

Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

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Cook's Point Hicks -- a toponymic torment?

An earlier article concerning the whereabouts of Lt James Cook's Point Hicks appeared in *Placenames Australia* in September 2014. It reviewed the evidence and theories put forward to explain why Cook had placed it out at sea and some miles from land. It concluded that the idea that Cape Everard was Cook's Point Hicks was incorrect, and that Cook had in fact been deceived by cloudbanks which appeared to be real land. To confuse matters further, against all the evidence, in 1970, to commemorate the Bicentenary of Cook's voyage, the government of Victoria had unhelpfully renamed Cape Everard as *Point Hicks*.

Since then, further research has revealed that the notion that Cape Everard was Cook's Point Hicks originated at least as far back as 1850 and that even stronger evidence exists that Cook mistook cloudbanks for land. It has been surprising to find that many people with a deep interest in Cook still adhere to the view that Cape Everard is what Cook saw and named at *Point Hicks* in 1770. This article attempts to explain why, against all

the evidence, this view still persists.

For too long misunderstanding has surrounded the location of Point Hicks, the first placename that Cook bestowed on the coast of Australia. As the navigator approached this coast for the first time at 8 a.m. on 20 April 1770, he named what he believed was a land feature out to the west as Point Hicks. Lt Zachary Hicks was the officer of the watch and had made this first sighting. Cook recorded the estimated position of Point Hicks as 38.0 S and 211.07 W, a point well out to sea from the actual coast. Later navigators assumed from their own experience that Cook had mistaken a cloudbank for land—Cook's Point Hicks simply did not exist as a land feature. However, two hundred and fifty years later, many people (including some well versed in Cook's exploits) believe that Cook gave that name to a location on the actual coast to the north of his 8 a.m. position, known from 1852 until 1970 as *Cape Everard* and officially since 1970 as *Point Hicks*.



Figure 1. Coast east of today's Point Hicks – Cook's first real landfall on Australia. "At 10...it made in sloping hills, covered in part with trees and bushes, but intersperd with large tracts of sand." Banks' Journal (Photo: Trevor Lipscombe)

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From the Editor



An editorial *mea culpa* to begin with: I've let this issue balloon to 16 pages instead of our regular 12. Perhaps it's better to claim that the extra four pages are an early Christmas bonus!

Our main article this time is the first of a series: Trevor Lipscombe's revisit to *Point Hicks*.

In following issues Trevor will look again at James Cook's involvement in the naming of *Rame Head* and *Cape Dromedary*. Our March 2020 edition will also progress Paul Geraghty's inquiry into Fiji's *Koro* island; and NSW toponyms *Gerringong* and *Bong Bong* will also be featured.

David Blair
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Our readers say...

Our regular correspondent **Bill Forrest** has shared some whimsical thoughts on the scores of 'New...' toponyms on the map of Australia—most of which, he says, are quite un-descriptive. There was *New Holland*, for a start—fortunately we didn't stick with that! And is there anything in South Wales that resembles the east coast of our continent? If there is, Bill reckons he hasn't seen it. (He also gives a guernsey to Matthew Flinders who resisted the temptation to either name the place

as 'New X' or to name it after himself—instead he put *Australia* on the map.) This lazy habit of 'New...' naming is international, he says: *New Guinea*, *New Zealand*, *New Hebrides*, *New Britain*, *New York*... Even *Nova Scotia* is there, hiding behind its Latinate form!

As it happens, Jan Tent has, quite independently, written for us a two-part article on 'New... and Old...' placenames—coming to *Placenames Australia* in 2020!

Notes and queries

Naming railway stations

Our article by Victor Isaacs (page 9) on source books for railway station names rang a bell with our Director, Jan Tent. He recalled that one of his *Toponymy 101* articles (on Indigenous Toponymy, December 2018) had included some complementary material:

[...] in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the bestowal of names of Indigenous origin to places such as rural or outback post offices, railway stations and sidings was often carried out by bureaucrats (with little or no knowledge of local conditions or languages) in the states' capitals, using lists of so-called 'euphonious' Aboriginal words. No regard for their meaning or the language of origin was afforded them... A similar practice was used in New Zealand—[one writer] complains

that the New Zealand Post Office and Railways were 'clapping on manufactured Māori names to places where we have no record of Māoris having ever lived.'

More street name sources

Jan has also pointed out that there are more resources available for suburban street names than we had realised! He's discovered an excellent web page from Wollondilly Shire Council (NSW) that gives access to the history of the shire's street names:

<https://naming.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au>

Gerry Robinson's original article on Heathmont (VIC) street names appeared in December 2018, and we followed that up in our June 2019 issue.

Puzzle answers - (from page 12)

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Darwin | 6. Alice Springs | 11. Wellington | 16. Katherine |
| 2. Sydney | 7. Leeman | 12. Leichhardt | 17. Parkes |
| 3. Melbourne | 8. Maria Island | 13. [Bulwer-]Lytton | 18. Wilsons Promontory |
| 4. Brisbane | 9. Mount Kosciuszko | 14. Port Augusta | 19. Hervey Bay |
| 5. Adelaide | 10. Xantippe | 15. Hobart | 20. Strzelecki |

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I wish to explore why this belief persists, and argue that the disbelief that Cook could have mistaken a cloudbank for land has led to dismissal of the cloudbank hypothesis and has fuelled the search for alternative explanations. The cloudbank hypothesis has received little previous analysis. Evidence is presented here that this was, and is, a common phenomenon, and that Cook's own data strongly supports the hypothesis.

I also argue that the 'evidence' for Cape Everard being Cook's Point Hicks results from an elementary misreading of the *Endeavour* journal. The eminent early twentieth century historian Ernest Scott was the key proponent for Cape Everard being Cook's Point Hicks. He convinced other historians, including well-respected Cook biographer and editor of Cook's *Journals* J.C. Beaglehole, and this published record has informed the views of governments and readers to this day.

Reverence for Cook has stood in the way of acceptance of the cloudbank hypothesis, while reverence for Ernest Scott and J.C. Beaglehole has led to acceptance that Cape Everard is Cook's Point Hicks.

How could Cook have mistaken a cloudbank for land?

The idea of Cook mistaking a cloudbank for land might appear incredible to today's lay person, as it did to Scott more than a century ago. But there is plenty of evidence to support this hypothesis.

Scott wrote:

Mr Fowler's suggestion that 'a bank of cloud was mistaken for land' would be fantastic, even if the observer was an amateur; but he was James Cook, the greatest navigator of his age, and one of the greatest of all time, the idea that he mistook a clot of mist for a cape is staggering... we may be quite sure that when Cook named 'a point of land' it was a point of land and not a meteorological freak.¹

Surveyor Thomas Walker Fowler points out that 'banks of cloud close to the horizon do assume appearances resembling distant land that would deceive the most experienced'.² He cites the journals of Captain Tobias Furneaux in *Adventure* in 1773 (during Cook's Second Voyage) and Matthew Flinders and George Bass in *Norfolk* in 1798, to show that all were similarly deceived in the same area as Cook. Flinders recorded that the illusion persisted all afternoon, evidence that these were

not necessarily fleeting deceptions. Early navigators were aware of this illusion and recognised Cook's error. Bass and Flinders could not find any land feature that met Cook's description and Flinders, and later John Lort Stokes, left Point Hicks off their charts.

Before Cook's voyage, the search for a southern continent had led to a number of apparent sightings of land in the Pacific Ocean, exciting speculation that these were parts of the large land mass that some believed existed there to balance the continents in the northern hemisphere. Alexander Dalrymple, a proponent of the existence of the continent, showed these on a chart which he presented to Joseph Banks before the *Endeavour* voyage. Shortly before Cook's departure from Britain, Captain Wallis in *Dolphin* had returned after visiting Tahiti and observing what appeared to be land, possibly the continent, to its south. Cook's secret instructions charged him with investigating this sighting:

...so soon as the Observation of the Transit of the Planet Venus shall be finished and observe the following Instructions. You are to proceed to the Southward in order to make discovery of the Continent abovementioned until you arrive in the Latitude of 40°, unless you sooner fall in with it. But not having discover'd it or any Evident sign of it in that Run you are to proceed in search of it to the Westward between the Latitude beforementioned and the Latitude of 35° until you discover it, or fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd by Tasman and now called New Zeland.³

Cook duly sailed south from Tahiti then west but found no land until he reached New Zealand. It seems that Wallis and *Dolphin*'s company had been deceived. In time the sightings that Dalrymple had recorded also turned out not to be land at all or small islands.

Sailors of Cook's time were familiar with the illusion of clouds or fog being mistaken for land, and of its enduring nature. They referred to the phenomenon as 'Cape Flyaway'. Beaglehole recounts an instance as *Endeavour* approached the coast of New Zealand earlier in the voyage, citing Joseph Banks' journal: 'Our old enemy Cape fly away entertained us for three hours this morn': it is Banks again, 5 October [1769], about latitude 38, and some were sure the clouds were land.⁴ Such illusions were an 'old enemy', convincing many and, as Flinders had previously observed, persisted for some time.

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Point Hicks...

While historians and lay persons may find it hard to believe that Cook could mistake a cloudbank for land, experienced early mariners Flinders, Stokes and Philip Gidley King, all familiar with this coast, have recognised Cook's error. Twentieth century surveyors and navigators Thomas Walker Fowler, L. Barker, Brett Hilder and Geoffrey Ingleton⁵ have, apparently independently, plotted Cook's data on a modern chart, and all conclude that Cook's Point Hicks was a point out at sea far from actual land.

As early as 1872 a Melbourne newspaper article about the location of Point Hicks recorded that, among geographers: '...it has been assumed that Cook must have been deceived by optical illusion, due to some exceptional condition of the atmosphere...'⁶ Almost a century later, Pacific navigator and hydrographer Captain Hilder shows 'cloud-land' on his chart showing *Endeavour's* movements in the area,⁷ while maritime historian Geoffrey Ingleton reaffirmed that Cook's Point Hicks was out at sea and concluded that Cook saw 'a cloud formation giving the illusion of land'.⁸ The same phenomenon is commonly observed today by yachtsmen in this area.

New light on Cook's first sightings of the Australian coast

Close examination of Cook's *Endeavour* Journal⁹ entries reveals further evidence that he was deceived by cloudbanks on this important day in Australia's history. While the focus has been on Cook's first observation of the extent of apparent land at 6 a.m., the significance of two later observations has been overlooked.

Cook first observed the apparent coast 'extending from NE to West at the distance of 5 or 6 Leagues' at 6 a.m. (see Figure 2). His second observation was made two hours later, at 8 a.m., when he placed Point Hicks at:

'The Southermost Point of land we had in sight which bore from us W ¼ S', observing: 'To the Southward of this point we could see no land and yet it was very clear in that quarter'. At the same time the ship: 'bore away along shore NE for the Eastermost Land we had in sight'. So, Cook's observation of apparent land to the west persists for the two hours between 6 and 8 a.m., as does the apparent land to the NE. This duration is consistent with other records of the persistence of this phenomenon.

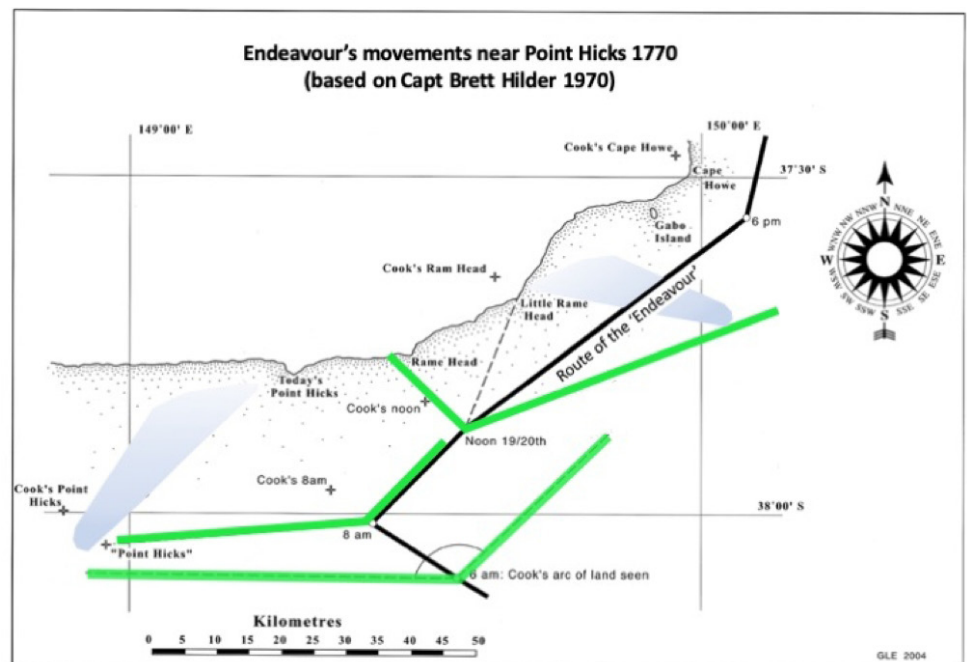


Figure 2. *Endeavour's* movements near Point Hicks 1770 plotted against the real coast line. Cook's positions for Point Hicks, Ram Head and Cape Howe are shown. These reflect minor errors in Cook's estimates of his position due to the limitations of the navigational technology of the time. Green lines show the extent of 'land' seen at 6 a.m., 8 a.m. and noon according to the *Endeavour* Journal. Approximate areas of cloudbank or illusions of land are also shown.

Cook's third observation is at noon, four hours later. From here Cook observes 'extremes of the land extending from NW to ENE'. To the north west Cook was now observing the real coast, but his observation of 'land' to the ENE (where there is no land) suggests that the cloudbank in this quarter, observed to the NE at 6 a.m., still persisted.

Cook's 8 a.m. and noon observations lend further credence to the cloudbank hypothesis. There are three observations of apparent, rather than real, land (at 6 and 8 a.m. and at noon), and the observations at 8 a.m. and noon are consistent with the 6 a.m. observations. Apparent land was seen on all three occasions and in the same quarters in which it was first observed at 6 a.m. This gives far greater certainty to what Cook actually

...Point Hicks

saw—illusions of land to the west and north east. It also discounts the notion that he made a recording error at 8 a.m. which might account for his Point Hicks being out at sea.

Other theories on the whereabouts of Point Hicks

Over the years since 1770 explanations have been sought for Cook's positioning of Point Hicks. Before 1800, Bass and Flinders had concluded that Point Hicks did not exist as a land feature, and based on their own experiences it seems likely that they concluded that Cook had been deceived by a cloudbank. Failure to find Cook's Point Hicks led to a range of theories to explain what had occurred.

Did Cook make an error in recording Point Hicks' coordinates?

Given the evidence he left, this seems highly unlikely. In the *Endeavour* Journal Cook gives his estimated position at 8 a.m., the bearing from this position to Point Hicks, together with its coordinates. Records from the ship's log, his soundings and chart of the coast provide further data. Each piece of this information is consistent with the other pieces and correlates with *Endeavour's* earlier and later track on that day. It is also consistent with his recordings of the extent of land seen at 6 and 8 a.m. and at noon. Importantly, it also accords with Cook's usual precise recording of his observations.

Was there a compass error?

We can also discount gross compass errors on the basis of earlier and later observations in the area on that day. Modern plotting of *Endeavour's* track also demonstrates that Cook's minor errors in estimating his position (due to the limitations of navigational technology at that time) are broadly consistent. Both Ram Head and Cape Howe, named in the next few hours, show similar errors as that for Point Hicks (see Figure 2, opposite).

Did Cook name a feature on the real coast?

What features on the actual coast could Cook have seen at 8 a.m., and could one of these be the Point Hicks he named? Hills near the real coast would have been visible before the low-lying coastline was seen and it was suggested that one of these was what Cook had seen and named. Various theories have been put forward over the years.¹⁰ All of these theories rely on the notion

that Cook's coordinates for Point Hicks were recorded incorrectly, and the evidence above indicates otherwise.

Was Cook lying for the Admiralty?

Margaret Cameron-Ash, a lawyer by training, is the latest writer to offer an explanation for Cook's Point Hicks being out at sea.¹¹ She puts forward a case that Cook deliberately placed Point Hicks out at sea under orders from the Admiralty to create the impression that there was land there, to disguise the existence of Bass Strait and to dissuade the French from colonising Tasmania. Part of her case rests on Scott's notion that Cook could not possibly have mistaken a cloudbank for land. Her evidence for the thesis on which her whole book is based—that Cook was under secret orders from the Admiralty to falsify his charts and other records—is certainly ingenious, but largely circumstantial. Her suggestion that placing a false Point Hicks a few miles off the real coast and only about one sixteenth of the distance to Eddystone Point, Tasmania (then the most northerly known extent of the Van Diemen's Land coast as recorded by Tasman in 1642, and known to Cook) was likely to disguise the existence of Bass Strait seems particularly unpersuasive.

Historian Ernest Scott's error and its long reaching influence

From earlier than 1850 the current Point Hicks (the former *Cape Everard*) was locally assumed, by some at least, to be the feature Cook saw.¹² It was the nearest land to, and almost due north of, Cook's 8 a.m. position, and Cook had recorded Point Hicks as the 'Southernmost Point of land we had in sight'; so it was assumed that this must have been what he was referring to. By the early 1900s, historian Ernest Scott had put forward the same explanation and begun a campaign to have Cape Everard renamed as *Point Hicks*. It seems that Scott was aware of what he refers to as 'the traditional view' that had prevailed from at least 1850.¹³ As we have seen, Scott's reverence for Cook would not allow him to accept the cloudbank hypothesis, leading to his espousal of this earlier assumption:

*[Cook] wrote that he 'judged' the point to be where as a matter of fact there is no land at all, but only open ocean. We have therefore to infer what Cook's Point Hicks was from his descriptive words. The 'southernmost point' in sight of the Endeavour at the time was that which figures on Admiralty charts as Cape Everard.*¹⁴

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Scott is right: the southernmost point of real land nearest to Cook's 8 a.m. position was and is Cape Everard. This fact is at the heart of the error—it seems on the face of it to be a plausible explanation. However there are several fundamental errors in Scott's proposition. Firstly, it misquotes Cook, who recorded: 'The Southermost land we had in sight which bore W 1/4 S I judged to lay in the Latitude of 39.0 S and in the Longitude of 211.07 W'. This puts Point Hicks just south of west and several leagues from his 8 a.m. position, a long way from almost due north which is where Cape Everard lies—hardly an error that 'the greatest navigator of his age' could have made. Secondly, because of the curvature of the earth, Cook would have been too far away to be able to see the low-lying point at Cape Everard from his ship's position at 8 a.m. Thirdly, Cook's purpose in naming coastal features was for the guidance of future navigators. Hence these features needed to be prominent and distinctive so as to be readily recognisable from out at sea. Cape Everard does not meet this criterion and so it is very unlikely that Cook would have named it even if he had been able to see it.

It is important to note Scott's words 'We therefore have to infer what Cook's Point Hicks was from his descriptive words'. Scott's house of cards is constructed on an inference—and it is startling that it has been accepted so uncritically for so long. Despite a published debate extending over several years, the expert opinions of Fowler, a well-regarded surveyor, were shouted down by the far more eminent Scott, despite his complete lack of any maritime or surveying experience.¹⁵ It seems remarkable that none of Scott's successors seemed to take the trouble to examine Scott's arguments, along with those of Fowler and the opinions of navigators since the time of Cook.

In its turn, reverence for eminent historian Scott resulted in acceptance of his views by other leading historians of his day, including J.C. Beaglehole. Later historians, most similarly unqualified in maritime matters, just accepted Scott's and Beaglehole's views as authoritative. As a result, the published record of this event to this day still largely reflects Scott's perspective. As Scott himself wrote in his Preface to 'Terre Napoleon' in 1910:

...however much disposed one may be to form one's opinions on tested facts apart from the writings of historians, several lifetimes would not be sufficient for a

man to inquire for himself into the truth of a bare fraction of the conclusions with which research is concerned.

A century after Scott it is difficult to find an accurate version of what was seen and named when the Australian east coast was first sighted by those aboard *Endeavour*. Examples of Cook biographers (besides Beaglehole) who have fallen into Scott's error are Alan Villiers (2001), Vanessa Collingridge (2003), Frank McLynn (2012) and Rob Mundle (2013). Examples of other historians and authors who have accepted Scott's line are Manning Clark (1962), Andrew Sharp (1963), Thomas Keneally (2009) and Cameron-Ash (2018).¹⁶

Hence, generations of students of Cook, reading about his exploits, have accepted this view of the event based on their own reverence for historical writers, particularly J C Beaglehole. As a key and trusted source, these lines have misled many readers:

Some confusion and controversy have arisen over Point Hicks, and even its existence... 'The Southermost Point of land we had in sight' however, could not have been in the position that Cook assigned to it, for that was in the open sea in 50 fathoms of water and over twelve nautical miles from the nearest shore. The matter has been conclusively treated by Ernest Scott, 'English and French Navigators on the Victorian Coast', in the Victorian Historical Magazine, II (1912) pp. 146-51. The cape is there says Scott: it was called Cape Everard... and today there is a lighthouse on it.

Beaglehole (1955). *Endeavour journal*, p. 299, footnote 1

...at 6 Hicks saw the land, extending from north east to west five or six leagues off. The ship had been heading towards Bass Strait; she was held on this western course for two hours more, and then Cook bore away for the easternmost land in sight, calling the southernmost point of land he could at that time see Point Hicks. It is now known as Cape Everard...

Beaglehole (1974). *The life of Captain James Cook*, p. 227

Scott's views have also influenced governments. In 1924 distinguished historians, including Scott, combined to persuade the Commonwealth government to erect a plaque at Cape Everard claiming that it was Cook's Point Hicks. The plaque is still there (Figure 3, opposite).

In 1970, to commemorate the bicentenary of Cook's voyage the government of Victoria was persuaded, again by historians and despite protests by navigators,

...Point Hicks

to rename Cape Everard as *Point Hicks*, a name it still bears.¹⁷ This fake 'Point Hicks' therefore appears on all modern maps, charts and satnav screens. In the current absence of any on the ground information to the contrary, today's visitors to this land feature may well conclude that they are visiting the first land feature on the Australia coast named by Cook. Today, as we approach the 250th anniversary of Cook's voyage, and despite Cook's central role in Australia's history, there is little apparent interest by public authorities in the State of Victoria in recognising and correcting this error.

Historians write books, but sailors seldom do. The expert views of experienced mariners Flinders, Stokes, King and twentieth century surveyors and navigators Fowler, Barker, Hilder and Ingleton, have received far less public exposure and consideration. It is only recently that more detailed analysis of the Point Hicks controversy has revealed the chain of events leading to the current widespread misunderstanding.¹⁸ Captain Brett Hilder, a very experienced Pacific navigator and hydrographer, who provides the most elegant proof of *Endeavour's* track near today's Point Hicks, wrote despairingly: 'academics tend to believe the printed word of previous scholars rather than the printed charts of practical men who are the real experts in the matter of charting a coastline'.¹⁹

Restoring Cook's Legacy

After 250 years of error it is important to the memory of Cook, a stickler for accuracy, that there is a better understanding of what Lt James Cook really saw and named on the coast of Victoria in 1770. Should today's 'Point Hicks' revert to its pre-1970 name of *Cape Everard*? It is perhaps ironic that those that have opposed

that renaming in most cases now support its retention; but there are good reasons for doing so. Hilder's view is that today's Point Hicks was 'certainly part of the land first seen by Hicks and I think should be left bearing his name to perpetuate the historic landfall'.²⁰ Historian Robert Haldane has a similar view: 'Cook's intention to name the area of his first landfall after Zachary Hicks has been fulfilled'.²¹

Hick's first sighting should be remembered somewhere in this area, and today's Point Hicks is also an appropriate place to commemorate Cook's landfall (or land first seen) on the continent. However, today's visitors and future generations should be under no illusions about what Cook named and why today's Point Hicks is where it is. An appropriately worded commemorative plaque of a permanent nature at today's Point Hicks would serve this purpose and should point out the importance of Cook's Ram Head.

Since Cook's 'Point Hicks' does not exist as a land

feature, the first place on this coast that Cook named is Ram Head. Stokes, Fowler, Hilder and others have pointed out that today's Little Rame Head is Cook's 'Ram Head' and not today's Rame Head as is commonly supposed. As earlier writers have suggested, Little Rame Head should be renamed as *Ram Head* as Cook intended, or even

allowed to bear a dual name to honour its dual heritage. Cook would have appreciated this gesture. He had great respect for native peoples and used local names on his charts where he could obtain this information, as at Tahiti. Cook's mighty achievements and small mistakes deserve our belated recognition.

Trevor Lipscombe

[Editor: In our next issue, Trevor will revisit the story of Little Rame Head and Ram/Rame Head]

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Figure 3. The 1924 Plaque claiming that Cape Everard was Cook's Point Hicks. (Photo: Trevor Lipscombe)

Endnotes

- ¹ Scott, Ernest (1912). English and French navigators on the Victorian coast. *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 2(8), 148
- ² Fowler, Thomas W. (1907). Captain Cook's Australian landfall. *Victorian Geographical Journal*, 25, 7–12
- ³ Beaglehole, John C. (1974). *The life of Captain James Cook*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p.146
- ⁴ Beaglehole *op. cit.* p.198
- ⁵ Fowler *ibid.*; Barker, L. Chart: Snowy River to Twofold Bay with Lieutenant Cook's Coast Line and the track of H.M. Bark 'Endeavour', Property and Survey Branch, Commonwealth Department of Interior, 1933, Series A876, GL400/14, Item barcode 172111, National Archives Australia, Canberra (NAA); Ingleton, Geoffrey C. (1970). Cook's landfall: why Cape Everard is not Point Hicks. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 April; Hilder, Brett (1970). Point Hicks: land or illusion of land. *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 41, 285–97
- ⁶ Anon (1982). The Surveyor-General's new map of the colony. *The Argus, Melbourne*, 7 September
- ⁷ Hilder *op. cit.* p.290.
- ⁸ Ingleton *ibid.*
- ⁹ Beaglehole, John C. (1955). *The journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery, vol. 1. The voyage of the Endeavour 1768–1771*. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society and Cambridge University Press. p. 298
- ¹⁰ Lipscombe, Trevor (2014). The Point Hicks controversy. *Victorian Historical Journal*, 85(2), 235; (2015). Cook's Point Hicks: Error that just won't go away. *Cook's Log*, 38(2), 26-32
- ¹¹ Cameron-Ash, Margaret (2018). *Lying for the Admiralty*. Sydney: Rosenberg Publishing. p.152; (2018). Captain Cook invented Point Hicks to hide Bass Strait. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Map Society Inc.*, 84
- ¹² Lipscombe, Trevor (2018). Cook's Point Hicks – reports from the 1870s. *Cook's Log*, 41(3), 36
- ¹³ Scott (1912) *op. cit.* p. 147
- ¹⁴ Scott, Ernest (1916). *A short history of Australia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- ¹⁵ Lipscombe (2014) *op. cit.* p.236 and pp.239-243
- ¹⁶ Villiers, Alan (2001). *Captain Cook, The seaman's seaman*. London: Penguin Books. p. 134; Collingridge, Vanessa (2003). *Captain Cook*, Sydney: Random House Australia. p. 199; McLynn, Frank (2012). *Captain Cook: master of the seas*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. p. 141; Mundle, Rob (2013). *Cook: from sailor to legend*. Sydney: ABC Books. p. 204; Clark, C. Manning H. (1962). *A history of Australia*, vol. 1. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. p. 49; Sharp, Andrew (1963). *The discovery of Australia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 99; Keneally, Thomas (2009). *Australians: origins to Eureka*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. p. 25; Cameron-Ash *op.cit.* p. 154
- ¹⁷ Lipscombe (2014) *op. cit.* p. 245-7
- ¹⁸ Lipscombe (2014) *op. cit.*; and (2018) *op.cit.*
- ¹⁹ Hilder *op. cit.* p. 295
- ²⁰ Hilder *op.cit.* p. 293
- ²¹ Haldane, Robert (2001). A beacon on the wilderness coast: the story of Point Hicks (Cape Everard). *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, 25
- ²² Lipscombe, Trevor (2019). Ram Head—the first place Cook named in Australia. *Map Matters*, 36. http://www.australiaonthemap.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Map_Matters_36.pdf

Are there any more Howquas out there?

Judy Macdonald's article on John 'Howqua' Hunter in our previous issue aroused the interest of the Avoca & District Historical Society. The President, Tony O'Shea, has shared the following information with us.

Our Society in Central Victoria covers the local history of a number of places in the district, including **Percydale**.

These days, Percydale is not much more than a spot on the map, with a population of maybe 50 at the most, but in the 1870s it was a thriving township on what was then the main road from Adelaide to Melbourne.

The licensee of the 'Percydale Hotel and Theatre' was a Chinese gentleman named **Ah Kin Howqua**, who also served as Chinese Interpreter in the Avoca Police Court. Howqua was born into a wealthy merchant family in China, which reputedly sent their sons to be educated in England before migrating to various parts of the world to seek their fortune. Ah Kin Howqua was naturalised in 1861, married a lady named Ellen and had a child, before dying at the age of 44 years.

His grave is in the Church of England section of the Avoca Cemetery, rather than in the Chinese Section.

Ah Kin Howqua had a great-granddaughter named Dr June Howqua, born 1921 and graduated MD in 1947 from the University of Melbourne. She later worked for three decades at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne, specialising in cardiology and pulmonary medicine. She died in 2008.

I have heard various stories about the locality near Mansfield which bears the Howqua name, including one that had our Ah Kin How Qua (or one of his siblings) involved in some way, but have been unable to verify this.

Tony O'Shea

An unusual source for placename histories

During the twentieth century at various times some, but not all, of the Railways of Australasia – which were then great monolithic organisations – published lists of the origins of their station names. This provides an unusual but useful source for the history of placenames, at least for those places with railway stations.

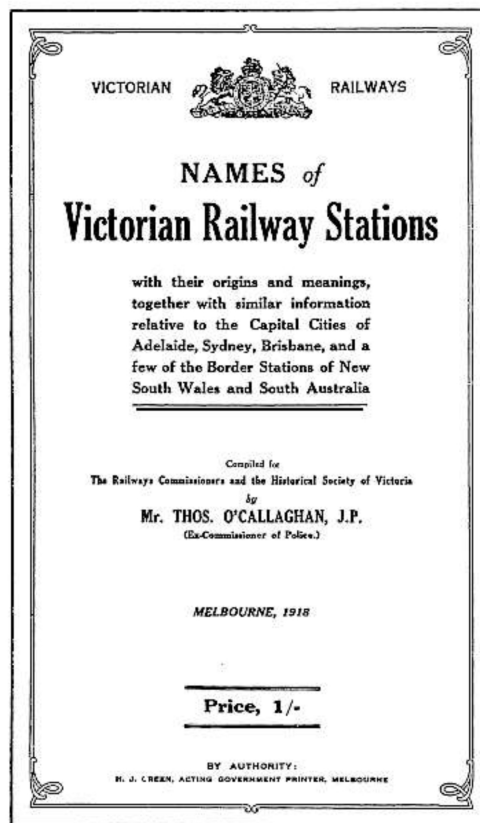
Queensland Railways started the idea with the publication in 1914 of *Nomenclature of Queensland railway stations*. This is, however, a very disappointing publication in that the information on the placename's origin is almost always exceedingly sparse. For example, the first entry (in the second edition) is *Abbottville*, for which the meaning given is 'After the late Mr Abbott'—but there is no indication who Mr Abbott was. For other entries, the explanation is even more useless. Many are frustratingly given simply as 'Name of district' or 'Name of town'. Sometimes the entry states (as for *Broadlands* or *Callide Coalfield*) 'Obvious'; or for *Southbrook* 'Self explanatory'. Sometimes it states nothing at all. Furthermore, no sources are provided.

The introduction of the QR list states, 'The meanings of some of the names have been omitted, either being doubtful or not available at the time of going to Press. It is anticipated, however, that the publication of the pamphlet in its present form will do much towards securing authentic information from different sources to permit of the issue of a complete second edition in the near future.' In fact, a second edition did not appear until November 1956. This was in the same style as the first edition, including all its deficiencies. In the 1990s extracts were printed in the Public Timetable books.

In 1915 the **South Australian Railways** published *Names of South Australian railway stations*. This was a classy publication. Details are given for each station and then the derivation of the name. Usually the explanation is very detailed. The booklet concludes with a map of the SAR system folded inside. The list includes the Central Australia Railway, then extending as far as Oodnadatta, 688 miles from Adelaide. This line had been built by the SAR and was operated by them until 1926, but financial responsibility for it had been transferred to the Commonwealth government in 1911.

The publication was compiled by Alfred N. Day, Secretary to the Railways Commissioner, and includes the

following note: 'The Compiler gratefully acknowledges the very valuable assistance rendered to him by a number of gentlemen, particularly Messrs. J. C. B. Moncrieff (Chief Engineer for Railways), E. M. Smith (Surveyor-



General), H. C. Talbot, R. Cockburn, C. H. Harris, and R. Mercer.' Sources for individual entries are not given.

The introduction assures readers that 'it is intended to publish a more complete issue in the future', but as far as I have been able to ascertain, this did not happen.

Until I examined this publication, I was unaware that SA had a station named with the wonderful apparent tautology *Mount Hill* (80 miles from Port Lincoln, named after William Hill) and a station called *Parramatta* (yes, said to be named after Parramatta, NSW).

Amusingly but understandably, the first two entries are placed out of order, so that the all-important *Adelaide* appears first, and the very unappealing *Abattoirs* comes second.

This publication is now unavailable, but microfilm copies are in major libraries.

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Then the **Victorian Railways** caught the trend. Their *Names of Victorian railway stations* was published in **1918**. Indeed, it was inspired by the Queensland and SA ventures. As the introduction states: 'The following list had its origin in a request by the Council of the Historical Society of Victoria in May, 1916, to the Victorian Railways Commissioners, that they should publish a list of the names of railway stations in this State, with their origins and meanings, such as had already been issued by the Railway Departments of South Australia and Queensland.' The Commissioners had a better idea: they thought the Society would be best placed to do it. So the Council of the Society delegated one of its members, Thomas O'Callaghan, to carry out the task.

The Victorian book commences with an introduction by O'Callaghan about the derivation of placenames generally. But the bulk of the book is very similar in style to its SA predecessor. It is, however, of course, much bigger, as the Victorian Railway system was, and is, so much bigger.

Thomas O'Callaghan is very interesting. He had long service in the Victoria Police although his career included vicissitudes relating to allegations of corruption. Nevertheless, he ended up as Commissioner of Police. He appears in Frank Hardy's famous novel *Power Without Glory* thinly disguised as 'Thomas Callinan'. He has an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.¹ His efforts as historical researcher were part of a long second career.

The Victorian station name book, unlike its Queensland and SA predecessors, comprehensively provides sources for the information given. Many of these are local informants. Of course, the reliability of these sources is another question. A very large proportion of the sources are police officers throughout the state.

We are lucky because, after 85 years, this book was re-published in 2003 by Boz Publishing in Victoria.

There is another interesting document relating to railway station names in Victoria. In the 1900s the Victorian railways went on an orgy of renaming stations. Some of this was to reflect usage. Some was to remove ambiguities in similarly named stations. However, most of it was an enthusiasm to shorten names. (Why? Was it to make tiny

An unusual source...

savings in the size of station nameboards and stationery?) Some of these shortenings of names seem silly (for example, *Crowlands* to *Crowland*). Some of it was just plain wrong (for example, *Riddells Creek* to *Riddell*, and *Kangaroo Flat* to *Kangaroo*), so that years later the full correct names were re-instated. The mass re-namings led to dissatisfaction. A Member of the Victorian Parliament called for a full list of the changes. This was provided as a Victorian Parliamentary Paper on 7 December 1909 entitled 'Names of Railway Stations Altered'. It covers the period from 8 September 1903 until 1 August 1909.²

In **1936** the Publicity Branch of New Zealand Railways published two booklets, *New Zealand railway station names and their meaning* (32 pages) and *The wisdom of the Maori: Railway station Maori names along the Main Trunk Line* (31 pages), by 'Tohunga'. *Tohunga* is Māori for expert or prophet, but in fact both booklets were by James Cowan. These were revised and republished in **1938** as *Maori names of New Zealand railway-stations: their meanings and traditions* (30 pages). Explanations are given in line and station order. James Cowan was a prolific and widely-read author of innumerable books about NZ history, especially the colonial period and Māori ethnography. He often wrote for the *New Zealand Railways Magazine*.

In **New South Wales** there was an early publication, but not by the Railways. Mr C. A. Irish wrote a series of articles in the *Labour Daily* from January to November **1926** about the origins of NSW station names. These articles were collated and republished by the Royal Australian Historical Society in their Journal in **1927** (vol. 13(2), p.99) entitled *Names of Railway Stations in New South Wales. With their Meaning and Origin*.³ In **1965** the New South Wales Railways at last joined in. Their publication was reprinted in 1978, 1979 and 1980 and then a second edition appeared in **1982**. It is from the second edition that my description is taken. The title of this was either *How & why of station names: meanings and origins* (front cover) or *Station names: dates of opening, closing and/or change of name: meaning or origin of name* (title page).

This publication was prepared by John H. Forsyth, then Archives Officer of the State Rail Authority of NSW. Forsyth was a livewire who prepared a number of publications about NSW railway history on a variety of subjects.

continued next page

...for placename histories

His NSW station name book, second edition, is a very handsome and useful publication indeed. It is very comprehensive in its description of the origin of names. There are also details of:

- dates that stations were renamed
- name of parish and county the station is situated in
- dates that the first school and post office opened in the locality, for comparison
- whether the station has a grain silo.

All of this information is useful. The dates of renaming, I think, are especially useful. Unfortunately, sources are not given. All that is said is that the book is 'compiled from records held in the Authority's Archives Section.' There is, however, a bibliography.

The information is complemented by old photographs of many stations. These are very interesting and the result is a very pleasing production indeed.

Sadly, as far as I can ascertain, there were never equivalent publications for **Western Australia**, **Tasmania** or the former **Commonwealth Railways** (Trans-Australian and Central Australian railways).

What we can say it that these books reflect the state of knowledge at their respective dates of publication. Their information sometimes complements, but sometimes contradicts, other information. The town of **Nevertire** (NSW) provides a typical example.

An article by Joyce Miles (*Placenames Australia*, Sept 2012, p.9) notes that the 'Nevertire' property of 32000 acres was taken up in 1852, and suggests that since the property lies within the Wangaaypuwan language area of the Ngilyampaa people, it may have been an Indigenous word. The article also records two folktales that purport to be explanations, based on experiences of early explorers and their guides. However, the NSW Railways publication claims that the 'The station was named after the pastoral holding of Ryrie & Alexander, who had 6,408 ha. in 1866.' I leave it to others to ascertain if this complements or contradicts the other information.

Victor Isaacs

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Victoria

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New Zealand

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New South Wales

Station names: date of opening, closing and/or change of name, meaning or origin of name / State Rail Authority of New South Wales, Archives Section. [Sydney]: State Rail Authority of New South Wales, 1982

Endnotes

¹ <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ocallaghan-thomas-7>

² It can be accessed at <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/vufind/Search/Results?lookfor=Names+of+Railway+Stations+altered&type=AllFields&submit=Find>

³ This can also be accessed at https://www.nswrail.net/library/station_names.php



Photo: Margie and Garry Kemp

We are sorry to say that our contributor, historian *Victor Isaacs*, recently passed away before he had chance to see this work of his in print. We trust that this valuable account of placename sources will be a suitable memorial to him and to his historical research, and we express our condolences to his wife Agnes Boskovitz.

Australia's Oceanic toponyms

Australia has two toponymic systems: the *Indigenous* and the *Introduced*. The latter, imposed on the landscape post-1770, is a construct of Australian English; nevertheless, it consists of toponyms sourced from many languages. Although of course most of these are of English origin, many derive from other European nations and languages (from French, Dutch and German, for example). Smaller numbers come from Asia and the Pacific. All these imported names contribute to the colourful linguistic mosaic of Australia's Introduced toponymy, which makes it such an interesting area of study.

One group of toponyms that interests me (apart from my special interest in Dutch-based toponyms) is the set of imports from Oceania—specifically those originating from Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Quite how many there are is hard to tell; I have identified at least a hundred, but there are undoubtedly more. Many can be identified by the tell-tale elements *wai* 'water/river/stream' and *-nui* 'large, big, many, plentiful, numerous, great, abundant, ample, superior, of high rank, important'. So, a place like **Wainui** means 'big/great water/river'. Polynesian words, in particular, have a regular syllable structure (if they haven't been anglicised)—every consonant must be followed by a vowel or diphthong, meaning words cannot end on a consonant. Words may also start with a vowel. In linguistic terms we say they have a (C)V syllable structure.

Polynesian names seem to be popular as names for homesteads or rural properties, especially those with the *nui* element (27 of the 36 names with *-nui*), and some 26 out of 76 with the *wai* element. Though we have to be careful with *wai* placenames—many in fact derive from Aboriginal languages!

Other toponyms are not immediately identifiable. The Sydney suburb of **Lakemba** is one. It derives its name from Benjamin Taylor's property which was named after the Fijian island **Lakeba** where his second wife's

grandparents, Rev. and Mrs Cross, were missionaries from 1835. One of the original streets in Lakemba is Oneata Street, which takes its name from another island close to Lakeba.

There are also several Polynesian toponyms that are sometimes thought to be of Aboriginal origin. These include: **Waitara** [< Māori 'mountain stream'] and the rather delightfully named **Malua Bay** (a township on the NSW south coast)—but more about this placename in a future issue of *Placenames Australia*!



Waikiki Beach (WA) Photo: www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g3208400-d3179457

Then there is the unmistakably Polynesian-based **Ulimarua** (a locality and railway station on the Darling Downs, QLD) [< Māori *ko Rimarua* 'long hand/arm' possibly referring to Grand-Terre, New Caledonia (see Geraghty & Tent, 2010)]. Others include: **(Lake) Kia Ora** (NSW), **Talofa** (NSW), **Tonga Mountain** (QLD), **(Mount) Tongatabu** (TAS), **Waikiki** (WA), **Waikato** (SA), **Te Kowai** (QLD), **Waitemata** (WA), **Papanui Rock** (TAS), **Wanganui** (NSW), **Rapanui** (WA), **Akarooa** (TAS) and **Wairewa** (VIC).

As I noted, it's sometimes difficult to know whether a name comes from Oceania or not. One such is the locality **Waitui** and the **Waitui Waterfalls** on the Stewarts River, north of Taree (NSW). *Waitui* is the Fijian word for 'sea', an unlikely name for an inland locality and waterfalls. The Geographic Names Board of NSW tells us it was previously written as 'Wytooe'. Is this a rendition of an Aboriginal word or an imaginative way of representing an Oceanic word? I shall attempt to investigate, and I hope to give an answer in a future issue.

Jan Tent

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Afghan cameleers in the Outback

A case of toponymic absence?

In 2014 I carried out an Australian Research Council project documenting the architectural, settlement, and cultural history of the cameleers in the Australian outback. The exploration of the built environment—the absence of built remains, the relationships to natural and linguistic landscapes—is a logical extension of my toponymic training and personal interests in all things architectural and cultural.

Apart from Jane Simpson's (2000) book chapter, little has ever been written about the language history of the cameleers in the Outback. My toponymic research, with the resulting 2018 article, is the first into the relationship of language and place in the life of the cameleers in the Outback.

During my 6-day field trip through the South Australian Outback from Adelaide through Port Augusta to Marree, and along with the missing and unavailable architectural residua of these explorer–drovers, I sought out language in place seen through toponyms. Apart from the descriptive placenames of **Afghan Hill**, **Afghan Well** and **Camel Well** of Beltana and the Afghan Quarter of Marree, and the personal names *Baloosh* and *Hafiz* which pepper the cemetery landscapes and gravestones of Hawker and Marree, there was little for me to find. There is a surprising lack of a toponymic footprint from our Outback Afghans.

The fact there is such a dearth poses the question: Why were they not documented? Or did they never exist? The cameleers were a big part of the Outback scene for a long time—from the 1860s for around 70 years. Surely they must have named places or had places named after them. Or maybe this toponymic absence is something important in itself? The issue is similar to the situation with Pidgin English toponyms on Norfolk Island:

What this omission reveals is not only the priorities of linguists in their documentation, analysis, and description of any languages (not just for languages like Pidgin English), but how 'non-research'

affects how languages associated with missions as idealised entities are treated in the real and scholarly world. The absence of an explicit focus on the Pidgin English and other marginalised language toponyms by past and present scholars working on missionary linguistic records highlights certain metalinguistic and social priorities held by linguists. (Nash, 2015, 141)

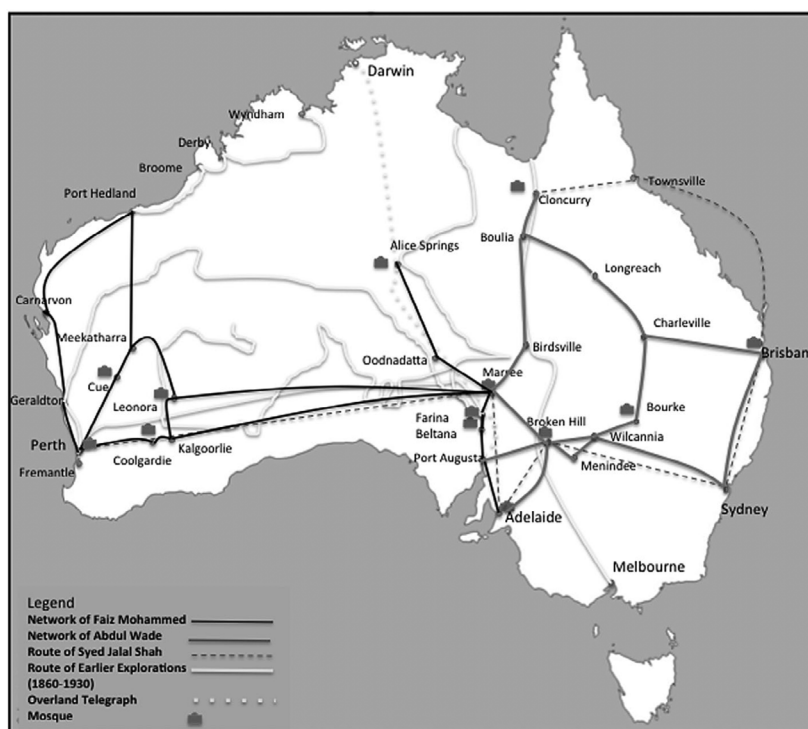
It is difficult to document what is not there. Still, such toponymic absence can provide insight into the concerns which drive our research, whether that be toponymic, linguistic, or whatever.

Joshua Nash

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, Denmark

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Map of early Australian inland exploring expeditions involving camels, 2016. Image courtesy of Md. Mizanur Rashid and Md. Noorizhar Ismail.

Map Warper ~ merging the old and the new

The Public Record Office Victoria recently launched a new map overlay service that allows researchers to easily find thousands of historical maps and plans from the State Government archives, using contemporary place names. The online tool enables users to see location change over time and the ways in which placenames have changed accordingly. *Asa Letourneau*, Online Engagement Officer at PROV, has written this article about the service for Placenames Australia.

With **Map Warper**, pixels can be converted into real geographic information by layering historic maps and plans onto a web mapping tool. This process, called rectification, allows users to visualise how places and placenames have evolved over time. Very simply, the user places markers or ‘ground control points’ on the historic map and on corresponding points in the exact same location in a real-world, online map. The open source Map Warper software then assigns latitude and longitude values to those points, as well as the x/y position of the pixels in the map image corresponding to those points. The result is an overlay of the historic map image on top of the contemporary world in the correct location.

modern location names they are more familiar with. Furthermore, with the Map Warper tool they can also scroll across a modern-day map to find relevant historical maps and plans in the PROV collection. Importantly, this project also benefits PROV as it is feeding geospatial data back into our systems to enrich our records.

The process was tackled in two stages. The first stage involved a team of volunteers compiling geospatial metadata for thousands of parish plans including the key data, contemporary equivalent location names for historic parish names and latitude/longitude co-ordinates for contemporary locations. The second stage involved

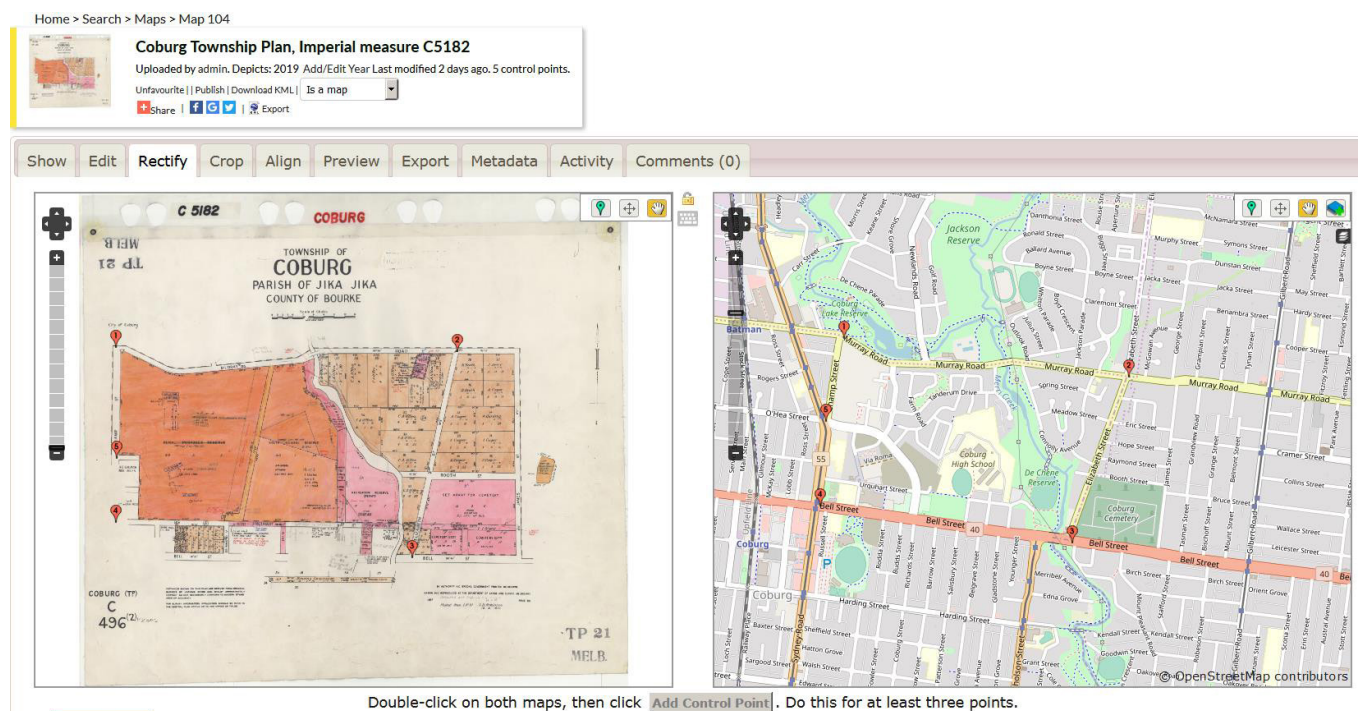


Figure 1. Rectification using the PROV Map Warper

The goal was to make it as easy as possible for users to find maps and parish plans in our collection. One of the major barriers to finding historic maps and plans is that they use historic names no longer known or used in Victoria. Most of our users aren't historians or archivists. However, if you create metadata that associates the historic name with its contemporary location name—or even better its latitude and longitude co-ordinates—researchers will be able to search for these historic records by using the

liaising with Tim Waters, a freelance geospatial developer based in the UK. I worked with Tim to build a PROV version of his own Map Warper site (he also built one for the New York Public Library some years ago). Once the PROV site was built and tested, content was imported, and crowdsourcing of rectification began.

Tim Waters' open source Map Warper software rectifies and overlays historic maps on a base map of the contemporary world. The base map used is not Google

...Map Warper

Maps but rather the non-proprietary Open Street Map built by a community much like Wikipedia. Libraries and other institutions have used it, including the New York Public Library, National Library of Australia, Harvard and Stanford Universities, Leiden Archives (in The Netherlands), the Department of Education and the National Environment Protection Authority (US Federal Government), and Wikimedia Commons.

Since our launch in June 2019, 4249 maps have been rectified and 290 public accounts have been created to do this.

Map Warper is already proving a valuable tool for PROV staff and the wider research community alike in allowing users to find historically names resources by using contemporary place names as the search terms. You can find Douutta Galla and Jika Jika Parish plans by searching for *Keilor* or *Richmond* and *Fitzroy* respectively. If you found the SLV 1897 **Kaleno** survey map exciting in the September issue of *Placenames Australia*, we hope you'll find the PROV Map Warper Commerralghip Parish Plan, Imperial measure 2417, just as exciting: it covers the same location (below). Go to

https://mapwarper.prov.vic.gov.au/maps/1003#Preview_Rectified_Map_tab

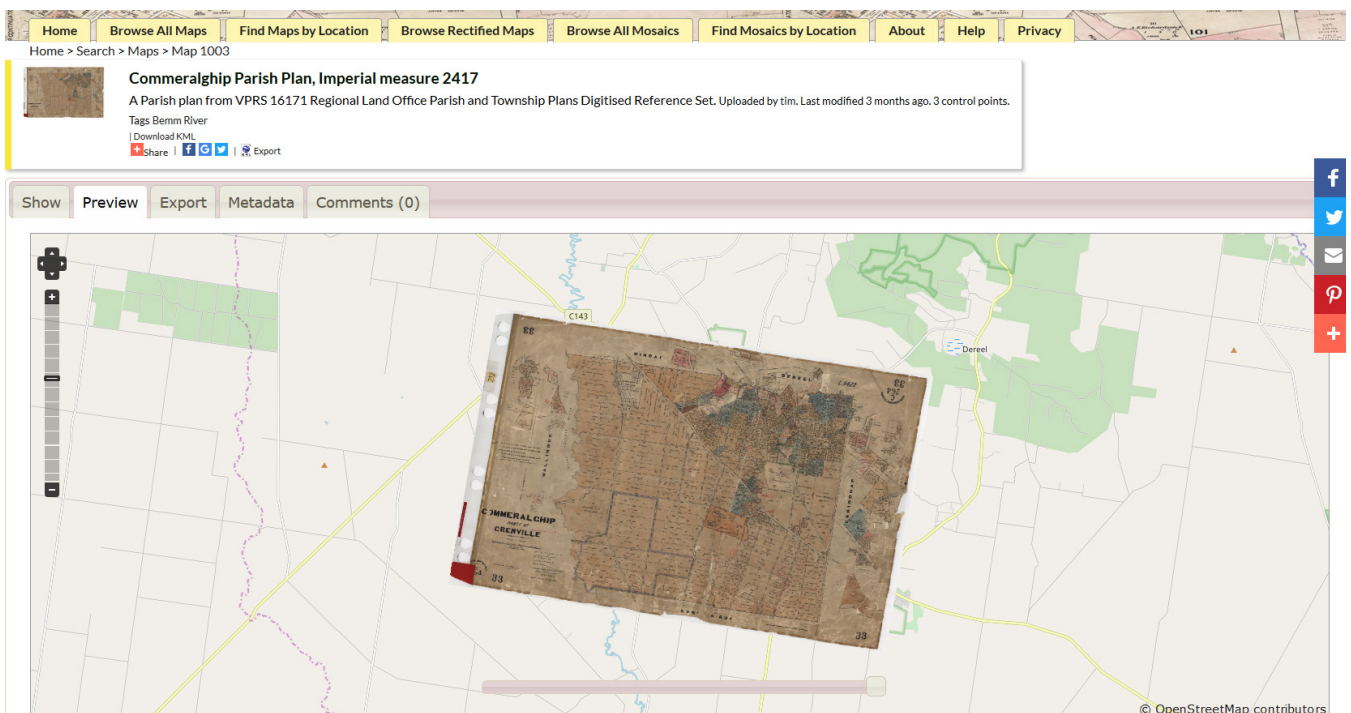
To get the full effect make sure to click on the Preview tab and slide the transparency slider back and forth.

In the future we hope to link historical maps and plans in our archival catalogue direct to their overlay view in the PROV Map Warper and vice versa. To do this we will replace the current Map Warper unique identifiers for each Map with the PROV unique 'Record Item' identifiers (found within the landing page URL for the record in the catalogue). While we are offering thousands of parish plans as our initial content for rectification, we have already drawn up a list of possible future cartographic series. These include the Historic Plans Collection, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works plans and aerial photographs from a number of record series. Given that Map Warper comes with an API, it would be useful to explore to what degree it could be used to manage imports and exports of content programmatically. For example, we could provide access to developers and other GLAM institutions. All of this has yet to be determined but these options illustrate the potential and contributions that PROV Map Warper could make in the future. We invite you to go to the PROV website and read the blog at

<https://prov.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-blog/how-find-parish-plans>

This blog features a video about how to use Map Warper and information about how to sign up to help us rectify maps and plans in our collection.

Asa Letourneau



Placenames Puzzle Number 72

Eponymous toponyms

The placenames this time are eponymous (i.e. named after a person). For example: (NSW, coastal town) the 5th governor of NSW. *Port Macquarie*

1. (NT, city) his (slow) theory ignited a scientific and religious revolution
2. (NSW, city) not the politician Townshend, but his peerage title
3. (VIC, city) the politician William Lamb's peerage title
4. (QLD, city) the 6th governor of NSW
5. (SA, city) the consort to William IV
6. (NT, town) the wife of Charles Todd
7. (WA, town) a Dutch sailor in the *Vergulde Draeck* (*Gilt Dragon*), wrecked on the WA coast
8. (TAS, island) the wife of Anthony van Diemen
9. (NSW, mountain) a Polish-Lithuanian freedom fighter
10. (WA, settlement north of Perth) Socrates' wife
11. (NSW, town) the peerage title of Arthur Wellesley
12. (NSW, suburb of Sydney) a German explorer who disappeared
13. (QLD, suburb of Brisbane) He wrote 'It was a dark and stormy night...'
14. (SA, harbour town) Lady Young was the wife of a South Australian governor
15. (TAS, city) the 4th Earl of Buckinghamshire, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies
16. (NT, town) the 2nd daughter of John McDouall Stuart's 6th expedition sponsor, James Chambers
17. (NSW, town) the 'Father of Federation'
18. (VIC, southernmost tip of the mainland) friend of Matthew Flinders
19. (QLD, bay on west of Fraser Island) [Cook named it after] the 3rd Earl of Bristol, Lord of the Admiralty
20. (at least 8 places across the country) he named Number 9 above

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

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