

CHRISTMAS ISLAND ON THE MAP

CHIEF INSPECTOR Don Bosman completed his posting as Officer-in-Charge Christmas Island some months ago, but he has left behind a permanent legacy of his stay.

He became chronicler of both the island's great beauty and charm, and a limited history of the island's police force with two publications, "Christmas Island Police, 1958-1983" and "Christmas Island, Indian Ocean". Both books were sell-outs — although some copies of the former are available for those who collect policing histories.

"Christmas Island Police" was prepared in haste to coincide with the celebrations of Australia's 25th year of sovereignty which occurred during Don's first year on the island.

"It all started when I was asked to mount a pictorial display and quickly realised the absence of any permanent record of the police presence on the island," he said. "Had time permitted we would have done more, but even compiling a record of a quarter of a century of policing was work enough."

The 1958-83 time band covers policing from the time the island was removed from control of the Colony of Singapore to that of a British Crown Colony and then, within only a matter of months, an external Australian territory.

But as the publication also points out, policing on the island began with the start of the Christmas Island Phosphate Company's association with the island.



• Chief Inspector Don Bosman



"In 1898, 200 Chinese labourers arrived with eight Europeans and five Sikh policemen to commence mining operations. Sikh policemen continued to maintain law and order until 1940," the text states.

In the limited time he had available, Don segmented the remainder of the police history in periods against each of the serving Superintendents.

It begins with Superintendents Reynolds, Curtis and Jackson from 1958 to 1961, then the AFP's Alan Morley (1961), A.L. Carmichael, Alan Morley again (1964). From then on, names of many serving officers occur, names like John Friend, Keith Moller and Brian Matthews.

"Everything evolves around the mining company," Don said.

"The island has no tourist facilities and is so remote that its population has remained relatively static. You must remember that it is situated some 2,300 kms from Perth and 1,300 kms from Singapore and only those working for the company or official visitors are allowed to enter.

"Christmas Island has great beauty and charm and a way of life that has remained relatively unchanged for decades. The tranquility and unhurried pace of life is typical of small communities, and there is relatively little crime."

After working so hard to produce the first book on time, Don started on the second — on the island itself.

"The photographs came mainly from Mr Tan Hin Wah, who was born on the island and wanted a record to give to all those who had worked, were still working or who will work for the island's phosphate company in the future," he said. This we achieved with me working as the book's co-ordinator and designer."

Forewords to the police history were provided by the then Minister for Territories and Local Government, Mr Tom Uren, and the Police Commissioner, Mr William Yates.

Commissioner Yates said: "Your founders in Great Britain and those in Australia who by Act of Parliament inherited the Christmas Island Police Force are indeed most proud of all who contributed so much to the standing, efficiency and the well-being of the Christmas Island Police Force."

Don Bosman is also proud of the fact that after paying all overheads, he was able to donate \$1000 of the proceeds from sale of the book to spastic societies in Perth and Singapore.