NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The third General Meeting of the Society for 1980 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00PM, MONDAY, 23 JUNE, 1980

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of previous General Meeting, held on Monday, 28 April, 1980, to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members.
   The following new members have been elected to the Society.

   Thomas James GARA
   Timothy Minton CONNELL

4. Papers and Journals.
   Papers and Journals from other Societies and Organizations will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Business.

6. Speaker.
   Mrs. RUBY HAMMOND, Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group, will give an address to the Society with background information and the current situation of the Aboriginal Land Rights issue.

7. Supper.
   Coffee, tea and biscuits will be served.

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UPPER COOPER FIELD TRIP

The Society's field trip to the Upper Cooper area was held from Thursday, 22 May, 1980 to Sunday, 1 June, 1980. Twenty three (23) members and families attended.

The areas covered on this field trip were as follows:

1. THE ABORIGINES.
   The Aboriginal tribes whose territories met in the area were the Yantruwanta, Yauraworka and Wongkumara.

   Yantruwanta territory of 28,300 km² lay almost entirely south of the river; the 'bulk of it' the sandy country on both sides of the Strzelecki Creek, extending down to Lake Blanche but including some of the Cooper lakes, a fine stretch of the Cooper itself and that area of stony uplands and mesas which lies on the South Australia - Queensland border.

   The Yauraworka had country north of the river covering 14,600 km², consisting of a large tract of the lakes and floodplain of the Cooper as well as a short river frontage, part of Sturt's Stony Desert, and the scattered mesas of the north-eastern corner of South Australia.

   The Wongkumara had 11,700 km² of dune country on both sides of the Cooper, and two small patches of high stony country at the western and eastern ends.

   All these tribal areas included part of each of the different kinds of desert terrain. These were:

   1. Riverine desert of open grasslands on fine-textured alluvial soils with gallery woodlands following the river channels. Deep and permanent waterholes were replenished by the flooding of the Cooper from rains in the Great Dividing Range of Queensland.

   2. Stony desert which had sandy soils thickly covered with stones, with open grassland and mulga woodland.

   3. Sandy desert, combining sandy plains and dune fields of longitudinal ridges. The margins of the dune fields were the most productive part of the sand desert, where surface run-off was concentrated in clayspans and gave rise to patches of trees and shrubs.

   This combination of three types of landscape provided a habitat with a wide variety of game and plant food, and ample water. The areas away from the river could only be exploited after rain, but the river banks provided a reliable shelter in which semi-permanent villages were established. The Cooper people lived in one of the most favourable desert habitats on the continent.

   The Cooper had therefore a fairly large population, which can be estimated on the basis of reports made during the contact period at an average of 400 individuals for each tribe. They were described by the explorers as being tall, well-built, healthy and athletic people.
1. THE ABORIGINES CONT’D.

The first white contact with the Cooper people was made by Charles Sturt in 1845, followed by Gregory, Burke and Wills, Rowlett and McKinlay. By 1870, missionaries and police troopers, cattle duffers and drovers had travelled into their territories, and in 1873 the first permanent white settlement on the Cooper took place at what is now Barrioolah.

By 1880 the whole area had been leased and had been occupied and stocked. The white man put his homesteads on choice campsites, and the Aborigine was driven away from the waterholes so that stock could water. With their traditional way of life curtailed, periods of drought brought them to the verge of starvation, and the South Australian government was obliged to supply rations for the old, sick and infirm. A few able-bodied men were employed as stockmen, shepherds and yard men; women worked in the homesteads, in the wool-scours and as message-carriers.

Hunting skills necessary for survival declined. European boats and fishing line replaced traditional netting; the gathering and grinding of nardoo was replaced by the white man’s flour. Obesity and lethargy came with idleness. Tribal rituals were discouraged, and the young men growing up in a changed world lost faith in the old ways.

By 1896 there were only 70 Aborigines at Innamincka, 10 employed on the station, 14 receiving government rations, the remainder living by hunting. By 1901 deaths greatly outnumbered births. There were only 46 individuals in Yauraworka country, two-thirds of them senile. By 1914 there were estimated to be less than 250 in Yantruwanta and Yauraworka territory, many of them from different tribes, and only 20 children among them. By 1918 the population had fallen to less than 100 in the whole north-eastern corner of South Australia.

The last full-blood of the Yauraworka people died in 1958, the last of the Yantruwanta in 1976. The Wongkumara people dwindled and died in the same way.

2. TINGA TINGANA STATION

This station was originally leased by William Christopher Burkitt in the early 1870s, and comprised 1,492 square miles of sandy country straddling the Strzelecki Creek. It was watered only by one large waterhole in the creek and five wells, and although it grew good herbage and grass after rain, areas distant from the creek soon became useless for stock. Burkitt abandoned the station in 1889 on expiry of the lease, after living there some years with his wife and family.

It was leased briefly then by Turton and Bristow, then in 1890 the Government put in a caretaker, G.L. Prior, who lived there with his wife until John Warren of Anna Creek took over the lease in 1892. He took his young bride to live on the Strzelecki with him, but in 1895 the combination of drought and the ravages of the rabbits which had arrived in the mid-80s forced him to abandon it.
UPPER COOPER FIELD TRIP CONT'D.

2. TINGA TINGANA STATION CONT'D.

Another government caretaker, Samuel Watts, lived on the station in great discomfort and distress, continually battling the drifting sand in 1896-7, until he died in November 1897 and is buried somewhere near the homestead.

All the Strzelecki stations were abandoned by 1899. In 1914 Albert Pope, owner of the Innamincka Hotel, moved down to Tinga Tingana for a couple of years. After him John Patterson took it over and hung on into the Twenties. The drought of 1929 finished the Strzelecki country; the track was closed both as a stock route (for lack of water) and as a mail route (because of the sand).

3. INNAMINCKA TOWNSHIP

The ford across the Cooper near Innamincka Station was the junction of a number of important stock and mail routes leading into south-west Queensland and northern New South Wales through Nappa Merrie, to western Queensland through Haddon Downs and Beetoota, or via Coongie to Birdsville, and to the southern stock markets by way of the Strzelecki track.

By 1882 all the country was taken up and stocked, and the volume of traffic and the population had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of a police camp, which was done in September on the north side of the Cooper near the crossing.

In 1883 tenders were called for a permanent police station on the southern bank, but when nearly completed the building was demolished by heavy rains and floods in 1885. The Police Department leased a hut belonging to the manager of Innamincka Station as a temporary station which was to remain in use until 1929.

In 1884 Edward Davey and George Pilkington built a small store, and in 1886 Howard Kearns and John Donaldson built the Innamincka Hotel close by. There were soon a couple of small houses, a saddler's shop, an eating house run by a Chinese couple and a Chinese gardener across the river on the flat.

Following steady agitation from the local people, a Government surveyor W.R. Murray laid out a township in 1890, to be named Hope Town after the then Governor of Victoria. The name reverted, under pressure of local opinion, to Innamincka in 1892.

Of the 177 town lots available, 40 were sold, mainly to local people.

The store was taken over by John West Manfield in 1890, and the hotel by John Donaldson (1891-1897), Larry and John Darmody (1898), Albert Pope (1900-1913), and Hermann Schmidt (1914-1919). After him came M.R. ("Jack") Oakes, who leased it to various licensees. Sir Sidney Kidman bought it in his wife's name in 1925, putting in a series of licensees, including Mrs. Phyllis Moulden in 1932, who bought it in 1937. After her death in
3. INNAMINCKA TOWNSHIP CONT'D.

1947 it passed to James Robert de Pury, a former Mounted Constable who had been stationed at Innamincka between 1924 and 1928. In 1950 de Pury went south to Waukaringa and Henry Thompson became the licensee.

The great drought which closed on the district between 1895 and 1902 effectively ended optimistic hopes of making Innamincka a large and prosperous centre. The only additional building to be built was the Australian Inland Mission Hostel - the Eleanor (later Elizabeth) Symon Nursing Home - which opened in 1929. About the same time a new galvanised iron police station replaced the old hut which had been in use since 1885.

Although the town site appears well above river level, both the police station and the hotel were badly damaged by Cooper floods, which reached the police station in 1887, 1891 (when it was three feet deep inside the station), 1906 (when it was nearly five feet deep inside), and 1907. The hotel was badly affected by floodwaters and rain in 1906 and 1907; when walls collapsed.

Because of a dwindling population and the service provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and outback radio, the Nursing Home was closed in August, 1951, and its equipment and fittings dispersed. The hotel closed in 1952 and within two months the police station also closed. The town became a ghost town until 1971, when eight township lots were bought and the building of the present complex of hotel, motel and store was begun, to be completed after the floods of 1973-74.

The town cemetery can be seen a short distance to the east. Among those buried there are Edgar Hampton (1894) and Peter Parker (1943) both killed in accidents during the Innamincka race meeting; James Lee (1885), John Budge (1887), A.W. Harris (1887), William Bralla (1894) and William Blinman (1922) all of whom were drowned in the Cooper; Thomas Row of Onooto who died of typhoid in 1888; Wallace Johnston, contractor for the famous Patchewarra Bore which was more than a mile deep but yielded little water; and Christopher Bowden, son of the Innamincka Station bookkeeper who died of gastro-enteritis.

4. INNAMINCKA STATION

The first land in the neighbourhood of Innamincka to be taken up was selected by a member of John Conrick's pioneering party, Robert Bostock, from Warrnambool in Victoria, in 1873.

In 1874 Henry Colless, Joseph Becker and a man called Green took up 1,415 square miles nearby; Colless and his wife moved to the Cooper where they built a stone cottage on the southern bank of the river, later to be known as the Old Station.

In 1875 Walter and William Hood leased 168 square miles along the North-west Branch of the Cooper and named it Terrawanga Station. This block was taken over by Colless in 1879.
4. INNAMINCKA STATION CONT'D.

In December, 1881, Hon. William Campbell, M.L.C. of Victoria bought Innamincka and some unstocked country on its northern boundary, adding it to his holdings near the Cooper in Queensland (Arrabury and Charleton Stations). His manager, Alfred Walker, moved the homestead across the river, to approximately its present position.

Cullamurra Station, originally intended to be used as the site of a mission station to minister to the Aborigines in gratitude for their kindness to John King of the Burke and Wills expedition, which had been subsequently held by Edward Laughton and James McLeod, was added to Innamincka in 1886. This brought the total holding in South Australia to about 4,000 square miles, carrying 20,000 cattle.

Campbell died in England in 1896, and the Cooper holdings were administered by his executors. The great drought did immense damage, the loss of cattle by 1895 being 10,000 head on Innamincka. In 1908 Sir Sidney Kidman went to England and bought the station from Campbell's estate for £32,000, with 4-5,000 cattle on it. Including Coongie, added to Innamincka in 1902, the station now covered some 7,000 square miles.

Originally a private pastoral company, Innamincka is now a public company. The homestead was threatened by the Cooper flood in 1887, 1891, 1906 (when it had to be vacated), 1949-50 and 1973-4 (once more necessitating evacuation of the residents to a nearby hill).

(Innamincka - "Yidni minka (ngeuamai)" - "Thou a hole (shall be)".)

5. CULLAMURRA STATION

(Kulyu - an acacia; maru - a wide expanse of country.)

In 1863 in recognition of the Cooper Aborigines' kindness to the lone survivor of the Burke and Wills expedition, John King, a block of 252 square miles of country was set aside on the Cooper for their use - that is, so that a mission station could be set up. However, both the Moravian Missionaries, who opted for Killalpaninna, and the Anglicans, who saw its remoteness from supplies as an extreme drawback, decided against establishing a mission, and in 1875 the lease was taken up by Edward C. Laughton of Adelaide. He gave it up to James McLeod in 1877, who stocked it with cattle.

In 1881 the block was mortgaged to Simpson Newland, and transferred to Hon. William Campbell in 1886, to become a part of Innamincka.

6. NAPPA MERRIE

(Ngapa - water; merri - sandhill.)

The original lease of about 200 square miles was taken up by John Conrick and George Ware from the western district of Victoria in 1873, and stocked with 600 Shorthorn cattle. By 1891 it carried 5,500 Shorthorns and 500 horses.
6. NAPPA MERRIE CONT'D.

In 1891, the neighbouring station of St. Ann, officially known as Bundabinna Downs, was added to Nappa Merrie. This country was stocked with sheep and the first record of a Nappa Merrie wool clip was in 1892. Wool from the station was to bring record prices in later years.

Nappa Merrie suffered badly in the great drought of 1895-1901. The 1899 wool clip of 117 bales left the station on two wagons for the railhead at Charleville, and took almost two years to reach its destination, averaging three quarters of a mile per day with a loss of 22 horses.

Wool was scoured on the station and taken away by camel string, donkey or horse teams, and later by truck. The first wool scour was washed away in the flood of 1906. By 1907 the station had recovered to carry 9,700 sheep, 655 cattle and 109 horses on 775 square miles of mixed country. In 1908 Chastleton Station, now known as Barrioolah, was added to Nappa Merrie to increase its size to about 2,000 square miles.

Machine shearing was begun in 1911, and a new scour built in 1913. Nappa Merrie sent 405 bales away in 1912, from 16,000 sheep. At the same time they carried 6,000 cattle and 300 horses, and were famous for their Poll Shorthorn (unregistered) stud and well-bred ponies and stock horses.

The fine stone homestead of Nappa Merrie was built on the top of the sandhill in 1885, where even the highest floods have never reached its walls. Of the original large complex of station buildings only the homestead and the ruins of the store remain, the present outbuildings being modern.

Severe drought in 1913-15 caused the loss of about 10,000 cattle on this station, and drought conditions were almost constant through the Twenties, Thirties and Forties. They lost 30% of sheep and 50% of cattle in the 1929 drought, and only at Barrioolah was there any feed. Brumbies also ate out St. Ann's and Barrioolah country in the mid-forties.

The Conrick family gave up Nappa Merrie in 1946 and it is now owned by the Peel River Pastoral Company.

7. ST. ANN

(Bundabinna Downs)

St. Ann holding was first taken up by H.W. Keys and Richard Bunworth in 1879. Keys withdrew and Bunworth with W.C. Palmer and others took it over in 1882. The area was 467 square miles carrying in 1883, 7,000 ewes, 357 rams, 150 horses and 50 cattle.

The lease passed in 1884 to George Marquand, George Styles and John Laughland; the latter moved in and the station was stocked with 4,100 sheep, 50 cattle and 150 horses. To the original slab cottage was added a handsome stone cottage overlooking the creek, built about 1884.
7. ST. ANN CONT'D.

St. Ann was transferred to Conrick and Ware of Nappa Merrie in 1891, complete with stock. After the disastrous Great Drought the lease was forfeited in 1904.

With some other blocks of country St. Ann was leased in 1911 by William Shine, a former Queensland police constable, and was called Lake Pure. When Shine died in 1948 the lease was transferred back to the Nappa Merrie Pastoral Company; the run then covered over 3,000 square miles.

8. CONTOO TOWNSHIP

The Oontoo Border Customs post was established in 1886 on a square mile of country resumed from Nappa Merrie Run, and a Mr. Ivory, Customs Officer, arrived to collect duties for the Queensland government. His first shelter was a tent, later followed by a pise house with a verandah, and yards nearby.

In 1887 the place became a depot for materials to be used in the construction of the Rabbit Proof Fence which followed along the border between New South Wales and Queensland to the South Australian border, then north into the Channel Country. The contractor for this section, James Gaffney, and his men put up tents and huts and made Oontoo their centre of operations.

In the meantime a shanty public house was built after the publican had carried on his business temporarily in a bough shed. Early in 1888 a substantial stone hotel was built by Thomas Costello with eight rooms, separate kitchen, well, stables and yards. Close by a store was also put up.

Several race meetings are recorded for the settlement.

The 1891 flood turned the township into an island for weeks, and a number of people were isolated there. The drought of 1895-1902 saw a great reduction in traffic as stock died and lack of feed along the tracks prevented the movement of teamsters and other travellers.

With federation the border customs houses were no longer required for the collection of intercolonial duties, but were retained until 1903 to check that passing goods had paid duty equal to the Federal tariff. The hotel was burned down in 1901, and the Customs House roof having been removed, the walls crumbled away.

For many years the Rabbit Fence patrols were continued, and the man responsible for the 20 miles north of Oontoo lived in a small house about half a mile north of the township site.