



Science article and book highlight how soil science helped solve a crime

The foray of CSIRO soils scientists into the world of crime solving has now been captured in the international journal *Science* and in an award-winning Australian forensic casebook.

An article on the work appeared in the October issue of *Science*, titled: 'Dirty Science: Soil Forensics Digs Into New Techniques' (*Science* 19 October 2007: vol 318 no. 5849 pp 386-387)

The article details how CSIRO Land & Water (CRC LEME) soil scientist Dr Rob Fitzpatrick was called on to assist the South Australian Police in a double murder investigation, which later led to the establishment of the Centre for Australian Forensic Soil Science (CAFSS).

Dr Fitzpatrick and his team, based at the Waite Laboratories at Urrbrae in Adelaide, were able to identify the similarities between mineral assemblages in soils on a shovel and also from a quarry. The soils had a common provenance and revealed the location of two buried bodies.

The work is also highlighted in a book *Written on the skin*, written by Liz Porter, which recently won the 2007 Ned Kelly Award for Best True Crime book in a tie, presented by the Crime Writes Association of Australia.

And the work is being showcased around the world. A poster by Dr Fitzpatrick and his team, which depicts the role of soil science in the crime investigation is being put on permanent display in several institutions around the world, including the Macaulay Institute, Scotland.

This followed Dr Fitzpatrick and CLW colleague Mark Raven's attendance at the 2nd International Conference on Criminal and Environmental Soil Forensics in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, from October 30 to November 1.

Presentations of their work at the conference also led to the publication of articles in the November issue of the *Investigative Practice Journal*, a police professional publication.

CAFSS is the first formal worldwide network of soil and forensic scientists that combines research, training and services in soil forensics to fight crime, terrorism and environmental pollution.

Since its inception, the CAFSS has advised on over 30 criminal investigations and has conducted national and international workshops.

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