

THE SURVEYS OF F.P. MACCABE AND HIS RECORDS OF ABORIGINAL PLACENAMES AT THE JUNCTION OF THE MURRAY AND DARLING RIVERS

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Surveyor Francis Peter MacCabe mapped sections of the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Darling Rivers between 1848 and 1850. In the process he recorded and mapped hundreds of Aboriginal placenames. His surveys traversed the country of three distinct language families, making his careful recordings of particular linguistic value. This paper provides an overview of his life and work and provides an analysis of some of his records from the Murray-Darling Junction area.

Key words: MacCabe, surveying history, Aboriginal placenames, linguistics, Murray-Darling Junction.

BETWEEN 1848 AND 1852, surveyor Francis Peter MacCabe (Fig. 1) was responsible for a significant phase of the mapping of the rivers of the Murray-Darling Basin: the Murrumbidgee from the Lachlan to the Murray, then the Murray to Chowilla, just west of the New South Wales – South Australian border, and the Darling from the Junction to Fort Bourke.

Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell established a policy requiring his surveyors to record Aboriginal placenames wherever possible. MacCabe was especially assiduous in this task, employing Aboriginal informants on his surveys, and along some stretches of the rivers, recording up to 6-8 placenames per river mile. The extent of his surveys through western New South Wales (NSW), the specific location of the names in the landscape, and his attempts to write down the words as accurately as possible, mean that MacCabe's maps and field books provide a valuable, but surprisingly little used, record of Aboriginal languages across the Murray-Darling Basin.

This paper deals with MacCabe's surveys of the Murray-Darling Junction area. Several language groups meet here: Darling River Paakantyi, Western Victorian Kulin, and Murray River languages. Aboriginal populations in this area were very high. On his voyage down the Murray in 1830 Charles Sturt noted that west of the Murray-Darling Junction, his party seldom communicated with fewer than 200 people daily (Sturt 1833). However the first white

men to pass through, Sturt in 1830, and again in 1844, Mitchell in 1835, and the overlanders, between 1838 and 1841, made no records of languages.

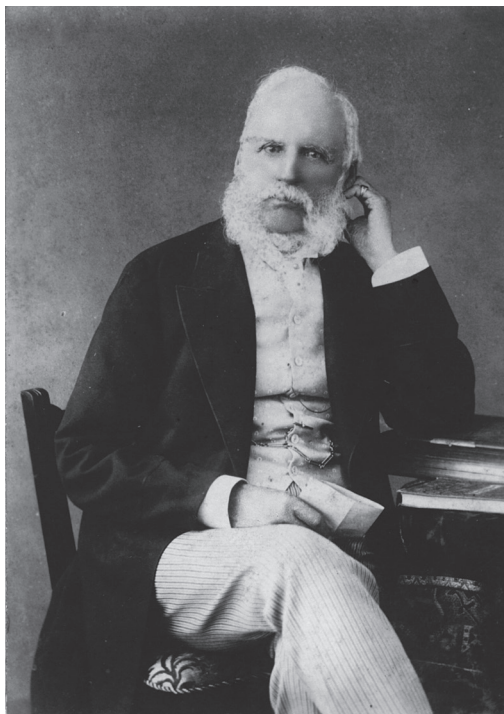


Fig. 1. Francis Peter MacCabe, photo with permission Michael MacCabe.

The first language information from the area was recorded in the early 1850s by the missionaries Goodwin and Bulmer at Yelta Mission, on the southern side of the Murray, just west of the town of Wentworth at the Murray-Darling Junction. This was the Darling River language, Paakantyi. In 1856-7, Blandowski and his team camped at Mondellimin, just 15km to the east, near the modern town of Merbein, Victoria. The Aboriginal people who assisted their zoological collecting spoke one of the Murray River languages, and Blandowski recorded their names for the animals collected. Neither of these sources provides any firm indication of the geographical extent over which these languages were spoken. Certainly Aborigines came into Yelta from the general region, and probably from both sides of the river. The Blandowski Expedition collected over a wide area, going up the Darling as far as Mt Murchison (now Wilcannia), but the Aboriginal field assistants at the base camp at Mondellimin probably lived in that local area.

MacCabe's language names, mapped along the Murray River, geographically link these two datasets, with the proviso that MacCabe's names are mainly on the north side of the Murray, while the Church of England Mission at Yelta and the Blandowski base camp at Modellimin were on the south side.

The Yelta data and other early (and fragmentary) sources contributed to Tindale's mapping of the complex relationship of tribal lands/language areas near the Murray-Darling Junction (Tindale 1974). It appears that Tindale was not aware of the Blandowski animal names or MacCabe's extensive work, nor of another earlier record, which includes placenames, the 1846 account of a journey along the Murray from Swan Hill to Adelaide in the journals of Victorian Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson (Clark 2000a, 2000b).

FRANCIS PETER MACCABE

Francis Peter MacCabe was born to Dr James and Margaret (nee Russell) MacCabe in Dublin in 1817. At 16 he joined the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and trained as a surveyor and in 1841 he was offered an appointment as Assistant Surveyor in NSW. In company with several other new recruits, including H.C. Ransley, H. Wade, J.S. Bourke, W. Shone, and T. White, he sailed to NSW on *Florentia*, departing 6 June and arriving 26 October (MacCabe 1992, M. MacCabe, pers.comm.).

MacCabe worked for the NSW Surveyor-General from 1841 until 1856, with the exception of the years 1844-45. He started as an Assistant Surveyor on a salary of £200 pa (plus an allowance for forage for his horse) and rose to the position of Surveyor in April 1853 on a salary of £456.5.0. In 1844, due to financial cut-backs, several Assistant Surveyors were made Licensed Surveyors, with substantial cuts in salary. MacCabe accepted the position of Licensed Surveyor and Commissioner of Crown Lands, Monaro and Twofold Bay, but in fact had only one private job as a licensed surveyor and in late 1845 was reinstated as Assistant Surveyor in the Department.

MacCabe's employment in the department coincided with the last 14 years of Thomas Mitchell's life, and his tenure as Surveyor General (1823-55). MacCabe was directly responsible to Mitchell, and the correspondence between them, preserved in the NSW State Archives, documents a chequered public service career, with frustrations over delays in salary payments and lack of promotion. Like many other surveyors, MacCabe had a number of conflicts with Mitchell.

In 1855 MacCabe married Jane Osborne, the eldest child of Henry and Sarah Osborne of Marshall Mount, Wollongong. In 1856 he left the NSW Surveyor-General and until 1883 managed the Mt Keira colliery owned by Osborne (Jane's father) and Wallsend. MacCabe had political ambitions and stood unsuccessfully for parliament in 1859. He was on the first North Illawarra Council and served as its Mayor in its second year. He was also a Justice of the Peace in Wollongong. Due to ill health, he retired to the family property at Bowral where he died on 27 June 1897.

MACCABE'S SURVEYS

Within four weeks of arriving in Sydney, MacCabe was sent to survey the Manaroo (Monaro) Plains in SE NSW. His initial inexperience, particularly in handling a convict labour force, is documented in correspondence with Mitchell (Michael MacCabe, pers.comm. 2007). Between 1842 and 1847, he surveyed parts of the Snowy Mountains and the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, the Monaro Tablelands, Twofold Bay, and the Genoa, Towamba and Bega River areas of the NSW south coast. In 1846 he surveyed down the Genoa River to Mallacoota.

In 1848 he began his major work on the rivers of western NSW (Fig. 2). He first surveyed the Murrumbidgee River, from its junction with the Lachlan

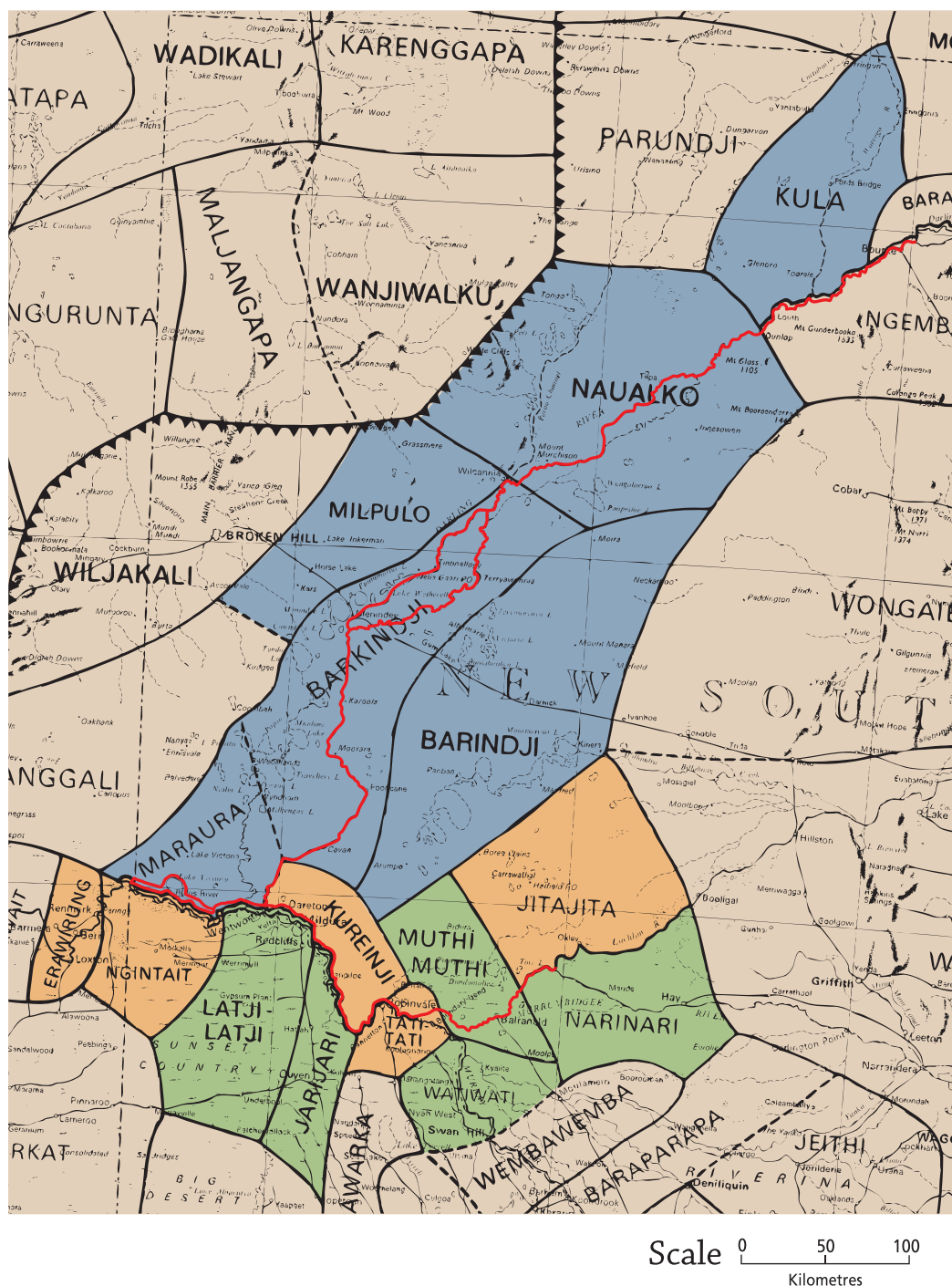


Fig. 2. Murray and Darling Rivers, showing location of MacCabe's surveys (red) and Aboriginal language groups. Blue: Paakantyi; Green: Kulin; Orange: Murray River Languages. Base map from Tindale 1974.

(mid-April) to its junction with the Murray (mid-May). He continued down the Murray reaching the Murray-Darling Junction in early September. In September 1848 he started up the Darling, surveying as far as the Laidley's Ponds (Menindee Lakes), and in 1849 extended this above Menindee to Fort Bourke.

In May-June 1850 MacCabe continued his survey of the Murray, proceeding west from the Junction around the northern side of Lake Victoria to Chowilla (just in South Australia (SA)) and returning along the Murray frontage. He also laid out plans for the townships of Mourquong (Mt Lookout), near Dareton, Caiera (Balranald), and Towpruck (Oxley), and surveyed roads along the Murray and Murrumbidgee.

By the end of 1852 he was recalled to Sydney. This seems to have been due to the difficulty of finding and retaining workers due the gold rushes. In 1852 MacCabe recruited a new team from HM Establishment at Parramatta, but five absconded when they reached the Murrumbidgee, apparently having entered his service with the intent of leaving it at the point nearest to the goldfields.

Initially MacCabe was redirected to the Bulli-Kiama area of the NSW south coast, but in 1853, now 5th Surveyor in the Department of the Surveyor-General, he led a surveying expedition to Port Curtis, Queensland, with instructions to lay out the town of Gladstone, intended as the 'Capital of Northern Australia' (Institute of Surveyors 1988). At Port Curtis MacCabe faced major problems - with transport, labour, food and water, Aboriginal resistance and difficult settlers. He fell out with Maurice Charles O'Connell, the government resident at Port Curtis. O'Connell's poor relations generally resulted in a select committee enquiry by the NSW Legislative Council, which called up all correspondence between MacCabe and both Mitchell and O'Connell. No action was taken against O'Connell, and when Queensland became a separate colony in 1856, O'Connell joined the new parliament, was knighted and became Lieutenant Governor.

MacCabe returned to Sydney in 1855 and married in November. He was transferred to Wellington in early 1856, but left the department later that year.

MACCABE AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

MacCabe's maps of the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Darling are notable for the numerous Aboriginal placenames he recorded. Not all surveyors followed Mitchell's directives to his survey staff to record Aboriginal placenames wherever possible, but Mac-

Cabe appears to have taken this task very seriously. His field books are full of carefully printed Aboriginal placenames. He used a distinctive lettering style for these names, different from the lettering of landscape features and the script used for recording words relating to the survey progress such as 'camp' and 'luncheon'. Further, he often made two or three attempts at an Aboriginal word in an effort to capture the sounds; his rejected attempts are carefully struck through, but still legible, giving useful clues to the pronunciation. He also uses diacritical marks over vowels, to indicate length or stress.

For the 1850 survey of the Murray from the Junction west to Chowilla, he employed two Aboriginal men. In fact, in 1849 he had requested and received a ration allowance for an Aborigine to give him the names of 'hills, flats and points of the rivers'.

Jemmy and Tommy are listed in MacCabe's 'Return of Men employed as Surveying Party' for the month of May 1850. Jemmy was employed from 5-31 May, and Tommy from 13-31 May. The white survey assistants are paid at the annual rate of between 25 and 15 pounds, and their pay for the full month of May ranges from £2 1s 8d to £1 5s. MacCabe has carefully entered £0 0s 0d in this column against Jemmy and Tommy's names, followed by the remark: 'Blackfellows work as white men. No wages [...] them. Blankets shirts [...]' (NSW State Records MacCabe letters 2/1554.2). It is probable that he was not permitted to pay them actual wages.

MacCabe's appointment to lead the Port Curtis survey was influenced by this experience, but his sympathy did not endear him to the settlers (or indeed the Aborigines) at Port Curtis. On 2 March 1854, a group of Aborigines attacked his camp and one man was speared in the thigh. In his report MacCabe stated that he believed he wounded one man; the next day the Native Police pursued the attackers and killed 23 of them (Michael MacCabe, pers.comm. 2007). MacCabe however was criticised for not taking a harder line himself. He defended himself in a tongue-in-cheek letter to the *Morton Bay Courier*:

...When out on duty one day, fully armed, [the survey party] espied some blacks, hunting. Panic-struck at the sight..., the surveyor fled, followed by his party, who threw away their carbines in order to make the best use of their legs, and arrived in camp without any serious injury, beyond a broken shin or two in falling over logs.

The natives, not having the slightest hostile intention, brought the firearms into the settlement next day, and delivered them over to Mr

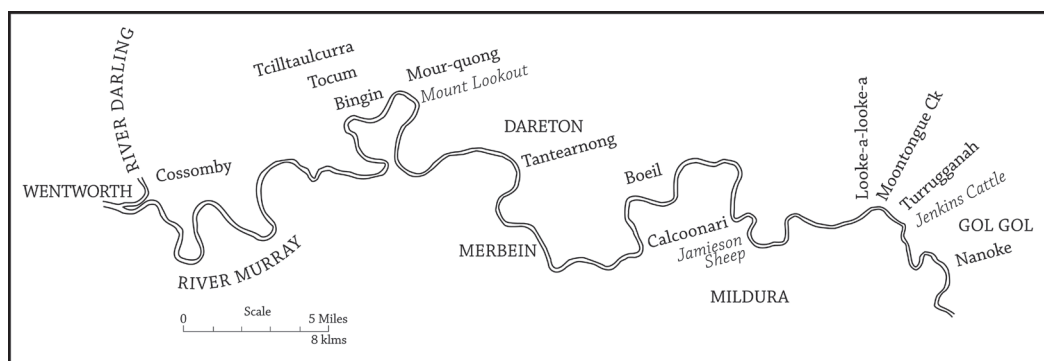


Fig. 3. Map of Murray River between Murray-Darling Junction and Gol Gol, redrawn from MacCabe's survey maps AO Maps 2545, 2546 (NSW State Records) with addition of modern town names in upper case.

Wilmott, the storekeeper, remarking with much laughter, how frightened the white fellows were and how they did run.

Having discovered the weakness of the surveyor's party (about a score strong), the blacks in a few days came down in force, and proceeded to plunder the tent. The gallant surveyor with his party at once retired behind a big tree, where twenty stand of arms were piled, and with a Colt's revolving rifle in his hand, observed with the greatest complacency the plunder of his tent, remarking that he was paid to measure and not to fight (*Moreton Bay Courier* 26 August 1854).

MACCABE'S MURRAY-DARLING JUNCTION SURVEYS

This section focuses on MacCabe's surveys of the Murray-Darling Junction area, specifically his surveys along the Murray River east and west of the Murray-Darling Junction, and of the Mourquong or Mt Lookout Reserve (Figs 3, 4 & 5). (This locality is variously spelt Morquong, Mourquong or Moorquong).

MacCabe's first experience in this area was in 1848 when he carried out a marathon survey season, starting at the Murrumbidgee-Lachlan Junction, and ending at Laidley's Ponds (now Menindee) on the Darling River. He reached Gol Gol Creek on the Murray on 1 September, and five days later was at the Murray-Darling Junction. Figure 3 is a combination of the two maps that cover this section of the survey, with modern placenames shown. (Figure 4 shows the same section on a later map of Victoria.) MacCabe recorded relatively few Aboriginal placenames here, significantly less than either earlier in

this survey on the Murrumbidgee or later, on the Darling. The reason for this is not known, pending further research into MacCabe's correspondence and records in the NSW State Archives.

In 1850 MacCabe continued west along the Murray from the Junction to Chowella (now Chowilla) in South Australia. In two transects, one following the road around the top of Lake Victoria, the other returning along the Murray, MacCabe recorded approximately 185 (some are repeated with different spellings) Aboriginal placenames. Only ten of these appear on modern maps of the area.

MacCabe's most important survey map relative to the Murray-Darling Junction area was that of the Mourquong or Mt Lookout Reserve. On 11 July 1849, Mitchell wrote to MacCabe as follows:

The Commissioner of the District, Mr McDonald, has suggested to the Government the necessity for laying out in allotments for sale, towns and villages at

Balranald otherwise Caiera

Euston

Mt Lookout otherwise Moorquong

You have already been instructed to survey the site for Balranald and I have now to request your report about Moorquong, whether that place or Cassoomby at the confluence is likely to be the most suitable for the Capital of your district or rather the Capital of that part of the country.

In reporting upon this you will bear in mind that the Capital should be at the spot where in the event of steam navigation being established on the Murray the steamboats are likely to stop which will be as near to the head of navigation as possible, and where proper wharfage may be obtained, and free access to the neighbouring

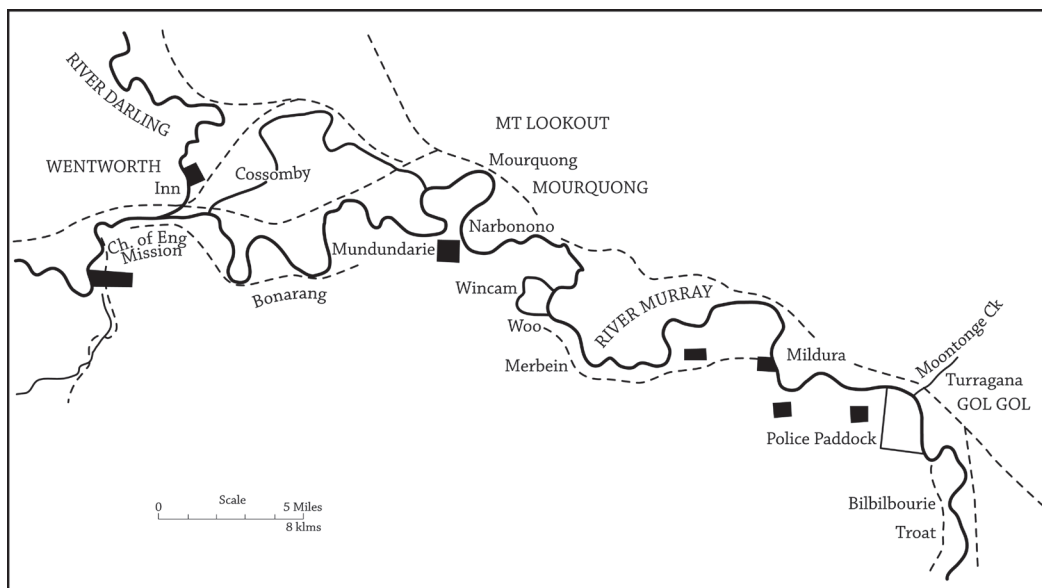


Fig. 4. Murray River between Junction and Gol Gol, redrawn from Map of Victoria 1874.

Country, in fact I should wish you to consider well this part of the Country and report to me whether it would not be desirable to make a very large reserve or reserves, looking forward to the time when supplies for the Country for hundreds of miles around will be brought by steam, and the produce taken away by leading towards Adelaide the same means and when also every road in the Colony from Moreton Bay to Melbourne must centre. The place called Euston – where it would seem Mr McDonald has established himself appears to be out of the District, but your report about this also and whether the traffic and other circumstances will warrant the laying out of three towns within short distances of each other (Mitchell, 11 July 1849, Letter 49/388, NSW State Records).

Mt Lookout was a high point on the sandplain edge, overlooking the Murray floodplain, about 7km east of the Murray-Darling Junction. Cossomby (or Cottomby) was on the east bank of the Darling River, directly across from the current town of Wentworth. MacCabe set out a town reserve at Mourquong, preferring it to Cossomby on the grounds that the junction of the Murray and Darling was subjected to flooding. He designed Mourquong as a long narrow town extending about 4km along the sandplain-floodplain edge, barely two streets wide. His 1850 map of the 'Mourquong or Mount Lookout Reserve'

(NSW State Records AO Map 3946 M.1411) has sections and allotments marked and street names pencilled in, but the town plan apparently never developed past this stage.

In 1849 Mitchell instructed him to join the Mourquong and Cossomby Reserves and to extend the reserve west across the Darling because it appeared to him that 'this point will eventually become the principal town of the neighbourhood if it does not indeed become one of the largest in the Colony' (Mitchell, 24 October 1849, Letter 49/592, NSW State Records). Mitchell was correct; the Junction became the site of Wentworth, a key riverboat port and the largest town in the region until it was overshadowed by the development of Mildura in the late 1880s. The town of Dareton, originally known as Coomealla, and close to MacCabe's proposed site for Mourquong, was not established until the 1920s.

As a result of these considerations about the future towns of the area, we have perhaps the most detailed map MacCabe produced, the Survey of the Morquong and Mt Lookout Reserve (NSW State Records AO Map 3947). The map extends about 10km east west and 4km north south, encompassing the sites of the later towns of Wentworth, Dareton and the Coomealla Irrigation Area (Fig. 5). It shows 26 Aboriginal placenames, the location of an Inn at Hawdon's Ford (named for Joseph Hawdon, the first to overland stock along the Murray to Adelaide in

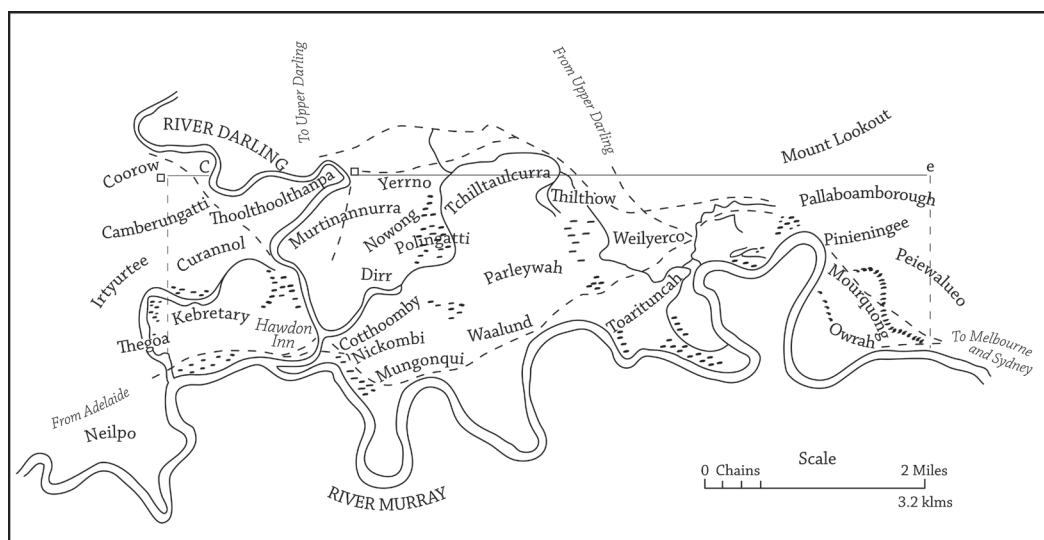


Fig. 5. MacCabe's survey of Mourquong or Mount Lookout Reserve. Redrawn from survey map (NSW State Records AO Map 3947). Drawing by Mark Haynes.

1838), later Wentworth, the positions of a number of roads and details of creeks and swampy areas. Unfortunately this map is not in good condition, and some of the placenames are difficult to make out; it has been redrawn for reproduction in this paper.

MACCABE'S ABORIGINAL PLACENAMES

Linguistic background

The Aboriginal Languages of the wider Murray-Darling Junction area belonged to three distinct sub-groups of the Pama-Nyungan family of Australian languages: they were not closely related (Fig. 2). The three different subgroups were

- The Kulin Languages of Victoria
- The Murray River languages: these included Yitha-Yitha from parts of the lower Lachlan and Murrumbidgee, and YerriYerri, recorded at Mildura Station by Jamieson and languages down to the Murray mouth
- The various forms of Paakantyi, the Darling River language.

Information on the Murray River languages from this area is scanty: it is confined to a number of unpublished manuscripts, the most important of which is the work by Edward Bate Scott (E.B.Scott, MS), mainly from further down the river around Moorun-

dee. The only overview is an unpublished 2004 MA thesis by Michael Horgen, which he has kindly made available in electronic form.

Table 1 gives a list of some simple words to show just how different the three sub-groups were, but it also shows similarities, which have been indicated by bold italics. The similarities are due to borrowing, inevitable because of constant contact between the people, but in the case of the verb 'to sit' the similarities are inherited similarities. The borrowings include grammatical features, such as the first person possessive marker *-ai*, as in *lerngai*, 'my camp'. There are many subtle minor similarities, such as the existence of a special word for a large Murray cod. The reduplicated dialect/language names up the Murray from the wider Mildura area all mean 'no-no' and are found in all the three language subgroups.

There is evidence that the people of Murray-Darling Junction area all got on well together and held joint ceremonies. A letter from the early settler H. Jamieson of Mildura Station to the Lord Bishop of Melbourne on 10 October 1853 states:

The tribes in the lower Murray and Darling are, generally speaking, on friendly terms; they not unfrequently during their annual migrations travel over 200 or 300 miles of country, increasing in numbers as they proceed, alternately hunting, fishing and levying contributions on both sheep and cattle as they slowly and indolently

Table 1. Comparison of the three language subgroups in the Murray-Darling Junction area. Similarities have been indicated by bold italics.

English	Murray River (Yitha-Yitha/ Yu-Yu/ Yerri-Yerri)	Paakantyi (Marawarra or Yako-yako dialect)	Kulin Mathi-Mathi (Letyi-Letyi is very similar)
Water	<i>nguk</i>	<i>nguku</i>	kathini
Fire	<i>niik*</i>	kunia	wanapi
Head	<i>derrart</i>	<i>thartu</i>	purpi
Nose	kaap	mintaulu	thindi
Woman	pirrp	nhuungku	laiyurki
Man	nana, ranggul	wiimpaya	wuthungi
Sun	nank	yuku	nyawingi
Camp	Raap/traap	yapara	lerngi
My camp	ngaty (t)raap	yapar <i>ai</i>	lerng <i>ai</i>
Ground	ngaity	marndi	thangi
No	yitha pinta	ngaatha (yako)	mathi
Food	thaap	manu	panemi
sit down	lewan	<i>ngiingka</i>	<i>ngengkatha</i>
Murray Cod	<i>parnta</i> <i>yatur (big one)</i>	<i>parntu</i>	pantung panthil (big one)

*But see Paakantyi *nhiki* = charcoal

saunter along the banks of the Murray and Darling (quoted in Tulloch 1969:79).

Though their languages were basically very different, the constant proximity and interaction and also intermarriage led to some borrowing and some lexical diffusion which is reflected in the linguistic evidence from the area, as shown in Table 1.

The people who occupied the country in the immediate vicinity of the Blandowski camp at Mondellimin were speakers of a Murray River language, of which Yitha-Yitha (Macdonald 1886) is a closely related language. They were called 'Yerre Yerre' by the early settler Hugh Jamieson (1878), and 'Yerree Yerree or Lyart tribe' in the Thomas papers. All Blandowski's fish names (Allen 2001) are in this Murray River language, and practically all Krefft's names of animals (Krefft 1866). Allen and other authors (this volume) refer to the linguistic Yerri-Yerri as the 'Nyeri Nyeri'.

The name of the fat-tailed dunnart that is given in Krefft's list, 'Mondellundellum', is so similar to the place-name 'Mondellimin' that the two must be connected. It may be that the place was known for the presence of many of these little marsupial mice, or was linked to a story about them: however they would not have been there long once Blandowski and Krefft had arrived. The naming of a place after an animal has a close parallel in Gol Gol ('Gall Gall' in an early

spelling). This name belongs to two separate localities, one near Buronga in the Mildura area, and one near Lake Mungo in an area where another Murray River language, Yitha-Yitha was once spoken. Krefft gives 'koel' or 'kohl' for the greater stick-nest rat, and so Gol Gol must have been known for the presence of stick-nest rats, or for a myth connected with them. (All the languages in the area, as in most parts of Australia, make no distinction between voiced and unvoiced consonants, i.e. there is no distinction between k and g, t and d, and p and b.) The lists of animal and fish names from the expedition are particularly valuable; as both explorers had a German background their transcription of vowels is clear and not subject to the vagaries of English spellings such as 'pull' versus 'cull' and 'mint' versus 'pint'.

The Anglican mission at 'Yelta' was started in 1852 and was only some 15km to the west of Mondellimin, but the language of the people who were there or were attracted to there was Marawarra, Tindale's 'Maraura', the now extinct southernmost dialect of Paakantyi, the Darling River language (Hercus 1993). The name of the site of the mission was Paakantyi too: it was 'Yelta', *yalta* in the practical orthography used for Paakantyi; *yalta* means 'a large grindstone'. There is a lake, also called 'Yelta' (Yartla), by the Ana Branch of the Darling. The published linguistic information

from Yelta is entirely in Marawarra (Hercus 1984). Clearly, in this area, Marawarra and Yerri-yerri were in close proximity, and this is reflected in the placenames recorded by MacCabe. We do not know whether MacCabe's two Aboriginal guides were Marawarra Paakantyi or belonged to the Yerri-yerri. This however makes little difference to MacCabe's recording of names, because the two men would have known both languages, as A.L.P. Cameron (1884-5) referring to the area in general explained:

These tribes speak different languages, but a man of any of them usually speaks two or three, and understands more.

Notes on some of the placenames from MacCabe

Comments about placenames almost invariably have to be made with caution, particularly when we are dealing with transcriptions from the past. In the lists given by MacCabe there are many names where one can hazard guesses, or where one can at least know with reasonable certainty which one of the three language groups of the area they belong to. Thus one can assume that a name belongs to the Murray River languages if it begins with *r*- which is not permitted as an initial in Paakantyi or the Kulin languages.

There are however some names where there is a reasonable chance of finding an accurate interpretation, and it is those that we will focus upon, as they tell us most about who lived there and about the country which MacCabe explored. Most of these names are Paakantyi, because we have more information on this language group than on the Murray River languages. As is well known, Aboriginal geography was most detailed and practically every bend in the river and every billabong had a name. Many of these names are now no longer used, but thanks to MacCabe's maps and notes a vision of this detail is preserved.

Animal and plant names

The easiest names to interpret are those that are identical to simple nouns or adjectives in the language, such as the names of animals mentioned above with regard to Gol Gol and Mondellimin.

Unless otherwise stated the names belong to places MacCabe visited on his way westward from the Murray-Darling Junction to Chowilla Creek.

Thaltha is mentioned in MacCabe's field notebook as being the name of a site not far out of Went-

worth and downstream from Neilpo: the precise location is uncertain because it does not appear on his map. This name corresponds to Paakantyi *thalta* 'red kangaroo'. Robinson who went there in May 1846 noted the same place, but he spelt the name **Talet.er** (Clark 2000a:44) and he drew it (2000a: fig. 5.19) as a small tributary that joins the Murray from the north at this place. Sadly we have no way of knowing whether this site was connected to a Kangaroo mythology.

Runtunagee nearby is clearly a Murray River language name as it begins with '*r*'. It is probably connected with *runth*, *runt*, 'corella', noted from the Murray River language just upstream from Mildura (McFarlane 1886:282). Curr explains the background to this vocabulary, which was 'kindly but hurriedly dictated to me by Mr. McFarlane, the owner of the Mallee Cliff Station, who speaks the language fluently' (Curr 1886: 282).

The names of plants are also relatively easy to recognise: the best known one is **Tara**, 'Lake Victoria', which corresponds to Paakantyi *thara* 'hopbush'. This had earlier been recorded by Robinson in 1846: 'Reached Lake Tara, Lake Victoria of Settlers' (Clark 2000b:47), and Eyre recorded a similar name for the lake, **Tar-ru** (1845:233). There are other placenames in Paakantyi country which contain the word *thara*: Tarawi Nature reserve is on the South Australian border and Tarrowingee (*thara*- 'hopbush', *wintyi* 'fresh, green') is north of Broken Hill near Poolamacca. Bundawingee, the name of an early run in the Lake Victoria area is formed in the same way *puntha-wintyi* 'clover-fresh'.

Po-po, a site immediately below Thegoa Lagoon probably represents Paakantyi *paapa* 'edible seed'.

Poimba is somewhat less certain, but could well represent the widespread word *pinpa*, 'Murray pine' found in Paakantyi and in languages further west.

Billeroo, the site of the Ana-Branch junction with the Murray is probably Paakantyi *piriluru* 'dead branches'

Yarrera, just above the junction with Mullaroo Creek represents *yarra-yarra*, the reduplicated form of Paakantyi *yarra* 'tree', 'wood': this reduplicated form usually means 'sticks, small pieces of wood'.

Only a couple of miles upstream from there MacCabe's map shows **Yerrawilpedee**, and a note in the diary says 'Hut other side Crozier'. This word can be analysed as follows:

Yarra-wilpi-thi
'wood-hut-indeed!'

It is therefore not really a placename, but a record of MacCabe being told 'here's a wooden hut!'

Yerroo. It is possible that this name on MacCabe's Mourquong survey also represents the Paakantyi word *yarra* 'wood, 'tree'.

Other analysable names: Marawarra/Paakantyi

The name **Thegoa** is still in use for the large oxbow lagoon at Wentworth, immediately to the west of the Murray-Darling Junction. It is a Paakantyi name meaning 'west', a word special to the local Marawarra dialect of Paakantyi and written down by Tindale as *tekua* from Frank Fletcher (Tindale MS: Murray River Notes, p.255). In MacCabe's Morquong Reserve survey the name is placed on the western side of Thegoa Lagoon, with the lagoon drawn wide here. This leaves open the possibility that originally Thegoa was not a placename at all: it may well be that the Aboriginal people who accompanied MacCabe were simply telling him that this was the west side of the Lagoon.

Thoomby is given by MacCabe as the name of a place on the Murray on his way back from the Murray-Rufus Junction. This is the Paakantyi word *thumpi*, which means 'waterhole', any waterhole, and so it seems that MacCabe's informants simply told him it was a waterhole, rather than giving him the specific name. When used with an adjective the term can be more specific and actually serves as a placename: there is a waterhole called *Katha-Kathara-Thumbi* 'deep-deep-waterhole' in the Darling near Pooncarie. The name Cotthoomby on MacCabe's Morquong map is *Katha-Thumpi* 'deep waterhole', a shorter form of the same name.

Catthuroca shown on the Murray not far upstream from the present Fort Courage Caravan Park (about 15km west of Wentworth) probably represents Paakantyi *kathara nguku* 'deep water' and this may well have been a specific name rather than just a general description.

Thararey is the name of the Rufus River, as is implied by MacCabe's map and diary. Before he has actually got there, Robinson in 1846 called the Rufus River **Tara**, the same as Lake Victoria (Clark 2000b:44). When he came to it he called it *Ter:re* (Clark 2000a:226, 2000b:47), and this is much closer to MacCabe's version. The name is clearly connected with *Thara*, the name for Lake Victoria and may represent a reduplicated form.

Culpa When he crossed the Rufus again a couple of miles further on MacCabe wrote 'Culpa'. This is not a placename: it is the ordinary Paakantyi word

kalpa 'creek'. Presumably MacCabe's informants were simply saying '(here is) the creek (again)'.

Neik neik nook is a location given in MacCabe's fieldbook but not on his map. Because of the borrowing of words, as shown in the table above, this name could be either Paakantyi or Murray River language. What it means is perfectly clear:

nhik(i) nhik(i) nguku

'charcoal-charcoal water'

'lots of hearths by the water.'

Botherimbo is the name of a lagoon just below Moorna, about 25km west of Wentworth. Placenames often consist of whole clauses, which may refer to past events or events in the Dreamtime. This may be the case here. In Paakantyi *pathara* means 'wide' and *-imba* is the second person singular marker, so *patharimba* means 'you are wide'. An Ancestor may have said this addressing the lagoon, but we don't know.

Thoolthoolthanpa is the name of a sharp bend in the Darling River on MacCabe's Morquong Reserve Survey of 1850. It can be analysed as *thul(u)-thul(u)* 'close, adjoining' and *thanpa* 'together', a very good name for a hairpin bend.

Murtina-urra is written slightly away from the Darling River on the map of MacCabe's Survey of the Morquong Reserve. The analysis is transparent:

Murtina-urra

Marti-na-warra

'Bank-of side,' i.e. the side of a bank

Tchilltaulcurro. In Aboriginal languages the sounds *ty* and *th* are closely related and so it is not surprising that MacCabe writes 'Tchilltaulcurro' on the map and right next to it, perhaps as an alternative 'Thilthow'. This shows that he was listening carefully- Paakantyi only has the initial *th*, not *ty*, but a Murray person using the name may well have pronounced it as 'Tchilltaulcurro'. The Paakantyi word *thiltakara* means 'lake', and there is indeed a small circle next to the name.

Other analysable names: Murray River Languages (including Yerri-Yerri)

Trapulla is very close to 'Talra' (see above), but has all the appearance of a Murray River language word as *tr* initial is not found in any Paakantyi dialect. Initial *tr* in the Murray River languages was probably an alveolar trill and could be heard as an alveolar trill-released stop, i.e. 'tr'. This sound is not common as word initial in Aboriginal languages, but it does

occur, as for instance in Yandruwandha (Breen 2004:13). This is confirmed by Krefft, who writes both 'tram trammit' and 'ram rammit' for 'mouse' (Allen 2001, Appendix 1). *Traap/raap* means 'camp' in the Murray River languages, so Trapulla probably means 'two camps', as -ul is the dual marker (J. McDonald 1886).

Mooranaraap is given as a name for a site 47 miles (via the river) to the west of Moorana, the present day Moorna. This name clearly contains the same word *traap/raap* meaning 'camp', but the rest is not clear.

Coolrap also contains the same word *raap*. The first part of the compound name could well be the word for 'greater stick-nest rat' as in Gol Gol and Krefft's 'Kohl'/'Koel', mentioned above, and so the name means 'stick-nest rat camp'.

Erawang. The River language downstream from below the Rufus River junction was called Yuyu, from their word for 'no'. Other names for the same language and the people who spoke it are 'Erawirung', 'Erawiruck' and 'Jirau'. There are a number of other variants, which are listed by Tindale (1974:211), who states that they lived 'on the western side of the River from Rufus Creek west to near Overland Corner.' The term Erawang would have to be another version of the name of the group who inhabited that country.

These names are just a small percentage of what is noted on MacCabe's maps and journals, but they give an indication of the detail and complexity of the Aboriginal view of the landscape. They also show how Murray River language names and Paakantyi names are in close proximity: 'boundaries' between the different groups of people were probably more intricate than is generally thought, particularly in the river country.

CONCLUSION

Surveyor Francis Peter MacCabe's surveys of the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Darling Rivers provide a previously overlooked source of knowledge about the Aboriginal languages of the Murray-Darling region. They are particularly valuable because his surveys traverse the country of three bordering but distinct language groups: Paakantyi along the Darling, Kulin in western Victoria and southern NSW, and Murray River group. The latter group is relatively poorly known. Some of the last Murray River language speakers moved to Cummeragunja Reserve in the late 19th century and there are no surviving

speakers in the Murray-Darling Junction area, though individuals listing Yerri-Yerri descent remain (Mark Dugay-Grist, pers.comm.).

Unlike many other historical sources which provide data from a general area, MacCabe's words can be firmly tied to specific localities, because he recorded them, from Aboriginal people, as he surveyed. Further, he took great care with transcribing the sounds of the words, picking up nuances of great value to linguistic interpretation. This paper provides just a sample of what is available in MacCabe's records, which is encouraging for further linguistic and landscape studies of the region.

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