

BOAT FEVER IN THE WEST

- The challenge for the America's Cup created problems for those zinc-encrusted sailors off Fremantle. Other kinds of boats have created challenges for our people, too. Superintendent F.C. Pimm reports on some nautical nabblings.

"OPERATION EQUATOR"

THREE foreign nationals attempting to leave the country from Perth Airport carrying \$76,062 in Australian currency set Western Region off on "Operation Equator".

This operation involved the importation of about 1000 kg of hashish by the yacht Libertad at Safety Bay about 40 km south of Perth on 22 November 1985. The Operation was conducted in two phases and the ultimate result was that about 400 kg of hashish was recovered, the Libertad and about \$232,000 in Australian currency seized and forfeited, nine people of various nationalities with different degrees of involvement arrested and two overseas principals identified. "Equator" was a significant achievement by the AFP and illustrates what assiduous Police investigation can achieve.

The first phase was the follow-up of information received from an alert Immigration Officer which queried discrepancies in moneys declared by crew members from the Libertad when applying for visas. As a direct result, the captain and three crew members were arrested at Perth Airport for excess currency offences. Further investigations and a search of the Libertad which included finding a secret well-concealed compartment and a bag containing a large amount of Australian currency established in the minds of the AFP investigators that a drug importation had occurred. Some admissions were obtained from the three crew members and following a trial the Captain was sentenced to life imprisonment with his three crew members sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. No narcotics have been recovered.

The second phase gathered momentum in early September 1986 when two Maoris were fully identified, located and charged.

Intensive interrogation revealed that the hashish had been transported in hired four-wheel drive vehicles stored at Burekup in the south-west of the State and was subsequently transported by road to New South Wales. A person at Burekup was arrested. The hashish was trans-

- This issue of Platypus features a selection of items from Western Region. In future issues we shall be looking at contributions from all AFP regions.

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ported in two trips using vehicles and a boat bought in alias names. False compartments were constructed and fibreglassed over.

Early October 1986 Western Region drug members combined with Canberra drug unit members, and two NSW residents were arrested. A total of 378 kg of hashish buried near Currarong NSW was recovered and further information leading to the identification of an overseas drug syndicate obtained.

Enquiries through Interpol and the WAPOL Scientific section are continuing with the possible extradition of two overseas offenders the main object during the final phase.

- Senior Constable Ian Arthur of the ACT Drug Squad and Senior Constable Peter Müddelhuus of Western Region recover hashish at Currarong, NSW.

SPINNAKER SPIN-OFFS

by Senior Constable Terry Dibb, Western Region

"ANY boss who sacks someone for not turning up today is a bum!" Remember the euphoria of 1983 when Australia II broke the 132-year nexus that existed between the New York Yacht Club and the "Auld Mug"? Whilst the Prime Minister may not have wished to be taken literally, his excitement typified the national ethos created through this international sporting victory. This was visibly manifested in the events of the next few months, beginning with a ticker tape welcome to the conquering heroes. It was followed by constant media exposure, a plethora of commemorative publications and 3.5 million Australians making the pilgrimage to see Oz II as she toured the land.

Now, early in 1987 the question could be: "What impact has the America's Cup had on Western Australia and what of the problems created by the influx of people, vessels and vehicles causing stress on public service, accommodation and the control of pollution and crime?"

In answer to the above a committee of the three tiers of Government was established with the specific objectives of:

- maximisation of the benefits from the America's Cup Defence to the people of Australia, particularly the people of Western Australia;
- minimisation of any detrimental effects on the City of Fremantle and other local authorities; and
- provision of community facilities of continuing benefit after the event.

With \$29.5 million through the Commonwealth America's Cup Funding Program, and \$50m. from the Western Australian Government, much development has been initiated or brought forward, extensive restoration of historic



buildings commenced, facilities upgraded, additional equipment and personnel provided. Many projects served as vehicles for Community Employment Program involvement thereby creating many new jobs.

Among the 100 projects being implemented under the tripartite agreement are:

- A 360-Metre Breakwater Extension to provide sheltering anchorage for interstate and overseas vessels during the Cup. It will have a significant long term benefit for the local ship building industry.
- Challenge Harbour to accommodate eight challenger syndicates, ultimately to be utilised by commercial and private boating interests.
- Fishing Boat Harbour adjacent to Challenge Harbour, expanded and upgraded.
- Aquatic recreational facilities totalling around \$15m.
- Transportation infrastructure developments over \$7m.
- Town Hall Complex: \$4.5m. This historic building has been completely restored, the auditorium enlarged and associated public facilities created. Remodelling of the adjacent city square has integrated St. John's Church, a building classified by the National Trust, thus returning the area to its original primary function of a focal point for community activities. This, together with additional restoration carried out by both Government and private interests, has had the effect of significantly enhancing Fremantle, a city already heralded as the finest example of a 19th Century seaport in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Accommodation: To ensure that single long term Fremantle residents are not displaced by owners refurbishing homes specifically for Cup

rental, the Park Hotel and a nearby residence were acquired and renovated as lodging houses — \$700,000. Point Walter, a popular recreation area on the banks of the Swan River has had old style army barracks converted into modern accommodation at a cost of \$1 million. A few private home owners have made a great deal of money renting out their homes.

At a purely Commonwealth level, much of its financial contribution (not forgetting accelerated development of the Perth International Air Terminal) can be attributed wholly to our possession of the America's Cup.

I don't want to convey the impression that the only activity at this time was Governmental. The prospect of an armada of free spending tourists has quickened the heart of many an entrepreneurial breast. A five-star, multi-storey beach front resort, several inner city hotels and the State's first casino must head the upper end of private capital investment.

Providing no less a service, however, are the myriads of smaller businesses — a colourful moped hire based within the old port city is just one instance.

To successfully predict attendance figures for any international event, particularly one at a new venue, is a difficult task characterised by the many variables involved. Although fewer visitors than anticipated have witnessed the Series the selection of Stars and Stripes as official challenger will undoubtedly be reflected in final visitor figures.

"The Cup" through the "America's Cup Festival of Sport" has presented WA with an entertainment smorgasbord in the form of numerous World ranking contests, including the World 12-metre Series, Benson & Hedges Cup, (Cricket and Trotting), 18ft Skiff World championship, boxing tournaments and Sprint

Triathlon. These spin-offs have not been confined to sports. The PACRIM conference and PACI EXPO are just two of the happenings that have added international flavour to Perth.

Technological innovations which will ultimately filter through to both leisure and commercial use can be expected from research directly connected with the America's Cup. Defence syndicates, seeking to maximise their boats' performance, have made grants to local tertiary institutions for scientific investigation into areas where gains may be extracted.

While the role of the AFP may appear comparatively minor, the increased opportunity for importation of narcotics, particularly trendy drugs, required vigilance. This, together with the attendance of high profile dignitaries for the finals, guaranteed our involvement.

The role of the Western Australia Police in ensuring that law, order, and public safety are maintained has been assisted by the upgrading of its radio communications and operation centre. These benefits, implemented at a cost of \$1.4 million, include transferring the network from VHF to UHF equipment. Although a special task force of 180 members has been based in Fremantle only for the duration of the Cup, an overall net establishment increase in excess of 100 members can be attributed to this event.

A gain more difficult to evaluate is the long term effect which 2000 journalists, photographers and TV crewmen from 25 countries will have as they report on Australian lifestyle and commercial activities. With some 55 million cup viewers, there is a likelihood, of not only capital, but expertise from many areas entering the country as our relatively hassle-free existence is recognised. Notwithstanding the occasional knocker the ultimate impact of the series can only be to our advantage. As the State Minister responsible for the America's Cup Defence succinctly stated: "... we have been discovered."

BOAT PEOPLE

IN January 1986, AFP Western Region received information through Interpol that the 26.5 m sailing vessel Oriana allegedly stolen from Israel, had been located in Albany, WA. Subsequently, warrants issued under the *Extradition (Foreign States) Act* were received, and the vessel was seized and the Captain and an associate arrested by Detective Senior Constable Ken Davis and Nick Anticich.

The Captain and crew of twelve claimed to be members of a religious group known as "Christ Circle". They were sailing around looking for a place to set up a commune.

It was soon discovered the group had

been living on the vessel for about two years. All their worldly possessions, including furniture, machinery, and animals (a dog and two cats which had to be destroyed by Quarantine Officers) were aboard.

There was a dispute between the "Oriana People" as they became known and the owners of the vessel in Israel regarding the bulk of furniture and effects on the vessel.

The crew, all American citizens, had no entry permit to enter Australia. They claimed to be very short of money.

This left our two police officers in the situation of having two prisoners, eleven displaced persons, with no money, no place of abode, and a sailing ship without a secure anchorage late on a cold, wet and windy night. The two prisoners were lodged at W.A. Police Lockup Albany and the other eleven allowed to remain onboard overnight under the supervision of the AFP.

The following day, the remaining members of "Christ Circle" were given refuge in unoccupied church premises. They were later allowed to remove personal effects from the ship, and the remaining contents of the vessel were placed in Customs Bond, Albany. The items are still in bond awaiting the result of a civil action between the "Christ Circle" members and the Israeli owners of the Oriana.

The Oriana was subsequently released to representatives of Oriana Limited of Israel, under direction of the Commonwealth Attorney-General on 22 February 1986, and has since been returned to Israel. The owners recruited a local crew for the trip.

The Captain and group leader, together with his associate are currently in custody in Perth awaiting the hearing of an appeal lodged against their extradition. This may not be heard until mid-1987.

This matter has raised considerable public interest in W.A. The remaining eleven "Christ Circle" members remain in Albany, though deportation orders have been signed. They seem popular with the local community and recently announced they would like to stay in Albany, and set up their commune.

There were many complications in this matter, few less than the problem of having a group of people dedicated to an unusual cause, and dealing with a foreign nation whose courts and standards of proof differ from Australian practice.

The commonsense approach to an unusual AFP task by Ken Davis and Nick Anticich contributed greatly to the satisfactory completion of the AFP side of the task.

● Oriana berthed at Albany, W.A. —
Photo from the West Australian.

GETTING THE LIZARDS TAPED

IN October 1986 Detective Senior Constables Doug Child and Elizabeth Brown arrested and charged a Perth husband and wife with four counts each of attempting to export Australian native fauna without permit, contrary to Section 21(b) *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982*.

The incident first came to notice in January 1986 when a parcel sitting in the North Perth depot of the Post Office gave off a strong aroma, similar to that given off by a dead animal. Upon opening the parcel, it was discovered that it contained five reptiles, two of which were dead. The reptiles had their limbs bound with tape, and they were wrapped in ladies' stockings.

Investigations by Customs Officers revealed that the parcel was addressed to West Germany, and that the sender's name and address proved false.

In September 1986 three more parcels, similar to that in January, were delivered to a suburban Post Office for posting to Denmark. These three parcels contained a total of 52 reptiles. As with the first parcel, the sender's names and addresses were false.

The matter was then handed over to the AFP for further investigation. Observations made of a woman taking the parcels to the Post Office resulted in the arrest of her and her husband.

The reptiles were released into the bush after being examined by the Curator of the South Perth Zoo. Upon inspection the Curator observed that the reptiles were professionally packaged, and that little harm would come to them during their journey as a result of the binding.



The reptiles would have sold overseas for approximately \$24,000, a handsome profit for common reptiles found in most Australian gardens.

The couple appeared on January 1987 at the Perth Central Law Courts. They have both pleaded not guilty to all charges, and have elected a Preliminary Hearing set down for April 1987.

“OPERATION SAMOYED”

“OPERATION Samoyed” resulted in the largest known drug seizure by the AFP in Western Australia. Some 1775 kilograms of compressed cannabis leaf in the form of “Thai Bricks” were smuggled into Australia at Shark Bay about 1000 km north of Perth on the Western Australian coast by the ketch *Lukama* during late February 1986. Five foreign nationals were ultimately arrested and convicted, three vessels seized and of paramount importance, all narcotics were recovered before they had the chance to hit the streets.

In what must be one of the classic operations in the history of the Australian Federal Police, Western Region became involved in a joint operation with Customs on 5 March 1986 following information that three foreign men had purchased a 6-metre runabout boat in what were considered suspicious circumstances. Surveillance was mounted and the men were followed from Geraldton to Carnarvon.

At about the same time apparently unrelated information was received to the effect that Customs sniffer dogs had reacted positively to the cabin of the yacht *Lukana* which had docked at Fremantle. This yacht was crewed by two U.S. nationals. Australian Federal Police enquiries raised suspicions that these people may have had a connection with the men who had come to notice in Geraldton. The crew was placed under surveillance at Fremantle.

On 10 March 1986 the crew members from the *Lukana* were apprehended and the vessel searched. The previous evening the Customs-AFP taskforce working under arduous conditions near Carnarvon had recovered 38 bags of cannabis. The offenders had put out to sea.

Neither AFP nor Customs had a capacity to respond and communications were virtually non-existent. A Nomad aircraft was used as a communications centre. Conditions were rugged and hot. The hunt was on!!!!

Meanwhile back at AFP Perth Regional Headquarters some admissions were obtained from the *Lukana* crew and it was verified that about two tonnes of compressed cannabis in 109 bags were offloaded at Peron Peninsula in the Shark Bay area. This isolated area has but one

road in and out. Surveillance was tightened and the area cordoned off with special emphasis on the recovery of the additional 71 bags of cannabis and the apprehension of the three decamped offenders.

A breakthrough came with the recovery of the 6-metre runabout near Monkey Mia in the Shark Bay area and the recovery of the cannabis which had been crudely buried. On 12 March 1986 even the offenders could not survive the harsh climate and surrendered to police at Monkey Mia.

In the months that followed all offenders pleaded guilty and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying between 5 years and 10 years with no minimum terms set. All were to have been paid \$US100,000 to be delivered in Hong Kong about six weeks after successful delivery of the drugs. No claims of right were lodged on the seized vessels.

Whilst the Western Region work on the actual importation is over, ongoing enquiries are in train with a view to extraditing some of the real villains from overseas.

DOPE ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND

MEMBERS of the Western Region's Drug Investigation and Intelligence Sections recently joined forces with the Christmas Island Police to successfully bring about the first drug charges to be placed on Christmas Island. The investigation has seen the conviction of the two offenders, with another currently on bail facing 12 charges of attempting to import heroin into Christmas Island.

In June 1986, Customs Officers at the Royal Mail Exchange, Perth, seized some sixteen envelopes. These envelopes were postmarked in Malaysia and addressed to various fictitious persons at eight Post Office boxes on Christmas Island. On examination it was revealed that each of the envelopes contained a quantity of pink rock heroin, with an average weight of one gram. Further examination by the WA Police Forensic Branch revealed that 12 of the envelopes contained handwritten entries which were of common authorship.

As a result of these seizures Detective Senior Sergeant Joyce Walpole and Constable Keith Randall of Western Region travelled to Christmas Island to assist the Police there with the enquiry.

It was initially hoped that controlled deliveries using parcel collection cards in the Post Office boxes would lead to an observable pickup, but after a couple of days this proved unsuccessful.

It was determined that the 12 similar envelopes were addressed to five Post Office boxes. Each of these boxes was registered to persons residing at the

Malay Kampong. Enquiries also revealed that one of the box holders, a Malaysian, had been in Malaysia at the time the envelopes were posted.

A number of Search Warrants were then executed and the registered box holders interviewed. As a result of the interviews admissions were made that the Malaysian had directly or indirectly asked the others for their Post Office box numbers prior to his departure to Malaysia and that through one of the box holders asked the other three for their box keys. The Malaysian was interviewed with the assistance of a Malay interpreter, but he declined to answer any questions. He was subsequently arrested and charged with 12 counts of attempting to import heroin contrary to the provisions of the Singapore Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, the applicable drugs legislation on Christmas Island.

Further examination by the W.A. Police Forensic Branch revealed that seven of the 12 envelopes contained fingerprints identical to those of the Malaysian. Microscopic examination of the postage stamps has linked the stamps together.

The investigation then moved to the Chinese community of Poon Saan where further search warrants were executed. Interview of one Chinese man resulted in full admissions being made by him in regard to a further two parcel post seizures. He stated that he used heroin in the usual Chinese way by smoking. Documents seized by Search Warrant, and handwriting specimens obtained also implicated another Chinese man in a previous 1985 Parcels Post seizure and he was later interviewed by Inspector Vic Young. Both Chinese were charged with attempting to import heroin.

In October 1986, the Chinese appeared before the visiting Magistrate and entered pleas of guilty. Both were fined \$500. The Malaysian was remanded until February 1987 for a trial date to be set.

The on-going operation has had a significant effect on Customs procedures on Christmas Island and on intelligence flow between the Island and Western Region.

Christmas Island Police, who are seconded from the Australian Federal Police, helped the investigation and provided warm hospitality to the visiting Western Region members.