

THE NARUNGA AND EUROPEANS: CROSS-CULTURAL
RELATIONS ON YORKE PENINSULA IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY

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Table of Contents

List of figures	ii
Abstract	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
1. 1802-1836: the appearance of <i>bindirra</i>	10
2. 186-1846: the arrival of surveyors and ‘adventurers’	34
3. 1849: ‘Murderous encounters’	59
4. The pastoral years: a tentative peace	105
5. 1866-1880: the Narungga and Julius Kühn	145
Conclusion	189
Appendices	192
Bibliography	197

List of illustrations

1. Flinders' map of Yorke Peninsula	16
2. Flinders' rough chart of Head of Great Inlet 14 (the head of St Vincent's Gulf)	20
3. Vegetation on Yorke Peninsula prior to clearing by farmers	64
4. Map of pastoral leases, Yorke Peninsula, 1860	65
5. 'Loading Sheep, Yorke's Peninsula'	111
6. Pethuenunkar (alias George Penton)	114
7. 'Surveyors Encampment, Yorke's Peninsula'	119
8. 'Kangaroo Hunting, Yorke's Peninsula'	119
9. 'Native cooking' and 'Native cooroboree'	121
10. 'Shepherd's hut near Lake Sunday'	137
11. 'Police Station on Yorke's Peninsula'	141
12. 'Kadina Natives'	184
13. Yorketown Lake, 1890	185
14. Jack, Lucy and Charlie, Yorketown Lake, 1890	186

Abstract

The Narungga are the Aboriginal people of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia. This thesis explores cross-cultural encounters and relations between the Narungga and Europeans in the nineteenth century. Contemporary Narungga people, hoping to learn about the lives of their forebears, instigated this research. The Narungga have not previously been the focus of serious historical or anthropological investigation. This thesis therefore fills a significant gap in the historiography.

This thesis seeks to re-imagine the past in a way which is empathetic and realistic to Narungga people who lived in the nineteenth century. To understand the impact of the arrival and permanent settlement of Europeans upon the lives of the Narungga, it is necessary to look closely at the cultural systems which orientated and encompassed both the Narungga and the newcomers. The two groups impacted on and shaped the lives of the other and neither can be looked at in isolation. This work has been inspired by the writings of historical anthropologists and ethno-historians. The findings of anthropologists, linguists, geographers, botanists and archaeologists are drawn upon. First hand accounts which provide graphic and immediate depictions of events have been closely analysed. The primary sources that have been examined include local and Adelaide newspapers, official correspondence between settlers, police, the Protector of Aborigines, the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, and private letters, diaries, paintings, photographs and sketches.

The archives continuously reveal great injustices committed against the Narungga, and this thesis does not seek to minimize the brutality of 'white' settlement nor the devastating outcomes of British colonialism on the Narungga. But the records also reveal the majority of Narungga people living in the nineteenth century were not helpless victims being pushed around by autocratic pastoralists or disengaged bureaucrats. On Yorke Peninsula in the nineteenth century, the future was unknown; the Narungga were largely able to maintain their autonomy while Europeans were often in a vulnerable and dependent position. The Narungga were active agents who adapted to and incorporated the new circumstances as they were able and as they saw fit. Rather than living in a closed or static society, the Narungga readily accommodated and even welcomed the Europeans, with their strange customs and exotic animals, plants and goods. The Narungga responded to the presence of Europeans in a way which made sense to them and which was in keeping with their customs and beliefs.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the history of the Aboriginal¹ people of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia, who, by 1899, became known to Europeans as the Narungga. This research was initiated by the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association (NAPA). NAPA is a community organization based on Yorke Peninsula which is governed and run by people who identify as Narungga. For the past three years I have been reporting my findings to NAPA, whose involvement has highlighted the relevance of the past in the present, the politics involved in the writing of history, and the ethics involved in historical research involving Aboriginal groups. Oral histories go back to the early twentieth century, but very little is known about nineteenth century Narungga life. NAPA instigated this project hoping the archives would reveal information which might bring to present generations an empathetic awareness and pride in their forebears. Upon completion, this thesis will be rewritten in a less academic form for NAPA and the wider community.

Life for both Narungga and non-Narungga people has changed dramatically over the past 160 years. The devastating impact of European colonization on Narungga society has left contemporary Narungga people with a fragmented knowledge of ‘traditional’ life. Unlike other South Australian groups such as the Dieri and Ngarrindjeri, the Narungga have never been the focus of detailed historical or anthropological investigation. Many Narungga people today look enviously at the disproportionate representation of other Aboriginal groups in institutions such as the South Australian Museum, and the prominence of such groups in the wider, non-Aboriginal community. Some Narungga question why their forebears and their culture were never deemed worthy of academic investigation, why they have been ‘forgotten’.

The pros and cons of being the focus of academic study can be widely debated but there is little doubt information gathered systematically over a prolonged period of time provides a precious resource for many contemporary Aboriginal people. Attempts to reconstruct ‘traditional’ Narungga life rely largely on sketchy and contradictory information collected in the nineteenth

¹ ‘Indigenous’ is currently accepted by scholars as the appropriate term for describing the original inhabitants of Australia and their descendents. However, the people I am working with feel this is a non-specific, global term. They prefer ‘Aboriginal’ which they identify with as exclusively Australian. In respect of these sentiments, ‘Aboriginal’ is used throughout this thesis.

century by European men who responded to questionnaires sent by distant ‘anthropologists’.² They answered questions which were framed in culturally, historically and gender specific ways – we learn as much about the interests of nineteenth century, well-educated men as we do about traditional Narungga customs and beliefs. In 1899, ethnographer Frank Gillen made several field trips to Point Pearce but the valuable information he collected was never published and is not widely known.³ Anthropologist Norman Tindale visited the Peninsula in 1935 and interviewed Louisa Eglinton – ‘the sole survivor’ of ‘the Southern Yorke Peninsula natives’.⁴ The experience and knowledge Tindale brought to the interview is reflected in his report ‘Notes on the Natives of the Southern Portion of Yorke Peninsula’ which was published in 1936.⁵

Due to the lack of alternative accounts, and the historic period in which the information was collected, these published reports have been widely accepted as accurate and have been appreciatively cited and referred to by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal historians for the past one hundred years. In 1975, DL Hill and SL Hill compiled all known published ethnographic information in a pamphlet entitled *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*.⁶ This pamphlet is a much valued source of information for Narungga people today, and the information contained is widely accepted as ‘factual’. However, the indiscriminate acceptance of information collected by amateur and professional ethnographers is problematic. The perceptiveness and depth of information differs markedly between the interviewers. Their diverse motives, personalities and backgrounds (and those of their informants) need to be taken into account, as does an awareness of the protocols and laws regarding the dissemination of knowledge in Aboriginal Society. The place, the time of year, the audience, the occasion, the speaker – all affected what was told. Ultimately, discrepancies and contradictions between the published findings are instructive and can be studied to comprehend the restrictions and protocols which were being negotiated or adhered to by Narungga informants. NAPA and I hoped oral histories from contemporary Narungga people would provide clues regarding

² See Appendix I for a list of these publications.

³ DJ Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, Alison Petch (Eds), *My dear Spencer: the letters of FJ Gillen to Baldwin Spencer*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1997. Frank Gillen, Anthropology Notebook Volume 5, Frank Gillen Collection, Barr-Smith Library, Adelaide University, nd.

⁴ NB Tindale, ‘Notes on the Natives of the Southern Portion of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia’, *Royal Society of South Australia (Transactions)*, vol. 60, 1936, p. 55-70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-70.

⁶ DL Hill and SL Hill, *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1975.

nineteenth century life which would counterbalance information recorded solely by members of the dominant cultural group. However, oral histories go back to the early 1900s and are connected with the Point Pearce Mission.⁷ This finding is reflected in histories published in 1987 and 2003 written by Aboriginal people with long connections to the Mission.⁸ These authors project their twentieth century experiences onto their perceptions of pre and early mission life. Narungga people who died before the 1880s, or did not have children, or predominantly lived outside the mission, are noticeably absent.

In 1968 and 1980 respectively, anthropologist WEH Stanner and art historian Bernard Smith used the prestigious Boyer Lectures to publicly question the ethics of colonization and the devastating ramifications of white settlement upon Aboriginal people.⁹ Stanner termed the Nation's collective and convenient forgetting of this shameful but fundamental aspect of its past 'the Great Australian Silence'. Numerous academics were inspired by these lectures. Throughout the 1980s, various revisionist histories were published which challenged stereotypical understandings of the settlement of Australia.¹⁰ These histories aimed to give a more realistic and balanced version of past events. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, numerous books and pamphlets were published to commemorate the centenaries of various Yorke Peninsula districts and towns, but the national shift in public awareness (regarding the absence of Aboriginal people to constructions of the past) does not appear to have affected the majority of these authors. Most do not mention the 'Aborigines' at all. A few make token reference to the Narungga who appear as a stone-age preface to the 'real' story. The exceptions (eg. Rhoda

⁷ The exception to this is a series of interviews conducted between Betty Fisher and Narungga Elders Tim Hughes and Gladys Elphick between 1966-8. Both the tapes and transcripts of the interviews are held in the NAPA Archives, Moonta. Although I have had access to the transcripts, I have not listened to the tapes. Tim is the 'grandson' Louisa Eglinton who refused to enter the mission and remained throughout her life on 'the country of her mother and kinsfolk' (see Tindale, p. 56). Tim spent much of his childhood with 'Mugurdi Louisa'. Gladys Elphick is Tim's mother.

⁸ Doris May Graham and Cecil Wallace Graham, *As we've known it: 1911 to the present*, Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education Unit (ASTEC), Underdale, 1987 and Eileen Wanganeen, *Point Pearce: Past and Present*, ASTEC, Underdale, 1987. Doreen Kartinyeri, *Narungga Nation*, Personal Publications, Morphett Vale, 2002.

⁹ WEH Stanner, *After the Dreaming*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1968 and Bernard Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1980.

¹⁰ For an excellent summary of shifts in historical discourses concerning Australian Aboriginal people, see Bain Attwood, 'The past as future: Aborigines, Australia and the (dis)course of History', in Bain Attwood (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, pp. vii-xxxviii.

Heinrich¹¹ and Ern Carmicheal¹²) display noteworthy sensitivity towards the Narungga, but it is not their primary aim to understand events from a Narungga point of view, nor is the available archival material thoroughly examined. These histories are chiefly concerned with narrating the experiences and achievements of European settlers.

Stanner and Smith's Boyer Lectures influenced many historians who were not specifically concerned with regional histories. Perhaps the most well known is Henry Reynolds' who first published the widely acclaimed *The Other Side of the Frontier* in 1982.¹³ Reynolds restored Aboriginal agency by highlighting Aboriginal peoples' determined and organized resistance to the take over of their lands, and thus challenged the legitimacy of settlement. Reynolds pulled together information from a variety of sources gathered in archives across the nation. He did not have the space (or time) to closely examine cross-cultural relations in numerous, specific geographical areas. His book provided a template for historians in all states to research and revise mainstream accounts of early colonial history.

In South Australia, Alan Pope published *Resistance and Retaliation* in 1989.¹⁴ Pope includes an analysis of events on Yorke Peninsula in his 'six stage model of inter-racial relationships', namely initial contact, close relationships, the outbreak of violence, determined resistance, retaliation and revenge, and defeat and domination.¹⁵ Pope is aware such a model oversimplifies complex issues, that the stages overlap, the edges are blurred, and individual agency must be allowed for.¹⁶ However, he argues 'this six stage model bears up under the test of these different, discrete micro-situations', and 'is helpful in increasing our understanding of early colonial race relations'.¹⁷ At a superficial level, events on Yorke Peninsula in the pastoral years fit Pope's model. However, when the historic records are closely examined, and the culture and laws of the Narungga – plus the Narunggas' forty years of accumulated experience of Europeans – are

¹¹ Rhoda Heinrich, *Wide Sails and Wheat Stacks*, Port Victoria Centenary Committee, Port Victoria, 1976, and *Governor Fergusson's Legacy*, Maitland-Kilkerren Centenary Committee, Adelaide, 1972.

¹² Ern Carmichael, *The Ill-Shaped Leg*, the author, Adelaide, 1973 and *Four Makes One*, District Council of Yorketown, Yorketown, 1975.

¹³ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1982.

¹⁴ Alan Pope, *Resistance and Retaliation: Aboriginal-European Relations in Early Colonial South Australia*, Heritage Action, Bridgewater, 1989.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

included in any analysis, it becomes clear that such a model is crude and misleading and does not lead to a deeper understanding of early cross-cultural relations. When a model is suggested, certain events (which fit into the formula) can be overemphasized at the expense of other, equally important events which are ignored or downplayed.

To understand the impact of the arrival and permanent settlement of Europeans on Narungga land, it is necessary to look closely at the cultural systems orientating and encompassing both the Narungga and the newcomers. The two groups impacted on and shaped the lives of the other and neither can be looked at in isolation. This thesis has been influenced by the writings of historical anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins¹⁸ and John and Jean Comaroff. Comaroff and Comaroff argue scholars need to recognize the cultural systems which encompass those we are researching:

In order to construe the gestures of others, their words and winks and more besides, we have to situate them within the systems of signs and relations, of power and meaning, that animate them.¹⁹

This thesis refers to the work of anthropologists such as Deborah Bird Rose, Diane Bell and Fred Myers who have worked with Aboriginal people in central and northern Australia and who provide crucial insights into connection to country, totems, notions of kinship and reciprocity, gender divisions, and greeting protocols.²⁰ Their findings are broadly applicable to nineteenth century Narungga. The work of linguists (such as Luise Hercus and Jane Simpson)²¹ can add a fresh perspective and depth to any analysis of cross-cultural relations. Linguists provide culturally contextualized translations which aid any attempt to understand events from an

¹⁸ For example Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1981 and *Islands of History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1985.

¹⁹ John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Westview Press, Colorado, 1992, pp. 9-10.

²⁰ See for example Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*, Cambridge, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1992, and 'Exploring an Aboriginal land ethic' in *Meanjin*, vol. 47, 1988, pp. 378-189, and *Country of the Heart: an Indigenous Australian Homeland*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2002. Fred Myers, 'Always Ask: resource use and land ownership among Pintupi Aboriginals of the Western Desert', in N Williams and E Hunn (eds.), *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter Gathers*, Westview Press, Colorado, 1982, and *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986. Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1993.

²¹ For example Luise Hercus, Flavia Hodges and Jane Simpson (eds), *The Land is a Map: Placenames of Indigenous Origin in Australia*, Panandus Books, Canberra, 2002, and L Hercus and V Potezney, 'Finch versus 'Finch-water'', in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, vol. 31, 1999, pp. 165-180, and Jane Simpson, 'Personal Names', in J Simpson and L Hercus (eds), *History in Portraits*, National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication, 1998, pp. 221-9.

Aboriginal perspective. Ethno-botanists such as Philip Clarke and Beth Gott,²² geographers such as John Poynter and Trevor Griffin,²³ archaeologists such as John Mulvaney and Isabel McBryde,²⁴ increase our understanding of the land and vegetation which nineteenth century Aboriginal people knew intimately and were dependent upon for survival. We can discover where plants and animals abounded, and which areas were favoured camping and hunting sites. Knowledge of the encompassing environment is crucial to understanding everyday life and long-term strategies.

Ethno-historians, such as Greg Denning and Karen Kupperman, who have worked extensively on cross-cultural encounters (in the South Pacific and North America respectively) have also inspired this research. Denning describes ethno-history as:

an attempt to represent the past in such a way that we understand both its ordered and its disordered natures. We live in a world already made for us but of our own making.²⁵

He later adds 'ethnographic histories must catch process – not just change, but the changing too'.²⁶ Karen Kupperman stresses the need to understand as fully as possible '[Indigenous peoples'] response to the new elements in their lives and the changed circumstances in which they maneuvered'.²⁷ Micro-studies concerned with one group of Aboriginal people, a defined geographical area, a relatively low number of Europeans and a specific time span, allow the researcher the luxury of 'digging deep'. When such 'digging' is accompanied by an anthropological awareness of the cultural system which gives meaning to the actions of individuals, a deeper and more realistic understanding of the past can be gained. Locations and individuals become familiar, connections and disparities emerge, and constant and evolving

²² For example Philip Clarke, 'The importance of root and tubers as a food source for Southern Australian Aborigines', in *Journal Anthropological Society of South Australia*, vol. 23, No. 6, 1995, pp. 2-15, and 'The study of ethnobotany in Southern South Australia', in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 2, 1986, pp. 40-7. B Gott, 'Ecology of Root Use by the Aborigines of Southern Australia' in *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol. 17, pp. 59-68.

²³ John Poynter, *The Cadastral Survey of South Australia, 1860-1880*, Honours Thesis, Adelaide University, 1965, and numerous manuscript maps showing the vegetation, pastoral leases and land sales on Yorke Peninsula for the nineteenth century which John kindly lent me for the duration of this thesis. See also Trevor Griffin and Murray McCaskill, *Atlas of South Australia*, South Australian Government Printing Division and Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986.

²⁴ D Mulvaney, *Australian Aboriginal Prehistory*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1970 and Isabel McBryde, 'Travellers in Storied Landscapes', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 24, 2000, pp. 152-174.

²⁵ Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 1992, p. 6.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America*, Cornell University Press, New York, 2000, p. x.

attitudes and perceptions can be highlighted. By honing in on everyday, often taken for granted details, we can see subtle (and not so subtle) flaws in broad models and provide direct evidence to dispel stereotypical, taken for granted assumptions. We can see the relevance of recognizing the diversity of Aboriginal groups who lived in heterogeneous environments and whose experiences with Europeans varied greatly. Micro-studies highlight the need to recognise the important role individuals play in unfolding events, providing clear proof that ‘history’ is not determined and inevitable, but dependent upon the personalities, experiences, and choices made by specific people.

In the existing literature, stereotypical understandings of contact, conflict and mission life are often re-iterated by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors. All implicitly reflect their own position in broader political debates regarding the ethics of colonization and its implications in the present. But to understand the reality of life for Narungga people living in the nineteenth century, we must temporarily put to one side our current awareness of the detrimental effects of European settlement. The nineteenth century was a different time, full of potential and possibilities, when the future was unknown and could only be imagined. Life in the mid to late 1800s is an alien world for us in the early twenty-first century. Animals and vegetation which are now sparse or extinct abounded, people had to be practical and resourceful in order to survive. Life was tough – physical punishment was acceptable and class distinctions were great, and the concept of distinctive and hierarchical ‘races’ was just beginning to gain ground.

The aim of this thesis has been to understand (as far as possible for a non-Narungga person living in the twenty-first century) events from a Narungga point of view, and to highlight the agency of Narungga people. Narungga culture was never simple, static or ahistorical as the majority of local histories imply – even histories written by Narungga descendants stress the peaceful and unchanging nature of Aboriginal life.²⁸ Instead it was dynamic and able to incorporate new technologies, ceremonies, and social shifts. Cross-cultural relations during the early days of South Australian colonization were fluid, creative and complex. Both groups were curious about the other, and attempted to find ways to accommodate or incorporate the other into known kinship and exchange systems. How did the independent Narungga receive the pale

²⁸ See Wanganeen, p. 1.

strangers who arrogantly assumed they could take over Narungga land and resources? What strategies were adopted to minimize the destructive impact of Europeans? How did the Narungga survive in an increasingly altered environment?

In order to find answers to such questions, and to recreate the past in a way which is both empathetic and ‘true’ to (at least some) nineteenth century Narungga, this thesis uses diverse sources and the work and knowledge of many people from various backgrounds and disciplines. As much archival material as possible has been closely examined. Local and Adelaide newspapers provide a snapshot of everyday concerns and public awareness of events. From detailed court reports published in Adelaide newspapers it is occasionally possible to hear the words of Narungga people themselves. Letters, notes, dispatches, and instructions between government officials such as the Protector of Aborigines, the Police Commissioner, Police Constables stationed on the Peninsula, and the Governor and the Governor’s Secretary, are held in the State Records of South Australia and provide invaluable, first hand information. Unfortunately the private letters and diaries of early settlers appear few and far between, the notable exception being the letters of missionary Julius Kühn²⁹ (which NAPA recently had transcribed and translated) and the published diary of Edward Snell.³⁰ Paintings, photographs, and drawings also aid any re-imagining of the past.

This history begins with a speculative analysis of the Narunggas’ reaction to the arrival of the European sailing ships in 1802. Beginning with the arrival of Europeans may seem Eurocentric, but this thesis has, by necessity, been constructed largely from historic documents written by Europeans, thus the records of the first Europeans to sight Narungga land and waters seem a practical starting point. There are several ‘turning points’ in the history of the Narungga between 1802-1880. During the first stage of pre-European colonization, the Narungga were exposed to newcomers, but no strangers settled permanently on Narungga land. This stage, from 1802 until 1846, is explored in the first two chapters and incorporates the visits of navigators, sealers,

²⁹ Julius Kühn, ‘Papers, correspondence, transactions, diaries etc of the Moravian Missionaries in Australia 1866-1879’, R15VIa, Unitaetsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany.

³⁰ Griffiths, Tom (ed.), *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell: The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1850*, Angus and Robertson and the Library Council of Victoria, North Ryde, 1988.

whalers, sea captains, ‘adventurers’ and surveyors. The next major turning point was the arrival of pastoralists with their sheep, shepherds, rations and guns. The permanent presence of strangers forced the Narungga to come up with new methods of incorporating and/or resisting European arrival. Although everyday life was significantly altered by the permanent arrival of Europeans, this thesis will argue that pastoral settlement did not erode Narungga autonomy. From 1846 until the first land sales on the Peninsula in the late 1860s, the Narungga were able to fulfill their cultural obligations and live relatively independently from the newcomers. The ‘pastoral years’ are explored in chapters 3-4. The discovery of copper at Wallaroo in 1859, and the systematic division and sale of land into small farming blocks marks the next major ‘turning point’. Large numbers of Europeans arrived on the Peninsula, and farmers and mining companies cleared the land of native vegetation. As the plants and animals disappeared, the Narungga were forced into greater contact and dependence on the ever increasing newcomers. Chapter 5 examines the establishment and early years of the Point Pearce Mission to dispel stereotypical understandings of these years.

This thesis examines the history of the Narungga during the nineteenth century to provide contemporary Narungga people with an awareness and understanding of the life of their forebears. Missionary Julius Kühn witnessed the transition from wurley to cottage and played a crucial role in the development and entrenchment of the mission and ultimately (some) Narungga peoples adoption of a European lifestyle. His departure in 1880 was therefore a logical stopping point for this thesis. The years before the mission was well established show us cross-cultural relations at their rawest. We see the Narungga setting the terms for contact, accommodating insensitive and tactless Europeans, deliberately avoiding bloodshed while assertively expressing their ownership of land and the limits of their tolerance, and adapting to the invasion of their country in creative and resourceful ways. They show us vulnerable Europeans who, on the isolated ‘frontier-land’ of Yorke Peninsula, were uncertain of their position as usurpers and who over-reacted more out of fear and insecurity than a desire for bloodshed or brutality. We see the impact individuals had on wider cross-cultural relations, and how ultimately each person made up their own mind as to how they would live in this new world.

1. 1802-1836: the appearance of *bindirra*¹

The Narungga are the Aboriginal people of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia. Their country encompasses the whole Peninsula from Port Broughton on the eastern shores of Spencer Gulf to Port Wakefield at the head of St Vincent Gulf, and the surrounding waters and islands. The Narungga believe the actions of Ancestral Beings created the features and characteristics of the land we see today. The two gulfs, the Hummock Ranges, hills and elevations, boulders, wells, springs, native animals and various plants and trees throughout the Peninsula provide a constant physical reminder of the exploits of these Beings and the laws which originated as a result of their actions. Such laws prescribe strict and complex obligations which need to be upheld if harmonious social and environmental relations are to prevail. Such laws are reiterated through Creation stories. Celebrations, or ‘corroborees’, relive the actions of Ancestral Beings through song, drama, dance and poetry and reinforce peoples’ connection to their land.

To belong to the land is to have intimate and detailed knowledge of the encompassing environment and ensure ceremonies are performed which acknowledge, reinforce and celebrate the mutual dependence and interconnectedness of humans, animals, plants and land. Unlike Europeans who see land as an object to be exploited – ie., a source of economic wealth – Aboriginal people perceive their country as alive, as a Being which works in partnership with its people by protecting and providing for them, and which receives care and attention in return.² The Narungga showed their respect and deep regard for their environment by singing for country, performing rituals for country, introducing strangers to country, and crying for country that had been neglected or ‘orphaned’ (whose owners were displaced or had died).³ They knew exactly when, where and how to find food and water, the meaning and significance of different places, and which ceremonies needed to be

¹ Frank Gillen translates *Bindirra* as ‘whitefellows’, Anthropology Notebook Volume 5, Frank Gillen Collection, SR 09G47, Barr-Smith Library, Adelaide. According to Tindale, *Bindira* [sic] stems from the word *Bindi*, meaning ‘spirit place’, in ‘Notes on the Natives of the Southern Portion of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia’, in *Royal Society of South Australia (Transactions)*, vol. 60, 1936, p. 65. I have used Gillen’s spelling for this title.

² See Deborah Bird Rose, *Country of the Heart: an Indigenous Australian Homeland*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2002, particularly pp. 14-18.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

performed where, when and by whom. They knew how to behave in certain areas, and where access was restricted or forbidden. This connection between people and their territory was reciprocal and generous – when people adhered to the law, their country nourished and protected them. Country provided the Narungga with physical, spiritual and emotional security and confidence.

Prior to European colonization, the Narungga were divided into four ‘clan’ or ‘totem’ groups – the Carrie (Emu), Wourie (Red Kangaroo), Wilthu (Shark) and Wiltu (Eaglehawk), whose territorial divisions were north, south, east and west.⁴ Although each family group had their own territory, rights to country were flexible. Elder Tim Hughes stated that although each group had their own places, the Narungga ‘were all in together’ and ‘others could come along there’:

there were different areas for this, different for that, and some people always hunted up there at the Hummocks, some down the bottom, some near the centre, some other places, but everyone shared special things when the time was right.⁵

The Narungga met at particular places to perform ceremonies and share resources.⁶ People inherited their territory and their ‘special’ totem (*parū*), from their parents.⁷ Each individual ‘owned’ or ‘belonged to’ various sub-totems known as *kuyia*.⁸ *Kuyia* were not inherited but came from an extra-ordinary event which was interpreted by the mother (or another closely affiliated woman) as signalling the unborn child’s connection with particular animals and places.⁹ The Narungga had a special proprietary interest in their *paru*, and to a lesser degree their *kuyia* – it was a serious crime to eat another’s *paru* without permission and, although

⁴ TM Sutton, ‘The Adjahdurah Tribe of Aborigines on Yorke’s Peninsula’, in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australia Branch*, vol. 2, 1887, p. 17. Note Gillen states ‘North men Kurnara –ura (ura is a suffix meaning men), South Murrie wurlie, East Winthara, West Warira’. Gillen also includes mullet, butterfly and seal as *paru*, p. 829.

⁵ Transcript of Tim Hughes’ interview with Betty Fisher, Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association (NAPA) Archives, Moonta.

⁶ For example see Tindale 1936, p. 58 and LG Phillips, *Southern Yorke Peninsula Pioneer*, 30 November 1934.

⁷ Gillen, p. 829.

⁸ Sutton, p. 17 and Gillen, p. 829.

⁹ Rose, p. 36.

less grave, ‘decent’ Narungga would not eat another’s *kuyia* without seeking permission first.¹⁰

Westerners use the term ‘totem’ to describe ‘structured relationships between human groups and ‘natural’ species’.¹¹ Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose points out totems are about connection. The relationships between people and their totems are profound and enduring:

These connections between humans and animal and plant species, or with other parts of the natural world, overlap and crosscut each other. Not only is every person in connection totemically, but equally important they are in connection with numerous species. The different ways of being connected produce for each person a web of kinship with the natural world.¹²

For example, people of the emu totem are connected to each other, to all emus and to sites of emu significance. Inherited *parū* relations are ‘reproduced in regular and predictable ways from generation to generation’, but *kayia* – the individual totems – allow for unpredictable and more widespread connections.¹³ Narungga *kuyia* include truvalli, snapper, tommy rough, silver whiting, jumping mullet, travelling mullet, silver bream, wombat, wallaby.¹⁴ The numerous fish *kuyia* demonstrate the Narunggas’ close connection with the sea.

A Narungga Creation Story describes low-lying, swampy country covered with numerous lagoons. Disagreements amongst Ancestral Beings belonging to the bird, animal and reptile families caused great concern to leaders of the willy-wagtail, emu and kangaroo families. After a night of prophetic dreams, a giant kangaroo bone was found which proved to be magic. When the wise and respected kangaroo pointed the bone at the swampy land, the earth opened up and the sea gradually flooded the low land. This is how the two Peninsulas (ie., Yorke and Eyre) and (what we now call) Spencer Gulf were formed.¹⁵ The events

¹⁰ Gillen, p. 829. Gillen was surprised the Narungga could eat their totem as he had not come across this practice in central Australia, in DJ Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, Alison Petch (Eds), *My dear Spencer: the letters of FJ Gillen to Baldwin Spencer*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 262-3.

¹¹ Rose, p. 108.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gillen, p. 829.

¹⁵ WR Smith, ‘How Spencer’s Gulf came into existence’ in *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals*, George G Harrap and Co. Ltd., London, 1930, pp.168-70. Smith blatantly plagiarised the work of David

described in this Creation Story are consistent with rising sea levels and the drowning of land scientists estimate occurred between 15000 and 8000 years ago.¹⁶

1802: the arrival of 'big white birds'

At the end of a hot, dry summer over two hundred years ago, the Narungga espied a huge, majestic vessel sailing upon the vast body of water we now know as Spencer Gulf. The unprecedented appearance of ships must have caused great interest amongst Aboriginal observers. Places of first sightings, anchorages, the season, weather conditions – all would have been noted, analysed, and incorporated into attempts to make sense of such events. In 1928, Susie, a 'full black' woman from Denial Bay (Eyre Peninsula) sang of a beautiful big white bird 'which came flying in from over the ocean, then slowly stopped and, having folded its wings, was tied up so that it could not get away'.¹⁷ Ethnographer Norman Tindale translated this as the Nawu interpretation of early sailing ships. Whether excited or apprehensive, mystified or gratified, the question of how to react and whether to communicate their presence on shore would no doubt have been passionately debated.

Upon first entering the head of the gulf, Matthew Flinders, captain of the *Investigator*, saw fires 'upon the eastern shores opposite to Point Lowly' and noted 'wherever I had landed there were traces of natives...it should therefore seem that the country here is as well inhabited as most parts of Terra Australis...'.¹⁸ Sailing crews knew smokes signalled the presence of 'Native inhabitants'. Where smokes are marked on the rough and published charts, we can assume Aboriginal people were gathered in the vicinity to utilize water and food resources, or to view the passing vessels.¹⁹ Smokes were also used for long distance communication between groups. As well as indicating where people resided, smokes tell us whether local people were prepared to make their presence known.

Unaipon but this particular story is not in the recently published Unaipon collection, David Unaipon, *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, pp. xxii-xlvi.

¹⁶ Alastair H Campbell, 'Aboriginal Traditions and the Prehistory of Australia', *Mankind*, vol. 6, no. 10, 1967, p. 477.

¹⁷ Cited in HM Cooper, *The Unknown Coast: A Supplement*, Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1955, p. 16.

¹⁸ Flinders, p. 160.

¹⁹ 'Smokes' marked on rough charts did not always make it to official charts. It is therefore necessary to look at copies of original compilation charts, manuscript charts and the rough and fair log.

Although relatively sparse, the written records of the earliest non-Aboriginal people to explore the coast and lands of the Narungga can be examined and analysed to build a picture of Narungga reactions to Europeans in the 'transient' years between 1802-36. Visitors during these years were men, mainly of European origin, who arrived by sea in relatively small numbers. Coming from diverse social backgrounds, their motives for visiting Narungga land varied, as did their knowledge and treatment of Aboriginal people. Although the intruders did not hesitate to help themselves to any items they desired, their plunder did not substantially diminish the Narunggas' resources. Nor would the stranger's brief presence have interfered greatly with prescheduled visits to specific areas. No Europeans settled permanently on the Peninsula during this period, thus (while the Narungga no doubt resented uninvited strangers trespassing on their land and committing other unethical acts) the Narungga remained in control of their country. They had over thirty years to observe, experience, and draw conclusions regarding the various strangers.

Flinders and Baudin

In the early nineteenth century, the British and French governments sponsored costly scientific 'voyages of discovery'. Prior to this, a large section of Australia's south coast, from Termination Island in the west to Wilson's Promontory in the east, was 'undiscovered' by Europeans.²⁰ The colonial powers were eager to map this large section of Australia's southern coast (which included Yorke Peninsula). Matthew Flinders, in the *Investigator*, was in charge of the British expedition, while Nicolas Baudin commanded the French ship *Le Geographe*. Both men aimed to discover and collect unknown plant and animal species, and to chart the coast looking in particular for potential sites for future colonization.

Flinders and Baudin had proven themselves honourable and relatively sympathetic in their dealings with Aboriginal people in other parts of Australia, but neither had time to acquaint themselves with the people whose country bordered Spencer and St Vincent's Gulfs. On board the ships were zoologists, naturalists, gardeners, mineralogists, astrologers and artists to study and describe the coastlines, vegetation, animals and Aboriginal people. Events of

²⁰ Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath and John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis*, Wakefield, Adelaide, 2004, pp. 7-8, 122-4.

both voyages were recorded in numerous log books, diaries and published accounts. Crew members understood the necessity of respecting the local people in order to facilitate future relations and to advance scientific discoveries. Had any meetings occurred, the Europeans would not have deliberately acted aggressively, and the encounters would have been well documented.

On 14 March 1802, the *Investigator* anchored ‘several leagues’ from the area that would later be known as Port Broughton, and the Europeans’ mapping of Narungga country began. Flinders bestowed the name ‘Barn Hill’ on a prominent mountain which was a strategic meeting place for Elders of various neighbouring groups. Barn Hill is part of a mountain range (known today as the Hummocks) which formed a natural boundary between the Narungga and their neighbours. Significant geographical features – such as rivers, mountain ranges, or changes in vegetation – were used to indicate tribal boundaries.²¹ If no clear geographical or ecological indicator existed, Aboriginal people marked borders using signs such as stones, scarred trees, or bushes tied together.²² Borders were well known and strictly adhered to – neighbouring groups did not cross into each others country uninvited. Trespassing was a serious offence and only Elders or select initiates were allowed to traverse the Hummocks.²³ Even when invited, accessible areas were strictly limited, and visitors were expected to camp in prearranged areas. For example, the Kurna would travel to Tiddy Widdy Beach (Tit:ta Wit:ta) to barter with the Narungga, but they were allowed no further south than this point.²⁴

Sailing down Spencer Gulf, the *Investigator* came close to shore near Point Riley and Point Pearce.²⁵ This area is integral to many Narungga Creation stories. Waraulte (called Wardang by the British) was the place Budderah (an important Ancestral Being) resided with his

²¹ See Norman Tindale, ‘Tribal Boundaries’ in *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, p. 56.

²² Transcript of Betty Fisher’s interview with Tim Hughes in 1966, Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association (NAPA) archives, Moonta.

²³ *Ibid.*, also Elizabeth Fisher, interview with Gladys Elphick in 1966, NAPA archives.

²⁴ Notes on map of portion of South Australia including Yorke Peninsula, Norman Tindale Collection, South Australian Museum archives, AA338/16/2.

²⁵ See Flinders’ map, figure 1.

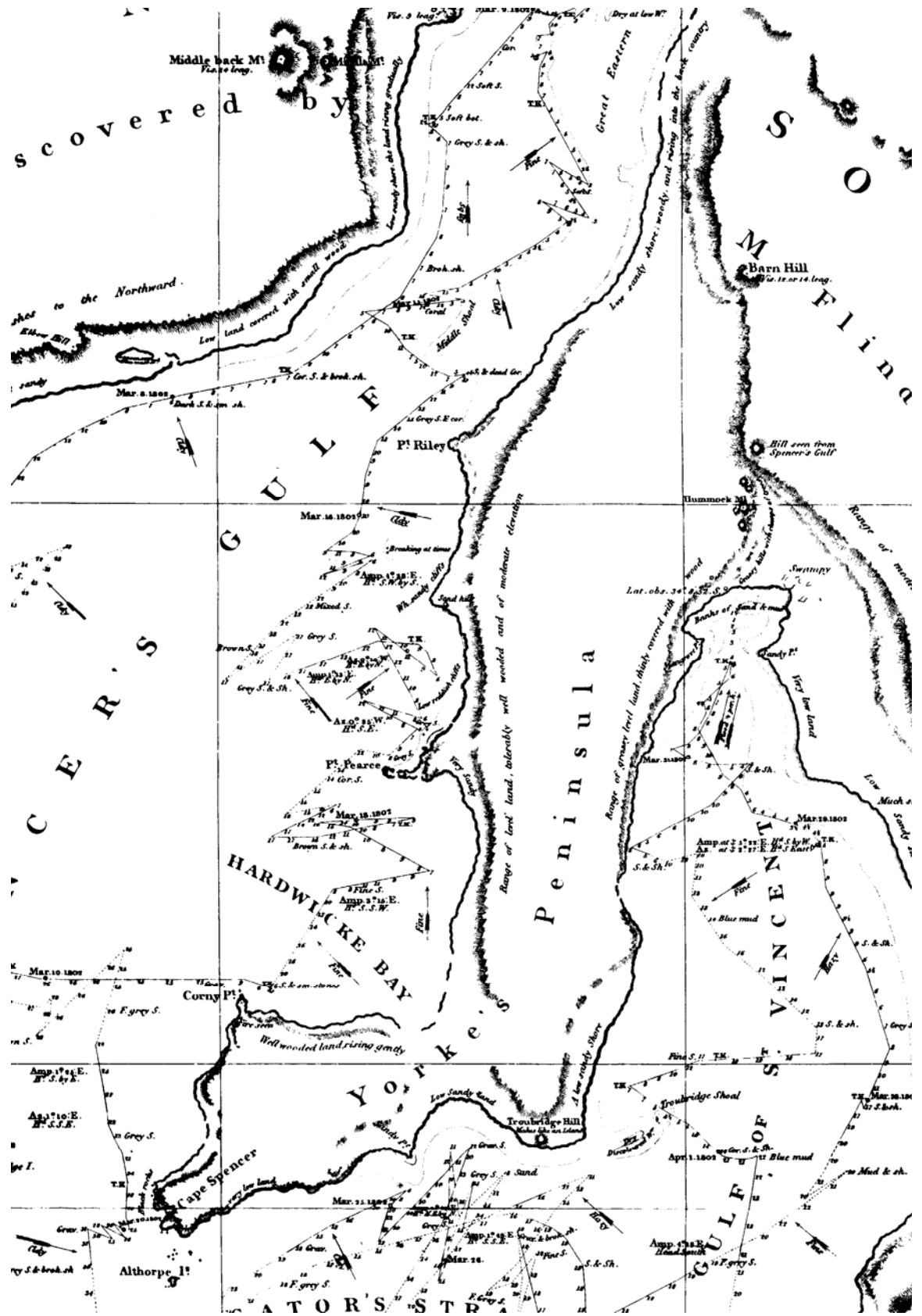


Figure 1. Flinders' map of Yorke's Peninsula

family.²⁶ He was buried on Goose Island.²⁷ The ship's tacking back and forth in these waters for over twenty-four hours may have been interpreted as uncertainty or a sign of respect – the strangers waiting for a signal indicating permission to land. The British did not sight any smokes along this 'very barren' and 'bare' stretch of coast.²⁸ If the Narungga were observing the vessel, they acted cautiously.

After spending 18 March 1802 sailing in Hardwicke Bay, a fire to the west was spotted which 'served as a mark to steer by'.²⁹ 'At before 10 in evening', the British anchored 'near a point which was for sometime thought to be an Island...a fire was burning near the Beach, and Natives walking about it'.³⁰ During the night 'the howling of dogs was heard', and at daylight, 'the shore was found to be distant two or three miles'.³¹ Flinders named the 'remarkable point' – known by the Narungga as *Mūjurlie*³² – 'Corny Point'.³³ The Narungga's central Creation Ancestor, Mudatju, turned into a bat in this area³⁴ and it is significant the Narungga chose to communicate with the British at this site. Perhaps the Narungga made some connection between the *Investigator* – an unfamiliar vessel which could travel over water – and Mudatju. The fires were large and bright enough for a ship several miles out at sea to 'steer by', and the *Investigator* came close enough to shore for Good to see figures, and for Flinders to note the plural 'fires' on his rough manuscript chart. By lighting and fueling the fires, and walking around them, the Narungga wanted to be seen. Perhaps they were inviting the strangers ashore. Were the howling dogs really dingoes, or were the Narungga signalling their presence in a form unrecognizable to the Europeans? Aboriginal people across the continent accurately imitated animal noises which were used as signals. When camping on Nukunu land at the head of Spencer's Gulf, crew members reported 'during the night they had heard howlings which they conjectured to be of dogs and

²⁶ Gillen, p. 833.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Diary entry, 17 March 1802, in Phyllis I Edwards, 'The Journal of Peter Good: Gardener on Matthew Flinders Voyage to Terra Australis 1801-1803, in *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) Historical Series*, vol. 9, 1981, p. 68.

²⁹ Flinders, p. 164.

³⁰ Good journal entry, 18 March 1802, in Edwards, p.68.

³¹ Flinders, p. 164.

³² Gillen, Anthropology Notes, p.832. Gillen notes the area nearby was called Annipia, p. 832 which is the name given by Tindale, written Nganepa, for Corny Point in Tindale 1936, p. 69.

³³ Flinders, p. 164.

³⁴ Gillen, p. 832.

human voices'.³⁵ But the strangers did not to respond, and early the next morning 'got under way', sailing west to islands previously visited in Spencer's Gulf.

The ship sailed in the direction the Narungga of the western division believed their dead travelled in a future state,³⁶ but late in the evening the *Investigator* 'stretched back for the coast'.³⁷ On this night the 'Moon Eclipsed'.³⁸ The Narungga, like other Aboriginal groups, were keen astronomers. The night sky was viewed as another dimension of the earthly world which was inhabited by ancestral beings and spirits. Anomalies conveyed messages to be interpreted by knowledgeable people. The following day, 20 March, the *Investigator* was becalmed, but the tide carried the ship south towards *Murdabalpina*, now known as Cape Spencer.³⁹ That evening *windara*, the west wind, blew strongly and increased to a gale, 'attended with a very heavy sea'.⁴⁰ Did the Narungga link the powerful *windara* to the presence of the *Investigator* and the eclipse of the moon? Aboriginal people believed experienced and learned individuals could control the weather. The gale and rough sea may also have been connected with Mudatju who was responsible for bringing rain.⁴¹

Between 21-24 of March, the British sojourned on Kangaroo Island. 24-27 March were spent tacking along the southern coast of Yorke Peninsula between Cape Spencer and a remarkable 'island-like point' whose hummock Flinders named 'Troubridge Hill'.⁴² This 'low, barren looking country'⁴³ held little interest for the crew. On 29 March, the *Investigator* anchored at the head of the 'Great Inlet 14', later to be named St Vincent's Gulf, 'about two leagues from land on either side & where [sic] could see the bottom of the Bay which seemed to terminate in Shoal water in every direction'.⁴⁴ Flinders called the point off which he

³⁵ Vallance et al., p. 156.

³⁶ Gillen, p. 829. Note Kühn and Fowler claimed all Narungga believe spirits of the dead go west, 'Yorke Peninsula South Australia' in EM Curr, *The Australian Race*, John Ferris Government Printer, Melbourne, 1884, p. 144.

³⁷ Flinders, p. 166.

³⁸ Edwards, p. 68.

³⁹ Flinders, p.166 and Gillen, p. 842.

⁴⁰ Tindale 1936, p. 68, Edwards, p. 68, and Vallance et al., p.163.

⁴¹ Gillen, p. 832.

⁴² Flinders, p. 174.

⁴³ Edwards, p. 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

anchored 'Mangrove Point'. Two nights were spent at this anchorage which marked the boundary between the Kaurna and the Narungga.

At 6 am on Tuesday 30 March, Flinders and the naturalist Brown 'set out in the cutter to the head of the bay'.⁴⁵ The day was 'very fine' with 'light breezes and cloudy weather'.⁴⁶ After 4 miles, the water shoaled but a small channel amongst the nearly dry mud flats allowed the men to reach a 'bank of mud and sand' which they walked upon for half a mile before reaching the shore.⁴⁷ Although finding the land 'poor in vegetable soil', Flinders and Brown were not displeased with the country they examined, describing the hills as 'pleasant-looking' and the grey mangroves as 'luxuriant'.⁴⁸ HM Cooper, after a detailed examination of Flinders' rough and fair logs and manuscript charts, concludes that cutter came ashore in the vicinity of Port Arthur.⁴⁹ Although Flinders saw the 'marks of natives' (see figure 2),⁵⁰ he did not see any Aboriginal people although the Kaurna had been busily signaling the *Investigator's* appearance as she sailed up the coast, and would surely have sent scouts to the head of the gulf.

There are many records across Australia of Aboriginal people initially thinking the white people were spirits, or the ghosts of their relatives, and it seems highly likely the Narungga and Kaurna were no exception. The Narungga initially called white people *Bindirra* which stems from the word *bindi* meaning spirit place.⁵¹ One Narungga man's 'face, and indeed all his body, turned pale – a kind of neutral tint – his hair stood on end, positively three inches straight off his head, and he screamed with fright' the first time he saw a white man.⁵² During the early days of European settlement on the Peninsula, a European wearing glasses was

⁴⁵ Vallance et al., p.169.

⁴⁶ Edwards, p.70, and Flinders' Rough Log entry 30 March 1802 in Cooper 1955, p.10.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 178.

⁴⁸ Flinders, p.179, Vallance et al., p.169.

⁴⁹ HM Cooper, *The Unknown Coast: A Supplement*, Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1955, p.12.

⁵⁰ Rough manuscript chart, photocopies obtained from the Hydrographic Office, Great Britain, held in Special Collections, Flinders University Library, Adelaide.

⁵¹ See Tindale, p. 65 (NB Tindale spells this *Bindira*). Gillen translates Bindirra as "Whitefellows", p. 828.

⁵² Thomas Giles, 'Reminiscence,' *Adelaide Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41C.

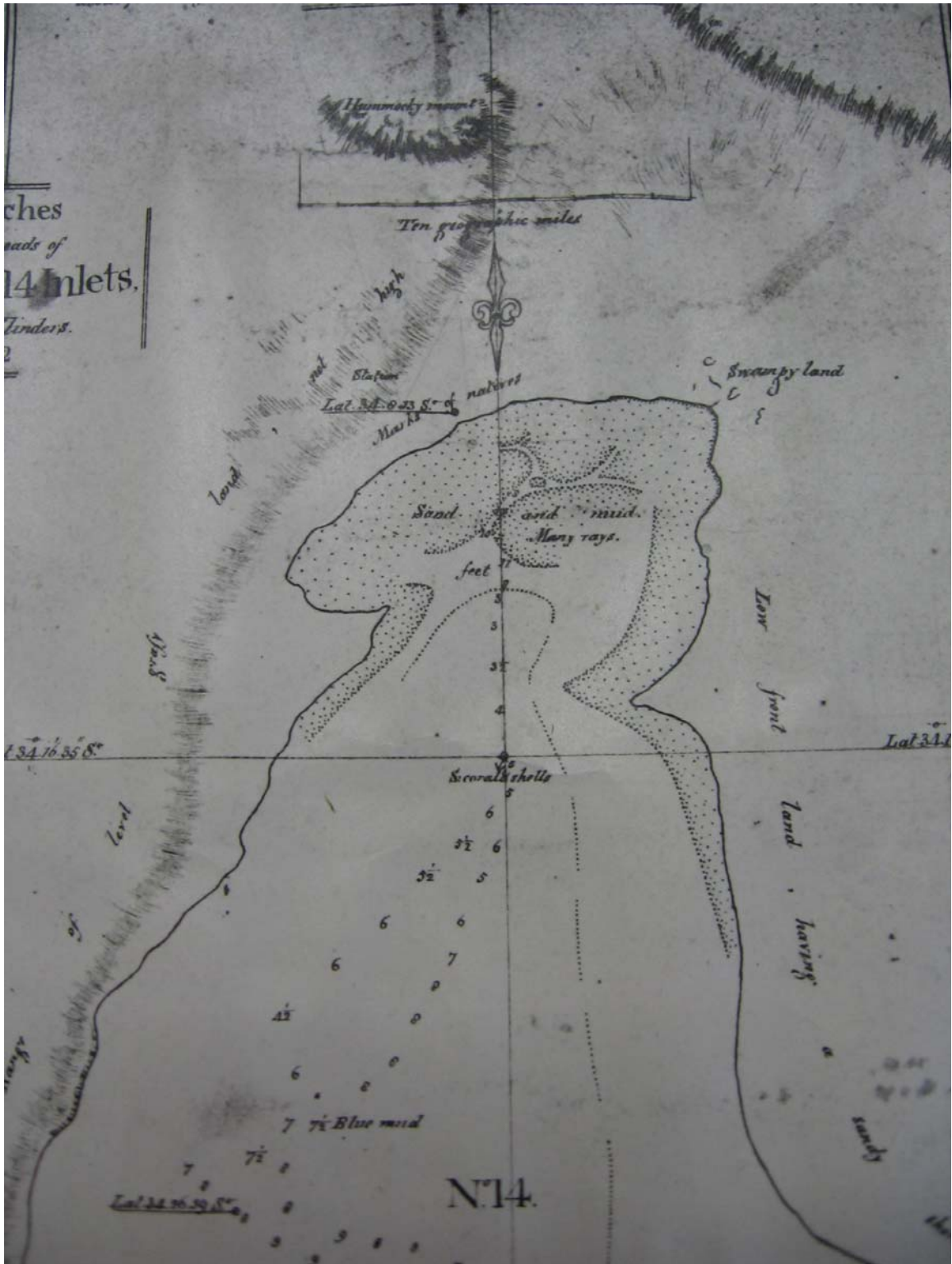


Figure 2. Flinders rough chart of 'Head of Great Inlet 14' (St Vincent's Gulf).

mistaken for a white devil.⁵³ The Narungga and Kurna may have acted cautiously if in close proximity to these strange beings. Flinders was well aware Aboriginal people could observe unnoticed. Reporting in his rough log on the exploration undertaken by Brown at the head of Spencer's Gulf, Flinders noted 'many marks of the natives were seen, and some recent; but they themselves, as usual, kept out of sight'.⁵⁴ Early colonial visitors to Yorke Peninsula were surprised at having items taken by the Narungga 'although we never could perceive they were anywhere near us'.⁵⁵

Flinders had spent sufficient time amongst Aboriginal people to know it was necessary to remain in an area for a number of days if contact was to be made:

I had always found the natives of this country to avoid those who seemed anxious for communication; whereas, when left entirely alone, they would usually come down after having watched us for a few days. Nor does this conduct seem to be unnatural...On the arrival of strangers, so different in complexion and appearance to ourselves, having power to transport themselves over, and even living upon an element which to us was impassable; the first sensation would probably be terror, and the first movement flight. We should watch these extraordinary people from our retreats in the woods and the rocks, and if we found ourselves sought and pursued by them, should conclude their designs to be inimical; but if, on the contrary, we saw them quietly employed in occupations which had no reference to us, curiosity would get the better of fear; and after observing them more closely, we should ourselves seek a communication.⁵⁶

The British did not remain at the head of the gulf long enough to make contact, but the deep footprints Flinders and Brown made (when walking through the mudflats to the shore) would no doubt have been carefully examined later by expert trackers who knew the prints of anyone they had previously come into contact with. The deep prints with no toes and odd shaped heels would hardly seem human and may have inspired wonder and/or fear. But at least prints were left – 'A friend will always leave a footprint, this is the teaching of the

⁵³ Octavius Skipper's 'Reminiscences of Fifty-Two Years' in R Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, Lynton Publications, Blackwood, 1974, p. 119.

⁵⁴ Flinders rough log entry 12 March 1802 in HM Cooper, *The Unknown Coast: being the exploration of Matthew Flinders along the shores of South Australia 1802*, the author, Adelaide, 1953, p. 76.

⁵⁵ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4A.

⁵⁶ Flinders, pp. 145-6.

Aborigines'.⁵⁷ Regardless of how the prints were interpreted, they – and any other traces Flinders and Brown left behind – would have been made sense of.

Coincidentally, Flinders and Brown picked an appropriate site to come ashore. The area surrounding Port Arthur was an inter-tribal meeting place where news and material goods were exchanged, ceremonies performed and relationships renewed and strengthened. Although on Narungga territory, the site was relatively neutral – men and women from diverse groups would gather here at appropriate times. The strangers' choice of place to disembark would have been viewed as sensible and appropriate, and their status may have been interpreted as similar to other visitors who met at this vicinity, although clearly these visitors were seasonally disorientated! The end of a long and dry summer when the grass was 'parched with drought'⁵⁸ was not the time the head of the gulf provided a bountiful supply of nutritious food, or the run off from the hills nearby abundant water. However, the 'Hummocky Mount' (which Flinders was aware 'would probably have afforded an extensive view, both across the peninsula, and of the country to the northward'⁵⁹) was of great spiritual and cultural significance to the Narungga and their neighbours. This mountain was an important meeting place for select male Elders.⁶⁰ Had Flinders and Brown ascended the Hummocks as intended, they would have demonstrated they were beings above regular rules, who were either authorized to ascend the mountain, or unafraid of the consequences of trespassing on such country. However, the 'long, flattish hill' was 'more distant' than Flinders and Brown expected and the men instead walked inland about one mile and 'ascended a nearer part of the range'.⁶¹ Their circumspect movements inadvertently mimicked those of people who had some knowledge of the local area and Aboriginal law.

Flinders and Brown left the shore at four pm. They did not water the ship or strip the area of resources. During the day they saw shags, gulls, a black swan, a bandicoot and numerous

⁵⁷ Unaipon, p. 127.

⁵⁸ Edwards, p. 70.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 179.

⁶⁰ See Elphick and Hughes interviews.

⁶¹ Vallance et al., p. 169, Flinders, pp. 178-9, and Edwards, p. 70.

stingrays.⁶² Flinders shot a hawk.⁶³ This act would have introduced Aboriginal observers to the sight, sound and effects of firearms. The Narungga believed an ancestor, *Gurgunya*, ‘wanders about the earth in the form of the Hawk of that name’ and is responsible for women’s reproductive cycle.⁶⁴ How chillingly apt that the first white man recorded to step foot on Narungga land should kill this symbolic animal. The Eagle hawk was one of the main totems of the Narungga and only members of that group had the right to authorize the killing of that animal.⁶⁵ Flinders may have unintentionally signalled his affiliation with particular people, country and animals.

The following morning (31 March), the *Investigator* sailed down the gulf.⁶⁶ On 1 April, an ‘extensive bank, near the west side of the entrance to the gulph, was named *Troubridge Shoal*,’⁶⁷ the examination of the two gulfs was complete, and the British sailed out of Narungga waters. Within ten days the *Geographe* appeared in St Vincent’s Gulf. Yorke Peninsula’s ‘flat and even’ eastern coast was first observed by the French on 14 April.⁶⁸ The French travelled in the opposite direction to the British and did not land on the South Australian mainland. They had difficulties with ‘rapidly increasing and decreasing depths’, and headed towards the eastern side of the gulf. Baudin named this gulf ‘Golfe de La Misanthropie’ or ‘Mankind-hater Gulf’⁶⁹ reflecting the tense emotions on board.

Baudin’s place names are powerful, imaginative and instructive, and reflect the immediacy of his ‘discoveries’. Baudin chose names in the drama of the moment; we learn about the emotional and physical wellbeing of the crew, and can imagine the powerful impact of unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells upon the travellers’ senses.⁷⁰ Baudin acknowledges local flora and fauna, and inadvertently provides a powerful reminder in the twenty-first

⁶² Flinders, pp. 178-9 and Vallance et al. pp. 170-1 who note JA Moloney suggested this was the Western Barred Bandicoot, now extinct in South Australia.

⁶³ Vallance et al., p. 170.

⁶⁴ Gillen, p. 804.

⁶⁵ Julius Kühn, ‘The Turra Tribe’ in Lorimer Fison and AW Howitt, *Kamilaroi ad Kurnai*, George Robertson, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane, 1880, p. 285.

⁶⁶ Flinders in Cooper, 1953, p. 61.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Nicholas Baudin, diary entry, 14 April 1802, in *Journal of Nicholas Baudin*, translated by Christine Cornell, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, p. 383.

⁶⁹ Cooper, 1955, p. 50.

⁷⁰ See Appendix II for a list of Baudin’s names for Yorke Peninsula.

century of the environmental degradation and species loss which accompanied British settlement.

The honour of bestowing names was usually given to the expedition leader, but Baudin died on the voyage home, and the zoologist Peron and Lieutenant Freycinet supplanted Baudin's names.⁷¹ The names chosen for features on Yorke Peninsula by Peron and Freycinet – and Flinders – display neither imagination nor poetry, and have no connection to either the site or events on board at the time of discovery. Powerful figures are commemorated with the hope of currying favour with influential people. The Frenchmen paid tribute to Napoleon, Josephine and la Fayette, while Flinders celebrated men who held high positions in the British Admiralty such as Pearce, Riley, Hardwicke, the Duke of Yorke and Earl Spencer. Such names display both temporal and spatial distance from Yorke Peninsula. They were chosen in England, France or the Isle de France, years after the voyages. The western world's acceptance of Flinders names, and the French government's discarding of Baudin's names, illustrates the politics involved in the bestowing, adoption and retention of place names. In 1912 the South Australian government officially acknowledged areas of the coast 'discovered' by Baudin by recognizing names conferred by the French, one well known example being Fleurieu Peninsula.⁷² However, the naming and subsequent possession of places already known, named and owned by Aboriginal people has never seriously been challenged by mainstream society. The generally unquestioned retention of these comparatively recently bestowed names is indicative of cross-cultural power relations in Australia today.

On 15 April, the *Geographe* tacked between Kangaroo Island and the Althorpe Islands, and the French sighted 'several columns of smoke to the North'.⁷³ On 16 April the French examined the southern shores of the Peninsula where again 'several columns of smoke' were seen 'in the interior'.⁷⁴ Baudin subsequently gave the name 'Cove of Smokes' (Ance des

⁷¹ Cooper, 1952, pp. 190-2.

⁷² *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia South Australian Branch*, vol. XIII, 1912, pp. 16-17 and vol. XIV, 1913, p. 20.

⁷³ Baudin, p. 384.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

Fumes) to Marion Bay.⁷⁵ It seems the Narungga were communicating their presence. Between 17-19 March, the French reconnoitred from Hardwicke Bay to Cape Elizabeth, while the 19-23 March were spent weathering extremely strong winds, squalls and gusts.⁷⁶ Perhaps the Narungga associated the storm with the appearance of this second ship in Spencer Gulf. These storms lowered the morale on board, and Baudin abandoned the survey of the gulfs and sailed west on 24 March.⁷⁷

The French returned in January 1803. Freycinet and the hydrologer Boullanger took *Le Geographe's* consort, the *Casuarina* to the head of each gulf to examine the western shores, but it is unlikely the men came ashore on Narungga land. They were instructed not to waste time on this 'sterile and unproductive' topography, and to go ashore only if 'certain of being able to obtain water easily'.⁷⁸ Proceeding up St Vincent's Gulf, a 'great number of fires were seen', from which the French deduced 'several tribes of savages undoubtedly live along these marshy shores'.⁷⁹ The *Casuarina* anchored where the *Investigator* had anchored ten months earlier at Mangrove Point, but no-one disembarked – the *Casuarina* lacked a small boat which made it difficult to get close to shore.⁸⁰ The shoals along Yorke Peninsula's coastline prevented the Frenchmen sailing closely along it.⁸¹ The French derogatively describe a hostile and inhospitable terrain. Blaming Baudin for a gap 'of almost one degree' on the official French chart (between Cape Spencer and Cape Elizabeth) Peron reasons 'since this gap is on Yorke Peninsula...the omission can only include unimportant details'.⁸²

Between them, the French and the British spent a total of thirty days in Narungga waters. No direct contact with any Narungga took place which corresponded with preliminary

⁷⁵ Cooper, 1955, p. 50.

⁷⁶ Baudin, pp. 385-390, and see map in Cooper, *French Exploration in the Pacific*, Macdougalls Pty Ltd., Adelaide, 1952, p. 93.

⁷⁷ Baudin letter to Freycinet dated 10 January 1803 in Baudin, 1974, p. 465.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Boullanger to Baudin, 20 February 1803, in Cooper, 1955, p. 36.

⁸¹ François Peron, *Voyage of discovery to the southern lands*, 2nd Edition 1824, translated from the French by Christine Cornell, Adelaide, Friends of the State Library, 2003, p. 74.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.73.

Aboriginal greeting protocols.⁸³ The appearance and actions of the Europeans may have been interpreted as preludes to future exchanges, the strangers behaving ‘properly’ by signalling their presence in a non-threatening manner and politely departing, giving the Narungga time to discuss and debate this unprecedented event. Only once did a small party of strangers come ashore at an intertribal meeting area in the vicinity of Port Arthur. No violent acts were committed, and the Europeans did not strip Narungga country of water or other resources. The Narungga had the opportunity of observing the ships, and drawing their own conclusions as to the origins of the strangers and the purpose of their appearance. However, the men who followed in wake of the disciplined navigators were of an entirely different calibre, and their treatment of Aboriginal people reflected this.

sealers and whalers

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, sealers desperately sought new hunting grounds to supply the profitable fur trade. The Chinese eagerly purchased skins of the southern fur seal, while those of the southern hair seal found a market in Europe and America. Both species of seal were found throughout the shores and islands of Australia’s southern coast.⁸⁴ Other ships cruised these waters in search of the Southern Right Whale whose migration route runs along the coastline of South Australia and whose bones and oil were greatly coveted by Europeans.⁸⁵ After 1803, the Narungga saw much activity in the two gulfs and occasionally on their coasts. Captains of sealing and whaling vessels were primarily concerned with hunting their prey and collecting a full cargo of oil and skins. Unlike Flinders and Baudin, these captains did not record precise dates, times and descriptions of anchorages and visits to the shore, details of the weather, or charts of waters surveyed. Crew members were illiterate, or lacked the desire or resources to jot down their experiences on paper. Our knowledge of cross cultural relations during this period is consequently minimal and fragmented.

⁸³ DJ Mulvaney, ‘The Protocol of Aboriginal Encounters’, in *Encounters in Place*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1989, p. 4-5.

⁸⁴ See James Kirker, *Adventures to China 1792-1812*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970, particularly pp. 17, 13.

⁸⁵ Philip Clarke, ‘The Significance of Whales to the Aboriginal People of Southern South Australia’, *Records of the South Australian Museum*, vol. 34, No. 1, 2001, p. 20.

Kangaroo Island was a convenient and practical stopping place for crews travelling between Bass Strait and King George's Sound. The island abounded in game and timber, and was uninhabited by Aboriginal people. Members of sealing crews were left on Kangaroo Island and the smaller islands that studded Spencer's Gulf to collect kangaroo and wallaby pelts, seal skins and oil, and valuable high quality salt. Some of these men were deserters, others were encouraged by their captains to remain.⁸⁶ Some men aimed to set themselves up through profits made by exploiting natural resources, others were content to live an autonomous subsistence lifestyle. Some sealers were loners who 'lived a Robinson Crusoe sort of life'⁸⁷ while others stayed together in gangs. These men came from a variety of cultural and social groups. Amongst the European sealers lived 'coloured Americans', native Canadians, Tahitians, New Zealand Maoris, and Aboriginal people from Tasmania and the Australian mainland.⁸⁸

The southern shores of Yorke Peninsula were explored and exploited by these men who came ashore to hunt kangaroos and seals, to collect timber and fresh water, and to explore 'undiscovered' land. The transient inhabitants of Kangaroo Island owned whaling boats and other small vessels which gave them a great deal of mobility. They travelled west as far as King George's Sound, and to Bass Strait in the east. Southern Yorke Peninsula was an easy stretch from Kangaroo Island, and seals inhabited the coasts and islands of the Peninsula. The abundance of seals in the pre-colonial days is clearly demonstrated by seals (*mūlta*) being a totem for the Narungga.⁸⁹ In 1816, Le Chevalier Dillon obtained one hundred seals on Althorpe Island 'in the neighbourhood of Yorke's Peninsula'.⁹⁰ One of the Althorpe Isles bears the name 'Seal Island'. Troubridge Shoal was 'a favorite rendezvous' for the hair seal,

⁸⁶ See South Australia Association, *Outline of the plan of a proposed colony...1834*, Adelaide, Austaprint, 1978, p. 53, also letter written by John Hart in 1854, in Thomas Francis Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1969, p. 52.

⁸⁷ *Register*, 29 May 1878, 5G.

⁸⁸ See Cumpston, *Kangaroo Island 1802-1836*, Roebuck Society Publication, Canberra, 1974, particularly pp. 90-1, and Rebe Taylor, *Unearthed*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2002.

⁸⁹ Kühn in Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi ad Kurnai*, George Roberston, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane, 1880, p. 285, and Gillen, p. 829. Tindale states 'wadibaru' was the word for a seal, probably *Arctocephalus doriferus*, 1936, p. 67.

⁹⁰ South Australian Association, pp. 64-5.

where, as late as 1838, they were ‘often seen to congregate to the number of from five hundred to one thousand’.⁹¹

Yorke Peninsula had the added attraction of salt lakes close to the shore at Browns Beach (near Warrenben), and Marion, Sturt and Waterloo Bays. These lakes were ‘covered with salt which was dug by the sealers for preserving pelts’.⁹² Salt was a much sought after item and proximity to shore was an important consideration for any salt collecting enterprise. Sealers ‘were reputed to have a small settlement at Warrenben Hut and Well some years before the establishment of a permanent colony at Adelaide in 1836’.⁹³ In 1975, ‘the ruins of the hut used [were] still visible adjacent to the former native wells on Sec. 78 Hundred of Warrenben’.⁹⁴ Narungga people told Julius Kühn and William Fowler that Yorke’s Peninsula ‘had occasionally been occupied by sealers prior to [1847]’.⁹⁵ RG Jameson, writing about southern Yorke Peninsula after a visit in 1838, stated sealers and whalers ‘are occasionally in the habit of landing on this part of the peninsula for the purpose of obtaining wood and water’.⁹⁶ A few weeks prior to Jameson’s visit, a party of ‘ruthless and merciless’ sealers, ‘inured to every hardship’ had set up an establishment at Trowbridge [sic] Shoal, for the purpose of carrying out ‘a war of extermination’ against the hair seal.⁹⁷

When the South Australian Colonisation Commissioners set up an enquiry in London in 1834 to evaluate possible sites for a future British settlement, evidence was collated from reputable people with experience of the South Australian coast. In a written report, Captain Sutherland stated that he had landed on Yorke Peninsula ‘in the bight between Point Riley and Corny Point’ sometime between 8 January to 12 August 1819.⁹⁸ Sutherland wrote:

⁹¹ RG Jameson, *New Zealand, South Australia and New South Wales: a record of recent travels in these colonies*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1842, p. 93.

⁹² DL Hill and SL Hill, *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*, Luther Publishing House, Adelaide, 1975, p. 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Hill and Hill footnote that Mr L Nelson of Marion Bay through personal communication informed them of the site of the sealer’s hut.

⁹⁵ WJ Kühn and W Fowler, ‘Yorke’s Peninsula, South Australia’, in EM Curr, *The Australian Race*, John Ferris Government Printer, Melbourne, 1886, p. 143.

⁹⁶ Jameson, pp. 87-8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-3.

⁹⁸ South Australian Association, p. 45.

Some of my men landed at several different places on the main, being sometimes absent three weeks at a time in search of seals. On these occasions they carried with them bread and some salt meat; but having a musket and a dog with them, they always obtained fresh meat (Kangaroo) when on the main, as well as on some of the islands. On these expeditions they never took fresh water with them.⁹⁹

The Commissioners asked Sutherland if he had ‘ever been on shore on the mainland’, to which he replied ‘Yes, I landed once on Yorke’s Peninsula’.¹⁰⁰ Asked about ‘the appearance of the natives on the main’, Sutherland stated ‘they are larger and better looking than those in the neighbourhood of Sydney, and I should think they are better fed’.¹⁰¹

George Goold told the Commissioners that when he visited Yorke’s Peninsula in 1828 he ‘landed about sixty miles above the southern shores of Hardwicke Bay’ (ie., in the vicinity of Wallaroo) where the country was ‘open forest land’ with soil of a ‘light sandy loam’.¹⁰² Goold went inland about five miles and saw two kangaroos and some emus. He found plenty of ‘wild celery’ which he used to make a soup with two ‘turtles of the hawksbill kind’.¹⁰³ Goold also found:

a lagoon about two miles inland...finding it too deep, I returned and attempted to round it...however, I was disappointed, for after walking about another mile, I fell in with a river running south towards Hardwicke Bay; the river was very clear and good water, about fifty yards wide, eight feet deep, and running a strong current.¹⁰⁴

Goold could not get round the lagoon and failed to trace this river. He returned to his boat and did not land on any other part of the coast. The river running south is surprising, however Goold did visit in early August, in the wet winter season. The Narungga relate that water courses did exist throughout the Peninsula before they were leveled with the plough.¹⁰⁵

Between 1803-36 the shores of St Vincent’s and Spencer Gulf were buzzing with the activities of sealers and whalers. Although the extent and character of Narungga relations

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 57-8.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 61-2.

¹⁰⁵ Gladys Elphick, transcript of interview with Betty Fisher, NAPA archives. Early surveyors were unable to locate ‘Goold’s river’. For example Robert Cock, *South Australian Gazette*, 15 June 1839, 2C.

with these transient, adventurous men is unknown, it is possible to hypothesise on the nature of these encounters by examining the sealers' treatment of Aboriginal people along other parts of the coast. Some European men established enduring relations with Aboriginal people. In 1832 a party consisting of thirty people with five boats was left at Port Lincoln where it was 'usual for parties to be left on the shore with a view to catching whales'.¹⁰⁶ The party 'had been over there during the three previous seasons' and 'had left their huts standing'.¹⁰⁷ The 'very numerous and peaceful' local people assisted 'in carrying water to the ship and in other matters' and were reimbursed with 'a little tobacco'; it was anticipated 'with kind treatment...they would work well'.¹⁰⁸ In July 1833 and January 1834, John Jones, in the *Henry*, voyaged to St Vincent's gulf. Jones came ashore 'in numerous places along the coast' which he visited for three years 'during all seasons of the year'.¹⁰⁹ Jones employed Aboriginal men who were 'very useful' and 'willing to work for a trifling remuneration'. To the five men who worked for him occasionally, Jones gave 'slop clothing'. He reimbursed the two men who were 'with him long' with pistols, powder and shot.¹¹⁰ Jones remarked that 'neither he nor his crew were ever annoyed by the natives although some of his crew frequently slept on the shore'.¹¹¹

However, the majority of visitors during these years did not come to such an amicable understanding with the local people. The previous experiences of many sealers and whalers had made them brutal and tough:

All knew the maritime trade as a complex geographical web sustained by the ruthless hunger for profit. That hunger had landed many of them at beaches across the oceans, where some had seen – or participated in – massacres and abductions. They knew that trading was a competitive business; that if they went gently, then the harder-dealing meaner-trading men would only follow them and commit worse...The hunger for profit brought them to the beaches of Kangaroo Island...These men would not look upon themselves as cruel or manipulative exploiters; their captains and merchants filled that

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Homburg in South Australian Association, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ 'Port Adelaide River: its first reported discovery', in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, SA Branch*, vol XXII, pp. 73-5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

role. These men had been the toilers and survivors, the poor bastards who had felt the cat on their back and had been bugged as boys, who received a measly portion of an unguaranteed profit, who had to hustle for a swig of the bottle, a better knife, a warmer jacket.¹¹²

The historic records contain numerous examples of savage and aggressive acts committed on Aboriginal people along the southern coast of Australia by these men, and it is likely that cross-cultural exchanges were largely detrimental for the Narungga during these years.

The Kangaroo Islanders brought with them Aboriginal women they had forcefully abducted from Tasmania. They depended upon these women's hunting skills and ability to find fresh water.¹¹³ The sealers' need and desire for female slaves was insatiable, and Aboriginal people who resided in the coastal areas of southern Australia received a brutal introduction to the inhumanity and cruelty of the newcomers. In 1826 Major Lockyer found the sealers 'a complete set of pirates' who go 'from Island to Island along the southern coast from Rottenest Island to Bass's Strait in open whale boats'.¹¹⁴ Their 'chief resort or den' was at Kangaroo Island, from whence they make 'occasional descents on the main land and carry off by force native women, and when resisted make use of the firearms with which they are provided'.¹¹⁵ In a newspaper article published in 1902, the sealers who 'settled themselves in out of the way places, far beyond the reach of the law' were described as 'pirates and wreckers':

In order to provide themselves with female society they made raids on the natives, forcibly carrying off their young women. The men at Kangaroo Island...sailed along the coast...as far as Rottnest...to bring back cargoes of skins and oil, and as many "lubras" (or gins) as they wanted. To obtain the lubras they did not hesitate to shoot any of their male blacks who ventured to resist them.¹¹⁶

A 'Septuagenarian' recalling stories told to him by Port Lincoln 'natives' in the early 1840s stated 'the island desperadoes occasionally visited the mainland, carried off by force native women, and murdered the children with whom their captives might unfortunately be

¹¹² Taylor, p. 30.

¹¹³ *Sydney Gazette*, 1 July 1826, in Cumpston, pp. 84-5.

¹¹⁴ Cumpston, p.105.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ GB Barton, *Australasian*, 8 November 1902, in Cumpston, p. 181.

encumbered'.¹¹⁷ He concluded 'their outrages on natives, when they could inflict them with impunity, were undoubtedly many'.¹¹⁸

Philip Clarke found the core population of Aboriginal women kidnapped from the coastal regions of South Australia consisted of women from Eyre Peninsula, the Lower Murray, and the Cape Jervis to Adelaide Plains region, but notes the population 'may also have occasionally included people from Yorke Peninsula'.¹¹⁹ Although there is no documented evidence to prove the abduction of Narungga women, it seems unlikely they would have remained beyond the reaches of these men. Sealers had obviously visited Yorke Peninsula as they told explorer Charles Sturt prior to 1834 that the 'promontory separating St Vincent's from Spencer's Gulf' was nothing but a 'barren and sandy' waste.¹²⁰

Conclusion

The records are sparse and fragmented, and oral histories do not go back to the arrival of navigators, sealers or whalers, but the work of anthropologists and linguists in conjunction with oral histories from other Aboriginal groups enable us to imagine how the Narungga viewed the appearance of pale strangers who were able to travel over the seas. The navigators did not have any direct contact with the Narungga, but Flinders saw figures on the shore and Baudin saw fires. By making their presence known, it seems the Narungga were willing to consider meeting the newcomers. The sealers and whalers were a different calibre of sailor altogether, and it is likely the Narungga received a harsh induction into the character and motives of outsiders via these men. By 1836, the Narungga had had at least thirty-four years of spasmodic but significant 'exposure' to the transient newcomers. Accounts of encounters with the Narungga which were written by early colonists show us how the Narungga responded to visitors to their shores after 1836, and provide clues to the nature of previous encounters. In November 1836, Colonel Light noted 'the natives on Yorke's Peninsula' were represented as 'much more hostile' than the people inhabiting the eastern shores of St

¹¹⁷ *Register*, 29 May 1878, 5G-6A.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Philip Clarke, 'Early interaction with Aboriginal hunters and gatherers on Kangaroo Island, South Australia', in *Aboriginal History*, vol. 20, 1996, p. 58.

¹²⁰ South Australian Association, p. 77.

Vincent's Gulf.¹²¹ When surgeon RG Jameson visited Yorke Peninsula in 1838, he blamed the Aboriginal peoples' 'terror and distrust' of Europeans on the sealers and whalers who 'are occasionally in the habit of landing on this part of the peninsula'.¹²²

¹²¹ David Elder, *William Light's Brief Journal and Australian Diaries*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1984, pp.77-8.

¹²² Jameson, p. 88.

2. 1836-1846: the arrival of surveyors and ‘adventurers’

South Australia was officially proclaimed a British colony in 1836, but it was not until 1846 that pastoralists began settling on Narungga land. Various surveyors and ‘adventurers’ visited Yorke Peninsula between 1836 and 1846. Some visitors wrote detailed accounts of their meetings with the ‘natives’ during these years, and their reports show the fluidity, creativity and complexity of cross-cultural relations in the early, tenuous years of the colony. There is a noticeable shift in the nature of Narungga responses to the Europeans. As the Narungga learnt to differentiate between the visitors (and the visitors’ weapons and equipment), Narungga confidence in their ability to defend themselves and their country increased. The Narungga shifted from fearfully avoiding meetings to aggressively confronting visitors. Europeans saw Narungga hostility as unprovoked and irrational, and altered the tone and sentiments used to describe the Narungga accordingly. Like Aboriginal people in other areas, the Narungga were no longer patronizingly depicted as harmless children of nature, but came to be represented as ‘treacherous, untrustworthy savages’. Scholars wishing to make sense of Aboriginal hostility argue it was a justifiable response to the take over of Aboriginal land and the multitudinous consequences of this invasion, including the brutal treatment of Aboriginal people. However, the actions of the Narungga between 1836 and 1846 prove we need to look for other, deeper reasons for Aboriginal aggression.

Prior to 1846 the Narungga were in the enviable position of being able to control (to a certain extent) visits to their shores. Visitors did not arrive in large numbers, nor did they bring sheep or cattle with them to destroy native vegetation, drive away native game or monopolise precious water supplies. There were no shepherds residing on the Peninsula to interfere with Narungga women. There was no battle for land ownership – no punitive shootings dished out to ‘teach the natives a lesson’. Many of those who visited the Peninsula were humane, empathetic men, who did not retaliate after the Narungga acted aggressively. The standard explanations for outbreaks of violence do not apply to the Narungga during this period.

The cross-cultural encounters recorded by Europeans between 1836-1846 were written when the Narungga were the undisputed owners of their land, and when their complex and

powerful culture remained intact. These accounts provide an important record of Aboriginal agency. The actions of the Narungga are raw – immediate and honest – in the sense that they had not yet been modified by the permanent, threatening presence of armed and ‘decisive’ Europeans. To fully understand these early cross-cultural relations we need an understanding of Aboriginal ontology. The Narungga were not acting irrationally but were adhering to traditional laws and understandings of ownership of country. These accounts also show the inventiveness and hospitality of Aboriginal people who were willing to incorporate new people and goods into traditional exchange networks. We glimpse Narungga optimism in their attempts to establish equitable cross-cultural relations, and frustration when this gesture was not reciprocated.

1836-1839: ‘timid’ and ‘mistrustful’ Narungga

Following the establishment of Adelaide in December 1836, squatters rapidly established extensive sheep and cattle runs on the well watered, park-like areas of the Adelaide plains and surrounding districts. The colonists realized more land needed to be ‘taken up’ if South Australia was to become an important wool exporting colony. With a view to investigating the fertility of the soil, and dispelling ‘some portion of the doubt, or rather the complete ignorance which exists respecting York’s [sic] Peninsula’, Robert Cock and RG Jameson set out in late 1838 to examine the western shores of St Vincent’s Gulf.¹ From the head of the Gulf, their boat ran south along the coast of the Peninsula. Seven or eight smokes in the interior were seen, and the men observed ‘the natives eyeing us fixedly from the cliffs’.²

The topography of Yorke Peninsula provided the Narungga with strategic vantage points to view and prepare for the arrival of strangers. Being surrounded on three sides by sea, the Narungga could safely keep a look out for potential arrivals. Europeans often commented on Aboriginal people’s excellent observational skills and ‘remarkably quick’ eyesight.³ One visitor noted the Narungga espied his small whale boat ‘at a distance of fifteen miles from the shore’ where upon the ‘smokes of natives fires...shot up in a thin blue line into the air like a

¹ ‘Report of a visit to York’s Peninsula – by Messrs Cock and Jameson’, *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* (hereafter *SA Gazette*), 8 December 1838, 2D-3A.

² RG Jameson, *New Zealand, South Australia, and New South Wales: a record of recent travels in these colonies*, Smith Elder and Co., London, 1842, p. 83.

³ NRF, ‘Account of a Trip to Yorke’s Peninsula’, *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

rocket' and 'were evidently intended for signals' as column after column of smoke could be perceived rising along the cliffs.⁴ Narungga responses to potential landings varied depending upon the site, the time of year, the number, gender, age and previous experiences of any Narungga in the vicinity, and the calibre and number of the visitors.

During the first few years of the colony, it seems the Narungga chose not to liaise with visitors. When Mr Beare explored 'the southern extremity' of Yorke Peninsula prior to December 1838, he landed 'opposite to a spot where a number of natives were seated around their fires'.⁵ But no sooner did the Narungga 'behold his approach than they fled in alarm into the woods, leaving on the ground their spears and grass-woven fishing-nets'.⁶ When Cock and Jameson came ashore in the latter months of 1838, 'many native smokes were rising' and a 'party of eight or ten natives gathering shell fish' were seen.⁷ However 'when the natives descried [Cock and Jameson] they immediately ran into the woods'⁸ and subsequent 'endeavours to meet them...were unsuccessful'.⁹ In April 1839, the Narungga situated four miles below Point Riley set fire to the bush upon sighting a boat containing Cock and the surveyor James Hughes.¹⁰ No Narungga were sighted when the party landed.

In 1839, Hughes felt the Aboriginal people of Yorke Peninsula had had 'little, if any, opportunity of intercourse with Europeans', and any encounters which had taken place previously 'may have been characterized by one of those disgraceful occurrences which operate so long in preventing a friendly meeting between the black man and the white man'.¹¹ The 'terror and distrust' of the 'natives' was blamed on previous experiences with sealers and whalers.¹² This seems a likely and valid assumption. If previous cross-cultural exchanges were unsatisfactory and possibly violent, the Narungga would act defensively and fearfully.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jameson, p. 87.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *SA Gazette*, 8 December 1838, 3A.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jameson, p. 87.

¹⁰ Robert Cock, 'Progress of Discovery', *SA Gazette*, 15 June 1839, 2B.

¹¹ Hughes, *Chronicle*, 13 January 1839, 3D.

¹² Jameson, p. 88.

The salt lagoons and seal colonies at the southern end of the Peninsula would have been more inviting to sealers than the country and coast further north. The Narungga's neighbours, the Nantowaru people (the Kangaroo Speakers), whose country encompassed the South Hummocks¹³ appear to have had no violent encounters with strangers prior to 1837. When Stephen Hack travelled north to retrieve some fat cattle belonging to the government in July 1837, he felt he was the first European to see the 'very fine' country with 'immense plains at the head of the Gulf'.¹⁴ He communicated with Aboriginal people who told him that streams ran through the 'very fine range of green mountains' (the Hummocks) all year round. The Nantowaru appear to have accompanied Hack, and do not appear to have prevented or been offended by his ascending 'the summit of a hill'.¹⁵ Hack was on horse back had a 'brace of kangaroo dogs' with him. In these early days the Europeans were anxious to befriend the local people, and Hack comes across as a generous, empathetic man. At this point of the colony's history he would have been respectful, and would no doubt have shared any game caught.

It is likely that by 1838, the Narungga had begun differentiating between the appearance and character of various visitors. The boats, clothing, equipment and general demeanour of the post-1836 'gentlemen' must have contrasted dramatically with those of the sealers and whalers. These new visitors gave presents of biscuit and blankets, and were careful to leave spears, nets and other items undisturbed if they chanced upon a 'native encampment'.¹⁶ Perhaps the Narunggas' timidity betrays uncertainty regarding the spiritual status and intentions of these new, more respectful visitors. In December 1838, Jameson reflected it was 'evident that in Yorke's Peninsula the white man was yet esteemed as a mysterious and formidable being'.¹⁷ When Jameson and Cock visited in 1838, they came ashore 'distant' from a 'beautiful, semicircular bay, three miles deep, with sloping and wooded shores'. They

¹³ Norman Tindale, 'Notes on the Natives of the Southern Portion of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia', in *Royal Society of South Australia (Transactions)*, vol. 60, 1936, p. 69.

¹⁴ Stephen Hack, State Library of South Australia, PRG 456/1/1488/18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Beare left tobacco and biscuits where the Narungga had been seated, and did not remove any spears or nets, in Jameson, p. 87, and Cock and Hughes planted maize, melon and turnip seeds in the vicinity of Port Riley, in *SA Gazette*, 15 June 1838, 2B.

¹⁷ Jameson, p. 87.

are describing Coobowie, (Ku:bawi) which literally translates as ‘a ghost’ or ‘dead ancestors’.¹⁸ This area, close to Troubridge Shoals, was a popular disembarkation point for sealers and other visitors – was it so named because of the recurring appearance of white people here in these early, uncertain years of cross-cultural contact?

In November 1836, Colonel Light stated the Narungga had a reputation for hostility, but visitors to the Peninsula between 1836 and 1839 were keen to clear up this misconception. Jameson, reflecting on his visit to Yorke Peninsula in December 1838, informed the public that the Narungga ‘are neither cannibals nor wild beasts, but human beings living on the spontaneous bounty of nature’.¹⁹ He felt Aboriginal people in general were ‘very harmless’, and that if the Narungga ‘received no provocation...they would remain perfectly inoffensive’.²⁰ On 13 January 1840, James Hughes, who had visited the Peninsula on numerous occasions in 1839, wrote to a popular Adelaide newspaper refuting an earlier report which claimed he had been ‘shamefully ill-treated by the natives’.²¹ Hughes was concerned the public would gain ‘an unfavourable impression’ against the ‘natives of Yorke’s Peninsula’, and wished to make clear he had received ‘no personal violence or ill-treatment on their behalf’.²²

1839: initial surveys of Yorke Peninsula

Jameson and Cock’s report of their visit to the eastern shores of the Peninsula in 1838 sparked the interest of squatters and speculators. Early in 1839, the Adelaide Survey Association contracted Hughes, and commissioned Cock, to survey any promising harbours and country on Yorke Peninsula.²³ The men travelled overland from Port Vincent to Port

¹⁸ Tindale, p. 69, and Gillen in DJ Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, Alison Petch (Eds), *My dear Spencer: the letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1997, p. 435. Luise Hercus and V Potenzy say ‘kupa’ means white and ghost and may mean white man, in ‘Finch versus Finch-water’: A Study of Aboriginal Place-Names in South Australia’, *Records of the South Australian Museum*, vol. 31, 1999, p. 175.

¹⁹ *SA Gazette*, 8 December 1838, 3A.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ JH Hughes, ‘Natives of Yorke’s Peninsula’, *Chronicle*, 13 January 1840, 3CD.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Rhoda Heinrich, *Wide Sails and Wheat Stacks*, Port Victoria Centenary Committee, Port Victoria, 1976, p. 12-3.

Victoria.²⁴ They found the country between Troubridge Hill and Victoria Harbour had ‘rich and fertile’ soil, with abundant timber (‘principally she-oak’) for fuel and fencing purposes, and the land ‘sufficiently open for the immediate commencement of agricultural pursuits’.²⁵ Cock wrote glowingly of the ‘safe and commodious’ Victoria Harbour, surrounded by an ‘agricultural area of at least six hundred square miles’.²⁶ He found fresh water ‘almost everywhere at from six to ten feet from the surface’, and noted ‘there appears to be few natives – kangaroo, emu and wallaby are plentiful’.²⁷

Reports regarding the suitability of Yorke Peninsula for farming and grazing varied. FR Lees and David McLaren were uninspired by a visit to Hardwicke Bay in March 1839. Lees ‘saw plenty of limestone and she-oak, with here and there a stunted gum tree, which seemed ashamed of the soil it grew upon’.²⁸ McLaren was not impressed with the soil, or the lack of hills, rivers and fresh water sites although he did find two well built ‘native huts’, quite different from structures he had previously seen.²⁹ In spite of these negative reports, by 10 May 1839, fifteen thousand acres at ‘Port St Vincent’ and ‘Port Victoria’ (comprising the sixteenth special survey) were ready for sale, and by 13 May 1839, unbeknownst to the Narungga, four thousand acres of their land had been sold.³⁰

Cock does not describe any direct encounters with the Narungga. At Port Lincoln, Hughes and Cock established amicable relations with the Nawu whom they treated with much respect.³¹ Cock was interested in the welfare of Aboriginal people. Although his employment directly linked him to the dispossession of Aboriginal people, Cock was aware of the injustice of taking over another peoples land. In September 1838 he wrote a letter to the *Southern Australian* enclosing a sum of money – 1/5th of the purchase money of town land –

²⁴ John Blacket, *History of South Australia*, Hussey and Gillingham Ltd, Adelaide, 1911, p. 95, and Judith Brown and Barbara Mullins, *Town Life in Pioneer South Australia*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1980, p.147.

²⁵ *SA Gazette*, 15 June 1839, 2B.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ ‘Progress of Discovery’, *Register*, 20 April 1839, 3AB.

²⁹ Heinrich, p. 12

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3.

³¹ *SA Gazette*, 15 June 1839.

to go towards the care of Aboriginal people as promised by the Colonisation Commissioners.³²

surveyor Hughes' first report, January 1840

James Hughes wrote two reports which describe numerous encounters with the Narungga.³³ In order to complete the surveys, Hughes not only visited various harbours by boat, but also travelled by foot across the Peninsula on several occasions in various seasons.³⁴ His recurrent presence must have conveyed the impression he had a particular interest in Narungga country. The men in Hughes' surveying party, whose numbers do not appear to have exceeded eight, would have been wielding theodolites, staves, and chains rather than muskets and swords, and no doubt the Narungga soon realized these men did not come with malicious intent. Their actions must have puzzled the Narungga. Rather than hunting animals or looking for water, the surveyors would have been pacing backwards and forwards, measuring, recording things on paper, and packing up and doing the same thing over and over again. As the head of the party, Hughes would have been recognized by the Narungga as a leader and an organizer. He was educated and would doubtless have dressed and behaved as a 'gentleman'.

Hughes comes across as comparatively fair and respectful in his dealings with the Narungga. His first report, dated 13 January 1840, was written out of his concern to 'exonerate the natives' from charges of personal violence.³⁵ This benevolent gesture must, however, be tempered with the fact that Hughes' surplus salary and expenses were indirectly connected with land sales on the Peninsula³⁶ – he would not want potential purchasers discouraged by fear of the 'natives'. Hughes is careful to convey to the public the respectful and inoffensive

³² 'A Tenant', *Southern Australian*, 15 September 1838, p.3.

³³ JH Hughes, 'Natives of Yorke's Peninsula', *Chronicle*, 21 January 1840, 3CD, and JH Hughes, 'Natives of Yorke's Peninsula – Port Victoria', *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4A-C.

³⁴ 'Yorke's Peninsula – report of Mr Hughes', *South Australian Almanacs and Directories*, 1840, Barr-Smith Library micro-fiche, Per 324, pp.113-114. Hughes writes 'prior to the road being cut', which according to Cock in *Southern Australian*, 7 August 1839, 3E, was completed by August 1839.

³⁵ *Chronicle*, 13 December 1840, 3D.

³⁶ Heinrich states Hughes was under contract with the Government but the remainder of his salary and charges were to be paid by the funds of the Adelaide Survey Association. Heinrich, p. 13.

manner in which he and his men treated the Narungga. On one occasion (prior to 9 December 1839) he made ‘a favorable impression on the natives at Port Victoria’ when

Having suddenly surprised two females...they appeared much alarmed, and made motions to us to go away, when our whole party wheeled round, taking no further notice of them.³⁷

‘If we go on as we have begun,’ Hughes felt, ‘we shall be on friendly terms with each other’.³⁸

In his January report, Hughes alludes to two other encounters he had with the Narungga while completing the preliminary surveys (during July-August 1839) with a party comprising himself and three other men.³⁹ The meetings appear awkward but not violent. Hughes notes:

having been obliged to visit one of their favorite watering holes at night, we found a tribe of natives there, who retired, on hearing our footsteps, and left their spears behind. They did not go above twenty yards, before they pitched for the night, of course imagining we were unaware of their vicinity. In return for their courtesy, having refreshed ourselves, we gave them an opportunity of removing their spears, and obtaining water, if they required it, which they availed themselves of...⁴⁰

Night was not a suitable time for Aboriginal people to travel about or initiate meetings – to disturb people already camped for the evening was very rude. Unfortunately, Hughes does not give the location of this ‘favorite watering hole’, but the Europeans helped themselves to water. To leave their spears behind the Narungga must have either been caught by surprise, or felt confident of the strangers’ peaceful intentions. The Narungga initially acted cautiously by immediately ‘retiring’ when hearing the surveyors. Interestingly, the Narungga did not ‘disappear’ as seems to have been the case in previous encounters. They were confident enough to return, gather their spears, have a drink, and camp nearby (it is doubtful they would have thought the Europeans unaware of their proximity). According to Hughes, the Narungga did not act aggressively, and therefore appear to be diplomatically overlooking the Europeans social blunderings. Or perhaps they felt any show of hostility would be unwise – Hughes description ‘a tribe of natives’ implies women and children were present. In Hughes’ first report, the Narungga appear to be tentatively accommodating the Europeans

³⁷ *Chronicle*, 13 January 1839, 3D.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Robert Cock, *Southern Australian*, 7 August 1839, 3E.

⁴⁰ *Chronicle*, 13 January 1839, 3D.

whilst strategically increasing their knowledge of the strangers. The Narungga modified their behavior as their knowledge and experience increased. At this stage they were no doubt trying to understand where and how the strangers fitted in to their cultural system, and deliberating on what status and rights to assign them.

Upon completing the preliminary surveys in August 1839, Hughes left a 'depot of stores', including a tent and surveying instruments, 'carefully buried in the sand' at Port Victoria. He covered them over with ashes and lit 'a large fire over all, leaving what remained of the unburnt timber on the spot'.⁴¹ Hughes left his boat nearby, and a cart 'loaded with rations, &c' at Yorke Valley.⁴² On 9 December 1839, Hughes and his surveying party returned to Port Victoria to resume the survey. The seventeen to twenty Narungga 'located on the spot' retreated when approached by four members of Hughes' party. They left their fishing nets behind but were 'allowed an opportunity of taking them away', which they did 'with out any attempt at hostility'.⁴³ The Narungga were becoming increasingly confident around Hughes, no doubt recognizing him from previous visits. Upon landing, Hughes was surprised to find:

the natives...had discovered my depot and had spoiled or destroyed everything they found there. It appeared they had not consumed any of the rations, but had scattered them about so as to make them useless. The tent, boat's sail, blankets, and everything in the shape of clothing had disappeared; the reflecting glasses of my sextant had been most ingeniously removed, as well as the bright arch of division.⁴⁴

The boat was undamaged, and only two blankets and a telescope stand were taken from the cart. The loss sustained was estimated at £150. In spite of this, Hughes pointedly states he and his men acted with great 'leniency' and 'not the slightest retaliation was made'.⁴⁵

I would speculate that Hughes' actions in leaving these items was highly significant for future relations between the surveying party and the Narungga, and for wider cross-cultural relations. Incredibly, Hughes thought his depot would not be discovered. But for the skilled trackers who knew their land intimately, it must have seemed the treasure trove of goods

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ JH Hughes, 'The Natives of Yorke's Peninsula', *Register* 26 December 1840, 4A.

deliberately planted in their country was purposely left for them. Did they think it was back payment for trespassing on their land and accessing their waterholes and other resources uninvited? Or did they think the Europeans were subtly providing an example of potential goods that could be obtained should the Narungga agree to become trading partners? Hughes unintentionally gave the Narungga a valuable opportunity to leisurely familiarize themselves with new objects and food without mediation or fear of repercussions. They could deduce which items were of use, thus not waste future exchange opportunities. Importantly, we also learn from Hughes which items the Narungga found valuable – blankets, clothes, the boat sail, metal and glass. The rations – flour, biscuits, rice, sugar, and tea – were scattered about, none had been consumed.⁴⁶ An awareness of which items were perceived as useful and which were discarded aids any analysis of later encounters.

Hughes reports that on another occasion in December 1839, two of his surveyors stationed at the Port Vincent huts were visited by ten to twelve Narungga men. The surveyors were unarmed, and gave the ‘natives’ a blanket as a present. The Narungga ‘immediately retired, without offering them any molestation’.⁴⁷ Hughes ‘sustained’ his last loss after sleeping overnight in one of the Pt Vincent huts. Hughes was alone, and at nine o’clock in the morning went to the springs nearby. He was gone two or three minutes, and upon his return found two blankets and ‘some other trifles’ missing, which ‘surprised [him] very much, as [he] had no idea there were natives in the neighbourhood’.⁴⁸ One hundred yards along the beach, Hughes saw ‘about ten natives fishing very deliberately, middle deep in water, two of whom had the missing blankets on their shoulders’. When they saw Hughes, they ‘retired into the scrub’ and were seen no more. The Narungga acted boldly and were not afraid to approach the strangers or their huts. They were satisfied with blankets. Interestingly, they did not approach Hughes, even though he was alone and unarmed. Perhaps his higher status made him less approachable. As noted earlier, Hughes adopts a decidedly conciliatory tone in his first report. He wants to ‘exonerate’ the ‘natives’ and stresses no personal violence or ill treatment was committed by them. On the occasion that he was alone ‘had they been

⁴⁶ The biscuits and tobacco left by Beare were also left lying on the ground broken and shredded, in Jameson, p. 87.

⁴⁷ *Chronicle*, 13 January 1839, 3D.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

hostilely inclined, they might easily have speared me, but they took no advantage of my defenseless state'.⁴⁹ He writes empathetically, deliberately not stirring up the passions of the public, despite having to temporarily abandon the survey due to the destruction of the equipment. However, this depiction of the Narungga as harmless, inoffensive people was not to last.

Although visitors between 1836 to 1840 sought to befriend and pacify the Narungga, in October 1840, several encounters took place which demonstrate a clash of cultural values and expectations. According to European norms, the hostility displayed by the Narungga was unprovoked. After December 1840, the Narungga came to be depicted as 'treacherous savages', and future visitors made sure they were well armed and supplied with plenty of ammunition. A careful examination of descriptions of Narungga hostility between 1840 and 1846 highlights the need for cultural and historical contextualization of Jameson's optimistic and slightly paternalistic statement that 'where ever Aboriginal people had been met', they had 'returned kindness for kindness'.⁵⁰

Port Victoria, October 1840

Hughes returned to Port Victoria in October 1840 to complete the survey. A report of his encounters with the Narungga during this trip was published in the *Register* on 26 December 1840.⁵¹ The tone of the December report is noticeably different to the one written in January – Hughes is now annoyed with the Narungga and seeks to rouse public sympathy for the manner in which he has been treated. When analyzing this shift in sentiment, it is important to be aware that Hughes had presented a detailed account of the Port Victoria survey to the Government in September 1840, but for the next two years 'wrangling ensued between Hughes and the Surveyor-General's department officers over the issue of Hughes carrying out his task competently, and whether he was entitled to receive any payment'.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *SA Gazette*, 8 December 1838, 3A.

⁵¹ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4AB.

⁵² Heinrich, p. 13.

Rather than tolerant and empathetic understanding for the harmless acts of the Narungga, the ‘natives’ are now depicted as treacherous and untrustworthy. Hughes’ second report subtly, but informatively, contradicts statements made in his earlier report. Rather than being passively tolerant and indifferent, it seems the Narungga were carefully scrutinizing the Europeans previously, and treating them with defensive tolerance. This later report of Hughes depicts determined Narungga people who, despite showing their strength, accommodated the Europeans’ blunderings and ineptitude. Hughes now says that when he landed the previous December (ie., 9 December 1839) the natives ‘located upon the spot, made an ineffectual attempt to surround the party, but were driven off without any shots being fired’, and that the ‘natives’ had ‘contrived to *rob* [him] twice of blankets’.⁵³ Retelling the same events reported in January, Hughes now describes the Narungga as ‘menacing’, ‘hostile’ and ‘threatening’, and he refers to an unfriendly encounter he had deliberately not mentioned previously.⁵⁴ On the day he ‘unintentionally’ surprised the two women (July-August 1839), Hughes states he ‘suddenly came within full view of the whole tribe’:

but having only two men with me, without fire-arms, provisions, or water, and no probability of obtaining any before we had crossed the Peninsula, I considered it prudent to retire without risking an interview, more particularly as they showed a menacing attitude.⁵⁵

When Hughes sailed to Yorke Peninsula in October 1840, he was careful to take ‘a sufficient stand of arms and ammunition’ for protection ‘against the hostility of the natives’.⁵⁶ His surveying party consisted of eight men (including himself). Upon landing at Port Victoria on this occasion, Hughes noticed that his boat – which once again he had trustingly (or stupidly) left on the beach – had been moved about a quarter of a mile, and had the ‘bottom flooring torn out, and the rudder, oars, &c. had been removed’.⁵⁷ When the Europeans went ashore to retrieve it, ‘about seventeen natives made their appearance with their spears, yelling with their *usual* threatening attitude’.⁵⁸ The word ‘usual’ contrasts with the January report in which Hughes implies landings and encounters were friendly.

⁵³ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4A, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4AB.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4B, emphasis added.

The Narungga had thoroughly dismantled the boat, no doubt completely demystifying any uncertainties or questions they may have harboured about such an object. By October 1840, (and, according to the second report, even earlier) they were not passively allowing Europeans access to their land. Hughes' earlier leniency had possibly increased Narungga confidence in dealing with visitors. The Narungga may have been unimpressed the survey party had not compensated them after their last visit – in December 1839, the Europeans did not replace the supply of goods buried in the sand. The Narunggas' increasing knowledge and confidence appears detrimental to potential cross-cultural relations. The more the Narungga learnt about the Europeans and their goods, the lower they appeared to regard them. However, as the following extract from Hughes illustrates, the Narungga were still prepared to accommodate the visitors, but only on terms acceptable to them.

Despite considering 'it almost useless to make any attempt at a friendly meeting with them', Hughes, with four men 'following steadily behind', advanced alone towards the 'natives':

I made the signal of peace by holding up both my hands and waving a green bough. This caused them immediately to drop their spears, and one of them took a green bow [sic] also, and advanced to meet me, the rest remaining behind at about the same distance from him as my party from me.⁵⁹

Hughes describes the Narungga strictly adhering to, and accepting the newcomers adoption of, the peace symbol which was recognized throughout much of Aboriginal Australia. The green bough represented 'the rite of safe passage through the land...so long as [recipients] were friendly, and under such restrictions as the laws impose, they and their children may come there again without fear of molestation, the presents of boughs and leaves and grass meant to signify that these are theirs when they like to use them'.⁶⁰ In October 1840, despite the leader appearing 'very timid as he advanced, frequently looking behind him to see if he was supported by his party', the Narungga were prepared to trust Europeans who displayed some knowledge of Aboriginal protocols.⁶¹ No doubt these men also took into account previous non-violent experiences with Hughes.

⁵⁹ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4B.

⁶⁰ Diane Barwick, cited in Bruce Pascoe, *Convincing Ground*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 15.

⁶¹ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4B.

Hughes knew to keep his men at a distance and give the 'chief' a present of 'some biscuit'.⁶² The Narungga 'chief' 'came close enough to receive it and was then reconciled'. Hughes ordered his men to drop their pieces. The chief likewise 'called to four of his party who came without their spears'.⁶³ The number of men the head man called precisely mirrored those accompanying Hughes, again showing Aboriginal etiquette. More biscuit was distributed. The Narungga pointed out 'a track which led to some water-holes, at which they had encamped'.⁶⁴ Hughes could not persuade the Narungga to return with him for more biscuit, but made signs 'we would visit them before the sun went down, and bring biscuit and get water'.⁶⁵ The two parties then separated, each waving a green bough.

The Narungga actively controlled this meeting; by refusing to return with the Europeans they adhered to Aboriginal protocols, in which greetings were not rushed or spontaneous but were carefully planned in advance in order for suitable preparations to be made. Later that afternoon, Hughes and five of his men visited their encampment as arranged. Hughes was impressed with the 'orderly conduct of the natives':

They were prepared to receive us, being seated in a circle, and without any weapons; the women and children had been sent away. They had dressed themselves with green boughs fastened round their middle, and advancing singly, the chief came alone to meet me, and introduced me to the waterhole, and then to each of his brethren. Having taken water, some biscuit was distributed among them, with which they seemed much pleased. My party now came up with green boughs and were received in the same manner. Having given them some small presents, we again separated, each party waving their boughs.⁶⁶

Hughes' account of Narungga etiquette is unique. His introduction to the waterhole prior to his introduction to the head man's brethren illustrates the great esteem in which the waterhole was held. Wider Aboriginal attachment to waterholes can be applied to the Narungga. Aboriginal people who have been able to maintain their connection to country revere waterholes and select individuals inherit, or are appointed as custodians of, such sites which

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

are thought of as alive, and need to be treated with great respect. An awareness of this increases our understanding of Narungga sensibilities and reactions to Europeans who treated waterholes with complete disregard. By rudely barging in and helping themselves to water uninvited, and radically altering the appearance of water holes by deepening and widening them, the Europeans were violating sacred spaces and Beings.

By formally introducing the Europeans to the waterhole and giving permission to access water, the Narungga demonstrated their willingness to accommodate the Europeans. This hospitable, or strategic, gesture begs the question: What were the Narungga expecting in return? Did they covet iron, guns, or women? We know they were not interested in the unappetizing rations, and their willing acceptance of biscuit illustrates great diplomacy. Perhaps they were seeking allies, hoping their hospitality would oblige the Europeans to recognize and acknowledge Narungga ownership of the country, and to act respectfully towards it.

This is at least the fourth time in eighteen months that Hughes visited Port Victoria. His rudimentary knowledge of Aboriginal protocols must have conveyed the impression he was familiar with the complex obligations these preliminary protocols preceded. Hughes noted ‘the pleasure with which they appeared to view us’ and ‘fully expected that all hostility had ceased’.⁶⁷ Four days later he and some of his men visited the ‘native’ encampment ‘for the purpose of giving them more biscuit’.⁶⁸ Only four females were present. Hughes called to them, but they got up, ‘much alarmed’. The Europeans retreated and waved the green bough, whereby the women ‘collected their nets &c., and walked away’, leaving behind a number of spears and four young dingoes.⁶⁹ As Hughes felt that most of the hostility shown by the ‘natives’ arose from ‘real or anticipated acts of violence on their females’, he hoped the actions of his party would convince the Narungga ‘we were real friends’.⁷⁰ Although Hughes had committed a serious breach in etiquette by not only visiting the camp uninvited and placing the unprotected women in an embarrassing position, it is likely the Narungga would

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

have overlooked this non-consequential mistake had not other actions of the surveying party seriously offended them.

‘Nothing more was seen of the natives for fourteen days’.⁷¹ This period marks a shift in Narungga attitudes towards Hughes and his party. During this time the survey party remained on the Peninsula, no doubt helping themselves to water at various waterholes, and supplementing their rations with fresh kangaroo and other game. The clearing of a twenty foot road was completed, and townships were marked at Port Victoria, in Yorke Valley, on Point Pearce and Wardang Island. These areas are rich in Dreaming and ceremonial sites. Access to some areas was restricted according to initiatory status and gender. Although these areas had been trespassed upon by Hughes and his party on previous visits, the Narungga must have been freshly affronted by the Europeans’ obvious disregard of their laws and sensibilities *after* they had generously extended the hand of friendship by officially welcoming the newcomers and granting them access to specific areas. By waving the green bough, Hughes had (unknowingly) signalled not only his recognition of Narungga ownership of country, but also his intention to adhere to Aboriginal law. His subsequent disregard of these laws, and lack of adequate recompense, must have been deeply insulting. At this point, the Narungga shift from seemingly relatively tolerant hosts to hostile defenders of their land.

Fourteen days after disturbing the women, two men left at the tents reported that a group of twenty-four Narungga appeared who, after making the signal of peace were ‘allowed’ to come down to the tents. They were given biscuits, rice, sugar and water but ‘their behaviour was very forward, and...the two men had much difficulty in preventing them from taking anything they wanted, and were under the necessity of showing the fire-arms’.⁷² After asking for and receiving a fire-stick, the Narungga set fire to the grass, ‘endeavouring thereby to drive us away’.⁷³ The Europeans managed to put the fire out. Upon ‘seeing this manoeuvre fail’, the chief:

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

advanced to the tents with two young females, and made signals to the two men in charge to take them into their tents; but this being refused, some more sugar and rice was given to the females, and they were ordered away.⁷⁴

At this point, the chief ‘became quite enraged’ and called to the other men who ran to him with a bundle of spears. Just as he was on the point of throwing a spear, another man was seen running away with a great-coat and a kangaroo rug. The Europeans ‘discharged their pieces’ but ‘without effect’.⁷⁵ The man with the rug and coat got away, as did the ‘chief’ who dropped his bundle of spears. Alerted by the shots, the survey party returned. The Narungga had disappeared. Hughes examined the seventeen spears left behind and looked in the sand-hills for signs of blood, but tellingly found only dropped rice, sugar and biscuit.⁷⁶

Hughes describes the Narungga as ‘forward’. Perhaps the lawless and impertinent actions of the Europeans freed the Narungga from the obligations of non-violence and hospitality embodied in the peace greeting. As no signs of adequate compensation were forthcoming, the Narungga felt entitled to help themselves. They were not satisfied with biscuits, rice and sugar, but desired the great-coat and kangaroo rug. When these items were not freely given, other strategies were resorted to. Informatively, the women were offered only after previous strategies failed. Was the ‘chief’ attempting to distract the two guards as Hughes reasoned? Perhaps he was impressed by the men’s courage in defending the tents, and was again attempting to extend the hand of friendship. Either way, by rejecting the women, the Europeans conveyed that they were not interested in enduring, reciprocal exchange relations. This major slight would understandably ‘enrage’ the ‘chief’. As a last resort, the Narungga threatened physical violence.

The following morning, the survey party began their work before sunrise. Hughes states that the Narungga, ‘nothing daunted at the occurrences of the previous day, had been watching the tents all night’, but the early hour at which the survey party set out ‘quite deceived’ the ‘natives’.⁷⁷ But when Hughes returned to the tents, twenty-six Narungga men were present. Hughes lit a signal fire to inform the men still in the field to return, and the survey party

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

‘was mustered in half an hour’. The Narungga made a smoke signal, after which they ‘went into the water to fish, about two hundred yards from our tents, as if nothing had occurred’. Hughes tried approaching them with a green bough, ‘and they did the same...[but] they would not face [Hughes], and scattered themselves about the sand-hills round the tents’.⁷⁸ In response to the Narungga smoke signal, eight men were seen coming from Gawler Point, and smokes were observed in other directions. The Narungga then set fire to the grass, forcing the Europeans to quickly pack up their tents and remove to the boats. In order to ‘keep off the natives’, the Europeans found it necessary to ‘fire over their heads whenever they attempted to come near’.⁷⁹ Hughes felt blood would have been shed had he not made a rapid escape.

Hughes’ green bough no longer had an immediate and determined effect upon the Narungga. The events of the past three weeks taught them to be dubious and skeptical of Hughes’ use of this symbolic gesture. Interestingly, although the Narungga used fire to force the Europeans to abandon their camp and move off shore, they did not resort to personal physical violence. Although the Narungga completely outnumbered the Europeans, and no women or children were present, no spears were thrown. Following his return to Adelaide, Hughes refused to accompany BT Finnis to Port Victoria in December 1840 and March 1841.⁸⁰ He does not appear to have visited the Peninsula again and the Special Surveys were abandoned in 1841.

1841-1846

Between 1841 and 1846, Europeans who travelled to Yorke Peninsula were adventurous men keen to explore a relatively unknown country. These visitors either had ready access to boats, or the means to acquire such access. Kangaroos and wattle gum were said to be found in large quantities on the Peninsula, and could make a trip worthwhile, and the Peninsula was also visited for health reasons.⁸¹ Squatters, constantly on the look out for new territory, no doubt arrived spasmodically. William Robinson, who visited the Peninsula in October 1843, typifies the majority of these early pastoralists who were not interested in long term

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Heinrich, p. 15.

⁸¹ ‘NRF’, *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C and Tom Griffiths (ed), ‘The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell: The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1850’, Angus and Robertson and the Library Council of Victoria, North Ryde, 1988, p. 54.

settlement. Their primary aim was to make a quick fortune by rapidly overstocking the land, stripping it of vegetation, and moving on. This unsustainable practice had a devastating impact on the environment and local Aboriginal people. However, the seeming lack of water on the Peninsula hindered any such designs at this time.

The language used to describe the Peninsula during these years reflects European perceptions of it as a wild and desolate place. Europeans had never described the thick mallee which covered vast areas of the Peninsula in positive terms, but after the Narungga's 'unprovoked' hostility became known to the colonists, the scrub came to be depicted as a defensive barrier. While the scrub was barely mentioned in 1838 and 1839 reports, after 1840 it was generally described as 'dense', 'massive', 'eternal', and 'impenetrable'.⁸² Particular patches, where there was the possibility the Narungga might lie in wait, were described as 'dark', 'gloomy' and even 'suspicious looking'.⁸³ Jameson, Cock and Robinson all visited the open grass and lightly forested areas between Troubridge Hill and the lower York Valley in Spring, in 1838, 1839 and 1843 respectively. However, their descriptions of this country varied dramatically. Where Cock found the soil 'composed of decomposed limestone and...generally rich and fertile', Robinson saw 'not one acre of land fit for cultivation'. Jameson felt 'the soil and vegetation...improved rapidly as [he] passed inland'. He saw 'extensive fields of kangaroo grass' and 'whole forests' of shea-oak interspersed with blue gum, mimosa and cypress', and enthused about the abundant pig face, (or 'wild fig') whose pulpy fruit was 'very agreeable when ripe' and was 'much eaten by the natives'.⁸⁴ But Robinson, after walking inland through 'nothing but scrub', saw only land 'covered with...prickly grass and sheoak trees, except patches of scrub here and there on the flat'.⁸⁵ Jameson deduced 'from the numerous native population...there is no scarcity of fresh water' and felt that far from being a 'barren and sandy waste', had a fresh water river been found, the Peninsula was 'a good country for the maintenance of flocks and herds'.⁸⁶ The only fresh water Robinson found was 'in one

⁸² *Southern Yorke Peninsula Pioneer* (hereafter *SYPP*), 3 October 1930, and *SA Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁸³ *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁸⁴ *SA Gazette*, 8 December 1838, 3A. Jameson refers to pig-face by its scientific name, *merembryanthum*.

⁸⁵ William Robinson, cited in *SYPP*, 3 October 1930.

⁸⁶ *SA Gazette*, 8 December 1838, 3A.

native well and in a small hole filled apparently by recent rain', and concluded there was 'no indication of permanent water anywhere'.⁸⁷

Prior to the arrival of pastoralists in 1846, 'the peninsula had a bad name on account of the blacks'.⁸⁸ The Narungga were viewed as dangerous and threatening, and visitors made sure they were armed. When one man (who wrote under the pseudonym 'NRF') visited the eastern shores of Yorke Peninsula in April 1845, he brought with him 'a pair of horse pistols and a double-barrelled piece'.⁸⁹ Although he only brought rations for two weeks, he brought 'ammunition for an unlimited time'.⁹⁰ Hughes made sure he brought 'a sufficient stand of arms and ammunition' when he returned to Port Victoria in October 1840.⁹¹ When Samuel Davenport, Governor Robe and Captain Sturt came ashore at Coobowie in February 1847, each member of the party was 'armed with a light musket and cartridge'.⁹²

The Narungga were no doubt learning to distinguish between different visitors, between 'gentlemen' and servants for example, and to take into account the number of people arriving, and the accompanying weapons and equipment. Members of the educated, upper class, from whom the majority of the historic records stem, often did not mention the presence of people deemed lower status. If they were included, rarely were full names given. There is no record of the servants who must have accompanied the Governor's high profile party, nor is any mention made of meetings with the 'natives'. The Governor's party no doubt arrived with a certain pomp and ceremony. The Narungga would have reviewed each situation accordingly. When William Robinson and Mr Line came ashore at Oyster Bay in October 1843, they brought with them 'two men and two horses'. They left the men searching for water at the Bay, and rode inland. Robinson briefly mentions seeing 'a few natives'.⁹³ He does not mention any hostility. This is the earliest reference to horses being

⁸⁷ William Robinson came ashore at Oyster Bay (Stansbury) in October 1843. Cited in *SYPP*, 3 October 1930.

⁸⁸ Thomas Giles, 'Old Time Memories – Blacks on Yorke's Peninsula', *The Adelaide Observer* (hereafter *Observer*), 22 October 1887, 41C.

⁸⁹ 'NRF', 'Account of a Trip to Yorke's Peninsula', *South Australian Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁹⁰ *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁹¹ *Register*, 26 December 1840, 4B.

⁹² Letter from Samuel Davenport to his father, 28 February 1847, in *South Australiana*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1980, p. 59.

⁹³ *SYPP*, 3 October 1930.

taken to Yorke Peninsula, and the Narungga may have been surprised and frightened by the appearance of these strangers on horseback. It is also likely Robinson would have been armed and defensive when travelling over the Peninsula. As one of the early over-landers, Robinson was involved in the massacre of at least thirty people at the Rufus River in 1841. He was not shy in using his gun against Aboriginal people and was not a man to be trifled with.

However, if the Narungga were in a position to actively repel any future arrivals to their shores, they did not hesitate to do so. They used smoke signals to communicate the appearance of boats, and rapidly assembled in large numbers.⁹⁴ No longer were visitors futilely attempting to meet with fearful, cautious people, or trying in vain to communicate with seemingly indifferent hosts. Nathaniel Hailes, a well known South Australian colonist, sailed from Adelaide to Port Lincoln in very calm weather, and his ‘small boat had to beat along the western coast of Yorke’s Peninsula’.⁹⁵ Hailes gives a graphic account of his experiences:

Occasionally we approached very close to the shore, and whenever we did so a large body of armed men and boys ran down to the beach and even within the water’s edge, warning us not to land. Some of the spears thrown at us fell but a few yards short of our deck. Their exclamatory appeals, accompanied by the most violent gesticulations, we could sufficiently understand to know that we were positively forbidden to set our ill-omened feet on their territory, and explicitly told to be off.⁹⁶

This occurred sometime between 1842 and 1846. The Narungga men were clearly confident of their defensive abilities, and did not want visitors arriving in this vicinity.

The Narungga were adhering to traditional laws regarding trespassing. Amongst Aboriginal groups, borders were well known and strictly adhered to – neighbouring groups did not cross into each others country uninvited. To trespass on another’s land was a serious offence punishable by death, and even today, ‘traditional’ Aboriginal people display great unease and

⁹⁴ See for example the *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁹⁵ Nathaniel Hailes, Manuscript PRG 832/1, State Library of South Australia, Microfilm.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

a noticeable lack of confidence when travelling on other people's country.⁹⁷ When Nawu man Maltalta was speared by Narungga men in 1851, a Narungga woman, Maora Monarty, stated he was killed because 'the blacks do not like a strange blackfellow to travel through their country'.⁹⁸ Kurna men were terrified of visiting Narungga territory, even when accompanying well-armed Europeans.⁹⁹ When Jameson sailed to Yorke Peninsula in 1838, he initially had on board 'three natives belonging to the Adelaide tribe' but 'it was with reluctance that they agreed to accompany us, being impressed with dread, lest the natives afar off would kill them'.¹⁰⁰ NRF hired two Kurna men, 'Tommy' and 'Jacky' who 'seemed much frightened while on shore saying "black fellows plenty spear them"'.¹⁰¹

NRF's 'Account of a trip to Yorke's Peninsula' provides additional details of Narungga responses to visitors. When NRF, Jacky and Tommy came ashore, they followed 'a path made by the natives...which wound picturesquely along the edge of the cliffs'.¹⁰² A recent footprint was espied, which frightened all immensely – the Kurna men 'smelled if they could not see, and away they dashed'.¹⁰³ NRF continued to walk towards the boat, 'cocking [his] pistols'.¹⁰⁴ Upon reaching the water's edge 'a large body of natives rushed out ...and commenced yelling and shouting in a most furious manner'.¹⁰⁵ NRF 'scrambled into the boat...pushing off as quick as possible into deep water', upon which the Narungga men 'rushed into the sea waving their hands over their heads still yelling'.¹⁰⁶ NRF saw no weapons, nor were the Narungga 'painted nor tattooed' but 'perfectly naked'.¹⁰⁷ Realizing the boat was out of reach, the Narungga men stopped 'up to their necks in water' and NRF beckoned to one man with a 'fine portly figure and...manly bearing'. The terrified Tommy and Jacky could not understand a word this man said. The Narungga man 'seemed astonished

⁹⁷ See Fred Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1982.

⁹⁸ *Register*, 5 March 1851, 3E.

⁹⁹ See *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3CDE.

¹⁰⁰ Jameson, p. 82.

¹⁰¹ *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C. Hughes may have swum at Black Point.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, the boat rowed towards Rogues Point.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, in the vicinity of Muloowurtie Point.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Rogues Point.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

at what he saw', and 'looked pleased' when NRF gave him a piece of bread'.¹⁰⁸ NRF showed him a gun 'but he did not appear to know its use'.¹⁰⁹ NRF shook his hand 'which seemed a very odd ceremony to him'.¹¹⁰ Upon the boat's departure, NRF describes the 'enemy' (ie the Narungga men) 'collecting in a body' to consult on the best 'ways and means' of 'defending their country'.¹¹¹

This passage is informative on a number of levels. The Kaurna men could not understand the Narungga, the dialects differed enough to be incomprehensible in moments of fear and panic. The Narungga man who confidently advanced on his own was not familiar with the gun or the gesture of shaking hands – it seems he'd had little contact with Europeans, nor had he been enlightened by Narungga people who had. This passage reinforces Hailes' account of Narungga men rapidly congregating in large numbers and forcing strangers to leave their country. NRF estimated that approximately sixty men had gathered and noted no women were present. But the fact that the men were not 'painted nor tattooed' suggests they did not necessarily come with war-like intentions, as does the fact they had their hands over their heads and no weapons were sighted. The yelling and shouting could be a sham, a form of greeting protocol.¹¹² Their gestures could not have been too serious, as NRF considered going ashore to be amongst them.

Although no spears had been thrown and the encounter ended amicably, NRF congratulated himself on his lucky 'escape' and felt it was 'well, too, that [he] did not land amongst them, it being probable that they are as remarkable for treachery as any of the other tribes in New Holland'; 'the treachery of the aboriginal tribes of New Holland is proverbial' and deceit was 'one of the darkest traits in their character'.¹¹³ NRF's sentiments echo those of Hughes and are representative of many colonists. Any unexplainable or seemingly unprovoked acts of hostility were viewed as confirmation of the 'savage' nature of Aboriginal people and helped justify the take over of land and decimation of Aboriginal people.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See DJ Mulvaney, 'The Protocol of Aboriginal Encounters', in *Encounters in Place*, University of Queensland Press, Lucia, 1989, pp. 1-7, particularly p. 5.

¹¹³ *Register*, 23 April 1845, 3D.

As NRF continued sailing up the coast, one of the men on shore separated from ‘his companions’ and ran along the beach. NRF landed alone and greeted the man on the beach. It was the same man he had previously shaken hands with and given bread.¹¹⁴ NRF gave him more bread and asked for water whereupon the Narungga man (who ‘looked a perfect picture of terror, doubt and good humour’) immediately pointed in the direction and offered to accompany him. The country being viewed by NRF was no doubt ‘owned’, or under the custodianship, of this mediator. As with the man who advanced singly to meet Hughes in October 1840, part of his duty would have been to introduce strangers to his country and waters. Although unsure and possibly afraid of the visitors, the Narungga man bravely and hospitably pointed in the direction of water and offered to accompany NRF.

This man continued following the boat along the beach as NRF and his companions made their way up the coast. Reaching some cliffs, the visitors prepared for a snack (‘an attack upon our wallets’), but were interrupted by:

Another fearful rush of those devilish looking fellows, from behind the rocks and bushes which skirted the base of the cliffs. Their numbers were about the same as the last we had seen. Their yellings were the same – rushing towards us hand over head and waving their spare one occasionally. It might have been in friendship, but to our civilized motions of etiquette and hospitality, was rather a strange mode of evincing their good will.¹¹⁵

Up went the anchor and off moved the boat. As NRF and his companions retreated, ‘one fine looking fellow, rather elderly...a kind of chief, shouted out... *man mando youco*’. The terrified Kurna men, crouched at the bottom of the boat, interpreted this as ‘hold onto the boat’. Narungga and Kurna speakers recognized each other’s speech, but thought the other unclear, or difficult to understand.¹¹⁶ NRF was well aware ‘fear may have dictated this translation to my interpreters’ and even went so far as to muse that ‘the words, for what I

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 3E.

¹¹⁶ Louisa Eglinton and Invaritji in Norman Tindale, ‘Notes on the Natives of the Southern Portion of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia’, in *Royal Society of South Australia (Transactions)*, vol. 60, 1936, p.55. Linguist Luise Hercus points out the Narungga spoke a distinct dialect of the Mira language. Other speakers of this language were the Ngadjuri, Kurna and the Nukunu. The Miru language group is a sub group of the much larger Thura Miru language group with whom the Narungga shared fundamental cultural traits, in Luise Hercus, *A Nukunu Dictionary*, Australian Institute Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra, 1992, p. 2.

know, may have been friendly'. However, the crew set sail with NRF reflecting 'I never saw a finer looking or more savage fellows'.¹¹⁷ NRF's detailed account reinforces those of other Europeans who describe the Narungga scrutinizing European actions and forcefully repelling unwanted strangers from landing on their shores. But, at the same time, we can see a willingness to engage with the newcomers and a potential for friendly contact.

Conclusion

Between 1836-46 the Narungga were able to increase their experience of Europeans and European goods while maintaining their autonomy and control of their country. Hughes unintentionally provided the Narungga with several opportunities to safely familiarize themselves with a variety of new materials and food, and we inadvertently learn which items the Narungga found desirable or useful. Previous encounters with sealers and whalers made the Narungga initially fearful of Europeans, but within a short time they learnt to differentiate between various visitors, some of whom they approached with confidence and authority. At no stage were the Narungga indifferent or passive to the actions of the closely watched Europeans.

It is possible to re-read these fragmented accounts of early encounters to provide a more empathetic understanding of why Aboriginal people reacted to newcomers in the ways they did, and to argue Narungga hostility was neither unprovoked nor irrational. The actions of the Narungga demonstrate an uninterrupted adherence to laws and traditions which stemmed from the Dreaming and were intimately connected with country. The Narungga were given greater opportunities than their neighbours to rationally evaluate the pros and cons of contact with Europeans. Although willing to welcome and incorporate newcomers into their world, it seems the Narungga decided that paltry gifts of biscuit, rice and other trifles were not adequate compensation for the inappropriate access to and use of Narungga land and resources. The Narungga firmly demonstrated they disapproved of disrespect shown to their country (which ultimately translated as disrespect to themselves and their culture).

¹¹⁷ *SA Register*, 23 April 1845, 3E.

3. 1849: ‘Murderous Encounters’¹

NRF, Hughes and Hailes describe confident Narungga working together to decisively repel visitors to their country. After 1846 however, Europeans no longer arrived in small numbers by boat. Instead, they travelled overland, bringing huge numbers of sheep with them, and they came intending to stay. Narungga tactics of gathering in large numbers along the shorelines and frightening potential arrivals away were no longer expedient, and (once again) the Narungga acted cautiously while increasing their knowledge and experience of these new arrivals. They were no longer the sole inhabitants of Yorke Peninsula, and a new stage of cross-cultural relations began. Although the records for the early pastoral period reveal fusion and fluidity between the two cultural groups and varying degrees of accommodation between individuals, the overwhelming impression is an atmosphere of mistrust, fear and violence. Both Europeans and Narungga committed brutal acts, and members of both cultural groups feared for their lives. But while the records show the Narungga acting with restraint and in accordance with their own laws, the same cannot be said of the Europeans.

remembering the past

This micro-study, which focuses on a marginalized group of people, highlights the manner in which early pioneers and Aboriginal people have been memorialized or forgotten in South Australian society. The Narungga were severely disadvantaged by the process of colonization and have generally been ignored by historians. Researching the history of this group highlights the politics involved in the writing of history. Which events are remembered and perpetuated and what particulars are included or omitted, tells us much about the society in which we live. Local histories concerning Yorke Peninsula were published in the 1970s to commemorate various centenaries. The vast majority of these works commence with the establishment of specific towns and districts and do not refer to the Narungga at all. A few acknowledge the pastoral era and mention relevant ‘pioneer’ pastoralists by name, but gloss over the presence of the original occupiers. If the Narungga are mentioned, they are referred to as ‘Aborigines’ in a general, non-specific way. No individual Narungga names are given, and their custom of moving from place to place is emphasized. One history describes Yorke

¹ ‘Murderous Encounters’ is the title of newspaper article published in the *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

Peninsula prior to 1860 as ‘almost completely uninhabited except for a few nomadic aboriginal tribes’, and then gives the names of early European settlers in the area.² Another history implies the Narungga were passive acceptors of European settlement:

Before white men came to Northern Yorke Peninsula, a number of Aboriginal tribes roamed the district. They were quick to accept the white man’s invasion of their territory, even though isolated cases were reported of assaults by blacks on the settlers, and of stock being stolen for food.³

Such histories imply the land was not owned or occupied by specific individuals and groups; they de-personalise and minimise the impact of British settlement on the Narungga. The ethics of colonization are not queried and the process of European settlement is sanitized. The hardships borne by settlers in their battle against ‘troublesome’ Aboriginal people and inhospitable country are emphasized, and the blame for hostilities is inadvertently placed on the Narungga. This portrayal of the Narungga as the initial aggressors has been repeated and reiterated for more than 160 years – from Hughes in 1840 to letters and newspaper reports written in 1849, from reminiscences written in the 1880s to histories written in the 1970s. These reminiscences and histories continue to be referred to in the twenty-first century. Narungga people themselves are also silent or non-specific when writing about these years. Doris and Cecil Graham fail to mention the pre-mission years while Eileen Wanganeen et al devote only two brief paragraphs to the pastoral period.⁴ Bob Mealing, a facilitator for the Point Pearce Community History Project in the 1980’s, reflected ‘the perception of history at Point Pearce is almost exclusively post 1868’.⁵ I have come to the same conclusion after conducting interviews and community workshops during the course of my research.

Two sources of information regarding the cross-cultural relations during the pastoral years have been heavily relied upon by historians writing in the 1970s. In 1887, Thomas Giles’ ‘Old Time Memories – Blacks on Yorke’s Peninsula’, was published in the *Adelaide*

² AJ Darling, *Kadina: 1872-1972*, Corporation of the town of Kadina, Kadina, 1972, p. 1.

³ Keith Bailey, *Copper City Chronicle: a History of Kadina*, the author, Kadina, 1990, p. 48.

⁴ Doris May Graham and Cecil Wallace Graham, *As we’ve known it: 1911 to the present*, Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education Unit (ASTECC), Underdale, 1987 and Eileen Wanganeen, *Point Pearce: Past and Present*, ASTEC, Underdale, 1987, p. 21.

⁵ Bob Mealing, ‘Point Pearce Community History Project’, *Word of Mouth: Oral History Association of South Australia, South Australian Branch Newsletter*, Adelaide, March 1984, p. 8.

Observer.⁶ Giles, in partnership with GA Anstey, ‘took up’ a ‘run’ on the Peninsula in 1847. Giles knows intimately the people, localities and vegetation of Yorke Peninsula’s pastoral years. He provides important details which flesh out official reports written by people who were less familiar with the people and topography of Yorke Peninsula. Although he did not witness all the events he describes, Giles expresses and exemplifies the sentiments of settlers who lived through the pastoral period. In the 1920s, Rodney Cockburn wrote *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*.⁷ Cockburn relied on the obituaries and reminiscences of well known pastoralists. He sought to glorify South Australia’s ‘pioneers’ and downplayed or excluded any unpalatable crimes committed by such men. Giles and Cockburn are openly sympathetic to ‘pioneers’ who ‘struggled’ against ‘hostile’ and ‘troublesome’ Aborigines.⁸ But Giles, a full fledged member of the ‘squattocracy’, wrote his reminiscences almost forty years after the events he describes. A close examination of historic records demonstrates the selectivity and inaccuracy of Cockburn and Giles’ accounts which need to be contextualized and examined in conjunction with a variety of sources.

Five local historians who discuss cross-cultural relations during the pastoral era are Ern Carmicheal, Diana Cook, Alan Parsons and DL Hill and SJ Hill.⁹ These authors are sympathetic to the Narungga (as is shown by their sincere attempts to include the Narungga in their histories). Although these authors briefly examine Colonial Office correspondence and newspaper articles, and occasionally modify statements made by Giles, they generally accept and reiterate Giles and Cockburn’s version of events. Hill and Hill question if a European who was a poor runner could outrun a Narungga man and Carmicheal (importantly) discredits Giles’ chronological ordering of events, but all fail to comprehensively research and analyse the chain of events or to understand events from a Narungga perspective. Stereotypical understandings of early cross-cultural relations are implicitly reinforced – namely, that hostilities were caused by Narungga peoples’ theft of

⁶ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41C.

⁷ *Ibid.*, and R Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia Vol 1 and 2*, Lynton Publication, Blackwood, 1974.

⁸ Cockburn, Vol. 1, pp. 111, 119.

⁹ Ern Carmichael, *The Ill-Shaped Leg*, the Author, Adelaide, 1973 and *Four Makes One*, District Council of Yorketown, Yorketown, 1975. Diana Cook, *The Striding Years*, Minlaton District Council, Minlaton, 1975. Alan Parsons, ‘Clash of Two Cultures’ in *A Resident’s View*, Pioneer Printing Office, Yorke Town, 1990. DL Hill and SJ Hill, *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1975.

sheep or the ‘immoral’ actions of uneducated, lower class Europeans, or that the violence did not last long and ended with the murder of shepherd William Bagnall in 1851. There is a persistent understanding that the Narungga committed the first unprovoked acts of murder and that subsequent retaliations were provoked and justified. The actions and morals of the pastoralists remain largely unchallenged.

This early settlement period is crucial to understanding past and present cross-cultural relations. It is important to understand how Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land. This chapter is reasonably detailed – events which are ignored or briefly alluded to by previous historians are analysed, contextualized, and placed in their correct chronological order. Biographical details of pastoralists, their employees and Narungga are included where possible to aid our understanding of events. Diaries, newspapers and government archives (particularly Colonial Office Correspondence and Police Correspondence) have been closely examined. Small, seemingly insignificant details can tell us much about the atmosphere on the Peninsula during the pastoral era. Of prime importance in making sense of these years is an awareness the Narungga were acting in a way that made sense in their own culture.

the pastoralists arrive

Twenty-three Occupation Licences for ‘runs’ on Yorke Peninsula had been applied for by the end of 1847.¹⁰ By August 1849, 63 horses, 270 cattle, 50,000 sheep and 106 Europeans were recorded as resident at seven stations.¹¹ The occupation of Yorke Peninsula was not a half-hearted undertaking but a serious investment in capital, labour and time. The men who took up runs were not small scale graziers hoping to build up their flocks and acres if luck and the seasons allowed. Instead, these men were entrepreneurial, relatively long term colonists who had the financial backing to commence their operations on a large scale. Just as the Narungga had encountered and drawn conclusions about Europeans by 1846, the same can be said of early pastoralists regarding Aboriginal people. Through experience and hearsay, these men (and they were all males) knew well the ‘difficulties’ involved in ‘opening up’ a ‘new’ country. They were gamblers, ‘pioneers’ who were prepared to sink a fortune into relatively

¹⁰ Listed in the *Government Gazette*, 1846-7.

¹¹ McCulloch’s statistical report to the Police Commissioner, 15 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527. NB Moorhouse gives the number of Europeans in October 1849 as ‘from 70 and 90’, GRG 24/6/1849/2001.

unknown country. If the gamble paid off, unimaginable riches could be gleaned in a relatively short time, and it was this potential for enormous profit that induced the earliest occupation holders to take up huge leases measured in square miles rather than acres. These transitory men did not put down roots in this portion of the colony. There was much transferring and relinquishing of leases, and those who could afford to employ overseers did not reside on their runs.

The vegetation on Yorke Peninsula consisted of thick mallee scrub and areas lightly forested with she-oaks, peppermint gums, tea-tree and boxwood. Large animals such as kangaroos, emus and wallabies grazed on the black, needle and wire grass which covered the surface of the clearer areas. The Narungga regularly fired the grass to allow for quick and easy travel and to attract game to the tender re-growth. Numerous wells existed throughout the lightly forested areas which were under the custodianship of various family groups and individuals. A map produced by geographer John Poynter shows the vegetation of Yorke Peninsula prior to the massive clearing of vegetation begun by farmers in 1870s (see figure 3). Another of Poynter's maps illustrates the areas taken up by pastoralists (see figure 4). The correspondence between the two maps is striking – the pastoralists were understandably attracted to the clearer areas (the Narunggas' prime hunting grounds) where sheep could begin grazing immediately and where existing wells could be taken over and enlarged.¹²

How did the Narungga respond to the permanent presence of these new arrivals? By the end of 1847, the Narungga were apparently 'manifesting symptoms of hostility' and the Protector of Aborigines, Dr Matthew Moorhouse, was instructed to visit Yorke Peninsula 'to ascertain the state of feeling between the Europeans and the Natives'.¹³ Moorhouse arrived on the eastern shores of Yorke Peninsula on 29 December 1847 and was met by a police party headed by Corporal Hall.¹⁴ Hall was accompanied by 'an aboriginal native' who was probably a Kaurna man from Bungaree (slightly north of Clare).¹⁵ Moorhouse and the police

¹² McCulloch, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹³ Protector's report for the quarter ending 31 March 1848, GRG 24/6/1848/674.

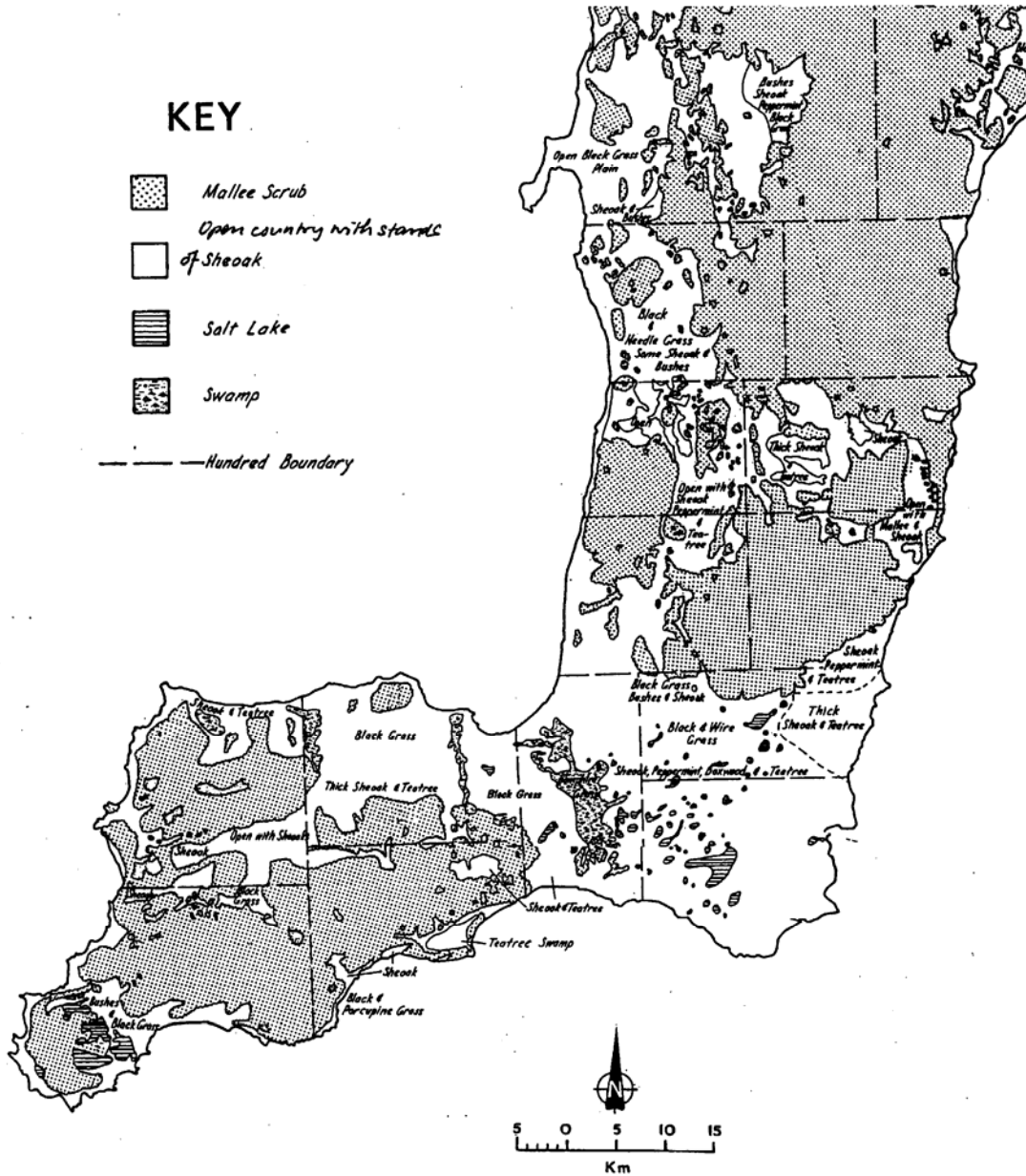
¹⁴ Moorhouse to the Colonial Secretary, 15 January 1848, GRG 24/6/1848/50. Hall gives the date of Moorhouse's arrival as 30 December, GRG 24/6/1848/85.

¹⁵ Corporal Hall's report to the Police Commissioner, GRG 24/6/1848/85.

YORKE PENINSULA

VEGETATION 1872 - 76

(Extracted from Surveyors' Diagram Books)

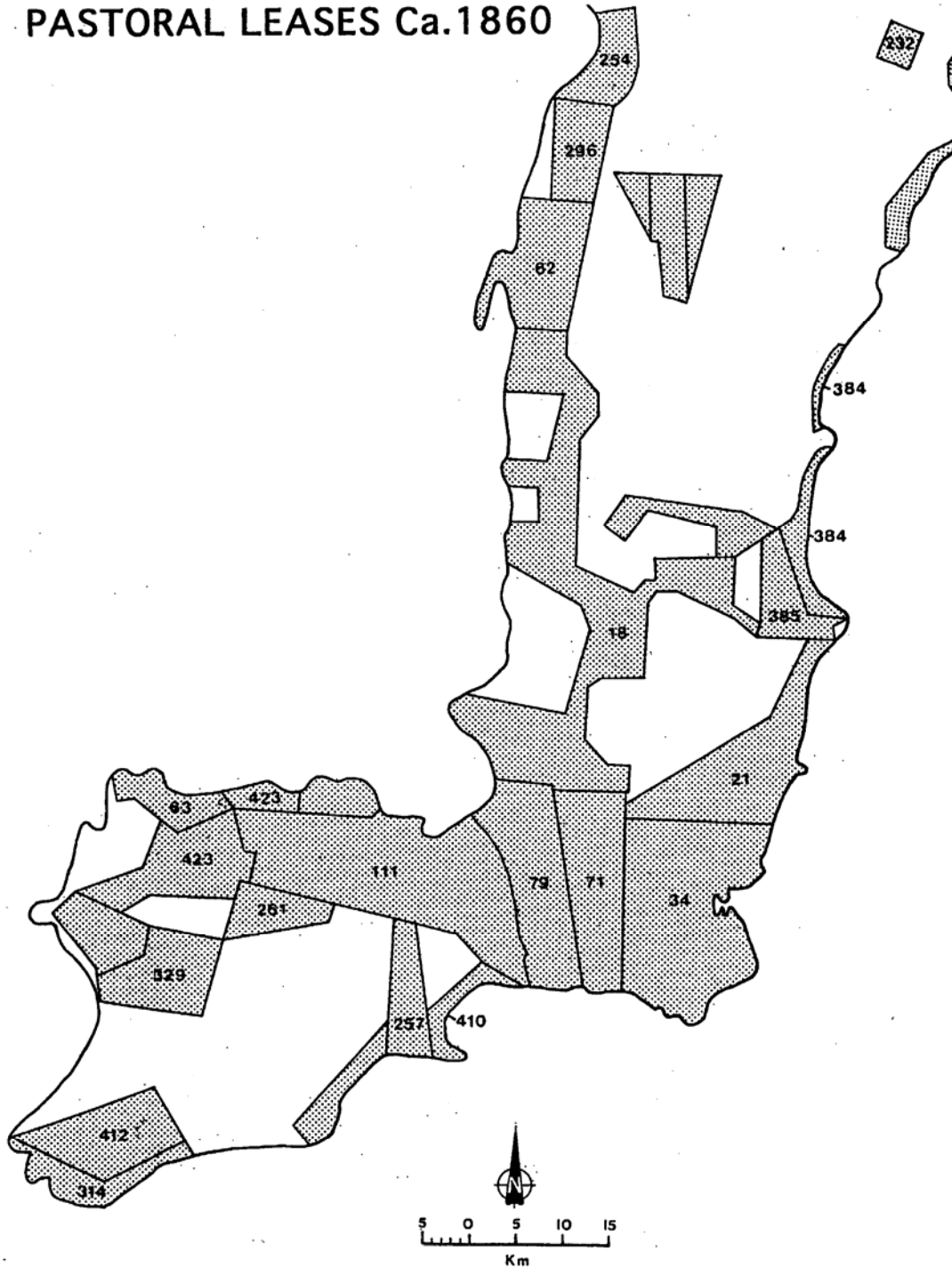


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Figure 3. Map produced by John Poynter.

YORKE PENINSULA

PASTORAL LEASES Ca.1860



©JWP/LDR 1999

Figure 4. Map produced by John Poynter.

visited ‘all the occupied outstations on the Peninsula’.¹⁶ The official party found the Narungga ‘seldom approached the stations, and as yet, have not been very troublesome’.¹⁷ On one occasion the Narungga had taken thirty sheep but all were recovered although ten had been slain – ‘the carcasses were found before they had been eaten’.¹⁸ Hall reported ‘no complaints against [the natives] except taking 40 sheep from Mr Bowden and Burning two huts of Mr Weaver’s about three months previous’.¹⁹

Moorhouse’s mission was to ‘assemble the Natives...to explain to them our laws relating to theft, and to prevent, if possible, collisions between them and the settlers’.²⁰ On 30 December 1847 at Kooley Wurta (Black Point), Moorhouse distributed flour to thirty-four Narungga and ‘advised them not to interfere with the flocks of the settlers’.²¹ He found ‘this tribe has not done so, and promised me they never would’.²² The Protector was well rehearsed in this procedure. After explaining British laws to one group of Aboriginal people in 1842, Moorhouse was satisfied they ‘fully understand when they are doing wrong, and rendering themselves subject to our laws on the points of theft and murder, and they are conscious that they deserve punishment...’.²³ Although Moorhouse was unsuccessful in meeting ‘Aboriginals of the Southern part of the Peninsula’, he hoped to return in a few months to try again. Hall met with thirteen Narungga on the eastern coast of the Peninsula on 22 December 1847. Interestingly, one man had been at the ‘Onkaparinga’ and knew to call Hall ‘policeman’.²⁴ Hall instructed this man ‘to explain to his companions, that if any Blackfellows take sheep, or burn white men’s huts, or kill white men, that they would be taken to Adelaide and severely punished’.²⁵ Hall’s Aboriginal companion informed him all had been understood, and the group promised they would not steal sheep or burn huts in the future.²⁶ The settlers and Colonial officials could confidently assert correct procedures had

¹⁶ Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hall, GRG 24/6/1848/85.

²⁰ Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary’s Office, 15 May 1842, *Government Gazette*, 26 May 1842.

²⁴ Hall, GRG 24/6/1848/85.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

been followed – the Narungga had been officially instructed not to steal from or murder white men.

Moorhouse realized this period of caution could quickly flare into violent confrontation. Although noting the ‘natives on the peninsula are not numerous’, Moorhouse warned ‘they might muster in groups sufficiently strong to attack the Europeans and their flocks’.²⁷ To prevent ‘collisions in this part’, he recommended the establishment of a police station at Mr Sharple’s station as soon ‘as is practicable’.²⁸ Eighteen months would be adequate to ‘impress’ British laws ‘fully...upon [the Natives’] minds’, and to convince them that any persons ‘breaking the law would be liable to punishment’.²⁹ Moorhouse’s experience of frontier conflict in other areas had taught him the importance of a police presence. Police demonstrated governmental concern for the settlers’ safety, gave the Europeans a sense of protection, and provided a tangible reminder of the authority of British law. Although the historic records contain numerous examples of policemen accompanying and even assisting retaliation parties, officials such as the Governor and the Protector genuinely believed in the virtue and usefulness of the force, and saw it as a means of preventing collisions.

In newly occupied districts the settlers’ sense of vulnerability was real. The pastoralists, overseers, shepherds and hut-keepers on the Peninsula did not outnumber the Narungga.³⁰ The Europeans occupied isolated outstations in unfamiliar terrain, and viewed the thick scrub which covered much of the Peninsula as inhospitable and impenetrable. But the thick mallee provided a place of refuge for the Narungga. Guns and muskets were unreliable and had a limited firing range, balls had to be made by hand.³¹ If powder was damp or damaged, weapons would not fire. Within a short time Aboriginal people were aware of the limits of European weapons.³² Spears and waddies on the other hand were reliable, silent, rapidly dispatched, and could travel reasonable distances.

²⁷ Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Protector’s report for quarter ending 31 March 1848, GRG 24/6/1848/674.

³⁰ GRG 24/6/1849/2001.

³¹ See D Denholm, ‘Men bearing arms’, in *The Colonial Australians*, D Denholm (ed), Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1979, pp. 32-4.

³² See Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1982, p. 55.

Between 1846-8, the Narungga were able to maintain their autonomy and ‘held the upper hand’ in their dealings with Europeans. Although disadvantaged by the invasion of their hunting grounds and waters, the Narungga were skilled fisher-people, and a nutritious diet could be readily obtained from the sea.³³ Water was easily procured by digging soaks in sand-hills which lined the coast, or from the roots of mallee trees. Vast areas remained unoccupied by the settlers,³⁴ and for the people who owned this territory, the impact of European colonization during these years was minimal. Such people would doubtless have initially extended hospitality to their less fortunate countrymen. If contact occurred during these early months, the Narungga either orchestrated the encounter or were willing participants. When contact did occur, the Narungga must have been curious or felt they had something to gain – whether knowledge, material goods, or food – from interaction with the Europeans.

During the early months of white invasion, the Narungga treated the pastoralists and their employees with tolerance and restraint. In January of 1848, Moorhouse and Hall found the settlers had only two minor grievances, but only the burning of one of Weaver’s huts can genuinely be called a deliberately hostile act against the Europeans at this stage. Although the Europeans were committing the ultimate act of aggression by trespassing and remaining on Narungga land, and despite ample opportunity to attack isolated shepherds and ignorance (at this stage) of the vengefulness of European retaliation, the Narungga clearly did not want blood shed. In stark contrast, the insecure Europeans aggressively over-reacted to any potentially tense encounters.

In the summer of 1847-8, George Penton (Anstey and Gile’s overseer) ‘caught’ some Narungga setting the grass alight.³⁵ This traditional custom, known as ‘fire-stick farming’, is recognized today as a sustainable and important agricultural practice. However, the settlers interpreted it as ‘the blacks...trying to burn us out’.³⁶ Penton ‘punished’ the Narungga by making them ‘break branches off the trees and beat out the fire’ which ‘he kept them at...

³³ See Tolmer’s letter to the Colonial Secretary, 26 October 1846, GRG 24/6/1849/1945.

³⁴ GRG 24/6/1849/2001.

³⁵ Giles, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

until the perspiration fairly rolled off them'.³⁷ This must have puzzled and humiliated the owners of the land who had been practicing this form of 'farming' for generations. Some time between October 1848 and July 1849,³⁸ Alfred Weaver and his family encountered 'a large party of Aborigines in war paint' who sent their women and children to the back of the group. The Weavers' were uncertain how events would unfold but neighbour Henry Morris 'appeared on the scene' and 'rode amongst the blacks vigorously cracking a stock-whip and dispersed them'.³⁹ The Narungga had done nothing to provoke such aggression, and Penton and Morris's actions appear unnecessarily hostile.

After a period of European settlement of at least twelve months in which sacred water holes and other sites were degraded and treated disrespectfully, and despite ample opportunities provided to the Narungga to assault the Europeans, no direct physical confrontation between the two groups had been recorded. Why? Scholars such as Reynolds and Pope suggest Aboriginal people were not initially aggressive in spite of their land being taken over because Europeans were widely viewed as ghosts or returned ancestors. Such an explanation is not easily applicable to the Narungga who had had more than forty years experience with white strangers, and had on several occasions acted in a non-respectful, non-welcoming manner. Another point raised is that Aboriginal people did not realize the strangers intended to stay. However, by 1846, the lands of the Narunggas' neighbours had been permanently invaded for between 6-10 years, and it is likely at least some Narungga knew of this. But because they 'came from' the land, and totally belonged to it, the idea that these newcomers would think of it as their own and would attempt to alienate the Narungga from their country would be totally incomprehensible at this stage.⁴⁰

Reynold's point that Aboriginal people may have believed Europeans possessed powerful and malignant magic⁴¹ is valid as demonstrated by their reluctance to physically injure the newcomers and their mystification upon sighting a pair of spectacles. In February 1849, two

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Morris arrived on Yorke Peninsula in October 1848 (see Judge Cooper's notebook for the Civil Court, Box 5, Supreme Court Archives, South Australia).

³⁹ Cockburn, Vol. 1, p. 119.

⁴⁰ See Reynolds, p. 65.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 21.

visitors 'on a water hunting expedition' in the Port Vincent area were confronted by a group of Narungga whom they felt were 'about to attack them'.⁴² However, the Narungga were apparently frightened by the glasses worn by one of the men whom they mistook for a white devil, consequently no 'unpleasantness' resulted.⁴³ At the beginning of 1849, novel situations and goods still had the power to confuse and startle the Narungga. Kaurna men who accompanied Europeans to Yorke Peninsula in 1845 were terrified the Narungga would kill them for trespassing.⁴⁴ In 1851 an Aboriginal man from Eyre Peninsula inadvertently trespassed on Narungga land and was subsequently speared and died.⁴⁵ The Narungga showed no mercy to familiar foe but great reluctance to injure the lesser known, possibly dangerous, Europeans.

The Narungga were probably using these months to carefully evaluate the Europeans and weigh up the costs and benefits of accepting their permanent presence. Aware of their vulnerable situation, the Europeans' no doubt treated the Narungga reasonably well, with presents of tobacco, sugar and blankets. Sheep also provide a vital clue to the Narunggas' relatively tolerant acceptance of Europeans in 1846-8. Although the Narungga no doubt resented the take over of their water holes and hunting areas, they must have been gratified by the arrival of thousands of delicious, easily obtainable sheep. The long term environmental destruction caused by hard hooves and heavy grazing would not yet have been known to the Narungga, and sheep meat was much sought after by Aboriginal people who attacked flocks because they 'longed for sheep's flesh'.⁴⁶ Sheep meat provided a tasty addition to the traditional diet and had the added advantage of being fattier than native animals and a good source of grease for rubbing on bodies, or mixing with ochre for ceremonial painting. Significantly for the social structure of the group, there were no taboos and laws governing the distribution this new, abundant food (it is interesting to speculate on how the introduction of sheep impacted on the Elders' authority). The Narungga could not

⁴² Octavius Skipper, 'Reminiscences of Fifty-Two Years', in R Cockburn, Vol 1, p. 119.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ RG Jameson, *New Zealand, South Australia and New South Wales: a record of recent travels in these colonies*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1842, p. 82, and *SA Register*, 23 April 1845, 3C.

⁴⁵ See *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal* (hereafter *SAGMJ*), 22 May 1851, 3D.

⁴⁶ Kaurna man to Moorhouse, in *Government Gazette*, 26 May 1842, p. 1.

have initially foreseen or imagined the Europeans would refuse to share this abundant resource which was streaming into their country by the thousands.

Sheep may have been perceived as compensation or ‘rent’. Such a view may have been reinforced in January 1848 when a flock belonging to James Coutts died from drinking sea water.⁴⁷ On 1 January 1848, Moorhouse met with five Narungga – one man, three women and one child. The women left to look for friends, and were to meet up with Moorhouse’s party later. But ‘the women did not come’, they had heard of ‘Mr Coutt’s party having lost 1000 sheep, and did not care for the flour that [Moorhouse] had for distribution’.⁴⁸ Moorhouse’s guides also left, preferring to return to their friends ‘to feast upon mutton, rather than accompany [Moorhouse] for flour and blankets’ – the ‘abundance of mutton without even the exertion of killing the sheep’ was too tempting.⁴⁹ Tellingly, Moorhouse encountered no more Narungga during his visit, although if he returned to Koolywurtie⁵⁰ where the sheep had died he would undoubtedly have met a large number of Narungga people.

Some historians view the taking of stock as retaliation for the invasion of Aboriginal land or as a deliberate act of resistance to drive Europeans away. Other historians argue Aboriginal people were driven by hunger as their lands were alienated, game driven away and vegetation destroyed. However, these hypotheses do not apply to the Narunggas’ initial taking of sheep. Instead, the Narungga patiently waited to see how they would be recompensed. As was the case with the depot Hughes buried in the sand, the feast of over one thousand sheep unintentionally provided by Coutts may have provided adequate compensation for a time, and perhaps delayed the onset of hostilities. Eventually, when it became evident the Europeans had no intention of paying their dues, the Narungga were forced (once again) to help themselves. This was not a deliberate strategy to aggravate the Europeans or force them from their land. The Narungga were not stealing but taking what was rightfully theirs according to their laws. Sheep had taken over important hunting grounds. They drank from

⁴⁷ Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1848/50. Carmicheal feels this occurred in the vicinity of Black Point, *Ill-Shaped Leg*, the Author, Adelaide, 1973, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Carmicheal gives this locality, 1973, p. 16.

and desecrated fastidiously cared-for wells. The Europeans did not ask permission to hunt the Narunggas' kangaroos or other totem animals. The Narungga openly and honestly tried to communicate their desire for sheep but the language barrier and European notions of property prevented cross-cultural understanding. The Narungga were not shy in taking up to two hundred sheep in clear sight of Europeans – they took because they felt entitled to, because they easily could, because they loved the taste of mutton, and because they were seeing how the Europeans would respond.

On 20 January 1849, Penton shot and killed a Narungga man at Minlacowie (Minlaton) in the vicinity of Gum Flat.⁵¹ Penton claimed an axe had been stolen earlier from the Gum Flat Station, and on 20 January a flock of sheep had been rushed and 'a number' carried away.⁵² Penton went in pursuit on horse back, 'and came upon a camp of about fifty natives'.⁵³ Eight sheep were baking in the ashes, and the Narungga were 'busy preparing the ninth'.⁵⁴ Penton startled the Narungga who ran away with the exception of one man who 'resolutely stood his ground'.⁵⁵ While this man was either 'preparing to spear'⁵⁶ or 'in the act of throwing'⁵⁷ his spear, Penton shot him through the head. 'With great promptitude' Penton brought a cart to the spot, ascertained the man was dead, carried away any nets, spears, and camp equipage, and travelled to Adelaide where he reported the affair to the police. Anyway, as Moorhouse cautions, 'this is the overseer's report' and the 'statement of the natives' had yet to be procured'.⁵⁸

Seven months later, Moorhouse met a Narungga witness who supplied 'the information that was wanting'.⁵⁹ He confirmed Anstey's sheep were taken 'during the hot season', and while cooking the sheep, Penton 'came suddenly up', whereupon the 'Natives ran away, with the exception of one adult, who stood his ground with an intention of spearing Penton, and

⁵¹ Protector's report, *Observer*, 5 May 1849, p. 3 and Giles, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

⁵² Protector's report, *Observer*, 5 May 1849, p. 3 and *Adelaide Times*, 5 February 1849, 2D.

⁵³ *Observer*, 5 May 1849, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Adelaide Times*, 5 February 1849, 2D.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Observer*, 5 May 1849, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Protector's report for the quarter ending 30 September 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

keeping possession of the property'.⁶⁰ Moorhouse was informed Penton 'fired and shot the Native before he had approached the distance at which a spear could be thrown with any force and accuracy'.⁶¹ If this account is correct, Penton displays a practical self-preservation and awareness of the loopholes and flexibilities of the law. The same can be said of the Narungga witness if Penton's version is correct. When Moorhouse met this man, the Narungga had had no experience of the British legal system. It is doubtful he would know to fabricate such a detail.

Nearly forty years later, Giles recalled this shooting and provided additional information and embellishments. Apparently the Narungga 'attacked' and 'drove away' a shepherd who ran back to the station and informed Penton. Upon the two men's return, they found 'not a black to be seen' – 'there was nothing for it but to track them...not an easy thing to accomplish'.⁶² 'A number of tracks' were found in the scrub which was too thick to follow on horseback.⁶³ Penton dismounted and 'the plucky old fellow went after them single-handed' (although armed with his 'short double-barrelled gun').⁶⁴ Penton chased a man who 'stopped to pick up a spear', but 'before he could throw it, Penton dropped him, the ball going right through his neck and killing him on the spot'.⁶⁵ After collecting the dead sheep and 'various belongings', Penton 'made a grand bonfire of the lot'⁶⁶ – clearly demonstrating his 'decisive' (remorseless) attitude. Giles states Penton went immediately to Adelaide and reported what had taken place.

In Giles' version Penton is the hero and the underdog, who although not a good runner, was able to outrun a Narungga man in thick scrub.⁶⁷ Giles' account, written in 1887, does not tally with reports written in 1849. Giles provided the public (he was writing for a newspaper audience) a dramatic blend of several incidents. It is likely that Penton did track, chase and

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Giles, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hill and Hill also question the likelihood of this but accept Giles version, qualifying it with 'obviously the quarry knew that the spear was there and had allowed the distance to be shortened', p. 29.

shoot a Narungga man, but on a different occasion. The basics, which include the taking and roasting of sheep, the Narungga fleeing with the exception of one man who was subsequently shot, and the decisive manner in which Penton destroyed the carcasses and Narungga possessions, accord with the historic records. Giles states Moorhouse came to Yorke Peninsula soon afterwards and found out ‘from the blacks their version of the story’ which tallied ‘pretty much with Penton’s statement’.⁶⁸ But Giles’ claim to official sanction is false as both Penton and Moorhouse’s reports differ significantly to Giles’ account. Giles’ inaccuracy and selectivity are constant throughout his reminiscences which are indicative of the manner many settlers chose to portray and remember frontier violence.

That no legal action was taken against Penton and no officials were dispatched to investigate reflects the Government’s lack of action and concern regarding the killing of Aboriginal people. Rather than being treated with contempt, Penton was hailed a hero. Giles was full of praise, describing Penton as ‘the best man we had in our employ’, ‘a decisive and resolute fellow’ and ‘just the sort of man for a new country’.⁶⁹ The *Adelaide Times* reported ‘This affair appears to reflect great credit on Penton...the decided manner in which the matter was met being likely to prevent the repetition of similar acts of aggression on the part of the natives’.⁷⁰ Commending Penton’s expedient reporting of the shooting, Giles noted:

Many bushmen came to grief by keeping things of this sort quiet, but he was always straightforward and above board, and it was the best policy too, as he was only doing his duty in protecting his employer’s property.⁷¹

Giles assumes the protection of settlers’ property is of prime importance; unpalatable acts necessary to achieve this are perfectly legitimate and even praiseworthy. He reflects with satisfaction ‘the blacks never gave us any trouble at Gum Flat after that’.⁷²

According to Giles, many bushmen kept the murder of Aboriginal people quiet, and Penton was unusually honest in this regard. We do not know what was going on at neighbouring stations occupied by James Coutts, William Sharples and Alfred Weaver. In November 1847,

⁶⁸ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Adelaide Times*, 5 February 1849, 2D.

⁷¹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Anstey applied for an Occupation License for 'Currie Valley, Yorke's Peninsula'.⁷³ Such a name suggests an aggressive confrontation, possibly a beating or a thrashing.⁷⁴ It is possible Narungga people had been killed as a result of pastoral invasion prior to January 1849, but if so, no reports were made and no records exist. However, Penton's shooting of the unnamed man in January appears to have been tentatively tolerated by the Narungga. All accounts agree Penton immediately raced to the scene as soon as the sheep 'theft' was reported, he had only one accomplice, and the Narungga man was holding a spear. The killing of this man would have come within the Narungga's cultural experiences, in a sense it was 'fair' – it was a clear confrontation between two grown, armed men, both of whom were recognized leaders of their respective groups. Following this murder, the Narungga appear to have remained optimistic of establishing beneficial relations. But the settlers continued to show no signs of adequate recompense, and the Narungga were again forced to take what they were owed.

the murder of Nantariltarra

On 1 July 1849, '15 or 20' Narungga men threatened Scott and Brown, two shepherds employed by Anstey and Giles in the Hardwicke Bay area.⁷⁵ Three men confronted Brown at the head of the flock and 'said something he could not understand'.⁷⁶ After Brown told them to 'go away,' they went to Scott at the back of the flock and 'spoke something Scott could not understand'.⁷⁷ The Narungga men circled the sheep, saying 'My brother wantem sheepie'.⁷⁸ Scott and Brown chased them away, each firing a pistol 'to let them know they had firearms'.⁷⁹ When Scott and Brown turned their backs, the Narungga men 'came on them again, and began throwing stones'.⁸⁰ Again Scott told them to go away but they continued throwing stones and coming around the sheep 'and wouldn't let them go'.⁸¹ Although Scott fired a pistol 'at them', the shepherds were 'obliged to run home, and leave the sheep'.⁸² The

⁷³ *Government Gazette*, 4 November 1847.

⁷⁴ *The Macquarie Dictionary*, The Macquarie Library Ltd, NSW, 1991.

⁷⁵ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4B.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

sheep were recovered the following day, but two hundred were missing.⁸³ The Narungga men sincerely tried to communicate with Scott and Brown. They were bold, determined and unafraid of armed Europeans but, although vastly outnumbering Scott and Brown at least fifteen to two, did not wish to injure the Europeans.

The settlers did not display such honourable or cautious behavior. In ‘recovering’ the sheep, an elderly man called Nantariltarra was shot at Hardwicke Bay on 3 July 1849.⁸⁴ Although ‘Penton came over to Adelaide at once and reported the occurrence just as he had done before’,⁸⁵ no statements or reports of Nantariltarra’s murder appeared in the Adelaide newspapers. This lack of reporting indicates either the police did not make Penton’s report widely known (ie., no journalists heard of it), or the newspaper editors did not deem Nantariltarra’s death newsworthy, in which case either the public lacked interest in Aboriginal people’s mistreatment at the hands of Europeans, or the editors, acting as censors, seriously misinformed the public. No official investigation or action was taken until six weeks later when Moorhouse met with two Narungga men, Kokunea and Murra, who witnessed Nantariltarra’s murder. The non-reporting of this case had important repercussions; rather than acknowledging the settlers and their employees as the initial aggressors, a continued and convenient misunderstanding – that ‘the blacks’ were ‘deeply provocative’⁸⁶ – was perpetuated.

Giles, Murra and Kokunea agree on many details regarding Nantariltarra’s death. All agree some sheep were taken, a party of settlers gathered and went in pursuit, they came upon the Narungga who ‘retreated’, and that Nantariltarra was shot and died immediately. Giles refers to Nantariltarra as ‘Williamy’ – ‘a much older man’ who ‘had been employed at the [Gum Flat] station all summer’⁸⁷ where he had ‘made himself useful’.⁸⁸ Perhaps Minlacowie, the well which determined the site of Gum Flat Station, ‘belonged to’ Nantariltarra, who may also have ‘owned’ the surrounding country. The Narungga would naturally try and remain on

⁸³ According to *Register*, 14 July 1849, 3E.

⁸⁴ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3F.

⁸⁵ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41 and Protector’s report for the third quarter, GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

⁸⁶ ‘Murderous Encounters’, *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

⁸⁷ The summer of 1848-9.

⁸⁸ Giles, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

their own country if possible, and perhaps were entitled to first right of refusal regarding any 'jobs' or benefits to be gained. That Nantariltarra's son was employed as a shepherd at the station supports such speculation.

Giles claims that after learning of the stolen sheep, Penton 'and another man' went in pursuit, and came upon the 'natives' encampment' when it was nearly dark.⁸⁹ The Narungga had 'made a bushyard for the sheep' and 'by the way they handled their spears made it plain that they meant to stick to them'.⁹⁰ Penton went to 'Mr Sharples' station, which was not far off, where he remained the night'.⁹¹ The following morning Messrs. Sharples, Lodwick, and Field 'started off' with Penton and his man – five in all...'.⁹² Murra, who had been employed as a shepherd by Penton, gave evidence that the pursuing party consisted of '[George Field]⁹³, George Penton, a person named Palfrey⁹⁴, a shepherd named Scott, a cook called William⁹⁵, a shepherd called Johnny, a gentleman whose name the witness did not know⁹⁶, and another shepherd'.⁹⁷ Murra's evidence regarding those present was supported by Kokunea, and was not refuted in court in September 1849 and must therefore have been accepted as correct by both parties. Perhaps the perceived lower social status of Scott and 'Johnny' and any Narungga employees excluded them from Giles memory. Perhaps the absence of Scott in this section of Giles' reminiscences is deliberate.

According to Giles, the party of settlers 'started off' the next morning. 'The blacks' were found 'still in the same place' and:

a scrimmage ensued, but the natives did not make much of a stand, and soon began to beat a retreat. One was killed, old Williamy the ringleader, George Penton having shot him. Of course they had eaten a good many of the sheep, but we got about 180.⁹⁸

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Referred to as 'the prisoner' in court reports.

⁹⁴ Alexander Palfrey, an employee of Anstey and Giles on Gum Flat. See Employee's ledger, Penton Vale Station, 1847-52, State Library, Group No. BRG 294.

⁹⁵ This is William Sharples, 'Cocky William', see Carmicheal, 1973, p. 40.

⁹⁶ Mr EB Lodwick.

⁹⁷ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4A.

⁹⁸ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

Giles gives a minimal, sanitised version of the ‘scrimmage’ and displays typical concern for the sheep. Murra’s court evidence is more informative:

On the approach of the party, the blacks took to the water. [Murra’s] father was one of them, but on hearing a little black girl cry on the beach, he returned for her. Just as he reached her [George Field] shot him through the head. The murdered man fell back with his head under the water, and never moved again...The ball entered the black man’s forehead, and came out at the back of his head. The little girl was drowned. The deceased had no spears in his hand when he was shot. They were all left at the wurley, where the white men afterwards burnt them with the nets, waddies, and the carcasses of the sheep’.⁹⁹

The white men dismounted from their horses before firing, and Penton asked Murra to hold his horse while he fired at Murra’s father.¹⁰⁰ Kokunea corroborated Murra’s version of events:

The black man was swimming in the water when he was shot. A picanniny cried on the beach. The black man came to her and that man (pointing to [Field]) shot him. The blackfellow tumbled down...[Field] loaded his gun and fired at another blackfellow, but he was too far off. All the other white men fired, but only one black was shot. The prisoner shot the black first. Then Palfrey fired at another blackfellow in the water, he dived...¹⁰¹

Kokunea stated ‘Palfrey and the gentleman¹⁰² had double-barrelled guns, all the rest had single barrelled guns, and Scott had a pistol’.¹⁰³ On 28 July 1849, Sergeant Major McCulloch was led to a grave at Hardwick Bay which Kokunea and Murra said contained the bodies of the ‘man who was shot and the girl who was drowned’.¹⁰⁴ McCulloch deposed ‘one of the bodies was that of a man, the other seemed to be that of a female or a young person’.¹⁰⁵ In the skull of the man ‘there was a round hole in front, over the left eye, and a shattered hole at the back, as if a ball had passed through’.¹⁰⁶ McCulloch found the bodies ‘in an advanced state of decomposition’ and felt they ‘might have been dead a month, more or

⁹⁹ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4AB.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Lodwick.

¹⁰³ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B. Scott having a pistol is consistent with Brown’s evidence, *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4B.

¹⁰⁴ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B.

¹⁰⁵ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3D.

¹⁰⁶ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B.

less, but not three months'.¹⁰⁷ Murra states it was 'when there was a big moon, a great many days before Scott was killed'.¹⁰⁸

Forty years later, Giles was adamant Penton shot 'Williamy'. Giles was puzzled by Murra's persistent claim that Field was the murderer until he learned Penton had caught Murra breaking lambs' legs, whereby Penton 'threatened if ever he could catch him he would tie him up and give him a sound whipping with his stockwhip'.¹⁰⁹ Murra 'stood in such wholesome dread of Penton, knowing he would keep his word, that he was frightened to tell the truth'.¹¹⁰ It is possible Murra was making Field pay for Penton's actions. For Aboriginal people, the law of payback would implicate anyone present on such a violent occasion.

In court, there were discrepancies in the Narungga men's evidence regarding the position of the white men on shore and the type of guns they carried. The unsworn testimony submitted by Lodwick was not produced, but Judge Bonney found 'the circumstances described by Mr Lodwick were so different from them spoken of by the natives that [Mr Bonney] was constrained to think them different affairs' – if not, 'one or the other statement must be quite wrong'.¹¹¹ Moorhouse reported 'The statements given by the Europeans...and two Natives who said they were present at the affray...were directly opposing each other'.¹¹² Because Penton had made no mention of the girl drowning, Moorhouse suspected the correctness of his report.¹¹³ Although the dead bodies corresponded with the witnesses accounts, and although the Judge found Kokunea and Murra 'had not swerved in any main particular', none of the 'gentlemen' were charged. Field was released on bail which was 'immediately' tendered by neighbouring pastoralists Alfred Weaver and James Coutts and on 14 September 1849, the Grand Jury ignored the bill against Field for murder.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3D.

¹⁰⁸ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B. In 1849 the full moon was on 5 July, but for a few days prior to the 'exact' full moon date, the moon would appear full to the naked eye.

¹⁰⁹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B.

¹¹² Moorhouse, GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

¹¹³ Protector's report for the third quarter, GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

¹¹⁴ *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3E.

There is a possibility the name Nantariltarra meant ‘father whose child has died’.¹¹⁵ I feel the murder of Nantariltarra marks a turning point in the nature of cross-cultural relations on the Peninsula, after which the Narungga concluded the Europeans no longer deserved to be treated with respect. A party of ‘gentlemen’, figures of high status and authority, ‘gathered’, prepared for a ‘scrimmage’, and bided time while waiting for morning. This was a favourite trick of many ‘pursuing parties’ who would quietly sneak up on sleeping camps and surprise unprepared Aboriginal people. All were armed, and all fired at the party which included women and children.¹¹⁶ None of the Narungga men were armed – their spears were ‘left at the wurley’.¹¹⁷ Giles admits ‘the natives did not make much of a stand’ during ‘this last shooting match’ and reflects ‘we had no trouble with the blacks after the affair at Hardwicke Bay’.¹¹⁸ The Narungga must have wondered what sort of men would cowardly surprise a group of unarmed men, women and children and shoot a ‘well known’ ‘useful’ man who was trying to rescue a child in danger. What sort of man could ask a boy to hold his horse while he fired at the boy’s father and relatives? What sort of men could allow a child to drown in front of them?

‘determined’ and ‘resolute’ men

Using Giles’ words, these were ‘determined’, ‘resolute’ men – ‘just the sort of [men] for a new country’.¹¹⁹ Men who understood the need to ‘teach the blacks a lesson’ and believed economic profits were more important than Aboriginal peoples’ lives. The Yorke Peninsula pastoralists and their overseers were a close knit group who supported each other. The connections between them – and indeed with other infamous ‘pioneering’ settlers throughout the colony – are intriguing and many. Field’s bail was tendered by James Coutts and Alfred Weaver. Weaver and Anstey and Giles appointed (respectively) Charles Parrington and Penton as Overseers. Penton and Parrington surveyed together under Colonel Light.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Upon being given a list of Narungga names with no further details, linguist Jane Simpson deduced: Possible ending ‘iltarra=yiltarra’ cf. NgiYerri Yetarra (Ngeturri Wikkarra) ‘ngi Yerri and Ngeturri’ may be the same form since ‘t’ may change to [y] in the middle of compounds. Just possible the Wkkarra is related to Kaurna wikkardi ‘father whose child has died’. Personal correspondence.

¹¹⁶ If a young girl was in the group, older females would also have been present.

¹¹⁷ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4A.

¹¹⁸ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Carmicheal, 1973, p. 7.

When overseeing for Weaver at Currency Creek, Parrington neighboured Henry Thomas Morris, who later managed George Milner Stephen's Port Vincent run. Morris was Ex-Governor Hindmarsh's nephew. By August 1846, James Dease had discovered 'a fine country' on Yorke Peninsula¹²¹ and Lodwick, Beevor and Dease applied for an Occupation license for the head of St Vincent's Gulf.¹²² In November 1847, Lodwick and Beevor applied for an Occupation License in the Port Lincoln district¹²³ and were residing on this run in May 1849 when Beevor was murdered by Aboriginal people.¹²⁴ The newspapers fueled the vengeful sentiments of the settlers following the 'treacherous' 'barbaric' murder of this 'old', 'kind', 'much respected' settler.¹²⁵ Lodwick discovered Beevor's body in the ransacked hut when he returned with his sheep¹²⁶ and no doubt his passions were still running high when he came to stay with his friend William Sharples on Yorke Peninsula a couple of months later. Lodwick's traumatic experiences on Eyre Peninsula must have been known to the settlers who participated in the 'scrimmage' in which Nantariltarra was murdered. It is also likely the 'gentlemen' in the court were protective of Lodwick in light of his horrific experiences. What was not made clear to the public was that Beevor's murder was in retaliation for the indiscriminate poisoning of at least five Aboriginal people on a nearby station several weeks earlier.¹²⁷

On 20 August 1846, only two weeks after Lodwick, Beevor and Dease applied for their Yorke Peninsula Occupation License, James Coutts and William Sharples applied for runs on Yorke Peninsula.¹²⁸ Coutts and Sharples came to South Australia together in 1837.¹²⁹ In the early months of 1839, Coutts and his kinsman, James Coutts Crawford, travelled overland with sheep from New South Wales to South Australia. Crawford kept a diary of the journey. Crawford refers to 'driving' several 'parties of blacks' 'off with dogs', and riding 'at the leading party at full gallop with our stockwhips but with our arms ready in case of

¹²¹ Ern Carmicheal, *Four Makes One*, District Council of Yorketown, Yorketown, 1975, p. 3.

¹²² *Government Gazette*, 6 August 1849.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4 November 1849.

¹²⁴ *Register*, 16 May 1849, 2E.

¹²⁵ See for example JB Hobb's letter, *Register*, 9 June 1849, 2D.

¹²⁶ *Register*, 18 Aug 1849, 4B.

¹²⁷ Police Commissioner's Report, *Register* 18 August 1849, 4B.

¹²⁸ *Government Gazette*, 20 August 1849.

¹²⁹ Carmicheal, 1973, p. 44.

necessity...'.¹³⁰ Coutts and Crawford 'fired a volley' at approaching Aboriginal people, and later when 'the natives' 'showed face' drove them away 'by a determined front'.¹³¹ In June 1839 Coutts again left Adelaide to make up a party of 'eight young men' amongst whom were William Sharples, Edward Spicer (who applied for a run on Yorke Peninsula on 1 July 1847¹³²), Deas[e] and Alexander Buchanan.¹³³ The men travelled to Sydney where they purchased sheep 'to be taken overland to South Australia as speculation'.¹³⁴

Buchanan kept a diary of the journey. He records his party killing a minimum of six Aboriginal people and wounding many more. The reader gains a sense of Buchanan's lack of concern regarding these murders through phrases such as 'give the blacks a volley',¹³⁵ and 'we kept firing as long as they were within shot', 'him we wounded severely but did not kill him, he being a good way out'.¹³⁶ The primary aim is to protect their valuable investment – the sheep. When an Aboriginal man was seen amongst the reeds, he was fired upon and killed as he 'had come there with no other intention than to spear sheep, so his plant was fixed'.¹³⁷ After killing 'five or six' men, the Overlanders 'broke up all their canoes and took all their nets and burnt them'.¹³⁸ This fervor to destroy Aboriginal goods was repeated over and over by pastoralists on Yorke Peninsula. At the end of the journey, the Overlanders met the Governor and Captain Sturt who 'asked what party we belonged to and asked if the blacks had been troublesome'.¹³⁹ Buchanan and his party:

told them they had been pretty quiet except at the Darling they had annoyed us a little.

Did not say we had shot any.¹⁴⁰

Buchanan, Coutts, Sharples and the other members of the party knew to keep quiet about certain matters – at least to government officials.

¹³⁰ James Coutts Crawford diary entry 11 March 1849, 'The Diary of James Coutts Crawford', Professor DH Pike (ed), *South Australiana* No.1, March 1964, p. 63.

¹³¹ Ibid., diary entry 29 March 1839, p.65.

¹³² *Government Gazette*, 1 July 1847.

¹³³ Diary of Alexander Buchanan on his overland journey from Sydney to Adelaide in 1839. *Royal Geographic Society of Australasia South Australia Branch*, vol. 24, 1922, p. 61.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Coutts employed his nephew, John Gall, at his station “Tuckokcowie”. Gall had ‘always been mad about guns’ and ‘when the native troubles were on, [Gall] was repeatedly involved in skirmishes’ in which ‘he came off lightly’.¹⁴¹ Charles Parrington became Coutts’ overseer in 1852.¹⁴² In October 1852 Gall and Parrington were involved in a ‘collision’ on Tuckockowie in which ‘several of the natives were killed’.¹⁴³ Moorhouse was sent to investigate,¹⁴⁴ but ‘in the absence of native evidence’, officials were forced to conclude ‘Gall and Parrington, were justified in firing upon the natives, and...have not committed any crime’.¹⁴⁵ No charges were laid, and the case was closed. The Advocate General was clearly suspicious however, and pointed out the flaws in ‘the testimony of the parties...who take the Law into their own hands...[and] in the absence of concrete testimony give such versions of the affair as may justify themselves...’.¹⁴⁶ He felt ‘the aggressions of the natives...almost always terminate *far more fatally* for the Natives’.¹⁴⁷ In July 1853, Coutts again had ‘trouble’ at his station and ‘had to fire upon the natives’.¹⁴⁸ Coutts was not charged, and there is no further reference to this shooting.

It is possible the number of people killed and wounded by Coutts’ and his employees in 1852 and 1853 was far greater than the alleged two. North of Coutts’ head station (Tuckockowie) is an area Narungga people in the late 1800s referred to as ‘Muldarby’. In the mid 1900s, a ‘pioneer’ recalled:

One very important piece of history...refers to a spot called Muldarby, which means the “place of death” and which is in the Tukokowie area. It would appear that in the early days of white settlement of the Peninsula, a great many of the natives died very suddenly and mysteriously at this place. One assumption suggests that the natives stole and ate poisoned flour from the early white settlers, but apparently the real truth surrounding the tragedy was never brought to light. However, this tragic incident marks the sudden

¹⁴¹ Carmicheal, 1973, p. 45.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴³ *Register*, 15 November 1852, 2E.

¹⁴⁴ Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

¹⁴⁵ Advocate General to Colonial Secretary, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹⁴⁸ *Government Gazette*, 15 December 1853.

ending of almost an entire tribe, the scene of the tragedy being ever shunned by the surviving natives, who gave it the name Muldarby (the place of death).¹⁴⁹

Howard Johnson, who spent many years on Yorke Peninsula in the late nineteenth century, recalled two areas, 'Muldarby and Little Mudarby two of the sections near Tucock Cowie' which took 'their name from one of the ghosts or evil spirits that the darkies were scared of' and he knew from personal experience 'that the niggers would not come over to the hut at night from their camp a mile away'.¹⁵⁰

Although such speculation is inconclusive and unproven, it is possible the Narungga named these areas following the shootings of 1852 and 1853. Aboriginal people across Australia 'superstitiously avoided' places where tragedies occurred.¹⁵¹ Muldarby may have been the site of killings that occurred during the time of the sealers and whalers. Or it may have taken its name from events prior to European presence. However, it seems more than co-incidental that Muldarby and Little Muldarby are situated on Coutts' run, near his head station, and two reports of shootings which were not investigated by the police and from which we do not hear the Narungga version of events occurred in the vicinity of Coutts' head station, 'Tuckockowie'. When Coutts sold the Tuckockowie lease in the mid 1850s, Parrington gained employment with James Brown at Culparo, Avenue Range (near Lucindale).¹⁵² According to Carmicheal, Parrington and Brown had 'known each other at Hindmarsh Valley' in the late 1830s. James Brown was notorious for 'the shooting murder of at least nine people in 1848'.¹⁵³ These included a blind and infirm old man, three women, two teenage girls and three babies.¹⁵⁴ It is telling that Parrington should chose to work for Brown.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ George Thom, *A Pioneer's Story of Southern Yorke Peninsula*, Anthropology Archives, South Australian Museum, date penciled in 1953.

¹⁵⁰ JH Johnson, letter to Tindale dated 17 March 1934, Anthropology Archives, South Australian Museum.

¹⁵¹ See for example 'Recollections of a Septuagenarian', *Register*, 29 May 1878, 5G-6A.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁵³ Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, 'The legend of James Brown', *Fatal Collisions*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2001, p. 81.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Carmicheal, 1973, p. 52.

the death of two shepherds

Nantariltarra's death must have shocked and angered the Narungga, and taught them not to trust settlers who were neither reasonable nor honourable. In spite of Nantariltarra allowing Europeans access to Minlacowie (the water hole) and proving himself 'useful' about the station, he was coldly shot. This must have sorely tested the patience and tolerance of the Narungga. On 11 July 1849, Thomas Armstrong, a shepherd employed by GM Stephen, was wounded with a spear in the small of his back at an out-station six to seven miles from GM Stephen's head station at the Port Vincent run.¹⁵⁶ Stephen, a lawyer and barrister, was married to ex-Governor Hindmarsh's daughter. Stephen was disliked by many of the Adelaide 'elite' amongst whom he moved – he comes across as a pompous dandy, and the numerous court cases against him depict him as a cheat, liar and social climber.¹⁵⁷ He scrimped on paying wages, reneged on deals, and was not fussy about who he employed to do his dirty work.¹⁵⁸ Stephen employed 'a rough lot of men'¹⁵⁹ amongst whom were at least two ex-convicts – Thomas Armstrong and William Bagnall – who arrived on Yorke Peninsula in 1848.¹⁶⁰

News of Armstrong's death reached Adelaide by 14 July. Stephen acted as the prosecuting lawyer for his murdered shepherd. Stephen sent his employees' undated depositions to the Colonial Secretary on 24 July.¹⁶¹ It is highly likely these depositions were taken by Stephen's wife's cousin, Henry Thomas Morris, who was on Yorke Peninsula at the time. John Wilson, a German hut-keeper, deposed that Armstrong began the morning twenty yards from the hut. As Armstrong did not require any assistance with his sheep, Wilson left him. Wilson then saw 'a native go into the hut', to whom he gave some food. Shortly afterwards, Wilson and 'the native' heard 'Armstrong coming towards us with a spear in his hands crying out "John I'm [murdered] help me to the hut"'.¹⁶² Wilson clearly states:

¹⁵⁶ Deposition of John Wilson, GRG 24/6/1849/1363.

¹⁵⁷ See Carmichael, p. 13. Snell describes Stephens as a 'vagabond' in Griffiths, p. 172.

¹⁵⁸ See for example court reports in the *Register* throughout October 1849.

¹⁵⁹ *Observer*, 13 October 1849, 3B.

¹⁶⁰ Carmichael, pp. 17, 22-3, 25.

¹⁶¹ Wilson, GRG 24/6/1849/1363.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

I saw no natives when I went to the assistance of Armstrong. The one who accompanied me when we heard the noise ran away.¹⁶³

In court two months later, Wilson ‘recollected Armstrong’s spearing ‘on the 12th of June or July’ and claimed he had seen a man called Melaityappa ‘at the same time Armstrong was speared’, and he was convinced Melaityappa ‘was the man Armstrong said speared him’.¹⁶⁴ Giles recalled a hutkeeper at Curramulka who was ‘plucky’ and ‘made of better stuff’ than certain ‘cowardly’ shepherds who were afraid of ‘the blacks’.¹⁶⁵ Giles held this hut-keeper in high regard, noting he was ‘only a lad...and moreover a German’.¹⁶⁶ Perhaps this was Wilson, who displayed the same cunning as the pastoralists.

Stephen’s overseer, IJ Taylor was with Armstrong while he died. Taylor deposed that Armstrong:

was engaged with his flock in the yard... he heard his dog barking...He went to see what was the matter when he suddenly came on about 30 Natives. I asked him if they were encamped there, he said no, they were standing among the trees and bushes, one of them threw a spear which knocked my hat off, I then turned around to run towards the Hut when another spear pierced me in the back. I cried out murder and the Hut Keeper John came to my assistance.¹⁶⁷

The overseer was careful to voice his concern for Stephen’s sheep. He asked the dying man ‘where his sheep were’, to which Armstrong replied ‘they were in the yards, in charge of the Hut Keeper’.¹⁶⁸

Unlike the other employees, Mr HV Jones Esq. was literate and able to write his own deposition. Jones stated Armstrong would not ‘ill-treat any of the natives’ and, to the best of his knowledge, ‘was on friendly terms with them’.¹⁶⁹ This undated deposition of Jones’ is interesting considering Morris, the Manager of Stephen’s station, later stated in court:

¹⁶³ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹⁶⁴ *Register*, 19 September 1849, 3F.

¹⁶⁵ Giles reminiscences, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ GRG 24/6/1849/1362.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

When Armstrong was speared, [Morris] assembled the men and...expressed his opinion that [Armstrong's] death was consequent upon his intercourse with the blackfellows' women.¹⁷⁰

Moorhouse later met with a 'Native boy who was present' on the occasion of Armstrong's wounding, who claimed:

He was shepherding for Armstrong some dressed sheep, he had been doing so for several days. Armstrong had requested him to bring a Native woman to the station; if he should happen to meet with any on the run. On the morning of the 11th of July the boy saw a Native named Tulta with his wife, a little from the station and told Armstrong where they were. Armstrong immediately went to them, seized the woman for sensual purposes and after accomplishing all that he desired, liberated the woman, to return to her husband. The passions of the husband were naturally aroused and whilst under their influence, avenged the insult upon Armstrong by spearing him.¹⁷¹

Moorhouse was adamant the immorality of Armstrong was the cause of his death, and later reflected 'it is impossible to prevent collisions' where 'the Shepherds determined to hold intercourse with the women...which happened at Yorke's Peninsula...in the case of Armstrong'.¹⁷²

Unlike the murder of Nantariltarra only eight days before, the newspapers quickly took up the story of Armstrong's spearing. One paper reported 'the blacks have recently become very daring at Yorke's Peninsula...a shepherd...of Mr Stephen's...severely speared...fatal results were expected'.¹⁷³ The *Register* reported:

The Aborigines on Yorke's Peninsula are becoming more troublesome than heretofore. A shepherd named Armstrong, in the employ of Mr GM Stephen, had been killed by a spear, and from the flocks of Mr Anstey no less than 200 sheep were recently abstracted by the wily blacks.¹⁷⁴

The *Register* makes no mention of Penton's shooting of 'Williamy' during the recovery of these sheep, but intriguingly mentions 'reports were current in town yesterday, that the recent outrages had produced a sanguinary collision between them and the settlers, and that several

¹⁷⁰ *Observer*, 29 September 1849, 4D.

¹⁷¹ GRG 24/6/1849/1907 ½.

¹⁷² GRG 24/6/1849/2001.

¹⁷³ *SAGMJ*, 14 July 1849, 3B.

¹⁷⁴ *Register*, 14 July 1849, 3E.

aboriginals had fallen'.¹⁷⁵ Although it is possible the 'collision' referred to is the Hardwick Bay 'scrimmage', the plural 'recent outrages' suggests the 'sanquinary collision' occurred *after* Armstrong's death. Penton had already reported the death of 'Williamy', and newspapers tended to downplay rather than exaggerate the number of Aboriginal people killed. The 'gentlemen' involved in Nantariltarra's murder would have been careful who they told – they knew the prudence in minimizing or keeping quiet about details of such occasions. This reference to a 'sanquinary collision' may be the sole record of another unreported and uninvestigated 'collision' in which several Narungga were killed.

It took the death of a white man to warrant the presence of a police force on the Peninsula. On 15 July 'one Acting Corporal, two constables, with four Horses were dispatched to the Peninsula', they travelled overland and arrived on 21 July.¹⁷⁶ Armstrong's death is the first record of serious Narungga violence towards the newcomers, and significantly affected morale on the Peninsula – for both Narungga and Europeans. Importantly for Tulta and his fellow countrymen, they now had proof shepherds were mortal and did not possess any malignant powers.

On 2 August 1849, twenty-two days after Armstrong's spearing and one full moon after the murder of Nantariltarra,¹⁷⁷ Anstey and Giles' shepherd, William Bruce Scott, was murdered by Tulta and Wilcooramalap.¹⁷⁸ Sergeant-Major McCulloch was patrolling the area, he saw Scott on 31 July, and on the night of 2 August he was at one of Anstey and Giles' outstations where he learnt Scott had not returned with his sheep. The presence of police did not deter the Narungga aggression towards the Europeans. On 3 August, Corporal McCulloch was led by 'three Aboriginal natives' (one of whom was the Narungga interpreter known to the Europeans as 'Jim Crack') to:

a dense forest country surrounded by scrub [where] they found a yard constructed of brush with a native encampment. About one hundred and fifty sheep were there alive, and a great many parts of newly killed carcasses, skins &c.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Police Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 1 September 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹⁷⁷ The 'exact' full moon was 4 August 1849 but to the naked eye the moon would appear full on 2 August.

¹⁷⁸ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4A.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

At McCulloch's approach, 'the natives' fled with the exception of Wilcooramalap. They 'captured a woman and some children, but let them go'.¹⁸⁰ Jim Crack asked Wilcooramalap where Scott was, and Wilcooramalap 'without hesitation, conducted the party' to the mangled body which 'presented a most shocking spectacle'.¹⁸¹ Wilcooramalap told Jim Crack 'that he and Thulta killed the white fellow'.¹⁸² McCulloch arrested Wilcooramalap and took him to Adelaide. They arrived on the morning of Saturday 11 August, and proceeded directly to the Police Court.¹⁸³

Wilcooramalap was not ashamed of the role he played in Scott's murder, which puzzled and infuriated the Adelaide public, and was used as evidence of the barbarity of Aboriginal people:

He entertains so slight an idea of the crime, that he not only led the police to the body, but unhesitatingly acknowledged, through an interpreter, that he was one of the murderers. When led to the police office, on Saturday, with the end of a rope about his neck, he grinned away with the most stupid indifference to the proceedings and profound ignorance to the solemn interest in his own fate...¹⁸⁴

Wilcooramalap and Tulta were acting within their laws, they were punishing the Europeans for crimes against their country and their people, and may have been respected by their own people for standing up to the interlopers. In stark contrast, the Europeans who killed Narungga people did not have such provoking circumstances, they were acting outside British law, and were defending neither fellow countrymen nor their country, but the loss of stock.

McCulloch felt the murders of Scott and Armstrong were caused by the settlers 'bad treatment' of the Narungga.¹⁸⁵ Evidence strongly points to Scott being killed as payback. It was while recovering sheep taken from Scott's flock that Nantariltarra was shot. Scott accompanied the party of armed white men who killed Nantariltarra and (indirectly) a child. Tulta, assisted by Wilcooramalap, confidently and brutally murdered Scott:

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ *Adelaide Times*, 13 August 1849, 3G.

¹⁸⁵ McCulloch to the Police Commissioner, 15 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

There was an incision from the breast to the naval, and part of the intestinal fat had been removed. The throat was cut almost from ear to ear, the windpipe being completely severed. There were two spear wounds in the back: one nearly opposite the heart and seemed to have penetrated between the ribs. The back part of the skull was completely smashed with some blunt heavy instrument, and the ears were beaten to a jelly.¹⁸⁶

Scott's body was not treated with respect. The taking of kidney fat indicates this death had symbolic meaning. The cut throat, spear wounds, and smashed skull may indicate a revenge in keeping with the severity of the original crime and perhaps a desire to investigate the mortality of European bodies. The mode of Scott's murder also illustrates pent up frustration and anger. The gun barrel found near Scott's body had 'two stones in it, rammed down about six inches...it had been poked down into the ground'.¹⁸⁷ The Narungga were sending a strong message to the settlers.

After Scott and Armstrong's deaths, the shepherds were 'greatly alarmed, and refused to take out the sheep', they 'would not venture from one hut to another without arms'.¹⁸⁸ The Narungga had confirmed no evil would immediately afflict them following the killing of shepherds, and their confidence increased accordingly. An Overseer on Yorke Peninsula wrote:

[The blacks], who have left their fisheries, are patrolling the bush with their weapons, watching every opportunity to steal sheep, rob the huts, and kill the men. They even boast that they can kill any white man now, and declare they will kill every one they come into contact with.¹⁸⁹

Another newspaper reported 'neither person nor property is safe on the Peninsula, and the dense scrub renders every facility to the blacks to conduct their depredations with impunity'.¹⁹⁰ Even in areas 'where the country was open and the blacks rarely came', shepherds 'who had been unmolested' were wanting to leave their flocks.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4A.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4B.

¹⁸⁸ John Walsh, evidence in Supreme Court, *Register* 19 September 1849, 3F.

¹⁸⁹ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

¹⁹⁰ *Adelaide Times*, 13 August 1849, 3G.

¹⁹¹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

This is a crucial stage of both cross-cultural relations and the pastoral enterprise. A commentator in Adelaide suggested ‘unless some means of protection...be adopted...the sooner the whites abandon that part of the country the better’.¹⁹² The pastoralists had sunk substantial sums of money into their ‘runs’, sheep were thriving and wool exports from Yorke Peninsula ‘for the coming season’ were expected to total £9000 – ‘a sum exceeding the whole export of the colony in its earlier years’.¹⁹³ But, as the Overseer warned his employer, unless ‘men of courage’ replace those ‘wanting to leave their flocks,’ ‘your loss will be great, and perhaps a total loss.’¹⁹⁴ Alert to the fact his employees’ well-founded fear could have a detrimental effect upon his bank balance, Anstey attempted to ‘conceal’ Scott’s murder in order ‘that the shepherds might not be deterred from going out with their sheep’.¹⁹⁵ For the entrepreneurial men who had taken up runs on the Peninsula, the potential for huge profits was too enticing to contemplate abandoning their newly acquired territories. The pastoralists and their men-in-charge chose to adopt their own ‘means of protection’ – it was necessary to raise the shepherds morale and teach the Narungga who was in charge. The ‘Overseer’ was ‘obliged to be on horseback everyday scouring the run...expect[ing] to hear every day of some new mischief by the blacks’.¹⁹⁶ ‘Penton showed such high spirits and determination that he seemed to impart his spirit to the men, and he persuaded them to take their flocks back to the different stations’.¹⁹⁷ ‘Mr Morris gave all the men arms, and was constantly scouring the run to protect the shepherds’.¹⁹⁸

For the settlers and their overseers, ‘protection’ appears to have been a euphemism for violently repelling and deliberately terrifying the Narungga. In early August, Morris assaulted two Narungga women, Monarto and Yurnarri. Before beating the women, Morris told them not to come near the stations.¹⁹⁹ When Sergeant McCulloch toured the Peninsula between 21 July and 10 August, he discovered ‘the Natives can not approach the stations

¹⁹² *Adelaide Times*, 13 August 1849, 3G.

¹⁹³ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Register* 19 September 1849, 3F, and see the intriguing letter written in great haste by Anstey on 11 August 1849, GRG 35/1849.

¹⁹⁶ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E, it seems likely this man was either George Penton or Henry Morris.

¹⁹⁷ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

¹⁹⁸ *Register* 19 September 1849, 3F.

¹⁹⁹ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4C.

without being fired upon'.²⁰⁰ As the stations were watered entirely from Native wells, and all the wells were occupied by the settlers, 'the Natives are driven to a state of desperation'.²⁰¹ John Walsh, a shepherd for Stephen, provides a contrasting perception of the scrub which he felt 'was very thick, and a black man could not easily escape from a pursuer in it'.²⁰² The Narungga were again wary of Europeans. When Moorhouse 'came on a native encampment' in August 1849, 'the blacks' made off upon his approach.²⁰³

Moorhouse had foreseen 'the Europeans, after having had two of their number killed, will repel, rather than encourage, further intercourse with the Natives'.²⁰⁴ An editorial in the *Register* was more succinct:

Those settlers who are confirmed in the pastoral career have almost insensibly acquired the persuasion of some "right divine" by virtue of which the lands included in their "runs" and the aboriginal occupiers of the soil have become wholly subject to their absolute rule. They view the sable denizens of the forest as dangerous interlopers, or something worse.²⁰⁵

In a letter to his employer, a Yorke Peninsula Overseer stated 'until the settlers are allowed to shoot [the blacks] wherever they are found they will never be quiet'.²⁰⁶ Three days after extracts of this letter were published, a colonist who went by the pseudonym 'Blue Nose' sent a letter to the Editor:

As the experiences of all the oldest residents in the Australasian colonies have unexceptionably demonstrated, that the best and only means of teaching refractory aborigines the sacred nature of the protection afforded to life and property by British jurisprudence, is to give them a severe lesson when their depredations sanction and demand severe measures. I could give numberless instances where a little cold lead, well applied, effected a perfectly amicable understanding between the two races...²⁰⁷

The Protector was understandably alarmed at such violent sentiments. He argued if 'the white settler be permitted to take the law into his own hands, and to shoot down for "a box of cold

²⁰⁰ McCulloch to the Police Commissioner, letter dated 15 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *Register*, 19 September 1849, 3F.

²⁰³ Evidence of Moorhouse, Police Court, *Register*, 1 September 1849, 4D.

²⁰⁴ Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 17 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1528.

²⁰⁵ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ 'The war between the blacks', *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

meat”* at his pleasure, this is a state of war in which might will most deplorably overcome right’.²⁰⁸

Melaityappa

Tellingly, the day news of Scott’s murder reached Adelaide, the Protector ‘received instructions to visit Yorke’s Peninsula’.²⁰⁹ Moorhouse, ‘accompanied by 2 mounted police’ (one of whom was McCulloch) and ‘three natives’, arrived on Yorke Peninsula on 19 August. He was aware ‘the natives will naturally be afraid of approaching the Europeans’, and realised that without food to distribute, no contact would be made.²¹⁰ The government authorised Moorhouse to take one ton of flour.²¹¹ On 22 August, ‘when in the interior’, Moorhouse ‘came upon an encampment of 7 Natives, 2 men, 2 women, one boy and 2 children’ on 22 August.²¹² One of the men:

was suffering dreadfully from three ball wounds he had received about 10 days before.

One ball had entered the back on the right side of the spine, passed to the front of the abdomen and was lodged in its muscles; a second had entered the right arm and lodged there, - and the third had passed through the left foot.²¹³

Moorhouse asked who had shot him, to which the wounded man, Melaityappa,²¹⁴ replied (through an interpreter) ‘two gentlemen on horseback, one having a double barrelled gun, and the other a single barrelled one’.²¹⁵ Moorhouse took immediate action. He cut the ball from Melaityappa’s arm and travelled with Melaityappa and Perria²¹⁶ (who witnessed the shooting) to Stephen’s head station where Henry Valette Jones was identified.²¹⁷ McCulloch apprehended Jones, and travelled with Moorhouse, Melaityappa and Perria to Adelaide, arriving on 28 August. Henry Thomas Morris was apprehended in Adelaide that day and taken to the Aborigines’ Location with ‘four white men variously dressed’ and separately

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4B. *this phrase was used by a witness in court proceedings against Jones and Morris.

²⁰⁹ GRG 24/6/1849/1907 ½.

²¹⁰ GRG 24/6/1849/1528.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² GRG 24/6/1849/1907 ½.

²¹³ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

²¹⁴ Also referred to as Melappa, Malappa, Malieappa, ‘Kit’.

²¹⁵ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

²¹⁶ Also referred to as Birria, Piaria,

²¹⁷ *Register*, 1 September 1849, 4D and GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

identified by Melaityappa and Perria.²¹⁸ On 29 August the Colonial Surgeon operated on Melaityappa.

On 29 August, the two ‘ruddy, reckless, dashing young fellows’²¹⁹ Morris and Jones, respectively described as ‘manager of a sheep station and stockholder’ and ‘gentleman’, appeared before Charles Bonney and FS Dutton at the Police Court. Perria gave evidence. He stated he and Melaityappa met with Jones who gave them a skinned kangaroo.²²⁰ Jones went ‘as if for home’, and Melaityappa roasted the kangaroo.²²¹ As he took it out of the fire, Jones and Morris rode up on small grey horses, they were armed ‘with short guns’. Jones and Morris stood a few yards from Melaityappa, and shot Melaityappa in the arm, foot and body. Perria ran away, and Jones and Morris rode off, taking with them the kangaroo, two nets and two waddies.²²² Moorhouse gave his evidence, followed by John Wilson ‘a German shepherd’ who had seen ‘some nets and waddies... on the roof of his hut’.²²³ The nets produced were identified by Perria as belonging to him and Melaityappa.²²⁴ McCulloch reiterated Moorhouse and Perria’s evidence, adding he had visited the site of the shooting with Perria where he saw the ‘tracks of two small horses about a native oven’. The tracks of the small grey horse Jones was riding when identified corresponded to the tracks near the native oven.²²⁵ The ball taken out of the Melaityappa’s arm was produced. The marks on it matched with a double barrelled rifle in Morris’s possession.²²⁶ Bail was refused which ‘surprised’ Stephen, the defense lawyer.

Melaityappa – whose name possibly translates as fourth born son²²⁷ – died at the Natives’ Location on Friday 31 August 1849.²²⁸ Narungga people did not say they were going to die

²¹⁸ *Adelaide Times*, 3 September 1849, 4D.

²¹⁹ *Register*, 19 September 1849, 3D.

²²⁰ *Observer*, 1 September 1849, 4C.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ ‘itya’ is a suffix added to birth order names in Kaurua, and ‘mirlaija’ is ‘fourth son’ in Narungga. Personal correspondence with linguist Louise Simpson,

²²⁸ *Register*, 1 September 1849, 3C.

as they thought it would prevent their recovery.²²⁹ Instead, just before dying, Melaityappa said his 'breath was heavy'.²³⁰ Four Narungga people travelled to Adelaide with Melaityappa²³¹, and maybe they were with him when he died. He was buried in Kaurna land, away from his country and family. The Coroner returned a 'verdict of wilful murder' against Jones and Morris²³² which 'was tantamount to a true bill by the Grand Jury'.²³³ The charge was serious and the court was following standard procedures. Stephen and his neighbouring pastoralists must have been alarmed. Stephen wrote to the Governor on Saturday 1 September on behalf of the settlers of Yorke's Peninsula requesting 'the favour of His Excellency's granting them an interview on the subject of the aggression of the aborigines'.²³⁴ The Governor, however, was granting no special favours to the Yorke Peninsula settlers, and coldly replied 'the best mode of communicating their wishes...would be by [writing]'.²³⁵

Upon being brought up on remand on 3 September, Jones and Morris had three lawyers appearing for them.²³⁶ Policemen Moulton, Burgon and McCulloch gave damning evidence. A bullet mould lent to Morris by Penton was produced which fitted the ball Moorhouse had extracted from Melaityappa's arm. Bullets corresponding in size and from the same mould were found in Morris's hut.²³⁷ William Brian saw Morris on a small horse carrying nets which were produced. Brian asked Morris 'if he had fallen in with the blacks; he said he had fallen in with the man who killed Armstrong...and that he fired at him'.²³⁸ Brian said Jones was with Morris, 'they were both mounted on small horses of a similar colour, and both were armed'.²³⁹ The Colonial Surgeon found 'the ball in the abdomen was received from

²²⁹ *Register*, 29 September 1849, 3E.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² GRG 24/6/1849/1907½.

²³³ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4A.

²³⁴ GM Stephens to the Governor, 1 September 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1634.

²³⁵ GRG 24/6/1849/1634.

²³⁶ Messrs. Stephen, Hanson and Gwynne. *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4A.

²³⁷ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3C.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Observer*, 8 September 1849, 3D.

behind'.²⁴⁰ Jones was committed for trial, while Morris was held until the following day charged with assaulting Yurnarri and Monarti.²⁴¹

Things were not going well for the defense and Stephen was concerned the imputation of Morris's assault on the women was 'prejudicing the public mind' against him. Stephen's proposal that Morris be committed for the principal charge was ignored by the bench.²⁴² Stephen vented his frustration by asking if the authorities intended 'to deprive him of his sheep [as they] had taken away all of his shepherds, and if the usual course were followed of binding them over to attend the Supreme Court, they would keep them away'.²⁴³ On 4 September, Monarto gave evidence 'Mr Morris had beat her with a whip over the head, and on her back with a yam stick...[he] knocked her down'.²⁴⁴ Yurnarri 'described an assault upon her, by Mr Morris, nearly in the same terms'.²⁴⁵ McCulloch stated he 'saw the lubras near Mr Stephen's home station, with their legs bleeding, about the beginning of August, [and] saw Mr Morris with a horse whip in his hand a little before'.²⁴⁶ 'His Worship' forwarded the depositions to the Advocate General for 'his discretion',²⁴⁷ and Morris was committed for trial on the previous charge of murder.²⁴⁸

The case against Jones and Morris sent shock waves through colonial society. Both naïve city dwellers and experienced pastoralists had their illusions shattered. While crimes committed by Aboriginal people against Europeans were widely reported and exaggerated, the opposite can be said of crimes committed by Europeans on Aboriginal people. Many Adelaideans were (perhaps determinedly) ignorant of the brutal treatment Aboriginal people received at the hands of pastoralists and their employees. *If* European aggressions were reported, the 'deeply provocative' acts of 'the blacks' were emphasized while European retaliation was emphatically played down. The case against Jones and Morris demonstrated that 'civilised'

²⁴⁰ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3C.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* 3CD.

²⁴² *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4A.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4C.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4C.

²⁴⁸ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3D.

Europeans did wound and kill innocent, unarmed Aboriginal people. Doubly painful was the awareness Jones and Morris were ‘gentlemen whose situation in life would justify the expectation that they would show an example of conduct worthy of their position’.²⁴⁹ The convenient perception that immoral acts committed on Aboriginal people were perpetrated by uneducated men belonging to the lower classes could no longer be sustained.

Although the case against Jones and Morris was supported by liberal thinking, humanitarian members of colonial society, it surprised and angered some colonists. Many pastoralists sympathized with Jones and Morris’s ‘misfortune’ at having their actions brought to the attention of high placed officials. As Police Commissioner Tolmer stated, ‘this case was brought to light quite accidentally’²⁵⁰ – had not Moorhouse and McCulloch chanced upon Melaityappa in the scrub, the government and the public would be none the wiser.²⁵¹ The same applies to the circumstances surrounding Nantariltarra’s murder. It is sobering to speculate on how many crimes committed on Aboriginal people went unreported. For men experienced in frontier life, it must have been unsettling to see Englishmen – particularly well off, educated Englishmen – face serious legal charges for crimes that were commonly committed against Aboriginal people. Prior to 1849, although numerous Aboriginal people had been killed by settlers, only one European (Donolley) had been found guilty for murder, and he was an ex-convict. The case against Jones and Morris demonstrated the Colonial Government was seriously desirous of punishing settlers who committed crimes against Aboriginal people.

At thirty-six years of age, Moorhouse was an educated ‘gentlemen’ who directly benefited from the takeover of Aboriginal land.²⁵² He was neither overly sympathetic to Aboriginal people nor a publicity seeker – if anything, he was a conservative who tended to downplay crimes committed by settlers. But Moorhouse was a morally upright man who conscientiously attempted to carry out his official duties. He was not intimidated by

²⁴⁹ Advocate General, Supreme Court, 17 September 1849 in *Register* 19 September 1849, 3D.

²⁵⁰ GRG 24/6/1849/1883½.

²⁵¹ However, Moorhouse’s meeting with Melaityappa was not as ‘accidental’ as the Europeans assumed. See chapter four, this thesis.

²⁵² Moorhouse, in partnership with James Masters and Charles Swinden, took up huge tracts of land in the Gilbert Valley as early as 1840, see Mary Burrows, *Riverton: Heart of the Gilbert Valley*, Riverton District Council, Riverton, 1965, p.3-5.

influential settlers of a similar – or lesser – social standing who may have attempted to persuade him the fraternity of pastoralists and the economic prosperity of the colony were more important than the death of a few ‘natives’. Moorhouse was broad-minded enough to see the fundamental hypocrisy of colonization. He realized the ‘development of agriculture, mining, trade and commerce’ were generally understood as necessary for the development and prosperity of the colony (‘provincial locomotion’) – but pointed out ‘the blacks and whites, here, are antagonistic’.²⁵³ Moorhouse did not have a solution for this difficulty, other than reminding settlers ‘[the blacks] are entitled to the sympathy of every man who would boast a generous humanity’.²⁵⁴ The *Register’s* editors did have a practical solution. They felt that if ‘the protection of the aborigines is to be anything more than a mockery...the *whole of the pastoral regulations should undergo wise and liberal revision*’.²⁵⁵ But the profits of the pastoralists and the indirect economic benefits to the colony prevented the government introducing such revision.

Moorhouse publicly accused the settlers of being ‘blind’ to ‘their own *permanent* interests’, and spelt out:

The blacks were here before us...At length the white man came, and the power of civilization has continued to monopolise and fence in the soil, and to shut out and drive away the game, and occasionally to shoot down the native tribes. All vice reacts on its perpetrators, and it is evident there is still such a thing as “the cry of blood”.²⁵⁶

When Aboriginal people committed crimes they were ‘revenging invasion, rapacity, and adultery’.²⁵⁷ Moorhouse and McCulloch gave clear and damning evidence against Field, Morris and Jones, and were supported by other men in high office. Police Commissioner Tolmer fully reported the charge against Jones and Morris which he described as ‘one of the most serious kind’.²⁵⁸ The Advocate General ‘had the painful but important duty’ of prosecuting Jones and Morris but ‘acquitted himself admirably’, and ‘omitted or neglected nothing material to the...duty devolved on him’.²⁵⁹ Judge Mann advised the jury that the

²⁵³ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4B.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E, original emphasis.

²⁵⁶ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4B, original emphasis.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ GRG 24/6/1849/1883½.

²⁵⁹ *Register*, 19 September 1849, 4A.

evidence against Jones and Morris was so strong, their duty ‘however unpleasant, is...clear’.²⁶⁰ Governor Young refused to bow to the settlers demands for an interview.

Men who defended Aboriginal people were publicly ridiculed and reviled. They were lumped together as ‘a horde of distinction-seekers’,²⁶¹ and ‘many severe and some not civil observations’²⁶² were addressed to them. On 8 September, only days after detailed reports of Jones and Morris’s Court hearings had been published, and while Jones and Morris were awaiting their trial in prison, Blue Nose’s letter appeared in the *Register*. Blue Nose wrote scathingly of the ‘Protectorship’ which ‘has ferreted out numberless pseudo murders and other barbarities perpetrated against the natives, including even the horrid villany of giving a black lubra a few lashes from a sanguinary piece of whipcord’.²⁶³ McCulloch was referred to as ‘a listless policeman who snuffs no promotion from the conviction of a black-skin, but who is quickly transformed into the wily maker-up of a “case” the moment that Government urges him to “investigate” any alleged delinquency on the part of the whites’.²⁶⁴ As for the Attorney General and Judges, Blue Nose felt ‘the authorities come into court with exceedingly bad grace to prosecute the whites for no virtual offence’.²⁶⁵

Blue Nose felt ‘the Government and the Protectorship are virtually responsible for any undue cruelties towards the natives, from the perfect indifference hitherto shown to the most earnest entreaties of the whites for protection’.²⁶⁶ This accusation is unfair and unfounded with regard to ‘the Protectorship’. Moorhouse strongly recommended the establishment of a police force on Yorke Peninsula as early as January 1848,²⁶⁷ and was compelled to wait for instructions from the Government before travelling to Yorke Peninsula to investigate any ‘affrays’.²⁶⁸ But Blue Nose’s blame of the government is well-founded, and reiterates the

²⁶⁰ *Register*, 12 September 1849, 3D.

²⁶¹ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

²⁶² Phrase used specifically for the public and defendants attitude towards the Advocate General in court, but widely applicable. *Register*, 19 September 1849, 4A.

²⁶³ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4B.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4A.

²⁶⁷ GRG 24/6/1849/2001.

²⁶⁸ GRG 24/6/1849/1907 ½.

editors of the *Register's* opinion 'the government has much to answer for'.²⁶⁹ The editors pointed out that although receiving (indirectly) revenue of at least £750 from Yorke Peninsula settlers, 'all the government has done is [send] three or four of the mounted police to scour the country and make some abortive attempts to restore peace'.²⁷⁰ Now Yorke Peninsula 'has become a largely productive portion of South Australia', the Government should 'bestir itself' and spend at least £1000 per year on 'its protection and local control'.²⁷¹

The historic records indicate Europeans' broadly refused to accept that settlers were frequently the original aggressors in cases of violent cross-cultural conflict. The public clung to a belief that any crimes committed by Europeans against Aboriginal people were in retaliation for 'barbarous', 'murderous' and 'treacherous' acts. This convenient perception can partly be blamed on inaccurate and selective reporting. The failure to report Nantariltarra's murder within a reasonable time of its occurrence (allowing for distance and slow communications) aided a widespread understanding that collisions on Yorke Peninsula were originally caused by Narungga aggression. Referring to the Jones and Morris case, Blue Nose claimed:

At...Yorke's Peninsula, the natives have been robbing, murdering and mutilating the whites for the last twelve months... Yet the moment a white inflicts retributive justice, which the government has denied, he is immediately pounced upon.²⁷²

During Field's hearing, lawyers repetitively confirmed that Nantariltarra was shot 'a great many days before Scott was killed',²⁷³ that 'George Field had seen Scott that day' and that Field and Scott 'were seen close together at the time [Nantariltarra] was shot'.²⁷⁴ Scott's presence at Nantariltarra's death was conclusively proven in court, which makes Giles later claim that Williamy was killed *after* Scott had been 'brutally murdered' seem deliberately conspiratorial.²⁷⁵ The case detailing the murder of Nantariltarra sat on 3 September – the same day as the case against Jones and Morris. By this stage, Moorhouse must have informed

²⁶⁹ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

²⁷³ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4B.

²⁷⁴ *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3C.

²⁷⁵ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

the Governor and other officials that Armstrong's immoral acts provoked his death. Yet the colonists continued to cling to a narrow, mercenary definition of aggression.

In his preliminary comments on the case against Field, Judge Mann²⁷⁶ stated 'I do not overlook...the circumstances which are connected with this attack on the blacks, and that they appear in this, as in many other instances, to have been the original aggressors'.²⁷⁷ The editors of the *Register*, despite recognizing the 'murderous, vindictive and...dastardly' acts of the 'whites', still claimed the whites were *retaliating* against 'murderous aggressions by the blacks' which were 'deeply provocative'.²⁷⁸ Blue Nose felt 'as long as the government remains so negligently passive in the face of the most brutal atrocities committed by the natives, the authorities ...prosecute the whites for no virtual offence beyond, at most, extreme measures of self-defense'.²⁷⁹

In spite of this, at the Supreme Court on 10 September, Judge Mann was optimistic of convicting Jones and Morris. He advised the Jury 'various...circumstances so strongly corroborate the testimony of the native witnesses that your duty, is, it seems to me, clear'.²⁸⁰ However, after interviewing Jim Crack on the 13 September on his suitability as an interpreter, the Judge found 'numerous and important' contradictions between the statements of the 'native witnesses'.²⁸¹ On Friday 14 September the *Register* reported 'in the case of Messrs. Jones and Morris, that the Grand Jury have almost unanimously expressed their regret at finding a true bill on such doubtful evidence'.²⁸² It seems the status quo would not be rocked and the influential pastoralists would triumph after all.

When proceedings against Jones and Morris began on Monday, 17 September, the sentiments of the public appear more akin to those of 'Blue Nose' than the humane and enlightened readership appealed to by the Protector or the editors of the *Register*:

²⁷⁶ Judge Mann was acting for Judge Cooper who was sick. *Register*, 12 September 1849, 3C and *SAGMJ*, 20 September 1849, 2D.

²⁷⁷ *Register*, 12 September 1849, 3C.

²⁷⁸ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 2E.

²⁷⁹ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4B.

²⁸⁰ *Register*, 12 September 1849, 3D.

²⁸¹ *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3CD.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 3E.

At the moment after the prisoners were placed at the bar, the Court became crowded, and continued so until the termination of the proceedings. An expression of commiseration for the prisoners and an anxiety for the result was visible on every face.²⁸³

The prisoners were ‘pale, wasted, and thoughtful’, and during the reading of the indictment ‘a deep flush suffused the face of Mr Morris’.²⁸⁴ The Advocate General instructed the Jury ‘the position of the accused should be completely put out of consideration’.²⁸⁵

As the case proceeded, Moorhouse damningly said ‘truth would not be regarded by the natives if it stood in the way of attaining their object, or if falsehood could secure it’.²⁸⁶ Perria gave the ‘native names’ for localities, which was jumped upon by the defense who implied the interpreter was making false statements. Perria gave the same answer to several different questions. The Advocate-General felt Perria was bewildered, as he had previously given clear, connected and conclusive statements in his deposition. When asked to point out Jones and Morris, Perria looked around the court, and ‘after considerable hesitation’ pointed out the wrong man to ‘a volley of hisses, accompanied by a stamping of the feet’.²⁸⁷ The ‘conduct of the people in the body of the court was indecorous and improper’.²⁸⁸ In an attempt to save the case, the Attorney General submitted Melaityappa’s statement, but Judge Mann would not admit it as Moorhouse had earlier said ‘the natives do not admit they are in danger of death’.²⁸⁹ According to Mann ‘it was only the consciousness of approaching dissolution and a belief in future rewards and punishments, that gave solemnity and force to a dying declaration’.²⁹⁰ The Judge concluded by saying the evidence was not sufficient and the ‘only safe course of the Jury...to acquit the prisoners’.²⁹¹ The Jury, ‘without hesitation’ returned a verdict of Not Guilty:

On the liberation of the prisoners, the silence which had been rigidly preserved in the court during the late proceedings...gave way to a tumultuous expression of satisfaction.

The long pent up feelings of the audience found vent in a mighty volley of cheers...The

²⁸³ *Register*, 19 September 1849, 3D.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4A.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

cheers were repeated outside the Court, and the traders of Hindley Street were startled occasionally by a sudden but simultaneous shout from a large body of people, who had not separated even at that distance from the Court-house.²⁹²

People on the streets of Adelaide celebrated the failure of British law to convict the murderers of an innocent, unarmed Aboriginal man.

What sort of a message did this send to Jim Crack, Perria, Kokunea, Monarti, and Yurnarri (or any Aboriginal people residing in Adelaide who had taken an interest in the case)? How would these Narungga people have narrated their court experiences when they returned to their friends and family on the Peninsula? How did Moorhouse explain to those people temporarily residing with him the superiority, justice and dignity of British Law?

Morris's recognizances for assaulting Monarto and Yurnarri were enlarged in September²⁹³ and in December, Morris was 'required to enter into his own recognizances to appear when called upon'.²⁹⁴ On 18 December, Jones was charged with being drunk and behaving indecently. Upon his arrest he was 'very insolent'.²⁹⁵ Jones was found guilty and received a £1 fine, but did not have the funds to pay it. In January 1850, the *Observer* reported:

the famous Henry Valette Jones, who has recently figured in the wars of our Peninsula, and in nocturnal feats within [Adelaide]...has taken his passage to England.²⁹⁶

Jones does not appear to have returned to South Australia. By the end of March 1850, the prosecution of Morris for Monarto's assault was abandoned,²⁹⁷ and Morris took Jones' cue and left the colony, no doubt to escape any unpleasant stigma. Upon his return in late 1852, Tolmer recommended Morris as a police escort for the Victorian gold fields. To Tolmer's surprise, Morris's application was rejected – maybe other officials had higher moral standards and longer memories.²⁹⁸ Not long after, Morris successfully applied for the government position Inspector of Sheep, he later became Chief Inspector of Sheep which he held for many years. Cockburn includes Morris in *Pastoral Pioneers*, and states; 'If merit

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ *Register*, 29 September 1849, 3A.

²⁹⁴ *Register*, 5 December 1849, 4C.

²⁹⁵ *Observer*, 22 December 1849, 4.

²⁹⁶ *Observer*, 12 January 1850, 3B.

²⁹⁷ GRG 24/6/1850/762.

²⁹⁸ Cockburn, p. 100.

alone had dictated the order of publication of these memoirs that devoted to the life of Henry Thomas Morris would have been very high up in the list”.²⁹⁹ In Cockburn’s and subsequent histories, no mention is made of Morris’s days on Yorke Peninsula. A history published in 1978 simply states that Morris left South Australia in 1850 ‘to try his luck on the Californian Goldfields’.³⁰⁰ Morris eventually took over Alexander Buchanan’s management of Anlaby Station, and in later years was feted and honoured as one of South Australia’s earliest pioneers at annual ceremonies which were held to celebrate the foundation of the colony.³⁰¹

Tulta was arrested for the murder of Armstrong and Scott on 15 November 1849.³⁰² His wife ‘stuck to him’ and travelled to Adelaide with him.³⁰³ The Grand Jury ignored the bills for murder against Wilcooramalap and Tulta due to ‘the absence of white evidence’,³⁰⁴ and the two men were released. There is no further record of Wilcooramalap. According to Giles, Tulta made his way back to the Peninsula but ‘did not live long’ although Penton ‘assured’ Giles ‘he was not shot’.³⁰⁵ In 1850, a visitor to Yorke Peninsula mentioned going ‘in pursuit’ of Tulta, an ‘outlaw’ who ‘may be legally shot with a clear conscience’, but, although sighting him twice, he and his friend ‘couldn’t get near enough for a shot’.³⁰⁶ The names of Nantariltarra, Melaityappa, Wilcooramalap, Tulta, Kokunea and Murra are unknown to contemporary Narungga people. Their stories have not been remembered through the generations.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Barry Durman, *A History of the Bakers Range Settlement: Lucindale Centenary 1878-1978*, Naracoorte Herald, Naracoorte, 1978, p. 7, and Cockburn, p. 100.

³⁰¹ See for example the *Advertiser*, 30 December 1901, 4E, and 29 December 1905, 5F-H.

³⁰² Protector’s report for the last quarter of 1849, *Government Gazette*, 17 January 1850, p. 47.

³⁰³ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

³⁰⁴ *SAGMJ*, 1 December 1849, 3CD.

³⁰⁵ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

³⁰⁶ Edward Snell diary entry, 20 June 1850, in *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell*, Tom Griffiths (Ed.), Angus and Roberston, North Ryde, 1988, p. 123.

4. The pastoral years: a tentative peace

Historians who include Aboriginal people in studies of the early pastoral period tend to focus on cross-cultural conflict and aggression. Since the 1970s and 1980s, a significant number of academic studies have demonstrated Aboriginal peoples' active resistance to the take over of their lands and the unethical and often brutal actions of European settlers. In South Australia, local histories largely ignore Aboriginal people and the few histories that do refer to the 'original inhabitants' give sketchy examples of conflict in which Aboriginal aggression is emphasized and crimes committed by settlers are minimised. However, this impression of either the absence of Aboriginal people or an insurmountable divide between 'blacks' and 'whites' is disproportionate and misleading. On southern Yorke Peninsula in the 1850s to 1880s, the Narungga were ever-present, and the majority of cross-cultural interactions did not involve bloodshed or violence. Instead, a tentative trust and understanding between the two cultural groups developed surprisingly quickly. Although reports of conflict and unrest continued throughout the 1850s, the records indicate this was not a common occurrence. This chapter explores the reasons behind this apparent truce and demonstrates how the Narungga and the settlers learnt to accommodate, adapt to, and even (to varying extents) benefit from, the presence of the other.

Our knowledge of cross-cultural relations on Yorke Peninsula during the pastoral years comes largely from official reports and returns written by the Protector of Aborigines, the Police Commissioner, and correspondence between their departments and the Colonial Office. We learn about issues and events that concerned the Government at the time – primarily conflict between the Narungga and settlers, and secondarily the health, movements and well-being of the 'native' population. The vast majority of information comes from a small group of educated, literate Europeans. This chapter will demonstrate it is possible to 'read between the lines' and address the imbalance of accounts which stem from members of the dominant cultural group. By using a variety of methods and sources, a more balanced picture of particular incidents and life in general for both Narungga and settlers can be achieved.

Micro-studies allow historians to understand and portray events in a way which is empathetic to groups and individuals who became marginalized and disempowered relatively quickly, and whose presence and input is usually ignored or distorted. Each incident requires careful scrutiny in which the season, the site, the personalities of individuals – both those directly involved and those who later investigated and reported on events – need to be considered. A close analysis of the historical records can yield contrary evidence and unexpected information which challenge current preconceptions. Each Aboriginal group inhabited specific and unique geographical areas. Historians need to recognize the impact topography and terrain had on Aboriginal peoples' reaction to the permanent presence of strangers. The character and agency of individuals, both Narungga and European, is crucial to any analysis of these years, as is the need to take into account internal Narungga politics.

few reports of conflict or 'depredations'

In the wake of the terrifying months of July-September 1849, in which Nantariltarra, Armstrong, Scott and Melaityappa were killed in rapid succession, settlers (and no doubt the Narungga) justifiably expected the worst. On 22 October 1849, the *Adelaide Times* reported:

The blacks are carrying on their depredations with more impunity than ever, and seem to set the small body of police at defiance. Mr James Cootes's nephew was severely wounded in a late encounter...and other settlers had to run up the gauntlet with showers of spears, boomerangs, waddies &c., successively, while the whites, seemingly cowed with the late prosecutions in the Supreme Court, have merely escaped the best way they could, thus rendering the savages more daring and reckless than ever of the lives and property of the former. It is doubtful whether Mr Cootes's nephew will survive his wounds, but we have not heard that the police have adopted any sufficient measures of redress.¹

This 'collision' took place on 9 October (less than a month after the Supreme Court found Jones and Morris 'not guilty'), when the passions of both groups were still running high. But, rather than foreshadowing further Narungga aggression, this 'affray' appears to mark the tail end of earlier violence. Coutts' nephew, John Gall, fully recovered and later deposed he was not 'seriously injured'.² Two men attempted to round up his flock, Gall 'fired a pistol to

¹ *Adelaide Times*, 22 October 1849, p. 235.

² *Register*, 5 December 1849, 4D.

intimidate them', and was consequently attacked with sticks and stones.³ Gall does not mention the presence of other 'whites'. The Narungga took the entire flock which 'with the exception of one or two, was recovered'.⁴ In November, Gall 'identified the Native who attacked him'.⁵ Koonko was tried at the Supreme court for assaulting and wounding Gall, and Watpa was charged with stealing one sheep.⁶ Koonko was given a lenient sentence of four months imprisonment and hard labour, and the charge against Watpa was abandoned.⁷ This is the last report of serious sheep theft until October 1852. Rather than increasing in 'daring and recklessness', the Narungga subsequently acted with restraint and tolerance.

Newspaper reports generally assumed the worst, and blamed Aboriginal people for any conflict or unrest; they reflect the tenor and content of news that reached Adelaide from frontier districts. Pastoralists were keen for government officials to learn of any provocations and hardships experienced at the hands of 'the natives' and to procure the sympathy of the public. Journalists tended to accept uncritically the settlers' version of events. Newspaper articles reflect the speed such news travelled, which contrasted dramatically with the slow process of official investigation. False or inaccurate reports were often not corrected until months later. The modified account was usually provided by Protector Moorhouse in his quarterly reports, or in Court Reports published in Adelaide newspapers. Moorhouse's reports provide a snap shot of cross-cultural relations on the Peninsula between 1849 and 1855.⁸ He received information from the Narungga, the Police and settlers. Moorhouse could speak and understand Kaurna and to a limited extent Narungga, but (crucially) he employed interpreters. In Adelaide, Moorhouse was in contact with Narungga prisoners, witnesses and pupils, and he met with Narungga people when he visited Yorke Peninsula. Through Moorhouse, the Narungga had a means of voicing their complaints. Moorhouse's regular

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Government Gazette*, 17 January 1850, p. 47.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Register*, 5 December 1849, 4D, *Government Gazette*, 17 January 1850, p. 47, *SAGMJ*, 29 November 1849, 3D.

⁷ GRG 24/6/1850/762.

⁸ Unfortunately Moorhouse's regular reports for Yorke Peninsula cease appearing in the *Government Gazette* after 1855. Reports spasmodically resume in 1866 with Corporal Besley at Wallaroo, Protector Walker's 1868 report, and Julius Kühn (superintendent of the Point Pearce Mission) in 1874 and 1875.

reports are relatively accurate – he was measured in his statements, and conscientiously attempted to give a balanced version of events.

Ignoring reports made by Anstey and Giles (one of hut plunder in June 1853 which was later proved false and others of sheep theft between July-November 1853 which remained unproven), only two settlers reported trouble with the Narungga after 1849. William Rogers and his family reported sheep thefts on seven occasions between November 1849 and August 1855. One of Rogers' shepherds was killed in 1851, and his overseer fired at a Narungga man in early 1855. James Coutts reported sheep being taken in October 1849, October 1852 and July 1853, and the plundering of two huts in June 1851. At least two Narungga men were seriously wounded by Coutts' employees in October 1852, and guns were reported to have been fired on at least three occasions. A cursory reading of such statistics indicates the Narungga fared badly at the hands of both men, and that neither Coutts nor Rogers came to any form of understanding or accommodation with the Narungga. However, a closer study is more enlightening. All sheep were taken between early winter and mid spring. Rogers goes to the trouble of reporting and pressing charges for losses as little as 'one sheep', or 'a ewe and a lamb'.⁹ He makes no reports for 1852-3, but Rogers' wife and son report the loss of larger numbers of sheep in August of 1854 and 1855.¹⁰ Coutts reports the theft of substantial numbers of sheep, and all reports involve some form of physical confrontation.

Rogers is the only settler to report the loss of sheep between November 1849 and September 1852, but it is doubtful sheep would not have been taken from other stations. Why were other settlers not making similar reports? There are several explanations. The brutal experiences of 1849 affected both the Narungga and the Europeans and taught both groups to tread warily. Perhaps the settlers truly were 'cowed with the late prosecutions in the Supreme Court'¹¹ and heeded the lesson of Jones and Morris – ie., that the government was serious about prosecuting Europeans for the murder of Aboriginal people. The mutilated body of Scott

⁹ GRG 24/6/1849/2273, GRG 24/6/1850/75, *SAGMJ*, 8 January 1851, 3C, *Government Gazette*, 23 October 1851, p. 713.

¹⁰ William Rogers died on 22 April 1854 aged 55. His pastoral interests were taken over by wife Ann and his sons Thomas, William and Samuel. See Rhoda Heinrich, *Governor Ferguson's Legacy*, Maitland-Kilkerren Centenary Committee, Adelaide, 1972, p. 33.

¹¹ *Adelaide Times*, 22 October 1849, p. 235.

demonstrated the Narungga would actively avenge unjust murders and may have subdued the pastoralists and their employees. On the other hand, the Narungga had witnessed the rapidity and severity of European reprisals, they knew 'black' men would be 'shot for the sheep'¹² and that retaliation for the murder of white men was indiscriminate. After 1849 it seems both groups modified their behavior and did not deliberately antagonize the other.

It is doubtful the Narungga desisted in satisfying their 'longing for sheeps flesh'.¹³ Within months of the pastoralists' arrival, the Narungga had devised an efficient system for taking sheep without the shepherds' knowledge. Giles recalled a Narungga lamb-minder who 'was caught breaking the legs of the lambs so that they could not follow their mothers, when the blacks would pick them up and walk off with them.'¹⁴ Alfred Weaver's daughter, who left the Peninsula in 1854,¹⁵ recalled this was 'a favorite trick' of the 'blacks'.¹⁶ The Narungga made pens and yards to contain sheep, and built such structures in the 'impenetrable' scrub which 'render[ed] every facility to the blacks to conduct their depredations with impunity'.¹⁷ In August 1849, a party of police (accompanied by several Narungga) found 'in a dense forest country surrounded by scrub...a yard constructed of brush with a native encampment. About 150 sheep were there alive...'.¹⁸ Tulta, after spearing Armstrong, 'took some sheep...in[to] the scrub [and] put them in a yard'.¹⁹ In 1852 an employee of Coutts came upon sheep 'carefully placed in a yard made by the blacks – about 20 sheep were wounded on the off hind legs and many speared'.²⁰ The Narungga used their superior tracking and hunting skills to outwit the settlers.

Either Rogers employed unusually astute staff or he placed great faith in the legal system. No doubt small numbers of sheep constantly went missing from all stations, but less observant settlers may not have noticed. Others may have turned a blind eye, believing the loss of a few

¹² Evidence of Murra, Police Court, 3 September in *Adelaide Times*, 10 September 1849, 3C.

¹³ Words used by Kaurna man, in *Government Gazette*, 26 May 1842, p. 1.

¹⁴ Giles, *Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41.

¹⁵ Diary of Jane Weaver, State Library of South Australia, Group No. D5427 (L).

¹⁶ Cockburn, Vol. 1, p. 119.

¹⁷ *Adelaide Times*, 13 August 1849, 3G.

¹⁸ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4A.

¹⁹ Evidence of Maratya, *Adelaide Times*, 24 November 1849, 3D.

²⁰ Deposition of John Gall, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

sheep was a small price to pay for peaceful relations. Giles tolerantly comments that after 1849 ‘the blacks... may have stolen a few sheep that had been left out on the run, but did not attempt to take any by force’.²¹ Perhaps some settlers willingly gave, or allowed the Narungga to take, one or two sheep at a time, seeing this as a form of ‘rent’ or compensation. Many pastoralists may not have reported minor sheep theft because they did not wish to go to the expense and trouble of laying charges. Any arrests meant a journey to Adelaide to give evidence in court which could keep settlers away from their stations for weeks with no guarantee of a conviction. Some settlers may have dealt with sheep thieves their own way, removed from the prying eyes of the law. If so, the methods used were not severe enough to deter the Narungga from visiting and working at the stations after 1849.

Another reason for the low number of reported sheep thefts is that by June 1849, the Narungga were being employed by the settlers as shepherds, lamb-minders and general assistants, and were receiving mutton and other goods in return. ‘Jim Crack’ began shepherding for William Bagnall at one of Rogers stations in April 1849.²² On 14 July 1850 Snell ‘took a boy named “belly ache”’ into his service, the following day ‘another black’ was engaged ‘as a man of all work’.²³ In 1850 Penton and ‘young Rogers’ had Narungga men working for them.²⁴ Mantamornappa was employed by Coutts in 1851,²⁵ and in 1851 Taityanna-Widlo (Johnny) assisted George Miles with shepherding his flock.²⁶ Employment would have allowed the Narungga to satisfy their longing for sheep flesh ‘legitimately’. Tellingly, Rogers reports no sheep thefts during the years the Victorian gold rush reached its peak (1852-3) when the colony was severely depleted of European men and Aboriginal labour was much depended upon.

²¹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41.

²² *Adelaide Times*, 3 September 1849, 4D.

²³ Tom Griffiths (Ed), *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell: The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1850*, Angus and Robertson and the Library Council of Victoria: North Ryde, NSW, 1988, pp. 129, 149.

²⁴ Snell refers to ‘Penton’s black boy’ in Griffiths, p.142 and ‘Young Rogers’ and his companion ‘Policeman Bob’, p. 132. ‘Penton’s blackboy’ may have been ‘Coodmutcha’ who ‘was with George Penton when he captured [Tulta]’ in 1849, *Observer*, 24 November 1849, 4E.

²⁵ *Register*, 5 August 1851, 3A.

²⁶ *Register*, 26 June 1850, 3B.

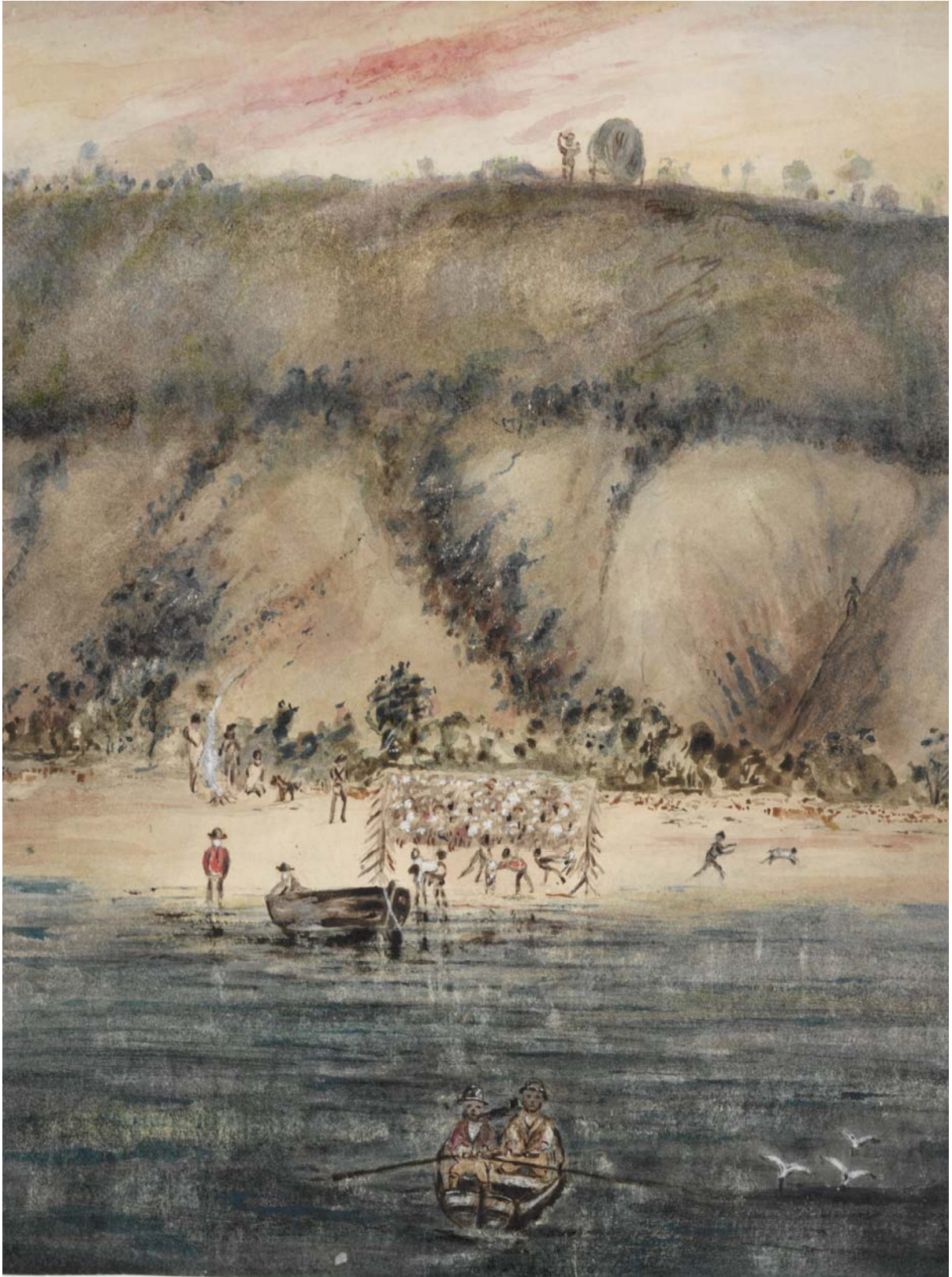


Figure 5. Shipping sheep, Yorke Peninsula. William Cawthorne, 1860s (Mitchell Library, NSW, PXD39_f33)

There are several reports of cross-cultural violence after 1849, but these reports inadvertently (and ironically) indicate an increasing level of communication and accommodation. On 27 May 1850, William Bagnall (a shepherd employed by Coutts) received three spear wounds from Kaukara Widlo.²⁷ Bagnall was an ex-convict who arrived on Yorke Peninsula in 1849. Bagnall gave ‘general discrepancies’²⁸ in his ‘imperfect and very contradictory’²⁹ evidence. He deposed that after being visited by several ‘blackfellows’ he loaded a double barreled gun but ‘could not say whether or not the blacks saw it’.³⁰ However, a waddy and four spears were thrown, ‘obliging’ him ‘to lay up for several days’.³¹ Bagnall’s wounding was reported much later (in court hearings and the Protector’s reports) – it did not make the daily news, and there were no consequent retaliatory attacks. It appears widely accepted the actions of the Narungga were justified. Moorhouse blamed Bagnall’s dog ‘which was celebrated for seizing and lacerating the natives at every opportunity’.³²

The Narungga taught Bagnall a serious but well deserved lesson, but did not mortally injure him. Other cases indicate the Narungga did not desire bloodshed. On 3 June 1851 one of Coutts’ huts was plundered. The hut keeper, Fredric Struve, stated ‘six natives...threw him down and held him with his face to the ground, without, however, hurting him’.³³ In October 1852, Coutts’ shepherd, Richard Monks, deposed that upon refusing a request for sheep, three ‘seized me and threw me down...they held me down for 10 or 15 minutes – tore my blue and cotton shirts, but did not strike me’.³⁴ In both cases the Narungga heavily outnumbered the isolated, unarmed European men. Perhaps they still held the life of white men in awe. Perhaps they realized and feared the reprisals that might follow the murder of Europeans. Maybe they knew what they could ‘get away with’ under white men’s law.

The presence of guns understandably altered the nature and severity of cross-cultural encounters, but even when the Europeans were brandishing arms the Narungga showed

²⁷ *Register*, 25 June 1850, 3D. Also written Keskahrowilla, Kerkerawilla, Karkarra-Wid-Lo.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3E.

²⁹ Moorhouse, *Government Gazette*, 18 July 1850, p.433.

³⁰ *Register*, 25 June 1850, 3E.

³¹ *Register*, 25 June 1850, 3E.

³² Protector’s quarterly report ending 30 June 1850, *Government Gazette*, 24 July 1851, p.510.

³³ *Register*, 1 July 1851, 2E.

³⁴ Deposition of Richard Monks, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

restraint. As mentioned above, in October 1849, John Gall was wounded by two Narungga men but, prior to his injury, Gall had ‘fired a pistol to intimidate [the natives]’.³⁵ Spears and waddies were not resorted to, and Gall was ‘not seriously injured’.³⁶ In June 1851, when three Narungga men plundered one of Coutts’ huts, a gun was taken, ‘considerable violence was used and the hutkeeper severely injured’.³⁷ Mantamornappa was subsequently arrested, he deposed in court that ‘he could not use the gun’ – ‘he had taken it away for fear it would be used against him’.³⁸

Giles’ reminiscences illustrate a noticeable shift in attitude towards the shooting of Narungga people after 1849. In June 1853, one of Anstey and Giles’ hutkeepers shot a man named Kawilla whom he claimed attempted to plunder his hut.³⁹ Granger was ‘charged before a magistrate’ but, as ‘there was no witness present’, was released.⁴⁰ Giles provides additional details and exonerates Kawilla from all blame.⁴¹ Kawilla’s murder was disapproved of and regretted by Penton and Giles. When Granger wrote to Giles in 1857 stating ‘a report to his prejudice had been circulated in regard to his shooting the blackfellow, and that he would be glad if I would send him a letter exonerating him from blame’, Giles ‘did not reply to his letter’ as he ‘could not very well give him a character’.⁴² Giles inadvertently describes a change in George Penton who, by 1853 seeks Narungga assistance and listens to and respects Narungga judgement. Penton – ‘as severe to a man that acted “on the cross” as he was kind to those that acted “on the square”’⁴³ – appears to have earned the respect of the Narungga relatively quickly and at least four Narungga people powerfully demonstrated a willingness to be associated with Penton by taking his name.⁴⁴

³⁵ *Register*, 5 December 1849, 4D.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Register*, 1 July 1851, 2E.

³⁸ The hut-keeper, Henry James Brown told the three men he ‘would not shoot them’ in *Register*, 5 August 1851, 3A, and the courtroom erupted in laughter when the Judge commented ‘they thought it was better not to trust you’, in *SAGMJ*, 16 August 1851, 3C.

³⁹ *Government Gazette*, 28 July 1853, p. 498.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 December 1853, p.815.

⁴¹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, p. 41.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Namely Bob Penton (single ‘black’ man), Harry and Jenny Penton (‘black’ married couple) listed in an 1882 ‘Return of Names’, GRG 52/1/1882/142, and George Penton (photograph in the M Angas Collection, South Australian Museum Archives).



Figure 6. (M Angas Collection, South Australian Museum Archives)

The records illustrate the Narungga confidently confronting and clearly communicating with Europeans. As early as 1849 when '15 or 20' Narungga men took a flock of sheep belonging to Anstey and Giles, three men approached a shepherd and 'said something he could not understand'.⁴⁵ Upon being told to 'go away' they moved to the second shepherd and 'spoke something [he] could not understand'.⁴⁶ In 1851, the six men who came to Struve's hut 'asked for bread and meat' and upon Struve refusing them, 'they threw him down'.⁴⁷ Prior to throwing Monks on the ground in 1852, 'five black men came up...and asked [Monks] to give them some sheep'.⁴⁸ The Narungga decisively approached the settlers demonstrating a lack of fear and a level of trust. They asked for sheep, indicating an expectation the

⁴⁵ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4B.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Register*, 1 July 1851, 2E.

⁴⁸ Deposition of Richard Monks, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

Europeans may acquiesce to their request. Upon refusal they assertively took what they desired. As their experience of Europeans increased, so did their communication skills. By 1851 the Narungga and Europeans can clearly comprehend each other.

Cross-cultural relations between the Narungga and the settlers depended very much on individual personalities. A comparison of the ‘troubles’ settlers had with the Narungga demonstrates the necessity of reading government records in conjunction with other sources, and incorporating an awareness of Narungga culture, politics and agency. In January 1855, Corporal Phillips informed his superior in Adelaide a ‘shooting affray with the Natives’ had taken place between an overseer, station hand and ‘natives’ at Rogers’ station near Point Pearce.⁴⁹ Upon enquiry, the police found:

...the overseer had employed two natives to assist him in building a hut, and upon the day in question, they had their dinners given to them when this native “Kurrawampa” and others took it away from them, which being told immediately to the overseer he went and took it from them, when they assumed a very threatening attitude, shaking their spears etc. Upon seeing that he told...[station hand] William Stephenson to go into the house and fetch the gun out (it was loaded with shot) which he did. One of the natives Kurrawampa then threw a spear which passed within a few inches of the overseer. Some scuffling then appears to have ensued during which the native caught the gun by the muzzle, and upon its being wrestled from him, stepped back, raised a second spear and was in the act of throwing it when the man fired, giving “Kurrawampa” a very severe peppering in the legs and thighs.⁵⁰

The overseer defended his Aboriginal employees’ right to eat dinner which (according to him) they had earned. But this was at Point Pearce, on Kurrawampa’s country, and according to traditional Aboriginal practices, fellow countrymen should share food or other items.

Kurrawampa’s ‘peppering in the legs’ highlights the fragmentary nature of historic records concerning Aboriginal people. We know about this ‘shooting affray’ purely because PC Phillips wrote to his superior wondering whether he should take further steps in the matter as

⁴⁹ Corporal Phillips to Inspector Hamilton, 9 January 1855, GRG 5/2/1855/56.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

he ‘considered the native had received enough punishment already’.⁵¹ Phillips letter inadvertently illustrates a degree of cross cultural trust and friendliness as Phillips notes ‘the native that got shot was laying at the Worley near the house at Point Pearce, unable to go away, the people at the station were attending to him’.⁵² Kurrawampa made a full recovery and by August 1856 stole 220 sheep from Rogers at York Valley.⁵³ He lived to old age – ‘Karrawompie’ (described as ‘a very old man...black’) is listed in an 1882 ‘return of names’.⁵⁴ Heinrich spoke with Narungga Elders at Point Pearce in the 1970s⁵⁵ who told her of a small group of Narungga people known as ‘the Curratompti’ tribe who, in 1880, ‘consisted of about twenty people...ruled by the wife of an enfeebled chief’.⁵⁶ These ‘proud and independent’ people ‘rejected all inducement to settle at Point Pearce Mission Station’, preferring instead to ‘retain their ancestors’ way of life’.⁵⁷ Karrawompie died on 12 September 1884, his given age was 70 years.⁵⁸

Edward Snell’s visit to the Peninsula, June-September 1850

Much of the material which survives through the ages is the newsworthy – ie., the exceptional, the unusual – and as such we are left with a distorted picture. The above examples, taken from reports of assault and theft, illustrate how it is possible to ‘read between the lines’ of reports of assault and theft to show members of the two cultural groups conversing with, and holding certain expectations of the ‘other’. But rarely do we gain a sense of everyday, taken for granted interactions from official correspondence or reminiscences. A valuable antidote to this is the diary entries and illustrations of surveyor Edward Snell who resided on the Peninsula from June to September 1850.⁵⁹ From Snell we gain a sense of constant, close and mutually respectful interaction between the Narungga and Europeans. Snell describes confident and autonomous Narungga who are keen to communicate and trade with Europeans, and to incorporate Europeans into their world.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² GRG 5/2/1855/56.

⁵³ Coorawampa, alias Karrallo, *Register* 19 September 1856, 3A.

⁵⁴ GRG 52/1/1882/142.

⁵⁵ Personal communication with Rhoda Heinrich.

⁵⁶ Heinrich, 1976, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Record of Births, Deaths and Marriages; Point Pearce Station*, South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide.

⁵⁹ Griffiths, 1988.

Immediately upon arriving at Oyster Bay, Yorke Peninsula, on 14 June 1850, Snell was ‘surrounded by a lot of blacks on the beach who supplied us with lots of fish’.⁶⁰ The following day Snell ‘paid the natives a visit and got a lot more fish’, in return for which he ‘stuck a few red wafers on their noses’.⁶¹ Snell was also an artist, and presumably the red wafers were thin slabs of dried pigment. Red was an important symbolic and ceremonial colour for Aboriginal people, and the Narungga ‘appeared perfectly satisfied’⁶² with this exchange. Snell traded red wafers and tobacco for ‘great numbers of Snappers and butterfish’ on several occasions.⁶³ He also bought two fishing nets, giving ‘a pipe and a stick of tobacco for one and a fourpenny knife for the other’.⁶⁴ Throughout his time on the Peninsula, Snell and his surveying party employed various men and youths as guides, water finders and water carriers, messengers, and kangaroo hunters.⁶⁵ As Snell had no trouble procuring ‘employees’, presumably the Narungga were satisfied with the flour and other items given as payment.

Apart from trading material items, Snell participated in a number of cultural exchanges. He was interested in the Narungga ‘style of cooking’, received tuition in waddy throwing, and recorded a Narungga vocabulary.⁶⁶ Snell participated in several corroborees which involved dancing and music.⁶⁷ In return Snell sung ‘lots of English songs with which they appeared much pleased and tried to imitate’.⁶⁸ Aboriginal people across Australia were delighted when Europeans shared music and songs. As well as being a popular source of entertainment, songs in this non-literate, oral society were valued currency through which ancient and contemporary information was conveyed from group to group and generation to generation.⁶⁹ Paul Carter points out that in oral societies, ‘mimicry had the same function as writing in a

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 120.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 127-8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 126-8, 130, 135, 140.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 148, 136, 138.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 128, 136.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁹ See for example J Clarke, ‘Devils and Horses: religious and creative life in Tasmanian Aboriginal Society’, in M Roe (Ed), *The Flow of Culture*, Canberra, Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1987, pp. 56-7.

literary culture'.⁷⁰ By imitating Snell, by physically copying him, the Narungga were 'making available a dance, a song, a person in a form that could be replayed later'.⁷¹ By sharing his songs, Snell repaid Narungga hospitality in a culturally appropriate and much appreciated way.

Snell showed the astonished Narungga 'the sight of themselves in a looking glass', he cut their hair, and gave "white fellow names" to the children and women whom he 'christened' according to their appearance.⁷² Snell gave the children humorous names such as 'Spindle Shankes' and 'Flat nose', and the 'very good looking' women he gave names such as 'Morning Star', 'Queen of Beauty'.⁷³ Simpson points out that 'bestowing European names on Aboriginal people was... a way of denying Aboriginal people their original cultural background and a symbol of control'.⁷⁴ However, the Narungga people 'requested' and 'wanted' Snell to give them 'white fellow names'. Maybe they saw this as a means of keeping their Aboriginal names private. Perhaps they realized many settlers could not remember or had difficulty pronouncing their names. Maybe they saw their use of Snell's names as a way of honouring and signalling an ongoing relationship with him. Regardless, these people demonstrated a willingness to be incorporated into European society; 'they took great pains to learn their names and stuck to them all the time [Snell] was on the Peninsula'.⁷⁵

Snell and the Narungga appear to have genuinely enjoyed each others company. The Narungga often visited Snell who frequently visited and 'fraternized with them' in return.⁷⁶ For major excursions he engaged Narungga people as guides, but on shorter journeys they voluntarily accompanied him.⁷⁷ Snell found the Narungga 'very good natured,' 'very useful'

⁷⁰ Paul Carter, *The Sound in Between*, Kensington, New South Wales University Press and New Endeavour Press, 1992, p. 125.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 128.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁷⁴ Jane Simpson, 'Personal Names', in Jane Simpson and Luise Hercus (Eds), *History in Portraits*, Aboriginal History Monograph 6, National Library of Australia, 1998, p. 222.

⁷⁵ Griffiths, pp. 120, 138, 127-8.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 128.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 139, 131.



Figure 7. 'Surveyors Encampment Yorke's Peninsula', Edward Snell, 12 July 1850
(State Library of South Australia, B55782)



Figure 8. 'Kangaroo Hunting Yorke's Peninsula', Edward Snell, 18 August 1850

(State Library of South Australia, B55781)

and 'pretty peaceable'.⁷⁸ He admired their skills; noting they were 'very dextrous' at 'swimming about after fish'.⁷⁹ He observed that where freshwater was scarce, 'rainwater collected in holes in the rocks' which 'the blacks cover...very carefully'.⁸⁰ The first time Snell went kangaroo hunting, although the kangaroo dog had a successful kill, Snell's party 'couldn't find the Kangaroo', and the dog was badly cut.⁸¹ Snell subsequently engaged 'Williamy, Jemmy and Charlie to go...kangarooing'.⁸² The Europeans supplied the dogs and the Narungga their tracking skills. Snell admiringly noted 'the blacks' could follow the tracks of kangaroos and dogs 'nearly as fast as I could run'.⁸³ Five kangaroos were collected and the carcasses divided.⁸⁴ News of this arrangement spread, and several days later more Narungga arrived with whom Snell 'went out kangarooing again'. Once again the Europeans 'cut off and kept the tails and skins...giving all the rest to the natives' who 'held a corroboree till midnight'.⁸⁵ Two days later 'the blacks took one of the kangaroo dogs with out leave' but made amends by bringing back two kangaroos, enabling Snell to have 'a glorious supper of soup from the tails' whilst 'the blacks had a grand corroboree'.⁸⁶ Both groups appear mutually satisfied with this arrangement.

From Snell we can hypothesize which skills and characteristics were needed to gain Narungga trust and acceptance. Snell appears well liked by the Narungga who may have been intrigued by his personality, his possessions and his skills. Snell was a creative and observant man who was keen to broaden his knowledge. As well as being a talented artist, Snell was a skilled and resourceful craftsman who constantly used diverse materials at hand to make useful items.⁸⁷ Snell was interested in the natural world, he avidly collected and drew shells, skins, skeletons, insects. He was unconventional, had a good sense of humour and a keen sense of fun. Snell kept his word – he was an honest and fair employer and

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 128, 129, 126.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁸² Ibid., p. 135.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 135-6.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 134, 136, 137, 139.

exchange partner. He was eager to learn from the Narungga, and was generous and obliging in return.



Figure 9. Sketch by Edward Snell, 18 August 1850⁸⁸

'a state of quietitude'

From Snell we gain a sense of everyday cross-cultural relations – we see constant interaction, respectful engagement, and Narungga autonomy and independence. In December 1850, Moorhouse reported the Yorke Peninsula district 'has been in a state of quietude'; 'the natives have commenced visiting the stations in a more friendly manner, and confidence appears to be taking the place of former suspicion and mistrust'.⁸⁹ Within a relatively short time, the vast majority of stockowners appear to have reached some form of tentative accommodation with the Narungga. The shootings and killings which lasted sometimes

⁸⁸ Griffiths, p. 137.

⁸⁹ Protector's quarterly report ending 31 December 1850, *Government Gazette*, 30 January 1851, p. 80.

decades in other areas lasted a few months on Yorke Peninsula, after which they were specific to Coutts station in 1852 and 1853. By 1850 many of the settlers and Narungga were at ease in each other's company. There are several reasons why this cross-cultural peace was established relatively smoothly and rapidly.

The vegetation and geography of Yorke Peninsula enabled the Narungga to live independently. The Peninsula was surrounded by waters which teemed with 'the usual kinds of gulf fish', and the shores 'abound[ed] with oysters, crabs, shrimps, prawns, wilks and a variety of other shell fish'.⁹⁰ Yorke Peninsula remained uncleared and unfenced until it was divided into farming blocks in the 1860s, 70s and 80s. Vast areas were covered with thick mallee scrub that Europeans found impenetrable, but which provided a refuge for native animals such as kangaroos, wallabies and emus. In 1850 Snell referred to numerous kangaroos⁹¹ on Yorke Peninsula, as did Protector Walker in 1868.⁹² In October 1849 the Police Commissioner explained why the 'Natives of Yorke Peninsula' are 'generally believed to be peaceable':

One cause of the comparative quietness of the native population...may be attributed...to their mode of obtaining food. The tribes living along the sea coast...principally subsist on fish which they can always obtain consequently are less likely to come into contact with the Europeans while those inhabiting the interior are driven frequently to commit depredations from hunger.⁹³

In January 1855, Corporal Phillips reported his district 'is very quiet, the natives at present being actively engaged in fishing'.⁹⁴ In 1866 sub-protector Buttfield found the 'Peninsula abounded with such game as the Natives use, and the waters on either side of the Peninsula supply them with unlimited stores of fish'.⁹⁵

Crucial to the rapid establishment of positive cross-cultural relations is the fact the European invasion did not significantly impact on the autonomy of the Narungga. The thick scrub

⁹⁰ 'Yorke's Peninsula: Report of Mr Hughes', *SA Almanacs and Directories*, Microfiche Per 324, Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University, p. 114.

⁹¹ Griffiths, p. 121 and 126.

⁹² Protector Walker's report, *Government Gazette*, 20 August 1868, p. 1146.

⁹³ Tolmer to Colonial Secretary, 26 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1945.

⁹⁴ PC Phillips to Inspector Hamilton, GRG 5/2/1855/60.

⁹⁵ Buttfield to the Protector, 5 July 1866, GRG 52/1/1866/115.

provided the Narungga with secluded retreats where they could avoid the settlers. The plentiful supply of nutritious food meant the Narungga did not need to ‘hang around’ the stations, they did not need to kill sheep or depend on European handouts to survive. The Narungga knew they could live well independently and were thus in a strong bargaining position; settlers did not have the ‘upper hand’ and could not dictate exploitative conditions of employment. The many Narungga who were employed as station-hands, shepherds and guides would not remain with people if they felt they were being inadequately compensated. On one occasion Snell got angry with two Narungga guides who ‘had to camp under the cart, it was a bitter cold night and they had no fire’.⁹⁶ The following day after giving them some flour, they ‘took an opportunity to desert’ and Snell never saw them again.⁹⁷ On another occasion, ‘Bob’ led Snell to some underground caverns which Bob would not enter as he was frightened of ‘Muldabby’ (‘the devil’). Upon Snell’s ‘return to daylight’, ‘Bob had deserted’.⁹⁸

If the Narungga were around the stations, it was because they chose to be there – to increase their knowledge and experience of white people, gain material goods, and increase status in the eyes of their people. Both Moorhouse and Snell refer to Narungga people ‘residing about the police station’.⁹⁹ At Moorowie the ‘blacks’ camp was a little north of the homestead and slightly west of the old men’s kitchen’.¹⁰⁰ A ‘black’s hut’ was included in the station complex of Rogers’ head station, ‘Ynoo’, in Yorke Valley.¹⁰¹ The Penton Vale records from 1862-75 indicate there was ‘30 male natives, 16 lubras, 6 native boys and 3 girls living on the station and receiving rations from the store’.¹⁰² In 1866 ‘at almost every sheep station there were some aged and infirm men and women’.¹⁰³ During the pastoral years, the Narungga would not remain with people or near places where they were not being treated properly or felt uncomfortable.

⁹⁶ Griffiths, p.129.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 129-30.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

⁹⁹ Griffiths, pp. 135-8 and Moorhouse in *Government Gazette*, 15 July 1852, p. 424.

¹⁰⁰ LG Phillip, ‘Reminiscences: early days on Yorke Peninsula’, *SYPP*, 30 November 1934.

¹⁰¹ Rhoda Heinrich, 1973, p. 34.

¹⁰² Leon V Davey, *Penton Vale: Southern Yorke Peninsula, South Australia, 1853-1879*, the author, Yorketown, 2000, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Buttfield to the Protector of Aborigines, Blinman, 5 July 1866, GRG 52/1/1866/115.

The official and regular distribution of rations began in October 1849¹⁰⁴ and may have contributed to cross-cultural peace. Flour was initially a necessary inducement for cross-cultural contact, but soon became incorporated into the Narunggas' cyclical celebration and habitation patterns. Although the government's monthly 'allowance of 4 pannikins of flour' per person and annual supply of blankets may seem mean and insignificant today, it's important to remember that for the Narungga living 150 years ago, flour and blankets were novel items which they were unable to obtain or manufacture from their natural surroundings. Such goods could only be procured through barter or as reimbursement for services rendered to settlers. When Snell traded 'red wafers, bits of tobacco etc' for 'a great number' of fish, he considered the Narungga 'sold their fish very cheap – a bit of tobacco enough for one pipe being considered ample for a fish of 10 or 12 lbs weight'.¹⁰⁵ But for the Narungga, fish were easily procurable and abundant, and 'a bit of tobacco' difficult to obtain and therefore 'expensive' (it is also likely the Narungga's desire for red wafers influenced the exchange). Although 'cheap' to us, Narungga people the mid 1800s appreciated and valued the regular distribution of flour.

Because the Narungga did not depend on the flour given 'each full moon', they may have perceived this as a goodwill gesture, a symbolic act of friendship from the police 'as compensation for the usurpation of their country'.¹⁰⁶ The Narungga certainly saw this as a reason to celebrate; in August 1850, Snell noted the 'blacks held a corroboree outside the Police Station on account of the flour to be given away, tomorrow being full moon'.¹⁰⁷ However, at certain times, the possibility of identification and arrest made the Narungga wary of attending distributions. Koonko and Watpa were 'captured' at the November 1849 distribution¹⁰⁸, and in June 1850 Snell noted the 'late capture of [Belarra and Kerkerawilla] has frightened them away for only 7 presented themselves for rations'.¹⁰⁹ Attendance depended on the season (people would not travel to the police station if they were busy

¹⁰⁴ *Government Gazette*, 17 January 1850, p. 48.

¹⁰⁵ Griffiths, p. 127.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁰⁸ *Government Gazette*, 17 January 1850, p. 47.

¹⁰⁹ Griffiths, p. 124.

fishing or were tied up with ceremonies in distant areas), employment, and relations between the Narungga and the settlers and police. In the early years of distributions, when cross-cultural relations were tentative and the Narungga were justifiably wary of Europeans, a moderate to large attendance at distributions indicates a willingness or desire to come into contact with the police.¹¹⁰ The distribution of flour became an anticipated event; when neglectful policemen failed to issue rations in 1853, Nelocha and Melapa took matters into their own hands by breaking into the police store room and taking and issuing 100lbs of flour to the assembled ‘natives’.¹¹¹ As relations with the settlers improved and steadied, employment became more regular and reliable. By 1855 ‘the natives have been very generally employed by the settlers; so much so, as not to care much about the monthly distributions of flour’.¹¹²

Important to the rapid establishment of peace and trust was the presence of the police. In January 1848 Moorhouse recommended collisions would be prevented ‘by forming, as soon as is practicable, a police station, in the centre of the runs’.¹¹³ He recommended ‘a Native constable should be engaged, (a boy belonging to this part) and that for a few months, the police might have flour for distribution’.¹¹⁴ Moorhouse’s advice went unheeded and although an unnamed Narungga man was murdered in January 1849, it was only after Armstrong was speared on 2 July 1849 that a party of mounted police, headed by Sergeant Major McCulloch, by was sent to Yorke Peninsula in late July. During this visit Scott was killed and the murder of Nantariltarra was brought to McCulloch’s attention. Upon his return, McCulloch informed his superiors:

¹¹⁰ Unfortunately the ration returns for Yorke Peninsula are patchy (see Appendix III), but numbers built up spasmodically from 1849 and peaked in April 1851 with an attendance of 190 men, women and children. This is listed as March 16 but seems to be the April return as the previous report listed returns for 17, 19 and 29 March (two extra distributions due to Moorhouse’s visit to the Peninsula during that month) and the March 16 entry is in the report for the second half of 1851 and is followed by May and June, *Government Gazette*, 17 April 1851, p. 264-5 and 24 July 1851, p. 510.

¹¹¹ Deposition of Charles Lewin, 2 May 1853, GRG 24/6/1853/1146. Nelocha and Melapa were not charged, as the Police Commissioner attributed the ‘whole blame’ to ‘the Senior Constable, whose duty it was to see that the flour was distributed to the assembled natives on the appointed day’.

¹¹² *Government Gazette*, 8 March 1855, p. 204.

¹¹³ Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 15 January 1848, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

With regard to the necessity that exists for a permanent police station I am of opinion that there is no other [remedy] to prevent a great deal of blood shed and murder.¹¹⁵

On 17 August, the Governor authorized the Police Commissioner to erect a station on Yorke Peninsula.¹¹⁶ Moorhouse had previously recommended Sharples's Run as 'the most suited for a police station'.¹¹⁷ Sharples' station was known by its Narungga name 'Moorowie'.¹¹⁸

The presence of vigilant policemen deterred collisions between the Narungga and settlers. Regular and wide-ranging patrols were a physical reminder of official concern and the wide reach of European law. The Advocate General argued 'there doesn't appear to be any method of deterring [the natives] from the [commitment] of [sheep theft] unless by the presence of what they feel to be a superior force'.¹¹⁹ 'By bringing before their eyes the certainty of detection and punishment', the 'Natives' would be protected 'from the retaliation which their acts of aggression entail'.¹²⁰ Until the Victorian gold fields lured them away in the first half of 1852, experienced and energetic policemen were stationed on Yorke Peninsula.¹²¹ The replacements were not of the same quality, and Moorhouse and Coutts blamed a 'collision' in October 1852 on the absence of an active police force.¹²²

The personalities of policemen impacted greatly on relations between settlers and the Narungga. In November 1853, Anstey, Giles, Coutts and Sharples sent a letter to the Police pleading for the reinstatement of PC Coyte 'who Abscond[ed] under the temptations of the Gold fields eighteen months ago'.¹²³ The pastoralists complained that PC Moran, who was 'stationed on the Peninsula 12 months ago' was 'not active', while 'those residing there at present...are inexperienced and unaccustomed to the bush'.¹²⁴ The settlers argued:

¹¹⁵ 17 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹¹⁶ Governor Robe to Police Commissioner, 17 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹¹⁷ GRG 24/6/1848/50.

¹¹⁸ I have not been able to find a translation for this name, although 'owie' means water.

¹¹⁹ GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See Anstey, Giles, Coutts and Sharples, letter to the Colonial Secretary, 17 November 1853, GRG 24/6/1853/3026 ½.

¹²² See whole file, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

¹²³ Anstey, Giles, Coutts and Sharples, GRG 24/6/1853/3026 ½.

¹²⁴ Ibid., Moran's name is not given, but the dates synchronize with PC Moran's period on Yorke Peninsula.

The only two really efficient men that have been stationed there were Corporal Mc Koy and P.C. Coyte. The moment they heard of the natives committing some depredation they went in pursuit and did not rest until they captured the offenders.¹²⁵

Clearly, McCoy and Coyte had the respect of the settlers and, it seems, the Narungga. The pastoralists glowing refer to ‘instances of Coyte following the blacks day after day and taking prisoners the men he wanted although he had only the native policeman with him’.¹²⁶ But we need to look beyond Coyte to understand why ‘during the time he was there, the natives were quieter than they have ever been before or than they have been since’.¹²⁷ Rather than Coyte, I believe the ‘native policeman’ briefly alluded to is the key to understanding the rapid establishment of peaceful cross-cultural relations on Yorke Peninsula.

Jim Crack

The ‘native policeman’ referred to is Jim Crack, sometimes written Jimcrack or Jem Crack, who was a Narungga man – ‘a native of Yorke Peninsula’.¹²⁸ Unfortunately, the records do not reveal Jim Crack’s Narungga name from which his birth order, ‘totem’, or stage of life might be deduced.¹²⁹ The name ‘Jim Crack’ is unique for Aboriginal and European South Australians at this time. Perhaps it is a derivation of ‘Jim Crow’, a term used by American settlers to refer to African-Americans. Morris or Jones had a horse called ‘Jim Crack’ in 1849¹³⁰ and it seems either the man took his name from the horse or vice versa. There was also a plain known as ‘Jim Crow’s Flat’ in the north of South Australia.¹³¹ In 1849 the *Adelaide Times* referred to Jim Crack as ‘a boy’¹³² but this is misleading as Europeans commonly referred to grown, middle aged and even elderly Aboriginal men under their employ as ‘boys’ or ‘black boys’. In September 1849 a Judge described Jim Crack as a ‘youth’.¹³³ However, Jim Crack was married, and was therefore old enough to have passed

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., original underlining.

¹²⁸ Supreme Court Judge’s interrogation of Jim Crack, *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3C.

¹²⁹ See Simpson, 1998.

¹³⁰ Evidence of Joseph Peacock, *Register*, 1 September 1849, 3F.

¹³¹ Police Correspondence, GRG 5/2/1857/755.

¹³² *Adelaide Times*, 3 September 1849, 4D.

¹³³ *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3D.

the prerequisite stages of initiation.¹³⁴ Europeans had trouble estimating the ages of Aboriginal people, it seems likely that Jim Crack was between 20-45 years old, as there is no mention of him being old or having grey hair.

Intriguingly, Jim Crack associated with colonists and learnt English as early as 1843. In 1849 Moorhouse deposed 'he had known Jimcrack for about six years' although 'he had not been so much in contact with him for the latter part of the time as he had of the former'.¹³⁵ Jim Crack appears to have spent some time at Moorhouse's school in the early 1840s as he 'picked up the English language at various stations, and also at the Location school', and although he had been taught 'the measure of time' and how to count, he had forgotten both by September 1849.¹³⁶ Maybe he was one of the thirty-four 'natives' Moorhouse 'assembled' and distributed flour to at 'Kooley Wurta' on 30 December 1847.¹³⁷ Perhaps he was one of 'two young men' Moorhouse gave a blanket and engaged to take him 'to the various tribes on the Peninsula'.¹³⁸ Certainly, Jim Crack is one of the first Narungga recorded as assisting the settlers, and he was interested in European goods. He spent from April-July 1849 shepherding for William Bagnall at one of Rogers stations.¹³⁹ Although he received no wages, 'anything he wanted, he could have for the asking'.¹⁴⁰

When McCulloch was sent to the Peninsula in July 1849, he was ordered to complete a 'statistical return of the number of stations on Yorke's Peninsula' and inquire into the necessity of a permanent police station.¹⁴¹ Jim Crack met and accompanied McCulloch and his party; on 2 August, he interpreted for McCulloch during inquiries into Scott's murder.¹⁴² It is highly likely Jim Crack was one of the party of Narungga who five days earlier had led

¹³⁴ Jim Crack's wife was Monarto. Monarto was one of the women whom Henry Morris had assaulted, see *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4C.

¹³⁵ *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3D. This is the only reference to Narungga people being in close contact with white people and travelling to and living in Adelaide at this time.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 15 January 1848, GRG 24/6/1848/50.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Adelaide Times*, 3 September 1849, 4D.

¹⁴⁰ *Observer*, 1 September 1849, 4D. Bagnall had ordered a pair of boots for Jim Crack and given him some blankets 'for his exclusive use', but Jim Crack left suddenly one night after being visited by 'some blackfellows and a lubra' – 'his cousins'. He took with him two blankets and a rug.

¹⁴¹ McCulloch, 15 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹⁴² *Register*, 15 August 1849, 3C.

McCulloch to the bodies of Nantariltarra and the girl who drowned during the confrontation with Field, Penton, Sharples etc.¹⁴³ Jim Crack was no doubt the medium through which McCulloch communicated with the Narungga during his trip. McCulloch informed his superiors on 15 August ‘the late murders’ were ‘in the first place caused by [the settlers] bad treatment [of the natives]’ and ‘without the presence of the police the Natives can not approach the stations without being fired upon’.¹⁴⁴ Jim Crack travelled to Adelaide with McCulloch, arriving on 11 August, and acted as an interpreter in court that day.¹⁴⁵ On 18 August Jim Crack returned to the Peninsula with McCulloch and Moorhouse.¹⁴⁶ On 22 August they came across the group of Narungga amongst whom was Melaityappa and Jim Crack acted as the interpreter.¹⁴⁷ On 28 August, he (with McCulloch, Moorhouse and Melaityappa) once again travelled to Adelaide. The following three weeks Jim Crack spent in Adelaide staying at the Police Barracks (with McCulloch) or the Aborigines’ Location (with Moorhouse).¹⁴⁸

A close examination of all available records indicates it was no coincidence Moorhouse and McCulloch met with Narungga people who witnessed crimes committed by Europeans. Jim Crack had known Moorhouse for six years, he trusted him and deliberately gathered and introduced him to people who could testify to wrongs being committed against them. Jim Crack provided the Corporal and Protector with information and details that would otherwise have eluded them. Moorhouse testified that on four occasions prior to September 1849, when he had had ‘opportunities of testing Jimcrack as an interpreter on Yorke Peninsula’ Jim Crack was ‘found efficient’ – ‘information was obtained from the natives through Jimcrack’s oral communication with them’.¹⁴⁹ The Advocate General pointed out ‘all the evidence adduced [in the Jones and Morris case] was the result of [Jim Crack’s] efficiency, as several of the witnesses had referred to the information received from Jimcrack’.¹⁵⁰ The weeks Moorhouse and McCulloch spent in Jim Crack’s constant presence resulted in three court

¹⁴³ See chapter three, this thesis.

¹⁴⁴ McCulloch, 15 August 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1527.

¹⁴⁵ *Observer*, 18 August 1849, 4A.

¹⁴⁶ GRG 24/6/1849/1528.

¹⁴⁷ *Register*, 8 September 1849, 4A.

¹⁴⁸ See *Observer*, 22 September 1849, 2D.

¹⁴⁹ *Register*, 15 September 1849, 3D.

¹⁵⁰ *Observer*, 22 September 1849, 2E.

cases against Europeans – namely Field for the murder of Nantariltarra, Jones and Morris for the murder of Melaityappa, and Morris for assaulting Monarto and Yurnari. It is largely due Jim Cracks skills as an interpreter and communicator that an unprecedented number of cases against the settlers went to trial in September 1849.

Jim Crack began working with the police as early as August 1849. His name appears in Court Reports and police correspondence constantly until February 1852. His duties were many and varied; he accompanied and assisted European police officers in patrolling the stations, investigating reports, and arresting people. He acted as an interpreter on the Peninsula and in Adelaide. Both Europeans and Narungga trusted and relied on him. It is no co-incidence that between August 1849 and October 1852 there are no reports of conflict or major sheep theft – cross-cultural relations settled down once the Europeans gave Jim Crack a position of authority. A major cause of on-going cross-cultural conflict was the inability to communicate with ‘the other’. Jim Crack’s linguist skills bridged that gap – he could explain white man’s laws, procedures and punishments to the Narungga, and ensure only guilty people were arrested. Alternatively, Jim Crack provided Europeans with the Narungga version of events and matters could be dealt with accordingly. Members of both cultural groups experienced the legal system as efficient and just. Because the settlers could be confident crimes were being punished, they did not take matters into their own hands and inadvertently punish innocent people. Alternatively, the settlers knew the Narungga had a voice through Jim Crack, and that Jim Crack was respected by fellow policemen and high-placed government officials.

Jim Crack and Coyte’s names are constantly linked, they appear to have worked well together. Jim Crack is described as Coyte’s ‘trusty assistant’¹⁵¹ but this phrase is misleading as Jim Crack was a crucial partner rather than assistant. In June 1850, Padlarra stole one of Roger’s sheep from Rogues’ Gully. Coyte, Jim Crack and Taityanna-Widlo found Padlarra amongst ‘a party of blacks fishing on the beach’, Padlarra was apprehended without any confrontation and ‘Jim Crack communicated the reason of his apprehension to the

¹⁵¹ *Register*, 1 July 1851, 2E.

prisoner'.¹⁵² Jim Crack was amongst 'the company of natives' who assisted McCoy when he apprehended Keskahrawilla for Bagnall's assault in June 1850.¹⁵³ It was because of Jim Crack's tracking skills and knowledge of the land and his people that Coyte was able to follow 'the blacks day after day and tak[e] prisoners the men he wanted' even though 'there would be as many as 50 natives together'.¹⁵⁴

In February 1851, Jim Crack was 'told by a native boy' that an Aboriginal man had been speared.¹⁵⁵ Upon investigation, Jim Crack, Coyte and Kanyana¹⁵⁶ found the body 'at the place described by Jim Crack'.¹⁵⁷ Jim Crack immediately identified the body as that of Maltalta, a Port Lincoln man he met once in the Adelaide Gaol.¹⁵⁸ Coyte and Jim Crack stated that the murdered man's hair was black, not grey but Moorhouse knew Maltalta's hair was 'decidedly grey – no one could mistake that'.¹⁵⁹ Moorhouse 'believed Jim Crack had made a mistake in his identity'.¹⁶⁰ However, when Moorhouse later washed the hair, 'he found it to be grey', and concluded the body was that of Maltalta.¹⁶¹ The case of Maltalta's murder is interesting as it shows the Narungga strongly adhering to traditional laws against trespassers. The information received and acted on by Jim Crack (who passed the information on to Coyte) led to the arrest of Tukurm, Nyalta, and Kangu Wadli who could have been hanged.¹⁶²

Jim Crack was an intelligent and highly regarded man. It is interesting to ponder what motivated him to work with the Europeans as a cross-cultural mediator. Maybe he enjoyed learning about and experiencing another people and their culture. Perhaps he sought personal prestige and material gain. He was given clothing and rations and frequently visited Adelaide

¹⁵² *Observer*, 5 June 1850.

¹⁵³ *Register*, 25 June 1850, 3E.

¹⁵⁴ GRG 24/6/1853/3026 ½.

¹⁵⁵ *Register*, 7 March 1851, 4D.

¹⁵⁶ *Register*, 20 May 1851, 3A.

¹⁵⁷ *Register*, 7 March 1851, 4D.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Register*, 20 May 1851, 3B.

¹⁶² Names as given in *SAGMJ*, 22 May 1851, 3D.

– situated on Kaurna land – in safety. His wife also received rations.¹⁶³ His ability to mediate no doubt earned him prestige and respect from many Europeans and his own people. Christina Smith, writing of her son Duncan, noted the Boandik (the Aboriginal people of the Mount Gambier area) ‘had great respect for [Duncan] being their interpreter when they got into trouble’.¹⁶⁴ A later descendant claimed ‘Duncan had gained status in the eyes of the booandiks as their interpreter’.¹⁶⁵ If Jim Crack was as young as the Europeans indicated, his knowledge and experience of white peoples’ laws and customs, and his performance as a cultural mediator, must have increased his status amongst his country-people. By July 1850, Jim Crack was a vital and celebrated member of his group. Snell witnessed two important Narungga rituals and on both occasions Jim Crack was ‘officiating as high priest’.¹⁶⁶ Only highly regarded, authoritative figures were entrusted with such a role.

Maybe Jim Crack was motivated by altruistic reasons, and used his skills to serve and help his people. He was instrumental in bringing cases against white people to trial and lowering the rate of conviction and severity of sentences for the Narungga. In Court, Padlarra, through Jim Crack, said he took the sheep because he was hungry at the time, his sentence was deferred.¹⁶⁷ Jim Crack interpreted for Keskahrawilla in June 1850. Keskahrawilla initially faced charges of felonious assault but eventually pleaded guilty to common assault and no sentence was passed.¹⁶⁸ In June 1851, two of Coutts’ huts were plundered and his hut-keepers assaulted. The guilty parties were ‘apprehended by constable Coyte and his trusty assistant, Jim Crack’.¹⁶⁹ They ‘confessed to the robbery’ and eventually received lenient sentences of six months imprisonment with hard labour.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ See Appendix III listing returns for distribution of rations, published in the *Government Gazette*.

¹⁶⁴ Extract from Christina Smith’s diary, in Heather Carthew (ed), *Sunlight Across the Swamplands*, Friends of the Millicent Public Library, Millicent, 1994, p. 20-1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Griffiths, p. 131. This was a circumcision ceremony.

¹⁶⁷ *SAGMJ*, 15 August 1851, 3C.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3D.

¹⁶⁹ *Register*, 1 July 1851, 2E.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, and 5 August 1851, 3A. Mantamornappa received a 12 month sentence as he was involved in the plunder of two huts.

In May 1851, news reached Adelaide of Bagnall's death.¹⁷¹ The body was brutally mutilated (comparable to Scott's) yet no outraged reports appeared in Adelaide newspapers and no mention is made of any form of retaliation.¹⁷² Once again, the Narungga appear to have had the sympathy of Europeans residing on the Peninsula and Government officials in Adelaide. The Police Commissioner was told Bagnall was 'a very peculiar person' and 'his own indiscretions and folly fully occasioned his violent and untimely end'.¹⁷³ Moorhouse drew attention to Bagnall's 'treatment of the natives of the Peninsula' and felt 'from the evidence ...the native charged with the murder will have several strong modifying circumstances in his favor'.¹⁷⁴ The Police Commissioner stated Bagnall's death was 'consequent upon some criminal intercourse with the Native women... it is a matter of notoriety that Bagnell [sic] had been for sometime past, conducting himself in such a manner towards the Blacks as to lead all persons who knew the particulars to anticipate the result'.¹⁷⁵ Marippa (whose 'lubra' was taken)¹⁷⁶ was sentenced to six months imprisonment, Yellarri, Warriapa and Ngi Yerri Yeltarra to twelve months.¹⁷⁷ Jim Crack was doubtless instrumental in supplying the police and Protector with information which led to an empathetic response to Bagnall's murderers.

Jim Crack and James Coyte worked in partnership and spent a great deal of time together. They appear to have respected and trusted each other and no doubt became good friends. Coyte left for the gold fields around April/May 1852, and the last direct reference to Jim Crack was in February 1852, the last recorded issue of flour to the 'native constable's wife'

¹⁷¹ *Observer*, 31 May 1851, 4F.

¹⁷² *SAGMJ*, 29 May 1851, 3A and *Observer*, 31 May 1851, 4F.

¹⁷³ Police Commissioner's Report, *Register*, 9 August 1851, 3C.

¹⁷⁴ *Government Gazette*, 23 October 1851, p.714.

¹⁷⁵ Police Commissioner's report, GRG 24/6/1851/3144.

¹⁷⁶ *Register*, 11 February 1852, 2D.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

was in April 1852.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps Jim Crack accompanied Coyte to the Gold Fields and never returned to Yorke Peninsula.¹⁷⁹

Narungga women and European men

Many Narungga women had sexual relations with European men. When Moorhouse visited Yorke Peninsula in March 1851, he found ‘the native women [were] in a fearful state of disease’; adding ‘the disease has been evidently communicated by the Europeans, and has spread from one to another until three fourths of both males and females have become affected by it’.¹⁸⁰ In July 1852, Moorhouse reported ‘13 men and 1 woman have died, and chiefly of secondary symptoms of venereal’.¹⁸¹ What is less certain, and in fact varied greatly, is the nature of, and women’s agency in, such relationships.

There is no doubt women were ‘lent’ with the full consent of their husbands or family. The Narungga readily adapted this traditional practice to new circumstances; as early as 1840 women were offered to members of Hughes’ surveying party at Point Pearce.¹⁸² Some Narungga men used women to obtain goods from the newcomers. When trying to understand how the women felt about this practice, it is important we don’t impose our own cultural morals and values. There was no shame associated with such an exchange, some women no doubt enjoyed the novelty and experience of sleeping with ‘white’ men, and they may have appreciated the material rewards. When Snell was in Adelaide, he ‘dropped in among a lot of female blacks in a ‘Whorley’ who told him ‘they had no “Lubras”, i.e. husbands, and offered us their services in that line for a bit of tobacco’.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ The Police Commissioner’s second quarterly report for 1852 lists a ‘native constable’ on Yorke Peninsula, and ‘the native constable’s wife’ is recorded as receiving flour rations from July 1851 until April 1852 (*Government Gazette*, 23 October 1851, p.714 and 15 July 1852, p. 424) but by October of 1852 the *Register* reported there were ‘no police stationed on the Peninsula’¹⁷⁸ and Moorhouse makes no reference to Jim Crack, an interpreter or ‘native constable’ when he investigated Gall and Parrington’s affray in November 1852. It seems Jim Crack stopped working with the police and was no longer on the Peninsula sometime between February and June 1852.

¹⁷⁹ Informatively, trouble began on the Peninsula after Coyte deserted the police force and Jim Crack’s name disappears from the records.

¹⁸⁰ *Government Gazette*, 17 April 1851, p. 264-5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1852, p. 424.

¹⁸² See chapter two, and *Register* 26 December 1840, 4A.

¹⁸³ Griffiths, p. 110.

Unquestionably some European men treated women terribly, but the Narungga seem to have punished men who mistreated Narungga women. Bagnall and Armstrong were killed because they ‘ravished’ Narungga women. Police Commissioner Dashwood felt, in the case of Bagnall, ‘the Blacks consented to the adulterous act, and destroyed him afterwards because he did not remunerate them’.¹⁸⁴ Rape must have been prevalent and it is telling the only cases brought against Europeans on Yorke Peninsula during the pastoral period were for the rape of young girls (the settlers seem to have turned a blind eye to all else). Thomas Simms was charged with raping six year old Wurti Paltanna in September 1850.¹⁸⁵ Simms was acquitted in February 1851. In 1855 Edward Gibbons was charged with raping a girl named Purt Purrie. Gibbons was remanded until 31 January, when he was dismissed as ‘only native evidence could be procured’.¹⁸⁶

Some settlers treated Narungga women well, and some women actively sought relations with white men. Two Narungga women, Monarto and Yurnarri, ‘used to cohabit with’ Christopher Christian, ‘or at least they followed him about from station to station’.¹⁸⁷ Monarto was Jim Crack’s wife, and Jim Crack was instrumental in bringing Morris to trial for assaulting Monarto and Yurnarri. During Morris’s trial, Jim Crack interpreted. He was told to ask Monarto ‘if she was not at the time of the assault living with [Christian]’:

Jimcrack’s feelings were evidently touched, for, on Mr Stephen’s pressing him to put the question, he wriggled and twisted about, hung down his head, and rolled his eyes about – first over one shoulder and then the other; but at last, as it seemed in a fit of desperate resolution, he put the question, and received the answer, and elevating his arms and depressing his body with a diabolical grimace, he hissed out the word, “yes”.¹⁸⁸

Jim Crack’s obvious embarrassment and Morris’s statement that the women followed Christian around, indicate the women were acting autonomously (alternatively Jim Crack’s embarrassment may have been caused by his familiarity with European values). In 1850, Snell had a liaison with a Narungga woman. Snell states ‘2 Lubras come to the hut this

¹⁸⁴ Police Commissioner’s report for quarter ended Sept 30th 1851, GRG 24/6/1851/3144.

¹⁸⁵ NB Moorhouse refers to her by this name, *Government Gazette*, 30 January 1851, p. 80, but the *Register* refers to her as Warriotsa, 16 October 1850, 3D. See also Griffiths, p. 139.

¹⁸⁶ *Government Gazette*, 24 May 1855, p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ *Register*, 29 September 1849, 3C.

¹⁸⁸ *Register*, 5 September 1849, 4C.

morning, one of them named Tanne Arrito...seemed to take a fancy to me'; 'I took her into my service and she stuck to me like a brick'.¹⁸⁹ Snell appears infatuated:

she had beautiful hair hanging in natural curls all down her back and her skin was soft a silk and shone like a bit of brown satin... I learnt a great deal of the Language from her.¹⁹⁰

Tanne Arrito appears to be acting autonomously.¹⁹¹ Snell was an interesting and fun man who possessed sought after items. Tanne Arrito may have enjoyed both his company and the comforts he could provide, maybe the novelty. Aboriginal women during the early pastoral years are vital to understanding cross-cultural interaction.

Southern Yorke Peninsula in the nineteenth century was a liminal space for many Europeans. Until the land was divided into small farming blocks and sold, it was a frontier land where European women were few and far between, and towns, schools, churches or shops were non-existent. Without such obvious trappings of white society it was easy for individuals to cross cultural boundaries. Some European men learnt the language, 'married' Narungga women and were incorporated into the group. Shepherds lived in isolation, if they had huts they were very basic and the Narungga term 'wurley' was commonly used to describe their temporary dwellings. Narungga people, at ease in their environment, were ever present and were of great use to the settlers who relied upon their practical skills and company. Several Europeans chose to live beyond the borders of European society. Unfortunately few records regarding such people exist – only tantalizing titbits have survived through the decades.

In June 1850, a man named Burgin was living on the Peninsula. Snell describes Burgin, a graduate of Cambridge University, as 'a queer figure, a regular bushman':¹⁹²

he had no trowsers on, a rifle at his back and a leather belt round his waist containing a bush tinder box, a large sheath knife and a kangaroo skin pouch with tobacco etc – he also had a powder horn, a pox for percussion caps and a bag of bullets.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Snell diary entry 21 July 1850, in Griffiths, p. 131.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Tanne Arrito may have been encouraged by other members of her group as this relationship began the day after Snell witnessed an important men's ceremony.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 124.

Charles Parrinton (whose name ‘by a strange coincidence was almost the same as that of Weaver’s overseer’ Charles Parrington) was ‘a hunter who had lived in the wilds of America, and who was employed by station owners to help reduce the hordes of kangaroos...believed to be destroying valuable pastures’.¹⁹⁴ Parrinton was ‘a man of mystery, apparently of a high class Canterbury family, well-educated and used to the refinements of civilized society, but for his own undivulged reasons he preferred to live with the aborigines, eschewing the comforts and companionship of his fellow Englishmen’.¹⁹⁵ In 1868 a ‘large number’ of Narungga had in their ‘encampment’ near Lake Sunday ‘a great quantity of dried skins which...they sold to Mr Parrington [sic] or exchange for flour and other necessities’.¹⁹⁶



Figure 10. Sketch by Edward Snell, Yorke Peninsula, 20 June 1850¹⁹⁷

In 1886 the Police Commissioner received a letter from James Fleming informing him ‘th[ay] are several White Hut men Kangarooing in the Hundred of Carrubie and thay have living with them Aboriginal Native Women’.¹⁹⁸ W Brown from the Yorketown police station ascertained:

¹⁹⁴ Diana Cook, *The Striding Years: History of Minlaton Council*, Minlaton District Council, Minlaton, 1975, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ Cook, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶ BC Besley to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wallaroo, 17 June 1868, GRG 52/1/1868/246.

¹⁹⁷ In Griffiths, p. 123.

¹⁹⁸ James Fleming to the Police Commissioner, White Hut Station, Carrubie, dated 29 May 1886, GRG 5/2/1886/377.

there are two Kangaroo hunters living with Native Women in the Hundred of Carrabee, named respectively Samuel Hitchcox and Frank Anto[ni]. Hitchcox is living with a half caste and Antoni with a pure blood Aboriginal, it is believed that the woman Antoni lives with is legally married to him... they are of erratic movements continually shifting Camp... there is nobody living in that part except the hunters in question.¹⁹⁹

Jane Antonia appears on a 'return of names of Aborigines' in 1882. She was apparently black', an orphan, and 'married to a half caste negro'.²⁰⁰ Interestingly there was a John Antonio who was one of the crew of the Endeavour dispatched to find the Governor Hunter in November 1816.²⁰¹ In 1902, an Aboriginal woman from Eyre Peninsula who had been kidnapped by a gang of sealers remembered one of the sealers as 'a muscular man of colour, a mulatto, named Antonio' and 'he was considered the best sailor and the most daring ruffian among them'.²⁰² Perhaps Frank was John Antonio's son, and his connections with the Narungga went back further than the British colonization of South Australia. There is an 'Antonio's Road' in the vicinity of Stansbury.

Many children with European fathers were born. How were they received by the Narungga and their biological fathers? Tindale noted:

the Narungga people at Point Pierce...always smoked their babies over the fire to make them go dark. When half-castes first presented themselves efforts were made to smoke them to a darker colour also, without much success.²⁰³

But it is equally likely the Narungga were following a traditional practice still used in Central Australia where babies are smoked to help them grow up healthy and strong.²⁰⁴ If so, the Narungga clearly wanted such children to live and flourish.²⁰⁵ Although the sparse and fragmented records do not allow for a comprehensive analysis, they do indicate that many

¹⁹⁹ W Brown to Inspector Saunders, 7 June 1886, GRG 5/2/1886/377.

²⁰⁰ GRG 52/1/1882/142.

²⁰¹ Cumpston, *Kangaroo Island*, Roebuck Society, Canberra, 1970, p. 42.

²⁰² *Australasian*, 8 November 1902, cited in JS Cumpston, 1970, p. 169.

²⁰³ Hand written note in Norman Tindale's notebook, 1839-1925, AA338/2/68.

²⁰⁴ Veronica Perrurle Dobson, *Arelhe-kenhe Merrethene: Arrernte Traditional Healing*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2007, p. 47.

²⁰⁵ Narungga Elder Gladys said in the 1960s 'we don't believe in...making children pay...that's not right. That's not our way of thinking. We make our babies welcome'. Interview with Betty Fisher conducted prior to 1966, transcribed by Betty Fisher 30 November 1996, tapes and transcripts held in NAPA Archives, Moonta.

Narungga men accepted their wives' 'half-caste' children as their own.²⁰⁶ At least one European man, Stephen Goldsworthy, fulfilled his parental or familial obligations, as 'half caste' George (alias Billy) Button lived with and was cared for by the Goldsworthy family throughout his life.²⁰⁷ Stephen was also a friend of the mission station and allowed his eldest (non-Aboriginal) son to learn to read and write at the mission and to spend time with Narungga children.²⁰⁸

On the sheep stations between 1850-70 there was much interaction and mixing between children of varied descent. At Penton Vale Station between 1865-72, fifty-five Narungga people received rations from the store – nine of whom were children.²⁰⁹ Sixteen of the men were on the payroll as workmen, shepherds, store assistants, and general station workers.²¹⁰ Willie MacDonald was a Scottish shepherd who worked at Penton Vale.²¹¹ His great-granddaughter, Kay Murdock, was told her grandfather grew up playing with Aboriginal children at the station.²¹² A Robert Eggleton was employed at Gum Flat between 1865-72. It is possible his children were Tom, Bob and George Eglington²¹³ who were born 'in the district' of Southern Yorke Peninsula and were able to 'talk the lingo like a black brudder' and who knew some 'native customs and legends'.²¹⁴ The Eglington boys 'lived at Marion Bay when the blacks were numerous when there were no other Europeans living near', they

²⁰⁶ In Kühn's letters to Reichel, it is clear that John Nagelschmidt, Maria Richman, Clara Douglas and George Reed had European fathers but were accepted by their Narungga fathers. See letters dated 25 April 1867, 15 June 1870, 'Papers, correspondence, transactions, diaries etc of the Moravian Missionaries in Australia 1866-1879', R15VIa, Unitaetsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany.

²⁰⁷ Ern Carmichael spoke with Mrs Les Goldsworthy, according to his notes held at State Library PRG 1073, 'George Button was the "1/2 caste" son of [one of Stephen's sons] and he stayed with the Goldsworthy family when natives went walkabout after the fire of 1869. George remained with the Goldsworthys until 1929. He died at the Salvation Army Aged Men's Retreat in 1935'. Mrs Goldsworthy's son Colin and grand-daughter Kerryn feel it is also possible George, or 'Billy' Button was Stephen's son (personal communication).

²⁰⁸ In June [1868] Kühn notes Goldsworthy donated hens to the mission, and his son was out fetching sheep with 'Charley' and, in June 1871 Kühn writes of a grazier who has leased Wardang Island (Goldsworthy) whose son comes to church at the mission every Sunday where he also attends lessons, see Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 16 June [1868] and 21 June 1871, 'Papers, correspondence, transactions, diaries etc of the Moravian Missionaries in Australia 1866-1879', R15VIa, Unitaetsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany.

²⁰⁹ Leon V Davey, *Penton Vale 1853-1879*, the author, Yorketown, 2000, p. 10.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Henry MacDonald, W McDonnell, and W MacDonald are listed in the 'Employee's ledger, Penton Vale Station, 1847-52', State Library of South Australia, Group no BRG 294.

²¹² Personal communication with Alan Murdock, married to Kay, Willie MacDonald's great-granddaughter.

²¹³ Tindale writes 'Eglington', also written (by Yorke Peninsula residents) Egginton, or Eglington.

²¹⁴ Tindale, 1936, p. 60, and JH Johnson, letter to Norman Tindale dated 17 March 1934, JH Johnson Collection, Anthropology Archives, AA160, Acc No. 191, AD 29, South Australian Museum.

‘consequently did not have any schooling’; although they could speak the ‘native language’ they could not read or write English.²¹⁵ It is informative that Louisa (who spoke to Tindale in 1935), whose mother was married to King Tommy,²¹⁶ eventually married George.

The pastoralists felt Police Constable Coyte had ‘as much control over the natives at Yorke’s Peninsula as Messrs Mason and Scott have on the Murray’.²¹⁷ Mason was a police trooper stationed at Wellington who became a sub-protector. Like Coyte he was in charge of the distribution of rations and maintaining a cross-cultural peace. Mason had a long term relationship with ‘Queen’ Louisa Karpany, a Ngarrindjeri woman with whom he fathered two children.²¹⁸ This relationship placed Mason within the local kin network and aided his ability to perform his police duties. Perhaps Coyte established similar links on Yorke Peninsula – he certainly had ‘an eye for the ladies’.²¹⁹ Coyte, Burgin, Parrinton and Antonio clearly felt safe surrounded by ‘the other’. They were comfortable in the bush, and obviously enjoyed and appreciated the company of Narungga people.

visits to Adelaide

Just as some Europeans experienced and felt comfortable in the world of the Narungga, so to did some Narungga experience the culture and lifestyle of Europeans. Jim Crack and other Narungga who were employed as interpreters and police constables,²²⁰ or who appeared as witnesses or faced charges in court, spent periods of time in Adelaide. Did they view their ‘visit to the whitefellow’s city as a pleasant trip, which enabled [them] on easy terms to see the world’?²²¹ Many people were able to move around freely and experience European life

²¹⁵ Norman Tindale, ‘Trip to Marion Bay, Yorke Peninsula, 8-11 November 1935’, in ‘Notes on the Kurna or Adelaide Tribe and the Natives of Yorke Peninsula and the middle north of South Australia’, 1935, South Australian Museum Archives, pp. 5, 7, 37.

²¹⁶ Tindale, 1936, p. 58.

²¹⁷ Anstey, Coutts, Sharples and Giles to the Colonial Secretary, GRG 24/6/1853/3026 ½.

²¹⁸ Doreen Kartinyeri, *Ngarrindjeri Nation*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2006, p. 74.

²¹⁹ In April 1855, the Police Commissioner received a pleading letter asking whether he ‘kn[ew] or could appertain whether [James Coyte] is a Married Man and if so how long or nearly how long has he been Married’. The writer did not want her name mentioned or she ‘might lose sight of him again’, stating this ‘is something of very great importance’, Mrs Shacklock to the Police Commissioner, Melbourne, 14 April 1855, GRG 5/2/1855/374.

²²⁰ Coodmutcha, a ‘young, intelligent native, who spoke English well’ acted as an interpreter in November 1849, in *Observer*, 24 November 1849, 4E. Snell refers to ‘Policeman Bob, a black fellow’ in Griffiths, p. 132. ‘Native Constable Ned’ was employed on Yorke Peninsula in 1854, see Police Correspondence, GRG 5/2/1854/528 ½.

²²¹ *Register*, 20 August 1865, 2G.

and culture. Others, who were brought to Adelaide as witnesses or who were charged with offences, were treated as prisoners. The authorities wished to give such people bail, but it was difficult to guarantee their reappearance in court.²²² The Advocate General and the Governor agreed ‘it would be much better they should be under the care of the Protector, than suffering a lengthened imprisonment before trial’,²²³ but Moorhouse cautioned ‘I could not engage to keep any native from Yorke’s Peninsula if I were to give bail – the moment the Yorke’s Peninsula Natives happened to be out of my sight they would start for their country’.²²⁴ During a trial for the rape of Wurti Paltanna, ‘the girl and her father, who was an important witness...absconded and could not be found during the sittings of the court’.²²⁵ In 1852, Moorhouse lamented the loss of eight children. All ‘left’ the Native Location where they had been studying and residing – ‘they went overland to their country – Yorke’s Peninsula’.²²⁶



Figure 11. Sketch by Edward Snell, 17 June 1850²²⁷

For prisoners, conditions were harsh. Snell describes how Balarra and Kerkerawilla were ‘secured by being chained by the necks together, the middle of the chain being passed through a hole in a she oak tree – they were taken into the hut during the night and lamented

²²² Advocate General to the Colonial Secretary, 2 July 1850, GRG 24/6/1850/1424.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Protector’s comments written on the envelope of GRG 24/6/1850/1424.

²²⁵ *Register*, 1 February 1851, 3B.

²²⁶ *Government Gazette*, 17 June 1852, p.367.

²²⁷ In Griffiths, p. 122.

very loudly in their way about being too cold'.²²⁸ Aboriginal people inevitably died in – or as a direct result of – gaol. Giles felt 'the close confinement of the gaol, with possibly the high feeding that establishment was renowned for, had so affected [Tulta's] health that he died in consequence'.²²⁹ In 1855, the Protector reported:

On the 10th of March, one of the Peninsula natives died at the Location. He had been convicted of sheep stealing, and had just completed his sentence of six months imprisonment.²³⁰

Aboriginal people had no immunity to European diseases, and were not used to living in confinement, although they were used to physical hardship which was a crucial part of initiation. Clearly, for some Aboriginal people, incarceration was a traumatic and negative experience, but there may be some truth in remarks that some made 'light of' imprisonment and boasted of 'good treatment received by their predecessors in criminal career, who have undergone the lawful period of good feeding and pleasant incarceration in the Adelaide gaol'.²³¹ In gaol food and clothing were provided, and Aboriginal prisoners mixed with people from diverse backgrounds. Upon release they were able to inform their fellow country-people of their experiences. Some may have viewed their visit to Adelaide and period of imprisonment as an opportunity to increase their knowledge of Europeans.

In November 1852, the editor of the *Register* felt 'natives' who visit Adelaide and see 'our numbers and our opulence...become impressed with a notion of our power, a sense of their own inferiority, and a sort of conviction of the impossibility of combating us successfully'.²³² He noted the 'feeling of superiority' held by 'natives who have not visited Adelaide', which 'strange as it may appear, is still cherished by the black fellows when comparing themselves to white men'.²³³ Although it is doubtful a visit to Adelaide would have convinced the Narungga of white 'superiority', it may have convinced them of the permanency of European occupation, and the invincibility of European laws and procedures. No doubt Jim Crack and others who travelled to Adelaide informed their country people of their perceptions and

²²⁸ Griffiths, p. 121.

²²⁹ *Observer*, 22 October 1887, 41.

²³⁰ *Government Gazette*, 24 May 1855, p. 408. This must have been either Mantamonappa, Talipa or Pikupa, see the Protector's report, *Government Gazette*, 2 Nov 1854, p. 776.

²³¹ *Register*, 15 August 1849, 2C.

²³² 'Treatment of the Natives', *Register*, 15 November 1852, 2E.

²³³ *Register*, 15 November 1852, 2E.

experiences upon their return. This knowledge may have compelled the Narungga to modify their behavior accordingly.

conclusion

Although Yorke Peninsula was one of the later districts to be colonized, within an unusually short space of time the vast majority of stockowners appear to have reached some form of tentative accommodation with the Narungga. It is important not to glorify or romanticize these years, and to remember the Narungga population continued to decline, and it is possible isolated incidents of violence went unreported.²³⁴ However, the records imply the shootings and killings which lasted sometimes decades in other areas only lasted for a few months in 1849, after which they were specific to Coutts in 1852 and 1853, or confined to exceptionally distant and isolated areas. By 1852, shepherds and hutkeepers went about unarmed. Monks 'had no fire arms with [him] as [he] had no fear whatever of the blacks'.²³⁵ Parrington 'did not expect to be attacked by the blacks'.²³⁶

When Moorhouse visited Yorke Peninsula in July 1852 he 'found the natives generally quiet, and on good terms with the settlers'.²³⁷ As his 'journey was performed by land', he 'saw many stations, but at none were complaints preferred against the natives'.²³⁸ By 1854 Moorhouse reported 'This district [Yorke Peninsula], so troubled two or three years ago by collisions between the Europeans and natives, appears now to move without any disturbance'.²³⁹ When sub-protector Buttfield made an extensive tour of Yorke Peninsula in 1866, he found Aboriginal people 'at most places' who 'were treated with kindness by the

²³⁴ Amongst long term residents of Yorke Peninsula exist oral traditions of poisonings and of Aboriginal people being driven over the cliffs on the 'toe tip' of the Peninsula with stockwhips and horses (personal communication with Alan Murdock). Gladys Elphick referred to Daly Head as 'a sad place, very beautiful but sad' and recalled 'down that way there used to be many people there, but a lot of trouble happened there...men with guns came, my old Aunt told me' (interview with Betty Fisher conducted approximately 1966, transcribed by Betty Fisher, 29 November 1995, NAPA archives, Moonta). In the 1970s, Warooka resident Alan Murdock found a skeleton with bullet next to it in sandhills near Daly Head which he took to the South Australian Museum where Robert Edwards identified it as a young, six foot Aboriginal man (personal communication with Alan Murdock). The 'toe end' of Yorke Peninsula was particularly isolated, and it would be easy for settlers to keep such things quiet.

²³⁵ GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

²³⁶ Deposition of Charles Parrington, GRG 24/6/1852/3249.

²³⁷ Protector's quarterly report ending 31 March 1852, *Government Gazette*, 23 December 1852, p. 772.

²³⁸ *Government Gazette*, 23 December 1852, p. 772.

²³⁹ Protector's quarterly report ending 30 June 1854, *Government Gazette*, 24 August 1854, p. 619.

settlers, and were for the most part in good health'.²⁴⁰ That a tentative peace developed so quickly in the uncertain and potentially dangerous early pastoral years is due to the geography of Yorke Peninsula and the diligence of influential and active individuals such as Jim Crack and James Coyte. By March 1859, the Police Station on Yorke Peninsula was abandoned.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Buttfield to the Protector, Blinman, 5 July 1866, GRG 52/1/1866/115.

²⁴¹ Police Correspondence, GRG 5/2/1859/255.

5. 1866-80: the Narungga and Julius Kühn

The majority of Narungga people living in the mid to late nineteenth century grew up knowing their kin, country and culture. They actively incorporated aspects of European life that were useful or appealed to them. The extent to which they adopted European customs and participated in European society varied greatly. In 1868, a mission was established at Point Pearce. From February 1866 until 1880, Moravian missionary Julius Kühn worked among the Narungga as a teacher and mission superintendant. Kühn's personality and religious beliefs are crucial to understanding the actions of the Narungga during these years, as are those of King Tommy, who was widely recognised as the 'head man of the aboriginals on Yorke's Peninsula', and who held much influence amongst his people.¹ The origin and early years of the mission have not previously been thoroughly researched. A closer look at these years challenges some of our current assumptions and stereotypical understandings of mission life. These years also show us the possibility of what 'could have been'. We see genuine communication and a level of accommodation between members of the two cultural groups; the Europeans listened to the Narungga and were eager to improve their material well-being, while the Narungga were open to new beliefs and new ways of living, but not necessarily at the detriment of their own culture. This chapter looks at the establishment and early years of the Point Pearce Mission to illustrate the complexity of cross-cultural relations and to understand the options available to, and the choices made by, Narungga people living in the 1860s and 70s. We see emerging a picture of mission life quite at odds with more contemporary accounts.

contemporary understandings of mission life

Several people have published information regarding the Point Pearce Mission. In *Governor Fergusson's Legacy*, Heinrich gives an accurate overview of the years 1868 to 1976 in a sixteen page chapter entitled 'The Point Pearce Settlement',² and Hill and Hill devote six pages to the 'The Point Pearce Mission' in their *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke*

¹ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 19 November 1886, 2G.

² Rhoda Heinrich, *Governor Fergusson's Legacy*, the author, Adelaide, 1972, pp. 51-65.

Peninsula.³ Hill and Hill reproduce extracts written by Kühn which were published in the *Government Gazette*. These non-Aboriginal authors do not ‘dig deep’, or try to analyse the historic records in a way which makes sense of Narungga actions. In 1987, two histories of Point Pearce written by Aboriginal people with long standing connections to the mission were published. *As we’ve known it: 1911 to the present* was written by Doris and Cecil Graham who were born in 1912 and 1911 respectively and grew up on the mission.⁴ Residents of Point Pearce, chiefly Eileen Wanganeen and the Narungga Community College, authored *Point Pearce, Past and Present*.⁵ In 2002 Doreen Kartinyeri published her genealogy *Narungga Nation* in which 30 pages are devoted to a ‘Brief History of Point Pearce Mission’.⁶ These histories were never intended to be comprehensive, but were a compilation of personal stories and remembrances, and a starting point for future work.⁷ They highlight the crucial role played by Aboriginal people in the establishment of the mission and the detrimental impact of government policies on Aboriginal culture and society. Aboriginal authors reflect the outcome of events and laws that came into being in the 1900s, but do not necessarily reflect the reality of life for Narungga people who lived in the mid to late nineteenth century.

None of the above authors thoroughly research the beginnings and early years of the Mission. Wanganeen, Kartinyeri and Heinrich rely on a pamphlet written by TS Archibald, *Yorke’s Peninsula Aboriginal Mission Incorporated: a brief record of its history and operations*.⁸ Archibald clearly states:

this little pamphlet is by no means an exhaustive history of Point Pearce Mission. Scarcely any records were kept prior to 1878 and it is therefore impossible to collect sufficient data to do justice to the institution, founded nearly half a century since...⁹

³ DL Hill and SL Hill, *Notes on the Narungga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1975, pp. 32-8.

⁴ Doris May Graham and Cecil Wallace Graham, *As we’ve known it: 1911 to the present*, Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education Unit (ASTEAC), Underdale, 1987.

⁵ Eileen Wanganeen, *Point Pearce: Past and Present*, ASTEC, Underdale, 1987. This book was compiled by residents of Point Pearce, chiefly Eileen Wanganeen and the Narungga Community College.

⁶ Doreen Kartinyeri, *Narungga Nation*, Personal Publications, Morphett Vale, 2002. Doreen, a Ngarrinjeri woman, married a Narungga man and spent much of her life at Point Pearce.

⁷ See Wanganeen, p. ix.

⁸ Hussey and Gillingham Limited, Adelaide, 1915.

⁹ Archibald, forward.

Archibald was writing in 1915, when the government sought to remove the Institution from the management of the local trustees and place it under State control, and when the lives of Aboriginal people were becoming increasingly regulated. His pamphlet, written ‘at the request of numerous friends of the mission’,¹⁰ understandably emphasized the industry, discipline and orderly running of the station.

However, numerous letters written by Julius Kühn to Reichel, his friend and mentor in Germany, have recently been transcribed and translated, and provide invaluable information which casts new light on current understandings of both the establishment of the mission, and the first decade of mission life.¹¹ Local and Adelaide Newspapers provide additional information which demonstrate it is inappropriate to project twentieth century experiences and understandings of mission life onto the early years of the Point Pearce mission. A reinterpretation of the available historic records provides a much more complex account of the origins and early days of the mission.

The Federal Government’s ‘Bringing them home Report’ and the popular film ‘Rabbit Proof Fence’ have influenced and are illustrative of current, widespread understandings of mission life in which it is understood European ways were forced on Aboriginal people who were compulsorily ‘sent’ to missions which they were unable to leave, and where they were not allowed to speak their own language or lead a nomadic life. Such an understanding is reiterated in the Point Pearce histories. Wanganeen, for instance, writes ‘the mission administration continued with its hostility towards Aboriginal culture. Mobility, for instance...was considered unacceptable’.¹² The historic records indicate this was not initially the case. In 1879, Kühn reflected:

When I first commenced my labours among the aborigines I brought every energy to bear to these occasional wanderings, but experience has taught me it was not wise. They are a nomadic race, and as such require a change.¹³

¹⁰ Archibald, title page.

¹¹ All letters written by Moravian missionaries Kühn, Walder, and Meissel, and Congregational minister William Wilson referred to in this chapter are held in the Unitaetsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany under ‘Papers, correspondence, transactions, diaries etc of the Moravian Missionaries in Australia’, R.15.V.I .a, 1866-79.

¹² Wanganeen, p. 31.

¹³ *Register*, 7 May 1879, 5G.

Kühn endorsed Narungga peoples' need to socialise and travel over their country for extended periods:

it is customary for them after the arduous work of shearing and harvest to take a rest; hence for a time they disperse themselves through the Peninsula, visiting different parts where may be friends are to be found, and where they can enjoy fishing.¹⁴

Other settlers likewise recognized and supported Aboriginal mobility. In 1874 a deputation of influential Yorke Peninsula settlers (which included several Mission Trustees and had Kühn's full support) petitioned the Commissioner of Crown Lands. They believed 'the nomadic life to which the Aborigines had been accustomed for ages unfitted them for settlement in one particular spot' and 'it was absolutely necessary that the natives should have a hunting ground'.¹⁵

Another misconception is that moves to establish the mission were led by the Government who wanted to 'control' Aboriginal people, or by farmers who saw the mission as a way of getting Aboriginal people off the land thus leaving it free for Europeans.¹⁶ Such a view neither allows for Narungga agency, nor recognizes that at the time the mission was established, Yorke Peninsula had been occupied by pastoralists for nearly twenty years. The majority of Europeans who actively petitioned the government for an Aboriginal reserve were not interested in farming – they were Church ministers, medical men, or held high positions in the mining company. When the government began selling land in the Point Pearce area six years after the mission was established, a deputation of influential citizens lobbied the Crown Lands Commissioner to drastically increase the size of the mission from 8 to 28 square miles. They presented a memorial 'signed by 571 residents on Yorke's Peninsula,...[that] might have been signed by thousands instead of hundreds if time had permitted...as the subject was one which commanded the sympathy of all classes of the community'.¹⁷ It was stated that 'while the sale of the old hunting grounds yielded a considerable revenue to the Government, it deprived the natives of the right to hunt for

¹⁴ Kühn in the *Chronicle* 10 May 1879, 12E.

¹⁵ *Register*, 2 September 1874, 5A.

¹⁶ See for example Kartinyeri, p. 12.

¹⁷ *Register*, 2 September 1874, 5A.

game.¹⁸ Petitions were made at other times to establish fishing reserves and other ‘native reserves’. In 1873, Mr Rogers suggested to the Estimates Committee:

there should be more reserves along the coasts for the purposes of fishing. There were such representations made by the natives of Yorke’s Peninsula when the surveyors were there...¹⁹

The parliamentarians recognized and respected Narungga agency; one Committee Member felt it would be wise for the Narungga to send ‘one or two representatives to the House...he knew they had exercised the franchise (hear hear)’.²⁰ Contrary to current understandings, the records indicate the settlers were not only sympathetic to the Narunggas’ situation, but that they actively campaigned with and on behalf of the Narungga.

Farmers employed Aboriginal men and women, but, rather than receiving a ‘small wage’,²¹ as Kartinyeri suggests, it seems that on Yorke Peninsula it was necessary to pay Aboriginal people a fair wage to retain their services. In 1870 Kühn stated ‘the blacks shorn the sheep to my great satisfaction and I gave them the same wages as a white man gets’.²² In 1875, thirty Narungga people were in the bush hunting for kangaroo skins. Kühn noted:

Kangaroo skins fetch a high price, some whites offer all sorts of things to get the blacks as their assistants. When we saw that this would bring income for the mission, we gave the highest price for the skins so that it covered our costs even if we did lose a few pounds.²³

The 1873 deputation ‘desired to help [the natives] to a much greater extent by offering a fair rate of wages for their labour’.²⁴

A close analysis of the records enables us to clear up many misconceptions. Kühn’s letters, for instance, tell us exactly who the foundation residents were.²⁵ The records also disprove

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Register*, 13 November 1873, 7A.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See Kartinyeri, p. 12.

²² Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 21 February 1870.

²³ Ibid., 27 February 1875.

²⁴ *Register*, 2 September 1874, 5A.

²⁵ For example, Doris Graham skips a generation when she says the first people to walk down from Wallaroo and camp at Point Pearce were ‘Cecil’s grandfather, Alfred Hughes, and my father, Joe Edwards...there were also Eddie and Walter Sansbury’ in Graham and Graham, p. 15. Alfred Hughes was born one year after the mission was established in 1869, Joe Edwards was the son of Matilda (King Tommy’s daughter) and Matilda was a child when the mission was established, and Edward and Walter Sansbury were born in the late 1870s, see Kartinyeri, pp. 195, 175, 270 and Kühn’s letters to Reichel re Matilda. It was these people’s *parents and grandparents* who walked down from Wallaroo with Kühn.

the widespread understanding that ‘the few remaining Narungga people’ were ‘sent’ to the mission in 1868.²⁶ Rather than the Narungga population dropping to ‘less than one hundred in a few localized communities’ by the ‘mid 1860s’, a 1866 census showed 252 ‘blacks’ were living in the Moonta, Wallaroo and Kadina area alone.²⁷ Of the hundreds of Narungga people on the Peninsula in the nineteenth century, only a small proportion chose to reside permanently at Point Pearce.

An analysis of the historic records reveals the complexities and contradictions of Narungga and European motives, beliefs, and actions. The Aboriginal people living on Yorke Peninsula in the 1860s and 70s were not helpless victims dependent upon the mercy of settlers or the Government, forced onto the mission against their will, coerced into a life they did not wish to live. Instead, the Narungga were active agents, adapting to new circumstances, using the missionary and the mission to their advantage as far as they were able. If satisfied with the unfolding events, Narungga people showed their support for Kühn by their presence (or that of their children) at the mission. If Kühn and his practices and beliefs were not satisfactory, the Narungga made their displeasure known by moving away from, and taking their children away from, the mission. Although actively involved in moves to establish the mission, Narungga support for the enterprise varied over the years and amongst individuals.

the arrival of farmers and miners

In order to understand the actions of the Narungga between 1860-1880, it is necessary to briefly outline European settlement patterns which interfered with the lives of Narungga people who inhabited the well populated, ‘urban’ north and the sparsely populated, isolated south. When farmers and miners flocked to Yorke Peninsula in the 1860s and 70s the Narungga were, once again, forced to adapt to new circumstances. During the pastoral years, the Narungga were (to a large extent) able to live independently and maintain their connection to country. While the European population remained minimal, and the land remained uncleared and unfenced, the Narungga could live a largely traditional lifestyle. However, the discovery of copper on at *Wadla-Waru* (Wallaroo) in 1859 and *Moonta*

²⁶ Wanganeen, p. 1.

²⁷ *Register*, 3 January 1866, 3E.

Moonterra (Moonta) in 1861 (on the run leased by Walter Watson Hughes), led to a huge influx of Europeans to northern Yorke Peninsula.²⁸ In March 1866, a local resident reflected:

Five years ago all this region...was occupied only by the Aborigines and a few [white] shepherds with their flocks. But copper mines were then discovered...since then the population has rapidly increased to 10,000 people occupying three... little towns with their churches, banks and government buildings...²⁹

By 1867 the mining towns of Kadina, Moonta and Wallaroo were the largest outside Adelaide.³⁰ In the south, 'wheat farms began replacing sheep stations' in 1869, and by 1879 'all of Yorke Peninsula had been surveyed and sold for agricultural settlement'.³¹ Farmers took up the open, sheoak country in preference to the dense mallee country as sheoaks signalled good soil and were easier to clear.³² As the land was gradually cleared and fenced, the Narungga of northern and southern Yorke Peninsula were increasingly alienated from their country and less able to live autonomously.

The discovery of copper meant circumstances differed dramatically between Narungga of the south and those of the north. In the south, vast areas of scrub remained undisturbed well into the twentieth century.³³ The low population meant individuals of both groups were known to the other. Initially the Narungga were employed on the large stations as shepherds and station hands, but as the land was subdivided and sold for farming they found seasonal work shearing and harvesting. Employment opportunities were greater in the north, and large numbers of Narungga (and Aboriginal people from neighbouring groups) congregated in the three mining towns. At the commencement of the mines the Narungga made their winter camps close to the workings³⁴ and 'if any of [the blacks] were in immediate want, they could always obtain food, water and the usual allowance of raiment, with the proviso that they should work for it'.³⁵ The Narungga worked 'well and cheerfully and...were

²⁸ Ken Preiss and Pamela Oborn, *The Torrens Park Estate*, the authors, Stoneyfell, 1991, pp. 45-6.

²⁹ Letter from William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 20 March 1866.

³⁰ Preiss and Oborn, p. 46.

³¹ Alan Jones, *Port Vincent: Shipping Port to Pleasure Resort*, Port Vincent Progress Association, Port Vincent, 1994, p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³³ Personal correspondence with Colin Goldsworthy, who describes Yorke Peninsula today as a 'lunar landscape' compared with the vegetation covering the Peninsula in the first half of the twentieth century.

³⁴ Keith Bailey, *Copper City Chronicle: a History of Kadina*, the author, Kadina, 1990, p. 48.

³⁵ Kadina Correspondent, 8 February 1866, in the *Wallaroo Times*, 10 February 1866, 3C.

remunerated accordingly'.³⁶ By the mid 1860s, Europeans found 'a number' of 'robust and obliging'.³⁷ Aboriginal people employed in the mines and shearing sheds, and as bullock drivers, domestic helpers and general servants. The Narungga frequently moved between Wallaroo, Kadina and Moonta.³⁸ The Tipara Springs (12 miles from Moonta) were 'one inducement' and 'the food given by the white population' was another.³⁹ Narungga people told Moonta Mines resident Mary Meredith 'the tribes of the Hummocks, all parts of the Peninsula, and even from the Light, resort to the Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta districts periodically'; 'at Christmas they congregate in considerable numbers, and two or three times a year besides'.⁴⁰

The Narungga incorporated the changed circumstances into established movement and subsistence patterns. In 1866, Kühn noted the Narungga 'either go hunting or go to work to earn their living'.⁴¹ They adapted traditional skills for the new market economy and went 'into the bush to make possum skin coats to sell and for their own use'.⁴² However, the presence of large numbers of Europeans and their stock interfered significantly with traditional hunting, fishing and gathering practices. Some Europeans were aware that:

clearing such large tracts of country of all the native trees, to supply the mines and the general population of the district with firewood, has to a very serious extent lessened the supply of wild animals on which the natives have hitherto depended for subsistence.⁴³

Other newcomers no doubt shared Kühn's belief 'it was their laziness' that made 'the blacks complain constantly of hunger'.⁴⁴ Initially, Kühn 'compelled them to go out hunting', but after going hunting with some men and 'returning empty handed', Kühn was relieved to receive government rations for distribution.⁴⁵

³⁶ *Wallaroo Times*, 10 February 1866, 3C.

³⁷ Bailey, p. 48.

³⁸ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

³⁹ *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁴⁰ Mary Meredith, letter to the Editor, 'A native mission on Yorke's Peninsula', *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁴¹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16 June 1866.

⁴³ Mary Meredith, 'Native institution on Yorke's Peninsula', *Register*, 29 January 1866, 3E.

⁴⁴ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 June 1866.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Cornish and Welsh miners flocked to the mines, bringing with them their own customs and beliefs. These were pious, practical people in whom the Protestant work ethic was deeply entrenched.⁴⁶ They disliked what they perceived as immorality and felt ‘deeply grieved’ contemplating the ‘physical and moral degradation and misery’ of local Aboriginal people.⁴⁷ Although moves to ‘improve’ the ‘social and moral’ condition of ‘the native inhabitants’ began in mid 1865, it was not until January 1866 that events were set in motion that would eventually lead to the establishment of the mission at Point Pearce in 1868.

moves to establish a ‘mission house or school’

Many individuals played important roles in moves to establish a ‘mission house or school’ on Yorke Peninsula, but perhaps King Tommy and Julius Kühn best represent the views of their respective cultural groups, amongst whom they were widely supported. King Tommy held much influence over his people, and was apparently ‘loved by all the natives both young and old’.⁴⁸ This ‘fine old man’ was held in high regard by Europeans who described him as ‘benevolent’, ‘firm’, ‘morally upright’, ‘intelligent’ and ‘kind’.⁴⁹ Mary Meredith knew ‘personally many of the natives of Yorke’s Peninsula’ and had had contact with ‘most of them’.⁵⁰ She observed ‘order and discipline’ amongst the Narungga:

all the tribes submit to one Chief, generally known as King Tom...He orders the movements of the tribes, and his word is never disputed. An entire tribe, or a few men, are ordered to go to such a part of the Peninsula, to stay there a fixed time, and then move farther off or return, and the order is obeyed to the letter, even to the exact spot mentioned for the encampment. No black can engage to work for a white man for any lengthened period without permission; and if the king orders him to leave, he does so even when he wishes to remain...nothing could be done without first gaining the goodwill of the chief.⁵¹

This description of a strictly regulated life is consistent with oral histories of Narungga Elders recorded in the 1960s, and anthropological research conducted on other Aboriginal

⁴⁶ The predominant Churches were Congregationalist, Presbyterian and Baptist, *Register*, 20 January 1868, 2G. By 1881 ‘80% of the entire population of Northern Yorke Peninsula...were members of the three branches of Methodism’, in Roslyn Patterson, ‘The Cornish Heritage on Northern Yorke Peninsula’, in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 21, 1993, p. 139.

⁴⁷ William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 20 March 1866.

⁴⁸ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 19 November 1886, 2G.

⁴⁹ *Register*, 31 December 1874, 7B, 10 January 1866, 2F, and *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 19 November 1886, 2G.

⁵⁰ *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

groups. Movement patterns, gatherings, ceremonies, and marriages were carefully planned and controlled – the timing, the place and the participants were meticulously worked out well in advance.⁵² Although each group or ‘clan’ was an autonomous unit, instructions given by acknowledged Elders were respected and heeded.

On 3 January 1866, an ‘Aboriginal Census’ appeared in an Adelaide newspaper. This document, authored by ‘an intelligent blackfellow’, is unique in that it was thought to be ‘the first effort of a native to draw up a census of his own race’.⁵³ ‘A desire among the people for a teacher’ led this man to ‘spontaneously’ record the numbers of Narungga people in the Kadina-Moonta-Wallaroo area.⁵⁴ Since 1864, the Narungga had indicated they would like to have their children ‘taught to read’.⁵⁵ By 1865, a number of Narungga believed a teacher was coming to teach their people, and they were ‘very glad’.⁵⁶ Europeans who supported this idea had been mentioning to ‘influential men’ the need for a school or depot for the Narungga, but ‘no one took sufficient interest...to endeavour to overcome any little difficulties’.⁵⁷ One man requested statistics ‘as to the number of blacks who inhabited the peninsula, their principal hunting grounds, chief places of resort’, but although supplied with the information, no action was forthcoming.⁵⁸ It seems the ‘intelligent black’ took matters into his own hands. King Tommy also firmly supported the idea of a school – since 1865 he had ‘willingly and decisively’ informed Meredith that ‘if a school were built, he would let his child go...and he would use his influence amongst his people’.⁵⁹

The ‘Aboriginal Census’ was interpreted by sympathetic Europeans as ‘a cry’ from the Narungga to “come over and help us”.⁶⁰ Moravian missionary Julius Kühn felt impelled to travel to Yorke Peninsula.⁶¹ The thirty-two year old German had been detained in Adelaide

⁵² Transcripts of Tim Hughes and Gladys Elphick interviews with Betty Fisher, in particular ‘Second discussion with Tim Hughes’, p. 3, Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association (NAPA) archives, Moonta.

⁵³ ‘Aboriginal Census’, *Register*, 3 January 1866, 3E.

⁵⁴ It is unclear in the article whether Cox or Wilson made this comment. *Register*, 3 January 1866, 3E.

⁵⁵ *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁵⁶ *Register*, 3 January 1866, 3E.

⁵⁷ *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Register*, 3 January 1866, 3E.

⁶¹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

where he and three fellow missionaries were waiting for the 1865-6 drought to break. They were heading to Cooper's Creek in South Australia's far north to establish a mission station. Kühn arrived in Kadina on 3 February⁶² and was warmly welcomed by both the Narungga and Europeans. Kühn was a hardworking, sincere man 'of warm sympathies and of a self-sacrificing spirit'.⁶³ His 'earnestness and simplicity'⁶⁴ touched local residents who declared 'it would be impossible to say how highly he is estimated by all who know him'.⁶⁵ Kühn was extremely religious but 'his zeal [was] tempered with judgement, and guided with discretion'.⁶⁶ Kühn did not believe himself superior to the Narungga because of his race. He was described as 'eminently fitted' for missionary work due to his ability, the genuine kindness of his disposition, his piety, and his unbounded faith in the ultimate success of the undertaking.⁶⁷

The publication of the 'Aboriginal Census' stirred public and government interest in the establishment of a 'mission house or school'. Sub-Protector Buttfield visited Yorke Peninsula to 'enquire into the condition of the Aborigines', and 'ascertain the most eligible site for the contemplated home'.⁶⁸ Four public meetings, 'attended by all the denominations of Christians in the place',⁶⁹ were held to 'consider how to best meet the advances which the government are making to elevate the condition of the aborigines'.⁷⁰ Kühn and 'about 50 aborigines'⁷¹ attended the first meeting in Wallaroo on 7 February 1866, at which it was resolved a 'Committee should be formed to consolidate with committees in the other townships'⁷² to 'maintain and promote' the 'present movement for the promotion of the

⁶² Walder to Reichel, Kadina, 20 February 1866.

⁶³ *Register*, 11 January 1866, 2D.

⁶⁴ *Wallaroo Times*, 31 August 1867, 2AB.

⁶⁵ *Register*, 12 September 1867, 2G.

⁶⁶ *Wallaroo Times*, 31 August 1867, 2AB.

⁶⁷ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser (Supplement)*, 10 November 1876, 1A. NB This was taken from an extract describing Kühn and his wife.

⁶⁸ Buttfield to the Protector, Blinman, 5 July 1866, GRG 52/1/1866/115. Buttfield made an extensive tour of Yorke Peninsula from late January-early February 1866.

⁶⁹ Wilson to Reichel, 20 March 1866.

⁷⁰ *Wallaroo Times*, 7 February 1866, 2C.

⁷¹ *Register*, 12 February 1866, 2F.

⁷² *Wallaroo Times*, 10 February 1866, 3C.

welfare of the aborigines' and 'apply to Government for a reserve of 400 acres, and for a grant of the money requisite for the necessary buildings'.⁷³

This genuine concern from all sections of society must have heartened the Narungga and Kühn. Mining families warmly supported the idea of 'a home where the [Aboriginal] children may be received and brought up as Christians', and 'monthly or weekly collections of small sums among the miners' quickly became a reality.⁷⁴ Many members of the wealthier classes gave their wholehearted endorsement. A public appeal made 'on behalf of the Yorke's Peninsula Aborigines'⁷⁵ received 'much sympathy and kindly feeling' and 'many offers of assistance'.⁷⁶ The 'Executive Committee of the Yorke's Peninsula Native Mission' was comprised of four Church Ministers, two Doctors, one Chemist, one Member of Parliament, two Justices of the Peace, (one of whom, Captain Duncan, was the brother-in-law of Walter Watson Hughes, the principal shareholder in the mining company). The Committee chairman was Captain Hancock, Captain of the Moonta Mines.⁷⁷

Help and assistance were not hypothetically preached from a distance. From January 1866 onwards, northern Peninsula residents organized and participated in regular Committee meetings and occasional fund raisers. Congregational, Presbyterian and Baptist Ministers preached sermons encouraging their parishioners to support the mission. Public letters were written, and petitions for land and funds were regularly sent to the government. Monetary subscriptions and donations were collected. Captain Duncan, 'one of the best friends of the mission', lent various houses and his shearing shed for the school and accommodation, and supplied Kühn's 'midday meal free'.⁷⁸ Other people gave food and animals such as goats, hens, and chickens⁷⁹ while the 'the local policeman supplie[d] masses of wood'.⁸⁰ Women from McLaren Vale, Angaston, Gawler, Adelaide, Moonta, Kadina and Wallaroo met once a

⁷³ *Register*, 12 February 1866, 2F.

⁷⁴ Mary Meredith, Moonta Mine, 5 January 1866, in *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁷⁵ See *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F, and 11 January 1866, 2D.

⁷⁶ *Register*, 29 January 1866, 3E.

⁷⁷ GN Birks, Secretary, Yorke's Peninsula Native Mission to E.B. Scott, Acting Protector of Aborigines, Kadina, 17 August 1867, GRG 52/1/1867/345.

⁷⁸ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, September 1866, and 23 February 1867, and *Register*, 23 October 1867, 3A.

⁷⁹ Kühn to Reichel, 16 June 1867 [1868], 23 February 1867, 24 July 1867.

⁸⁰ Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866.

month to make clothes for the Narungga.⁸¹ In August 1867, a concert ‘in aid of the...Native Mission’ was held in Kadina.⁸² This was ‘the largest gathering of anything of the sort that has taken place on the Peninsula’, the hall was so crowded, many people were ‘not able to gain admission’.⁸³ During the concert, the singing of ‘some fifteen aboriginal children’ was ‘heartily appreciated’ and an enthusiastic encore demanded.⁸⁴ When public support was failing, ‘friends...bestirred themselves’ and arranged ‘large and enthusiastic’ meetings at which substantial collections – ‘far better than is usually the case’ – were made.⁸⁵ At one such gathering, witnesses ‘never on any occasion saw so large a meeting on the Peninsula... interest was stirred in many hearts which before had felt none what-ever for the poor Aborigines’.⁸⁶ Narungga people were present at these meetings.⁸⁷

Advocates for the mission were unflinchingly critical of the inaction and tardiness of the government and others who handsomely profited from the takeover of Narungga land. In February 1866, Wilson ‘urged in forcible terms the claims of the aborigines upon their white brethren’.⁸⁸ Meredith pointed out the Aboriginal people were ‘the real owners of the land’⁸⁹ and the immorality of Europeans enriching themselves ‘with the produce of the land or its mineral wealth’ while leaving ‘the original possessors untaught and uncared for’.⁹⁰ The Editor of the *Register* referred to the Narungga as ‘the poor creatures whose lands we have taken possession of’.⁹¹ Another contributor pointed out the hypocrisy of many ‘whose interest in the welfare of the natives has not yet gone beyond a mere feeling of sorrow and a wish that something would be done for them’, adding that such people should ‘set aside indifference and love of ease, and...do simply what the opportunity affords’.⁹² This advocacy was enduring – in 1868 a newspaper article described how ‘the Peninsula natives

⁸¹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 23 November 1866.

⁸² *Wallaroo Times*, 24 August 1867, 4BC.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 August 1867, 2AB.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5CD.

⁸⁸ *Register*, 12 February 1866, 2F.

⁸⁹ *Register*, 29 January 1866, 3E.

⁹⁰ *Register*, 10 January 1866, 2F.

⁹¹ *Register*, 11 January 1866, 2E.

⁹² *Register*, 19 February 1866, 2H.

are treated very shabbily by the Government'.⁹³ The 1874 deputation of Peninsula residents argued the Government should give the Narungga 'some portion of the land which was once their own'.⁹⁴

the rapport between the Narungga and Kühn

This strong, cross-sectional community support would not have lasted were it not for the rapport which quickly developed between Kühn and the Narungga which is crucial to understanding the successful establishment of the mission. On his first day of teaching in February 1866, Kühn 'had about 30 pupils'.⁹⁵ This demonstrates Narungga eagerness to learn rather than any affiliation with Kühn, but over the next few months increasing numbers of Narungga regularly spent time with Kühn. In March, 'about 60 of the blacks went to Wallaroo to go fishing'.⁹⁶ Kühn visited them 'every second day to conduct school' to which 'they came willingly' and asked Kühn 'to come as often as [he] could'.⁹⁷ From February to May 1866, Kühn reported he had '40-50 blacks around me...some have been coming to school twice a day, I am hardly able to keep track of them all'.⁹⁸ The students were 'coming to school of their own accord',⁹⁹ they were attentive and seemed 'keen to learn'.¹⁰⁰ If the Narungga objected to Kühn, his methods or his subjects, they would have avoided him. Instead, their actions demonstrate Kühn's acceptance and endorsement.

Between 1866-7, Kühn taught the Narungga at various locations¹⁰¹ (which changed as needs and funds dictated). These temporary schools were an interim measure while the Committee waited for the government to grant land and funds and decided upon a suitable site for the mission. Three months after Kühn began teaching, Wilson wrote:

⁹³ *Register*, 9 June 1868, 2E.

⁹⁴ *Register*, 2 September 1874, 5A.

⁹⁵ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866.

⁹⁹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 June 1866.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 March 1866.

¹⁰¹ Kühn taught in a stable and then a rented house in Kadina (Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866), and a rent-free cottage and woolshed in the Wallaroo area (Kühn to Reichel, September, 1866, and Kühn to Reichel, Goodutterra, 18 November 1867).

¹⁰¹ *Wallaroo Times*, 7 February 1866, 2C.

Mr Kuhn has a far greater number attending School and under Christian influence than we see reported as attending instruction at Australian Aboriginal Mission Stations.¹⁰²

The unqualified success of the school(s) – and ultimately Kühn’s rapport with the Narungga – encouraged concerned parties not only to continue petitioning the government for permanent site for a mission house, but to increase the scale and scope of their unformulated plans.

Prior to Kühn’s arrival, local residents were unclear how to ‘best meet’ the government’s advances ‘to elevate the condition of the aborigines’.¹⁰³ Meredith envisaged ‘a Home’ for the children – either a ‘mission house or school’ – run by a schoolmaster and matron. She modestly proposed ‘two large rooms for school and general use’, one dormitory for boys and aged men, another dormitory for girls, infants and aged women, plus a kitchen, cellar and tank.¹⁰⁴ A reporter for the *Wallaroo Times* imagined a ‘home or depot for the natives...where the children will be educated...and the adult natives may receive food and clothing when necessary’.¹⁰⁵ Initially ‘a reserve of 400 acres’ was perceived as adequate,¹⁰⁶ but by January 1867, the Committee were applying for 8 square miles (5120 acres)¹⁰⁷ and envisioning an agricultural community which would become self supporting. In September 1867 Meredith publicly appealed for funds to supplement the government’s increasingly inadequate provision of £200 towards the erection of the buildings, as ‘a much larger sum’ was now required.¹⁰⁸ By 1874, citizens were petitioning the government for ‘an additional area of 20 square miles’.¹⁰⁹

motivations for supporting a mission station

Although motivated by different reasons, both the Narungga and Europeans fully supported the establishment of a mission. Many settlers were genuinely concerned about the material well being of the Narungga. But underlying such concerns was a firm belief in the superiority

¹⁰² William Wilson to Mr Morris, The Manse, Kadina, South Australia, 4 May 1866, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰³ *Wallaroo Times*, 7 February 1866, 2C.

¹⁰⁴ *Register*, 29 January 1866, 3E.

¹⁰⁵ *Wallaroo Times*, 7 February 1866, 2D.

¹⁰⁶ *Register*, 12 February 1866, 2F.

¹⁰⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867].

¹⁰⁸ *Register*, 12 September 1867, 2G.

¹⁰⁹ *Register*, 2 September 1874, 5A.

of Europeans beliefs and life-styles, and a desire to incorporate the Narungga into the settlers' value systems. European mission advocates displayed paternal and condescending attitudes and espoused hierarchical understandings of 'race':

The old have their habits confirmed, and they are too firmly wedded to them to change. But it is different with the young. Their minds are more plastic, and would be more susceptible to impressions. Many of these poor children are half-castes, and there is something sad in the thought that children possessing our blood and with our blood something of the vigour and quickness of our race, should be doomed to such a life as the aborigines of this land live. With some small amount of education they might be rescued from the wurley and be made decent members of our society.¹¹⁰

Sub-Protector Buttfield praised Peninsula residents for 'devising a means' whereby 'the Aboriginal including half caste children may be snatched from a state of growing depredation', 'rescued' from 'a wurley life', and offered 'protection and improvement'.¹¹¹ Another 'Friend of the Aborigines' noted Aboriginal people cannot be kept from evil; 'it is in his own nature and he meets with it in its worst forms when wandering about in his own wilds'.¹¹² Sympathetic people recognized 'the native race has cruelly suffered from intercourse with the white race' and felt morally upright newcomers 'would raise him to a higher level instead of degrading him to a lower level than the one he now stands on'.¹¹³ Rarely expressed was the opinion that the Narungga 'have their own ideas of good and evil in much the same manner as any other nation or sect; so why not allow them to retain those feelings with out interference?'.¹¹⁴

King Tommy and other Narungga had a different line of reasoning. The Narungga no doubt recognised literacy as a way of securing a place in the dominant society. School attendance was not compulsory on Yorke Peninsula until 1877¹¹⁵ and Narungga children taught by Kühn were better educated than many mining and farming children. Rather than envisaging the mission as a primarily Christian establishment at which they were subjugated inmates, the

¹¹⁰ *Register*, 11 January 1866, 2D.

¹¹¹ Buttfield, GRG 52/1/1866/115.

¹¹² *Register*, 19 February 1866, 2H.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Wallaroo Times*, 10 February 1866, 3C.

¹¹⁵ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 30 November 1877, 2D.

Narungga imagined and supported the idea of their own township in which Europeans provided aid and support:

The King (so called) of the Moonta blacks, however, and a number of his people have said...they will go...where we give them a township (as they speak) and take care of the helpless old people and the helpless young, and care for the sick'.¹¹⁶

Kühn felt the Narungga 'expect to have a much easier life' once the plans for the proposed station are realized.¹¹⁷ The Narungga wanted a place they could receive food, clothing and shelter if needed, and where their children could receive a western education. They did not see this as incompatible with their own beliefs and customs.

Narungga acceptance of Kühn

Within weeks of his arrival, Kühn was said to have a 'powerful personal influence over our blacks'.¹¹⁸ Why did Kühn have such an influence, and what was the extent of his influence? To understand the reasons behind Kühn's popularity we need to examine Kühn's personality and actions from a Narungga viewpoint. If we take King Tommy as representative of the wider Narungga population, the Narungga had 'willingly and decisively' approved of the idea of their children learning to read and write, and desired their own township where Europeans would take care of the sick, and 'helpless' old and young.¹¹⁹ The arrival of Kühn, who immediately began serving the Narungga, must have been gratifying. Kühn's presence and actions indicated Narungga needs and requests were being taken seriously.

Kühn was not an illiterate member of the working classes. The Narungga would have recognised him as a well educated, widely respected man. Kühn generously and selflessly shared his knowledge with the Narungga. Members of both cultural groups were particularly pleased with the success Kühn had in teaching the Narungga to sing hymns. Kühn saw singing hymns as a way of praising God, whereas Narungga saw singing as entertainment, a way of sharing and passing on knowledge and history. The Narungga must have viewed the patience and effort Kühn put into teaching them how to read, write and sing hymns as Kühn welcoming and accepting them as equals into his culture and system of beliefs.

¹¹⁶ *Register*, 27 February 1866, 2H.

¹¹⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

¹¹⁸ William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 20 March 1866.

¹¹⁹ *Register*, 27 February 1866, 2H.

The Narungga also appreciated Kühn's efforts to learn their language. Within weeks of his arrival on the Peninsula, Kühn had 'a collection of some 300 words' which he could 'make use of...which they find very funny'.¹²⁰ When Kühn visited the Narungga in their wurleys, he moved from 'camp to camp' and used their language 'as much as possible'.¹²¹ On his first visit to Point Pearce (while looking for potential mission sites), Kühn met with people who were 'very pleased' he 'was in a position to use their language'.¹²² Arriving at one camp, Kühn 'heard the words bomamangin binderie (a white man is coming)'.¹²³ After answering 'in their language', 'they instantly became friendly'.¹²⁴

Kühn was instrumental in alleviating the Narunggas' physical needs. Between February-June 1866, Kühn provided 'the midday meal for the children'¹²⁵ (which no doubt provided a major incentive for attending school). By mid-June 1866, Kühn received authorization to distribute government rations to children and adults (Kühn recognised this would be 'a great advantage for our mission' as it would 'keep the blacks together here').¹²⁶ Kühn passed on his knowledge of gardening to the Narungga, and their joint efforts enabled the Narungga to have a regular supply of vegetables. Wherever possible, Kühn and his pupils established vegetable gardens. King Tommy was impressed with 'lettuce, radishes, cauliflower, cabbage, [], carrots, peas, melons etc' he saw at a temporary mission school near Wallaroo in 1867.¹²⁷ Kühn was 'particularly pleased that the adults take such an interest in the garden'.¹²⁸ By October 1870, the vegetable garden at Point Pearce 'supplied everyone at the Station with all sorts of vegetables'.¹²⁹ In 1873 the 'many different sorts of vegetables' in the garden enabled the children 'to fetch as much as they wanted each day'.¹³⁰

¹²⁰ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866.

¹²¹ Ibid., 22 November 1866.

¹²² Ibid., 16 January [1867].

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866.

¹²⁶ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 June 1866. The rations probably consisted of 'blankets, flour, tea, sugar, fish-hooks and lines', see *Wallaroo Times*, 7 February 1866, 2D.

¹²⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 27 May 1867.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Boorkooyanna, 4 October 1870.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 6 November 1872.

Kühn was instrumental in providing good quality clothing for the Narungga and he ensured Narungga women and girls learnt to sew. Within weeks of his arrival Kühn formed a 'Ladies Committee' to 'take care of the clothes for the native children'.¹³¹ One Committee member successfully 'wrote to a merchant asking for material for dresses for the black women'; for the men Kühn had 'a suit-case full of clothes'.¹³² Women in various townships made clothing for the Narungga which Kühn distributed.¹³³ In April 1867, the 'women and girls [were having] a weekly sewing lesson from Mrs Wilson'¹³⁴ but by November Mrs Wilson's supervision was 'largely unnecessary'.¹³⁵ At Point Pearce, women made 'their own dresses and those for the children',¹³⁶ and shirts which they sold in the Point Pearce shop – all were well made and of good quality.¹³⁷ Although Kühn wanted the Narungga to be warm, he was also motivated by a desire to eliminate Aboriginal nudity. Many Europeans viewed nakedness as immoral and signaling a lack of civilization. But we should not necessarily assume the Narungga were coerced into wearing clothes against their will. Kühn found:

The black women are all very vain, a black woman can work hard all day to get a crinoline, I wish [crinolines] had never come to Australia...I wish I could prevent it but it is impossible.¹³⁸

Some Narungga fully embraced English fashions which were a visible symbol of status. In 1879, a frequent visitor to Point Pearce noted 'the air of dandyism adopted by some [natives] who, with their spotless white shirt-front and fashionably cut clothing, could vie with their white brethren in their faultless get up'.¹³⁹

The Narungga must have appreciated the physical effort Kühn put into his labours. During his early years on the Peninsula Kühn had a gruelling work load. He taught school in the morning and afternoon, distributed rations, babysat for weeks at a time while parents went off hunting, and traipsed for miles to visit the Narungga in their wurleys. Kühn's letters convey his physical and mental exhaustion during this time:

¹³¹ Ibid., Kadina, 16 June 1866.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 23 November 1866.

¹³⁴ Ibid., Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 18 November 1867.

¹³⁶ *Yorke's Peninsula Advertiser (Supplement)*, 10 November 1876, 1B.

¹³⁷ *Register*, 5 June 1879, 7B, also Heinrich, p. 59.

¹³⁸ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 22 November 1866.

¹³⁹ *Register*, 5 June 1879, 7B.

I am so overloaded I don't know where to start and where to finish. I start school at 9.30 in the morning and in the afternoon from 2-5, often with 2 classes, in the evening I visit the others in the wurleys and hold an assembly there, and usually get back home at 9 o'clock'.¹⁴⁰ When the Narungga 'changed the location of their wurleys', Kühn had to walk 3-4 miles to visit them 'which is very tiring'.¹⁴¹ Kühn did not 'know what to do first, several people could be busy'.¹⁴²

I am alone in all I do and often have to do this or that which absolutely has to be attended to, the visits to the camps take up a great part of my time, as well as the distribution of the rations, I am happy to do the work but frankly working in this heat from 6 in the morning until 11 at night with all the preparations for school and the assemblies, there is often a sigh to the Lord on my lips...¹⁴³

Kühn acted as a Protector for the women who complained to him that when their men were away, some miners and workers of 'low morals' 'come and offer them bread, brandy or money to dishonour them'. The women 'often ask me to take these white fellows with me into town...for this reason I go to the camp each evening at about 7 or 8 o'clock'.¹⁴⁴

The Narungga no doubt recognised Kühn's presence was crucial to the proposed mission becoming a reality. Local residents argued 'were he to leave us at this crisis we know of no one who could come and carry on his work'¹⁴⁵ and 'if this good work be not vigorously followed up...so the blacks may have sensible evidence of our good intentions, all the interest and benefit produced by Mr Kühn's labours are in danger of being lost'.¹⁴⁶ Kühn felt 'if this cause was abandoned the people would not try it a second time'.¹⁴⁷ Kühn played an important role in helping to secure the land at Point Pearce (which Kühn consistently referred to by its Narungga name 'Boorkooyanna').¹⁴⁸ The decision to site the mission at Boorkooyanna proves the Narungga were vocal about their requirements and actively

¹⁴⁰ Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 22 November 1866

¹⁴³ Ibid., 23 February 1867.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 21 March 1866.

¹⁴⁵ William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 20 March 1866.

¹⁴⁶ *Register*, 27 February 1866, 2H.

¹⁴⁷ Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866.

¹⁴⁸ According to Gillen, 'Boorkooyanna' translates as 'oil bush plain'. Francis Gillen, *Anthropology Notes*, Volume 5, Barr-Smith Library, SR 09 G47, p. 706.

involved in the process. It also shows a sensitivity and awareness on behalf of the Europeans who were well aware:

the Home must be on a spot where they most congregate. To build at a place they only visit once a year for mullet fishing or any other purpose would...cause the failure of the mission. The blacks have their own ways, their favourite haunts, and their own ways of resorting to them, and we must meet them...¹⁴⁹

Committee members realized the site must have an adequate supply of permanent water, good soil in order that the land might be cultivated, 'scrub that will afford shelter for the tribes when in the neighbourhood', and should be near the sea to enable the Narungga to fish.¹⁵⁰ Initially the Committee felt the mission should be 'within reach of those who choose to form themselves into a committee for visiting the Institution regularly',¹⁵¹ but following Kühn's arrival on the Peninsula the Committee became 'on conscientious grounds decidedly opposed to the placing of the Mission Station within easy walking distance of any of the towns or any place where intoxicating drinks are sold'.¹⁵² The initial suggestion of Port Hughes (only three miles from Moonta) did not meet the Committees requirements of the minimum distance of ten miles believed necessary to protect the Narungga from 'the danger' of the towns.¹⁵³ Tipara Springs, thirteen miles from Moonta and Kadina, was subsequently suggested but it became known 'the blacks from about Moonta will not go to reside [at Tipara],' and 'they do not like Tipara very well because a number of their people have died there'.¹⁵⁴

In the winter of 1866, 'a surveyor travelled all over the island' examining potential mission sites. By September, Protector Walker 'considered it best if Point Pearce were named as mission station'.¹⁵⁵ On his first visit to the area, Kühn found:

¹⁴⁹ *Register*, 19 February 1866, 2H.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, and 27 February 1866, 2H.

¹⁵¹ *Register*, 19 February 1866, 2H.

¹⁵² *Register*, 27 February 1866, 2H. The controversy of whether to separate the Narungga from the 'white' population is interesting. From an uninformed twenty-first century perspective it may appear a racist act of forced segregation, but contrarily, the Committee were not motivated by a desire to keep 'pure' whites from 'inferior' Aboriginal people, but the opposite, ie to keep immoral whites from 'innocent' Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, although Narungga were present during (at least one of) the meetings, no Narungga opinions are recorded.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, September 1866.

good land and very good water, there is a well which has water year in and year out...the Reserve is by the sea, a lot of grass for the stock, timber and stone for building, also fish and Kangaroos, wallabies, wombat, possum...¹⁵⁶

The Committee members were originally looking closer to the towns (so 'friends' could readily visit) but Point Pearce was forty miles south of the mining towns. The land around Point Pearce had not yet been surveyed and was leased by Samuel Rogers who did not relinquish his lease happily or readily. It is likely the Narungga directed the surveyor, Kühn and Committee members' attention to this site which was a traditional meeting area, or, in Kühn's words, was 'located where the local worker can visit the blacks in the south and in the north, although they are two different tribes they are friendly towards one another'.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps most importantly of all from a Narungga perspective (but unbeknownst to Kühn), this area contained numerous, vital sacred sites. In the 1960s, Narungga Elder Tim Hughes said the area around Point Pearce was:

a most sacred part of our land, that part is the most important...the biggest part, and most special. That's what makes us grow up, got everything special about all that stuff...that's older than everything, all the land and islands.¹⁵⁸

The Narungga clearly approved of this area for a mission site; during his first visit to Point Pearce, Kühn 'found about 50 blacks including 9 children under 5', all had heard of Kühn and asked 'when [he] would come and build the mission house, they promised to come to me and learn then'.¹⁵⁹ A Narungga man in the Wallaroo area told Kühn that when he 'went to Point Pierce [sic] all the blacks would want to go to school'.¹⁶⁰

Narungga opinions and sentiments were taken into account. The siting of the mission in this highly significant, abundant area is not a co-incidence but illustrates Narungga influence and a high level of communication between the two cultural groups. The Narungga must have appreciated Kühn's efforts and seeming ability to make their requests a reality. Throughout, Kühn and the Committee acted with foresight and caution. When criticized the process was taking too long, the committee argued 'surely it were better that the Mission buildings should

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 16 January 1867.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Transcript of interview with Elizabeth Fisher, Part III, Stories, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January 1867.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

not be erected this year than that they should be built in the wrong position...'.¹⁶¹ When Kühn arrived at Point Pearce at 'the beginning of September [1867]...to take up a square mile of land that I can choose...';¹⁶² Rogers and his employees placed difficulties in the way of the missionary.¹⁶³ According to Kühn, Rogers did not act 'honestly and fairly':

I wanted a good piece of land and he wanted me to take what he offered me or if I wanted the piece of land we had chosen, he wanted 6 months notice.¹⁶⁴

After consulting with the Committee (and no doubt his Narungga companions), Kühn 'chose to wait to get the good land rather than always have a bad piece of land'.¹⁶⁵ Kühn was in the presence of numerous Narungga people at the time, and their joint sagacity (in conjunction with the Committee), ensured the Narungga would have their 'own township' and that it would be appropriately sited. This no doubt increased the regard in which the Narungga held Kühn.

mutually agreeable unfolding events

Although Kühn and the Narungga had different reasons for supporting the establishment of a mission station, all appear mutually satisfied with the unfolding events. The Narungga appreciated Kühn's labours and liked him as a person. Kühn was encouraged by the trust and warmth of the Narungga. When there was talk of Kühn leaving, 'The heathen beg many of them with tears pouring from their eyes that Mr Kühn will stay'.¹⁶⁶ Kühn reciprocally stated 'I love the blacks here and they love me'.¹⁶⁷ He felt 'very happy in the midst of a crowd of black children'.¹⁶⁸ The Narungga demonstrated their regard for Kühn by including him in significant events. In June 1866 Kühn was invited to the funeral of an important Elder,¹⁶⁹

¹⁶¹ *Register*, 27 February 1866, 2H

¹⁶² Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 24 July 1867.

¹⁶³ Geo. Birks to the Acting Protector of Aborigines, 16 September 1867, GRG 52/1/1867/399.

¹⁶⁴ Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 18 November 1867.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 4 May 1866.

¹⁶⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867].

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1866. Intriguingly, Kühn was invited to 'the king's' funeral, but as there is no mention of the death of the well known King Tom in the newspapers, and King Tommy did not die until 1886, I am assuming the King Tom referred to between 1866 up until 1886 is the same person, and that Kühn is referring to the death of another important Elder.

and in February 1867, 'the king sent a messenger' to report the unexpected death of two children.¹⁷⁰ Kühn was 'pleased' with such symbols of 'trust the blacks showed in [him]'.¹⁷¹

Perhaps most telling of the high regard in which Kühn was held was the Narunggas' willingness to entrust their children and 'helpless old' people to his care. By the beginning of May 1866, 'some of the blacks left their children with [Kühn] when they went into the bush'.¹⁷² Around September 1866, Kühn stated:

three girls and one boy have stayed with me without interruption [for] 4 months... they are very devoted to me, the parents of the children come, stay about two weeks and then go back to the bush, but they are willing to leave the children with me, just as the children prefer to stay with me, they know that they are much better off.¹⁷³

An old, blind man was left with Kühn during this time.¹⁷⁴ King Tommy and the Queen left their son with Kühn in August 1866.¹⁷⁵ Between April-May 1867, Kühn had '40-90 blacks at my location, about 29 in school each day'; 'The parents come and go and it is complicated because the children stay here at the school, I also have two children from Point Pearce here whose parents are also here'.¹⁷⁶ By September 1867, 'the older natives [had] been won over to trust their children with [Kühn]'.¹⁷⁷ This was not 'because they do not care to keep them' as some people 'who do not know them think' as 'they have the same affection for their children as white people have'.¹⁷⁸

The words of an elderly Narungga man powerfully illustrate why the Narungga were willing to leave their children with Kühn. In January 1867, Kühn noted a 'half white girl Maria asked her parents...if she could stay with me for ever, her father came to me the next morning and told me the whole conversation in very broken English'.¹⁷⁹ Maria's father told Kühn:

¹⁷⁰ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 23 February 1867.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 16 June 1866.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., September, 1866.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 27 May 1867.

¹⁷⁷ *Register*, 12 September 1867, 2G.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867].

You are very good man, you plenty money, you teach my girl to sing and pray very good, she may stay with you. I want to see her from time to time I want to go into the bush, I am too old (touching his grey hair) I am no good for learning.¹⁸⁰

Kind and morally upright Kühn was recognised as a ‘very good man’. He provided for the physical needs of the children, thus ‘plenty money’. This man makes clear his desire to visit Maria ‘from time to time’. Mission advocates recognised and supported such wishes, and as early as January 1866, recommended the future mission provide shelters to ‘be used by the parents of any children in the institution, whenever they choose to remain near them...during such time they should be supplied with rations, and free intercourse allowed with the children’.¹⁸¹ Informatively, Maria ‘had very bad eyes’¹⁸² which would have made her a liability in the bush. The children who made up the student population at Point Pearce in 1868 were sickly, orphaned, or of ‘mixed’ parentage (with either a European, African-American or Chinese father).¹⁸³ The ‘black boys and girls’ at the mission had parents who were ‘shepherds here in the neighbourhood’¹⁸⁴ and could visit frequently. Maria’s father approved of Kühn teaching his daughter ‘to sing and pray’.

Kühn often mentions the Narungga enjoying and approving of the singing, and asking him to pray for them. This is interesting, as Kühn was an evangelical whose everyday practices were guided by his Christian beliefs. Kühn made no secret of his disdain of Narungga customs which he regarded as ‘barbaric’, ‘heathen’ and ‘superstitious’¹⁸⁵ and which (unlike other German missionaries such as Teichelman and Schurmann) he made no attempt to understand.¹⁸⁶ Kühn made it clear his form of religion was incompatible with Narungga beliefs. The Narungga were a proud and independently-minded people whose ancient spiritual beliefs and practices were integral to every aspect of their lives. Kühn’s letters reveal the Narungga did not passively accept Kühn’s teachings, or automatically view Kühn’s religion and practices as superior to their own. He describes tense and even

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ *Register*, 29 January 1866, 3E.

¹⁸² Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867].

¹⁸³ Ibid., Boorkooyanna, 16 June [1868], see also *Register*, 9 June 1868, 2E.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ See Kühn’s letters to Reichel and *Register*, 7 May 1879, 5G.

¹⁸⁶ Kühn’s complete ignorance in this regard is evident in sparse and inaccurate replies to a questionnaire sent to him by ethnographer Alfred Howitt in 1879-80. See Appendix I.

dangerous moments when he directly challenged the Narungga about their beliefs and prevented people from attending and performing important ceremonies. Why then did the Narungga ask Kühn to pray for them and place their children in an environment where their beliefs and customs were derided? Why did many Narungga chose to (outwardly) accept Kühn's terms and to place faith in him (and consequently his beliefs)?

tolerance of Kühn's interference

Throughout his time on the Peninsula, Kühn treated with derision and disdain, and significantly interfered with, Narungga beliefs and customs. Yet the Narungga tolerated Kühn's clumsy transgressions. We firstly need to understand the extent of Kühn's interference, and secondly why the Narungga were prepared to accommodate such behaviour. By November 1866, the Narungga knew well that Kühn disliked their 'heathen dances'.¹⁸⁷ They accommodated Kühn and 'refrained' from performing corroborees in his presence.¹⁸⁸ In April 1867, Kühn dramatically challenged one of the Narunggas' most fundamental beliefs:

we caught a bat and the young people told me the old blacks believe that the bats created the blacks and can make rain. I told them that we might kill it and they agreed willingly, I thought that if they really believed in bats they would advise me against killing it. When we had killed it I explained to them how the bat flied and why it goes out flying at night, and they recognized how mistaken the old people were.¹⁸⁹

The Narungga knew the bat as *Mudatju*, one of the most significant Creation Ancestors. Although these 'young people' would have informed the 'old people' about this event, this did not appear to affect Kühn's standing. Several days later King Tommy, his two wives, daughter and another woman came to 'to visit his son' who had been 'at the school for 9 months'. After looking at the garden, King Tommy told Kühn 'he would like to stay with me now, it was not good to wander around'.¹⁹⁰ Kühn agreed, and said 'if he did go away he should at least leave his other children here...which he promised, he came to the evening assembly with the queen and his second wife and was pleased with our singing'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 22 November 1866.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

¹⁹⁰ Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 25 April 1867.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

On several occasions Kühn interfered with Narungga marriages on behalf of Narungga women. In June 1866, two women complained to Kühn ‘about their problems’. Kühn was ‘to have had the king and another black taken to court but they asked [him] not to’.¹⁹² Around September 1866 Kühn reported:

One young woman had a wound on her left eye... her husband had hit her, he was present, I asked him why... Later I had an opportunity to speak to the man who had mistreated his wife so... he recognized that he had done wrong and said he would never do it again.¹⁹³

In January-February 1867 Kühn’s interference was more significant. A ‘young man from the Kadina area’ married a ‘widow with a child’, who, within months, was ‘taken away from him by force’.¹⁹⁴ The man complained to Kühn who subsequently ‘called all the blacks together and reproached them... They answered that she belonged to the Port Wakefield blacks not the Kadina blacks’.¹⁹⁵ After espousing on the importance of the marriage promise, and waiting for the King to give him ‘an answer’ (which typically was not forthcoming), Kühn:

went to the place where the woman was staying, guarded by 10 blacks... and told her she had to decide if she would come back with me to her husband... I promised that I would protect her whatever happened. After a brief pause she said I will come and I took her to her husband and now they are... living happily and peacefully.¹⁹⁶

Kühn later heard ‘she had been intended for another black, ’ adding ‘the blacks are not saying a word about it’. Informatively ‘the next day the king sent his wife to [Kühn] for flour, sugar, tea and tobacco’. King Tommy (who again appears indecisive or reluctant to get involved) was requesting some form of compensation for Kühn’s breach of protocols. And, (whether knowingly or not) Kühn inadvertently appeased King Tommy (and the other Narungga in his camp) with these items. Kühn’s actions seriously breached Narungga laws, and one man told Kühn ‘blackfellows are very frightened for you’. But Kühn (true to form) acted steadfastly and confidently, and said ‘that was not necessary, I just wanted everyone to

¹⁹² Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 June 1866.

¹⁹³ Ibid., September, 1866.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 23 February 1867.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

be treated justly'.¹⁹⁷ The Narungga appear to have accepted Kühn's interference, and remained loyal to him – Kühn notes 'the last month was one of the busiest'.¹⁹⁸

By 24 July 1867, Kühn had spent several Sundays speaking about baptism to give his students 'an opportunity to know what baptism is and who could be baptised'.¹⁹⁹ Kühn would have made it clear that potential candidates who wanted to be 'received into the Christian church through baptism' had to 'renounce and totally turn [their] back[s] on all heathen practices'.²⁰⁰ In a letter home to Reichel written on 24 July, Kühn describes an incident which occurred 'last Sunday' which marks a turning point in Kühn's relations with the Narungga. This event will be examined in some detail as it illustrates Kühn's standing amongst the Narungga, his dogmatic beliefs, and his method of making the Narungga chose between his version of Christianity and their traditional customs.

This Sunday, Kühn refused to give a young man rations because 'people who can earn their living have no claim', 'Sunday was not the day for distributing them', the man did not work last week and, because 'instead of coming to the assembly (to which [Kühn] had invited everyone), he had gone to fetch white earth (clay) in order to hold a corroborre' – 'such a desecration of the Sabbath was not deserving of bread'.²⁰¹ This man told Kühn 'he would instantly strike me down to the ground', whereupon Kühn 'looked him in the face sadly' and told him 'he ought to think carefully about what he had said to me...if he dared attack me he would have cause to repent of it'. Before leaving the camp, Kühn told those 'who wanted to work tomorrow' they would get 'tea, sugar and some tobacco but...only as much as he needed so that the lazy ones would not get anything'.

Kühn boldly stood up to this man despite the presence of '15 strong men'. He acted calmly throughout and felt 'my fearlessness made him fearful'. Kühn's worried pupils 'begged' him 'to send for the police', but Kühn reassured them he 'was not afraid of those blacks' and 'the devil was one of the busiest people on Sundays in order to desecrate the Sabbath'. Kühn

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 24 July 1867.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., Boorkooyanna, 16 June [1868].

²⁰¹ Ibid., Gooduttera, 24 July 1867.

informed his pupils he did not want them attending the corroboree as ‘it was a sin to spend the evening in that way’. Although they ‘had been invited’, Kühn’s pupils acquiesced to his wishes. Later, one pupil came and said ‘Mr Kühn, when you go to the camp tomorrow we will all go with you and fight for you’. Kühn’s students, aware of the dangerous position Kühn was in, were prepared to stand up for him.

However, the following morning all the men from the camp (except the ‘crude man’ who demanded rations) showed their acceptance of Kühn’s methods and reasoning by coming to him, asking for work and breakfast and saying ‘in their own language that they did not want to quarrel with their good master’. By clearly pointing out the Narungga spoke to him in their language, Kühn implies this was either unusual and/or particularly significant. Perhaps the men spoke in their language to emphasise the seriousness of the situation and the sincerity of their words, or perhaps this gesture was a symbolic acknowledgement of their consensual acceptance of Kühn’s position of authority. The phrase ‘*good master*’ is also telling – these men not only acknowledged Kühn’s upright morals but also his position as an employer and provider. In return, Kühn apologized for being ‘so sharp’ but informed them ‘if they wanted it that way they would get to know me from a different side.’ He gave them breakfast, and told them ‘they would get lunch and an evening meal’ if they worked. Kühn had set new ground rules and issued an ultimatum. The men accepted his terms. This incident illustrates a subtle shift in power relations.

Later on, ‘the king and the queen came and had a long conversation about the events of yesterday’. Kühn ‘told the king he had been wrong not to support me when he could see I was right’. Informatively, King Tommy then ‘*patted me on the shoulder and asked me to be good again, I had always been good*’.²⁰² The King and Queen came after the other men had shown their acceptance/forgiveness of Kühn. No doubt all at the camp had previously discussed the incident and decided upon the best plan of action. As Elders, King Tommy and the Queen visited Kühn *after* the initial, uncertain ‘reconciliation’. Kühn, King Tommy and the Queen ‘had a long conversation’; this incident was clearly a matter of concern for all parties and it was imperative that an understanding be reached. Kühn voiced his

²⁰² Ibid., emphasis added.

disappointment in King Tommy's lack of support. King Tommy had diplomatically remained silent during the incident, perhaps waiting to see what the outcome would be, perhaps waiting to hear what the other Narungga people thought was the best course of action. By asking Kühn 'to be good again' King Tommy is requesting that Kühn continue serving the Narungga as he had done previously.

The 'crude man' returned during the 'morning blessing' – he stood at the front of the door 'looking fierce' and holding 'waddies'. Kühn ignored him and 'included the events in my prayers'. The King and Queen demonstrated their alliance with Kühn by 'honouring [him] with their presence' during lesson time at which King Tommy:

was very pleased with the answers given by the pupils and said to me 'you big one talk along gerli' (children) he was particularly attentive in geography, when I held an orange and explained to the children what shape the earth was...etc, but I believe he was only intent on when he was allowed to eat the orange.²⁰³

In his letter to Reichel, one senses this event seriously rattled Kühn. This was the first time Kühn refers to speaking angrily to the Narungga and asserting his authority. However, to all outward appearances, Kühn acted calmly and fearlessly. All (except the man who instigated the 'dispute') accepted Kühn's terms. No doubt pragmatic reasons influenced this decision (ie., the desire for rations). Maybe the Narungga understood Kühn's argument that people who had done no work were undeserving of rations. But I also feel that, at this stage, the Narungga were uncertain (and perhaps in awe) of Kühn's religion and beliefs and may have felt it was safest to hedge their bets by not antagonizing Kühn and keeping an open mind regarding his beliefs.

Another way Kühn seriously interfered with Narungga beliefs and practices was through the rite of baptism. Kühn took the rite of baptism very seriously, he disapproved of the 'English Church' which 'baptises everyone'.²⁰⁴ Kühn felt 'undergoing certain rites doesn't achieve anything at all if the process of rebirth under the Holy Spirit has not begun'.²⁰⁵ To 'lead the life of a disciple of Jesus' Kühn's pupils (who underwent months of rigorous examination)

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

had to ‘renounce completely all heathen customs and traditions’.²⁰⁶ The Narungga would have been under no delusions regarding Kühn’s rigid beliefs – those who had been baptized had to turn their backs on the beliefs and customs of their family, friends and forebears (or at least give all outward appearances of doing so). Baptised people lived a different life – they permanently resided on the mission and their days were regulated by school, prayers and assemblies. How, then, did the Narungga feel about their people being baptised? Prior to the move to Boorkooyanna, Kühn baptized young adults Maria Richman and Harry Gordon at the ‘big church in Kadina’ in 12 January 1868 ‘at the conclusion of Prayer week’:

all church denominations partook the Lord’s Supper after the baptism, many people came from the other towns for it, and the two baptismal candidates partook of the Lord’s Supper...several hundred people gathered, and many could not fit into the church. About 50 blacks turned up and had the closest positions to see the rite.²⁰⁷

Maybe Kühn was hoping the solemnity and ritual of the occasion, plus the immediate status apparently gained in the eyes of fellow Christians, might encourage potential converts. A young man known as Charley Keutel asked to be baptized in mid 1868. When he was finally baptized on 4 July 1869,²⁰⁸ Charley’s ‘mother and brother and brothers-in-law were present’²⁰⁹ as were many other Narungga – the large school house ‘was quite full’ which ‘deeply moved’ the missionary.²¹⁰ Charley was to be baptized earlier but ‘the older men wanted to circumcise him’ which Kühn actively tried to prevent.²¹¹ Following Charley’s baptism, ‘four people...requested to be baptized, one of whom, John Nagelschmidt,²¹² was the Queen’s son and King Tommy’s stepson.

The Narungga do not appear to have accepted Kühn’s ultimatum, and felt Kühn’s religious beliefs could co-exist with their own. In 1870, despite Charley being baptized, ‘about 80 blacks’ gathered at Point Pearce to circumcise him, but ‘refrained’ because Charley had a bad foot.²¹³ Tellingly, the men are determined this important rite be performed. A bad foot was

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 11 June 1868, see also *Register*, 20 January 1868, 2G.

²⁰⁸ Kühn to Reichel, , Boorkooyanna, 15 June 1870.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Meissel to Reichel, Boorkooyana, 22 April 1868.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 31 January 1871.

an acceptable excuse while being baptized was not. Across central and south-western Australia, circumcisions were occasions of great gatherings and lengthy celebrations; in Kühn's words, this 'heathen custom is accompanied with great festivities'.²¹⁴ The Narungga did not allow their men to marry unless they had been circumcised. In January 1871, Kühn stated:

I have 3 young men of about 16-18 years who according to the old superstitious heathen customs of the wild blacks should be circumcised. I spoke to the young men about what the old blacks intended to do to them, two of them have been baptized, they replied decisively that they would not undergo this custom and asked me for protection, which I promised.²¹⁵

The young men, afraid of the unknown and eager to embrace European religious beliefs, did not want to undergo the painful and frightening rite of circumcision. Kühn 'protected' them.

In 1871, after twenty-five years of European occupation, the rite of circumcision was being strongly adhered to. The Narungga, proud and confident of their cultural traditions, did not accept Kühn's derision of this custom. Although they listened with interest to Kühn's religious teachings and appeased him by attending his assemblies, the majority did not necessarily accept his beliefs as superior or correct. But in spite of their large numbers and the strength of their beliefs, the actions of the Narungga show they were keeping their options open and diplomatically maintaining good relations with Kühn. King Tommy asked Kühn 'if I would give [] the three young men' but Kühn 'tried to make him understand that it was wrong'.²¹⁶ Although Narungga men 'often' asked Kühn why he would not give the men to be circumcised, they told him 'they would not take these three without my permission'.²¹⁷ The large numbers of Narungga who had gathered did not wish to antagonize Kühn by taking the men without Kühn's knowledge and approval. Even on this extremely serious assault on their culture and beliefs, the Narungga accommodated Kühn. Why?

Why did the Narungga accommodate Kühn?

Kühn was recognised as a 'good' man and master, he provided for the Narungga peoples' physical needs, welcomed them as equals into his culture, shared his knowledge and taught

²¹⁴ Ibid., 7 April 1874

²¹⁵ Ibid., 31 January 1871.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

the children the skills needed to advance in European society. He was instrumental in ensuring ‘the most important’ Narungga country on Yorke Peninsula would be protected and made available for the exclusive use of the Narungga. All these factors help explain why the Narungga appeased him by listening to his sermons and participating in his religious rites, and why they allowed him to interfere in and prevent important ceremonies. But I believe the main reason the Narungga tolerated and even went along with Kühn’s beliefs was because they were open to the possibility Kühn’s religion and rituals were valid and possibly more powerful than their own, and the reason for this was Kühn’s seeming ability to heal and cure the sick.

The Narungga would have been aware Kühn saw himself as an instrument of God whom (Kühn believed) directed every event and outcome. In the winter of 1866, many Narungga suffered from heavy colds. Kühn ‘doctor[ed] to them often, and freed some of their illnesses’.²¹⁸ On rainy days he fetched the sick into the school house, cared for them and gave them medicine.²¹⁹ During this time, one man who was chopping wood accidentally ‘hack[ed] a wound with the axe above his right eye, 2 inches long and through to the bone.’ Kühn raced to the scene, washed the wound, and ‘brought round’ the fainting patient who would not agree to Kühn stitching up the wound. Instead, Kühn ‘put on a sticking plaster and cold compresses’ and within a short time the wound was ‘almost completely healed’.²²⁰ Kühn reflected ‘in this way *I have won their trust completely*’.²²¹

In early 1867, Kühn asked Maria’s parents if he could try and cure her bad eyes. The parents and Maria were ‘willing’, so Kühn:

prepared a sort of eye mask and made a hole in each earlobe and pulled a strong silk cord coated with a sort of oil, her eyes got visibly better, I brought her some glasses [] quite good for her eyes and the girl and the parents are very thankful for it and *the blacks believe I can cure any illness*, they come to me very often and the medicine I give them is very simple, but I am convinced that *their trust in me and their belief in the medicine make them well*.²²²

²¹⁸ Ibid., Kadina, 16 June 1866.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., emphasis added.

²²² Ibid., 16 January [1867], emphasis added.

While Kühn was temporarily residing at Boorkooyanna in September-October 1867, a girl who had been scalded with hot water had maggots in the wound which Kühn carefully picked out. He made a salve of lime and salad oil, applied the salve several times a day, and made her lie on her front the whole time. Within a short time the wound had ‘healed fairly well’.²²³ When the Queen’s daughter ‘was fatally ill’, the Queen asked Kühn ‘to pray with her’:

I held an assembly at her bedside and made the sick girl the subject of my prayer, the Lord heard our prayers and the girl got better, now the queen thinks that if I pray for her she will also get better.²²⁴

In November 1867, the Queen asked Kühn to:

come to the camp and pray for her (to pray her right), she didn’t feel well... She got better but the illnesses are often just an overladen stomach or coughs and colds.²²⁵

Kühn ‘won their trust particularly’ when he ‘found a young man who had burned his back and had holes in his back’.²²⁶ Kühn went to Dr Croft who immediately visited him; ‘after 2 weeks the black had recovered and the blacks thank me for his recovery’.²²⁷ Kühn’s basic medical skills, his care, attention and diligence, and his influence with Doctors and Pharmacists built an impression that Kühn had the magic touch in curing the sick!

Asking Kühn to the funeral of the high status Elder, and informing him of the unexpected death of the two children are perhaps more than signs of Narungga respect for Kühn – perhaps the Narungga saw Kühn as a protector or authority in more than the physical sense. When two cottages on the outskirts of Wallaroo were offered as a temporary mission, ‘the blacks thought I would live in the town and only spend the day with them, so they told me they were afraid at night and the old people weren’t willing to see the children go, when I assured them I would sleep out there all difficulties were removed’.²²⁸ This may explain the Elders’ seeming lack of concern following Kühn and the young peoples’ killing of the bat. The Narunggas’ belief in Kühn’s apparent ability to cure is crucial to understanding their trust in him, and their accommodation of his beliefs at the expense of their own.

²²³ Kühn to Reichel, Goodutterra, 18 November 1867.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., Kadina, 23 February 1867.

the tide turns

After establishing the mission at Point Pearce, Kühn continued labouring hard, and the number of children at the station slowly increased, with the ‘old people’ attending Sabbath Services when they were in the neighbourhood. By 1871 the Sunday School was ‘in a flourishing state’ with ‘thirty-four scholars’.²²⁹ In 1871, Robert Penton brought his dangerously ill son Alfred to Boorkooyanna, but although Kühn ‘did whatever was in [his] capacity’ to cure him, Alfred died on the second day.²³⁰ Kühn asked Penton ‘if he would allow me to take the funeral’. Kühn explained the ritual to Penton, who ‘was quite willing’.²³¹ ‘All of the blacks in the neighbourhood’ (about seventy people) came to the funeral and Kühn ‘gave an address’. Those present ‘behaved very well’ and informed Kühn his ‘kind of funeral was better than theirs’.²³² By 1872 the ‘wandering blacks’ were ‘beginning to send for Mr Kuhn to pray beside them when they are ill, and to speak of sending their children to the Mission Station as a matter of course, when they are old enough to leave their parents’.²³³

However, disaster struck the mission station between March and September 1872 when ‘no fewer than sixteen of the natives who once belonged to the Station’ died from whooping cough and croup.²³⁴ Because Kühn could not prevent these deaths, faith in him and his beliefs was shattered. Parents and grandparents took their children away fearing ‘they might die too’.²³⁵ Kühn’s missionary efforts suffered a serious blow. As late as 1875 and 1876 Kühn was still lamenting the ‘the prejudice against the mission station’ ‘caused by so many deaths’.²³⁶ Kühn’s letters after 1872 convey a shift in the balance of power. The Narungga

²²⁹ *Fourth Annual Report of the Yorke’s Peninsula Aboriginal Mission*, Wallaroo Times Office, Wallaroo, 1871, p. 7.

²³⁰ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 21 June 1871.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Brief Review of the Operation of the Yorke’s Peninsula Aboriginal Mission for the first five years*, Wallaroo Times Office, Wallaroo, 1872, p. 7.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8 and Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 6 November 1872. NB Kühn states 14 people died in the epidemic.

²³⁵ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 6 November 1872.

²³⁶ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 23 April 1875 and *Register (Supplement)*, 26 July 1876, 2B.

who did not reside in the mission buildings no longer dutifully attended the assemblies or listened respectfully to Kühn's beliefs:

Last winter and until Christmas I had about 50-60 blacks here in the neighbourhood. I visited them as often as time permitted. One hot November day I visited them...they had neither flour, tea nor sugar, but they were too lazy to come 6-8 English miles to the Station. I asked them all to assemble at my place so that I could hold an assembly with them. They all asked if I had brought them anything to eat. I told them that they were free to fetch rations at any time. With a great deal of trouble I managed to get them all together. Oh these poor people ...live only for eating and drinking.²³⁷

In 1877 Kühn wrote 'Each Sunday I rode out to them to conduct a service and often set out on my return journey with a heavy heart, since I had the feeling that the people showed little or no interest in spiritual matters'.²³⁸ In 1879 Kühn pessimistically reflected 'to break down the walls of superstition and heathenism is not an easy work, and indeed, beyond superhuman power'.²³⁹

Kühn worked extremely hard trying to induce the Narungga to return – by 1875 his 'main goal' was 'to get the adults to this place'²⁴⁰ and 'everything that can be thought of' was done 'to make them feel at home'.²⁴¹ But although Kühn offered 'every inducement' ('every black who works at the station gets 5/- wages a week, half a sheep, flour, sugar and tea')²⁴² 'there were some who preferred an idle life'.²⁴³ When a 'hunting party' of between thirty to fifty Narungga camped 10-15 miles from the station, Kühn 'visited them twice a week', 'supplied them with flour, sugar, tea, soap and some clothing',²⁴⁴ and bought their skins – all were well pleased with the price given.²⁴⁵ But, after finishing kangarooing, most 'dispersed to the different woolsheds on the Peninsula' where they were employed in shearing, while the old and infirm came to the station.²⁴⁶

²³⁷ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 7 April 1874.

²³⁸ Ibid., 20 June 1877.

²³⁹ *Register*, 7 May 1879, 5G.

²⁴⁰ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875.

²⁴¹ Additional 'Report' included in *Brief Review of the Operation of the Yorke's Peninsula Aboriginal Mission for the first five years*, p. 8.

²⁴² Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875.

²⁴³ *Register*, 6 May 1876, 5F.

²⁴⁴ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875.

²⁴⁵ *Register*, 29 January 1876, 13B.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

Although numbers slowly crept up, Kühn no longer had the pull he once had, and was forced to accept people would come and go as they wanted. In answer to accusations that ‘there were only about thirty natives at the station’, ‘it was a rule for them not to remain there’,²⁴⁷ and ‘the natives on the station only go for food’,²⁴⁸ Kühn replied ‘of course some come and go, staying a short time at the station, then wandering off again, to return perhaps in a few weeks, perhaps staying away for a much longer period’ but this should surprise no one as it takes ‘a long time to change the habits so ingrained since infancy’.²⁴⁹ By 1881 only thirty people were living at mission.²⁵⁰ Clearly, the Narungga were not forced against their will into the Mission Station. Instead they used the station for food and goods when alternative options were not available. As such, the Narunggas’ initial wish – for a township of their own where the sick, old and young could be attended to – was fulfilled. The mission was successful in ‘ameliorating’ the ‘condition of the natives’; it did free the young and old from the worry of where they would be clothed or fed,²⁵¹ and Narungga children were taught to read and write.

King Tommy played an instrumental role in the establishment of the mission – was he satisfied with the outcome of his efforts? Like other nineteenth century Narungga who witnessed first hand the take over of their lands, King Tommy was positioned at the cross roads of two worlds. As a respected leader he represented the interests of his people and acted with foresight, intelligence and tolerance. He decisively attempted to alleviate the suffering of his people and set them on the path for prosperity and success in the new world. Like the Narungga who met Hughes’ surveying party at Port Victoria in 1840, King Tommy was open to new exchanges, objects and beliefs.²⁵² On 5 December 1874, King Tommy’s

²⁴⁷ *Register*, 29 April 1879, 4G.

²⁴⁸ *Register*, 5 June 1879, 7B.

²⁴⁹ *Chronicle*, 10 May 1879, 12E.

²⁵⁰ GRG 52/1/1881/147.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² King Tommy’s experiences may have made him view European presence in a more favorable light than his fellow country people as he received a weekly pension of 5 shillings from WW Hughes until his death (see GRG 52/1/1885/98), and could therefore live somewhat independently in the white man’s world.

(step)son, John, married Elizabeth Angie at Point Pearce.²⁵³ Apparently King Tommy did not want to give his permission for the wedding before his son was circumcised, to which Kühn intriguingly notes:

I don't want to say anything more about what I did...the Lord has worked wonders. The king gave his permission and I believe this old heathen custom is broken.²⁵⁴

John's parents, 'accompanied by a favourite few', were present at the ceremony.²⁵⁵ After the wedding, King Tommy and the Queen looked around John and Elizabeth's neat cottage with furniture and utensils, the King 'burst into hearty laughter, saying "All same as whitefellow"'.²⁵⁶ King Tommy and the Queen asked Kühn to build them a house,²⁵⁷ but the records are unclear as to whether this eventuated. They may have been amongst the 'very old people' who lived in wurleys on the station which (according to one visitor) were 'superior to the general run of such buildings, being mostly well thatched with rushes'.²⁵⁸ King Tommy died at the mission station in 1886.

Between 1866-1880, those who made up the Mission population were largely converts like John Nagelschmidt who consciously turned his back on Narungga customs, or children who were sickly, orphaned, or whose parent(s) were unable to support them. 'Christianised' people from Poonindie and Point Macleay came to Point Pearce in the 1880s and 1890s. When ethnographer Frank Gillen conducted field work at Point Pearce in 1899, he refers to 'six old grey beards' – 'pure black incorrigible heathens who cannot be induced to live disreputably within stone walls' – who 'were Evidently delighted to find a white man who did not look upon their customs as being hideous and their beliefs wicked'.²⁵⁹ Gillen found 'none of the young men know the language, some scarcely a word of it, all except my

²⁵³ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875. In later years John Nagelschmidt came to be known as John Stansbury. According to Kartinyeri, p. 270, John was the son of mine owner Walter Watson Hughes. King Tommy had a long standing connection with Hughes (see footnote 245). John named his eldest son Walter.

²⁵⁴ Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875.

²⁵⁵ *Register*, 31 December 1874, 7B. It is likely the King, Queen and Elizabeth's mother's family were adhering to traditional marriage patterns. Elizabeth Angie was the daughter of a Narungga woman from the Hummock Ranges and a Chinese shepherd. Kartinyeri, p. 130 and *Register*, 9 June 1868, 2E. This woman must have had connections throughout the Peninsula. Louisa Eglington, whose family country encompassed the southern 'toe' end of the Peninsula, and whose mother was a wife of King Tommy, married her son, Dan Angie.

²⁵⁶ *Register*, 31 December 1874, 7B.

²⁵⁷ *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser*, 23 March 1875.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, (*Supplement*), 10 November 1876, 1B.

²⁵⁹ DJ Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, Alison Petch (Eds), *My dear Spencer: the letters of FJ Gillen to Baldwin Spencer*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1997, p. 263, original underlining.

heathen six are Christians'.²⁶⁰ These young people, whom Gillen noted were 'nearly all half-castes',²⁶¹ carried the legacy of Kühn's beliefs onto the next generation, and it is these people who were Elders when Graham and Graham were growing up. Doris remembered that when she was growing up on the mission, the old people were 'wonderful people...clever people and good living, God-fearing people', and Alf Hughes as 'a man of discipline...a peace maker...a deeply religious man'.²⁶²

Contrary to widely held beliefs, the vast majority of Narungga in the late nineteenth century remained outside the mission, but the records provide only clues to the lives of these people. Some appear to have embraced European ways, married Europeans and lived in houses in the mining towns where they were absorbed into the European community.²⁶³ Kühn mentions some of his converts going to work for 'respectable' people of the towns – where they ended up I have been unable to ascertain. A school at Moonta 'for the instruction of aborigines' was 'again commenced' in 1870 at which 'about a dozen adults and eight or ten lubras and children' attended.²⁶⁴ In 1871, Leonard Giles of Penton Vale (Thomas Giles' half brother) wrote a letter to the Crown Lands Commissioner on behalf of the Narungga to 'try and get some of their land reserved for them',²⁶⁵ the Narungga did not think 'the time for getting land is premature, it would be useless for them to ask after the land is sold'.²⁶⁶ A census collected in the same year showed a total of 36 men and 30 women living in various areas on the Peninsula.²⁶⁷ In February 1876 at Edithburgh, a dozen European men dressed up as soldiers one night and terrified a group of Narungga by pretending to fire and ordering them to leave the area. Neither group provided necessary details to the policeman sent to investigate, the Europeans protected each other, and the Narungga were too intimidated.²⁶⁸ In May 1876 Kühn visit about 60 Narungga at Edithburg, Salt Creek and Sultana. Kühn offered them all

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 264.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁶² Graham and Graham, pp. 25, 21.

²⁶³ See photographs held in the M Angas Collection, South Australian Museum Archives.

²⁶⁴ *Register*, 24 March 1870, 4F.

²⁶⁵ Leonard H Giles to W Birch, 23 October 1871, GRG 52/1/1871/224.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ GRG/52/1/1871/168.

²⁶⁸ George Orr, Police Station, Edithburgh, 10 March 1876, to R Saunders, Inspector of Police, Clare, GRG 52/1/1876/56.

employment and a home, they seem pleased and 'promised to come after the races'.²⁶⁹

Photos

in museum archives illustrate well dressed people living at Yorketown and Kadina. Settlers and seven Narungga women who assisted a kangaroo hunter near Warooka sent a petition to the government in 1886 asking for rations.²⁷⁰



Figure 12. On the back of this photo is written in pencil, from left to right, 'Shooting Tommy, Johnny Miller, Tom/Ned Kelly [crossed out], Emma Kelly (not of Kadina Tribe), Amelia (hereditary Queen) [this is Kaurana women Invaritji alias Amelia Taylor], [blank], Monkey Mary, [blank], [blank], Joe Fowler'. 'Photo by Duryea who was in Wallaroo prior to 1893'[NB nd this photograph was likely taken between the 1860-80s], 'Photo presented by Mr J Major' (South Australian Museum, AA 80/1/2/1).

²⁶⁹ *Observer*, 13 May 1876, 10G.

²⁷⁰ Richard Place to the Commissioner of Crown lands, Edithburgh, 18 August 1886, GRG 52/1/1886/254. Petitions signed by 23 European residents and Narungga women Lucy Morris, Louisa Harding, Matilda, Marian Cogy, Mary, Marian Johnson and Nelly.



Figure 13. Yorketown Lake, 1890 (State Library of South Australia, B42064)

Reminiscences of Southern Yorke Peninsula ‘Pioneers’ collected in the 1930s²⁷¹ recall Aboriginal people living in the Edithburg parklands, at Sultana Point, Coobowie and Penton Vale. There is a general consensus these people ‘just disappeared’ after about 1910. ‘What happened to them’, ‘when they went, where or how’,²⁷² these local residents did not seem to know. A few settlers remember these people with affection, in particular a woman known as ‘Black Lucy’ (see figure 14) who apparently loved children but had none of her own.²⁷³ As a group they are described as ‘characters’, they are referred to with condescending amusement. One woman starkly recalled ‘in those days the blacks were considered as nothing’.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Archives of the South Australian Museum, AA635.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid., Mr Turt Bartram as told to Mrs J Brennan.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., Mrs Miller and Mrs Hays.



Figure 14. 'Black Jack, Black Lucy and Old Charlie',²⁷⁵ Yorketown Lake, 1890
(State Library South Australia, B42063)

In 1974, two residents of Coobowie (John and Betsy Edwards) recalled that after 1868 the shepherds 'fenced the waterholes and chased the aborigines away and wouldn't let them have any water'.²⁷⁶ Either John or Betsy's grandfather arrived on the Peninsula in 1880 and became 'great friends with the chief – old Ned White'.²⁷⁷ When the settlers 'wanted to get rid of the aborigines', they 'pulled a dead horse into their camp [at Coobowie] and buried it', and the people moved onto Edithburgh.²⁷⁸ In 1977, Mrs AE Cleland (nee Edwards) recalled a 'native family' which 'included the grandmother, Tilly, Milly, and her son, Charlie, Milly's

²⁷⁵ These people were identified by Mrs I Anderson and Mrs Joyce Miller who obtained the photo from her brother, Mr A Miller, Edithburgh (South Australian Museum Archives, AA635/2406).

²⁷⁶ Extracts from a taped conversation with John and Betsy Edwards of Coobowie, taped by Mr and Mrs Visciglio, given to Ern Carmicheal, 1974, 'Notes on some Aboriginal Campsites on Southern Yorke Peninsula', South Australian Museum Archives.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., the reference is unclear as to whose grandfather it was.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

youngest child'.²⁷⁹ This family owned twenty one dogs – 'each dog's name was connected with light, Starlight, Moonlight, Sunlight, Sunrise etc.':

This family would walk from possibly Point Pearce, or somewhere north of Point Rickaby to Corny Point and back, following the same route each way...They had a wurley in Edward's Scrub, west of Minlaton...the natives would come to the house and the only things they would ask for were tea, flour, sugar and baccy. They would stay indefinitely when the ti-tree was in flower, as this was a sign that Tommy Ruffs were about. When asked where they obtained water they would say that they had small wells which they kept covered so that they were hidden, it also helped to keep the water cool and prevented small animals from falling in and fouling the water. The natives would search old rubbish dumps for old boots. They would remove the upper which they used as the base of small baskets. These baskets were made from porcupine seed stalks which had to be in the right state of maturity for weaving. The baskets were sold at 1/6 each...Mrs Edwards and others kept the family in clothes. Their dogs were never known to attack the sheep or let their fires get out of control. After the rest of the family died, Charlie lived on at the Edwards Scrub wurlie for many years. He would come to the house for dinner and Mrs Edwards sent food back with him for his tea...Charlie would walk direct to the beach...with his spear and stand on a rock, perfectly still, until a large enough fish to spear came along...and then spear it. He kept the Edwards family in fish. After the Edwards family shifted to Minlaton, Charlie and other natives would bring their fish into the town and hawk them, and Mrs Edwards would buy what they had not sold. Charlie later lived at Point Pearce. This native family were peaceful and much respected by the local white people.²⁸⁰

John and Betsy Edwards remembered Louisa Eglinton - 'the last Aborigine lady [in the district]' – who was 'a little skinny woman and a very good shot, her husband was a kangaroo hunter'.

The records contain only tiny fragments of information on these Narungga people who continued living on southern Yorke Peninsula into the early decades of the twentieth century. Life for these people must have been hard – physically, mentally and emotionally. The invasion of stock and the clearing of land destroyed the environment which had nurtured and

²⁷⁹ Mrs AE Cleland (nee Edwards), as told to AC Parsons, Minlaton, 1977, 'Reminiscences', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia*, 25 (3), 1987, pp. 4-5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

sustained their people for millennium and they were forced to beg food, clothing and 'anything they could get' from 'the whites', or exchange fish for 'flour, tea etc'.²⁸¹ They had witnessed the death of many of their people through disease and other consequences of European settlement. They knew they were the last of their people to know their country as it was. The photos show proud people, who, despite constant inducements, chose to remain on their own land and live (as far as possible) an independent lifestyle in keeping with the customs and beliefs of their forebears.

²⁸¹ Ibid., Mrs I Anderson as told by Mr Uren.

Conclusion

Research for this thesis was instigated by Narungga people who wanted to learn about the lives of their forebears. Nineteenth century Narungga people are noticeably absent from regional histories written by interested amateurs and Aboriginal histories which tend to focus on the twentieth century. This ethno-history, which moves from the earliest recorded stages of contact with Europeans in 1802 to the establishment of the mission in the late 1800s, fills a significant gap in the literature. Researching the history of the Narungga has been like piecing together a large jigsaw puzzle. Many of the pieces are missing, never to be recovered, while others are so distorted or faded as to be almost unrecognisable. But, from the disparate pieces that have been recovered, a picture of active and accommodating people with a dynamic and flexible culture has emerged. This study has revealed a level of Narungga agency that has hitherto remained hidden, and allows us to significantly revise current understandings of their history.

A knowledge of the cultural system that orientated and structured the everyday world of the Narungga is vital to any analysis which seeks to understand how and why the Narungga made the choices they did, and why events unfolded as they did. This work has therefore been informed by current anthropological research into Aboriginal life. A relatively detailed knowledge of the encompassing geographical and natural environment has also been applied. In the mid-nineteenth century, the outcome of European invasion was unknown. The Narungga did not perceive themselves as helpless victims with no options available to them. Instead, the vegetation and geographical isolation of Yorke Peninsula meant many Narungga were able to live independently from Europeans, and that Europeans were, in many instances and to varying extents, dependent upon the expertise and good will of the Narungga. While the Narungga had access to large parts of their country, their customs and beliefs remained relatively intact.

This thesis has demonstrated that Narungga responses to the challenges of British colonization were neither naïve or ill-prepared. Before Europeans settled permanently on their land, the Narungga had had more than forty years experience of strangers. From the

very first, by deliberately lighting fires and signaling their presence at Corny Point in 1802, the Narungga demonstrated their willingness to engage with Europeans. The nature of contact varied depending upon the motives and personalities of members of both cultural groups. Their dealings with sealers and whalers made the Narungga cautious and fearful, but accounts written by surveyors and other visitors after 1836 illustrate the Narungga quickly and confidently began to assert their authority and custodianship of the land. This study enables us to learn and understand what aspects of European culture resonated with the Narungga who readily incorporated new systems, objects and people into their world, but on their own terms.

The Narungga appear to have readily accommodated the initial arrival of pastoralists. A close analysis of the outbreak of violence dispels unfounded, continuously held, widespread understandings that the Narungga were the initial aggressors, while simultaneously challenging the approach of some historians who readily accept European aggression preceded Aboriginal 'depredations'. This thesis shows the need to culturally contextualize the actions of Aboriginal people. Rather than understanding violence as necessarily being caused by conflict over women, or hunger, or resistance to the take over of water and land, we need to recognize Aboriginal people were open to the possibilities of Europeans residing on their territory, having relations with their women, and becoming incorporated into their cultural systems, but they wanted this done in a manner which was fundamentally respectful of their country. If the newcomers respected the land – which, for Aboriginal people, includes everything connected with their surrounding environment (such as waterholes, animals and plants) – the newcomers were consequently showing respect to the Narungga and their beliefs.

This thesis has argued that on Yorke Peninsula, conflict was relatively short-lived and key individuals such as Jim Crack and Julius Kühn played important roles in unfolding events and significantly shaped broader historical outcomes. This ethno-history has demonstrated that established views of the frontier and early mission life in this region are inadequate and inaccurate, and do not fully recognize the agency of Aboriginal people. For example, the perception that Narungga people were herded onto the mission and prohibited from leading a

nomadic life is not supported by the historic records. A deeper analysis of the sources demonstrates the Narungga actively participated in moves to establish a mission station, and, once this became a reality, the Narungga continued to move about the district with relative freedom.

Narungga reactions to colonization were diverse; people had different experiences with Europeans, depending on their gender, the location and nature of the land to which they were affiliated, their personalities, and the personalities, experiences, and motives of the Europeans with whom they came into contact. This thesis has explored the variety of Narungga responses to European invasion and has demonstrated the complexity of nineteenth century cross-cultural relations. Those people who have been forgotten by the history books and who are unknown to current day Narungga have been placed at the centre of the story. Perhaps by re-imagining the past in this way, and understanding at least some of the choices made, we can better understand the situation of Aboriginal people in the present. The Narungga coped with the take over of their land with dignity, tolerance and humanity, they were neither helpless victims nor irrational aggressors. Throughout the nineteenth century, as in the present, we can see the fundamental contradiction of British settlement where the Colonial Office's rhetoric of concern and justice for the Aboriginal people was irreconcilable with the practice of taking over Aboriginal land and putting the drive for economic profit ahead of human lives.

Appendix I

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* The Indigenous Cultures Department at Museum Victoria have advised that the manuscript reference numbers can be provided at a later date if required.

Appendix II

Baudin's place names for coastal areas of St Vincent's Gulf and Spencer Gulf¹

Baudin's name	English translation	Current name
Golf de La Misanthropie	Mankind-hater Gulf	Gulf of St Vincent
Pointe aux Corbeaux	Crow's Point	Rapid Head
Ance des Savoyards	Savoyard's Cove	Yankalilla Bay
Point aux Aigles	Eagle's Point	Carrickalinga Head
Ance des Curieux	Cove of the Curious Ones	Aldinga Bay
Pointe Pitoresque	Picturesque Point	Witton Bluff
Pointe des Ourcins	Sea-eggs' Point	Marino Point
Pointe des Bouquets	Aromas' Point	Point Malcolm
Pointe aux Arbres	Trees' Point	Point Gawler
Point aux Islots	Islet's Point	Yorke Point
Ance des Fumees	Cove of Smokes	Marion Bay
Archip. de L'Est	Eastern Archipelago	Althorpe Islands
Pointe des Malfaisants	Malicious Point	Cape Spencer
Cap de L'entrée du Golfe de La Melomanie	Cape at the entrance of Melomanie Golf	West Cape
Point des Soupirs	The Point of Sighs	Corney Point
Gulf de La Melomanie	Music-mania Gulf	Spencer's Gulf

¹ As given in HM Cooper, *The Unknown Coast (A Supplement)*, the Author, Adelaide, 1955, pp. 50-51.

Appendix III

Return of rations as given by Protector Moorhouse and printed in the Government Gazette 1849-1855

	Males	Females	Children under 10 males	Children under 10 females	total	Additional Notes
1849						
August						200lbs flour was distributed during Moorhouse's visit on the Peninsula.
October*						384lbs flour
November						340 ditto
1850						Return not received yet
December						No return
January						No return
February						No return
March						No return
26 April	49	12	12	6	79	
26 May	33	21	20	18	92	
24 June	35	18	9	13	75	
July						
August					About 50	
September						
21 October	30	20	16	10	76	2 females born
21 November	10	4	6	2	22	4 males died
19 December	28	8	10	7	53	2 females died
1851						
18 January	40	21	11	18	90	
16 February	28	22	18	20	88	
17 March	40	25	16	12	83	
19 March	10	4	12	6	32	The two additional visits in
29 March	17	16	18	10	51	March were made during Moorhouse's visit there.
16 March	60	50	30	50	190	[NB this date is most likely 16 April, as is in next return, (ie., <i>Gazette</i> 24 July 1851) and flour has been distributed on three previous occasions in

						March]
15 May	36	43	32	11	122	10 blankets given
14 June	37	25	38	37	137	
NB see entry in gazette for 24/7/1851 re Queens Birthday (24 May 1851)	18	12	9 (male or female)		39	
13 July	40	35	20	17	112	2lbs of flour given per diem to wife of native constable
12 August	21	8	14	6	49	“
10 September	19	12	10	7	48	“
1852						
6 February	14	7	7	4	32	Native constable's wife has 3 lbs per diem allowed; 154 lbs given to the sick (during quarter)
7 March	14	11	13	10	48	
4 April	9	5	8	6	28	
						[No return included in the two Protector's reports for the remainder of 1852]
1853						
Jan	9	6	7		22	
Feb	14	12	12		38	
March	8	10	14		32	
1854						
1 st quarter						Not received
Yorke's Peninsula (2 nd quarter)	-	-	-			
June, July, August						Not recieved
1855						
October 6	4	5	4	2	15	1 death; issued 31 blankets and 88lbs of flour given to the sick
Nov 6	5	8	7	7	27	
Dec 4	2	3	4	3	12	

* These two distributions were only commenced by the police on the 24th October, as the natives are cunning and timid, a daily issue has been made to them when about the station, in order to keep them in contact, as much as possible, with the police.

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Map of portion of South Australia including Yorke Peninsula, Norman Tindale Collection, South Australian Museum archives, AA338/16/2.

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