

This is the second in a series of articles by **Jan Tent** which we have dubbed 'Toponymy 101' which presents a sequence of short vignettes on toponymy and some of its theoretical issues.

Placenames are generally considered in terms of 'specific' and 'generic' elements. They can consist of a **specific** alone (e.g. *Darwin, Sydney, Perth*) or a **specific** with an accompanying **generic** (e.g. *Botany Bay*, or *Mount Kosciuszko*). The generic element is usually a geographic feature term. However, a generic can sometimes fulfil the role of a specific (e.g. *Point Lookout*). Similarly, placenames that comprise the definite article often just have a generic following the article (e.g. *The Basin, The Bight, The Spit*), but may also just have an accompanying **specific**, or both a **specific** + a **generic** (e.g. *The Three Sisters, The Armchair, The Battery Creek, The Bunyip Waterhole*).

However, we can look at placename structure from a slightly different, more grammatical, perspective. We then see that they have various types of structure.¹ They can either consist of a single word (e.g. *Darwin, Sydney, Perth, Bell*)—in which case they are simply 'specific elements'—or multiword items.

Word types

- a. **Simple**—consists of a single free morpheme, e.g. *Orange, Epping, Darwin*.²
- b. **Complex**—consists of two or more morphemes (1 free + at least 1 bound), e.g. *Manly, Carpentaria, Watsonia, Mount Hopeless, Kissing Point, The Friars*.
- c. **Compound**—consists of two or more free morphemes, e.g. *Blackheath, Newcastle, Blacktown, Lucyvale*.
- d. **Compound-complex**—combination of types b. and c., e.g. *Cowpastures, Rushcutters Bay*.

Typical structural forms

Our focus in this article is on the structure of toponyms whose specific element is non-simple; that is, those where the internal structure consists of compound or complex words or a combination of those. Such placenames may, among other things, display the following surface structures:

1. **Solid Forms** [i.e. single orthographic words], e.g. *Rutherglen, Bankstown, Forestville, Brookvale, Chatswood, Alberton, Ellendale, Streatham, Bellbird, Figtree, Tasmania*, etc. A distinctive subgroup is the form known as:

- **Blends or portmanteaux** [solid forms resulting from the blending of two words or names], e.g. *Belrose* (from Christmas Bell + native rose), *Lidcombe* (from Aldermen F. Lidbury + H.J. Larcombe), *Kurmond* (from Kurrajong + Richmond), *Wangara* (Perth suburb, from Wanneroo + Gnangara).
- 2. **Hyphenated Forms** (hyphenated orthographic words + an optional **generic**), e.g. *Tomato-Stick Cave, Bob-a-Day Park, Brighton-Le-Sands, Bergen-Op-Zoom Creek, Dunn-Field Creek*, etc.
- 3. **Open Forms** [separate orthographic words, comprising either a multiword **specific** with an optional **generic**; or a single **specific** with a **generic**], e.g. *Dee Why, Devils Marbles, St Kilda, Dead Man Crossing, Port Jackson, Lane Cove, Mount Disappointment, Church Point, Mona Vale, Violet Town, Sandy Creek*, etc. Distinctive subgroups with an open-form structure are:
 - **Binomials** [nouns, adjectives, verbs joined by *and*, with an optional **generic**], e.g. *Coal and Candle Creek, Sow and Pigs (Reef), Cow and Calf Rocks, Linger and Die Creek, Free and Easy Creek, Boy and Dinghy* (ISLAND GROUP), *Bishop and Clerk* (MOUNTAIN PEAK), *Old Man and Woman* (POINT), etc.
 - **Verb Phrases** [often based on either a participle, or on a verb with its particle, plus a **generic**], e.g. *Rotten Swamp, Unnamed Corner, Disputed Plain, Felled Timber Creek, Broken Bay, Tessellated Pavement, Broken Ridge, Tumble Down Creek, Rising Fast Creek, Boiling Down Creek, Bedding Down Creek*, etc.³
 - **Noun Phrases** [noun phrases + optional **generic**], e.g. *Valley of the Giants, Leg of Lamb Bank, Chain of Lakes, Butt of Liberty* (POINT), *Tower of Babel* (HILL), *Rock of Ages* (HILL), *Run o' Waters Creek, Bust Me Gall Hill, Meeting of the Waters, The Plains of Promise*, etc.

The spelling of placenames is often a contentious issue and is frequently a matter of debate within and among placenaming authorities, both here and abroad. For instance, some jurisdictions permit hyphenated forms whilst others do not. There are numerous examples of

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compound names that have more than one possible rendering, for example: *Colovale* (WA) v *Colo Vale* (NSW), *Hilltown* (SA) v *Hill Town* (SA), *Campbelltown* (NSW & VIC) v *Campbell Town* (TAS), and *Mossvale* (WA) v *Moss Vale* (NSW).

An interesting case is that of the *jumpup*. It is defined by ANPS as ‘a sudden steep rise or escarpment, especially presenting as an elevated, step-like obstacle on an ascending road or track’; and is designated under the feature set <CLIF>. We see *jumpup* as a **specific** spelled as: **Jump Up Creek**, **Jump-Up Creek** (both in NSW) or **Jumpup Spring** (SA). As a **generic** it seems to be always spelled as an open compound, e.g. *China Wall Jump Up* (NT), *Frog Rock Jump Up* (NT), *Borrooloola Jump Up* (NT), *The Jump Up* (NSW). So, there are various ways of representing multiword placenames. Indeed, there is a lack of consensus among toponymists and lexicographers as to how the term ‘placename’ itself should be represented. One sees *placename*, *place-name* or *place name* used in official toponymic literature from the various place-naming agencies around the world. (ANPS uses the spelling *placename*, the standard Australian usage as reflected in the *Macquarie Dictionary*.)

As illustrated in category 1 (**solid forms**), a generic element often forms part of the compound. Often, however, the generic is veiled because the placename is so ancient that the generic is no longer part of our everyday language: its original meaning has become lost in time. There are abundant examples of such toponyms in Britain, many of which have been transported to the Australian context. Some include:

- *Melbourne* – from Old English (OE) *burna* ‘stream’
- *Mornington* – from OE *tūn* ‘fence, enclosure, homestead’
- *Ashburton* – a combination of the above two generics
- *Epping* – from OE *-ingas* ‘people of’

The Oops! Corner

- Greg Eccleston points out that, in Stuart Duncan’s December article on Brisbane street names, Governor **Gipps** of NSW appeared as ‘Gibbs’. Greg warns us that the good folk of Gippsland in Victoria will not be pleased, and he’s probably right!
- And in last issue’s Puzzle, as Mary Anthony spotted, **Rottnest Island** seemed to have been transported from WA to SA. Blame the Editor’s typing fingers for that one, Mary!

- *Tumby (Bay)* – from Old Scandinavian (OScand) *Tūn-býr* ‘settlement by the fence’—OE *tūn* ‘fence, enclosure, homestead’ + OE *bý* ‘settlement, homestead’, from ON *býr* / *bær*
- *Tamworth* – from OE *worþ* ‘enclosure, homestead’, from Old Low German (OLG) *wurð* ‘soil’
- *Stanmore* – from OE *stan* ‘stone’ + *mōr* ‘moor’
- *Millthorpe* – from OE *þorp* ‘farm, hamlet’, from OScand *þorp* ‘farm, new settlement’

Other such attached generics are more transparent, for example: *Newtown*, *Riverglen*, *Lindfield*, *Rockdale*, *Westleigh*, *Lewisham*, *Edithburgh*, etc.

So next time you look at a map or drive along, spare a thought for the way the names you encounter are formed. Is it a compound, if so what kind? Is it a blend, a binomial, a verb form or a phrase? It would make a good game to pass the time by keeping count of the different toponym structure types on a long trip.

Jan Tent

Endnotes

¹ I shall refrain from including an analysis of Indigenous placenames or elements thereof because it is so often the case we do not know the true meaning or structure of these.

² A ‘morpheme’ is the smallest meaningful element in a language. They often coincide with suffixes and prefixes. However, they can also be words comprising single meaningful elements, e.g. *girl*. A ‘free’ morpheme can stand on its own, e.g. *black*, *go*, *wise*, etc. A ‘bound’ morpheme is a word element that cannot stand on its own; it needs to be attached to a free morpheme, e.g. *-ing*, *-ed*, *-s*, *-es*, *un-*, *in-*, *pro-*, *-ness*, *-ly*, *-ment*, etc. Hence, *boys* is a word consisting of two morphemes: *boy* (a free morpheme meaning ‘male child’) + *-s* (a bound morpheme meaning ‘PLURAL’); *walked* comprising *walk* (free, meaning ‘to perambulate’) + *-ed* (bound, meaning ‘PAST TENSE’).

³ Notice how the placenames with a present participle (i.e. the *-ing* verb form) often refer to streams. This is not so surprising because streams are dynamic and are, therefore, more likely to contain a present participle to convey this dynamism. Static geographic features such as mountains are more likely to have a past participle (i.e. *-ed* or *-en* verb forms) in their name.

- In our ‘Skeletons in the toponymic cupboard’ article, we noted a newspaper report—based on the Australian Electoral Commission’s description—that **Canning** electorate was named after surveyor Alfred Canning. Ian Murray is sceptical; he believes the electorate’s name, like the *Canning district* and *Canning River*, honours George Canning, Prime Minister of England. We suspect Ian’s right, but the AEC’s supporting documents are hard to access!