

FROM WINKIPOP

THE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES BOARD OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ADONIS ISLAND
MAGPIE HOLLOW

Few things can raise the ire of normally sedate citizens more than a proposed change to the name of a suburb or locality. The Geographical Names Board (GNB) is the body given the rather daunting responsibility of approving names and sitting in judgment over disputes. Contrary to popular belief the GNB is not responsible for street names, which are a local government responsibility.

The Board was established in 1966 and has the function of assigning names to places, altering or discontinuing names and maintaining a *Geographical Names Register*. Originally the register was maintained on cards, but with the advent of modern database systems the cards have been superseded and now are part of the State archives collection at the Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood (see *profile*). Surprisingly not all the data on the cards was transferred to the new database and from time to time readers still ask to see the originals.

Both versions of the register include names that have disappeared from usage. You can see a selection of these discontinued geographical names scattered throughout the page design. Evocative names like Adonis Island and Head of Black Jack Creek spark curiosity about their origins and conjecture about their discontinuation.

The Board itself consists of representatives from the State Library, Local Government Association, Geographical Society of NSW, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Department of Planning and the Cultural Affairs Commission, as well as the Surveyor General and Deputy Surveyor General of NSW. Alan Ventress, Associate Director, City, State Records represents the Royal Australian Historical Society and provides advice on historical matters as well as assistance in relation to geographical or historical materials held by State Records as archives.

A recent initiative of the Board is the establishment of a dual naming policy, which places equal importance on Aboriginal and European names for geographical features. The first nomination for dual naming is Dawes Point or, to use its Aboriginal name, Tar-ra. Another exciting development in the Indigenous area is the creation of an *Aboriginal Names Dictionary of New South Wales*.

Keeping its finger on the cultural pulse, the Board has met with Surfrider Foundation Australia to discuss plans for the registration of certain names given to surf breaks along the NSW coast. Many breaks are secret, unnamed or have continually evolving names. Some of the more well known Sydney surf breaks include Kiddies Corner at Palm Beach, Winkipop in Manly, The Bommie at Clovelly and Voodoo in Cronulla.

So far the proposal has received a mixed reaction from the surfing community. Steve Blackley from Surfrider Foundation Australia, who has been consulting with the Board about the proposal, understands the sense of caution. Blackley explains that the search for great waves on Sydney's crowded beaches means that a special local or secluded surf break can take on almost spiritual significance. 'Waves are never the same from one day to the next'. When wind, tides, swell direction and wave size combine to create the perfect wave it's like a 'shrine that materialises'.

Surfers covet the experience of surfing good, uncrowded waves. In choosing which names will be registered and which will remain local, Blackley believes the *Geographical Names Board* can deliver both official recognition of surfing culture and the protection of special breaks from over exposure.

MIDDLE SLAPDASH STATION

For further information about the Geographical Names Board see: www.lpi.nsw.gov.au

URAL TANK
TARAGO CREEK

IRISHTOWN
HEAD OF BLACK JACK CREEK

FISH RIVER RAILWAY STATION

ADONIS ISLAND

TO VOODOO:

BALMAIN TEACHERS COLLEGE
20 MILE HOLLOW

DAGWORTH
GRASS TREE CAMP

RATHOLE

HEAD OF BLACK JACK CREEK

LA PEROUSE WHARF

KANGAROO MICKS

BALMAIN TEACHERS COLLEGE
NEVERTIRE WATERHOLE

↑ Maroubra surfer John Sutton heads for a wave breaking between Dunny Bowl and Stormy

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES CARDS

30 March 1966 - 31 December 1990 Series NRS 15382

These index cards, contained in 63 alphabetically ordered boxes, detail the names of places and geographical features throughout New South Wales, as required by the Geographical Names Act, 1966. Prior to the introduction of the cards there was no formal registry of names, and this resulted in many places and features having several different spellings or names. The cards were superseded about 1990 by the *Geographical Names Register*, which is now available online (www.lpi.nsw.gov.au).

The colour-coded cards record the official names of a huge variety of places and landforms, including towns, neighbourhoods and suburbs; airports, schools and cemeteries; beaches, mountains and waterfalls. The white cards include name, type of place or feature, parish, local government area,

reviewed map name, description and date gazetted. Other information may include previous or altered names, Central Mapping Authority map name, latitude and longitude, height above mean sea level, meaning, origin and history. The pink cards contain information about discontinued names.

The cards are no longer the official 'dictionary of geographical names'. The online Register contains more up-to-date information, such as historical facts of which the Board was not aware in the past or details of place names that have altered since 1990. Despite this, the register entry may not contain all of the information provided on the corresponding card, particularly if the card contains detailed information.

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WHIPCRACK
YARRALLEE STATION