

MICRO-CHIP MATCHINGS

THE time needed by AFP Fingerprint Bureau experts to search out a match in fingerprint records within Australia has been cut considerably over the past 12 months.

This has been made possible with the AFP's new NEC Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) which links the bureau at Weston Services Centre in a network covering all mainland Australian police fingerprint bureaux. Tasmania Police plan to link up with the system in the future.

The specialist computer system, dedicated only to fingerprint identification, is believed to be the first such link-up of a national fingerprint system anywhere in the world.

It replaces the manual Central Fingerprint Bureau which operated in Sydney and was run by the NSW Police on behalf of all other Australian police forces.

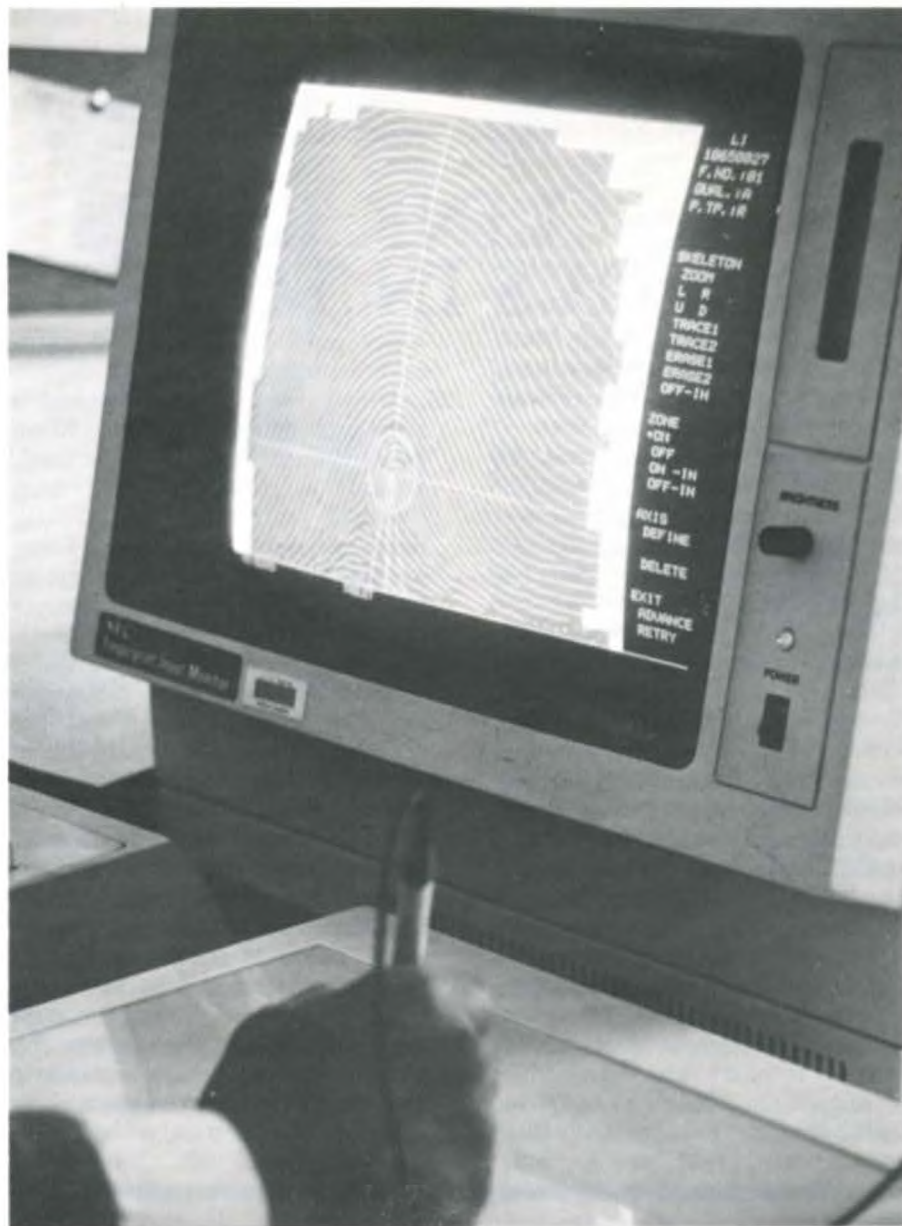
The AFIS allows a rapid check to be made of even a single fingerprint taken from a crime scene with the other mainland police forces. It is now possible to establish the identification of prints which were unsearchable with the manual system. It has also greatly reduced the time needed to establish a person's national criminal record for court presentation if necessary.

The system has been phased into Australian police forces during the past two years. The AFP link-up with AFIS in May last year was completed at a cost of \$800 000.

Acting Superintendent Gordon Kendal, in charge of the AFP's Fingerprint Bureau, said that now it was fully operational, AFIS had 1.6 million sets of prints on file.

"It can take from less than one minute to perhaps five minutes for the computer to complete a search through them," he said. "Delays of up to one year on search inquiries using the old manual method are a thing of the past. This has meant, among other things, that people with previous records can no longer go before a court posing as first offenders. Their records are now taken into account for sentencing purposes."

"One notable success we've had with this system allowed us to identify a break and enter offender who'd been doing several jobs a year on the



southside of Canberra. We'd collected his prints from each crime scene but hadn't been able to identify them until we linked-up with AFIS. We found he had a record in NSW and used to drive down from Sydney on a regular basis to supplement his income."

A more spectacular success for the new system was the identification of a murderer by NSW Police. An aged pensioner was bashed and robbed in Sydney in 1976, and later died from her injuries. The only clue police had to go on was a partial fingerprint on a bingo card in her purse.

On setting up the first computerised system in 1986, NSW Police matched the partial print to a set on file. A Queanbeyan man was arrested and

charged with the "Bingo Card" murder.

The process of recording prints on the system involves two machines. A Fingerprint Image Scanner reads the actual prints and records the positions of all characteristics of ridges in relation to each other. A Fingerprint Input Monitor is used to search for a previously recorded print, or to feed a new print into the system.

Acting Superintendent Kendal, a fingerprint expert of 17 years' experience, was initially sceptical about a computer being able to do the job of the human eye, but now speaks highly of the new system.

"It has taken the tedious work out of sifting through endless card indexes. However, a fingerprint operative is

still required to check the lists of possible matches provided by AFIS and prepare and present evidence in court. We now have more time to focus on the development and enhancement of crime scene prints using latest technology in which the AFP is a pacesetter," he said.

"The future holds many exciting developments. The next stage should

be the production of a machine to electronically scan a complete set of prints from a person and feed them straight into AFIS. This type of development, along with things like DNA genetic 'fingerprinting', should continue to make criminal identification a challenging field to be in. We are still only in the early stages of the possibilities of technological advancement."

'COPS' LINK KEEPS PATROLS IN TOUCH

AN advanced, computerised Incident Reporting System is now in use in the Operations Room at ACT City Station.

The new COPS Incident Reporting System, developed by the Systems Analysis Branch at Weston, was installed in March. It replaces the DOCI system which the Operations Room has been using since 1983.

The COPS system allows a radio operator, or a member in any AFP station, to enter incident details directly upon an Incident Report screen at a computer terminal. A glance at the relevant screen instantly reveals details of current and past incidents, details of any complainant, incident status, and the location and details of all patrols throughout the ACT.

The work of the radio operators in the dispatching to and monitoring of patrols at an incident has been greatly assisted by the introduction of the new system. It eliminates the double-handling of the old message and status cards, which had to be manually filled in and updated by the radio operators.

Many years of message and status cards are stored.

Usually, seven constables and a sergeant work in the Operations Room during a shift. The pace can be hectic at times — virtually non-stop from Thursday afternoons to Monday mornings, with particularly heavy workloads on Monday mornings as people return to work to discover weekend burglaries and vandalism. The number of incidents also varies with the weather, with an increase in vehicle incidents when it rains, and the season, with more shopstealing in school holidays and more break-ins during summer.

The radio operators are highly-trained, continuously monitoring local and national AFP channels, special operations, rescue, emergency and marine channels, NSW Police, ACT local government and ACT Emergency Service bands. They are constantly refining the COPS system. The Systems Analysis Branch is currently reviewing 26 changes to the system suggested by the radio operators themselves.



Sergeant Ian McDougall.

TRACKS ON THE GHAN

Two AFP trekkers based in Adelaide are to follow in the tracks of the famous Ghan train — on foot.

Ian McDougall, Fraud and General Crime, and Bill Fazakerley, Administrative Support Staff, will set out with two other walkers on 1 July to attempt a continuous walk along the entire length of the original narrow gauge railway from Alice Springs to Port Augusta, a distance of about 1300 kms.

Apart from water, the camping expedition will be self-sufficient.

Ian McDougall believes the Great Ghan Walk 1989 team will be the first group of individuals to complete the walk. The "Ghan" is the name given to the train which ran between the Alice and Port Augusta for many years carrying passengers and vital supplies to centres and station properties on the way. It got its name from the Afghan camel trains which once covered the route.

Ian and fellow team-member Chris Whiteside, a secretary, have had considerable experience in bushwalking. They took part in an expedition from SA's Flinders Ranges to Cape Jervis, on the South Coast. (See story, *Platypus* 11 October 1984.) The 1373 km took them 71 days. They hope to do the Ghan trek in 63 days.

The fourth member of the party is Ian's sister, Jeanie, a horticulturalist, who specialises in native flora and fauna. She has already participated in a number of short and extended walks in South Australia.

COL WINCHESTER

LONG time friend of Assistant Commissioner Col Winchester, Assistant Commissioner Ian Broomby writes:

"I am not aware of the exact years or period over which Colin Winchester was at Wolaroi College (Orange, NSW). I believe Colin was 11 or 12 when he started at Wolaroi which would make that year 1945. I understand from his wife Gwen that he attended there for about 2 years.

"The only matter not mentioned in the many *Platypus* articles contributed is that Colin in fact was sent to Wolaroi College. In a recent letter to Mr Alan Anderson I told him that Colin's wife had said that his mother wanted one of her boys to become a Methodist Minister, and for that reason Colin travelled from Captains Flat to Orange by train staying overnight with an aunt in Sydney. Interestingly, Mr Alan Anderson in his reply to me stated: 'One does not usually associate the Police Force with the Ministry (!) but I guess both professions are involved in helping people. I'm sure his mother would have been very proud of her son'. I can assure you, though she passed away a number of years ago, she certainly was."