NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The second General Meeting of the Society for 1983 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00PM MONDAY, 25 APRIL, 1983

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous General Meeting.
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held Monday, 28 March, 1983 to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members.
   The following new members were elected to the Society.
   Rosemary Rae WHITE
   George Randal WOOLMER

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

5. Business.

6. Speaker.
   ANDREW TAYLER will give an address to the Society entitled:

   THE FAR NORTH-EAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA -
   AN AUDIO VISUAL PRESENTATION

7. Supper.

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Pootpobberrie.

AN ABORIGINAL LEGEND.

When the blacks first visited the Adelaide plains they came, according to this legend, in small parties of three or four. They found plenty to eat, and would have done very well had they been left to themselves; but they were subjected to a great deal of annoyance by the cruel behaviour of certain evil spirits, who were already in possession of both land and water. The chief of these spirits was Muldarbie (called also Diarbie), who had the power of changing people into birds and animals. Children paddling in the water were sometimes changed into ducks or fish; a piccaninny left by its mother asleep in a wurrly might be a lizard when she came back; a boy climbing a tree for birds’ eggs might be changed into an opossum. A man snaring a wombat was said to have been changed into a kangaroo; and two women who quarrelled were changed—one into a parrot, and the other into a hawk.

As things could not continue like this, two of the blacks returned to their own country in search of the sorcerer Wirirwi-Maldie, to persuade him to come and punish Muldarbie, and put an end to his bad practices.

After Wirirwi-Maldie had collected a great many things necessary for his purpose, such as yacca gum, hair, feathers, and entrails, with which he performed various ceremonies, he made a fire and burned them, causing a great smoke and a horrible smell. This alarmed the spirits so much that they fled in terror, and took refuge in water-holes and creeks, where they have had to remain ever since, excepting on dark nights, when they come out just a little way, but are afraid to venture far.

Up to this point the sorcerer’s work had been successful, but the mischief wrought by the bad spirits in turning human beings into birds and animals could not be undone, as Wirirwi-Maldie had no power to restore them to their former shapes. Accordingly, he returned to his own people, and spoke in such glowing terms of what he had seen that they came in large numbers to occupy the new country.

A difficulty now arose in the matter of eating certain foods, for it was quite possible that any fish, lizard, opossum, or bird might be one of their own kindred; and it was against their custom to eat human flesh. It happened, however, that a man and his lubra ate part of a kangaroo they had killed, and in consequence their baby boy, born afterwards, was partly human, and partly kangaroo. This was Pootpobberrie, the first of the tribe of that name. He grew taller than any man ever known, had long pointed feet, paws for hands, and a fur-covered body, so strong that he could carry a large rock and leap across a gully with it in one bound. As years went by, he, with his lubra and children, had possession of the hill country east of the great plain. They did not eat flesh, but lived on roots, fruit, and wattle-gum, and to supply their wants with least trouble robbed their neighbours on the plain.

These frequent thefts led to their own undoing, as the tribes that had been robbed lay in wait for them, and killed by spear or boomerang all who came within range of their weapons. Thus, after many years there were only three of the original Pootpobberrie tribe left—Mayu, a man; Mininnie, a woman; and Moolalar, a child.

One day Mayu heard that men of the Weera tribe had stretched long nets, mindie munta, across a gully, with a view to catching a large number of wallaby. Feeling sorry for the animals, he crept quietly along, hoping to loosen the net before any of them were caught. The woman followed him at some distance, and the child came after her. Mayu was wounded by a spear thrown from a long distance, and seeing that enemies were about, he threw a stone behind him to warn Mininnie of danger; and she in turn threw a stone behind her to warn Moolalar; but too late, as at that moment many spears were thrown, which put an end to both woman and child.

A great number of wallaby were stopped by the net, some falling over into a large waterhole, shaded by spreading gum trees, where the spirit Meralpi lived. Meralpi was so enraged by the intrusion of the animals and noise of rolling stones that he changed the only person visible into a bird, Poot-Poota. This happened to be Mayu, who at once flew into a high tree, carrying with him one end of the net, which he made fast to a bough, and broke out into a fit of laughter at the strange things that had happened. Poot-Poota continued laughing so loudly that people at a distance wondered at the strange noise, some calling it Cooyeyanna, others Kerkoarta. The place where this happened was called Mayonna Marte, and afterwards became known as Ngulta, because of its fancied resemblance to a tattooed man.

Note.—This legend will be readily associated with Waterfall Gully, the three falls Mayu, Mininnie, Moolalar, marking the places where the last three members of the Pootpobberrie tribe met their fate. It is also a full account of the origin of the laughing jackass.

The outline of this story was told to the writer many years ago by the late James Cronk, of Modbury, who came out with Colonel Light and acted as native interpreter to Government officials in early days.

—C.H.H.

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