

# Study on Hastings' aboriginal culture

A professor of aboriginal history and languages, Mr Percy Haslem, has appealed to all residents in the Hastings Valley to help him record the history of the local Aborigines.

Professor Haslem of the Newcastle University said most of the history of the North Coast aborigines was in family documents and people's memories.

"The real history of these people is not in books, it hasn't been written," he said.

"I would appreciate any sort of information about the Aborigines such as their language, history, tree cuts and ceremonial sites so I can piece together their history and culture.

"The Hastings Valley has a lot of grass roots information about the Aborigines which has not been tapped.

"I hope to be able to talk

to people, find some tree cuts and maybe uncover more information about their lifestyle in the area.

"It is painstaking and laborious work."

Professor Haslem spent two months in England this year studying at Cambridge and London Universities.

He was interested to find some of the Thomas Dick photo collection at the Cambridge University but also found a lot of gaps in the University's knowledge of the North Coast Aborigines.

He is now preparing a more comprehensive study to send to Cambridge for the archives.

Included in his study will be a copy of March 23 issue of the Port Macquarie News.

This edition's Monday Magazine contained articles on Thomas Dick and prints from his photos of aboriginals.

Professor Haslem said the Dick family were a very valuable link with the history of the Aborigines in the area.

"The series of photos by Thomas Dick of Aborigines making bark canoes is the only record of its type in the world," he said.

Mr Haslem said he would also be keeping a copy of the News Magazine for the Newcastle University Archives and sending a copy to London University's school of oriental and African studies.

Anyone who has any information which might help Professor Haslem should contact the Hastings District Historical Society.

8th July, 1981. Port Macquarie News.

## Aborigines' Week puts focus on sacred sites

**National Aborigines' Week is being celebrated throughout Australia this week, with the theme "Sacred Sites".**

The theme was chosen by the National Aborigines' Day Observance Committee because Sacred Sites are being interpreted in terms of their exploitable wealth rather than what they really are — the essential sources of aboriginal life both past and present, around which our identity and culture revolve.

Chairman of the Committee, Mr John Moriarty, said all Australians understood the significance of sacredness, whether they revered the presence of Christ or acknowledged the sanctity of Anzac memorials.

"We hope therefore that all Australians will understand the importance when we simply say that site is sacred to us — even though they may culturally be unable to understand why it is so," he said.

"Aboriginal sacred sites are not recently created land marks to oppose mining, tourism, or any other undertaking.

"Sacred sites are a dreamtime heritage, and their significance has existed from time immemorial. They are not identified for their exploitable economic value, but for their intrinsic value in the perpetuating of all life".

The National Aborigines' Week poster for 1981 depicts a Sacred site that is invisible to the casual observer, yet is as sacred as the more obvious sites such as Uluru (Ayers Rock). There is no apparent sign and no obvious commercial value — yet the Aboriginal people will award this Site the same protections from any form of desecration.

Mr Moriarty said the National Aborigines' Day Observance Committee urged that all Australians ensure that aboriginal sacred sites were safeguarded against sacrilegious defacement.