



The writing of this essay was funded as part of The Kaurna Project 2021-2 (coordinator Rob Amery) by the Commonwealth of Australia Ministry for the Arts through its Indigenous Languages and Arts (Languages) program.

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

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.04.03/04

MURLAWIRRA and MURLAWIRRANGGA

(last edited: 8.8.2022)

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This essay has not been peer-reviewed or culturally endorsed in detail.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 Kaurna-Miyurna, 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 Kaurna 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: i.e. Aboriginal researchers who are linking their oral traditions with other up-to-date and best available knowledge, and associated archaeologists, geographers, ecologists, anthropologists and historians.

Chester Schultz [10/7/2020].

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4/04.03/04

MURLAWIRRA and MURLAWIRRANGGA

(last edited: 8.8.2022)

Abstract

Murlawirra (Old Spelling *Mullawirra*), 'dry forest', is the 'Kaurna'-Miyurna name of a "small but dense" patch of forest "on the east side of the Aldinga Plain", as recorded by the German missionary linguists in 1840. With the exception of Aldinga Scrub on the west side, all the forested areas of Aldinga Plain were erased in the 19th century, and no paintings or photographs survive to show exactly where they were. However, they are marked on Richard Counsel's field sketch maps from the first surveys in 1839, and on the first two area maps developed from these. A careful comparison of them suggests that *Murlawirra* in 1839 was a coherent forested area of about 360 hectares, covering most of the land between Justs Rd and the scarp, from Sellicks Beach Rd to just north of Button Rd, plus a northwest extension almost to Norman Rd; i.e. mainly on Sections 617, 628-9, 641-3, Pt. 527, 653-4 and Pt. 538 (Hundred of Willunga).¹

Louis Piesse, who had been an assistant in the first surveys of the district in 1839, wrote in 1844 that "surface water becomes scarce" on the Willunga-Sellicks Hill scarp south of Section 276, when compared with the area near Willunga. He recorded the Kaurna-Miyurna names of the five "most important" of the "little rivulets" in this area down to Mt Terrible Gully, and the third of these was "Mullawerungga" = *Murlawirrangga* (O.Sp. *Mullawirrangga*), 'dry forest place'. This watering place must be on one of the biggest creeks near the eastern fringe of Murlawirra Forest: in fact, on Silver Sands Creek where it emerges from the steep scarp of Mt Terrible at the southeast corner of Section 643, on the old Plains Rd reserve, as confirmed by recent archaeological evidence that this place included a campsite. Obviously named after the forest, *Murlawirrangga* was presumably its ecological and cultural focus.

These places belonged to the man who was named after them, *Murlawirrapurka* (*Mullawirraburka*) 'senior man of the Dry Forest'. They were part of his *pangkarra*, a tract of land probably inherited from his father, which also included part of the high valley of Myponga River (see Discussion). He was well-known to colonists, first as 'Onkaparinga Jack', later as 'King John'.

¹ All Section numbers in this essay are in the Hundred of Willunga.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Coordinates | Mullawirra Forest: Lat. -35.3201, Long. 138.4717 [nominal centre on Main South Rd near Button Rd] Mullawirringga waterhole: Lat. -35.3229, Long. 138.4807 [Silver Sands Creek at old Plains Rd crossing] |
|--------------------|---|

Language Information

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Meaning | 1. 'dry forest' 2. 'dry forest place' |
| Etymology | 1. <i>murla</i> 'dry' + <i>wirra</i> 'forest' 2. ditto + <i>ngga</i> 'at, place of' |
| Notes | Linguistically, <i>Mullawirringga</i> is simply a version of <i>Mullawirra</i> , adding the optional Locative suffix <i>ngga</i> . However, the available early records refer the former only to a waterhole in the forest, and the latter only to the forest as a whole. This may reflect Kaurna-Miyurna usage for this particular Named Place. |
| Language Family | Thura-Yura: 'Kaurna' (Miyurna) |
| KWP Former Spelling | 1. Mullawirra 2. Mullawirringga |
| KWP New Spelling 2010 | 1. Murlawirra 2. Murlawirringga |
| Phonemic Spelling | /murlawirra/, /murlawirringga/ |
| Syllabification | " M urla - w irra": " M urla - w irringga": |
| Pronunciation tips | Stress the 1 st and 3 rd syllables only. <i>u</i> as in 'put'. Every <i>a</i> as in Maori 'haka'. <i>rl</i> is a Retroflex <i>l</i> (pronounce <i>l</i> with the tongue curled back). <i>rr</i> rolled as in Scottish. |

Main source evidence

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Date | 1840 |
| Original source text | – "Pangkarra, a district or tract of country belonging to an individual, which he inherits from his father... As each <i>pankarra</i> has its peculiar name, many of the owners take that as their proper name, with the addition of the term <i>burka</i> : for instance, ... Mullawirraburka (King John) ..." – " Mullawirra , the forest on the east side of the Aldinga Plain, from which King John derives his native name." |
| Reference | Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840, <i>Outlines of a Grammar...</i> , 2:36, 75. |
| Informants credited | |
| Informants uncredited | Kadlitpinna, Wauwitpinna, Mullawirraburka, Ityamaitpinna, etc 1838-40 |



| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Date | July 1840 |
| Original source text | “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 [<i>Field River valley through Reynella & Happy Valley</i>] and he exchanged them for Ugaldinga ” [transcription error for ‘Ngaldinga’, i.e. Aldinga] “and Maitpunga [Myponga] Plains... Captain Jack, a few years back, belonged to the Koubanda (northern) tribe, and possessed no land; King John received him into his family and made him co-partner with the whole in the district just mentioned.” |
| Reference | Matthew Moorhouse Protector’s Report 27/7/1840, in ‘Papers Relative to South Australia’, <i>British Parliamentary Papers: Colonies: Australia</i> Vol. 7: 355. |
| Informants credited | ‘King John’ (Mullawirraburka) and ‘Captain Jack’ (Kadlitpinna), 1839-40. |
| Informants uncredited | |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Date | 1844 |
| Original source text | – [<i>from Colville’s property 2 km SW of Willunga, travelling southwest along the Willunga-Sellicks scarp:</i>] “Surface water now becomes scarce... In the winter almost every glen or ravine has water in it; but the little rivulets soon run to waste, and after a few warm days they dry up. Keeping still along the foot of the range from Mr Colville’s, the following are the most important: 1st. The glen Perreminkamin-kungga. 2dly. Wilyahowkingga; 3dly. Mullawerungga ; 4thly. Kurtandilla; and 5thly. Mt Terrible Gully... – “... I must now strongly advise the tourist to take a walk up Mount Terrible for the commanding prospect that can be obtained from its summit... Returning, and keeping more towards the coast, we cross the plain called Aldinga (properly Ngaltingga). 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 ,– that to the west is called the Southwest Corner (from its position from Willunga) and is well known to the kangaroo hunters; that to the east is the Mullawirra (Dry Forest—an appropriate name , as indeed, the native names are generally found to be when we get them correctly and the interpretation) from which the native generally known as “King John” takes his name Mul-lawirra-burka. Keeping along the plain four miles brings us to the grassy gully called Tartarchilla...” |
| Reference | ‘L.P’ [Louis Piesse], ‘Descriptive Tour through Part of District C’, <i>Adelaide Observer</i> 13/4/1844: 7c, 8a, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/158918431/18834087 . |
| Informants credited | |
| Informants uncredited | Kurna-Miyurna guides during the first surveys of District C in 1839. |

Discussion: MULLAWIRRABURKA'S 'DRY FOREST' AND WATERHOLE:

MULLAWIRRA, 'KING JOHN'S FOREST':

The German missionary linguists Teichelmann and Schürmann described “Mullawirra”² as “the forest on the east side of the Aldinga Plain, from which King John derives his native name”. It means ‘dry forest’.³ This forest was the core part of his *pangkarra* from which he derived his personal name *Murlawirra-purka* (Old Sp. *Mullawirra-burka*), ‘senior man or owner of the Dry Forest’.⁴

Because Murlawirraburka was such a prominent identity in the colony between 1837 and his death in 1845, we know quite a lot about him. He was one of the main informants with whom Teichelmann, Schürmann and Moorhouse held many conversations at the Native Location, and from whom they learned the Kurna-Miyurna language. Much of what we know has been laid out by Tom Gara in his seminal ‘life and times’ biography.⁵ Born about 1811, Murlawirraburka was “a finely built fellow”, “a warrior of great renown”, often described as a ‘chief’ or ‘king’ of the ‘Adelaide tribe’.⁶ There are a number of differing records of where ‘his country’ was said to be. In the early years of colonization he was called “Onkaparinga Jack”, which at that date identified him closely with *Ngangkiparingga*, the area which we now call Old Noarlunga; and he was buried near there, probably after other funeral rites in “his own country, ‘Myponga’” (the Myponga Valley).⁷ From 1840 onward he was usually identified with *Murlawirra* (on the Aldinga plains near Sellicks Hill) and with the Myponga valley just over the range there. According to Moorhouse, “King John... formerly belonged to the districts of Adelaide, Glenelg, Sturt River, and Hurtle Vale, and he exchanged

² Old Spelling; New Spelling *Murlawirra*.

³ In some contexts the word *murla* can also mean ‘finished, complete’: “*murla paltandi, to finish, complete; to consume*” (Teichelmann MS Dictionary 1857). But this seems unlikely to be among the connotations of *Murlawirra*. There is another word meaning ‘dry’, *bulturro* (*pulturru*), but this seems to refer only to ‘dry air’ or ‘dry wind’. *Murla* refers to dry objects such as the dry-bark shield *murlapaka* (*mullabakka*) or the smoke-drying of a corpse.

⁴ Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 2:36, 75.

⁵ Tom Gara 1998, ‘The life and times of Mullawirraburka (‘King John’) of the Adelaide tribe’, in J Simpson & L Hercus (ed.) 1998, *History in Portraits: biographies of nineteenth century South Australian Aboriginal people*, Canberra, Australian National University, iAboriginal History Monograph 6: 88-132.

⁶ Gara 1998: 92, 98.

⁷ Gara 1998: 95-6, 121-3. Gara summarizes these varying records of Murlawirraburka’s country by asserting Willunga as his primary place, describing him as “a senior custodian of the Willunga area” (p.93), and that “he had a strong connection with the Willunga area” (p.95, cp. 118). But this is an unjustified generalization from Jessop’s late claim that ‘King John’ ruled over “the matchless plains of Willunga, towards the south” (Gara 1998: 96): which is Adelaide-centred language, almost certainly referring to Aldinga Plains, not Willunga. There are no other records connecting ‘King John’ with Willunga. It was not he but Ityamaitpinna (‘Rodney’) who was identified with Willunga (Gara 1998: 103; cp. Wyatt in JD Woods 1879: 180, “Rodney’s country, from Onkaparinga to Willunga, and south of it”).

them for Ugaldinga and Maitpunga Plains”. This passage raises many questions, not least because it does not mention Onkaparinga.⁸

TREES, FOREST LAND, and *MURLAWIRRA*:

Counsel’s sketch maps of this area in his Field Book 102⁹ were drawn onsite during the first surveys of ‘District C’ in late 1839, and are the ultimate authority for most data. In Adelaide later that year he compiled for the Survey Department an area map which survives in the files of the Geographical Names Unit.¹⁰ The first formal map from these surveys was then drafted by FH Burslem;¹¹ and in 1840 this was further modified into the well-known map published in London by Arrowsmith.¹²

For Teichelmann and Schürmann and Piesse, the name ‘Aldinga’ had nothing to do with today’s township, which was not founded until 1857. When they wrote ‘Aldinga’ they meant the whole triangular plain south of Willunga Creek.¹³ In the imagined ‘tour’ which Piesse wrote in 1844, he ‘travels’ from Willunga southwest along the bottom of the scarp, approximating the line of the

⁸ Matthew Moorhouse Protector’s Report 27/7/1840, in ‘Papers Relative to South Australia’, *British Parliamentary Papers: Colonies: Australia* Vol. 7: 355. ‘Hurtle Vale’ was the early colonial name for the Field River valley, through what is now the suburbs of Reynella and Happy Valley. ‘Ugaldinga’ is a mis-transcription of ‘Ngaldinga’ = Aldinga; the plains, not the town, which did not exist until 1857. ‘Maitpunga’ = Myponga (the high valley, not Myponga Beach). There is a mystery surrounding this claim that Murlawirraburka acquired his Aldinga territory only during his adult life by an unusual act of “exchange”, bartering his ‘former’ lands further north for “a district belonging to another family”. This text comes from Moorhouse’s summary of a lengthy discussion with Murlawirraburka about the patrilineal system of Kurna-Miyurna land tenure, which clearly left the Protector puzzled over some features. In part it reads: “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 Ugaldinga and Maitpunga Plains. One circumstance regarding property is peculiar; some own large districts of land, while others have none at all. We do not know how it was originally obtained, how it happens that some have, while others have not. Captain Jack, a few years back, belonged to the Koubanda (northern) tribe, and possessed no land; King John received him into his family and made him co-partner with the whole in the district just mentioned”. This mystery is beyond the scope of my essay. Gara comments: “It is impossible to tell what Moorhouse meant when he referred to one family ‘bartering’ its territory with another family, or Mullawirraburka making Kadlitpinna his ‘co-partner’. It is possible that Moorhouse obtained some inkling of ‘managerial’ or other secondary rights that an individual may have, or perhaps he was referring to some process of succession that was occurring in the turmoil of post-contact times” (Gara 1998: 110).

⁹ Richard Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102, Hundred of Willunga (SA Geographical Names Unit): 41, 42, 43, 45 (see Maps 1-4 in this essay).

¹⁰ Richard Counsel 1839b, ‘Original’, Diagram Book Hundred of Willunga, page X4 (SA Geographical Names Unit). This map is signed “Sketched & Drawn by RC 1839”, and “J McLaren, Senior Surveyor, 31st December 1839”. It refers to “F.B102”, and includes later annotations. Not all of the data on this map agrees exactly with Counsel’s field book, and I have annotated it accordingly; see Map 5_TREES_DiagBk_annot’.

¹¹ FH Burslem 1839, ‘Plan of the country south of Adelaide from O’Halloran Hill to Mt Terrible, including District C and portions of Districts B and D’, Adelaide: Survey Office (map C236 in State Library of SA). This is a photographic negative. My Map 6 gives a positive of the Aldinga Plains section from it. Much of Counsel’s original data is simplified and made to look neater and more well-defined.

¹² John McLaren, ‘Country South of Adelaide from O’Halloran Hill to Mt Terrible, including District C and portions of Districts B and D’, London, Arrowsmith, 1 September 1840. It was re-used in a number of versions over the next several years. This map modifies Counsel’s tree markings even more than Burslem’s, reducing the number of dots drastically in favour of decorative tree icons with shadows.

¹³ See PNS 4.04.01/01 Ngalingga.

survey boundary which Counsel had mapped in 1839. Parts of it still survive as the diagonal bits of Plains Rd, and other diagonal bits along the scarp, both public and private.¹⁴

Having reached Mt Terrible and recommended to the reader its stunning views, Piesse locates Murlawirra Forest as follows:

“Returning, and keeping more towards the coast, we cross the plain called Aldinga (properly Ngaltingga). Close by is the lagoon which dries up in the summer, and the water of which is salt in the winter.” – [the Washpool] – “The plain is bounded by small but dense forests on either side,— that to the west is called the Southwest Corner (from its position from Willunga)¹⁵ and is well known to the kangaroo hunters; that to the east is the Mullawirra (Dry Forest—an appropriate name, as indeed, the native names are generally found to be when we get them correctly and the interpretation) from which the native generally known as ‘King John’ takes his name Mul-lawirra-burka. Keeping along the plain four miles brings us to the grassy gully called Tartarchilla...”

The route by which Piesse imagines his tourist ‘returning’ was doubtless the existing settler track to Encounter Bay. This is marked explicitly in Counsel 1839a, Counsel 1839b and McLaren 1840 as “Present Track to Encounter Bay”, along with the nearby “Proposed Road” (which in fact was never built in the Sellicks Hill area). Further north – in other pages of Counsel’s field books¹⁶ and on McLaren 1840 – “Native Tracks” are also mapped in close association with the ‘Present Track’. The latter had obviously been derived from the former by earlier colonists travelling with Aboriginal guides. On these plains almost all of Counsel’s tree dots and ‘Forest Land’ annotations are located east of the ‘Present Track’. The exceptions are (1) “Sandy and Scrubby Forest Land’ in an area more or less coinciding with today’s Aldinga Scrub; and (2) a few scattered dots (interspersed by several areas of “Open Plains”) around and south of Sellicks Beach Rd.¹⁷

The ‘Present Track’ crossed the range at Mt Terrible Creek on Section 734. Northward on the plain it lay well to the west of today’s Main South Rd, crossing Justs Rd between Sellicks Beach and Button Roads, and joining Main South Rd only at the Colville Rd bend (parallel with the northern limit of Aldinga Scrub). It passes only once through a fringe of the forest (just south of Norman Rd and east of Justs Rd), and had obviously been developed as the easiest route to Mt Terrible Gully, keeping mainly to the ‘Open Plains’. Any colonial traveller in the 1840s would have passed

¹⁴ This whole survey boundary is clearly marked on Counsel 1839b (my Map 5 in this essay).

¹⁵ ‘Corner’ probably refers to the isolation of Aldinga Scrub in winter, when all approaches except the northern were blocked by the Blue Lagoon as well as the Washpool. Piesse’s ‘Southwest from Willunga’ was a loose piece of geography. In fact the Scrub began almost due east of Willunga town, and its southern extremity was only WSW. ‘Southwest Corner’ was probably a view from the whole plain around Willunga Creek, rather than from the town.

¹⁶ Counsel 1839, FB 94: 56, 58.

¹⁷ See Map 5.

Murlawirra *immediately 'to the east' of this track* all the way from Sellicks Beach Rd almost to Norman Rd – not further northeast on the absolute 'east side' of the larger Aldinga Plain.

Eastward on the plain, from Sellicks Beach Rd to Rogers Rd, Counsel's tree dots and 'Forest Land' markings cover a large majority of the whole area over to the scarp, plus more of it north of Rogers Rd and east of Main South Rd. There are five 'Open Plain' markings, but all are well north of Button Rd.

I conclude that a coherent Murlawirra Forest – "small but dense" – covered at least the following area:¹⁸

- Beginning immediately north of Kurtanthilla (Old Sp. *Kurtandilla*), most of the land from Sellicks Beach Rd to a latitude about 0.5km north of Button Rd, between the 'Present Track' (a little to the east of Justs Rd) and the scarp immediately NE of Chaff Mill Rd; containing a thinner 'lightly wooded' area west of Plains Rd.
- A northwestern arm extending north almost to Norman Rd, between the 'Present Track' (further east from Justs Rd) and Main South Rd.
- It may have extended up the scarp as well, though it is not clear how dense this part was, as Counsel's original field maps show much less tree cover here than his Diagram Book copy.

There is a final confirmation of these assessments when we compare my location estimates above with Piesse's distance of "four miles" (6.4 km) from the forest(s) to "the grassy gully called Tartarchilla" on Willunga Creek at today's Aldinga town.¹⁹

WHAT WAS 'DRY' ABOUT MURLAWIRRA?

Piesse noted a sharp decrease in available water as he travelled southwest from Willunga along the scarp. After Colville's 'Wykera-wonjurilla' on Section 276 (2 km west of Willunga South),

At first the settlers about here had some difficulty in obtaining water, Mr Loud having sunk a well 150 feet, and a party a little farther on having sunk one 180 feet without obtaining water.²⁰ I am however happy to say that from the two last wells sunk in the neighbourhood, water was obtained at 40 feet.

Surface water now becomes scarce; and, indeed, this is the great drawback of the Aldinga Plains which now lie before the traveller. In the winter almost every glen or ravine has water in

¹⁸ Total area about 358 hectares, mainly on Sections 617, 628-9, 641-3, Pt. 527, 653-4 and Pt. 538 (see my annotated Map 7_trees1839Mullaw.pdf).

¹⁹ Tatatyilla is Section 1 on Willunga Creek near the Arts Eco Village (see PNS 4.03.02/04 Tatatyilla). 'Four miles' from here is an accurate distance for Murlawirra Forest, but not for 'Southwest Corner' (Aldinga Scrub); it is the distance from Tatatyilla SSW to just south of Button Rd, which according to my assessment is the middle of Murlawirra. The distances from Tatatyilla to the northern extremities of Aldinga Scrub and Murlawirra are 1.9 miles (3.1 km) and 3.3 miles (5.3 km) respectively (see my annotated map 'FourMilesToTartachilla.png').

²⁰ Edward Loud's property was on Sections 272, 273 and 283 near Louds Hill Rd, and had Creeks #12 and #7 running through it.

it; but the little rivulets soon run to waste, and after a few warm days they dry up. Keeping still along the foot of the range from Mr Colville's, the following are the most important: 1st. The glen Perreminkamin-kungga. 2dly. Wilyahowkingga; 3dly. Mullawerungga; 4thly. Kurtandilla; and 5thly. Mt Terrible Gully.

Did the Kurna distinguish Murlawirra Forest as 'dry' mainly because of the practical difficulty of finding water in that area? Or partly because of its appearance and dominant tree cover? Or perhaps both?²¹

'KING JOHN' AND HIS WATERHOLE CAMP MURLAWIRRANGGA, 'DRY FOREST PLACE':

The name *Murlawirra* could be used idiomatically in an optional alternative form *Murlawirrangga* (O.Sp. *Mullawirrangga*), adding the Locative suffix *ngga*, 'at, place of'.²² But in fact this expanded form is on record only from Piesse, who refers it to a creek somewhere on the Willunga-Sellicks scarp, one of five "rivulets" which were "the most important" water sources in the drier stretch towards Sellicks Hill (see below). Piesse's authority for this was no doubt his Kurna-Miyurna guide(s) in 1839.

Since Aboriginal naming practices do not give a single name to the whole length of a watercourse, we may assume that *Murlawirrangga* referred to a specific site on its creek, no doubt a waterhole of some kind. Moreover, since it took its name from a much wider forest, we may also be sure that it was the focal site of that whole area. In the context of Murlawirraburka's *pangkarra*, it is also possible (as Gara says) that he "may have had a special bond with this waterhole; it may have been his Dreaming, his totemic centre inherited from his father and/or his birthplace".²³

²¹ TREE SPECIES IN MURLAWIRRA: Counsel distinguished between the "Sandy and Scrubby" forest land of Aldinga Scrub on the one hand, and the straightforward "Forest Land" east of it. The only "Scrubby" marking east of the 'Present Track' is on Section 271, 4 km west of Piltongga Gully. From this we might infer that he saw the eastern forest as a different kind from the 'Southwest Corner', perhaps less mallee-like ('scrubby'), perhaps growing in better soil. According to SA's Department of Environment and Water in its website NatureMaps: -
 – Aldinga Scrub is a Woodland of Pink Gum (sometimes called Hill Gum or Scrub Gum) (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*) over a grassy and herbaceous understorey;
 – while the pre-European vegetation of Murlawirra – both on the plains area around Button Rd and Norman Rd, and on the higher upland plains south to Sellicks Beach Rd – was a Low Woodland of Mallee Box (*Eucalyptus porosa*), Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) and Dryland Teatree (sometimes called 'Black Teatree' or 'Moonah') (*Melaleuca lanceolata*), with little or no understorey. This plant association is similar to that which was typical of the coast from Old Hallett Cove Scrub to Marino (Darrell Kraehenbuehl 1996, *Pre-European Vegetation of Adelaide*, Adelaide: Nature Conservation Society of SA: 211-5). These were some of the grassy plains with isolated large trees and occasional forest patches 'like a gentleman's park' which surprised and delighted so many of the first colonists. The general Kurna-Miyurna name for such landscapes was *Yarna*, 'bald, naked'. According to Tindale, Ivaritji applied this word as a name for the whole region from Adelaide to Rapid Bay (see PNS 1/01 Yarna).
 – Along the edge of the scarp was a similar Low Woodland, but Teatree was replaced by either Grey Box (*Euc. microcarpa*) or SA Bluegum (*Euc. leucoxyton*) or both.
 I leave it to others to assess whether this distinction of plant communities might cause the Kurna-Miyurna to see Murlawirra as 'drier' than Aldinga Scrub.

²² Both *Ngangkiparri* and *Ngangkiparringga* were recorded as names for the Old Noarlunga area of Onkaparinga River (Wyatt "Ungke perre, Ungke perringga"; Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 "Ngangkiparri"; see PNS 4.02/04 Ngangkipari).

²³ Gara 1998: 93.

These possibilities must be considered alongside several other matters:

1. Murlawirraburka's well-documented special relationship with the Onkaparinga area.
2. The likelihood that his totem was *Kua* (*Kuwa*), 'Crow', since this was one of his other personal names.²⁴
3. The complexities of totemism in the wider culture region of this part of SA, in which a man inherits one totem name from his mother, and from his father a different one along with responsibility for the *pangkarra*, its associated ancestral Being and story, and the ceremonies for the totem species.²⁵ We have no direct information about stories or totemic sites in or around Murlawirraburka's *pangkarra* here – though it may have included Mt Terrible, and there are some possible hints of story there.²⁶
4. Moorhouse's mysterious claim – derived from a long discussion with the man himself – that Murlawirraburka acquired his Aldinga Plains territory only during his adult life by an unusual act of 'exchange', a land 'barter'.²⁷

These matters are very complex, and our data are limited. An understanding of Murlawirraburka's relationship with his forest and waterhole will be a work in progress, and we will be wise to avoid premature conclusions.

Of the many little creeks and gullies along this scarp, which was Piesse's "Mullawerungga"?²⁸

From the "little rivulets" among the glens and ravines "along the foot of the range from Mr. Colville's", Piesse listed the five "most important" in order from northeast to southwest. At the northern end, Colville's was Section 276, about 1 km east of Delabole Rd. At the southern end, we know the location of Piesse's fifth, "Mt Terrible Creek" at the southern boundary of the District C surveys; and of his fourth, "Kurtandilla" (N.Sp. *Kurtanthilla*) on Section 668 where Sellicks Creek emerges from the hills immediately south of the Victory Hotel.²⁹ Piesse's "Mullawerungga" was the third, the last before *Kurtanthilla*. Moreover, it would certainly have been within the forested area of the same name, as described above. Counsel recorded no water sites in this area, so we are obliged to use other geographical data in order to make an assessment.

²⁴ 'King John' was also called by his birth-order name *Kartameru* (*Kartamiru*), 'first-born child, a male', and *Kua* (*Kuwa*), 'Crow' (Schürmann 1839 in *SA Colonist* 17/3/1840: 23). *Kua* was probably his totem (cp. Jane Simpson on personal totemic names including "*Koar*", in *History In Portraits* 1998: 225-6). 'Maria', one of Murlawirraburka's four wives, was also named *Kua* ("*Koa*", Wyatt in Woods 1879: 180).

²⁵ Gara 1998: 126.

²⁶ See PNS 5.01/04 'Koolta Kourga' / Mt Terrible. Mt Terrible is directly between Murlawirra Forest and the central stretch of Myponga Valley. It could be part of Murlawirraburka's *pangkarra* if this was continuous across the range rather than split into two separate tracts 'Aldinga Plain' and 'Myponga Plain'.

²⁷ See my long footnote above, referring to his alleged 'exchange' of land near Adelaide for land on the Aldinga and Myponga plains.

²⁸ Piesse's spelling clearly represents *Murlawirrangga*.

²⁹ See PNS 4.04.03/03 Kurtandilla.

I have made a rough preliminary investigation of all the creeks along this scarp.³⁰ The whole area today is in a very altered and degraded state, most places having a majority vegetation of introduced trees, weeds and crops, the creeks being mostly drained or choked with undergrowth or both. Hence not much can be concluded by casual visits or viewing, e.g. by taking photographs onsite as far as public roads allow, or examining satellite images. I have supplemented these most importantly with careful examination of Counsel's 1839 field book and the earliest area map versions derived from it; but also with SA government data from NatureMaps,³¹ and items from the 'Water Allocation Plan for the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area'.³²

The sum of this compiled evidence makes it almost certain that the waterhole *Murlawirrangga* was on Creek #1 (Silver Sands Creek), probably at or near the beginning of the scarp proper where the old Plains Rd crosses the creek. Within the possible Murlawirra Forest area – i.e. between the Victory Hotel and the beginning of "Open Plains" in the vicinity of Creek #18 on Section 621 near the south end of Cullen Rd – Creek #1 has the largest catchment (72 hectares); the longest course on the plains marked in the first maps (1.4 km, nearly to Main South Rd); and sustains the most impressive tree-line, though on the scarp most of this is introduced Pine.³³

If there was once a reliable waterhole somewhere here, it would have invited a campsite nearby – and this has proved to be so. Artefacts "both pre and post contact" were found by archaeologist Dr Keryn Walshe and cultural geographer Dr Gavin Malone at this site in 2021, "indicating there was a camp site which straddled the gully".³⁴

It now remains to find the location of the camp's waterhole. At the crossing on the public corridor at Old Plains Rd, #1 does not look promising in its current state. After visiting it, Gavin Malone reported that this site is "highly degraded; erosion, land fill and pine plantings".³⁵ But with Aboriginal landcare before settlement, the waterhole might have been kept open a little further

³⁰ See 'Assessing the Creeks' in my document 'BACKGROUND8SellicksScarp'; also Maps 5, 7 and 8 in this essay. I have allocated numbers to most of the creeks along the scarp, enabling exact identification from my key Map 5.

³¹ NatureMaps, (<http://spatialwebapps.environment.sa.gov.au/naturemaps/?locale=en-us&viewer=naturemaps>).

³² 'Water Allocation Plan for the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area', Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board, 2007: 7, via home page <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaide/mountloftyranges/water/water-allocation-plans/mclaren-vale>).

³³ The only other possible candidate for 'Mullawirrangga' waterhole is Creek #4, which is 1.4 km northeast of #1, near the end of Chaff Mill Rd. But this is on a far fringe of the southern forest area, where Counsel marked trees more sparsely, with some 'Open Plain' nearby (around Section 632; see Map 5_TREES). We need to know the status of both #4 and #1 as water sources in 1839-44, but this is unrecorded. The catchment of #4 is about 76% that of #1, and Counsel marked it on the plain less than half the length of #1 (see Map 8_Catchments5+Lengths). The Burslem 1839 and McLaren 1840 maps do not show #4 at all. Today both creeks have tree-lines of planted pines at the scarp and upstream (see any good satellite image); #4 seems to be in better condition at the survey boundary, but much managed

³⁴ Gavin Malone, p.c. email 6/12/2021. Walshe notes that "artefacts were found on both the margins of and within the Gorge [creekbed]. Finds included: small quartz and quartzite cutting tools and an adze; flakes of crystal quartz; nosed quartzite handaxe and slate baton for cleaning and softening skins... The nosed handaxe... is possibly manufactured from rock extracted from the 'blue vein' noted in Mt Terrible Gorge some 80 years ago. If so, this manufactured item has travelled from the quarry to a higher elevation, not down along the coast, thus emphasising bi-directional travel along gorges and creeks in the Willunga Basin... The presence of historic material makes clear the continuity of site use well into the late 1800s" (Keryn Walshe 2022, 'Background archaeology of Mt Terrible Gorge [Silver Sands Creek]', unpublished report, edited here by Schultz).

³⁵ Gavin Malone, p.c. email *ibid*.

downstream³⁶ or maybe a very short distance upstream;³⁷ or perhaps it was nearby off the main watercourse,³⁸ fed by localized underground seepage from the fractured basement rocks,³⁹ independent of both the visible catchment areas and the visible creek lengths on the plain in Counsel.

This campsite and waterhole *Murlawirrangga* is only about 1.1 km NE of Kurtanthilla campsite. Both are at the base of Mt Terrible, 2-2.5 km from the summit where tributaries of Creeks #1 and #4 rise.⁴⁰ Kurtanthilla is at the mouth of the gully of Sellicks Creek (#23), up which Old Sellicks Hill Rd (the 'Victory Road') was built in 1859, around a known Aboriginal track over the range into Myponga valley and thence to Encounter Bay. This was an alternative to their other known route via Mt Terrible Creek.

Future investigators and walkers on the land may find more to suggest how frequently each of these two campsites was occupied, and how each was used.

References to background documents

For background information and analysis relating to the creeks and gullies of the Willunga-Sellicks scarp, including Mt Terrible Gully, see my document '**BACKGROUND8_SellicksScarp.pdf**', and my digital data folder '**pnf4-04-03_SellicksSCARP**'.

.....

SEE ALSO THE MAPS ON NEXT 9 PAGES:

³⁶ Today #1 sustains a considerable growth of medium-large trees well downstream, in the last third of its course towards Main South Rd. But this is probably irrelevant to a waterhole near the scarp.

³⁷ The scarp becomes very steep within 100m of Plains Rd.

³⁸ If so, the elusive waterhole might be found either near #1 or perhaps on #2, a very short creeklet in Counsel which today has some small dams only 360 metres away from the site on #1, plus a drain extension down to Main South Rd.

³⁹ See 'Water Allocation Plan for the McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area', Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board, 2007: 2, 3, 7-8, www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/files/f3c8c02c-f7bf-4b87-851c-a27a00e73015/mclaren-vale-wap-2007-gen.pdf (27/11/14), which discusses the 'fractured rock aquifers' on this scarp. It refers to "a survey of 22 watercourses" on the Sellicks scarp in 2004, which might throw more light on waterholes in and around Creek #1: "Seeps have often been selected as sites for farm dams, where underground water discharge maintains dam levels throughout the year".

⁴⁰ See Map8_Catchments.

MAPS ON NEXT 8 PAGES:

p.14: MAP 1: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p.41: Aldinga Scrub & Washpool area.

p.15: MAP 2: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p.42: Kurtandilla & Sellicks Creek area.

p.16: MAP 3: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p.43: Main South Rd to Rogers Rd area.

p.17: MAP 4: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p.45: Ryan Rd to Delabole Rd area.

p.18: MAP 5: Pre-colonial tree cover on the Aldinga Plains and creek gullies along the Willunga-Sellicks scarp.

Base map: Counsel 1839b, Diagram Book Hd of Willunga p.X4. Annotated with data from Counsel 1839a).

p.19: MAP 6: FH Burslem 1839, 'Plan of the country south of Adelaide...', map C236, State Library of SA (detail: Aldinga Plains).

p.20: MAP 7: Summary of Mullawirra and other main forest land on Aldinga Plains in 1839.

Base map: SA Government, NatureMaps website <http://spatialwebapps.environment.sa.gov.au/naturemaps/?locale=en-us&viewer=naturemaps>, 7/3/22.

p.21: MAP 8: Scarp creeks in southern area: (1) Catchment areas; (2) Length of watercourses on plain in 1839, as shown in Counsel 1839a & 1839b.

Base map: NatureMaps 1/3/22.

.....

End of Summary

41

2. from page 39

418

419

420

421

424

59-78 to Station Mark

6200 to Station

6045 see diagram of section 740

425

426

429

430

435

436

437

Forest Land

Scrub + Scrub

601

602

603

5660 to Bank

1900

608

609

610

1900

3800

1800

3050

614

615

616

617

618

2400

627

628

629

630

1000

4100

5050

2828

2828

639

640

641

642

643

3070

2828

2920

2978

2828

652

653

654

655

3090

2980

3030

3040

MAP 1:
Counsel 1839a,
Field Book 102
p41
Aldinga Scrub &
Washpool area

Wide diagram Bank
pages 13 for 607.

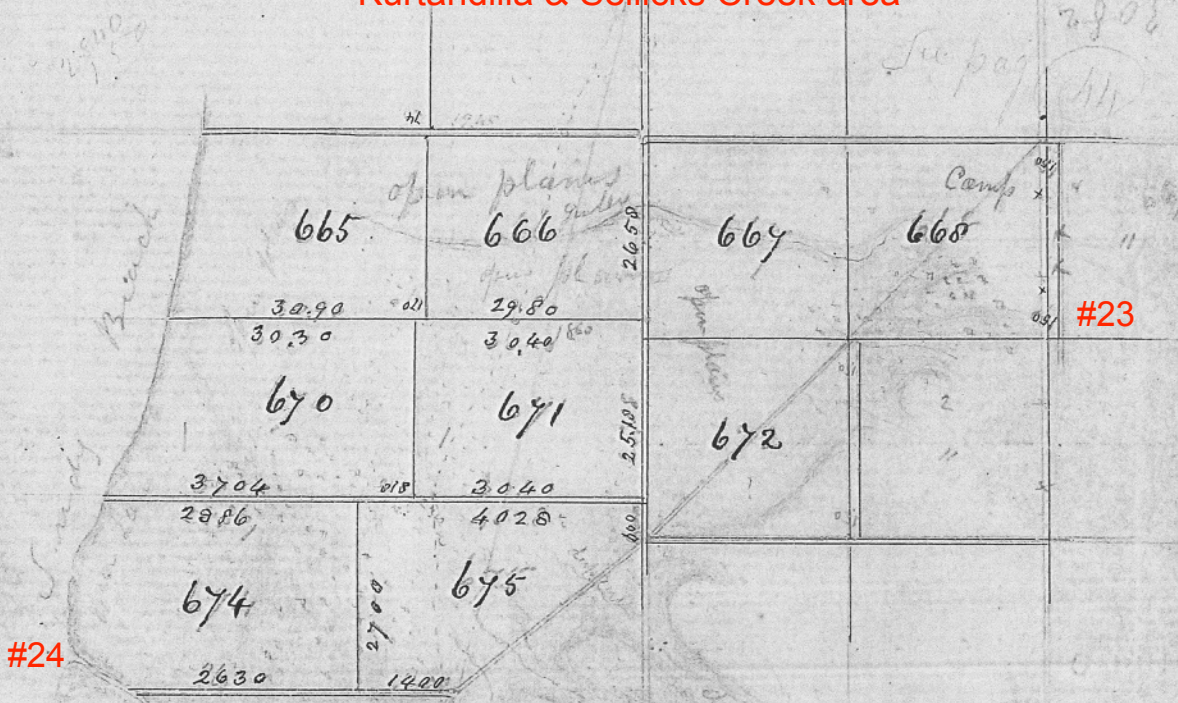
Lagoon

Salt Water
Lagoon

FB 102 : 41 LIGHT

42

MAP 2: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p42
Kurtandilla & Sellicks Creek area



Section 668 - See page
in Day's Book for
re. survey

Prove bank from
to East side
23.1.1887

FB 102 : 42

FB 102 : 42

43 See page 37 for this Section

MAP 3: Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p43
Main South Rd to Rogers Rd area

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| 425 | 426 | 427 | 428 | 259 | 260 |
| 430 | 431 | 432 | 433 | 434 | 269 270 |
| 436 | 437 | 438 | 439 | 440 | 279 280 |
| 602 | 603 | 604 | 605 | 606 | 289 290 |
| 609 | 610 | 611 | 612 | 613 | 299 300 |
| 617 | 618 | 619 | 620 | 621 | 622 #19 |
| 629 | 630 | 631 | 632 | 633 | #5 #18 |
| 642 | 643 | | | | #4 #3a |
| | | | | | #3 |
| | | | | | #1 #2 |
| 655 | | | | | #21 |

F18102 : 43

45 Forward from page 33



ends here
→

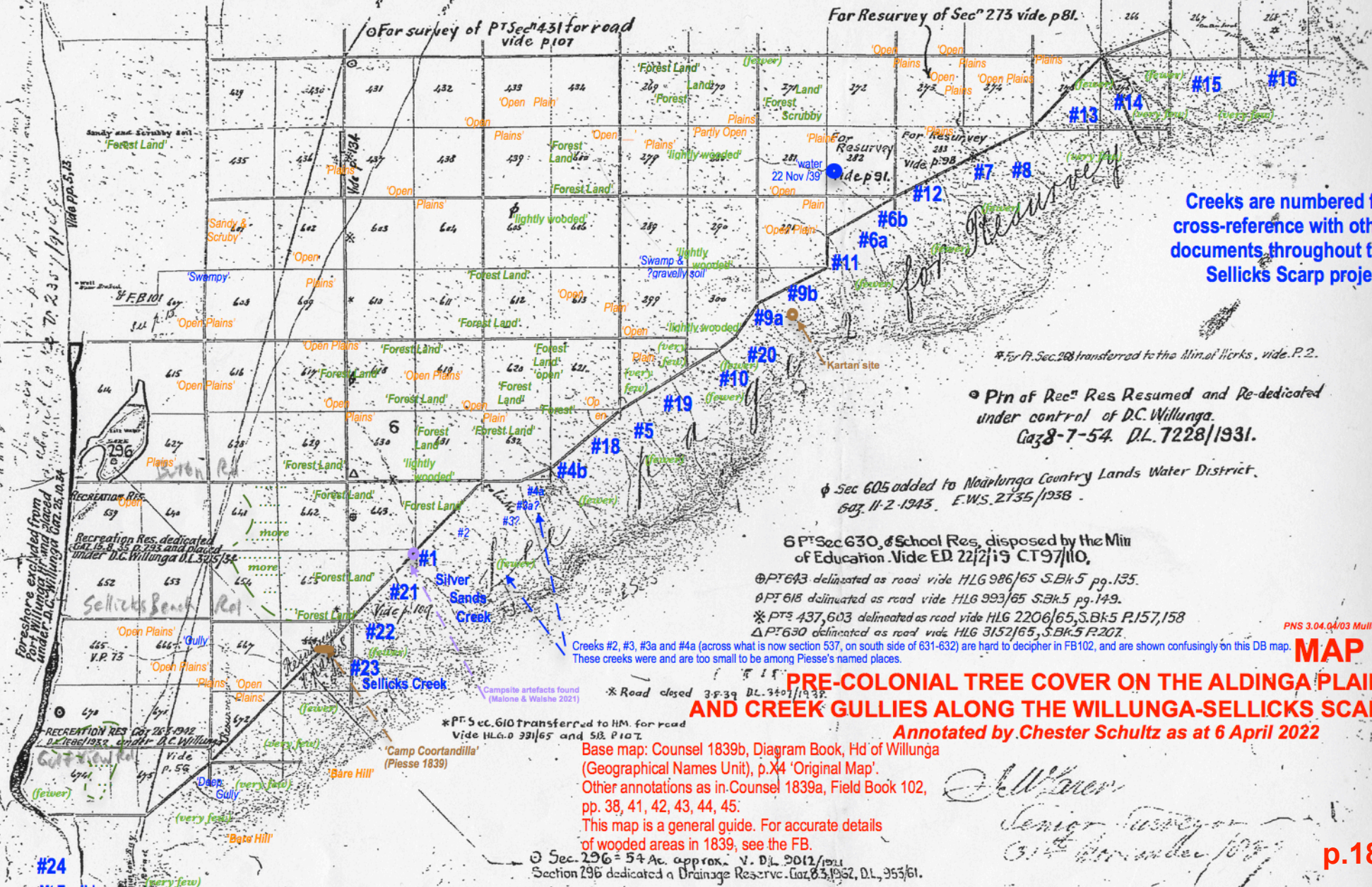
FB 102 45

MAP 4:
Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102 p45
 Ryan Rd to Delabole Rd area
p.17

Tree dots on this DB map are more faithful to Counsel FB102 than Burslem map C236 is, and much more than McLaren 1840 is; but still do not always match those in the FB. Hence a few extra wooded areas shown in FB102 & C236 are marked here as '(more)' with rows of dots in dark green. Where tree dots are fewer in FB102 than on this DB map, the area is marked '(fewer)' in light green.

In dark green: Locations marked 'Forest Land'
 In light green: Locations marked 'Lightly Wooded'
 In orange: Locations marked 'Open Plains', etc.

Creeks are numbered for cross-reference with other documents throughout the Sellicks Scarp project.



6 PT Sec 630, School Res, disposed by the Min of Education vide ED 22/2/19 CT97/110.

PT 643 delineated as road vide HLG 986/65 S.Bk 5 pg.135.

PT 618 delineated as road vide HLG 993/65 S.Bk 5 pg.149.

PT 437, 603 delineated as road vide HLG 2206/65, S.Bk 5 P.157, 158

PT 630 delineated as road vide HLG 3152/65, S.Bk 5 P.207.

PNS 3.04.0/03 Mullawarra

Creeks #2, #3, #3a and #4a (across what is now section 537, on south side of 631-632) are hard to decipher in FB102, and are shown confusingly on this DB map. These creeks were and are too small to be among Piesse's named places.

MAP 5: PRE-COLONIAL TREE COVER ON THE ALDINGA PLAINS AND CREEK GULLIES ALONG THE WILLUNGA-SELICKS SCARP

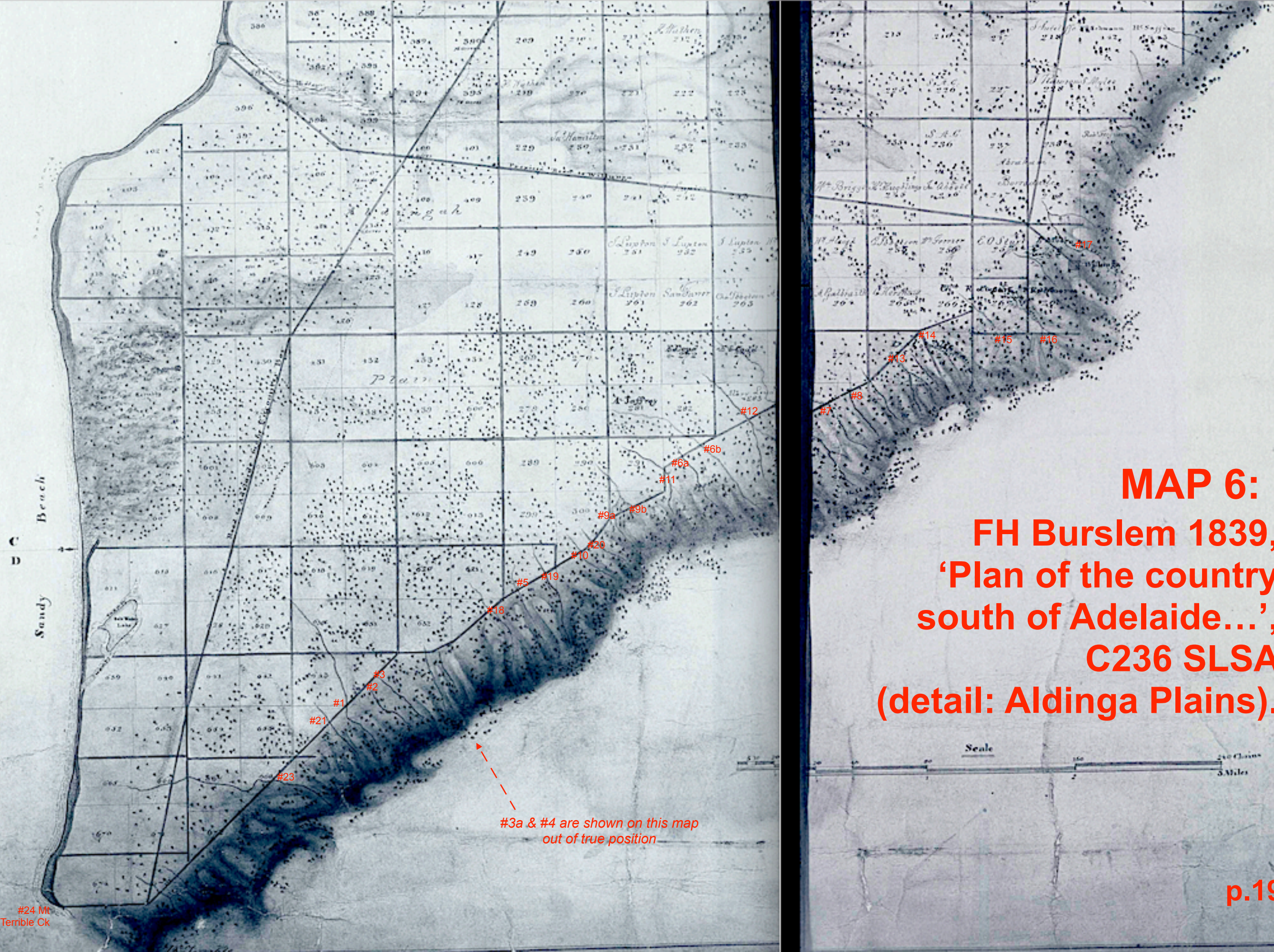
Annotated by Chester Schultz as at 6 April 2022

Base map: Counsel 1839b, Diagram Book, Hd of Willunga (Geographical Names Unit), p.X4 'Original Map'.
 Other annotations as in Counsel 1839a, Field Book 102, pp. 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45.
 This map is a general guide. For accurate details of wooded areas in 1839, see the FB.

Sec 296 = 54 Ac. approx. V. D.L. 2012/1911
 Section 296 dedicated a Drainage Reserve. Gaz. 83, 1932, D.L. 353/61.

The heavy double line SW-NE along the bottom of the scarp marks the boundary of the 1839 surveys, often coinciding with the original Plains Rd and its remnants today. Creek data are measured upstream and downstream roughly from this line.

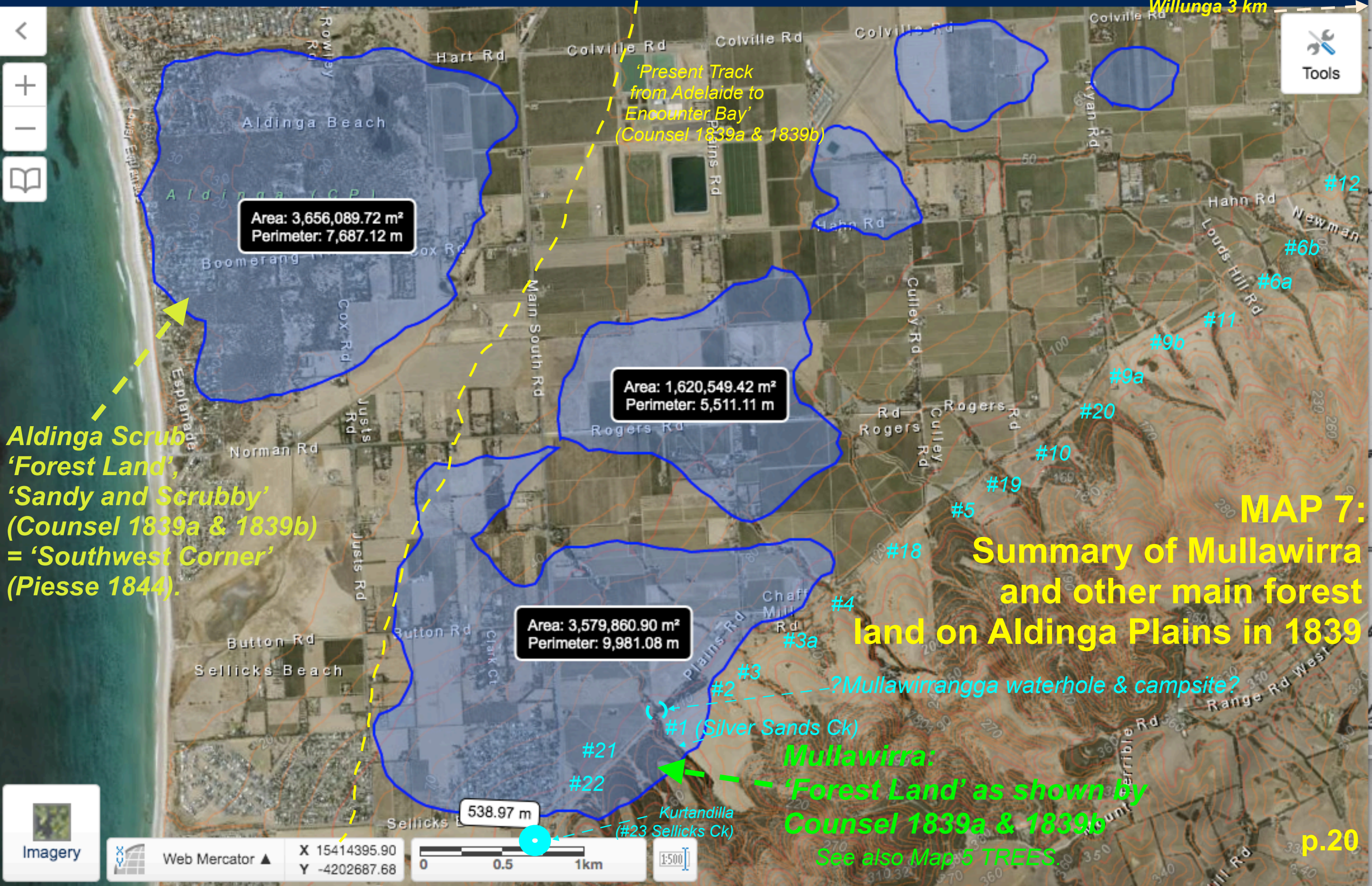
= Present track to Adelaide



**MAP 6:
FH Burslem 1839,
'Plan of the country
south of Adelaide...',
C236 SLSA
(detail: Aldinga Plains).**

#3a & #4 are shown on this map
out of true position

#24 Mt
Terrible Ck



Area: 3,656,089.72 m²
Perimeter: 7,687.12 m

Area: 1,620,549.42 m²
Perimeter: 5,511.11 m

Area: 3,579,860.90 m²
Perimeter: 9,981.08 m

Aldinga Scrub
'Forest Land',
'Sandy and Scrubby'
(Counsel 1839a & 1839b)
= 'Southwest Corner'
(Piesse 1844).

'Present Track
from Adelaide to
Encounter Bay'
(Counsel 1839a & 1839b)

MAP 7:
Summary of Mullawirra
and other main forest
land on Aldinga Plains in 1839

Mullawirra:
'Forest Land' as shown by
Counsel 1839a & 1839b
See also Map 5 TREES.

Willunga 3 km

?Mullawirrangga waterhole & campsite?



Web Mercator ▲
X 15414395.90
Y -4202687.68



1:500

MAP 8: Scarp creeks in southern area:
 – Catchment areas.
 – Length of watercourses on plain in 1839
 as shown in Counsel 1839a & 1839b.

