

THE HISTORY OF YERONGA PART 7 FROM BOGGO TO YERONGA

Dr Michael Macklin

By the 1880s, the Yeronga area had become a fashionable place to live with businessmen, lawyers, politicians and civil servants establishing large residences on substantial blocks of land generally with river access. It is for this reason that the Yeronga Park land was set aside as a recreation reserve in 1882 and hence became Brisbane's second oldest park with 103 acres and three roads (41.9 hectares) especially cleared for this purpose. The remaining native vegetation suggests that the reserve was open eucalypt forest up to that time.

The transition from Boggo to its present name of Yeronga is a somewhat contested history. However, its formal naming does seem to have been strongly championed by Charles Hardie Buzacott and Richard Gailey. Buzacott's home was called *Yeronga-lea* which was built in 1883 on a large block which went down to the river on the corner of Feez Street and Kadumba Street.¹

During his political career, Buzacott attempted to introduce an eight-hour working day in Queensland but was in advance of his times and did not succeed. He did, however, become Postmaster-General in January 1879 and was responsible for linking Brisbane to London by telegraph (the longest telegraph line then in existence) plus the introduction of the telephone to Queensland. In 1880, he purchased the controlling shares in the Brisbane Newspaper Company, owners of the *Brisbane Courier* and *The Queenslander* and was Managing Editor until 1894.² Buzacott's papers immediately began using the name 'Yeronga' to distinguish the area from Boggo.

The celebrated architect Richard Gailey³ was an owner of a third of the Brisbane Newspaper Company and a person with an eye to the business of property valuers who doubtless had very definite views about 'Boggo' as a name for an area in which he was designing homes for the new business class. Richard knew the area well since he often visited Kadumba", the home of the Grimes family, where Baptist services were held till a church was built.

It seems that 'Yeronga' originally existed in some form as an Indigenous name for the area.⁴ According to the records in St. John's Cathedral, the first known European name for this neighbourhood was "Bloggo". In what became a typical Australian approach, "Bloggo" meaning "two trees growing together" was soon changed to "Boggo" because it sounded like "boggy", an apt description of the terrain along the "Boggo Track" that in 1905 became Annerley Road. Even the South Brisbane jail for many years was known as the Boggo Road Gaol despite there being no Boggo Road. In an uncharacteristic nod to history, the name has been retained in the new bus station at the end of the tunnel under the old jail site.

Buzacott's and Gailey's contribution might best be characterised as popularising the name. Indeed, given Buzacott's and Gailey's prominence and influence, it is not hard to see why the Railway Department picked up the 'Yeronga' name and used it for the railway station when it opened in 1884.

¹ The word appears to have been derived, in part, from the ‘yerongpan’ language meaning ‘sandy place’. An alternate meaning, or possibly another associated meaning, is ‘ceremony place’. Given the annual surplus of rakali in the area, this would certainly have been a good place for various Indigenous groups to come together to conduct ceremonies.

² C Lack, Buzacott, Charles Hardie (1835–1918), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/buzacott-charles-hardie-3133/text4669>. This was published first in hardcopy in 1969, accessed online 24 September 2015.

³ Richard Gailey was the architect responsible for a number of memorable Brisbane buildings including *Moorlands* at Auchenflower (home of the Mayne family), Brisbane Girls Grammar School, the *Regatta Hotel* at Toowong, the *Empire Hotel* in Fortitude Valley, the old Myer Store in Queens Street of which one can now only see the front facade facing the mall, the Brisbane Arcade across the mall from the Myer store (designed by his firm but probably the bulk of the work was done by his son), the Irish Club, the Metro Arts building in Edward Street and Primac House in Creek Street used during World War II as the US Army’s main postal exchange and the centre of the infamous ‘Battle of Brisbane’ riots, from November 27 to 30, 1942, between the ‘over-sexed, over-paid and over-here’ US troops and the Australian servicemen.

⁴ Rev. W Ridley, *Kamilaroi and Other Australian Languages*, 1875, pp. 84, 133; see also the paper *Untangling ‘Stories of Stephens’ Place Names*’ by Neville Buch, Ray Kerkhove and Michael Macklin for an extended discussion of this issue.