

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 5.04.01/08

WITA-WATTINGGA (Wita-wartingga) (Rapid Head)

(last edited: 3.4.2016)

Abstract

Wita-wattingga (or *Wita-wartingga* in KWP's New Spelling 2010) is probably the original Kurna form of a hybrid Ngarrindjeri-Kurna name "Witawatang" which the Ngarrindjeri elder Albert Karlowan gave to ethnologists Tindale and Berndt in the 1930s.

According to him, this was the name of Rapid Head or its vicinity.

It was also a place where Tjirbuki carried the dead body of his nephew as he emerged from a forest: an incident which is not mentioned in the published literature about Tjirbuki.

The Kurna form *Wita-wattingga* means 'in the midst of Peppermint gumtrees'.

Probably it was a generic name for any forest country featuring dominant *wita* trees, and had been applied to such country nearby to the south, between Salt Cliffs Station and Starfish Hill.

The same name was also applied in 1837 to Peppermint gum country at Seacliff Park (see PNS 2/21 Witawattingga [Seacliff Park]).

<i>Coordinates</i>	Latitude -35.559358°, Longitude 138.163762° [nominal centre of <i>wita</i> forest location: Yohoe Rd at intersection of Sections 179 / 180 / 1477]
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Language Information

<i>Meaning</i>	'in the midst of peppermint gums'.
<i>Etymology</i>	<i>wita</i> 'peppermint gumtree' + <i>warti</i> 'middle' + <i>-ngga</i> 'in, at' > <i>wartingga</i> 'in the middle, between'.
<i>Notes</i>	
<i>Language Family</i>	Thura-Yura: 'Kurna'.
<i>KWP Former Spelling</i>	<i>Wita-wattingga</i>
<i>KWP New Spelling 2010</i>	<i>Wita-wartingga</i>
<i>Phonemic Spelling</i>	/witawartingga/
<i>Syllables</i>	"Wita-wa-rtingga":
<i>Pronunciation tips</i>	Stress the 1st syllable. secondary stress on the 3 rd syllable. every 'a' as in Maori 'haka'. 'rt' is a soft 't' with tongue curled back (retroflex).

Main source evidence

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

Date	1840
Original source text	“ wita peppermint tree ”. “ watte middle, midst; watingga ‘between. ”
Reference	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc, 1838-40.

Date	?Dec 1935
Original source text	“ witawatān / place where Tjirbuke emerged from forest with dead sister’s son’s body (KAL)” [<i>arrow to Rapid Head. ‘KAL’ = Karlowan</i>].
Reference	Tindale annotated map ‘Kangaroo Island Pastoral Plan’, AA 338/16/13, SA Museum.
Informants credited	Karlowan ?1935
Informants uncredited	?Milerum

Date	?1934-7?
Original source text	[<i>in heavy ink</i>] “ Wiṭa`watān ”. [<i>arrow to Section 1507 near Rapid Head</i>]. [<i>in lighter ink</i>] “where Tjilbruke came out Mil. lit. ‘out of the `wiṭa forest’ ____ [<i>tiny and illegible: Museum Catalogue claims it reads “9 November 1937”</i>]” [<i>marginal note</i>] “Notes from Milerum 28.3.34 ` ` Karlowan Dec. 1935 Notes transcribed from ms from Milerum 11.1941”.
Reference	Tindale annotated map, Hundred of Yankalilla, SA Museum AA 338/24/101.
Informants credited	Milerum (Clarence Long) (in part)
Informants uncredited	

<i>Date</i>	1935-6
<i>Original source text</i>	"... in the summer he [Tjirbuki] went down to Rapid Bay near `Wita`watan (Rapid Head) where his track came out on to the coast."
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale n.d. [1935?], 'The story of Tji:rbuki' (Tjilbruke, Tjelbruke, Tj'erbruke) from Karlowan and notes from Milerum, published in 1936', in 'Notes On The Kurna', SA Museum AA 338/1/35: 79.
<i>Informants credited</i>	Albert Karlowan
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Milerum?

<i>Date</i>	1936
<i>Original source text</i>	"In the summer he [Tjirbuki] went down to Rapid Bay near [`Wita`watan (Rapid Head)], where his 'track' (i.e. his hunting territory) extended to the coast."
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale 1936, in Tindale & Mountford 1936, 'Results of the Excavation of Kongarati Cave...', <i>Records of SA Museum</i> Vol. 5(4), :500).
<i>Informants credited</i>	Albert Karlowan
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Milerum?

<i>Date</i>	9 Nov 1937
<i>Original source text</i>	"Notes: `Wita`watan (Rapid Head) / `Witawa`tarnk (Brighton) ."
<i>Reference</i>	'Songs by Milerum recorded 9 Nov 1937', in Tindale, Southeast of SA journal Vol.2, AA338/1/33/2, SA Museum: 254.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	?Karlowan c.1935; and ?Milerum c.1936?

<i>Date</i>	c.1940
<i>Original source text</i>	"[Tjirbuki] continued, passing Witawateng (Rapid Head) until he came to a hill with a cave...."
<i>Reference</i>	RM Berndt, 'Becoming <i>Ngatji</i> : Blue Crane', in Berndt & Berndt 1993, <i>A World That Was</i> : 234; cp. p.330 map.
<i>Informants credited</i>	Karlowan c.1940
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

<i>Date</i>	1987
<i>Original source text</i>	- "Tjirbruki... was of the [ˈPatpanga] band or clan, the southernmost one of the Kurna tribe, having their [ˈpaŋkara] or territory along the shore of Rapid Bay and its [ˈwita] (peppermint gum tree) forested hills inland "... - "Tjirbruki and his fellow Patpangga clansfolk were living at [ˈTankulˈrawun] near Rapid Bay... one of their summer camping places near [ˈWitaˈwatəŋ]. Today Witawatang is known as Rapid Head ." - "Heading north again, he came to the place near where he had seen Kulultuwi last... He saw where the body had been... Having made these discoveries Tjirbruki said, '... I am off!' He left the place in the wita forest and went towards [ˈRawarəˈŋal] (Port Elliot). "
<i>Reference</i>	Tindale 1987, 'The Wanderings of Tjirbruki', <i>Records of SA Museum</i> 20: 5a, 6a, 8a.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

WHERE TJILBRUKI 'CAME OUT': A PEPPERMINT FOREST? Discussion:

1. THE NAME 'WITAWATANG', considered just as a name, is not hard to interpret.

At different times in the period 1935-40 the Ngarrindjeri man Albert Karlowan gave to both Tindale and Berndt the name "Witawatang" or "Witaˈwatəŋ", attributed to "Rapid Head".¹

The context was the story of Tjirbuki – of which more later.

It was spelled with a number of minor differences: as "ˈwitawataŋ",² "ˈWiʃaˈwataŋ" with an interdental *t* in *Wiʃa* and a clarification of the stress pattern;³ "ˈWitaˈwateŋ"⁴ = "Witawatəŋ" with an 'e' in the suffix,⁵ cp. "ˈWitaˈwatəŋ" with a neutral vowel sign *ə* instead;⁶ and "ˈWitaˈwaʃaŋ" with an interdental *t* in *waʃaŋ* but not in *wita*.⁷

¹ Note that I will be referring to a number of records which represent the final sound *ng* by the phonetic symbol *ŋ*. It is possible that Tindale's other Ngarrindjeri informant, Milerum (Clarence Long) also gave the name (see below).

² Tindale, 'Kangaroo Island Pastoral Plan', AA 338/16/13. Cp. Tindale n.d. [1935?], 'The story of Tjirbruki' (Tjilbruke, Tjelbruke, Tj'erbruke) from Karlowan and notes from Milerum, published in 1936', in 'Notes On The Kurna', SA Museum AA 338/1/35: 79.

³ Tindale annotated map Hundred of Yankalilla, SA Museum AA 338/24/101. Linguist Rob Amery says: "Both *Nukunu* and *Adnyamathanha* have *wita* as an alveolar *t* (as in English 'wit'). There is no evidence for an interdental" (p.c. 5/7/2010).

⁴ Tindale 1936, in Tindale & Mountford 1936, 'Results of the Excavation of Kongarati Cave...', *Records of SA Museum* Vol. 5(4), :500); cp.

⁵ RM Berndt, 'Becoming *Ngatji*: Blue Crane', in Berndt & Berndt 1993, *A World That Was*: 234; cp. p.330 map.

⁶ Tindale 1987, 'The Wanderings of Tjirbruki', *Records of SA Museum* 20: 6a.

⁷ 'Songs by Milerum recorded 9 Nov 1937', in Tindale, Southeast of SA journal Vol.2, AA338/1/33/2, SA Museum: 254.

We can ignore the *e* and the *ə* which were recorded a couple of times in the suffix. The *e* was a misprint in one case (Tindale 1936), and probably a variant pronunciation in the other (Berndt 1993). The neutral vowel *ə* (schwa) was probably a hindsight rationalization by Tindale of a misprint in his 1936 publication.⁸

'Witawatang', and a related place-name "*Wituwatangk*" given elsewhere in Tindale,⁹ are Ngarrindjeri forms given by Ngarrindjeri speakers. The suffix '-ang' clearly represents the standard Ngarrindjeri Locative suffix *-angk*, 'at'. These recorded forms may have come from very old Ngarrindjeri usage, yet early records do not include them. While Kurna speakers still controlled the land in those places, the names which belonged there must have taken Kurna forms: e.g. *Witu-wattVngga* and *Wita-wattVngga*.¹⁰ Or the Kurna names for these places might have been quite different.

The etymology is far more convincing in Kurna than in Ngarrindjeri. *Wita* is Kurna for 'peppermint gum tree'; *wattingga* is a well-attested Kurna word meaning 'in the midst of'. The combination makes complete sense, 'in the midst of peppermint gums'. By contrast, in Ngarrindjeri we have *wati* ('tail') and *warti* ('firestick' or 'the planet Venus'), while *wita* is unknown in the language; and little or no sense can be made of these in any combination.

As a clincher, a linguistically identical name, recorded from Kurna people in 1837 as "*Weta weringa*", and from Ngarrindjeri people in the 1930s as "*Witawatang*", is found 60 km north of Rapid Head, at Seacliff Park. In that case it has been analysed beyond reasonable doubt as Kurna *Wita-wattingga* (New Spelling *Wita-wartingga*) and its association with peppermint gumtree country is demonstrated.¹¹

⁸ In Tindale's 1936 publication, 'eŋ' (with an ordinary *e*) is almost certainly a misprint for the original 'aŋ' of the primary records. It is likely that when he came to publish again in 1987, he re-read this 'e' and excused it by guessing that 50 years earlier he might have really meant to write a schwa, which looks similar. On his place-name card 652/1 'Wita`watəŋ, "aŋ" has been altered to "əŋ". Cp. ə on card 652/2 'Witawatəŋ', and on the late maps 'Summary of Kurna' AA 338/16/8, and 'County Hindmarsh' AA 338/24/121.

⁹ Tindale also gave a very similar Ngarrindjeri name "*Wituwatangk*" for what he called 'Brighton' (see PNS 2/22 Wituwattingga [Brighton]). He also gave it with "*wita*" instead of "*witu*". A cryptic note appended at the end of some songs by Milerum asserts a contrast in spelling and location for two versions of the *same* name: "*Wita`wataŋ (Rapid Head) /`Witawa`tarŋk (Brighton)*" (Tindale, 'Songs by Milerum recorded 9 Nov 1937', SE of SA journal Vol.2, AA338/1/33/2: 254). Although elsewhere he adopted the spelling 'witu-' instead of 'wita-' for 'Brighton', in this 1937 record the two names are identical, distinguished only by stress patterns and by a difference in the spelling of the suffix. However, both of these differences are linguistically meaningless. Here, probably in a slip of the memory, he puts an alleged interdental 't' in '*wataŋ*' instead of '*wita*' as on his Yankalilla map. It is extremely unlikely that these subtleties originated from Milerum or Karlowan, except maybe different stress patterns in their pronunciations. In any case, Tindale eventually suppressed both the '*wita*-' spelling for Brighton (almost; it crept into his 1987 essay on p.1) and the interdental in '*wataŋ*' (see also my document 'BACKGROUND2_Wita&Witu.pdf'). We can ignore the interdental too; if it was not simply a mistake by Tindale, it was a Ngarrindjeri adaptation.

¹⁰ 'V' here represents an unknown vowel. In Ngarrindjeri the Locative suffix *-angk* usually replaces the root word's final vowel, which we must therefore guess or deduce; but in Kurna the corresponding Locative *-ngga* always retains the last vowel of the root word.

¹¹ See PNS 2/21 Wituwattingga (Seacliff Park). This location was still seen as part of 'Brighton' when Tindale was interviewing his informants in the 1930s.

2. Though the name has a simple interpretation, **ITS MYTHICAL ASSOCIATIONS** are complicated to understand, even though they were recorded in words which are few and simple.

Most of the complications arise from Tindale's working habits. His original records are often brief and ambiguous notes on maps, often already incorporating interpretation in them, and often with no clear indication of their source. He later transferred these fragments to index cards and publications, often adding more interpretation, and then continued to use the latter as sources, without (it seems) checking them against the originals for errors. 'Witawatang' is a case in point.

2a. THE PRIMARY SOURCES:

In February 1934 Tindale heard the 'Story of Tjelbruke' for the first time in a long session while camping near Tilley Swamp on the Coorong with Milerum (Clarence Long). The first sentence of his notes reads, "*Tjelbruke His place at Rapid Bay by Point*":¹² i.e. the hero had a coastal campsite next to Rapid Head on his own country.

A name for Tjelbruke's camp there, "*Tankulrawun*", is given in an uncredited footnote at the end of the story; but for the name attributed to the 'Point' itself – Rapid Head, the high bluff at the western end of the Bay – we have to look further.

Tindale's two primary records of Witawatang both incorporate a tiny incident from the story of Tjirbuki – or are there two incidents?

In the first and probably earliest – recorded in about 1935 – Karlowan says that "*witawatar*" is a

*place where Tjirbuke emerged from forest with dead sister's son's body.*¹³

This 'forest' incident happens in the general vicinity of Rapid Head and presumably in the last stages of the coastal journey south. Karlowan was the only informant who told how the grieving hero created successive beach springs from his tears during the final southward journey as he carried his nephew's smoke-dried corpse down the coast from Kingston Park.¹⁴ To deserve a

¹² Milerum 1934, 'Story of Tjelbruke', in Tindale SE of SA journal Vol.2, SA Museum AA338/1/33/2: 44.

¹³ Tindale, 'Kangaroo Island Pastoral Plan', AA 338/16/13. The annotation is credited "*KAL*", which is presumably an abbreviation for 'Kaloan' or the like, an early spelling of the name which Tindale later standardized as 'Karlowan'. This note is directed to a faint and illegible earlier one which is in the vicinity of Rapid Head.

¹⁴ Milerum's version of the story does have a southward journey with the corpse, but it diverges from Karlowan's: (1) it is occupied largely with payback. (2) It is not a direct one-way journey south; Tjelbruke detours north at one point, and finally carries the body *inland* to a cave in the highest part of the range (see PNS 5.04/01 Warabari).

place-name attached to it, and a specific independent mention, this must be a significant moment in the story.

But it is not mentioned again in any of the later records or publications about Tjirbuki, including those to which Karlowan contributed.

A second incident (or perhaps it is the same one?) was recorded from Milerum, possibly in 1937, and attached (in a smaller script) to the name “*Wita`watan`*”,

*where Tjilbruke came out.*¹⁵

This note is attached to Section 1507, the site of what is now the limestone quarry and jetty within Rapid Bay at its western end; this is at the beginning of the cliffs but a kilometre from the point of the Head itself.¹⁶

But it is extremely ambiguous. ‘Came out’ *from* what, and *to* what? – from a forest? (as in Karlowan) – from a cave? (as in all versions of the story; Milerum’s 1934 version mentions at least three of them, Karlowan’s a couple more) – from his mother’s womb, or out of the ground? (Karlowan’s Tjirbuki “*was born (started)*” somewhere in the high ranges at one of the cave sites).¹⁷

Nor is it clear whether Milerum also contributed the name, or whether it was transferred here from Karlowan’s earlier record.

2b. CHRONOLOGY OF TINDALE’S USES OF THESE SOURCES:

Over the next 50 years Tindale made a number of uses of these two ‘came-out’ notes, sometimes inconsistent and all debatable. They are worth pursuing in order to get back then to what Karlowan and Milerum themselves may have meant, individually and perhaps differently.

¹⁵ Tindale annotated map Hundred of Yankalilla, SA Museum AA 338/24/101. The note in small script is credited “*Mil.*”. The date 1937 is debatable. A third and fainter note reads “*lit. ‘out of the `wita forest’*”, followed by a tiny illegible note which (according to the Museum’s catalogue) dates the ‘Tjilbruke’ note at “*9 Nov 1937*”. This was the date of a recording session during which Tindale wrote the note about “*Wita`watan`*” and “*Witawa`taryk`*” (see footnote above); but this is not necessarily the date of ‘came out’, but more likely a cross-reference about the name. The etymology of *wita* here is inaccurate. No doubt it is Tindale’s: he admitted that Milerum did not usually “*dissect*” names (Tindale Ramindjeri vocabulary card ‘wita’, in AA 338/7/1/17; this card also includes the information that “*Milerum learned names during walks to Adelaide to receive blankets*”, which supports the likelihood that Milerum may have given the name ‘Witawatang’).

¹⁶ At this date Tindale gives an apparently precise location of Witawatang as Section 1507 within the bay (Tindale [1930s], Yankalilla Hundred map AA 338/24/101; and later transferred onto Kurna card 652/2). Much later he gives it as Section 31, right at Rapid Head (Ramindjeri vocabulary card ‘wita’; Tindale (after 1968), County Hindmarsh map AA 338/24/121). From this discrepancy we understand that he had not been told anything more specific than ‘Rapid Head’, and over the years he continued trying to deduce or guess a more precise location. As with language, so with locations: Tindale was inclined to set down details which look precise and authoritative, but often are only armchair guesses.

¹⁷ See PNS 5.03/04 Wataraparringga. For Karlowan’s caves see PNS 7.01/06 Konggaratingga (Blowhole Beach).

First let us note that Karlowan's incident – in which Tjirbuki carries the body of his nephew as he emerges from a forest at Witawatang near Rapid Head – is never mentioned again in any publication.¹⁸ Tindale retains the name and the *wita* forest from the Yankalilla map (where they are secondary records), and maybe simply forgets the Kangaroo Island map where the name and incident were probably recorded at the same time. In his quest for the one 'correct' version, he apparently deems the incident too hard to harmonize with the other material and discards it – but does not entirely forget it, as echoes of it ring out faintly from time to time, combined with echoes of Milerum's 'came out'.

In 1935 Karlowan gave Tindale a more extended version of the legend. The earliest source I have been able to find for this account is a manuscript draft from shortly before publication, entitled "*The story of Tji:rbuki (Tjilbruke, Tjelbruke, Tj'erbruke) from Karlowan and notes from Milerum, published in 1936*".¹⁹ The relevant passage reads

*In the summer he went down to Rapid Bay near `Wita`wataŋ (Rapid Head) where his track came out on to the coast.*²⁰

Tindale published this account in a nearly identical version in 1936 as "*Story of [Tji:rbuki], a legend of the people of Rapid Bay*".²¹ Here the same passage reads thus:

*In the summer he went down to Rapid Bay near [`Wita`wataŋ] (Rapid Head), where his 'track' (i.e. his hunting territory) extended to the coast.*²²

This trivial change of phrasing obscures its origin as a quotation of Milerum's 'came out'. The sentence is a credible interpretation. Here it is given at the beginning of the story when describing part of Tjirbuki's lawful hunting territory or 'track'. There was a journey at this stage, but not one that seems important to the story: Tjirbuki merely 'went down to Rapid Bay near `Wita`wataŋ'. Perhaps at this early date we can trust Tindale's memory of what Milerum had actually said. But

¹⁸ After the original map there is only one known explicit reference to this incident: the place-name card '`Wita`wataŋ'. This paraphrases the map – "*In the Kurna story of the man Tjirbruki it was here that he emerged from the forest of eucalyptus trees*" – but (unaccountably) cites only his own two published essays, neither of which mentions it! Clearly his real interest here was in the name and the *wita* forest, and this card was written after his essay had already been published and it was too late to include the incident (Tindale, Kurna place-name card [652/2]).

¹⁹ Found in Tindale folder 'Notes on the Kurna', AA 338/1/35: 79-85. Typically, the essay is composite effort to present a single 'correct' form, and even in this draft it is not made clear which bits come from Milerum rather than Karlowan, e.g. the spellings 'Tjilbruke' and 'Tjelbruke'.

²⁰ *ibid.* p.79; my emphasis.

²¹ Tindale 1936, in Tindale and Mountford 1936, 'Results of the Excavation of Kongarati Cave', *Records of SA Museum* Vol. 5(4): 500-1.

²² *ibid.* p.500; my emphasis.

note that along with this interpretation he omits Karlowan's 'forest' incident entirely; the 1936 essay does not refer again to Rapid Bay.

Five decades then passed, and the informants were long dead, before Tindale re-visited the story in the well-known longer essay published in 1987. Though this uses much of Milerum's material from 1934 and Karlowan's from 1936, it becomes in part a new and independent version of the story, because many of Tindale's own interpretations, extrapolations and other unrelated work are embedded in it – beginning with the title: *“The Wanderings of Tjirbruki: a tale of the Kurna people of Adelaide”*.²³

Here Tindale seems to use both Karlowan's 'forest' and Milerum's 'came out' in new ways.

The “[wita] (peppermint gum tree) forested hills” are announced in the introduction as an inland part of the Southern Kurna people's *pangkara*, which also runs “along the shore of Rapid Bay”. Witawatang is “one of their summer camping places”.²⁴ But there is no phrase 'came out' or 'extended to'.

Tjirbruki meets his nephew Kulultuwi cooking an emu somewhere vaguely in “the forest, far inland from his Witawatang camp at Rapid Head”. Later, travelling north along the range from Cape Jervis, he arrives at “the place near where he had seen Kulultuwi last”. Here now he

“knew in his heart that nangari [his nephew] was dead. He saw where the body had been, and where people had made a smoke fire. They had made a... drying rack... On the third day they had, as was customary, covered the body with red ochre... They had carried the bier towards Adelaide. Having made these discoveries Tjirbruki said, ‘I have only one spear properly fixed. I am off!’ He left the place in the wita (peppermint gum forest) and went towards... Port Elliot

and other places east of the range, seeking more spears for his payback.²⁵ This 'leaving' seems to be an echo of Karlowan's 'emerged from the forest' or (more likely) the 'came out' and its added interpretation on the Yankalilla map. But Tjirbruki here is not carrying the corpse on a journey (as on the KI map), nor is he leaving or arriving at Rapid Head where (according to Milerum in the 1930s) Tjilbruke 'came out'.

²³ Tindale 1987, 'The Wanderings of Tjirbruki', *Records of SA Museum* 20: 5-13. In the title the name uses an invented spelling which combines “Tjir-” from Karlowan and “-bruki” from Milerum; and the story is now presented as belonging to the people of Adelaide, rather than Rapid Bay as in 1936. \ -----

²⁴ Tindale 1987: 5a, cp. 11a. There is no historical credibility in Tindale's distinction here between *pangkara* ('hunting territory') and *ruwe* 'lands' (the former is a Kurna word, the latter Ngarrindjeri; see Amery 2000, *Kurna Dreaming Stories*, Report to Kurna Aboriginal Community & Heritage Association: 4-5).

²⁵ Tindale 1987: 7b-8a, my emphasis.

We cannot be sure whether or not Tindale in 1987 is accurately interpreting this part of Milerum's original tale from 50 years earlier, because the original notes are vague about the details. The 1934 journal says that Tjelbruke, coming back from the Cape after an initial search for his nephew,

*knew [Kulultuwi] was killed, followed track up. On hill looked – saw body. Made white smoke, everybody came. Made bier, carried him to camp. Make big camp Tj said. Made drying rack for smoking body. Two three days time smothered his body red ochre and dried it. Tjel. Said I'm off, get spear fixed properly. Went down to Pt Elliot.*²⁶

At this point Milerum is not saying that Tjelbruke is in a forest, let alone a *wita* forest, though he is in the hills and we might assume that they were scrubby. 'Everybody' carries the corpse to a 'big camp' at an unspecified location (possibly in the hills, possibly towards or even in Adelaide). There it is Tjelbruke himself who oversees the first stages of the smoking, before setting off alone for the south coast on the third day.²⁷

Perhaps we might give Tindale the benefit of doubt, that the fresh details in 1987 were things he knew from his "supplementary discussions" with Milerum and his own "personal recollections".²⁸ Perhaps in 1987 he may have been right in deducing or remembering that Milerum's Tjelbruke came out of a *wita* forest at this particular moment; that this was southward and inland in the hills; and that the body had already gone north without him. But if so, then the old Yankalilla map location of 'came out' – Rapid Head – is wrong, and some of the details recorded in 1934 are wrong or misleading. And in any case this 1987 interpretation of 'came out' contradicts his own *pangkara* interpretation in 1936. Tindale-1987 is on shaky ground at this point.

2c. BERNDT:

Around 1940 RM Berndt received from Karlowan a brief account of Tjirbuki, and it has been published as 'Becoming *Ngatji*: Blue Crane'. The full Ngarrindjeri text and translation of the narrative are given in an appendix, while Berndt re-tells and discusses it in the main text.²⁹ "*Witawateng: Rapid Head*" occurs in Berndt's own story text and map, but it does not occur in Karlowan's text. Nowhere in Berndt is it mentioned as Tjirbuki's summer camp: a fact which

²⁶ Milerum 1934, p.46, my emphases.

²⁷ The 1934 notes do not say how the body got to the campsite on the Sturt River; Tindale's 1987 account of the brothers carrying it there appears to be his own extrapolation, though a reasonable one. In both of Karlowan's accounts, by contrast, the nephew is killed at the Sturt River camp, and Tjirbuki travels there to find the body, then takes it to Kingston Park to be smoked (Tindale 1936: 500; Berndt & Berndt 1993: 234).

²⁸ Tindale 1987: 5b.

²⁹ Berndt & Berndt 1993, *A World That Was*: 445-7, 233-4.

supports the likelihood that it was Milerum who supplied this detail to Tindale, and that his 'came out' had something to do with it (as in Tindale's 1936 interpretation about Tjirbuki's 'hunting territory').

Karlowan was probably sure of his data, but its transmission has been fraught with ambiguity. We can be certain that he knew and told the name which we are reviewing. But when talking to Berndt, he mentioned it only as a place which Tjirbuki passed by during his last journey south, on his way to a cave which was not the final one. From Carrickalinga,

Picking up his burden again he continued, passing Witawateng (Rapid Head) until he came to a hill with a cave.³⁰ He stayed there for a while, then carried the corpse up into the hills and went down into a cave at Nangarang, near Pariwa (Cape Jervis). He walked into the cave... placed the body, making sure all was well, and left it. He went further on down into the cave...

This cave at Nangarang was the last one, the end of Tjirbuki's grieving pilgrimage. But where was the mysterious missing 'forest' incident?

We will take this up again after a digression into landscape.

3. THE PLACE, THE TREES, and WITA:

Here we enter upon the botany and local history of tree species, in which I have no expertise whatever. Everything I say on such matters might need to be revised by those with more scientific and local knowledge. But perhaps I can lay out some groundwork.

Tindale asserted that there were "[wita] (peppermint gum tree) forested hills" in the "inland" vicinity of Rapid Bay.³¹ While it is quite likely that this was his own armchair speculation based only on the word *wita*, in this case he could be right.

If the peppermints were inland and not at the Head itself, Wita-wattingga's actual location could be significantly different from the place recorded, if it is taken literally.

This is often so with European records of Aboriginal place-names. We can allow that Karlowan's 'Rapid Head' was an approximation, guiding his listeners by a nearby landmark whose English name he knew (or perhaps it was the listeners who suggested the name). After all, this country

³⁰ This cave is otherwise unrecorded in the myth. Was it the 'Salt Creek Cave' which is still listed on the website of the SA Land Services, "exact location to be determined, positioned very approximately in the vicinity [sic] of Salt Creek only"? (see <http://maps.sa.gov.au/plb/>). This is only about one km south of the probable location of Nangarang.

³¹ Tindale 1987: 6a.

was still quite remote for town dwellers in the 1930s, and he did not know it as well his own country from Raukkan to Murray Bridge. 'Rapid Head' would suffice to indicate any place a few kilometres away but unfamiliar to most.

What are or were 'peppermint gums', and where were they found?

Several species of gumtree were called 'peppermint' by the early settlers. Following the botany of his time, Tindale assumed that "*peppermint gum*" or "*peppermint tree*" (as *wita* was glossed in the early records) meant Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*).³² However, they could also be Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) or Mallee Box, *Eucalyptus porosa*.³³

Microcarpa was the dominant species in Adelaide's original Black Forest, and prefers wetter conditions (19-25 inches of annual rainfall).³⁴ *Odorata* and *Microcarpa* have very dark bark. *Porosa* was once found in the other *Wita-wattingga* at Seacliff Park, and has lighter-coloured bark. Probably *Odorata* and *Microcarpa* once grew around Rapid Bay, whose annual rainfall is 22-29 inches;³⁵ but the soils would discourage large specimens. *Odorata* and *Porosa* in particular are tolerant of limestone. The other *Wita-wattingga* at Seacliff Park had peppermint gums on limestone country quarried by the Adelaide-Brighton Cement Company.³⁶ Rapid Head is also limestone country, quarried first by BHP and more recently by the same ABC Company.

It is unproven but possible that *wita* might have been used by the Kurna as the name of all three species, just as they were all called 'peppermint gum' by the settlers. Probably *Wita-wattingga* could be applied generically to any country which featured *wita* notably in its landscape.

Local knowledge has it that 'peppermints' did grow in the wider neighbourhood of Rapid Head. A local chronicler writes of an area 4 to 6 km south of Rapid Head, around Yohoe (Stockyard) Creek, Salt Cliffs Station (originally called Yohoe) on its southern bank, and Starfish Hill 2 km further south:

³² Tindale relied on the botany of his era, citing "*Behr ex Schldl*" and "*Eichler 1965*" (Tindale, two Kurna vocabulary cards "wita", in AA 338/7/1/12).

³³ This botanical discussion owes much to conversations with Darrell Kraehenbuehl in 2010; also his book D Kraehenbuehl 1996, *Pre-European Vegetation of Adelaide*, Nature Conservation Society of SA; and CD Boomsma 1972, *Native Trees of South Australia*, SA Woods and Forests Dept Bulletin No. 19. Both *Microcarpa* and *Porosa* were often mistaken for *Odorata* by earlier observers.

³⁴ See CD Boomsma 1972, *Native Trees of South Australia*, Woods and Forests Dept Bulletin No. 19: 140, 148.

³⁵ 550-750 mm, according to <http://www.atlas.sa.gov.au/go/resources/environments-of-south-australia/3/2/1/mt-rapid-environmental-association-3-2-1> (3/7/2010).

³⁶ See PNS 2/21 for an account of the species and ecology around Seacliff Park.

*Until the regular burning of the bush to increase stock feed this grazing land was an open forest of peppermints and stringybarks with an undergrowth of native grasses, herbs and small shrubs.*³⁷

Is this claim supported by early accounts and images of the landscape?

In 1836 Colonel Light made the following observation during his first visit to Rapid Bay, in which he took an immediate and keen interest:

*The country is not thickly wooded, like Kangaroo Island. Gum trees seem most numerous; they are generally small, and the bark of a very deep colour.*³⁸

Were they small specimens of *Microcarpa* and/or *Odorata*?

Several paintings and sketches from the 1840s show trees scattered lightly in 'parklike' grassland or as open woodland over the hill slopes of Rapid Head and its immediate vicinity.

In March 1844 George French Angas titled one of his watercolours as "*View from between Rapid Bay & Jones's valley*".³⁹ It faces north from somewhere near Mt Rapid, and has Mt Lofty in the distance; its foreground shows open woodland but (according to Kraehenbuehl) no peppermint gums.⁴⁰ Nor do they occur in another watercolour from that visit, "*Yattagolinga, near Cape Jervis*".⁴¹

As we have seen, *Wita-wattingga* was said to be at the coastal end of the hunting territory of Tjirbuki and his clan, near their summer camp at Rapid Bay. Angas painted this camp looking west with Rapid Head in the middle distance; there are patches of open woodland on it but not large enough to distinguish the species.⁴²

³⁷ Shirley Mulcahy 1992, *Southern Fleurieu Historic Walks: Tjirbruke Country*, Somerton Park, the author: 33, cp. 25. Here it is not made clear whether the "peppermints" were Peppermint Box, Grey Box or Mallee Box. For tree species see below, and my file BACKGROUND1_Trees.pdf.

³⁸ W Light letter to Colonial Commissioners 15 Sep 1836, in Capper 1837, *South Australia: extracts from the Official Dispatches of Colonel Light...*, H Capper: 8.

³⁹ 'Jones's Valley' was Stockyard (Yohoe) Creek, where Second Valley pioneer landowners Henry and Frederick Jones pounded their stock. Angas's view was therefore taken from somewhere near Mt Rapid.

⁴⁰ GF Angas 1844, 'Mt Lofty from Rapid Bay', 0.618, Art Gallery of SA; Darrell Kraehenbuehl, p.c. 13/5/10.

⁴¹ Angas 1844, 'Yattagolinga, near Cape Jervis', AGSA 0.627; cp. Angas 1847, *SA Illustrated*, Plate 49.

⁴² Angas 1844, 'Rapid Bay, March 1844', AGSA, on permanent loan from Nat Trust SA, L78N2; cp. Angas 1847, *SA Illustrated*, Plate 39. See also PNS 5.04.01/06 Tankulawun.

Other views of Rapid Bay were painted by survey artist James Henderson in 1843.⁴³

However, I do not know of any very early pictures of the immediate hinterland.

Perhaps the peppermints were sufficiently rare in the southern Fleurieu that a 'forest' of them was a notable landmark for travellers. I refer this part of the discussion to the specialists.

4. TRACKS NORTH AND SOUTH:

Where might Tjirbuki have been walking when he 'emerged from the forest' in the neighbourhood of Rapid Head?

Little is known directly about Aboriginal travel routes around Rapid Bay, but a certain amount can be deduced as probable from very early map records of tracks.

To move around the very hilly terrain here, Aboriginal people probably used ridges and steep cliff tracks in preference to valleys. A route northward from Rapid Bay is marked "*native track*" on maps from the first surveys in 1840. It climbs eastward from the beach, passing behind the northern point of the Bay, veers inland, and turns back down the gully of a tiny creek, to arrive about ½ km from the mouth of the Parananacooka River at Second Valley, a total distance of about 3 km.⁴⁴

There can be little doubt that they also had well-chosen foot tracks in the opposite direction, heading south towards Cape Jervis; but evidence of these is even harder to find. One of Goyder's sketch maps of 1855-6 may show a late trace of the part of a "*Ridge track*" on Section 2 as it crosses what he calls "*Range Road*" (now Nowhere Else Road) just south of its intersection (then) with "*Road to Yohoe*" (a northeastern continuation of today's Yohoe Road).⁴⁵ This is the narrowest part of the ridge, and somewhere hereabout on the western side a traveller would ford the Yohoe (Stockyard) Creek. For someone on foot this is a shorter and lower alternative to the much higher ridges now followed by the Rapid Bay Road and today's Main South Road.

If they were heading inland, this route could probably take them more directly to the areas of original scrub which still survive on sections 1 and 1461 between Yohoe Creek and Nowhere Else

⁴³ Henderson's Rapid Bay watercolours from Frome's surveying expedition in 1843 include B2434/38 and /41 (SLSA): <http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+2434/38>, <http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+2434/41> [15/7/15]).

⁴⁴ TA Macpherson 1840, 'Plan of 13 sections in the country adjoining Rapid Bay', Plan 6/16; W Smith 1840, 'Plan of sections, in Districts F & D near Rapid Bay', Plan 6/16A, GNU.

⁴⁵ Goyder, Field Book 265, GNU: 147. The old settler tracks approaching this point on the ridge from both sides can still be seen on a GoogleEarth image.

Creek (though these remnants are now threatened by development); and further up Yohoe Creek to the deep spring-fed waterhole on Yohoe Road at Delamere.⁴⁶

But of particular interest to this essay is a route – hypothetical but possible – which would connect Rapid Head with both the ‘peppermint’ country (about 5 km away) and the cave destination of Kulultuwi’s body (about 3 km further). Travelling south from the Yohoe Ck ford, Tjirbuki might continue up the ridge past the Yoho (Salt Cliffs) homestead into the locally-remembered country of ‘peppermints’. At some point in this stretch of two km or so, he could turn west down one of the ridges running northwest, and approach the steep descent to the coast at Nangarang (which is at or near the mouth of New Yohoe Creek).⁴⁷

5. TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE TJIRBUKI INCIDENT AT WITA-WATTINGGA:

Was this the track on which Tjirbuki “*emerged from forest with dead sister’s son’s body*”?

It is clear from the early pictures and accounts that the thickly-wooded range gave way (even this far south) to a coastal fringe of natural grasslands and/or fire-managed ‘parklands’. Aboriginal fire management had created a striking difference in vegetation cover between the southern Fleurieu and land on nearby Kangaroo Island which was otherwise similar.⁴⁸

At many or most points along the lower western ridges of the range (including the stretch of ‘peppermints’) one could turn west and ‘emerge from the forest’ into these grassy parks, leading to coastal shrublands and heaths.

This ‘emerging’ was regarded by Karlowan as important enough in the story of Tjirbuki to rate an independent mention with a place-name attached to identify the site. But on this southward journey with the corpse, he mentions only two places after Rapid Bay: Cape Jervis and Nangarang.

Tjirbuki went “*all the way to Cape Jervis*”. We are not told why – though Uncle Lewis O’Brien believes that it was to show the body to the spirits on *Karta* (Kangaroo Island), “*the land where spirits dwell... for his spirit to go there*”.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See PNS 5.04.02/03 Yalawalangga Putna.

⁴⁷ New Yohoe Creek mouth is about 1.5 km southwest of the mouth of Yohoe (Stockyard) Creek. Tindale’s map of the Hundred of Yankalilla has a note describing a route to the cave (he calls it “*Yanawing*”) from Section 178 on Salt Cliffs property, via Section 60, down a gully to the shore, and north along the foreshore to the mouth of New Yohoe Creek (see Tindale map AA 338/24/101).

⁴⁸ See Bill Gammage 2012, ‘The Adelaide District in 1836’, in R Foster and P Sendziuk, *Turning Points: Chapters in South Australian History*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press: 7-9.

⁴⁹ Kauwanu Lewis O’Brien 2013, ‘Tjilbruke, the great hunter and firemaker’ (unpublished MS). Kangaroo Island is not visible from the northwestern side of the range.

From there he “*returned northwards along the cliffs*”⁵⁰ – and here is where the elusive incident probably fits, in a manner something like this:

Still carrying his nephew’s body, he travelled along a ridge through a forest (which may well have been a distinctive area dominated by *wita*). Before him, northward on the far side of a valley, rose the steep gullies and ridges of Mt Rapid, the high summit of Rapid Head. But he knew the moment had come: he was near the final destination of Kulultuwi’s remains. So instead of going up he turned west, “*emerged from the forest*”, and “*went down*” across the fringe of windswept grassland, down the precipitous ridges and gullies to the tiny secluded beach at Nangarang, where he “*came to [the]... cave... carried the body in, placed it on the platform, and left it*”⁵¹.

This scenario is more likely than an earlier ‘emerging’ on the way south from Rapid Bay, at a moment with no known significance in the story.

It is of course only a theory, and there is still a snag in it. If Tjirbuki was already heading for Nangarang when he turned back from Cape Jervis, why did he detour to the vicinity of Salt Cliffs Station rather than take a shorter route down the big north-south ridge at Sappers Road, where the main line of wind turbines now stands just north of the flats at the Cape? This ridge would take him almost straight to the coastal descent on Section 60. Perhaps the *wita* extended further south, to Sappers Road (but if so, what becomes of the location identifier ‘Rapid Head’?). Or perhaps a regular northward route lay along the Starfish Hill ridge, and was more convenient for Tjirbuki to use until the final turnoff. More investigation may provide a firmer explanation, or perhaps we may never know.

6. FINAL SUMMARY OF THE NAME:

Our considered interpretation of *Wita-wattingga* makes good ecological sense, even though Karlowan who volunteered the name probably regarded it as ‘just a name’ and did not know that in Kurna language it meant ‘in the midst of peppermint gums’.⁵²

⁵⁰ This part of the story is told only by Karlowan. Tindale’s published text reads “*along the foreshore below the cliffs*” (my emphasis). But this is an error unaccountably introduced by Tindale. The draft had said “*northwards along the cliff*” (Tindale folder, ‘Notes on the Kurna’, AA 338/1/35: 85; my emphasis). North of Morgan’s Beach at the Cape, continuous travel ‘along the foreshore’ is impossible, with precipitous high cliffs plunging straight into the sea and negotiable beaches only in small separate coves. According to Milerum’s account of the land there, the hero would have to walk along the clifftops and reach the foreshore near the cave via the only possible descent at Watbardok (see PNS 5.04.02/01 Yanawing, and 5.04.02/02 Watbardok). Obviously we have to take ‘along the cliffs’ as another approximation. At the very least periodic inland detours would certainly be necessary, and it is much more likely that Karlowan imagined him using a known track.

⁵¹ Tindale 1936: 501.

⁵² Karlowan knew very little Kurna language, and made a number of impossible Ngarrindjeri folk etymologies for Kurna place-names when Tindale asked him about them (see e.g. PNS 4.03.02/04 Tartatyilla).

The case is therefore strong that this is an original Kurna name which was used for this place. In a Ngarrindjeri adaptation it was known to Karlowan’s Yaraldi family in the generations after the local Kurna speakers were dispersed, and possibly before that as well.

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References to background documents

For more on ‘peppermint gum’ species and on the word *wita* in Tindale, see my research files ‘BACKGROUND1_Trees.pdf’ and ‘BACKGROUND2_Wita&Witu.pdf’.

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End of Summary