

# Christmas Island

By Jeff Woodgate

**The glassy, heaving swells of the Indian Ocean roll in from distant regions to the shores of Christmas Island, bringing Dutch Mariners and their wooden boats in search of new wealth.**

It was in 1615 when they first sighted the uninspiring landfall, and it took until 1688 for the first recorded landing to take place.

The island continued to slumber on uninhabited until a British naturalist, Sir John Murray, discovered that coral reef samples brought back from an oceanographic survey of the island were composed of pure lime, a valuable commodity in a world starved of fertiliser.

Britain annexed the island in 1888 and established a small settlement there in 1891 when part of the Clunies-Ross family sailed over from the nearby Cocos-Keeling Islands.

British overseers, Chinese indentured

labourers and five Sikh policemen came to work there, under administrators from the Straits Colony in Singapore.

Early policing records are obscure, but after Japanese occupation forces departed in 1945, the island was again policed by detachments from the Singapore Police on a rotational basis.

In 1958, Christmas Island became an Australian external territory, with an officer seconded from the NSW Police as the first Superintendent of the Christmas Island Police Force.



*AFP members on Christmas Island have been required to perform all kinds of duty, from Customs to Immigration.*

# Norfolk Island

By Don Hook

**A penal settlement once officially described as 'hell on earth' is now a popular tourist resort ... and a favoured posting for members of the AFP.**

Norfolk Island, some 1700km from Sydney, was discovered by Captain James Cook on 10 October 1774 and named after "the noble family of Howard" to which the Duke of Norfolk belonged.

Cook, impressed by the island's pine trees and the wild flax plant growing in abundance, believed they could be useful to the British Navy for spars and masts, and in sail-making.

Captain Arthur Philip was ordered to occupy the island and on 6 March 1788 the armed tender 'Supply' carrying Lieut. Philip Gidley King and a party of convicts reached Norfolk Island to establish a settlement.

As it happened, the timber and flax were unsuited to the navy's needs and the early days of settlement suffered from chronic food shortages.

By 1810, with a population of 1100, more than a quarter of the island had been cleared for agricultural use by the settlers and convicts.

The costs, however, were too high and gradually the settlement was run down, to be abandoned only four years later.

In 1825, the need for a penal settlement turned attention once again to the Island and on 6 June 1825 a detachment of soldiers and convicts landed at Kingston to begin the second settlement. This time, no private settlers were permitted on the island and it quickly earned the reputation of being a 'hell on earth' with rumours of brutality and inhumane treatment of prisoners continually reaching the Australian mainland.

## Different role

Growing agitation to have the penal settlement closed finally prevailed and in 1856 the last of the convicts left, to be replaced by 194 refugees from the crowded Pitcairn Island, descendants of the mutineers of the *Bounty*. Their descendants still live on the island.

But today, the task of maintaining law

The Singapore Police stayed on under seconded Superintendents from the Royal Papua-New Guinea Constabulary, the Commonwealth Police (COMPOL) and the Victoria Police.

A more permanent force was eventually established in 1962 when the Christmas Island Police recruited Malaysians, Singaporeans and Islanders, with officers on secondment from COMPOL and, later, the AFP. The Island's first police-woman, Sergeant E.A. Harrison, now with

and order on Norfolk Island falls to the AFP. Three members and five part-time or special police make up the strength of the Norfolk Island Police Force.

Sergeant Paul MacIntosh, of ACT Region headquarters, who served on Norfolk from 1984 to 87, says it is a very different role from that shared by the early soldier-penal officers. Many of the early convicts ended up there after breaking into the homes of the rich to steal food. But today burglary on the island is very rare.

"The islanders seem to have a home code of ethics," Paul says. "In fact, very few people even bother to lock their homes.

"However, the same cannot be said about breaking into workshops and stores. That's fairly common. There's also petty thieving of things like water pumps and building materials, and minor pilfering from the cargo ship which brings supplies to the island."

## Car accidents

Sergeant MacIntosh said much of their work involved general community policing duties, such as inquiries into the

the AFP in Perth, was recruited in 1977.

With the population of the island at about 1800 Chinese, 850 Malays, 380 Europeans and 120 Indians, traffic accidents and common thefts were the staple diet of police work. Occasionally there was a sea search to be conducted by the three Australians and 14 Malaysians and Singaporeans in the force.

The composition of the force changed over the years, with AFP members generally seconded for two years.

Life on the island changed as well. The first obscene phone calls were made, a woman was reported for child abuse, the police rescue launch was set on fire, the phosphate mining company shed staff and the population fell, bushfires were fought, naval ships continued to visit and industrial relations soured as the phosphate mining company's profits dwindled with the fall in phosphate reserves.

#### Clearance duties

The terms of service of the Islander policemen were brought to an end in 1984, with the government's approach to modernise the force.

By now, the population had fallen to

about 1650 Chinese, 200 Malays, 200 Europeans and 50 Indians.

The Christmas Island Police, now all AFP officers, had a strength of eight. Traffic accidents, thefts, sea searches and bushfires continued.

From June to October the winds from the west bring yachts into Flying Fish Cove. The police perform clearance duties for visiting vessels as well as Customs duties for the arrivals aboard the weekly air flight from Singapore.

A murder occurred in May 1987 when a money-lender from the Poon Saan Club was robbed and killed. A team from Canberra CIB was sent to investigate and two men were finally caught and convicted of the killing.

Early in 1988, the new police boat was lost assisting a cruise liner in difficulties during a storm.

Police members work with the National Parks Service to safeguard protected wildlife.

Much of it is at risk on an island where part of the population enjoys dining on emerald pigeons, turtle eggs, and blue land crabs, according to Constable Audrey Fagan, now in International Division, who did a tour of duty in 1986-87.

number of road accidents which occur. They mainly involve single motor vehicles which run off the road or collide with animals. They also carry out airport duties and liaise with Customs.

Apart from some 2000 local residents, they also look after about 25,000 tourists a year. Most of these are from Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia and the United States.

In the past, AFP members have spent two years on Norfolk Island with the option of extending for a further 12 months, but the period of posting has

now been changed to three years. There are several sporting and social clubs on the island, with the most popular sports being tennis, golf, bowls, squash, basketball, clay pigeon and pistol shooting. There is a three-team Rugby League competition.

Paul MacIntosh's only complaint with a posting on the island is the cost of living. But it's not serious enough to discourage him from thinking of returning to the island. He's applied for a further posting there.



Norfolk Island.... once a "hell on earth".



Audrey, after service with the Juvenile Aid Bureau, the Fraud Squad and Woden CIB, found Christmas Island a unique and challenging environment.

#### Tax incentive

The sheer ruggedness and beauty of the tropical island impressed her, although it is a remote hardship posting.

"You have to make the most of it," she said. "You can't buy whatever you want from the shop. Much of the food can be out-of-date, but you get used to sifting weevils from the flour, and joining the rush to pick up fresh fruit after the weekly flights from Singapore and Perth arrive.

"The scuba diving is brilliant and there is no way you can avoid getting to know all the Australian expatriates. Every night is dictated socially. Wednesday, for instance, is ladies' golf night. Thursday night is the 'Hash House Harriers' run where virtually everyone on the island turns out. Friday night is men's golf night, and so on."

Audrey was there at a time when officers paid only half the tax rate, but this concession was phased out in 1988.

The island is off the beaten track and there is no hotel accommodation, although a tour group organised by bushman Harry Butler once camped on the foreshore in tents.

The Australian Government later dissolved the Christmas Island Assembly and the population of the island dropped to 900.

The future of the island has taken on a new look. A casino is to open by January 1990.

The Indian Ocean swells may again carry visitors towards a vision of wealth, just as they brought the Dutch sailors there in search of gold so long ago.

The AFP remains on Christmas Island with a strength of six and every sign of growing in the future.

# Badge History



The 'Texas Rangers' version



The black and silver version



The final decision

**One of the most creative and, as it turned out, contentious issues confronting the AFP Planning Headquarters in the run up to the AFP commencing operations was the badge and shoulder flash design.**

With the adoption of a two-component police force — general service and police protective service — it was initially decided that the components would be distinguished by having separate cap badges and shoulder flashes. In the meantime, arrangements were made for an initial shoulder flash to be produced, based on a design which included the Australian Coat of Arms and which, it was understood, was agreed to by all parties.

When the then Minister for administrative services saw the flash, he objected to the use of the wattle and other embellishments and was reported as saying it looked like something that would be issued to the 'Texas Rangers'.

Apart from being worn by Sir Colin Woods and Deputy Commissioner Reg Kennedy, this design was withdrawn from general issue and new designs were produced, using only the actual Coat of Arms — kangaroo, emu, shield, federation star and bar.

The General Police Component was to carry the words "Australian Federal Po-

lice" and the Protective Service Component the words "Police Protective Service".

When shown the new 'flashes', senior officers of the two police associations, acting as a Joint Executive Committee, sent a telegram to Sir Colin stating:

**"The Joint Executive Committee of Associations representing members of the Australian Federal Police Force strongly reject the proposed issue of the black and silver shoulder flashes. We demand the original shoulder badges, previously approved by all parties, be issued forthwith.**

**A. Bilbie,  
Federal Police Association  
P.N. Curtin,  
Commonwealth Police Officers'  
Association."**

In informing the Minister of this resolution, the then Commissioner noted: "... this is one of the first things that the Associations have been able to agree on!"

Colour was once again introduced to the kangaroo, emu, shield and star. The flash is the one still issued today.

The badge design was far less controversial. Some designs were produced by

officers of the former ACT and Commonwealth Police Forces and, unsolicited, by a number of private individuals.

The design chosen, while similar to a number of suggestions, originated from the Police Planning Headquarters.

Contracting lead-times meant that to have a supply of badges available for Day One, an interim production using a moulding process was commissioned from the company which today produces the current plaques.

The interim arrangement produced a general policing and a police protective service badge. By the time the contract was issued for the production of the permanent issue one, it had been decided that both components would have the same badge.

So by the time the permanent badges and shoulder flashes were produced, it had been decided that all members from whatever component would wear the same cap badge and shoulder flash. The only differentiation was the cap. General police had the white topped cap with checkered hatband, whereas Protective Service members used the black cap with no hatband. This remained until the transfer of the protective service component in 1984.