chook, pretty well throughout Fiji, including Muala

itself, is *toa*, which does not readily allow derivation of the placename *Muala*.

However, it has been speculated that in the very early days of the Lapita occupation, a language developed in the far eastern part of Fiji (comprising Lau, Taveuni and north-east Vanualevu), which was the ancestor of the Polynesian languages; further, when people left to settle Polynesia, they took with them this language, while those who stayed behind eventually changed their languages to ones more resembling those of central Fiji.

My suggestion is that the term for 'chicken' in far east Fiji in the early days was *moa*. Where it came from no-one knows, but it went on to be the pan-Polynesian word for 'chicken', and in New Zealand it was given to the famous giant flightless birds, now long extinct. So add the suffix *-la* and Moala meant 'place of chickens'.

'Now hold on a minute,' you may be saying if you have been paying attention. 'I thought you said the name of the island was Muala, not Moala!' If you did, well done, and the explanation is simple. It was originally named *Moala* by the Lapita people, and their descendants in Tonga still call it by that name, but their cousins in Fiji have, for whatever reason, changed the pronunciation to *Muala*.

Paul Geraghty
University of the South Pacific

Odd signs

Peter McInnes has drawn our attention to a couple of conflicting road signs, south-west of Sydney and just north of Taralga. It's no wonder the signs are confusing. The creek is

actually **Burra Burra Creek**, not *Currueela Creek* at all. And while the locality is indeed called **Curraweela** (which was formerly the name of a 'historic area'), it used to be called *Currueela,* a name which has now been discontinued and dismissed to the wastepaper bin.

Peter has been intrigued by this variation in spelling, especially because it comes from early attempts at turning Indigenous words into English spelling. He's had a similar problem sorting out the various spellings of *Taralga*.

How many apparent *Taralga* variants are really the same Gundungurra word? Or are they really different words?
    Coming soon: Peter's *Occasional Paper No 12* 'A dance of brolgas? The meaning of Taralga'.

Placenames Puzzle Number 81

Dates & Events

These placenames recall notable events or the celebration dates of such events. Example—(NT, hill) recalls a 1953 ceremony that involved the Queen. *Answer:* Coronation Hill

1. (QLD, township) In this year on 23rd May, James Cook landed near here.
2. (NSW, Sydney park) commemorates a century of European habitation in Australia
3. (QLD, Toowoomba suburb) named in 1960 to commemorate the separation of QLD from NSW in 1859.
4. (NSW, Homebush Bay park) opened on 1st January, 1988, and named to celebrate that year's important milestone in the nation's history.
5. (Indian Ocean, island) named after the day it was 'discovered'.
6. (WA, island group) named after the feast that celebrates the resurrection of Christ.
7. (QLD, island) named for the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday.
8. (WA, island) named by George Vancouver after a day sometimes called the Feast of the Archangels.
9. (QLD, passage in Great Barrier Reef) named by James Cook after the feast observed seven weeks after Easter.
10. (NT, park near Howard Springs) named after the taking up of the resurrected Jesus to heaven.
11. (NSW, mountain) commemorates the day upon which Christ was crucified.
12. (WA, locality in the Gascoyne) commemorates the year in which King Harold II of England and Duke William of Normandy fought.
13. (Vic, civic space) named after 1st January, 1901.
14. (SA, well) named after 11th November, 1918.
15. (TAS, hill) bears the name of 26th January.
16. (SA, cave) commemorates the first day of the year.
17. (VIC, creek near Wangaratta) the northern spring festival, or International Workers' Day?
18. (NSW, creek) named after the first weekday after Good Friday.
19. (SA, bay) named by Flinders on 8th April 1802 to mark his meeting the French explorer Baudin.
20. (SA, tank) named after the 2nd Sunday of May.

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

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