

## AN ODD USE OF Paddock

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According to the O.E.D., in the third usage of the second order of *paddock* as a substantive, a *paddock* is 'In the Australian colonies, the general term for any field, or piece of land enclosed by a fence, irrespective of size, whether in pasture or tillage.' The other two usages are: (a) 'a small field or enclosure; usually a plot of pasture-land adjoining or near a house or stable'; and (b) that type of enclosure which is part of a stud-farm, from which, by extension, comes the associated saddling-paddock at a race-course. As far as the dictionaries which I have consulted will take us, the primary emphasis is on enclosure, with a secondary emphasis on the smallness of such an enclosure. The means of enclosing seems to be ordinarily understood to be by fencing but whether 'fencing' subsumes 'hedging' is arguable. The matter of smallness is quite another matter, recognised by the O.E.D.'s qualification, 'irrespective of size'; the very language, in adopting 'small' or 'smallness' as part of its term, makes the idea of a *paddock* a relative matter, relative to whatever lies beyond. One may think that the greater the claimable land then the greater potentially may be the size of any immediate paddock.

Any problems or queries about *paddock* in New Zealand English are not likely to be notably different from those about the Australian *paddock*, so answers to the one are likely to be answers to the other. What are in effect "answers" are given in three recent publications, but the present writer feels that a certain note of definitiveness is perhaps a little premature as yet.

Baker<sup>1</sup> in his latest work gives *paddock* as an example of the Australians taking an old English word and remodelling it to suit the requirements of the new settlement. *Paddock* 'was in use in sixteenth century England for a small field or meadow. In Australia there is no limit to the size of a *paddock*: it may be one acre or 60,000 acres, but it is a paddock as long as it is enclosed by a fence.'<sup>2</sup> Ramson,<sup>3</sup> who treats the word as an early Australianism, an extension of the meaning of an older English word,<sup>4</sup> also makes an interesting association:

*Paddock* and *run* are both dialect words which, in Australia, are used of much larger areas than in England, and the meaning of *run* has been both simplified and generalized. 'The *English Dialect Dictionary* recorded *run* in Perth and in East Yorkshire with the meaning 'a stretch of pasturage' or 'the right of pasturing a beast in common pasture', but in Australian English it refers simply to 'a large open stretch of land occupied by a settler for grazing stock'.<sup>5</sup>

The pasture connection is worth noting.

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1. Baker 1966 : 42.  
2. Baker 1966 : 42.

3. Ramson 1966 : 38, 70.  
4. Ramson 1966 : 40.

5. Ramson 1966 : 72.

Turner<sup>6</sup> in a discussion of Standard Australian and Standard New Zealand English remarks in passing:

Although *stream* and *field* are theoretically available, they are never used to describe the landscape of Australia or New Zealand. *Creek* and *paddock* must be considered standard Australian and standard New Zealand English.

This is clearly enough an assertion that *paddock* has supplanted 'field', which is decidedly open to dispute, and of which more will be seen later. Turner, however, qualifies his view subsequently<sup>7</sup> when he makes observations on extension of meaning under the influence of semantic change, and takes *paddock* as a case of extension: 'a fenced piece of land of any size'. The qualification lies in a following statement that while *paddock* is extended in meaning it also occasions a narrowing of the use of *field*, which continues to function: 'It would be an oversimplification, then, to say that, in Australian English, *paddock* replaces *field*, or combines the meanings of English *field* or *paddock*'.<sup>8</sup> He further remarks that *field* has lost frequency and some of its senses in current speech,<sup>9</sup> or survives 'with variations'.<sup>10</sup> About frequency, he points out that oddly, in a Queensland survey, *field* and *paddock* had virtually the same currency<sup>11</sup> and, like Ramson, he looks at *paddock* in association with *run*:

Paddocks were at first the land near a dwelling, within the zone of civilization. As the run was brought under control by fences, it all became paddocks.<sup>12</sup>

This may be true of a *run*; it is surely less true of a *farm*. As Turner says,<sup>13</sup> it 'would be an oversimplification' to say that in Australian or New Zealand English *paddock* replaces *field* 'or combines the meanings of English *field* and *paddock*'. The situation is not quite so simple.

It is Turner's claim that in Australia *field* 'has only abstract uses'<sup>14</sup> except in compounds such as *fieldmouse*, or *coalfield*. Turner does not mention *wheatfield*, but surely this has not disappeared from New Zealand use? Is it not the case that wheat is grown in a *wheatfield* but hay is grown in a *haypaddock*, and that this usage points to a distinction and a connection of *paddock* with 'pasture' which has apparently been lost from Metropolitan English and is absent from American English? The question is not so much whether *paddock* has supplanted *field*, but rather, whether it has not taken over certain uses of *field* (as, for example, in *hayfield*) common in Metropolitan English while eclipsing *meadow* and *pasture*, and this must lead to further enquiry as to why, for instance, *meadow* and *pasture* may be retained in American English where *paddock* seems to have been lost from those areas where it is most applied in Australia or New Zealand.

Noting that Ramson cites *paddock* as an early Australianism, one must also notice that neither Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*<sup>15</sup> nor Wright's *Provincial Dictionary*<sup>16</sup> has it in the sense which interests us, nor does Craigie<sup>17</sup> or Mathews<sup>18</sup> list it. Nor does it appear in the lists of Mathews's *Beginnings of American English*.<sup>19</sup> It does not seem at any later date to have entered American English. On

6. Turner 1966 : 34.  
7. Turner 1966 : 47.  
8. Turner 1966 : 51.  
9. Turner 1966 : 53.  
10. Turner 1966 : 64.

11. Turner 1966 : 124.  
12. Turner 1966 : 142.  
13. Turner 1966 : 51.  
14. Turner 1966 : 51.  
15. Halliwell 1889.

16. Wright 1869.  
17. Craigie and Hulbert 1938.  
18. Mathews 1951.  
19. Mathews 1931.

the contrary, in two recent television Westerns in situations where a New Zealander would use *paddock*, *meadow* and *pasture* were used: horses were rustled 'off the night meadow', and a cow was reported 'to be down (i.e. sick) in the north pasture'. The 'pasture' was shown to be fenced, but the 'meadow' was apparently a contained though unfenced part of the range.

Historically, *paddock* is associated with a small enclosed grassed area not given to vulgar use. It might be a deer-park, and one can see why *paddock* in this connection readily dropped out of the colonial vocabulary. It might be used for bloodstock, and in this connection it retained its usefulness and also found its extension into the *saddling paddock* of a racecourse. As such, it survives in British, American, Australian and New Zealand English, and no question attaches to it.

In the sense of 'a small field or enclosure; usually a plot of pasture-land adjoining or near a house or stable', the pasture aspect is emphasised but is not taken to be total and exclusive. If it is not pasture, what is it? Land in tillage? The only other possibility is wasteland and that, in the British context, seems improbable, so we must conclude that in this sense *paddock* connotes a small piece of enclosed land, either in pasture or likely to return to pasture adjoining, or in the neighbourhood of, a dwelling-place or stable. In this sense, although the old colonial term *accommodation paddock* (pertaining to a drovers' pub) is new as a term, it is not so new as a function of *paddock*, and the *paddock* adjacent to a house is not new at all. In this case, a question does arise: Why is *paddock* in this sense missing from American English? Was it never employed?

The apparently Australian innovation lies in the extension from the early small fenced or enclosed land, and in the adoption of the refined terminology of the *home paddock* and the *night paddock* which, although subsequently functionally distinct, must in the early years have been the same piece of land. In their talk of "extension" the commentators appear to mean that what, in British English, pertained to a small plot of land came easily to mean something larger than was usual in Britain. Turner, for instance, speculates that in early years 'the elements "small" and "fenced" in the meaning of the word *paddock* would almost always be combined in the experience to be named',<sup>20</sup> and that fence rather than size was the determinant,<sup>21</sup> to which Baker also inclines.<sup>22</sup>

A view of this kind is reasonable enough. The extension can be reckoned to have been facilitated, given the prime connection of *paddock* with *pasture*; or the relationship of *paddock* with *run* and *run* with *pasture*; or that oddity recorded in the *English Dialect Dictionary* as an item of 1824, *paddock*: 'a small farm', from the Scots. That the "paddock" and the "farm", or the "paddock" and the "run" were pretty well coextensive at the outset of the early Australian and the early New Zealand settlement is not much matter for argument, nor that the Scots element was a fraction of the founding groups. How far the inviting Scots effect can be credited is so far unknown but while it deserves to be pointed out one must recognise that there were Scots settlers in North America also, where the possible effect seems discounted in advance.

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20. Turner 1966 : 59.

21. Turner 1966 : 59.

22. Baker 1966 : 42.

Two possible anomalies remain to be considered. One is instanced as an illustration to the O.E.D. cases, from Bischoff's *Van Diemen's Land* (1832), 'a fenced paddock'. This may be a tautology. On the other hand, it may be a piece of supporting evidence to show a differentiation between the *paddock* 'run', and the *paddock* 'part of a run', i.e. a *home paddock*. It does suggest that being fenced was not quite as inherent in the idea of 'paddock' as is assumed.

The other case is from Dieffenbach (1843), apropos of 1840. Writing of a North Auckland location seemingly on the Awanui River, although referred to as the "Awaroa", Dieffenbach records:

Early in the evening we arrived at Southee's farm; it is situated on both banks of the river, which here forms by its serpentine course several natural paddocks.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of containment or enclosure is there, but not the idea of fencing, as also in another instance, this time of the Northern Wairoa:

It is very serpentine in its course, and forms a number of paddocks of alluvial land; these are at present swampy, but a little drainage would effectually lay them dry.<sup>24</sup>

Again, these are unfenced paddocks but with some suggestion of natural enclosure. Plainly, in neither case is *paddock* substituting for *field*. These "paddocks" are rather *water meadows*, and the idea of fencing is much less a feature of a "meadow" than of a "paddock"; it may even be contended that the association of hay is stronger with a meadow than with a paddock,<sup>25</sup> and certainly, harking back to the *pasture*, the association is strong.

Dieffenbach learned his English in London. In his use of *paddock* in the first example he may have been open to contamination from Southee; he is not likely to have been much influenced by his travelling companion, who was a Frenchman, Captain Bernard; Dieffenbach had, however, only recently returned from a trip to Australia, especially to the Hunter River district, so his "paddock" may have an Australian touch to it. The impression one has from his narrative is that although he was remarkably apt in his English he was also bookish and little likely to take over a vernacular usage. If this impression is valid, it would seem that Dieffenbach probably acquired his *paddock* in England. Since he is one who uses *sheep walk*, which Ramson observes was becoming rare by 1840,<sup>26</sup> the probability of his having acquired his *paddock* in Australia is made just a little less likely.

It would seem, then, if Dieffenbach is to be trusted, that *paddock*, while suggesting some mode of limitation, did not necessarily connote the idea of fencing, to which Bischoff may give some support and for which there may be some other support in the *paddock* 'farm' of dialect. The pasture aspect of *paddock* is the main aspect of any considerations about the utility of such an area, with the tillage aspect decidedly secondary. What *paddock* displaces is *meadow*, or that usage which gives us a *pasture*, more notably than a supplanting of *field*, but on this we need more information about New Zealand uses, both of the present and of the past.

While it may be the case that Australian and New Zealand uses extended the permissible size of a paddock, and in this may be innovating, it is nonetheless odd that

23. Dieffenbach 1843 : Vol. 1, 214.

24. Dieffenbach 1843 : Vol. 1, 268.

25. Concise Oxford Dictionary 1951.

26. Ramson 1966 : 72.

*paddock* had no appreciable effect on American English. It is also odd that, given the dialect association (for example, with *run*), it should be missing from Halliwell's collection and from Wright's.

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