

Game, Set & Match to AAP London.

The days of far flung hacks chiselling out copy on weighty "portable" typewriters and then screaming their breathless prose down telephone lines are long gone – at least for AAP.

At Wimbledon and the British Open Golf this year AAP's sports team of Ron Watson, Mark Lever and Howard Northey were the envy of British, Americans, and even fellow Australians who marvelled at the wonders of filing by NEC portable computers direct to Sydney. Most of our European and British colleagues had seen or heard about these, the Radio Shacks or similar little marvels, but few had ever watched them in operation. The Americans seemed to be still shackled to the highly efficient but far bulkier Teleram Portabubbles, with a few Radio Shack portables tossed in.

Almost every Australian newspaper reporter at Wimbledon and the Open worked through NECs but it was generally the AAP crew who were asked about their operation. There was even the odd occasion when fellow Australians turned to their AAP colleagues to ask how to get the most out of their machines.

But by far the most mesmerised were the doyens of Fleet Street who sweated over typewriters and yelled down phones. "It all looks so easy," said one Fleet Street reporter at AAP's desk at the Open.

At Wimbledon the AAP operation attracted more than just media interest. Members of the All England Club Committee – even two members of the House of Lords – came to view and express interest in the operation of the AAP desk.

It also became AAP's role to give advice on which type of telephone mouthpieces would best suit couplers – "What are couplers, old boy?" – and the need for power

points and the correct space for a working area that would accommodate a phone and an NEC.

London Chief Correspondent Ian Dick adds that Ron has made himself something of a whizz on the NECs and the office Portabubble. Instant working knowledge of these machines became necessary in the Christmas-New Year change over in the London office from the old tape punchers that had served for ages to filing direct to Sydney.

Ron shouldered most of this work, taking home three different instruction books/manuals for the NEC alone, and working on it until he got it right. Then he had to sit down in the office and wrestle with hitherto unheard of problems of establishing links to Sydney, the correct parameters for filing both to Sydney and through Reuters, handling acoustic couplers . . . and a range of associated technical matters.

Of course the NECs are now an established part of the office equipment, and have proved efficient on outside trips, both inside the United Kingdom and on the Continent.

On Tour- Queensland Style.

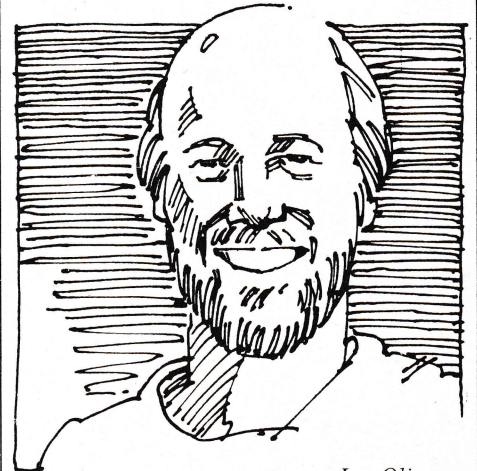
It was murder on the Capricornia Express when Ian Oliver toured North Queensland by rail for ten days with state Tourism minister Peter McKechnie.

A special ministerial train, made up of five restored turn of the century coaches, travelled 3,000 km from Brisbane to the end of the northern line at Chillagoe. At times, the train was left behind for excursions to Barrier Reef resorts.

In true Agatha Christie style

there was foul play on the train . . . one of the 14 people in the Minister's party was stabbed by a surgeon's knife (while having his appendix removed) and two others suffered blood poisoning.

However Ian was unscathed and his copy appeared almost daily in both the Courier-Mail and Daily Sun, including a page one lead in the Sun – with minor alterations under another's name. Regionals also gave wide play to his stories. Ian scored an exclusive on Queensland's new heritage legislation from McKechnie who is also the Arts Minister. When the Sun tried to contact McKechnie, Ian overheard the Minister telling his press secretary: "Tell them to stick with the AAP copy!"



Ian Oliver.

Another to roam the state was Wayne Heming, who joined the touring English Rugby League team for their Bundaberg match. The team was staying at the Hervey Bay resort hotel at Bargara. Naturally, Wayne was booked in there too – a fact not appreciated by the team management, which had barred the British press and did its best to persuade Wayne to move out as well. But Wayne stood his ground and settled in to see what they had been worried about.

Wayne later reported with mock disappointment that they

turned out to be one of the best behaved touring rugby league teams he's seen: no drunken brawls or broken doors, and not a bowler hat in sight. Wayne also followed the tourists to Toowoomba and Tweed Heads, as well as combining with Gil Breikreutz to cover the spiteful Second Test.

Out and About.

June was a fairly active month for SYDNEY BUREAU, with a yo-yo Australian dollar, NSW doctors inflicting the punishment of a thousand cuts on Premier Neville Wran and Australians taking in more Asians and liking it less (according to a private report). Everybody's darling Fiona Coote left hospital, taking her new heart with her, and for light relief we had the rat-ridden rogue Argentine freighter trying to flee Sydney Harbour amid local union concern over the crew's living conditions.

Bylines sighted included Les Kennedy and David Foale, on the doctors' dispute, plus Keith Gosman and Bruce Millar on the story's parliamentary angles: Chris Zinn scored widely with Australians becoming more racist: and Ron Corben kept up a triphammer barrage of stories.

Deputy sports editor Ian Telford went to Fiji to cover the Wallabies' tour and won kudos from the Fiji Sun for his "excellent coverage" of the "Australian viewpoint" of the tour—which they printed.

Finance editor Leon de Bord and Anne Jamieson shared credits in several papers with stories on Treasurer Paul Keating dishing out foreign exchange licences and as the month was ending a bloke in a frock arrived in Sydney, winning new cadet Jody Isaacs and casual Fran Thompson joint bylined play around the country.

An air crash in Chile gave MELBOURNE one of the hottest stories of the month—about the two orphaned frozen embryos, whose parents perished in the crash. John Townsley's byline was sighted on a swag of FOE stories and new staffer Russell Grimmer won a share of the credits.

Brian de Lacy had a page all to himself, with byline, in the Melbourne Herald for his piece on Albury-Wodonga, future inland capital, which also scored bylined play in a bunch of other papers. To top that he won front page play in The Australian with a Swiss pilot's account, related in Melbourne, about how he had been captured and held by anti-Indonesian guerrillas in Irian Jaya.

Problems with New Zealand over ANZUS, the troubled NZ dollar and the political eclipse of Prime Minister Sir Robert Muldoon — AAP's man in WELLINGTON, John Coomber, told us all about it weeks before it happened.

A tip for EICs doing the Impact in future. Don't count CANBERRA bureau's clippings, just measure the thickness of the file! In June it was FAT, and consisted of a veritable rollcall of capital city AAP staffers' bylines.

Sighted: Bruce Jones on the Opposition's plan to deliberately disrupt federal parliament, the US bases row and the Howson diaries: Jane Eyre on Phillip Lynch's death and the planned immigration of Pacific islanders: Clare Arthurs on the Great Impressionists on display at the National Gallery: and Peter Logue scored two front page lead bylines in The Australian with Hawke on uranium and Hawke under attack on US bases. Other bylines sighted included Mike Lawson, Craig Skehan, Patrick Lyons, Chris Kremmer, Tim Dobbyn and Bill Goff.

A check of newspapers in June underlined the value of having a correspondent in JAKARTA. Leigh Mackay scored wide play, mostly with bylined pieces, on Indonesia being unhappy with the Australian media (though not necessarily with Leigh), the aftermath of Arnold Ap's killing, Indonesia rejecting Fretilin's call for peace talks, Jakarta cancelling the Australian embassy delegation visit to Timor, the possible repatriation of Irian Jayan refugees from Papua New Guinea and the medical/hospital facilities being upgraded in Bail.

POSTSCRIPT—A telex from the editor of the Brisbane Sunday Mail to AAP said, "Much appreciate Leigh Mackay's Irian Jaya feature, run Sunday May 13 as World on

Sunday page lead, for balanced and informative content. Grateful if you would onpass our thanks to him."

DARWIN correspondent Brian Johnston had the NT ALP leader planning to defy branch policy on uranium: Darwin research expected to aid millions of people and animals in tropical areas: East Timorese refugees living in fear: and sex scandal in the scouts. Brian shared credits for the middle-aged Simpson Desert trekker Dennis Bartell.

ADELAIDE won good play for a grab bag of stories. Those that scored well included Tim Dornin's humorous piece on writing on lavatory walls and workers compensation conference proving lively: Richard Pullin's look at wind as a "new" energy source, bureau chief Don Woolford's story on fears about a major aircraft accident in Adelaide.

Jamie Collins of the BRISBANE office went to Townsville, with Peter Logue of the Canberra office, to cover the ALP state conference then almost entirely covered the front page of the Toowoomba Chronicle with his "Labor Backs Anti-Uranium Stand" as well as scoring well with bylined play in a score of other papers. New Brisbane staffer Heather Grant won solid play with a feature on crocodiles—big, ugly and misunderstood—and what it's like to cross the banana border.

Border crossings by rebels and refugees, a cyanide spill in the Fly River, alleged Indonesian incursions into PNG and a visit by outspoken Tasmanian MP Michael Hodgman provided Port Moresby correspondent Chris Pash with a plateful of stories. Play included bylined treatment in the Age (twice), Sydney Morning Herald, Newcastle Herald, Adelaide Advertiser and Courier-Mail as well as unbylined play on the Canberra Times front page. Chris also won a bundle of credits elsewhere for a range of stories.

Mark Smith in Perth scored well with America's Cup victory puts WA on the national tourist map (bylined in several papers) and several other brief stories on a range of topics. Mark will be leaving AAP in July. He will be replaced by Diana Plater of the Sydney newsroom.