

Drawing a long line in

Why our State border is where it is goes way back to a papal decree in the time of colonial exploration of new worlds on what was thought to be a flat earth

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The WA border is an imposing line on our maps. It

delineates this State's territory and where WA stops and South Australia and the Northern Territory begin.

It runs north-south through some of the most unforgiving parts of the State.

And it not just a legally important line, it is an underlying part of the nation's psyche, and carries even more symbolic weight for West Australians.

It's us on this side and them on the other side — the "T"othersiders".

And how proud we are to be Sandgropers, doing our own thing on this side of that line — as then premier Mark McGowan and his "island within an island" found during the depths of COVID despair.

Of course, the border is a modern construct, a symbol devised by early colonial leaders which paid no heed to the more than 60,000 years of Indigenous history and occupation of the land.

The line was determined long before June 1992, when the High Court of Australia handed down its landmark Mabo ruling establishing the principle of native title rights in Australian common law.

The judgment overturned the concept of terra nullius — that Australia was a "land belonging to no one" at the time Britain claimed it had taken

possession. So back to the WA border.

First, a recap. Lines of longitude (also called meridians), measured in degrees, run between the north and south poles and are used to measure distances from the prime meridian — 0° longitude — also called the Greenwich meridian because it passes through Greenwich, England.

An antimeridian is the meridian of longitude opposite any given meridian. A meridian and its antimeridian

form a continuous ring around the Earth.

The position of the WA border is the end result of rivalry between Spain and Portugal, a Pope's decree and British concerns about other nations staking claims to New Holland, the land west of the area which Britain had claimed as New South Wales.

The origins of the line on the map go back to 1493, when, amid competition for "new" lands between Spain and Portugal, the Spanish-born Pope Alexander VI effectively decided to divide the known world in half. Spain was to have exclusive rights to those parts that lay to the west of the dividing line, and Portugal the east.

This line was slightly adjusted and inked in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Constitutional

law expert Gerard Carney in a High Court public lecture series, delivered in 2013, said that "by this treaty, they divided between them the world outside Europe, then thought to be flat, by reference to a line of longitude 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands".

"This was the supposed mid-point of the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and the recently discovered New World," Carney said.

"The circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan from 1519 to 1522 effectively converted the dominions of Portugal and Spain into hemispheres.

"This led, however, to a dispute over the specific meridian defining their respective hemispheres in the Pacific (referred to as antimeridian) because they calculated the Tordesillas Line from different points in the Cape Verde Islands."

But by the end of the 16th century the anti-meridian of the Tordesillas Line was commonly accepted at the 135 meridian (east longitude, or east of the prime meridian) which took it through the heart of what we now call the Australian continent.

Carney said that the Dutchman, Abel Tasman, in 1644 named only the western

(Spain and Portugal) divided between them the world outside Europe.

Gerard Carney



WA government astronomer Harold Curlewis using a theodolite on a border determination expedition circa 1921-22. Picture: Landgate

half of the continent as New Holland, leaving the eastern half as Terra Australis, within the dominion of Spain.

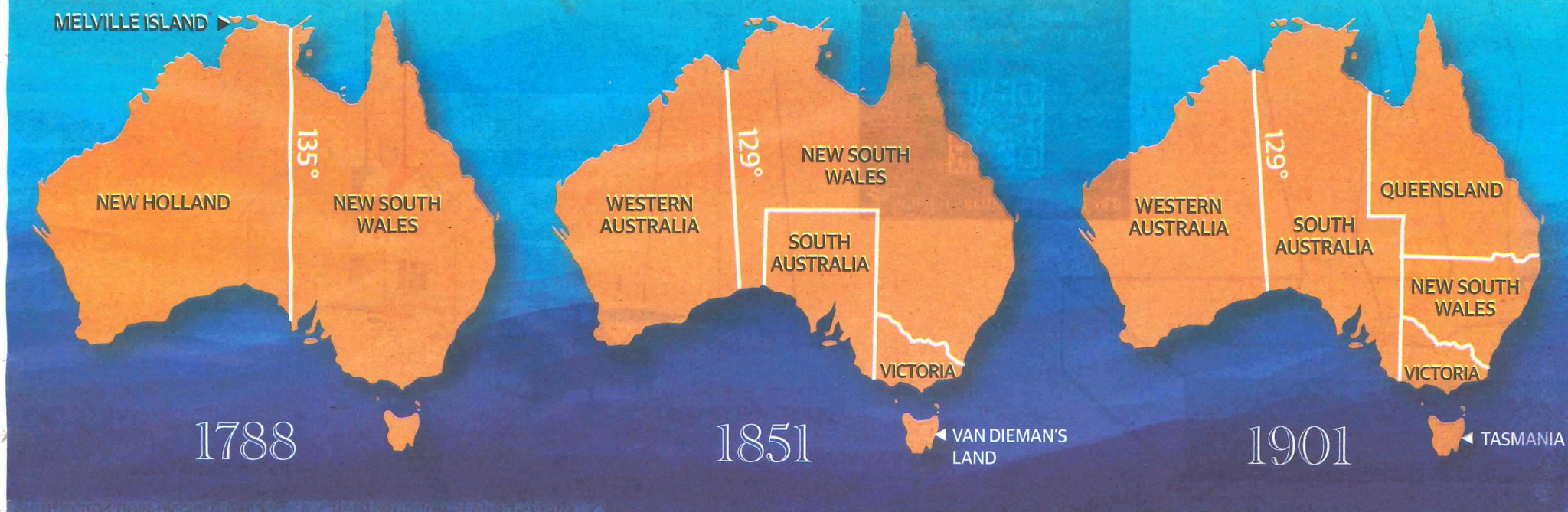
"This avoided any additional conflict with Spain, against whom Holland was fighting for independence.

"This appears to explain why in 1786 the British selected the 135 meridian as the western boundary of New South Wales, leaving untouched the western half of the continent known as New Holland. They did not wish to offend the Dutch," Carney said.

In 1790 Spain conceded Britain's rights to navigate, fish, trade in and settle any "unoccupied" areas of the Pacific Ocean, Carney said.

But potential French and Dutch claims led to growing concern by Britain in the 19th century over the future of the western half of the continent.

"Heightened European interest in New Holland in the 1820s strengthened the case for British trading settlements along the northern coast of the continent, west of the 135 meridian beyond the



a big country

jurisdiction of New South Wales," Carney said. In 1824 Britain claimed the "North Coast of New Holland" between the 129 and 135 meridians, including all islands off the coast, and settlements were set up at Port Essington and at Fort Dundas on Melville Island.

"These developments in the north led to a decision in Britain to move the western boundary of New South Wales from the 135 meridian to the 129 meridian," Carney said.

The commission given to the new governor of New South Wales, Sir Ralph Darling, in 1825, "prescribed the western boundary of the colony to be the 129 meridian (which) ... accommodated the new settlements at Port Essington and Melville Island, and seems likely to have been made both to accord with the Portuguese anti-meridian line under the Treaty of Tordesillas and to prevent any Dutch settlements east of that line", Carney said.

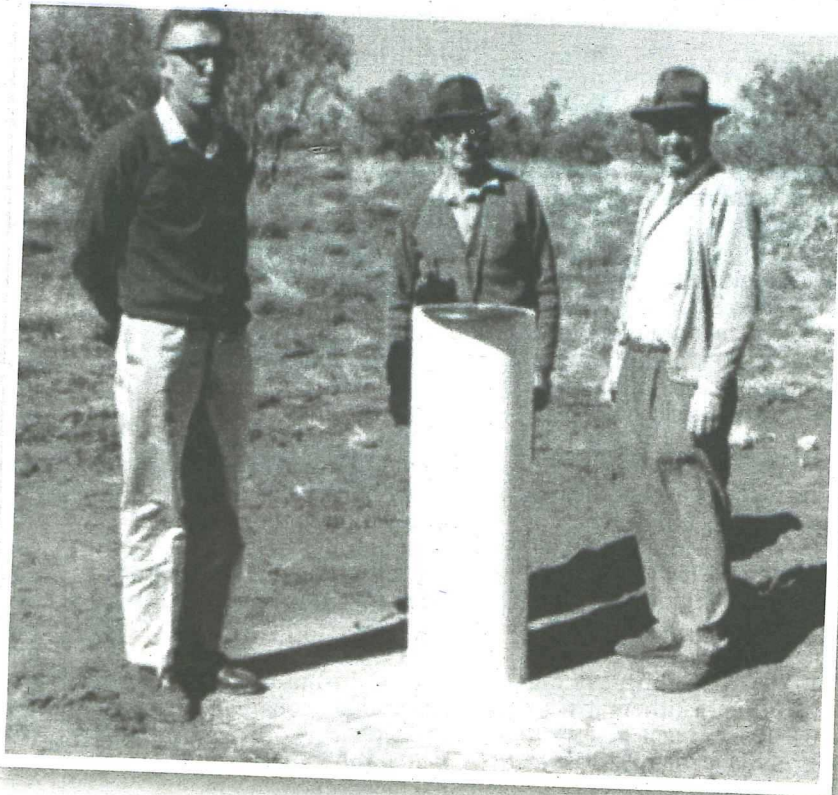
In 1829 Britain claimed the remainder of the continent, west of the 129 meridian, to establish what was to become Western Australia.

"This means that Western Australia is the only State never to have been part of New South Wales," Carney said.

With the eastern border of WA set at the 129 meridian, eventually NSW was further reduced in area to create South Australia and the Northern Territory — which now share borders with WA.

A paper by Curtin University academics and Landgate, published in the Journal of Spatial Science in 2014, says that from 1866 various attempts were made to determine and physically mark sections of the WA border, not always coming up with the same measurement.

In 1921 astronomical observations were taken at the trans-continental railway



The surveyors general of the day at Surveyor General's corner in 1968. Left to right: H. Camm (WA); H. Bailey (SA) and P. Wells (NT) each standing in his respective State or territory. Picture: Landgate

settlement of Deakin by WA and SA astronomers to determine accurate borders.

The party also travelled to the Kimberley to carry out observations just north of Argyle Station, the paper said.

In 1922 WA, SA and the Federal government signed an agreement to fix the boundaries and specified that permanent marks would be placed on the 129° east meridian at Deakin and in the Kimberley.

The border was to be defined by lines running north and

south from these points, even if proved by better survey methods in the future to be slightly off the 129 meridian.

Due to the possibility of significant mine deposits in the area around the WA, NT and SA border junctures, it was decided to mark where the SA-NT border reached WA at the 129 meridian.

It was discovered that the WA border's "lines" running true north and south from the earlier marked points missed each other at the juncture of the WA, SA and NT borders.

In 1968 concrete pillars were constructed about 127m apart along the SA-NT border to link the "gap" in the WA border line.

This has become known as Surveyor-General's Corner. The area is about 7km north-east of the Wingellina community in WA.

Access to the area is limited to guided tours, and visitors require a special permit in addition to the standard Great Central Road transit permit.

FAST FACT:
A survey in the 1960s found the WA border's "lines" running from north and south missed each other by about 127m at the juncture of the WA, SA and NT borders

WA is the only State never to have been part of NSW.

Gerard Carney



DO YOU HAVE ANY QUIRKY OR FORGOTTEN TALES OF WA?

Email Malcolm.quekett@wanews.com.au

Today

THE OTHER SIDE with Robert Drewe



All I want for Xmas

Busy billionaires take note. Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop Gift Guide has just been published for the 15th Christmas, and perhaps if you leave it lying around the mansion, someone will take the hint and give you one of these perfectly acceptable gifts.

Or, here's a thought, give Gwyneth's guide to an assistant for when they're out shopping for gifts for your loved ones.

A steal at \$US29,400 (\$45,180) is the Tabayer Pave Opera bracelet, or the Sauer Zaha one-diamond ring for \$US19,800 (\$30,415), the Royal Delft hand-painted tulip vase pyramid \$US16,752 (\$25,734), or the (ahem) Lelo Inez 24K gold vibrator \$US15,000 (\$23,000).

Gwyneth's offerings are also the non-billionaire columnist's dream gifts. For example, the gold-plated Easy-Health Super-Angel fruit juicer that she recommends. I enjoy a glass of breakfast orange juice and it's only \$5739.

The juicer would perfectly complement the set of St Louis Tommy crystal glasses that she advocates, for \$US6940 (\$10,665), and the Arthur Umanoff bar cart, to serve the juice from \$US1495 (\$2297). I prefer to travel light so the Valentino lightweight canvas trolley suitcase she favours would also be acceptable for only \$US5545 (\$8520).

For 14 years Gwyneth's lifestyle empire has been curating this annual list of presents for your lover, mother, butler, house manager, child, personal assistant, Pilates instructor and spiritual healer (no fathers, for some reason). The guide quickly became famous for its more luxurious and rarefied treats — like the \$38,000 mattress, the \$8300 Yurt and the custom leather bag exclusively for carrying a watermelon (price upon request).

True to form, this year Paltrow and Team Goop have embraced the notoriety and made the splashier gifts an entire category: "Ridiculous-but-Awesome". The list features that \$US15,000 (\$23,200) gold vibrator, a \$US400 (\$618) aged cheese and a \$US2000 (\$3092) gong stand. And who doesn't appreciate a stand for their gong?

There is also a list of cheaper gift-worthy items. These include a miniature concrete fireplace for \$US96 (\$148), a 2024 moon calendar for \$US39 (\$60), and some rubber Birkenstocks \$US90 (\$139). There's also a futuristic treat for busy kids, the \$US250 (\$385) automated toothbrushing system: "the latest in AI technology".

As Gwyneth says, gift selection is simple. "After all, it's easy to identify people by their love of entertaining, or art, or their deep and unabiding affection for jewellery."

What I admire about her gift suggestions is not only their

originality and the economy of scale involved but the thought behind them. Who doesn't need a gold-plated fruit juicer? Or a custom leather watermelon bag? Whereas (shhhh) I don't need the tie my stepmother gives me every year, as I haven't worn one since 1993.

Nor, just quietly, do I require another green short-sleeved "business" shirt (in either S or XXXL sizes but never my XL) a shirt that even the thinnest or fattest suburban accountant hasn't worn since 1968, despite their synthetic qualities and two chest pockets for multiple Biro storage and presentation.

I also don't want a T-shirt and matching baseball cap advertising motor oils. I don't want cargo pants either, as the current cargo is adequately handled by jeans (long) or shorts (short). Other thanks-but-don't-bother gifts for me (Auntie, please save your silver coins) are the Best Of Barry Manilow and Great British Bake-Off CDs you found at the op shop, or another dolphin calendar, or long socks, or, despite their nationalistic claims on my loyalty, another op shop favourite — the thongs

Not a bad idea, except he scratches the tickets first, in case they've won.

with the Australian flag on the upside and bottle openers in the soles (made in China). In fact, nothing with flags, from any nation.

I've written before of my dullest Christmas present ever. Wonderful in its dreariness was a gift from my sister-in-law: a plastic bag in which to store other plastic bags. It was called a Hideaway and it took my breath away that this nice woman who'd known me for decades must have passed the Kmart counter displaying plastic bags for storing other plastic bags, and stopped dead in her tracks, thinking: "What a stroke of luck! He'd definitely welcome one of these!"

While the Hideaway tops my dull-gift register, it had a few to beat. The Much Loved Classics and Aussie Bush Ballads CDs from the post office were right up there for minimum consideration, not to mention least possible financial outlay.

However, on the subject of gift thriftiness, I bow before my friend's great-aunt who once sent her a partly used cake of soap, and my friend's uncle, a wily farmer who gives his relatives scratchie tickets.

Indeed, he showers them with lottery tickets for their birthdays as well.

Not a bad idea, except he scratches the tickets first, in case they've won something.