

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL NAMES FOR THE NATURAL REGIONS AND FEATURES IN THE HILLS SHIRE

LOCAL STUDIES INFORMATION

Introduction

Very little information on this topic has been documented for our Shire and contradictions in spellings and interpretations exist. This is mainly because the indigenous population had no written language, so it is not uncommon to find a number of different spellings and meanings for the same word resulting from Aboriginal language sounds having no English language equivalent as well as misunderstandings by interpreters and recorders.

The early population decline of local indigenous people and their movement to areas outside our shire either due to smallpox or conflict over white land settlement of traditional food sources, especially near the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers, have also meant that traditional names for particular regions and features have disappeared.

Darug Language Group

Darug¹ according to Arthur Capell in 1970², was the name of the Aboriginal language group for most of the Sydney region. The Darug language has been divided into two dialects according to location; coastal and inland - the border between these two dialects was first mentioned by diarist Watkin Tench in 1793 as being just to the west of Parramatta.³ In 1987 Jim Kohen published a dictionary for the Darug inland dialect that was based on words (not place names) recorded by: - Collins, Hunter and Tench in the 1790s, John Rowley in 1878 and R.H. Mathews in 1903.⁴

It is likely that the boundary between the coastal clans and inland clans ran north along the Pennant Hills Road ridge, then west along Castle Hill Road and north towards Cattai Ridge Road, Glenorie and then west to the Hawkesbury. Clans were usually named after the place where people lived, or a totem they revered.⁵ Clans in The Hills Shire would have included the Tuga, Burramatta, Cattai, and Bidji. It seems that the majority probably spoke the inland dialect. Their use of different resources in the shire's natural regions of river flats, ridge tops and valleys would have caused them to give these regions special names.

Regional Names

Reverend William Branwhite Clarke, while headmaster of The King's School at Parramatta and Sunday preacher to the people of the Castle Hill and Dural areas, recorded in his diary entry for November 6 1840⁶, nine traditional placenames given to him by Narguigui⁷, chief of South Creek: -

Darug	Geographic Area	Comments & Possible Meaning of Placename
1. Wianamatta	South Creek	South Creek clan were the Wianamatta ⁸
2. Borramarree	Between Toongabbie & Baulkham Hills	It may mean Northmead, Winston Hills, North Rocks; "burra" means mouth, food e.g. eel; "buru" means grey kangaroo; "mari" means big, many
3. Norree	Baulkham Hills	"nowee" place of trees to make canoes?

¹ Current spelling used by descendants but has also been spelt Darag, Dharug, Daruk, Dharuk, Dharuck, Dharook, and Dharruk

² Arthur Capell, 'Aboriginal languages in the south central coast, New South Wales: fresh discoveries' in Oceania vol. 41, pp.20-27

³ Watkin Tench, Sydney's First Four Years

⁴ J.L. Kohen, A Dictionary of the Dharug Language: the Inland Dialect

⁵ Keith Vincent Smith, Sydney Coastal Clans 2002

⁶ Rev. W.B. Clarke Diary 1839-1840 Mitchell Library MSS 139/7 Item 5 on Reel CY 3383

⁷ Likely to be Nurragingy who in 1819 received a land grant in the Blacktown area and was one of two natives made a chief by Governor Macquarie

⁸ Jim Kohen personal communication June 2004 (Listed as such on one of the blanket lists at State Records)

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4.Mogoaillee	Castle Hill	"mogo" means stone hatchet, "aillee" may be possessive meaning belonging to somewhere or something ⁹ ; place of stone for hatchets?
5.Narrung Dooral	This side [read in conjunction with 6]; dooral gully	"narrung" means little, "dooral" means gully according to Nurragingy so this may be Little Dural now known as Kenthurst
6.Cobbory Dooral	Towards Wiseman's; where much honey: good honey place	"kobbera" means head, upper part of body, so this may be Upper Dural now known as Glenorie
7.Budgoggerah	Near Tollgate	"bado" means water, fresh, "kobbera" means head
8.Buraillee	Opposite to Berowra	Berrilee - either "burra" or "buru" as above, or "berril" finger, "aillee" possessive belonging to
9.Wiamarra	Prospect	Also called Warmul by the Darug ¹⁰

It seems that traditional placenames tend to be of a descriptive nature rather than of a commemorative nature as is common in English culture. Adequate translations for those place names in our shire have proved difficult due to: -

- Variations in spelling
- Similarity of words that have different meanings
- Uncertainty of word meanings

Dural was thought to come from "dooral" meaning a hollow tree on fire at the bottom, with "dooral dooral" being plural for many hollow trees on fire. Aborigines used to smoke possums out of trees by lighting a fire at the bottom. Surveyor James Meehan used the name Dooral Dooral for the area when surveying the Great North Road in 1817¹¹ (now Old Northern Road). However, Reverend Clarke's 1840 diary entry showing Dooral gully, and an 1805 reference to the valley of Dorell at the Northern Rocks¹² have indicated that "dooral" may have two meanings, or a broader meaning of valley or gully with many trees on fire.

Maroota comes from Darug "muru", "meroo", "mooroo" meaning pathway or track; and "-ta" (shortened version of "matta", meaning place of water. Long time Ruby Ramm believes it means much water¹³. There are certainly a number of large rock holes in the Maroota area that contain water year round and were important in men's ceremonies¹⁴. It is significant that the route of Old Northern Road from Dural to Wisemans Ferry follows the ridge tops - the traditional Darug pathway.¹⁵

CATCHMENTS

The Hills Shire is divided into two catchments: -

1. Upper Parramatta River Catchment to the south of Castle Hill

Parramatta River, home of the Burrumatta clan derives its name from the Darug Burrumatta where "burra" meant food such as eels and fish, and "matta" place of water.¹⁶ Governor Phillip chose to retain this traditional name for the settlement and river

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Jim Kohen personal communication June 2004

¹¹ James Meehan Field Book 128, 1817 State Records of NSW Reel 2623

¹² Sydney Gazette February 3 1805 p.3 (Northern Rocks could be North Rocks or Maraylya)

¹³ Ruby Ramm Life at "Landsdale" p.1

¹⁴ Jim Kohen personal communication June 2004

¹⁵ Ralph Hawkins personal communication with Noelene Pullen May 2004

¹⁶ Colin Gale, personal communication with Noelene Pullen May 2004

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Toongabbie Creek was home to the Tuga clan. "Tuga" was Darug for dense forest or thick wood; "bi", "bee" is a possessive form - belonging to the place of thick woods¹⁷. Governor Phillip established a government Farm at Toongabbie in April 1791

2. Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment to the north of Castle Hill

Cattai Creek is named for the Cattai (also spelt Caddie, Caddy, Catta, Catye, Cathai) clan and is thought to mean swampy land where the wide river flats give way to less hospitable country¹⁸. Governor Lachlan Macquarie wrote in his journal on 4 December 1810 of visiting Dr Arndell's Farm at Caddy Creek¹⁹.

The Darug word for **Hawkesbury River** is "Deerubbin" and this is a kind of yam²⁰. The word "Darug" also is a kind of yam- a member of the lily family (specifically the vanilla lily²¹) with an edible bulb, an important source of starch in the Aboriginal diet, and as important as the potato to the Irish. There were once extensive beds of yams growing on the flood plain of the Hawkesbury River.

Jim Kohen thinks Darug is also a generic term for underground plant food that can be dug up such as roots and tubers including yams. The other two main types of plant foods were Wigi - fruits such as lillypilly, figs and native grapes; and Watangal - nectar from banksias, melaleucas and waratahs that were sucked directly or made into a sweet drink called bool.²²

TRADITIONAL NAMES FOR LOCAL FLORA

In 1805 Daniel Moowattin, a member of the Burrumatta clan²³, acted as a guide to the botanist George Caley and amongst other things described 30 species of Eucalypt giving their native name and pointing out their distinctive features.²⁴ Those growing in The Hills Shire²⁵ include: -

Darug	Species	Common Name ²⁶
Banga'ly	<i>Eucalyptus robusta</i>	Swamp Mahogany
Baray'ly	<i>Eucalyptus acmenioides</i>	White Mahogany
Burringora	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>	Forest Red Gum
Cobajora	<i>Eucalyptus eugenioides</i>	Stringybark
Calang'oral	<i>Eucalyptus saligna</i>	Blue Gum
Derrobarry	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i>	Ironbark
Mogargro	<i>Eucalyptus beyeri</i>	White Ironbark
Mun'ning	<i>Eucalyptus gummifera</i>	Red Bloodwood
Mundowey	<i>Eucalyptus punctata</i>	Grey Gum
Tarrin'ny	<i>Eucalyptus haemastoma</i>	Scribbly Gum
Tarunde'a	<i>Eucalyptus pilularis</i>	Blackbutt

¹⁷ Jim Kohen personal communication June 2004

¹⁸ NSW Parks and Wildlife Service display at Caddie Park 2004

¹⁹ Lachlan Macquarie Journal 6 Nov 1810 - 15 Jan 1811 Mitchell Library A778

²⁰ Colin Gale, personal communication with Noelene Pullen May 2004

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jim Kohen Aboriginal People of the Sydney Region AABR lecture series

²³ Jim Kohen, personal communication June 2004 (research by Keith Smith included in report by Keith Smith, Andrew Knight and Jim Kohen on Parramatta Park for the National Trust)

²⁴ The list was published in 1995 by Joan Webb in George Caley 19th Century Naturalist, Appendix D

²⁵ T James, L McDougall D Benson, Rare Bushland Plants of Western Sydney 1999

²⁶ Alan Fairley Philip Moore, Native plants of the Sydney district: an identification guide, 2000

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Torrangora	<i>Eucalyptus paniculata</i>	Grey Iron Bark
Tarunde'a	<i>Eucalyptus pilularis</i>	Blackbutt
Torumba	<i>Eucalyptus resinifera</i>	Red Mahogany
Werraboynes	<i>Eucalyptus piperita</i>	Peppermint Gum
Nandan'gora	<i>Angophora floribunda</i>	Rough Barked Apple
Barida	<i>Angophora bakeri</i>	Narrow Leafed Apple
Cadjim'bora	<i>Angophora costata</i>	Red Gum
Killior'ra	<i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i>	Turpentine

The following flora names listed by Jim Kohen²⁷ can be added to this list: -

Darug	Species ²⁸	Common Name
Budjor	<i>Leptospermum polygalifolium</i>	Tea-tree
Bunya	<i>Leptospermum juniperinum</i>	Prickly Tea-tree
Kulgargru	<i>Duboisia myoporoides</i>	Corkwood Tree
Kurunderung	<i>Melaleuca linarifolia</i>	Paperbark
Kwigan	<i>Exocarpos strictus</i>	Native Cherry
Wattungulle	<i>Acacia longifolia</i>	Wattle

TRADITIONAL NAMES FOR LOCAL FLORA

Jim Kohen also believes that the Darug recognised four different groups of food animals²⁹: -

- Goalong - animals such as wallabies, kangaroos and possums
- Can - snakes and lizards
- Binyang - the birds
- Mogra - the fish

His dictionary of the inland dialect³⁰ also includes the following Darug names for native fauna that would have inhabited The Hills Shire over two hundred years ago:-

Darug	Fauna
Bangu, Chubbi	Glider Possum
Bidjawong	Eastern Water Dragon
Budhawa	Night Owl
Bundeluk	Rosella
Burra	Eel
Burraga	Bandicoot
Burru	Grey Kangaroo
Cherribit, Jirrability	Black Snake

Darug	Fauna
Dingo	Dog
Dubing	Mosquito
Goconde, Kogunda	Kookaburra
Kirrawe	White Cockatoo
Karuk	Magpie
Kula	Koala
Kung-gung	Frog
Ngunun	Flying Fox Bat

Darug	Fauna
Waiali, Wali	Brushtail Possum
Wirriga	Goanna
Wolara, Wolaru	Wallaroo
Wombat	Wombat
Wuggajin	Black Bulldog Ant

²⁶ Alan Fairley Philip Moore, Native plants of the Sydney district: an identification guide, 2000

²⁷ Jim Kohen, A Dictionary of the Dharug Language: the Inland Dialect 1990

²⁸ Ken Godfrey, Aboriginal Plant Bioresources of the Western Cumberland Plain

²⁹ Jim Kohen Aboriginal People of the Sydney Region AABR lecture series

³⁰ Jim Kohen, A Dictionary of the Dharug Language : the Inland Dialect 1990

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ABORIGINAL STREET NAMES IN THE HILLS SHIRE

From the mid 1960s until the early 1970s, as new housing estates developed in the shire especially in the Crestwood area, Council suggested aboriginal names to developers for the naming of new streets. These mainly came from Aboriginal Words of Australia by E.H. Apps and, unfortunately, were mostly not from the Darug inland dialect, as Jim Kohen's dictionary wasn't written until 1987. A list of street names in The Hills Shire that are not of Darug origin can be found in the Street Listings Pamphlet File located in any of the libraries in The Hills Shire Library Service.

PRESENT SITUATION

In December 2003 an historic agreement was signed by: - The Hills Shire Council, the NSW Department of Lands, State Forests of NSW and a representative of the Darug Custodians Aboriginal Corporation. This saw the formal foundation of Bidjigal Reserve with the rededication of Excelsior Reserve and the Darling Mills State Forest.³¹ The community nursery located in this area was renamed the Bidjiwong Community Nursery in 2001. Bidjawong means Eastern Water Dragon. There are plans to establish three walking tracks in the reserve and two of these will be called Darug names: - Burruga (Bandicoot), and Murri-yanna (long walk); with the third being Platypus.

Research into the Darug speaking people and their language is ongoing. The Notebooks of First Fleet astronomer, William Dawes, have been placed on the internet <http://www.williamdawes.org/index.html> with additional information on the Aboriginal language of Sydney and some pronunciations by Darug man Richard Green. An oral history of Richard Green was undertaken in 2009 as part of The Hills Shire Council's oral history project Hills Voices Online. For excerpts see the 'Changing Shire' theme www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/hillsvoices

³¹ Hills News Tuesday December 9, 2003