

# The Australian BUSH PRESS

## NATIONAL SUPPLIER DIRECTORY

Target Australia's independent newspaper proprietors and their commercial printing divisions with a listing in the National Supplier Directory for only \$40 pre-paid for four issues. (Display advertisers receive a free listing.)

### SOFTWARE TRAINING, TECHNICAL BOOKS, FORMATTING

#### THE WORSLEY PRESS

11 Lintel Court, Hastings, Vic 3915.  
Phone/fax 03-5979 1112.  
Freecall order line 1800 622 805.  
Email: info@worsleypress.com

### GRAPHIC ART SUPPLIES, INK, CHEMICALS, CONSUMERABLES

#### A. E HUDSON PTY LTD

Sydney: 02-9643 8200  
Melbourne: 03-9380 2277  
Brisbane: 07-3252 8212  
Queensland County: 0411 471 108  
Adelaide: 08-8363 4466  
Perth: 08-9388 3040  
Tasmania: 03-6234 5622

### PRINTING ROLLERS

#### BRISSETT ROLLERS PTY. LTD.

New South Wales: 02-9559 3900  
Victoria: 03-9587 4111  
Queensland: 07-3344 4255  
Australia-wide: (1800) 249 992

### PAPER SUPPLIERS

#### SPICERS PAPER

44 Raglan Street,  
Preston, Victoria  
Phone 03-9487 8888  
Fax: 03-9416 8124

### PRINTING, PUBLISHING, DESIGN

#### AD-CELL MEDIA PTY. LTD.

78 Moorabool Street,  
Geelong, Victoria  
Phone 03-5221 4408  
www.adcell.com.au

## Newspaper history being researched

ROD Kirkpatrick strides through the offices of country newspapers in his dreams. He has written a history of the first 75 years of the Queensland provincial press and has now spent three years researching the New South Wales provincial press in readiness to write a book covering its first 150 years.

He started the NSW research after completing a successful PhD thesis charting the end of six Queensland newspaper dynasties. The aim is to have the NSW book published to coincide with the centenary of the NSW Country Press Association in October 2000.

Dr Kirkpatrick, a senior lecturer in journalism at the University of Queensland has edited two NSW papers, the *Manning River Times*, when it appeared four times-a-week in Taree and the *Central Western Daily*, Orange.

One of the themes his book will explore is the impact of the newspaper on the community it served, and vice versa.

Dr Kirkpatrick has a special interest in some of the smallest papers, especially those that hung on by a thread for half a century or more with the tiniest circulations - some only a few hundred.

One of the features of his book will be tables of the country papers being published at the beginning of each decade: from 1850 through to 1990. The peak in these tables was reached in 1910 when nearly 250 titles were being published. **BP**

# The Australian BUSH PRESS

The journal of Australia's independent newspaper publishers

## The paper chase

### Small, local newspapers are back, beating the big publishers at their own game

THE COMPUTER revolution of the 1970s that signalled the demise of many small town newspapers, and made hot metal type-casting machines museum oddities overnight, finally has turned full circle. Gone, sadly, are Blackall's grand broadsheet, the *Barcoo Independent*, the *Burnett Advocate* (that once a year poked fun at itself by changing its masthead to the 'Burn It Advocate'), the smudged and crooked *Isis Recorder* at Childers, *Gunning's Gazette* and a host of other titles that for years faithfully recorded country life. Often they survived on the determination and eccentricity of their proprietor. Usually he was journalist and printer, manager and salesman, distributor and debt collector.

The oldtime 'local rags' were killed off in the shake-up of buy-outs that followed introduction of new technology and offset printing centres, or their owners could not cope with technological change. Many simply couldn't afford to reinvest in new equipment and cashed in to retire on the proceeds as superannuation.

Today a new picture of newspaper publishing is emerging.

No more the *Barcoo Independent*, but the *Blackall Leader*, not the *Burnett Advocate*, but the *Gayndah Town Talk*; the *Town and Country* in place of the *Recorder* at Childers and the *Bulletin* at Gunning.

To the list we can add a new batch of titles - the aptly named *Sand Paper* serving a small Western Australian

ground of stagnant or slow growing circulations among capital city and regional dailies, the local weekly, fortnightly or monthly is thriving.

A recent, although inexhaustive, trawl of towns revealed more than 200 small newspaper titles ranging in circulation from 130 (*Beeac Country News*, Victoria) to 9950 (*Jimboomba Times*, Queensland). The survey revealed what many have thought - the local paper is back, parochial, informative and quirky as ever.

They are idiosyncratic, bursting with personality, shamelessly home town proud and much loved. In many cases they are spearheading the revitalisation of country towns and the 'can do' spirit of those who live in them.

Whatever the plight of the old weekly scandal sheets, so too the fortunes of the readers they served.

Just as a drive down the main street of country towns today reveals a gap-tooth row of boarded-up shopfronts and a diminished streetscape, a proud community without a newspaper fails to reach its full potential.

(Continued on page 4)

...They are idiosyncratic, bursting with personality, shamelessly home town proud and much loved

beach community, Derby's *Boab Babler* and *Flat Chat*, covering the happenings of the old mining town of Captains Flat in southern New South Wales. Unpretentious, yet highly valued.

The paradigm shift has arrived in the form of a 'newspaper in a box', or computer, and a breed of computer literate, civic minded or romantics, hard-edged business people or city refugees enraptured by a new environment and desperate to see it preserved. The vehicle for doing so is a new look 'local newspaper'.

Beating the odds and against a back-

IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR BUSINESS TO APPEAR IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH PRESS SUPPLIER DIRECTORY, COMPLETE YOUR DETAILS BELOW:

BUSINESS NAME.....

TYPE OF BUSINESS.....

BUSINESS ADDRESS.....STATE.....

TELEPHONE ( )..... FAX ( ).....

☐ I would like my business to appear in *The Australian Bush Press* National Directory for 1 year (four issues) for \$40.

SUGGESTED COPY FOR DIRECTORY: .....

.....

.....

.....



# THERE'S SOMETHING AUSTRALIA DOES BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE!



**B**ecause Brissett's Blankets and Rollers are manufactured right here in OZ — and Brissett will go out of their way to look after the Bush Presses!!

So you can set up a roller exchange service that suits you, order the blankets to the requirements of your Goss Community or whatever presses produce your local paper ... wherever you are.

## Why go elsewhere?



NEW SOUTH WALES (02) 9559 3900  
VICTORIA (03) 9587 4111  
QUEENSLAND (07) 3344 4255  
AUSTRALIA-WIDE (1800) 249 992

to alter 'tracking', to slightly increase space between letters, and you may even add a fraction of a point to line spacing. However, do such things cautiously — they can too easily be overdone.

Adding a preface, or summary of the story above a head, can also work, especially where short stories need special emphasis.

And so the tricks continue. I'll deal with more in future articles, as well as detailing with some of the ways in which you can save time in getting the stories from your contributors and into the pages. **BP**

### HOW TO START AND PRODUCE A MAGAZINE (OR NEWSPAPER) Gordon Woolf



•How to Start and Produce a Magazine (or Newspaper) by Gordon Woolf — a valuable book that all small publishers should have on their office bookshelf.

Gordon Woolf runs The Worsley Press, a small business now based in Hastings, Victoria, which publishes books such as *How to Start and Produce a Magazine and Newspaper Production* using PageMaker 6.5. He undertakes page production for newspaper publishers and trains in newspaper production as well as writing automation scripts for PageMaker. He has been involved in newspapers and magazines for several decades, apart from a brief spell running a milk bar where he learned from selling newspapers that the public's perception of newspapers is very different from that of those who usually publish them.

Contact him by email at: [gordon@worsleypress.com](mailto:gordon@worsleypress.com)

## From laundry copper to national manufacturer

**W**HAT started out as a family and friends operation has blossomed into a multi-million dollar national company that supplies an impressive number of Australian printers with rubber rollers and blankets.

Brissett Rollers manufacturing plant in Tempe, a suburb of Sydney, mills rubber from raw materials. The factory mills, grinds, cures and polishes rollers for offset lithography, flexographic, gravure and letterpress machinery.

"We began in 1960 and all we had was a basic grinder and a laundry copper to mix and case what they called 'composition rollers' which were made from gelatine and glycerine," says Terry Brissett, Managing Director of Brissett Rollers.

After completing school in 1961, Brissett chose to join the new family venture full-time, relinquishing an early dream to be an architect. He completed a five year, part-time chemist diploma at the local technical college and steered his family business into making rubber rollers in the early 1960s.

Moving into rubber was a real turning point for us. It was really 'bite-the-bullet' stuff. We bought a rubber mill to mix the ingredients but didn't have a clue how to use it. I can honestly say that it took us about five years to

produce a rubber roller that could match an imported product — the first few were really shocking.

"Towards the end of the 60s when the industry had accepted our product as viable alternatives to European rollers, some clients wanted to prepare a petition to the Federal Government to place a tariff on imported products and thus make those rollers more expensive and less competitive.

"We thought about it long and hard but declined the offer. Our thinking was that if we needed protection to compete, the future may not be too good for us. We wanted to prove ourselves on a level playing field.

"We are the only local, rubber roller maker that deals specifically in printing rollers. This means that we have a lot of expertise built up over the years to react quickly to changes in the industry. If a customer comes to us with a problem, we can formulate a rubber to overcome a certain problem and usually have a new roller ready for trial on the press within a week.

"Also, our organisation is not too big, so everyone tends to be more or less hands-on to respond to customer requirements."

Brissett Rollers is a unique Australian manufacturing success story. **BP**

## Babbling for 17 years

**P**EOPLE entering the newspaper market for the first time should understand their readers and allow the community to speak through the organ they publish, according to Natasha Simmonds, editor of Derby's *Boab Babbler*.

"If you get people coming in hard, pushing a particular view, you have a negative town," Natasha said.

The *Babbler*, circulation 1000, has published as a quarterfold for the past 17 years in opposition to the *Broome Advertiser*. Most of that time, Natasha has been custodian of the editor's chair.

"A lot of people won't touch the *Advertiser* because it is from Broome, but they see my publication as a local

rag," Natasha said. The *Babbler* is a co-operative effort. Natasha's West Kimberley Printing assembles and prints the paper, but its pages are given over to organisations and community groups that use the space to broadcast their message.

"I don't bother a lot with council news. I print the minutes and a press release, if one is supplied. Basically, if people want to contribute, it is a good issue, but otherwise it is a bit light on," Natasha said. She has come to respect the readership and urges others to do likewise.

"It is very much their paper. And it is like milk in the morning. They expect it to be there and chide me if it's late," she said. **BP**



# Can it be read?...What works in newspaper layout

## TECH TALK

Why does a newspaper look like a newspaper? Gordon Woolf examines good newspaper layout and explains some tricks to improve the readability of a publication.

**W**HY does a newspaper look like a newspaper? Because, over centuries, publishers have discovered that the basic design works. People read them.

Many bush newspapers are quarter-fold, but the design remains the same: multiple columns, with a headline on top. If there is a big photo, the sequence is: photo, caption, headline, story.

The story starts under the first letter of the headline. It goes down until it hits a major obstacle, which may be the bottom of a page, but could as easily be a rule or another headline across several columns. Then you return to the next column, again under the first headline. Text should never go higher than where the story started.

A picture goes at the top or bottom of one or more columns of the story (but never at the top of the first column unless the story starts in the column after the picture). Columns vary in width but a good guide is no more than six to seven words, or around 35 characters to a line. Small type can be read in narrow columns, which is why insurance conditions and contest rules are in wide measure!

The reader should never be confused over what to read next. When the eye reaches the end of one column it should be led to only one place – the jump should be automatic. If it isn't, you will lose all but the most committed reader.

You can live up a mass of type by crossheads, breakout quotes, maybe a sidebar (a section from the story, with its own heading to attract the reader). However subsidiary heads or breakouts, especially those spread

over more than one column can cause confusion, as can a subhead which may make part of the story look like a separate story.

Embellishments can confuse or distract the reader. Before you add that drop shadow to every picture ask whether you could just make the pictures larger.

If you add a sidebar, or have a story you want to emphasise, think before putting a tint behind it. Tints make text

was always the fresh text output of the linotype machines. But spacing material—rectangular chunks of solid metal, or hollow blocks like segments of a bridge superstructure—was always in short supply. Type went against type, with the column rules strengthening the page so it would not fall apart when lifted off the stone to put on the press.

Then came photo typesetting and suddenly type was strips of paper and space was everywhere. Sanity returned as newspapers realised that readers buy newspapers for information. We lost the column rules, and there is a little more space than before, mainly around

headings. However, a problem remains that, if you want to have a consistent look, you have to cope with differences in story lengths. One way to overcome this is to resize pictures – bigger or smaller, within reason. With a very short story you can add another brief item, but what of those items which are still a few paragraphs short?

A crosshead or two will help spread a story, as will a break-out quote. You may also take a section of the story which virtually stands on its own, and put it in a box, maybe with a break on one side to connect it visually to the main story. A box means the column will be narrower and therefore the story will be longer. It will lengthen again if you make the type bold.

Many layout programmes allow you

*A cross head or two will help spread a story, as will a break out quote.*

harder to read, so, to compensate make the type larger and bolder. Tints are made up of dots, and, on low-cost printing systems, these tend to be large enough to be visible as dots, which can make the type hard to read.

You need a consistent look – so your choice should be one body typeface and one headline typeface (varied by using bold, light and, maybe, italic). If you have a special feature you can allow yourself free reign to choose something out of the ordinary – but don't use more just because you have one of those CDs with 2000 types.

Newspapers traditionally are short on white space and it is worth recalling why this is so. In the days of hot metal, when a newspaper office was more like a heavy engineering workshop, there

PUBLISHED BY:

Whistler Publishing

75 Hardings Road,

Wallington, Victoria 3221.

PO Box 358,

Ocean Grove, Vic. 3226

Phone/Fax: 03-5255 2562.

EDITOR: Greg Wane

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Brian O'Connor

ADVERTISING: Heidi Wane

PUBLISHED: **Quarterly (December, March, June, September) and direct-mailed to independent newspapers and community newsletters throughout Australia, industry groups and associated bodies.**

PRINTED BY:

Star Printing Service Pty Ltd.

113 High Street, Terang

Victoria 3264

PAPER:

**This publication is printed on**

**Spicers Paper - Monza Satin Ivory**

**135gsm**

SUBSCRIPTIONS: **\$10 per annum**

© Copyright 1998.

THE CONTENTS of this news-magazine is copyright. No unauthorised reproduction without written permission of the editor.

## The Australian BUSH PRESS

## Contents...

- 4 — The Paper Chase – small papers are back
- 6 — Letters and faxes
- 7 — Publishing in the Tropical North
- 8 — Overseas News
- 10 — Industry News
- 11 — Creating The Bush Press
- 12 — Going Flat Chat
- 14 — Hot Metal is doing ok in Barham
- 16 — Writing about everything, but cricket
- 17 — Internet Ideas
- 18 — Tech Talk
- 19 — Featured Industry Supplier
- 19 — Making news in Boab
- 20 — National Supplier Directory

## Welcome to the first issue...

EARLIER this year, together with a colleague Brian O'Connor, we began building a data base of small independent newspapers in Australia, initially to identify the number of quarterfolds (A4) papers being published. We conducted a survey and the results indicated that although editors and publishers were lukewarm about attending a national conference, all survey participants were really keen to see a national newsletter produced.

The survey revealed that bush editors have a sense of humour and are fiercely proud of their towns and their newspapers.

We are also fiercely proud of The Australian Bush Press the news-magazine for Australia's independent newspaper publishers.

I would like to thank the advertisers in this first issue, Gordon Woolf: Worsley Press, Grant Churchill: A. E. Hudson Pty. Ltd., Maureen Tayler: Adcell Media, Terry Brissett and Debbie Stone: Brissett Rollers Lee Clarke: Chatter Publishing and Rohan Dean: Spicers Paper, for offering their support to a publication 'sight unseen' and sharing our enthusiasm. I urge you, whenever possible, to support these companies.

**Greg Wane**  
Editor



Continued from page 1—

# Small local newspapers are back...

IT IS inarticulate, self-conscious and frustrated, even dispirited, no longer spurred on by a thundering editorial or a banner headline railing at politicians, their inaction, the state of the wool industry, or whatever topic was on the collective mind of townsfolk that week.

Some persevere. John English's *Don Dorrigio Gazette* and Peter Martin's *Manilla Express* are dogged examples of the old breed of newspaper (and newspaperman). More often than not, most small publications were swallowed up into the larger chains - Rural Press or Australian Provincial Newspapers - or survive for the time being, dependent on the printing presses of the powerful for their continuance. The family newspaper dynasty survives in places - the Westons at Kiama, the Dunnets at Narrabri and the Marstons at Mt Barker in the Adelaide Hills. And let's not forget Doretta Ryder-Wood's *Lachlander* at Condobolin (another hot metal anachronism).

The independent locals are as different to their conglomerate-controlled, printed-down-the-road mass circulation 'local tabloid' as a Big Mac hamburger is to a traditional Aussie burger bought at the corner Greasy Joes. And just as the McDonalds fast food chain has countered with the McOz burger, the big players in the local newspaper game are extolling their staff to emulate the independent locals.

They are also seeking to get closer to their readers through regionalisation of editions. Whereas the big chain 'local rags' have expanded circulation to beat rising costs and in doing so turned their backs on individual communities in their distribution areas, the new breed of local - often quarterfolds - caters to niche markets.

The larger circulation weeklies serve all their towns but paradoxically, cater to none. In many instances they are staffed by trained and idealistic

employees eager to progress in a news organisation, but who never stay long enough in one place to gauge the mood and pulse of public opinion or notice the subtle weft and warp of town life.

Enter, then, the quarterfold. The size is important - the page, that is, not their number.

Magazine in format, convenient, well produced in the main and (most importantly) printed in the district by a local printer. The local newspaper is back. Changing demographics are playing a big part. For instance, the *Buderim Chronicle* is one of a string



• The ingenuity of the Australian bush newspaper. Pictured is the 'office' of the *Stony Creek Gazette*, which circulates in the rural areas between Queanbeyan and Bungendore in New South Wales. The 20-litre kero drum nailed to a post serves the locals well as a roadside drop-off point for their editorial and advertising copy.

of small newspapers on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, among the fastest growing regions in Australia. It co-exists alongside the *Palmwoods District News*, the *Range News*, the *Mary Valley Voice* and the *Glasshouse Country News*.

So, who are we - the small independent newspaper?

Whereas the newspaper proprietor of old most probably was a grey-coated printer, fingernails framed in ink residue, today's small town newspaper publisher more often than not is female.

Consider this insight from Deborah Hopper of the *Roleystone Courier*: "We are regarded not as the owner, but as the custodians [of our newspaper]. Everyone in the area believes they have a proprietorial interest in this paper."

Beth Pagel of the *Kentish Chronicle* in Tasmania says: "We are unashamedly parochial. Unless people put a copy under their jacket, they are mugged going down the street. And advertisers get a good run for their money because people keep issues from one month to the next. Most of my readers have kept all copies of the paper since we started in 1994."

What are our strengths? They are quality production, fiercely loyal readership (even with paid circulation), targeted and cost-effective advertising and a blend of news, information, lifestyle articles and community feedback/input.

Another strength is the non-reliance on the bigger newspaper chains to print the independents. A quarterfold can print close to its distribution point, usually at a convenient printing plant not controlled by a larger newspaper company.

The quality of printing is excellent, usually on 80gsm paper as opposed to 48gsm for normal newsprint. The smaller printers have no problems with

venture sinks to great depths, gracing our front page. The Australian National Underwater Training Centre was about to commence saturation diving training at nearby Lake Cethana and the general manager gave us an exclusive story before news of the official opening in December was given to the major newspapers. Believe it or not, on 31 January 1995 the Hydro Company released water from the lake and didn't warn the Dive Centre, resulting in the training barge doing a back-flip into 30 metres of water, hence the new headline referring to the previous *Sinking to great depths* headline, adding *Oops! We didn't really mean it!*

To make matters worse, the rescue became even more nightmarish when the barge was partially raised only to sink again, this time taking with it a bulldozer, a four-wheel drive vehicle and a compressor.

On 18 March the barge finally surfaced completely to everyone's relief resulting in the headline: *Hooray, 'n' up she rises!*

This also furnished our cartoonist Bob Wells, with perfect ingredients for our O'WHIDN Clan cartoon (which stands for Oh What Have I Done Now?).

We also have a "Snoopy" segment which is an ideal venue to tell the

laughable behaviour of friends.

The major stories and photography are my department with club news sent in by the multitudes of organisations in prodigious numbers throughout the community. We have a regular historical (sometimes hysterical) segment provided by Barb Wells, the curator of the Kentish Museum, and information on our gardening page is kindly provided by locals with wheel-barrow-loads of knowledge.

A regular "Girl's Talk" is written by Sara Knight, a nurse educator from the Jean Hailes Foundation (Victoria). Poor lady came over as a guest speaker for a women's health conference about a year ago but was too polite to say "no" when I asked her to take on the task. Regular book reviews are provided by a friend who foolishly asked if he could help. I never ask if these people need a rest from their writing - they might, and then what would I do?

Our news is always sourced from within the Kentish municipality. I make no apologies for being fiercely parochial. My advertisers enjoy unashamed protection. I accept no advertisers from outside the municipality if they are likely to be in direct competition with the locals. The

*Kentish Chronicle* is totally unsuitable for wrapping vegetable peelings (A4 sheets of 80gsm Reflex), unlike the daily newspapers. Hence my advertisers enjoy a full month of being read and utilised by our readers.

The *Kentish Chronicle* is posted free-of-charge to 1950 households in the district. I print 2100 on a Gestetner 5375 Copyprinter which answers to the name of 'Gizmo'. The papers are folded at a printery near Latrobe (30km away) then collated here by a trusty team of four teenagers. Most of the remaining copies are posted to expatriates outside our postal area, many on the mainland and some are sent overseas. Many people have kept every paper since its inception.

The people of Kentish district are my adopted family and we stick together. They know that I keep a watchful eye on the council on their behalf and share a joke or three; they know that I love 'em to bits, warts and all - and that feeling is reciprocated. The *Kentish Chronicle* story championing the Kentish-Latrobe Joint Authority was used as evidence of local community support at Government hearings into amalgamations of small councils into mega monsters, in which we wouldn't have enough ratepayers to warrant a lone representative.

In July last year I was diagnosed as having Parkinson's Disease and in March my doctor suggested that I write an article about how I was coping. It wasn't easy, but I have always been keen to say what's wrong and got on with living. Copies of that article have since gone all over the world and it has even been published and translated into Malay in an Asian newspaper.

So after all this time I finally can be a writer who doesn't have to watch cricket!

—from Beth Pagel

## Internet ideas

An occasional look at how the Internet can help produce a better newspaper

### Christmas song book

GAIN a closer rapport with readers this Christmas by sponsoring the local community carols night and publishing in the pages of your paper a lift-out song sheet.

For those publishers with access to the Internet, the task is made easier by being able to download words and graphics from sites where this material is available freely.

Try these sites for songs and carols: <http://www.cameron.edu/~mikel/christmas/songs.html>

<http://www.santas.net/songs.htm>

Illustrate the pages with downloadable images from:

[http://www.yahoo.com.au/Society\\_and\\_Culture/Holidays/Christmas/Animation\\_and\\_Clip\\_Art](http://www.yahoo.com.au/Society_and_Culture/Holidays/Christmas/Animation_and_Clip_Art)

### Newspapers on the Internet

WANT to see what other small newspaper publishers are doing? Check out their sites on the Internet. Here are three sites where you can view stories and download sample pages:

*Mary Valley Voice:*

<http://www.suncoast.com.au/Kenilworth/Voice/start.html>

*Palmwoods District News:*

<http://www.suncoast.com.au/Palmwoods/News>

*Glasshouse Country News:*

<http://www.suncoast.com.au/Beerwah/GCNews/start.html>

SUPPORT  
THE  
ADVERTISERS  
WHO SUPPORT

The Australian  
**BUSH PRESS**



# "I don't want to write about cricket!"



Beth Pagel, editor of *The Kentish Chronicle*, was initially 'frightened off' journalism after being warned she may have to write about cricket matches.

**G**ROWING up in South Australia, I had always wanted to be a writer. A vocational guidance officer once told me that this was impractical – I'd need to become a junior reporter with a newspaper, commencing my training by writing about cricket matches. I could have coped if he'd said "writing about grass growing" or indeed, "writing about paint drying," but cricket??? So I became a school teacher instead.

Years passed, occupied with marriage, children and I become a farmer, then, in 1981, we moved to Sheffield in the Kentish district of beautiful north western Tasmania. The town is 30 kilometres south of Devonport, near the majestic Mt. Roland.

Three weeks after arriving, I was seconded to help on the community monthly newspaper which was produced at the Sheffield District High School, with children and parent-

volunteers gathering stories and advertisements. I soon became 'hooked' – cricket reporting was done by those who were interested!

The school had an offset printer and the services of a local man who had once worked for Hallmark Cards.

While there I realised there was a niche for someone to produce low-priced, small print runs which couldn't be produced economically in the traditional printeries.

From this grew my Think Small Printing Service which I started in 1986. Bear in mind that these were pre-desktop printing days!

It was well patronised, so I had no time to help on the school's newspaper.

Production of the community paper gradually wound down and the right to print it under the *Kentish Times* banner was taken over by a new (Government assisted) group in town. The format was changed and it was printed in Devonport. Content became

less local and more self-praising – the year was 1994 and the *Kentish Times* death was imminent.

Robbie, my employee, was an ex-newspaper photographer and during a quiet spell we started talking about what we'd do if we produced our own community newspaper.

My shop has always been the 'hot gossip' centre of town, so we were first to hear rumours of the group's impending demise and fall from Government grace. It seemed a shame to waste all that juicy stuff, didn't it? I well remember the day when we put together a letter to send out to the community groups and our potential advertisers.

Let's face it deep down inside we are all country folk who like to know who's doing what, where, when and why – no secret societies here!

The first edition of the *Kentish Chronicle* was published in September 1994 with a world scoop *New Kentish*

small print runs, whereas a large newspaper press generates many 'spoils' before it corrects registration and produces good quality papers.

The smaller circulations are ideal for local advertisers. A butcher, for example, is likely to reach his client more efficiently and for cheaper cost than buying advertising in a mass circulation free. He or she is more likely to attract customers from the

immediate area, rather than draw custom from the most distant readership of the larger circulation paper. Clients are unlikely to drive past several of the butcher's competition to buy his lamb roast special. The same could be said of

any small business in a town. Their message can be carried effectively and more cheaply in the local small circulation, independent than in a mass circulation competitor. The cost is comparable to, or less than, producing and distributing a flyer. Many readers consider flyers as 'junk mail', but they will accept happily the same message as a full-page advertisement in their home town newspaper.

Where the mass circulation locals have an advantage is in capturing the advertising dollar of the region's car dealership, the large department store or national franchise chain that can negotiate a group advertising buy, the independents could overcome this by offering to strengthen custom for the advertiser in the niche market that they serve. Long shelf life is another

advantage of the quarterfolds and independents. Proprietors talk of readers keeping copies for years after publication; sometimes for no other reason than an issue may have contained a good recipe, a cure for bee sting pain, or the contact telephone number for the local bush fire brigade. Because a small independent is likely to contain lots of news from one community (in comparison with a

Many readers consider flyers as junk mail, but will accept the same message as a full page advertisement in their local paper...

the quarterfolds and independents. As this occurs, one or two of the larger chains may be tempted to lease out titles to journalists or groups of partners who would instil a better 'home town' independent feeling into a local publication.

We can expect also that the bringing together of isolated journalists and editors 'on-line' via the Internet will enable each individual to draw from

another's expertise, as well as allow fast transmission of complete pages to printers.

Consolidation of printing at one location, such as occurs at the *Beautesert Times*, is another possible trend. Incidentally, the *Beautesert Times* is printed by the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, while its printery concentrates on producing five or six quarterfolds from equipment especially designed for that purpose.

But while the future is not entirely clear, one thing is certain. The quarterfolds and independents, with their mix of news, community notices and lifestyle articles, are an emerging new force in Australian newspaper publishing.

What, then, the future? Expect some of the larger groups to circulate copy-cat publications that will fill in the distribution gaps between their large circulation free locals. A loose affiliation of locals, interaction and swapping of ideas (via this magazine, for instance) and through the opening up of membership by country press associations will improve the image of

another's expertise, as well as allow fast transmission of complete pages to printers.

Consolidation of printing at one location, such as occurs at the *Beautesert Times*, is another possible trend. Incidentally, the *Beautesert Times* is printed by the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, while its printery concentrates on producing five or six quarterfolds from equipment especially designed for that purpose.

But while the future is not entirely clear, one thing is certain. The quarterfolds and independents, with their mix of news, community notices and lifestyle articles, are an emerging new force in Australian newspaper publishing.

What, then, the future? Expect some of the larger groups to circulate copy-cat publications that will fill in the distribution gaps between their large circulation free locals. A loose affiliation of locals, interaction and swapping of ideas (via this magazine, for instance) and through the opening up of membership by country press associations will improve the image of

What, then, the future? Expect some of the larger groups to circulate copy-cat publications that will fill in the distribution gaps between their large circulation free locals. A loose affiliation of locals, interaction and swapping of ideas (via this magazine, for instance) and through the opening up of membership by country press associations will improve the image of

—from Brian O'Connor

• Photocopy this article and circulate it to your advertisers. Prove to them the worth of smaller, independent newspaper publishers.

## READER'S ADS

Got some equipment for sale, offering a special deal for printing, looking for equipment, advertise in the special rate ads for independent proprietors. Fax or post your copy or camera-ready artwork to *The Bush Press*. Ads are prepaid \$30.

**1,000 Business Cards**  
(Incl. Design)  
**From ONLY \$75**  
Delivered Anywhere  
In Australia!  
Ph: (02)6236 6434  
Chatter Publishing & Printing

### CAN YOU HELP?

The Queenscliff Historical Museum in Victoria is seeking copies of the newspaper *The Queenscliff Pilot* published in the town from 1948 to 1968. The museum wishes to add to its incomplete collection. Many people have visited the seaside resort over the years and may have collected a few copies which could be stored in drawers or cupboards.

Contact the president  
Margaret Wright  
(03) 5258 2196

### FOR SALE INTERTYPE C4 with Quadder and mhr saw

Still in working order (saw not connected), also several aluminum magazines with mats and quantity of metal. Mats include Park Avenue 14, 18, Minuet Script 14, Lotus Script 14, Folio, Times, Garamond with accents.

IN BRUNSWICK, MELBOURNE  
PH. 03-650 3217  
ASK FOR KATHY

### THIS SPACE IS AVAILABLE

Reach out across  
Australia  
for only  
\$30 (prepaid)

Call 03 5255 2562

Advertising Sales  
Annual Reports  
Specialist Publications  
Magazines  
Newspapers  
Newsletters  
Corporate Design  
Brochures  
Web Publishing

**Ad-cell**

Publishers of  
The Geelong  
Independent  
and  
Geelong Business  
News

## Summer Special

Book in and complete your Design or Print job in the months of January and February and receive a 10% Discount

For further information contact  
Caroline Tayler

Ad-cell Media Pty Ltd  
78 Moorabool Street  
Geelong  
Phone: 5221 4408  
www.adcell.com.au



## LETTERS

and  
FAXES

Write to:  
PO Box 358,  
Ocean Grove,  
Victoria 3926  
or Fax to:  
(03) 5255 2562



## The importance of the local rag

I HAVE long held the view that the future of the overall newspaper industry, as we know it today, lies in the small community news/magazine/letter. With our empirical peers diving deep into the Internet, the days of the five mile roll of newsprint are definitely numbered.

Also, the community based newspaper does a far more important job, believe it or not. International and national news is readily available via all media outlets and sure, the TV can

give us the graphic visuals unobtainable in newsprint. Nevertheless, it cannot tell us who got pinched for being pissed on a pushbike, or the scores for the Under 14's basketball team at Tamborine Mountain for instance. (Much more important news than who's the next Man-on-the-Moon.)

Whilst viewers/listeners/readers eyes and ears are assailed on a daily basis by what Saddam Hussein or Bill Clinton is up to, how much more

relaxing it is to retire to that quiet inner sanctum, which no-one dares disturb, with the local rag, especially the paper that you don't have to fight in order to turn the page without it falling to bits.

And it's high time we took things into our own hands and formed an association before the axes from within the large media organisations send disgruntled editors and their copy boys out on the street to earn a crust. Just think, they might start an A4 in their home town to ease retirement and invite us to join them. The very nerve!

I was very interested in the directory compiled by Brian O'Connor. I became keen even, when I discovered our modest effort was in the top ten (distribution-wise, seventh no less) which has not been an unlucky number for me.

Surprised even if there are not indeed many more around the country, although I certainly will not be surprised if many more emerge.

Now that the current election hysteria has ceased, an article worth researching would relate to what effect the GST will have on us. Small newspapers as ourselves who have no product to sell have been exempt from any appreciative tax (nil sales tax at least) and an article in the *Australian Printer* by Harry Lamerton affirms that as late as December last year a new ruling was made that considered "...magazine is not characterised as advertising matter because the advertising is incidental to the magazine's main purpose of informing and entertaining."

We certainly inform and attempt to entertain so it's pleasing to know that our 'service', up until now, has been recognised by the powers-that-be.

Regards,  
Kevin D. Kane  
*Tamborine Times*  
Queensland.

We welcome your comments and letters about all things that matter in small newspaper publishing. The triumphs, humour, warnings and frustrations can be posted or faxed to:  
The Editor, Greg Wane,  
*The Australian Bush Press*  
at the contact numbers above.

## For newspaper publishers...

## Books

## How to Start and Produce a Magazine (or Newspaper)

We cover methods from duplicating to many forms of printing. We look at advertisements and how to work out an economic rate, what an editor needs to know (including guidelines on copyright and libel), how to talk to printers (did you know a small change in size might reduce costs?), and what you can do for yourself. There is general advice on layout, and on collating, binding, distribution, and all the other considerations in producing a magazine or small newspaper. By Gordon Woolf \$25.95 + \$2 postage (PB A4 94pp ISBN 0 646 05684 0)

## Newspaper Production using PageMaker 6.5

PageMaker has been used by many small (and not-so-small) newspapers for many years, but version 6.5 has much to extend its usefulness. Most guides to PageMaker emphasise its use in graphics arts to achieve whatever the designer has in mind. But in newspapers, newsletters and magazines, editorial and advertisement copy is brought in as quickly as possible, and is formatted to strict rules. Throughput is the key, and PageMaker is now equally suited to this production. However it needs a different method of working – and that needs a guide from the newspaper viewpoint. \$52.00 plus \$5 postage (scripts and templates can be downloaded from the Web – password in book – and there is a free email or fax enquiry service). ISBN 1 875750 13 4 (B5 PB, 176pp)

## PageMaker Scripting

If you are using PageMaker 6.5, many tasks you undertake regularly can be automated. We can write the scripts to do this to meet your specific needs, as we have done for newspapers from Victoria to Queensland and from New Zealand to Texas.

## Format email newsletter

This is a free service to all who produce formatted publications – newspapers, newsletters and magazines – a newsletter by email issued roughly every two weeks, it currently circulates to more than 350 people in 34 countries. To sign on send a message of "subscribe" to format-request@lists.best.com (it doesn't matter what you put in the subject line). See back issues at www.worsleypress.com/format.htm

## The Worsley Press

11 Intel Court, Hastings, Vic 3915 Ph/fax: 03 5979 1112 Freecall order line 1800 622 805  
www.worsleypress.com email: info@worsleypress.com

\* KOONDROOK AND \* BARHAM BRIDGE

**THE BRIDGE**

A BORDER JOURNAL

Ph: (03) 5453 2057 - Mobile: 018 125 323 - Fax: (03) 5453 2077

Recommended Price 80c. No. 2741.

FRIDAY 23rd OCTOBER 1998

Print Post 232055/00003

between a chemist and a takeaway cafe. The people of Koondrook, Victoria and Barham, New South Wales – twin towns straddling the Murray River – can attribute the 25-year stewardship of their local paper by this former dairy farmer to the poor price of milk in the mid-1970s.

Forced to sell due to low butterfat prices and a farm accident that still affects his health, Lindsay let slip to the broker handling the property sale

that he would like to own the local paper, *The Bridge*. Sensing a double commission, the broker approached the then owner of the paper, Laurence Carroll, a man then in his 70s, and a deal was struck. The same day he signed the papers handing over the deeds, Lindsay suddenly found himself manager of *The Bridge*.

Barham is the principal town in a circulation area covering the diversified cropping, grain sheep and

horticulture districts of the mid-Murray between Deniliquin and Kerang/Swan Hill.

Because the economy is based on several commodities, including cotton, citrus, rice and wool, a downturn in any one product is compensated by steady prices for the remainder. Not that locals ride high on the hog. The Harrington's experience with dairying is proof of that and the paper makes a 'modest income' according to Lindsay's wife, Sue, who is clerical manager for the paper.

Advertising for 14-16 pages each week is supplemented by a small printing business that also provides employment for two printing staff.

Lindsay says the paper gives he and his wife a great deal of satisfaction. They have fended off one or two offers in recent years.

"(The Bridge) would lose some of its identity (if it were sold)," says Sue.

"A paper holds a community together. We have made decisions that are financially detrimental for us, but which were good for the community."

As a vehicle for local opinion, news and advertising, 'The Bridge' is an apt description of this paper's role and the links it helps create among readers.

But how long can the Harringtons continue their newspaper using what many regard as outmoded techniques? Things won't change if either Lindsay or Sue have their way. Nonetheless, experienced Linotype operators and parts to keep machinery going are becoming more scarce.

Like their printing plant they supervise, the Harringtons are not getting younger. Sue realises that inevitably, they will have to sell out and retire. That won't be for a while, though. "I think things will change," Sue says in a candid moment.

Meanwhile, *The Bridge* remains a shining light among Australian independent newspapers. **BP**

## John is one-eyed about Argus



The twice-weekly *Narranderra Argus* remains locally owned.

SINCE returning to his home town four years ago, John Shute, manager of the *Narranderra Argus*, has turned around the fortunes of the newspaper, but admits keeping it profitable is a constant challenge.

The twice-weekly *Argus*, based in the western New South Wales town, circulation 2000, employs a staff of five generating 28 pages a week. It is owned by a consortium of business people keen to see the paper remain in local hands.

John Shute says the *Argus* will again produce a 28-page colour special this Christmas to attract additional advertising revenue and is planning an Easter special next year with the same aim in mind. The *Argus* is a metaphor for many

small independent newspapers.

"The situation remains tight. If I were to employ an extra staff member, we would lose our profitability," John said. At the same time, the *Argus* is producing no less than 12-page papers when some publications in western New South Wales are down to eight pages. Printed at Wagga Wagga under contract to the *Daily Advertiser* the *Argus* is covering a cost increase instituted six months ago and shortly will lift its cover price to 90 cents.

"There will be some initial backlash, but we expect our readership to steady again around the 2000 mark," John said. **BP**

**FOOTNOTE:** If you own an old linotype, don't sell it for scrap without first offering it to independent newspaper proprietors whose plants still employ this technology. Among papers printed using hot metal techniques are: *The Don Dorrigio Gazette*, *Walgett Spectator*, *Manilla Express*, *Lachlander* and the *Bridge* in New South Wales, the *Tarrangower Times* in Victoria and *Gnowangerup Star*, Western Australia.



# Step back in time through the pages of *The Bridge*



For 90-odd years *The Bridge* newspaper at Barham on the Murray has been typeset in hot-metal and printed on a Meihle cylinder – and it's not about to change.

LINDSAY Harrington sits confidently in the editor's chair like an experienced stockman astride a horse – somewhat nonchalant, yet confident – head tilted, ears attentive, passive eyes behind tinted glasses. It is a Thursday and the chatter of the Linotype and Ludlow machines 'out back' signal that

arrange for a new part to be transported from Melbourne. Composure is resumed. The problem won't prevent *The Bridge* rolling off the Meihle press much the same as it has for the past 90 years or so.

That's not to say things haven't changed. The newspaper office has moved from Koondrook to Barham, on

rhythm, plucking tiny brass letter matrices from the hot lead ejector back to the slot allocated to each through a mechanism of grooves and teeth similar to the notches in a key.

This is a living, breathing newspaper. Not a computer in sight. No clinical laser printers, no scanners no optical character recognition. A facsimile machine in the corner is one of the few concessions to the modern age; that and the computerised personal diary Lindsay keeps in his top pocket. He remembers many names and phone numbers of contacts, but the mind does slip occasionally.

Not only editor, but museum curator, Lindsay is proud that little has changed at *The Bridge* since it was first published on 30 September 1909. The locals like it that way too. They are standing in line to buy their weekly 'egg timer' every Friday morning. In what must be a circulation coup for any newspaper in the country, only three households in Barham don't purchase a copy.

"One fellow told me once that there's nothing in the paper, but there must be something, for people to buy it regularly every week. Perhaps they don't want to miss the issue that does contain something really interesting," Lindsay smiles.

It is not unknown for *The Bridge* to make headlines itself – like the time, so the legend goes, when a lion escaped from the circus and wandered into the printery! More than a decade ago, a team from a Melbourne metropolitan newspaper visited Barham seeking local colour stories and sought Lindsay's advice. He told them about the many characters of the town such as the woman who rides a bike, wears tinsel in her hair and lives in the bush with dogs. The crew decided a story about Lindsay and *The Bridge* would make a better double page spread.

Newspaper wars are not just restricted to the Packers and Murdochs. When the newspaper company in the town up the road circulated a paper in opposition to *The Bridge*, town loyalty sent the newcomer packing – and broke.

Not much moves in Barham without Lindsay knowing about it or observing it from his shopfront office sandwiched



• Lindsay Harrington in the editor's chair at *The Bridge* office.

another issue of the *Koondrook and Barham Bridge* is in the making.

It's press day and Lindsay is asked whether an interview is inconvenient: "Not really, 'been doing this for 25 years," came the reply in a reassuring drawl. The small talk is interrupted by a minor crisis. One of the Linotypes is playing up and the culprit is a small part no bigger than a fingernail.

Lindsay instructs a colleague to

the other side of the Murray River, during that time. Stories are no longer set by hand, a letter at a time, although the type still sits in dusty wooden drawers. Even the carved wooden headline type is scattered about like scrabble pieces struggling to make a word.

Chases are laid out on the stone, type inked and galley proofs spiked, the arms of the Linotypes moving in

# Publishing a paper in the 'relaxed' tropical north



Kathy and Peter Stapely who produce the *Cooktown Local News* describe their location as REAL Far North Queensland. This probably gives them the distinction of being the most northern independent newspaper in Australia!

WE MOVED to Cooktown in 1992 from Melbourne, which was quite a culture shock. We are now pretty well settled into the town although we are still waiting to enjoy the "relaxed, tropical lifestyle" we were expecting!

Cooktown is on the southern end of Cape York Peninsula and Captain Cook was the first tourist. He stayed for 40 days whilst repairs to his ship were being carried out. But things didn't really hot up again for another 100 years, when gold was discovered in the region in 1870. The town grew enormously from then and at one stage was the major east coast port. During World War 2, there was an enormous armed forces presence, particularly the airforce, but after the war the town shrank back. From about 90 pubs (and quite a few sly grog shops) in the late 1800s the town is now down to three.

Cooktown (population 1500) is on the east coast at the mouth of the Endeavour River, 350 kilometres north of Cairns. There are two large Aboriginal communities close by and Cooktown is the main town in a shire as large as Victoria. The shire has only a very small rate base, around 4000 ratepayers, so there is not a lot of money to go around. There is a number of ongoing issues up here, remoteness and the consequent costs of living, freight, etc, as well as the constant issue of roads, high registration fees and enormous wear and tear on vehicles. (Cooktown is one of the only few towns in which cars can be registered without Roadworthy Certificates).

Cairns, the nearest large town, is 350 kilometres away with 80 kilometres of dirt to cover before you hit bitumen on the main road to Cairns.

Cooktown streets are bitumen, but once you leave the town boundary most roads are dirt. In the Wet we have to cope with flooded creek crossings and rivers which regularly rise a metre or more over their bridges. It is not unusual for us to be isolated for hours or days at a time.

In the Wet, children at the school are often sent home early, if heavy rain occurs, otherwise they wouldn't get home at all. Every child who lives out of town has a 'foster family' where they can stay if stranded in town.

However, the disadvantages are far out-weighted by the beauty of the region (reef, rainforest, waterfalls and beautiful deserted beaches) and the many activities such as fishing on the reef (only seven kilometres from shore) which is allowed.

Newspapers have quite a long history in Cooktown, going back 100 years. At times there have been two or three in circulation at once, at other times, none. The *Cooktown Local News* had been in existence for about eight years, beginning as a newsletter produced by the school's Parents and Citizens Association. In fact many of the older people in town still refer to the paper as 'the newsletter'.

We became the proud owners of the *Cooktown Local News* in May 1994. Basically the truth was that Peter felt the newspaper would give him a legitimate excuse to buy even more computers and software, not to mention the other assorted pieces of equipment he has managed to persuade me are 'absolutely necessary' such as collators, stitchers and offset printing machines.

The newspaper business was something we knew nothing about, but we had never let that stop us before.

Peter spent a few weeks working with the previous owners and then they were off and it was up to us. The whole experience has been a process of learning by trial and error (with plenty of the latter!).

Our most outstanding typographical error was in an article about the former Deputy Opposition Leader of Queensland, Mr Tom Burns. Most of you probably know what it's like – someone sends you typed, ready written editorial material, it's late, you're looking for something to fill that space and you use it. Well we scanned the article in and off we went. It wasn't until much later that night – after we had printed, collated and packed the complete edition – that we noticed that the 'r' in Burns had scanned as 'm'. Mr Tom Burns was referred to as Mr Tom Bums throughout the entire article. Luckily he has a wonderful sense of humour! (Although we did get just a little bit tired of the Bums jokes that we had to put up with for some weeks afterwards.)

Publishing the local newspaper has been an enormous education for us. Certainly the locals consider it "their" newspaper and many of them have no hesitation in telling us how to run it, and what to print. Many of them also see us as a resource when they don't seem to be able to obtain any action on important issues.

We have been involved in a campaign to save four of the 14 hospital beds in town from closure and addressing the approach of Queensland Transport to vehicle inspections in town.

We have found that a small newspaper can really make a difference and can be quite powerful in eliciting responses to local issues from politicians, bureaucrats and other assorted 'powers that be'. If the community also gets behind it, it becomes a very powerful influence on how issues are dealt with and addressed by government agencies.

We plan to be here for some time yet, and are learning more every week.

We are really looking forward to this first edition of the Bush Press and look forward to picking up ideas from all those publishers who are more experienced and educated in the business than we are!

BP

—from Kathy Stapely



# Big advertisers eye the community newspapers

## OVERSEAS NEWS

To what extent are community newspapers overseas accepted among readers and what do the larger advertisers think of taking their message to customers through the pages of the local news? Freelance journalist ANITA LAHEY, in Ottawa, examines the Canadian experience.

THE colour photo on the front page of the inaugural *Flamborough Post* appears to be a dead giveaway. It's a rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed boy perched atop a pony. There are other clues: a furry kitten, a fun-loving festival performer, and a grand story about the newspaper itself, titled "Welcome to the brand new *Post*."

At first glance, it looks like one of those papers we all remember being tossed onto our doorsteps at one time or another, the ones that were chock full of pictures of cute pets and giant pumpkins but very little actually worth reading. Call it sappy copy, call it good news journalism, call it small town reporting, it's part of the reputation that has stuck to local, community newspapers for years.

However, a closer look at the first *Flamborough Post* reveals a much more complex publication. And it is one that hints at some of the changes quietly taking place in community newspaper reporting as a growing number of publications are improving editorial quality to a degree now earning respect among readers, and subsequently, advertisers.

The story about the *Post* describes how the paper will cover contentious political issues, such as amalgamation and downsizing of social services. Beside it is a story headlined "Police not impressed with court decision" — not exactly suggestive of fluff. On page three is a detailed report about a recent swarming in the area. On page four is a piece about the local farmers' struggle with the extremely dry summer. Granted, the paper does carry some cutesy photos, but it also covers local businesspeople,

commercial developments and politics. In short, the *Post* appears to be trying to provide the only thing a community paper can that will set it apart from larger media: true local news.

"If it doesn't happen within our community, if it doesn't involve people from our community, then we're not interested," says Ian Oliver, publisher of the *Flamborough Post* and several other papers in southern Ontario.

"That's our uniqueness and that's our focus."

Community papers have always professed to be the voice of the locals. But the truth is, in many cases, that voice was somewhat selective, often choosing to print the nice stories and brush the nasty stuff under the desks in the news room.

Barrie Zwicker, media critic for Vision TV, started his career on small town papers like the *Russell Banner* in Russell, Manitoba. He describes the old affliction of the local press as a combination between boosterism and avoidance. He thinks it was more a side effect of small town life than something that happened by design.

"If there's a political reporter in Ottawa, he or she may not feel any particular compunction at taking hard shots at the mayor," says Zwicker. "If you are in Lanark County (in eastern Ontario) and in a town of 3000 and the mayor literally lives two doors down and his kids play with your kids, it's harder. That matter of proximity is defanging. It dulls the teeth of what should be a watchdog press in little communities." However, there is growing evidence of those teeth sharpening. Zwicker mentions the

*Peninsula News Review*, a paper near Sydney, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, which last year ran a hard-hitting, eight-page supplement about domestic violence in the community. "This is a nice, upper-class area with lots of tourism. They don't want to hear about the bad stuff, right? They did," says Zwicker.

Michael Anderson, executive director of the Canadian Community Newspaper Association, says entries into last year's Michelin writing awards also provide evidence that small papers are getting bigger mouths. One paper submitted its investigation into how the town's largest employer had been poisoning the local water supply, while another entered a six-part series on local drug and alcohol abuse.

Also, entries to the CCNA's own newspaper contest have surprised Anderson.

"I was struck by how many shots submitted for the photo categories are dealing with events like loss of home, loss of life and community violence. This is not the picture of the duck on the front cover of the paper."

Anderson says the impetus for change comes from readers and editors. "They've decided to deal with some of those hard issues," he says.

"By and large, the people want to be informed, they want accurate reporting and they recognise there is good news and bad."

If anyone knows this first hand, it's Lars Eedy, editor of the *Fergus-Elora News Express* in Ontario, which has a paid circulation of 4900 and a reputation for digging up dirt. Besides being knee-deep in stories about planning issues, commercial growth, the survival of the downtown business core and municipal restructuring, the *Express* currently is reporting on a murder trial — the only first degree murder case to ever occur in the area.

Eedy says some good news is essential in a local paper, because readers don't hear the good things about their community in any other medium. But it's certainly become a smaller part of the mix. "Community newspapers have had their biases, but

November 1995, *Flat Chat* became the Clarke family business when the association 'gave' the paper to Lee and Nathan.

While it doesn't turn much of a profit, the paper is a vehicle for promoting the printing side of the business. This includes flyers, material for the local shire council and business cards. The lower overheads of their country location means Chatter Publishing and Printing can compete effectively with printers in Queanbeyan and Canberra.

Business card orders come from as far away as Narooma on the NSW south coast.

*Flat Chat* has diversified as a product, but still retains a strong policy of advising readers of government assistance programs and sources of funding for local activities. The paper acts as a debating forum; a place where ideas can be distilled and the course of action finally decided upon disseminated to every household.

Production takes a whole month, but is usually concentrated into the last two weeks, when even Lee's mother lends a hand collating and folding. The couple distributes the paper to outlets in Canberra and Queanbeyan, while Australia Post takes care of roadside deliveries to mostly urban rural readership.

"One of the things about this community is the number of educated and incredibly talented people who choose to live here or in the nearby small towns", Lee said.

Tapping into this resource base is the key to success, for the community and the newspaper.

The success of this strategy can be seen in *Flat Chat's* recent campaign to have touring theatre company stage a play at Captains Flat (it was a sell-out). Just now, the paper is marshalling community forces to battle for a grant to upgrade the town water supply and to seed the bare hills above Captains Flat — a legacy of early mining.

Into the future Lee and Nathan hope to expand the circulation of *Flat Chat*, upgrade its software and add an office to the end of the house. It will replace the bathroom size office used currently for all aspects of the business. The office will have panoramic windows of the town and surrounding country side — a vision as big as that Lee and Nathan have for their successful publication. **BP**

• Pictured previous page: Lee and Nathan Clarke on the balcony of their home overlooking the village of Captains Flat.



# Flat Chat

Volume 4, Issue 10  
Ph/Fax: 6236 6434 Email: www.flatchat@yahoo.com  
PO Box 2, Captains Flat NSW 2623

## The Captains Flat Garage Set to Re-open

As the final papers are signed and a few delays overcome, the Captains Flat Shell Garage should be set to re-open, hopefully around the 10th of this month, if not sooner.

Only 2 months after its closing under the previous owner, Ms M. Hetherington, two local people have gone into partnership;



## The birth of *Flat Chat*

### Flat Chat Specifications

**Description:** 28pp, quarterfold  
**Circulation:** 1500, free monthly (first Monday)

**Years published:** 20

**Production:** Microsoft Publisher, Windows 98

TODAY'S newspaper serving the old mining town of Captains Flat, south-east of Queanbeyan in southern New South Wales, is a far cry from the first means of communication among locals. An old tree located outside the Post Office, dating from 1893, served as the district message board until the *Captains Flat Mining Record* first appeared on Saturday 15 January 1898.

Ironically, it was a notice tacked to the old tree that announced the destruction of the *Record* printing plant by fire and the subsequent takeover of the paper by the *Queanbeyan Age*, which subsumed it into the *Age* title a few months later. Several newsletters circulated locally during the period 1940 to the late sixties, the most notable being *Head Frame* (a reference to the mining operations that once underpinned the town's economic livelihood).

The forerunner of *Flat Chat*, the *Captains Flat School Newspaper* burst into print in March 1978 and appeared bi-monthly. The front cover was designed by students of the Captains Flat Public School and, for the second issue, a student named Melissa Findlay suggested the name *Flat Chat*. In 1984, production of *Flat Chat* was taken over by an enthusiastic group of parents. The frequency of production increased to

once a month and many topical issues were covered, not just school news. In June 1986, the paper was 'put aside'.

The name *Flat Chat* was adopted by local artist John Creswell for his cartoon strip in the *Great Entertainer* — a local television guide circulating in Queanbeyan and district. The community was again without a voice.

In a testament to the power of the bush press, a new newspaper commenced operation in 1988. Called *Community Voice*, it was the mouthpiece of local forces responsible for Captain Flat's entry into the Tidy Towns Competition and development of a park and sporting reserve. This is located on the creek bank 'flat' where a bull called Captain often grazed. The spot became known as Captains Flat.

In 1994, a local resident and the newly formed Residents and Ratepayers Association distributed a single sheet *Community Newsletter*. In October that year, it was revamped into a four-page publication called the *Captains Flat News*.

Editorship passed to Mrs Lee Clarke in March 1995. She was then publicity officer for the Residents and Ratepayers Association, then renamed the Community Association.

In November 1995, the association handed over the paper to Lee Clarke and husband Nathan. Their Flat Chatter Media Publications company was formed in February 1996, with production responsibility passing to the couple. Previously, the paper had been printed at the Captains Flat Public School.

—with acknowledgment to the research skills of Lee Clarke.



# It's a case of flat to the boards at *Flat Chat*



One of the advantages of producing a newspaper from home is that you can work happily in your pyjamas! According to Lee Clarke, the editor of *Flat Chat* which circulates 1500 copies monthly to the people of Captains Flat and district in southern New South Wales.

"I CAN WORK IN MY PYJAMAS." It was a flippant remark – a throwaway line from *Flat Chat*'s Lee Clarke – in an otherwise thoughtful interview.

However, it serves to illustrate the unpretentious and down-to-earth nature of the new breed of 'local rag' only now being recognised by the serious players on the publishing business. If you doubt that statement, read elsewhere in this issue of the action of the Queensland Country Press Association in admitting smaller newspapers to its ranks and moves by one of the country's largest newspaper publishers, Rural Press, to emulate the style and appeal of the village quarterfolds.

Lee Clarke and husband Nathan – who print the paper and operate Chatter Publishing and Printing – have no doubt they have discovered a successful formula. It is described as a "newspaper magazine" by one reader, a "lifestyle magazine" by Lee.

A mix of local news, community notices, whimsy, practical hints, columns and ads for local traders. *Flat Chat* is helping to define and shape a community that was rudderless following the closure of the mine – once the town's reason for being – and now seeks to identify itself with the thoughts expressed in the pages of the local newspaper.

"The motivation is to bring people together," Lee explained.

"Our readers may not live in town, but they identify with a wider community formed by the paper's circulation area. They belong," she said.

Her philosophy is simple. It is also a winner too. The editor should take a back seat to the paper she or he produces, Lee says. That's not to mean 'abandon all care' (she cares

passionately about the product), but allow the paper to reflect the community to itself.

And always be positive about what is printed. "People should read the paper and feel good about themselves," Lee Clarke says.

Lee once overheard a comment made by someone in nearby



Queanbeyan who said: "The only good thing that comes out of Captains Flat is *Flat Chat*."

"Now, that's silly, really," she says. "What is *Flat Chat* if it isn't about the people of the town. In essence they are *Flat Chat*, so the comment was a compliment for the people who live here."

"To see the identity it has built in a town that had none, and see the ripples flowing from it is wonderful. Groups that were ambling along now want to project a positive image through the paper," Lee said.

"The people of the region have the idea that a lot happens in Captains Flat. Not much does, but a read of the paper gives the impression that there is. People are driving out here [from Queanbeyan] and property values have gone up."

"People are pulling together."

While outsiders like the paper, readers love it.

"I get complaints that *Flat Chat* is too informative," Lee said. "They [the readers] don't want it to come out more frequently. It takes a month to read!"

Local newspapers at Captains Flat have had a chequered history. *Flat Chat* is the most enduring and widely read. Its 1500 copies are circulated monthly in an area south and east of Queanbeyan – a town of 30,000 just over the NSW border from Canberra, home to 300,000.

Lee, formerly a personal assistant with an engineering firm, and Nathan, a former printer with the Federal Department of Health, traded their Canberra lifestyle for Captains Flat after one of their two daughters was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. To give Jasmine the high level of care she required, in Lee's words, the Clarke's 'abandoned the mortgage' on a city home and moved about 40 minutes from town. This was close enough to access all the services of Queanbeyan and the national capital, but sufficiently distant to purchase land and build their own home overlooking a sleepy village to the mountains beyond.

Lee confesses to dreaming while packing that she one day would like to run a local newspaper. The opportunity came when she performed the task voluntarily on behalf of the local progress association. From

I think those days are over," says Eedy. "People are so accustomed to other media they're demanding more from their community newspapers: more responsibility and more exposure."

What does all this mean for advertisers? Essentially more quality vehicles from which to choose. Jeff Ferguson, a media assistant at McKim Media Group in Toronto, helps clients like Chrysler Canada Ltd, which uses a mixture of daily and community newspaper advertising, sift through the thousands of smaller newspapers across the country. He says community newspapers offer a household penetration that is unequalled by any other print medium. According to a 1994 survey by the Angus Reid Group, of Vancouver, 65 per cent of all Canadian adults read their local newspapers.

The challenge, he says, is finding the right ones.

"We don't ever use one without going through and making sure it's a viable vehicle," says Ferguson. "We check the editorial to make sure it's suitable for our clients. We check the advertisers to make sure there's good support, but to make sure it's not a junk-mail piece that is solid advertising from front to back." Ferguson says a paper needs a strong community focus and a strong ratio of editorial to advertising, at least 60 per cent editorial – although he admits this level isn't that common.

Doug Newell, vice-president media buying services for Harrison Young Pesonin and Newell in Toronto, says the quality of small town papers remains inconsistent, and finding the good ones can take more effort than it's worth.

A great number of them that do provide value to the communities and are read, but it's a huge task for an advertiser or an agency to sift through [and identify them], he says. "There's not a lot of reward for doing so. The communities are small, and the amount of ad space used is relatively small."

The bottom line is that advertisers don't want to be in a paper just because it is going to every house in a community. "It matters to an

**"People are so accustomed to other media they're demanding more from their community newspaper: more responsibility, more exposure."**

advertiser that the paper is respected in the community," says Newell.

Ferguson says that's sometimes hard to determine. This is because so many community papers are distributed through controlled circulation. And he says McKim prefers to go with paid circulation community papers when it can find them.

Dennis Merrell, executive director of the Alberta Community Newspapers Association, says a 1995 readership survey by the AUNA showed that

community newspapers are not only highly read, they are read more thoroughly than other media.

The survey showed that 65 per cent of respondents read every issue of their local paper, while just 36 per cent read four or more issues per week of a daily. Half said they relied most on the community paper for local news, while only eight per cent turned to the daily.

"People spend more time reading their community newspaper," says Merrell. "It's a more leisurely read. First of all it's no where near the size of the daily paper. Secondly it's in the home for longer, but mostly because they're reading things that are important to their everyday lives."

Another place advertisers may have an advantage with community newspapers, says Zwicker, is that it's not just editorial, but sometimes the ads that are a strong pull for readers. "We read the local paper if we really are learning

something. Local people looking at the ads of their local businesses is part of that service."

In fact, a healthy number of local ads is a sure sign of a well-respected, well-read paper, says Anderson.

"A strong classified section is a good indicator. The number of inserts, the number of ads, lend themselves to the fact that the product is being read. Advertisers are driven by one thing only. If it isn't working for them, they're not there."

BP

## LaserLink

Computer-to-plate also in reach for small offset



HUDSON 2001\*  
PRINT CHEMISTRY

\*For Today And  
Into The Future

## PRESSMATCH DRY

Colour Proofing Fast & Easy  
At A Low Cost

A. E. HUDSON PTY. LIMITED • GRAPHIC ARTS SUPPLIERS

A.C.N. 004 432 286

FAX: SYD. (02) 9643 8211 MELB. (03) 9388 0925 BRIS. (07) 3252 1515

SYDNEY: JAMES & EAST STS  
LIDCOMBE NSW 2141  
TELEPHONE: (02) 9643 8200  
Email: hudson@hutch.com.au

MELBOURNE: 417 ALBERT STREET  
BRUNSWICK VIC 3056  
TELEPHONE: (03) 9380 2277

BRISBANE: 30 EDGAR STREET  
BOWEN HILLS QLD 4006  
TELEPHONE: (07) 3252 8212  
QLD COUNTRY: 0411 471 108

ADELAIDE: (08) 8363 4466  
PERTH: (08) 9388 3040  
TASMANIA: (03) 6234 5622



## Queensland Association restructures to accept quarterfold newspapers

### INDUSTRY NEWS

**W**HILE some state-based country press associations adopt a 'closed shop' attitude to smaller newspapers published less than once a week or printed to a size smaller than tabloid, the Queensland Country Press Association restructured itself recently to admit quarterfold newspapers to its ranks.

The association's May conference at Gympie was targeted specifically at the quarterfold newspapers that have flourished in that state on the back of strong population growth. A score of quarterfolds circulate in areas around Brisbane - many clustered in a kidney-shaped rural belt from the Gold Coast hinterland north to the Sunshine Coast. They serve a string of small towns (and not so small, if the circulation of the *Jimboomba Times* is a guide) experiencing a rebirth as baby boomers, retirees and others seeking a better lifestyle discover the

pleasure of country living close to a large city.

Queensland Country Press Association president, Wendy Creighton's Boonah Newspaper Company publishes three newspapers from a base at Boonah in the crook of the mountains that form the spectacular Border Ranges south of Brisbane. Her publications link clusters of quarterfolds circulating in the coastal hinterland north and south of the capital. One of the three, the *Moreton Border News*, is a quarterfold. Wendy knows the readership loyalty the small papers generate.

When the largest newspaper publishing group in Queensland, Australian Provincial Newspapers, opted out of the Country Press Association last year - almost halving membership numbers - the association looked to the quarterfolds as a means of bolstering membership

and, at the same time, improving the quality of the smaller publications.

Whereas previously membership fees were based on circulation, they were restructured and linked to staff numbers. A paper with one employee now attracts the minimum levy of \$240, although some quarterfolds with larger circulations will be charged more.

"The new arrangement is more indicative of what people can afford to pay," Wendy Creighton said.

The May half-yearly gathering hosted by Rural Press saw about ten quarterfold proprietors attend as guests. Most indicated their intention to join the association at its annual conference held in Brisbane on 22-23 October. Talks and workshops focussed on issues affecting the quarterfolds. The free-for-all discussions encouraged by Greg Watson, Queensland-Northern New South Wales group manager for Rural Press, were excellent according to Wendy.

One address, entitled 'Getting Into Your Community' examined how Rural Press is counteracting the loss of local news content in independent newspapers subsumed into that group.

Getting the balance right between hard news and community club notes was another topic and effective layout advertising was another.

Overall, the conference subject matter and the networking among members paid off well for the newcomers.

Wendy Creighton says the embracing of the independent quarterfolds into Queensland Country Press Association is recognition of where the newspaper industry is heading.

"While the *Courier-Mail* might be hit by development such as the Internet, papers such as ours won't feel the effects as much. I am heartened by the spirit of camaraderie in the industry between the larger groups and the independents.

"The industry is a unit and we need to work together as a unit. For too long it has been an 'us' and 'them' situation," she said.

"The new approach will benefit the industry and the individual mastheads and help ensure our continuing vital role in the market place." **BP**

• (Wendy Creighton may be contacted on 07 5463 1888.)

## Convince your suppliers to advertise in The Australian Bush Press...

# The Australian BUSH PRESS

The only Journal for Australia's independent newspaper publishers

## Creating a newsletter for bush publishers



Greg Wane explains how the newsletter, you are reading, came about and tells a little about himself.

**T**HE *Australian Bush Press* was conceived over a glass of wine and hommus in a Turkish restaurant in Canberra during September this year. Earlier in the year, together with a colleague Brian O'Connor, we surveyed independent quarterfold newspaper proprietors in Australia with the intention of setting up an association. However it became apparent that the smaller newspaper publishers cannot leave their desks for very long and weren't too interested in a conference, however the survey also suggested a newsletter where they could read about like-minded editors in other parts of Australia, and this really appealed!

These written responses, spread out on the table of the almost deserted restaurant on a Monday night, fuelled the idea to produce and publish a national newsletter.

The title *The Bush Press* was one of about ten suggested. It seemed to sum up all that was Australian in country publishing.

During my apprenticeship at trade school in Melbourne, anyone who worked more than 30 kilometres from the metropolitan area was referred to as "from up the bush". Many of these young apprentices worked on country newspapers and there seemed to be a great camaraderie among bush printers. Occasionally I still see a couple of the guys from trade school. One who also began as a linotype operator was so attached to his local newspaper, he ended up buying the business.

My own newspaper career began when at 14 years of age I published *The Drumcondra Times* (a suburb of Geelong, Victoria) with the grand circulation of 12. This was a duplicated, quarto size, four page monthly with a cover price of threepence. An apprenticeship as a



• Greg Wane, and assistant, edits an edition of *The Whistler*.

compositor and linotype operator followed with stints at commercial printers and country newspapers in Victoria.

With a passion for writing I also pursued journalism with a part-time correspondence course and practical experience working as a freelance writer. Later, a specialised course in editing further developed my skills.

I worked in the printing, graphic design and publishing, running my own business for eight years, yet still hankering to produce my own publication.

The cost effective desktop publishing with a PC made this possible in 1996 when I launched the monthly 1000 print-run news-magazine *The Whistler* for Ocean Grove in Victoria. A small bird common to the area Rufous Whistler, I heard once described by an elderly poetic naturalist as "the tiny bird that darts about the bush

spreading the news", would lend its name for the title for this local publication.

Some simple market research indicated that local people only want to read local news - and I have stuck to this simple formula. Three years later, with the circulation increased to 2000, *The Whistler* continues to grow.

Over the years I have indulged in a hobby collecting copies of newspapers wherever I travel - is there a name for this? Newsalotist perhaps, anyway I have collected copies of hundreds of titles including some very old newspapers dating back to 1890.

Rupert Murdoch collects newspaper titles too, but my finances only allow me to purchase a couple of copies, not the companies.

I know of only one other fanatical collector in Australia - Brian O'Connor who has joined me to produce the *Australian Bush Press*. **BP**