

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.3.1/06

‘PIKKARA’

(McLaren Vale)

(last edited: 1/4/2013)

Abstract

As the name of a railway stopping place on the former Willunga line, ‘Pikkara’ was approved by the SA government’s Nomenclature Committee on 10th January 1946.

The name was a mis-transcription of *rikkara*, the word for ‘south’ in the Ngarrindjeri language of the Lower Murray Lakes. Their source was probably Taplin’s *Folklore of the South Australian Aborigines* (1879).

Coordinates	-35.229136° Latitude, 138.556148° Longitude. (estimated from 1:100,000 mapsheet ‘Milang’ No. 6627 1 [1967]).
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Language Information

Meaning	<i>Rikkara</i> means ‘south’.
Etymology	
Notes	‘Pikkara’ was mis-spelt from ‘rikkara’ in Ngarrindjeri language.
Language Family	Yaraldic: Ngarrindjeri’.
KWP Former Spelling	
KWP New Spelling 2010	
Phonemic Spelling	
Pronunciation	
Pronunciation tips	

Main source evidence

Date	1879
Original source text	“South – Rikkara.”
Reference	G Taplin 1879, ‘Vocabulary of the Narrinyeri Language’, in <i>The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines</i> : 138.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	Jan 1946
Original source text	"Rw St DL 5890/40: The following names are suggested for stopping places on the Willunga line:... PIKKARA m^g 'south' ."
Reference	Minutes of 10/1/1946, in Nomenclature Committee Minutes Book, GNU: 106.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	March 1946
Original source text	" SAR 6968/45 . Stopping places on the Willunga line:... No.11, PIKKARA meaning 'south' ". [<i>signed for committee by "AD Smith & RO Segerlind 5/3/46"</i>].
Reference	Nomenclature Committee Minutes as sent to Director of Lands, in Docket DL 5890/40, State Records.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Discussion: K-NAME, TITLE:

Aboriginal words have been all the rage for naming purposes since the 1890s. On the 4th of February 1946 PF Cherry, Secretary of the Office of the Railways Commissioner, sent a letter to the SA Surveyor-General:

*We have a number of un-named level crossing stops on the Willunga line which are at present identified by numbers... 2, 4, 6, 9 and 11.... It is deemed desirable that names should be substituted for numbers and the Railways Commissioner would be glad if the Nomenclature Committee would suggest a suitable name for each of the above stopping places. It is suggested that short aboriginal place names be selected containing few syllables.*¹

The Committee responded with a typewritten Minute to the Director of Lands dated 5th March:

Consideration has been given to the requests of the Railways Commissioner, and the Committee submits the following native names for use in connection therewith:—

... SAR 6968/45. Stopping places on the Willunga line:—

No.2, PATPA meaning 'south wind'.

No.4, YETTO meaning 'good'.

No.6, KORRA meaning 'grass'.

No.9, TUNI meaning 'sand'.

No.11, PIKKARA meaning 'south'.²

¹ SAR 6968/45, in docket DL 5890/40, State Records of SA.

² Enclosure in Docket DL 5890/40, State Records. The information in the typescript is identical with that which appears in the Committee's Minutes Book, with the same internal date but for some reason still under the head of 'Meeting 10.1.46'.

Spellings in this note are identical to those hand-written in the Committee's Minutes Book.³

The committee, a little more familiar than the Commissioner with Aboriginal language sources, had wisely not complied with his request to use existing place-names. At that time they were using plenty of Aboriginal words but rarely making any distinction between different languages or lands. For sources they used most of the readily-available Aboriginal wordlists from all over Australia.

They did not say where they obtained the alleged word 'Pikkara' and its meaning. It is untraceable so far in the given spelling, but their source was almost certainly *rikkara*, the word for 'south' in the Ngarrindjeri language of the Lower Murray Lakes, given in the 'Narrinyeri' wordlist collected by Taplin and published in his *Folklore* (1879). It is easy to misread a capital R as a capital P in bad print or hasty handwriting; and this seems to be what happened to Secretary Smith of the Nomenclature Committee in 1946.

The Committee was made up of busy men who all had other main jobs. During this one interchange three out of five station names were mistranscribed. 'Yetto' was actually 'yatto' (also from Curr), and it was the Committee who mistranscribed it.⁴ They sent off 'Korra' correctly, but it still managed to be gazetted as 'Korro'.⁵ We don't know whether the Committee noticed at the time of publication or regarded the matter as having any importance.

The old line was closed in 1969.⁶ It is now followed by the Coast To Vines Rail Trail, where this and other stations are now commemorated by onsite plaques.

In the language of the Kurna people of the McLaren Vale area, 'south' is *patpa*. Ironically, the Committee at the same meeting chose this word as the name of another station on the same line, away to the north near Hallett Cove;⁷ and managed to make a fourth mistake by translating it incorrectly as 'south wind' (it has nothing to do with 'wind').⁸

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End of Summary

³ Nomenclature Committee Minutes Book: 106.

⁴ See PNS 4.1.2/06 'Yetto'.

⁵ See PNS 4.2.1/07 'Korro'.

⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willunga_railway_line,_Adelaide (16/3/09).

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patpa_railway_station,_Adelaide (1/4/2013).

⁸ Perhaps in haste they took 'southerly', in another of the Committee's standard references, to mean 'a southerly' in the weather sense (Wyatt [1837-9], in JD Woods 1879, *Native Tribes of SA*: 174).