

## Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 2/21

### WITA-WATTINGGA

#### (Seacliff Park)

(last edited: 11/1/2012)

#### Abstract

*Wita-wattingga* or *Wita-wita* was the Kaurna name, recorded in 1837 as 'Weta wertinga', of a lightly forested area on the north side of O'Halloran Hill, clothed before settlement by a low woodland featuring mallee peppermint gums (*Eucalyptus porosa* &/or *odorata*). It certainly included the northwestern slopes from the end of the plains at South Brighton & Seaview Downs, across to Seacliff Park; probably also east across the hilltop almost to Main South Road, & west to the inland slopes of Marino.

In 1940 Tindale's Ramindjeri informant Ephraim Tripp located the name at the Brighton Cement Works on section 245 & 199, but this was probably a non-local memory of the more general Kaurna application in this area.

The meaning was not given at the time, but is 'in the midst of peppermint gums'.

The name was probably generic for any peppermint gum country, since it may have applied also near Rapid Head (see PNS 5.4.1/5).

Coordinates	-35.032667° Latitude, 138.530216° Longitude.
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#### Language Information

Meaning	<i>wita-wattingga</i> 'in the midst of peppermint gums'. <i>wita-wita</i> 'lots of peppermint gums'.
Etymology	<i>wita</i> 'peppermint gumtree' + <i>watte</i> 'middle' + <i>-ngga</i> 'in, at' > <i>wattingga</i> 'in the middle, between'.
Notes	This name should not be confused with <i>Witu-wattingga</i> 'in the midst of reeds' (see PNS 2/22).
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kaurna'.
KWP Old Spelling	<i>Wita-wattingga</i>
KWP New Spelling 2011	<i>Wita-wartingga</i>
Phonemic Spelling	/witawartingka/
Pronunciation	" <u>W</u> ita-wattingga"
Pronunciation tips	Stress the 1st syllable; secondary stress on the 3rd; every 'a' as in Maori 'haka'; soften the 't' towards a 'd' (no puff of air); 'ngga' as in 'finger'.

## Main source evidence

<i>Date</i>	<b>1837</b>
<i>Original source text</i>	“5 Sept <sup>f</sup> ... Course South. 1 Cowandilla Plains – 2 Ware Peringa plains – 3 [?Time ?Taneya] Plains – <b>4 Weta wertinga plains.</b> / 6 Sept <sup>f</sup> . The Mount Lofty range of hills seems to terminate here.”
<i>Reference</i>	Charles Mann 1837, abridged MS copy ‘General Description of The Country from Adelaide to Encounter Bay’, BRG 42/52, SLSA.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka & other Kurna guides.

<i>Date</i>	<b>1837-9</b>
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <b>Weeta – peppermint gum.</b> ”
<i>Reference</i>	Wyatt [1837-9], in JD Woods 1879, <i>Native Tribes of SA</i> .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants.

<i>Date</i>	<b>1840</b>
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <i>wita</i> peppermint tree; <i>witawirra</i> a cluster of peppermint trees”.
<i>Reference</i>	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, etc, 1838-40.

<i>Date</i>	<b>1934 / n.d.</b>
<i>Original source text</i>	“[Tjelbruke] Almost where camp was. Got to <b>Brighton camp</b> [*inserted: <b>Weta weta</b> ] tired with walking. Here is old uncle, children ran to meet him...”
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale, ‘Story of Tjelbruke of Encounter Bay to Cape Jervis’, in SE of SA journal Vol.2, AA 338/1/33/2: 46.
<i>Informants credited</i>	Milerum 15/2/1934.
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	*unknown

<i>Date</i>	<b>1940</b>
<i>Original source text</i>	“Footnotes:... <b>Brighton `Witawa`ta{;}nk at Hill where Cement Works is, i.e. Brighton Cement Works.”</b>
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale journals SE of SA 2, AA 338/1/33/2: 49.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Ephraim Tripp 1940.

Date	?1980s
Original source text	“Witawa`ta:ngk - Brighton Cement Works area at the hill. / Tindale ms SESA J 2:49 from Ephraim Tripp.”
Reference	Tindale Kurna place-name card 653/2.
Informants credited	Ephraim Tripp [1940]
Informants uncredited	

## Discussion: UPLANDS AMONG THE WITA

### LEARNING NEW TERRITORY IN 1837:

On 5<sup>th</sup> Sep 1837 Attorney-General Charles Mann set off south on foot with the newly-appointed Interim Protector William Wyatt, in urgent response to news that a whaler Driscoll had been killed by a Ramindjeri man Reppindjeri ('Alick') at 'Mootaparinga' near Encounter Bay. As Wyatt ruefully observed, they went *'he to prosecute, I to defend, the poor native'*.

Interest in the country was urgent in local circles of the government & SA Company. Place-names were still very scarce, & needed as a first step in knowing one's way around. While Mann's other letters addressed the legal problem, his 'General Description of The Country from Adelaide to Encounter Bay SA'<sup>1</sup> addressed the management's need for place-names. These he obviously obtained from his Kurna guides.

Who were the guides? The party took with them Kangaroo Islander William Cooper. His Kurna wife had been known as 'Doughboy' to Colonel Light & his surveyors a year before this, & accompanied him on many or most of his subsequent interpreting jobs. Though she got no mention in the reports – if Cooper was there he would have taken the lead in communicating her information to the bosses – very likely she came on this trip too, because two *'relatives of Cooper's woman'* camped overnight *'near us'* when the party met an Aboriginal group at *'Mipunga'* on the way.

On the way they added to their party *"a family of natives belonging to a well-known and excellent man, commonly called Onkaparinga Jack"*, &, we may surmise, 'OJ' himself, later identified as Mullawirraburka & 'King John'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abridged MS copy of Charles Mann 1837, 'General Description of The Country from Adelaide to Encounter Bay', BRG 42/52, SLSA.

<sup>2</sup> For this whole section see Wyatt letter in John Stephens 1839, *The Land of Promise*: 75; Mann to Hindmarsh 20/9/1837, GRG 24/1/365; Wyatt to Hindmarsh, GRG 24/1/372.

Unfortunately, we know Mann's 'General Description' only from an abridged copy made by another hand. It begins:

*"5 Sept<sup>r</sup>. Started at 12 [from the offices in Adelaide]. About 2 miles off came to a winding stream {?Glen Osmond Creek} running with considerable rapidity of a clear & sparkling Brownish colour. Said to join with the stream running to Glenelg – passed thro' splendid plains – covered with the wattle in full bloom - & having a profusion of flowers - a mile further on [from what?] came to a second stream [?Brownhill Creek] – crossed at a ford without difficulty & passed on, till we reached the grove of Eucalyptus which runs to the Company's Sheep Station [No. 1 Station on Brownhill Creek at Mitcham]. Course South. 1 Cowandilla Plains – 2 Ware Peringa plains – 3 [?Time ?Taneya] Plains – 4 Weta wertinga plains.*

*6 Sept<sup>r</sup>. The Mount Lofty range of hills seems to terminate here. Our course mostly southerly over the [?next] range, terminating about 6 miles further on..."*

'Ware Peringa plains' are at the Sturt River, Warriparringga.<sup>3</sup> 'Weta wertinga plains' were between these & the party's campsite for that night. Next morning they noted that they were on or near the spur which we now call O'Halloran Hill, & set off southward again. Whether they had camped on the spur, or just north or south of it, the 'Weta wertinga plains' were north of it, because there are no plains southward at the descent to Happy Valley.

Thus the 'Weta wertinga plains' were not far southwest of the Sturt River, but separate from its immediate 'Ware Peringa plains'; so they were probably not the wetter plains of Marion & Sturt below the Flagstaff Hill scarp, but must have been the drier plains further west around or below Seacliff Park.

#### TREES:

From observers around 1840 we know that in Kurna language *wita* is a 'peppermint gum'.

Many parts of the Adelaide plains & foothills were covered by 'stunted peppermints' (mallee-style), or dotted with large trees called 'peppermint gums'. The name was probably applied to several different species. Unfortunately the old identification of these with the Peppermint box (*Eucalyptus odorata*), though accepted by Tindale & others up to the 1980s, is no longer considered accurate. While there were some *Odorata* here & there, most of them were Grey box (*Euc. microcarpa*), the dominant tree of the Black Forest & in wetter, heavier soils; or the smaller Mallee box (*Euc. porosa*), common in the western City & Parklands, & Enfield Scrub, in drier, less fertile soils.

The area from Darlington through Seacliff Park to eastern Marino was a light Low Woodland: *'scattered trees of Drooping sheoak near Kingston Park & Eucalyptus porosa at Marino*

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<sup>3</sup> see PNS 3/3.

*Conservation Park, Marino Rocks & above Brighton Cement Works give an indication of how this area might have appeared before settlement*.<sup>4</sup> Early maps show us where the trees were. The magnificent plan drawn by Light, Finniss & Co. in 1838 to show the SA Company its holdings around Adelaide, has tree icons complete with shadows. They adorned the northwestern slopes of O'Halloran Hill from the end of the plains at South Brighton & Seaview Downs, across to Seacliff Park; also east across the hilltop almost to Main South Road, & west to the inland slopes of Marino. The whole rise from Seaview Downs along the scarp to Marino was called 'The Downs'.<sup>5</sup>

This area is a limestone scarp with the Boral Lime Quarry still chewing away immediately south of the Cement Works; & features well-drained 'Seacombe silt loam' soils, with an annual rainfall of about 500mm; & so a good & attested territory for the lime-tolerant mallee-style *Porosa* &/or *Odorata*. The name recorded by Mann must now be counted as extra evidence that there were Peppermint gums (of whichever species or both) in this 'Downs' area southwest of Sturt River.

Mann ascribed the name to '*plains*', but in the light of what we know about the trees, this probably means only that his guides gave it to him while they were still at the approach to *wita* territory. The 1838 map shows that in those days grassland gave way to trees at the gently rising ground of sections 202 (South Brighton), 185 (Dover Gardens) & 186 (Seaview Downs). This does not preclude a wider application including the Cement Works site on section 197 a little further up-hill.

*Parndalilla* (probably 'place of the lumbar spine', or possibly 'place of two limestone rocks') may have been another name for a different aspect of the same whole area; perhaps also *Punduwalluwattingga* (meaning unknown).<sup>6</sup>

According to Karlowan & perhaps Milerum, a hybrid name identical in form, 'Witawatang', was used at Rapid Head above Rapid Bay: another limestone place with peppermint gums.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE WORD:

Mann's 'Weta wertinga' consists of Kaurna *wita* 'peppermint gum', plus one of the variant pronunciations of *wattingga* 'among, between': the latter deriving from *watte* 'middle' + locative suffix *-ngga* 'at, in'.

<sup>4</sup> Botanical information in this essay is from D Kraehenbuehl 1996, *Pre-European Vegetation of Adelaide*, Nature Conservation Society of SA: 23, 63-5, 67, 72, 135, 148, 162, 210, 212-4, 264 and frontispiece map; & Darell Kraehenbuehl p.c. 5/5/10.

<sup>5</sup> map BRG 42/120/17; cp. C 934 & C 218, SLSA.

<sup>6</sup> see PNS 3/5 & 3/6.

<sup>7</sup> see PNS 5.4.1/5 'Witawattingga' (Rapid Head).

The name was probably familiar to visitors from Encounter Bay & the Lower Murray Lakes in pre-settlement times. They would have had to pass this *wita* forest every time they came by the normal coast route to the Adelaide Plains, unless they veered northeast to *Warriparringga* after reaching the hilltop. This may be why it was remembered by Ramindjeri man Ephraim Tripp in 1940, who told Tindale that "*Brighton [is] `Witawa`tanġ at Hill where Cement Works is, i.e. Brighton Cement Works*". The Adelaide-Brighton Cement Works were built at Seacliff Park to take advantage of the limestone nearby, & their ruins still remain. Tripp probably named them as a convenient indicator for the whole general area. His word is clearly the same name attached to the same area as Mann's, with a Ngarrindjeri locative *-angk* instead of the Kurna *-ngga*; & over many years his tradition had adapted the stresses into a different language system as 'Witawa-tanġk' instead of Kurna 'Wita-wattingga', not knowing the meanings of the morphemes in a very different foreign language.

'WETA WETA':

A version of the same name was remembered by another of Tindale's informants (possibly Milerum). In Tindale's journal notes of Milerum's original 1934 tale of 'Tjelbruke', '*Weta weta*' was an uncredited extra note attached to the text '*Brighton camp*': the place where Tjelbruke arrived ready to take revenge on the killers of his nephew.<sup>8</sup> Milerum did not clarify the location of this camp, though it was presumably on the coast because Tjelbruke had earlier used it for fishing.

If Milerum was the contributor of 'Weta weta' (& this is the more likely because the use of 'e' instead of 'i' conforms to Tindale's early fieldwork rather than his later analytical work), he may have meant this place; or he may have meant another place in a large & generalized 'Brighton'. Giving the story in 1934 he was sitting camped opposite Tilley's Swamp near Salt Creek in his own country on the Coorong; Brighton & Tjelbruke's track were distant memories, not a detailed present experience. Or if the contributor was some other unnamed informant, Tindale may have merely assumed that 'Brighton' meant the same place as with Milerum.

In either case the informant was not a Kurna speaker, & would not have known the meaning of the name. But in Kurna language *Wita-wita* is a reduplicative meaning 'lots of peppermint gums', & these trees do not grow on coastal dunes. In its original Kurna useage it must have applied somewhere which could be called 'Brighton' only in some expanded sense: in the 1930s this suburb label would certainly have covered Seacliff Park.

So we can regard 'Weta weta' as a confirmation of 'Weta wertinga' & its relationship to peppermint gums in an area not very far from Brighton.

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<sup>8</sup> Added marginal note (undated, uncredited) in Tindale's journal of Milerum's 'Story of Tjelbruke' 1934, SESA Vol. 2, AA338/1/33/2: 46.

## References to background documents

See also my documents

'BACKGROUND2\_Wita&Witu',

& 'BACKGROUND1\_Trees',

both accessible to researchers through Management of this website (contact KWP).

also PNS 2/22 Witu-wartingga (Brighton), linked from that name on the map at  
kurnaplacenames.com.

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*End of Summary*