

TO NEW DIVISION

memory was the friendliness of the American people.

"The week we moved in, the street put on a 'Welcome to America' luncheon which was fantastic. I think their 'Welcome Waggon' is another marvellous idea. These are run by local government and local business houses. They come to

your home and tell you where to shop, what to buy, what price to pay and a whole host of other information.

"I think a place like Canberra could pick up that idea and make it work just as it does in the States," she said.

Big, bad London

Detective Chief Inspector Lloyd Worthy is the first to admit that after growing used to the quiet, comfortable, easy-going life-style of Canberra, London was quite a shock for the whole Worthy family of six.



• Lloyd Worthy

"The AFP's role in the United Kingdom is unique in that you are not attached to the High Commission or Embassy. You work from New Scotland Yard, more specifically from the Central Drugs and Illegal Immigration and Intelligence Unit," he said.

Inspector Worthy's two-year UK posting is something he still talks about.

"Work-wise, it was stimulating because it was multi-faceted. It involved intelligence gathering, monitoring the movement of Australian criminals in and out of the UK and Europe and tracking the movement of international criminals in and out of Australia," he said.

"From my point of view, the person in the UK needs extensive investigational experience. Almost equally important is that you have to be adaptable. Your actions can reflect not just on the AFP, but Australia. The UK is very much still a class conscious society and the police force is much more rank conscious than here. Certainly you have to be able to mix socially at all levels of society.

"Of course the climate and the life-styles were different. So was the schooling. My four kids moved from ordinary Australian schools into the English Comprehensive education system, but they coped. They found it hard, particularly at first, but they grew to like it and made lots of new friends.

"And because London is so cosmopolitan, there was no doubt that as time went by, the experience had a great maturing effect on the kids; in fact on the whole family.

"I think we're better for it".

"Lloyd's wife, Pam, would readily agree, but understandably her experience, particularly initially, was the more traumatic.

"For me it was the first time out of Australia," she said. "The Cooma-Canberra-London syndrome did take some readjustment. The first three months were the most difficult, and it was a combination of factors that made it so. The culture shock. Yes, it happens. Quiet, friendly Canberra to big, bad London was quite a shock. Bad because things are more impersonal and people are not as trusting. They can't afford to be. Most big cities are the same. People just don't make the time to stop and say more than hello or to worry whom their next door neighbours are.

"Another is that being a one-off post detached from the High Commission, you can't readily contact wives of other new arrivals.

"Here I'd give one big piece of advice — be outgoing. Join things where you can. Be patient, be understanding and be prepared for many a sad story from your kids. They get the Pommie syndrome in reverse. They were called 'dingoes'. The Poms thought that a friendly term, but my kids didn't.

"Certainly the readjustment in those early months comes hard when you know no one and long for female company. Afterwards, when you've made friends, dear friends, as we did, you can look back on it and wonder how something initially so difficult would become so good.

"You have to be able to entertain and you have to be able to cope away from family and all the other supportive apparatus you've been used to getting.

"It was a great experience — for all of the family."

Pam also suggested that wives read as widely as possible about the country, and try to check out what to take with someone who has been there.



• Mrs Beverley Polden talks with the Thai Deputy Director of Police, Lieut.-General Saneh Sittipunt.

Culture in Bangkok

Contrast those views, from countries with no language barrier and similar cultural backgrounds, to those from Steve Polden. Steve served in both Bangkok and Malaysia.



• Steve Polden

"Every post has its peculiarities — Bangkok's would be the massive culture shock, the weather, the noise and pollution levels, and the language barrier," he said.

"It was difficult enough for both my wife and me, and we'd travelled extensively in South-East Asia and lived for nearly two years in Darwin, where the climatic conditions are similar, before being posted."

Both Steve and his wife Beverley believe strongly that the AFP could benefit from language training for future Bangkok representatives.

"It is not just a firmly established requirement for Foreign Affairs appointees, but also for many of the representatives from other police forces and agencies in the Thai capital.

"Unlike other South-East Asian posts — Singapore and Hong Kong for example — which are highly Westernised, English has not yet become the second language in Thailand. Without the language you are initially at a big disadvantage."

The options are either pre-posting language training or the three-month in-house course on arrival. Steve believes the latter is the most beneficial.

"Work-wise, Bangkok would be one of the busiest and one of the most successful of all our posts," he said. "One good reason for this is the level of co-operation from the Thai police.

"You are constantly busy. For most of my posting we were responsible for liaison with Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and in the early part of the posting, for Hong Kong.

"It is a work post."

Steve said many police forces also were represented, including New Zealand, Canada, the United States, France, Hong Kong, Germany, Thailand and Italy, as well as Interpol.

"That liaison, from an intelligence point of view, is a fantastic opportunity. The vast majority of the work is drug-related with some requirement for general policing experience."

Both Steve and Beverley found an important requirement was the ability to mix at all levels of society.

"This is something all wives have to be prepared to handle," Beverley

said. "And be prepared to have your house, or in our case, town-house used as a home-away-from-home.

"You are constantly entertaining."

On other important issues, the Poldens' advice is:

- Schooling — Two schools, one British, one American. The British school catered only for primary school age children, the American for high school students but was run on the American system. Most Australians boarded their children in Australia. Those who had sent theirs to the American school found the children faced repeating a year on returning home.
- Accommodation — Adequate. The Poldens had a three-bedroom town-house and two maids — essential if you have children or are to maintain the level of entertainment and social commitments expected of you.
- Lifestyle — Initially a considerable shock from the point of view of the sheer noise level, pollution and overcrowding and the language barrier.
- Allowance — Adequate.
- Transport — Adequate, as the AFP team of officers and clerical staff has access to two small cars.

And a final summation from Steve: "Initially bloody difficult, but by the end of the posting, a lifestyle you're enjoying and generally sorry to leave."

That's a scene-setter, a mere pen-picture of the requirements, impacts and life-styles of overseas experience. It can't possibly, from afar, be a totally comprehensive picture.

The in-depth and up-to-date view must come from those already overseas. And that 'Platypus' is fixing.

Throughout 1985 we will bring you extensive post reports, suitably illustrated, from each of the AFP's overseas posts and their representatives.

These reports will pick up and cover the nature of the job, the living standards, the impact of family life-styles, the advantages, the disadvantages, the availability of schooling and educational standards, the allowances measured realistically against the cost of living, and the whole gambit of information necessary to enable anyone thinking of applying for an overseas position to be as widely informed as possible.



• The Worthy family in Trafalgar Square.