



The author gratefully acknowledges the Yitpi Foundation for the grant which funded the writing of this essay.

This and other essays may be downloaded free of charge from

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp/placenames/research-publ/>

## Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.04.01/01

### NGALTINGGA

(last edited: 11.8.2016)

See also PNS 4.04.01/06 Kauwi Ngaltingga and PNS 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla

#### NOTE AND DISCLAIMER:

*This essay has not been peer-reviewed or culturally endorsed in detail.*

*The spellings and interpretations contained in it (linguistic, historical and geographical) are my own, and do not necessarily represent the views of KWP/KWK or its members or any other group.*

*I have studied history at tertiary level. Though not a linguist, for 30 years I have learned much about the Kurna, Ramindjeri-Ngarrindjeri and Narungga languages while working with KWP, Rob Amery, and other local culture-reclamation groups; and from primary documents I have learned much about the Aboriginal history of the Adelaide-Fleurieu region.*

*My explorations of 'language on the land' through the Southern Kurna Place Names Project are part of an ongoing effort to correct the record about Aboriginal place-names in this region (which has abounded in confusions and errors), and to add reliable new material into the public domain.*

*I hope upcoming generations will continue this work and improve it. My interpretations should be amplified, re-considered and if necessary modified by KWP or other linguists, and by others engaged in cultural mapping: Aboriginal people, archaeologists, geographers, ecologists and historians.*

*Chester Schultz, 21/7/2017.*

## Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.04.01/01

### NGALTINGGA

(last edited: 11.8.2016)

See also PNS 4.04.01/06 *Kauwi Ngaltingga* and PNS 4.04.01/03 *Wakondilla*

#### Abstract

*Ngaltingga* is the Kurna name for the Aldinga Plains: the triangular plain bounded by the Sellicks Hill Range in the east, the Gulf in the west, and in the north the rolling downs which begin just south of Maslin Creek.

It was first recorded in October 1836 as “Aldinghi” by John Morphett, and soon afterward as ‘Aldinga’ and ‘Aldingha’ by a number of other early travellers.

The name means ‘at *Ngalti*’ or ‘place of *ngalti*’, but no meaning is known for *ngalti*. Place-names (like personal names) do not necessarily have dictionary meanings: cp. ‘London’, ‘Rome’, ‘John’.

It is possible that ‘Aldinghi’ was recorded from a Ngarrindjeri-speaking informant, and that this was a Ramindjeri-Ngarrindjeri adaptation of the Kurna original. No other record of the name in Ngarrindjeri is known.

The name was not applied specifically at today’s Aldinga town (on the southern side of Willunga Creek) until the village was laid out in 1857; but the traditional Kurna name *Tartatyilla* belongs at this location (see PNS 4.03.02/04).

<b>Coordinates</b>	-35.296949° Latitude, 138.472452° Longitude (intersection of Main South Road, Cox Rd and Hahn Rd, the centre of a large area of plains)
--------------------	--

The following have been recorded as meanings of ‘Aldinga’; but linguistic analysis shows that they are all insupportable as *meanings of the name*. Some of them are apt as *descriptions of the place*:

- “much water”.
- “tree district”.
- “plenty of trees and water”.
- “open wide”.
- “hunting place”.
- “good place for meat”.
- “battle or burial ground”.



## Language Information

Meaning	'at <i>Ngalti</i> ' or 'place of <i>ngalti</i> '
Etymology	<i>Ngalti</i> [meaning unknown] + <i>ngga</i> 'at, place of'
Notes	Until the German linguists Teichelmann and Schürmann arrived in 1838, early colonists did not record the <i>ng</i> at the beginning of this name. English words never begin with this sound, and when English speakers heard it they could not recognize it as part of the word; it sounded to them like a mere noise or stammer.
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kaurana'
KWP Former Spelling	Ngaltingga
KWP New Spelling 2010	Ngaltingga
Phonemic Spelling	/ngALTINGka/
Pronunciation	Ngal-ti-ngga:
Pronunciation tips	Stress the first syllable. 1 <sup>st</sup> 'ng' as in 'singer' (practise this by first saying "singalti", then dropping the 'si'). Every 'a' as in 'Maori 'haka'. 'ngg' as in 'finger'. 't' unvoiced (no puff of air).

## Main source evidence

Date	Nov 1836
Original source text	- "III <sup>d</sup> [anchorage symbol] Deception Bay" [= Aldinga Bay] - [at Deception Bay] "Salt lake / A beautiful looking Country from the ship but on landing we found the Soil very inferior to the rest, but I am told about 3 Miles from the shore the soil is excellent." - "High ground well Wooded and Looking very rich" [inland beyond Aldinga Plain]
Reference	William Light hand-coloured map 3/11/1836, in D Elder ed., William Light's <i>Brief Journal</i> : 89. cp. Arrowsmith map 26/1/1838 'A survey on the coast on the east side of St Vincents Gulf made by Col Light, Surveyor General', 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report of Colonial Commissioners 1837, Appendix, <i>BPP: Aust, Vol. 5</i> : 196.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	Oct 1836
Original source text	"Above 'Yanky Lilly' the hills come down in a very bold manner to the sea.... This portion of the coast terminates to the northward in <b>a gentle slope, called by the natives 'Aldinghi Plains'</b> ".
Reference	John Morphett 1836, in <i>South Australia: Latest Information from this colony, contained in a letter written by Mr Morphett, Dated Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1836</i> , London, John Gliddon, 1837: 9.
Informants credited	"the natives"
Informants uncredited	probably George Bates; possibly and/or 'Sally' and/or Condoy, Oct 1836.



<i>Date</i>	[May 1837] / Jan 1838
<i>Original source text</i>	“Their name for Glenelg is Corvandilla [ <i>sic</i> ], which, being interpreted, means <i>good water</i> ; Adelaide, the city, they call Walinga: Ouhe-peringa [ <i>sic</i> ], Palbungi [ <i>sic</i> ], Morialbo [ <i>sic</i> ], <b>Aldinge</b> [ <i>sic</i> ], and Yankeedilly [ <i>sic</i> ], are all names of places in this neighbourhood.”
<i>Reference</i>	Stephen Hack letter from Adelaide, 1 May 1837, <i>South Australian Record</i> , Vol.1 No.4 (13 Jan 1838): 29c.
<i>Informants credited</i>	“ <i>The blacks</i> ” in the general vicinity of Adelaide, i.e. Kurna-speaking Aborigines.
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants for Adelaide names; for ‘Aldinge / Aldinga’, probably by personal communication from Morphett, or possibly Kurna informants.

<i>Date</i>	1 May 1837
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <i>Glenelg, May 1, 1837...</i> Their name for Glenelg is Corvandilla [ <i>sic for ‘Cowandilla’</i> ], which, being interpreted, means <i>good water</i> ; Adelaide, the city, they call Walinga: Ouhe-peringa [ <i>sic for ‘Onkeperinga’</i> ], Palbungi [ <i>sic for ‘Patbunga’</i> ], Morialbo [ <i>sic</i> ], <b>Aldinge</b> [ <i>sic</i> ], and Yankeedilly [ <i>sic for ‘Yankeelilly’</i> ], are all names of places in this neighbourhood. We arrived here in the middle of February...”
<i>Reference</i>	Stephen Hack letter May 1837, <i>South Australian Record</i> , Vol.1 No.4, 13 Jan 1838: 29b.
<i>Informants credited</i>	“ <i>The blacks</i> ” in the general vicinity of Adelaide, i.e. Kurna-speaking Aborigines.
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants Feb-April 1837 for Adelaide names; for ‘Aldinge / Aldinga’, probably by personal communication from Morphett, or possibly Kurna informants.

<i>Date</i>	May 1837
<i>Original source text</i>	“Adelaide, the city, they call Wallinga. Onkeperinga, Oatbunga, Morialta, <b>Aldinga</b> , Yankudilly are all names of places in this neighbourhood.”
<i>Reference</i>	Stephen Hack letter May 1837, in H Watson 1838, <i>A Lecture on South Australia</i> (Gliddon, London): 18.
<i>Informants credited</i>	“ <i>The blacks</i> ” in the general vicinity of Adelaide, i.e. Kurna-speaking Aborigines. .
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	For ‘Aldinga’, possibly Light’s party or Samuel Stephens?



<i>Date</i>	Sep 1837
<i>Original source text</i>	“7 Sept <sup>f</sup> ... we came to a plain which terminated in a fine open forest, where the gum tree Eucalyptus again became predominant. This forest opened into the <b>Aldinga plains</b> . Deception Bay to the S.S.E. and a range of beautifully wooded acclivities stretched along, height about 5 or 600 feet.”
<i>Reference</i>	Charles Mann 1837b, ‘Extracts from Memoranda, made... while travelling from Adelaide to Encounter Bay, SA on 5.6.7 and 8 <sup>th</sup> Sept <sup>f</sup> / 37...’, in South Australian Company Papers, BRG 42/52: 2.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Possibly Mullawirraburka (‘King John’).

<i>Date</i>	[Sep 1837?] / 1879
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <b>Auldingga – Aldinga</b> ”. “ <b>Koue Auldinga</b> - Deception Bay”.
<i>Reference</i>	W Wyatt [1837-9] / 1879, ‘Vocabulary of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay Tribes’, in JD Woods 1879, <i>Native Tribes of SA</i> : 179.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka and family, Sep 1837

<i>Date</i>	Nov 1837
<i>Original source text</i>	“Nov.29... presently we were joined by Cooper the interpreter and his native wife, who had tracked us all day... we halted for the night on the skirts of a wood on <b>Aldinga Plain</b> , about 3 miles from the base of the mountain range. A well of good water is to be found about half a mile distant...” “Dec 16... About 6 halted <b>on Aldinga plain</b> by a well in a wood...”
<i>Reference</i>	YB Hutchinson 1837, <i>A Hasty Account... of an expedition to Encounter Bay... 1837</i> , PRG 1013/1/4/1-2, SLSA: 2, 8.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Earlier colonists, possibly and/or William Cooper and Doughboy.

<i>Date</i>	early 1838
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <b>Aldinga B.</b> ” [= ‘Aldinga Bay’]
<i>Reference</i>	Map, n.d., ‘The maritime portion of South Australia from the surveys of Cap <sup>t</sup> Flinders and of Col. Light’, C 1023 SLSA. (This map was the basis for several later maps from 11 May 1838 onward).
<i>Informants credited</i>	Light; but the cartographer probably obtained this name from later explorers.
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	





Date	1838
Original source text	- “ <b>Aldinghi Bay</b> ” - “ <b>Aldinghi Plains</b> ”
Reference	Map frontispiece, ‘The Eastern Coast of Gulf St Vincent’, in Capper 1838, <i>South Australia, Containing Hints To Emigrants...</i> , (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed), London, Robert Tyas.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Morphett 1836

Date	May 1838
Original source text	“We passed the ford at Unkaparinga where the river enters a precipitous ravine continued the route through a grassy undulating open forest, and then through the open and extensive track known by the name of <b>Aldinga Plains.</b> ”
Reference	BT Finniss MS letter to Colonel Light, Adelaide 5 <sup>th</sup> May 1838, SA Company Papers, BRG 42/53, SLSA.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	May 1838
Original source text	“Thurs 3 <sup>rd</sup> May Left Unkaparinga at 7 o’clock, reached <b>Aldinga Plains</b> at noon, saw numbers of turkeys, swans and emu’s – Land pretty good, but no brooks of Water seen.” “Monday mornng 7 May... had great difficulty in getting it over the Ravine into <b>Aldinga Plains</b> – where we found no water. Caught a very fine Emu this morning, the steaks from the leg of which afforded us a delicious dinner.”
Reference	William Giles letter to GF Angas 1838 (journal of his expedition to and from Encounter Bay with Finlayson and Randall), 3 and 7 May 1838, PRG 174/1, SLSA, microfilm reel 3: 1179, 1181.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	July 1838
Original source text	[from ‘Onkeperinga’] “We then proceeded across not a very good country as far as <b>Aldinghi</b> , this is a fine country but badly watered in summertime... It is 20 miles [from Adelaide] to Onkeperinga and 15 from there to <b>Aldinga Creek</b> [today’s Willunga Creek]. ... I returned along the coast from Rapid bay to Cape Jervis and back one day by Cowyrlanka and Yankalilla to <b>Aldinghi</b> two days and from <b>Aldinghi</b> to Adelaide by Onkeperinga three days...”
Reference	Stephen Hack letter to Maria Hack 20 July 1838, PRG 456/1/25, SLSA.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Possibly Morphett 1836 for ‘Aldinghi’.



<i>Date</i>	Jan 1839
<i>Original source text</i>	- "... Mount Terrible, the southern boundary of the <b>Aldingha plains</b> ..." - "The <b>basin</b> of Adelaide to the west of the Mount Lofty range; that of <b>Aldingha</b> , between the Mount Lofty and Mount Barker ranges; and probably those of Yankalillah and Encounter Bays, between the Mount Barker and the Mount Wakefield ranges, are filled with a marine fossil formation."
<i>Reference</i>	George Gawler 1839, 'Notes made during a Journey into the Interior', <i>SA Gazette</i> 19/1/1839: 2a, 2b.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

<i>Date</i>	Aug-Oct 1839
<i>Original source text</i>	- " <b>Aldinga Plains</b> , Aug 26 <sup>th</sup> 1839". - " <b>Aldinga plain</b> ".
<i>Reference</i>	Richard Counsel 1839, Field Book 102 'Hundred of Willunga', Geographical Names Unit, Adelaide: 23, 25; cp. 27.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	This name <i>possibly</i> from Kaurna survey guides; or from earlier colonists.

<i>Date</i>	1840
<i>Original source text</i>	" <b>Ngalti-ngga - Aldinga Plain</b> ".
<i>Reference</i>	Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawiraburka, Kadlitpinna, Itymaitpinna etc 1838-40

<i>Date</i>	July 1840
<i>Original source text</i>	"Occasionally one family will barter their territory for a district belonging to another family, as in the case of King John, who formerly belonged to the districts of Adelaide, Glenelg, Sturt River, and Hurtle Vale, and he exchanged them for <b>Ugaldinga</b> and Maitpunga <b>Plains</b> ..." [transcription error for ' <b>Ngaldinga</b> ']
<i>Reference</i>	Moorhouse Protector's Report 27 July 1840, in <i>BPP: Australia</i> Vol. 7: 355.
<i>Informants credited</i>	Mullawiraburka
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	



Date	[1839] / 1840
Original source text	<b>"Aldingah Plain"</b> [from Willunga Creek south almost to Hahn Road]
Reference	FH Burslem map 1840, 'Plan of the country south of Adelaide J. McLaren Esq <sup>r</sup> Senior Surveyor 1840', Survey Office, Adelaide, C 236.SLSA. cp. Arrowsmith 1840, 'Country South of Adelaide from O'Halloran Hill to Mt. Terrible including District C and portions of Districts B and D / Surveyed by J. McLaren esqr... Sepr. 1st 1840', C 274 and C 803, SLSA.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	This name <i>possibly</i> from Kurna survey guides, Aug-Oct 1839; or from earlier colonists.

Date	1844
Original source text	<b>"... the Lagoon at Aldinga..."</b> "... we cross <b>the plain called Aldinga (properly Ngaltingga)</b> . Close by is the lagoon which dries up in the summer, and the water of which is salt in the winter... The plain is bounded by small but dense forests on either side..."
Reference	'L.P.' [Louis Piesse], 'Descriptive Tours through Part of District C', <i>Observer</i> 13/4/44: 7a, 8a.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Probably earlier colonists plus Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840.

Date	[1840s] / 1893
Original source text	<b>"Nal-dinga (open wide)"</b> .
Reference	'A Native' [Faith Emily Lockwood, nee Hewett], <i>SA Register</i> 11/10/1893: 7e.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna informants 1840s

Date	1930s?
Original source text	<b>"Nalden`ga"</b> [at printed Aldinga town].
Reference	Tindale annotated map Adelaide Area AA 338/16/6.
Informants credited	"Original data collected by N.B. Tindale / cross check with journals"
Informants uncredited	Possibly Milerum or Karlowan?



<i>Date</i>	1987
<i>Original source text</i>	“The old man then carried the body to [ˈWitawali] on the beach north of Sellicks Hill. He noticed that there was a fine bay which would serve at night as good netting place for sea salmon... He turned inland and climbed over Sellicks Hill. He kept Maitpanga on his left... At a place called [ˈWarabari]... the camp of the men [ˈLimi] and [ˈDarakːani]... The men saw that Tjirbruki meant mischief and all took headers into the water and turned into fish. Thus, in the sea off [ˈDaldenga] today you will find [ˈɲarakːani] (the gummy shark...), and [ˈlimi] (the cobbler carpet shark...)” [location not specific but obviously Aldinga Bay]
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale 1987, ‘Wanderings of Tjirbruki’, <i>Records of SA Museum</i> 20: 8b-9a.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

### Discussion: The plain NGALTINGGA:

In the earliest records ‘Aldinga’ or ‘Aldinghi’ referred consistently to the whole triangular plain: bounded by the Sellicks Hill Range in the east, the Gulf in the west, and in the north the rolling downs which begin just south of Maslin Creek.

The Kurna usage may have been this entire medium-sized area of plains; or perhaps it was defined by ecology as the larger part of it south of Willunga Creek, with no flowing watercourses and little all-year surface water.

Since European settlement the name has also been applied by extension to the open Bay which fronts the Plain in the lee of the rugged Myponga Beach coastal cliffs; and also to Willunga Creek.<sup>1</sup>

Only when the Aldinga School opened in 1852, and the village of Aldinga was laid out in 1857,<sup>2</sup> did the name begin to be focussed on the site of today’s town by the Creek.<sup>3</sup>

### RECORDED HISTORY OF THE PLACE-NAME:

It is almost certain that a few at least of the pre-colonial sealers visited this plain, even if only on the way somewhere else.<sup>4</sup> But none of their records mention it, and (as we shall see) it is uncertain whether they knew a name for it.

<sup>1</sup> The earliest known usage of the name ‘Aldinga Creek’ is a letter of Stephen Hack. Writing to his mother in 1838, he describes the explorations he has just done: [from Adelaide] “It is 20 miles to Onkeperinga and 15 from there to Aldinga Creek” (Stephen Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1838, PRG 456/1/25, SLSA). This was a natural extension of the usage to the lower reaches of Willunga Creek, and was probably normal until the standardizing work of the Geographical Names Board fixed one name upon the whole watercourse: presumably the name given originally to an upper reach near the town of Willunga. On a place-name card probably written in the 1980s, Tindale was still referring to Section 392 on the lower reach as ‘Aldinga Creek’ (Tindale Kurna place-name card 623 “‘Tarnijund’ingga”).

<sup>2</sup> Manning 2006: 17.

<sup>3</sup> The Kurna name which belongs in Willunga Creek at Aldinga town is *Tartatyilla* (see PNS 4.03.02/04).

## LIGHT'S 'DECEPTION BAY':

The first European to visit and note it in writing was Colonel Light. He visited this plain briefly on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1836 as he hurried up the gulf seeking the elusive harbour for the capital:

*The whole country... presents a most beautiful appearance... went on shore. Felt some disappointment at the appearance of the land, as it looked so luxuriant from the ship; we could find no fresh water; a lake of some extent on the high ground above the beach proved, on reaching it, to be salt.*<sup>5</sup>

Light was not very interested in Aboriginal place-names (they rarely occur in his journals), and he was in a desperate hurry. If he or his team obtained a name for this plain – from his Kangaroo Island employees Cooper and 'Doughboy' (a local Aboriginal woman) or from the Rapid Bay Aborigines – there is no direct record of it from any of his team.

Immediately losing interest in the little he had observed of its soil and water, he named it "Deception Bay" ('bay': a seaman's viewpoint),<sup>6</sup> hurried off northward, and thereafter scarcely mentioned it again. But by November 3<sup>rd</sup> when he sent his first hand-coloured map from Rapid Bay back to London, he must have heard more, probably from Morphett and Samuel Stephens (see below). For opposite the symbol for his third anchorage at 'Deception Bay', his annotation included the following:

*A beautiful looking Country from the ship but on landing we found the Soil very inferior to the rest, but I am told about 3 Miles from the shore the soil is excellent.*<sup>7</sup>

Inland from the plain he also marked "High ground well Wooded and Looking very rich".

<sup>4</sup> In 1831 two of the Kangaroo Island sealers, or their Aboriginal companions, gave Captain Barker's party the name *Kurtandilla*, the neighbouring pass over the ranges. It was recorded as "*Cutandilla*" on Sturt's map, from information given by the Barker party (map in Charles Sturt 1833, *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia*, London, Elder Smith, Vol.2: 228).

<sup>5</sup> W Light, *Brief Journal*, 23 Sep 1836.

<sup>6</sup> cp. WJS Pullen 'MS Journal', PRG 303/31, SLSA: 17.

<sup>7</sup> The original map is reproduced in D Elder ed., Light *Brief Journal*: 89. A later published version is Arrowsmith map 26/1/1838, 'A survey on the coast on the east side of St Vincents Gulf made by Col Light, Surveyor General', Appendix to 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of Colonial Commissioners 1837, *BPP: Aust*, Vol. 5: 196.

---

MORPHETT'S 'ALDINGHI':

Of course this place had been named by the people who lived on it and tended it. The first known record of the Kurna name comes from the newly-arrived and energetic merchant settler John Morphett. At the same time as Light but independently, Morphett was making two survey expeditions from the Kingscote base enabled by sealers and whaleboats of KI. His second trip, 18 days in early October, was in a boat belonging to Jacob Seaman and manned by George Bates and Nat Thomas.<sup>8</sup> Accompanied by Colonial Manager Samuel Stephens, they went north this time as far as Port Willunga, landing on the way to examine Aldinga Plain. At Holdfast Bay in November Morphett penned a glowing letter to England. Above 'Yanky Lilly' were rugged cliffs,<sup>9</sup> the hills "covered with a very nice herbage, and... much more bare of trees than we have hitherto seen" further south; but

*This portion of the coast terminates to the northward in a gentle slope, called by the natives 'Aldinghi Plains'. The upper part consists of the same sort of land as the hills... This place has a very singular and interesting aspect from the sea.*

He had in his company local knowledge of the plain in its seasonal variations, for he continues:

*The sloping grassland in front, without a single tree for three or four miles square, of a beautifully bright green in winter and spring, and a golden colour during the hotter months,<sup>10</sup> is surrounded by finely wooded eminences, and a bold range of hills beyond.<sup>11</sup>*

In May 1837 a letter to England from the Quaker explorer Stephen Hack listed "Aldinga" as one of several unlocalized place-names "in this neighbourhood" (an area from Adelaide to Cape Jervis). Or did it? We have no manuscript copy of Hack's letter. Another published version of it gives "Aldinge", which probably represents an oral communication of Morphett's 'Aldinghi': a spelling which Hack later reproduced exactly in another letter.<sup>12</sup> We might call this 'the capitalists' spelling'.

---

<sup>8</sup> For the personnel see Journal of the 'John Pirie' 1 Oct 1836, SLSA; RT Sexton 1990, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures South Australia 1627–1850*, Canberra: Roebuck Books: 29-30.

<sup>9</sup> Between today's Myponga Beach and Sellicks Hill.

<sup>10</sup> Kangaroo grass (see Gammage 2011, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> J Morphett 1837, *South Australia: Latest Information from this colony... contained in a letter written by Mr Morphett*, London, Gliddon: 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Hack letter 1 May 1837. The name was published as "Aldinge" in *South Australian Record* 1(4): 29, and as "Aldinga" in the same letter in H Watson 1838, *A Lecture on South Australia* (Gliddon, London): 18. Cp. "Aldinghi" in Stephen Hack letter to Maria Hack, 20 July 1838 (PRG 456/1/25, SLSA). From their arrival the Hack brothers (John and Stephen) were in touch with other leading capitalists such as Morphett. Stephen did not visit the southern regions himself until so two months after his letter of 1 May 1837.

---

THE STANDARD 'ALDINGA':

But today's standard English spelling 'Aldinga' did appear very early in the colony. We don't know for sure who first wrote down this spelling, nor in what circumstances; it seems to be independent of Morphett's spelling. In the first year of the colony a number of eager settlers were out exploring from Adelaide in search of good land: Hack, his brother John Barton Hack and Morphett privately; and Samuel Stephens and CW Stuart on behalf of the South Australian Company as well as themselves. Not all of these expeditions have been chronicled; any of them may have crossed Aldinga Plain in company with a Kurna-speaking guide. On the other hand it is also possible that this version of the name was obtained from 'Doughboy' or the 'Cape Jervis' tribe at Rapid Bay by one of Light's team in September 1836, and came to Adelaide with him orally.

'Aldinga' might be called 'the government's spelling'. Its first unambiguous appearance was in September with government officials, the records of an overland journey by Advocate-General Mann and Interim Protector Wyatt from Adelaide to Encounter Bay in the company of the Kurna-speaking leader Mullawirraburka ('King John'). Mann gave it as 'Aldinga', and Wyatt as 'Auldingga'.<sup>13</sup> Probably on the same trip Wyatt also recorded "Koue Auldinga" (*Kauwi Ngaltingga*, 'water at Aldinga') as the name of Deception Bay.<sup>14</sup>

But Morphett's spelling 'Aldinghi' remained in currency with some until at least 1838. In July of that year Stephen Hack used it several times in a letter; but this was probably because he had read Morphett as well as spoken with him.<sup>15</sup> By 1838 most other people were using 'Aldinga',<sup>16</sup> and in the same letter Hack himself used that spelling for the Creek. In 1839 records of "*Aldingha*" seem to combine both spellings.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> The difference may seem insignificant in the light of our normal pronunciation ('ald' as in 'alder'), but could confirm what the actual pronunciation was *at that time* when it was still being heard from Kurna-speaking lips. See my Appendix (below) about the first vowel.

<sup>14</sup> See my separate essay PNS 4-04-01/06 *Kauwi Ngaltingga*. Wyatt's spelling 'Auldinga' here represents the same sounds as "*Auldingga*" in the same list (Wyatt in JD Woods 1879: 179). It is likely that he revised many of his 'nga' locatives to 'ngga' after reading Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840.

<sup>15</sup> By then Morphett had become a familiar associate of the Hack brothers. In December 1837 JB Hack had explored across the ranges to Mt Barker with his NSW bushman Davies, Morphett, Samuel Stephens and CW Stuart.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Mann in Sep 1837, Strangways and Hutchinson in Dec 1837; Samuel Stephens in May 1838 (Stephens to Morphett 14/5/1838, in *Reports Of Country Lands*, BRG 42/51); Giles, Finlayson and Randall in May 1838. BT Finnis originally wrote "*Aldinga Plains*" in his letter to Light reporting on a trip to Encounter Bay; but a month later it was published in a newspaper as "*Aldinghi Plains*" (Finnis to Light 5 May 1838, SA Company papers BRG 42/53, SLISA; *Southern Australian* 2 June 1838: 4b).

<sup>17</sup> G Gawler 1839, 'Notes made during a Journey into the Interior', *SA Gazette* 19/1/1839: 2a, 2b. The same spelling is found in *Register* 10/8/1839: 6a. Burslem and McLaren's spelling "*Aldingah*" (see 'Main Evidence' above) adds nothing significant.



Once this form had appeared on the Survey Department's maps and continued there on new versions, it became standard and official.<sup>18</sup>

Some of these maps marked "Aldinga B." or "Aldinga Bay" and credited Light's work; but their date is too late to tell us whether this name originated from his team in 1836 or from another source.<sup>19</sup>

### THE PLACE: BEAUTIFUL FOR ALL, THIRSTY FOR SOME:

It seems likely that early generations of colonists applied the name to a larger area than we do today.<sup>20</sup> In accordance with the topography it seems to have included right from the beginning the entire flat area south of today's Malpas Road, where the rolling downs around Maslin Creek begin about one kilometre north of Willunga Creek.<sup>21</sup>

### GRASS AND FOREST:

Morphett in 1836 continued his first impressions of the Aldinga and Willunga plains, with their luxuriant crop of kangaroo grass:

*To the north the level country... is covered with so long and thick an herbage that it is quite laborious to walk through it. There are numerous woods, or what might be termed groves, of a very open description, and some spots where the scenery resembles an English gentleman's park, or is even more beautiful.*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> e.g. [no title, n.d.] (early 1838?) 'The maritime portion of South Australia from the surveys of Cap<sup>t</sup> Flinders and of Col. Light', C 1023 SLSA. This map was the base on which later maps (some with the same title) were developed over the next few years, such as Arrowsmith 'A new map of South Australia', C 929 (11 May 1838) and BRG 42/120/26 (June 1838: both SLSA); and Appendix to 2<sup>nd</sup> Report From Select Committee on South Australia, 1841, *BPP, Aust 2*: 272. The only map I know of which used Morphett's 'Aldinghi' was Capper's second edition in 1838, which was still relying on information from 1836 (frontispiece 'The Eastern Coast of Gulf St Vincent', Capper 1838, *South Australia, Containing Hints To Emigrants...*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), London, Robt Tyas).

<sup>19</sup> In 1837 Light and his team were preoccupied with Adelaide. Aldinga plain was not surveyed at all until 1839.

<sup>20</sup> See (e.g.) John Wade's estimate, in December 1837, that the Aldinga plains were "nearly of equal extent" with the Onkaparinga plain (around Woodside) which "contains upwards of 100 square miles" (Wade letter quoted in Gouger 1838, *South Australia in 1837* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed): 24-6. This is much larger than our current Aldinga plains (about 35 square miles even if we include the 'rolling downs' area north to Pedler Creek). He must have been including the entire flat area from Sellicks Hill to McLaren Flat, i.e. most of the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells area. Tindale must have been assuming something similar when he mapped "*Mul:awira (Mullawirra T&S forest on E side Aldinga Plain)*" along Douglas Gully Road at McLaren Flat (Tindale annotated map Hundred of Willunga, AA 338/24/97, This position is known to be quite wrong: see PNS 4.04.03/04 Mullawirra).

But this large area is not typical usage. Wade was a short-term visitor from Tasmania, and the McLaren Flat area would soon be labelled 'Bay of Biscay'.

<sup>21</sup> The route descriptions in Mann 1837 and Finniss 1838 both read as though Aldinga Plains began immediately after emerging southward from 'open forest' near Maslin Creek.

<sup>22</sup> J Morphett 1837: 9-10. Morphett was not alone in being struck by the beauty of this plain, with the scarps of the Ironstone Range framing it so boldly. The artist George French Angas wrote in 1844, "*The scenery in every direction is*



It was openness which distinguished Aldinga Plain even from the open woodland country immediately north of it (the rolling 'downs' around Maslin Creek).<sup>23</sup> Travelling south, BT Finniss wrote of passing from "a grassy undulating open forest, and then through the open and extensive track known by the name of Aldinga Plains".<sup>24</sup> Morphett found a grassland "without a single tree", and we know precisely where it was because we have meticulous detailed Field Books and maps of it, surviving from the first survey conducted by Richard Counsel in late 1839 under the supervision of John McLaren. On McLaren's map this whole blank space is used to mark "Aldingah plain".<sup>25</sup>

However, Aldinga Plain was much less open than the bare paddocks we have on the flats today. Morphett's treeless patch was surrounded by open woodland. Their positions were clearly marked on Counsel's Field Book and the maps derived from it.<sup>26</sup> And there were also two "small but dense forests on either side" of the Plain.<sup>27</sup>

---

*peculiarly charming. Morphett Vale, the Willunga Hills, and the plain of Aldinga, with Mount Terrible beyond, present scenes of unequalled beauty*", which unfortunately he did not paint during his whirlwind visit (Angas 1847, *Savage Life and Scenes* Vol.1: 214). In 1850 Edward Snell's diary sketch "from recollection, of Willunga looking towards the sea" (southwest towards Sellick's Beach) shows the Plain with scattered trees and perhaps a patch of scrub to the left on the foothills nearby: "the whole covered with trees through which the roads wind and looking very much like a gentleman's park in England" (Tom Griffiths (ed) 1988, *Life and Adventures of Edward Snell*: 78).

<sup>23</sup> In 1893 'A Native' asserted that "Nal-dinga" was "open wide" ('A Native', *Register* 11/10/1893; reproduced in Manning 1990: 1). This author was Faith Emily Lockwood, daughter of the McLaren Vale pioneer CT Hewett, and she probably recorded this independent spelling of the name from direct inquiry among her Kurna-speaking visitors at Oxenberry Farm in the 1840s. Although she probably meant the phrase as a description, Cockburn in his 1984 edition interpreted it as a meaning, "open, wide plain" (Cockburn 1984, *What's In a Name?*).

<sup>24</sup> BT Finniss MS letter to Colonel Light, Adelaide 5<sup>th</sup> May 1838, SA Company Papers, BRG 42/53, SLSA.

<sup>25</sup> Morphett's "sloping grassland... without a single tree for three or four miles square" is no doubt the same as the almost blank (= treeless) triangular area on Counsel's survey maps of the forests in 1839. This extends from a narrow end at Norman Rd and Justs Rd, to a broad end at Biscay Road from Main South Rd to Ryan Rd, and includes:

1. (as shown clearly on DB 'Hd Willunga' map, from Counsel's Field Book 102): Sections 608-9 (at Norman Rd and Justs Rd), expanding northward over Sections [602]/603-4/[605], 437-8-9, and 431-2-3/[434] (to Colville Rd where it extends from Main South Rd to Culley Rd). This might cover an area of 12 square km [1200 hectares] = 4.5 square miles (very roughly estimated).

2. (as shown fairly clearly on McLaren's map 'Country South of Adelaide', but not so easily traceable in Counsel's Field Book): a further extension north and east on Sections 426-7-8/259-260, 416-7/249-250-1-2-3 and 409/239-240-1 (up to Biscay Rd and east to Ryan Rd). This is about another 700 hectares = about 2.5 square miles.

Did Morphett mean '3 or 4 square miles' or '3-4 X 3-4 = 9-16 square miles'? The distance in a straight line from 608 to 241 is '3 or 4 miles' (actually about 3.6); his word 'square' was probably a hasty guess expressed very loosely.

<sup>26</sup> The forested patches are shown roughly on the first published map arising from the surveys of District C (J McLaren 1 Sep 1840, 'Country South of Adelaide from O'Halloran Hill to Mt. Terrible', London, Arrowsmith, C 274 and C 803, SLSA. This was developed from FH Burslem's prior local draft, 'Plan of the country south of Adelaide', Adelaide Survey Office 1840, C 236 SLSA).

However, for the area of Aldinga Plain south of Colville Road the patches are shown with more detail and clarity in the Diagram Book 'Hundred of Willunga' (Geographical Names Unit) p.4-2. (This is in turn based directly on Counsel's Field Book 102, GNU).

These maps show large patches of scrub over much of the strip from west of Main South Rd at Button Rd, northeast along the foothills to Colville Rd (using today's road names); and it becomes continuous and much denser on higher ground all along this range.

Morphett's 'treeless 'three or four miles square' is probably the almost blank triangle shown from its narrow end at Norman Rd and Justs Rd, expanding northward to Colville Rd where it extends from Main South Rd to Culley Rd; plus a further extension (shown on McLaren's map where its space is used to mark "Aldingah plain") north almost to Willunga Creek and east to Ryan Rd.

<sup>27</sup> Piesse 1844: 8a.

Near the sea in the west was the large patch of mallee scrub which was “called the Southwest Corner (from its position from Willunga)<sup>28</sup> and is well known to the kangaroo hunters”.<sup>29</sup> Today its precious though reduced remnant is called Aldinga Scrub: the only large area of original vegetation now remaining in the entire Adelaide region.<sup>30</sup>

On or near the eastern foothills, *Mullawirra* (‘dry forest’) was another mallee scrub whose custodian and traditional owner was the leading cultural informant of early contact times, Mullawirra-burka (‘King John’).<sup>31</sup> This forest has been totally obliterated, and its exact position is now unclear.<sup>32</sup> From the earliest maps it appears that Mullawirra was fairly continuous with other patches of the more open woodland.

The park-like beauty – large trees separated by grass rather than undergrowth or scrub, with patches of forest nearby: ideal hunting country – was the intended result of Kurna ‘firestick farming’. For many centuries the people burned off the grass regularly to reduce scrub undergrowth and make *pardu* (meat, game) more accessible.

John Morphett had an eye for land and its management, if only in order to turn it into a new English farmland. Within three months he had acquired some knowledge of how this beauty and functionality had been shaped by humans. Nevertheless, with a double-think all too common, he could still offer simultaneously the usual clichés about ‘untrodden wilds’:

*The country from Cape Jervis upwards is very picturesque, and generally well timbered, but in the disposition of the trees more like an English park than what we could have imagined to be the character of untrodden wilds; it is, therefore, well suited for depasturing sheep, and in many places, under present circumstances, quite open enough for the plough... Any person landing on the coast for the first time at the present season might entertain an unfavourable impression of the soil, because the land looks bare and sterile. A short time, however, would convince him of his mistake, especially if a shower of rain should fall, when a couple of days would suffice to present to his eye one universal carpet of green. The appearance of barrenness to which I have alluded is the effect of the fires kindled by the natives, which sometimes burn for days together, and run over a great extent of country. These fires are evidently carried on in a systematic manner, and are the means adopted by the natives for removing the old crops of grass, which I imagine they are induced to do in consequence of the labour necessary to get through the*

<sup>28</sup> The township of Willunga was established in 1840 and naturally became the settlers’ reference point for locations on this plain.

<sup>29</sup> Piesse 1844: 8a.

<sup>30</sup> Aldinga Scrub was saved from ‘development’ in the 1970s, at which time it was also the subject of a holistic ecological and cultural study: see E Wollaston (ed) 1978, *Aldinga-Sellicks Beach Scrub: a report*, Education Dept of SA.

<sup>31</sup> See my PNS 4.04.03/04 Mullawirra.

<sup>32</sup> However, the location of *Mullawirra* and its spring *Mullawirrangga* may yet come to light through a careful study of the original survey maps and comparison with local knowledge and hydrology.

country in summer, before it has been fired, and because the young grass affords a nourishing and tempting food for the kangaroos and emus.<sup>33</sup>

#### WATERS:

South of Willunga Creek there are no permanent surface streams and, despite much interference from European development, much of the drainage still happens underground.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps it was this fact, and the associated need to rely on springs and ‘wells’, which defined *Ngaltingga* for the Aborigines who used it – rather than the mere flatness which defined it in the eyes of European travellers. If so, then *Ngaltingga* was probably confined to an area south of Willunga Creek.

The ‘salt lake’ which Light saw was The Washpool, just north of Sellicks Beach. This permanent lagoon – receiving the entire drainage of the southern Willunga Basin – was said in those years to be salty even in winter.<sup>35</sup> When Light came it was spring; the seasonal Blue Lagoon, further northeast out of sight behind the scrub, was then probably two or three metres deep after winter rains, a small freshwater lake. But Light missed it. Morphett, in less of a hurry, seems to have seen it and understood its relation to The Washpool:

*The lower part [of the plain] is impregnated with salt, being beneath the level of the sea at spring-tides, and this imparts a brackish taste to the rains, which collect there during the winter months, and form a small lake.*<sup>36</sup>

One old resident remembered:

*The [Aldinga] Scrub was always a special place, virgin bushland... I remember a large swamp in the middle of the Scrub. I came upon it one evening just as a flight of black swans was*

<sup>33</sup> John Morphett letter to England, 28 Feb 1837, GC Morphett (ed) 1936, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Morphett*, Adelaide, Hassell Press: 31-4. For a detailed study of Aboriginal land management by fire, including contemporary paintings of its resulting landscapes, see Bill Gammage 2011, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Allen & Unwin; and examples from the Adelaide-Fleurieu region in Gammage 2012, ‘The Adelaide District in 1836’, in R Foster and P Sendziuk, *Turning Points: Chapters in South Australian History*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press.

<sup>34</sup> The current system of largely manmade drains is quite different from what is shown on the first survey map. There south of Willunga Creek many short watercourses are marked coming from the range, but *none* of them reach the plain proper; and not even Sellicks Creek reaches the coast (McLaren 1840, ‘Country South of Adelaide’). The Willunga Basin is the southern part of the much larger ‘McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells’ area: a drainage system which from its outlets at the Washpool, Port Willunga, Maslin Beach and Moana extends between two branches of the Range for 30 km NE all the way to Kangarilla. The ‘Willunga Basin Plain’ itself is considered to include all the above aquifers; within it underground water contributes to many of the surface streams and is dominant at Aldinga Scrub which “occurs over a perched aquifer”, and doubtless feeds the waterholes in the coastal dunes (Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board 2007, *Water Allocation Plan for the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area*: 10, 11, 13; online at <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adalaidentloftyranges/water/water-allocation-plans/mclaren-vale> [3/6/15]).

<sup>35</sup> Piesse 1844: 8a. Later testimony casts some doubt on the generalization that it was always salty (see PNS 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla).

<sup>36</sup> J Morphett 1837: 10.



*coming in to land on it. There were wild ducks, herons, cranes, all manner of swamp birds, a cacophony of frog songs (in fact they could be quite deafening as far away as the shacks at night). Cape Barren geese would come to this place too.*<sup>37</sup>

“The old people remember it... In the days when the lagoon was there, there were no creeks. Now there are creeks which have washed the soil from the high ground into the swamp and filled it up”: so wrote ‘Our Special Correspondent’ in 1933, and continued:

*Near this lagoon... there used to be a thick forest, haunted by all sorts of bird life. Today there is merely open plain, almost treeless. Yet 70 years ago parties used to be sent from the city to hunt birds in this forest. The birds were exported in thousands, and some species were exterminated.*<sup>38</sup>

Twenty years after that was written, the Blue Lagoon and Washpool were finally obliterated altogether. The latter is now merely a dark patch which occasionally becomes waterlogged during the wettest winters.<sup>39</sup>

The plain was beautiful to look at, but could be troublesome to cross for a newcomer on foot in the wrong season and ignorant of the waterholes.

William Giles, Pastor Finlayson and William Randall, travelling through in May 1838, “saw numbers of turkeys, swans and emu’s – Land pretty good, but no brooks of Water seen”. On their return journey, “Caught a very fine Emu this morning, the steaks from the leg of which afforded us a delicious dinner”.<sup>40</sup>

But in those times there were other waters too on the plain, fed by the underground drainage. Some were in the coastal dunes and not far from them around Aldinga Scrub. Six months before Giles, the KI sealer William Cooper and one of his Aboriginal wives (probably ‘Doughboy’, who was a Fleurieu woman) had guided the gentleman surveyor Hutchinson to some of them:

*We halted for the night on the skirts of a wood on Aldinga Plain, about 3 miles from the base of the mountain range. A well of good water is to be found about half a mile distant.*

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Hay, ‘Memories of Aldinga Beach 1942-1951’ (Willunga Library), quoted in Rob Linn 1991, *Cradle of Adversity: a history of the Willunga district*, Historical Consultants and Willunga District Council: 177 note 5.

<sup>38</sup> “I was told these things... by Messrs JN Crisp, TH Culley, A Bird, J Poynton, and ET Martin” (‘Our Special Correspondent’ [?Rodney Cockburn], ‘The Story of Aldinga’, *Adelaide Chronicle* 1/6/1933: 46). In 1844 it was said that “Pelicans are pretty numerous here and I picked up some skins of the penguin on the beach” (Piesse in *Observer* 13/4/1844: 7c).

<sup>39</sup> For more on the Washpool and Blue Lagoon, see my PNS 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla.

<sup>40</sup> W Giles journal, PRG 174/1, m/f reel 3, SLSA: 1179, 1181.





And on the way back they “halted on Aldinga plain by a well in a wood”.<sup>41</sup> These ‘wells’ might have been Cliff’s Waterhole in the northeast corner of Aldinga Scrub.<sup>42</sup> Other wells existed in the Scrub vicinity, but many of them have now been destroyed by dune degradation or development.<sup>43</sup>

It was probably one of these waters nearer the coast which was referred to as *Kauwi Ngaltingga*, ‘the water at *Ngaltingga*’.<sup>44</sup> Or perhaps it was a phrase referring to all of them collectively.

In 1839 the surveyors too found that “Aldinga... is really deficient in surface water”; but their Kurna guides showed them where to find hidden water on the eastern side of the plain:

*There are several springs along the Range, which, on being cleared out, only give a more abundant supply.*<sup>45</sup>

Louis Piesse – who later became the storeman of Sturt’s Central Australian expedition – learned to appreciate *Ngaltingga* the Kurna way when he joined McLaren’s team for the first surveys of ‘District C’ in late 1839. He had grassroots company, for it was reported of the ‘natives’ that “Several of them are also employed in the Survey Department at Yankalilla and Aldingha (Aldinga), who receive rations and pay the same as the white laborers”.<sup>46</sup> Piesse kept a diary which is lost; but some of what he learned from his uncredited Kurna-speaking mates has been preserved. In the spring of 1839, from their current bush base “Camp Coortandillah, near Aldinga”,<sup>47</sup> he wrote to the *Adelaide Guardian* who published his small collection of Kurna words and place-names. More of it surfaced in the *Adelaide Observer* a few years later under the pen-name ‘L.P.’ in the two-part ‘Descriptive Tours of District C’. With a surveyor’s eye, he noted significant Kurna place-names and their section numbers, and commented on them as water sources. He listed the names of most of the springs along this part of the range, and in this way bequeathed us a Kurna view of the geography.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> YB Hutchinson, *A Hasty Account... of an expedition to Encounter Bay... 1837*, PRG 1013/1/4/1-2, SLSA: 2, 8.

<sup>42</sup> See Wollaston (ed) 1978: 10, 11, 15.

<sup>43</sup> See Wollaston (ed) 1978.

<sup>44</sup> Wyatt recorded “*Koue audlingga*” as “*Deception Bay*”, probably while journeying south to Encounter Bay. But *kauwi* refers to fresh water. I surmise that Wyatt’s error arose from his informant naming the site(s) at a distance while looking west from the ‘native track’ in the vicinity of today’s Main South Road. See PNS 4-04-01/06 *Kauwi Ngaltingga*.

<sup>45</sup> *Observer* 13/4/1844: 8b.

<sup>46</sup> *Register* 10/8/1839: 6a.

<sup>47</sup> *Kurtandilla* (see PNS 4.04.03/03).

<sup>48</sup> See PNS 4.04.02/01 *Piltangga*, 03 ‘*Burkaburkarilla*’, 04 ‘*Wykera-wonjurilla*’; 4.04.03/01 ‘*Perreminkaminkungga*’, 02 ‘*Wilyahowkingga*’, 03 *Kurtandilla*, 04 *Mullawirrangga*.



Apart from the advantages of this landscape for hunting and fishing, its hydrology created an area between Aldinga Scrub and Blue lagoon in which the soil contained mineral salts which were good for curing skins. This place was called *Wakuntilla* or *Wangkuntilla*.<sup>49</sup>

Naturally there were a number of good campsites in the area, making good use of the local resources of scrub, grassland, dunes, sea, sandy beach, lagoon and the workshop soils.<sup>50</sup>

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURE:

Aldinga Bay was well-known to Aboriginal travellers as “a fine bay which would serve at night as good netting place for sea salmon”.<sup>51</sup> With these same travellers many of the fish in Aldinga Bay would have had totemic resonances. The ancestor Tjirbruki contributed to their presence here. In the vicinity of the cliffs between Sellicks Hill and Myponga Beach, he carried out payback by spearing in the leg a group of men including [‘Limi] and [‘Darak`ani]... The men saw that Tjirbruki meant mischief and all took headers into the water and turned into fish. Thus, in the sea off [‘Daldengga]<sup>52</sup> today you will find [‘narak:ani] (the gummy shark, *Mustelus antarcticus*), and [‘limi] (the cobbler carpet shark, *Sutorectus tentaculatus*)... These fish became the *ngaitji* or totems of members of the Witjarlung clan of the Kaurna tribe”.<sup>53</sup>

#### AN ABORIGINAL TRACK:

Piesse also mentioned an Aboriginal track across the plain, noting some of its rationale, and that it had been the basis for the ‘Proposed Road to Encounter Bay’ when they were surveying in 1839. In 1844, when this was already ‘the old road’ and a new route was being proposed,<sup>54</sup> he wrote:

<sup>49</sup> For more about this see PNS 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla.

<sup>50</sup> See Wollaston (ed) 1978; Margaret Nobbs 1971, ‘A Description and Survey of Archeological evidence at Aldinga-Sellicks Beach Scrub’, *Friends of SA Museum Newsletter*, Vol.11 No.1: 5-7; Nobbs 1987, ‘Summary of information, Reminiscences and Anecdotes collected during interviews with... elderly residents of the Aldinga Scrub area’, *Journal of Anthropological Society of SA* 25/1, Sep 1987: 5-6; Betty Ross (ed) 1981, *Aboriginal and Historic Sites around Metropolitan Adelaide* (Anthropological Society of SA).

<sup>51</sup> Tindale 1987, ‘Wanderings of Tjirbruki’, *Records of SA Museum* 20: 8b; this datum probably from Karlowan and/or Milerum.

<sup>52</sup> = ‘Ngaldengga’. Tindale uses the phonetic symbol ŋ / D for the sound *ng*.

<sup>53</sup> Tindale 1987, ‘Wanderings of Tjirbruki’: 9a. The Aboriginal names of the fish are in Ngarrindjeri language. This incident comes from Milerum’s ‘Story of Tjelbruke’ 1934 (Tindale ‘South-east of SA Journal’ Vol.2, AA 338/1/33/2: 48-9). Here Tindale is also equating Aldinga Bay with his own other uses of the name “*Ngaldengga*” for the town: unjustifiably in his own terms, but (ironically) with more historical accuracy.

The word ‘Witjarlung’ is in Ngarrindjeri form, and there is no record of the clan at first contact; it is one of the memories from the 1870-80s recorded by Tindale in the 1930s from his Ngarrindjeri-speaking informants.

<sup>54</sup> The ‘old road’ – surveyed as a ‘Proposed Road to Encounter Bay’ in 1839 on the basis of tracks already in use – crossed Sellicks Hill almost over Mt Terrible (where the long and steep scarp was notoriously difficult for loaded bullock wagons), and continued across the Myponga valley and via Hindmarsh Tiers to Hindmarsh Valley. Sturt’s proposed ‘new road’ approximated today’s Victor Harbor Road, crossing the scarp over Willunga Hill, passing through the ‘Great Sandy Basin’ now called Mt Compass, and down Crows Nest Road.



*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.*<sup>55</sup>

Piesse's team officer Counsel had noted this "native track" with a dotted line on his field maps. It is shown from O'Halloran Hill to the Noarlunga ford and south to Sellicks Hill, usually bypassing the more densely wooded patches.<sup>56</sup> Apart from the maps there are enough records about it – literature which follows it verbally to Encounter Bay – that it offers a fruitful exercise in cultural and historical geography. Aboriginal people and researchers can reconstruct such routes and their meanings by using early surveyors' maps and field books, historical literature, diaries, ecological history, place-names, archaeology and anthropology.<sup>57</sup>

### THE NAME:

The most authoritative record of the name is a simple and sole mention in the work of the missionary linguists Teichelmann and Schürmann: "Ngalti-ngga – Aldinga Plain".<sup>58</sup> This is confirmed in the same year by Protector Moorhouse when he named part of Mullawirraburka's country as "Ngaldinga".<sup>59</sup>

In all the earlier records the English-speaking colonists had failed to hear the initial *ng* as part of the word, since this never happens in English.

The T&S entry displays the Kurna locative suffix *-ngga*, 'at, place of', on a root *ngalti* which has not been recorded anywhere as a Kurna word or morpheme in its own right.<sup>60</sup> As Amery observes, "Perhaps there was no meaning for Aldinga in the minds of Kurna people alive back in the 1830s. *Ngaltingga* could have been just a name with no known meaning, just as Indulkana is just a name for Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people today. If Aldinga had meant something, there

<sup>55</sup> *Observer* 16/3/1844: 7a.

<sup>56</sup> The whole track from Section [426]/430 to 675/[529] is shown with a dotted line as "Track from Encounter Bay" and "Present track to Adelaide", along with the forested patches around it (Diagram Book 'Hundred of Willunga' p.4-2, GNU). In much more detail the dotted line can be followed through Counsel's Field Book 102 (GNU): on p.37 and 43 (SSW from Aldinga town); p41 (to Button Rd); and p42 (to Mt Terrible Gully and up a tributary southward over the range).

<sup>57</sup> See also (e.g.) my PNS Kawimarnilla, Ngangkiparringga, Taringga, Tarniyandingga, Kanyanyapilla, Willangga, Piltangga, Kurtandilla.

<sup>58</sup> Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840, 2:75. I do not know any other mention of this name in their writings.

<sup>59</sup> Moorhouse Protector's Report 27/7/1840, in *BPP: Australia* Vol. 7: 355. The publication gives "*Ugaldinga*", but this is clearly the publisher's mis-transcription of hand-written 'Ngaldinga'. With unfamiliar words in cursive handwriting it is easy to confuse capital N and capital U.

<sup>60</sup> The same applies to the place-name *Maitpangga* (Myponga Valley): see PNS 5.01/05.

is a good possibility that T&S would have listed *ngalti* in their vocabulary, after having noted and listed the placename Ngalti-ngga”.<sup>61</sup>

.....

We might leave the linguistics there; but teasing complications in the records offer a few bypaths.

### 1. Morphett’s ‘Aldinghi’, the earliest record:

As it stands, the final vowel here is incompatible with the authoritative form *Ngaltingga*. In Kurna ‘Aldinghi’ could be a simple word *ngaltinggi* of unknown meaning and containing no suffix. But we have the linguists’ authority that this place-name does include a Locative; and that the Kurna locative cannot be *-nggi*.

So where did Morphett’s “-ghi” come from? and what is its linguistic significance?

There are two possibilities, both related to the identity of his unnamed informants.

The first is that this version of the name was given by one or both of the Kangaroo Island ‘sealers’ who accompanied him on his second trip, Bates and Thomas.

If so, they may have assimilated the syllables *-tingga* from the original Kurna to the familiar English word ‘dinghy’ (a very small boat).<sup>62</sup> Something similar happened to *Yarnkalyilla* (Yankalilla) when these pre-colonial Islanders adapted it to “Yanky-lilly” (‘Yankee’ + ‘lily’).<sup>63</sup>

That is one simple explanation for the redundant ‘h’ in Morphett. But it does not explain the similar redundant ‘h’ in ‘gha’, found in “Aldingha” and other early place-name records.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Rob Amery 2002, ‘Weeding Out Spurious Toponyms...’, in Hercus et al, *The Land Is a Map*, Sydney, Pandanus Books: 167.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Dinghy’ had been adopted into English from Hindi by 1794, and one source says that today’s standard spelling ‘dinghy’ was first recorded in 1879, before which it was spelt without the ‘h’. See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dinghy>; and Peter Last 2003. ‘On *dinghy*, a loan word from Hindi’, *Australian Style: a national bulletin* 11(1) June 2003, Canberra: Style Council Centre, Macquarie University: 3, online via [http://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/faculties\\_and\\_departments/faculty\\_of\\_human\\_sciences/linguistics/linguistics\\_research/-z\\_research\\_list/australian\\_style\\_blog/australian\\_style\\_archive/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_human_sciences/linguistics/linguistics_research/-z_research_list/australian_style_blog/australian_style_archive/) (11/9/13).

Yet in the 1860s Taplin’s Point McLeay Journal contains three examples of ‘dinghy’. In Joe Lane’s transcription ‘dinghy’ occurs on 24/3/1860, 16/8/1861 and 18/1/1869 (Journals of the Reverend George Taplin 1859-1879, PRG 186-1/3, SLSA, transcribed by Joe Lane from typescript and “*matched with the original handwritten journals*” (see <http://www.firstsources.info> [5/6/15]). However, Taplin’s spelling is usually ‘dingey’.

<sup>63</sup> See PNS 5.02.01/02 Tuttungga (sometimes spelled ‘Tootongha’ in the records).

So if perhaps Morphett and his sealer contacts were *not* thinking of ‘dinghy’, why did he not write ‘ingi’ or ‘ingie’, as in the Ngarrindjeri place-name ‘Meningie’? And why was it not ‘inga’, in line with the known Kaurna form?

Perhaps these ghi’s and gha’s were Englishmen’s attempts to represent ‘exotic’ pronunciations, on the analogy of colonial experience especially in India.<sup>65</sup> Morphett wrote that this plain was “called by the natives ‘*Aldinghi*’”; quite possibly he heard it from these ‘natives’ in person.

This is the second possibility: that Morphett’s informant was Aboriginal but actually did say *Ngaldinggi*. Because words ending with *-inggi* are relatively rare in Kaurna,<sup>66</sup> this would imply that he or she was a speaker of Ngarrindjeri – a different and almost completely unrelated language.

But it would not necessarily imply that *Ngaldinggi* was a genuine Ngarrindjeri name. Although *ngalde* (= *ngaldhi*) was recorded as the Ngarrindjeri word for ‘meat, flesh’, and although in that language *-inggi* is a very common non-suffix ending for words in general, yet *-inggi* is not credible as a locative,<sup>67</sup> and no other record combines this morpheme with *ngaldhi* or *aldi*.

It is much more probable that this was the Kaurna name assimilated to Ngarrindjeri language habits by Ngarrindjeri people. We have at least one clear post-contact example of *-ngga* being assimilated to *-nggi* across the same language barrier.<sup>68</sup> The same thing may have happened with at least one other place-name recorded at first contact.<sup>69</sup>

It is not recorded that Morphett and Stephens took any ‘natives’ with them on this second trip, but it is still quite possible that they did. Bates and Thomas were with them on this second voyage, and may have brought an unknown Ngarrindjeri person or persons along to help. If so, then judging by his extant accounts Morphett would be unlikely to mention these ‘natives’ in writing unless they had performed some function of general interest to other colonists – such as providing this place-name.

<sup>64</sup> e.g. “Tootongha” = *Tuttgartga* or *Tuttangga* (see PNS 5.03/10); “Pupongha” (PNS 7.1/16).

<sup>65</sup> Cp. Afghan, dhal, ghat, ghee / ghi, ghosh, gurkha; [http://dict.hinkhoj.com/hindi-transliterate-words/listgh\\_a.php](http://dict.hinkhoj.com/hindi-transliterate-words/listgh_a.php); [http://dict.hinkhoj.com/hindi-transliterate-words/listgh\\_i.php](http://dict.hinkhoj.com/hindi-transliterate-words/listgh_i.php) (4/6/15).

<sup>66</sup> The normal third-person Command form of a Kaurna verb is *-ingki* (e.g. *kundaingki* ‘let him beat’); but an Imperative verb would not normally be a place-name.

<sup>67</sup> Ngarrindjeri has a number of normal suffixes performing functions like the Kaurna locative, notably the standard *-angk*; but none of them end in *-nggi*. Only a very few Ngarrindjeri place-names appear to end with *inggi* or *ingg*: e.g. *Meninggi*, ‘Tipping’, ‘Rumbuwattyingg’.

<sup>68</sup> According to Tindale, the Ngarrindjeri speaker Milerum apparently believed that *-beringgi* was a Southern Kaurna locative and meant the same as Ngarrindjeri *-angk*; but in fact it was almost certainly the Kaurna word *paringga*, ‘river place’ (see PNS 5.03/04 Watara-paringga).

<sup>69</sup> ‘Punduwaluwattingg’ is probably a Ramindjeri adaptation from Kaurna (see PNS 3/05).



Any of these locals white or black could have given the name to Morphett back in Kingscote on Kangaroo Island, where he was based with Stephens for a few days before, between and after his two whaleboat voyages. But his one specific record – ‘called by the natives’ – favours an Aboriginal informant.

## 2. Tindale’s ‘Dalden`ga’: a 20<sup>th</sup>-century puzzle:

Tindale’s records contain one potentially interesting item about the name: he recorded it several times as “Dalden`ga”,<sup>70</sup> i.e. *Ngaldengga*: with a different second vowel ‘e’, and an extra stress on the last syllable, “Ngaldeng-ga”.<sup>71</sup> Both of these are significant departures from Kurna, which does not use the implied short e sound (as in ‘get’) at all, and never stresses the final syllable.

This third-syllable stress is intriguing. Perhaps Tindale was remembering how the name was pronounced by one or more of his informants, maybe Milerum or Karlowan. We could say that this is *Ngaltingga* pronounced with a Ngarrindjeri accent: not knowing that the full locative is *-ngga*, they prolonged or weighted the final *-a* with an imagined *-angk*, their heavier mother-tongue locative.<sup>72</sup>

But Tindale’s records do not give these details consistently, neither the spelling nor the stress.

We can disregard his ‘e’. In Kurna the sound e has no meaning separate from ‘i, although it does occur as a separate phoneme in Ngarrindjeri. Was it a much later perception by Tindale’s Ngarrindjeri-speaking informants? Very unlikely; because it did not appear in Tindale’s records of this name until after (probably long after) his informants had died, while his original map record – in the 1930s while they were still alive – is “Dalinga”, almost certainly lifted straight from Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Tindale annotated maps AA 338/16/6, AA 338/16/8, AA 338/24/107; cp. “Daldenga” in Tindale 1987, ‘Wanderings of Tjirbruki’: 9a.

<sup>71</sup> His symbol which I give here as “`” signified a stress (heavier weight) on the following syllable.

<sup>72</sup> The same thing seems to have happened in Tindale’s records of “Maitpan`ga” (Myponga) and “Karika:li`nga” (Carrickalinga): see PNS 5.01/04 PNS 5.01/07.

<sup>73</sup> Only the earliest of these maps (Hundred of Willunga, AA 338/24/97) contains entries made directly from his informants at the time he was speaking with them in the 1930s. Tindale recorded much ‘original data’ directly onto large-scale maps of Hundreds (and a few other kinds) during the 1930s, sometimes but not always including the names of his informants. But on these same maps he often included other data from published sources, often without crediting sources or distinguishing these items from his ‘original data’. The Willunga map includes other data credited from “T&S” (e.g. Mullawirra: see footnote above on references to a larger Aldinga Plain).

All his other notes about Aldinga – whether on maps and cards – probably date from the 1980s when he was preparing his data for the proposed ‘Gazetteer of Place-names of the Southeast of SA’, which he never finished (see Paul Monaghan 2009, ‘Aboriginal names of places in southern South Australia: Placenames in the Norman B Tindale collection of papers’, in Koch and Hercus (ed) 2009, *Aboriginal Placenames: Naming And Re-Naming The Australian Landscape*, Aboriginal History Monograph 19, ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc, [http://epress.anu.edu.au/placenames\\_citation.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/placenames_citation.html) [5/6/15]).

The smaller-scale maps (of Counties or other larger areas) collated data from his earlier journals, manuscripts, Hundreds maps, and publications; so did his index card files of Place-names and Vocabulary.



The spelling of “Ngaldengga” with an ‘e’ seems to be an armchair speculation of his own, probably based on the Ngarrindjeri word *ngaldhi* which was recorded by Meyer with an ‘e’ as *ngalde* (‘animal food, meat, flesh’).<sup>74</sup> But while it is conceivable that Ngarrindjeri-speaking people such as Morphett’s informant may have had ‘meat place’ in their minds as a folk etymology, this cannot be the real Kurna meaning of the word; and a Kurna suffix cannot go on a Ngarrindjeri root. This is another example of the frequent confusion with these two languages in Tindale’s work.

### 3. Wyatt’s ‘Auldingga’: a red herring:

We might also speculate about our modern pronunciation of ‘Aldinga’, with the first syllable ‘ald’ as in ‘all’, ‘alder’, ‘Aldgate’. Wyatt’s “Auldingga” probably confirms that this was the pronunciation used in 1837.<sup>75</sup>

But why would Englishmen pronounce *ngalt* in this way, when from most authorities the Kurna original uses an *a*, either short as in ‘haka’ or long as in ‘arm’? Conversely, if the early colonists *did* hear an *a* sound here, why did they *not* spell it ‘Uldinga’ or ‘Ardinga’, even ‘Oldinga’, and pronounce it accordingly?<sup>76</sup>

Was it really a *u*, giving *Ngultingga*, ‘place of night’ or some other meaning from a similar though unrecorded word?<sup>77</sup>

However, this path takes us away from the main authorities, and too far into uncertain territory to be useful.

---

His 1987 essay on ‘Tjilbruki’ lists a number of informants as general sources of cultural information, but also contains many details – especially about place-names such as ‘Ngaldengga’ – which are demonstrably his own unrelated armchair work.

<sup>74</sup> This might also explain Tindale’s late place-name card 481 in which he gives cites “*Auldingga / Aldinga*” as “*plain used in hunting*”. This alleged connection was then taken as the word’s *meaning* by his Museum colleague HM Cooper (*Aboriginal Words* 1957 “*a place for hunting*”; and 1962 “*hunting place for meat*”), and recycled as such by Manning. When we note that Tindale consistently applied the name to Aldinga town – even to the extent of giving the name a precise latitude-longitude at the Old Vine cafe (Kurna place-name card 481 ‘Auldingga’) – we may conclude that he had collected no data from his informants about it except perhaps the stress on the final syllable.

<sup>75</sup> Wyatt’s ‘Rules for pronunciation’ include “*au as a in fall*” (Wyatt in Woods 1879: 169).

<sup>76</sup> cp. ‘Unkaparinga’ and ‘Onkaparinga’ for *Ngangkiparingga*; or ‘Arltunga’ in Central Australia. In the case of ‘Aldinga’, it is possible that the Kurna pronunciation was quickly subverted by *readers* who interpreted the spelling in line with the many familiar English words using ‘ald’, such as ‘bald’, ‘alder’, etc.

<sup>77</sup> T&S 1840 *ngulti* ‘night’; cp. Wyatt: “*Ngölte* night; *Ngöltingga* last night; *Olte, ngölte* night”. Cp. Wyatt’s occasional use of ‘au’ for long *o* (= ‘or’) in Ngarrindjeri “*Kaupe*” (*ko:pi*), “*Paule*” (*po:li*), “*Paute*” (*po:thi*); but cf. his “*Ngölte, night*”. Tindale made this speculation too, though for a different reason: sparked by the apparent first-syllable vowel *a* in W Williams 1839 “*Hul-tin-gar, night*”; we would normally interpret this as *ngaltingga*; but other sources all give the sound *u* (Tindale Kurna vocabulary card: “*ngaltingga... night... Williams 1839 ultingar as restored by Parkhouse 1923 to ngultinga*”; but he rightly added, “*discard unless further information appears*”).

Or could *ngulti* perhaps be a variant of *ngulta* ‘tattooed man’, giving *Nguultingga*, ‘place of the *ngulta*’? Teichelmann gives *ngulti-burka* as “*father of the ngulti*” (Teichelmann MS 1857 under ‘burka’). If ‘the *ngulti*’ is a man or being (rather than ‘night’), is this a variant of *ngulta* or a different word? But T&S 1840 give the same *ngulti* without comment in the corresponding entry.

#### 4. Folklore about the meaning of 'Aldinga':

As usual with Aboriginal names of familiar places, theories unfounded have abounded, wild guesses have been made from interstate wordlists, and all have been faithfully passed on by enthusiasts.

Rodney Cockburn's *Nomenclature of South Australia* in 1908 was the first to cite in print the belief of one early settler, Felix De Caux, that Aldinga meant "much water", and of another (unnamed) that it means "tree district".<sup>78</sup> It is very likely that this information had been collected for Cockburn by his colleague, the ex-surveyor CH Harris who had collected information on place-names from old colonists.

The alleged meaning "battle or burial ground" was first cited without source by Cockburn in a later manuscript.<sup>79</sup>

In 1933 Tyrrell cited 'Aldinga' as a place-name – from Western Australia! – meaning "plenty of trees and water".<sup>80</sup>

Other glosses – likewise impossible as meanings but plausible as descriptions – were "hunting place" and "good place for meat", both published first in various editions of HM Cooper's *Aboriginal Words*.<sup>81</sup> They probably originated from his SA Museum colleague Tindale, who may have speculated invalidly from Ngarrindjeri *ngalde* 'meat, flesh'.<sup>82</sup>

Amery summarizes the linguistic provenance of all these bits of folklore thus:  
"A compound would be required to encode the notions. It could not possibly literally mean 'good place for meat', even though historical sources suggest that the Aldinga area was used as a kind of 'fattening paddock', because that would require at least two morphemes in addition to the *-ngga* suffix. Furthermore, the known Kurna words for meat (*paru*), water (*kauwe*), plain (*womma*) etc. bear no resemblance whatsoever to *ngalti*".<sup>83</sup>

*End of Summary*

<sup>78</sup> Rodney Cockburn 1908, *Nomenclature of South Australia*, Adelaide, WK Thomas & Co: 9, 34.

<sup>79</sup> Cockburn's expanded manuscript was published by his son in 1984 as *What's In a Name? Nomenclature of South Australia*, Adelaide, Ferguson Publication; reprinted in 1990 as *South Australia: What's In a Name?*, Adelaide, Axiom Publishing.

<sup>80</sup> JR Tyrrell 1933, *Australian Aboriginal Place-Names*, Sydney, Simmons Ltd.

<sup>81</sup> Harold M Cooper, *Australian Aboriginal Words*, SA Museum, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1957; 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1962.

<sup>82</sup> cp. Tindale n.d. [after 1986], Kurna place-name card 481: "*Auldingga - Aldinga: township area: plain used in hunting*".

<sup>83</sup> Rob Amery 2002, 'Weeding Out Spurious Toponyms...', in Hercus et al, *The Land Is a Map*, Sydney, Pandanus Books: 167.