

The Irish in South Australia: names and naming

In 1845, the Adelaide *Register* newspaper reported that nineteen Catholics had been baptized at 'little Dublin' on the outskirts of Mount Barker. 'Little Dublin' was not an official place name for this spot. It is unclear whether the place name came about because there was a large number of Dubliners among the small Catholic community living there, or whether the name Dublin, or Little Dublin was being considered as an official name at the time. The place name Dublin had been considered before. In 1840, the *Register* reported that the map showing the allotments for a proposed village of 'Dublin' was on display at the Emu Inn, Morphett Vale. While local history shows a small Irish community in this area in the nineteenth century, and Morphett Vale was where the second Catholic Church in South Australia was built, the place name of Dublin did not eventuate. In 1876, however, the name Dublin appeared in The Hundred of Dublin: named for Irish and Dublin-born Governor MacDonnell. Before that, the town of Dublin, north of Gawler, was settled in the 1870s.

This official town of Dublin was not prompted by the existence of a local Irish or Catholic community. Nevertheless, the name of the town of Dublin, north of Gawler is linked with Ireland, and individuals and communities occasionally exploit the connection. For example, in 1970, the South Australian Dublin Progress Association invited the Irish ambassador Richard O'Brien, to open its centennial celebrations. The Kerry School Irish dancers

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entertained the ambassador and the other dignitaries and the event was reported in Adelaide's *Sunday Mail* on Saint Patrick's Day.

In celebrating its centennial in an Irish way, despite having little Irish background, The Dublin Progress Association, chose to exploit what Pierre Bourdieu¹ would call the 'economic', 'cultural' and 'social capital' associated with the name of their town. Place names, as we know, have economic capital. For example, it usually costs more to live in Burnside than it does to live in Woodcroft. How much you pay for a house, and its on-costs in the form of rates, is directly determined by the name of your suburb. Arguably, you must have high economic capital to live in Burnside. Some may even argue that you can increase your economic capital simply by living there; for example, some employers may see your address as a positive indicator, and you might gain a higher paying job as a result. Bourdieu argues, however, that capital is available beyond the economic form. Cultural capital is a form of capital that can exist as a mindset or a worldview: when the Irish ambassador proposed a visit to South Australia, for instance, the South Australian government had a mindset that saw an Irish related place name such as Dublin as having value for the occasion. Cultural capital may be objectified in the form of 'cultural goods'; for example, the name of the town of Dublin as it occurs in printed form; Irish related decoration that may have been used during the ambassador's visit; and in the case of the Irish dancing display, the troop itself with their distinctive costumes, are all cultural goods deriving from the cultural capital of the name Dublin..

¹ 'The Forms of Capital' translated by Richard Nice. Available at http://www.viet-studies.org/Bourdieu_capital.htm

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The third form of capital, social capital is gained when one's social standing is increased as a result of possessing an object or idea. The place name Dublin in South Australia had social capital at the time of the Irish ambassador's visit because it afforded the 'mutual acquaintance and recognition', or group membership of the Progress Association/South Australian Government/Irish ambassador relationship. The visit to Dublin earned the officials involved social 'credit'. We can see then that an 'Irish' place name in South Australia can have meaning and value that extends beyond its role as a geographic indicator and an historic reminder. Recognition of the economic, cultural, and social value of place names reveals new insights and possibilities. This paper explores Bourdieu's concepts through the naming of, in the main, Irish related places in South Australia.

If we look at early maps of Adelaide and the names on the first allotments, we can see that the names of those first streets had an economic value. Adelaide and South Australian pioneers lived and worked in those streets, buying and selling the homes and businesses there as well as making a direct living from commercial and residential properties. Even before the arrival of the first settlers, the cultural and social capital of the streetscapes was laid out in Colonel Light's map. Although there have been some minor changes to Light's plan in operation, today the business area is largely concentrated where he planned it to be, the principal street is still King William, and big and expensive houses in North Adelaide overlook the central business district. Today in addition, both large and small houses in North Adelaide have a relative value greater than many other areas in Adelaide city and its suburbs.

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Light's map set out the allotments and the street design, but the naming of the streets was left to a small group. One member of that group was John Jeffcott, a Kerry man born in Tralee, who named Jeffcott Street after himself or his father, Kermode Street after his fiancée, and O'Connell Street, not, as has been presumed, after Daniel O'Connell, the Irish member of the British parliament at the time, but after his son, Maurice, who was a patron and fellow Trinity College graduate.² While O'Connell Street in North Adelaide is the principal street of the residential part of Adelaide today, that was not the plan. On Light's map, Jeffcott Street is the principal street, leading as it does to the principal square of North Adelaide, Wellington Square. Because of drainage problems in the first few years of the colony, however, O'Connell Street was in a better position to develop as a principal street. This history is not well known, though, and most people would presume that O'Connell Street, North Adelaide's standing originates with the name Daniel O'Connell, who is honoured in the name of the principal street of the capital of Ireland. While the people of Ireland held O'Connell, known as 'The Liberator', in high esteem at the time of the founding of South Australia, his reputation in England was not good. O'Connell's political aspirations forced the British government to repeal the Act that kept Catholics from becoming parliamentarians. He also argued against the political union of Great Britain and Ireland and the paying of tithes by Irish Catholics to the Protestant churches. The suggestion that his son Maurice was the O'Connell 'that Jeffcott had in mind makes more sense in the light of that history. Without the history being widely known, O'Connell

² Jarlath Ronayne, *The Irish in Australia*, Viking, London: 2002, pp. 171-183

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Street, North Adelaide, has acquired economic, social, and cultural capital by default. This capital has been drawn on in recent times with the naming of the Daniel O'Connell 'Irish' pub in Tynte Street.

Sir John Jeffcott was of a social class known as Anglo-Irish. Although born, raised, and sometimes primary schooled in Ireland, the mainly Protestant, city-based, Anglo-Irish class looked more to England than to a Gaelic past. These Irish came to South Australia with far greater economic and social capital than the labouring or rural Irish did. They could name places by virtue of their political and social standing. The government surveyor and colonial architect George Kingston was another such. He was from Bandon, County Cork. The town Kingston-on-Murray is named after him, while other place names involving 'Kingston' are named after his father. The Irish origins of people such as Jeffcott and Kingston are hardly known today. Even in the nineteenth century when this knowledge may have been more widespread, records tended to name such settlers as 'British'. There was little economic, social, or cultural capital to be gained by a claim to Irish origin in nineteenth century Adelaide. The term 'Irish' often had different connotations then. That part of North Adelaide was called Irish town for a part of the nineteenth century reveals this well.