

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 5.3/03

WANWALILLA

(last edited: 17/5/2013)

Abstract

Wanwalilla is the Kurna name recorded in 1842 for a reach of the Yankalilla River on sections 1612-1616 at Torrens Vale, along Torrens Vale Road from the end of Dairy Flat Road to the intersection of Parawa and Stone Roads.

Its meaning is unknown, apart from the Kurna suffix *-illa* 'at'.

Coordinates	-35.514553° Latitude, 138.38542° Longitude.
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Language Information

Meaning	'at <i>Wanwa</i> lV'
Etymology	<i>Wanwa</i> lV [<i>Wanwala</i> or <i>Wanwali</i> or <i>Wanwalu</i> : meaning unknown] + <i>-illa</i> 'at'
Notes	
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kurna'.
KWP Former Spelling	Wanwalilla
KWP New Spelling 2010	Wanwalilla
Phonemic Spelling	/waNwaLila/
Pronunciation	" <u>Wan</u> -wa-lilla":
Pronunciation tips	Stress the first syllable; secondary stress on 3 rd syllable; every 'a' as in Maori 'haka'.

Main source evidence

Date	1842
Original source text	" Wanwalilla R. " [along sections 11616-1612 on upper reach of "Yankalyilla R." (which is named downstream)].
Reference	W Wishart 1842, 'Plan showing the property of the South Australian Company on the Yankalyilla and Myponga, District D, and Wanwalillah , District F', map C 801, State Library of SA.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna survey guides; surveyors

Discussion: GATEWAY TO THE RANGE:

THE PLACE:

We do not have the notebooks from the first surveys of this area (the 'Yankalilla' surveys in Districts D and F, led by NL Kentish and James Poole). This is a pity, because we know they were hiring Aboriginal guides on equal pay¹ who must be the source of the place-names which then appeared on their maps and plans. These guides almost certainly signed up in Adelaide, and were therefore speakers of Kurna language.

The only known source for the name Wanwalilla is a State Library photocopy of a very rare map drawn up for the SA Company in 1842.² In the body of the plan the name is applied to an upper reach at Torrens Vale of the creek which we know as Yankalilla River. But in the title "*Wanwalillah*" is generalized as a locality equivalent to "*Yankalyilla*" and Myponga, in the usual way adopted by the surveyors everywhere. The nearby name "*Ingalilla R.*", applied here to a small stretch of Waterfall Creek 4 km west, is similarly generalized onto a quite large area in other maps from the same surveys.³

The reach marked 'Wanwalilla R.' is on sections 1616 to 1612, extending along the flat on Torrens Vale Road by the southern foothills of Bald Hills, from the end of Dairy Flat Road upstream to the intersection of Parawa and Stone Roads.

We have here an instance of Aboriginal ways of seeing and naming watercourses. Our European system insists on defining 'the one main watercourse' from source to mouth and giving it one 'proper' name: a perennial headache for those responsible for public names. So by 1842 we have "*Yankalyilla R.*" marked downstream: even though in 1836 Light's "*Yankalilla*" (Finniss's "*Yankallyilla*") was a site at the mouth on Lady Bay, and even by them not originally attached to the river.⁴ But from this map we know one of the other names out of the many that certainly would have identified sites along the whole length of the river and its tributaries.

To the Kurna and their Ramindjeri relatives *Wanwalilla* was a place of its own, just as *Ingalilla* and *Yernkalyilla* were. Its location was strategic for travel across the range by any of the few

¹ Register 10/8/1839: 6a.

² W Wishart 1842, 'Plan showing the property of the South Australian Company on the Yankalyilla and Myponga, District D, and Wanwalillah, District F', map C 801, SLSA.

³ See PNS 5.3/02.

⁴ See PNS 5.2.1/02.

tolerable southern alternatives. Travellers from the Yankalilla River to the west, Salt Creek to the northwest, or Bungala River to the north could camp at Wanwalilla before continuing up the Yankalilla headwaters in the Stone Rd valley. From here they could cross the watershed either eastward (descending into either Back Valley or the valley of the Inman) or southward (into Willow Creek or along the ridge of Mt Robinson Rd).⁵

Country as far inland as *Wanwalilla*, near Mt Robinson at the top of the range, off the main routes and almost as close to Encounter Bay as to Normanville, was no doubt regarded as borderland and used only intermittently by any groups. There must have been Ramindjeri and Ngarrindjeri names in the same area and often for the same sites. A few of these survived in the memories of Milerum and Karlowan, and were recorded by Tindale in the 1930s.⁶

The guard soon changed at Wanwalilla, and new names flagged a new regime. JB Hack was one of the first to buy property here, though complaining that *"it might as well have been in Van Diemen's Land, it is so inaccessible"*.⁷ Well before the 1842 map was drawn up he had established, and soon abandoned, a *"cattle station for fattening and breeding"* for his dairy farm at Echunga Springs.⁸ The flat where Hack serviced his dairy soon became known as the 'Dairy Flat', and this became its new name.⁹ In 1860 a subdivision on the adjacent section 1602 was dubbed 'Torrens Vale', commemorating either Colonel Robert Torrens who had presided over SA's disastrous early financial system but never set foot in Australia, or his son Sir Robert Richard Torrens who had recently simplified the system of land title and would soon return to England. In 1908 this became the official name of the district.¹⁰ So much for Governor Gawler's official desire to preserve native names.

⁵ See Roy Williams 1986/1991, *To Find A Way*, Yankalilla and District Historical Society: 293. Cp. AH Lush 1971, *The Inman Valley Story*, Ambrose Press, Victor Harbor: 27; cp. track marked on GNU Plan 12/126. Though it is conjectural that these were Aboriginal routes, there can be little doubt that many or most of these early settler tracks were based on foot tracks which were shown to the surveyors by Aboriginal guides.

⁶ See PNS 5.3/04 Wataraparringga, 5.3/05 'Lepuldawi', and 5.3/08 Tuttokauwingga.

⁷ Quoted in Roy Williams 1986 / 1991: 96.

⁸ JB Hack, 'A Chequered Career', No. II, *Register* 23/4/1884: 6c; JB Hack, 'Early Settlement in SA', No. V, *Observer* 16/8/1884: 43d.

⁹ Along with Hay Flat, this area was lush with grass. In late November 1850 'Old Colonist' journeyed from Wilkinson's homestead (now 'Coomooloo') on section 380 west of the Bald Hills watershed, across country to *"Dairy Flat"*. He recorded: *"In this district of the 'bald hills of Yankalilla' cultivation is everywhere progressing... We passed a vast number of gullies, & through grass flats, with good pasture, the grass looking in many places quite green from the sheltered position of the flats, & being close & full at the bottom, though rather coarse... After a traverse of about five miles... we came to Dairy Flat... formerly a dairy farm and the establishment of Mr JB Hack, more recently of Mr Field, but now abandoned as to the original purpose, and occupied by the blacksmith"* ('Old Colonist' 1851 in Yelland (ed.) 1981, *Colonists, Copper and Corn* (2nd ed): 33.

¹⁰ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Torrens_\(economist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Torrens_(economist)); and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Torrens (17/5/13); GH Manning 1990, *Manning's Place Names of SA*: 91, 312.

THE WORD:

The form of 'Wanwalillah' is standard Kurna for a place-name whose root word has three syllables, using the appropriate locative suffix *-illa* rather than *-ngga* as for two-syllable roots. What we are given therefore indicates a root *Wanwal-* plus an unknown vowel, omitted when attaching the suffix. Since no known Kurna or Ngarrindjeri morphemes fit this, we have no idea of its meaning, if any.

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End of Summary

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