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Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 8/20

'PARA' / 'PERRY' / 'PARRY'

(last edited: 2.3.2016)

SEE ALSO: PNS 8/14 Muna; 8/18 Kadlitia; 8/17 Murlayakki; 8/39 Mitiwarti.

PREFACE:

My analysis of this and other names north of Adelaide is incomplete, and may be clarified or modified by others later from better knowledge of this part of the land, and from sources not yet consulted. In particular, I did not cover these areas when I searched the records left by the first surveyors (i.e. Field Books and maps held in the SA Geographical Names Unit). The Southern Kurna Place Names Project was originally confined to the region from Adelaide southward.

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This essay has not been peer-reviewed or culturally endorsed in detail.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 Kurna, 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 Kurna 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, 21 July 2017.

**Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 8/20****'PARA' / 'PERRY' / 'PARRY'**

(last edited: 2.3.2016)

Abstract

"Parra or Perry" was a word recorded from anonymous 'natives' in mid-1837 by early explorers, one of whom was a man named Crouch, and another probably Stephen Hack. They mistook it for the name of one of the rivers north of Adelaide (probably the Gawler River).

Over the next few years other colonists applied it in a confusing number of different ways to name the North Para and South Para rivers (which join to form the Gawler), and the Little Para River, and the general 'Para district'. It was spelled 'Parra', 'Parry' and 'Para'; the last form became standard early in the 1840s.

However, it is beyond reasonable doubt that the original source 'Parra or Perry' was a mis-hearing or mis-remembering of Kurna *pari*, 'river, creek', the common generic term for any such watercourse: i.e. it was not a place-name at all.

'Para' has of course *become* part of many place-names *in Australian English*.

South Australian colonial folklore after the period of first contact several times mentioned a word or phrase 'Para Para', allegedly Aboriginal in origin and meaning 'big river' or 'Great Para' or 'big water'. But this has no linguistic or historical credibility in Kurna culture.

Coordinates	Latitude -34.595973°, Longitude 138.744997° (nominal centre of 'Para district' at Gawler town: on Section 4, Hd of Nuriootpa)
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Language Information

Meaning	'creek, river'
Etymology	pari
Notes	
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kurna'
KWP Former Spelling	parri
KWP New Spelling 2010	pari
Phonemic Spelling	/pari/
Syllabification	
Pronunciation tips	Stress the first syllable. 'a' as in Maori 'haka'. 'r' as in Australian English 'hurry'.



Main source evidence

Date	2 July 1837
Original source text	"I have not found Polly, but have heard through Crouch from the natives that she is on the Parra, or Perry River , as they call it, to the north..." [Polly was a horse.]
Reference	'Extract of a Letter from Mr Morphett, Adelaide, July 2 nd , 1837', in <i>South Australian Record</i> , Vol.1 No.4, 13 Jan 1838: 31c.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Kurna tracker-guides / explorers from Adelaide: almost certainly Stephen Hack and another colonist (probably Crouch) in the days immediately preceding Morphett's letter.

Date	Dec 1837
Original source text	"Tuesday 12 December... After much trouble we arrived at 10.30 a.m. at the Mete Watte River* when we lunched and remained till 3 p.m. then followed the banks of the river upwards for about three miles to bivouac, our bullocks not being able to go any further... * (This is the most tortuous river I ever saw, called Mette Watte .)" "Saturday 16 December– Started at 5 a.m. and came to Lynedoch Vale to breakfast. At 11 we again started, and arrived at the Para [<i>Para Pass = ford on South Para</i>] at 4 p.m... At 9 p.m. after having turned in, an alarm was given of some natives hovering about, but all was quiet after firing our pieces off..."
Reference	W Light, 'Diary of a Journey to Lynedoch Valley, December 1837', in David Elder (ed) 1984, <i>William Light's Brief Journal and Australian Diaries</i> , Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 132-3.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	?Peramangk informants.

Date	2 March 1838
Original source text	"Friday, March 2—... we passed over the Cowandilla plains... Crossed the river Para , we then directed our course to the eastward... arrived at... Cockatoo Valley..." "... we retraced our former track by Cockatoo Valley, at the head of a rivulet, which we traced through the hills and found it to be the river Para running into the Cowandilla Plains..."
Reference	John Oakden, 'Notes of an Excursion to the Murray', <i>South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register</i> 17/3/1838: 3c-d.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Probably Oakden had heard the name from earlier explorers.



Date	Nov 1838
Original source text	“Friday 23 rd ... we struck upon a fine river, running deep and strong, and containing, we should say, above three times as much water as the Torrens. We named it the Gawler , after his Excellency the Governor... Saturday 24 th ... We therefore re-crossed the Gawler ... Continuing a south-east course we struck the main branch of the Parry river , which resembles the Torrens in size and general character. Proceeding onwards we found the spot where the expedition headed by Colonel Light and Mr Fisher turned back, and shortly afterwards we crossed the south branch of the Parry where we encamped... We did not meet a single native.”
Reference	TB Strangways and S Blunden, ‘Progress Of Discovery – Another Fresh Water River’, in <i>South Australian Gazette And Colonial Register</i> 1/12/1838: 3c.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	9 Jan 1839
Original source text	“Wednesday, 9 January... Handcock and Fisher in company came over the hills and descended into the plains about 6 miles from the Para . At 11.30 we arrived at the river [<i>South Para</i>] and remained until half past 2 p.m.; then rode with McLaren, Finniss and Randal to examine the other branch [<i>North Para</i>]. We found this a more respectable stream having plenty of water... At 5 p.m. we returned to the Para and dined and slept at the old place...”
Reference	Light, ‘Diary of a Journey to Lynedoch Valley, January 1839’, in D Elder (ed) 1984, <i>William Light’s Brief Journal and Australian Diaries</i> , Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 136.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	14 Jan 1839
Original source text	1. ‘Mr McLaren’s party Jany 11 th 1839 about 14 miles north of the Para Pass ’. 2. ‘Deadman’s Tree, Para Pass , 14 January 1839’.
Reference	1. W Light watercolour, Art Gallery of SA, reproduced in Elder (ed) 1984, Plate 5 (p136). 2. W Light pencil sketch, SA Archives, reproduced in Elder (ed) 1984: 134.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	



Date	23 Jan 1839
Original source text	“South Australian Gazette. ... Special Surveys... the district to the northward of Adelaide, known by the name of the Sources of the Great Parra River, recently named the Gawler... ”
Reference	<i>Southern Australian</i> 23/1/1839: 4e.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	Feb 1839
Original source text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘Gawler R’ [<i>along today’s Gawler River</i>]. - ‘The Parra Road as first proposed by Col. Light’ [<i>along an east-west track (approx. today’s Angle Vale Rd), crossing river at Gawler, then continuing just east of North Para to Light Pass</i>]. - ‘Little Parra R’. - ‘Port Gawler’ [<i>survey boundary around river near mouth and over halfway to Gawler</i>]. - ‘Murray Pass’ [<i>along South Para R; survey boundary surrounds junction of rivers</i>]. - ‘Cockatoo Vale’ [<i>tributary of South Para</i>]. - [<i>There is no name marked on either the South Para or the North Para</i>].
Reference	‘Map of Districts North of Adelaide, compiled from the Sketches of W. Light, B.T. Finniss & Co., 1839’, CO700 Public Record Offices, London. Part of it is reproduced in David Elder (ed) 1984, <i>William Light’s Brief Journal and Australian Diaries</i> , Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 31).
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	21 Feb 1839
Original source text	<p>“Early on Saturday morning last [<i>16 Feb 1839</i>], Mr T.B. Strangways, J.P., Mr Nation, myself [<i>George Milner Stephen</i>] and attendant, left Adelaide... We travelled in the same direction for about eight miles, crossing the course of two streamlets, at present dry, until we descended upon the great plain running due north from the Port Adelaide Road for about thirty miles. There we crossed the lower ‘Para River’ [<i>Little Para</i>] which cuts the plain nearly right angles and loses itself in a kind of swamp close to the Port Adelaide creek...</p> <p>After crossing the Lower Para we travelled due north along this plain for about fifteen miles till we reached the Gawler just below the junction of the Upper Para [<i>South Para?</i>] with that fine river. We found it at this point dry; and crossing it, followed its banks to the N E for about three miles, when we came upon some noble pond of water, far larger than any of the pools of the Torrens, and there we encamped for the night [<i>on the North Para</i>]... .. the next morning... we followed the course of the Gawler to the N E for about two miles,...</p> <p>On Monday morning we rode to the junction of the Upper Para with the</p>



	Gawler , about one and a half miles below our camp. Its course from the Gawler bore by compass S.E. [<i>i.e.</i> 'Upper Para' is South Para], while the Gawler [<i>North Para</i>] comes from the N.E.... We travelled along the Gawler, which has a very broad channel and banks from thirty to sixty feet high, running through the SW through the great plain before spoken of, for three miles, throughout which we found no water..."
Reference	George Milner Stephen 21 Feb 1839, 'Discovery of a Splendid Tract at the Mouth of the Gawler River', <i>South Australian Gazette & Colonial Register</i> 28/2/1839: 8a-c.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	16 March 1839
Original source text	"MILNER ESTATE, PORT GAWLER. The Town is situated within a stone's throw of the river Gawler (called by the aborigines the "Great River") ..."
Reference	<i>South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register</i> 16/3/1839: 3b.
Informants credited	'the aborigines'
Informants uncredited	Possibly hearsay from explorers or other colonists; more likely a garbled memory of several current perceptions.

Date	4 May 1839
Original source text	"... a shepherd of Mr. Hallett's had been murdered by the natives near that gentleman's station at the Para River ... The party of police, headed by Mr Inman, the Superintendent, and accompanied by Mr. Williams of the Storekeeper-general's department, and several of the most intelligent natives of our friendly tribes of the immediate neighbourhoods of Adelaide... succeeded in apprehending and bringing into town three natives directly implicated in these affairs. They belong to the small tribe who frequent the Lower Para district , and among them are the natives known as Tam o'Shanter, Tommy, and Bob — perhaps of all others, the most purely savage and the very worst that have occasionally visited the town..."
Reference	'The Natives', <i>SA Gazette & Colonial Register</i> Saturday 4 May 1839: 1.
Informants credited	Henry Inman
Informants uncredited	

Date	[May?] 1839
Original source text	- " Gawler River " [<i>below river junction</i>]. - " North Para River " [<i>on North Para immediately above river junction</i>]. - " South Para River " [<i>on South Para immediately above river junction</i>].
Reference	'Plan of the Special Survey of Gawler containing 4000 acres, 1839', Plan 5/6, SA Geographical Names Unit.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	



Date	12 June 1839
Original source text	"... the advertiser offers for sale at the Murray Pass, on the river Parry, (now the Gawler,) 3 ALLOTMENTS..."
Reference	Robert Tod land sale advertisement 'To Flock Owners', <i>Southern Australian</i> Wednesday 12/6/1839: 1e.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	July 1839
Original source text	" Parra or Gawler R " [along today's Gawler River, crossing the mouth of South Para and a very short way up the North Para].
Reference	William Light, [Plan of Gawler Town], Light, Finniss & Co, 1 July 1839; reproduced in SMEC Urban, April 2013, <i>Gawler Urban Rivers Master Plan</i> : 30 (http://www.gawler.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=641&c=38510 [30/11/15]).
Informants credited	Light, Finniss
Informants uncredited	

Date	[c.1837-8] / 1890s
Original source text	" Para River: ... Pari-nga (Cronk James) ".
Reference	HC Talbot (compiler) n.d., 'The Talbot Book', SA Geographical Names Unit: 152a.
Informants credited	James Cronk (1811-1904), interpreter in Adelaide 1837-8.
Informants uncredited	Kurna informants / Cronk 1837-40 / ex-surveyor CH Harris c.1890s

Date	1840
Original source text	" Mulleakki: the Para River ".
Reference	Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840, 2:75.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc 1838-40.

Date	Nov 1840
Original source text	"For sale, THE first choice in the Special Survey at the South Para... "
Reference	<i>Southern Australian</i> 17/11/1840: 2d.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	



Date	1 March 1841
Original source text	<p>[in 'Reference' list of Surveys]: -</p> <p>"1. GM Stephen Esq^r: Banks of the Gawler or N. Parra R." [<i>'N(orth)'</i> is an error; on map the Milner Survey is marked along Gawler R. from the mouth 2/3 of the way to Gawler.]</p> <p>"2. H Murray & J Reid Esq: Junction of the N. & S. Gawler or Parra R." [on map this is marked the same as Light 1839 map 'Murray Pass' survey.]</p> <p>... "4. J.B. Hack Esq^r: The Para R." [on map marked at <u>Little Para R</u> in hills]</p> <p>... "30. G.A. Anstey Esq^r: On a branch of the R. Parra" [marked on map along today's Tenafeate Ck, a southern tributary of South Para R.]</p> <p>[marked on map]: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Gawler R' [along today's Gawler R.] - 'The Parra Road' [parallel south of 'Gawler R.' (approx. today's Angle Vale Rd); joins 'Gr^t North Road' at junction of Paras, and continues to 'Light Pass'.] - '1 Milner' [Survey at 'Port Gawler']. - 'Parra or Gawler R.' [marked along North Para R around Jacobs Ck]. - 'R. Gawler' [marked along North Para R in 'Flaxman's Valley' east of 'Barrossa Range']. - 'South Parra or Gawler R.' [marked along South Para R past 'Cockatoo Vale']. - 'Lit. Parra R' [marked along Little Para R]
Reference	Map, John Arrowsmith (London) 1/3/1841, 'Part of South Australia to the eastward of the Gulf of St. Vincent: from Lat. 33° to 35° 40', from documents in the Survey Office Adelaide', SLSA zmp 00290313.
Informants credited	"from documents in the Survey Office Adelaide"
Informants uncredited	Map of Districts North of Adelaide, compiled from the Sketches of W. Light, B.T. Finniss & Co., 1839

Date	1857
Original source text	<p>"Mudleakki N. prop. of the great Para." [<i>'N. prop'</i> = 'proper noun', i.e. unique name of something].</p> <p>"parri - From this word the Colonists in former times have derived their little Para, great Para, Onkaparringa, etc. etc. etc."</p>
Reference	Teichelmann unpublished MS Dictionary 1857.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaiitpinna, etc 1838-44.

Date	1867
Original source text	"' Para Para ,' the mansion of the Hon. Walter Duffield, member of the Hon. A. Blyth's Ministry, and Treasurer of South Australia. ' Para Para ' is the native name signifying the confluence of two waters ; for here the North Para and South Para Rivers unite their streams."
Reference	C. N. C., 'Para Para Vineyards And Orangeries', <i>The Bunyip (Gawler)</i> 9/3/1867: 4c.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	



Date	1889
Original source text	“When words are repeated, as in ‘Burra Burra’, ‘ Para Para ’, a comparative meaning is attached to the name, and it becomes Great Burra or Great Para , although in the latter case the Europeans have made the distinction in the Gawler district thus: - Para Para and Little Para. ”
Reference	Edward Stephens jnr. 1889, ‘The Aborigines of Australia’, <i>Journal & Proceedings of Royal Society of NSW</i> 23: 498.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	1908
Original source text	“The late Hon. N. [sic: error for ‘W’] Duffield was anxious to call his house by the native name, but not being able to get it[,] called it Para Para, because it was just below the junction of the two rivers, the North Para and South Para. ”
Reference	‘N.C.’, <i>Register</i> 11/6/1908: 5f.
Informants credited	Walter Duffield (owner of ‘Para Para’ Estate at Gawler from 1851-1882).
Informants uncredited	

Date	1912
Original source text	“But while many native names have been entirely superseded a large number are likely to remain current, such as the stream known as the ‘Para,’ meaning little water, and ‘Para Para’ meaning big water... ”
Reference	[Anon.], <i>Advertiser</i> 20/2/1912: 6g.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	n.d. [c1890-1915]
Original source text	“ ‘para’ or ‘perra’, water running between deep banks ”.
Reference	CH Harris (1846-1915) papers, PRG 1112, Bound Volume: 79 (SLSA).
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	earlier surveyors? and/or old settlers in 1870s

Discussion – ‘PARA’, ‘PARRY’, PROFUSION AND CONFUSION:

‘Para’ has been a headache from the start. Today the law requires that public place-names be uniquely defined and precisely mapped; although with this name the current facts are less than ideal, at least we know what they are. The North Para and South Para Rivers join at Gawler town, and below this junction the stream is called Gawler River, with its estuary at Port Gawler. Further

south there is separate smaller catchment with a main stream called the Little Para River, whose separate estuary is on the Barker Inlet close to that of Dry Creek.

But there was confusion about the names for most of SA's history, and especially the first 50 years. First the name 'Parra or Perry' was obtained in mid-1837 under obscure circumstances; this essay offers a new interpretation of them. We don't know whether its first reporter meant a section of the Para-Gawler or (almost as likely) the Little Para. For about six months it was not visited again by the colonists, and the name referred to an undefined watercourse on the plains not far north of Adelaide. In December Light visited the Gawler area and the South and North Paras, and began to use the name 'Para' or 'Parra' in his records, applying it to the *South* Para in his diaries.¹ Then in November 1838 another ill-defined part of the same catchment (probably on the North Para) was independently named the 'Gawler'. The government lacked precise information, was slow to send out official parties, and made no official pronouncements about the names; but the entrepreneurs were in a hurry, needed names for advertising, and used what was available.

As word went round of the "beautiful country" around "Lynedoch Valley" discovered by Light² and containing many a "splendid tract" with abundant water and kangaroo grass,³ the major buyers pushed hard at the beginning of 1839 to get it all put up for sale. Place-names multiplied in commercial advertisements and (lagging far behind) in the published maps of surveyors. The progress of the latter was badly hampered by their inability to attract labourers and by factional crisis.⁴

In this manic situation the name 'Para' underwent a rabbit-like proliferation. It was applied loosely and inconsistently to different locations; it very quickly acquired various qualifying adjectives meant to distinguish one Para from the others; then these were also often applied inconsistently at different times and by different people.

As usual in the Place Names Project, we ask our fundamental questions: "When, where, how, from whom and by whom was this name first obtained? Does it have any original authority from Kurna informants in the living culture at first contact? Who were they?"

¹ Light's Lynedoch diaries (published in Elder 1984) regularly refer to the South Para as "*the Para*" and give no name for the North Para. His first 'Map of Districts North of Adelaide' (Feb 1839) gives no name to either the South or the North Para, but marks the Gawler River (west of the junction) as such.

² W Light, 'Diary of a Journey to Lynedoch Valley, December 1837', in D Elder (ed) 1984, *William Light's Brief Journal and Australian Diaries*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 132-3. 'Lynedoch Valley' was a tributary of the North Para.

³ See Oakden, 'Notes of an Excursion to the Murray', *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* 17/3/1838: 3.

⁴ Light and his team had defected from the government Survey Department in 1838 to form their own private business Light, Finnis & Co, and his replacement as Surveyor-General (GS Kingston) was both incompetent and unpopular.

ORIGINS:⁵

At the end of June 1837 some Adelaide tribesmen had just returned from travelling south to *Wirramulla* (Encounter Bay) with a young whitefella who was learning to speak a little of their language.⁶ It was probably through him that another “2 natives” at the embryonic colony heard that the newcomers had lost many of the strange big hard-footed animals called ‘bullock’ which pulled their loaded carts.⁷

These two men were likewise well-travelled: they had recently been north and seen some of these creatures up there. Willing to help the ignorant visitors, they told the congenial young fellow about this. A few days later – probably between 28th June and 2nd July – they took him north on a two-day expedition with two of his fellows, almost to the mangroves where *Wonggayerlo* (St Vincent's Gulf)⁸ ends and one turns west into Narungga country, on the way no doubt showing them the campsites and water. In the vicinity of the River Light they tracked down many of the bullocks (perhaps with some help from the man called Tom, who seemed slightly less ignorant about the bush), and helped in driving them back to Adelaide where the owners wanted them to stay. The young fellow's family seemed fairly decent and perhaps rewarded them with food or blankets.⁹

This young language-learner was the 21-year-old Quaker explorer Stephen Hack,¹⁰ brother of the more famous JB Hack. His two white companions were Tom Davies or Davis (the Hack family's stock manager and bullock driver, hired in Launceston),¹¹ and “another on horseback” who was probably a man named Crouch. “I believe no one but myself has yet been so far”, Stephen wrote to his mother three weeks later.¹²

⁵ This account discards previous theories that the Para was ‘discovered’ first by Colonel Light or his survey colleague BT Finniss. The evidence presented here predates Light's first excursion to the Para by six months; and there is no known evidence for an alleged discovery of the rivers Para and Light by Finniss in April 1837 (see Gwenneth Williams quotation in GH Manning 2010, *Place Names of Our Land*: 1381; and the comment on this by D Elder at <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/manning/pn/p/p1.htm#paraR> [1/12/15]; my own File Data for this essay confirms his doubts). Nevertheless I owe thanks to Manning for unearthing the crucial Morphett letter in *SA Record*.

⁶ *Wirramulla* was the Kaurra name for *Ramong* at Encounter Bay (see PNS 7.02/01). See Stephen Hack's account of his journey with Light, Fisher and Morphett in June 1837 (Stephen Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1837, PRG 456/1/18, SLSA). Hack arrived back in Adelaide on 28th June.

⁷ For the lost bullocks and Hack's journeys to look for them, see JB Hack letter 25 July, 1837, *South Australian Record* 1(4), 13/1/1838: 30b; and Stephen Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1837, PRG 456/1/18, SLSA.

⁸ See PNS 7.

⁹ Hack brought back 35 of the government's 60 lost bullocks, an exploit which “*was quite the wonder of the colony*”. On a tip-off from “*the native*” – no doubt one of the previous two – he went again later “*with old Tom alone*”, found more “*in the tiers*” (in or near the Adelaide hills) and brought them in; but it turned out that these belonged to the SA Company (JB Hack letter 25 July 1837).

¹⁰ “14th [Jan 1837] – *Stephen is of age today*” (JB Hack diary, edited by him as ‘Early Settlement in SA’, *Observer* 1884, 12/7/1884: 43d = *Register* 3/7/1884: 6). For Stephen Hack (1816-94) see http://www.durrant.id.au/hack_family_portraits.html [17/11/15]. “*S. is nearly master of the native language, and can make them understand anything: it will be of the greatest service to us in many ways*” (JB Hack letter 25 July, 1837, *South Australian Record* 1(4), 13/1/1838: 30b).

¹¹ The Hacks hired Tom Davies (a labourer from NSW) partly because he was “*a first-rate bushman*” and from their viewpoint “*a first-rate tracker — as good as a native*” (JB Hack, ‘A Chequered Career’ No. 3, *Register* 28/4/1884: 7b).

¹² Stephen Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1837.

Horses were also a notable novelty to the Kurna men, and at that time there were only a small handful of them in Adelaide, mostly owned by the Hacks.¹³ In January when someone else's mare called 'Polly' had broken free and escaped, it had been a significant blow to the colony, which at that time had only one other horse. Excursions had gone out to look for her, including one by CW Stuart to Noarlunga in February.¹⁴

Very likely it was these "2 natives" who, having heard a description of the missing mare, told Crouch they seen her. Where exactly? Probably they said something like 'at that *parri* (river) up north', and described the place for his benefit. Naturally Crouch would have informed the small circle of horse-riding entrepreneurs at once, especially since Hack was enthusing that he had found "every few miles a fine run of water and beautiful plains".

Thus the first record of an alleged place-name came to be written by the Hacks' fellow explorer and land capitalist John Morphett, in a letter dated 2nd July 1837:

*I have not found Polly, but have heard through Crouch from the natives that she is on the Parra, or Perry River, as they call it, to the north.*¹⁵

Was it Crouch or Hack who originally noted this item about a northern river in mid-1837?

Stephen Hack's Kurna language skills were impressive to his brother, who thought him 'nearly master' of it by then. Stephen himself wrote around that time, "I know enough of the language to be able to chatter with them a little".¹⁶ He regularly spelled *Ngangkiparringga* as "Onkeperinga", in which his 'peri-', very similar to 'Perry', represents *parri*.¹⁷ Yet why would Hack have made this elementary error, mistaking a common generic noun for a particular name? In mid-1837, though still in the early stages of learning the language, already in his travels with Kurna-speaking guides he must have crossed and passed a large number of *parri*. It would be strange if he had not quickly become clear about the nature of this word.

¹³ JB Hack, 'A Chequered Career' No. 1, *Register* 22/4/1884 1884: 6a, 6b.

¹⁴ For Stuart's excursion see 'Noarlunga' [CW Stuart] 1875, 'An Adventure With the Natives', *South Australian Advertiser* 28/12/1875: 5-6 (re-told in my PNS 4.02/01 Birranga).

¹⁵ John Morphett letter 2 July 1837, in *South Australian Record* 1(4), 13/1/1838: 31c. Clearly Polly was very mobile, and I have not found whether she was ever recaptured. As this scanty geographical information circulated in the next year or so, the words were also spelled 'Para' and 'Parry'. The explorers Strangways and Blunden used 'Parry' in November 1838 (*South Australian Gazette & Colonial Register* 1/12/1838: 3c). Light in December 1837, Oakden in March 1838, and Light again in January 1839, used 'Para' (see Elder (ed) 1984, and *Register* 17/3/1838: 3c). After 1839, with the Special Surveys and settlement on the 'Para' or 'Parra', 'Perry' and 'Parry' fell out of currency.

¹⁶ Stephen Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1837.

¹⁷ Stephen Hack letters: May 1837, in Henry Watson *A Lecture on SA*, London 1838: 18; S Hack to Maria Hack 20 July 1837, PRG 456/1/18 and 20 July 1838, PRG 456/1/25. Wyatt spelled it similarly, "*perre*" (Wyatt [1837-9] / 1879). In the first syllable both men probably meant a dialect pronunciation of English 'per', close to the Kurna sound *pa*.

Perhaps it was his companion on the trip (probably Crouch) who misunderstood the reference. Perhaps Crouch heard it from 'the natives' in Hack's absence, or while talking about the trip a few days after he returned.

WHAT WAS THE WORD WHICH SOMEBODY HEARD ORIGINALLY FROM KAURNA INFORMANTS?

The only known word in Kaurna language resembling *para* or *bara* is *parra*, 'branch of a tree': an unlikely candidate for an allegedly specific place-name. Of course *Para* could theoretically be a place-name with no known 'meaning', like 'London'. But when we know that the original record included the alternative 'Perry', and that it was recorded soon after as 'Parry', it passes beyond reasonable doubt that 'Para' was a mis-hearing or mis-remembering of *parri* 'river, creek'. The German linguist Teichelmann thought so after many years editing the language records, when he wrote in his manuscript Dictionary of 1857: "*parri*... From this word the Colonists in former times have derived their little Para, great Para, Onkaparringa, etc. etc. etc".¹⁸

James Cronk, who was one of the few interpreters in Adelaide in 1837-8, late in his life remembered the name of the Para River as "Pari-nga".¹⁹ Since this is merely 'river place' (*parri* with the Locative suffix *-ngga*), it confirms at least that Cronk's understanding coincided with Teichelmann's.

It is therefore fairly clear that the Kaurna original of 'Parra or Perry' was not a place-name at all.

If Aboriginal people had a concept of the Gawler-Para River as a dominant feature of the area, it is also most unlikely that they could have referred to it in English style as 'The River'. Their language contains no Definite Article ('the') with which to construct such an idiom; and because there are several rivers in the district, *parri* alone would remain ambiguous except in the immediate vicinity of the Gawler along its 25-km stretch on the plains.

SUBSEQUENT CONFUSIONS OF THE SEVERAL PARA NAMES, 1837-1848:

We do not know which part of the river system Crouch and Hack were seeing or remembering when they obtained 'Parra or Perry'.

¹⁸ Teichelmann 1857, Manuscript Dictionary, from Governor Grey's archives in South Africa. The morpheme *bara* = *para* does occur in neighbouring languages, e.g. Narungga *bara* 'blackwood, myall' and *barra* 'hole', and in the place-name 'Wirrabara' (probably Nukunu); but it does not mean 'river'.

¹⁹ "*Para River... Pari-nga (Cronk James)*". This item was recorded by HC Talbot in the SA Geographical Names Unit's unique scrapbook 'The Talbot Book' (:152a). Talbot must have obtained it from his colleague CH Harris, who was in touch with Cronk in the 1890s (see Amery & Schultz 2007, 'Trail of Discovery'). The Kaurna word 'Paringa' (*parringga* 'river place') has been exported as a place-name many times in SA, including to a town near Renmark, a subdivision at Port Noarlunga, and a homestead in the Southeast (see Manning 2010: 636-7, and search for 'Paringa' at <http://maps.sa.gov.au/plb/>).

In December of that year Light arrived on the Gawler River two or three kilometres below the junction, and there obtained the name “*Mete Watte River*”.²⁰

In March 1838 Strangways and Blunden (both government men) re-named part of it “the Gawler, after his Excellency the Governor” (probably the North Para), while also continuing to refer to “the main branch of the Parry” and “the south branch of the Parry”.²¹ As this shows, it was already necessary to qualify the name in some way, as new sections of the catchment became known. Most records of the next few years follow Light’s maps of 1839 in referring to a combination of our Gawler and North Para as “the Gawler or Parra River”, or sometimes “the Great Para”.²²

Yet at least one travel writer – Daniel Brock, the census man in 1843 – wrote of “the Great or South Para”; and an 1858 plan of Gawler South marked the “South Para or Gawler R”.

The names ‘South Para’ and ‘North Para’ were rationalized by the surveyors on their plans by about May 1839, but not on public maps until 1840.²³

The Special Surveys in early 1839 also included one on the stream further south, which was first labelled “Little Parra R” in a map based on Finniss and Light in February 1839.²⁴

For one writer the Little Para was the ‘Lower Para’, and the South Para was the ‘Upper Para’.²⁵ A few months later ‘Lower Para’ was the lower reaches of the Gawler.²⁶

On the same map in 1841, we find the northern Paras marked more or less coherently, while the list of Special Surveys refers to Milner Stephen’s at the mouth as being on the “Banks of the Gawler or N[orth] Parra R”, and to JB Hack’s (marked on the upper Little Para in the hills) as being

²⁰ See my PNS 8/39 Miti-warti. The name was published in his *Brief Journal* in June 1839. For the location where Light obtained the name “*Mete Watte River*”: after arriving there he “*followed the banks of the river upwards for about three miles to bivouac*”, probably at the ford on the South Para where he would camp several more times (Light’s ‘Diary of a Journey to Lynedoch Valley, December 1837’, Elder (ed) 1984, *Light’s Brief Journal*: 132).

²¹ *South Australian Gazette & Colonial Register* 1/12/1838: 3c. Thanks to Adrian Shackley for helping me to identify the probable locations where the various explorers met the various rivers (even though I differ from him in some details).

²² “*Parra or Gawler R*” on Light 1839, [Plan of Gawler Town], Light, Finniss & Co.; reproduced in SMEC Urban, April 2013, *Gawler Urban Rivers Master Plan*, <http://www.gawler.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=641&c=38510> [30/11/15]; cp. *Southern Australian* 23/1/1839: 4e, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71685042> [30/11/15]; Teichelmann MS 1857 under ‘Mudleakki’.

²³ cp. ‘Plan of the Special Survey of Gawler containing 4000 acres, 1839’, Plan 5/6, GNU (about May 1839); and Bennett *The Royal SA Almanack & General Directory for 1840*: 129; ‘Statement of the Extent & Cultivation... compiled from Official Returns for 1840’ (Papers Relative to the Affairs of SA, *BPP Aust.* 7: 128); Bennett 1841, *SA Almanac*: 126.

²⁴ ‘Map of Districts North of Adelaide, compiled from the Sketches of W. Light, B.T. Finniss & Co., 1839’, CO700 Public Record Offices, London (in David Elder (ed) 1984, *William Light’s Brief Journal and Australian Diaries*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 31). However, the decision to call this river the “*Little Parra*” was probably made by Finniss or the draftsman. Light himself continued to call it “*the first river*” or “*Fisher’s river*” right up to June 1839 (Light ‘Diary of a Journey to Lynedoch Valley, Dec 1837’ and ‘Last Diary’, D Elder 1984: 132, 159, 161).

²⁵ George Milner Stephen (Colonial Sec), ‘Discovery of a splendid tract at the mouth of the Gawler River’, in *South Australian Gazette and Register* 28/2/1839: 8a-c. Stephen clearly uses ‘Lower Para’ for our Little Para. It seems to be for him the opposite of ‘Upper Para’ which is our South Para. For him (as for Light) ‘Gawler River’ includes the North Para.

²⁶ The killers of shepherds in April 1839 were said to come from “*the small tribe who frequent the Lower Para district*”, and included Tam O’Shanter of Port Gawler (*South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* Saturday 4/5/1839: 1; see also my PNS 8/17 Murlayaki).

on “The Para R”. The Murray and Reid Special Survey at Gawler town is at the “Junction of the N. & S. Gawler or Parra R”.²⁷ It is as if the city draftsmen under pressure were throwing in everything every time, under the mistaken impression that this would reduce the confusion!

One record seems to suggest that ‘Great Para’ may have been prompted by an Aboriginal name “the Great River” applying somewhere on “the River Gawler”.²⁸ But this is a low-quality source, an advertisement for land in the proposed town of Port Gawler on the Milner Estate. Apart from viewing the river European-style as ‘the same thing’ here as upstream, it is probably no more than a casual reference to the supposed Aboriginal name ‘Para’, merged with the subsequent uses of that word.

‘PARA PARA’:

To overload our heads even more, in later generations colonial folklore circulated a doubtful word *parapara* or ‘Para Para’. This allegedly Aboriginal and meaning ‘big’ or ‘plenty’.

It was applied by some to the Para river names: Para meant ‘little water’, while Para Para meant ‘big water’ and applied to the ‘Great Para’.²⁹

Sometimes this word was cross-connected with the names of Burra and the Burra Burra Mine of the 1840s: another allegedly Aboriginal word ‘burra-burra’ whose English spelling, after analysis, is linguistically identical to *parapara*. Some authors have claimed that the South Australian ‘Burra-burra’ originated from Hindustani under the British Raj, where ‘burra’ did mean ‘big, important’.³⁰

In 1848 it was briefly applied to a mine which operated for a few years in the hills between the sources of the Little Para and those of the South Para.³¹

In 1889 Edward Stephens, in a paper about his memories of the Adelaide tribe, was telling a scientific conference in NSW that ‘Para Para’ (like ‘Burra Burra’) was “a comparative meaning”, and that “the Europeans have made the distinction in the Gawler district” between “Para Para and

²⁷ Map ‘Part of South Australia to the eastward of the Gulf of St. Vincent’ (London, Arrowsmith 1/3/1841).

²⁸ “MILNER ESTATE: PORT GAWLER... The Town is situated within a stone's throw of the river Gawler (called by the aborigines the ‘Great River’)” (*South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* 16/3/1839: 3b, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/31750472> [30/11/15]).

²⁹ *Advertiser* 20/2/1912: 6g; cp. Edward Stephens 1889, in *Journal & Proceedings of Royal Society of NSW* 23: 498.

³⁰ – as a quick Google search will show, e.g. <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/glossary/b.htm> [9/12/15].

³¹ ‘Mining Intelligence’, *South Australian* 18/1/1848: 3d, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71610297> [30/11/15]; cp. ‘The Battle of the Royalties’, *Observer* 15 May 1847: 4c, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/158924307> [30/11/15].

Little Para". These obviously refer to the rivers, the first presumably being the 'Great Para'.³² In view of Stephens's doubtful linguistics in the same paper, such as bad re-spelling of Kurna words from other unacknowledged sources,³³ one must doubt that this interpretation has any original Kurna authority.

As we have seen, the word *para* itself is not confirmed by any reliable Kurna records as meaning anything like 'river', 'water' or 'big'. If *parapara* is Aboriginal, its form is reduplicative, signifying 'many *para*' (but not 'big *para*'). Kurna has other words for 'big',³⁴ 'little',³⁵ and 'many',³⁶ but none of them resemble *para*.³⁷

It is conceivable (but improbable) that in 1837 when the earliest Europeans visited the Para rivers, with a very limited understanding of Kurna language, somebody may have told them that something there concerning rivers or water was '*parapara*'. Their informants could have been either their Aboriginal guides from Adelaide or Aborigines met near Gawler, a meeting place for Peramangk, Ngadjuri and Nukunu travellers as well as Kurna.

It is conceivable that the explorers then confused this word with Kurna *parri*, and mistook both words for *names* of that 'big river' (conceived by them from first sight within a European category) which would become known to them as the 'Great Para'.

Perhaps they heard a reduplicative *parri-parri*, 'many rivers', which could refer to the many river sites in the well-watered catchments draining into the Gawler River at Gawler.

The North Para and the Gawler individually were both 'big' in their differing ways.³⁸ Perhaps the Aboriginal informants did refer in some way to a 'great river' in this area – but if so, the word would

³² Edward Stephens jnr. 1889, 'The Aborigines of Australia', *Journal & Proceedings of Royal Society of NSW* 23: 498. I have found no confirmation from the time of first contact (up to about 1850) that any of the rivers were called 'Para Para' then by the first settlers.

³³ On Edward Stephens's linguistics, see Amery 2000, *Warrabarna Kurna!*: 86-7.

³⁴ *tauara, yernda, parto, yatho, witi*.

³⁵ *tuku, kurltu*.

³⁶ *partana, tawata, ngaraitya*.

³⁷ The best local evidence we have for *parapara* comes from early colonist TW Chalk, and it is still very weak. In 1926, remembering Aborigines at the Adelaide suburb of Oaklands in about the 1850s, he told Tindale that "*Burra-burra*" meant "*plenty, a great deal*": for example, "*Burra-burra cowie... very big flood*" ('*cowie*' = *kauwi* = 'water'. Chalk's original MS is on 5 pencil MS sheets in Tindale 'Notes on the Kurna or Adelaide Tribe Supplementary Papers', AA338/2/68; cp. Tindale's MS transcript 'Adelaide Tribe. Notes from Mr Chalk, 7 November 1926', in 'Notes on the Kurna or Adelaide Tribe', AA338/1/35: 167). But this item is a very late reminiscence. It is far more likely that English spelling led Chalk and others to confuse the alleged word 'burra-burra' with a genuine Kurna word *burroburro* (*u* as in 'put'), 'soon, not yet, bye-and-bye'. No doubt Chalk, influenced by decades of folklore, thought *burroburro* was the word for a different part of the (implicit) information, i.e. 'big'.

³⁸ Strangways and Blunden described their 'Gawler' – the North Para in the Barossa Valley – as "*a fine river, running deep and strong, and containing, we should say, above three times as much water as the Torrens*" (*SA Gazette & Colonial Register* 1/12/1838: 3c). Milner Stephen wrote of the river west of Gawler: "*We travelled along the Gawler, which has a very broad channel and banks from thirty to sixty feet high, running through the great plain... [T]he Gawler... had so immense a channel...*" (*SA Gazette and Register* 28/2/1839: 8b). It may have been such an observation which led some of the early settlers and later surveyors to believe that "*para*' or '*perra*'" meant "*water*"

have been neither *parri-parri* nor *para-para* but probably *tauara-parri* ('big' unspecifically), or *yernda-parri* ('wide'), perhaps *parta-parri* ('thick') or *witti-parri* ('large, much').³⁹

Our doubts about *para-para* are increased when we read that in 1848 a small ore discovery near the Little Para River is "now called the Para Para Mine"; and that the name of the famous orchard estate 'Para Para' at Gawler was an invention of its owner Duffield in the 1850s. It was said that he "was anxious to call his house by the native name, but not being able to get it[,] called it Para Para, because it was just below the junction of the two rivers, the North Para and South Para".⁴⁰ Very likely this was the beginning of the word's folklore, in which mingled memories became new 'facts': e.g. "'Para Para' is the native name signifying the confluence of two waters".⁴¹

The common-sense theory remains more probable: that those two unnamed Aborigines in mid-1837 said *parri*; that some of the explorers mis-heard it and all of them mistook it for a place-name; and that all the rest is colonial 'white noise'.

THE GENUINE ABORIGINAL PLACE-NAMES ON THE PARA RIVERS:

In Aboriginal culture there would have been many site names on and near each of the watercourses which today we call the Gawler, the North Para, South Para and Little Para, and their tributary creeks. Doubtless these would have totalled up to dozens or scores; only four have survived. There would have been no single name for any of these European-style entities, let alone the 'Great Para'; and there is no evidence of a general name for 'the Para' region.

So much confusion about 'Para' alerts us to the fact that very few colonists were collecting Aboriginal place-names during the first explorations of that area.

Unlike the first wave south of Adelaide, who had noted and preserved 'Yankalilla', 'Aldinga' and 'Onkaparinga' in order to know how to travel around the new and threatening hills of Fleurieu Peninsula, by the end of 1837 most explorers to the north did not feel the need for native landmarks and so deemed Aboriginal guides unnecessary. Colonel Light's 'Metewatta' was ignored, though obtained in December 1837. This continued to be the case a year later when explorers like Oakden and new settlers like John Reid first took serious notice of the Para region. The northern public names which we inherit from this era are typified by dull repeats of 'Gawler' and 'Light', or nostalgic European place-names ('Barrosa', Clonlea, etc), or a gaggle of variations on the one native name they wrongly thought they had.

running between deep banks" (Charles Hope Harris papers, PRG 1112, SLSA, Bound Volume: 79. Harris [1846-1915] was a government surveyor in the 1860s-70s).

³⁹ 'Long' would not be used, since it invokes the European idea that the total length of watercourse (defined by which tributaries?) is a single entity.

⁴⁰ 'N.C.' letter, 'Native For Gawler', *Register* 11/6/1908: 5e; <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/56868873> [11/11/15].

⁴¹ *The Bunyip* (Gawler) 9/3/1867: 4c; <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/130961995> [6/11/15].



Not until Aboriginal knowledge suddenly mattered again did other real place-names briefly come to light. When Aborigines from 'the Para' started to kill shepherds in April 1839, interpreters like William Williams and James Cronk, and perhaps the Interim Protector Dr William Wyatt, were forced to turn their attention to this new 'northern' region. (For Wyatt it was too late: these events would cost him his job). Williams went up with Special Constables from the Adelaide tribe – including Kadlitpinna who may have had a totemic connection with Gawler – to track down the murderers.⁴² For the pursuers, the place-names 'Moon-na', 'Cud-lie-tie-par-rey', 'Kaleteeya' and 'Moole yerke perre' became important, momentarily.⁴³ When the tribe had been sufficiently intimidated by the search parties and two of the offenders hung, very few colonists retained any interest in the place-names or the cultural map they symbolized, except the German missionaries and new Protector Moorhouse.

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POSTSCRIPT:

As development of the area has proceeded over 17 decades, Hack and Crouch's old mistake has been a short, easy and favoured adoptee for places and subdivisions near all of the Paras: Parafield, Para Hills, Para Plains, Para West, Para Park, Para Vista, Para Downs, Paralowie,⁴⁴ Paraville (now Pooraka),⁴⁵ Para Ville (between Lyndoch and Tanunda),⁴⁶ and several places or homesteads in the hills: Paracombe,⁴⁷ Paracliffs, Paraglen, Paradell, and another Paraville.⁴⁸

But even though many place-name authors have written about 'the native language' (as though there is only one), the name of 'the Para' has no connection with Parara, Para Wurlie, Parananacooka River, Parawa, or Paradise.

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End of Summary

⁴² For an account of the 1839 murders and aftermath, see Tom Gara 1998, 'The life and times of Mullawirraburka', in *History In Portraits*, Aboriginal History Monograph 6: 105-7. Williams, Cronk and Wyatt inevitably took part in the trials.

⁴³ See my PNS 8/14 Muna, 8/17 Murlayaki and 8/18 Kadlitipari.

⁴⁴ See my PNS 8/20 'Paralowie'.

⁴⁵ "Paraville - It was a 1921 subdivision of part section 97, Hundred of Yatala, by John Richard Baker and Herbert Angus Parsons, solicitors; changed to 'Pooraka' in 1928" (Manning 2010: 634).

⁴⁶ See <http://maps.sa.gov.au/plb/> (26/11/15).

⁴⁷ "The Little Para rises here in a garden, which gives the station its name of 'Paracombe'" ('DGB' [Daniel Brock] in *Register* 1/11/1843: 2).

⁴⁸ See <http://maps.sa.gov.au/plb/> (26/11/15).