

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 3/01

TUKURRU-WODLINGGA (Tukuru-wardlingga)

(last edited: 22/3/2013 14/3/2016)

Abstract

Tukurru-wodlingga (*Tukuru-wardlingga* in our New Spelling) is a Kurna name recorded in early 1839 as 'Too-cu-ru-wer-lin-ga', and referring to something on or near the Sturt River at today's Glengowrie, on Section 173.

It was probably not a traditional permanent place-name but a temporary descriptor referring to some kind of European dwelling erected by the first surveyors during 1839: most likely bell tents.

Wodlingga (*wardlingga*) and its variant *worlingga* (*warlingga*) mean 'place of (or at) the wurlie or house'.

Several possible glosses of *tukurru* are possible, but it is not possible to know which (if any) is correct:

Tukurru could be an otherwise unrecorded Kurna word (meaning unknown).

Or it could be a compound word contracted from

(a) *tuk-* for either *tuku* 'small' OR *tuka* 'mud, dirt, mortar';

(b) + *-uru* for either *kuru* 'grass-tree; any vessel, pot, cask' OR *kurdu* the crown of the head; vertex'.

Any possible overall meanings of *tukurru* are thus quite obscure. The name as a whole could signify anything from 'place of the little cask(s) + wurlie(s)' to 'place of little grasstree(s) + wurlie(s)', to meanings derived from unknown vocabulary.

Coordinates	-34.981645° Latitude, 138.53586° Longitude.
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Language Information

Meaning	'place of the <i>tukuru</i> wurlie(s)'.
Etymology	(possibly) (a) <i>tuk-</i> for either <i>tuku</i> 'small' OR <i>tuka</i> 'mud, dirt, mortar'; (b) + <i>-uru</i> for either <i>kuru</i> 'grass-tree; any vessel, pot, cask' OR <i>kurdu</i> the crown of the head; vertex'. (certainly) + <i>wardli</i> = <i>warli</i> 'wurlie, hut, house'; + <i>-ngga</i> 'place, at'.
Notes	Conversational speech would usually contract a long word in which two adjacent syllables begin with the same consonant: e.g. <i>tuku</i> + <i>kuru</i> – much as in recent times the English word 'interpretative' has been contracted to 'interpretive'.
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kurna'.
KWP Former Spelling	Tukurru-wodlingga OR Tukurru-worlingga

<i>KWP New Spelling 2010</i>	Tukuru-wardlingga OR Tukurdu-warlingga OR Tukurdu-wardlingga
<i>Phonemic Spelling</i>	/thukuRuwartlingka/
<i>Syllables</i>	“Tu-ku-ru - wod-ling-ga” or “Tu-ku-ru - wor-ling-ga”.
<i>Pronunciation tips</i>	“Tukuru - wardlingga” or “Tukuru - warlingga”: Stress the 1 st and 4 th syllables; initial ‘t’ pronounced with the tongue tip between the teeth; every ‘u’ as in ‘full’; ‘rdl’ in <i>wardli</i> and ‘rl’ in <i>warli</i> pronounced with tongue curled back (retroflex). The ‘r’ in <i>tukuru</i> might be either alveolar (as in English) or a tapped ‘rd’.

Main source evidence

<i>Date</i>	[1837-9] / 1879
<i>Original source text</i>	“Kooroo, pot or pannikin”. “Tooka, mud”. “Werlingga, at or in a house”.
<i>Reference</i>	Wyatt 1879, ‘Vocabulary’, in <i>Woods Native Tribes of SA</i> .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants 1837-9.

<i>Date</i>	1839
<i>Original source text</i>	“Coo-roo, cask, box or pot”. “Took-cha, mud or clay.”
<i>Reference</i>	William Williams 1839, ‘A Vocabulary...’.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna informants

<i>Date</i>	1839
<i>Original source text</i>	“Too-cu-ru-wer-lin-ga: section 173, district B.”
<i>Reference</i>	Louis Piesse letter 18 Oct 1839, in <i>SA Colonist</i> 1(19), 1840: 296.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Kurna survey guides 1839.

<i>Date</i>	1840
<i>Original source text</i>	“ <i>kurru</i> , grass tree; any vessel, as pot, kettle, etc; <i>kurru yernda</i> a large vessel; pot, etc; <i>kuro, kuroanda</i> , the crown of the head, vertex; <i>kurokarrendi</i> to be ashamed; shy; to blush; <i>kurokarri</i> be ashamed; <i>kurruru</i> circle; <i>toka</i> , mud, dirt, mortar.”
<i>Reference</i>	Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840, <i>Outlines of a Grammar</i> .
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc.

Date	1844
Original source text	“‘kooroo’ was a “fire apparatus... two pieces of grass-stick”.
Reference	WA Cawthorne 1844, ‘Rough Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Natives’, <i>Royal Geographical Society of Australasia: SA 27 (1927): 62.</i>
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna informants including Kadlitpinna, 1842-4.

Date	1857
Original source text	“ <i>kurru</i> the crown of the head, bashfulness, (ambition). Variant: <i>kurro</i> ; <i>kurru karri</i> ; be ashamed; <i>kurru wilta</i> ; shameless, impudent; <i>toku smal [sic]</i> , little; <i>kurroanda</i> ; i.q. <i>kurru</i> , having the shape of, expressed by the termination <i>anda</i> , or <i>nda</i> . <i>kurruyernta</i> ; a globular vessel; <i>moku mokurru</i> globular, round.”
Reference	Teichelmann MS Dictionary 1857.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc.

Discussion: PLACE OF THE *TUKURRU WURLIE*:

In 1839 Louis Piesse was a survey assistant with McLaren’s teams in Districts B and C south of Adelaide. The Aldinga team was employing Kurna men on equal wages,¹ and almost certainly there were others on the teams surveying District B from the Sturt River to the Onkaparinga earlier that year. No doubt these were the men who gave Piesse the collection of place-names, with precise locations, which he included in his letter from the survey camp at *Kurtandilla* on Sellicks Hill.²

THE PLACE:

The site of ‘Too-cu-ru-wer-lin-ga’ is District B, Section 173: at Glengowrie, from Morphett Rd to Buttrose St, with the Sturt River running through its NE corner at the southern part of Fisk Reserve. We have very little particularized information about this area in the first two months of 1839 when the survey team was there. The name was both collected and published during this first survey of the area, before the land was available to be chosen and occupied. The site was several miles

¹ Register 10/8/1839: 6a.

² See PNS 4.04.03/03 ‘Kurtandilla’.

away from the centres of settler activity around Glenelg and Adelaide at that time, and from the travel routes between them. It certainly had no permanent buildings on it; and nothing is shown on the maps released later that year.

James Hawker was employed on the team as fourth officer, and remembered the beginning of the Country Surveys:

In the beginning of December 1838, a large survey camp was formed on the opposite side of the Sturt River, a little to the left of the present bridge crossing the river on the Main South Road just before reaching the foot of Tapley's Hill" [i.e. at the riverside reserve at today's Darlington]; "For a short time we were employed surveying sections where Marion is now situated, then from Glenelg to Brighton... along the coast sandhills and between there and our camp... Quail were very plentiful, as well as parrots."³

It is very likely that 'flying camps' were sent out from here, as they were later from the Onkaparinga base camp.⁴ One of them might well have been at section 173 for a short time, since it was on dry ground south of the Glenelg lagoons and near water in the Sturt River.

THE WORD: 'WER-LIN-GA':

Up to a point it is not very hard to make some sense of 'Too-cu-ru-wer-lin-ga' in the Kurna language. The rhythm (stress pattern) must be "Toocuru- werlinga"; because the pattern 'Toocu- ruwer- llinga' is not allowed (it would have to be 'Toocu- ruwer- lilla' in order to fit the standard Kurna requirement for a three-syllable root word 'ru-wer-li'). Therefore 'wer-lin-ga' stands by itself. In fact it is a familiar variant of the word *wodlingga* (*wodli* 'dwelling' + *-ngga* 'at'), as also heard by Wyatt around the same year: "*werlingga*: at or in a house".⁵ The English word 'wurlie' is derived from the Kurna *wodli* and its variant pronunciation *worli*.

So the name refers to some kind of built shelter or dwelling. We shall return to this later.

'TOO-CU-RU':

'Too-cu-ru' (*Tukuru* or conceivably *Tukaru*) is not known as such, though it could be unrecorded vocabulary.

³ Hawker 1899, *Early Experiences*, 1: 35-6.

⁴ Hawker 1899, 1: 38-9.

⁵ Wyatt [1837-9] / 1879: 177.

It could also be, easily and idiomatically, a contraction of known vocabulary, either *toku-kurru* or *toka-kurru*. In both cases the spelling would be *Tukurru* (the sounds *o* and *u* do not have separate identities in the Kurna sound-system).

Several possible meanings are involved in *tuk-urru*, and we can only speculate about the combination of them.

‘KURRU’:

There are two very similar words in Kurna, both connected with ‘roundness’. They were recorded by Teichelmann and Schürmann in 1840 as *kurru* ‘grasstree; any vessel such as pot’, and *kuro* ‘crown of the head, vertex’. Comparison with similar words in neighbouring related languages suggests that the ‘r’ in *kurru* is like the usual English *r*, while that in *kuro* is a tapped *r* (represented here as *rd*).⁶

So let them now be re-spelled *kuru* and *kurdu* respectively:

1. *Kuru* was glossed twice as all or part of a grasstree. The linguists in 1840 said it was ‘a grasstree’; WA Cawthorne in 1844 thought ‘koo-roo’ was the name of a “fire apparatus... two pieces of grass-stick”.⁷ In all other known references including the linguists, it means some kind of round European artefact, probably named after the grasstree: ‘any vessel, as pot, kettle, etc’,⁸ ‘pot or pannikin’,⁹ ‘cask, box or pot’.¹⁰

2. *Kurdu* was glossed by the linguists twice as ‘the crown of the head’. In 1840 they considered that a variant of this *kurdu* noun was ‘kuroanda’ (*kurduanda*).

3. But there are some ambiguities about the relationship between the two words.

Confusingly, Teichelman in his later Dictionary gives only one word, spelled ‘kurru’; here it means only ‘crown’ and metaphors derived from it; and ‘kurro-anda’ is now an adjective ‘having the shape of *kurru*’. The alternative ‘grasstree-pot’ word and glosses are omitted.

But he also gave a sample sentence in which ‘kurru’ retains the semantic extension ‘cask’ while distinguishing this from ‘Engl. water bucket’ which is given a loan word ‘bukcotti’. We note that the latter is not globular or pot-shaped;¹¹ and this in turn reminds us that he now considers ‘kurruyernta’ to be specifically ‘a globular vessel’, not merely ‘a large pot’ as in 1840.

This leaves us wondering

⁶ Rob Amery, p.c. 21/3/13.

⁷ WA Cawthorne 1844, ‘Rough Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Natives’, *Royal Geographical Society of Australasia: SA 27* (1927): 62.

⁸ A continuation of the same entry in T&S 1840.

⁹ Wyatt [1837-9] ‘koo-roo’.

¹⁰ Williams 1839 ‘coo-roo’.

¹¹ Teichelmann MS 1857, under ‘Purlani’.

- (a) whether both *kuru* and *kurdu* are related to the several other known words referring to 'round' or 'circle';
- (b) whether *kuru* is anything concave like a bowl and down at the bottom like a remnant grasstree stump, while *kurdu* is anything round, convex and up at the top like a head of hair.
- (c) whether one or both of them mean 'completely round', i.e. 'globular'.

Lacking more vocabulary and sentences from the 1840s, we may have to let the distinctions remain unclear.

GRASSTREES AT GLENGOWRIE?

The Sturt River flats were not prime grass-tree country, but plant historian Darrell Kraehenbuehl knew of a grasstree which was surviving at Unley in 1938.¹²

Though the 1840 gloss seems to take *kuru* as the name of the whole plant, Rob Amery points out that, like the Yolngu of Arnhem Land, the Kurna would have no word for 'grasstree' as a whole.¹³ In both societies its importance is signalled by the number of unrelated names for different parts of it, referring to their various uses.¹⁴ At least one item in this grasstree vocabulary hints that the Kurna saw the plant's structure in terms of the human body: the flower stem or 'spear' was *kayamunto*, 'spear belly'.

The *kuru* of a grasstree might possibly be the trunk, whose remnant stump after burning in a bushfire forms a good watertight bowl.¹⁵ But in the light of all the 'pot' and 'globular' glosses, perhaps it could also be a body analogy, signifying the round 'crown' of leaves like a human head and hair.¹⁶

'TU':

We may assume that *tu* does not modify *wodlingga* but *kurru*, the morpheme to which it is attached in the contraction. What then is a *tu-kurru* as a sub-species of *kurru*? *Toku* is 'small'; *toka* is 'mud,

¹² Darrell Kraehenbuehl p.c. 26/3/10.

¹³ Amery p.c. 2010.

¹⁴ See e.g. ASTRU / Aboriginal Community College 1985, *The Kurna Seasonal Trail Excursion: Teacher's Handbook*: 43-4.

¹⁵ Rob Amery, p.c. 21/3/13.

¹⁶ Cawthorne wrote in 1844 that 'koo-roo' was a "fire apparatus... two pieces of grass-stick", which seems to indicate that it referred to the flower stem (WA Cawthorne 1844, 'Rough Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Natives', *Royal Geographical Society of Australasia: SA* 27 (1927): 62). This confirms the application of *kurru* to the grasstree; but in the light of the other more careful linguistic sources, Cawthorne may have mistaken the part to which the word was referring. For fire-making with firesticks made from split and dried grasstree stems, see Meyer 1846, *Manners and Customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay Tribe*: 14; and Tindale miscellaneous paper (n.d.) 'Strike-a-lights, Fire Flints', quoted in PA Clarke 2001, 'Significance of whales', *Records of SA Museum* 34(1): 8, 26.

dirt, clay, mortar'. So *Tukurru* could mean either 'small crown or vessel', or 'mud / earth' + 'crown or vessel'.

It is just possible that if *kurru* refers here to actual living grass-trees, then *tukurru* was the name of a 'small grasstree trunk or crown'; perhaps it was even a name specific to a smaller species (the Tufted Grasstree *Xanthorrea semiplana*, as contrasted with the taller Mt Lofty Grasstree *Xanthorrea quadrangulata*).¹⁷

'TUKURRU' AGAIN:

Tukurru could refer to any mixture of the meanings listed above; or metaphorically for anything that reminded Kurna people of these. It is doubtful that this can now be resolved with any certainty.

WURLIES:

Do we get any hints from its combination with 'wurlie'?

The Kurna people were necessarily experts and connoisseurs in wurlie materials and construction. Their land was rich enough that they had a considerable choice of materials, and a few of their terms for sub-types are known.¹⁸

But what was a *tukurru* wurlie? The term was not noted as vocabulary in any wordlist, so its meaning can only be deduced or conjectured.

If the surveyors were not completely misunderstanding their Kurna informants and 'Too-cu-ru-wer-lin-ga' was really some kind of place-name, the wurlies it referred to are very unlikely to have been traditional Kurna ones. Kurna wurlies did use *toka* in the form of earth for water-proofing; but being temporary and short-lived, they were not likely to be enshrined on the cultural map unless they featured in some mythology there. This is conceivable in the case of *Pilta-wodli*, 'possum wurlie',¹⁹ and perhaps conceivable here as well, though if so we know nothing whatever about it.

On the other hand, European structures were often name-worthy novelties, and could be a useful temporary sign of place – like the *Tinninya-wodli* 'rib wurlie' next to the Native Location (the Iron

¹⁷ See e.g. Ron Allen n.d., <http://www.bing.com/search?q=yacca+grasstree&form=APMCS1> (14/3/13).

¹⁸ *tingkyo wodli* 'bough hut' (Williams 1839 'tin-gue-wer-lie'); *watto worli* 'branch hut' and *tidli worli* 'a hut roofed with the fresh bark of the trees' (Teichelmann MS 1857).

¹⁹ See PNS 2/04.

Stores, in the shape of a Nissen hut); and the *Tamba-wodli* 'plains wurlie' in the West Parklands (the Emigration Square building).²⁰

The only European 'wurlies' on Section 173 at the time must have been those of the surveyors. These were usually tents, and some tents may have struck the Kurna as being *kurru*-shaped.²¹ However, tents in general had been named *turnki wodli* ('cloak or cloth hut') by the same Kurna men from whom Piesse obtained the alleged place-name.²²

The surveyors might sometimes erect other structures which their colleagues a few years later were actually calling 'wurlies'. Edward Snell's and his companions, doing some of the first surveys on Yorke Peninsula in July 1850, started to build themselves 'worleys'. It did not take long for them to become proud of their efforts: after three weeks Snell "shewed the blacks how to build a worley properly!"²³

A surveyor's wurlie might well include some mud; and perhaps *toka* could be any kind of earth used as a building material.²⁴ If the surveyors camped at 173 for long enough to want something more substantial than a tent, was the *tukurru-wodli* a hut which used grasstree leaves as thatch, and mud to seal it? Or was it a hut perceived for some other reason as being 'round on top' or 'like a grass-tree crown'?

There is no other known record of either a *toka wodli* or a *toku wodli* from which to check this.

²⁰ See PNS 2/10.

²¹ SURVEYORS' TENTS: In November of 1839 Hawker's survey colleague Richard Counsel wrote himself a job note:

"A Bell Tent of the *smallest* description to be made for the use of the Govt Bullock Driver at Willonga Also another for the Horse Team" (Counsel, Field Book 99, GNU: [22b]).

We can see them in several sketches of the era; Goyder made a small drawing of one to mark his survey camp at Yohoe Station near Cape Jervis (Goyder, Field Book 265, GNU: 147).

They were very small by comparison with the large marquees of Adelaide; and they were more or less round, perhaps making *kurru* applicable. Surveyors' tents of various sizes can be seen in EC Frome 'McLaren Vale April 24', watercolour c.1840, in R Linn, 1991, *Cradle of Adversity*, Adelaide: Historical Consultants Pty Ltd: 87; in Elder 1984, *William Light's Brief Journal*: 136 'Mr McLaren's party... about 14 miles north of the Para Pass'; and in Elder, 1987, *Art of Wm Light*: 110-1 'View at Yankalillah'.

For early settler tents see D Elder, *Art of Wm Light*: 116-7 'The First Settlement in SA', and E Kwan *Living in SA*, Vol.1: 19, 21.

²² Piesse "*Ton-key Werley: a tent*"; Wyatt "*Tongke, tongke, cloth, clothing, sails of ship; Tongke werle, a tent (cloth house)*".

²³ Tom Griffiths (ed) 1988, *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell*, Angus & Robertson: 126-9, 132-3, 138.

²⁴ The earliest settlers did build primitive 'mud huts' while waiting for their land to be surveyed. According to Wyatt the Kurna called these *parnda wodli*, and *parnda* is 'limestone, lime (Wyatt 1837-9 "*panda werle: a mud hut*"; Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 "*parnda: limestone, lime*"). But *ngarru* meant 'any white substance: white ochre, chalk, lime, pipe-clay', and 'a whitewashed house' (presumably using lime) was *ngarru wodli*. Could white lime be *parnda* as well as *ngarru*? or what kind of mud was an example of *parnda*? *Toka* was the dirt or mud which sticks to your feet, but also 'mortar' which thus appears to be distinguished from *ngarru*. Did *toka* also include the dried & hardened mud of some variety of hut material which was not lime or limestone and not white?

Sometimes no doubt there might be special shelters for provisions. Official survey rations included “a certain amount of spirits, generally rum, but at this time [May 1839], that being unprocurable, a vile substitute called arrack, made from rice”.²⁵ Since *kurru* can be a ‘cask’, it is tempting to speculate that the *tukurru* wurlie may have been the tent or other shelter where ‘small casks’ of rum were kept secure by the storeman. Probably these shelters themselves were ‘small’. If there was one of these on section 173 for a month or two, no doubt its location might well be named and notorious.

But we can’t be sure of any of these interpretations.

If Piesse may have misunderstood a temporary descriptive reference as a permanent place-name, he was not the only one. At first settlement in early 1837 Stephen Hack had thought that ‘Wallinga’ was the name of Adelaide; but this was merely *wodlingga*, ‘place of wurlies’: no doubt the novel clusters of primitive European reed huts at and near ‘Buffalo Row’.²⁶

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End of Summary

²⁵ Hawker 1899, *Early Experiences in SA*: 40-1.

²⁶ See PNS 2/09 ‘Wodlingga’.