



all yours

Indigenous Language Resources

South-East Qld Placenames

This Information Guide has been developed to support individuals and communities in their research into placenames of South-East Queensland, particularly those from an Aboriginal language background.

Aboriginal placenames generates a lot of discussion and queries regarding meanings, translations, etc. – the landscape of South-East Queensland had traditional names prior to the settlement of Moreton Bay. Some have been maintained in placenames or landmarks, others have been lost and replaced by introduced names; there also seems to be a growing trend of dual-naming to revive traditional names.

The following list is a selection of traditional placenames and meanings originating from the main Aboriginal groups of the South-East Queensland Region – Butchulla, Jandawal, Ngugi, Nunukul, Turrubul, Wakka Wakka, Yugambeh, Yuggera and Yuggerabul peoples¹.

- **Banyo** (Turrubul) – means ‘ridge’.
- **Barambah** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘Buranba’ which means ‘Westerly wind’.
- **Beerburrum** (Kabi Kabi/Undanbi) – from ‘*Bir-barram*’ which means ‘sound of wings of the King Parrot’.
- **Beerwah** (Kabi Kabi/Turrbal) – means ‘up in the sky’ [from *birra* = sky; *wa*(ndum) = go up/rising up].
- **Boonah** (Yuggerabul) – from ‘Buna’ which means ‘a bloodwood tree’.
- **Bribie Island** – traditionally known by the Kabi Kabi people (Jindoobarrie Clan) as ‘*Yarun*’, which means ‘hunting ground’.
- **Brisbane** – named by Oxley after Governor Brisbane, however the traditional name for the area was ‘*Mianjin / Meean-jin*’ (Yuggera/Turrbal) which refers to the spike of land which formed Petrie’s Bight.
- **Buaraba** (Yuggera) – name taken from an early pastoral run which means ‘place of dry bushes’.
- **Bulimba** (Yuggera) – several meanings, however believed to mean place of magpie larks/Peewees [from ‘*bulum*’ = magpie lark; *ba* = place of].
- **Bundamba** (Yuggera) – from ‘*Bundanda*’ which means ‘axe place’ [*bundan* = axe; *da* = place of].
- **Caboolture** (Yuggera / Turrubul / Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*kabul*’ which means carpet snake in several South-East Queensland languages; i.e. ‘place of the carpet snake’.
- **Canungra** (Yugambeh) – from ‘*gungungai*’ which means ‘a long flat or clearing’.
- **Coochiemudlo** (Nunukul) – from ‘*Coodgee Mudlo / Kutchi mudlo*’ means ‘red rock’.
- **Coochin** (Kabi Kabi/Turrubul) – means ‘red soil’ (locality on Sunshine Coast).
- **Coochin Coochin** (Yuggerabul) – means ‘red clay/earth’ (property near Boonah).

¹ Note: some names may be derived from clans or dialect groups within these main language nations, e.g. Goenpul, Mununjali, Undanbi, etc.

South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Coolabunia** (Wakka Wakka) – means ‘sleeping koala’ [from ‘*Koala*’ and *buani* = sleeping].
- **Cooloola** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*kululu*’ which means ‘Cypress Pines’.
- **Coolum** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*gulum*’ meaning ‘without or wanting’ [refers to blunt nature/shape of mountain]; there is a Dreaming story associated with this placename.
- **Coomera** (Yugambah) – refers to a species of wattle tree; the bark was used to stun fish.
- **Coonowrin** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*coonoong-warrang*’ which means ‘crooked neck’.
- **Coorparoo** (Yuggera) – from ‘*koolpurrum*’ which refers to mosquitoes – this was also the name given to Norman Creek; however a second possible meaning is ‘gentle dove’ [refers to the sound made by the dove].
- **Cooroy** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*kuru*’ which means ‘grey forest possum’.
- **Deebing Creek** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – from ‘*dibing*’ which means ‘mosquito / midge fly’.
- **Doboy** (Yuggera) – from ‘*dubee*’ which means ‘mud crab’.
- **Doomben** (Yuggera) – from ‘*dumben*’ which means ‘a tree fern’.
- **Dugandan** (Yugarabul) – from ‘*dugai / tugai*’ which means ‘place on rising ground or mountain spur’.
- **Dundathu** (Butchulla) – from ‘*dhan-dauwa-dhu*’ which means ‘place of dead trees’ [refers to a site on the Mary River where Pettigrew & Sims established a sawmill in the 1850’s].
- **Elimbah** (Kabi Kabi/Undanbi) – means ‘place of grey snakes’ [*yilam* = grey snake; *ba* = place of].
- **Enoggera** (Turrubul) – from ‘*Euogerra*’ a contraction of ‘*youara-ngarea*’ which means ‘song and dance’ [refers to a ceremonial site at Enoggera used for dances].
- **Fisherman Island** – traditionally known by the Jandawal people as ‘*andacchah*’, which means ‘mullet’.
- **Fraser Island** – traditionally known by the Butchulla people as *k’gari*.
- **Gatton** – named after the town in Surrey (UK), but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Boona*’ (means a bloodwood tree).
- **Gayndah** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘*kunda*’ which means ‘a mountain range’.
- **Gin Gin** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘*Kwin Kwin*’ which means ‘red soil / red soil country’.
- **Goomeri** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘*gumerri*’ which means ‘wooden shield’.
- **Goodna** (Yuggera) – means ‘dung’.
- **Gowrie** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘*kowari*’ which means ‘place of scrub’ [from ‘*kowa*’ = scrub].
- **Grandchester** – originally named “Bigge’s Camp”, it became Grandchester in 1865; however it was traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Goojabila*’ which means ‘honey’.
- **Grantham** – named after an early pastoral run, but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Goanumby*’ which means ‘green bark’ – so called because the inner bark of ironbark trees were collected from this area for humpies.

South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Gympie** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*Gimp*’ which means ‘stinging tree’.
- **Helidon** – named after an early pastoral run, but traditionally known to the Yuggera people as ‘*Yabarba*’ (means ‘kurrajong’).
- **Helidon Spa** – traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Woonarrajimmi*’ (means ‘where the clouds fell down’ – there is a local Aboriginal Dreaming story that describes how the springs were formed).
- **Indooroopilly** (Yuggera) – means ‘gully of leeches’ [from ‘*nyindur*’ meaning leeches; *pilli* = gully].
- **Ipswich** – named after Ipswich in the UK, however the traditional Yuggera name for the area was ‘*Doolmoor*’; while the Yuggerabul people called it ‘*Dulmah*’.
- **Jeebropilly** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – means ‘gully of sugar glider’ [from ‘*jeebro*’ meaning sugar glider; *pilli* = gully].
- **Jumpinpin** (Yugambah) – means ‘pandanus root’; according to Steele (1984) the roots were beaten until fibrous and then used as chewing ropes for eating honey.
- **Kalbar** (Yuggerabul) – from ‘*galbar*’ which means ‘dead/whitened trees’.
- **Kurilpa** (Yuggera/ Turrubul) – means ‘place of water rat’ [kuril = water rat; pa = place of].
- **Laidley** – named by Cunningham after James Laidley (Deputy Commissary, Sydney), but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Milgero*’ (meaning not recorded/unknown).
- **Laidley Creek** – as previous, but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as ‘*Goonanje-gerrara*’ (means ‘going down creek’); this refers to the Gatton and Helidon groups crossing the creek as they are ‘going down’ towards Moreton Bay.
- **Lake Clarendon** – named after early run, traditional name for the area is unknown.
- **Ma Ma Creek** – claimed to be a corruption of ‘*Mia Mia*’ (bark huts) but this word originates from Western Australia; it may have been a borrowed name used by early settlers. The traditional name for the area is unknown.
- **Maroochydore** (Kabi Kabi) – means ‘place of the black swan’ [from ‘*murukutchi*’ = black swan/red-bill; *dha* = place of]; there is a Dreaming story associated with this placename.
- **Maroon** (Yugarabul) – from ‘*murrun*’ which means ‘sand goanna’; there is a Dreaming story associated with the name/area.
- **Milbong** (Yugarabul) – named after ‘One Eye Waterhole’ – *Milbong* means ‘one eye dead or gone’.
- **Moggill** (Yuggera / Turrubul) – from ‘*mugil / magil*’ which means ‘water lizard’.
- **Moogerah** (Yugarabul) – means ‘thunder’; this refers to the storms which develop along the ranges surrounding Cunningham’s Gap.
- **Mooloolaba** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*Muluaba*’ which means ‘place of black snakes’ [*mulu* = black snake; *ba* = place of].
- **Moreton Bay** – traditionally known by the Ngugi people and neighbouring groups as ‘*Quandamooka*’; this term is also used to refer to people of Moreton Bay.
- **Moreton Island** – traditionally known by the Ngugi people as ‘*Moorgumpin*’, which means ‘place of sand hills’.

South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Mount Cordeaux** (Cunningham's Gap) – traditionally known by the Yugarabul people as '*Niamboyoo*'.
- **Mount Mitchell** (Cunningham's Gap) – traditionally known by the Yugarabul people as '*Coonyin-nirra*'.
- **Mundoolun** (Yugambeh) – from '*Mundheralgun*' which means 'death adder'.
- **Murrarie** (Yuggera) – from '*mudherri*' which means 'sticky / messy earth'.
- **Murphy's Creek** – named after Peter Murphy (servant/travelling companion of Patrick Leslie), but traditionally known to the Yuggera people as '*Tamamareen*' (means 'where the fishing nets were burnt in a grass fire').
- **Mutdapilly** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – means 'sticky gully', referring to the black soil in the area – area was also known as Ten Mile Swamp [*'mutda'* meaning sticky/muddy ground; *pilli* = gully].
- **Nambour** (Kabi Kabi) – from '*Nambur*' which means 'red-flowered tea tree'.
- **Ninderry** (Kabi Kabi) – means 'place of leeches' [from '*nyindur*' meaning 'leeches'].
- **Nindooimba** (Yugambeh) – from '*Ninduimba*' which means 'place of remains of a fire'.
- **North Stradbroke Island** – traditionally known by the Nunukul/Jandawal groups as '*Minjerribah*', which means 'Island in the sun'.
- **Pimpama** (Yugambeh) – from '*pimpimba*' which means 'place of soldier birds (noisy miners)' [*pimpim* = soldier bird; *ba* = place of].
- **Pinkenba** (Turrubul) – from '*Binkinba*' which means 'place of land tortoise' [from *Binkin* = tortoise; *ba* = place of].
- **Purga** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – from '*pur-pur*' which means 'meeting place'.
- **South Stradbroke Island** – traditionally known by the Nunukul/Jandawal groups as '*Curree*' which is derived from '*curralee*' meaning currajong trees; a second reference suggests the mouth of a river, possibly referring to the place where the Coomera River entered the Bay.
- **Tabralga** (Yugambeh) – from '*Dhaberigaba*' which means 'place of clubs/nullas'.
- **Tallebudgera** (Yugambeh) – means 'rotten or decayed logs'; [from '*Talle*' = trees/logs; '*Budhera*' = rotten or decayed] – refers to the practice of the local people placing timber (preferably oaks) in the water to attract teredo (type of mollusc) which was a source of food.
- **Tallegalla** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – means 'scrub turkey'; the locality is also known as Two Tree Hill.
- **Tarampa** (Yuggera) – name taken from early pastoral run which means 'place of the wild lime' [*turum* = wild lime; *pa* = place of].
- **Tewantin** (Kabi Kabi) – from '*dauwadhan*' meaning 'dead tree or logs' [refers to when the area was first used for sawmilling].
- **Tibrogargan** (Kabi Kabi/Undanbi) – refers to the mountain and the Dreaming Story associated with the Glasshouse Mountains; derives from '*jeebora*' which means sugar glider and '*gaggalin*' which means 'biting'; name is also used for several features in the area, e.g. Tibrogargan Creek.

South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Tingalpa** (Yuggera) – means ‘place of stunning fish plant’ [from *tangul* = plant used for stunning fish and *pa* = place of].
- **Toowong** (Yuggera) – from ‘*tuwung*’ which means ‘koel / cuckoo’.
- **Undulla** (Yuggerabul) – corruption of the word ‘*nandulla*’ which means silver leafed wattle.
- **Urangan** (Butchulla) – from ‘*yuangan*’ which means dugong; a second reference suggests it may be derived from ‘*yerengen*’ which refers to a small shellfish.
- **Wamuran** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘Wamuran’ who was a local leader/warrior; Mervil Wamuran also known as King Jacky Delaney [King of Stoney Creek].
- **Warill** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – means ‘creek’ or ‘river’; used in several placenames, e.g. Warrill View, Warrill Creek.
- **Willawong** – language origin is unknown, possibly an introduced word from Southern States; means the junction of two creeks which may be a reference to Oxley and Blunder Creeks.
- **Wongawallan** (Yugambeh) – refers to ‘*wonga*’ meaning ‘pigeon’ and ‘*wallan*’ meaning ‘water’; a second reference suggests it is derived from ‘*wangum-wulam*’ which means a cut/scarred cheek.
- **Woombye** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘*wamba*’ which means ‘black myrtle tree’; the timber was used for axe handles.
- **Woogaroo** (Yuggera) – means a ‘whirlpool’; a second reference suggests it means ‘cool or shady’.
- **Woolloongabba** (Yuggera) – from ‘*woolloon-capemm*’ which means ‘whirling water’ – refers to series of waterholes originally located there; a second reference refers to a ‘fighting place’.
- **Wulkuraka** (Yuggera/Yuggerabul) – from ‘*woolcooracca*’ which means ‘flowering gum tree’; a second reference refers to ‘plenty of kookaburras’.
- **Wynnum** (Yuggera) – from ‘*winnam*’ which means ‘breadfruit or Pandanus tree’.
- **Yeronga** (Yuggera) – from ‘*yarungnga/yarung*’ which means ‘gravelly place’; a second reference refers to ‘*yurong*’ which means rain.
- **Yeerongpilly** (Yuggera) – means ‘sandy or gravelly gully’ [from ‘*yarungnga/yarung*’ = sand/gravel and ‘*pilli*’ = gully].

Note: This list is merely a selection of placenames from South-East Queensland and provides an insight into the traditional names for country used by Aboriginal groups. Many words were ‘shared’ across neighbouring groups and may have a shared meaning in several languages.

Further information on Aboriginal placenames can be obtained from a range of sources including: Traditional Owner Groups, Indigenous Language Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, Historical Centres and Museums, Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management as well as community members.

Sources in State Library of Queensland Collections:

This is only a selection from the SLQ Collections – for a comprehensive listing of print and electronic materials relating to Indigenous languages, use the OneSearch facility:

www.onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au

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Watson, F. J. (1944) *Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland*. REFJ 499.15 wat

Further Details

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