THE RANGER

1999

The Annual Journal of the 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment

Honorary Colonel
Sir John Young AC, KCMG

Regimental Colonel
Brigadier W.J Hocking Ed, RFD

Allied Regiments
The Staffordshire Regiment
(The Prince Of Wales)
The Royal Regiment of Canada

Commanding Officer
Lieutenant Colonel J Paterson
" " R. Haughton

Allied Associations
The associations of the 7th Battalion incorporating the

7th Battalion AIF
7th Battalion AIF (1939 – 1945)
2/7th Aust Inf Battalion
7th Battalion RAR

The 8th Battalion (Ballarat) Association
The 8th Battalion (Ararat) Association

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Front Cover

Soldier moving to fire positions during Exercise Albert in April 1999

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 8/7 RVR

The 8th/7th Battalion, the Royal Victoria Regiment, encompasses the area bounded by Mildura, Warrnambool, Bacchus Marsh, Shepparton and Echuca. The Battalion Headquarters is at Ballarat, 113km west of Melbourne. The Battalion has depots in Ballarat (2), Bacchus Marsh, Shepparton, Echuca, Cobram, Swan Hill, Mildura, Hamilton, Warnambool and Maryborough.

The history of the Battalion commenced on the 23rd October 1857, when a meeting of citizens in Ballarat was convened to consider the possibility of establishing a Rifle Corps in the District. Representations were made to the Government of the Colony of Victoria, and assent for the enrolment of a Corps was received on the 21st July 1858. The first parade of this new unit was the 9th August 1858. This date is celebrated annually as the Battalion's birthday.

The Battalion has existed since that date with an uninterrupted history, although under a variety of titles. The present day 8th/7th Battalion traces its lineage back to a number of units. 8th Battalion (City of Ballarat Regiment), 59th Battalion (The Hume Regiment), 7th Battalion (The North West Murray Borderers) and the 38th Battalion (The Northern Victorian Regiment).

The Battalion has been granted freedom of entry to the following cities in the area:

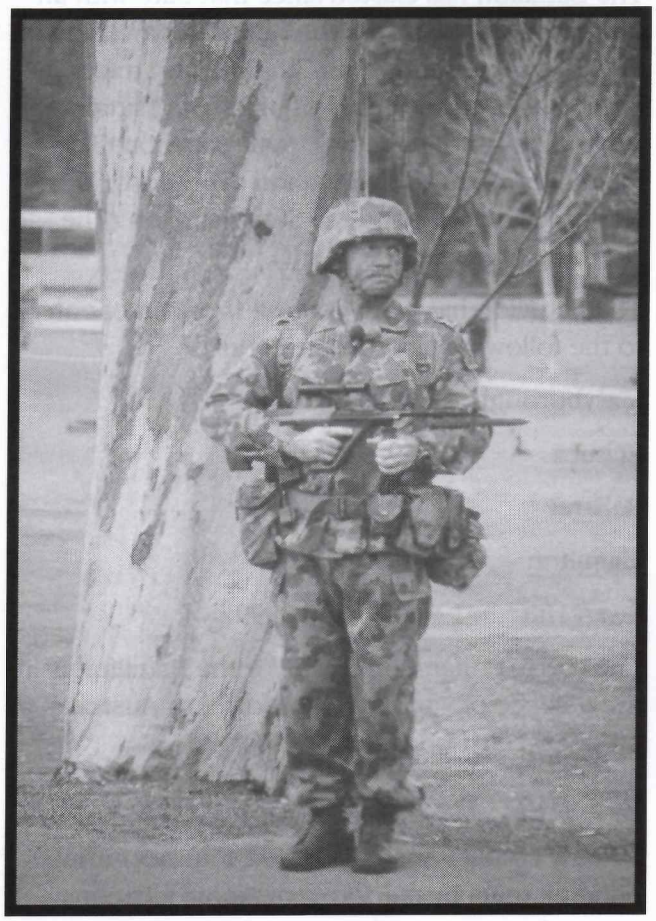
Maryborough	1980
Echuca	1989
Ballarat	1983 and 1998
Hamilton	1990
Swan Hill	1988 and 1999

The current operational role for the Battalion is in the defence of vital assets in Northern Australia, as part of the 4th Brigade from Victoria.

8/7 RVR BATTLE HONOURS

In early conflict Australia raised volunteer armies, building units in specific geographic locations across the country. The unit colours display the following Battle Honours from these conflicts:

Boer War:	South Africa 1899-1902
World War 1:	World War 2:
Landing at Anzac Cove	Bardia 1941
Somme 1916-1918	Capture of Tobruk
Bullecourt	El Alamein
Yypres 1917	Greece 1941
Polygon Wood	South West Pacific 1942-1945
Amiens	Bobdubi
Albert 1918	Finisterres
Mont St Quentin, and Hindenburg Line	Hari River, and Borneo



From the Commanding Officer

On 16 January this year I was honoured to assume command of the Battalion. My immediate impression as I observed the preparations for sending our company group to New Zealand was one of well-trained soldiers commanded by enthusiastic and motivated junior leaders. I am pleased to say that the initial impression was spot on and remains with me today.

This year started with a real training highlight, and it will end with one as well. In addition to sending our troops to New Zealand for some excellent training, we hosted a Kiwi company and arranged some challenging and unfamiliar experiences for them. At the end of this year we will conduct Ex Bobdubi II where our focus will be on training for peace operations, and we will also provide one section to the 5/6 RVR company group that is deploying to Butterworth in Malaysia. In between we have had one of the busiest and most exciting years this Battalion would have experienced for a long time.

My aim for training this year was to deliver relevant and challenging activities that prepared us for our Protective Operations role in Northern Australia. I decided to mix weekends and nine-day periods to allow more effective collective training to be conducted on the longer periods. Exercise Hari River in particular was well attended, and those soldiers who participated received some excellent training. The foreign weapons training and range practice, tank and APC work, and company withdrawal and attack were new to most soldiers but were tackled with great enthusiasm and I was very pleased with the final result.

On a more sombre note, we were all very saddened by the tragic death of LCPL Dion Walker earlier in the year. He was a highly regarded member of the Battalion and a fine leader, and his loss has been keenly felt.

One of the most important events of the year was the provision of nearly 50 part time and full time members to reinforce 7 Brigade in Brisbane. With only four weeks notice to volunteer, and only two weeks from date of acceptance to departure, this was an amazing achievement. We still have nearly 60 more volunteers listed who were not offered full time service at the time. This response was quite outstanding, and represents about 40% of our effective strength.

Next year we will focus on building up our numbers, qualifying members on specialist and promotion courses, and preparing for another possible call for volunteers to augment higher readiness units. There is also the possibility of supporting the Sydney 2000 Olympics, which if it eventuates will be an exciting and demanding task.

I am sure I am joined by all members in wishing our mates who are now in 7 Brigade good soldiering and a safe return if they are deployed on operations. We have also lost many members on posting or discharge and I thank each and every one of them for the service they have provided to the Battalion. I particularly thank the RSM, WO1 David Ashley, whose contributions have been quite exceptional. To those who remain I thank you for your efforts this year and I particularly thank your families for their support to you. I wish you an enjoyable and safe festive season, and I look forward to another demanding and challenging year in 2000.❖

From the RSM

It is now time for me to say farewell after two years as your RSM. I have enjoyed my time and feel satisfied, although there are some things I would do differently if I had my time again. These things I have learnt from you, the soldiers. So farewell and thank you for the lessons. Last year I spoke of the yardstick, my previous reserve units, that I could use to measure our Battalion. I told you that compared to them you could hold your heads high. I meant that then and mean that now in spades. This year I have had another yardstick; our sister battalion in Melbourne. Our Military Skills section, under the able command of CPL Richards, comprehensively trounced the other brigade units including 5/6 RVR. Again during the recent barrier testing, a cross-section of our Battalion preparing to transfer to 7 Brigade were compared to our brothers from the city. Our troops overall, performed very well in comparison with the metropolitan boys, a point duly noted by the School of Infantry assessors. Then again I suppose 5/6 RVR are pretty good at football (or are they just pretty?), at least until next year.

We have lost 70 soldiers to the ARA. This is a big hit in a Battalion only just over 300 strong. We now need to reinforce. To do that we need to recruit and qualify.

Firstly to recruit – recently, the CO and I were impressed with the good work of PTE Watson from B Coy. PTE Watson had personally recruited his friend who is now training at Kapooka. PTE Reale has the clear potential to become a very valuable member of B Coy and the Battalion. You should all follow this example. Our soldiers are our best recruiters. You, more than anyone knows which of your friends and school or work mates will make good soldiers. If each one of you is able to interest just one person, we could field another company.

Secondly to qualify – if you are not fully qualified for rank and trade, get off your backside and do something about it. Proactively hunt down, through your chain of command, course details and apply. Don't tolerate a mate who is not qualified. Convince him to do the same. I expect NCOs to ensure all your soldiers get qualified ASAP. We also need NCOs. I have confidence in you all. If you are prepared to lead, demonstrate your potential to your chain of command and become part of the backbone of the Battalion.

I am soon to be posted as the RSM of 6 RAR and I am relieved that 50 members of 8/7 RVR are going with me. I would like to share with you a view I have on the Army Reserve. The ARA is like a main parachute. It is high performance and may work flawlessly for ever. The GRES is like a reserve parachute. You may never need it, but if you do the bastard had better work! The ARA, our main parachute, is nearly expended and the Army is looking for that reserve handle. If the other reserve soldiers transferring to 7 Brigade are as good as you, that reserve parachute will work just fine.

Goodbye. Always wear your uniform with pride.❖

From The Editor

Already the close of another year is upon us. During this year we have seen enormous change within the battalion as a result of external influences. Most notable amongst these influences has been has been the formation of 1 Brigade in Darwin and the shifting of resources to support the raising of the brigade. Also notable has been the effect that East Timor has had upon the battalions training focus and manning. Very recently a large number of full and part time members have departed the Battalion to support this operation and to backfill personnel moving from Operation Belesi in Bougainville.

From these influences have come changes to the battalions training regime with an increase in the focus of combined arms operations and the role of the infantry within the modern three dimensional battlespace. Clearly the challenge we all face is to adapt to these influences and to adopt new methods and tactics that in turn improve our chances of surviving the modern battlefield. All these challenges and changes will see the Battalion evolve.

For myself, this year sees the end of my time with the battalion as I move on to undertake additional training. The period of time I have spent with the battalion has been both challenging and rewarding. With my staff of two, Staff Sergeant Ivan Solomano and Sergeant Trevor Beales, we have undertaken to support the companies in as many activities as possible. Sadly due to resource limitations we were occasionally hampered from providing support to all the requests.

Certainly a large number of soldiers within the Battalion have participated in the Laws of Armed Conflict lectures that have been conducted by the INT Cell during 1999. The crowning achievement for this must have been the presentation at Puckapunyal during Exercise Hari River in July. No one can dispute Staff Solomano's ability to gain people's attention, particularly with the use of fireworks as a backdrop to his lecture.

Another highlight during the year was Admin companies undertaking to deploy in the field at Mount Cole near Beaufort. Undaunted, Major Leckie and his team deployed and operated for 30 hours and braved high winds, heavy downpours and temperatures that hovered near freezing. All participants to this weekend truly faced the elements and won! I can think of a number of units who faced with similar conditions, would have turned tail.

In closing, the Battalion should be commended by the ability of it's members to rise to challenges and to overcome any adversity. The camaraderie and professionalism that has been displayed in the battalion is something that all members should be proud of.❖

Happy Soldiering

Mark Sonter

Capt

S2

LETTER FROM PTE CLINT McKAY TO HIS MOTHER

If you want to get a picture of East Timor it's hot and muggy so far I've only been in Dilli. It's on an area of about 10km x 20km flat ground, then it rises into a range that looks like the Grampians with less vegetation on the hills.

Surrounding Dilli is rice paddies and banana trees mostly. There are a lot of ordinary small houses but lots of people live in shanties on the outskirts of town, in the hills and through the plantations I believe these huts were here before the crises as most of them have been destroyed as well. There are a lot of water buffalo, dogs, cats, rats and black pigs. The animals often roam around the streets happily ignoring each other.

There are a fair few people around but I suspect about ¼ to ½ that would normally be in a town this size (a little smaller that Ballarat). The people here are friendly and are very glad to have us here. It's not uncommon for them to grab you by the hand and kiss it as you patrol down the street.. To get a feel for the destruction imagine a fire truck going down the streets of Ballarat filled with diesel instead of water, going from house to house spraying it and setting it alight.

Because that's how it was done here. I have only seen a handful of places that weren't burnt. We just got news that the last of INI (Indonesian Army) have left East Timor. So far everything has been going well for me in the Army. I seem to pass everything without much trouble. First the school of Infantry,

then "Cogswell" a month long course I had to pass once I got to Darwin then pre-deployment training before I came here. So I've had six months of progressive training before leaving Australia.

I'll put this in to save any confusion in my letter:

Section	-	8 men
Platoon	-	3 sections
Company	-	3 platoons + support
Battalion	-	3 companies + support

Not long after I got to Darwin there was a best soldier competition. It went for 24 h, straight covering 30km with a series of stands along the way. I came third out of the Company, which was enough to get me a trip to America to train with the Marines in Hawaii for two months.

Unfortunately no one got to go due to East Timor. We have some great equipment here. Every man in 5/7 RAR was issued with night vision equipment. It's about the size of an empty toilet roll that straps on to your head. To give you an idea how well it works on a dark night when you can't see your hand in front of your face with the naked eye if you look through the night vision equipment you can recognise a friends face from out to 30 meters. On a night when theirs a bit of light, say starlight, It's like day time only all in green. I also have a 3 x telescopic night vision scope for my gun.

I am the gunner of the Section loaded with 200 rounds and the night scope. It weighs about 14kg. Twice the weight of the rifles the rest of the Section carries. WE also carry water, webbing and sometimes helmets and flak jackets when patrolling. I said to my mates at the School of Infantry that I wanted to be the gunner when I got to my Battalion and a couple of weeks later I was.

Our first week in Dilli I was busy. The first three days I only got eight hours sleep. In those first three days my Company alone captured more Militia than any other whole Battalion did here in their first two weeks. Maybe our intelligence was better or maybe they didn't kick in doors and drag the Militia out in the middle of the night.

Things have settled down a lot since we got to Dilli. Now we do a lot of guards at the heliport, water point and power plant. These guards are interrupted about once a day with tasks. These tasks include patrolling, vehicle check points, assisting other patrols needing crowd or security control, searches for bodies and saving Malitia men from holding houses.

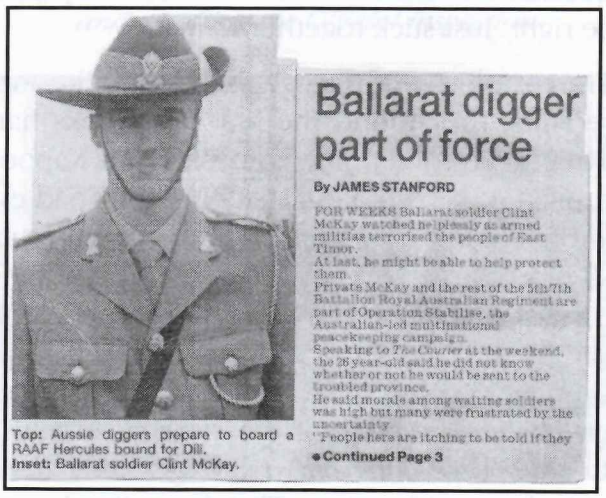
Our Section was also attached to the Special Air Service for 24 hours to assist in security for Gausmo (the leader for the independence) the night before he gave his speech in Dilli. There are not usually bodies around the main streets but in out-of the way places. So they have to be searched for "tip offs". Mainly the Platoon just finds halves or parts which makes sense because the locals seem to use make shift graves for their dead. The tables have turned so much since we've been here that recently on three occasions we've been called out to save Militiamen from holding houses.

A local political group (that I won't name) has been holding and beating, bordering on torture, Militiamen. In one bad case a Militiaman had his spine severed. (The locals must be tipping us about where the houses are). I just found out that tonight my Platoon is going to the barracks where the TNI has been staying (we're at the heliport at the moment). The locals have been taking pot shots at the TNI the last couple of days.

I find the excitement of patrols, cordon searches and spying on the TNI addictive, and suffer from boredom when on guards. I'm looking forward to going to the border soon. The 10th of November but its not for sure yet. We haven't had a day off yet and won't get one for a while. No hope of a beer. I think the bottle of whisky must be being held in Australia. Probably at my barracks.

Although I'll be glad for a break at the end of the nine months I enjoy the challenge here. I get along well with my Section and are confident with my job. My Corporal has let me know that I am currently being watched to hold a position of command. I already knew this because I'd seen a report going to the Platoon Commander.

Well, better go, It's 3pm and the daily downpour's here again.



Ballarat digger part of force

By JAMES STANFORD

FOR WEEKS Ballarat soldier Clint McKay watched helplessly as armed militias terrorised the people of East Timor.

At last, he might be able to help protect them.

Private McKay and the rest of the 5th/7th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment are part of Operation Stabilise, the Australian-led multinational peacekeeping campaign.

Speaking to *The Courier* at the weekend, the 28 year-old said he did not know whether or not he would be sent to the troubled province.

He said morale among waiting soldiers was high but many were frustrated by the uncertainty.

"People here are itching to be told if they

• Continued Page 3

Top: Aussie diggers prepare to board a RAAF Hercules bound for Dili.
Inset: Ballarat soldier Clint McKay.

An extract from the a local Ballarat Newspaper

A TALE OF THREE SOLDIERS

by the RSM

This story tells the tale of three soldiers, PTE'S Brumley, Lewis and Tsakos. All three enlisted earlier this year. The tale will explain what happened to them from their enlistment, through their training at Kapooka and where they are now.

(left to right) Pte Lewis, Pte Tsakos and Pte Brumley on their first day at Kapooka

You can see from the photo at enlistment that like all new recruits, they are apprehensive about what awaits them at Kapooka. What they know about basic training comes from sources such as the movie 'Full Metal Jacket' and 'The Boys from Company C'. They may be asking themselves, "What if they march me into the sea?". "Will my CSM be like the Enforcer?" I was at their enlistment ceremony and they had a thousand questions. In the end I told them that they would be right. Just stick together as mates.

They took my advice. At Kapooka, like most recruits, they found the first few weeks hard. They were sometimes homesick and Kapooka proved to be the hardest school they had ever attended. But they stuck together as mates and all was right. They each found focus, fitness and a belief in themselves. The last few weeks were slightly easier. Not in their workload but because they had got over the hurdle that separates a civilian from a soldier. They started to excel. The CO and I were fortunate enough to be able to visit them mid course. The determination and aggression we witnessed as they ploughed through the Bayonet Assault Course, was a far cry from the timid souls on enlistment day. The instructors told us that they were doing well and that Recruit Brumley was one of the top soldiers.

You can now see the photo of them on March Out day. Look closely, you can see a marked difference. They are now ready for anything. Each of them wanted to go straight onto their IET Course. As the very old Army advert went "It's a bloody miracle!". As their instructors predicted they all went well. Note that PTE Brumley is holding a trophy. He was awarded Best at PT.

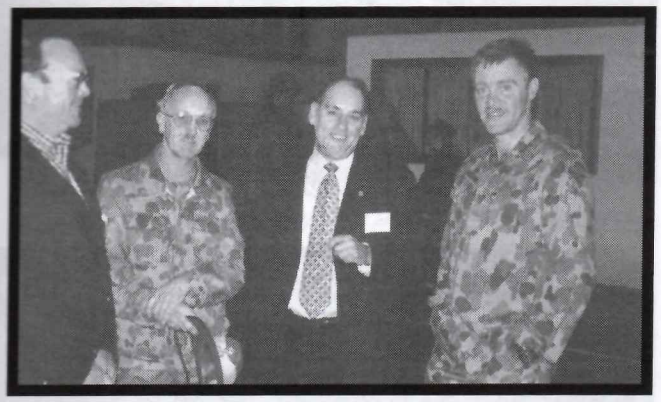
Where are they now? These three are typical. PTE Lewis has transferred to the ARA and is posted to 6 RAR along with 40 other members of 8/7 RVR. PTE Tsakos has also transferred to the ARA and is currently on her Drivers Course prior to a posting to an ARA unit. PTE Brumley has done what all new march ins should do without delay. He is now fully qualified as a Rifleman and has a great future in the Battalion.

There is a message in this tale for us all. Each of these three soldiers decided to enlist not because of a slick TV add or a glossy recruiting brochure. They joined because a mate talked them into it. Two of the three no longer serve in 8/7 RVR. There are operational reasons why two have left us but it demonstrates the hurt the Battalion has suffered. You all have the ability to enlist a Brumley, Lewis or Tsakos. Get to it.

Good luck PTE's Lewis and Tsakos. We wish you all the best with your ARA careers and we look forward to working with you, PTE Brumley.

Battalion Headquarters

DRSC Evening, Ranger Barracks 25 May 1999

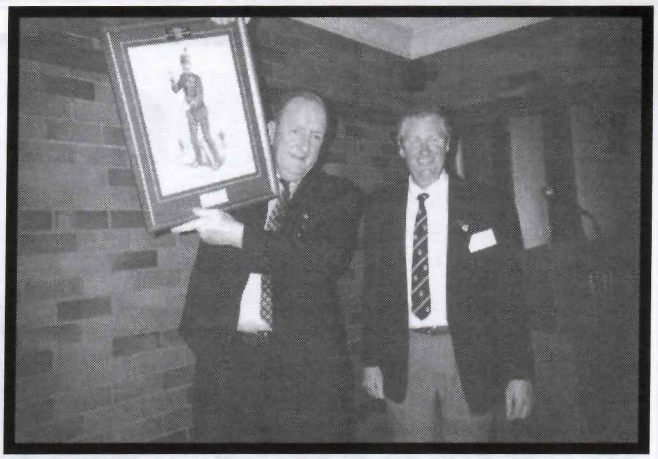


(Left to Right) Mr Robert Mitchell (VICROADS) Corporal "Jacka" Smith, Mr Doug Kimberley (CEO Rural Ambulance Victoria) Lt Col Paterson CO 8/7 RVR

South East Fund Raising Dinner

The South East Asian Memorial held a fund raising dinner at Ranger Barracks on 14 July 1999. The guest speaker for the evening was the deputy Prime Minister, the Honorable Mr Tim Fischer MP. Mr Fischer is a Vietnam Veteran who saw active service as a platoon commander with 1 RAR prior to entering politics.❖

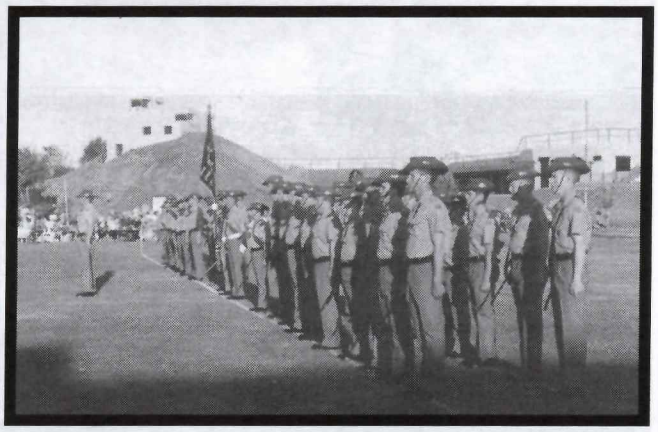
The CO with Mr Fischer



The Chairman of the South East Asian Memorial Committee, Mr Jeff Scully presenting Mr Fischer with a Ranger Print.

Beat the Retreat parade, Queenscliff

Members of the Battalion participated in a Beating of the Retreat Parade at Queenscliff on the 27th of February 1999. Major Jeff Cole, OC Alpha Company, commanded the 8/7 RVR members.❖



The guard supplied by the battalion are on parade and awaiting the Official inspection

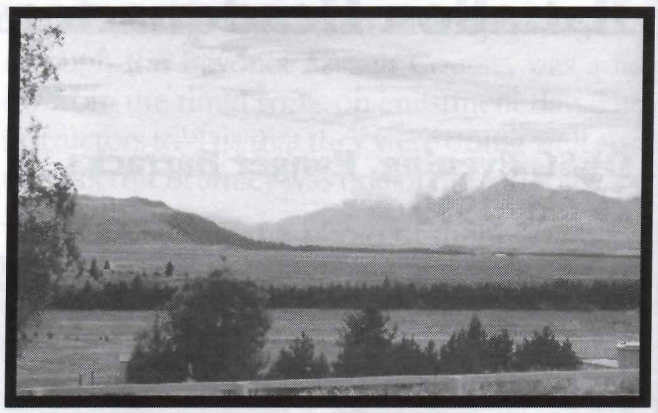
The guard during the ceremony

The Mayor of Queenscliff, Councillor Bugg, accompanied by the Guard Commander; Major Jeff Cole inspects the guard.

Exercise Tasman Reserve

A soldier performing TOET's at New Zealand

The range at New Zealand



The view from the barracks, just as picturesque

The CO presents the New Zealand contingent commander with a momento of his visit

Exercise Albert April 1999

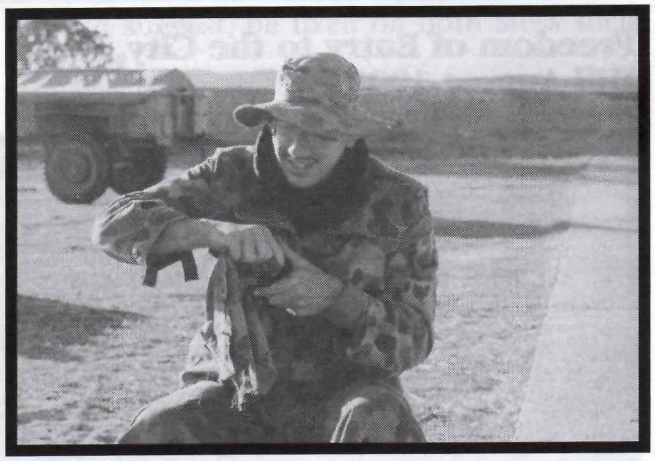
Photos by Captain M Sonter

Cpl Spielvogel and Pte Spielvogel rehearsing drills during the down time on the exercise

Covering the arc's of fire prior to the assault

LCpl McKinley and Pte Baird calling in Mortar fire prior to the assault

The assault started with a bang, literally when explosive charges were used to simulate return mortar fire from the "enemy"



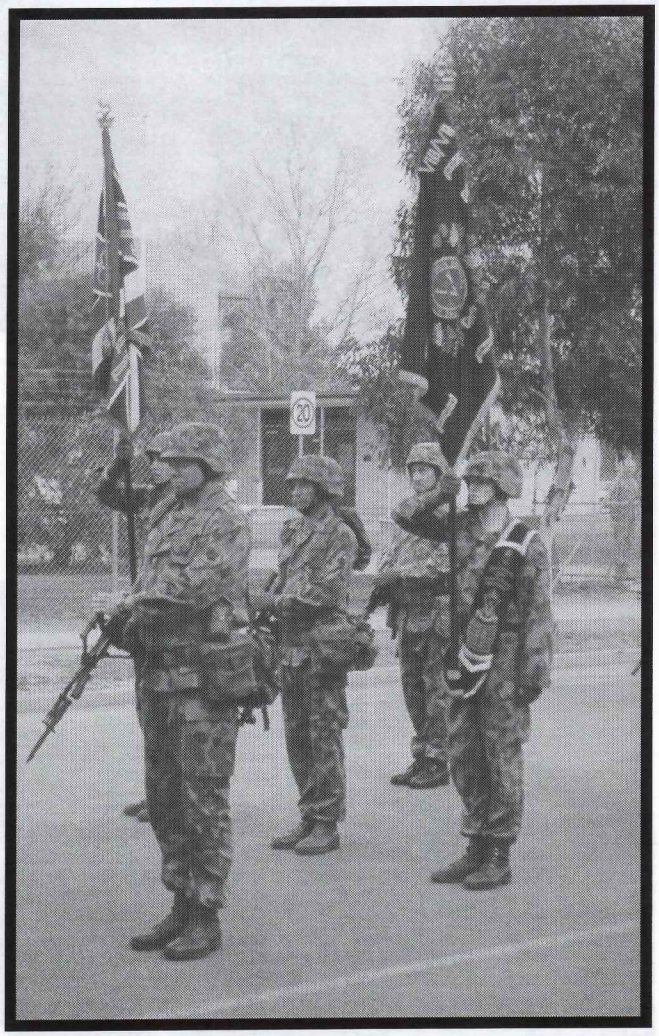
Pte Stoop cleaning up prior to the end of the exercise

Exercise Hari River July 1999

Soldiers rehearsing minefield clearance on a football ground during the exercise

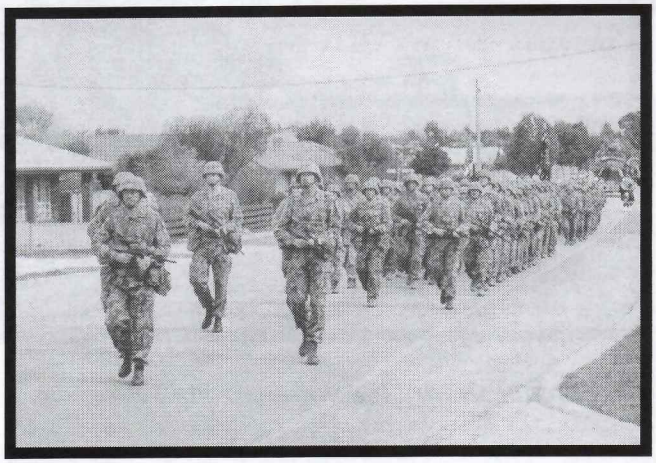
Captain Saultry keeping a careful eye on the action.

Freedom of Entry to the City, Swan Hill August 1999

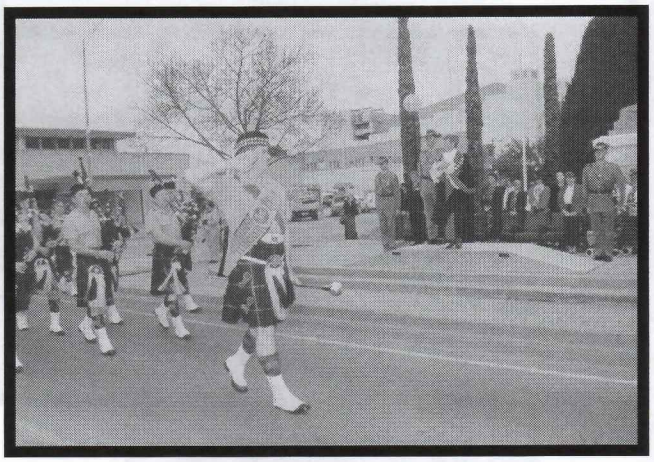


The Battalion colours on parade prior to moving off

One of the band members from 5th/6th Battalion enjoying himself



The Battalion and supporting elements



The band in the March Past. The parade was reviewed by the Mayor of Swan Hill and Brigadier Ball, Commander 4th Brigade.
(photo courtesy Captain Ian Toohill, 4th Brigade)

Cpl Spielvogel after crossing the Murray River. The river crossing was part of the soldiers demonstration of skills at the recruting display. (photo courtesy Captain Ian Toohill, 4th Brigade)

Awards and promotions

NATO Service Medal

Sgt. Osbaldstone was awarded the NATO Service Medal for peacekeeping operations in Bosnia during June to November 1996. Sgt. Osbaldstone was posted to the 1st Battalion, Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment as part of Exercise Long Look 96. He was employed as the Platoon Sgt. of 5 Platoon, Bravo Company and was active in foot and road patrols in the South West are of Bosnia

Sgt. Osbaldstone said, "The experience that I gained from the exchange was invaluable. While it was basically infantry orientated, operating in another country and with another army allowed me the opportunity to compare different combat skills between the British Army and ours". Sgt. Osbaldstone is currently posted as the Signals Sgt., 8/7 RVR.❖

From the Officers Mess

By Major Bill Akell

Photos by Captain M Sonter

Although being one of the most widely dispersed officer's messes in Victoria, we still manage to get together and make the most of these too few occasions

The start of the year saw a combined Officer and Sergeants Dinner at Ranger Barracks. This type of "mixed" function has many advantages, not the least being the chance for the Battalions leaders to socially solve the problems of the world, then attempt those of the unit. This mixed mess function also provides an introduction to the Battalion Group leaders and will, I'd suggest, be fixed on both Mess social calendars.

A few mixed happy hours gave both Messes the opportunity to try and "outdo" each other in flamboyant themes and spicy bar snacks. German (with 'The Cross Of Iron' projected in the background), Mexican (who can forget the 'tacos') were all visited; with Jamaica the 'port' of call in May. Tea cosies were deemed the official headdress for the evening.

July saw the now famous 'Xmas in July' function being very capably choreographed by our own Padre James Pearce. A Traditional Christmas dinner, singing of Christmas carols and the playette (many award winning Oscar performances were seen here!) all combined for another enjoyable and long night in the mess.

Major Tony Watson receives Santa's surprise during the Officers Mess Xmas in July Function

Late November saw the final formal function in the Past Commanding Officers Dinner. Here, the Mess welcomed back many of it's former CO's and farewelled some of it's members. The year in the mess finished with the traditional All Ranks visit on the final parade evening for the year.

(Left to Right) Capt Leneghan, Capt Carmody and LtCol Paterson playing their part in the Xmas in July Pageant

Alpha Company

By Major Geoff Cole

How Alpha Coy Viewed 1999...

Once again the New Year kicked off with a blast. As 8/7's A Coy took on their ANZAC allies both at home and abroad. We were subjected to the harsh alpine meadows of the New Zealand terrain and the weak hearts (and IWIS batteries) of the New Zealand soldiers. Despite our superhuman strength, numerous casualties were taken as result of the cold. Christchurch, however, proved to a warm safe haven for ORs and officers alike.

While at home, our diggers were given free reign to teach the Kiwis some advanced military and beer drinking skills. The only 'Haka' we saw from the Kiwis, came at 4am, from the bottom of a gutter.

A couple of weeks later A Coy and attachments (B Coy) cruised down to Fort Queenscliff, to celebrate the Army's 98th birthday. This was done with a faultless display of precision drill (which incorporated Rag's 'Front Rank Kneeling' firing of volleys). We were followed by the cloud punchers' usual off-timed attempt at the 1812 Overture. The 3000 strong crowd was so captivated by the Melbourne Army band, that they failed to notice the misfires. Later in the boozer, we willingly pointed out the gunners' many and major faults.

For the next training weekend, we ventured down to Cerberus to play in the mud and climb some ropes?!?! After waiting for what seemed an eternity, we revisited Cerberus for a retest, which also included a live de-bus drill from a crashed Coaster. (Thanks Pte Wa#$&n for the mental scarring!) Those who survived were then doused in flames before being submerged in water in a submarine escape exercise. Finally, as a farewell, we were gassed to ensure no hard feelings.

ANZAC Day 1999 was busy day for A Coy, when we were able to miraculously supply seven catafalque parties. The RSL members then supplied us with free drinks.

In June — at where else but Cerberus — Army logistics surprisingly prevented half of our company from completing their AIRN qualification range shoot. But we must concede it is almost impossible to ensure no one else has booked the range. The next day, after a refreshing hailstorm, we assaulted a grounded foreign vessel — only to find, to our disappointment, that any refugees had already fled the area.

Later in the month, we stole the limelight of the West Coast v Geelong thrashing with a gut wrenching display of fearless absailing. Demolitions followed shortly after in exercise Hari River. It went off with a bang!!

With amazing foresight to the upcoming East Timor crisis, the Company spent the weekend in Warrnambool rehearsing MOUNT operations in an asylum. The evening was also mad with a dining in night and an intra-Company mess rugby match (which miraculously suffered no mortal losses) — 'a good time was had by all.'

In the latter days of August, the RSM conscripted members to his Swan Hill Freedom of the City romp. After a mediocre day and a swim across the river, soldiers spent the evening carousing in local taverns with the village wenches and fauna.

Then something evil happened at Alpha Company, which was followed by the hasty formation of the Cult of our CSM. We are also witnesses of his resurrection.

As fatigue from the year began to set in. The diggers regrettably opted for taxi rides in the Prince of Wales buckets (A comfort that can only be experienced by diggers... and sardines). A month later, we did it all over again. This time with hard-core military journalists from the local Geelong newspaper. In a matter of days we were elevated from mere diggers to superstars in the community.

As everyone knows, towards the end of the year, the Army hit overdrive with the development of the East Timor crisis. Thirteen soldiers from A Coy answered the call and signed the dotted line for fifteen months full-time service with 6 RAR:

2806793 LT G.J. Murphy,

232684 SGT T.J. Cuming,

3207721 LCPL C.N. Rantall,

3807722 PTE P.W. Baird,

3813596 PTE M. Berends,

3813367 PTE D.R. Butters,

3814125 PTE D.A. Dinning,

4802008 PTE M.A. Meinhold,

3813688 PTE R.A. Miller,

3814033 PTE B.B. Wright,

3813323 PTE D.J. Hansen,

3813246 PTE J.A. Ross,

3808436 PTE J.R. White

Our best wishes are sent with them all.

Unfortunately, the Army wouldn't cancel a few guys' tickets on the Malaysian Contiki Tour. And thus prevented them from actually applying what we train for. ❖

"Remember, there is no impossibility, only incapability!"

Bravo Company

By Major Paul Hopkins

Photos by Captain M Sonter

Rantings and Raving from CHQ

1999 saw the coy start the year running with an initial deployment of soldiers on Ex Tasman Reserve in New Zealand. A great opportunity to aclimatise ahead of schedule for the coming winter in Ballarat. All attending put in a solid effort and rumour has it they even trained well to!

After the New Zealand trip, the Coy launched into the training year with an adventure-training weekend at Kosiosko National Park. After a marathon drive on the Friday night, the soldiers dispersed to the four winds on a very brisk Saturday morning to complete an orienteering course that led them over some very scenic country, and quite a few hills. Unfortunately those of us in CHQ had to man safety vehicles and radios and missed out on the joys of marching over hill and dale. Although the OC and CSM mad a vain attempt to carry water in jerry cans, with marching order, to a check point in the vicinity of Charlottes Pass only to return after half an hour thoroughly defeated in their attempt. A wise decision to abandon the attempt in hindsight as all of the groups conveniently avoided the checkpoint all day! Thanks go out to Lt McGann for organising the weekend, but we must question his time and space estimates on the travelling time to reach the park. 4 hours was his estimate.

Ex Albert was the next cab of the rank although after New Zealand and Kosiosko, everyone obviously thought they needed a rest because attendance numbers were very low from the Coy. However by the time Ex Hari River rolled around the Coy was refreshed and was able to shake out and run through it's paces.

Ex Hari River brought together all elements of CHQ for the first time in the field for an exercise including the Trg WO, WO2 Spencer, freshly promoted from the black pit of the Ops cell in BHQ. He replaced WO2 Ken McMillian who retired earlier in the year after 20 years service in the army. Good Luck to ken in his future endeavours and thank you for the effort he put in during his time with us.

Unfortunately it was the last chance to work with Lt Middleton, who fresh from RMC, enjoyed six months with the Coy before being called back to the wild blue yonder of Aviation School. Ex Hari River was a successful exercise and the soldiers were able to benefit from a number of range shoots and tactical activities. Contrary to rumours from the CQMS, no one missed out on their rations.

At the conclusion of the Ex, the afore mentioned CQMS, SSgt Bourgonjen was the next to leave the Coy and was posted back to 4RAR. We will miss his witty rejoinders to many a conversation that was held while on Exercise, although there may be a bit more space in the back of the CQ's vehicle now that his bed has gone with him to 4 RAR. SSgt Green was his replacement and hails from 4 RAR. We welcome him and his family to B Coy and hope they enjoy their stay in Ballarat.

The Coy ran a series of weekend exercises through the year named Ex Footloose I, II and III. A highlight of one of these weekends was watching a certain Admin Coy member eat his ration pack. After years of surviving on fresh rations in the echelon he became confused and disorientated when confronted with the instructions on a packet of freeze dried rice. He managed to tear open the packet but then interpreted the instruction of "place boiling water in packet" as "place the packet in boiling water". The rice sat in its packet, bone dry, surrounded by boiling water for a good five minutes until the laughter from a group of bystanders could no longer he suppressed and alerted the "cook" to the fact that something was wrong. I think he ate cold rations for the rest of the weekend.

A wagtail conversion course was completed by the Coy in August at Russell St, with good attendance by members of the Coy. All those attending passed, no doubt partly due to the patience of the instructors! Surprisingly, we have still not received any volunteers wishing to fill the role of Coy sig.

At the time of writing this we are faced with the imminent departure of a number of members of the Coy. To all those that were lucky enough to make the list for posting to 6RAR we wish them all the best in coming 1 5 months and a safe return to the Battalion in the future. Those members posted from B Coy. include:

Cpl Parker	Pte McCormack
LCpl Furness	Pte Preadaux
LCpl Dixon	Pte Purcell
Pte Crutrbley	Pte Shainovic
Pte Farquhar	Pte Sutton
Pte Fitton	

With the departure of these members from the Coy, those at are left will face a number of challenges in the future. The foremost of those being to assist in filling the gaps by making recruiting a major priority of the Coy.

As we approach the end of the year and EX Bobdubi 11 looms close all, CHQ personal would like to take this opportunity to thank the soldiers, NCO's and PI Comd's of the Coy, for their efforts this past year in moulding Bravo the best rifle coy in the Battalion. We wish you and your families all the best for the year 2000.

P.S. We would be remiss in not giving the CSM an honourable mention in this article for going above and beyond the call of duty while on Ex Hari River in acting as a decoy for the rest of the Coy while doing the withdrawal. Using the guise of heading for the Coy RV to count the troops through he managed to take the RSM off to parts unknown without a map, which allowed the Coy. to carry out its withdrawal in peace and quiet! W02 "Barf' Bartels self sacrifice for the good of the Coy. will go down in the annals of CHQ history.❖

4 Platoon

By Sgt Dobson

It started with the Ex Tasman Reserve lead up training weekend in January in which Cpl Armstrong leading from the front as usual during the CFA tripped over something resembling air and damaged his ankle ligaments. For him, the trip to New Zealand was over before it started.

Lt McGann then took us to New Zealand for the two-week exercise under command of C Coy. It was a difficult exercise for the other platoons as 2Pl (Bravo) led from the start with the other platoons never quite catching up.

The exercise commenced with ranges and other IMT's and culminated in a company deployment into the exercise area for a short period of time before weather caused play to be abandoned.

The exercise area was something that had to be seen to be believed. There were small hillocks that rarely went as high as a contour line and the ground was open with no vegetation other than very low tussocks. Visibility was up to 3 kilometres. As part of the training the platoons were sent out in half platoon fighting patrols under either platoon commanders (Hall, Woholhan, McGann) or the experienced and learned platoon sergeants. The mission was to clear to AO of suspected enemy forces. Needless to say for those members in the platoon commanders patrols, there was a large need for body bags because IWESS does not lie. The Plt Sgt's being myself, Sgt Laity and Sgt Cox showed why caution and style won the day, albeit with small losses. All that can be said is that the bosses learnt a lot that day.

Various incidents took place, but the award for the winner of the exercise would have to go to Pte Toohey who went for a run on dusk and kept on running. He returned in darkness whilst the company and the wild life rangers where being organised for an extended emu bob over the eastern ranges. It was good to see that he could navigate in the dark. What competency did he get I wonder.

The next B Company activity was to Mount Kosiosko in February, again led by Lt McGann. After driving all night we stopped at Thredbo village and started climbing. Pte Ellis went a green shade of pale after 100 metres and the pace then slowed down as we felt the effects of the altitude. A very peaceful night was spent around the range and the only thing worse was the climb back down. Of course as we were finishing the climb down was when the lifts started operating.

In April some members attended Ex Albert where a section plus deployed from the Battalion. Some good training was conducted but the lack of numbers was embarrassing. There were more officers than section commanders, which of course led to mass confusion. The CFA route consisted of climbing Mount Pucka and it was timed that we hit the trig point on sunrise.

It must have been most impressive for those who haven't seen a sunrise before. Point to note: If you are going to pick up a smoke grenade that is discharging smoke, do it at the start of the burn and not the end as the container can get quite hot.

Ex Hari River was conducted in July under the OC Bravo, Major Hopkins. The exercise was the best AIRN week so far with normal IMT training. Highlights were the special weapons that were fired at the classification range under the relaxed style of the Special Weapons Wing personnel. The exercise ran smoothly which was entirely due to the company that was running the exercise. It included the night move for the company attack whereby some checkpoints were moved at short notice.

All in all it has been a good year for the platoon with some good training leading up to the end of year exercise. Wishing you all the best for your future.❖

5 Platoon

5 Platoon paraded at Bobdubi Barracks, Echuca with C Company for several years, however due to the condition of the barracks and the low recruitment, we were forced to relocate to Bendigo with B Company. We hope that this move will help build up the platoon to full strength.

To date there have been five soldiers who have transferred from the platoon to Full Time Service. They are

Pte Chris Dunbar (2 RAR)

Pte Tim Norton (3 RAR)

Pte Shane Jefferies (5/7 RAR)

Pte Gibb (1 RAR)

Pte Chris Eeles (6 RAR)

Good luck and best wishes from 5 Platoon to all. Ex Tasman Reserve was a highlight of the year and there were a few memorable moments, particularly with a few soldiers finding a sheep in their barracks eating rations. And scaring the daylights out of them when the soldiers opened the door.

Another highlight of the year was Exercise Hari River at Puckapunyal. The first impressions of a new soldier to site 6 were "What a dump". After two weeks in the field, the same soldier returned to site 6 and was heard to say, "It was like the Hilton".

We have also had a couple of training weekends learning to work with APC's, Leopard Tanks etc. This has preliminary training for Exercise Bobdubi at the end of the year. With our new location we are actively recruiting with these recruiting drives used to demonstrate the equipment that we use. This effort will soon see our ranks swell with new recruits.

It is also a sad day when Bobdubi barracks will be closed for good. The platoon has many good memories of the barracks, however the new site at Bendigo has the potential for the platoon to grow.❖

6 Platoon

In June 1998, 6 Platoon Bravo Company (which was previously known as 11 Platoon) re-opened the depot at Bacchus Marsh (RSL Hall) with only 4 diggers and a platoon commander. We have grown since our humble beginnings to our current strength of 10. Our goal to grow to a full strength platoon in the next year or two is very achievable as our location in regards to Melbourne is favourable. With the promise of a new depot to be constructed at Melton further improves our opportunity to grow.

Now to speak of the men of 6 platoon. Since the depot re-opened, the members of 6 platoon have been actively involved in every exercise conducted by the unit. At least 2 members attended every event in the battalion, which, given the size of the platoon, is a remarkable achievement.

So whenever you're on exercise, remember that someone from 6 platoon will be there, giving their best.❖

Pictures

Several of the Members of B Coy who have left to join 6 RAR

B Company at October 1999

Charlie Company

CHQ NEWS FROM THE NORTH

By Major Tony Watson

C Company has had an extremely busy year, participating in or supporting every major Battalion activity in 1999.

The year began with a large number of Company personnel helping to make up the composite Company which deployed to New Zealand as part of Exercise Tasman Reserve 1999. The weather encountered at Lake Tekapo was a far cry from that which we are generally used to.

On return to Australia, we very shortly had to deal with the death of Corporal Dion Walker of 7 Pl. I am grateful to Chaplain Martin de Pyle and Warrant Officer Wayne Harris for their assistance to Cpl Walker's family and for ensuring that his funeral was conducted with solemnity and dignity.

A highlight of the Company's year was the visit of the Land Commander Maj Gen John Hartley to the recently refurbished CHQ at Swan Hill. He spent over 40 minutes fielding questions from soldiers and was heard to remark that the OC's office was larger than his own.

CHQ also played host to the Divisional RSM WO1 Col Lee and numerous individuals and units including the School of Armour who held their Chief Instructor's Seminar there.

Swan Hill was also the venue for the Battalion's main ceremonial activity of the year, the Freedom of Entry Parade held to coincide with the Battalion's birthday in August. I am most grateful to Staff Sergeant Noel Allport who, as acting CSM, worked tirelessly to ensure the parade's success. I am also grateful to all members of the Company who worked throughout the weekend to ensure that all visiting members of the Battalion group enjoyed the weekend. I think one of the hardest jobs was that of babysitter, a view that I think Private Wayne Turner would thoroughly agree with!

It was a real treat to travel to Watsonia to watch seven members of Company shape up as members of the Battalion's Aussie Rules team which (nearly) flogged 5/6 RVR's team. There's always next year I guess...

The Company faced a number of upheavals during 1999. Firstly there was a steady drain of personnel to the ARA as part of the revitalisation of 1 Brigade. At least one of our former soldiers, Private Daniel Carter, is now in East Timor. Mid way through the year the Echuca component of 9 Platoon was absorbed into B Company with the move into Bendigo. Happily at the end of the year Sergeant Bryan Tyler and Corporal Shaun Stringer will return to the Company. Finally, 11 members of the Company volunteered and were accepted as reinforcements for 6 RAR. I was very proud to be able to farewell them from Tullamarine airport, with Lieutenant Simon Mouatt and Corporal Adrian Thompson already in Brisbane to pave the way for them.

We have also temporarily lost Corporal Mick Rosier, Lance Corporal Brendan Shell and Private Adrian Coatsworth to 5/6 RVR for 3 months, as part of the Rifle Company Butterworth. They should return in February with plenty of tales to tell.

As part of the rationalisation of the Battalion's depots, Echuca was closed on the 10th of November. However, with Sgt Tyler resident in Echuca and Shepparton only 60km away, we should still be able to recruit from the Echuca area.

This leads me to my concluding remarks. The close of 1999 sees the Company basically at Section strength in each of its 3 depots and the challenge for the year 2000 will be to build on our remaining strengths and actively recruit for the Company. If we thought 1999 was a busy year, we ain't seen nothing yet! ❖

7 PLATOON

The start of the year saw members of 7 Platoon deploy to New Zealand for Exercise TASMAN

RESERVE. The deployment took two days and as many flights before the 7 Platoon boys were finally reunited in sunny Tekapo. Shortly afterwards we commenced training. Over the two weeks that were spent training we had to learn to adapt our method of patrolling to the sparse, open and very hilly countryside of Tekapo. Training was going fine until the time came to deploy. 1 think we may have set a record for the shortest field phase in history, for in a matter of hours the temperature dropped, and a light drizzle had started. While one of the Platoons was clearing an area to our front, the rest of the Company was laying in all round defence. Needless to say a short time later several people had hypothermia and due to the declining weather conditions the field phase was cancelled. During the next four days we conducted all our patrols within the Tekapo Military area. At night we would go out and carry out ambushes, and on one such night one of the sections had surprise waiting for them in their hut, in the form of a friendly New Zealand sheep (wonder what that was doing there?). During the day we would be doing live fire attacks, in sections and in pairs. Overall it was an exciting exercise with lots of new and interesting training, enhanced by the R & R at the end of the training. The two nights of R & R were spent in Christchurch. Day two of the R&R saw us up in the early hours of the morning trying to acquire a nice new flag for our boozer. Later in the morning we could be seen touring around on rented scooters. Several people even went reverse bungee jumping. That night it was back to the kareoke bar for another session, minus a few members from the previous night. The next day was a VERY long flight home.

The next few months until July were fairly quiet, with most people being out of days, but there were a few range shoots and some other weekend training.

The next financial year saw us deploy on Exercise HARI RIVER. This nine-day exercise involved APC training and a nice big walk followed by an exciting "Platoon" attack.

Certain PL functions saw most members attempt to pass the PL AIRN requirement, which consisted of a "100 club." Several members are still not yet compliant. It was good to see that LT Hill was leading by example. But on the other hand PTE Hopfner needs a lot more personal training. A reminder to members, you need three hard training sessions a week just to maintain your standard, to improve you need more! Practice makes perfect.

Also during this part of the year we lost a few good men to the ranks of the Regular Army. 7 PL lost Daniel Carter to 2 RAR.

The month of August held the Freedom of Entry to the City of Swan Hill, and also a huge open day in Swan Hill. In August we also had the annual footy match against 5/6 RVR, but this year C Coy gave B Coy a hand, and even though we were again defeated, it wasn't a complete and utter embarrassment, with the margin only a few goals.

The training after that was pretty much weekend and day training in preparation for Exercise Bobdubi 11, which is to be held late in November.

Numbers for this Exercise dropped dramatically as a lot of soldiers were given the opportunity to render full time service with 6 RAR, and two others who have been issued Hawaiian shirts and are off to Water Transport. Also our beloved boss, LT Hill is off to bigger and higher paid things. Cpl Rosier is leaving us for a short period of time to go and "train" with 5/6 RVR in Malaysia. We'd like to welcome to 7 PL, PTE Gosling, and PTE Maloney, who decided to come when we're all leaving.

Those members who are going to 6 RAR had a training week recently, where they were given local leave. They all decided to go out on the town.

On a sadder note we'd like to say a final farewell to a Section Commander and a good friend, Cpl Dion Walker, who passed away earlier in the year.

During the year several other members have transferred to other PLs, Coys and even out of the Battalion. We'd just like to say farewell to PTE Di Toro, SGT Jack (9 PL), and PTE Reith (10/27 RSAR). I'd like to welcome into 7 Pl SGT Laity who is now the PL SGT.

In conclusion it was a very successful, and beneficial years training for all, and to all of those soldiers who will be leaving 7 PL for full time service or other reasons, goodbye and good luck to you all.❖

10 Platoon – The Phantom Platoon

By Pte Logan

The year 1999 has represented a year of many comings and goings for 10 Platoon, unfortunately with many more goings than new arrivals. The year began with the departure of Lt George, now promoted to Captain and posted to 6 RAR. This

proved to be prophetic for many others in the Battalion before the year was out. He was able to prepare the way for further reinforcements from the battalion who transferred later in the year. His replacement was Lt Simon Mouatt, Shepparton's answer to Erwin Rommel who arrived here from 5/7 RAR bringing with him a wealth of knowledge on combined arms operations.

The year began with Ex Tasman Reserve, with personnel going to New Zealand to train with their army. Those who drew the short straw ended up in Puckapunyal to train the New Zealand personnel who came over here. The group that went to New Zealand learnt that AUSCAM's are not designed for arctic conditions. However the 1 ½ days of R & R was thoroughly enjoyed by all members, especially by Pte Piggott who returned home much poorer than when he left our shores.

The platoon also supported the two training activities during the year, Ex Albert and Ex Hari River. This platoon was able to field 30% of the combat troops deployed for the exercise. In addition to this, a series of local training initiatives were run by the platoon. All except for Pte Logan who still wears a souvenir from the bayonet training enjoyed these.

One of the saddest goings was the fact that this year we bid a fond farewell to the Echuca depot. This has brought an end to a long association of this Battalion with the township. The remaining personnel from this depot are currently transferring to Shepparton, Bendigo, Brisbane and East Timor.

One of the biggest impacts on the platoon this year has been the revitalization of the regular army and the deployment of troops to East Timor. To that effect we wish all the bet for the future to those former members of the platoon who have moved on from both Shepparton and Echuca to various postings throughout the defence force.

During the year the following personnel were lost

Lt Mouatt	6 RAR
Cpl Nathan	3 RAR
Cpl Thompson	6 RAR
LCpl Dunbar	2 RAR
LCpl McKinley	MONUR
Pte Alcorn	6 RAR
Pte Dunn	5/7 RAR
Pte Eeles	6 RAR
Pte Gawne	RAAF
Pte Harper	6 RAR
Pte Jefferis	6 RAR
Pte Piggott	6 RAR
Pte Turner	6 RAR
Pte White	2 CER

Support Company

By Major Bernard Farley

1999 saw Support Company fleshed out with a new hierarchy and soldiers from the Rifle Companies and the ARA. Our first action for New Year had a number of soldiers fronting for a trip across the Tasman for Exercise Tasman Reserve. The home front was well guarded by the rest of Support Company as we hosted our ANZAC cousins to the delights of Puckapunyal Range and firefighting.

Following on from Exercise Tasman Reserve saw the lads and lassies from the senior company rescue the Alpha Company conducted Exercise Albert. Conducting ranges and other support while the entire control team left for a wedding. Valuable training was still conducted for the Mortar Platoon and all mortar qualified soldiers firing in support of the rifle section that attended the exercise and for the Signal Platoon as they shifted the OA Command Post around the training area.

During Exercise Hari River Support Company was left to its own devices with Pioneer Platoon destroying the entire ADF's supply of explosives and Mortar Platoon letting a train load of NICO ammunition go down range. Signal Platoon trained a quantity of soldiers from all companies on the Pintail Radio.

Throughout the remainder of the year the company has trained or participated in the following:

1. Wagtail Training
2. Non Continuous Pioneer Course
3. Swan Hill's Freedom of Entry
4. Every Public Relations Exercise conducted by this unit
5. Anzac Day Ceremonial Occasions
6. Brigade directed Church Services
7. Mortar Support to the JOST and JOSC Courses conducted by the School of Artillery

8. Exercise Bobdubi 11

As the year closes and the weather warms (except in Ballarat) the company prepares to farewell those soldiers who have volunteered for service with 6 RAR and it remembers those soldiers who left the company and are currently serving in the battalions of the RAR. This proves that some Australians, regardless of background, are still prepared to stick his hand up when things get dirty.

Our best wishes go with them and their families. ❖

Pioneer Platoon

The Pioneer Platoon has been busy this year with the running the 1/99 NON- Continuos Basic Assault Pioneer Course running from March to November of this year. Soldiers from A COY and some from B COY attended the course covering three modules of the course.

Course Member for the 1/99 Non-Continuous Basic Assault Pioneer Course

For the three modules, theory lessons were conducted on weekends and some Tuesday nights at the Geelong Depot, with the practical aspects being conducted on some weekends and on exercise.

The Demolition's Module was held over March and May, finishing with the demolition's range practice being held on Exercise Hari River. During three days the

PNR PL and the trainees, plus a few other PNR qualified members in the Bn put theory into practice with a whole years allocation of demolition's. Targets were supplied by the PNR PL, which they had scrounged up and had donated over the year. It proved to be a very popular part of the CSE with both trainees and staff gaining more experience in their roles.

June saw the PL called on by CAT-C at Puckapunyal to build an observation bunker for the Mortar Wing. Members from the PL spent two days on the job, starting the digging work and the erection of the structure. PNR's from Broken Hill came down and assisted us on the second day and stayed on for three more days to finish the project. It was a valuable exercise as most who attended had not taken part in the erection of a CP before and the design is much the same for a bunker.

The Watermanship Module was held in October in the Corio Bay area of Geelong and also at Barwon Heads. During this phase PNR PL with their assault craft and zodiacs landed a small assault force from A COY on Eastern Beach as part of a recruiting display which proved to be very popular with the public.

In September three NCO's from PNR PL and two from A COY (Geelong) attended module 1 and 2 of the 1199 Assault Pioneer OFF/NCO Course, held for the first time at the School Of Military Engineering in Moorebank (Sydney) run by the Assault Pnr Sect (Sch. Inf.). It is expected that further courses will be held there also instead of at Singleton. All who attended the course successfully completed the course and now can be employed as safety staff and Instructors to various PNR, activities.

With the situation in East Timor, members from all over the country have been asked to transfer or to take up full time service. PNR PL will unfortunately be losing three members, LCPL (PTE) A.J. McDonald has transferred to the ARA and has been posted to 6 RAR, PTE J.L. Hughes, and PTE C.C. Walker have taken full time service for 1 5 months and both have also been posted to 6 RAR. All three are expected to be posted to PNR PL 6 RAR upon arrival in Brisbane.

There seems to be a body count in PNR PL, earlier this year PTE M. Jack and PTE L. Stojcevski transferred to the ARA and are currently serving with 2 RAR in East Timor. So anyone wishing to transfer to PNR PL remember the body count so far is 5!

Next year the PNR PL is expecting to run the Mine Warfare Module of the Basic PNR CSE, as well as further practicing the skills already learnt. If there is anyone in the Bn that has any targets that could be used on the demolition's range, or any jobs that they think the PNR PL would be able to do as part of some training, please contact SGT B. Tully PNR PL in Geelong. (03) 5223 1002❖

Admin Company

By Major Neil Leckie, OC Admin Coy

Photos by Captain M Sonter

1999 has seen Admin Coy continue its extremely busy life. In addition to providing admin support to every sub-unit activity, the Coy deployed an Echelon on both battalion exercises, Albert and Hari River.

On Ex Albert, A Echelon (callsign 95) worked in conjunction with F Echelon (callsign 0A), practicing deployments and working out the best layout for the F Echelon and its attached admin element at F Echelon (callsign 95A). At the end of the exercise, Admin Coy provided staff for the Battalion CP on the BDE CPX.

On Ex Hari River, only A Echelon was deployed and training and admin conferences were held at A Echelon.

Over the weekend 28/30 May, Admin Coy took the opportunity to operate on its own (although it still undertook a separate transport task) and deploy a full A Echelon. With the support of a couple of BHQ clerks, some sigs and the Int Sect as a control element, the coy moved to private property in the Mt Cole area. During Saturday there was about 25mm of rain, but the coy still deployed, put up its tents and cam nets in the rain and high winds and then operated for the remainder of the weekend before returning to home locations on Sunday afternoon.

The coy was fortunate that the private property had a shed with a potbelly type wood heater (which, for the tactically minded, was out of sight) which gave all members a chance to dry out at some stage. Unfortunately the rain "washed out" any chance of the drivers getting some night driver training.❖

Ins and outs

As is usual, the coy saw many transfers in and out during the year. CHQ saw last years' 2IC, Capt Tony Watson, return to C Coy as OC after learning the ropes of battalion admin during 1998. His replacement is Capt Cliff Gowers from B Coy. WO2 Geoff Pellow remained as CSM. CHQ has had a number of clerks during the year including Cpls Tracey, Carlin, Craig and Millar (now Sgt). The current hard working Clerk is Pte Kayleen Charlesworth who is proving to be a very handy member.❖

Transport

The Tpt Pl, under Capt David Falloon and Sgt Dan Casey, has continued to provide excellent service to the battalion. Despite many changes to already complex transport plans (caused by changes of numbers of participants, unplanned tasks and people "doing their own thing" with battalion vehicle resources) the vast majority of transport tasks in this complex battalion of ours have been carried out on time using a minimum of resources.

Pte Anna Watson passed her Sub 4 for Cpl and was promoted to Cpl. Almost straight away she found herself as the Tpt NCO on a bn exercise. This was followed by almost three months Full Time Service while Sgt Casey was on course.

Cpl "Jacka" Smith reaches retirement age this year after 25 years of service with the battalion and the Engineers. He has requested an extension. His new found availability and driver Testing Officer skills will make him a useful soldier for some time yet.

Ptes Vicky Tsaikos and Danielle "Soup" Minutoli joined the platoon and have both qualified as Land Rover variant drivers.

For the record, the transport platoon this year has covered over 600,000 km and used over 110,000 litres of fuel at an accident rate of one accident per 103,000 km. Note: the battalion's most serious accident for the year was in a battalion vehicle which was not being driven by a Tpt Pl driver.❖

QM Pl

The QM, WO2 Chris Bates, is preparing to move to Bandiana in January and will be replaced by WO1 Kev White some time in the New Year. The QM has appreciated the help of all the Q staff in his two years in the battalion. In the meantime, the RQMS SSgt "Swampy" Fuller will fill in as QM.

The Q Sect has worked extremely hard this year and has, as always, done a fine job. The sect will lose Pte Hunter to 4/19 PWLH. He has done a great job in the clothing store while with the Battalion.

The Catering Section, under the acting WO Caterer, Sergeant Mark Broemmer, has continued to provide excellent results with limited resources. Corporal Kaiser has finally transferred out (again) and Corporal Mullane went to Queensland and appears unlikely to return to the battalion. The Cat Sect now has a couple of TFEs who will help its numbers.❖

Medical

Staff Sergeant "BJ" McKeon has taken over as RAP Staff Sergeant and has put much of the Battalions Medical/Dent information onto computer. This will help greatly with the Battalions AIRN Medical/Dent problems. "BJ" is actively recruiting for his platoon and, with three TFEs, hopes to have a platoon strength of 10 by Christmas. Sgt Jo Hem leaves the Battalion at the end of the year to take up a Nursing Commission with the Army in Brisbane in January. ❖

Tech Support

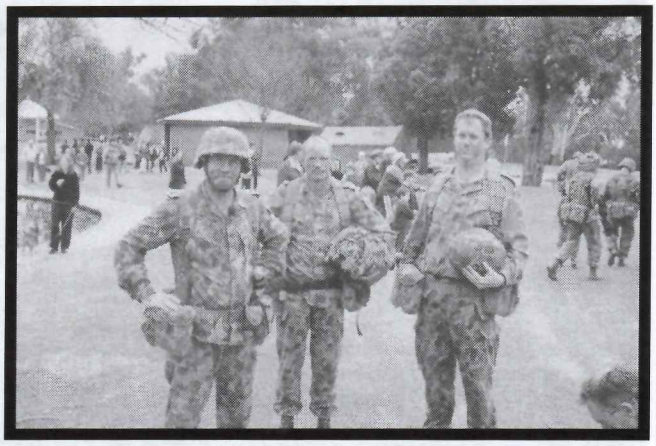
Sgt. "Jacko" Jackson has been "the Tech Support Pl" for most of this year. He attended Ex Albert and has also carried out weapons inspections in all northern depots. Corporal Darren Werry returned to the platoon in October and the platoon is hopeful of recruiting a third armourer later this year. ❖

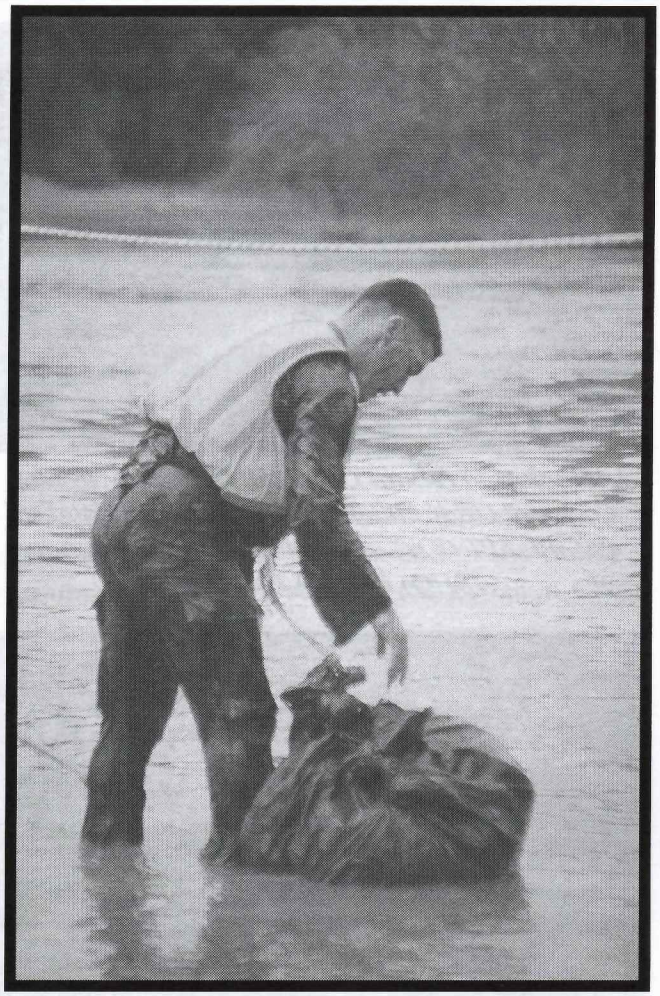
Photographs

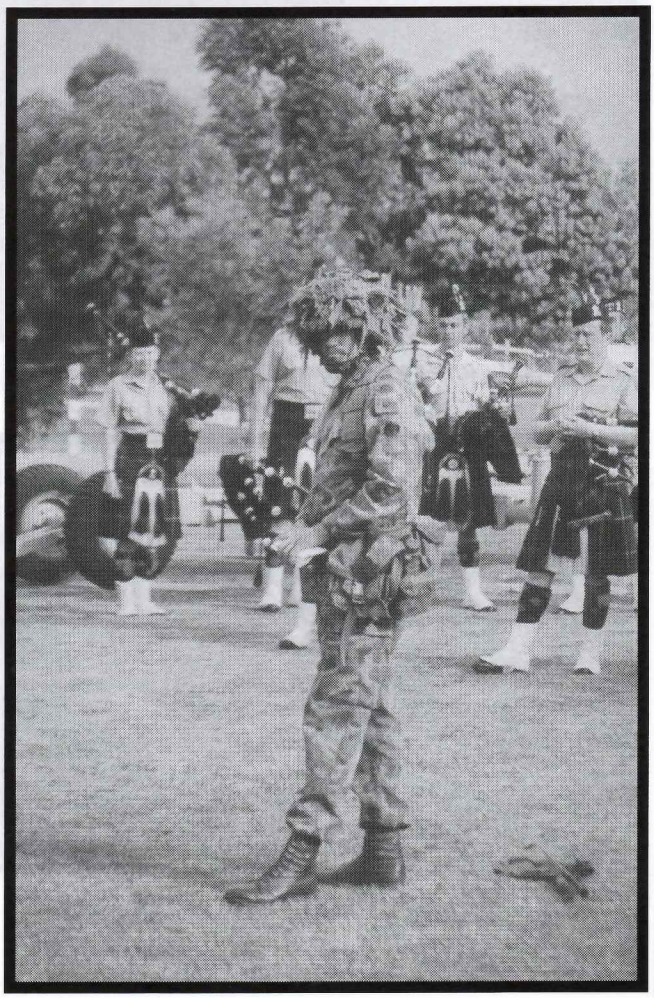
A well camouflaged A Echelon at Mt Cole, May 1999

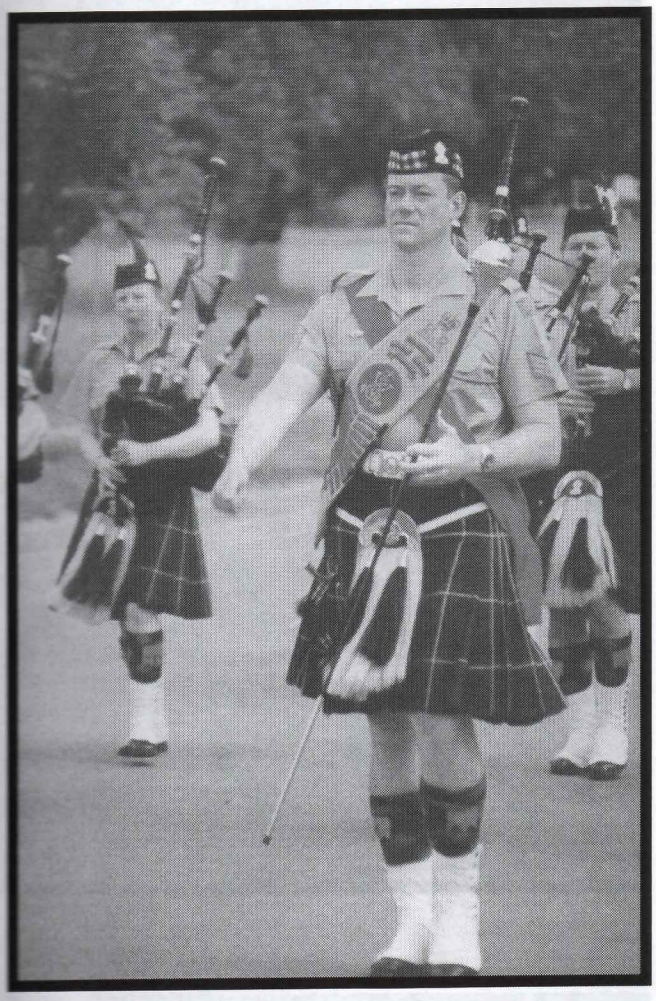
The A Echelon convoy prepares to leave Mt Cole, May 1999

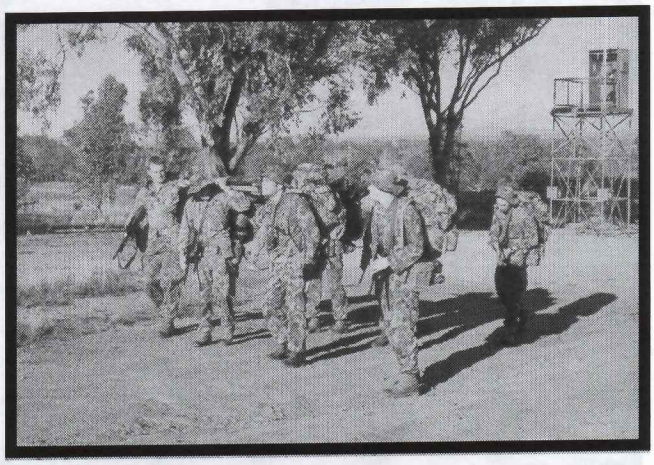
Support to Admin Coy at Mt Cole, May 1999: Corporal Lindy Miller (BHQ), Corporal Matt Dell (SIG PL, SPT COY) and Private Donna Saunders (BHQ) in the A Echelon CP

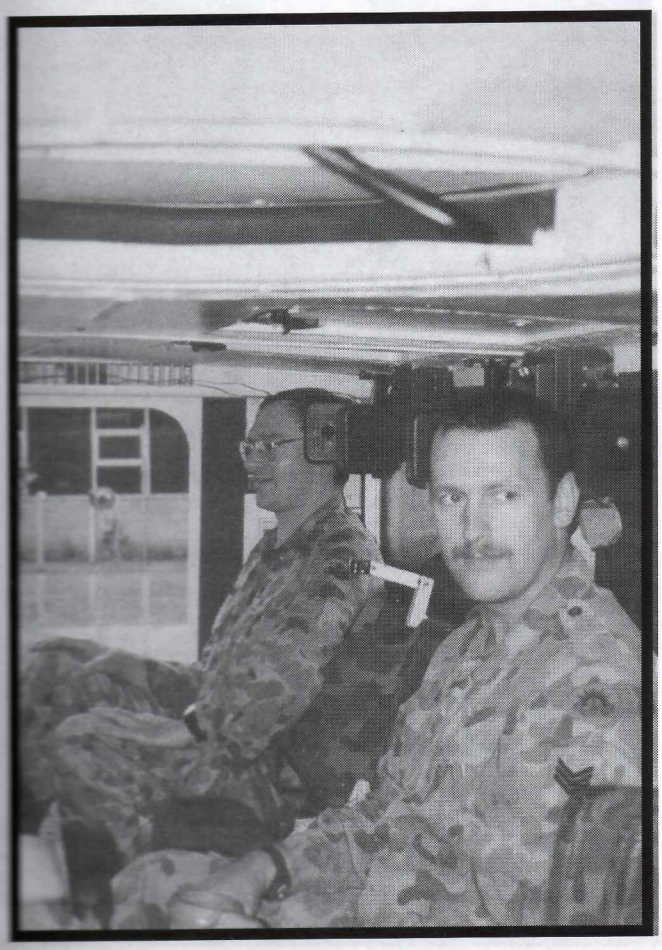


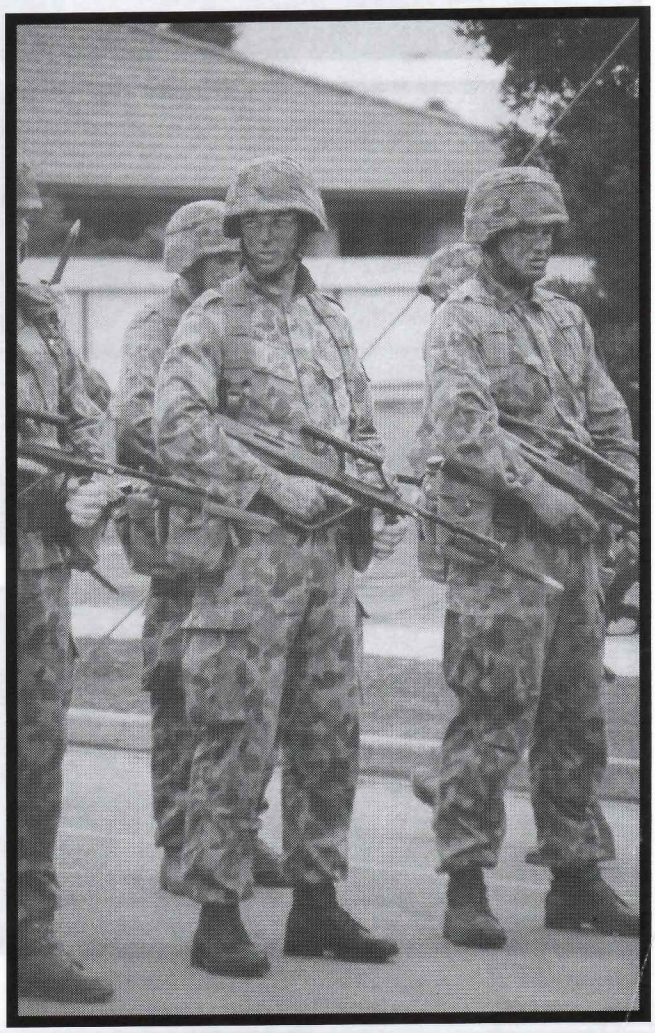


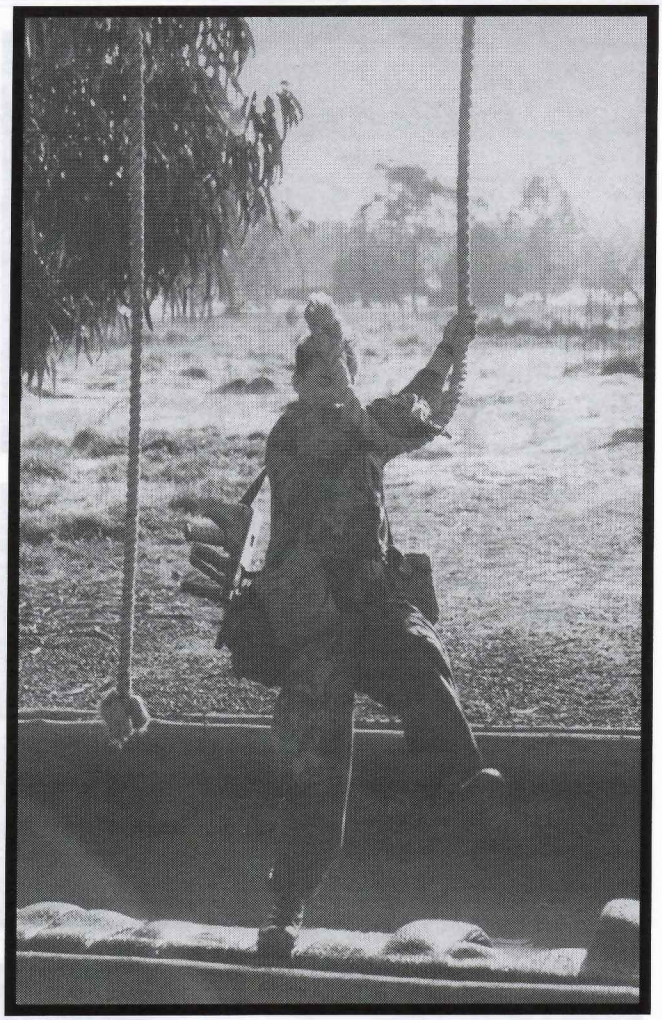


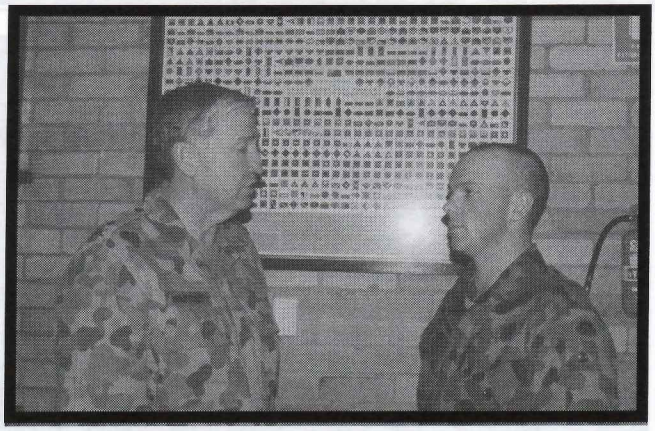


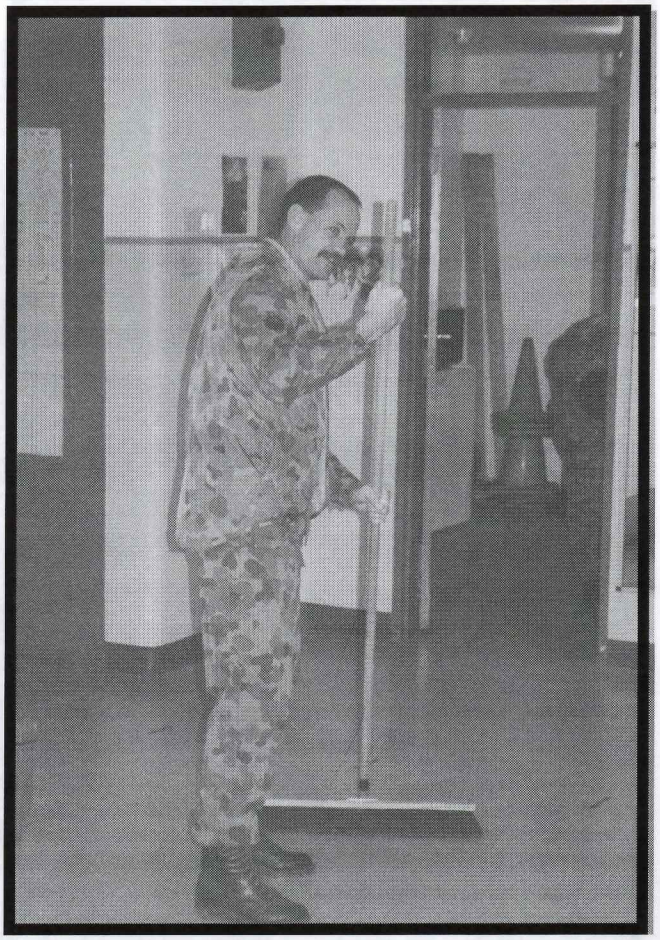












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