



The writing of this essay was funded as part of The Kaurna Project 2017-8 (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) 4.02/06

NURLUNGKA

(last edited: 4.6.2018)

SEE ALSO PNS 4.02/04 Ngangkiparingga.

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This essay has not been peer-reviewed or culturally endorsed in detail.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, 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: Aboriginal people, archaeologists, geographers, ecologists and historians.

Chester Schultz, [date].

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.02/06

NURLUNGKA

(last edited: 4.6.2018)

SEE ALSO PNS 4.02/04 Ngangkiparingga.

Abstract

The name first recorded as 'Noolunga' (later re-spelled in other ways, such as 'Noarlunga' which became standard) was derived from the Kurna word *nurlungga* (KWP New Spelling *nurlungka*). We infer that the first surveyors of the district in 1839 heard it from their Aboriginal guides applying it to the 'horseshoe' loop of the Onkaparinga River on Sections 70 and 71 at what is now Old Noarlunga. The word means 'at the corner or bend [of a river]'.

However, it was not a place-name, probably not even a generic one, but merely a description of the place. This alleged place-name does not occur at all in the Aboriginal vocabularies of the Protectors. The site was known to Kurna-speaking Aboriginal people, and to the German missionary linguists (apart from one early misconception in 1840), only as *Ngangkiparingga*, 'woman's river place' (see PNS 4.02/04). Its essential public features were not the 'bend' but the ford, which controlled movement northward and southward on the plains; and its true name referred not to a 'bend' but to stories or business about women.

Other folk and 'expert' etymologies have included 'fishing place', 'hill place' and 'steep place'; but none of these have any linguistic or historical credibility *as meanings*. Each of them is based on true observations about the *place*, but not on credible etymology of the *word*. Some are based on Teichelmann & Schürmann's early error "Ngurlongga", attempting to match this to the Ramindjeri word *ngurli* ('hill'). But it is extremely unlikely that any Aborigines at first contact would have used a hybrid word with a Ramindjeri root and a Kurna Locative suffix. In any case, Teichelmann later corrected "Ngurlo-ngga" to "Nurlungga" (beginning with a normal 'n'. N.B. second vowel: in Kurna language *o* and *u* are not distinguished from each other).

Coordinates	Lat. -35.182480, Long. 138.501470	[as for gazetted Noarlunga Suburb]
--------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------------------



Language Information

<i>Meaning</i>	'at the river bend or corner'
<i>Etymology</i>	<i>nurlu</i> 'corner or bend of a river' + <i>ngka</i> 'at, place of'
<i>Notes</i>	Teichelmann (MS 1857) rejected the idea that this is a place-name. The sounds <i>g</i> and <i>k</i> are not distinguished in Aboriginal languages; they mean the same thing, even though Teichelmann & Schürmann used both. In KWP's New Spelling system (2010), the decision was made to use only <i>k</i> as normal phonetic practice, to simplify learning of the language in future. However, as a concession to the familiarity of Teichelmann & Schürmann's Locative spelling <i>ngga</i> , this spelling was retained for place-names only (e.g. <i>Wilangga</i>); while Locatives on Common Nouns are now spelled <i>ngka</i> (e.g. <i>wardlingka</i> 'in the hut', <i>wauwangka</i> 'at the beach'). Hence <i>Ngangkiparingga</i> has a capital and the Locative is spelled <i>ngga</i> , because that is a genuine place-name; while the original Kaurna word <i>nurlungka</i> is now spelled without a capital and the Locative is spelled <i>ngka</i> , as this is <i>not</i> a place-name.
<i>Language Family</i>	Thura-Yura: 'Kaurna'
<i>KWP Former Spelling</i>	<i>nurlongka</i>
<i>KWP New Spelling 2010</i>	<i>nurlungka</i>
<i>Phonemic Spelling</i>	/nurlungka/
<i>Syllabification</i>	"nu-rlungka"
<i>Pronunciation tips</i>	Stress the first syllable only. Every <i>u</i> as in 'put'. The 'ur' is <u>not</u> as in English 'hurl'. <i>rl</i> is an <i>r</i> with the tongue curled back (Retroflex: a sound not used in English). <i>ngka</i> as in English 'finger'.

Main source evidence

<i>Date</i>	July 1839
<i>Original source text</i>	- "27 July ..." - <i>[list of expenses]</i> "Going to Noolunga – 0 – 5 – 0 ..." - "Going to Noolunga – 0 – 5 – 0 ..." - "1 August 1839"
<i>Reference</i>	Surveyor Corporal RH Moulton [1839-1842], 'Hundred of Waitpinga', Field Book 95, (no pagination: entries beginning from back of book p.[9, 11-13]), SA Geographical Names Unit, Land Services Group.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kaurna-speaking survey guides, probably during surveys of District C under John McLaren earlier in 1839.



<i>Date</i>	25 April 1840
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>“HORSESHOE SECTION, OR, NO-ORLUNGA TOWNSHIP. This beautiful section will be opened for purchase on and after Wednesday next, in small allotments, as a township under the native name of No-orklunga, agreeably to a plan which may be seen at the Commercial Office of the South Australian Company. No-orklunga will be about eighteen miles distant from Adelaide, on the high road to Wilunga [sic] and Encounter Bay, almost surrounded by the Onkaparinga River (which is there a deep flowing stream), and must form the chief depot for that district for the supply of the numerous settlers with provisions, and for the sale of cattle, sheep, and agricultural produce. Access to the river is secured throughout the township, as a road along the bank has been reserved by his Excellency the Resident Commissioner, and reserves have been made for a church, a school, public markets, a cemetery, &c; By order of the Manager, WILLIAM GILES.”</p>
<i>Reference</i>	<p><i>South Australian Register</i> 25/4/1840: 4a, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27441366/2049755.</p>
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna-speaking survey guides, probably during surveys of District C under John McLaren in 1839.

<i>Date</i>	1840
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>- “<i>nurlo</i> curvature; corner” - “NAMES OF PLACES AND RIVERS... Ngangkiparri, the Onkaparinga River. Ngurlo-ngga - the winding of the Onkaparinga, where the road to Encounter Bay crosses it.”</p>
<i>Reference</i>	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840, <i>Outlines of a Grammar, Vocabulary and Phraseology of the Aboriginal Language...</i> : 29, 75.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kadlitpinna, Mullawirraburka, Ityamaitpinna, etc, at Adelaide Native Location 1838-40

<i>Date</i>	1840
<i>Original source text</i>	“At Noarlunga , or the Horse-shoe, in this district there is an inn and hotel, stockyard, &c.; likewise a general store...”
<i>Reference</i>	‘Statement... from Official Returns for 1840’, in ‘Papers Relative to SA’: 121, <i>BPP Australia</i> 7.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

<i>Date</i>	1842
<i>Original source text</i>	- “ Noorlunga ” [<i>at ‘horseshoe loop’ of “Onkaparinga River”</i>] - “Inns... To Encounter Bay Sladdens Tapleys, Andersons, Nooralunga , Willunga.”
<i>Reference</i>	Burslem 1843, ‘Outline sketch of the settled portions of the colony 1842; Adelaide 1843; lithographed by FH Burslem’, C 1018/1 (State Library of SA).
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	“Sketches in the Survey Office” [Adelaide] and “EC Frome, Aug ^t 5 th 1842” (see map C 809, SLSA).

<i>Date</i>	April 1844
<i>Original source text</i>	<p>“The Onkaparinga (an approximation to the native name —the Missionaries would spell it Ngangkiparringga)++ is the largest river to the South of Adelaide... As this river passes through a very hilly country it affords some fine landscape scenery, the grouping of the hills being occasionally very grotesque. The portion of it in District "C" up the river from the Horse-Shoe can only be regarded as a continuous ravine, in some parts of which the sides are so precipitous as to render the river unavailable. It is this steepness of the banks of the river that concentrates the traffic of the Southern Districts at the Township of Noarlunga.# ...</p> <p>++ <i>Ngangki</i>, female; <i>Parri</i>, river; and river, <i>ngga</i> on or upon. Properly names of places should be written without the termination, thus— <i>Ngangkiparri</i>.</p> <p># This is another corruption of the native name Nurlo-ngga, from Nurlo, a curvature or elbow, and <i>ngga</i>, on or upon”.</p> <p>The tide flows up to the Horse-shoe, so that except when there is a set of the fresh down the river the water is salt...</p> <p>Noarlunga is the regular Adelaide Cockney’s jaunt so that almost everybody knows it, though some muster courage to ‘bush’ it as far as Willunga. The road, previously to the bridge being erected over the river, was up Constitution Hill,— a hill that bullocks like to go down better than up. No tourist, however, should leave the Onkaparinga without mounting it. Let him make it a walk before breakfast, the view will amply compensate him for the time it takes... The Bush, Sir, the Bush is the place for health...”</p>
<i>Reference</i>	‘L.P.’ [Louis Piesse], ‘Descriptive Tour Through Part of District "C."’, <i>Observer</i> 13/4/1844: 7a-b, http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/18834087 .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840; probably Teichelmann personal communication to Piesse 1839-44; perhaps also Kurna-speaking guides during first surveys of District C in 1839.

Date	1857
Original source text	" <i>nurlo</i> – corner or turn of a river, from which the Engl. have made Noarlunga i.e. Nurlungga , on the bent [<i>sic</i>] of the River <i>Ngangki</i> (female = lady) <i>Ngangkiparri</i> the lady river."
Reference	CG Teichelmann 1857, MS Dictionary of the Adelaide dialect, South African Public Library.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kadlitpinna, Mullawirraburka, Ityamaitpinna, etc, 1838-45

Date	[1840s] / 1893
Original source text	"On-ka-paringa (eagle's home), No-orklunga (place of fish). "
Reference	"One of the earliest residents of McLaren Vale" [Faith Lockwood, nee Hewett], in 'A Native' [EH Hallack] 1893, 'Aboriginal Nomenclature', <i>Evening Journal</i> (Adelaide) 23/9/1893: 4c, http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/198433414/22405986 .
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kaurna-speaking people in 1840s at CT Hewett's Oxenberry Farm, McLaren Vale

Date	n.d. [1980s]
Original source text	" Durlenga <i>[in v faint pencil]</i> Needs study. Noarlunga on Onkaparinga River. Noarlunga Barker c 1840, Observer 13 April 1844 gives as Nurlo-ngga - nurlo. Tindales interpretation 'hill place'. Cockburn 1984:160 'fishing place'."
Reference	NB Tindale Kaurna Place-name card [578], AA 338/7/1/12, SA Museum.
Informants credited	Rodney Cockburn (ed. Stewart Cockburn) 1984, <i>What's In a Name? Nomenclature of SA</i> (Adelaide, Ferguson Publishers); 'L.P.' [Piesse] 1844.
Informants uncredited	Spelling "Durlenga": probably based on <i>ngurle</i> 'hill' (Meyer 1843, Ramindjeri language); 'Barker c 1840' source unknown.

Date	2006
Original source text	"Professor Tindale said that it is derived from nurlenga – the name applied by Aborigines to the steep approach to the 'native crossing near section 80'..."
Reference	GH Manning 2006, <i>Manning's Place Names of South Australia: From Aaron Creek to Zion Hill</i> , Gould Books, Modbury: 309.
Informants credited	NB Tindale (presumably personal communication to Manning in 1980s)
Informants uncredited	



Discussion: 'NOARLUNGA' and *NURLUNGKA*: AROUND THE BEND:

1. THE WORD:

Christian Gottlieb Teichmann was a German missionary linguist who spent seven years speaking with Aboriginal people around Adelaide in their own Kaurna language. He eventually produced a manuscript Dictionary which crystallized his views in a much more deeply-considered form than the early book published by him and his colleague Schürmann after only 18 months in the country.¹ We must allow his final interpretation of 'Noarlunga' to be definitive. An entry in his 1857 dictionary says:

nurlo – corner or turn of a river, from which the Engl. have made Noarlunga i.e. Nurlungga, on the bent [sic] of the River Ngangkki (female = lady) Ngangkiparri the lady river.²

So *nurlungga* (*nurlungka* in New Spelling)³ is a word meaning 'at the bend [of a river]'. Note that Teichmann gives it a capital letter only in deference to common settler usage, while rejecting its validity as a place-name: it is only 'the English', not the Aborigines, who have 'made' this into a name 'Noarlunga', taken from the common word *nurlo*.

It is worth noting here three linguistic points:

(1) The phonetic spelling 'url' does not give us 'ur' as in English 'hurl'. It represents the sound *u* (as in 'put', not as in 'but'), followed by a Retroflex *r* (written as 'rl', and pronounced as an *r* with the tongue curled back: a sound never used in English). We will see below how this affected some of the recorded spellings.

(2) The stress is on the first syllable, *nurlungka*, not on the second as in English 'Noar-lunga'. This means that the second *u*-vowel is unstressed, and therefore easily mis-heard by someone who does not know the language.

(3) Both of the *u*-sounds would normally be written by a lay colonist as 'oo' – if he heard them clearly. In English the default interpretation of an unstressed vowel is either the neutral vowel ə, or the sound *a* (as in Maori 'haka') – which unfortunately is usually written by English-speaking lay people as 'u' (as in 'but', lung', etc), not as a phonetic *u* (as in German 'Carl Jung').⁴ We will see below that in fact *none* of the lay settlers heard the second vowel correctly; they all wrote '-lunga',

¹ Teichmann & Schürmann 1840, *Outlines of a Grammar, Vocabulary and Phraseology of the Aboriginal Language of South Australia*.

² Teichmann MS Dictionary 1857.

³ See Language Information (above) for an explanation of KWP's decision about the Locative spellings *ngga* and *ngka*, which are pronounced the same and are semantically identical.

⁴ As yet another complication, in Kaurna language the sounds *o* and *u* are not distinguished, so that Teichmann's "*nurlo*" could just as well be written *nurlu*, and is written so in "*Nurlungga*".

which represents the incorrect syllables *-langga*. We may even doubt that most of them ever heard an Aboriginal person pronounce the word.

In history on the ground, some early settler – almost certainly one of the first surveyors of the surrounding District C in 1839 under John McLaren – had asked a question or heard a reference to the well-known ‘horseshoe’ loop of the Onkaparinga River, or perhaps a survey camp there, and mistaken a mere description of its location (‘at the bend’) for a proper name of the site.

But this site had a quite different name which is very well attested by many observers, including Teichelmann, Schürmann and their fellow linguists from Dresden, Meyer and Klose. All of the latter mention *Ngangki-paringga*, the ‘woman’s river place’ at the ford by the entrance to the Onkaparinga Gorge. In all their extant publications, diaries and letters, not one of them ever refers to the place or the area as *Nurlungga*, but only as “Ngangkiparri” (with minor variations in spelling, and with or without the optional Locative *ngga*).⁵ Teichelmann in particular visited Ngangkiparingga quite often in the mid-1840s. If there had been a genuine site there named *Nurlungga*, it would be strange that he never mentioned it except to disown the status of its name.

2. HOW THE ALLEGED PLACE-NAME WAS FIRST OBTAINED:

The ford was crucial and unavoidable for all travellers north and south, and it was bound to acquire a place-name immediately as a site reference for the colonists. The real site name *Ngangkiparingga*, having been identified as the name of ‘the river Onkaparinga’, was quickly and incorrectly applied to its whole length, European-style.

The settlers then needed another name for the ford site. The earliest reference I have found to it is in the field notebook of Corporal Moulton, one of the survey officers in the second wave of surveys under EC From and his Royal Sappers and Miners. In July 1839 during his months in the bush of southern Fleurieu Peninsula, he listed some of his expenses incurred while “Going to Adelaide” and “Going to Noolunga”, where the Survey Department’s supply depots were located.⁶ Probably he had heard the name from other surveyors who had set up camp in that strategic spot earlier in 1839 when John McLaren was directing the first surveys of District C, from Happy Valley to Aldinga. They in turn would have heard it from the Aboriginal guides whom they employed.⁷

⁵ See PNS 4.02/04 Ngangkiparingga. Meyer in one of his very early letters referred to “*Ongoparinga*”, thinking that it was “the hill” nearby which “is very steep” (Meyer to Dresden 11/12/1840, in Meyer Correspondence, tr. Cynthia Rathjen and Heidi Kneebone, Adelaide Lutheran Archives). Almost every settler noted how hard it was to get a wagon up this hill on the southeastern side of the ford. But Meyer had only recently arrived in the colony and settled at Encounter Bay, did not know Kurna language at all, and was merely writing down what he heard his settler helpers say.

⁶ RH Moulton, ‘Hundred of Waitpinga’, Field Book 95 [no pagination: 9th to 13th pages reading from back of book], SA Geographical Names Unit (Land Services Group). This field book is officially dated “1842”, but includes material from 1839 in notes which begin at the back of the book.

⁷ “THE NATIVES... Several of them are also employed in the Survey Department at Yankalilla and Aldingha (Aldinga), who receive rations and pay the same as white laborers” (South Australian Register 10/8/1839: 6a, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27440703/2049497>).



3. HOW IT WAS INTERPRETED OVER THE DECADES:

3.1 THE TOWNSHIP:

Only a few months later, in April 1840, the 'Horse-shoe Section' next to the ford was subdivided for the "No-orklunga Township". Whoever created this spelling believed (of course) that the word was a "native name", but he had heard the retroflex *rl* and made some attempt to accommodate it:

*THIS beautiful Section will be open for purchase on and after Wednesday next, in small allotments, as a township, under the native name of No-orklunga, No-orklunga will be about eighteen miles distant from Adelaide, on the high road to Wilunga [sic] and Encounter Bay, almost surrounded by the Onkaparinga River (which is there a deep flowing stream), and must form the chief depot for that district for the supply of the numerous settlers with provisions, and for the sale of cattle, sheep, and agricultural produce.*⁸

In the same year 1840, Teichelmann and Schürmann published it under the heading "Names of Places and Rivers": "Ngurlo-ngga - the winding of the Onkaparinga, where the road to Encounter Bay crosses it".⁹ Probably Schürmann had heard the word during one of his two journeys to Encounter Bay. On the first one in July 1839, when he was travelling on foot with Adelaide youth Wauwitpinna, surveyor McLaren had helped him out at the ford.¹⁰ The spelling was wrong, and Teichelmann explicitly corrected it to "Nurlungga" in his 1857 manuscript. In 1840 Teichelmann had not travelled as far as the Onkaparinga and probably had not heard of this name, though they had both certainly heard of *Ngangkiparri*. Perhaps Schürmann had become confused about the first consonant after hearing Encounter Bay people talk in Ramindjeri of *ngurli*, 'a hill'.¹¹

3.2 TEICHELMANN AND PIESSE 1839-1844:

Louis Piesse was a member of John McLaren's survey team in the first surveys of District C in 1839. In October of that year he wrote to the *Adelaide Guardian* with some opinions about the language of the 'natives' – no doubt those who were then employed on the same survey team¹² – including a wordlist and some place-names: some in the McLaren Vale district but none around the Onkaparinga-Noarlunga.¹³

⁸ *South Australian Register* 25/4/1840: 4a, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27441366/2049755>.

⁹ Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840: 75.

¹⁰ Schürmann diary 24 July 1839 (tr. G Noller), Adelaide Lutheran Archives.

¹¹ e.g. Meyer 1843 'ngurle'. "*Ngurlongga*" is one of the very few mistakes made by the Dresden linguists in distinguishing Velar Nasals (*ng*) from other Nasals which they give as 'n', 'rn' & 'ny'.

¹² See the reference to these Aboriginal survey guides in section 2 of this essay.

¹³ This *Guardian* issue has not survived (as far as I know), but Piesse's letter was re-published in *The South Australian Colonist* Vol.1 No.19, 14 July 1840, p.296 [via <http://www.nla.gov.au/ferg/issn/1461426X.html>].

Teichelmann – very pleased to find somebody showing an all-too-rare interest in the language – wrote a critical but cordial reply on 13th November, which was published in December:¹⁴

Sir.—With great pleasure I read in a late paper the letter of Mr. L. Piesse, in reference to the language of the Aborigines of this Colony, manifesting a lively interest in their language, and endeavouring to acquire the same correctly and grammatically. This gentleman I hope, will not take it amiss, if I venture to give him some hints, through you, of the progress we have made in this language... I beg respectfully to state, to your correspondent, that we claim no superiority, if we have obtained more information than he possesses ; we are daily in contact with the natives, and if he had the same opportunities, we have reason to believe, his knowledge would have been as much, if not more.

It is almost certain that Piesse would have read this and regarded it as an invitation to dialogue about the language. It is certain that he read Teichelmann and Schürmann's publication when it came out in 1840; he would have noted on p.75 the place-names around the ford which he had not obtained in 1839, including "Ngurlo-ngga". And there can be little doubt that this connection was the background of the travelogue which Piesse wrote for a newspaper in 1844.

It contained an accurate quotation of Teichelmann and Schürmann's *Ngangkiparringga*, with an accurate etymology and observation about the optional Locative *ngga*; followed by a description of "the Township of Noarlunga" with this footnote:¹⁵

This is another corruption of the native name *Nurlo-ngga*, from *Nurlo*, a curvature or elbow, and *ngga*, on or upon.

From this we infer that he had probably got in touch with Teichelmann and/or Schürmann¹⁶ at some stage between December 1839 and April 1844, and got the idea about *nurlo*-‘curvature’ and ‘*Nurlo-ngga*’ from them.¹⁷ Perhaps he compared pronunciations with Schürmann from their respective experiences of feet on the ground at the Horseshoe. We have already seen that Teichelmann later confirmed Piesse's etymology explicitly, while rejecting the assumption that it was a ‘native name’.

¹⁴ *Adelaide Chronicle & South Australian Advertiser* 10/12/1839, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/195859487/22337876>. Thanks to Gerhard Ruediger for showing me this reference in 2014.

¹⁵ ‘L.P.’ [Louis Piesse], ‘Descriptive Tour Through Part of District "C."’, *Observer* 13/4/1844: 7a, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/18834087>.

¹⁶ But Schürmann would only have been available for a few months. He left Adelaide in September 1840 to take up his missionary post at Port Lincoln (EA Schurmann 1987, *I'd Rather Dig Potatoes: Clamor Schurmann and the Aborigines of South Australia 1838 – 1853*, Adelaide, Lutheran Publishing House: 110).

¹⁷ In T&S 1840 *nurlo* is likewise glossed as ‘curvature’; and Piesse's layout of “*Nurlo-ngga*” exactly echoes T&S's “*Ngurlo-ngga*”.

4. SPELLINGS AND ETYMOLOGIES, CLERICAL, 'FOLK' AND 'EXPERT':

170 YEARS FROM EARLY MAPS, TO LOCKWOOD 1893, TO TINDALE 1980s, TO MANNING 2010:

The rest of this essay is in one sense unnecessary. I continue with it only in order to identify where confusions have originated, and to rebut them.

4.1 PUBLIC CONFUSIONS 1840-1846:

In the earliest years, incoming pioneer settlers would spell the name as "Nourlunga"¹⁸ and "Noorlunga" (by elimination of the earlier hyphen).¹⁹

By the end of 1840 the spelling which is now standard was beginning to appear in official publications: "At Noarlunga, or the Horse-shoe, in this district there is an inn and hotel, stockyard, &c.; likewise a general store".²⁰ The 'oar' also shows an attempt to allow for the retroflex in *url*.

"Noarlunga", "*No-orlunga*" and "Noorlunga" all appeared during the 1843 census,²¹ but by about 1844 the first of these was a fixture,²² though it could of course be mis-transcribed as "Noralunga".²³ or "Noarlanga".²⁴ In 1846 a settler 'J Wild' could even filch the name "Noorlunga" for his farm at the Reedbeds of the Fulham area.²⁵

We have seen that *nurlungka* has a quite precise and known etymology, 'at the [river] bend'. It is rare for this to happen at first contact. Most early Aboriginal place-names were obtained without a 'dictionary meaning' attached to them, even when it would have been reasonably obvious to students of the language. The only other examples in the Adelaide area were *Ngangkiparri* (as above) and "Yurrēidla" ('two ears', for Mt Lofty and Mt Bonython).²⁶

¹⁸ Colton and Hewitt letter 2 Sep 1840, '2nd Report from the Select Committee on SA: Minutes of Evidence': 45, in *British Parliamentary Papers: Australia* 2.

¹⁹ Maps 'The Maritime Portion of South Australia: from the surveys of Captn. Flinders & of Col. Light', London: Arrowsmith, PRG 1336/5/1 (State Library of SA); and EH Burslem, 'Outline Sketch of the settled portions of the colony 1842', SLSA C1018/1.

²⁰ 'Statement... from Official Returns for 1840', in 'Papers Relative to South Australia': 121, *BPP Australia* 7.

²¹ Cotter *SA Almanac* 1844: 171, 173, 174, 182 and frontispiece map.

²² *South Australia In 1842: by one who lived there nearly four years*, London: JG Hailes: frontispiece map; 'L.P.' 1844.

²³ 'Rough sketch of the Settled portions of the Province of South Australia', map C 809, SLSA.

²⁴ JF Bennett 1843, *Historical and Descriptive Account of South Australia*, London: Smith, Elder & Co: 135.

²⁵ A Murray 1846, *The South Australian Almanack & Town & Country Directory for 1846*: 122.

²⁶ T&S 1840 1:22, 2:75. See PNS 2/02 Yurirdla.

4.1 FAITH LOCKWOOD 1893:

Place-names need not have a dictionary meaning (consider, for example, 'Rome', 'London' and 'Greece'). But in later times many Australians looked for such 'meanings', experts as often as lay enthusiasts.

They read in an old source the words "No-orlunga (place of fish)", in Faith Lockwood's memories of the 1840s, published anonymously in 1893 during the first heyday of newspaper correspondence about Aboriginal names.²⁷ Following their own assumptions, the enthusiasts jumped to the conclusion that this was the *meaning* of the word. In fact Faith Lockwood's phrase was not an etymology of the *word* but a knowledgeable description of the *place* – which was of course a prime fishing spot for both Aborigines and settlers, before development degraded the immediate environment and dammed the water flow of the whole river. The fiction that the name 'Noarlunga' "means 'fishing place'" passed into the endlessly-recycled folklore of the place-name enthusiasts, beginning with the seminal compilation by Rodney Cockburn in 1908.²⁸

4.2 NOEL WEBB 1920s-30s:

Those who dabbled in old records of Kurna language did little better, especially since they had Teichelmann and Schürmann's 1840 mistake to mislead them. Their speculations were all too often presented as facts.

Lawyer and place-names correspondent in Noel Webb in 1921 began with Kurna *ngurlo*, which (he said) "is the accusative case of the demonstrative pronoun 'ngu', and meant 'that'. Ngurlo-unga meant 'that place', or the chief place". By 1936 he had changed his mind to run with 'a curve', probably he had read 'L.P.' 1844 in the meantime.²⁹

4.3 TINDALE AND COOPER 1930s-1980s:

Even the famous ethnologist Norman Tindale, regarded by most as a prime authority on place-names, is unreliable in this case. He knew Teichelmann and Schürmann's published version, and

²⁷ 'A Native' 1893, presenting "one of the earliest residents of Maclaren Vale" [Faith Lockwood nee Hewett], *Evening Journal* (Adelaide) 23/9/1893: 4c, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/198433414/22405986>; and subsequent reprints in the *Register* and *Observer*. Lockwood may have been remembering the early spelling of the town name; or she may have been writing down the word as she had heard it from the lips of Kurna speakers back then.

²⁸ Rodney Cockburn 1908, *Nomenclature of South Australia*, Adelaide, WK Thomas: 97; Alfred N Day 1915, *Names of SA Railway Stations, with their Meanings and Derivations*, [Adelaide: Railway Commissioner's Office]: 21; Horace Talbot, 'The Talbot Book': 110/2 (MS scrapbook held in Geographical Names Unit, SA Land Services Group). Cockburn says that "One of the native vocabularies says that the word is aboriginal for 'fishing place'" (my emphasis); but I doubt that this reflects any extra knowledge on his part, but is merely a regrettably loose reference to 'A Native' 1893 as though it were a 'vocabulary' on a level with Teichelmann & Schürmann.

²⁹ Noel Webb 1921, 'Before the Whites Came', *The Mail*, 14/5/1921: 3e, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/63888955/5314695>; Webb 1936-7, 'The Place Names of the Adelaide Tribe', *City of Adelaide Municipal Year Book 1936-7*: 307.

duly inscribed “Ngurlo-ngga of T&S” alongside the printed ‘Noarlunga’ on his early annotated map.³⁰

But over the subsequent decades he was speculating in several different directions, but as usual his records appear (to the outsider) to be asserting known facts.

In 1949 the SA Museum first published their best-seller *Australian Aboriginal Words*, “which may be employed in naming private homes, institutions, properties... yachts... commercial products... streets... and racehorses”. It was compiled by their staff-member HM Cooper (“Assistant in Ethnology”) with an introduction by his colleague Tindale.³¹ The 1949 entry ‘Noarlunga’ was glossed as “Steep place, place on the curve of the river”.³² ‘Curve of the river’ is an exact quote from Cockburn 1908 – but Cockburn had not given this as a meaning of the Aboriginal word, only as the reason for the English nickname ‘Horseshoe’. ‘Steep place’ was new at that date, and was probably an attempt to accommodate *ngurle* ‘hill’ to the notorious slope by the ford. Cooper may have done this himself in his researches; but most likely he discussed it with Tindale.³³

This is confirmed much later, probably in the early 1980s when Tindale was collating all his information for a huge proposed Gazetteer of Aboriginal place-names. On an index working card he re-spelled it as “Durlengga” (= Ngurlengga’), retaining the initial *ng* but giving the second vowel as ‘e’. Here he notes Cockburn’s citation of ‘fishing place’, and the 1844 *Observer* article (i.e. Plesse) giving “Nurlo-ngga – nurlo’, without following up or even quoting the true etymology given there. His ‘e’ was probably used in honour of Ngarrindjeri *ngurle* (‘hill’) as spelled by Meyer 1843, since the card notes “Tindales interpretation ‘hill place’”. This seems final; but there is a faint pencil note, “Needs study”. In fact ‘hill place’ is impossible: (1) Meyer’s ‘e’ represents the sound *i* (Kurna has no e-sound); and (2) a hybrid of Ramindjeri root with Kurna Locative is extremely unlikely (except to Tindale and sometimes his Ngarrindjeri-speaking informants. Their collaborative records, and Tindale’s later interpretations of them, confuse the two languages many times and in various ways).

But he changed his mind again (or had thought differently shortly before; the chronology is uncertain). On his County Adelaide map, as one of his final summarized place-name items written neatly in red ink, he gave it as “Durlanga” (= ‘Ngurlangga’).³⁴ He gives no justification for the second vowel ‘a’. His ‘a’ (intended as phonetic) must be pronounced like the ‘u’ in ‘but’ and in the English pronunciation of ‘Noarlunga’. He has probably misinterpreted Teichelmann and Schürmann’s ‘o’, which in their system means the sound *o/u* they always represent the sound *a* by a phonetic written *a*. Perhaps at that moment Tindale was falsely equating their spellings with those of untrained settlers, who did often write as ‘o’ what was originally sounded as *a*: e.g. in ‘Myponga’ (*Maitpangga*) and ‘Onkaparinga’ (*Ngangkippingga*).

³⁰ Tindale annotated map ‘Hundred of Noarlunga’, AA 338/24/73, SA Museum.

³¹ The book went through four editions and at least six printings (1949, 1952, 1957, 1962, 1966, 1969), the last three containing 3,000 words.

³² HM Cooper 1949, *Australian Aboriginal Words*, [1st Edition], SA Museum: 19.

³³ The 1948 Foreword to the First Edition acknowledges “some [words] made available by Mr. Norman B. Tindale... from his research manuscripts”.

³⁴ Tindale annotated map ‘County Adelaide’, AA 338/24/107.

4.4. MANNING 1986-2010:

Place-name scholar Geoffrey Manning produced several volumes of his place-name researches between 1986 and 2010. During production of his earlier editions Manning seems to have been in touch personally with Tindale, and certainly treats him as the ultimate authority on Aboriginal names in preference to any other sources.³⁵ He must have spoken to Tindale at what we might call an ‘e+steep’ phase, which otherwise is known only indirectly via Cooper (above). Again the speculation is presented by Tindale as Aboriginal fact:

Prof Tindale said that it is derived from *nurlenga* – the name applied by Aborigines to the steep approach to the ‘native crossing near section 80’.³⁶

Manning dutifully cites all the other historic opinions except the correct one, whose correctness he had no way of identifying.

.....

End of Summary

³⁵ See GH Manning 1990, *Manning's Place Names of South Australia*, Adelaide: the author: 371. There are several items from Tindale in Manning's work which do not appear in any written of Tindale's papers or cards that I have seen.

³⁶ This sentence appeared for the first time (more than 10 years after Tindale's death) in GH Manning 2006, *Manning's Place Names of South Australia: From Aaron Creek to Zion Hill*, Gould Books, Modbury: 309. Manning's spelling “*nurlenga*” may have been taken from Tindale's card “*Durlenga*” in the absence of the author. Manning did not know the symbol η (= ng) and mis-transcribed it a number of times as ‘n’, ‘N’ or even ‘W’. However, the word ‘steep’ and the reference to Section 80 do not occur on that card or anywhere else in Tindale's known glosses of ‘Noarlunga’, so there may have been some personal communication as well – though obviously not enough! Section 80 is a loose identifier. It lies south of the cliffs at the southern side of the ‘horseshoe’ loop, while the ‘steep approach is almost a km away on Sections 61 and 71, northeast and southeast of the ford which is about 300 metres from the entrance to the Gorge.