

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) 4.04.01/03

### WAKONDILLA / WANGKONDILLA

(last edited: 17/1/18)

#### Abstract

#### 1. *Wakondilla* or *Wangkondilla* (*Wakunthilla* or *Wangkunthilla* in KWP's New Spelling 2010):

The original form of the Kurna name for a place near Silver Sands, in the immediate vicinity of the extinct Blue Lagoon and Washpool, was either *Wakondilla* or perhaps *Wangkondilla* (we cannot be sure which). Probably it referred to the cluster of campsites and old springs (some now extinct) on Sections 607, 615 and the southwest of 742; and near the skin-curing workshop area somewhere near the boundary of 614 and 615.

Sturt mapped the place in 1833 as 'Waccondilla Cr.' from information provided by Captain Collet Barker's team in 1831. While searching for Barker they had obtained it from Kangaroo Island sealer George Bates and/or the Aboriginal woman Sally Walker.

However, either Barker's men or Bates may have misheard *Wangkondilla* (a possible form deduced from Karlowan's much later version).

These forms use the standard Kurna locative suffix *-illa* 'at, place of'.

#### 2. *Wangkondanangko* (*Wangkunthanangku* in KWP's New Spelling 2010):

In 1935 Tindale recorded information from the Ngarrindjeri man Albert Karlowan, who knew the same site and called it *Wangkondanangko*.

Karlowan knew very little Kurna language. This version is Kurna in form, using the suffix *-anangko* 'away from'. It is unlikely that it was used by the Kurna in this form as a place-name.

Either Karlowan or Tindale believed that the name meant 'opossum place', which if unmodified is linguistically incorrect.

Karlowan's family must have obtained it originally from Kurna sources, but their usage may have arisen from a misunderstanding between them and the Kurna, speaking two very different languages; and the interpretation may have adapted *wak-* to *wangk-* under the influence of Ngarrindjeri words for animal skin, *wangkandi* and *wanggu-bakkauwe*.



*Wakondilla-Wangkondilla* was a major workshop site, much used for the curing and drying of animal skins, from which many essential possessions were made such as cloaks and bags. Nearby were several freshwater wells and many Aboriginal campsites. The Aldinga Scrub was prime hunting ground, and there was good fishing on the Sellick's Beach coast.

In all of the recorded forms, the root meaning is unknown.

*If* the true form was *Wangkondilla*, then in view of known uses of the location this might perhaps have some connection with Kaurna *wangko*, 'small possum'. But we do not know which was the true form.

The lagoons themselves may possibly have been known as *Kauwi Ngaltingga*: see PNS 4.04.01/06.

<b>Coordinates</b>	-35.310135° Latitude, 138.453419° Longitude (approximately the skin-curing area).
--------------------	---

## Language Information

<b>Meaning</b>	1. 'place of <i>WakondV</i> ' OR 'place of <i>WangkondV</i> '. 2. 'away from <i>Wangkonda</i> '
<b>Etymology</b>	1. [unknown morpheme] + <i>-illa</i> at, place of 2. [unknown morpheme] + <i>-illa</i> at, place of
<b>Notes</b>	The alternative <i>Wangkondanangko</i> means 'away from <i>Wangkonda</i> ': <i>Wangkonda</i> + <i>-anangko</i> 'away from'. It is conceivable that <i>Wangkondilla</i> could be derived in some unknown way from <i>wangko</i> 'small possum'; but neither it nor <i>Wangkondanangko</i> mean simply 'opossum place' as claimed by Tindale.
<b>Language Family</b>	Thura-Yura: 'Kaurna'.
<b>KWP Former Spelling</b>	Wakondilla OR Wangkondilla; Wangkondanangko
<b>KWP New Spelling 2010</b>	1. Wakuntilla OR Wangkuntilla; 2. Wangkuntanangku
<b>Phonemic Spelling</b>	1. /wakuntilla/ OR /wangkuntilla; 2. /wangkuntanangku/
<b>Pronunciation</b>	1. "Wakond-illa" OR "Wangkond-illa": 2. "Wangkond-anangko":
<b>Pronunciation tips</b>	Stress the 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable; secondary stress on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> ; every 'a' as in Maori 'haka'.

## Main source evidence

Date	<b>1833</b>
Original source text	<b>“Waccondilla Cr.”</b> [short river line on coast not far from ‘Cutandilla’ near Sellicks Hill].
Reference	maps in Charles Sturt 1833, <i>Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia</i> 1833: Vol. 1 ‘Map of the Discoveries’, and Vol.2: 228.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	John Kent of the <i>Isabella</i> , May 1831; his informants ‘Sally’ and George Bates.

Date	<b>[1837-9]</b>
Original source text	<b>“Koue Auldinga - Deception Bay”.</b>
Reference	Wyatt [1837-9] / in JD Woods 1879, <i>Native Tribes of SA</i> .
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna informants: probably Mullawirraburka and family, Sep 1837.

Date	<b>1844</b>
Original source text	“...Preliminary district ‘C’... Its South boundary is a line drawn from <b>the Lagoon at Aldinga</b> , due East to the Preliminary line...” “...the plain called Aldinga... Close by is the lagoon which dries up in the summer, and the water of which is salt in the winter...”
Reference	‘L.P.’ [Louis Piesse], <i>Observer</i> 13/4/44: 7a, 8a.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna survey guides 1839

Date	<b>1935</b>
Original source text	<b>“Wangkondanangko opossum place (lagoon)</b> a place for pegging out opossum skins to cure for cloaks etc” [attached to ‘Salt lake’ printed in <i>The Washpool on section 614</i> ].
Reference	Tindale annotated map, Hd of Willunga, AA 338/24/97.
Informants credited	Albert Karlowan 1935
Informants uncredited	

## Discussion: A PLACE FOR POSSUM-SKINS:

### THE PLACE:

Five kilometres south-southeast of Aldinga, in the bare grassy paddocks behind what is now the holiday suburb of Silver Sands, there was once a wetland of wonder.

Against the backdrop of the steep Sellick's Hill range, the entire water table of the Aldinga Plain<sup>1</sup> runs or seeps into this lowland. Surrounded once by park-like open woodlands and forests, every winter it formed a large freshwater lagoon up to 5 metres deep at times, near the western end of what we call Norman Road. Settlers named it the Blue Lagoon. This was connected to the sea at Sellick's Beach by another large lagoon which they called The Washpool.

There was good fresh water, even in summer when out of sight and invisible to the newcomers: wells just north of Norman Road and in the dunes behind the Clarrie Eatts Reserve,<sup>2</sup> and in the Dolph Waye Reserve.<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Light 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... present[ed] a most beautiful appearance... [We] 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>4</sup>

His map accordingly labelled the anchorage 'Deception Bay'.<sup>5</sup>

Early surveyors and map-makers from Light onward all recorded the lagoon here as a salt lake.<sup>6</sup> In 1844 Piesse described "the lagoon which dries up in summer and the water of which is salt in the winter".<sup>7</sup> Richard Counsel's Field Book of the first survey in late October 1839 shows two outlet channels running SW from The Washpool: one reaches the coast south of Button Road and the other north of it. Interestingly, on one sketch<sup>8</sup> only the southern one has a sea mouth marked; but on another page, possibly sketched some weeks later, only the northern one has it.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps in

<sup>1</sup> Geologically known as the Willunga Basin.

<sup>2</sup> E Wollaston (ed) 1978, *Aldinga-Sellicks Beach Scrub: a report*, Adelaide, Education Dept SA: 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> M Nobbs 1987, 'Summary of information... collected during interviews with ... elderly residents of the Aldinga Scrub area', *Journal of Anthropological Society of SA* 25/1, Sep 1987: 6; cp. Nobbs 1973, in Wollaston 1978: 18.

<sup>4</sup> W Light, *Brief Journal*, 23 Sep 1836.

<sup>5</sup> Light/Arrowsmith map 26/1/1838, 'A survey on the coast on the east side of St Vincents Gulf', *BPP: Colonies: Aust, Vol. 5: Appendix to 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of Colonial Commissioners 1837*: 196.

<sup>6</sup> Light hand-coloured map, C 1050 SLSA 'South Australia. A survey of the coast...', *reprinted* in Appendix 9 of '2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report of the Colonization Commissioners, 1837', 26<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1838, *BPP Aust* 5: 196;

S Stephens 14/5/1838, in 'Reports Of Country Lands', BRG 42/51, SLSA: 6;

R Counsel 1839, Field Book 102, GNU: 41;

McLaren 1/9/1840, map 'Country South of Adelaide' London, Arrowsmith, C 274 SLSA.

<sup>7</sup> 'L.P.' [Louis Piesse] in *Observer* 13/4/1844: 8a.

<sup>8</sup> FB 102: 41. Page 42 shows the date 'Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> 1839'.

<sup>9</sup> FB 102: 61 (no date).

those years the outlets were significantly different from later, and varied with the conditions. The maps derived from Counsel show only the first version.<sup>10</sup>

A couple of weeks after Light and independently of him, the energetic merchant John Morphett was making a second exploratory trip from his Kingscote base. Accompanied by SA Company manager Samuel Stephens and Kangaroo Island sealer George Bates,<sup>11</sup> he took a whaleboat up the gulf about as far as Port Willunga, visiting these plains among others. Joining Light in November at Holdfast Bay, he penned a letter to England which glowed with enthusiasm for this coast, his appreciation of the bounty dimming only when his land-agent's eye saw salt:

*A gentle slope, called by the natives 'Aldinghi Plains'. The upper part consists of the same sort of land as the hills –*

[by which he means “covered with a very nice herbage, and... much more bare of trees than we have hitherto seen” further south]

*– and would do admirably for sheep-runs in winter. The lower part 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. This place has a very singular and interesting aspect from the sea. 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, –*

[He probably heard about this from his guide Bates]

*– is surrounded by finely wooded eminences, and a bold range of hills beyond.*<sup>12</sup>

The lake was clearly The Washpool.

It was spring. Light had missed the Blue Lagoon, perhaps further northeast and out of sight behind the dunes though possibly still deep after winter rains. Morphett, in less of a hurry, seems to have seen it and understood something of its relation to The Washpool.

Morphett's observation about the effect of 'spring tides' on the lowest land combines with the memories of settlers from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to reveal a key to the salt question. According

<sup>10</sup> Burslem 1840, 'Plan of the country south of Adelaide', Survey Office, Adelaide, C 236 SLSA; McLaren 1840, 'Country South of Adelaide', C 274; etc.

<sup>11</sup> For this piece of history see my PNS1/03 Patpangga.

<sup>12</sup> Morphett 1837, SA: *Latest Information... contained in a letter written by Mr Morphett*, Gliddon, London: 9-10.

to the settlers, The Washpool was usually fresh except when high seas broke over its sandbar during winter storms.<sup>13</sup>

Giles, Finlayson and Randall, travelling through the area on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1838, “saw numbers of turkeys, swans and emus”.<sup>14</sup> Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the lagoons supported birds flocking in thousands:

*I became familiar with the area in 1926 and can remember Blue Lagoon covered with ducks..., Eastern swamp hens, small water hens, swans, plovers, ibis, spoonbills and Cape Barren geese... One old resident said ‘When disturbed, the ducks would darken the sky’.*<sup>15</sup>

North of the lagoon and swamps was the Aldinga Scrub, some of which survives today as a rare remnant of the old ecology. On the foothills eastward was *Mullawirra*, the ‘dry forest’.<sup>16</sup> “To the north”, Morphett continued, describing what we would call the northern Aldinga Plains,

*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.*

Within a kilometre of Blue Lagoon was the long sandy beach, abounding seasonally with salmon.<sup>17</sup> In 1844 one traveller noted, “Pelicans are pretty numerous here and I picked up some skins of the penguin on the beach”.<sup>18</sup>

CAPTAIN BARKER, BATES and SALLY 1831:

Such was the place where, in April 1831 a week or two after rains,<sup>19</sup> a glitter of water must have attracted attention from the deck of the schooner ‘Isabella’ as she sailed past, bearing Captain Collet Barker from his excursion at the Onkaparinga towards an anchorage at Carrickalinga and an early death at the Murray Mouth.

<sup>13</sup> Gardiner in Wollaston 1978: 12;

Betty Ross (ed.) 1981, *Aboriginal and Historic Sites around Metropolitan Adelaide*, Anthropological Society of SA: 17.

<sup>14</sup> W Giles journal, PRG 174/1, reel 3: 1179, SLSA.

<sup>15</sup> Gardiner in Wollaston 1978: 15.

<sup>16</sup> See PNS 4.04.03/04.

<sup>17</sup> Karlowan in the Tjirbuki story: Tindale and Mountford 1936: 501.

<sup>18</sup> ‘L.P.’ [Louis Piesse] in *Observer* 13/4/1844: 7c.

<sup>19</sup> Sturt 1833, *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia*: Vol.2: 233.

Two years later the maps in Sturt's book about his voyage down the Murray River showed the name "*Waccondilla Cr.*" at the Sellick's Beach site. Sturt had not visited any country west of the range; but he included in the book, for the benefit of aspiring colonists, a summary of the Barker party's search for their lost leader in May 1831 as told to him by Barker's deputy John Kent, and information from him about the promising stretch of country on the east coast of Gulf St Vincent. They had sought help from an Aboriginal woman called 'Sally', her male relatives at Encounter Bay, and Kangaroo Island sealers George Bates and Nat Thomas.<sup>20</sup>

The current 'creeks' at Sellick's Beach are drains, sometimes extended from intermittent foothill creeks. There was no real 'Cr.' then, as far as we know from old maps. But the label should not be taken too literally, as the Barker names on the map included another 'Cr.', the 'Ponkepurringa'<sup>21</sup> (the lower Onkaparinga), which Kent described as an '*inlet*'.<sup>22</sup>

Neither Barker nor Kent's search party had visited 'Waccondilla Cr', nor the third place on Sturt's map, 'Cutandilla' (*Kurtandilla*) at Sellick's Hill.<sup>23</sup> Both places were probably given as landmarks on the normal route from the gulf plains across the range to Encounter Bay: 'Cutandilla' was the pass, and 'Waccondilla Creek' was the most visible feature nearby from which to find it. Or Barker's default commanders Kent and Dr Davis may have asked about the glittering water they had seen in the gulf.

Bates asserted late in his life that 'Sally' was Sally Walker, who by then was a well-known identity on Kangaroo Island.<sup>24</sup> There is some debate over her tribal affiliation. On one hand her father 'Condoy' was clearly a Ngarrindjeri speaker, as he was the chief broker between Kent's search party and the clan on the east side of the Mouth,<sup>25</sup> and so must have spoken a dialect of Ngarrindjeri. On the other, her countryman 'Harry' gave a Kurna wordlist to Gaimard in 1826,<sup>26</sup> and she or Bates gave only Kurna-form place-names to Kent.

#### THE NAME – 'PLACE OF WAKOND\_ '?

'Waccondilla' is clearly Kurna. Ngarrindjeri words rarely end in *a*, and *-illa* is unknown. It uses the locative suffix *-illa* correctly on a three-syllable root. From a single amateur record we cannot be completely sure how to spell this root word, but it is most likely *wakondV* (the final vowel 'V',

<sup>20</sup> The story is told in more detail, and the backgrounds of Bates and Sally are analyzed, in PNS 4.02/05 'Ponkepurringa'.

<sup>21</sup> See PNS 4.02/05.

<sup>22</sup> Sturt 1833, *ibid.*: 233.

<sup>23</sup> See PNS 4.04.03/03.

<sup>24</sup> Bates letter, *Advertiser* 19/1/1887: 6.

<sup>25</sup> Davis report 19/5/1831, in *J. Proc. Royal Geographical Society (SA)* Vol. 6 (1903): 25.

<sup>26</sup> See Amery 1998, 'Sally and Harry', *History in Portraits*, Aboriginal History Monograph 6: 52-3, 60, 66.

omitted for the suffix, is not known because there is no recorded three-syllable word to match). *Wakond-illa* would mean 'place of *wakondV*'.

Recorded Kurna vocabulary includes *wako* 'spider' and *wakowako* 'child', but these as they stand do not account for *-ndV*.

And place-names need not have meanings which are identifiable from other current known vocabulary: consider 'London', or even 'Australia'.

Of course the consonants or vowels might not be represented completely or accurately. Bates knew some local language, and had had the chance to learn it from Kurna people during a period when he lived among them;<sup>27</sup> but he was not any kind of linguist, and many of the Kurna words he used would certainly include wrong or missed consonants. Surviving examples of his linguistic abilities are few, but probably include 'Yanky Lilly' for *Yangkalyilla* and 'Aldinghi' for *Ngaltingga*.<sup>28</sup> Or if it was Sally from whom Barker's party obtained their information, they may have made the same mistakes from her accurate pronunciation. For instance, the 'cc' may conceivably have been a misperception of an original *ngk*; and the 'o' could represent either *u* or *a*. We will return later to the question of these consonants in the light of other evidence.

#### A MAJOR WORKSHOP AND CAMPING AREA:

It is unclear when the settlers began to refer to these lagoons as 'The Washpool' (a term adapted from sheep-dipping, and also used as a place-name in the Southeast) and 'Blue Lagoon'. In the early explorations they had perceived the Aldinga Plains as lacking water in summer.

But for the Kurna it had not been so. The area from Aldinga Scrub to Sellicks Beach had several freshwater wells and many campsites, the Scrub was prime hunting ground, and there was good fishing on the Sellick's Beach coast. It was well-used for thousands of years, from the 10,000-year-old 'Kartan' wave through to the Kurna-speakers at first contact and Ngarrindjeri-speaking visitors both before and after settlement. Though the area from the Washpool to the Scrub was accessible only from the north for half of the year,

*the Kurna undoubtedly used the Aldinga-Sellicks Beach Scrub as hunting territory and they camped in sheltered places bordering the scrub and the lagoon... The whole area was probably under semi-permanent occupation. Fish were abundant in the coastal waters... Shellfish... and oysters were eaten. Many Mulloway otoliths, crab and yabby remains are found in hearth sites... Information derived from the early settlers indicates that skeletons have been found in the scrub and that the area could thus have been used as a burial ground...*<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion of Bates and Sally in PNS 4.02/05 'Ponkepurringa'.

<sup>28</sup> See my 'Feet on the Fleurieu, Language On the Land (forthcoming, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Nobbs 1973, in Wollaston 1978: 18.



Further north at low tide there were Tjilbruki's beach springs at Port Willunga.<sup>30</sup>

Archaeologists found widespread evidence of campsites around the Scrub up to Aldinga Beach. In the south these overlapped

*a site centred on Norman Road [at its west end] from which Harold Cooper collected 1200 implements ranging from large pieces which can be classified as Kartan, to Pirri points and microliths... Located only a few hundred metres to the east is Blue Lagoon, where animal skins were cured.*<sup>31</sup>

Here that salt, which settlers from Morphett onward so disdained, was for the Kurna one of the area's many virtues:

*The [Blue] lagoon was considerably reduced in size during the summer months and the mud on the southern edge... was known by the Aborigines to possess qualities eminently suitable for the preparing and curing of skins. This mud probably owed its curing property to the fact that the southern edge of the lagoon received water which had flowed over the calcium and magnesium rich cambrian limestones which outcrop on the Willunga Range. Aborigines came from miles around in the late summer...*

*Animal skins of, for example, possum and kangaroo were collected, brought to the site and pegged out with little wooden pegs, fur side uppermost... The smaller skins, when softened, were punctured around the edges... and then joined by fibre or hair... Large skins were simply thrown over the shoulders to serve as clothing.*<sup>32</sup>

*Possums and kangaroos were caught in the late autumn when their fur had thickened for the winter, and the pelts were brought to the mud-flats of the lagoon, just south of Norman Road. Here they were pegged out and dried before the winter rains came. Kandappi is the term used for the preparation of a kangaroo or other skin for a bag or a cloak. This was done by scraping and smoothing the inside by means of a Katta [large waddy] or stone.*<sup>33</sup>

"The Scrub was probably a semi-permanent camp area", and continued in use long after the Kurna had been dispersed. About eight families of Ngarrindjeri-speaking visitors from Encounter Bay and the Lakes were still camping in the area, especially in the Scrub, during annual expeditions to Adelaide for blankets and rations right up to the First World War (1914).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See PNS 4.03.02/02 'Terenangu'.

<sup>31</sup> Betty Ross 1981: 24.

<sup>32</sup> Nobbs 1973 in Wollaston 1978: 18.

<sup>33</sup> Ross 1981: 24. Nobbs and Ross disagree about what time of year the curing and drying happened.

<sup>34</sup> See Nobbs 1971: 7; Gardiner 1973 in Wollaston 1978: 11-12, citing the memories of local residents Norman and Dickinson.



## THE NAME AGAIN – ‘AWAY FROM WANGKONDA’?

It is probable that one of these Ngarrindjeri visitors was Albert Karlowan. What is certain is that he told Tindale in 1935 about a “(lagoon) a place for pegging out opossum skins to cure for cloaks etc”, which Tindale mapped at The Washpool. According to Karlowan (or perhaps it was Tindale’s guess), the name of this place was “Wangkondanangko”, and it meant “opossum place”.<sup>35</sup>

The word fits easily into Kaurna language: *-anangko* is a standard suffix ‘away from’, and does not exist in Ngarrindjeri. It is remarkable that Ngarrindjeri people would preserve this Kaurna suffix. Perhaps it was remembered partly because it was taken to be the important locative form for a name, and partly because *-anangk* was a familiar sound: it occurs commonly in Ngarrindjeri on the end of pronoun suffixes, and alone can mean ‘to me’; while the final *o* in *-anangko* fits the Ngarrindjeri sound system more easily than final *a* (e.g. in Kaurna *illa*) which is rare in Ngarrindjeri.

But there are no Kaurna place-names known from Kaurna sources which use *-anangko* rather than the standard *-ngga* or *-illa*.<sup>36</sup> The standard locative form with a three-syllable root word, ‘place of *Wangkonda*’, is *Wangkond-illa*.

Perhaps the original Ngarrindjeri source of this version had misunderstood a conversation with one of his Kaurna trading partners, in which both sides were using a Pidgin form of the other’s language. For example, if the Kaurna local said several times ‘You are going back home to the Lakes from *Wakonda* (*Wakond-anangko*)’, and if the visitor did not know that *Wakond-illa* was the true locative form, then quite possibly he might take the former to be the place-name. In the process he might also unwittingly adapt the consonant *k* to *ngk*.

Can *Wangkondanangko* be an authoritative version of the Kaurna name? Perhaps Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri vocabulary may help us.

## POSSUMS IN TWO LANGUAGES:

Karlowan’s pronunciation introduces into the root word an *ng* not found in Sturt. *Wangko* in Kaurna is ‘a small opossum’. Perhaps Karlowan knew or suspected something like this, since in Ngarrindjeri the related word *wongguri* is ‘ringtailed possum’. In the light of what we know about the

<sup>35</sup> The map is Hd Willunga, AA 338/24/97; credited generally, “*Details from Karlowan Dec. 1935. March 1939 / 1941*”, and in his journals Tindale noted “*Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 1935. Worked at odd times on several days with Karlowan... We placed put numbers of new place names on the map including a series along the coast from Cape Jervis to Adelaide*” (“Murray River notes”, AA 338/1/31/1: 197).

<sup>36</sup> There is ‘Terenangu’, (?= *Tirranangko*) at Port Willunga; but this too is (almost certainly) from a Ngarrindjeri-speaking source. See PNS 4.03.02/02.

place, it is tempting to assume that Karlowan has proved a definite connection between the lagoon's name and the 'small possum', and that with 'cc' in 1831 Bates or Kent must have misheard an original *ngk*.

But this assumption meets obstacles in both language and ecology.

In Kaurna the name 'place of the small possum', built on the two-syllable root *wangko*, would be *Wangko-ngga*. There is no record of any *wangkonda*,<sup>37</sup> and no known explanation of the extra syllable *-ndV*,<sup>38</sup>

Therefore Karlowan's version cannot be taken as certain, and the gloss given by him and/or Tindale cannot be a true and full gloss of it. Karlowan knew very little Kaurna language, misinterpreting even the common place-name suffix *-illa*.<sup>39</sup> He and his forebears after the 1850s, sharing with their now-departed Kaurna-speaking relatives a common knowledge of the site and its uses, may have adapted an original Kaurna *wak-*, in order to make it match Ngarrindjeri words such as *wangkandi*, 'kangaroo skin' and *wangu-bakkauwe* 'possum skin'.

On the other hand, in making such an adaptation it would have been very easy to adapt the unstressed second vowel as well from *o* to *a*, making it 'Wangkand-' in line with Ngarrindjeri *wangkandi*. Instead we have an *o* in line with the published 'Waccondilla' of 1831. Since Tindale does not seem to have used Sturt's map as a source anywhere, and since *o* is a 'more difficult reading' (i.e. unfamiliar in Ngarrindjeri), Karlowan's second syllable *-ond-* can be regarded as a memory of genuine Kaurna information.

It is likely that neither 'Waccondilla' nor 'Wangkondanangko' are totally accurate. We may assess, firstly, that the 'o' in 1831 probably represents *o/u* rather than *a*; and secondly, that we cannot be sure which of *ngk* and 'cc' (= *k*?) is right. The name might be either *Wakondilla* or *Wangkondilla*. The issue cannot be decided unless other evidence turns up.

#### ECOLOGICAL SNAGS: HYPOTHETICAL POSSUMS:

<sup>37</sup> Unlike *WakondV*, the final vowel is known because it is not omitted when the suffix *-nangko* is added.

<sup>38</sup> Rob Amery points out that several other Kaurna words relating to animal skins end with a morpheme containing *nd*: *kartando* 'the skin of a kangaroo'; *maikundo* 'skin generally' (or 'the skin (of the wild dog)'); *mantinda* 'skin; kangaroo skin' (or 'skin of dogs and kangaroos'); *yurinda* 'skin; as *pilta yurinda* opossum skin'. However, none of these form the skin term directly from the name of the animal (as in the hypothetical etymology *wangko* > *wangkondV*) – as the last example makes clear.

<sup>39</sup> See my discussion of his 'Turtotjalangga' in PNS 4.03.02/04 Tartatyilla.



What species is the *wangko*? If we knew this, *and* that it lived near Silver Sands, it might strengthen Tindale's case for a 'possum' meaning, and even help to pinpoint the site of the name more exactly.

But the sources are rather inconsistent about possum species.

Wyatt, who was Colonial Naturalist as well as Protector, glossed "*Wonggo*" simply as '*an opossum*', while distinguishing it from '*Peelta: opossum, black tail*', '*Malloorta: possum, white tail*' and "*Weerappe: opossum, flying (petaurus)*" (see below).

We know that the *wangko* was hunted for meat at Rapid Bay in mid-January 1837:

*"Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January. I started soon after breakfast this morning taking three of the natives with me to hunt the opossum which they do very cleverly. The opossum [probably the Common Brushtail], with the wongo (a smaller species), are found in the hollow branches of the Gum tree".*<sup>40</sup>

*"Sat. 14 - .... Had a Wonga for breakfast this morning about the size of a half grown rabbit. Very white meat and very good far better than Opossum not being so strong".*<sup>41</sup>

Southeast of the range, the Ngarrindjeri *wongguri* (cognate with *wangko*) was glossed as 'ring-tailed opossum' in both Meyer 1843 and Taplin 1879. Was it the Common Ringtail or the Western Pygmy? – we don't know. Need *wongguri* be the same species as *wangko*? – probably not.

The *wangko* was widespread and common enough that at least three sources recorded it around Adelaide,<sup>42</sup> and another two (above) at Rapid Bay. Previous work by Jane Simpson (partly based on Dorothy Tunbridge) has suggested that it was "*possibly ringtail possum or feathertail glider*",<sup>43</sup> However, the scanty available evidence suggests that the *wangko* was smaller than the large Common Brushtail but was almost certainly *not* the medium-sized Common Ringtail; that in the 1830s it was widespread around Adelaide and the Fleurieu (though this of course does not mean that it still exists there or indeed anywhere); and that its species remains uncertain. All of the possums available to be the *wangko* would have been smaller than the Common Ringtail, but the Feathertail is only one option and not as likely as the Western Pygmy Possum.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Dr J Woodforde diary 13/1/1837, PRG 502/1, SLSA: 57.

<sup>41</sup> William Jacob diary 14/1/1837, PRG 558/23, SLSA.

<sup>42</sup> Wyatt [1837-9] '*Wonggo: an opossum*'; Williams 1839 '*Wan-gu: species of opossum*'; Tans 1840 '*wangko: a small opossum*'.

<sup>43</sup> KWP resource *Warra Kaurna* 1993: 31; cp. D Tunbridge 1989, *The Story of the Flinders Ranges Mammals*, Kangaroo Press: 27.

<sup>44</sup> Within SA, the Common Ringtail in recent times occurs commonly on Kangaroo Island, the Fleurieu and in the SE (Robinson, Casperson and Hutchinson 2000, *A List of the Vertebrates of SA*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Adelaide: Department for Environment and Heritage: 18, 29). With a 40 cm body and 35 cm tail (V Serventy 1973, *Australia's Wildlife Heritage*, Paul Hamlyn: 691), it is considerably smaller than the Common Brushtail, though still much larger than the Feathertail and Pygmy. It has a white tail, and Tunbridge is no doubt correct in identifying it as 'probably' the *madlurta*, because this

According to Graham Medlin, it is very unlikely that very small possums such as the Feathertail or Western Pygmy, or even the Common ringtail, would have been used for skins in this area which abounded in the much larger Common Brushtail Possum.<sup>45</sup> From this we deduce that a site near The Washpool would not have been named after *wangko* by reason of its skins being cured there.

Perhaps the area was a notable habitat for *wangko*? or perhaps it was a Dreaming place of the *Wangko* ancestor? These guesses are conceivable, but, *wangko* skins being ruled out, they still leave the syllable *-ndV* unexplained.

#### THE PLACE-NAME: CONCLUSIONS:

There are far too many uncertainties here to reach any conclusion. While it is established that the vicinity of Blue Lagoon and The Washpool was a place for curing skins of possums among others, it is not established that the Kurna name has anything to do with either *wangko* or possums or skins. Or it might not have a dictionary meaning at all.

Within the general area of The Washpool, Kent and Sturt applied the name (from afar and third-hand) to a 'creek' which was really a lagoon; while Karlowan (in memory from afar) applied it to a 'lagoon' which he identified as 'a place for pegging out opossum skins'.

We cannot know with any certainty exactly what it applied to; but the nearest we can get is the mud site itself on the southern edge of Blue Lagoon, or a campsite near it. The archaeologists must give us a more exact conclusion if they can.

---

name was glossed by Wyatt as '*Malloorta: opossum, white tail*' (Tunbridge 1989: 53). The *wangko* is therefore not the Common Ringtail.

Williams 1839 gave 'Wee-rap-pee' (*wirappi*) as both 'species of opossum' and (separately) 'ringtail opossum'. Wyatt said 'Weerappe' was an '*opossum, flying (petaurus)*'. Tunbridge thinks *wirappi* is 'probably' the Western Pygmy Possum, which is found in southern SA and was sometimes called a 'ringtail', though it does not glide (Tunbridge 1989: 56-7); and it is still common across southern SA including the Mt Lofty Ranges (Robinson et al. 2000: 18, 28). But (1) the name 'ringtail' was given to more than one species; and (2) Wyatt was the only naturalist among our sources, and his identification must be allowed to stand; therefore the *wirappi* cannot be the Common Ringtail. The only known *Petaurus* glider which occurred around Adelaide is the Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*, even though it is now rare in SA (Robinson et al 2000: 19, 29). This is a relatively small glider, 40 cm including tail (Serventy 1973: 698).

The small Feathertail Glider once occurred on KI, so one might expect it to have been in the Fleurieu too, "*given the vegetation of KI and Fleurieu Peninsula are quite similar*"; but it has no record there: "*Subfossils of the Feathertail Glider have not been recorded as in the Adelaide region*" (p.c., email, Matthew McDowell, specialist in extinct mammals on Fleurieu Peninsula, 6/3/2012). Within SA it is now recorded only on the eastern border (Robinson et al. 2000: 19, 67).

The *wangko* might be either this or any of the Pygmy Possums, especially the Western which is still common across southern SA including the Mt Lofty Ranges (Robinson et al 2000: 18, 28).

<sup>45</sup> Graham Medlin (SA Museum Research Associate in Mammal Subfossils) p.c., email 5/3/2012.

It is generally agreed that *pilta* was the Common Brushtail, the largest local possum, because Wyatt gave '*Peelta: opossum, black tail*'.



### REQUIEM:

As the lowlands were forced into a vain effort to sustain cloven-footed animals and produce European crops, there was an inevitable result. The Blue Lagoon, many of the water sources, most of the game, and most of the Aboriginal campsite remains were wiped out by farming, drainage (the current 'creeks' here are all artificial drains), and by postwar housing development which also buried Blackfellows' Waterhole in the southwest of the Scrub. By 1959 the official maps could declare the Washpool a 'Salt pan (dry)', now more or less permanently.<sup>46</sup>

*An extensive drainage system and two new cuttings to the sea effectively obliterated both the Blue Lagoon and the Washpool.*<sup>47</sup>

The 'salt lake' is now remembered only by an area of darker soil sodden in the wettest part of winter. Tjilbruki's spring at its old mouth is only a grassy hollow in the dunes, and there is a new mouth at the outlet of a drainage channel.<sup>48</sup>

Aldinga Scrub is a precious remnant. When development had already begun in the 1970s, it was saved only by strong community action backed by science.

.....

<sup>46</sup> Map Hd Willunga 1959, H830bje maps, 'Hundred of Willunga' 1:63,360, SLSA.

<sup>47</sup> Nobbs 1971: 6. See also Gardiner 1973, in Wollaston 1978: 12-15.

<sup>48</sup> See PNS 4.04.01/04 'Witawali' (Sellicks Beach).

POSTSCRIPTS:

1. ALDINGA BAY: *Wangkurtilla* ‘the corner’?

It is just conceivable that ‘Waccondilla’ could be a mishearing of *wangkurtilla*, which was recorded only by Teichelmann 1857 as ‘in the corner’.<sup>49</sup> It is also conceivable that *wangkurti* ‘corner’ might be used of a bay,<sup>50</sup> and that it could apply to a very visible ‘corner’ like the coast at Aldinga Bay.

But these speculations are too tenuous to justify a firm conclusion.

2. ‘THE WATER AT ALDINGA’:

It is *possible* that we know a Kurna name for the Lagoon itself.

Aldinga Bay, known briefly after Light as Deception Bay,<sup>51</sup> had a Kurna name according to William Wyatt, Protector from 1837 to 1839. He wrote that ‘Deception Bay’ was ‘*Koue Auldinga*’<sup>52</sup> – in our spelling *Kauwi Ngaltingga* – which means ‘[fresh] water at *Ngalti*’.<sup>53</sup>

But the referent ‘Deception Bay’ must be a mistake if taken literally. *Kauwi* is not normally used for seawater (though Wyatt possibly did not know this yet);<sup>54</sup> and there is no definitely-known word for ‘bay’.

It is *possible* that the Blue Lagoon was the referent for this Kurna name, though another place is rather more likely.<sup>55</sup>

.....

*End of Summary*

<sup>49</sup> CG Teichelmann 1857, *Dictionary of the Adelaide Dialect*, unpublished MS No.59 from Bleek’s catalogue of the library of Sir George Grey (South African Public Library); transcribed by Jane Simpson, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994.

<sup>50</sup> The same semantics apply to Ngarrindjeri *ngarti* ‘corner’ and *Ngartong* ‘Rosetta Cove’ at the Bluff, Encounter Bay: literally *ngart-angk* ‘at the corner’.

<sup>51</sup> There was later another Deception Bay at Coobowie on Yorke Peninsula.

<sup>52</sup> Wyatt 1879, in JD Woods, *Native Tribes of SA*: 179.

<sup>53</sup> *Ngaltingga* referred to the Aldinga Plains, not the later town: see PNS 4.04.01/01 *Ngaltingga*.

<sup>54</sup> *Kauwi* is land-locked water whether fresh or brackish, still or running. ‘Seawater’ or ‘salt water’ is *kopurlo*; ‘the sea’ is *yerlo* or *tarni* (or in Wyatt, “Kopoola koue”).

<sup>55</sup> See PNS 4.04.01/06 *Kauwi Ngaltingga*.