
The writing of this essay was funded as part of The Kurna Project 2015-7 (coordinator Rob Amery) by the Commonwealth of Australia Ministry for the Arts through its Indigenous Languages and Arts (Languages) program.

I am grateful to Gavin Malone for enthusiastically sharing with me his library research and on-the-ground investigations around the Willunga Basin; and for his encouragement.

This and other essays may be downloaded free of charge from <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp/placenames/research-publ/>

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.04.02/02

WILANGGA or WILA-WILANGGA (at Willunga)

(last edited: 24.2.2017)

Abstract

Willangga (*Wilangga* in KWP's New Spelling 2010) is the Kurna name of a campsite area on Sections 258 and 248 where today's Wirra Creek and another small watercourse emerge from the hills at Willunga town, probably centring around the best waterholes on Wirra Creek in the 700 metres upstream from St Peters Tce.

The name was first recorded in 1837 by Interim Protector Wyatt, who identified "Willa willunga" as part of "Rodney's country, Onkaparinga to Willunga" (referring to Ivarityi's father, Ityamaitpinna).

Louis Piesse (a worker on the first survey team in 1839, which also employed Kurna-speaking men) recorded its location as "Section 258, District C", the site of the original town (from St Peters Tce south to about Church St and Kirk St, and from St Andrews Tce east to about St James St).

The name *might* mean 'place of dust'; but the root *wila* could also be an unknown but similar noun, or (like many place-names) it might have no dictionary meaning. Wyatt's version (probably obtained from Mullawirraburka) is Reduplicative and might mean 'place of much dust'. This meaning is possible though uncertain, and we do not know what the 'dust' would signify culturally or otherwise at this leafy location.

While the site is centred on the permanent pools on Section 258 in the creek between St James St and St Peters Tce, there was also good water further upstream on Wirra Creek in 702. Half a km away just upstream from Waverley Homestead, there was more on the northern tributary which joins Wirra Creek on Section 248; and a few hundred metres west near St Marys St, another spring-fed watercourse once ran.

The place was strategically located for Aboriginal travellers: a well-watered stop with abundant food sources, on the foothills between the plains on the northwest and a range crossing at

Willunga Hill for travel to and from the southern Fleurieu, Encounter Bay or the Lakes. This was especially so after late 1839 when the colony surveyed a new road to Encounter Bay via Willunga Hill and what is now Mt Compass, and made Willunga the site of a police station, supply depot, a township, and for a while a ration station for Aborigines. However, it seems reasonably clear that before 1839 this was not the preferred route to the south for either Aboriginal or European travellers; this followed (roughly) the Main South Rd through Aldinga and over the range at Sellicks Hill.¹

The flat area between the two creeks (part of today's Willunga Golf Course) may have served for a corroboree ground.

There is no linguistic or historical credibility in the claim that the name means 'place of green trees', 'scrubby place', or the like; nor in Tindale's attempt to relate it to *wilya* 'foliage'; nor in NA Webb's speculation that it is derived from *willi* 'chest'.

The same or similar name was applied to a site on Brownhill Creek at Mitcham, but there it was recorded only in the Reduplicative form (see PNS 2/16 Willawilla).

Coordinates	Latitude -35.27237°, Longitude 138.559109 [on Wirra Creek between St Peters Tce and St James St]
--------------------	---

Language Information

Meaning	possibly 'place of dust'; possibly also 'place of much dust'
Etymology	<i>wila</i> [possibly meaning 'dust'] + <i>ngga</i> 'at, place of'; also <i>wilawila</i> [possibly meaning 'much dust'] + <i>ngga</i> 'at'
Notes	Alternative forms are <i>Wila</i> (without the Locative suffix) and <i>Wila-wilangga</i> (Reduplicative). If 'dust' is the correct etymology, its significance in this place is unknown. However, we cannot be sure that <i>wila</i> here has a dictionary meaning at all, nor (if so) that it is the word for 'dust'.
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kurna'
KWP Former Spelling	Willangga, Willa-wilangga, Willa
KWP New Spelling 2010	Wilangga, Wila-wilangga, Wila
Phonemic Spelling	/wiLangka/, /wiLawiLangka/ /wiLa/
Syllabification	"Wi-langga", "Wila-wilangga":
Pronunciation tips	Stress the first syllable (and the third in Reduplicative form). 'a' as in Maori 'haka'.

¹ See PNS 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla and 4.04.03/03 Kurtandilla.

Main source evidence

<i>Date</i>	[Sep 1837] / 1879
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>"NAMES OF PLACES, &c...</p> <p>...Ungke perre, Ungke perringga – Field's River, Onkaparinga.</p> <p>Kerno –</p> <p>Warrekillla –</p> <p>Willa willungga –</p> <p>Kurra mooroo –</p> <p>Weeningga –</p> <p>Kurra e wurre –</p> <p>Auldingga –</p> <p style="margin-left: 150px;">} Rodney's country, from Onkaparinga to Willunga, and south of it.</p> <p style="margin-left: 150px;">} Aldinga..."</p>
<i>Reference</i>	William Wyatt [1837] / 1879, 'Some account of the manners and superstitions of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay tribes', in J.D. Woods [ed.] 1879, <i>The Native Tribes of South Australia</i> , Adelaide: Government Printer: 179.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka ('Onkaparinga Jack', 'King John') and his family, Sep 1837.

<i>Date</i>	[Nov 1838] / n.d.
<i>Original source text</i>	"Rodney of Willunga " <i>[on the back of the painting]</i>
<i>Reference</i>	Martha Berkeley painting of Governor Gawler's feast for Adelaide Aborigines, 1 Nov 1838; as quoted in Tom Gara 1998, 'The Life and Times of Mullawirraburka', in Simpson & Hercus 1998, <i>History In Portraits</i> , Canberra, Aboriginal History Monograph 6: 101.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Probably Martha's husband Captain Charles Berkeley, later of SA police force.

<i>Date</i>	1839
<i>Original source text</i>	"Wil-lah – dust".
<i>Reference</i>	William Williams 1839, <i>A Vocabulary of the Language of the Aborigines of the Adelaide District</i> , Adelaide: <i>South Australian Colonist</i> 1 (19): 295-296.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants, Adelaide 1836-9



Date	July-Aug 1839
Original source text	<p>- “23rd July. Mr. Morehouse and I had set this morning at 9 o'clock on our departure for Encounter Bay or Wirramu... WaūwitpiNa [= <i>Waūwitpinna</i>], who had promised to accompany us now refused to go and only after a long angry exchange trying to convince him we, in addition to him, took a young man along because Wauwitpinna was unwilling to go alone... We left Adelaide about 12 O' clock...</p> <p>24th July... After we had gone about 4 miles, we came to the surveyor at Ngankiparringa where we were received in a very friendly manner by Mr MacLaren. Since he was just then handling survey work at Kanjanjapilla we put our packs on his carts which brought them 7 miles further since the named place was so far from the old place. We should have proceeded on this same day from Kanjanjapilla to Willanga where the governor had his tent. The only problem was that the ship [<i>?carriage</i>] in which they were to bring him was finished only that night...</p> <p>25th July. Shortly before daybreak we loaded our packs on the horses to go to Willanga which we would have found only with difficulty had not the aborigines discovered in the distance the smoke of a fire. Just at that time the governor was absent but a hearty breakfast compensated for this diversion. From here to Mount Terrible we followed the leading of our aborigines with no path to follow. We simply were amazed at their knowledge of the land, water, and winding creeks and the like...”</p> <p>- [<i>on the return journey</i>] “2nd August. After we had walked again for about 3 hours following our tracks these led us to a known locality and finally to the camp site of the governor. This time we did meet him and after he had provided a good breakfast for us, he conversed with us in a most friendly manner... We left Willanga about 11 o'clock in heavy rain and arrived once again wet and exhausted at about 7 p.m. to the place where had passed our first night [<i>Kanyanyapilla</i>]. My feet were so sore and painful that I had to travel the last four miles barefoot...”</p>
Reference	Clamor Schürmann diary 23-25 July, 2 Aug 1839, S90-91; translated from the German by Geoffrey Noller, except Aboriginal words transcribed by C Schultz with assistance of Lois Zweck. Microfilm copy of original MS held in Adelaide Lutheran Archives and Barr Smith Library; Noller translation in Lutheran Archives.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Wauwitpinna, the guide from Adelaide; surveyors at Kanyanyapilla (who may have included a Kurna guide); probably also John McLaren.

Date	n.d. [Sep-Oct? 1839]
Original source text	<p>- [p.27] "Water" [marked on boundary of Section 248/703 on <u>northern</u> creek running into 248]; "Police station" [on Section 258]; "gully, Water" [on Section 702 on <u>southern</u> ck = today's Wirra Creek].</p> <p>- [p.35] "Willunga" [marked on Section 258 = original Willunga town]</p> <p>- [p.38] "good water" [along Wirra Creek on 258]; "good water / Vally" [along Wirra Creek on 702-701].</p>
Reference	R Counsel 1839, Field Book 102, Hundred of Willunga (GNU): 27, 35, 38.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kaurna survey guides

Date	Oct 1839
Original source text	" Will-un-ga – the police and post station at the foot of the hills on the new road to Encounter Bay."
Reference	Louis Piesse letter 18/10/1839 to <i>Adelaide Guardian</i> , reprinted in <i>SA Colonist</i> Vol. 1(19), 1840: 296, http://www.nla.gov.au/ferg/issn/1461426X.html .
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kaurna survey guides 1839

Date	[1839] / 1840
Original source text	<p>- "Willunga" [in Section 258].</p> <p>- "good Water" [on Wirra Creek in Section 258, extending into [702] to east].</p> <p>- "marshy" [stipples around another partial creek line running northwest in mid-western part of 258 & extending into 257].</p>
Reference	FH Burslem 1840, 'Plan of the country south of Adelaide from O'Halloran Hill to Mt. Terrible... as surveyed by J. McLaren...', Survey Office, Adelaide (State Library of SA, C 236). This information is included (simplified and approximate) on published J McLaren map 1/9/1840, 'Country South of Adelaide...' London: J Arrowsmith (BRG 42/120/28, State Library of SA), online at http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/BRG+42/120/28 .
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kaurna survey guides 1839 for the name.

Date	[Oct 1839] / 1840
Original source text	" Will-un-ga – the police and post station at the foot of the hills on the new road to Encounter Bay."
Reference	Louis Piesse letter 18/10/1839 from "Camp, Coortandillah, near Aldinga" to <i>Adelaide Guardian</i> , reprinted in <i>SA Colonist</i> 1(19), 14/7/1840: 296, http://www.nla.gov.au/ferg/issn/1461426X.html .
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kaurna survey guides



<i>Date</i>	Nov 1839
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>- “Nov 15th [1839]... One of the Govt Leatter[?] from Willonga [sic] will take out as much provision on with them as they can carry - & start at the same time as the teams for the Expedition of the Governor – There are at present <u>two</u> drays in from Willonga of which one will go on with the party – A Bell Tent of the <u>smallest</u> description to be made for the use of the Govt Bullock Driver at Willonga Also another for the Horse Team...”</p> <p>- “Nov 27th ... A cart exported by Mr McLaren have been left at the Unkaparinga When to be brought in & repaired & also sent out to Willonga.”</p> <p>- “4 Labourers wanted for Sgt Forrests party at Currency Creek – also 3 for Mr Calder’s road party at Willonga...”</p>
<i>Reference</i>	Counsel & Loveday n.d. [1839-55], Field Book 99 (GNU): no pagination [22a-b, 24a, 25a].
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna survey guides 1839.

<i>Date</i>	1840
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>- “Willa-ngga, Willunga”.</p> <p>- “Willawilla, Brown Hill Creek”.</p>
<i>Reference</i>	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840, <i>Outlines of a Grammar...</i> , Adelaide, 2:76.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc 1838-40

<i>Date</i>	Aug-Oct 1840
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>- [during his first journey to Encounter Bay] “On Friday the 21st of August we commenced our journey by horse or rather by pony, and in good time reached Willonga, which is a small settlement and a kind of summer residence for the Governor. This place is considered the halfway point on the way to Encounter Bay, and is reckoned to be 28 English miles from Adelaide...”</p> <p>- [after returning to Adelaide and planning how to take his wife to Encounter Bay] ... we did not wish to drive the whole way, but only half of the distance from W[illunga] to E[ncounter] B[ay], in order that Brother Klose, the driver of the cart, could cover a good part of the return journey and arrive back in Willong_ again on the third day... On Wednesday the 10th [October] we commenced our journey...”</p>
<i>Reference</i>	HAE Meyer to Dresden Mission Society, 11 Dec 1840, in Meyer, H A E, Correspondence with the Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden 1839-1850; draft translation from the German by Heidi Kneebone, Cynthia Rathjen, Sandy Martin and Lois Zweck (Adelaide Lutheran Archives); except Aboriginal words transcribed from the MS by C Schultz.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	For name ‘Willonga’, probably Governor Gawler, 17 Dec 1840.



<i>Date</i>	[1839] / 1844
<i>Original source text</i>	“WILLUNGA TO ENCOUNTER BAY.—THE ROAD... The pass over the range here is the best pass along the range. The road to the Bay previously was over Mount Terrible to what is now called the Black Bridge in Myponga and thence over a very hilly country to the head of Hind-marsh Valley, and the present pass was decided on by Governor Gawler and Captain Sturt, after diligent search, in 1839. The old road went as near as possible by the "native pad" from Encounter Bay to the Onkaparinga. I think the predilection of the natives for their route may be accounted for by the fact that water can be more frequently obtained, and that they had not to pass so large a tract of scrub, and consequently could sooner fall on good country abounding in game... The road has been partially cleared and levelled, which was executed under the orders of Mr Calder (then a Surveyor but now of the Customs) and who, I believe, laid out the whole of the road after the pass had been decided on by Governor Gawler. The road is very imperfect on the range and but temporary...”
<i>Reference</i>	‘L.P.’ [= Louis Piesse] 1844b, ‘ Descriptive Tours In South Australia ’, <i>Adelaide Observer</i> 16/3/1844: 7a-b, http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/18834055?zoomLevel=1 .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna survey guides 1839

<i>Date</i>	[1839] / 1844
<i>Original source text</i>	“ Willunga (properly Willa) being Section No. 258, ‘C’ on the maps. This township is favourably situate, being at the foot of the Ironstone Range, where there is the best known pass over the Range, and having the high road to the Southern Districts passing through it. Not a dray passes to Myponga, Bungala, Yankalillah, Rapid Bay, or Encounter Bay, but calls at Willunga. As a town, however, Willunga exists more in name than in reality. There are hut two brick buildings in it,—the Inn and Atkinson’s Barn. These are four huts belonging to the Government, and two or three other little places belonging to private settlers... The first entry in my journal at Willunga, in 1839, is, — ‘I have just seen the sun set as beautiful as if I was at sea... The forest resounds with the strange sound of the axe, a family of the children of Nature are emerging therefrom coming towards me, and my faithful dog warns me of their approach * * * Such is the bush at Willunga.’”
<i>Reference</i>	‘L.P.’ [= Louis Piesse] 1844b, ‘ Descriptive Tour Through Part Of District "C" ’, <i>Adelaide Observer</i> 13/4/1844: 7b-c, http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/18834087 .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna survey guides 1839

Discussion: *WILANGGA*: SURVEYORS, ABORIGINES, WATER, TREES, AXES:

THE PLACE (1): A HISTORY OF HOW IT BECAME KNOWN TO EUROPEANS:

It has been thought that this place first came to European attention in June 1837 when Fisher and Light's expedition reached "the foot of the ranges, where the town of Willunga has been since erected", and then (allegedly) turned back to Adelaide. But this is an error based on careless second-hand reportage written fifty years later.² In fact Light's party – like every other party of settlers until 1839 – used the route via Aldinga and Mt Terrible (Sellicks Hill), and he did not turn back but continued on to Encounter Bay.

Likewise three months later, Interim Protector William Wyatt and Advocate-General Charles Mann also bypassed the place as they headed for "a very high hill" leading to "Mipunga". They were travelling south to investigate a murder at Encounter Bay, guided by "Onkaparinga Jack" and his family.³ This man was in fact Mullawirraburka, later known as 'King John'. The party walked south from the "Onkeperinga" or "Ungke perre",⁴ following the standard route which approximates today's main South Road. They were passing through some of Mullawirraburka's own country: *Ngaltingga* and later *Maitpangga*.⁵ It seems he was pointing out to them a number of places which were the "country" of another Adelaide identity who had made himself known at the Native Location in Adelaide: "Rodney" (as we now know, he was Ityamaitpinna, father of Ivaritji); acknowledging Rodney's ownership. "Rodney's country", according to Wyatt, extended "from Onkaparinga to Willunga", and perhaps also "south of it".⁶ One of his places in the distance unspecified was "Willa willungga".

² JW Bull 1878, *Early Experiences Of Colonial Life In South Australia*, [1st edition] Adelaide: Advertiser and Chronicle Offices: 18. Bull says this was "after passing Aldinga", which means that they were heading not for Willunga Hill but Sellick's Hill, by the direct route which was universal for colonists until 1839. I know of no Europeans who used the Willunga-Mt Compass route until it was surveyed as a 'new road' in 1839, after which it was underdeveloped and perilous for many more years. Bull did not arrive in the colony until May 1838, and wrote this passage long after Willunga township had become the familiar focus of southward travel. Light's alleged detour to Willunga is probably Bull's careless extrapolation from his informant's 'foot of the ranges'.

³ Charles Mann 1837, 'General Description of The Country from Adelaide to Encounter Bay', BRG 42/52: 2-3; Wyatt to JC Mathews in *South Australian Record* 1(8), 8/8/1838): 83c; Wyatt to Hindmarsh 22 Sep 1837, GRG 24/1/1837/373. For a full account of this expedition see my history *Feet On the Fleurieu* (in progress 2016).

⁴ Mann's and Wyatt's spelling respectively of *Ngangkiparringga* or 'Onkaparinga' River.

⁵ See Moorhouse Report 27/7/1840, 'Papers Relative to SA... 1843', *BPP Australia* Vol. 7: 354.

⁶ Wyatt [1837] / 1879, 'Some account of the manners and superstitions of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay tribes', in J.D. Woods [ed.] 1879, *The Native Tribes of South Australia*, Adelaide: Government Printer: 179. The spellings 'Onkaparinga' and 'Willunga' were no doubt added to this record later, when these had become the standard colonial forms. The grammar of Wyatt's record is unclear. A list of six names is bracketed under the heading "*Rodney's country, from Onkaparinga to Willunga, and south of it*". Does this mean 'Rodney's country (from Onkaparinga to Willunga); and south of his country'? OR 'Rodney's country (which extends from Onkaparinga to Willunga and south of Willunga)'? I incline to the latter; which means we do not know the southern border of Rodney's country, because we have no exact locations for any of the other five names in this list.

No more was heard about this place until April 1839. Governor Gawler was extremely keen to get the land sales moving, and initially headed the first Country Surveys himself, from the sacking of Kingston until the arrival of Captain Sturt as Surveyor-General in February 1839. Then in April he, Sturt and Chief Surveyor John McLaren personally surveyed an alternative route which would avoid that “formidable obstacle” of Mt Terrible.⁷ They found such a route over the range via this gentler hill further north, continuing through what is now Mt Compass and Mt Jagged, and joining the old route at the valley of the Hindmarsh River.⁸ As the surveys proceeded southward from the Onkaparinga River, the approach to this route, in the foothills at Section 258, was immediately chosen as a site for a ‘halfway’ stop with an area reserved to the government for a police station and supply depot, and neighbouring allotments advertised for a township with an inn. By July at the latest it was known that the Aboriginal guides employed by the survey department called this place “Willanga”⁹ or “Willunga”.¹⁰

These actions ensured that from mid-1839 ‘Willunga’ would become the standard landmark watering place and stopover for colonists on the way south; in fact, the only one in the area which most of them knew. It immediately and permanently eclipsed the *Kanyanyapilla* and ‘Aldinga’ stopovers on the due south route which had previously been used by several parties under Aboriginal guidance; and in Adelaide eyes it soon replaced Mt Terrible as the perceived ‘halfway’ point to Encounter Bay.

German missionary linguist Clamor Schürmann wrote the earliest record attaching the name to a place. He had come to South Australia in 1838 as a shipmate of Governor Gawler, holding many a conversation about Aboriginal affairs and rights. In July 1839 he was on his way to Encounter Bay on foot, guided by an unnamed Aboriginal youth and Wauwitpinna (one of his most informative contacts at the Native Location in Adelaide).¹¹ They travelled south from the ford *Ngangkiparingga*, helped out by a chance meeting with McLaren, and sheltered for the night with surveyors at “Kanjanjapilla”¹² before seeking out Gawler at a place called “Willanga” where (Schürmann knew) “the Governor had set up his tent”. No doubt Gawler had briefed him about the place and possibly its name before he set out; or perhaps Wauwitpinna gave him the name. This area was then partly

⁷ James Hawker 1899, *Early Experiences in South Australia*, Adelaide, ES Wigg & Son: 39-40; Sturt 1849, ‘A Notice of... South Australia in 1847’, in *Narrative of an Expedition to Central Australia*, 2:224.

⁸ See Statistical Society 1841, Report On Roads And Bridges, *SA Register* 25/12/1841: 3, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27443063/2050221>; and ‘L.P.’ [Louis Plesse] 1844a, ‘Descriptive Tours In South Australia’, *Adelaide Observer* 16/3/1844: 7a-b, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/158918330/18834055>.

⁹ Schürmann diary 24 July 1839 (see below).

¹⁰ Richard Counsel 1839, Field Book 102: 63, and later maps based on it. For Aboriginal survey guides in 1839 see *SA Register* 10/8/1839: 6a, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27440703/2049497>.

¹¹ This name is given as “*Wattewattipinna*” in Ted Schumann’s published version of the diary (EA Schumann, *I’d Rather Dig Potatoes*, Adelaide, Lutheran Publishing House: 56). This book uses Hans Spoeri’s translation of the diary, in which many of the Aboriginal words are mis-transcribed. “*Wauwitpinna*” is my own transcription from the MS, aided by Lois Zweck. *Wauwitpinna* means ‘father of the female kangaroo’, referring to a daughter and probably a shared totem.

¹² *Kanyanyapilla*. Schürmann, as a German, uses ‘j’ to represent the sound of a consonantal ‘y’. See PNS 4.03.03/03.

forested; Schürmann's diary gives us some idea how wild and remote it appeared to newcomers like him:

24th July... After we had gone about 4 miles, we came to the surveyor at Ngankiparringa where we were received in a very friendly manner by Mr MacLaren. Since he was just then handling survey work at Kanjanjapilla we put our packs on his carts which brought them 7 miles further since the named place was so far from the old place. We should have proceeded on this same day from Kanjanjapilla to Willanga where the governor had his tent. The only problem was that the ship¹³ in which they were to bring him was finished only at night so the people refused to bring it there under the pretence that they would not be able to find it in the darkness since they did not know the way. They let us sleep in a tent except that the cold soon had me seeking the fire whose beneficent warmth allowed me to spend the night in comfort. 25th July. Shortly before daybreak we loaded our packs on the horses to go to Willanga which we would have found only with difficulty had not the aborigines discovered in the distance the smoke of a fire. Just at that time the governor was absent but a hearty breakfast compensated for this diversion. From here to Mount Terrible we followed the leading of our aborigines with no path to follow. We simply were amazed at their knowledge of the land, water, and winding creeks and the like.¹⁴

This is the only record I know of a journey by this route. Possibly it used the complete series of creeklets along the scarp whose names Piesse was collecting from survey guides in the same year,¹⁵ or perhaps it climbed the steep ridge of Loud's Hill 4 km from Wilangga.¹⁶ From Mt Terrible the journey continued like others before them, over the range into Myponga valley and via Hindmarsh Tiers to "Murta Creek" (Hindmarsh Valley).

Returning on August 1st with only the youth for a guide, Schürmann was the first of many to record the dismal dangers and hardships of the 'great Sandy Basin' around Mt Compass:

[W]e had to make our way more than half the return journey through high grass, bushes and undergrowth, guided only by the tracks of horses that had gone ahead of us. If we had not had the aboriginal young man with us who could track the horses over grass and stones we could very well have wandered around possibly for days in the outwardly desolate mountains. We could see neither sun nor mountains because of the fog and rain... [W]e came to a swamp and we were forced to be satisfied with rain water which dripped from leaves and twigs... without any protection of any kind against the cold wind and rain... 2nd August. After we had walked

¹³ Probably 'carriage'.

¹⁴ Schürmann diary 24-5 July 1839, translated by Geoffrey Noller (Lutheran Archives) except for Aboriginal words transcribed by C Schultz.

¹⁵ See 'L.P.' [Louis Piesse] 1844b, 'Descriptive Tour Through Part Of District C', *Adelaide Observer* 13/4/1844: 7c. Southwest from Wilangga he lists seven "little rivulets" from "Piltongga" to "Mount Terrible Gully", including Mullawirraburka's own site "Mulawerungga" – about which the custodian had chosen to keep silent during Wyatt's journey, though they must have passed within a mile of it.

¹⁶ Louds Hill was certainly in use as a route to Mt Terrible in the 1850s (see Yelland 1980, *Colonists, Copper and Corn*: 39-40).

again for about 3 hours following our tracks these led us to a known locality and finally to the camp site of the governor. This time we did meet him and after he had provided a good breakfast for us, he conversed with us in a most friendly manner... We left Willunga about 11 o'clock in heavy rain and arrived once again wet and exhausted at about 7 p.m. to the place where had passed our first night.¹⁷ My feet were so sore and painful that I had to travel the last four miles barefoot.¹⁸

On their way south Wauwitpinna and Schürmann had approached “Willunga” from the northwest. Probably their main hindrance in locating it was a “thickly timbered” area in “the last mile to the depot”, as described by surveyor James Hawker and shown in Richard Counsel’s Field Books from that year, and the maps based on them.¹⁹ Future travellers would not have Schürmann’s difficulty, for within a few months of Schürmann’s trip, Hawker and his crew were dynamiting and axe-felling this stretch of forest because it obstructed the proposed line of road from McLaren Vale to Willunga; and in the wave of farmers that followed, the first priority was to clear the land. The first casualties were Hawker’s famous three-foot stumps which so annoyed the early wagon drivers.²⁰

The first road line up Willunga Hill was not regarded as a good enough solution: it was still much steeper than the Department wished. “Instructions came for me to examine the country through the ranges, and try and find a crossing less precipitous than the present one at Willunga”.²¹ The problem took many years to resolve, and hindered the development and use of the new route.

The name ‘Willunga’ first appeared in public in October as an advertisement for property in this neighbourhood, under the heading “Waste Lands”.²² By December the agents were advertising “WILLUNGA.—The new half-way Town to Encounter Bay, Currency Creek &c”. “The Government Police Station and Store are already erected”, and a proprietor was sought to build an Inn. The notice emphasized that there was “water all the year round, and the Stringy-Bark Forest within one mile”. Though halfway up the hill and over the crest, these trees were essential building timber,

¹⁷ i.e. Kanyanyapilla.

¹⁸ Schürmann diary 2 Aug 1839, Noller translation.

¹⁹ Hawker 1899: 52b; and see Sections 227-8?, 237-8, 247-8 in Counsel Field Book 102: 27 (cp. FH Burslem 1840, ‘Plan of the country south of Adelaide from O’Halloran Hill to Mt. Terrible’, Adelaide Survey Office, SLSA C236; McLaren 1840, ‘Country South of Adelaide from O’Halloran Hill to Mt Terrible’, London, Arrowsmith).

²⁰ ‘Hawker’s stumps’ were not at Stump Hill Rd just northwest of McLaren Vale, as local folklore has it. See Hawker 1899 1:46a, 52b, 58b and 2:15a-b. Hawker’s adventures with this piece of road make good reading and tell us much about what happened to the land here in that year: “Colonel Gawler made frequent visits to the country with the view to having the surveys pushed on as rapidly as possible in the rich pasture lands...I was instructed to survey and clear a line of road from the Horseshoe to a police station and depot about to be formed where Willunga township is now located” (p.46a). “The last mile to the depot was thickly timbered, so my camp had to be moved [from McLaren Vale] to the edge of the Depot Creek, where we could get water. We then worked back and cut the heavy timber off, according to instructions, about three feet from the ground, and these stumps remained until the Township of Willunga was surveyed” (p.52b).

²¹ Hawker 1899: 58b.

²² SA Register 5/10/1839: 4a, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27440869/2049548>.

many of them also destined for the axe.²³

Another spelling “Willonga” seems to have been in use for a while among some of the earliest surveyors. It crops up several times in some team management notes of November 1839,²⁴ for the initial stages of Gawler’s elaborately planned and (in the end) disastrously executed exploring trip to the Murray River. A year later, another newly-arrived German missionary linguist, Eduard Meyer, used the same spelling on the way to Encounter Bay when a letter from Gawler “procured for us a substantial evening repast and a comfortable bed for the night”, probably at the new Bush Inn. “Willonga”, Meyer wrote, “is a small settlement and a kind of summer residence for the Governor. This place is considered the halfway point on the way to Encounter Bay”.²⁵ Meyer no doubt got his spelling and pronunciation from Gawler; and as a frequent visitor to the surveys, Gawler probably got it from surveyors at the Willunga depot. Six weeks later, in October 1840, Meyer too had to be rescued along with his wife after a night lost in the wilds of the ‘interior’ around Mt Compass, by a friendly road-builder who himself had never been to Encounter Bay.²⁶

THE NAME:

Wyatt’s “willungga” and Schürmann’s “Willanga” represent the same sounds, which we now spell *Wilungga*. Note that it is pronounced with a stress on the first syllable, not the second as in English today.²⁷ This is clearly a Kurna word, *wila* + the standard Locative *ngga* ‘at’, place of’, used correctly after a two-syllable root.

The ‘Willonga’ of Meyer and the surveyors might have represented a variant second vowel *o/u*; but ‘o’ was often used by Englishmen to represent the sound *a*, especially when unstressed, in words like ‘Myponga’ (*Maitpangga*),²⁸ and so this does not present any real alternative.

Rob Amery (2002) summarizes the linguistics of the root:

“There are in fact three competing etymologies for Willunga, all from within the Kurna language, and all of them plausible.

²³ *Adelaide Chronicle & SA Advertiser* 24/12/1839: 1d, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/195859540/22337879>.

²⁴ The notes survive in Counsel & Loveday 1839-55, Field Book 99 (GNU) (no pagination: pages 22-25).

²⁵ Meyer to Dresden Mission Society 11 Dec 1840, in HAE Meyer, Correspondence with the Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden 1839-1850, MS p.410; draft translation by Heidi Kneebone, Cynthia Rathjen, Sandy Martin and Lois Zweck (Adelaide Lutheran Archives). Meyer knew no local language at this date, and probably got his initial spelling and pronunciation ‘Willonga’ from Governor Gawler. Gawler was very supportive, and during Meyer’s visit to him on 17 August (see same letter) probably told him all about ‘Willonga’ and his ‘kind of summer residence’ there at the same time as giving him the letter of support.

²⁶ Meyer *ibid*.

²⁷ i.e. the rhythm is like that of English ‘willingly’, not of ‘we lumber’.

²⁸ Again we remember that the first hearers heard (and presumably reproduced in their conversation) the rhythm ‘Myponga’ and ‘Mipunga’, not ‘My-ponga’.

1. Willunga is from *willa* 'dust' + *-ngga* 'LOC'. Williams (1840) records *wil-lah* 'dust'.
2. Willunga is from *wilya* 'foliage' + *-ngga* 'LOC'. This is certainly the etymology that the Willunga Council ascribes to. Manning (1986) says it means 'a place of green trees'.
3. Willunga is from *willi* 'the chest of a kangaroo or other animal' + *-ngga* 'LOC'. This is the etymology put forward by Webb when he links the place with Uraidla and other locations referring to parts of a giant kangaroo laid out across the landscape. The first etymology is in fact the most likely of the three, though perhaps least favoured. T&S record the name as *Willa-ngga*, though they do not record *willa* in their vocabulary. If it had been derived from *wilya* or *willi*, most likely they would have recorded the name as *Wilya-ngga* or *Willi-ngga*. Perhaps *Willa-ngga* means something entirely different. There are four distinct laterals (or 'l' sounds) in Kaurna. T&S often wrote three of these, namely an interdental [lh], alveolar [l] and retroflex [rl], with a double 'll'. Nor did Williams distinguish between these three 'l' sounds, So T&S's *Willa-ngga* may bear no relationship to Williams' *wil-lah* 'dust'".²⁹

i.e. *willa* might be a different unrecorded word; or the name might have no dictionary meaning. The 'dust' meaning is possible but uncertain, and we do not know what it would signify culturally or otherwise in this green and well-watered place.

To this I add a historical perspective, which is marginal to our concerns but illustrates the pitfalls which place-name scholars must face. All the sources used for these derivations and others (as summarized in Manning)³⁰ are very late speculations and do not come from Aboriginal origins. Here are the dismal credits:

- Ex-surveyor CH Harris 1893, for the mis-spelling "Willa unggga" (a misquote from Teichelmann & Schürmann's "Willa-ngga").³¹
- Journalist Rodney Cockburn 1908 (probably from Harris and Talbot) for publishing the unsourced and unlikely folk etymology "locality of green trees".³²
- 'The Talbot Book' (an old scrapbook of information about SA place-names, kept by the Geographical Names Unit as a source and for many years an authority), for putting these two errors together.³³
- Alfred Day 1915 for publishing the direct quotation from the Talbot Book.³⁴
- Tindale in the 1980s, for "Wiljaunga", which is merely his spelling of "Wilya-ungga": thus he makes explicit the probable origin of 'green trees' from Kaurna *wilya* ('foliage'), and preserves this little soup of errors with his authority (on an index card used later by Manning); while also producing a parallel working card which incompatibly acknowledges 'dust'.³⁵

²⁹ Amery 2002, 'Weeding Out Spurious Toponyms', Hercus et al 2002, *The Land Is a Map*, Sydney, Pandanus Books: 174, <http://press.anu.edu.au/publications/land-map>.

³⁰ GH Manning 2011, *Place Names of Our Land*: 922, 1402. Manning adds a couple more speculations of his own which have even less linguistic credibility.

³¹ CH Harris 1893, 'Geographical Nomenclature of SA', facsimile copy in SLSA: 495.

³² R Cockburn 1908, *Nomenclature of SA*, : 139.

³³ Horace Talbot, 'The Talbot Book', no date [1890s-1924], Geographical Names Unit: 110/2. One of Talbot's frequent sources was his colleague Harris.

³⁴ Alfred N Day 1915, *Names of South Australian Railway Stations with their meanings and derivations*, SA Railways Commission: 30.

Noel Webb's obsession with the body parts of a Giant began only in the 1920s. His linguistic observations are careless and often quite wrong, and come from no historical or Aboriginal basis at all beyond the name "two ears" for Mt Lofty and Mt Bonython in the two main early Kaurna sources.³⁶

On the credible trails I add only three points.

Firstly, the name also existed in an expanded form, the Reduplicative "Willa willungga" (*Willa-wilungga*) in the first record of the name, Wyatt 1837. This means 'place of much *wila*' (possibly 'much dust'). Interestingly, this form – or at least a form which looks very like it as recorded – was reliably the name of another site 32 km away on Brownhill Creek at Mitcham.³⁷

Secondly, Piesse also asserted that the name "properly" used was *Willa*, i.e. without the Locative suffix.³⁸ This usage seems to be confirmed by Teichelmann in a diary entry the same year,³⁹ and a century later by the Ngarrindjeri man Albert Karlowan to anthropologist Ronald Berndt, who mapped Willunga as "Wila".⁴⁰ In fact quite a few other names were recorded both with and without their Locative; in Kaurna it was optional, sometimes at least.

Thirdly, Tindale's map record of this name⁴¹ *may* be an example of a Kaurna word familiar enough to be remembered by Ngarrindjeri people long after Kaurna speakers had disappeared, but now spoken with a Ngarrindjeri accent. He gives it as "Wil:a`ngga", in which the stress marks show that the pronunciation is '*Willa-ngga*'.⁴² As I pointed out above, the Kaurna pronunciation is *Wilungga*, with only one stress at the beginning; while our *English* pronunciation stresses the second syllable. The map credits Karlowan as a general source, and the note is attached to the name 'Willunga' printed on the base map. Was it Karlowan who gave this pronunciation? If not, where did Tindale get it? Other similar examples in Tindale suggest that Ngarrindjeri speakers of Karlowan's generation sometimes adapted the pronunciation of the Kaurna Locative *ngga* to that of their own

³⁵ Tindale Kaurna place-name cards in AA 338/1/12: [645] Wiljaungga and [647] Wil:angga.

³⁶ "*Willi-ungga, the place of the chest, becomes Willunga*" (Noel A Webb 1927, *Advertiser* 3/12/1927: 14c). Cp. "*Yurrēidla: Mount Lofty and the adjoining point*" (Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 2:75); "*yure illa (two ears), the native name for Mount Lofty*" and "*Yure and yureilla – Land adjacent and Mount Lofty*" (Wyatt [1837-9] / 1879: 161, 179). See a fuller story about Webb and his Giant in PNS 2/02 Yuridla.

³⁷ "*Willawilla – Brown Hill Creek*" (Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 2:76); see PNS 2/16.

³⁸ Cp. *Ngangkiparingga* ('Onkaparinga'), which was also recorded without its Locative in the form *Ngangkipari* (see PNS 4.02/04). Piesse asserted that place-names 'should' have no Locative as a general principle, with *Ngangkipari* as another example: "*Properly names of places should be written without the termination*" (Piesse 1844b: 7a); but the only proof of this would be to find an example in a verbatim Kaurna sentence in a reliable source.

³⁹ Teichelmann diary 17 Oct 1844: "*after sunset reached Willa (WILLA); spent the night there*" (Teichelmann diary 1839–1846, TA 53, translated by Marcus Krieg, Adelaide Lutheran Archives).

⁴⁰ Berndt & Berndt 1993: 330-1.

⁴¹ Tindale annotated map Hundred of Willunga, AA 338/24/97.

⁴² i.e. the rhythm is like that of 'willing bar': quite unlike both of the rhythms mentioned before. The sound *ng* is represented by the symbol *ŋ*. In Tindale, a colon after a consonant is meaningless and is merely his way of re-spelling a double letter in an original written text (in this case "l:" for 'll').

standard Locative *angk*, which does produce a secondary stress on the final syllable of some Ngarrindjeri place-names (e.g. 'Toope-rang', 'Coola-wang' and *Kuma-rangk*).⁴³

THE PLACE (2): ECOLOGY AND ABORIGINAL PRESENCE:

We turn now to the nature of this piece of country, and its consequent place in societies both Aboriginal and white (at least while the latter retained some immediate dependence on local pieces of land). This involves rediscovering what was there in 1836-9 before settlement: which in this area is usually very different from what is there now after many decades of tree-felling, mono-cropping, soil depletion, damming and diverting of watercourses, draining of wetlands, etc.⁴⁴

There were reasons other than travel for the colonists to be interested in Wilangga as it was then. The meticulous field sketches of Richard Counsel during the 1839 surveys – probably over several visits between September and November⁴⁵ – show some of them. He marked “good water” on the

⁴³ Tindale records similar final-syllable stresses for

- 'Congeratinga': “*Kongarati`ngga*” and a Ngarrindjeri variant “*Kongarati`rangk*”, both probably from Karlowan (Tindale & Mountford 1936, 'Results of Excavation of Kongarati Cave', *Records of SA Museum* 5(4): 501; Tindale annotated map Hd of Yankalilla AA 338/24/101); see PNS 5.02.02/03.

- 'Carrickalinga' “*Karika:li`ngga*”, probably from Karlowan, possibly Milerum (Tindale & Mountford *ibid*; Kurna place-names cards [524/1 and /2]); see PNS 5.01/07.

It is possible that Tindale reproduced the idea in “*Wil:angga*” himself rather than heard it from Karlowan.

⁴⁴ Linn's excellent local history tells the sad story of the radical destruction of the landscape, watercourses and soils of the Willunga area between 1860 and 1880 by relentless over-use and poor practices (Rob Linn 1991, *Cradle of Adversity: a history of the Willunga district*, Cherry Gardens, SA, Historical Consultants Pty Ltd: 57-8, 78-80, 100-1, 108, 168n1-2. The self-congratulating triumphalism of many early settlers maintained itself long after the signs of ecological disaster became evident, and even continues among many today. In 1854 John Norman enthused about the progress made since the first wave “*had arrived at a time when emus and kangaroos were the exclusive possessors of the soil*” (*Observer* 13/5/1854: 5e, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/158097368/18793557>). In 1876 a published chronicle was still boasting that “*It is in battling Nature, conquering the soil... fighting with the elements and compelling the earth to yield what it never yielded before – a reward for man's toil*” (William Marcus 1876, *South Australia: its history, resources and productions*, quoted in Linn : 33). Linn comments thus on the intervening years around Willunga (quoting JB Hack from 1839, the year of the first Country Surveys): “*the basic commonsense farming they might have once known, that stressed fallowing and proper manuring of the ground, was often cast aside. Was not the land itself 'nothing but a rich heap of manure'?... The soil was flogged mercilessly until finally the results of punishment were self-evident: constant cropping had made the land 'wheat sick'*” (Linn 1991: 80).

⁴⁵ THE SURVEYORS AND THEIR CAMP AT WILLUNGA IN 1839: Hawker moved camp from McLaren Vale to “*the Depot Creek*” before 22nd November 1839 when Gawler visited it; and it is certain that other surveyors had already camped there months before this; probably some of them were there (though unrecorded) by July when Schürmann was visiting the governor's cottage a few hundred metres from their campsite. Exact dating is often difficult in both Hawker and the Field Books. FB 102 shows that Counsel was at Maslin Creek on 26 August; Kurtandilla (Sellicks Hill) on 23 October; and the foothills southwest of Willunga on 22 November (Counsel 1839, Field Book 102: 23, 42, 45); Piesse wrote his letter from Kurtandilla on 18 October. Hawker was at Wilangga before 23 November when his patron Gawler (with his whole exploring party, ladies as well) visited him there (Hawker 1899: 54a). The surveyors camped on “*the edge of the Depot Creek, where we could get water*” (Hawker 1899: 52b), probably next to the prime 'good water' stretch between St Peters Tce and Quarry St. The governor's cottage (to be known locally as 'Government House') was located upstream, just across Wirra Creek from the depot and police station (Baxendale & Lush 2006: 7). Hawker's camp was downstream from both (Hawker 1899: 54b).

main watercourse (now called Wirra Creek) in three places:⁴⁶ from about St Peters Tce on Section 258 and upstream into 702; and again 400 metres further up, crossing from 702 into 701 in the gully just east of the Old Willunga Hill Road; and again at the “Tea tree scrub” near the top of the gully.⁴⁷ He also wrote “good water” on part of another creek half a km to the north, upstream from Waverley Homestead in Section 703 (this is the eastern tributary which joins Wirra Creek on 248).⁴⁸

In October the land agent for the proposed ‘half-way Town’ and inn emphasized that there was “Water all the year round”:⁴⁹ implying that Wirra Creek had permanent pools here at the town (i.e. between St James St and St Peters Tce) and was probably spring-fed: part of a large underground hydrology which Aboriginal people knew well along the scarp of the Ironstone Range.⁵⁰

Sturt had examined Willunga district among others during the eight months he was Surveyor-General, and is said to have camped at Willunga itself.⁵¹ In 1847, when the area had been opened up to farming for seven years, he wrote, “At Willunga there is a small stream, which issues from a valley close behind the township, and appears in former times to have laid many hundred acres of the flats below under water. Their soil is composed of the very richest alluvial deposit, and has produced some of the finest crops of wheat in the province”. The ‘small stream’ must be Wirra Creek, and the ‘flats’ must be those around the Ingleburn catchment. ‘In former times’: did the settlers eliminate those ‘unproductive’ swamps in seven short years?

⁴⁶ In recent years the main watercourse at Willunga has been officially named ‘Wirra Creek’. *Wirra* is Kurna for ‘forest’, which (as we shall see) is a fair description of its original surroundings. But in the light of the known and ancient Kurna name for the site, with no other such names known along its course as defined in modern terms – from its headwaters on Section 1241 to 203 (near Pethick Rd) where it joins Maslin Creek – this watercourse should probably be re-named *Wila-pari* (‘*Wila* Creek’ or ‘Dust Creek’).

⁴⁷ Counsel 1839, Field Book 102: 38, main and subsidiary sketches.

⁴⁸ Counsel 1839 *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Adelaide Chronicle & SA Advertiser* 24/12/1839: 1d, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/195859540/22337879>.

⁵⁰ There were many more creeks along the scarp of the Ironstone Range southwest of Willunga, but according to Piesse they were (as now) short and not transient: “*In the winter almost every glen or ravine has water in it; but the little rivulets soon run to waste, and after a few warm days they dry up*”. However, the geology and hydrology of the area is such that many of them are also spring-fed from the same underground stratum. A number of these “*little rivulets*” were important enough in Aboriginal eyes to have names which Piesse recorded in 1844, and I hope eventually to write something about all of these. But to locate each one correctly and evaluate it properly, we need a detailed study of the underground hydrology of the whole scarp from Willunga to Mt Terrible Gully. This I must leave to others, recommending as a start the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Water Allocation Plan, which has studied 22 spring sites along this line and no doubt has an archive of information for us to put alongside Piesse’s essay and Counsel’s sketches. See Piesse 1844b in footnote above, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/18834087>; and Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board 2007, ‘Water Allocation Plan for the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area’, online via home page <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges/water/water-allocation-plans/mclaren-vale> [3/6/15]. My thoughts about Wilangga are a tentative beginning to such a project, which ideally would include cultural mapping and regeneration together with Aboriginal people.

⁵¹ A plaque on a huge old gumtree in the Golf Course reads (rather vaguely), “*The survey camp of Captain Charles Sturt Surveyor General was located between the two creeks in this vicinity in November 1839*”. ‘This vicinity’ could include Section 258. I do not know the source for ‘between the two creeks’. But Sturt was no longer Surveyor-general after Frome arrived in October of that year. Does the plaque refer to a visit by Sturt earlier in the year when he was still in that office? He had come in September to inspect the roadline newly marked out towards Willunga, while Hawker was beginning to clear it from a camp at McLaren Vale (Hawker 1899: 51b).

The northern watercourses in *Wilangga* are not part of the Willunga Creek catchment but of Maslin Creek, via the Ingleburn catchment. Another large catchment also had part of its headwaters nearby in the Town itself. On the western side of Section 258 (in the vicinity of today's Bishop St and Moore St) is a small creek which probably does (or did) run into Willunga Creek via the lower course of Beltunga Creek. Early maps based on Counsel's work show here a separate creek line running into a "marsh"; and local history tells us that there was a 'spring' or 'spring stream' nearby. No doubt this was on the creek line which runs from a small gully near the new Victor Harbor Rd, northwest through St Georges St, Chapel St and St Marys St, and through or near the site of Spargo's Cottage on St Judes St.⁵²

Trees were dispensable. "The land surrounding [Willunga] was thickly timbered with peppermint, blue and red gums, together with wattle and stringybark, tea-trees and... strange dome shaped grass trees. The strenuous work of felling and clearing the ground then begun in earnest".⁵³

.....

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AROUND WILANGGA AND PIRLTANGGA:

It is easy to assume that Wilangga had always been as important to Aboriginal travellers as it was to whites from 1839 onward. But in first-contact sources I have found only two direct references to an Aboriginal presence at Wilangga (see Piesse and Teichelmann below), and otherwise only a few doubtful generalizations in local histories. According to the Willunga Progress Association in 1952,

Many tribes of aborigines lived under the shade of the giant red gums and gaunt stringy bark trees, the plentiful supply of possums making this a happy hunting ground. The Ramindjeri and Kurna tribes, better known as the Cape Jervis and Adelaide or Encounter Bay tribes lived and fought their tribal battles here in this fertile spot... 'Waverley Park'... was the site of many a

⁵² See maps C 236; McLaren 1840; Hundred of Willunga Diagram Book pages p.11-2 and 12-2 (GNU); cp. modern UBD street directories, which mark a creek line here. For the 'spring' near Spargo's Cottage, see Baxendale & Lush 2006, *Willunga Walks*, Willunga National Trust: 15. This almost-vanished watercourse we might christen as 'Spargo's Creek'. It was the original subject of a long-running lawyer's picnic arising (so the arbitrator found) from the re-direction of this "small spring stream" out of "the natural movement for the water", first into Mrs Spargo's property, then later out of it into her neighbour's; and from the conflict over the Council's efforts to "lessen the damage caused by floodwaters", presumably around Counsel's 'marsh' (see Linn 1991: 100-1).

⁵³ Manning 1984: 115. Manning puts these words into the mouth of Richard Hill, but more likely he himself is paraphrasing other sources. Counsel shows "*Tea tree scrub*" on the upper course of Wirra Creek beyond Section 701, as well as below Beltunga Gully (Counsel 1839, FB 102: 38, main and subsidiary sketches).

camp and corroboree. Many native tools have been found here from time to time, some quite recently.⁵⁴

According to a more recent local guide, “There was a plentiful supply of game and food-bearing plants, and abundant water in the springs of ‘Piltangga’ (Beltunga) Gully and other creeks flowing from the hills”; and “Waverley Park... with two tree-lined creeks had been a camping place for aboriginals of the Kurna tribe”.⁵⁵

But TW Chalk (whose memories probably extended back to the late 1840s) remembered what one of the surveyors had told him: “There were apparently but few natives around Willunga. Hyde (one of the Murray party (miners & sappers) who camped at Willunga saw very few”.⁵⁶ Geoffrey Manning’s *Hope Farm Chronicle* writes a fictionalized conversation between his own ancestor and one of the first settlers at Willunga in 1840, Richard Hill, in which Hill remembers up to 300 Aborigines camping at Beltunga Gully; but he does not make any such claim about Willunga.⁵⁷

The nature and extent of Aboriginal presence around Wilangga itself before 1839 therefore remains rather unclear. The local proprietors were Kurna speakers, as illustrated by the fact that *Wilangga* and all the surrounding names recorded during times of first contact (1831-45) are in Kurna language. Mr Chalk believed that Wilangga was part of the territory of the ‘Adelaide tribe’;⁵⁸ and in the 1840s this seems to have been how it appeared to those few who bothered to take note.

The ‘Adelaide tribe’ were never very numerous in the first place. Already affected by smallpox from the eastern colonies, within five or six years of first settlement they dwindled from disease and despair and were heavily outnumbered by a massive increase of visitors from nearby groups, especially Ngarrindjeri speakers from Encounter Bay and the Lakes, and after 1841 invaders from the Murray near Blanchetown. Their decline over the period 1840-1847 is recorded in the diaries and letters of the Dresden missionaries Teichelmann and Klose, who knew many of them by name, distinguished them from others as “our people” or “our natives”, and tried to keep in touch with them.⁵⁹ This was increasingly difficult; for it seems that in these several years the Adelaide people – sidelined and increasingly regarded as a mere nuisance on their own heartland – were falling

⁵⁴ Willunga Progress Association, *Willunga, ‘Place of Green Trees’* (1952; reprinted by Lutheran Publishing House 1982): 1.

⁵⁵ Ruth Baxendale & Faye Lush [1989] / 2006, *Willunga Walks* {6th ed}, Willunga, The Authors [& Willunga National Trust]: 2, 10.

⁵⁶ Notes from TW Chalk 1926: MS in Tindale ‘Notes on the Kurna: Supplementary’, AA 338/2/68; typescript ‘Adelaide Tribe. Notes from Mr Chalk, 7 November 1926’, in ‘Notes on the Kurna’, AA338/1/35: 168. Chalk was born in 1835 or 1836 and was probably remembering the period from the late 1840s to the 1860s.

⁵⁷ GH Manning 1984, *Hope Farm Chronicle*: 116-7. For Beltunga Gully see PNS 4.04.02/01 Pirtangga.

⁵⁸ “The Adelaide people extended down to Willunga” (TW Chalk 1926 in Tindale, *ibid*).

⁵⁹ Schürmann diary *passim*; Teichelmann diary 10 Dec 1840, 1 Nov 1845; Klose letters p.27.

Schürmann was re-assigned to Port Lincoln in 1840, and his place at the Adelaide Native Location was taken by Klose, while Teichelmann moved to his proposed native farm ‘Ebenezer’ at Happy Valley and from there made regular trips back to the Location.

back southward onto the less pressured fringes of their old campsites at Ngangkiparingga (Old Noarlunga) and Wilangga.⁶⁰ Samuel Klose lamented:

“Last December [1841]... old and young left, even including the children who had not deserted the school for the whole year. All attempts to dissuade them were useless. Sad at heart I watched them go, but believed they would not stay away long, but would soon return to Adelaide. In Willungga and in the region of Ngangkiparri... they stayed until 1 March [1842]”.⁶¹

Teichelmann had to ride to Ngangkiparingga a number of times in order to find them. On two occasions they had been there but had moved on shortly before he arrived; on the first time, he noted that they had had “gone south”,⁶² quite likely to Wilangga or Pirtangga. Mostly they were not interested in stopping at Ebenezer, and if he saw them there they were likely to be heading for the Ngangkipari.⁶³ In this vicinity the missionaries had an ally in “the Christian farmer Mr Hewett” at McLaren Vale, at least for a place to sleep overnight.⁶⁴ Governor Gawler being another ally, at Wilangga they sometimes had the use of his cottage, the government depot or the inn.⁶⁵

Their references to Adelaide people at Wilangga are all from a distance, indirect, never when they themselves were there on the way to or from Encounter Bay. Were the people camping at Wilangga itself? or at nearby Pirtangga, with Teichelmann’s diary generalizing the name ‘Willungga’ from his Adelaide viewpoint to include? Probably the missionaries never saw Beltunga Gully during their brief stopovers in the township, and apparently they did not know this name.⁶⁶

The local remnant groups around Adelaide were deported to Poonindie by 1850, or absorbed into the southern groups who (especially among families from the Fleurieu coast) probably included relatives.

⁶⁰ If some of them fell back northward to their allies near Gawler, it was not recorded. It is also unlikely. The Gawler-Barossa area had been terrorized in 1839 by the colony’s first mounted police expedition leading to two hangings, and Adelaide people had collaborated as trackers and constables (see PNS 8/17 Murlayaki).

⁶¹ Klose to Dresden 26 April 1842 (Klose 2002, tr. E Meier, M Krieg, & L Zweck, *Missionary to the Kurna: the Klose letters*, Occasional Publication No. 2, Adelaide: Friends of Lutheran Archives : 22); where he also noted that “*During the absence of the Adelaide natives a number of other tribes moved in from the north, from the Murray, from the east*”. The same happened again in the following summer: “*On 25 December [1842] our natives went off with the Encounter Bay natives to the Ngangkiparri river ... and the Murray men brought the deceased here and buried him*” (p.27, Klose to Dresden 4 Jan 1843).

⁶² Teichelmann diary 15 Sep and 22 Nov 1844 (Teichelmann diary 1839–1846, translated by Marcus Krieg, Lutheran Archives, TA 52).

⁶³ Teichelmann diary 8 Dec 1844, TA 56.

⁶⁴ Klose to Dresden 3 Sep 1844 (Klose *op.cit.*: 33-4). This was the same Hewett who employed Aboriginal men in seasonal labour in the 1840s (see below).

⁶⁵ See e.g. Teichelmann diary 22 Oct 1840(TA 11), 17 Oct 1844 (TA 53), 20 Jan 1846 (TA 89); Klose to Dresden 3 and 14 Sep 1844 (pp.33, 38).

⁶⁶ None of their writings mention any version of the place-name Pirtangga; they knew the word only as general vocabulary, “*Pirtangga: on the side*”. See PNS 4.04.02/01 Pirtangga.

This fact colours most of our other information, which dates from after 1850, well into the post-contact period. In most of it Wilangga features, not as a well-used campsite or ceremony ground, but as a stopover on a travel route and a place where colonial authority set up a ration station in order to get Aboriginal people to ‘settle down’ here instead of in Adelaide – largely without success.

TRAVEL ROUTES ABORIGINAL AND COLONIAL:

Wilangga in the second half of the 19th century seems to have been the convergence of several routes which Aboriginal travellers used from each of the four compass points.

But these did *not* include the main ‘old road’ south through Aldinga and over Sellicks Hill, certainly shown to settlers by Aboriginal guides and used by everyone until Sturt surveyed the ‘new road’ in 1839. Piesse knew that this track due south was “the ‘native pad’ from Encounter Bay to the Onkaparinga”,⁶⁷ and the reasons for it:

*The road to the Bay previously was over Mount Terrible to what is now called the Black Bridge in Myponga and thence over a very hilly country to the head of the Hindmarsh Valley... The old road went as near as possible by the ‘native pad’ from Encounter Bay to the Onkaparinga. I think the predilection of the natives for their route may be accounted for by the fact that water can be more frequently obtained, and that they had not to pass so large a tract of scrub, and consequently could sooner fall on good country abounding in game... Water [is] obtainable three or four times on the road.*⁶⁸

But any route going inland from Wilangga meant fewer waterholes, more scrub and less meat.

Karlowan apparently told Berndt about an easterly Aboriginal route over the range to Bulls Creek. On his map⁶⁹ “Wila” appears at the convergence of this track with a northern one to *Ngangkiparringga* (Old Noarlunga);⁷⁰ a south-easterly one to Mt Compass and Goolwa, territory foreign to the Adelaide people; and a western one which we know passed down White’s Gully to *Tirranangku* and “Luki spring” at Port Willunga, passing through *Tatatyilla* on the way.⁷¹

⁶⁷ My emphasis.

⁶⁸ Piesse 1844a: 7a.

⁶⁹ Berndt & Berndt 1993: 330-1; cp. trade routes on p.20.

⁷⁰ Berndt apparently did not get the names correctly here, and calls the river “*Tainbarang (Noarlunga) River (the Onkaparinga or Ongkeperinga)*” (p.20).

⁷¹ See PNS 4.03.02/03 Ruwuru and 4.03.02/06 Luki/Lukar. *Tatatyilla* was actually at Aldinga town (see PNS 4.03.02/04).

There was – perhaps – another track more directly from Encounter Bay. R.T. Sweetman reminisced in 1928 that in the context of the Queen’s Birthday ration handouts, “The Encounter Bay natives made for themselves a native pad, two feet wide, from Hindmarsh Valley in as straight a line as possible to Willunga. This pad was used by horsemen travelling to Adelaide, and, later, a coach could be taken from Willunga”.⁷² It is unclear whether the reference to the Queen’s birthday rations in Adelaide is intended to be taken as the reason why the Ramindjeri made the pad. The passage seems to suggest that the pad-making happened during settlement times and was known to some settlers. But this happened, if at all, before Sweetman’s birth, and he is probably mixing settler folk memories with whatever he may have heard from his Ramindjeri contacts.⁷³ The facts behind this passage *may* be simply that when seasonal work for the men became available on the Willunga and McLaren plains very early in the 1840s,⁷⁴ and especially after the ration depot was established at Willunga in 1859,⁷⁵ the Ramindjeri, Ngarrindjeri and Kurna people made less use of the Mt Terrible route in favour of the more direct ‘new road’ which was 10 miles shorter. But we cannot rule out the likelihood that they supplemented it with paths of their own making.

From Schürmann’s journey in July 1839 it is clear that Aboriginal people, even from Adelaide, knew another route southwest along the scarp from Wilangga to Mt Terrible. It was winter, and this route no doubt made good use of waterholes in some of the ‘little rivulets’ listed by Piesse. But there is no other record of Aboriginal people guiding colonists along this route, and there can be little doubt that Schürmann made the detour to “Willunga” only because the Depot and Gawler’s cottage were there to provide this inexperienced traveller with a “night in comfort” and “a hearty breakfast”.⁷⁶

Thus *Wilangga* was a well-used focus for travellers, Aboriginal as well as white, from the 1840s into Karlowan’s time (the 1860s and onward), but this may not always have been so, or not to the same extent. The Hill-Manning record hints at an earlier preference for *Pirltangga* (Beltunga Gully) about a kilometre south, though both the fact and the reasons for preferring Pirltangga are rather conjectural.⁷⁷ Piesse sang the praises of the Willunga scenery where he was camped,⁷⁸ but when it came to water supply for the settlers it was ‘Piltongga’, not Willunga, that he eulogized: “The

⁷² Robert T Sweetman 1928, in *Register* 8/3/1928: 10f, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/57042053/5111345>.

⁷³ Sweetman’s inaccuracies are very obvious in his following account of ‘Billy’ murdering a worker from the whale fishery: a garbled folk version of the well-recorded story of Reppindjeri and Driscoll (1837).

⁷⁴ e.g. in 1842 “A large party of natives came up from Encounter Bay on Friday evening to Oxenbury Farm [at McLaren Vale]... and offered their services to cut corn. Mr Hewett employed six of them to reap and bind, and we must confess, we found two of them good reapers – one, especially, would surpass some whites that profess to be able hands. There can be no doubt that, with a little instruction, these natives could be made very serviceable in gathering in the harvest” (*Southern Australian* 16/12/1842: 2b, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71622686/6246168>).

⁷⁵ Robert Foster 1989, ‘Feasts Of The Full-Moon: The Distribution of rations to Aborigines in South Australia: 1836-1861’, *Aboriginal History* 13(1), Canberra, ANU: 72, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p72111/pdf/article047.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Schürmann diary 24-5 July 1839, cp. 2 Aug.

⁷⁷ See PNS 4.04.02/01 Pirltangga.

⁷⁸ See below.

spring at Pittongga [sic] might be carried a considerable distance over the Aldinga Plain".⁷⁹

With Gawler pushing land sales vigorously, development, and (in Aboriginal eyes) the ruin of country, proceeded much more quickly here than in Adelaide where settlers had been forced to wait for the surveys, unable to take up their purchases. Perhaps Aboriginal campers were pushed out of Wilangga when the first buyers flocked onto the land in March and "early autumn" 1840.⁸⁰ Even if they had made good use of Beltunga Gully in the past, they would have found themselves far less welcome there after the discovery of slate nearby in mid-1840, as the cottages of the slate quarrymen and quarry owners multiplied. Radical changes and displacements came with colonization as soon as Wilangga came to the white man's notice. Wilangga had a Government Reserve with a storehouse and Police Station by December 1839, later a reserved Aboriginal camping space as well, and the police station was used for a while around 1859 also as an Aboriginal ration station. Robert Foster's paragraphs on Willunga illustrate well the combination of and control exerted and opportunity grasped:

While it is true that the distribution of rations proved a successful means of gaining a degree of control over the Aborigines, it is also true that the Aborigines used the depots to fit in with their preferred pattern of movements and to establish new patterns. In May 1859, Police Trooper Shaw, in charge of the Police Station at Willunga and consequently the distribution of rations, reported the arrival of about 30 Aborigines from Goolwa. They claimed that they wanted to settle at the station but Shaw took a different view:

I believe they have been induced to come here from the report of the liberal supply of rations issued to the Adelaide Tribe, but I do not think (from the enquiries I have made) that they intend to stay longer than the winter months.

His suspicions proved well founded; in the following January he noted that most of the Aborigines had left the station:

Several of them left for McLaren Vale about three weeks ago and the remainder have gone to that place in order (as they say) to find employment but I believe they have gone on their "annual round".⁸¹

Perhaps the police station became an occasional refuge and opportunity in a mainly hostile environment, as well as an emblem of colonial power and control. Perhaps the Wilangga corroborees (mentioned in passing in some local histories) were part of this colonial situation in which performances organized by Aboriginal or white entrepreneurs might attract money.⁸² They

⁷⁹ Piesse 1844b: 8b.

⁸⁰ See Manning 1984, *Hope Farm*: 115.

⁸¹ Robert Foster 1989: 76-7. But in view of the high praise for some Aboriginal reapers noted above, it is possible that Shaw underestimated the commitment of these people to the harvest season of friendly farmers such as Hewett.

⁸² See Michael Parsons 1997, 'The tourist corroboree in South Australia to 1911', *Aboriginal History* 21, Canberra, ANU Press, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p72631/pdf/article0415.pdf>. Apart from the well-recorded

were probably performed (as Baxendale and Lush assert) on the flat area of Section 248 between the two creeks (part of today's Willunga Golf Course).

By this time the Aboriginal travellers through Wilangga were total outsiders, alternately annoyances and decorations on the margins of a white world. For example, during the visit of Alfred Prince of Wales in 1867, a correspondent wrote after the bonfires and fireworks at Willunga had finished:

*A large party of blacks had been here for several days, and had only left for Encounter Bay the day previous, which was a pity, as their presence on the hill and a corroboree would have completed the entertainment. With the history of one of the black gins quite a romantic story is associated. Her mother, who is with them, and at present sick, was many years ago married to, or living with, a white man, by whom she had a child, Betsy (the gin I refer to), who in the course of time was married to a white man named Pool. The result of this marriage was two very pleasing, intelligent-looking children. A short time back her husband deserted her, and she is now wandering about with her mother's tribe. She hears a striking contrast to the other blacks, as she keeps herself and children very clean and tidily dressed. She reads and writes very fairly.*⁸³

Back in 1839 Piesse was writing a diary which is now lost (unfortunately for our researches). With plenty of time to spare in the long months away from 'society', he sometimes contemplated the beauty of 'the bush' as well as its healthiness, and wrote:

*Willunga approximates to panoramic perfection, presenting a view on to the Gulf for several miles, in which the contrast is heightened by the prospect over the intervening country between the Gulf and the township. The first entry in my journal at Willunga, in 1839, is,—“I have just seen the sun set as beautiful as if I was at sea; he went down with gorgeous colours clad, and as if he bathed his blazing forehead in the main.” The entry the next day was—“The grass is so high and was so surcharged with dew this morning as to give me a similar soaking in about a mile's walk as if I had waded into a pond. * * * * The eagle soars aloft majestic, the cockatoo, screams on the hills, the lory hath made her nest in the tree that shades my tent, and the blue mountain parrot wings her rapid flight close by. The forest resounds with the strange sound of the axe,* a family of the children of Nature are emerging therefrom coming towards me, and my faithful dog warns me of their approach * * * Such is the bush at Willunga.*

**Virgil.*⁸⁴

corroborees in Adelaide (by visiting groups after the early 1840s), such performances also occurred at Clare in 1860 (p.64), at Mt Barker and Strathalbyn in 1886 (p.58), and at Victor Harbour in 1905 (p.63).

⁸³ . SA Weekly Chronicle 2/11/1867: 2f, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/91264396/8388877>. It is likely that this was the family of the well-known Ramindjeri identity 'Billy Poole' or 'King Poole', who became a tourist attraction at Victor Harbour in the late 19th century (see M Parsons 1997: 63).

⁸⁴ Piesse 1844b: 7c. Cp. “The Bush, Sir, the Bush is the place for health; a thousand country settlers hardly take as much physic between them as one of your Adelaide ailing ladies does under her physician's advice” (Piesse 1844a: 7b).

The author was probably sitting somewhere near the junction of the creeks, looking out on the Willunga plain as it was about to change. Despite the peaceful intent of his words, in hindsight a warning note sounds through the over-ripe prose. He was measuring out this land for sale to the farmers and those who served them. The ‘strange sound of the axe’ – which he promptly romanticizes by a self-conscious reference to Europe’s Latin classics – came perhaps from half a mile away to the northwest, where it was creating some of Hawker’s stumps. The ‘children of nature’ were indeed present in 1839, but unmentioned except here. It is very likely that much has been quietly omitted. In those surveying months away from social constraints and female company, how many single men like Piesse collected their place-names and wordlists from Aboriginal women? – with whom they might live by arrangement through their Aboriginal interpreter-guides.⁸⁵ Probably Piesse’s ‘faithful dog’ had (like others in the survey teams) already been helping to slaughter the kangaroos to augment the surveyors’ rations, or sometimes just for a bit of bracing and traditional English fun.⁸⁶ By places like this ‘new halfway Town Willunga’ which Piesse’s team was laying out, the people of the land would soon be put under control, and their lives would be dominated by a struggle to carve out a place for themselves within a grievously changed natural and social environment.

Richard Hill’s is almost the only unambiguous record I know of an Aboriginal presence *around* Wilangga before the 1850s. Yet, as Gavin Malone puts it, Wilangga itself was “a top spot and given the topography I fail to see how it would not have been well utilised”.⁸⁷ Why do the records provide us with hints that Pirltangga was well-used and Wilangga empty of its people?

A likely explanation of this paradox in the data may be that Wilangga, having been identified very quickly by the colonists as a top spot, also paid the price very quickly. The government activity (including tree felling); traffic of surveyors in 1839, including people like the military man James Hawker (who would later join his brother George in subjugating the natives around their homestead ‘Bungaree’ in the mid-North) as well as the benign Governor Gawler; and the first settlers at the well-promoted ‘new halfway town’, with their enthusiastic felling of trees and fencing to exclude ‘trespassers’ from their private property – perhaps these had already *by early 1840* pushed people away from Wilangga to more secluded but less ideal places like flood-prone Pirltangga – before anyone had a chance to take an interest and record observations at Wilangga. The only exception is that tantalising diary entry by Piesse.

.....

End of Summary

⁸⁵ This is how the surveyor Edward Snell collected his Narungga wordlist on Yorke Peninsula 11 years later (Tom Griffith [ed] 1988, *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell*, North Ryde, Angus & Robertson, Chapter 3).

⁸⁶ On kangaroo dogs and kangaroo hunts during the surveys, see Hawker 1899: 39a, 46a-b, 49-50.

⁸⁷ Gavin Malone p.c., email 10 Jan 2017.