



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

THE 8TH RANGER 2003

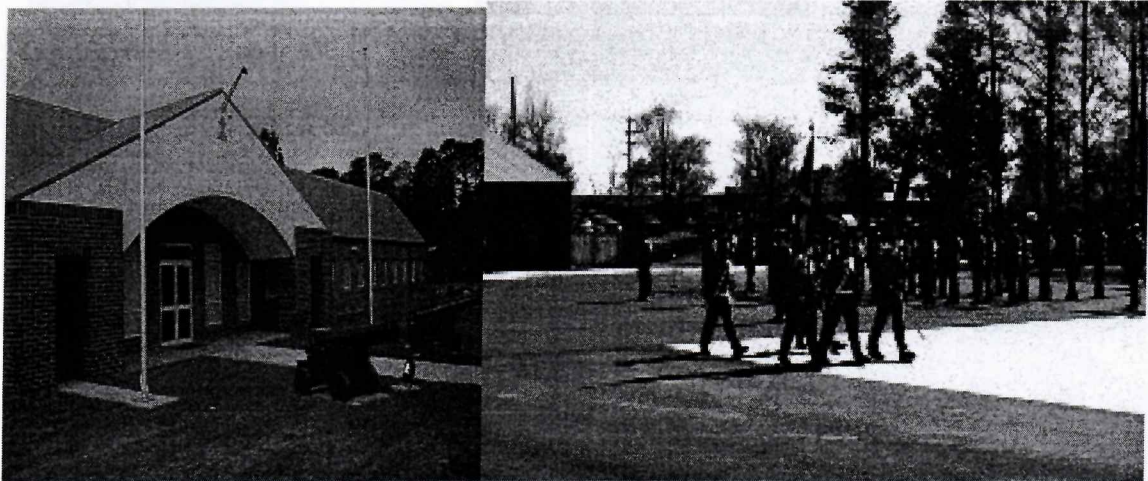


Cover photos: Opening of Ranger Barracks 18 October 2003

THE RANGER

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Honorary Colonel

Mr John Landy AC MBE

Regimental Colonel

COL P. A. Riley AM RFD

Allied Regiments

The Staffordshire Regiment
(The Prince of Wales's)
The Royal Regiment of Canada

Commanding Officer

LT COL R. S. Haughton

Allied Associations

The Associations of the 7th Battalion
incorporating the
7th Battalion AIF
7th Battalion AIF (1939-1945)
2/7th Australian Infantry Battalion
7th Battalion RAR

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

The 8th/7th Battalion – 2 RVR Association

Regimental Sergeant Major

WO1 J. L. Glover

Colours over White



Colour over Brown



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The 8th/7th Battalion - 2 RVR Association



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8/7 RVR – A BRIEF HISTORY

The 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment, encompasses the area bounded by Mildura, Warrnambool, Geelong, and Shepparton. The Battalion HQ is at Ballarat, 110km west of Melbourne.

The Ballarat part of 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 the new unit was the 9th August 1858. As the Battalion Headquarters is based on Ballarat, 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 it's lineage back to a number of units. These include the 8th Battalion (City of Ballarat Regiment), 7th Battalion (The North West Murray Borderers), the 38th Battalion (The Northern Victorian Regiment) and the 59th Battalion (The Hume Regiment). These battalions cover the major cities of Ballarat, Mildura, Bendigo and Shepparton.

The Battalion has been granted and used The Freedom of Entry to the following cities in the area:

Ballarat	1983 & 1998
Echuca	1989
Hamilton	1990 & 2000
Maryborough	1980
Swan Hill	1988 & 1999

The year 2003 saw Battalion HQ, B Company and Admin Coy move into the new depot, Ranger Barracks, in Sturt Street, Ballarat and further work on the redevelopment of the 2/10 FD REGT Depot to where A COY will move.

8/7 RVR BATTLE HONOURS

Boer War South Africa 1899 – 1902

World War One

Landing at Anzac Cove
 Somme 1916 – 1918 Bullecourt
 Ypres 1917 Polygon Wood
 Amiens Albert 1918
 Mont St Quentin & Hindenburg Line
 South Africa 1899 – 1902

World War Two

Bardia 1941
 Capture of Tobruk
 El Alamein
 Greece 1941
 South West Pacific 1942 – 1945
 Finisterres
 Hari River
 Borneo

CO's Message

October completes the third and commencement of my fourth year as CO, and as such I wish to reflect over the period.

This year saw the battalion's 145th Birthday on the 9 August 2003. This year has also seen 8/7 RVR take enormous steps towards establishing itself in a new barracks in Ballarat and it is aptly called 'Ranger Barracks'. The opening on the 18 October was a very clear statement to the Ballarat community and Western Victoria that the Army Reserve is here to stay and be part of the community.

All the rifle companies have undergone significant change over the period with differing responsibilities and varying geographic coverage for the soldiers they are training or command. The current structure with a Northern Company and a Southern Company of trained soldiers has allowed for a more manageable geographic coverage for their respective members. Bravo, Support and Admin companies still have the issue of every depot can have their members parading. This is unavoidable but allows for soldiers to progress to areas other than positions in a trained soldier's company.

The battalion's training over the three years has not relented. Most notable among the periods activities was the short notice commitment of 8/7 RVR members to serve with the 5th/7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5/7 RAR). 27 soldiers left for Darwin on 15 July 02 and they returned to the battalion as of 1 July 2003. Some members were given very public welcomes by their local communities with civil receptions, others were glad just to back and being able to resume their lives. Some have decided to continue to serve, others have taken long leave and some members have decided they can no longer serve. Whatever members make because of their circumstances I support them.

The focus for training has continued to undergo change, and even this year has seen the Force Protection Company Group (FPCG) changed in focus to the ~~Ready Reaction Force (RRF)~~ and with this now established, the FPCG is again a training focus. *Reserve Response Force*

The battalion has run a variant of the IET course over the four years and seems to be entering a further variant. However the battalion is still producing highly enthusiastic and capable infantry soldiers.

The 8/7 RVR has been an active recruiter in the whole period I have been in command, and we have achieved significant recruiting numbers against poor central recruiting agency support. Enthusiastic and dedicated battalion members can only achieve this outcome.

I personally wish to thank all members of the battalion again for their contributions and their families for their support over the years, and this allows the battalion to meet its requirements in capability for the army.

When all this activity is set against a backdrop of considerable defence wide change, the tempo sustained by 8/7 RVR throughout the years of my command is quite an achievement.

I wish my successor Lt Col Craig Hinchliffe all the best in his command from 2004.

Lt Col Robert Haughton

CO Elect

8/7 RVR is fortunate to have obtained the services of a Ballarat resident, Lt Col Craig Hinchliffe, as CO commencing 1st January 2004. Lt Col Hinchliffe is retiring from the Regular Army at the end of the 2003 and will be the first Ballarat resident CO for the battalion in almost twenty years.

XO's second 'Year in the Chair'

When I turned 55 in 2001 I applied for and was granted an extension for 16 months to my service with the battalion. This would allow me to do a hand-over to the incoming XO in January. As there was no one being posted in as XO to replace me, the CO asked me to extend further. After a battle I was granted a further 8 months extension. Four weeks later 'all bets were off' as the age of retirement for all General Reservists went to 60. I could now serve a complete second 'year in the chair'.

This second year has been every bit as busy and interesting as the first. Early in the year the Adjutant, Captain Andrew Butcher, went on course for four weeks and due to my now part-time teaching commitment, I was able to fill-in in his absence. It is always interesting and challenging doing someone else's job and this was no exception. One task undertaken was to attend the Defence Reserves Support Council (DRSC) brief at Victoria Barracks. This led to a program of visits by the DRSC Liaison Officers Captain Paul Graham and Lieutenant Commander Chris Wright to each of the eight battalion depots throughout the year. The briefs on the role of the DRSC in supporting both the Reservist and their employer were most informative. The DRSC visits were combined with my depot visits on behalf of the CO.

The next major task for me was to oversee the move into the new Ranger Barracks and the Opening Ceremony. These involved many hours of discussion and co-ordination with many battalion members and a number of others from outside the battalion. Thanks must specifically be given to The Adjutant for his part in administering the Invitations and Public Relations involved with the Opening ceremony. Now that Ranger Barracks is up and running smoothly, I can get back to the more mundane tasks of Non Public Money Accounts auditing, O H & S Meetings and other duties that go with the role of XO.

My best wishes go to the outgoing CO and his family as they move into another phase of their lives and also to the incoming CO as he finds his feet in our great battalion 8/7 RVR.

FROM THE RSM

Soldiers of the 8/7 RVR, 2003 is almost at an end and we can look back on our many achievements with pride and a sense of accomplishment: ANZAC Day, BDE Exercise, Mil Skills Competition, the opening of Ranger Barracks and many more. Since being appointed as the RSM in January this year I have seen that you, the soldiers of the Battalion, have constantly proven your worth within the Australian Defence Force. I congratulate the soldiers who served and returned safely from active service with the 5th/7th BN RAR in East Timor. However, not all of our soldiers had the opportunity to deploy on warlike operation, but they maintained the infantry spirit and skill base, and in doing so passed on the baton of professionalism that has allowed our current infantrymen to perform so well for the battalion.

The Army Reserve must remain prepared for the unforeseen – An army fights to the level it is trained. In the words of General Douglas MacArthur: 'In no other profession are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or so irrevocable as in the military'. In both peace and conflict, high quality training is vital. While efficient organisations and state-of-the-art materiel are essential ingredients to success, they do not win battles. Skilled and well-trained soldiers, led by knowledgeable, respected and capable commanders win battles.

In closing I will leave you with this thought:

In the 21st Century the RA INF CORPS demonstrates professional mastery
of close combat in a complex environment.

It fights smart in a unique Australian way.

It fights well above its weight through its firepower, mobility and moral.

It constitutes the very core of the all arms team on operations.

Its people are highly trained, disciplined and professional- they are proud of their Corps

"THEY ARE THE INFANTRY"

OPS: The Operations Cell - Engine Room of the Battalion

"The army is an instrument of war; its sole purpose is to fight the country's enemies, and tactical preparedness is an essential element of success in the struggle. An army lacking in tactical training is forced to learn in the course of fighting at the cost of unnecessary losses."

Marshal of the Soviet Union, Georgi K. Zhukov, Reminiscences & Reflections, 1974

In the words of our recently departed but not forgotten Adjutant, Captain Andrew Butcher, it has been another tumultuous year for the Battalion. Once again we demonstrated to the wider defence community our ability and drive to develop capabilities sought by higher whilst providing our members and that of the Brigade with realistic and enjoyable training. So, as we put pen to paper and outline from the Operations Cell's perspective what has occurred we can be extremely proud of our achievements this year.

The year burst in to flame (pardon the pun) in mid January when battalion members were called on almost immediately to assist in fighting the bush fires in Northeast Victoria. The ADF's push was ably led by 4 CER and the battalion provide upwards of a platoon of reinforcements at various times, mainly to work in the rear areas establishing fire breaks and clearing operations. 4CER were extremely thankful for the support and it reinforced in the Infantry battalions what an important asset an Assault Pioneer is. This in part has led to our request to vary our SED to have an Assault Pioneer capability returned to the unit.

By the time February had come around, the battalion was finalising its plan to conduct a split weekend to cover the Avalon Air show, which had been tasked to A Coy on short notice while the rest of the battalion went to our old stomping ground at Puckapunyal to conduct range practices and the like. A Coy did a great job to get upwards of a platoon for the four days of the Air Show and did themselves proud even though the Announcer who was from 5 Avn Regt referred to the boys as coming from the "Royal Victorian Rifles". Even after 145 years of service to both the Australian public and the State of Victoria the Regs still can't get our name right.

It was also during this month that the Ops Cell staff attended the first Ops Conference of the year with the new Brigade Commander, Brigadier Dunbar (former Battalion CO) & Brigade Major or BM, Major Mercer. This meeting was to redefine the ten principle of warfare for the Australian Army Reserve as detailed below and consequently the way we were to conduct training:

1. Flexibility;
2. Flexibility;
3. Flexibility, and
- 4.-10. Flexibility

Within five minutes the Brigade Commander had cut through every unit's training program like Taz of Disney fame reducing the contents to an illegible jumble of letters.

Effectively units would no longer conduct training on their own and would be required to take an all arms approach to training with units given responsibility to plan and conduct training on a weekend for all brigade units. This was to commence with 5/6 RVR in March and then 8/7 RVR in May, 4/19 PWLH in June, 4CER in July and Bde HQ in Aug before the Bde Exercise was conducted in September. Whilst we addressed some concerns through Brigade regarding the late notice of changes to the training program and the heavy training commitment in the last six months of the year we realised that it was unlikely any adjustment would occur. And so it was!!

The impact of these changes was conveyed to Bde HQ as for the second time in two months we had to adjust the location and date of the training weekend to conform with other Bde Units. Consequently, the turnout for the 5/6 RVR weekend was poor albeit in line with what we advised Bde. This was disappointing, as I understand 5/6 RVR conducted some great infantry training for all rank levels, which our members would have benefited from. A week later Spt Coy & C Coy were to provide the guard for the Beat the Retreat parade at Fort Queenscliff. However, with the commencement of the Iraq War it was

postponed until November and the companies involved did a great job to fleshing out their training programs to provide relevant and informative training on the weekend.

By the time it came to the conduct of the 8/7 RVR sponsored weekend in May the whole of BHQ had been heavily involved in the process from the development of the General & Special Ideas, the OPODS and supporting documents and traces. It was with pride that we attend Bde HQ one Tuesday night and issued a complete set of orders for the operation. Bde staff noted this was the first time they had seen this happen in a long time and thought it was fantastic. We had approximately 250 – 300 Bde and non Bde members on the weekend, which was by far the biggest turnout for a Battalion weekend we have seen for a long time which allowed us to deploy two combat teams with a reasonable sized OA and 95. In addition it was the first time the battalion deployed a senior group of members to conduct evaluation of the training at all levels. Overall, we felt everyone enjoyed themselves as we finally got back to the real work of soldiering and combined with the APC's, RSM blowing things up and Mortars firing in support of the companies what more can you say, but play it again, Sir.



Left: General Taylor at the May Weekend

Right: Yes, we have a 'Doc' (Major Harris) and he does go bush.



Left: DFSW Section.

Right: What is more dangerous than a junior officer with a map and compass? Two junior officers!

Unfortunately this was not to be the case as later in the month the Bde did an about turn in accordance with Divisional Directives as another change in the training continuum took effect with the commencement of the RRF. One can only be impressed by the dedication of the members of the battalion who once again confronted by a quick change in the training focus were able to adapt and approach the change with a positive attitude.

Apart from the courses, that were conducted in Jul and Sep, which the sub-units have commented on, the next major issue for the Ops Cell, was the Battalion Military Skills weekend in August.

Like the May weekend, this required significant planning to ensure it was a success. From all comments it was, with a good mixture of activities including the repelling and mobile WTSS facility to test participant's skills. It is the RSM dream to expand next year's competition to make it more gruelling than this year. So start preparing now.

The results of this year can be difficult to thread considering members had to make a constant adjustment to the change in training focus. However, in doing so those who have planned the training have tried to ensure that we at all stages tried to develop capability and as such at least maintain if not improved the battalion's tactical preparedness. What needs to occur now is a period of consolidation to ensure the battalion has a sound footing on which to advance. This can only be achieved if you the member make the commitment to attend training on a regular basis.

It is time to bid adieu as Christmas approaches. Please have a great Christmas and fantastic New Year with family and friends. Above all please stay safe. I look forward to seeing you all in 2004.

The Battalion Orderly Room

The 8/7 RVR BHQ Orderly Room started 2003 with some fresh faces:

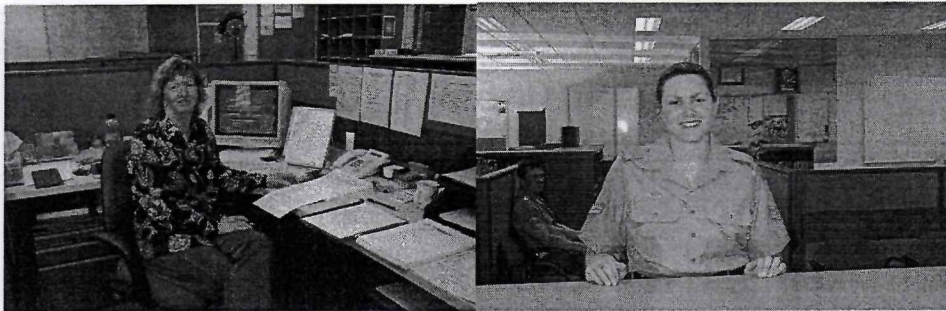
Chief Clerk WO2 Neville 'Dezzies my bitch' Bullock,
Movements Clerk LCpl Scott 'the Pies'll get up next year for sure' Sporn and,
yours truly - UPR CPL Michelle 'I still don't have a notable saying' Haiser
joined the stayers:

Orderly Room Corporals Des 'hear me out' MacMillan and
Nicole 'whatever' Cunningham along with

ESP guru Dave 'I know the whole battalions first, middle and last names as well as addresses and shoe sizes' Willoughby was there to greet us with a smile.

But where would the engine room of the Battalion be without it's chief 'fixit' chick and general all round fountain of knowledge Dee 'pass the champers and prepare to be chest-posted' Saunderson??

Add to this our latest addition in August of GRes Member, PTE Amber 'new chick' McIntyre and we're good to go.



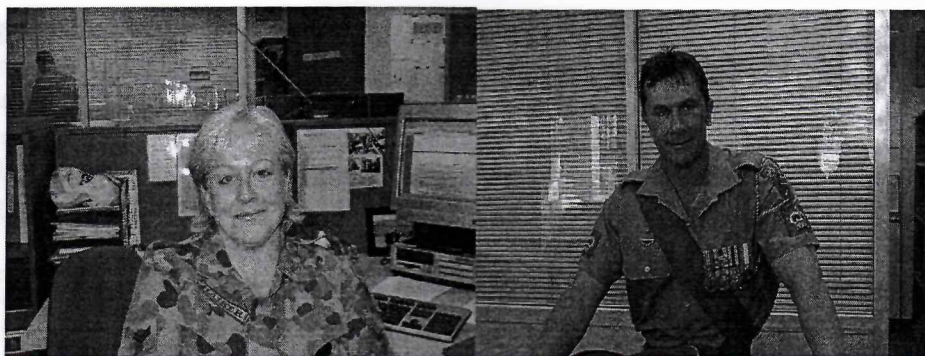
Dee Saunderson.

Cpl Nicole Cunningham.

Einstein's other less known theory

New postings + new personnel inevitably = NEW METHODS

was given a workout and from admin to pay and movements we've made some changes, both big and small, that we have hoped would streamline processes and benefit the members, both full and part-time. A Big thank you to everyone who took these changes on board and an even bigger thanks to those who took the time to make suggestions which were appreciated and implemented.



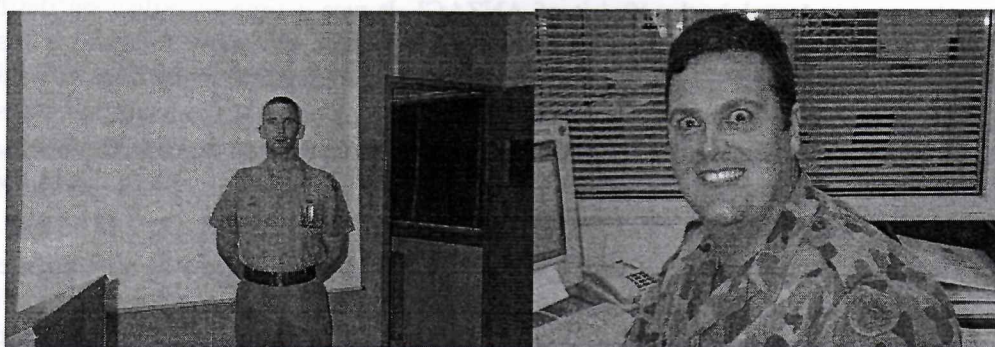
UPR Cpl Michelle Haiser.

Chief Clerk WO2 Neville Bullock.

The move to new digs at Ranger Barracks was eagerly anticipated – more room, nicer desks, proper plumbing. And we were all given a timely lesson in computer dependence when things didn't go quite as planned and connection was delayed. But we worked through and managed, without too much grief (okay, with substantial grief), to maintain the Battalion's admin and pay needs.

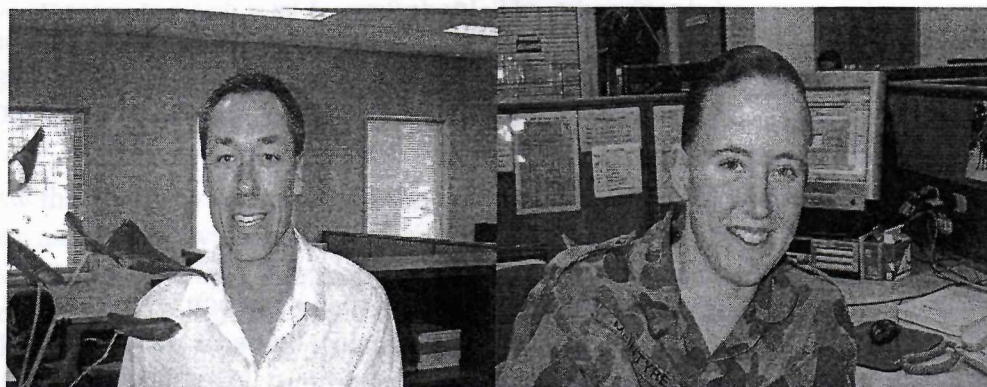
Keeping morale high whilst processing an impressive amount of work is no mean feat, however, and throughout the year we have enjoyed the odd training activity at some fine local establishments. We're still waiting word on exactly how this translates to a tax deduction....

Scott's countback of the year's Footy Tipping Comp didn't provide the last minute upset victory I was hoping for.... CC ran away with the NRL top prize and Dave took out the AFL. Last in both codes was our star tipper, Nicole (narrowly beating the OPSO for the sought-after wooden spoon). Never again will I suggest a prize for last place....



Left: Movements Clerk LCpl Scott Sporn.

Right: Orderly Room Cpl and sometimes Acting Chief Clerk Cpl Phillip 'Des' MacMillan.



ESP Clerk David Willoughby.

Pte Amber McIntyre.

Des returned from his month's leave (hands up anyone else who's even gotten a month's leave???) in the Philippines not too much the worse for wear – it's amazing what penicillin can cure.....

Scott, in the meantime, is slogging it out at Singleton on his SUB 2 CPL and will return to the fold at the end of November..... he's no doubt seen enough of the bush for a while.....

And no-one will be happier to see Scott return than Nicole..... mover/ shaker/ discharge clerk and general task-a-holic poor Nic has done it all while Des and Scott have been away, and without a word of complaint might I add.....(I might, but I won't!!)

CC, in the meantime has recovered from his knee op and is preparing to represent the southern states in the Touch Footy Comp 35+ division

All in all 2003 was a big year for the BHQ Orderly Room new faces, changes galore and a new depot – we look forward to the challenges and opportunities 2004 has in store.

Farewells

Sadly part of military life is the inevitable goodbyes each year –

CPL Phillip 'Des' MacMillan is leaving for the West to drive a desk for the chicken stranglers – if he can keep his mouth shut National Security might just not be compromised. We're currently running a tote and the odds are a million to one he won't....

Dave Willoughby's contract has run its course and sadly he must depart. The office won't be the same without Dave's friendly smile, upbeat attitude and booming voice.

Highlights from my year - David Willoughby

8/7 RVR has been an exciting place to be during 2003. Lots of things have happened to make it exciting. Three events stand out for me: ANZAC Day, my first Dining-In Night and the Ranger Barracks Opening.

On ANZAC Day, my wife and I attended the ANZAC Day Parade at Lake Bolac. It was a nice drive through beautiful Rural Victoria in getting there. The local RSL Hall in this small rural community was filled to capacity as we shared in the 'Spirit of ANZAC'. It was a time to reflect on the tremendous sacrifice made by our Diggers in past conflicts and the freedoms we enjoy today as a result. It was wonderful to see so many young people in attendance. After the formalities were over, it was nice to get together with some of the Army people for lunch and a couple of beers at the local pub across the road. For me personally, this experience not only gave me a greater awareness of the 'Spirit of ANZAC' and its traditions, but also the important role of the Australian Military in today's modern world. We certainly have a military that serves our great nation with passion, pride and distinction.

The Dining-In Night at Broodseinde Barracks in June was a great night enjoyed by all who attended. I had never been to such a function before. My attendance at this dinner gave me an appreciation of and greater insight into the customs and traditions of the Australian Army. Sitting opposite to me at the dining table was SGT Jackson from Mildura. It was interesting striking up a conversation with him as I found out he served in the RAAF some years ago with my brother Kevin. It's a small world in the military!

The March In to Ranger Barracks on the 18th October was a fantastic event. I was an onlooker at the Arch of Victory when the soldiers began their march down Sturt Street. I later drove to the barracks to see the soldiers march onto the Parade Ground. The precision of the marching, the music of the band and the sight of the soldiers on the Parade Ground was an inspiration. I think that for me this was more inspirational than the speeches from the politicians. The 8/7 RVR soldiers did everyone proud on this occasion. It was positive seeing so many people in attendance. Military life is alive and well at the grassroots level in our local communities!

A COMPANY

2003 year got off to a flyer for the Coy, literally, as it provided a platoon (-) to conduct Airmobile Platoon Attack demonstrations, using Iroquois and Blackhawk helos, as part of the Avalon Air Show in February. This also provided the Coy with an opportunity to set-up an infantry weapons and equipment stand as part of a larger ARES Recruiting Stand. Literally thousands of people

went through it. This month also saw the arrival of PTE Andrew Breach, posted in from 3 RAR. Breachy has since done his clerical course and is now in the Orderly Room at CHQ.

In March, at Pucka, we had our first chance to get into the field and brush-up on basic Sect and Pl SOPs and attacks. Unfortunately, some of the enemy escaped unscathed due to some geographical embarrassment by those who shall remain nameless!

Bde HQ wanted greater inter-operability between its units and in April we participated in the first of the Bde inspired training weekends. This one was run by 5/6 RVR and again saw the sections practicing SOPs and attacks (on their own!) at Pucka.

ANZAC Day was again a very busy day for A Coy. As well as conducting the traditional Dawn Service at Newtown (started by A Coy several years ago), the Coy was also responsible for providing the Catafalque Parties for the Rats of Tobruk, Wye River, Norlane, Ocean Grove, Bacchus Marsh and Meredith services. SGT Brendon Henley was posted in to A Coy in April and started parading at Geelong as a 'Quey'.

May was a good month for the Coy as it welcomed back those Coy and Bn members who served in East Timor as part of A Coy, 5/7 RAR. They had their welcome home parade at Simpson Barracks and shortly thereafter commenced their very well earned leave. Many are still overseas on holidays!

The May training weekend at Pucka was another Bde affair, only this time 8/7 RVR ran it. A Coy occupied a defence position on a Force Protection Company Group (FPCG) task guarding an airstrip. We won.

In June the Coy trained with the APCs of 4/19 PWLH again at Pucka.

A Coy conducted a Range Practice Weekend at the Pucka MTR on the first weekend in July and PTEs Alford, Bowden, Dinning and Miller showed their class in achieving their Skill At Arms Badge (Crossed Rifles). PTE Dinning top scored with 247/300 - excellent shooting - well done Drew. Concurrently the OC, CSM and the PHQ staff did some much needed ambush training. Later in July the Coy participated in another training weekend that allowed us the opportunity of working with the Engineers. A highlight seeing the EOD dogs doing their stuff.

August was another huge month for A Coy, for it was in August that the new battalion structure came into being. A Coy now consisted of only those ECN 343-1 and above soldiers from Geelong, Laverton, Ballarat and Warrnambool. The other depots became C Coy. However, due to the latest influx of newly trained soldiers from B Coy, and the return of many of the East Timor soldiers our strength stayed pretty much the same. We bid farewell to those that once were proud A Coy members - as of now you are feeble C Coy wankers! Let the rivalry begin!

August saw the company participate in the Battalion Milskills Competition. Although A Coy's Cpl Baird was awarded with the Champion Section Commander, a composite Section under LCpl Logan from C Coy won the Champion Section Competition by a very narrow margin. Also in August For the second year in a row the best Paraders in A Coy were rewarded with an Adventurous Training trip doing down hill and Nordic skiing at Falls Creek and the Bogong High Plains.



A Company members at the Military Skills Competition at Pax Hill in Ballarat in August.

In September the Bn ran its first Reconnaissance Cse and Lt Fouras, Sgt Derrick, LCpl Clulow, Ptes Assouad, Atwood and Stachlewski are all to be congratulated for passing it. Good luck with the raising of Recon Pl in '04.

A Coy provided one of the guards for the opening of the Ballarat MUD parade in October. The highlight of that weekend was Cpl Baird being awarded a Soldiers Medallion in recognition of his commitment and professionalism. Well done Peter. Some fortunate A Coy members made it on to the White Water Rafting trip at the end of October, and enjoyed a sensational days rafting on the Mitta Mitta River.

The year ended with the now traditional Geelong/Laverton depots mixed Dining-in Night held at the Geelong RSL. It was an excellent night for all 68 people that attended, and gave us all the opportunity to parade with the Battalion Colours that were brought down for the occasion. The CO and the RSM were invited, and the CO used the occasion to award Pte Liz Vorbach a CO Commendation in recognition of her dedication and reliability. Congratulations Liz. Other awards presented on the night included the trophy for the A Coy Outstanding JNCO of the Year which, for the second year in a row, was won by Cpl Peter Baird. The A Coy Champion Soldier of the Year was won by Pte Drew Dinning. Congratulations to both soldiers, who thoroughly deserved recognition for their efforts in 2003.

The end of 2003 will see A Coy farewell some of their members. WO2 Peter Young (CSM) is posted to 5/7 RAR in Darwin to an OPS WO position and has been with A Coy for two years. SSgt Graeme Westbury (CQMS) is posted on promotion to be the QM of 5/6 RVR at Hawthorn. He has been with the battalion since '97. He has been CQMS of Admin and Bravo Coys, and has been CQMS Alpha Coy for the last three years. Cpl Andrew Cook is posted to 5 Avn Regt in Townsville into a Sqn Clerk position and has been with the Coy for two years. We bid you farewell and good luck with your next postings.

ADVENTUROUS TRAINING: EXERCISE HOWLING BLIZZARD 2

For the second year in a row the best paraders in A Company were rewarded with a week of skiing (falling, tripping, dodging trees, carrying packs, risking life and limb) on the Bogong High Plains in Victoria's alpine area over the period 18-24 August 03.

The team consisted of MAJ Doug Laidlaw (veteran from last year's trip), LT Andreas Fouras (The Greek Connection and Snow Numpty), WO2 Peter Young (trip leader), CPL Peter Baird (also a veteran from

last year's trip), CPL Adam Parker (Snow Numpty), CPL John Stapleton (Snow Numpty), PTE Jason Adams (some experience), PTE Clinton Colley (Snow Numpty) and PTE David Weiland (Snow Numpty).

We drove up to Tawonga early Monday morning and pitched our tents in the Caravan Park, which was our home for the next couple of nights. After picking-up our hired ski boots we headed to the local pub for dinner and a few quiet beers. It soon became apparent that some individuals had misspent their youth, and proceeded to dominate the pool table all night. Several appropriate promotional hats were acquired!

The next morning we were out of our tents and away early, via the skier's traditional bakery stop at Mt Beauty, to Falls Creek Resort for a day of downhill skiing. As the bus ascended higher and higher Doug Laidlaw became greener and greener. It was only a question of when, not if, the contents of his stomach decided it wanted out. You could have saved yourself a few bucks at the bakery that morning Doug! Of course being such an understanding lot we all expressed our concerns for him in an appropriate manner. But seriously, once we wiped the tears from our eyes and got the incriminating photographs we continued our journey. Once at the resort all those that required it had a skiing lesson, and we then spent the day on the slopes learning and polishing the skills needed for the rest of the trip. CPL John Stapleton was able to perfect his technique of using wooden safety fences to stop himself. Perfect weather, brilliant snow cover, spectacular crashes, Kamikaze attitudes and fatalism all combined to make it a great day. Late that afternoon we headed down the mountain back to the tents and to continue our domination of the pool table (and to finish our hat collection!).

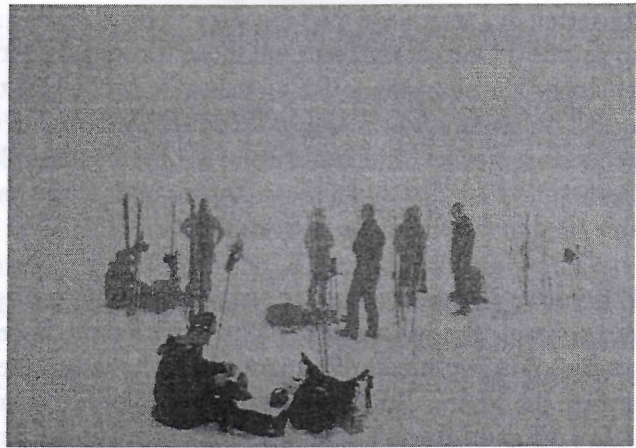
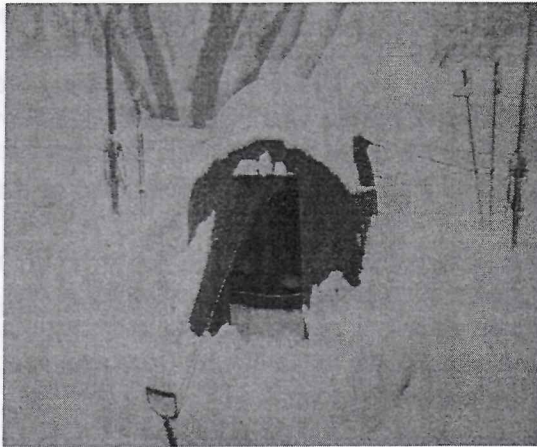
Wednesday. It was now time to start our tour of the High Plains. John Stapleton dropped us off at our start point at Windy Corner in Falls Creek Resort. John, nursing his bruised and battered body from the previous day, returned to Warrnambool. The rest of the team skied down to the Nordic Bowl and went through their paces learning backcountry (Nordic) skiing techniques. We then headed off to our first night's camp on Heathy Spur, and quickly set-up our tents so we could spend the arvo skiing the nearby slopes. Its funny how slopes appear so much steeper once you're standing on the edge of them! Dave Weiland shining as the groups high speed maniac in T-shirt attire. We eventually retired to the camp and prepared our first meal on the snow - a feast of pasta, cheese and salami!

The next day was hard yakka. It was only about twelve km distance, but required determination and good teamwork to get everyone there together given the very icy conditions and the inexperience of most skiers. We completed Heathy Spur and continued north up and around Mt Nelse (1880m) and Mt Nelse North (1884m). We stopped for lunch, and a few of the blokes tried tobogganing on their snow shovels - Peter Baird almost losing his 'toboggan' when he stopped but his shovel raced off down the slope without him. We continued down to Roper Hut and the ski down through the trees towards it was superb. It was particularly memorable for the grace and skill exhibited by Andreas Fouras (The Greek Contortionist) as he hurtled out of control through the trees. Unfortunately our expectations of enjoying the comforts of the hut went up in smoke - literally. The hut was burnt to the ground during the bushfires that raged through the area in summer. Thankfully the dunny was still standing!

We woke up the next day to snow covered tents, and the snow continued to fall throughout the morning. As a group we headed off on a day trip to Timms Lookout. The snow was superb and we skied in whiteout conditions, which meant we were literally surrounded by thick cloud, making everything white and very disorientating. Once up on Timms Spur we stopped for lunch and enjoyed the view through breaks in the clouds. It was around about this time that Jason Adams finally succumbed to the bout of severe tonsillitis he had been battling over the past few days. We were a long way from Falls Creek and he was not going to be able to ski out. The SES were then contacted via mobile phone and we quickly organised Jason's evacuation from our camp to the medical centre in Falls Creek. We then quickly headed off to our camp and arrived just in time to RV with the SES Skidoos. The obligatory photos were taken, Jason made himself comfortable on the back of the Skidoo (complete with oxygen), and they headed back to Falls Creek. Later that night CPL King (driver) picked Jason up and took him down to the Caravan Park.

Because one of our group had been evacuated, the rest of us decided to ski out the next day. Conditions were good, as they traditionally are when going home! Those that were more confident made maximum use of the excellent downhill sections of our route home, and the others.....did their best! Adam and Andreas preferred a more leisurely pace yet still managed to fall over twenty times each!

We arrived back at Windy Corner tired but happy. The weather had been kind to us despite weather reports predicting storms, snow conditions were good, the group had an excellent attitude and everyone enjoyed himself (Jason not as much as the rest!) Kingy and Jason were waiting with the bus to pick us up and take us down the mountain to the Caravan Park for one last night. On Sunday we returned to Geelong, and I am glad to say the weather when we left was terrible - it turned out we owe Jason for getting us off the mountain before the storms hit. Thanks mate.



Exercise Howling Blizzard 2

WO2 Peter Young

The Regimental Dinner in June

It was held in the B Company Drill Hall.

It was \$35 a head,
which I thought was dear for a cold shed.

The guests were supposed to be Colonels Barnes and Riley.
But COL Barnes couldn't make it you see, that just left Sgt Baulch as host for COL Riley.

We all gathered in the Percy Lay Club,
a lot of us wished we were at a pub.

The Dining Photo was a chore,
trying to get all the Sergeants out the door.

We were all set for the photo, but someone was late it was the OPSO.

Who is this I hear you ask, it is Major Falloon here at last.

In he walked as calm as can be,
so we could take the photo for you all to see.

The notice was given to move and start the dinner, but someone was late, guess who it could be,
it was Major Falloon again you see.

Grace was short and sweet.
Chaplain Buijs must have been, in a hurry to eat.

The meal was fair the wine was not,
we were all glad when desserts finally rocked up.

It was time for the toasts you see,
there was only supposed to be two, but it turned into three.

This was done by Presidential Decree
and here I thought we lived in a democracy.

The top table left and it was time for me
to organise the entertainment you see.

I got SGT Henley to tell a joke
about a camel that liked being stroked.

By the end of the joke about the camel,
we all wished we were back on Ex Hamel.

Then WO2 Spencer took over for Kangaroo Court,
to charge our latecomer that got caught.

Ten ports to skull was the penalty
of which he was found to be guilty.

Ordered by the members to drink them all,
by 1a.m., he was flat out on the floor.

That was the end of the dinner you see
and I am sure glad it was not me.

Mr Vice SGT P. Hardcastle

Laverton

2003 has been a very busy year for the reprobates here at Laverton. We started by gaining Lt. Strack, Sgt Prada, and Ptes Sheenan, Haouli, and McCarthy and Assouad came over from the dark side (Geelong). About mid-year we were happy to welcome back Cpl Arundell, Cpl Russell, and PTEs Russell and Byrne from their sunny Timorese adventure. Pollard and Pedrana went full time. Bridle dropped by for a while, and then out of the blue, packed up and moved to China. It might have been something we said.

Activity wise, the year has been jam packed with more excitement than Sexpo. We've sent blokes to fight the fires (and at the same time gorge themselves at the pubs of Mytleford and Tallangatta) up in the Alpine region. Also to have an absolute blast getting paid to fly around in helicopters at the Avalon air show, as well as getting several of our B Coy diggers fully qualified, to sending people on Recon, Signals, RRF, Grand Final, and enemy party courses and activities.

Socially it has been a lot of fun here at the depot. More fun than you can poke a stick at. With the arrival of a once defunct and ratty and now shiny and blue pool table from Warrnambool, we have had an excuse to hold many more depot functions (the functions go off like a frog in a sock). The new cloth for the table means that you can hardly see the stains that Warrnambool had left for us. (Historical note: Cpl Arundell and mates from the old Sig Platoon in Maryborough helped create some of those stains...yes in the stone age).

Although the Mil-Skills competition at Ballarat didn't end as favourably as we would have liked for the Laverton Section, we proved our capability by being the home of the Champion Soldier of the Battalion, Pte Gerhardt, as well as a fair representation of Laverton soldiers in the Champion Section.

The opening of the new Ranger Barracks in Ballarat in October saw an impressive turn out from Laverton. With Cpl Oakley and Cpl Arundell sorting out a few last minute hitches, such as our new March Ins not having all of their kit, and considering drill is not every soldier's (read as any soldier's) cup of tea or beverage, the guys from Laverton looked like they where the Federation Guard..ok ok how about not too shabby. Pte Gerhardt (obviously drill is not the Champion Soldier's strength) had the dubious honour of being one of the first soldiers to check out of Parade Ground at the new Ranger Barracks... from ground level.

Our own Annual Competition saw Pte Campbell win the Champion Soldier Competition for Laverton, and even more encouraging Pte Tarrant was crowned most improved soldier. Who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks. The future for Laverton seems bright and shiny, without weapons though (maybe Santa can help us there). It must be said though, that the most memorable event by far has been Pte Dvoracek's unique brand of drunken monkey kung-fu abseiling on the August weekend. We have yet to send the footage to Australia's Funniest Home Videos. With Laverton's effective strength at over thirty soldiers we are by far one of the stronger depots, especially considering we have only been around for a couple of years.

B COMPANY

2003 has been a huge year for the Bigger Better Bravo, and the term backbone of the Battalion has definitely been the case this year. At the start of the year B Coy swapped with C Coy and took over the training of soldiers from enlistment to completion of the RIO-B Course or Module 1, C Coy then looked after the RIO-P or Module 2.

We had some new faces arrive in the Coy namely a new OC, MAJ Peter George, new CSM WO2 Craig Cunningham, new CQ CPL Damien Wilson, and new Clerks CPL Steve Linane and PTE Rebecca Walsh. We also received a new 2LT Robert Francesevic. It was the start of what was going to be a very busy but exciting year.

Background

The start of the year kicked off with the normal training weekend at Pucka and in Feb a RIO-B Course conducted by RTC-VIC in which we supplied numerous instructors. To try and maintain interest within B Coy, different depots were utilised by the company on training weekends and for the first half of the year weekends were held at Warrnambool and Ballarat, with a Shepparton weekend planned but postponed at the last minute. The company made a fairly smooth transition and things were going well considering the difficulties involved with having soldiers spread over 8 depots in various stages of training. At this point B Coy was managing DTUs and coordinating their attendance at ARTC. Managing MRTs (part Recruit Training completed) and their attendance to complete Mod 2 at ARTC, and managing TFEs and ensuring their attendance on a RIO-B Course.

July RIO-B

In July the Company conducted a RIO-B Course at Puckapunyal, usually an RTC-VIC task. The course was very successful and conducted without incident. 20 members of the Battalion and 2 Commando qualified as ECN 343-0. It was the first RIO-B Course run internally by a unit and the results positive.

Restructure

Just when we were getting on top of things and most of the deadwood (DTUs/MRTs that had been on the books for years) were discharged, and the roll books were looking good with everyone accounted for, another restructure was implemented. The old saying of "The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Oil" was well and truly happening. So after a mammoth manning conference B Coy got all of C Coy's deadwood and we were back to square 1. Now B Coy was responsible for all training from enlistment to qualified Rifleman. So with 1/3 of the Battalion on our books away we went.

Move to Ranger Barracks

What was supposed to be an exciting time for the Company didn't really go that way when the Battalion moved into the new Ranger Barracks. Some people got caught up with the move and tended to forget that as well as being the Battalion HQ Building it also houses a Sub Unit (B Coy) of which has soldiers that are the reason the HQ is there in the first place. But being the backbone of the Battalion the Company remained strong, we watched and worked on. Whether it was Tuesday nights, Adventure Training for the Battalion, organising the RIO-P Course conducted in NOV-DEC, or local Catafalque Parties we kept to soldiering.

Conclusion

The year 2003 has been a busy one with many changes for B Coy. This will continue in 2004. It has been a frustrating year at times with many obstacles arising, but the main focus of the Company which is to train soldiers and get them to A or C Company has been achieved. In 2003 the Company will have qualified over 40 members on RIO-B Courses and over 30 on RIO-P Courses.

Farewells

We will be farewelling the CQMS, CPL Wilson, who will return to the Main Q and PTE Walsh to the ARA (4/19 PWLH). PTEs O'Donnell and Geddes will transfer to MUR as Staff Cadets and undertake Officer Training. Good luck to them and thanks for all your assistance this year.

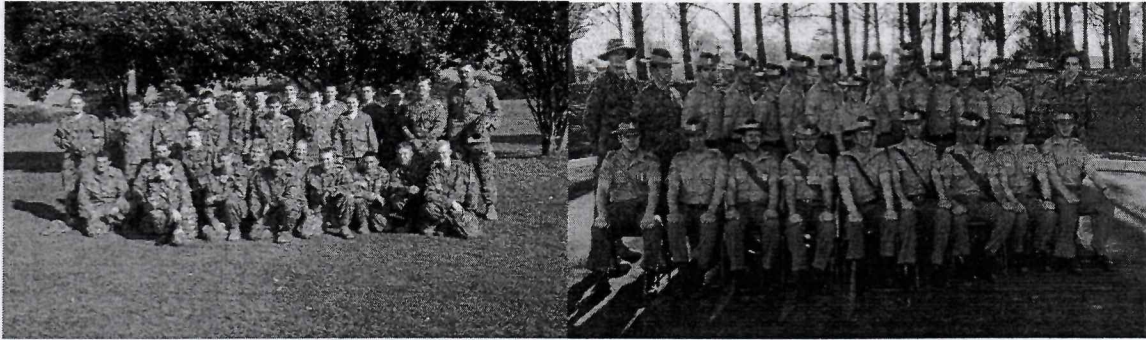


Remember: It should be all B Company soldiers aim to spend as little time in B Company as possible and get yourself qualified.

Notable moments and comments

PTE Graafmans or is it Crashmans reversing into a tree with the Commodore.
2LT Francesevic's Colour Drill on the Barracks Opening

CPL Willo Wilson stirring up the BHQ Clerks (keep it up)
Dessy the hand ball MacMillan
Is SGT Beales really pregnant?
Will LCPL Speilvogel ever arrive on time?



B Company members at Warrnambool and after the opening of Ranger Barracks.

B Company White Water Rafting 22-27 Oct 03

After months of planning, including detailed recon, requests, letters, instructions, and hundreds of phone calls, the B Company White Water Rafting Activity was finally happening. The call was put out through e-mails, faxes, phone calls, and conferences for volunteers around the battalion to participate, but as normal it didn't get passed on and no one knew seemed to know about it. But eventually we had the numbers required, until again the normal thing 2 days before the phone started ringing and the excuses started flowing, there was even some I hadn't heard before.

On Wed 22 Oct the advance party left for Omeo. We had MAJ John Eiby from 3 RAR and SGT Darren Warke from 2 FSB attached as Unit Adventure Team Leaders (UATLs). The facility at Omeo was excellent with a large kitchen, beds, drying room, and hot showers; all involved were impressed and happy to sleep in a bed instead of a hootchie. The next day the members of the advance party were used as guinea pigs and used to make up numbers so the guides could recon and raft the river. Other than the shock of the cold water, all went well.

The next 3 days saw 3 groups rotate through a day each of rafting, the first group made up of the small number of full time staff that made the effort to attend, the second group from the southern depots, and the last group from the northern depots. With many vehicles travelling long distances from all over Victoria, the drivers need to be commended for their efforts. With all participants going through rapid swim training first at the start point, the rafting was then fast and furious. After getting over the shock from the cold water they were put into raft groups. Section identities were maintained where possible and this allowed groups such as the Orderly Room, Main Q, and other areas to build teamwork, trust, and courage. By the end of the day a close bond was developed within the raft group.

Some highlights of the trip were:

the Clerk Raft which spent more time in the water than in the raft.

the Q raft which kept saving the Clerks.

watching PTE Tarrant gulp water during the rapid swim training.

CAPT Morton being told off by MAJ Eiby for throwing the bailing bucket out of the raft (the second time).

the CCLK screaming when going down each rapid.

PTE Walsh's face the whole day.

Overall the activity was a huge success. Not only did all involved enjoy themselves, but also some important qualities required within the battalion were developed. It was very disappointing having so many withdraw at the last minute, especially within the ARA and command group who knew about the

activity for months prior. I don't ever want to hear anyone complain about never doing Adventure Training!

I would like to personally thank the following members for their assistance of which without the activity could not have gone ahead.

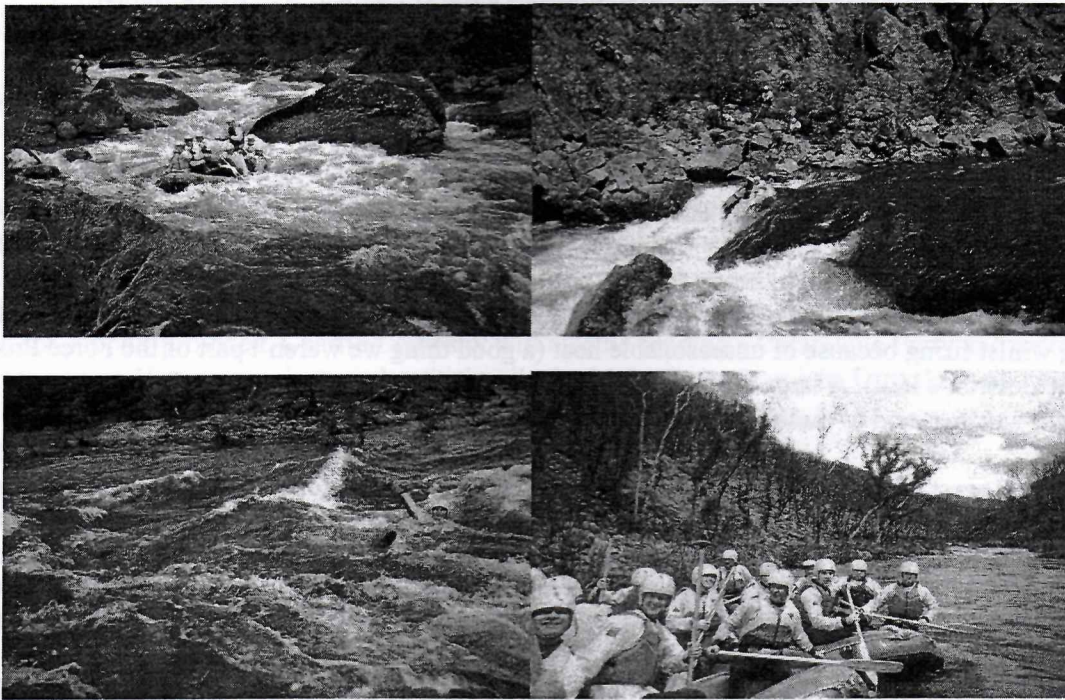
OPSO – Who was very positive towards the activity, without resources would never be able to conduct.

UATLs – MAJ Eiby, SGT Warke, and SGT Baulch.

WO2 Broemmer – Meals were of an excellent standard and much praised.

B Coy Staff – The staff from B Coy did an excellent job throughout, SGT Beales, CPL Stapleton, CPL Linane, CPL Wilson, PTEs Graafmans, and Santamaria.

Participants – Without them couldn't conduct.



Adventurous Training on the Mitta Mitta River.

C COMPANY

2003 saw the headquarters of C Company return to Shepparton from Swan Hill. C Company's role at the start of the year was to conduct the battalion run Infantry IET Module 2 Course (RIO-P) in July. This entailed all the lead-up training and weekends, usually at not-so-sunny Puckapunyal, to prepare the soldiers for the course.

Posted Out: SGT Bill Armstrong, who had done such a good job in building up the numbers at Shepparton.

Remaining: SSgt Peter Anderson as CQMS C Company at Swan Hill
Sgt Bill Clayden to Mildura from Swan Hill

Posted In: Captain Alex Gabriel as OC C Company
WO2 Brad 'BJ' Turner as CSM C Company
Cpl Bloffwitch as Trg Cpl at Swan Hill
Pte Sean Smithies from Ballarat as Company Clerk
Tpr Woods as a general 'dogs body' at Mildura

- January:** Back to work and the ARA/FT Induction Training.
- February:** First training weekend for the year. WTSS and Classification Range at Pucka.
- March:** Mandatory and weapons training at Geelong.
- April:** Back to Pucka for MTR/WTSS Steyr shoots.
- May:** Pucka again, camping on the Class Range again for more WTSS and live fire shoots at the Class and Sneaker Ranges while the rest of the battalion participated in the Brigade Exercise.
- June:** Just for a change (ho hum) yet again at the Class Range, but this time with the Minimi.
- July:** The conduct of the two-week RIO-P Course in the Pucka Military Area.
- August:** As a new entity, the Northern Company, participated in the battalion Military Skills Competition at the Pax Hill Scout Camp in Ballarat. **The Trophy and Flag are now held by the Northern Company!**
- September:** Involvement in the courses period and RRF Training as part of Ex Hamel.
- October:** The opening of Ranger Barracks in Ballarat and for some White Water Rafting Adventurous Training.
- November:** As 'The Ranger 2003' goes to print, once again Specialist Courses, a RIO-P Course and the finalisation of the RRF Training.

Because of the amount of time spent at Pucka, it became blatantly obvious that Pucka is not a very nice place – the old 'four seasons in a day' making itself known quite often. There were days we couldn't start firing until mid-morning, due to heavy fog and not being able to see zeroing and grouping targets at 100 metres. Other days we would go from being cold and wet for lengthy periods, including hail and sleet, to melting whilst firing because of unseasonable heat (a good thing we weren't part of the Force Protection Thing at Colston's Hill). A large number of soldiers qualified during these Range Practices, even with the inclement weather, and to these members we say: 'Well done!'

One of the biggest problems was trying to get all the members of the company in the same place at the same time to do the qualifying shoots in the lead up to the RIO-P Course. We were very lucky in the end that when the time came to conduct the course all the members attending had the required qualifications to participate. The 'Big Fellow' upstairs was also very kind to us over this period with regards to weather and the two weeks playing soldiers passed with only a minimum of abnormal discomfort for the future infantry soldiers. Many thanks to Lt Bowen, Sgt Clayden, Cpls Herbert and Bloffwitch and LCpl Spielvogel for their continuous help on the defensive position as well as SSgt Anderson, Sgt Derrick and Cpl Holland for their support throughout the course.

01August03 saw a change in the battalion structure with the fully trained soldiers from Mildura, Swan Hill, Shepparton and Bendigo being redesignated as Charlie Company (The Northern Company). Unfortunately, at the moment, numbers are not yet on our side with several members transferring to the Regular Army or pursuing a change in career. Additionally, having a lot of soldiers involved with seasonal work, or indeed actually finding work, has hindered them from attending some activities in the latter half of the year. Hopefully with the implementation of a some good training weekends and activities, outside of additional tasking that comes from a lot higher, Charlie Company to properly establish itself as the Northern Company in it's own right – a force to be reckoned with!

There are a number of questions that do arise from the training year thus far, and some that pop to mind are:

1. Are Ptes Gregor and Raufer (both now A Company) actually Siamese Twins, and can they survive without each other?
2. How many times will Pte Goontileke (also now A Company) be able to injure his ankle before he can no longer keep popping up like a Terminator?
3. Can anybody achieve a double banger and stop not only Pte Raufer but also Pte Graafmans from smiling in the most adverse conditions?
4. Will Cpl Holland ever get a Drivers Course?
5. Is Sgt Clayden able to return to the RSL in Swan Hill?

These questions may be answered in the future!

East Timor:

In the middle of the year the battalion saw the return of its members who deployed to East Timor as part of A Company 5/7 RAR.

Returning to the Northern Depots are:

Mildura: LCpl Moloney, Ptes Ansell, McGlashan and Sweet,

Swan Hill: Pte Dear,

Shepparton: Cpl McKinley,

Bendigo: Ptes Farquarson, Hayden, Macumber and Mazzon.

The experience and knowledge gained by these soldiers whilst deployed overseas will prove invaluable, not only to themselves but also to others within the battalion as they pass on this experience. We all know that you put in an outstanding effort and 'did the battalion proud' throughout the whole time that you were away. Well done!

Ceremonial:

In addition to ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day Ceremonies, which saw members from all Charlie Company depots participating, we were also able to provide Catafalque Parties and Guards for other activities, not the least being the opening of Ranger Barracks in Ballarat in October.

Associations such as The Darwin Defenders and the 59th Battalion (The Hume Regiment) are very grateful for support provided. Charlie Company will also be sending a Catafalque Party and extras to support the Light Horse Association when it unveils the Light Horse Statue in Tongala (near Shepparton) in late November. We have also received a request by the Korean Veterans for the company to assist in an activity that they are conducting at Swan Hill in February 2004.

We need to keep in mind that drill and parades are part and parcel of being a soldier and every attempt should be made to become involved in these activities as they arise. It is also good to become involved with the people that have preceded us as members of the Defence Force. The ceremony at Swan Hill will also be a chance, finally, to dedicate the Soldiers Club in the Swan Hill Depot, a task long overdue.

Recruiting:

As members from the out-stations would be aware, we need more members within the company. More than a few would also be aware of how frustrating it is to put in the hard yards on recruiting drives only to have one or two, sometimes less, turn up at the ensuing information sessions. The bottom line is we need to get out and be seen, to put in those hard yards, until we are literally told 'no more'. We need new blood and there are a couple of promising activities coming up in Swan Hill and Mildura from which we **must** benefit!

Conclusion:

Well it has certainly been an interesting year. Charlie Company will be extremely sorry to lose Sgt Bill Clayden who is departing Mildura after a long time in the battalion. He is on his way to 5/7 RAR in Darwin, hopefully via a stint in the Sinai. Best of luck and thanks for your help, Bill.

We will be receiving a few replacements, still to be confirmed, in some of the out-stations.

The big thing is for all members of Charlie Company is: look after yourselves, have a safe but excellent Christmas and New Year period and let's come out swinging from the bell next year to make it a year to remember.

WO2 Brad Turner

D COMPANY

D Company was raised in October with the posting to the battalion of Bendigo based Captain Nigel Townsend. His years of recruiting experience in Tasmania are being put to good use. WO2 Shane Armstrong will relocate to Ballarat in 2004 and with the additional experience of Ballarat's Cpl Graeme Paizis, the battalion will be well served in the recruiting area.

D Company's role will be to coordinate the battalion's recruiting and to liaise with outside organisations such as 4 Bde Recruiting and Defence Force Recruiting on recruiting matters.

SUPPORT COMPANY

The year started with SSGT Barry Phillips welcoming the new ARA staff WO2 Kelvin Haley (Spt Coy CSM & Depot Commander) and myself Cpl Sean Walters (Spt Coy Clerk) to Spt Coy and the Bendigo Depot (Passchendaele Barracks) on 20 Jan 2003.

With not even a pen in sight, the newly appointed staff prepared to organise the depot into the fine oiled machine known today. It took some time to sift through and sort out all the mess but now the depot looks and runs like it should.

The first parade night was an eye opener for the new head of the depot and the newly appointed clerk as we didn't have much idea of what was going on but with help from the CQMS it all came together in the end. It was also the first time we met the Bendigo weekend warriors as the CSM tried to find out where they were with their training.

It was a hot start to the year with LCpl D. Logan, Pte B. Hartwich and Pte P. Shaw from Spt Coy joining in with other members of 8/7 and helping the people of Central Victoria overcome the bushfires, which devastated North East Victoria.

While the bushfires were being put under control, the staff of 8/7 got together in Ballarat for the first training weekend in late January early February for 2 days of Death by Power Point presentations (Induction weekend). It gave the new and old staff of the battalion a chance to meet and catch up with long lost friends and tell waries from past trips to Timor.

February training weekend was held at Puckapunyal and as far as Spt Coy were concerned it was a very disappointing turn out, with only three Pte soldiers making the effort to turn up. Although the numbers were low it gave us a chance to conduct weapon TOETs and shoot LF3 in the WTSS. We also had the chance to participate in the first BFA for the year.

Spt Coy members were looking forward to participating in the Beat Retreat parade to be held at Queenscliff, but this was cancelled at the last minute, so it was off to Geelong for the March training weekend. The turn out was much better than February and Spt Coy had their first chance to get DFSW Pl together and run over their gun drills and practice TOETs on the 84mm. OC Spt Coy, Maj Murphy, also had a chance to speak to his troops and tell them what he expects over the next 12 months.

Bendigo was the next port of call for April training weekend, with buckets of blank 7.62mm rounds, DFSW PL ran amuck out in the back training area squaring away their debus drills. With ANZAC Day fast approaching the month of April was set to be very busy as the soldiers of Bendigo brushed up on their drill. ANZAC Day itself went off without a hitch. Cpl Dawborn (A Coy) lead the Catafalque Party out at Huntly RSL and then joined the rest of the depot in town for the main event which was a march through Bendigo City. After the march we headed to the Bendigo RSL for some coldies, lunch and a few bets on Two-Up. All in all it was a great day and the march went well for all concerned.



Bendigo members of 8/7 RVR at the Bendigo ANZAC Day Parade

The May weekend was a joint training weekend with 5/6 RVR and 8/7 RVR conducting a defensive exercise at Puckapunyal training area. The ARA staff left early on Thursday to help set up for the soldiers arrival late Friday night. The weather was typical Puckapunyal weather freezing at night and pissing rain during the day. The only thing we didn't get was snow and even that came close. Maj Murphy was attached to A Coy as their OC while WO2 Haley was in charge of the enemy party. DFSW PL was acting as A Coy fire support with Sgt Wait in command. It was a great wet weekend with a lot of planning involved by BHQ and with all members learning something.

The next two months we were at Pucka again, June at the range when again we had buckets of 7.62mm live for DFSW to hone their skills by day and by night. It was also the first time we met the phantom of Spt Coy and Bendigo depot, Capt Brades who we thought was just a figment of 8/7's imagination. We also said farewell to Pte Myers who has since moved onto greener pastures in the ARA.

The following month of July was pretty much the same as February but with more members attending, again we shot LF3 and had the chance to shoot some different serials with the 84mm and Mag 58 in the WTSS.

Down to the coldest place in Victoria for the August weekend for Battalion Mil Skills Competition held at Pax Hill Scout Camp in Ballarat. With a lot of Spt Coy members away for different reasons there wasn't enough soldiers to make a full section. LCpl Logan was put in charge of a mixed section including Pte Frohn and Pte Baylis. With one and half days of competing in different stands ranging from BFA to Abseiling, LCpl Logan's section did an outstanding job and won the competition.

Sep saw a quiet period for most of the battalion although this did see the conduct of the Recon Course. If all goes well, there will be another Specialist Pl asset to Spt Coy in 2004. Most soldiers were left with the task organising their polyesters for the next months Ranger Barracks opening in Ballarat. On release of the Instruction, Spt Coy gladly noted the dress for Spt Coy was not polyesters but DPCUs with the happiest soldier being the CSM.

Oct was the Opening Ceremony for Ranger Barracks in Ballarat with Spt Coy getting a chance to show off its primary role, which incidentally has been the company's primary asset this year to all the Ballaratians. As Nov draws to a close the company staff will be heading off to Puckapunyal to conduct the Sig Cse to finalise the inclusion of the last Specialist Platoon asset for 2004.

Soldiers within the Bendigo Depot have had a rewarding year with the coming and going of many new faces. As the year draws to a close we would like to farewell SSgt B. Phillips who is being posted to 5/7 RAR and wish him all the best at his new location.

Spt Coy / Bendigo would like to thank all those with their participation for 2003. Hopefully new faces next year will help to establish Support Company as a formidable force.

All the best for the New Year and if you are out and about drive safely and look after your mates.

CPL Sean Walters, Spt Coy Clk
And WO2 Kelvin Haley, CSM Spt Coy

Some notable sayings for 2003:

“Are we getting paid for that” -Pte Frohn
“I didn’t Know Sir” -Pte Nott
“Whose in for Pizza” -Pte Trenti
“Has anyone got a key to get my gear out” Cpl Dawborn



(Left) Troops holding ground during Parade Rehearsals at the opening of Ranger Barracks.

(Right) Pte Michael Bowden and Pte Dion Alford from Bendigo (along with Pte Zane Alford) left for Myrtleford for a seven-day stint to assist with the fires in Central Victoria. They even got their faces in the local rag!

Fighting Bushfires

After a long trip from Ballarat, the 8/7 RVR Contingent of around 25 soldiers arrived at Myrtleford on 1st February, where we were joined by soldiers from 4/19 PWLH, Engineers and Plant Operators. On arrival, the CFA gave us some basic fire safety and then we were split into 4 teams of 12. Each team comprised a chainsaw group and a hand group.

The next day we travelled to Tallangatta, which was to become our Staging Area for the rest of the week. We were put to work mainly clearing firebreaks in preparation for burnoffs around Mitta Mitta and Eskdale. This involved a lot of hard handwork using rakehoes to clear around big trees that could cause concern during the burnoff. We also cleared a road to gain access to a fire tower near Dartmouth, which seemed very lucky to survive the fire. It was completely surrounded by burnt out bush.

It was a good experience to be a part of and, after a great BBQ and night at the Tallangatta Pub; we headed home on 7th February with the Army then heading down to Gippsland to assist with asset protection with the 4th rotation.

PTE Dion Alford

PTE T. A. McLaren's Poster

PTE McLaren's poster, The evolution of 8/7 RVR, is included as the back page of The Ranger 2003. In Pte McLaren's own words, the background behind this poster is:

I am a studying graphic design student at the moment and earlier in the year I was given a project, which was to choose a theme which encompasses a historical part of Bendigo and develop a typographical/image related 'limited edition poster'. So I thought what better subject to do it on than the infantry battalion that I am a proud member of. I am very interested in the history of the battalion and thought that I should display some of its proud history to others. I am very proud of the final product and hope that others will enjoy the visual and historical aspects of the poster as well.

WARRNAMBOOL

2003 has been an extremely busy year for the Warrnambool Depot. This year has probably been the hardest of the past three for enjoying our favourite work, activities such as surfing, diving, and golf. All jokes aside the Armstrong/Stapleton team had a very productive year attending many courses and successfully completing promotion courses with Sgt Armstrong being promoted to WO2 at the opening of the Ranger Barracks in Ballarat in October. This year sees the end of an 11-year career in the ARA for CPL Stapleton; whose past three years with 8/7 has been a treat. Although leaving the ARA not all is lost I will be transferring to Chockos to help carry on the Warrnambool spirit. With WO2 Armstrong and CPL Stapleton both taking on other vocations the ARA position will be filled by CPL David Harding from the "Big Blue One".

Recruiting:

Once again Postal drops and visits to the secondary schools around the district, along with info sessions at the depot and the odd walk-in, have all been a large part to the success of the new members Parading at Warrnambool. Boasting 26 on the books, two at ARTC who will be TFE's before Christmas, three more to ARTC in January, and eight in the pipeline, it's been a top year in Recruiting. We have come a long way in the past two years with only having eight on the books in Jan 02. If it wasn't for the hard work, teamwork, motivation, and drive put in by WO2 Armstrong and CPL Stapleton, Warrnambool would probably been disbanded and sold up to the developers.

This year we gave a wide birth to the Port Fairy Folky as last year's experiences were enough to last a lifetime. However, WO2 Dernehl tricked us into attending the Port Fairy show. It was a very exciting day for all kids under 12yrs. In fact the only exciting thing that happened all day was when a wild sheep broke from its corral and attacked a unsuspecting Shetland Pony, causing it to go on a kicking rampage in a near by Car Park, causing thousands of dollars damage to the surrounding vehicles.

J.W.H. Atkinson MC Club:

The J.W.H. Atkinson MC Club has also had a full on year with a few attendances from the local constabulary, enjoying the fruits of the bar. The spirit of ANZAC is still strong in the Warrnambool community with approximately one hundred attended the ANZAC Day function. There was Two Up and Crown and Anchor, which were very successful. Three kegs and plenty of bar snacks (thanks to the hard work by CPL Steve Ivey) topped off a great day. The club staged many functions this year ranging from 18th to 50th Birthdays, Bucks Nights and send-off's. All went off with out a hitch.

The social highlight of the year was our night out at Dracula's Theatre-Restaurant in Melbourne. 18 members from the depot attended and 18 returned unscathed. It was great to have a social night as a group away from the depot. Fiji is on the cards for next year!

Another highlight was taking possession of the full size Snooker Table, which we enjoy as often as work permits.

ADMINISTRATION COMPANY

Admin Coy went through a year of change on 2003. CHQ started the year with MAJ George Osborne as OC, CAPT Louise Morton as 2IC, WO2 Geoff (Tiny) Pellow as CSM and CPL Rose Campbell-Foulkes as Coy Clk. This lasted for the first half of the year until the CSM found that due to work commitments he hadn't the time to parade. So he was transferred to the OPS Cell. This made way for WO2 John (things will change) Spencer to take over as CSM. CHQ then drove on until CPL Campbell-Foulkes found travelling four hours round trip too much for a three hour parade and who could blame her. The last change to CHQ was when MAJ Osborne transferred to the Inactive List due to work commitments. CAPT Cliff Gowers then took over as OC. With any luck CHQ should remain as is for 2004.

Admin Coy has had its ups and downs this year with appointment changes, depot changes and a shortage of members across the board. With a new year on the way and a revamped HQ 2004 looks like it will bring back the Admin Coy of old who will once again take its place as the backbone of the unit.

Transport Platoon

Well another year has come upon us, where did it go. Transport has had another busy year.

First of all we had another truckie join us (mind you a 3rd line truckie from 15 TPT SQN doesn't count for a real 1st line truckie) welcome to the platoon, Sgt Dalmayer. The main exercise for the start of the year saw the Bde (-) exercise its might over parts of Pucka Range in May. A learning curve for all as it was probably the first large exercise in four years with Admin Coy leading the charge (from the rear). Thanks to the assistance from 4 CSSB transport (as we gave our trucks away).

Training that followed included the Pax Hill training weekend in August, where Cpl King conducted the 'Trucks Under Trees' course. This gave the majority of posted transport drivers their full qualification as drivers. The weekend consisted of being able to erect the three stages of vehicle camouflage under various terrain conditions and lighting. It was also the first training weekend in two years that Transport was given the opportunity to conduct its own training (rumour has it that all sat around a bon fire telling tall tales and jokes) NO TRUTH IN THE RUMOR!

Other training that we have been able to conduct when possible included recovering all of the vehicles that Kingy constantly gets bogged. I'm sure he does it to keep our skills up. We also found time to keep our cross-country driving skills up, both on the Puckapunyal Range and Creswick State Forest.

We've just recently completed the move from Russell St./ Dowling St locations to Ranger Barracks. Our offices and workspaces are now in the one location, saving us a lot of wasted training time (and preventing us from getting to McDonalds). We now have our own fenced off maintenance bay that we don't have to share with the Q store. Has everyone seen the servicing ramps (either have we)?

Pte's Dooley and Leviston were both lucky enough to attend the recent Mack Course in South Australia and both did very well, they are both now Heavy Rigid qualified. (Pte Dooley, where is the souvenir from the Oodnadatta Police Station?)

Much to his surprise, Pte Jones was awarded the soldier's medallion at the opening of new Ranger Barracks. He was one of two to be awarded. He's still not sure why (due to his conscientious efforts last year, we think).

Due to MAS staging a dawn attack, we have been without most of our green fleet for a great deal of the year. They were grounded for technical reasons under a newly implemented army functional system. We have repaired most of these vehicles back to fully functional status.

We recently received our first new transport driver in two years, a young Pte Smith who is eagerly waiting to become qualified.

Near to the same time we are losing Cpl Damion King, our Transport Platoon Section Commander of two years. He is off to bigger and warmer, and more fishy places. Good luck, Kingy!

As well as all the hard work that we've done, we've also had a lot of fun in transport this year. We now have more transport drivers than we've had for a long time, let's hope we can keep the momentum going.

PAR ONERI (Equal to the task) for you uneducated heathens.

Medical Platoon

Doc Harris and his band of Medics, Cpls Holland at Swan Hill, Cpl Rogers at Shepparton and LCpl Borowiak at Ballarat continue to give the battalion great support at weekend activities and during courses. Pte Liz Vorbach from Geelong has recently joined them. Liz has always wanted to be a Medic but was unable to get on a course until this year. Instead she had to be content with attending a driver's course and being a useful part of Transport Platoon.

The Medical Platoon looks forward to 2004 when they will once again have the services of a full time Sergeant Medic.

Tech Support Platoon

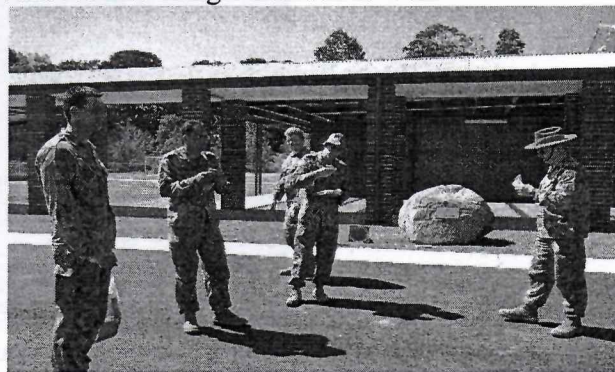
The smallest (but not shortest) platoon in the battalion is the Tech Support Platoon ie Sgt Jackson. Jacko parades at Mildura and in between Tech Spt tasks acts as a Storeman, Recruiter and Duty NCO. Keep up the good work Jacko.

Q Platoon

The Q Platoon went about its business in its usual no nonsense manner moving from crisis to crisis with the minimum of fuss. As usual the platoon was revamped by the mid year posting cycle with CPL Toni Boggs posted to Townsville while we received PTE Mick Culic from Townsville.

Activities of note the year are:

- The May - Bde extravaganza;
- Implementation of the Technical Regulatory Framework (TRF) and accreditation audit;
- The Maintenance Advisory Service (MAS) grounding our unit vehicles;
- Introduction of Standard Defence Supply System (SDSS) version 4;
- Pax Hill adventure playground;
- The AIRN Range shoots;
- White water rafting;
- The retrieval of Defence Stores from PMA, and
- How could I forget- we moved into Ranger Barrack as well.



Preparation for the Ranger Barracks opening – 'You gotta eat sometime!'

During the course of the year there were times that things happened that stuck in my mind, I would like to share these gems with you:

- The May Bde extravaganza - where do I start, enough said, however a special mention must go to the Caterers recipe for "Old English Breakfast Soup", a real heart starter.
- Pax Hill adventure playground nearly claimed the life of the RQMS while he was lowering a trailer back into the creek for the trailer push activity - I had hardly anything to do with it. Well, I will be blown, if the cooks didn't come up with another creative egg recipe; there are definitely no flies on them - or anyone else for that matter.
- The on again off again move to Ranger Barracks was to say the least challenging, but looking at the facility now, there is no question that we are definitely on the right track.
- The very cold water rafting, well, to be honest if it was not for the Queys raft there would not be any clerks left in BHQ - we all make mistakes.

Next year will see the deserved promotion of WO2 Ross Pringle to WO1, QM and SSGT Marty Griggs and to WO2, RQMS. SGT Terry Marsland will remain as the ever reliable Tech SGT while CPL Damion Wilson will return from a stint as CQMS B Coy to the Tech CPL position, PTE Mick Culic will continue to increase his knowledge as he continues his OJT.

I am posted 10/27 RSAR as QM, which means I have to move out of the Mess Annex at the Bell Tower but the up side is I will have the chance to see my family most nights.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of Q platoon, and the CQMSs for the professional manner in which they conducted themselves this year (mess functions excluded) and for making my short stay with 8/7 RVR a memorable one.

I would like to leave you with one parting thought, "It is fortunate that Queys have Crystal Balls".

Catering Platoon

The past year has seen a number of interesting developments within the Catering Platoon. It was a year when the platoon conducted the last formal function at Broodseinde Barracks and the first formal function at the new Ranger Barracks. The central fountain at the first dinner was a big hit with the diners but failed to impress the fish!

Lo and behold, we saw the long anticipated inclusion, after much trying to sort out the system, of Cpl Steve Ivey (Warrnambool) on his Sub 4 for Sgt course. We also would like to welcome Cpl Allison Wait who transferred in from Monash University Regiment.

Pte Currie has become a first time father and Pte Holmes-Burrows attempted his Basic Cooks course at HMAS Cerebus, blitzed his way through and became Student of Merit. There are no flies on him, that's for sure! The platoon has also undertaken the training of two new members after finishing their recruit courses, Ptes Kelly and Geddes.

Pte Geddes has since 'seen the light' of the 'dark side' and has been accepted for Officer Training. Good luck Robert! (Ed. Does this mean we will get an officer who can cook when he returns to the battalion?) Another trainee, Pte Watson, has just completed Recruit Training and the platoon looks forward to conducting his training.

The platoon continuous to provide quality catering support to the battalion and the brigade even though our numbers are severely depleted. Should their be anyone out there that would like to increase their skills and , gain qualifications as a cook then contact the Caterer.

On a sad note was the recent passing of former battalion member and Sgt Cook Dave Romein of Ballarat.

CEREMONIAL

ANZAC Day

As is the norm for 8/7 RVR, ANZAC Day becomes 'bigger than Ben Hur'. In Ballarat the battalion provided two speakers for pre-ANZAC Day functions and four speakers on ANZAC Day while Support Company also provided an ANZAC Day Speaker. On the day BHQ provided a Catafalque Party, the Geelong Depot provided 8 Catafalque Parties, Ballarat 8, Warrnambool 3, C Company 5, Bendigo 2 (plus a Guard on the parade) and a Colour Party marched in Melbourne.

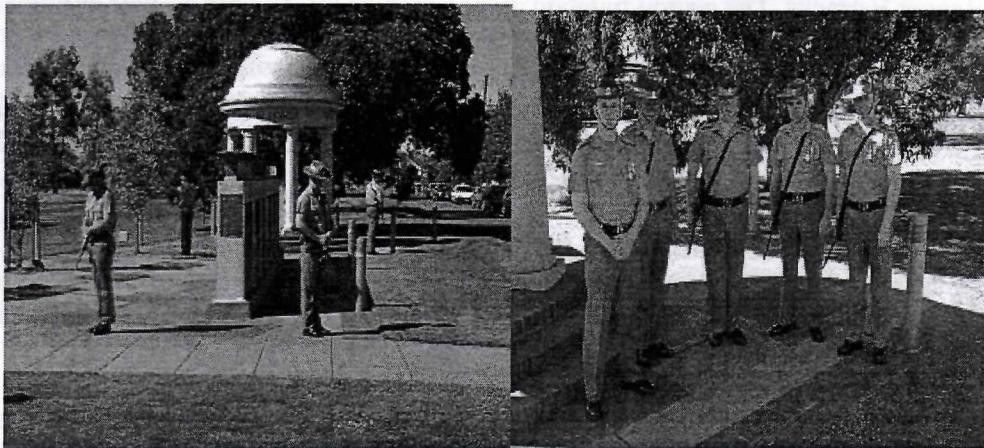


Left: The 8/7 RVR Colour Party in Collins Street, ANZAC Day 2003.

Right: Former Battalion 2IC Major (Ret) Bill 'Yank' Akell and current Executive Officer (Bn 2IC) Major Neil Leckie at the Buninyong ANZAC Day Service.

Remembrance Day

The battalion also participated in a number of Remembrance Day activities. In Ballarat the battalion provided a Catafalque Party for the short Arch of Victory Ceremony then it was into the car and off to the longer main service at the cenotaph in Sturt street.



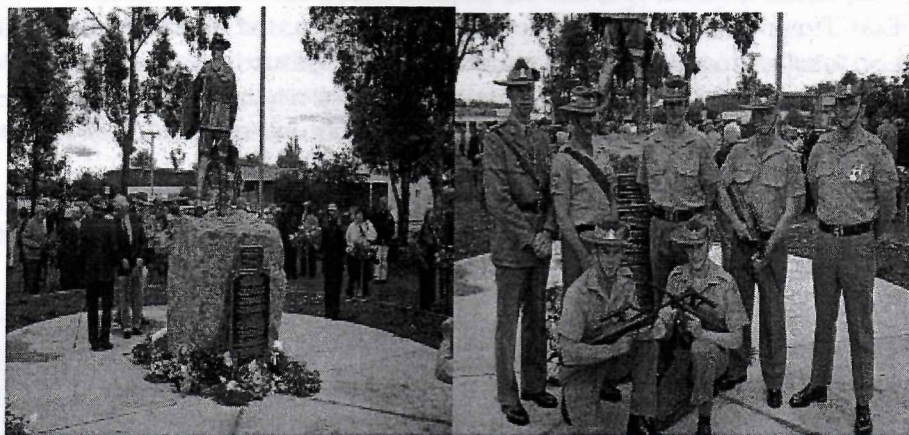
Ballarat Remembrance Day Catafalque Party

Tongala Light Horse Memorial

The battalion was requested to provide a guard for the unveiling of the Light Horse Memorial in Tongala on 23rd November. Unfortunately this weekend clashed with the commencement of the Courses and the RRF Training weekend, so the guard was provided by the Army Cadets from Albury and 8/7 RVR

provided a Catafalque Party under Cpl McKinley and the MC, Major Leckie. It was a huge day for the town. Over 1000 people attended and 600 were attended the lunch and reunion in the Town Hall.

The day consisted of a parade of the Creswick Light Horse Troop, a number of old Army vehicles carrying VIPs and past members of The Light Horse, the 4/19 PWLH Band, Army Cadets, Air Force Cadets and a Cadet Guard with the Colour Party. After the March Past by the Light Horse Troop, the posting of the Guard and Band and the usual speeches, the Memorial was unveiled by Mr Maurice Watson, the last man from Tongala to enlist in The Light Horse. C Coy's Pte Tim Moore, from Tongala, assisted the wheelchair bound Mr Watson unveil the memorial.



The Light Horse Memorial and the 8/7 RVR Participating Members

A COY 5/7 RAR

A historical Army deployment concluded on the 25th May 2003 when a crowd of several hundred family and friends welcomed home 60 Victorian Army Reserve soldiers who returned to Melbourne from East Timor. The soldiers were a part of the 90 strong A Company, The 5th/7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5/7 RAR). In November last year they became the first sub-unit of Reserve soldiers to be deployed on combat duty since World War 2. The members were welcomed home by the Commander 2nd Division, Maj Gen Paul Irving, and the Commander 4th Brigade, Brig Wayne Dunbar (a former CO of 8/7 RVR), at a short 'Dismissal' Parade at Simpson Barracks in Melbourne. After the parade, friends and relatives joined the soldiers for a BBQ before they departed to their home locations and leave until 30th June when their contract ends.

The Victorian soldiers were drawn from Country Victoria's 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment (8/7 RVR) and the Melbourne based 5/6 RVR.

4 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers were from Ballarat.

3 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers were from Bendigo

5 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers were from Geelong

4 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers were from Laverton

4 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers were from Mildura

1 of the 8/7 RVR soldiers was from Shepparton

2 of the 8/7 RVR Reserve soldiers were from Swan Hill, while only the only Regular Army member in the company was also from Swan Hill

To be a part of the deployment, the reserve soldiers were required to take 12 months leave from their civilian employment. Earlier this year, a number of their employers were taken to East Timor by the Defence Reserves Support Council to see their employees on operations.

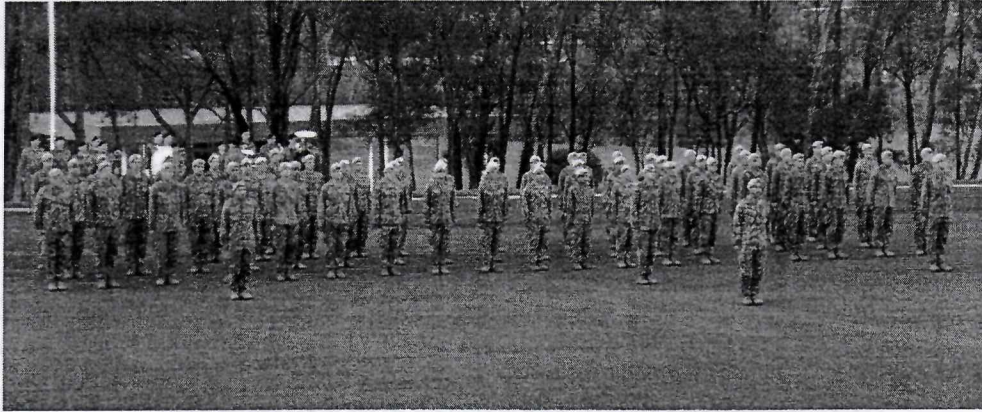
The preparation for the deployment of the Army Reserve soldiers included an intensive 3 week selection process at the Puckapunyal Army Base followed by a further 3 months training in Darwin with 5/7 RAR.

While in East Timor, the Reservists performed a wide variety of tasks including vehicle and foot patrols, often in difficult terrain. They also had the responsibility of Border Patrols near West Timor and the manning of a Border Check Point. During their Tour of Duty, the company arrested many suspicious persons including one Ex Militia Company Commander.

Other tasks included the training of the newly formed East Timorese Border Police (PNTL) who are now in the process of taking over the role of Border Check Points.

Indications are that, unlike after the return of the reserve members who were sent to 'round out' 6 RAR for its tour of East Timor where most left the reserve on return, the majority of these members have indicated they wish to return to the reserve. It appears that the boys are 'non the worse for wear', but there have been some grumbling about a 'them and us approach' between the full-time and part-time members of the battalion. After completing a period of leave, the soldiers will return to their civilian employment well satisfied with what they have achieved during their time in East Timor.

Some of the soldiers had a visit in East Timor by their employers. The DRSC (Defence Reserves Support Council) funded the visit, which included the 4th Brigade Commander.



Victorian members of A Company 5/7 RAR after returning to Watsonia from their tour of duty in East Timor.



A happy soldier and his family after the Welcome Home Parade.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF RANGER BARRACKS

Ranger Barracks in Curtis Street has been home to Militia, CMF and Army Reserve soldiers since 1886. For many years, the old building and its offices had been either too big, too small, too hot and too cold or just plain impracticable. But it did have character! Planning for a MUD in Ballarat began in earnest in 1998 and in July 2001, HQ and Admin Company 8/7 RVR moved out of Ranger Barracks and joined B

Coy in Broodseinde Barracks. The portable buildings used by BHQ and Admin Coy were cramped but we got by.

After many meetings, much discussion and many changes, construction of the new MUD got under way in November 2002. The MUD was designed to accommodate BHQ, Admin Company and B Company of 8/7 RVR, 300 RCU AAC and 425 (The City of Ballarat) Squadron AAFC and would allow for some expansion of these units.

The MUD has two buildings:

Building 1, which houses BHQ and the Orderly Room, B Company, D Coy (Recruiting), CHQ Admin Company and the RAP and the Cadet offices, and

Building 2, which houses Transport, the Main and B Company's Q Stores, the Cadet Q Stores, the gymnasium and the roofed area known as Bob's shed (after the CO, Lt Col Robert Haughton who fought to have that area in lieu of two wet weather stations).

The MUD units owe a great deal for what they have to the MUD Liaison Officer Captain Gowers and the Quartermaster WO Rudd.

Many features in the MUD were incorporated from Curtis Street and Broodseinde Barracks. Included were the two cannons that proudly stood outside Curtis Street and were also in place inside the gates at Broodseinde Barracks. The cannons came from the HMAS Nelson when it was decommissioned in Tasmania in the 1800s. They were donated to the people of Ballarat and are in trust to 8/7 RVR from the City of Ballarat and are to be held in public display. The 32 Pounder Cannons were refurbished by the Ordinance Factory Apprentices in 1983 and are believed to be the best maintained cannons of their type in the district.

As the time approached for the building to be completed and occupied, 8/7 RVR requested that to maintain the history of the battalion the MUD be renamed Ranger Barracks after the original barracks. With the agreement of both Cadet Units and despite their being no accommodation to allow the MUD to be called barracks, approval was received on 11th August 2003 for the name to be Ranger Barracks once again. The abbreviation MUD was no longer to be used.

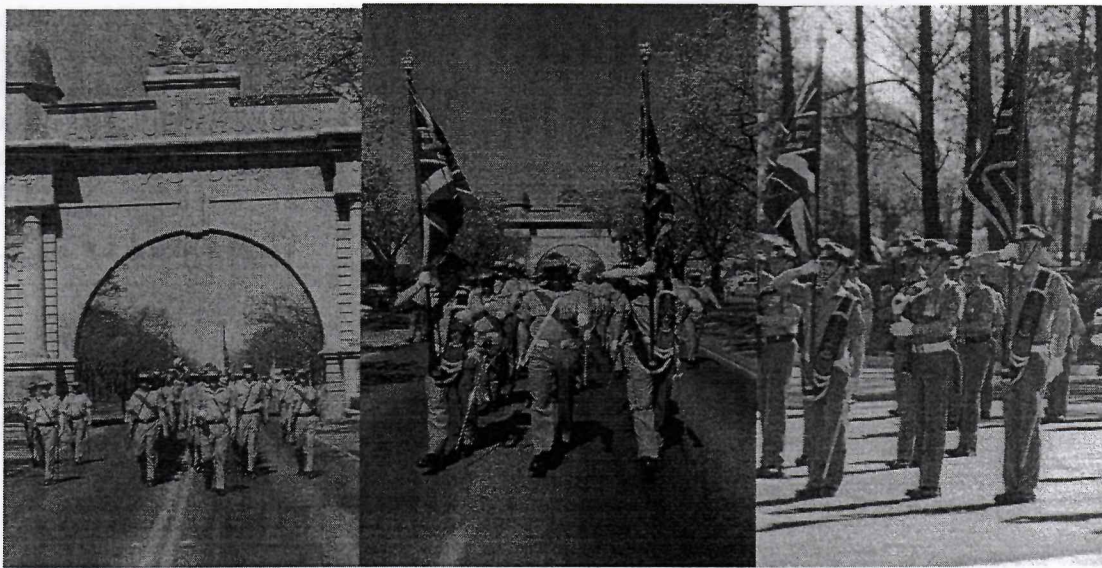
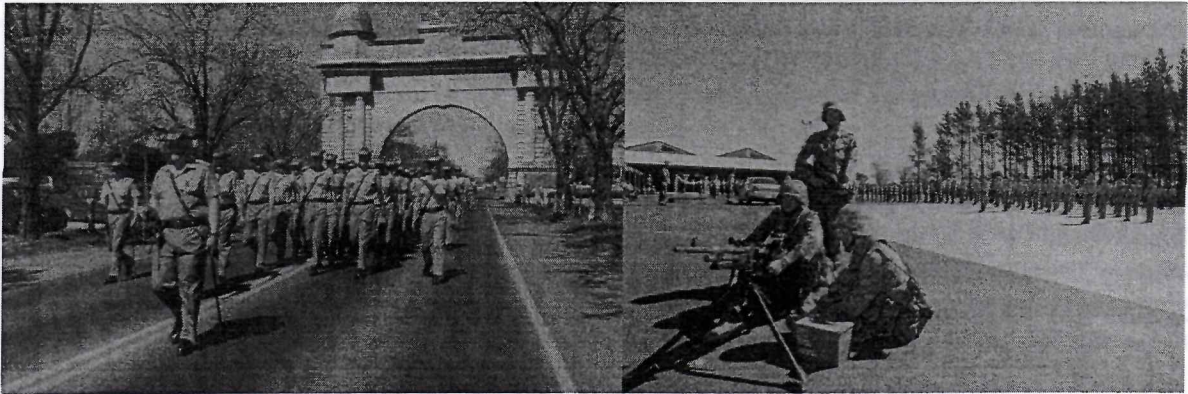
Planning for the move into Ranger Barracks commenced in June 2003 with an Opening Ceremony to be held on the Official Battalion Birthday of 9th August. It soon became apparent with building time slippage that the barracks would not be handed over by then and the battalion training weekend 17-19 October was selected for the opening. Invitations were sent and acceptances and apologies made. But it was not until the Thursday before the ceremony that the government confirmed that Victorian National Party Senator Julian McGauran would be the Reviewing Officer.

The QM had ordered and received good weather on the day, Saturday 18th October 2003. Some people actually got sunburned in Ballarat! The battalion had the Colour Party and two Guards and assisted by the Band of 2/10 Field Regiment marched the two kilometres from the Arch of Victory to the barracks. There to meet them on the Parade Ground (the Car Park) were four Gun Detachments from the DFSW Platoon (Troops holding Ground) and a Guard from each of the Cadet Units who share the barracks with the battalion.

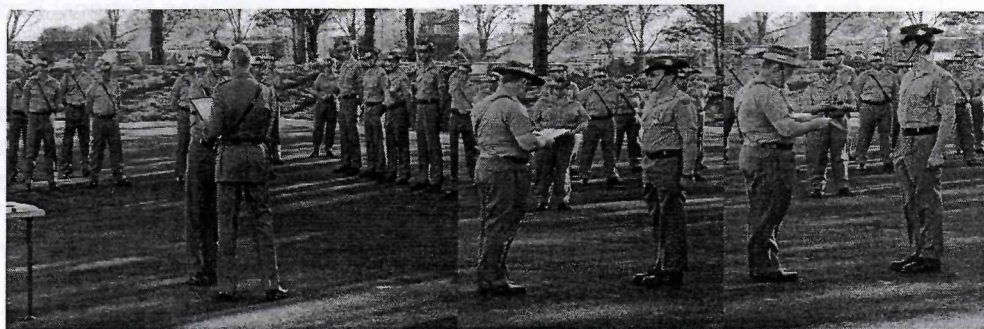
The Commander 4th Brigade, Brigadier Wayne Dunbar (CO 8/7 RVR 1994-96) was the Host Officer and along with Senator McGauran, other Official Guests welcomed were The Mayor of Ballarat, Councillor David Vendy, The Member for Ballarat Ms Catherine King and the Land Commander, Maj Gen David Hurley.

After the usual inspection and speeches, a (rather long) Dedication by the battalion's Padres Glen Buijs and Martin de Pyle, Senator McGauran declared Ranger Barracks Officially Open and it was off the Parade Ground to carry out some presentations before a BBQ and a drink or two to celebrate the day.

Sgt Shane Armstrong was presented with his Warrant, 2Lt Robert Francesevic was presented with his Commission, Cpl Baird and Pte Jones were presented with CO's Commendations and Captain Andrew Butcher, who left the battalion on posting that night was farewelled from the battalion.



The Parade and Opening Ceremony



*Left: 2Lt Francesevic receives his commission.
Centre: Cpl Baird receives his Commendation.
Right: Pte Jones receives his Commendation.*

Despite threats to cancel the move due to a contractual dispute between the government and the electricity supplier Powercor, no Certificate of Occupancy and a few other minor matters, the relocation into Ranger Barracks started on Monday 6th October with the move of the Q Store and Transport from the temporary warehouse to the new Q Building. Then it was the Cadets, B Company and finally BHQ. Prior to the

actual move the computers were unplugged on 22nd September and staff found that their work efficiency increased rapidly. The computers became fully functional again on 31st October and by then everyone had a backlog of hundreds of e-mails to read.

EX HAMEL 02

Ex Hamel 02 was completed after the printing of 'The Ranger 2002', so the write up is included here as a reminder for those who attended as to what happened there!

8/7 RVR's Ex Hamel 02 took place at Puckapunyal over the period 23rd November – 7th December 02. The exercise incorporated three distinct components. The first component was to conduct lead up training on the proposed BDE METL for the Force Protection Company Group for the trained soldier Coy (A COY) followed by a snap exercise supported by a realistic scenario to practice the skills. The second component was for B COY to complete the field component of the Rifleman Infantry Operations-Platoon (RIO-P) course for the partly trained soldiers to allow them to graduate to A COY. Finally, the BN Champion Section competition would be run to provide the BN the opportunity to build on the section teamwork established during the exercise and to assess the improvement in basic soldier skills.

A COY under MAJ Doug Laidlaw, commenced their exercise with its platoons undertaking a WTSS Shoot, a F88 EOS Live Fire Shoot, NBCD Training run by 4 CER, NAVEX, Ambush, VCP, LOAC and ROE Revision, TGT Indication and FCO. The COY then went bush working with 4/19 PWLH and conducted offensive and defensive operations, patrolling and ambushing.

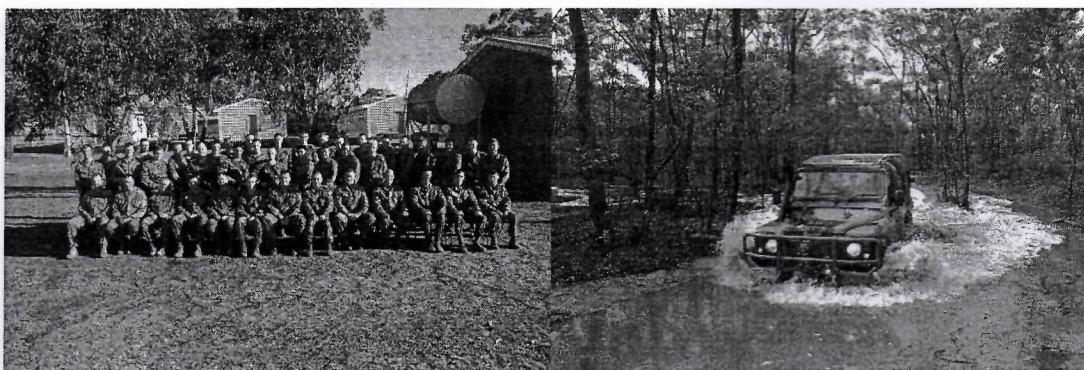
B COY under MAJ John Murphy commenced its course with a Zeroing Shoot before carrying out Sneaker Range & Live Fire Section Attacks to complete the Live Fire suite of competencies for the RIOP Course. Along with 8/7 RVR, participants in the course also included members from MUR and 2 CDO. The course spent four days completing all field theory components, including TESS, Padre Hours, RATEL etc before going bush for nine days on Ex Bullecourt in the Western part of the range. The Coy dug in a number of pits to Stage 3 and from their company security position conducted both Defensive and Offensive operations moving from section level to platoon. The enemy for both activities was provided by SGT Bill Armstrong's C COY.

The Echelon area was located at the Puckapunyal Military Area Transit Lines (PMA TL). BHQ and ADMIN COY deployed near A COY in the North East of Puckapunyal Range for 4 days and redeployed to PMA TL prior to the Champion Section Competition.

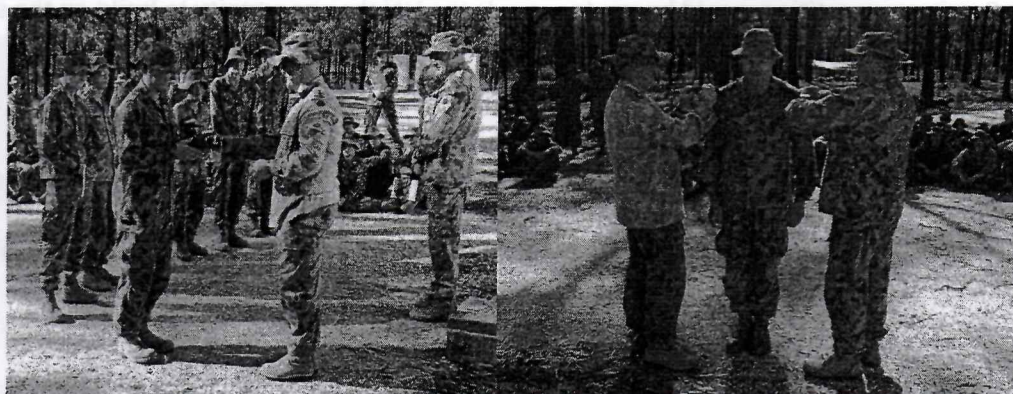
Day 1 of the Champion Section Competition included TOET on the F88, F89, Claymore, 40mm GLA and 66mm SRAAW, a WTSS Shoot, erecting a Cat 1 Wire Obstacle and running the Obstacle Course over the Pucka Pool. This was followed by a day/night NAVEX and on Day 2 a Medical Stand, a Run and Falling Plate Shoot, a Scouting Lane and an All Arms Call for Fire. The Champion Section for 2002 was CPL Baird's Section from Geelong.

Having exhausted themselves over the previous 24 hours, the rifle sections then undertook an Escape and Evasion Exercise down the Eastern Side of the range. Three sections were caught and taken to the MP/INT PW Cage and interrogated before being released back at the start point. CPL Baird's Section came through unscathed. Another section made up of three Junior Officers and two SGTs also got through unscathed. This section somehow, after a long radio conversation with the exercise controller WO2 John Spencer, suddenly lost comms and would return to HQ when directed. However, for the purpose of training they were brought in and went through the interrogation process.

As the exercise and RIO-P Course were now completed, all members moved to the new Bendigo MUD, now named Passchendaele Depot after the former Passchendaele Barracks in Bendigo, on the last Numbers on the exercise varied between 130 and 140. This number, combined with the 35 other battalion members on courses, added up to give the best attendance on a major activity for a number of years.



*The RIO-P Course at Puckapunyal, December 2002.
Typical Pucka weather!*



*Left: The CO Lt Col Haughton presents Cpl Baird with the Champion Section Trophy for 2002.
Right: The CO and RSM, WO2 John Spencer, pin on Captain Falloon's crowns on promotion to Major.
Saturday and attended a BBQ and watched the DVD movie 'We Were Soldiers' in the old shed in the Longlea Training Area.*

Over Ex Hamel 02, lessons were learned at all levels, right from the newest soldiers to those in BHQ. With the experience gained, members of the battalion now look forward to participating in a major exercise in 2003.

THE BALLARAT RANGER MILITARY MUSEUM

The museum is now in its third year situated at the Sebastopol RSL Hall. A year which has seen it acquire some funding from the Department of Veteran's Affairs under the 'Saluting their Service' agenda. This will allow the museum to implement a number of ideas, including a School's Package, a new display case for the first Ballarat Regimental Colours, upgrade the Wall of Valour and allow framing of many photographs that are currently only on cardboard backing.

Former 2IC Maj Bill Akell has had an extremely busy year of fundraising for the museum, with a number of raffles and Special Efforts such as the Ranger Barracks Opening Commemorative Port (\$15 per bottle through the Caterer).

Ben Smith and WO2 Broemmer have been at the forefront of welcoming guests to the museum and providing technical expertise in arranging displays and permanent fixtures.

The museum also welcomes two new members to the committee, Ray Rosenow and Ern Zylstra, both Army Veterans. Welcome aboard! The museum always has space for new members on the committee to share the manning of the museum during opening times (Sunday 1-4pm) and in the fundraising activities

that are needed from time to time. If you are interested in the battalion's history, and Ballarat in particular, please call the Caterer.

The museum is looking to expand its 'Foundation Member' base to include more ex-serving and current members of the battalion. Membership is only \$5 p. a. and the cash injection will assist the museum to carry out its work more easily.

Next February the museum committee will be attending the Buninyong Gold King festival and hopes to capitalise on a 'Soldier for a Day' program aimed at the younger members of the community. Children have their photograph taken in one of three Army oriented poses and presented to them in an ornate folder. The funds generated will also assist the museum.

As always, the museum is looking for new items to exhibit, especially those with historic significance to the battalion. All enquires should be to the Caterer, WO2 Broemmer at Ranger Barracks.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Harry's (WO2 Tony Harris, CSM B Coy 2002) Quotable Quotes (Hamel 02):

SGT Skiparis: 'Knowledge is power! HmMMMM I'm feeling a bit feeble today!!!'

CAPT Brades (when told he can pay for something): 'On my salary!'

CAPT Brades (speaking about cleaning up a mess): 'On my wage, I get other people to do that sort of thing for me.'

CPL Stapleton (speaking about a spoon, covered in dirt, that had been picked up: 'I've had worse things in my mouth than that!!!!')

CPL Holland (when reversing his Land Rover): 'I'll just back up on the trailer. (That would hurt!)

From XO/OC Admin:

CO (talking about an aerial view of sticks placed in the ground marking tracks):
People doing unnatural acts on the ground.

RSM (Spencer) while talking to SCMA on ADJT's 'phone:
'Worst case you will get the Adjutant.'

OPSO (CAPT Falloon) after finding that CAPT Gowers had filled the OPSO's webbing with rocks:
'CAPT Gowers did things to me.'

CO while RSM and CSM ADMIN were out of EX:
'We're looking a bit thin without Tiny.'

RSM Spencer: 'I'm cheap!'

OC A COY: 'When BHQ wants a hot shower their off, while it takes 3 days to provide anything to the (rifle) COY!'

RSM Spencer discussing Escape & Evasion: 'The soldiers will be dragged off to INT and beasted!'

CO when discussing sources of information:
'The Regimental Colonel (BRIG Hocking) is a nice body!' OPSO: 'It's true!'

OPSO and ADJT (both suffering with a wog) to CO: 'We share everything we have with you!'

Last Conference for 2002 (17th December): RSM Spencer returns to CSM Admin in 2003. He is 'looking forward to beasting the Admin Coy Soldiers.'

17 battalion members attended the lunch at The Gamekeepers Secret, Friday 28MAR03:

The OPSO turned up to lunch in a civvy restaurant in DPCUs. XO: 'How can the OPSO plan a BN EX when he can't even organise his civvy clothes to go to a lunch in?'

ODD SHOTS



Warrnambool February 2003



Sgt Bill Clayden, Mildura



Left: Mr Ian Murray and Pte Gerhardt Champion Soldier

Right: Regt Col, Col Paul Riley and CO Lt Col Haughton show they have some hand skills when changing the Regt Col's car's flat tyre.



Left: MUD Co-tenants, CO 8/7 RVR Lt Col Haughton, OC 425 Sqn PltOffr Andrew Segrott and OC 300 RCU Maj Erwin at the Ranger Barracks Opening

Right: The famous Arch of Victory in Ballarat



Victorian Rangers

The Evolution of the 8th/7th Battalion, Royal Victoria Regiment.

The Battalion was formed as the Ballarat Volunteer Rifle Regiment on the 9th August 1858. The battalion went through a series of changes as followed:

- 1884 - 3rd Ballarat Battalion Infantry (Militia)
- 3rd Ballarat Battalion Victorian Rifles
- 1892 - 1st Battalion 3rd Victorian Regiment
- 1898 - 3rd Battalion Victorian Infantry Brigade
- 1901 - 3rd Battalion Infantry Brigade
- 1908 - 1st Battalion 7th Australian Infantry Regiment
- 1912 - 70th/71st Battalion (City of Ballarat Regiment)

Further North, towards the Murray River the following evolution was taking place Encompassing the Bendigo/Castlemaine & Murray River areas:

- 1858 - Bendigo Rifle Regiment (disbanded)
- 1860 - Bendigo Volunteer Rifle Corps
- 1870 - Castlemaine Corps of Rifles
- 1872 - Mount Alexander Battalion of Victorian Rifles
- 1883 - 4th Battalion, Infantry
- 1887 - 4th Mount Alexander Battalion of Victorian Rifles
- 1893 - 3rd Victorian Regiment, 2nd Battalion
- 1898 - 4th Battalion, Victoria Infantry Brigade
- 1903 - 8th Australian Infantry Regiment
- 1908 - 8th Australian Infantry Regiment 1st Battalion
- 1912 - 66th (Mount Alexander) Infantry

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, both the 8th & the 7th Battalions were again raised & the two Battalions served side by side during many of the most significant campaigns & battles in World War II.

Following World War II, the 8th & 7th Battalions were amalgamated to form the 8th/7th Battalion, the North Western Victorian Regiment. The Battalion retained this name until 1960, when pentropic Divisions were formed & the Battalion became 2 RVR, absorbing the 8th/7th, 38th & the 59th Battalions.

On 14 November 1987, the Battalion was officially re-titled the 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment. It has adopted the white (8th Battalion) & brown (7th Battalion) lanyard & wears the 8th Battalion Colour patch (rectangular white over red). The Battalion Flag consists of the regimental badge on a diagonally split background of brown above white.

Members of the unit have also served in Korea, Malaya, Borneo, South Vietnam, Bougainville & most recently in East Timor.

When war broke out in 1914, the 8th Battalion was recruited from the Ballarat & Ararat areas & the 7th Battalion from the North Western & Murray areas. Both Battalions became well known & respected for their actions in the Gallipoli Campaign & latter in France, earning numerous campaign & battle honours.