

Come Fly With Me.

Open air press boxes, Caribbean breezes and rum punch in the evenings . . .

Howard Northey of the London bureau had to work in those appalling conditions for 3½ months, covering the Australian cricket tour of the West Indies.

In St Kitts, they had a steel band which started up every time there was a break in play. Howard says you couldn't hear yourself think.

"In Barbados and St Lucia, when presentations were held after the games, the press boxes were invaded by spectators wanting to get a closer look at Clive receiving his cheques," he said.

The tour takes in seven islands plus Guyana. Getting there, says Howard, definitely wasn't half the fun. What should have been a 2½ hour direct flight from St Lucia to Montego Bay, for instance, stretched to 10½ hours on three airlines.

Filing from the West Indies has always been a nightmare. Telex offices supposedly operating 24 hours a day are often closed and booking international phones calls can be excruciating. On a previous tour, our correspondent got back to Sydney before his last dispatch.

Our cover this time was the smoothest in memory. Howard had his troubles filing, but he had Winsor Dobbin or Steve Dettre assigned in Sydney during every session of play to keep the copy flowing, translating garbled transmissions, checking scores etc. Most of the time, we were only 20 minutes behind the progress of play.

In spite of the hassles, Howard says it was a great tour to cover. "We were led to believe Jamaica, particularly Kingston, may be a little ugly, but we found the people there extremely friendly. The real Rastas, as opposed to the bandwagon-

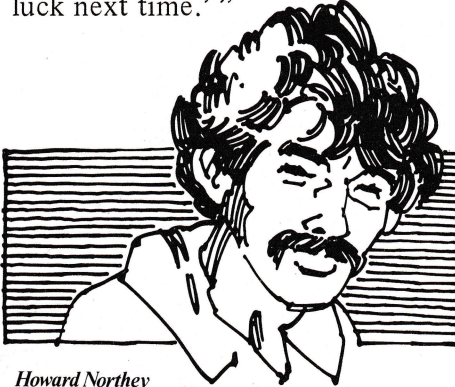
jumpers, are an amazing people."

After the Fifth Test ended in a 3-0 series defeat for Australia, the Sir Frank Worrall Trophy was presented by his widow. She said to the Australians: "Better luck next time."

After the presentations, Howard was walking over to the dressing rooms to interview the captains.

"This Rasta pulled me up, and said: 'Are you Australian, mun?'"

"I said yes and he said: 'Don't take it too hard, mun. You remember what Lady Worrall said. Better luck next time.'"



Howard Northey

Howard added: "He couldn't have been more generous. We need more than luck. Perhaps a 30-yard pitch when they're bowling would be a help."

Howard's droll humour was a feature of his widely used copy. As a sample, the following from Castries, St Lucia: "The Phillip Park crowd was today subjected to a form of mental cruelty - watching David Hookes bowl 21 overs."

Show Biz.

Here's one for the "How-long-have-you-been-doing-this?" file. Sydney cricket writer Ross Mullins covered the Royal Easter

Show for the 37th consecutive year in April.

He started in 1947 as the Sydney Morning Herald's wood-chopping correspondent. Those were the days when 80,000 people packed the Showground to watch the axemen compete for the coveted Sir Edward Hallstrom Trophy. Ross did his first show for AAP in 1976 and has been in charge of our cover since 1979. But for new Melbourne cadet Siobhan Harrington it was a month of firsts. Siobhan covered her first demonstration on Anzac Day and it turned out to be less than routine.

Police were making arrests among some 50 demonstrators trying to break up the service at the Shrine of Remembrance. To get a close look, Siobhan got down on all fours and crawled, ending up in front of the spectators - looking down at a pair of police boots.

When mounted police moved in, Siobhan almost got trampled under hoof.

She returned to the office with a back ache, and the lead for the bureau's Anzac Day story.

In her first month as a cadet, Siobhan also scored a byline for her feature on research into birth defects.

The Bows & Arrows War.

The troubled Papua New Guinea - Irian Jaya border earned Port Moresby correspondent Chris Pash one of the fattest clipping files of the month.

On April 9, practically every daily newspaper in Australia ran his story on OPM (Free West Papua) rebels freeing a Swiss mission pilot they'd been holding hostage. In many papers, the story was run in tandem with a backgrounder from Chris on the rebels' "hide and seek" war in the Irian Jaya jungle.

Chris had earlier broken the story that the pilot, Werner Wyder, had been captured. His story was based on a letter from Wyder which was smuggled into PNG and won him the front page lead with AAP credits in all the local newspapers.

While Chris was getting the inside story of the secret negotiations which secured Wyder's release, the PNG government declared the Indonesian military attache persona non grata following an incident in which two Indonesian jets buzzed a border post.

To further complicate matters, refugees started pouring over the border from Irian Jaya, eventually in their thousands.

Chris says the hardest part of reporting on the border is its remoteness. There will often be no official word on an incident until up to a week later, so he has to rely on a network of contacts in the area and rebel sources.

And as if he didn't have enough to do, he had to keep tabs on the smouldering Rabaul volcano and make arrangements for AAP's cover of the Pope's visit to PNG in May.

Jakarta correspondent Leigh Mackay was also occupied covering the Irian Jaya-PNG border troubles. Chris Pash says Leigh's stories on Indonesian-PNG talks on the border were praised in Port Moresby as revealing the best insight so far published on the situation.

Leigh's interview with Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar was also a great success, and was published with bylines in the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age, the Adelaide Advertiser and the Brisbane Sun, among others.

Dawn at Anzac Cove.

It would be difficult to find a dateline more apt for two Anzac Day features than Canakkale, Turkey, near the steep hills and ravines where the legend was born.

It was from Canakkale that Stuart Parker, formerly of the Sydney newsroom and since travelling, reported on the 69th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings.

One feature related that the signs of war had still not been obscured; the other was about a dozen young Australians and New Zealanders braving cold and rain to watch dawn break at Anzac Cove.

The Canberra Times ran both, while individually they were featured in the Melbourne Herald and Melbourne Sun, the Hobart Mercury, the Cairns Post, and many others.

London Bureau Chief Ian Dick, fresh from a trip to Germany at the end of March to observe an Australian beer promotion, picked up the controversy here over the Age tapes and scored with a story on phone tapping cases in Britain.

Melbourne News Editor Jim Dallmeyer got out into the field and produced two features, both widely used with byline. One investigated the mystery of the supposed wreck of the Mahogany Ship near Warrnambool, the other looked at the Alcoa smelter project at Portland.

Darwin correspondent Brian Johnstone had another scoop on the Azaria Chamberlain case, an exclusive interview with one of the jurors in the Darwin trial. It was the first time any of the jurors had spoken out and Brian's story got a huge run.

Finance On Assignment.

Patrick Miles and Graeme James from the Sydney Finance desk shook off the routine newsroom duties to head for warmer climes during April.

Patrick covered an Australian Coal industry conference in Surfers Paradise, while Graeme inspected a new mineral development at Charters Towers in Queensland.

Finance desk bylines generally travelled far and wide in April. Bob Lawrence got a particularly good run in New Zealand papers for his feature on deregulation of the stockbroking industry.

Louise Williams of the Sydney bureau, who has just completed her cadetship, also got big play in New Zealand. Her stories from the NSW Women and Management conference were sighted in no less than five

papers across the Tasman.

The most prolific Sydney Bureau byline was Les Kennedy for his cover of the long-awaited Donald Mackay inquest.

Brisbane's Gil Breitreutz covered the Australian Surfing Titles on the Gold Coast early in April, then went to Townsville over Easter to cover the North Queensland Games, which included a marathon swim to Magnetic Island.

Pat Cree was also involved in a marathon when she covered the longest-ever sitting of the Queensland Parliament to debate the controversial Aboriginal and Islanders legislation.

The sitting lasted till nine o'clock the following morning, with Pat assiduously taking notes while the honourable members nodded off. The Courier-Mail paid tribute to her endurance the following day.

Glenn Davis got wide play in Queensland for his stories on Joh Bjelke-Petersen's refusal to accept the new national anthem, while Debbie Ansell's story on the State's sex education attracted attention with her intro: "Daddy, where do babies come from?"

The furore over U.S. copyright on "Waltzing Matilda" earned bylines for Canberra's Patrick Lyons, who shared credits with Bureau Chief Bruce Jones on cover of reaction to Japan's shock decision on major changes to its beef import quotas.

At the Double.

In an important development in AAP's communications, Queensland regional newspapers started switching over from the 300-baud QXX circuit to the new 600-baud RNS (Regional News Service) circuit.

RNS will eventually combine the selectorised QXX, NXX and VXX circuits, which in turn replaced twice as many 75-baud specialised circuits to regional areas in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania.

RNS will cover some 40 subscribers and will have a spare 600-baud capacity to carry special services such as NewsScan and the PR Wire to regional areas for the first time.