



Obituary

Frank M. Bateson OBE FRAS FRASNZ, 1909–2007

Frank Bateson was one of the world's greatest contributors to the study and science of variable stars, providing leadership to the field in the Southern Hemisphere for 78 years. The son of Charles and Alice Bateson, he was born on 1909 October 31 in Wellington, New Zealand. Frank was educated at the Hurworth Preparatory School in Wanganui, NZ and at Scots College, Sydney, Australia.

He made his first observations of meteors in 1923 (Donovan Prize, 1923) and variable stars in 1924 (Donovan Prize, 1924). In 1927 he joined the New South Wales branch of the BAA, was lent a small refractor and allowed to use the refractor at the Sydney Observatory. Bateson left school and started working in 1925 in business administration and accountancy, a career that he followed for most of his working life. He returned to New Zealand in 1927 and founded the Variable Star Section (VSS) of the NZ Astronomical Society (later the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand). He served continuously as Director of the Section for the next 78 years. In 1931 he married Doris McGoldrick and they had two daughters, June and Audrey. Throughout these years Bateson continued his observation of variable stars and worked tirelessly to expand the VSS with its network of observers. During the Depression, the Batesons moved first to Auckland and then in 1937 to a job in Whangarei which allowed plenty of time to devote to astronomy.

After the end of the war in 1945, Bateson moved to the Cook Islands to manage a trading company. From the tropics he continued his own observations (now with an 8-inch refractor) while also directing the New Zealand VSS. Under his leadership, the number of active observers increased as did the number and types of variable stars covered, most notably dwarf novae. He established close working links with professional astronomers and provided them with data obtained through the extensive network of observers. He contributed at least three articles to the *BAA Journal* around 1948–1953.

In the late 1950s he began promoting his vision of a professional observatory in New Zealand in collaboration with Frank B. Wood of the University of Pennsylvania. Bateson conducted an extensive site-testing survey and recommended a site at Mount John near Tekapo. The Mount John Observatory was established with the University of Canterbury in 1965; Bateson served as Astronomer-in-Charge until his retirement in 1970.

Bateson's research in variable stars has achieved international recognition, particularly



Bateson (right) with veteran observer Albert Jones at the former's retirement party on 2004 December 4. (Photo by John Toone)

from professional astronomers who made extensive use of the results he collated. Approximately one million observations have been recorded. Over 1000 charts of southern variable stars have been published (most with Mati Morel). In addition, he has personally authored over 300 scientific papers.

Frank Bateson was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand (RASNZ) in 1963 and at his death had been a member of the Society for over 80 years. He served on the RASNZ Council for many years and was a past President (1966–'67). He was also an honorary member of numerous astronomical societies both within New Zealand and around the world.

Over his long career, Bateson was honoured by many major prizes and awards. He was elected to full membership in the International Astronomical Union and served as the first NZ representative. He received the Jackson–Gwilt Medal and Gift of the (UK) Royal Astronomical Society in 1960 and an honorary doctorate from the University of Waikato in 1979. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1970 for services to astronomy, and the Amateur Achievement Award of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific in 1980. The asteroid 2434 Bateson was named in his honour. With justification, he has been widely recognised as the father of modern New Zealand astronomy. His autobiography *Paradise Beckons* was published privately in 1989.

In 2004, at a meeting to honour Frank's retirement, John Toone, the BAA VSS Chart Secretary, presented Frank with a plaque of the very first observation he submitted to the BAA VSS in 1926. Altogether, Frank made approximately 150,000 observations of variable stars and historically he was the second person to achieve the 100,000 observations milestone.

Frank Bateson died peacefully in Tauranga on 2007 April 16 in the company of his family.

Grant Christie

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(contributed with additions by **Roger Pickard**)

Obituary

John Charles Clint Larard, 1937–2007

With the death of John Larard on 2007 May 25 at a nursing home in Camberwell, we have lost one of the great classical visual observers of our time.

John was born on 1937 April 17, his birth registered in Edmonton District with Clint adopted from his mother's maiden name. He attended Haileybury School. His interests were many, including a passion for classical music, but observational astronomy was his main hobby.

He was a long-time member of the Société Astronomique de France, which often appeared on his headed notepaper during correspondence, and also of the Astronomical Society of India. He was elected a member of the BAA on 1957 November 27 (appropriately

the year of the start of the Space Age) and as a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society on 1967 March 10. In volume 75 (pages 294–295) of the *BAA Journal* he wrote of his double star survey. The RAS library records also show a 'celestial survey' by John was lodged with them.

He became known to the author as the first secretary of *The Casual Astronomer*, which would later become known as *The Astronomer*. The records show he attended the inaugural meeting of this group at Caxton Hall on Thursday 1964 April 2, where he and the founding editor, Jim Muirden, discussed the production of a rapid publication magazine which would provide vital feedback to active

