



Meteorites: a journey through space and time

by Alex Bevan and John de Laeter

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Alex Bevan is curator of minerals and meteorites at the Western Australian Museum in Perth; John de Laeter is emeritus professor of physics at Curtin University in Perth.

Meteorites: a journey through space and time is an introduction to the world of meteorites: what they are made of, where they come from and what they tell us about the solar system. As stated in the preface, this text aims to appeal to everyone by keeping the 'necessary evil' of jargon and technical terms to a minimum.

The book begins with an account of meteorite impacts in historical times, from the Egyptian age to the present day. The section discusses subjects from the forging of daggers in Java from meteoric iron to retrieval of micrometeorites by melting ice in Antarctica, and many things in between. *Meteorites: a journey through*

space and time then goes on to describe the processing and differentiation of the solar system's raw materials, explaining how melting, alteration and fractionation have led to the planets and the range of meteorite types we find today. This section, constituting the greater part of the book, contains wonderfully concise and intelligently devised diagrams. One drawing depicts the series of events that produced meteorites we recover today, from supernovae explosions ~4.7Ga ago to cosmic ray interaction and impacting on the Earth. No mean feat in only two thirds of a page! With equal clarity, the authors have devised sketches explaining the formation of chondrites versus achondrites with elegant simplicity.

Next, the authors present a comprehensive overview of the impact structures on Earth, including some wonderful photographs of less well known impact craters which I, for one, have never seen before. *Meteorites: a journey through space and time* concludes with a discussion of the

future of planetary science, looking to sample return missions from comets and asteroids, and is accompanied by a well chosen list of references which will furnish the reader with up to date knowledge of every area of meteoritics without overwhelming an interested amateur with needlessly complicated details.

The authors state that 'This book is written for people who are not scientists.' Quite true, *Meteorites: a journey through space and time* is instantly accessible to anyone with even a passing interest in the building blocks of our solar system. It is a richly illustrated and succinctly explained record of our current ideas about the early solar system, which should be bought and enjoyed by everyone.

Greg Holland

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