

The Ranger 2010

(Op Anode Edition)

The annual journal of the 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment



Op Anode Rotation 22, July to December 2010.



Left: 2 PL Boarding the HMAS Wewak during interoperability training with the Australian Navy.

Below: Emergency evacuation training

Left below: The SIO-S Course



8/7 RVR, 2010:

Commanding Officer
LT COL Douglas Laidlaw CSC

Regimental Sergeant Major
WO1 Brian Buskell

Honorary Colonel
Professor David de Kretser AC
The Governor of Victoria

Regimental Colonel
Brigadier Douglas Ball AM RFD ADC

Allied Regiments:

3rd Battalion (Staffords),
The Mercian Regiment

The Royal Regiment of Canada

Ranger Magazine Editor
Major Neil Leckie RFD
XO, 8/7 RVR



Pre-deployment training IIMVs



Pre-deployment PPC Training



Canungra MST Orders and deployment

The Ranger 2010

The Ranger is usually produced by the last parade each year, but in 2010 it was held over under the battalion's members returned from Rotation 22 in the Solomon Islands, consequently, it is a bit late, perhaps a lot late – but better late than never! – Ed.

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

As in 2009, BHQ consisted of the CO, LT COL Douglas Laidlaw, the XO, Major Neil Leckie, the Adjutant (or S1) Captain Mark Johnston, and the RSM, WO1 Brian Buskell. Chap Geoffrey Traill was attached to the Battalion for a while. Chaplain Traill has an affinity for the battalion as his Grandfather was a Commanding Officer of the 8th Battalion in World War 1.

However, it wasn't long before Chaplain Traill departed (to the ARA), Capt Johnston moved to the Op Anode Cell and the RSM began preparing for his deployment with the HQ element of Op Anode.

The Commanding Officer (LTCOL Laidlaw)

This short note is my last duty as Commanding Officer of this fine Battalion.

I could not begin by other than thanking the officers and soldiers of 8/7 RVR for their outstanding achievements during the last year in particular.

There could be no greater job for a CO than to prepare and deploy a sizeable force element from the Battalion and this the Unit did – and did it well.

In the last year 8/7 RVR mounted for operations and deployed the Coy Group on Rotation 22, CTF 635, OP ANODE. The professionalism and dedication displayed by the deploying members and the mounting team was beyond expectations, at even the highest levels. By the end of the force preparation HQ 1DIV commented to me that new standards had been set for preparation for that deployment and there was no hesitation in certifying the force as “good to go”.

As expected, Rotation 22 went on to distinguish itself with fine operational service. Those members brought credit upon the Battalion and certainly made this CO proud of their achievements. There is no doubt that this deployment, 8/7 RVR manned and lead, has written a new chapter in the Unit history.

A special mention must be made to all the families of our deployed soldiers. Your support makes such service possible. Without it, Australia would not be able to achieve the strategic outcomes that operations such as OP ANODE provide. I recognise the hardships that are endured. There are no medals for those left behind, yet the price is heavy.

This last year also saw the Battalion grow to exceed 400 in number. Through improved retention and recruitment of 68 personnel, the net Unit manning rose from 380 to 420. Of those recruits 45 completed recruit training, 38 commenced and 34 completed Initial Employment Training as riflemen. The Battalion achieved 49 members of the High Readiness Reserve as against a directed task of 30, being a 40% increase from an initial 35. This Unit has always punched above its weight and in my, perhaps biased view, I do not believe there is a more effective unit in the 2 DIV.

Not to rest on these laurels, the task ahead is now to take up the challenge to provide manning for the next operational task, OP ASTUTE. I wish the Battalion and your new CO, LTCOL Duckworth every success in writing the next chapters.

Before my closing comments, I wish to thank my RSM WO1 Buskell for the unfailing service he provided to the Battalion and the legacy he has left to benefit the Unit for the years ahead.

This now draws a line under my service in this outstanding Battalion. I have been proud to serve as Pl Comd, Coy 2IC, Officer Commanding A Coy, B Coy and Spt Coy (when we had one) and finally, as CO. Thank you all.

My last word goes to thank and recognise my ever patient wife, Joanna, without whose support I would not have experienced command of country Victoria's own. Good luck and good soldiering, Douglas Laidlaw, LTCOL

The Regimental SGT Major (WO1 Brian Buskell)

In writing my last article for The RANGER, I have been reflecting on the way the soldiers of the Battalion have conducted themselves over the last two years.

Several years ago the Army commenced an initiative to define what it means to be an Australian Soldier. They sought to identify and describe the key traits and attributes that set our soldiers apart from all others. Since the 1800's the character of the Australian Soldier has been continually developed in times of war, and equally as important times of peace.

The young men and women who volunteered in their tens of thousands to enlist in the First World War came from a different world to the young people of today. Yet justifiably, the soldiers in the Battalion today are as equally worthy of the title, Australian Soldier.

The initiative, appropriately named '**I'm an Australian Soldier**', included the following key statements that encapsulate what that simple but significant statement means:

I'm proud to share traditions built on the foundation of the ANZAC legend.
I'm proud to build on the heritage of service, mateship and sacrifice of previous generations.
I'm proud to serve the Australian people by securing their future.
I'm proud to secure peace and safety for the people of other countries when they need help.

Every soldier an expert in close combat
Every day an opportunity to learn
Every soldier a leader
Every threat an opportunity for courage
Every soldier physically tough
Every soldier mentally prepared
Every task an opportunity for initiative
Every challenge an opportunity for teamwork

It is my belief that these traits and principles are alive and well in 8/7 RVR. Over the last two years we have completed an enormous amount of training, doubling our trained strength. We have seized every opportunity to learn new skills gaining qualifications and forged new friendships in the process. We have faced situations that have tested our physical and moral courage and we have proven repeatedly that we can choose the hard right over the easy wrong.

I take great pride in all of our achievements, too various to mention for fear of missing some very worthy person. To the junior NCO's I say thanks for all your tireless work, To the Officers, WO's & SNCO's I commend you on the training philosophy, enthusiasm and professional standards you have set and maintained.

It is now time for me to say goodbye after two years as your RSM. I will look back on my time with 8/7 RVR with very fond memories. My family and I have enjoyed our time in the Battalion and in Ballarat.

I wish you all the very best for your future endeavours, B.J. Buskell WO1 RSM 8/7 RVR 2009/10

The XO (Maj Leckie)

Every year with the Reserve is a busy one, but there is no doubt that 2010 was one of the busiest. The year had one aim: to send the best prepared company that has ever gone to the Solomons. I believe that the aim was achieved. However, along the way all the other training requirements had to be met, despite tight financial constraints.

The Induction Weekend at Puckapunyal in February was one of the best attended weekends the battalion has had in recent years. Maybe the thought of a deployment to the Solomons brought the extra numbers, or maybe it was just the enthusiasm of belonging to this great battalion.

In February, along with former Commanding Officer of the battalion, LT COL Ted Lynes, I attended a book launch at the Talbot Historical Society. The launch was a book written from the diary of a World War 1 Dental Technician, Harold Krutli, who landed at Gallipoli. After the war Harold became a Dentist and practiced in Maryborough. His nickname was Doctor Cruelty (sounds similar to Krutli) as he was known to have removed teeth without anaesthetic, just using pressure points. Maybe this treatment was derived from World War 1 service where Doctors and Dentists would have been unlikely to have had anaesthetics. LT COL Lynes officially launched the book.

A couple of Training Weekends and before we knew it ANZAC Day was upon us and 40 or so Catafalque Parties and Guest Speakers were provided. This year I wasn't scheduled to be a Guest Speaker, so I marched in Ballarat.

And then Op Anode. Four weeks at Pucka, a few days break and then the last few weeks at Canungra before we waved farewell in late July to the Company Group and the Headquarters members of Op Anode R22.

For the rest of us it was back to the normal routine of Parade Nights, weekends, NPMA Audits and OH&S Meetings.

In October the battalion provided a small number of Role Players and Observer Trainers (once known as Umpires) to the Brigade Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA) at Puckapunyal., I found myself in Week 1 working for the Brigade Major and Week 2 working as Camp Commandant with the Battalion Resources Officer Geoff 'Tiny' Pellow in his Reserve Role as a WO2 as my offsider.

While R22 was away on Op Anode the OPSO was away for five weeks, including a two week course qualifying him for a possible United Nations Military Observer deployment. In the OPSO's absence I worked with the OPS Cell from time to time.

In another of my tasks I was busy in the Ranger Museum. The year saw many visitors to the Museum and in another area of history saw the return of the cannons to the front of the barracks after their wooden carriages were replaced at the Apprentices School Bandiana.



Other areas of involvement this year were attending the Remembrance Day Service at the Macarthur Street Primary School (repository for 2/8th Battalion AIF memorabilia) and Army and Air Force Cadet end-of-year functions. Then before we knew it was preparing for the Welcome Home and Dismissal Parade at Laverton for R22 on

All-in-all another great year with a great battalion!

Left: With Principal Andy Backwell at Macarthur Street Primary School after the Remembrance Day Service.

OPS CELL

Like BHQ, the OPS Cell remained the same in 2010. The OPSO was Major Trevor McTernan, the OPSWO WO2 Shane Armstrong and the OPS SGT SGT Jim Skett. For most of the year they were assisted by Sapper Nathan Saunders. Geoff (Tiny) Pellow, the Resource Manager, reports to the OPSO.

The OPS Cell was extremely busy as not only were they preparing the battalion's members for Op Anode, but they were also responsible for the training for the remainder of the battalion and preparing for the Training Year 2011/12.

ORDERLY ROOM

The Orderly Room was under the control of the Chief Clerk, WO2 Gary Kirk. SGT Ian Cust was the OR SGT with SGT Steve Linane (on CFTS), CPL Sarah Hiller, PTE Sophie Graham and lately LCPL Graeme Paizis providing the Clerical support. The Pay Clerk (the most important person in the battalion to Reservists) was PTE Kerrie Saffron and the most important person, the font of all (paperwork) knowledge was our Receptionist Dee Saunderson.

S1 Cell (From SGT Ian Cust)

What an incredible year for the administrator. All work and no play.

The Chief Clerk, "the Chief" to his minions has been in the unit for some time and for some time more. The Chief is loved by all, respected by some. On numerous occasions was heard to say 'my staff are like the feet of the duck paddling like hell below the water with me above the water looking cool calm and collected'. We have also identified an invisible path from his office to the blue car and back which is very well worn.

Sgt Steve Linane answers to 'Steve' when working as one of the long timers or permanent staff of the unit. One of the big cogs in the admin system that just keeps on keeping on. Unfortunately Steve will be transferring back to the active reserves and will leave a large vacuum that will be hard to fill.

Cpl Sarah Hiller, Miss Squeaky Clean, yes that means the brew point, cups, morning tea plates and anything else that moves. She also has been known as Mrs Lotto but like everyone else still waiting for the big payout. Unfortunately Sarah is transferring back to the active reserves early 2011 and will be missed for her sharp wit and effective work ethic.

Sgt Ian Cust, "I am a Legend, Go the Pies" that's all that needs to be said.

Pte Kerrie Saffron also known as the "Chris Judd groupie", has been heard to say on many occasions, "I'm flat out here and I haven't got anybody to give me a hand have I?" but she is still doing a great job.

Pte Sophie Graham is the unofficial Angel of the BHQ Orderly Room. She was always the first to put her hand up to assist another unit or Deployment. What a pure pleasure to have such an asset in the team.

LCPL Graeme Paizis is one of the newest Administrators to cross over to the paperwork side of war and just hasn't looked back. Who said it is never too late to change over to the admin system.

Last, but by no means least, the venerable Dee Saunderson continues her sterling work as the APS02 Receptionist. This being her 21st year of service to the battalion she once again proved crucial to the smooth running of the S1 Cell.

A COMPANY

A Company, with the largest number of riflemen in the battalion, calls itself 'the backbone of the battalion. It has depots in Geelong, Warnambool and Laverton. Its Officer Commanding was Major

Gareth Ward. The company Training WO/CSM was WO2 Peter 'Jack' Daniels, the Company Clerk CPL Lewis and the CQMS were SGT Nicholas and WO2 Yoxall.

1 Platoon is located at Geelong. The Pl Comd was LT Laws. PL SGT was SGT P. Hardcastle and Section Commanders CPLs Miller, Dinning, and Lynch

2 Platoon is located at Laverton. The Pl Comd was LT Saowyer. PL SGT was SGT Mutsaerts and Section Commanders CPLs Dvoracek, and Corbett

3 Platoon is located at Warrnambool and provided the Support Section. The PLI Comd was SGT Charman and Section Commanders LCPLs W. and J. Petering and Cole

A Company CHQ



Representing the Battalion, A Company's Training WO, WO2 Peter Daniels, participated in a medal presentation at Member for Corangamite Darren Cheeseman's offices in Waurin Ponds. These two gentlemen shown in the photograph both received their Australian Defence Medal and one received his National Servicemen medal.

Geelong

2010 started off at the usual blistering pace with the main focus being on the deployment to the Solomon Islands by a vast majority of the members of the Battalion, but this did not take away the yearly ceremonial activities of which the first was ANZAC day. WO2 Daniels got all the formal requests and permissions to conduct an activity from the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) Council for the A Coy conducted dawn service at the Boer war memorial in Geelong, this year the Dawn Service, the only one conducted in Geelong, was once again patronised by hundreds of Geelong residents, the service and the guard were both done very well, thanks to all that participated. Indeed thanks to all members of A Coy involved in the Catafalque Parties for the seven services held in our area of responsibility.

The next event was the East Timor flag raising ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of independence in that country, the activity went off without a hitch and we were all invited into the council chambers for lunch and conversation.

The majority of soldiers that regularly parade at A Coy's Geelong Depot were involved with the deployment to the Solomon Islands on Operation ANODE. This Operation saw the depot numbers shrink significantly from August to December. The rest of the personnel at the depot were encouraged to keep attending with the inclusion of some good training activities whilst the deployment was on. Many of the members that were on deployment got a lot of excellent qualifications in the four months: these were weapon, promotion and equipment qualifications that would normally take years for a reserve soldier to achieve. So, well done to all on your achievements.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the two ARA Depot Commanders, SGT Ben Willmore from Warrnambool and SGT Ben Bounden from Laverton, both of whom gave the Coy and Battalion three years of dedicated service, they have been posted to 2 RAR and RMC respectively. I wish them and their families all the best for the future, and to SGT Willmore stay safe on your deployment to Afghanistan in May 2011.

Warrnambool

Here is the year of 2010 as seen through the walls of the Tel-El-Eisa barracks:

Being a building of quite a few years of age I have seen a lot of changes during my time. From the sacks of potatoes that used to come to me, to the newbie soldiers who wander in now a days. Actually sometimes there isn't much difference between the two, funny about that.

The year 2010 wasn't much different from the last couple of decades, saw a few people disappear and then reappear and some people disappear for good and some people who appeared. Sometimes I feel I should have revolving doors attached to me to make things a lot easier. Also some people who I had never seen before turned up, they haven't left yet. Give them time I say, it seems to be the curse of Warrnambool, I get them qualified or nearly so and then they have the bad grace to leave me. They regret it though, no one can beat the awesomeness that is the Warrnambool depot, I am that good.

Anyhow enough of that! What did happen during the year? It's hard to remember really so many things. Josh, Reece, Rodney, Brownny and Ben all went somewhere called the Solomon Islands I think; those brave few who went were well missed, the walls of this old building were very much quieter without their unique antics bandied around the place. They all came back to me a little wiser and little skinnier and just a wee bit thirsty.

I was introduced to some new faces; they were Liam Cook, Sherman 'The Tank' Taylor, Reece Woods, Tiernan McNeill and Alex Moore. Three of these will be put to good use me thinks but first they have to get qualified and not leaving me would also be a good start. Time will tell on that one. The other two had to leave me though. Alex went back to Tasmania, I still can't figure that one out and Tiernan went to Bendigo. Sally McNamara and Jayson Blain had to leave me for greener pastures. I wish them all well although the poor fools will miss me.

At the end of the year, one SGT Ivey turned back up though: he will be welcome I think. My kitchen has especially missed him and I'm sure the boys can't wait till he reacquaints himself with that particular part of my building.

Also at the end of the year I will replace my Depot commander once again. SGT Willmore will leave me to go up north and I wish him luck. ARA staff I can take leaving me, nature of the job I guess. I will welcome a SGT Edwards to the greatness that is the Warrnambool depot and hope he has a very relaxing and enjoyable time here with me. Hopefully the boys won't be too much trouble for him, me thinks he will take it if they are.

I must recognize a few promotions within my walls with Josh Petering gaining the rank of CPL (about time I reckon!) Also congratulations go out to Reece Callaway and Rodney Lenehan on their promotion to LCPL.

A few congratulations are to made for outside achievements, before I can go back to sleep. A big congratulations to Aiden and Vanessa for getting married and also having a beautiful baby girl. Congratulations also Rod and Nadine for also adding to our future manning with a gorgeous baby boy. Two little soldiers in the making.

Laverton

Laverton has had a major turnover of personnel; it was once one of the smallest parade numbers but now has the most. It has been capably commanded by SGT Ben Bounden who will be replaced at the end of the year by SGT Phillips on posting from 1 RAR. The big news to come out of Laverton was the news that the depot will move down the road to RAAF Williams - Point Cook. There have been ongoing meetings to ascertain what type of facilities would be required and the move may be happening at the end of 2012. There is an existing building which will become available and some huts will be moved and upgraded for the new depot. This will become Laverton's third home.

Laverton has become the 'go-to' place for the Brigade to conduct training and administration activities, with the lead up and decompression activities for ANODE Rotation 22 occurring at the depot. Laverton was also the scene for the Farewell and Welcome Home Parades. If the numbers continue to grow at the depot we can only hope that the new facilities at Point Cook are able to accommodate all the soldiers.

B Company

B Company has two platoons. 4 Platoon, for many years the Ballarat platoon, remains in Ballarat, while 6 Platoon is in Monegeetta. The OC of B Company was Captain Paul O'Donnell (known to all as POD), the Training WO was WO2 Peter McGechan, who splits his time between Ballarat, Monegeetta and Bendigo, the CQMS SGT Trevor Beales and the Company Clerk was PTE Sophie Graham. The company supplied a good number of members for Op Anode, in particular three Section Commanders and one Section 2IC.

CPL Brad Watkins of the Mongeetta Depot has had a good year. In May he was awarded the 2009 Spiros Vardos OAM Award from the Hellenic Sub-branch of the



R&SL. The sub-branch provides an annual award to both battalions of the RVR. The award is in recognition of the sterling service that the 2/7th and 2/8th AIF Battalions gave while fighting in Greece in WW2.

In 'Army', 25th November, it was notified that CPL Watkins had been awarded a Soldier's Medallion. Above right: OC B COY, CAPT Paul O'Donnell, CPL Brad Watkins and Training WO, WO2 Peter McGechan. The XO, MAJ Leckie, presented the award on behalf of the R&SL.



The battalion is not flush with junior officers and with LT Wait on the Inactive List, the company, and Ballarat, does not have any Platoon Commanders. PTE Nick Boak is aiming to correct this problem and commenced his Officer Training Course.

Stepping up to Cross Over (OCDT Nick Boak)

OCDT Nicholas Boak (Nick) was born in Charlton, Victoria on 05 Dec 1982. He enlisted in the Australian Army Reserves as a Rifleman on 30 December 2003. He was promoted to LCPL in November 2009 and transferred to the rank of Officer Cadet in October 2010.



Nick has been on CFTS with RCB 68 from November 2004 to February 2005, Op Vi/c Fires Assist in February 2009 and Operation Anode Rotation 18 February 2009 to August 2009. Nick has been a member of the Reserve Response Force (RRF) and also has been on a High Readiness Reserve (HRR) contract.

Nick is looking forward to finishing the remainder of his GSO First Appointment Course in 2011 and returning to Bravo Company 8/7 RVR. There is a shortage of Junior Officers in 8/7 RVR at the moment and Nick encourages other members looking for more leadership opportunities to seek selection for Officer training.

As a civilian Nick works in Finance. Nick completed a Bachelor of

Commerce at the University of Ballarat in 2005 and is currently studying a post graduate Masters in Business Administration. Nick has used these skills to be the Treasurer for the Other Ranks Mess at Ballarat for most of 2010.

Nick enjoys the mateship and fitness that comes from Army Reserves and is committed to 8/7 RVR and the continuing development of Bravo Company. He is married to Melissa, has played most sports and enjoys cricket and golf, and is a keen reader of military history.

ANZAC DAY at Maryborough

On ANZAC Day, OCDT Boak lead his five man group from B Company Ballarat and participated in the ANZAC Day ceremonies at Maryborough. This was OCDT Boak's first command of a Catafalque Party. He ensured that the party completed plenty of practice prior to the day and this ensured that the correct drill was performed on the day. The Catafalque Party received high praise from the Maryborough ANZAC Day crowd.

Following the ANZAC Day Service the former members of the now closed Maryborough Depot held a reunion at The Albion Hotel. CPL Nick Arundell of the Maryborough, Bacchus Marsh and Laverton depots was the main force behind the reunion.

ANZAC Day at Skipton

With many small Sub-branches of the R&SL closing, there are a number of groups known as 'Friends of the RSL' formed around the country. B Company was proud to have been asked to support the ANZAC Day Service at Skipton. LCPL Powell let the Catafalque Party and in a letter from the 'Friends' stated that the party 'performed faultlessly, and their "turn-out" was spotless.



C Company

The widest spread company in the battalion is C Company. Its OC in 2010, Captain Bill Chapman resides and works in Mildura. His 2IC, Capt Paul Neunhoffer resides and works in Bendigo where the Company Training WO, WO2 Michael Greenwood is based, along with the CQMS SGT Bell and the Company Clerk CPL Hart.

Bendigo: Like Ballarat, Bendigo, 8 Pl (-), does not have a Platoon Commander. CPL Tavis McLaren was one of the main instructors for the depot.

Shepparton: The Depot Manager for the early part of the year was SGT Potter. Potts was to be deployed during the year, but an administrative 'blunder' saw him withdrawn from the deployment. Potts was on leave when the year ended. Captain Vincent Oladele (an attached RAAMC officer) and SSGT Ivan Solomano, along with CPLs Crowe (later promoted SGT) and Moore kept the depot running. 'Sol' participated in the preparation training for Op Anode while four Shepparton members deployed on Op Anode.

Mildura: SGT Steve Ivey completed the second of his two years on CFTS in 2010 looking after the Mildura Depot and helping out with Swan Hill. These two depots constitute 7 Platoon with LT Ted Guinea the Platoon Commander. SGT Darryl Jack returned to the platoon for part of the year. Other depot staff were SSGT Rod Jackson (Q), CPL Simmons and LCPL Kevin Farrell (Transport) and Sig Harding.

Swan Hill: Swan Hill, numerically the smallest of the battalion's depots, continues to provide the battalion with a capability (as would be seen in the 2011 floods). SGT David Logan manages the depot and is supported by LCPL McIlroy and long serving member Viv Holland.

Operation Carloman – ADF Support to Victorian Flood Assist, September 2010 (By SSGT Ivan Solomano)



Above left: The sandbag filling production line in operation.

Above right: SES and 4 RRF members with some of the sandbags.

Left: Some of the 10,000+ sandbags filled on Op Carloman in the September floods.

Following several days of extremely heavy rain in central Victoria, towns in the Goulburn River valley were under threat from rising flood water. Eighty soldiers from 53 Battery in Puckapunyal were deployed to the 8/7 RVR Somme Barracks in Shepparton, to assist the SES and other emergency services with

protecting low-lying area of Shepparton. The 53 Bty soldiers worked for four days filling and laying sandbags, and door-knocking residents whose houses were under threat of being isolated by floodwater.

In order to continue these DACC tasks, 4 RRF was warned out for on-going operations. A number of 8/7 RVR members volunteered their services for the 4 RRF group and on 9 September, 55 personnel took over from the 53 Bty members. The first day of the 4 RRF tasks involved familiarisation of the flooded areas of Shepparton and filling several pallets of sandbags at the Council Depot. By this time the threat of flooding in Shepparton had eased but the flood peak was now heading downstream towards Echuca.

On 10 September, the 4 RRF group deployed to Echuca. Following a soldiers' five on how to fill sandbags the SES way, the production lines commenced. The bags did not need to be tied and the considerations were which direction was the water flowing and would they stop water, not whether they would stop projectiles or shell fragments. 7,500 sandbags were filled and palletised under the direction of the SES. On return to Somme Barracks there was a BBQ waiting in lieu of ration packs. The BBQ was courtesy of the SES HQ. Some upper echelon members of the SES had been overheard by the 4 RRF liaison officers complaining about the quality of the motel rooms that they were staying in. The RRF officers explained that this was "luxury" as the soldiers were eating ration packs and sleeping in stretchers in a "tin shed". (This was technically correct as the Somme Barracks has a corrugated iron roof. However, this was much better than being under a hootchie in

the rain.) The SES complainants realised that perhaps they didn't have it so bad after all and offered the makings of a BBQ tea. This had been quickly accepted.

On the following day, another trip to Echuca/Moama and filling of more sandbags occurred. This took the total for the two days to in excess of 10,000 (equivalent to 200 tonnes of sand). Some sections also delivered several thousand of these to the low-lying area of Echuca and assisted the SES and CFA to lay them to protect houses from the peak flooding that had been forecast to arrive within the next few days. The 'shuttle run' of 'Mogs through the towns and the soldiers in cams provided many photo opportunities for the print and TV media.

This completed the work for the Army as the filled sandbags had provided the SES with a good supply that the SES would be using as they chased the floodwaters downstream for the next few

It was ironic that the 8/7 RVR members were performing DACC flood protection activities when 18 months earlier, they had been conducting DACC activities following the Black Saturday fires. This activity provided a good example of how the Army Reserve members could be rallied at short notice to the assist the local communities.



ANZAC Day at Cobram

It was a case of youth and inexperience and the old hands at Cobram on ANZAC Day. SSGT Ivan Solomano was the Catafalque Party Commander on the day, while PTE Trevor Faul, who has well over 30 years' experience, was one of the party. The Cobram-Barooga Sub-branch sent a letter of thanks and stated that almost 1,000 of the twin town's population of 6,000 attended the two services.

ADMINISTRATION COMPANY

2010 saw Major Cliff Gowers the OC of Admin Company. He was ably supported by WO2 Brian Wethling, the 'pocket dynamo'. The Company retains its five platoons:

Quartermaster Platoon (Ballarat):

QM: WO1 Martin Griggs RQMS: WO2 Darren McKenzie

TECH SGT: SSGT Barry Phillips and CPLs Darren Brown and Raymond Tuck. The main

Reserve members were PTEs Peter Brewer, Shane Watkins and Chris George.

Catering Platoon (Ballarat): WO Caterer: WO2 Mark Broemmer, CPLs Bruce Wilson and Michael Currie. Cooks: PTEs Matthew Gellet, Luke Winter, Sonja McLaughlin and Jodie Pitt.

Medical Platoon (RAP Ballarat): The RMO was Major Mark Harris who was ably supported by Nursing Officer Captain Jennifer Lee and Medics LCPL Erica Rosewarne and PTE Chantelle Lewis.

Transport Platoon: CPL Greg Hems was in his last year with the Transport Platoon and during the year attended a promotion course. He was supported in Ballarat by Reserve members PTEs David Dwyer, Scott Buckley, Jason Hartup, Neil Leviston, Tim Wilson and Marie Yorston.

TECH SPT Platoon (Ballarat): SGT Darren Werry, along with CPL Steve Linton provided the Technical and Armourer Support to the battalion

OP ANODE PREPARATION

Op Anode is the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). 8/7 RVR was tasked in 2009 to provide a Rifle Company Headquarters and two Rifle Platoons, the third platoon being provided by the Papua-New Guinea Defence Force, and elements of the Combined Task Force Headquarters (CTF) for CTF 635. The 8/7 RVR Group was to be the 22nd rotation of Op Anode Company Groups and was thus named Rotation 22 (R22) and was due to fly to the Solomon Islands for a four month deployment in August 2010.

Nominations for positions on the Company Group were called for in late 2009 and a training and selection program developed to fill all positions. Wherever possible, members of 8/7 RVR were selected with only some specialist positions to be filled by other units.

Preparation for deployment on Op Anode commenced in earnest with two Administration weekends at RAAF Williams, Laverton. The first weekend, held over 16/18 April, included Situation Briefs, Medical and Dental checks, DPI checks - including requesting Passports and making Wills, vaccinations, welfare and pay briefs and Basic Fitness Assessments.

The second Administration weekend, 14/16 May, completed the administrative requirements and included some First Aid Revision, Rules of Engagement training, weapon training and a WTSS Shoot at Simpson Barracks, Watsonia.

The next stage was full-time training. The 'main body' arrived at the National Service Lines, Puckapunyal on 28th May and training commenced the next day. Prior to the Main Body arriving, however, training had already commenced for the Combat First Aid Attendants (CFAs), the Basic Combat Communicator Course (BCCC) and Interim Infantry Mobility Vehicle (IIMV) drivers. The PNG Platoon arrived to join the Company Group and was immediately issued with Australian cold-weather gear, items of clothing that they seldom removed.

The next four weeks saw a hive of activity as those members looking for deployment undertook a vast array of training which included: Weapons Training Tests and Range Practices on static and sneaker ranges; Population Protection and Control (PPC) Training and Section & Platoon Training. Any members who could not achieve all the outcomes of this training dropped out and were replaced by those on the 'Reserve List'.

On 25th June the Puckapunyal Phase of the Pre-deployment Training concluded and the deploying members went into an 'administration' phase ie. 'leave'.



Left: BRIG Robert Marsh, Minister Alan Griffin and CR Judy Verlin.

Right: RSM Buskell receives a gift for CR Verlin.

On 1st July there was some last minute administration and a Farewell Parade from Victoria held at Laverton. VIPs included the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Alan

Griffin MP, the Mayor of Ballarat, Cr Judy Verlin, the Brigade Commander 4th Brigade, Brigadier Robert Marsh, and the CO 8/7 RVR, LT COL Douglas Laidlaw.

After the parade there was an afternoon tea for the deploying members and their families and the support staff.

The following day the Rotation members and support staff flew out from Tullamarine to RAAF Amberley and then moved by bus to Canungra to prepare for the Mission Specific Training (MST) and Mission Rehearsal Activity (MRA). The MST was run by CO 8/7 RVR and a staff consisting mainly of 8/7 RVR members, while the MRA, the final assessment activity, was run by the CO 5/6 RVR, LT COL Darryl Clarke and his 5/6 RVR staff.

The three weeks in Canungra consisted of Navigation Training in the jungle country around Kokoda Barracks, training in Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) at Brisbane Airport, a three day MST exercise and ending with a 5 day MRA. The MST and MRA were based on scenarios that have occurred in the past in the Solomon Islands and could possibly occur again in the future there.

Assessments during the MST and MRA were undertaken by Observer/Trainers (OTs). OTs were drawn from officers/WOs and SNCOs who had either undertaken OT roles in the past, or were trained on a course at Watsonia as OTs prior to the Canungra Phase. 8/7 RVR provided the OTs for the MST, while our sister battalion, 5/6 RVR, provided the OTs for the MRA.

When the training was completed, reports were that R22 was the best administratively prepared rotation to deploy on Op Anode. Thanks should go to Captain Mark Johnston and WO2 Michael McLennan and their Clerks for the hard work in ensuring that these administrative matters were completed on time. Thanks also go to WO1 Greg Green for the sterling effort he put in to ensure that the Q side of the training and deployment worked so well.

OP ANODE, ROTATION 22

Rotation 22 consisted of a Headquarters and a Rifle Company. The company consisted of a Headquarters and three platoons, two from 8/7 RVR and one from PNG. Drivers for the 8/7 RVR IIMVs were provided from 4/19 PWLH. WO1 Brian Buskell (RSM, 8/7 RVR) was the rotation's RSM, while Ballarat's Captain John Spencer headed the Civil Military Liaison (CML) Team. Ballarat's WO2 Michael McLennan was the headquarters Chief Clerk.

The following articles are reproduced with the permission of the Commanding Officer, R22, LT COL Paul Landford.

From the Commander CTF635 LTCOL Paul Landford (from Newsletter 1)

When someone commits to undertaking the preparation for and conduct of an overseas deployment they are doing their country a great service. Here, in the Solomon Islands, Australian Defence Force (ADF) men and women are part of a commitment to the wider Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The ADF members of Rotation 22, and those ADF personnel that stay on for longer periods, are part of a contribution in support of an Australian-led Whole of Government combined operation to assist the Government of the Solomon Islands. And, together with our other military troop contributing nations and in everyday direct support of the Royal Solomon Island Police Force (RSIPF) and multi-national Participating Police Forces (PPF), they are doing a great job.

Since 2003 RAMSI has transitioned away from an 'intervention' to 'restore law and order' and rebuild the machinery of government. RAMSI has continued to evolve, progressively shifting the focus away from operational work towards building the capacity of the personnel and institutions of the Solomon Islands public sector. Nevertheless, there are still issues which have the potential to reignite conflict and cause insecurity.

The successful conduct of the August 2010 National Government Election and the smiles and waves from the local community belie the efforts, training and contingency planning that a highly trained military presence is undertaking every day to appropriately posture itself to respond to any security sector challenge.

The thankful lack of any prolonged significant operational incident is testament to the success of RAMSI to date and that the overall security strategy has successfully provided the required level of deterrence. All preparations and activity aside: it is the heat, humidity, rain and long hours that are a distraction. A distraction that is tempered by the conduct of good old fashioned military duty tasking, equipment servicing, maintenance and a daily training programme that also includes providing competency qualifications to soldiers that translate to better career choices and chances in the Army and also overall confidence and skills to aid in civilian employment post mission for the 90% of us who are ADF Reservists.

As you read the articles in this newsletter I sense that you will also get an understanding of the unique opportunity for the occasional rest and relaxation activity in between the call of duty. The soldiers have worked hard for these sporadic times off-base and activities in the community, a chance to interact with the local culture, to see the beautiful environment or to visit WWII battlefield sites are a privilege that I am proud to afford small groups where the opportunity exists. These are clearly the highlights of an otherwise operational deployment that the voluntary contributors to this newsletter have primarily written of and wish to share with families, friends and loved ones.

I trust you enjoy this newsletter and most importantly keep safe ... just as the men and women deployed on Rotation 22 are committed to doing for each other and for the people of the Solomon Islands.

FROM THE REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR WO1 Brian Buskell

Rotation 22 completed its handover with rotation 21 in late July and settled in. The soldiers quickly became familiar with their new surrounds and began pointing out to me the good and the bad, which leads me to believe that morale is high.



Above: RSM on a Battlefield tour

All CTF members have acquitted themselves very well in the first 50 or so days in the Solomon's, achieving excellent standards in all areas. A Coy have also trained very hard during this time on top of a number of operational tasks and have achieved some outstanding goals, I congratulate all of you on our successes thus far.

Keep up your good work.

CIVIL MILITARY LIAISON (CML) TEAM. The only one outside the wire.

After one month in country and the election period drawing to a close, CML team can look back upon a hectic, yet productive few weeks. After arriving in country and completing our initial briefings, we were straight into our vehicles and out on task with the previous CML team and RSIPF. Detailed handover briefs occurred between our CIVPOL counterparts, civilian contacts and CML. Then finally, the chatty previous team departed, we claimed our office, cleared out the clutter and begun work in our own manner.

The CML team consists of 5 members, CAPT Spencer, SGT Logan and LCPL Rosewarne. We are also lucky enough to be joined by our two SNO's, the first being PNG SNO CAPT Misel with his

land and dialect knowledge giving us a great advantage. He is also one of the Wantoks here, making him a great asset to our team. Our second SNO is TNG SNO LEUT Tapueluelu. LEUT Tapueluelu has been in country for over 9 months now and during this time, has generated many useful contacts for us out in the local communities. With his friendly demeanour and excellent bartering/ negotiation skills, he has struck us many good deals and been a valuable means to our information gathering capability. Sadly, LEUT Tapueluelu will be departing SI and headed back home to Tonga shortly. We are looking forward to welcoming and integrating the new TNG SNO MAJ Tui'halafatai Tuita into our team.



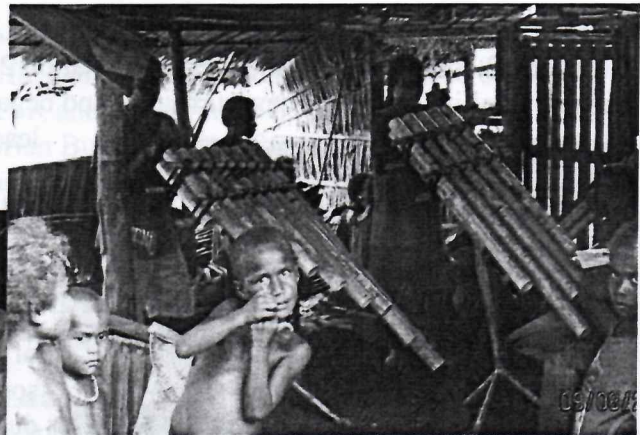
Whilst our role is invariably busy, we have been fortunate enough so far to work in some beautiful locations such as Lungga, Gold Ridge Villages, Mbarana, Kakebona, Auki and the remote villages of Tamboko (NW Guadalcanal) and Buma (Malaita). CML has a vast range of capabilities such as Community Policing Patrols, land usage negotiations,

Above: CML and PPF participate in basic drills at SOLkick.

Interpreter assistance tasks, Outreach Programmes and SOLkick. Our main role though, is to maintain an open line of communication between the locals, Police, Humanitarian Aid agencies and CTF to ensure that our interaction with these parties is as positive and productive as possible. This also includes communicating the role of RAMSI Military and promoting a positive image for RAMSI and the RSIPF.

CML wishes you the best in furthering your linguistic skills, cultural integration and in rising to the challenges of a hopefully productive upcoming 3 months.

Right: Traditional instruments at the school in Buma, Malaita.



Left: Community Policing Patrol visits a local Chief in Tamboko.

CML PATROL

Sea sickness. You never know whether you get it or not until you have been in properly rough seas and the Weather Coast off the south of Guadalcanal sure lived up to its reputation.

The MV Jackpot, our vessel and makeshift home for much of the past 4 days, originally designed for chartered scuba dive and fishing jaunts, now used as a support vessel for RAMSI's work in the Solomon Islands. For these four days however it would be host to a Civil Military Liaison (CML) outreach patrol.

As I write this, Sgt Logan prepares the evening report, LCPL Rosewarne diligently cleans and oils her pistol which will be rusty again before it reaches its holster due to the sea air and PTE Duffield provides the intelligent conversation. The unlikely team of 4 soldiers from different backgrounds and trades and an attached Participating Police Force (PPF) member are here for more than just a boat trip.

The CML are made up of a mix of Military (CTF 635), PPF and Civilian RAMSI members. Working together to provide an open dialogue and positive interaction between the RAMSI and in particular CTF and the local Solomon Island Population.

The CML team builds vital relationships between RAMSI and a wide range of local communities. Aiming to create a community awareness of local law enforcement issues and to assist the Royal Solomon Island Police Force (RSIPF) in maintaining peace in the area.

Throughout the 4 days the CML team visited 4 different communities providing education and mediation with local leaders. In order to visit such remote locations we were forced to make some exciting beach landings on board the Jackpots smaller powered dingy. The skilled pilot would launch the craft at the beach whilst riding 8 foot waves like a surfer onto the rocky shore as we quickly departed and dragged the boat out of the water before the raging sea dragged us back out again. There was little chance of remaining dry as we required many landings to transport the large amount of gear required for even such a small operation as this.

Being based out of AVU, AVU Police Station really gave us the opportunity to see how both the local RSIPF and stationed PPF interact with the local populous. There is often only 1 or 2 police for an area half the size of a major Australian city which along with the total absence of roads, almost impossible vegetation and terrain present an array of challenges. To assist in this mammoth task the RSIPF and PPF train local community officers to help deal with minor criminal disputes within communities and collection of information on behalf of the police such as witness statements. This teamed with the education and relationship building provided by the community policing officers and the CML are helping to achieve an awareness and acceptance of SI law and changing attitudes towards developing a working relationship between statute and local tribal laws.

In such a remote area, 8 hours by boat and no access by road we needed to have reliable communications back to GBR and the safety of the Air Medical Evacuation helicopters. That's why I'm here, although not a radio operator by trade, all RASIGS are trained in radio communications so I jumped at the chance to get outside the wire for this patrol. I have had the opportunity to utilize 4 different means of communications equipment that I am not usually exposed to. Including radio equipment from the NZ Defence Force which are a part of CTF 635.

During the time here I was also able to participate in a challenging HF radio exercise with Australia. For those unfamiliar with HF radio theory it is built on a solid foundation of star reading and wishful thinking and is a stark change from the reliable satellite and telephone systems that I am used to. That said the experience was invaluable and I developed real world knowledge of the abilities, limitations and ranges of the various different pieces of equipment. Personally the best experience I had was providing a situation report via secure satellite radio on board a boat traveling at 20 knots in very rough weather. Overall the communications were a success and we were able to effectively communicate within the patrol and keep headquarters informed of all our activities and movements.

The Weather Coast served up some of its best which forced us to return home earlier than expected. With the CML objectives met and valuable information gained we made way for Honiara.

S1 CELL – “Awesome”

After so many months of force preparation, landing in the Solomon Islands and transitioning straight into the election, let alone ensuring all CTF exercise their right to vote in our own national election, it seems a blur when one thinks back over the last few months at the achievements and tribulations of the S1 cell.

But alas that was over a month ago now. Rotation 21 have departed GBR, the election held, a myriad of visitors departing, some returning, requiring the awesome orderly room to engage gear and provide it's specialist administration care.

One task dutifully handed over was the processing of birthday cakes. When being told about the birthday cakes that the mess made, some had doubts that they would be very ordinary. But we were very wrong. The cakes are massive and so delicious. The mess does an excellent job at making these godly cakes, with lovely icing on them. Much appreciated and enjoyed by all.

It is not all work though for our admin staff, thanks to the S1, CAPT Jin Wang, who has shown great skill and character by volunteering to orientate the S1 cell to the local sites and cuisine of Honiara. First to the Japanese Restaurant to all get acquainted, the evening allowing the S1 to meet his new team, even if the question was asked; how do you eat this raw fish? This also allowed the S1 cell to meet our remaining FA, WO2 Martin Taylor, who clings to the hope he will be going home in October.

Next it was off to see the sights. After implying the tour was going to the beach, the S1 cell's war tour of the 7th of August included the AMTRAKS out near 'Tetere'. The cell then went to Alligator creek, and saw a Japanese war memorial and then onto 'Bloody Ridge'. Further up there was yet another memorial and it was here that PTE Evans made friends with the locals and devoured their Sugar cane.

The S1 Cell then moved off to see the Japanese Memorial, which was very plain and covered in Graffiti. Travelling on past up to the top of the hill and to the Japanese OP. To conclude what was a great orientation, the S1 cell grabbed some of the best takeaway Indian dinner.

Eventually the orderly room did get to the beach, placing a SWANREQ to Benigi Beach where members of CHQ and the S1 cell went and snorkelling where they snorkelled around a sunken ship. It is well known that some people may have forgotten to put on sunscreen and some backs were very sunburnt the next day; however a very relaxing day after what has been a very busy period.

Now that the numbers of visitors have decreased and the Coy moving into another phase of the deployment, the orderly room will strive to continue its awesome service. The ongoing provision of birthday cakes a main priority, the staff will strive to ensure pay and allowances are correctly received, administrate documents compiled and filed, post received and dispatched and all the other numerous tasks that the S1 cell complete daily to ensure this deployment is enjoyable for all.

A COY – From the OC “Putting the Combined in CTF 635” Major Gareth Ward

The Rifle Company was lead by Major Gareth Ward, Captain Mark Johnston, WO2 Brett Stephenson and CQMS SGT Trevor Beales.

A Coy, CTF 635 arrived in country during period 23-26 Jul 10 courtesy of three RAAF (C130J) sorties out of Amberley. After a couple of days “acclimatisation” the company was thrown into operations with the PNG platoon (3 PL) pushed down to Forward Operating Base (FOB) RANADI to link up with the Kiwi platoon (4 PL) and relieving the Tongan platoon (5 PL). This allowed the

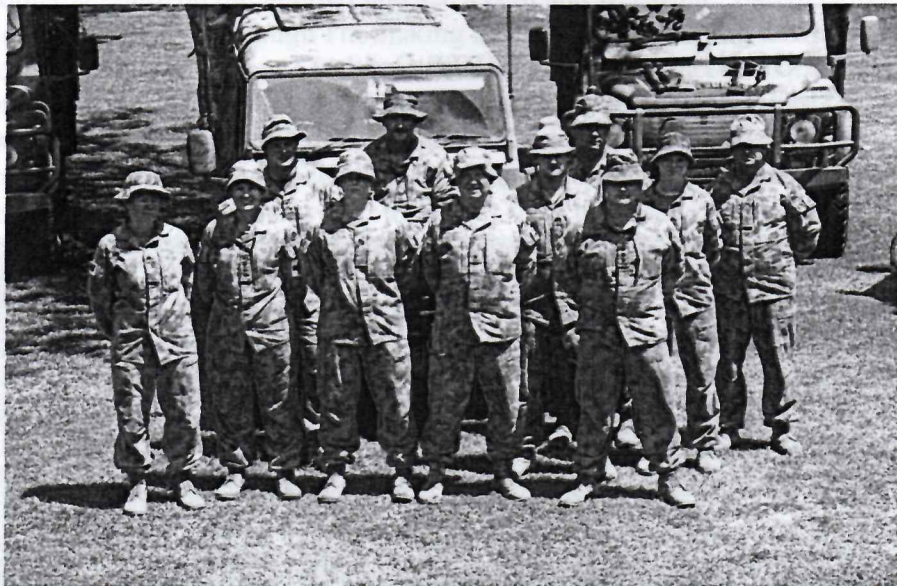
two Aussie platoons (1 PL and 2 PL) to further acclimatise to the tropical conditions of The Solomon's and prepare for operations within the confines of Guadalcanal Beach Resort (GBR) area.

As you can see from the photo on the cover, A COY is made up of a multi-national force that quickly moulded together for the election period in country. Over the past 6 weeks, the company has participated in significant operational tasks to support the RAMSI mission and the local Royal Solomon Island Police Force and much credit goes to all members of the company for quickly assimilating to the conditions, bonding together into an effective company group and putting the training received at Puckapunyal and Canungra to good effect.

The company now goes into a period "post-election" that allows for consolidation of lessons learnt from the operation and continuation of training effort to maximise our time on full-time service.

Many friendships have been made with the Tongans and Kiwi members who have recently returned to their respective home lands. Our PNG brothers remain with us to the end of the rotation.

CHQ (PTE Wojcieszak COY Signaller)



It wasn't until the Canungra phase of Rotation 22's pre-deployment training that CHQ really began to gel as a team. The sunny Queensland weather was a welcome relief from icy Puckapunyal but the bitter Canungra nights a reminder that we weren't quite in the Solomon's yet. The MST/MRA phase of the Canungra training presented interesting challenges as the Company began training and getting assessed based on conditions that could be expected on operations, never the less all came through unscathed and all requirements were met with a great deal of success.

After a busy couple of months training a few days of leave on the Gold Coast was greatly appreciated, many members were lucky enough to have loved ones fly up to meet them on the Coast while others took advantage of being single and cashed up. The junior members of CHQ for the most part banded together on leave and relished in the opportunity to bond in a non-military setting. Possibly the highlight of the leave period for the junior members of CHQ was a night at Dracula's on the Gold Coast, which provided a great dinner and fantastic entertainment. The occasion also provided a chance to celebrate LCPL O'Brien's birthday and an appropriately themed cake was provided by Dracula's much to LCPL O'Brien's delight.

After saying goodbye to loved ones the Company left Australia for the Solomon Islands. The first week in country proved to be a busy and at times stressful experience for many in Company Headquarters as our rotation had entered country in a time of a significantly heightened operational

tempo which required a lot of long hours and hard work by the entire team. Despite this CHQ members were able to conduct a successful handover/takeover with rotation 21 and were geared up to take on a busy Solomon's election period with enthusiasm. The election period itself also required a lot of hard work especially from the more senior members of CHQ, and many hours were spent in organising, planning and liaising with police elements to ensure the Company was prepared for any trouble during the election period. During much of this time Company Headquarters was split in two with the Coy 2IC CAPT Johnston, Coy INT WO2 Morris and Coy Sigs CPL Szykowski and PTE Wojcieszak being located with the Coy elements based at FOB RANARDI, while the rest of Coy headquarters remained at GBR. This of course provided the OC and CSM with the fuel to suggest that the RANARDI crew were in fact on summer holiday enjoying the secluded nature of their new home.

As it turned out the election period was rather uneventful which to some was a little disappointing, It's nice however to think that our hard work contributed to the stability that ensued during the election period and resulted in a much needed positive outcome for the people of the Solomon Islands. With at least a further 12 weeks left in country much work still remains for the Company, and hence Company Headquarters to achieve which will undoubtedly be tackled with the same enthusiasm and professionalism that has been seen so far.

A COY – 1 PLATOON - Callsign 11 (PTE Geddes)

The platoon was led by LT Marcus Soawyer and former 8/7 RVR member SGT Shannon McKinley. 1 Section was lead by CPL Luke McGregor and LCPL Robert Powell; 2 Section was lead by CPL Daniel Purcell and LCPL Josh Petering, while 3 Section was lead by CPL Wayne Beales and LCPL Brent Craske.



For an organisation that drapes itself in drab browns and greys, the army has some wonderfully colourful turns of phrase, like "s**t rolls downhill". It does, too. But we also discovered it drifts laterally. We were in it, but at that stage we were still blissfully unaware of just how much poo we were in...

On the shore at Ranadi, coconuts and bananas flourished. After the first week or so jammed into GBR, Callsign 11 was sent to FOB Ranadi just in time for the election period. Ranadi could be an exotic, idyllic kind of place - absolute beachfront location, sea breezes, rustic living in between the excitement of, for most of us, the first real, live operational patrols in a foreign country. Gravel floored showers with ocean views, varied menu (including freshly opened coconuts), rustic jungle gym. And you should have seen the grins during the handover brief that when told we could swim (so long as there was a "croc" watch" on duty!). But there's two sides to everything: cold showers, water shortages (not that you'd could drink the stuff safely either), malarial mozzies, chain link fence between us and that beach - just metres away, smelly porta loos, no beer, an OH&S black hole of a gym... The whole experience was what we, or the people above us, chose to make it.

Like I said, though, we were in the s**t. Apparently the CO was a bit s**y, and the RSM lost his s**t 'cos they'd heard we'd been swimming, in s**t. We swam, blissfully unaware, in the lateral drift of raw sewage outflows just a couple of hundred metres away on either side of us. Someone at Aspen medical soon helpfully pointed out the error of our ways and taught us another lesson about life and health in the tropics. Cest la vie... But after the first month and a half or so of what for most of us is our first deployment, the lesson seems to be that this trip will be what we make of it. A little bit of black humour goes a long way when little luxuries seem a long way off.

Now FOB Ranadi is no more, we're all jammed back into GBR, and the patrol program has all but evaporated. The tempo has changed though and, if anything, we're busier. There's regular PT (with superb gym facilities) and a bunch of courses planned to keep us occupied and continuing the long slow climb onwards and upwards along the Army Reserve career trajectory. There should be some good training opportunities in the next couple of months. There's air conditioning, laundries (and people who'll drive washing machines for you if you can't be bothered), and a pretty good mess.

The tropical climate - takes some getting used to, and it makes me just a little homesick when I check the weather at home on the internet and see a cold and wet winter like the kind I remember from my childhood. However, though I'm making a point of not counting down the days, little milestones keep coming and going (ASM qualification, half way to tax free qualification, etc) that let me know the time is passing. Letters and parcels and phone calls to and from home are important too. Now and again we do get to go out and see some pretty interesting places - Hells Point and some of the beaches have been highlights for me - and it makes me smile every time we go for a drive and get the "smile and wave" treatment from the locals. The time has flown so far, and I'm sure it'll be all too soon that we jump on a Herc for home...

Sunshine, sweat and elections PTE McDonald, 2 PL

The Platoon was led by the 'Doc' LT Shrikkanth Rangarajan (or Ranj) and SGT Nathaniel Cave. 4 Section was led by CPL David Crowe and LCPL Daniel Baker; 5 Section was led by CPL Tim Moore and LCPL Scott Connor, while 6 was led by CPL Sean Fitton and LCPL Dan Towers. After two months of acclimatisation training in Puckapunyal and Canungra, 2 Platoon arrived in the Solomon Islands in late July for Rotation 22 of Op Anode. To say the contingent arrived at an interesting time would be an understatement. History shows that election time in the Solomon Islands is often marked by tension, with a volatility that can quickly escalate into civil unrest as occurred during 2006.



It is against this backdrop that we have been tasked with supporting the Participating Police Forces by providing a visible presence to deter groups that may be intent on similar unrest during the 2010

election period. Whilst we have only been incountry for a short month, we have been very active to ensure our presence is visible during the lead up to the elections and the subsequent announcement of the country's new Prime Minister. Our tasks to date have included over-watch of the Solomon Islands worst criminals at Rove Prison, patrolling the streets of Honiara with the Solomon Islands and other nations' Participating Police Forces and patrolling areas where unexploded ordinance of WWII vintage is known to be in high concentration to deter its removal by the local populace. Whilst the election period came and went without widespread unrest, it definitely did not pass without incident. The sight of procession after procession of vehicles laden with people, chanting slogans and horns blaring moving up and down the Kukum Highway in the lead up to Election Day



added a degree of fervour and colour (literally) I had not seen before. Coupled with the numerous street rallies, it was apparent to all of us that the election was of great importance to the Solomon Islanders. Indeed, the sight of proprietors of local businesses welding up their shop-fronts on the eve of the Election Day illustrated how bad locals expected things to turn out if the election process was not perceived to be above board. All in all, it made the media coverage of the lead up to the Australian election appear tame in comparison.

However, the importance that the Solomon Islanders place on their elections is but one of many differences in between the Islander culture and our own. These many differences manifest themselves in the most peculiar ways and are often surprising. There are few other places in the world where when travelling in a vehicle all pedestrians feel compelled to either wave at you, abuse you or do

both. I can't think of anywhere else I have been where stoning a vehicle is the most socially acceptable way of conveying one's displeasure with the vehicle's passengers and/or the driver, just as there few other places you will see a 7 year old ascend a palm tree in as many seconds. Equally I can't think of another place where people are so intrigued by you and welcoming at the same time. Whilst there is a lack of neon lights in Honiara, the beaming smiles of some of its inhabitants when they see you pass through their village more than makes up for it.



Similarly impressive is the natural beauty of the place, with the Platoon consensus being that the country resembles a post apocalyptic Fiji. This initial assessment of the Solomons was confirmed during our patrol to Auki in the Malaitan province in the days surrounding the announcement of the country's new Prime Minister. Deploying to the Island of Malaita from Guadalcanal aboard the HMAS Wewak, we were able to take in the more of the Islands of the archipelago, complete with their palm

tree lined sandy beaches, coral reefs, clear blue straits and canals. If it weren't aboard an Landing Craft Heavy (LCH) chock full of sweaty soldiers, you could have sold the ride as a 6 hour cruise to

tourists who would have paid handsomely for the privilege.

As a side benefit of the trip, 2 Platoon also has an appreciation of what we imagine it is to be like rock stars. It seemed like half the city of Auki greeted us at the port, and that was after much of the youth of the town paddled into the harbour on their canoes to usher in the LCH as they saw it approach on the horizon. By contrast, our patrolling programme on the Island was not nearly as eventful. With the Prime Ministerial announcement in line with expectations and no sign of the unrest that marked the same period during the 2006 election, the majority of locals were as perplexed by the need for our presence as they were surprised by it. Not that would have been disappointed by the RAMSI stimulus package that was unleashed as the Platoon did its best to purchase every pack of Funkees on the island to supplement our ration packs.

As hard as it is to believe, despite feeling like we have just been getting started, we find ourselves over a quarter of the way through our deployment. Despite this, like the boy pushing the wheelbarrow, the job is still in front of us with much work still to be done.

Inside the wire (PTE James Craig, 2 Platoon)

Since the end of the election period here in the Solomon Islands and the transition to a steady state, the tempo of operational duties has reduced substantially, as more responsibility is handed over to the Participating Police Force. The change in operational tempo has resulted in the members of A Coy CTF 635 spending a lot more time inside the wire at GBR. This time has been put to good use with a number of courses being run including the Basic Communications course, a Combat First Aid course and Infantry Promotion courses. There was also the chance to conduct interoperability training with the Australian Navy on the Landing craft vessels that deployed to the Solomon Islands' during the election period.

The Navy interoperability training by members of 2 PL became quite useful when they were called upon to assist the police in operations that required the use of naval assets. The extraction of which proved to be the most challenging part of the operation as the sea state began to pick up with the approach of a storm, providing a less than stable platform to be moving men and equipment onto.

With the reduction in the tempo of operations there has also arisen the opportunity for members of



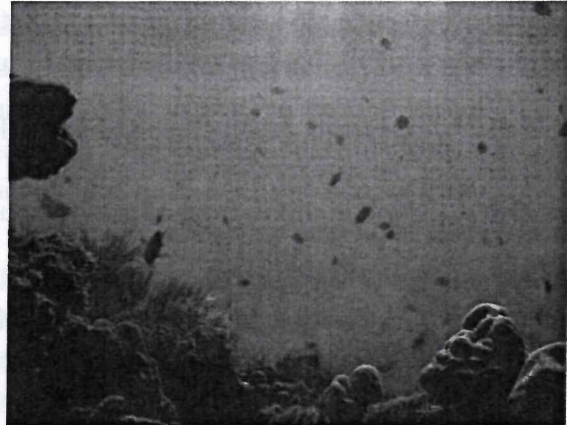
the company to get out and see some of the historic sites that Guadalcanal has to offer. These have included CPL Crowe's excellent battlefield tour that saw us visit the sights of some of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific campaign of WWII. Being here and seeing the terrain and conditions that the soldiers of World War II fought in throughout the Pacific gives one a new perspective and respect for the American and Japanese Soldiers that fought and died here.

Above: TPR's Lanyon and Lockheart and PTE's Merriman, Emms, Lenehan and Ludeman view a collection of WWII artefacts in a local village.

A highlight of the deployment for many members has been the chance to obtain their Open Water diving licence. Given that we are in one of the premier dive destinations in the world with water

that is refreshingly warmer to Victoria's chilly depths, it has been an excellent place to obtain diving qualifications. Also we have been afforded the chance to dive a number of sites in the vicinity of Honiara including a Japanese submarine that was rammed and run aground on a reef, and a B17 bomber. All members have also had the chance to swim at Bonegi beach where a WW2 transport ship has ran aground, with segments of the vessel still protruding from the water after almost 70 years, a wreck site that can be well explored with just snorkelling equipment.

And finally, not that anybody is counting, but at the time this article was finished there were 623 hours left till we will be flying home.



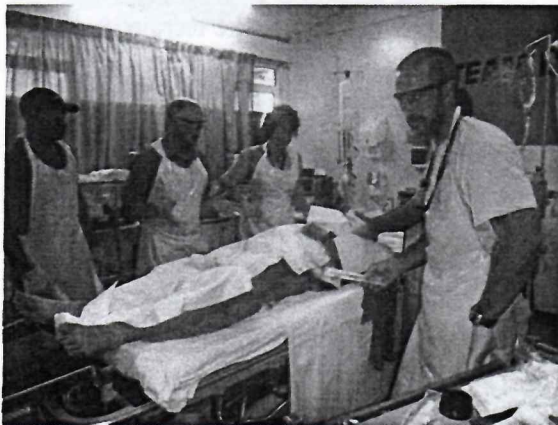
The 'Wreck'

Medically supporting our soldiers. By MAJ Tony Griffiths, Police Liaison Officer

Families and friends of our soldiers here in the Solomon Islands will be interested in our medical support arrangements which are extensive. Our Combat First Aiders (CFA) are soldiers who receive extra specialist training and are found in every section. They are capable of dealing with a range of conditions and traumatic injuries and are authorised to administer certain drugs and intravenous fluids. CFA must maintain these competencies on an annual basis.

The contingent also has a number of Advanced Combat Medical Assistants (ACMA) who are roughly equivalent to intensive care paramedics and are routinely deployed to the field in support of our soldiers. ACMA are trained to deliver advanced cardiac and trauma life support and can utilise a wide range of drugs and interventions to provide pre-hospital care. CPL Andrew Young, an ACMA with the Rotation, says "Although most of our time is spent in treating minor conditions it is great to know we can deal with life-threatening situations in the event of an injury".

The contingent is well supported at our base by Aspen Medical, a contractor which provides a range of clinical and ancillary health care services including primary care, pathology, radiology, ward care, an intensive care unit, surgery, emergency care, including resuscitation and ambulance services and aeromedical evacuation (AME) including supporting international medical retrieval. Many of Aspen's senior medical personnel have recent experience in the Defence Force.



Left: An Aspen medical team at work during a CTF exercise

As much of the Solomon Islands can only be reached by air or boat, the contingent is supported by helicopters provided by a contractor, PDL Toll which additionally is contracted to provide a 24 hour capability for AME at 30 minutes notice. PDL Toll's helicopter operator is a very experienced company employs pilots and aircrew many of whom have significant experience in military aviation. The helicopters are equipped to be able to fly in most weather conditions and their crews are additionally equipped and trained to fly using night vision goggles thus enhancing the safety of night flying enormously.

AME crews regularly train and periodically the contingent exercises all participants in an AME exercise which includes calling for assistance, deploying a medical team from Aspen to the scene of the incident and assessing and stabilising the patient. The patient is then loaded onto the helicopter and evacuated to our base to receive further treatment or surgery as necessary. In extreme cases, Aspen will then coordinate with medical authorities in Australia to transfer the patient for further care.

As you can see, soldiers are well looked after should they suffer any injury or illness during their time in the Solomon Islands.

A note from the Medical Team CAPT FERGUSON, CPL YOUNG and LCPL O'Brien.

During this rotation the Medical team has supported many activities. These activities consisted of Range practises, training Combat first aid, sports day, triatholons, marathons, field training activities, targeted ops and maintaining an RAP.

The health of the contingent has always been of the most importance especially preventing heat injuries during training. Skin rashes and prickly heat from sweating has always been a battle to prevent and reduce. Injuries have been managed throughout the deployment, especially vulnerable are knee, ankle and back injuries.



room was outside and fairly warm the participants were very keen to learn. This provided some interesting sights around GBR as everyone seemed to be used as a casualty to be practised on for training. We would also like to thank those played a casualty for their acting. As we all prepare to return home to our families we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Right: CPL Young on CFA Mass casualty training.

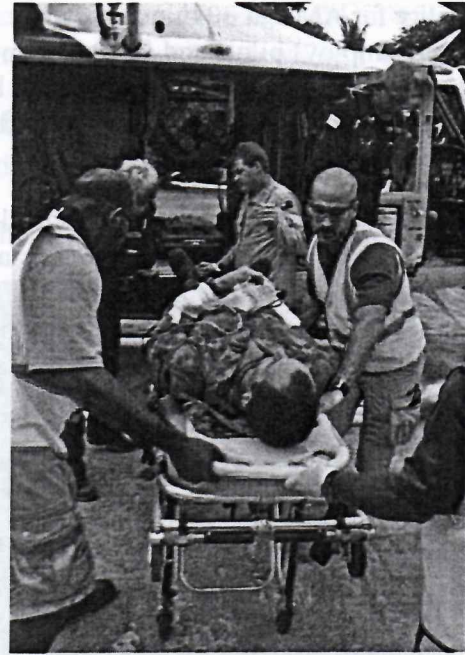
One experience we have enjoyed has been time on the range with the PNG platoon. They showed us how to fire their M16 which has no magnifying sight to look through. Using a slightly different technique we were soon able to fire a grouping. When it was lunch time the PNG know how to put on a BBQ and with a bit of help from their machetes we were able to wash down lunch with a coconut drink.

The medical team have had an opportunity to run a Combat First Aid Course. The team worked very hard preparing their lectures and preparing for practicals. Though the lecture





Left: LCPL O' Brien instructing PTE Merriman on thoracic injuries.



Above: Evacuation to a helicopter. Right: soldier is unloaded from an AME helicopter during an AME exercise

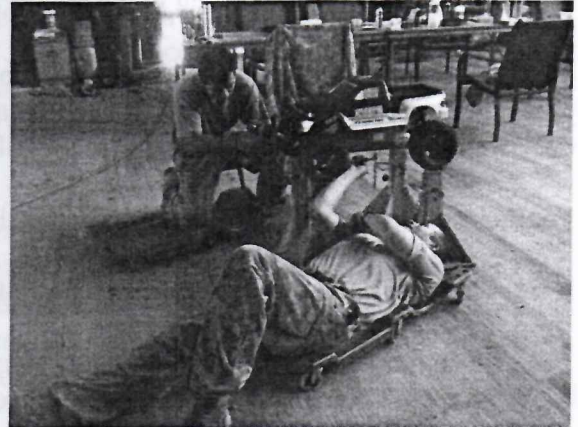


Above: CAPT Ferguson on the mass casualty training.



Right: An Aspen doctor and paramedic treat the casualty

S4 CELL *The grand opening of the new log facility*



Above left: LTCOL Thompson cutting the ribbon alongside LTCOL Landford.
Above right: The new log facility has made even the biggest jobs seem so small!

The S4 Cell has seen some great people come through the gates of GBR however the team that enters the wonderful new log facility will set a new standard in sarcasm, irony and humour the likes of which has never been seen before.

For example the RQ (WO1 McIntosh), who has not only successfully stood up to and defeated the CQMS in a battle of opinions' he has also managed to spend the last 6 months in Sollies without the sun touching his skin (must be the Doxy!).

Then there is CQMS (SGT Beales), he was devastated when his beloved Ranadi FOB was dismantled and returned to GBR however he found comfort in his new man-friend, the CSM (WO2 Stephenson).

RAEME have also seen their fair share of adventure/hardship. Not only do they have to toil in the heat of the Sollie sun but when they enter their office, a shipping container, the temperature inside makes the outside breeze feel like an arctic blast. Of course no RAEME outfit would be complete without their counterparts the Transport Section. Made up of two females and one male, TPT SPVR CPL Kev 'and friends' Farrell says it's just like being at home. Everything he says is "wrong" and he should just "stay out of it". Thank you CPL Farrell for the sacrifice you are making for your country.

These are just some of the many talented and hardworking S4 Cell members that continually provide a high level of service with much integrity and enthusiasm. No matter how many times we get left out of the operational planning and told at the last minute 'we need range stores for yesterday, didn't anyone tell you'.

Supervisor Infantry Operations-Section (SIO-S) Module 2 (Pte Trent Duffield)

With the pace of operations 'slow', the Company was able to partake of a number of training opportunities. One of these was to run a promotion module, the SIO-S Module.

For the soldiers of SIOS Mod 2, the course did not begin with the theory of the previous week, the course began with the field phase and our march into the jungle.

We marched in with each man's pack laden with ammunition, food, water and 30 other odd kilograms of the bare essentials. For a bemused some, the bare essentials were later found to extend to the bizarre, including fire extinguishers (PTE McDonald), vehicle winch hooks (LCPL Baker)

and weights liberated from the gym (PTE Moller) – all thanks to a clandestine midnight raid on their packs the night before by their digger mates. It was clear that the concepts mateship and mischief were alive and thriving in the modern Australian Army.

With a platoon harbour soon established, the patrol program began. With two sections and only one jungle between us, we held numerical supremacy. Regrettably, this 'supremacy' proved not to be decisive, or even relevant. It was, in fact, a fail.

For those unfamiliar with the jungle of Guadalcanal, it is important to note the following:

1. If it can have a spike, it will have a spike, or maybe a 72 of them;
2. Bamboo is not your friend;
3. The jungle is in the jungle for a reason;
4. Impenetrable is not an adjective, it is reckless understatement; and
5. Spiders straight from Tolkien's Mordor dig the jungle floor (and your sleeping bag)



The aggregate of the above provided for intense patrols and the need for serious navigation. The slightest discourse by student section commanders from bearings and paces could see a section leaving a patrol and entering an odyssey. Fortunately, the odysseys were few. .

Each student's capacity to lead throughout the course was tested and tested again. Student section commanders were tasked with ambushes, observation posts and various patrols that were beset with complex scenarios. A section commander could soon find their

ambush was compromised and that the section was receiving incoming mortar fire (notional) or that their patrol had wandered into a minefield and was besieged by multiple casualties.

One beleaguered soldier in the platoon was even confronted alone in the jungle's darkness by a Solomon Sasquatch courtesy of the kind folk at buycostumes.com and a mischievous band of instructors. Fortunately, shock and a stumble rearward prevailed prior any 5.56mm negotiations being entered into.

In all, the field phase of SIOS Mod 2 proved challenging, demanding and, after a good shower, rewarding. As the course emerged from the jungle on the fifth day, it was clear that the already deep respect for those who had fought in the same jungle some 70 years earlier had only increased.

With the field phase now behind us, the course is preparing itself for the live fire component to be completed in the coming weeks.

THE HOMECOMING

At the end of a deployment all the deployed member wants to do is to throw away the uniform, hop into some 'civvies' and get back to normal life. However, there is a process that needs to be gone through. This is currently known as 'Decompression'. For R22 Decompression was undertaken at RAAF Williams, Laverton. Those members whose family was able to meet them had their first night free. The remainder went to Laverton. The next day saw the Decompression commence in earnest.

Decompression consisted of RTAPS (Return to Australia Psychological Screening), Post Deployment Health and Alcohol Briefs, Post-deployment Medical and Eradication Medication, Separation Health Assessment (for those ending Continuous Full-time Service or CFTS), completion of documentation. It is not a simple process, but with a Reserve unit drawn together from depots up to 600 km apart, it had to be done before dispersal.

Finally there was 'The Parade'. The Host Officer was the Commanding Officer of 8/7 RVR, LT COL Laidlaw. The Reviewing Officer was a former CO of 8/7 RVR and Commander 4th Brigade Brigadier Robert Marsh. The Principal Guest was the out-going Mayor of the City of Ballarat, Cr Judy Verlin. Cr Verlin had attended the Farewell Parade for the deployment and had visited the Company as a member of Boss Lift. Following her visit to The Solomons Cr Verlin presented the battalion with a Eureka flag signed by all Ballarat members on the deployment. As a part of the parade there were a number of promotions following the SIO-S course run during the deployment.

THE CATA

For those members of the Brigade who weren't deployed on Op Anode, the 4th Brigade undertook a Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA), known as Ex Jacka, at Puckapunyal in mid October. Over the fortnight of the CATA over 500 members passed through the Reception, Staging Onwards Movement and Integration or ROSI process.

The training was based on a 5/6 High Readiness Reserve (HRR) Company. 8/7 RVR provided some of its non HRR members as an 'opposing' force while some of its Recruit qualified members as Role Players. In all 8/7 RVR provided almost 50 members at the CATA, including 3 Observer Trainers (OTs).

The training scenarios were based on low-level insurgency such as expected in East Timor. Consequently, the HRR members were trained in Joint Land Combat, Population Protection and Control, Information Operations and Indigenous Capacity Building.

The major activity during the CATA was the capture of insurgent Ron 'El Resto' Cox at his farmlet near the town of Toolleen between Puckapunyal and Bendigo. The tactics included an Outer Cordon, an Inner Cordon and a Search Party.

The CATA was the first in a number of steps which commenced the training for a 5/6 RVR led Rifle Company Group that will deploy to East Timor for an eight month tour commencing in early 2012. It is planned that 8/7 RVR will provide a platoon. 8/7 RVR will also provide the staff for the training and testing of the Company Group prior to its deployment.

THE RANGER MUSEUM (Major Neil Leckie – Museum Manager)

The Ballarat Ranger Military Museum opened in the old Ranger Barracks (now appropriately a Dan Murphy's outlet) in July 1989, just prior to the battalion deploying to RAAF Tindal at Katherine in the NT on Exercise Kangaroo '89 (the largest exercise held since WW2). When the barracks closed in 2001 and BHQ and ADMIN COY were temporarily housed at the B Company depot at Broodseinde Barracks, the museum found a temporary home in a disused room in the council hall at Sebastopol, the hall where the Sebastopol R&SL Sub-branch meets.

In 2004 approval was obtained to move the old Q Store Hut (known in WW2 as a P1 Type Hut) that had been moved from Ranger Barracks to Broodseinde Barracks for the Army Cadets to use to the new Ranger Barracks for use as a museum (technically to store the battalion's Unit Historical Collection).

The hut was a tin shed with no wall or ceiling linings. With the help of some apprentice plasterers and painters and a lot of hours from the museum's volunteers (mainly Vietnam Veterans), the hut was lined and painted and opened on the battalion's 150th Birthday, 9th August 2008.

The 'museum' houses a fascinating collection of memorabilia from the Ballarat district and from former and serving members and the battalion's predecessor units.

The 'museum' is open 'By Appointment' (ring BHQ reception on (03) 5330 4500. It is hoped that in 2011 the museum will be open Thursday afternoons from 1-4 pm.

ALLIED REGIMENTS

The Staffords (3rd Battalion, Mercian Regiment) In 1955 the 38th Battalion, The Northern Victorian Regiment (Bendigo) was allied to the South Staffordshire Regiment (once known as the 38th Foot). When the South Staffords amalgamated with the North Staffords (80th Foot), the alliance was changed in 1959 to the Staffordshire Regiment. The Staffords alliance changed to 2 RVR when the 'Royal' Regiments were formed in Australia in 1960. A couple of years ago the Staffordshire Regiment amalgamated with two other British Regiments to form the Mercian Regiment. The Staffords thus became the 3rd Battalion, Mercian Regiment (Staffords). Like in the days of old, the Staffords find themselves on an indefinite overseas posting. They are now based in Fallingbostal in Germany and occupy the same barracks as the Germany Army did in the late 1930s.

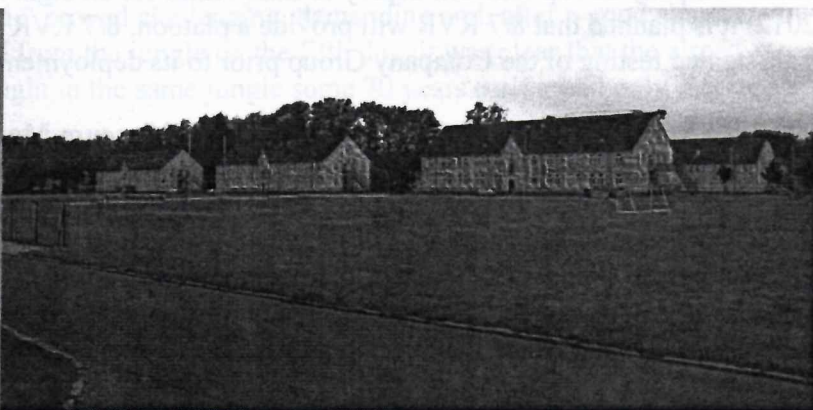


A group of eight men, all with a connection to 8/7 RVR, visited the Staffords in Germany during a Western Front Tour in August 2010. They were former Shepparton Company Commanders Peter Dempster and Denis Scott, former Echuca and Ballarat officer Peter Ramm, former Staff Sergeants Tom Chambers and Brian McInnis, former 'Q' Cpl Ian Nunn and a former digger George Douglass. The tour leader was Major Neil Leckie.

Left: At Robert Beatham's Grave at Heath Cemetery, France.

After a couple of nights in Paris and visiting the battlefields in France and Belgium, which included visiting the grave of Robert Beatham VC (8th Battalion), the group stayed for three nights in the Staffords lines. The stay included a comprehensive tour of the barracks and an inspection of their Warrior APCs.

Below: The Stafford's Barracks at Fallingbostal, Germany.





After leaving Fallingbommel, a day's drive through Germany, Belgium, Holland and France, crossing the channel on the Calais-Dover Ferry and a few hours through the English country-side saw the group arrive at the C Company London Regiment Barracks where they were billeted. During the next four days the group visited the Imperial War Museum, the Army Museum, the RAF Museum at Hendon and a number of other London attractions. The group was fortunate enough to visit the Tower of London for the

Ceremony of the Keys (the locking up of the Tower for the night).
Above: A Stafford's 'Warrior' APC

Our Canadian Allied unit is the **Royal Regiment of Canada**. It was formed in Toronto in 1862 when Canada was under threat during the American Civil War. It was then known as the 10th Battalion Volunteer Militia Rifles, Canada. The Regiment was on active service during the Fenian Raids in 1866. In 1889 to 1900, during the Boer War in the South African War, the 10th Royal Grenadiers contributed volunteers to the Canadian Contingents. As a result the Regiment was awarded a Battle Honour, "South Africa, 1899-1900."

During the First World War, 1914-1919, the 10th Royal Grenadiers recruited volunteers for the 3rd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) that served in France and Belgium with the 1st Infantry Brigade, 1st Division from Feb 1915 until the Armistice. The Regiment also recruited members for the 58th Battalion, which served in France and Belgium from Feb 1916 until 1919. The 10th Royal Grenadiers recruited for the 123rd and 124th Battalions, both of which served as Pioneer Battalions from Mar 1917 to May 1918. They also recruited for the 170th and 204th Battalions, which provided reinforcements for the Canadian Corps in the Field.

After World War I, on 1 May 1920 the Regiment was redesignated, "The Royal Grenadiers." A new Regiment was formed mainly from veterans of the 3rd Battalion CEF and named "The Toronto Regiment." The Royal Grenadiers and the Toronto Regiment were amalgamated 15 Dec 1936 under the temporary title of, "The Royal Regiment of Toronto Grenadiers". On 11 Feb 1939, the Regiment was redesignated "The Royal Regiment of Canada".

In the Second World War, on 1 Sep 1939, the Regiment was mobilized as "The Royal Regiment of Canada C.A.S.F." A 2nd Reserve Battalion to be stationed at Fort York Armoury in Toronto. June 1940 saw the 1st Battalion moved to Iceland. In Oct 1940, it was transferred to the UK. The Regiment took part in the raid on Dieppe in Aug 1942 where it suffered heavy casualties. It landed in Normandy on 7 Jul 1944 and served with great distinction in Northwest Europe in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. After the War ended, the 1st Battalion of the Regiment returned to Canada and was disbanded on 31 Dec 1945. The 2nd Battalion continued to serve in the Reserve Army as "The Royal Regiment of Canada".



Today, The Royal Regiment of Canada serves as an Infantry Regiment in 32 Brigade in the Primary Reserve of the Canadian Army. It is stationed at Fort York Armoury in Toronto. Members of the Regiment have taken part in United Nations and NATO Operations in Africa, the Middle East, Bosnia and the current UN & NATO mission in Afghanistan. The Regiment continues to maintain its strong traditions of excellence of service to the community and to Canada.

Overseas Attachments Given sufficient notice, detachments to our Allied Regiments can be arranged for members when travelling overseas. Attachments can also be made to other units such as when PTE Ben Collyer of A Company went to England to work and gained an attachment to the London Regiment.

Odd Shots:



Corps Awards 2009

The following recipients of the Corps awards were offered congratulations in the previous journal. We now honour them with photographs of their presentations.



The PTE Gale RAAOC Soldier of the Year Award – PTE (now LCPL) Matthew Hutchins, 8/7 RVR.



PPC Training at Pucka. Simulator Training at Canungra Farewell Parade at Laverton. 152nd Birthday at Ballarat PTE Peter Brewer and WO Mark Broemmer. Maryborough ANZAC Day, LT COL Laidlaw, CR Judy Verlin (Ballarat Mayor) and RSM WO1 Brian Buskell at Laverton, Catafalque Party at Cobram