



Shining body in the night sky

ON Monday, at approximately 8.42pm, just as it was getting properly dark, at least four people saw a meteorite in the southern sky, going down from right to left.

The first sighting reported, from Murrumbateman, described it as a bright, white, glowing mass, with sparks coming off it just before it disappeared.

The chances are that very many more people than the four who have taken the trouble to report it actually saw the mass fall from the sky — it could even have been sighted in New Zealand. And in a 200-mile radius from where it actually hit the ground (or the Tasman Sea) people could have heard sonic boom explosions as it entered the earth's atmosphere at anything between 25,000 and 100,000mph.

If enough people report sightings to Mr Don McColl, curator of the geological museum at the Bureau of Mineral Resources, phone 499291, hearings can be taken and the meteor-

bearings can be taken and the meteorite may be found.

Most of the time Mr McColl is happy to work with his 500,000 specimens of minerals, rocks and fossils, stored in his museum and at Fyshwick and in display cases around the East Portal building on Anzac Parade.

But he is deeply interested in meteorites and would dearly love a series of reports which would justify his going looking for one.

"I'd be particularly interested in hearing from anyone who could give some idea of where the light went out at the end of the fall", he said.

"Even someone saying, 'I was standing by this rosebush and the light went out by the second branch of that tree' could be very helpful.

"If we can get good enough bearings, and if the meteorite did not go into the Tasman, we could probably find it.

"One which fell in South Australia in 1941 was found in 1970 — actually the farmers were found who had

picked up bits of it during the war years. And in 1930, one which fell near a farming township in the Mallee was found in a week".

Meteorites were happening all the time, he said, and in some cases were very exciting. A few, including one found in Victoria in 1969, contained carbon, and according to some theories the presence of carbon (the basis of living material) could indicate that there was life wherever the meteorite came from.

So if anyone saw a bright mass in the southern sky on New Year's night, even if it appeared to be red

night, even if it appeared to be red and only two miles away, a report could be helpful.

Actually, Gang Gang is surprised that Mr McColl needs to invite sightings. Among our vivid journalistic memories are the nights when people saw things in the sky — meteorites, shooting stars, UFOs, auroras, searchlights, unusual aircraft, in fact anything that moved. There could be dozens of calls, and more again to the university and museum.

Perhaps space travel has removed the glamour, and television the night sky audience.

FIRST CHIVALRY NOW MANNERS

BEARING no resemblance to Chaucer's "verray parfit gentil knight", a top resident of this town approached three sales birds at a well-known shop over Christmas.

He apparently inquired the price of some chairs, but was misheard by one of the girls who thought he addressed her by name.

She did not know him but, doing the friendly thing, said encouragingly, "I'm sure I know you from somewhere".

"I don't care whether you know me", was the reply. "I'm Sir — —. How much are the chairs?"

WORK - OUT ON THE SWINGS

CANBERRA'S and Australia's own psephologist, Malcolm Mackerras, has been working on his favourite subject for the past three weeks, calculating the amount of swing which took place in each electorate and State in the Federal election.

He does it after all preferences are allocated — and where the electoral office has not had to allocate preferences to determine the winning candidate, Mr Mackerras does the job himself, admitting that in some seats it is a dicey business.

The biggest swings against the previous Government and to Labor were in Victoria, of course, with the previous Minister for Labour and National Service, Mr Lynch, getting the biggest guernsey although managing to retain his seat.

On Mr Mackerras' calculations, the biggest swings to Labor were: Flinders (Mr Lynch) 11.6%; Latrobe (Mr Jess defeated) 10.2%; Henty (Mr Fox barely retaining his seat) 9%; Holt (Mr Reid defeated) 8.7%; and in NSW, Farrer (Mr Fairbairn) 8.7%.

The biggest swings against Labor were: Stirling, WA (Mr Webb defeated) 8.8%; Fremantle, WA (Mr Beasley returned) 6.1%; Dawson, Qld (Mr Patterson) 6%; Capricornia, Qld (Dr Everingham) 6%; Hindmarsh, SA (Mr Clyde Cameron) 5.8%.

Coincidence, no doubt, that the last four who all retained their seats have since become Ministers.

Three States deviated from the overall trend, according to Mr Mackerras, although he acknowledged that that sounded a little odd in view of the fact that there are only six

that that sounded a little odd in view of the fact that there are only six States. The anti-Labor trends were: WA, 4.3%; SA 1.5% and Qld, .4%.

The biggest State swings to Labor were Victoria, about 5.5% and NSW, 3%.

Mr Mackerras' thoughts on the ACT result will not increase his popularity in some quarters: a fairly vocal body of opinion has suggested that the swing to Labor here was one of the highest in the country at slightly better than 10%.

However, Mr Mackerras points out that this figure is based on a comparison with the by-election after the late Mr Fraser's death when, after the distribution of preferences, Mr Enderby won with 57.8% of the formal votes. This election he received 68%.

Mr Mackerras considers the comparison invalid and says this election should be compared with the previous Federal election when Mr Fraser received 71.6% after preferences were distributed — and that means a 3.6% swing against Labor this time.

ROUGHING IT IN FORREST

"FOR most Canadians the traditional Christmas meal is hot turkey with all the trimmings", begins a news item in the Ottawa Guardian of December 19. And it continues:

"But for 206 Canadian servicemen at 13 remote locations around the world, it's two 40lb cardboard boxes packed with 35 sealed items from

world. Its two 40lb cardboard boxes packed with 35 sealed items from cocoa to gherkins.

"Lacking the twinkling tinsel of a Christmas meal at home, the packages nevertheless beat the old spam, ham and jam bundles faraway postings formerly received".

Among the recipients of this largesse from the directorate of special personnel support services in Ottawa were military advisers and observers in various near and far east countries . . . and Canberra, Australia.

When Gang Gang phoned Lieutenant Colonel G. D. Corry, Canadian Forces Adviser with the High Commission, at his home in Forrest, he confirmed he had received the parcels and had shared the goodies with High Commission staff and some Australian friends.

No, he did not really think Canberra was exactly a hardship post, but it was a nice thought from home, and after all Canberra was rather remote from Ottawa.

HUNTING NEW GAME

ALLAN Stewart, foe of the Northern Territory Administration, and white hunter and safari operator in the Alligator Rivers area of the Top End, acquired new status recently when he stood as an "independent Independent" against the sitting Member, Sam Calder.

Known to his parents, friends and enemies for some 54 years as Alexander Allan Stewart, he changed his

ander Allan Stewart, he changed his name to Alexander Allan-Stewart, thus getting to the top of the voting paper.

"People took it very well and did not think I had changed at all", Mr Allan-Stewart told Gang Gang. (He was in Canberra to see if a name change at the Department of the Northern Territory was likely to produce a change of heart about resuming the lease of his safari operation).

"Darwin thought it was a good trick. The only trouble is that people call me Sandy or Alex now and I don't always realise they're talking to me".

As a parliamentary candidate he had to organise one other major change: the old Mr Stewart had been an undischarged bankrupt for 12 years; the new Mr Allan-Stewart is still getting used to his new credit rating after paying a full 100c in the \$.

The sitting Member got in of course (after preferences were distributed) but, with 9% of the vote, Mr Allan-Stewart polled third best of the 57 Independents who stood for election on December 2.

He is now looking forward to the Senate elections, assuming that the NT gets a couple of reps in that Chamber.

"Up in Darwin", he said, "there's a lot of us think Canberra needs me".

INAUGURATING THE LOOS

"THE chairman and members of
the YMCA camp committee

The YMCA camp committee have pleasure in inviting you, your family and friends to the official handing over ceremony of the new ablutions and toilet block to Mr K. W. Arscott, MBE, president, Canberra YMCA, at YMCA Camp Sturt, on the Murrumbidgee River, via Uriarra Crossing, on Sunday, January 7, 1973, at 3pm".

A memorable invitation, suggestive of a most memorable social occasion. Although not a formal one — the invitation adds, "Dress: Comfortable, cool and casual clothing. Please take swimming togs and towel for the family swim".

But Gang Gang is all agog, trying to work out what constitutes an official handing over ceremony of an ablutions and toilet block.

An inaugural ablution, perhaps, of president Arscott? Or an opening, as it were, effected by cutting a ribbon across a urinal? Maybe a launching, by means of an official flushing, with a small plaque set in a throne to commemorate the event?

SINGING THE BLUES AWAY

IT was probably true, as Ian Macdougall said last week, that up to now love songs have been absent from Australian balladry.

"But", as one of our friends and relations remarked, "ballad fashions come and go. Remember a few years back the spate of songs of family problems?"

problems?

"Such as, 'Long ago you held our baby's bottle — the one you hold today's a different kind', and, 'Why does this world, when a boy goes wrong, look down on his old Mum and Dad'".

Even the Beatles' 'Will ya still need me, will ya still feed me, when I'm 64' comes into that genre.

Gay Davidson