

IN SEARCH OF THE MURKY METEORITE



● Dr Richard Jago (pictured with the measuring rod), of Monash's materials engineering department, was flown to short-lived Schofield Island in Lake Victoria, Gippsland, by a Melbourne newspaper when it was believed that a meteorite, seen overhead, could have ploughed into the lake, causing the overnight mud upsurge. Dr Jago was among the first to reject this theory, however, and said that the island could have been caused by marsh gases bubbling up through the mud. Photo courtesy The Sun.

Education— a key to Aboriginal problems

As a former school teacher, Colin Bourke has a basic faith in education's role in tackling the problems facing Australian Aborigines.

Colin, at 40, is the new director of Monash University's Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs.

He emphasises, though, that the education is two-pronged: it is as much a matter of education of the white community as that of the Aboriginal.

He believes that, by changing white opinion, Aborigines may be able to build up a much-needed power base.

Towards this educative aim, the Centre will launch a black studies lecture series at Monash later this month. It will allow speakers, mostly Aboriginal, to give up-to-date information and present their viewpoints on a wide range of Aborigine-related issues, such as health, education, welfare, housing and employment.

Colin quotes these figures to illustrate the enormity of problems Aboriginal people face:

Throughout Australia the Aboriginal unemployment rate is between 60 and 70 per cent. With 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population under 14 in some areas, "that means there's very little money to feed a hell of a lot of mouths," he says.

As far as formal education of Aborigines is concerned, Colin believes that few who attain advanced levels are later employed to their full capacity.

In Victoria, he says, there are only four Aboriginal teachers, no doctors, no dentists, no architects ... the professional list is long.

Melbourne universities have had only four Aboriginal graduates, Monash two and Melbourne two (Colin is one of them, holding B. Comm. and B. Ed. degrees).

CHANGES ARE NEEDED

As well as placing faith in education, Colin believes there are some basic structural changes which need to be made.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs should be replaced by an Aboriginal foundation or commission, composed of Aborigines, with its own budget.

He claims that of the DAA's \$143m. annual budget, \$120m. ends up back in the hands of whites without ever having reached blacks' pockets.

"A lot of it is being spent paying non-Aboriginal people to do jobs they can't do, while competent Aboriginal people are without work," he says.

Colin has been seconded from the Victorian Education Department, for which he has worked for 21 years, to the Centre for an initial term of 12 months.

He was previously vice-principal of Keon Park Primary School.

Footnote: The first lecture in the black studies lecture series will be held on March 22 at 6.30 p.m. in R6. The second will be held on March 29 at 6.30 p.m. in R6. For further information contact ext. 3348.

Speaker at the first lecture will be **Bruce McGuinness** and speaker at the second, **David Anderson**.

JOURNALISM'S DEBT TO CRABTREE — NEW CLAIM

English poet Joseph Crabtree had exerted a "powerful and pervasive" influence on early Australian journalism, a Melbourne journalist and Crabtree researcher has claimed.

In fact, he attributes the "Olympian heights" of colonial press writing to Crabtree who, he claims to have discovered, was a frequent visitor to the infant settlement.

Mr Keith Bennetts, information officer at Monash University and a former newspaperman of long standing, revealed details of his research in the 1977 Crabtree Oration, delivered to the Australian Chapter of the Crabtree Foundation at Monash recently.

The Crabtree Foundation was established at University College, London, in 1954, to foster research into the life and work of the hitherto little-known poet. Crabtree was born on St. Valentine's Day — February 14 — 1754 and died on St. Valentine's Day, 1854. Each year on the Wednesday closest to St. Valentine's Day, a distinguished scholar is invited to deliver a Crabtree Oration.

Professor Arthur Brown, professor of English at Monash, was the second Orator in the London series and has been instrumental in forming the Australian Chapter.

Mr Bennett's research follows on that of the 1976 Orator, Don Charlwood, who unearthed informa-

tion linking Crabtree with Captain Cook's voyages of discovery. At the time, Mr Charlwood could produce no evidence, however, that Crabtree had actually landed in Australia.

With the help of a fortuitously-met living descendant of the poet, Pastor Barry Crabtree, Mr Bennetts first traced Joseph Crabtree's presence in Australia to a remote settlement in far western Victoria — Lake Charliegrark, close to Lake Boorookpi on the southern fringe of the Little Desert.

MAGPIE MAGIC

Mr Bennetts told the Chapter: "Charliegrark is, of course, an Aboriginal word meaning 'place of magpies' and, in the awesome stillness of that distant Antipodean wilderness, the evening carolling of magpies can exert a magical influence on the senses.

"Picture, if you will, Joseph Crabtree in that magnificent loneliness. You cannot then avoid the question: Where else but here could Crabtree have composed his memorable 'Ode to a Magpie'?

"Hail to thee, pied singer!
A bard may never write
A poem that could charm the sky
Like the Bird of Boorookpi."

Crabtree had travelled widely in Australia, Mr Bennetts contended, contributing to journals in places as far-flung as Kalgoorlie, Sydney and Melbourne.

He said: "While it must be recorded that there was indeed some pretty lusty and uncouth journalism (at the time) — the result, no doubt, of the monumental power struggles between competing proprietors — the papers also contained passages of reportage — in prose and poesy — of outstanding delicacy and beauty.

"In fact, it seemed, no reporter of the time could resist the temptation to record the most mundane events — a ship arrival, a petty court case, the price of vegetables — in elegant, flowing verse.

"Much of this I ascribe to Crabtree's powerful and pervasive influence."

Mr Bennetts quoted the following extract of a Crabtree poem published in the Poet's Corner of John Pascoe Fawcner's *Melbourne Advertiser* as an example of the poet's prescient power.

It is from "Afternoon at Newport", a composition the Orator suggested William Wordsworth was heavily indebted to for his "Yarrow Visited".

"The vapours linger round the heights.
They melt and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine
Sad thought! which I would banish,
But that I know, wher'er I go,
Thy genuine image, Yarra!
Will dwell with me — to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow."