

# Dog-legs and cockatoos: clarifying two confused and confusing early Australian fencing terms

JOHN PICKARD

*Dog-leg and cockatoo fences were widely used by selectors and squatters in colonial Australia in the early years of developing their selections and runs. However as the terms, which have their origins in colonial Australia, were applied to a range of structures, interpreting contemporary descriptions may be difficult. This paper explores the meanings of the terms and their origins. Dog-legs are paired poles laid diagonally across a fence of any form, but usually some form of log or brush fence, with a log supported in the crutch to increase the height or stability of the fence. They have also been recorded with dry stone walls. In general the term 'dog-leg fence' should not be interpreted as a zig-zag fence, although dog-legs may be used with these structures. Cockatoo or cocky's fence was a derisive term applied to any of a wide range of rough fences, again usually log or brush, and including dog-leg fences, erected by small-scale selectors known as cockatoo or cocky farmers. Historical archaeologists should be careful assigning a specific structure to a contemporary use of this term.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the primary objectives of historical archaeology is to integrate disparate and usually incomplete information from various sources into a coherent description or explanation of some event, place or person. Interpreting early documents may be difficult if the terms used were imprecise or overlapped so that the same names applied to different objects or activities. It may not matter if a name is not unique if the context is clear. Thus there is unlikely to be confusion between a tap as a light touch (verb and noun), a valve to control fluid flow (noun), or a tool for cutting screw threads in holes (verb and noun). On a larger scale, there is no confusion between fencing as a sport using swords, and fencing as erecting posts and wires on farms. But when the same name is applied to different objects in the same general sphere, or conversely the same object has multiple names (including some applied to other objects), then confusion is inevitable. This is the case with names for many obsolete and current fences in rural Australia, and particularly with dog-leg and cockatoo fences.

Various types of fences are named after the structure, function or dominant component. Thus the ubiquitous post-and-wire fence (structure) may also be called a paddock or boundary fence (functions) or abbreviated to a wire fence (component) in the same conversation with a farmer. Animal names are applied to many fences, usually because the fences are designed to exclude those species, e.g. rabbit fence, dingo fence, kangaroo fence, etc. (Pickard 2010:150-256). However two names apparently derived from animals – dog-leg and cockatoo – neither engender a clear image of a structure (as straight as a dog's hind leg?) nor refer to a function (fencing out cockatoos?). Both these names were widely used in the nineteenth century to describe fences, but they are now generally misunderstood because both encompass a range of structures.

In this paper I explore the origins of these two terms, and the fence structures to which they have been applied. I conclude that dog-leg fences are a range of fences incorporating crossed poles or dog-legs supporting a higher rail; and that cockatoo fence was a derisive term applied to any rough log or brush fence (including some dog-leg fences) built by impecunious small farmers known as cockatoo farmers.

## DOG-LEGS AND DOG-LEG FENCES

At first glance, the name 'dog-leg fence' might suggest a worm or zig-zag fence, which is as straight as a dog's hind leg.

Indeed this is a reasonably common modern use, and is based on the series of sharp bends providing structural stability to zig-zag fences. A typical example is Stone and Garden (1984:128) in a generalised history of colonisation: 'A more sophisticated type of fence was the dog-leg made of zig-zagging the poles so that they became self-supporting'. Another example is the caption provided by photographer John Collins for his image of a zig-zag fence in Wyperfeld National Park (north-western Victoria) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: 'Rainbow, Wyperfeld National Park. Dog Leg Fence' (State Library of Victoria)

The earliest explicit description that I have found of a dog-leg fence provides no detail of the structure, but the abbreviated description is clear. When describing hunting in the English-style in South Australia, William Shaw (1854:146-147) noted 'three descriptions of fences, the dog leg, the kangaroo, and the post and rail; the former, which is in the shape of an X'.

Two decades later, the Hills' description of a 'dog's leg fence' near Mt Barker (South Australia) in mid-April 1873 is somewhat unclear but appears to describe a zig-zag fence with forked posts supporting some of the branches:

This is formed of bare branches of the gum-tree laid obliquely, several side by side, and the ends overlapping, so that they have somewhat the appearance that might be presented by the stretched-out legs of a crowd of dogs running at full speed. An upright stick at

intervals, with a fork at the top, on which some of the cross-branches rest, adds strength to the structure. Its advantage is that it is quickly and cheaply made, no posts having to be shaped or nailed together, or holes dug to receive them (Hill and Hill 1875:61).

Rather than being applied to zig-zag fences, the more usual historic usage of the term 'dog-leg fence' was of any fence incorporating dog-legs – poles arranged in pairs from either side of a fence and crossing on the top of the fence, forming a crutch in which a log or rail is rested. This is clear from Morris' (1898:123) definition:

Dogleg, *adj.* applied to a primitive kind of fence made of rough timber. Crossed spars, which are the doglegs, placed at intervals, keep in place a low rail resting on short posts, and are themselves fixed by heavy saplings resting in the forks above.

A similar definition of dog-legs is found in regulations under New South Wales lands legislation for types of fencing satisfying improvement conditions of Conditional Purchases:

A fence of at least four feet in height, composed of logs and chocks, the chocks to be of no greater thickness than will leave an opening of nine inches between the logs, and the same distance between the lower log and the ground, or composed of logs and chocks, the top log to rest between two crossed stakes (dog-legs) not less than six inches in diameter, and inserted six inches in the ground, with the same distance between the logs as mentioned above, no one log in either case to exceed sixteen feet in length. (New South Wales 1887:471)



Figure 2: 'Chock & log & dog-leg fence' showing two sets of dog-legs or crossed poles increasing the height of the extremely high (and perhaps fanciful) chock-and-log fence, and supporting top rails or poles (The Antique Print Room).

An early illustration (Figure 2) shows how they were used with a chock-and-log fence.

Despite considerable searching, I have been unable to determine the origin of the term 'dog-leg' as used in Australian fencing. There is no apparent use of the term in early British or American works describing fences, even though dog-legs were used in the USA, but under a different name. 'Dog' is an old English term 'applied to var. instruments used to hold anything in its place'; one form was 'an instrument used by sawyers to hold timber together', typically 'a short bar of iron, with the ends turned up and sharpened, used to hold a piece of timber steady for sawing. One end of the dog is driven into the timber, the other into the frame of the sawpit' (Wright 1900:110). Salaman (1975:172-173) illustrates several variants, and also describes and illustrates various dogs used in handling timber (Salaman 1975:484-485). However, none of these is similar to the crossed poles used in fences. The closest is a 'saw buck' (Salaman (1975:441-442) of two frames forming a crutch to support and hold timber when sawing. In Australia this is usually called a 'saw horse' and the term is still used today. Bark roofs on huts in colonial Australia were kept in place with small logs or spars crossed over the ridge of the roof, and pegged together. These spars in turn supported horizontal spars (Lewis 2003). However, the vertical spars were not called 'dog-legs' despite their obvious similarity to those in fences.

Abrupt bends in almost any otherwise straight object – including fences – are often referred to as 'dog legs', a clear reference to the proverbial dog's hind leg. But it is difficult to see how this was applied to spars arranged across an otherwise generally straight fence. Regardless of why it was originally coined, the term was applied to Australian fences from at least 1836 when a parcel of land in Tasmania was described as 'all that portion of Land Bounded on the north by a dog leg and furze [gorse] fence' (Tasmanian Non-State Records 103/3 25 October 1836, quoted in Ramson 1998:210). In 1840 Alfred Weaver had '80 acres of land, enclosed with a dog-leg fence' at his property Woodlands on the South Road from Adelaide (Cockburn 1925:118). Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing if either fence was a zig-zag or had crossed poles supporting a log.

Morris' (1898:ix) inclusion of the term in his dictionary of 'words and uses of words peculiar to Australasia' is strong evidence of a colonial Australian origin. I have adopted the hyphenated version rather than Morris' single word because it appears to be more common.

Dog-legs were also known in Australia as crosslegs or cross legs, and shears (Gordon 1865:3), and trestles (Buley 1905:33-34; Peterson 1988:10) (Figure 3). Both cross legs and trestles are descriptive terms. Shears or sheers were crossed poles or spars 'lashed together near the top with a block suspended from the point of intersection' and used to lift heavy objects (Brande and Cox 1867:428). Thus these alternatives have fairly obvious derivations. The log, rail or pole supported by the dog-legs was rarely given a specific name in Australia. 'Jumbuck' [Patrick R. Gordon] (1868:6) called it a 'top rail', while Kaleski (1910:65) called it a 'cockatoo rail'. A specific form of dog-leg fence was used in New Zealand (see below), but the term was not used in the United States of America where dog-legs were known as 'stakes' and the supported logs as 'riders' (Martin 1892:11-12; Meredith 1951:135). Not surprisingly, such fences were called 'stake and rider fences' but I have found no record of this term in Australia.

'Jumbuck' (1868:6) gives a detailed description of building what he called a 'Billabong fence' (Figure 3), essentially a carefully-made log fence topped by dog-legs supporting an additional log. Gordon (1867:32) suggests that the name is derived from *Billabong Run* (northeast of Holbrook, NSW)

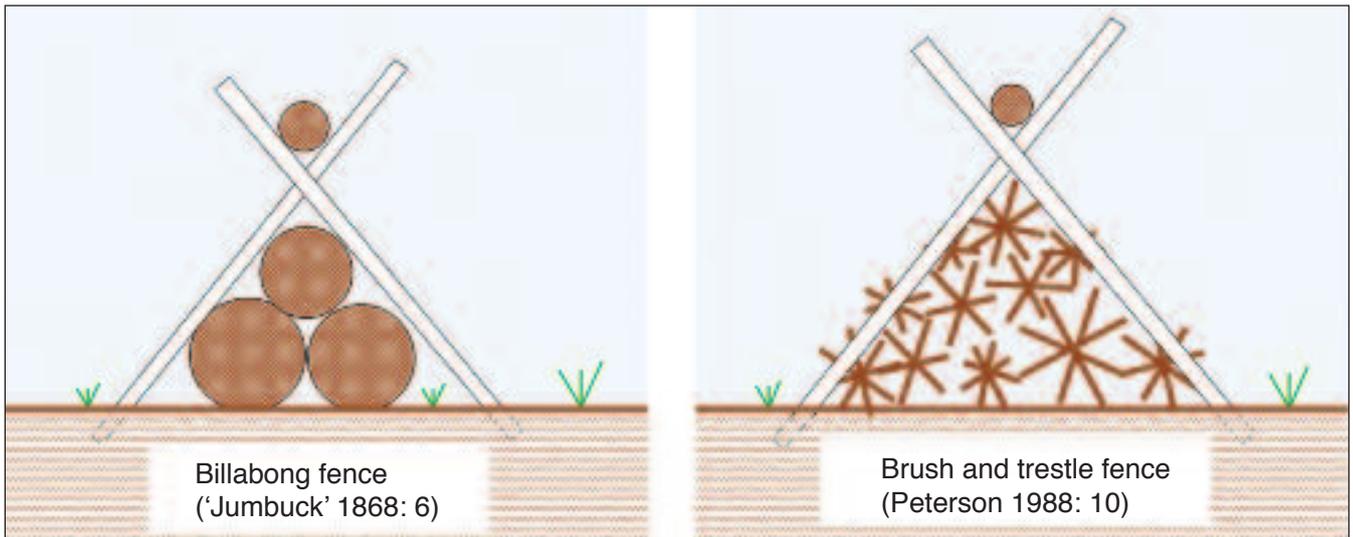


Figure 3: Interpretations of two forms of dog-leg fence. Left: Billabong fence using two base logs supporting a second tier, and the top log or pole in the crutch of the crosslegs or dog-legs. Right: Brush and trestle fence with top rail.

where Rawdon F. Greene first erected a fence with this structure.

The foundation of the fence is made by laying a number of logs, of any length, and as nearly as possible of a uniform diameter of two feet, longitudinally along the ground on the line in which it is proposed to erect the fence, the ends being so cut and fitted together as to prevent the possibility of the escape of lambs; care also being taken that any inequalities should be chocked up, so that there may be no means of escape under the bottom log.

After the bottom logs have thus been laid along a considerable portion of the line, logs of a somewhat smaller diameter are, in the same manner, laid along on the tops of the former.

Strong 'crosslegs' are then split, sunk in the ground, one on either side of the fence, and made to cross each other on the top of the second log in the usual way; and in the angle formed by this crossing, a large heavy sapling, not less than nine inches in diameter, is embedded. This binds the fence firmly, and forms its top rail. The intervals between each pair of crosslegs ought not to exceed twelve feet, and it is desirable, in all cases, to have the crosslegs of split stuff, as it is found that they last longer in the ground than saplings ...

The advantages of this fence are, that it is very strong and durable, can be constructed by the ordinary class of bush laborers, and requires the use of few tools.

To the small farmer it will be found to possess an additional advantage, inasmuch as it will utilise a quantity of timber felled for the purpose of clearing the land.

Its disadvantages may be stated as – (1). Like all other bush fences, more liable to fire than post-and-rail. (2). The liability of the crosslegs to 'jump' or rise out of the ground during heavy rains; and (3). Their liability to rot. As so much depends upon these crosslegs, it is absolutely necessary – if the fence is to be made a lasting one – that they should be of strong, sound, split timber, and well sunk in the ground. The weight of the upper rail will, of course in great measure, determine both their strength and the distance they should be sunk in the ground. Much will depend upon the manner in

which the hole is sunk; if made just sufficiently large to receive them, so that the pressure will be on a 'bone' – that is, on soil which has not been disturbed by the spade, there will be little fear of their ever 'jumping.' As a rule, the heavier the top rail the stronger and firmer will be the fence. ('Jumbuck' 1868:6)

By the early 1880s when wire fences were the *de facto* standard, Armstrong and Campbell (1882:195) considered that:

The dog-leg fence is now almost out of use, and is very seldom seen. It forms neither a secure nor neat fence, and is so seldom used that we consider an explanation of its construction almost unnecessary.

However, they describe using dog-legs to raise the height of a chock-and-log fence:

A somewhat similar description of fence may be used to raise the height of a low chock and log, which is done by placing two straight spars in opposite slanting directions at stated intervals, resting against the top log, and then placing additional logs in the forks formed by these spars. A two-rail fence may be formed by placing one log upon sawn blocks, or in forks, sunk into the ground, and about two feet from the surface, and completing the fence in the manner we have just described (Armstrong and Campbell 1882:195).

Surveyor A. Ebsworth recorded 'chock and dog-leg fences' near Jindabyne NSW on his plan of Portion 131, Parish of Coolamatong, County of Wallace, (plan 4148.1604 dated 29 June 1891), suggesting a structure similar to that illustrated in 1883 (Figure 2), i.e. a chock-and-log fence with dog-legs supporting a higher log. However, even otherwise meticulous surveyors could be somewhat cavalier in their descriptions of fences, as he labelled the same fence 'chock and dog-leg' and 'dog-leg' in adjoining portions he surveyed on the same day.

The single known extant example of a dog-leg fence (Figure 4) was built to form a paddock for mustering and holding wild unbranded cattle in the late 19th century on the Snowy River NSW (Pulsford 1991:31-32; Stephenson 1980:37). Originally described as a cockatoo fence by Pulsford, who found it, Pickard (2007:494-495) preferred calling it a dog-leg fence because of the crossed poles. A considerably neater dog-leg fence with the same structure was photographed, but not named, at an unknown location in southern NSW c. 1880 (Figure 5).



Figure 4a: Lateral view of dog-leg fence at Mt Trooper, south of Ingebyra, New South Wales, showing forked posts supporting logs laid head to butt. The second tier of logs rests in the crutch of the dog-legs, and one partly dislodged log remains. The log in the right foreground had been a second-tier log, but fell as the next pair of crossed poles collapsed.

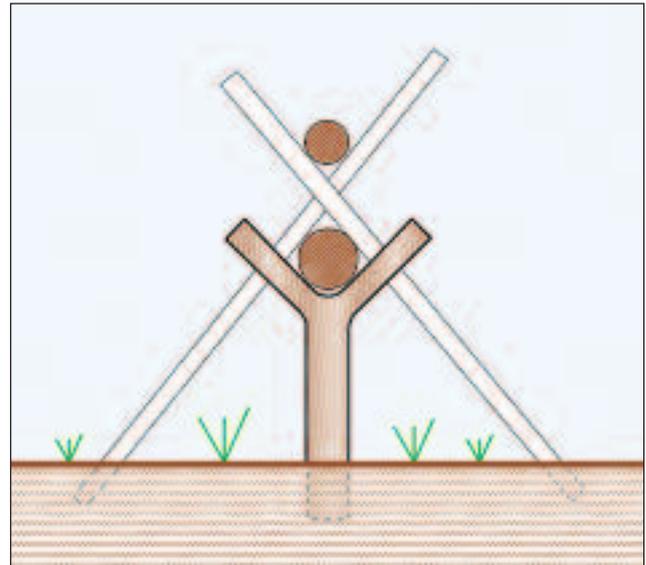


Figure 4b: Interpretation of the structure.

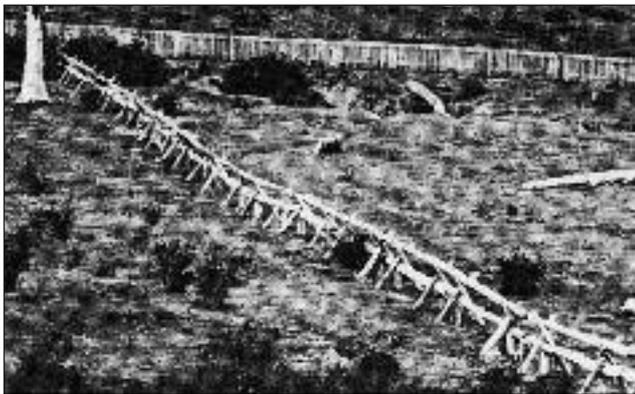


Figure 5: Dog-leg fence on 'a cleared property in Southern New South Wales, c. 1880' showing structure of forked posts supporting a lower log, and dog-legs supporting the second tier (Merritt and O'Brien 1985:5).

Buley (1905:33-34) clearly describes the structure of the dog-leg fences used by his generic selector:

A walk around the selection shows that its owner is master of every imaginable makeshift. Dog-leg fences, made of long saplings, supported on improvised and shaky trestles, run crookedly between the paddocks, inviting the stock to break through and stray.

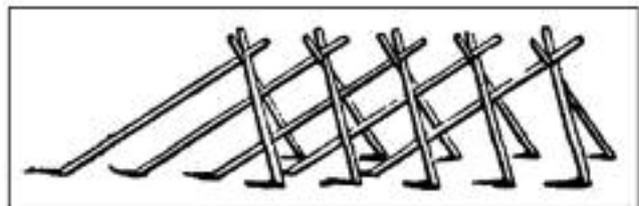


Dog-leg fence from New Zealand (Hargreaves 1965: Figure 2, p. 47)

One 1870s' description of a dog-leg fence in northern Tasmanian differs significantly from the usual Australian forms: 'the dog-leg fence, formed by crossing two short spars and leaning upon them, where they cross, a longer spar and so on' (Furlong 1982:96). This appears to match a dog-leg fence from New Zealand illustrated by Hargreaves (1965:147); and another made in 1862 described by Sherrard (1966:160-161) as having 'consisted of pairs of sticks crossed about three or four feet above ground level, each pair a foot from the next, with longer limbs slanting from the ground to rest in the crotches'. Hargreaves' diagram and Sherrard's description are identical with a so-called 'primitive paling fence' 'formed without nails or ties [sic] of any sort, by inserting the pales or stakes in the ground in different directions, by using forked or hooked stakes' (Loudon 1825:442) and used in Central Europe in the early 19th century (Figure 6).

Rolls' (1984:192) description of a dog-leg fence on *Upper Cumble Run* (north of Baradine NSW) in 1885 appears to be a different form again, but it incorporates the crossed poles:

These popular fences were based on short posts sunk about fifteen centimetres into the ground. Each panel was formed by butting a long rail against one of the upright posts and leaning its top on the next, then butting another long rail against the bottom of that post and leaning it on top of the first. They naturally crossed



"Primitive paling fence" from central Europe (Loudon 1825: Figure 389, p. 442).

Figure 6: Dog-leg fence from New Zealand and identical early primitive paling fence from central Europe.

in the middle of the panel. When similar rails were put in the adjacent panels, their ends crossed over the tops of the upright posts. Each upright post thus had rails butted against it on each side and rails leant on its top from each side. Other shorter rails were driven into the ground each side of the upright posts and leant towards the line of fence so that they crossed in the cross on top of each upright. More long rails were then lifted into the forks. These fences were as insubstantial as a tower of cards. Each rail supported and was supported.

It is difficult to see how this structure could be stable unless the posts were forked, and this is probably why Rolls (1984:192) considered them 'a tower of cards'.

Perhaps the most unusual use of dog-legs is to raise the height of a low dry stone wall. A single extant example is known, a wall erected in the mid-1880s near Jindabyne, New South Wales. A series of paired cut poles and single forks rests against the wall (Figure 7). Some are regularly spaced approx-

imately 4–5 m apart, and at least one fork still has a cut pole resting in its crutch. These poles and forks differ from random tree and branch falls which are generally crooked, often have branches attached, and have broken ends with no evidence of being cut with an axe. It is not possible to determine when the dog-legs and forks were added to the wall. They could have been incorporated during construction, or subsequently as cheap repairs. Meredith (1951:140) illustrates a similar structure from Virginia.

In summary, dog-legs were a quick and relatively easy way to increase the height of a low fence, or to stabilise an existing fence. Dog-leg fences were not zig-zag, but any of a range of generally log and brush fences with added dog-legs supporting a top rail. Using dog-legs allowed making maximum use of raw material from felled trees. The largest and longest logs were always on the bottom, whether on the ground, on chocks or on forked posts. The next largest were laid in the crutch of the dog-legs which were the smallest poles.



A truncated pair of dog-legs across a low part of the wall.

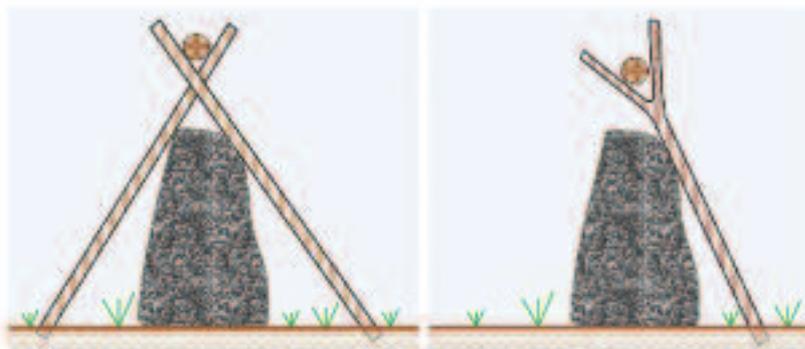


A cut fork resting across the wall still retains the cut pole that was originally supported by dog-legs at its uphill end.



Remains of four dog-legs (arrowed) ~ 5 m apart.

Ranging pole with 200 mm divisions.



Using dog-legs (*left*) and forks (*right*) to support a log above walls to increase the height of the fence, or to quickly repair a partially fallen wall.

Figure 7: Dog-legs and forks used to increase the height of a dry stone wall near Jindabyne, New South Wales.

## COCKATOO FENCES

Australia has many species of large cockatoos, and the sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) is one of the most well-known for its snowy white plumage, and yellow crest. It is found in large flocks from the northwest across the Top End, and down the east coast to Victoria and Tasmania. Its range extends from the coast to the slopes and plains, but not to the arid interior. It is a seed-eater, and can cause considerable damage to crops when large flocks descend *en masse* to dine on ripe wheat, oats or maize. Small-scale farmers who selected land from the domains of squatters were called cockatoos because they were regarded as similar predatory pests:

Cockatoo, *n.* (2) A small farmer, called earlier a *Cockatooer*. The name was originally given in contempt ... but it is now used by farmers themselves. *Cocky* is a common abbreviation ... After the gold fever, *circa* 1860, the selectors swarmed over the country and ate up the substance of the squatters; hence they were called *Cockatoos*. The word is also used adjectivally ...

Cockatoo, *v. int.* (1) To be a farmer. (Morris 1898:92-93; emphasis in original).

Morris' earliest example (1898:93) is a letter in the form of a poem *Shamrock Leaves* written in dog-Irish by a fictional Judith Phin to her cousin Bridget in Ireland 1863:

At last Oi took a notion that Oi'd lave the town and troy  
A short bout in the country, and so, Biddy, here am Oi;  
At Kilmore [Victoria], where at service Oi have nearly six months tarried,  
And there's little chance o' laving, as Oi'm going to be married,  
To what is termed a Cockatoo – which means a farmer – who  
Has lots o' land and milking cows, and pigs and poultry too (Beveridge 1863:154).

Forty years later, Buley (1905:32) offered a significantly different explanation, referring to the problems of being a small-scale farmer rather than their impact on squatters:

In the vernacular of the bush, the selector is a 'cockie,' and cockie is short for cockatoo farmer. He is a cockatoo farmer because he works early and late to clear a patch of ground and plough it. Then he sows his seed, only to wake at dawn the next day and find his field white with cockatoos, all busily devouring the grain. Those cockatoos are the only crop he has.

The *Australian National Dictionary* (Ramson 1998:153) has a similar definition 'small farmer', but adds specific information about its origins: 'orig. with reference to tenant farmers, brought from Sydney and settled in the Port Fairy [Victoria] district'. The earliest record is from 1845:

Most of the settlers on Mr Atkinson's special survey, either have or are about to flit; it appears that the agreement between 'Cockatoo settlers' and their landlord, was merely verbal. (*Standard* 13 August 1845:3/2 in Ramson 1998:153).

Morris (1898:93) also records the term from New Zealand in 1867. Sulphur-crested cockatoos are not native to New Zealand, apparently becoming feral in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries in a few places when caged Australian birds escaped. As the term had already been in New Zealand for several decades by then, it is likely that it migrated across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand as part of the vocabulary of Australian miners who flocked to the Otago gold rushes in their thousands in the 1860s. An additional

source would be from Australian squatters seeking greener or additional runs in New Zealand, and small selectors (already known as cockatoos), and dispirited ex-miners from Australia wanting to farm small blocks.

The trials and tribulations of selectors are the stuff of Australian legend, and feature strongly in literature: e.g. Steele Rudd's [Arthur Hoey Davis] *Dad and Dave* series including the classic *On our selection*, many of Henry Lawson's short stories, and Eric Jolliffe's *Saltbush Bill* cartoons (Pickard submitted). A common theme is the chronic shortage of money during the early years of trying to clear and develop the land for farms. With little money to spend on permanent improvements, selectors resorted to effective but short-lived expedients, relying on their own labour and available resources. Trees that had been cleared for farming were laid in lines for various forms of brush and log fences. Even squatters with deeper pockets who could afford better fences also used similar structures when first fencing their runs.

Because of their association with cockatoo farmers, many of these rough fences were labelled cockatoo fences. A possible, but perhaps unlikely, derivation may come from the similarity of men and cockatoos perched on the top rail of a fence: 'The correct thing, on first arriving at a drafting yard, is to 'cockatoo,' or to sit on the rails high above the tossing horn-billows' (Boldrewood 1890, volume 1:110). The top rail where both cockatoos and men perched could have become known as the cockatoo rail, and the term subsequently applied to fences with a top rail.

The problem with cockatoo fences is that the name was applied to quite different structures, and without an explicit description, it may be impossible to determine exactly what was meant (Table 1, Figure 8). The earliest dictionary definition (Morris 1898:93) provides no information on either structures or materials, just the owners. However, one of the sources Morris collected, 'Lyth' (1890:120) included materials (branches and logs) and their arrangement. The earliest known description (Tourle 1840) is rather cryptic, but seems to have forked posts (stods) supporting a rail at its core, with trees, logs and branches added, 'the rougher the better'. Anon (1861) provides both a clear description and engraving (Figure 8), but much of her information is suspect, and must be used carefully. Kaleski's (1910) photograph of his cockatoo fence stock-yard shows a rather flimsy-appearing fence of forked posts with dog-legs supporting poles (Figure 8). The structure is identical with the more robust fence described by Pulsford (1991:Figure 3.1) (Figure 8). Both are better described as dog-leg fences.

It is difficult to place much credence on Vernon's (1909:165) inclusion of cockatoo in his list of synonyms for snake fences. His book is primarily an English compilation from many unspecified sources, and his information on Australia is all derivative. His description of the structure and his engraving show a zig-zag fence with supporting posts at the bends (Figure 8). This carefully-made structure bears no resemblance to earlier Australian descriptions which emphasise the rough nature of the cockatoo fence.

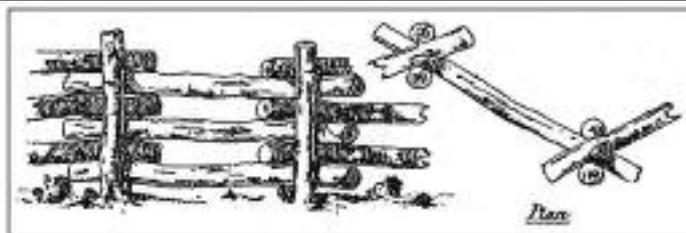
Unfortunately, Karney's (1991:3) account of fencing in 1870 is semi-fictionalised and it is difficult to know what is direct contemporary quotation and what is her interpretation or interpolation. A subsequent diary entry dated 28 May 1881 describes 'carting post and rails on the fence line', but Karney adds her interpretation: 'As the trees are felled some of the huge trunks are split longitudinally with maul and wedges into slabs for buildings or fencing. Others are piled together to make log fences; sometimes the branched ends of larger limbs are pronged together for greater stability, called cockatoo or fork-and-log fences' (1991:13-14). This interpretation is repeated in the glossary (1991:189), but is difficult to visualise.

**Table 1: Definitions and descriptions of cockatoo fences.**

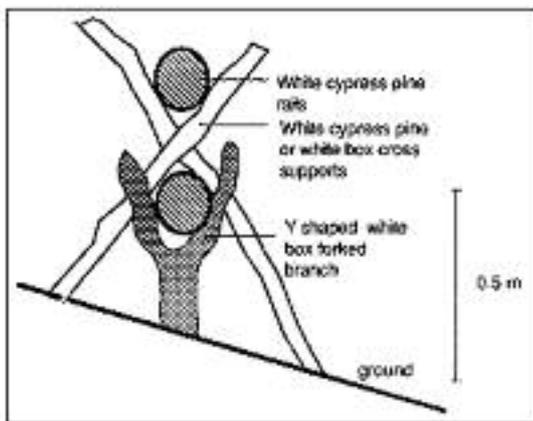
Source	Definition or description
Tourle (1840)	'Our Fencing is what is termed Cockatoo, ie Trees felled and rolled in line. A single Post & Rail with Boughs thrown in the fill up & c – The Rail lying in a Strod [a forked post] and the rougher [?] the better.'
Anon (1861:13)	'... a cockatoo fence, ... consists of forked sticks driven into the ground, and saplings or young trees laid across them. A second and shorter row is requisite, making it a two railed fence' (see Figure 8).
Karney (1991:3, 189)	'... in April 1870 the Crown Bailiff inspected his [William Mills'] land [at Balnarring on the Mornington Peninsula of Victoria] and reported that '165 pound worth of improvements had been effected, consisting of: 60 chains of log fencing, 180 chains of fork and log (or cockatoo) fencing' [and] 'Cockatoo fencing. Log fencing made of forked logs pronged together, also called fork-and-log.'
Pulsford (1991:31-32)	Cockatoo fence erected in 1880s (see Figure 8).
'Lyth' (1890:120)	'The fields were divided by open rails or cockatoo fences, i.e. branches and logs of trees laid on the ground one across the other, with posts and slip rails in lieu of gates.'
Morris (1893:93)	'Cockatoo Fence, n. fence erected by small farmers.'
Vernon (1909:165)	'Snake or Zigzag Fences, Cockatoo, or, as called in Australia, 'Drop Fences,' ... are still used in American and Australia.'
Kaleski (1910:63)	'the next thing to do is put up a 'cockatoo' fence stock-yard' (see Figure 8).
Edwards (1987:14)	Sketch of a 'fork-and-pole' fence of crossed light poles supporting equally light poles (see Figure 8).
Peterson (1988:10)	'Forks-and-poles fence (Cockatoo Fence or Zigzag Fence). A sapling was felled and the next length to the butt, about 9 (2500 mm) or 10 feet (3000 mm) is sawn off and put on one side for the corner post of the milking yard and another length is taken off to be 'run out' or split into rails (Palmer 1961). The residue of the tree was dragged away for use elsewhere on a brush fence. A fork trestle was formed every nine feet; a rail was placed inside the fork and another one placed on top. This was a regional variation, the 'brush and trestles' fence (with trestles of leaning poles or small logs). It was used for small yards (for example horse yards and milking yards), as it was timber-intensive' (see Figure 8).
Ramson (1998:154)	'A fence improvised from logs and branches.'



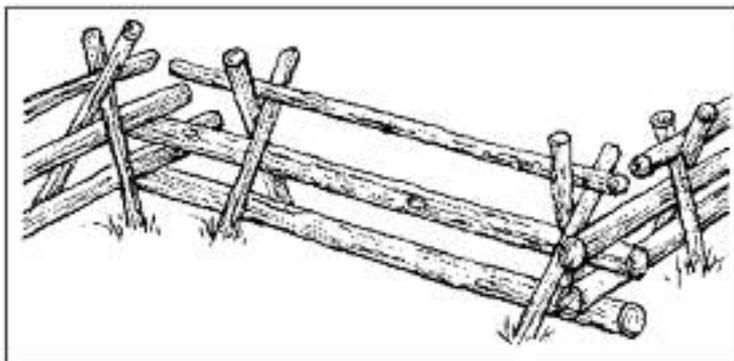
Anon (1861 frontispiece).



Vernon (1909: Figure 50 b. c).



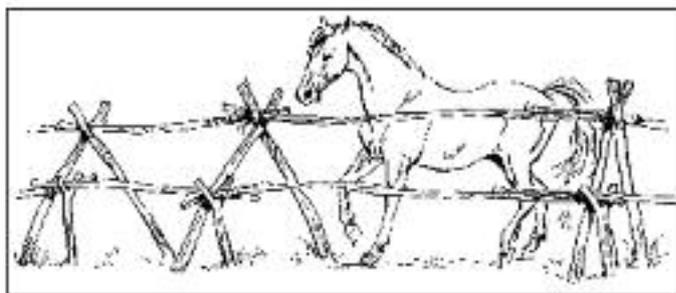
Pulsford (1991: Figure 3.1).



Peterson (1988: 10).



Cockatoo fence stockyard (Kaleski 1910: 62).



Edwards (1987: 14)

Figure 8: Comparison of diagrams of cockatoo fences.

Peterson's (1988:10) description and interpretative diagram are of a zig-zag fence with added dog-legs stabilising the structure at the bends, and raising the height with the top rail (Figure 8). The fork-and-pole fence of Edwards (1987:14) is flimsy like Kaleski's stockyard cockatoo fence, and incorporates dog-legs.

Summing up, there are multiple descriptions, illustrations and interpretations of a cockatoo fence, with no real way of determining which has historical priority, which was the most widespread, and indeed, if all these structures were termed 'cockatoo' by the builders and their contemporaries. The exception is Kaleski's photograph from 1910, and Anon's (1861:frontispiece, 13) engraving and description of entirely different structures. The examples show that many cockatoo fences incorporated dog-legs to either increase the height of the fence or to stabilise it. This suggests that fence builders adapted designs for what are now unclear reasons, but were most likely available materials and budgets.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dog-legs are vertical fencing components performing a similar function to posts: they support horizontal components – logs, poles or rails – to form the barrier of the fence. They can be used with a range of basic structures, including dry stone walls, to stabilise and increase the height of the fence. Consequently, a dog-leg fence should not be interpreted to mean a zig-zag (snake, Virginia, or worm) fence. Rather, it is a fence of various forms with pairs of dog-legs arranged across the fence, with a log or logs resting in the crutch where they cross. Historically, almost any fence with them was often referred to as a dog-leg fence regardless of the predominant structure of the fence (log, chock-and-log, brush, etc.).

Based on the various descriptions, cockatoo fence was a generally derisive term for any rough fence erected by impecunious or thrifty small settlers or cockatoo farmers. This is the sense of Morris' (1898:93) definition: 'fence erected by small farmers'. Such fences could include several forms of log and brush fences, various combinations of forks and poles, etc., but not the more permanent and expensive post-and-rail and chock-and-log fences. Some may be better described as dog-leg fences. In any event, cockatoo fence is merely a generic term for these rough fences rather than a specific structure. Like dog-leg fence, the term has its origins in colonial Australia.

Dog-leg and cockatoo fences were widespread and common in the initial stages of developing farms. They are recorded from most colonies and were used into the early years of the twentieth century. However, while dog-legs were accepted as components of fencing improvements under NSW lands legislation, cockatoo fences were not. Apparently they were regarded as too expedient and too impermanent.

Without expanded descriptions, interpreting early use of both terms is problematic. Although dog-legs were used with several basic structures, the term generally described any fence with crossed poles supporting a higher rail. If a more precise description is available, then this should be used. Cockatoo fences encompass a wider range of structures, including some with dog-legs. As before, more precise descriptions are better. In any event, modern readers should be cautious in assigning a specific structure to the term 'cockatoo fence'.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Ian Pulsford and Louis Kissajukian (The Antique Print Room) for permission to use their images. The State Library of Victoria granted permission to use Collins' photograph of a zig-zag fence.

## REFERENCES

- ANONYMOUS 1861 *Australian Settler's Hand Book. The Farm, being Practical Hints for the Inexperienced on the most Simple and Profitable Method of Cultivating their Land. Being the Result of many Years Experience in the Colony*, James W. Waugh, Sydney.
- ARMSTRONG, A.S. and G.O. CAMPBELL 1882 *Australian Sheep Husbandry: A Handbook of the Breeding and Treatment of Sheep and Station Management. With Concise Instructions for Tank and Well-sinking, Fencing, Dam-making etc.*, George Robertson, Melbourne.
- BEVERIDGE, M.K. 1863 *Gatherings among the Gum-Trees*, James Reid, Melbourne.
- BOLDREWOOD, Rolf, [Thomas Alexander Browne] 1890 *A Colonial Reformer*, Volume 1, Macmillan and Co., London.
- BRANDE, W.T. and G.W. COX (eds) 1867 *A Dictionary of Science, Literature & Art: Comprising the Definitions and Derivations of the Scientific Terms in General Use, together with the History and Descriptions of the Scientific Principles of Nearly Every Branch of Human Knowledge*, Volume III Poles – Zymotic, Longmans, Green & Co., London.
- BULEY, E.C. 1905 *Australian Life in Town and Country*, George Newnes Limited, London.
- COCKBURN, R. 1925 *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, Publishers Limited, Adelaide.
- EDWARDS, R. 1987 *Bushcraft 3. Making Do in the Bush*, The Rams Skull Press, Kuranda.
- FURLONG, C. 1982 *The Settler in Tasmania 1873–1879*, Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide.
- GORDON, P.R. 1865 'Sheep Farming. No. III', *The Brisbane Courier* (7 December 1865):3.
- GORDON, P.R. 1867 *Fencing as a Means of Improving our Pasture Lands and its Advantages to the Stock-owners and the Colony, with Suggestions for a Fencing Bill, and the Improvement of Pasture by Means of Sapping*, William Maddock, Sydney.
- HARGREAVES, R.P. 1965 'Farm Fences in Pioneer New Zealand', *New Zealand Geographer* 21:144-155.
- HILL, R. and F. HILL 1875 *What We Saw in Australia*, Macmillan & Company, London.
- JUMBUCK [Patrick R. Gordon] '1868 Fencing', *The Brisbane Courier* (17 October 1868):6.
- KALESKI, R. 1910 *The Australian Settler's Guide*, Anthony Hordern & Sons, Sydney.
- KARNEY, M. 1991 *No Rugged Landscape*, Loch Haven Books, Dromana.
- LEWIS, M. 2003 *Australian Building: A Cultural Investigation*. Section 2.1 Bark. Online, <http://mileslewis.net/australian-building>
- LOUDON, J.C. 1825 *An Encyclopaedia of Agriculture; Comprising the Theory and Practice of the Valuation, Transfer, Laying Out, Improvement, and Management of Landed Property; and the Cultivation and Economy of the Animal and Vegetable Productions of Agriculture, including all the Latest Improvements; a General History of Agriculture in all Countries; and a Statistical View of its Present State, with Suggestions for its Future Progress in the British Isles*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London.
- LYTH [Kathleen Lambert] 1890 *The Golden South. Memories of Australian Home Life from 1843 to 1888*, Ward & Downey, London.

- MARTIN, G.A. 1892 *Fences, Gates and Bridges. A Practical Manual*, Orange Judd Company, New York.
- MEREDITH, M.J. 1951 'The Nomenclature of American Pioneer Fences', *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 15:109-151.
- MERRITT, A. and C. O'BRIEN 1985 *The Striding Years. Squatters and Selectors in 19th Century Australia*, CCH Australia Limited, North Ryde, New South Wales.
- MORRIS, E.E. 1898 *Austral English. A Dictionary of Australasian Words Phrases and Usages with those Aboriginal-Australian and Maori Words which have become Incorporated in the Language and the Commoner Scientific Words that have had their Origin in Australasia*, Macmillan and Co, London.
- NEW SOUTH WALES 1887 'Crown Lands Act of 1884. (Classes of Fencing and Amended Regulations Nos. 97, 33, and 134)', *Journal of the Legislative Council of New South Wales* 1887 (Second Session) (1):471.
- PALMER, H. 1961 *Fencing Australia*, Longmans, Melbourne.
- PETERSON, R. 1988 *Fences and Gates c. 1840-1925*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne.
- PICKARD, J. 2007 'Australian Rural Fences: Heritage Challenges for Conserving the Unconservable', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 13 (6):489-510.
- PICKARD, J. 2010 *Lines across the Landscape: History, Impact and Heritage of Australian Rural Fences*, PhD thesis, Macquarie University.
- PICKARD, J. (submitted) 'Fencing with *Saltbush Bill*: An Assessment of Historical Information in Eric Jolliffe's Cartoons', *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*.
- PULSFORD, I.F. 1991 *History of Disturbance in the White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*) Forests of the Lower Snowy River Valley, Kosciusko National Park*, MSc thesis. Australian National University.
- RAMSON, W.S. 1998 *The Australian National Dictionary: A Dictionary of Australianisms on Historical Principles*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- ROLLS, E.C. 1984 *A Million Wild Acres*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria.
- SALAMAN, R.A. 1975 *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools c. 1700-1970 and Tools of Allied Trades*, Unwin Hyman, London.
- SHAW, W. 1854 *The Land of Promise; or, My Impressions of Australia. By the Author of 'Golden Dreams and Waking Realities'*, Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., London.
- SHERRARD, J.M. 1966 *Kaikoura. A History of the District*, Kaikoura County Council, Kaikoura.
- STEPHENSON, H. 1980 *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains*, H. Stephenson, Armadale.
- STONE, D.I. and D.S. GARDEN 1984 *Squatters and Settlers*, Popular Books, Frenchs Forest, New South Wales.
- TOURLE, T. 1839-1841 *Letterbooks 1839-1841*. Manuscript reference no. NLA MS 18, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- VERNON, A. 1909 *Estate Fences: Their Choice, Construction and Cost*, Spon, London.