

**BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE
Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry**



Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry SHP 17059, c.1999.

Source: DEW Files

ENTRY IN THE REGISTER

Description or notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The South Australian Heritage Council may correct errors or inaccuracies in the Entry in the Register in accordance with s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME: Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry

PLACE NO.: 17059

ADDRESS: Barngarla Country

McKenzie Road, Minnipa SA 5654

CR 5757/306 H640800 S27, CT 5954/216 H640800 S1 17

Hundred of Minnipa

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

5 July 2000

DESIGNATED AS A PLACE OF GEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

16 March 2000

S16 CRITERIA SATISFIED UNDER *HERITAGE PLACES ACT 1993*

(c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the state's history, including its natural history.

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Additional information provided as a part of the content of the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with s14(6) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993* 'hold information in association with the Register'.

KNOWN AS: Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry [Designated as a place of geological significance]

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry is an excellent example of a granite outcrop in South Australia that contains exposures of the Hiltaba Suite granites. The rock is a large monolith protruding from the landscape and demonstrates erosional features such as gutters and flared slopes that differentiate it from the surrounding plain. Quarrying and development of the water storage areas have exposed geological features that would have otherwise been unknown. Exposed flared and stepped slopes demonstrate that without a doubt, the rock was weathered in the subsurface making it important for understanding erosional processes that affected the landscape over millions of years.

STATEMENT OF DESIGNATION

Designated Place of Geological Significance

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry provide exceptional examples of erosional processes on granite. The quarry and in-situ quarried rocks demonstrate a weathering profile that displays how the nearby Yarwondutta Rock may have developed. The flared and stepped slopes of Yarwondutta Rock provide clear evidence of the evolution of the geological landscape and provide insight into the cycles of weathering and erosion that have altered the granite and produced various distinctive features on the rock surface. Investigation of these features is highly likely to further understanding of the inselbergs of South Australia.

Elements of Significance

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Granite outcropping,
- Erosional features associated with the outcropping including boulders, flared and/or stepped slopes, rillen, gnamma, jointing,
- Quarry including exposed weathering profile and silicified tree roots.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- Human-made objects, trails and roads, vegetation, fencing and signage.

CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history

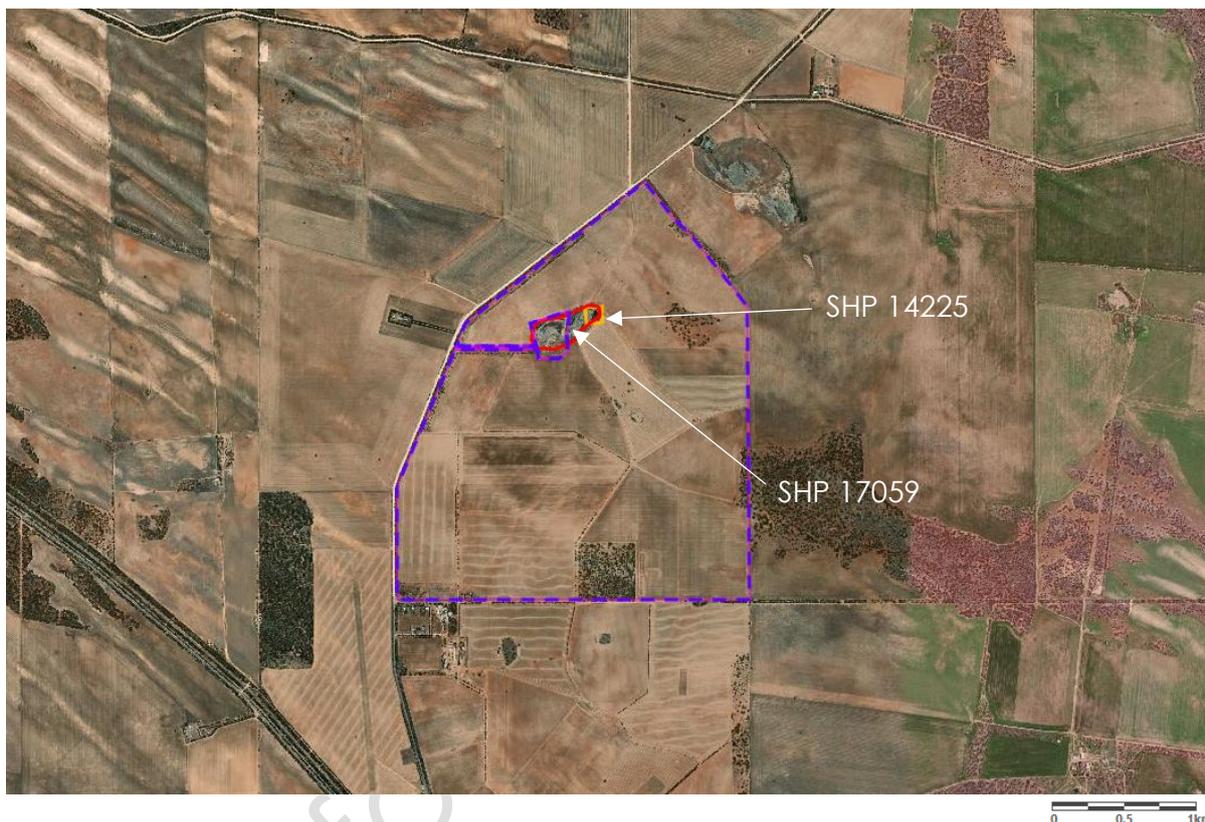
The Yarwondutta Rock is part of the Hiltaba Suite granites, which intrudes into the Gawler Range Volcanics that forms one of the most voluminous igneous provinces in the world. Along with similar formations dotted throughout the region, the Yarwondutta Rock is key to understanding the origins and geological evolution of South Australia.

Yarwondutta Rock is an excellent example of a granite inselberg of the Hiltaba Suite. Few other inselberg's within South Australia demonstrate a comparable size and complexity. The structure displays examples of erosional features such as flared slopes, well-developed tafoni, rillen, rock basins, dissected bedrock surfaces, pitting and clear joints that have contributed to the shape of the structure over years of erosion and weathering. Additionally, an excellent example of an exposed weathering profile is present within the Yarwondutta Quarry. It demonstrated that it and other structures with flared and stepped slopes have undergone weathering prior to surface exposure. Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry provides a clear physical record of the cycles of weathering and erosion which have shaped the landscape over millennia. The structure and adjacent quarry, in association with other inselbergs in the region, is highly likely to provide evidence of the origin and development of inselbergs throughout South Australia.

SITE PLAN

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry
McKenzie Road, Minnipa

PLACE NO.: 17059



Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry, McKenzie Road, Minnipa SA 5654,
CR 5757/306 H640800 S27, CT 5954/216 H640800 S117 Hundred of Minnipa

N ↑

LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place
-  Existing State Heritage Place (Yarwondutta Rock Tank SHP 14225)

SITE PLAN - DETAIL

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry
McKenzie Road, Minnipa

PLACE NO.: 17059



Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry, McKenzie Road, Minnipa SA 5654, Hundred of Minnipa
CR 5757/306 H640800 S27, CT 5954/216 H640800 S117

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LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place
-  Existing State Heritage Place (Yarwondutta Rock Tank SHP 14225)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Yarwondutta Rock is a large protruding rock structure found south of Gawler Ranges National Park. It is made up of several domed granite outcrops with flared slopes, giving a stepped, wave-like shape, and boulders with large tafoni (cavities developed in the underside of rocks).¹

Pink-red, coarse-grained granites as a part of the Hiltaba Suite² make up most of the structure.³ The major granite outcrop has an area of approximately 21,000 square metres and reaches approximately 15m high.⁴ Geologists typically recognise Yarwondutta Rock as an inselberg, an isolated hill that stands above its surrounding plains, like Uluru or the more comparable Pildappa Rock.⁵

Yarwondutta Rock has a pitted appearance due to erosion, creating several armchair hollows, pits and pans in the surface of the rock.⁶ Additional channels and erosional gutters, described professionally as rillen, have also been formed by waterflow. Some of the channels and rillen are present along the sloping sides of the rock.⁷

Like Pildappa Rock, the granite lacks many joints⁸ which allow erosion in only very select areas.⁹ Rillen form predominantly along the joints in the rock. Also, weathered along a joint is a large 'cleff' between two flared slopes.¹⁰ A large residual boulder sits atop the northwestern slope¹¹ of the granite outcrop, forming a stark visual contrast with the main rock formation. This boulder demonstrates highly developed tafoni.¹²

In the western portion of the State Heritage Place is a quarry. This site was initially a second, separate outcrop of the Hiltaba Suite, but a large portion of that granite was later quarried for railway ballast.¹³ The quarrying has exposed a subsurface weathering profile and further jointing.

A 650,000-gallon water tank at the base of the Yarwondutta Rock is also recognised as a separate State Heritage Place (Yarwondutta Tank SHP 14225).¹⁴

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Granite outcropping,
- Erosional features associated with the outcropping including boulders, flared and/or stepped slopes, rillen, gnamma and jointing,
- Quarry including exposed weathering profile and silicified tree roots.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- Human-made objects, trails and roads, vegetation, fencing and signage.

HISTORY OF THE PLACE

Geological History

The Yarwondutta Rock is a Mesoproterozoic rock structure from approximately 1600-1575 million years ago (Ma) and is composed of very-coarse grained granites in the Hiltaba Suite. The Hiltaba Suite is a group of granite formations that were formed in the last volcanic event to have affected the Eyre Peninsula.¹⁵ The Hiltaba Suite granites often have a red or pink colour from abundant iron oxide inclusions within its grains and is commonly quarried commercially. Areas of this formation can be found throughout the west and central sections of South Australia.



Yardwondutta Rock and Quarry

Source: SARIG Map (N.D.)

Over millions of years, the Hiltaba Suite and in turn, what is now the Yarwondutta Rock were covered with sediment. Uplift and erosion of the surrounding sediment eventually revealed the Hiltaba Suite granites and Yarwondutta Rock, revealing the inselberg 'wave rock'. The wave itself is said to be a result of subsurface, wet rocks against the granite that caused the granite to weather inwards into the wave-like shape with overhanging sections.¹⁶ Surface exposure of Yarwondutta Rock may have begun as early as 20 million years ago.¹⁷ At this time, there were two granite exposures at the site, one eastern and one western. Today, Yarwondutta Rock is surrounded by Pleistocene (2.58 Ma - 11.7 ka (thousand years ago)) sediments. Minnipa Hill, approximately 1.7km north and also composed of the Hiltaba Suite, is thought to be a probable extension of the Yarwondutta Rock outcropping. Additional outcrops of the Hiltaba Suite can also be found nearby including Pildappa Rock, Mount Wudinna and Ucontitchie Hill. The Central Eyre Peninsula is often referred to as Granite Country,¹⁸ thus such outcrops are not uncommon.

Several interesting structures are associated with Yarwondutta Rock, including:

- Examples of well-developed gnamma on the upper surface of the rock (Weathered pits of water including flat-bottomed pans),¹⁹
- Excellent examples of interconnecting gutters (rillen) along joint structures,
- Boulders with well-developed tafoni (cavities developed in the underside of rocks),²⁰
- Flared, often stepped concave or convex slopes of Yarwondutta Rock,²¹
- Exposures of Yarwondutta Rock and associated weathering profiles within the adjacent Quarry.²²

Yarwondutta Rock demonstrates excellent examples of granite outcrop features such as rillen and tafone within the State. Weathering fronts in the nearby quarry also demonstrate erosion processes.

The granite demonstrates very few joints (breaks or fractures in the rock). This lack of joints may explain the homogenous and somewhat monolithic rock formation²³ which has allowed little alteration. Geologists believe that the Yarwondutta Rock, with its limited joints, was eroded much slower than the surrounding, closely jointed granite plain. As a result, the surrounding landscape has revealed Yarwondutta Rock and allowed it to stand starkly in the landscape.²⁴

Notably, minor forms in the granite such as rillen, were potentially weathered from beneath the soil. Additionally, the weathering front for Yarwondutta Rock can often best be seen in the flared and concave slopes of the feature. Unlike Pildappa Rock, the flared slopes of Yarwondutta Rock appear sequential, as there are examples of stepped slopes, potentially demonstrating several distinct erosional periods.²⁵

The outcropping is currently surrounded by Pleistocene (2.58 Ma - ~11 ka) gravels and clays.

Human History

Yarwondutta Rock is on Barngarla Country and a Native Title Determination has existed on the site and surrounding area since 2016. The First Nations significance of Yarwondutta Rocks specifically is not well documented, however, the Barngarla People have had a connection to Country for tens of thousands of years. It is likely that gnammas on the rock surface were used as sources of water for First Nations People in South Australia, as was the case at Pildappa Rock. The word 'gnamma' itself is of First Nations origin in the Western Desert and refers specifically to a rock hole with water. Australian Historian Geoffrey H. Manning believes the name Yarwondutta is a corrupted version of the Aboriginal term 'yuwangdutu', meaning 'where the land rises up'.²⁶

In 1915²⁷, the margins of Yarwondutta Rock were dug out using picks and shovels, and a concrete water tank/retaining wall was constructed²⁸ on its side. The tank would catch runoff from the rock, due to walls built to better direct waterflow. The tank contains several rows of internal concrete pillars. The water was used to feed steam locomotives that travelled through the outback.²⁹ The water could also be used for agriculture in nearby farms.³⁰ The Yarwondutta Rock Tank (SHP 14225) was confirmed in the State Heritage Register on 4 March 1993. The catchment is now disused.³¹.



Historical Image of Yardwondutta Rock Tank. c.1999

Source: DEW Files

Government-funded water collection at Yarwondutta Rock (and Kolballa) informed decisions for further collections at other granite outcrops within the State. At Yarwondutta Rock, the water tank was excavated close to the granite outcrop. This decision was subsequently found to be less suitable than having a tank that was further away, even wholly or partly above ground. Owing to this discovery, water collection tanks at places such as Mt Wudinna, Peella, Cocata and Polda were thereafter designed in a more efficient manner. However, other non-government funded tanks like those at Ucontitchie Hill continued to reflect the older, less efficient water collection method.³²

Likely around 1966, a quarry was established at the western exposure of the rock for railway ballast.³³ Early quarrying activity used high velocity explosives for quarrying. By 1968, quarrying works had removed 102,000 tonnes of rock and mined to a depth of 10 metres. The mine functioned on a campaign basis, often with irregular, short term and objective-driven projects rather than periodical mining ventures, until 1974. However, the mine was briefly reopened in mid-2010.³⁴ It was abandoned sometime afterwards. The quarrying reportedly has not damaged the main, remaining outcrop.³⁵

Quarrying inadvertently revealed excellent examples of previously buried weathering profiles. The exposed sediments demonstrate calcrete 'superimposed' on the granite and an iron oxide rich area near the base of weathering.³⁶ This profile was recognised as significant when the place was confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register. Also exposed were some of the flared slopes of Yarwondutta Rock, which along with similar structures at Chilpuddie Hill, demonstrated that erosion of the rock had occurred underground and prior to aerial exposure. This discovery changed the understanding of the development of many of the Eyre Peninsula granites.³⁷ and some xenoliths, as well as further jointing known as off-loading jointing. The latter provides further evidence of erosion and weathering.³⁸ Quarrying also revealed plant fossils in the form of silicified tree roots, which were found at the southeast corner of the quarry excavation,³⁹ its deepest point. Dr Charles Rowland Twidale informed Heritage SA of these findings in 2000.

Although Yarwondutta Rock is one of the most researched inselbergs in the Eyre Peninsula, the true method of exhumation of the structure, and the time period and sequence of which this occurred, is not yet well understood.⁴⁰

Aboriginal Cultural Considerations

The *Heritage Places Act 1993* makes provision for the identification, recording and conservation of places and objects of non-Aboriginal heritage significance. The protection and preservation of Aboriginal heritage is provided for under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*. Contact the Aboriginal Heritage Unit for listings.

CHRONOLOGY

Year	Event
~2500	Proterozoic Eon.
538.8 Ma	Includes the Mesoproterozoic Era (~1600 – 1000 Ma) . Yarwondutta Rock formed (~1600-1575 Ma) The place is buried by jointed granites that are more easily eroded. As a result, Yarwondutta Rock remained as the surrounding rock eroded.
2.58 Ma	Surrounding sediment deposited. Likely Yarwondutta Rock used as a water source by the Barngarla People.
1915	Dam constructed a Yarwondutta Rock. Used for steam engines and, likely, agricultural practices nearby.
c.1966	Yarwondutta Rock Quarry began excavation; functioning on a campaign basis until 1974.
1980	Recognised as a Geological Monument by the SA Division of the Geological Society of Australia in 'Geological Monuments in South Australia'.

- 1987** Yarwondutta Rock Tank (SHP 14225) considered for State Heritage Listing in the *Heritage Survey of the Eyre Peninsula and West Coast*.
- 1988** Added to the Register of the National Estate
- 1993** 4 March: Yarwondutta Rock Tank added to State Heritage Register
- 1998** 1 December: Nomination received.
- 2000** 16 March: Provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register and designated as a place of geological significance.
5 July: Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register.
- 2010** Yarwondutta Rock Quarry briefly re-opened

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Scientific Publications

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Ferris, GM, Gray, ND & Pain, AM (1998), 'Reconnaissance granite sampling of the Mesoproterozoic Hiltaba Suite Granite on Northern Eyre Peninsula, South Australia for dimension stone', *Primary Industries and Resources SA, Report Book 97/28*, p.373.

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BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 17059

Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 5 July 2000

Draft BHI SSHP for Consultation 12 February 2026 to 12 May 2026

The Geological Survey of South Australia (1988), 'Yardea 1:250 000 Geological Map', *Quarterly Geological Notes*, no. 107, pp.18-19.

Twidale CR (2016), 'Enigmatic Mesozoic paleoforms revisited: the Australian experience', *Earth-Science Reviews*, Vol. 155, pp.82-92.

Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin, age, and conservation, of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia', *Cadernos do Laboratorio Xeolóxico de Laxe Revista de Xeoloxía Galega e do Hercínico Peninsular*, Vol. 45, pp.33-58.

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SITE DETAILS

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry
McKenzie Road, Minnipa

PLACE NO.: 17059

FORMER NAME: Granite inselberg with abandoned quarry site.

HISTORIC THEME/S: Theme 1 Natural Environment
 1.1 Tracing climatic and topographical change

AGE OF FORMATION: 1600-1575 Ma

REGISTER STATUS: Nominated 1 December 1998
 Provisionally Entered: 16 March 2000
 Designated: 16 March 2000
 Confirmed: 5 July 2000

CURRENT USE: Granite outcropping and quarry

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Wudinna District Council

LOCATION:

Street No.: NA

Street Name: McKenzie Road

Town/Suburb: Minnipa

Post Code: 5654

LAND DESCRIPTION:

Title: CR 5757/306 H640800 S27;

Reference: CT 5954/216 H640800 S117

Hundred: Pildappa

PHOTOS

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry
McKenzie Road, Minnipa

PLACE NO.: 17059



Detail of the large boulder showing an example of tafoni. c.1999

Source: DEW Files



Yarwondutta Rock. c.1999

Source: DEW Files

PHOTOS

Yarwondutta Rock and Quarry
McKenzie Road, Minnipa

PLACE NO.: 17059



Example of one of the sloped sides of Yarwondutta Rock. c.1999

Source: DEW Files



View of the water tank to the northeast of the outcrop. c.1999

Source: DEW Files

REVISIONS

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 17059
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Draft BHI SSHP for Consultation 12 February 2026 to 12 May 2026

Date	Changes
13 February 2026	SAHC modified template to include an image at the beginning of the document.

¹ Ferris, GM, Gray, ND & Pain, AM (1998), 'Reconnaissance granite sampling of the Mesoproterozoic Hiltaba Suite Granite on Northern Eyre Peninsula, South Australia for dimension stone', *Primary Industries and Resources SA*, Report Book 97/28, p.373.

² The Geological Survey of South Australia (1988), 'Yardea 1:250 000 Geological Map', *Quarterly Geological Notes*, no. 107, pp.18-19.

³ Ferris, GM, Gray, ND & Pain, AM (1998), 'Reconnaissance granite sampling of the Mesoproterozoic Hiltaba Suite Granite on Northern Eyre Peninsula, South Australia for dimension stone'.

⁴ Bierman, PR & Caffee, M (2002), 'Cosmogenic exposure and erosion history of Australian bedrock landforms', *GSA Bulletin*, Vol. 114, pp.787-803.

⁵ Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin, age, and conservation, of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia', *Cadernos do Laboratorio Xeolóxico de Laxe Revista de Xeoloxía Galega e do Hercínico Peninsular*, Vol. 45, pp.33-58.

⁶ Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin age and conservation of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia'

⁷ Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin age and conservation of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia'

⁸ McBriar, EM, Giles, CW and Mooney, MD (1980), 'Geological Monuments in South Australia Part 3', On behalf of the *Geological Monuments Subcommittee of the SA Division of the Geological Society of Australia Incorporated*, pp.63-64.

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¹⁰ Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin age and conservation of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia'

¹¹ Twidale CR (2016), 'Enigmatic Mesozoic paleoforms revisited: the Australian experience', *Earth-Science Reviews*, Vol. 155, pp.82-92.

¹² Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin age and conservation of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia'

¹³ The Geological Survey of South Australia (1988), 'Yardea 1:250 000 Geological Map'.

¹⁴ The Register (1919), 'The Man on the Land', 27 October, p.4. From <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article62399046>>.

¹⁵ SA Division of the Geological Society of Australia Incorporated (2016), 'Central Eyre Peninsula; Geological trails'. From: <<https://sarigbasis.pir.sa.gov.au/WebtopEw/ws/samref/sarig1/image/DDD/BROCH043.pdf>>.

¹⁶ Twidale CR (2023), 'The origin age and conservation of an 'elevated platform', Yarwondutta Rock, north-western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia'

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