



The Legend of Watari: Green Island

Green Island is an Aboriginal hunting and fishing place located in Oyster Harbour. It is a place of mythological significance because it is part of the Menang Kinjarling Creation Myth. This part of the myth tells the story of how Oyster Harbour and Green Island were made by an Aboriginal dreamtime woman named Watari and her dog Whatami. It was told to Captain Collett Barker by Mokare.

The Legend

A long time ago a man named Legan and his wife Watari, their son and their toort (dog) Whatami. They lived on the upper reaches of what we now call the Kalgan River. One day Watari decided to go into the bush to look for food for her family. Every time she found some she would sing out to her husband Legan to come and taste the food. Legan was in a grumpy mood and said no to everything she offered him, which upset Watari, who continued to look for food. One day she found a very large marjit which she knew was the sacred water snake of the Noongar people, but she was so hungry she hit the snake many times until she killed it. Then she made a fire and cooked the snake and ate it all by herself.

When she told Legan what she had done he became very angry and started to hit her with a stick until he broke her legs. Legan then ran off to the Stirlings leaving Watari to die. In great pain Watari dragged herself towards the sea gouging out great tracts of land as she did, however she died before she could reach the sea. Her faithful toort Whatami found her body lying in the open and knew he would have to cover her to prevent the evil spirits from taking her body so he dug the soil around her to make a burial mound. Eventually Whatami dug through to the sea which flowed all around the burial mound to create what is known today as Oyster Harbour. The burial mound became Green Island. When the sea flowed into the gouged tracks made by the wounded Watari it created the Kalgan River.



European History

Green Island was named by George Vancouver who also named Oyster Harbour when he visited the area in 1791. (WA Information - Albany 2003) When the colony in Albany was first settled in 1826 Green Island was planted for vegetables and by 1830 supported a vegetable garden. A hut was erected on the island for the gardener to live in. (Shellam, 183)

Green Island is recorded as a place of historical importance and is mentioned in Neville Green's book *Broken Spears* (1984). He relates how Major Lockyer had to rescue some Aboriginal men from Green Island after they had been stranded there by sealers so they could steal their women. In 1827 a group of sealers took 5 Aboriginal men to Green Island to catch birds. The sealers rowed away, leaving the Aboriginals behind, returning the next day with water. The Aboriginals attempted to take the boat and the sealers fired on them killing one of them. The remaining Aboriginals were removed to Michaelmas Island and left there making "great lamentations". (Southern Indian Ocean Expedition 2002)





Yoolberup - Mt Manypeaks

Yoolberup is a place of mythological, religious and ceremonial significance. It is part of a creation story about a number of prominent features in the landscape centred on Mt Manypeaks. It includes South Sister and North Sister to the northwest and encompasses a chain of freshwater lakes near the two sisters.

Within the present Noongar population there are still memories of stories of traditional religious views about the creation of landscape features. Some of these stories are specific to certain places and tell of the actual dreamtime event of creation. They relate to the journey of mythical beings over vast tracts of land from the Stirling Ranges to the coast at Waitchinicup. They also describe how the travels and actions of mythical beings created prominent features of the landscape and record that this is where a being's spiritual essence remains. The story of Toolberup and Yoolberup is one of these stories. (L. Knapp, Kinjarling Report: 176, 184)

