

THE ORIGIN OF THE PLACE NAME "DAPTO"

The interesting detail revealed by the choice of the house name "Dappeto" is that it lends some support to the view of John Brown who, according to Bill McDonald in his IHS publication *Nineteenth Century Dapto* (p.75; 1976 edition), was quoted in 1893 as indicating that "the western portion of the Hooka lands towards West Dapto...was called by the aboriginals "Dabpeto".

Because Frederick Gibbins transliteration of the place-name also has three syllables. This tends to indicate that both "Dappeto" and "Dabpeto" are varying transliterations of what is probably exactly the same aboriginal word rendered by different native speakers. The fact that Gibbins grew up in the area in the 1840s also lends weight to the much later reminiscence of John Brown.

The earliest reference to Dapto, according to Bill McDonald, is that of surveyor Knapp in 1829. The Wollongong Council Local Studies Library Card Index, however, has a reference to a claim that a local Aborigine claimed the word "Dapto" was not Aboriginal. Unfortunately, the page reference to McCaffrey proves, in this instance, to be faulty and I have been unable to confirm or deny the strength of this source.

I suspect, however, that it is just such a comment that the word is not an Aboriginal one that has sparked the rash of fanciful claims that the word is derived from the English

“Dab-toe”, supposedly a reference to an old Aborigine with a permanently disabled foot.

Thanks to the forebears of Christina Stead’s step-mother we can now be slightly more confident that the Aboriginal word for Dapto probably originally had three syllables and that the middle syllable is likely to have contained the labio-dental ‘b’ or ‘p’.