

# Naming Fraser Island Natural Features

*FIDO Backgrounder 56, July 2012 — A short history recorded by John Sinclair of how many places came to be named*

The naming of features on Fraser Island hasn't been an easy task. Captain Cook was the first person to name features that appeared on the first maps ever produced. He named Wide Bay, Indian Head, Sandy Cape and Breaksea Spit. The great navigator, Flinders was drawn to Fraser Island three times. After his ship was wrecked on Wreck Reef in August 1803 he broke his marathon rescue journey back to Sydney, a distance he calculated at the time to be "792 miles" to rest a night at Indian Head. He reported to the Governor by letter "on the 28th in the evening made land near Indian Head, from whence I kept the coast on board to this place". Flinders had earlier sailed down the West Coast and added a number of names there. Thereafter names just kept appearing on maps for the next 150 years and all were just accepted. The one most notable exception was the European name of the island itself Flinders had named it the Great Sandy Peninsula. That became Great Sandy Island. However, the story of the fate of Capt James Fraser and his wife, Eliza caused the public to ignore the official name and name the island "Fraser's Island". That has become abbreviated to Fraser and entirely superseded. "Great Sandy" no applies only to the National Park.

through exchanges of mail and correspondence and as Sinclair provided data to update the map. Sinclair and Lambourne never met for two years because Lambourne was tied down by a job as a draftsman in the NSW Environment Department and was only conducting his cartography business as a spare-time sideline.

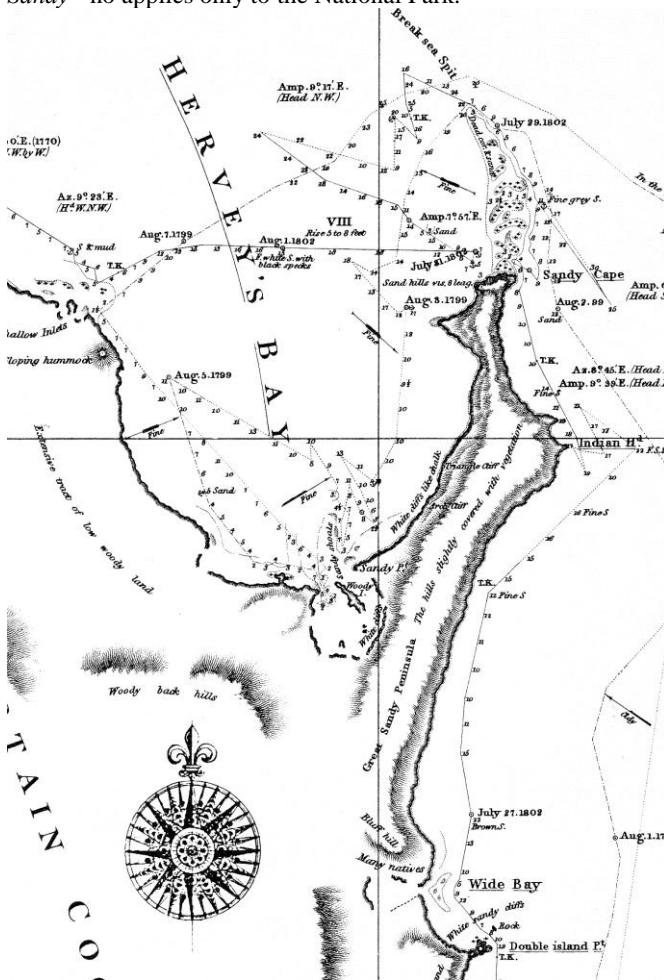
The second edition of the map sold at an even faster rate. It outsold the maps produced by the Forestry Department because it was in colour, easier to read at a 1:100,000 scale, had contour marks and folded (rather than rolled) up so that it could be stored away in vehicle glove boxes. Then Lambourne suggested that the map needed a companion guide and thus Sinclair was soon engaged in producing a black and white book "Discovering Fraser Island" that also proved to be popular and a great revenue earner for FIDO. Soon too Lambourne was suggesting that that publication be revised and expanded and printed in colour.

It was about this time that Sinclair who had been the house-guest of Lambourne in Sydney a few times suggested that Lambourne who was doing so much to help advance FIDO's cause through promotion and revenue raising should visit Fraser Island on a forthcoming FIDO safari. That was when Lambourne made a big confession. "I don't need to see the island to appreciate it. I saw a lot of it when I was working for Dillinghams back in 1970 to 1972. You don't remember it but I was in the Mining Wardens Court back in May 1971 when you spent two days giving your evidence."

One aspect of the production of the maps was the realization that not one of Fraser Island's most significant geographical features, its sandblows, was named on any map and Sinclair and Lambourne started applying names to the maps to help identify some of the sandblows. They were unaware that Queensland had legislated decades before to prevent unauthorized names coming into common usage. Queensland had experienced real estate developers inventing names to help sell Gold Coast properties and others becoming established elsewhere.

John Sinclair decided that one sandblow where his father, Charles, then an island resident, had discovered and collected some amazing fulgarite tubes caused by lightning strikes, should be called Charlie's Blow. He also named a sandblow north of Orchid Beach where prominent Australian coastal geomorphologist, Dr Eric Bird had identified a number of features should be named Birds Blow. Likewise a number of lakes lacked any names. The first person to identify the uniqueness of Fraser Island's perched dune lakes was Dr Ian Bayly who had difficulty with his published paper because one lake where he had gathered data had no name. Sinclair named it Lake Bayly.

FIDO had nominated a sandblow in the centre of Fraser Island's top end as the Five Finger Blow because of its particular appearance when viewed from the air. In the top end there were many features not named so Sinclair named a lake near the Five Finger Blow after his wife, Helen. This so intrigued one of Sinclair's mates that he was requested to name a lake after the mate's daughter. After camping beside a lake in the Top End on a FIDO safari in 1975 (that turned out to have a depth of less than two millimetres of clear drinkable water above a base of sludge), he identified the lake as Lake Glenys. Then in 1976 while undertaking a hike through the length of the island with ACF Director, Geoff Mosley, Sinclair named another two shallow lakes in that area, Lakes Duone and Lake Bridie after Mosley's daughters.



**Early map by Flinders with some Kgari features named**

One of the more interesting personal relationships developed during FIDO's history was the close relationship between a former Dillingham employee, W.G. (Bill) Lambourne and John Sinclair. It began when the Sydney based Lambourne wrote to Sinclair in the early 1970s suggesting that FIDO should produce a map of Fraser Island and market it as a fund raiser. The map was a sell-out in its first edition and soon Lambourne revised the map and produced a colour version that sold even faster. The friendship between Sinclair and Lambourne grew

The Queensland Forestry Department had previously held a monopoly on Fraser Island cartography and resented FIDO's map outselling its map. It objected to the Queensland Place Names Board in 1978 about FIDO's use of unauthorized naming of some Fraser Island features. The Board first deliberated and investigated the names used on the Forestry maps. It found just as many Forestry names that failed to meet the requirements of Queensland naming legislation as FIDO's.

About the same time an anthropologist at the University of Queensland, Dr Peter Lauer was writing up a paper on his studies of Fraser Island and needed to be able to identify the sandblows in which he had gathered and identified artefacts. He nominated a preferred set of names and then applied to the Place Names Board to have these accepted.

With the wisdom of Solomon, the Place Names Board decided to form a sub-committee that included Sinclair, the Forestry Department's cartographer, Jack Craig and Peter Lauer to review all of the place names on Fraser Island. Thus over a period of months in late 1979 and early 1980 the subcommittee met and reviewed existing names as well as applying new names where appropriate on the map. There were two strict rules followed:

1. *No names of any living person would be acceptable which ruled out all of the names FIDO had proposed and many of the later names applied on Forestry maps; and*
2. *Preference would be given as far as possible to adopting Aboriginal names.*

Another edict was that any name that had appeared on an official Queensland map prior to the gazettal of the Queensland Place Names Act would be accepted but they could be changed if there was a compelling case. Further, wherever possible the origin and backgrounds to all names were to be recorded even if they were already established names. This was dutifully done by Board members, Sid Colliver and Paul Wilson.

Peter Lauer's list of names for sandblows was accepted with only a couple of amendments. However there was much discussion on other names. Jack Craig advised the meeting that he had only limited space on his map for printing to spell out a new name for what FIDO had nominated Lake Bayly, between Lake Benaroon and Lake Birrabeen. He would have liked to therefore keep the name Lake Bayly. The subcommittee advised that if he could find an appropriate Aboriginal name that fitted the lake (preferably starting with "B") he should propose it. The next meeting approved the name "*Barga Lagoon*" although Jack Craig couldn't find a meaning for the word "*barga*".

Sinclair had difficulty with two existing names that were often mispronounced and misspelt. Sandminers had pronounced the name spelt Boemingen as "*Bo-MING-en*" for the largest perched dune lake in the world. This was a serious issue and a great distortion of this Aboriginal language. Many spellings of Butchulla words were made by a German linguist and didn't accurately coincide with Aboriginal pronunciation. Thus it was agreed to thereafter apply a spelling that would encourage pronunciation closer to the Butchulla. That is how "*Boomanjin*" came to replace "*Boemingen*". For similar reasons Wanggoolba Creek was renamed to be more phonetic. It was previously "*Woongoolbver*".

In the spirit of getting things right, Sinclair also proposed that note be taken of Aboriginal objections to the "whitefella" names given to the four creeks south of Eurong. Thus First, Second Third and Fourth Creeks were renamed Gerrawea, Govi, Taleebra and Toolooloo. Everything went well with harmony and accord and the names agreed on were gazetted in July 1980. There was a problem though. Not all the names were included in the gazette. Notably most of the sandblow names were omitted although in anticipation that the names had been agreed to, both FIDO's and the new Forestry maps

published in 1980 included all of the names. There was one discrepancy though over where Binghih Sandblow was located. Forestry had it behind Waddy Point and FIDO had it north of Orchid Beach in place of "Birds Blow". This was when it was discovered that there had been a serious omission in the gazettal.

FIDO tried to have the matter reconciled with a subsequent regazettal of the omissions. These entreaties though were subsequently ignored as Queensland Place Names went through a series of upheavals with the Board being disbanded. There were a series of restructures and responsibility for Queensland place names was shuffled and delegated to various sections. As a result of these changes and general Queensland bureaucratic inefficiency, it took Sinclair a quarter of a century to start to get these omissions addressed. In 2005, seeking community support to address the omission, he took the matter to the Fraser Island Community Advisory Committee who established a subcommittee to return with a set of recommendations but also with provisos that preferences should be given to Aboriginal names and that the sub-committee had Butchulla participation. In October 2005 a meeting that involved more than a dozen Butchulla and a series of language references was held and a set of recommendations was passed back to the Community Advisory Committee.

Despite the CAC's overwhelming consensus to endorse the sub-committee report, one dissenter then made private submissions to undermine the recommendations. This resulted in bureaucrats putting the matter in the "too hard" basket where despite representations by Sinclair, the process was stalled for another five years. New names were gazetted and it took several approaches to the Minister before the submissions were taken out of the too hard basket and addressed. Finally all of Fraser Island's sandblows were officially named in 2010.

Despite the QPWS edict that Butchulla names should prevail for all Fraser Island official names, it chose to ignore this ruling when it came to naming some of its own camping areas. Although they were advised of the Butchulla names for the Central Station campground trees, they elected to ignore them.

FIDO thought that it was a stupid (dilly) move for the sandmining company, Dillinghams, to create a base camp for a mining venture that had no certain future. Thus began a play on words "dilly", "Dillingham and the camp which was facetiously termed a village. Dilli Villi was the result. When mining ceased the Queensland Government bought the camp but Dillinghams liked FIDO's name and wanted to be remembered. Thus Dilli Village has been perpetuated.

### **Naming Fraser Island Man-Made Features**

The rules applying to naming natural features don't apply to man-made features. Naming natural features on maps isn't as easy under Queensland legislation as naming man-made features. Thus structures including dam walls can be named after living persons (for example, Hinze and Bjelke-Petersen Dams, various bridges, buildings and streets). It should be remembered that with dams the names of the politicians only applies to the walls. The body of water behind the Bjelke-Petersen dam is *Lake Boondooma* and behind Hinze Dam holds back *Lake Advancetown*.

When streets in the Eurong township were named after the first people to build and settle there, a glaring omission is that no street was named after Charlie Sinclair even though he was earlier than some others honoured with streets named after them. This was because of political disapproval in the Maryborough City Council of his son's efforts to stop sandmining and to limit the timber industry on Fraser Island that the Council supported. No "Sinclair" name was to be recognized on Fraser Island.