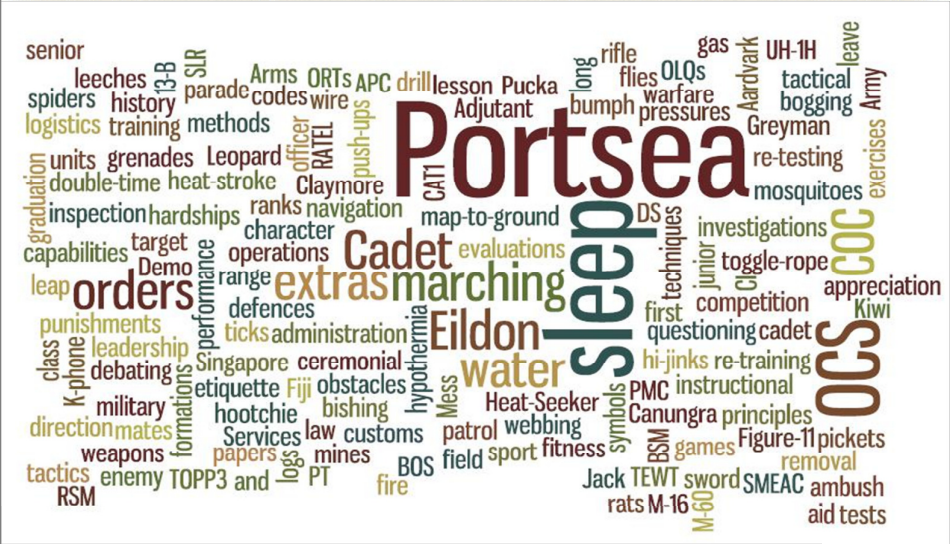


A Collective Memory of  
life as an Army Officer  
Cadet at OCS Portsea

July 1983 – June 1984

On the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our  
OCS Portsea Graduation and to provide a record  
for ourselves and our families so we never  
forget the life-shaping experience



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## Overview

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1983, around 105 service and civilian entrants (including Reservists, a couple of psychologists, a teacher, a lawyer, a librarian and others with seemingly no correlation with Army life) were scheduled to enter Officer Cadet School Portsea for 44 weeks of high intensity training that would produce another willing batch in a continuous six monthly flow of junior Army officers who would link up with their Duntroon cousins as they entered Regimental service. The course was, contrary to the statistics contained in Neville Lindsay's history of OCS, comprised of roughly 38% serving soldiers and around 30% with no military experience of any kind. Most of the remaining 32% had some Reserve experience (Territorials, for the New Zealand entrants) with at least three having served a year at another officer training establishment also giving them an advantage and at least four more having the questionable benefit of school cadets. In short, more than 60% of our number had a lot of ground to make up on our serving mates in the next few months. Of our graduating cohort, nine New Zealanders, three Singaporeans and one Fijian would return to their home countries to begin their commissioned service. One Australian re-joined the course in Senior Class after recuperating from injury. Of the 76 who eventually graduated, few of us had any real appreciation of what we were about to encounter and 30% of the commencing class fell by the way over the ensuing 11 months.

While none of us is likely to recall it, our Joining Instruction informed us that the course was designed to:

- a. *promote a sense of honour, loyalty, duty and responsibility, inculcate habits of discipline and soldierly conduct;*
- b. *develop a capacity for clear logical thought and expression;*
- c. *give a sound military education in the science and art of war; and*
- d. *instruct in those military skills and techniques of modern warfare required of a junior officer.*

It went on to state, "*The course is, and always has been, challenging both physically and mentally. Throughout it you will be exposed to physical hardships and mental pressures which will test every fibre of your being... The way you react to this stress is continuously monitored and recorded by the staff to assist in determining your suitability for service as an officer.*" We could not accuse OCS of leaving us ignorant or of pulling their punches.

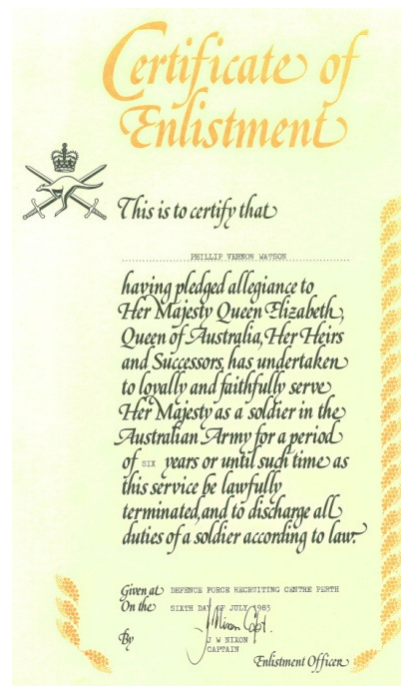
This was the year of Police's *Every Breath You Take*, Cyndi Lauper's *Girl's Just Want To Have Fun*, Van Halen's *Jump* and U2's *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* and a wealth of 80's classics still played regularly today. *Return of the Jedi* and *Flashdance* were popular movies and a very young Nicole Kidman starred in *BMX Bandits*; *The Little Drummer Girl* by John Le Carre and the *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley did the same for books. The most popular new car on the road was the XE Falcon, easily outselling the VH Commodore and the Mitsubishi Sigma (my how the mighty have fallen). We had already seen Bob Hawke defeat Malcolm Fraser for the Prime Ministership and our memories were still raw from the Ash Wednesday bushfires. We were witnessing the emerging Franklin River Dam protests and we would later become aware of the bungled ASIS training raid at the Hilton Hotel and

the floating of the Australian dollar for the first time. In sport, we had little inkling of the impending America's Cup win by *Australia II* and thereby breaking the world's longest sporting winning streak (132 years), or of "*Kiwi*" winning the Melbourne Cup (although it would be a programmed holiday for us), and it was only on the second day of the course that New Zealand defeated Australia in Rugby League ending sixteen consecutive test victories. As for cricket, every Aussie did their best to change the subject anytime a Kiwi brought up the Trevor Chappell underarm bowling fiasco a few years earlier. (It happened to be a good time to be a Kiwi on our course.) We were yet to find out that sports time was scheduled to enable us to watch Hawthorn defeat Essendon to win the VFL final and, unheralded at the time, Billy Slater and Miranda Kerr were god and goddess-like icons born in the same year as the birth of our military careers. (Some of our class were not to know that, perhaps, they too would ascend to such military heights equivalent to and even beyond the public stature of such icons of the present day.)

The Australian civilian and Army Reserve entrants were required to enlist for a period of six years with everyone having their enlistment terminated on graduation and replaced with an open ended Officer's Commission. A letter of resignation could be sent to the Chief of the General Staff but there was no obligation on the Army to accept such a request. In effect, it constituted a life-time obligation to serve but in practical terms very few ever had their request declined. For those who undertook flying training after graduation, there was a six year Return of Service Obligation. For the rest of us, it was two years.



1 OCS Portsea Conditions of Entry and Service pamphlet



2 "...having pledged allegiance... has undertaken to loyally and faithfully serve Her Majesty as a soldier in the Australian Army for a period of six years..."

As for the financial attractions to be found in committing to our budding, demanding career; the annual salary for a civilian entrant with a university degree was a miserly \$11,640<sup>1</sup> at the time, but still about \$1,000 higher than a non-graduate, and still 34% less than the national average wage. Pay for serving soldiers remained at their previous level unless it was already lower than the Cadet rate. Given that it was a period of high unemployment (nearly 10%) and inflation was also running at 10%; a secure job, even a poorly paid one with an element of danger to it and the opportunity to serve one's country, had an appeal. Besides, the salary on commissioning increased to a pleasing \$21,751 dollars on graduation for a Lieutenant which was 14% higher than the national average. Most of the class graduated as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants (the second last cohort of an illustrious cadre) and had to wait six months before being promoted to Lieutenant and being rewarded with the full fruits of their arduous labour. Those of advanced years were able to anticipate rapid promotion to Captain though under the "28 years of age" policy. Those with a degree graduated as full Lieutenants, and because of the iniquity of delaying 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants from promotion until the following year, it meant that degree-qualified graduates skipped a cohort ahead. Andrew Maggs: *"Degree qualified people were known as 'Special Entrants' which wasn't a good thing with Drill Wing Sergeant Major Maurie Lazarus on the parade ground, in my face, wanting to know exactly in which ways I was 'special', and he didn't think it could be in any good ways."* Phil Watson: *"I lost count of the number of times the serving soldiers abused me saying, "A li-bar-ian! [sic], a f@#\*ing li-bar-ian!! How can it take 3 years to learn to file a book and then you get to graduate a whole rank above me and skip a whole cohort?!!!!" I think I would have preferred Maurie Lazarus' attentions instead."*

For all of us though, the experience fundamentally re-shaped us as individuals and set us on a path to leadership and professional excellence.

## Enlistment

Before being accepted for enlistment we each had to pass a rigorous medical, dental and psychological examination and subsequently participate in a full day of physical and aptitude assessments at a local barracks. The role of the Selection Board was to *"assess the candidate's general compatibility and suitability as an officer. The Board concerns itself with the degree to which the candidate gives evidence, in the various situations, of his resourcefulness, ingenuity, flexibility, adaptability, and his capacity to communicate ideas to, and influence others and thus demonstrate his potential for success as a cadet at the Officer Cadet School."* We attended in groups of around a dozen of which only one or two might be selected. The assessments involved a whole raft of interviews, including the not surprising question where we were asked how we felt about killing someone. We acted out scenarios and simulated problems and socialised over a buffet lunch with the others in the group as well as the interviewing officers. The highlight was the three different physical activities designed to assess

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<sup>1</sup> The salary for a degree-qualified officer trainee in 2013 was \$45,456 which was 36% less than the national average annual wage. The salary for a 1<sup>st</sup> year Lieutenant was almost exactly the same as the average annual wage at a little over \$69,000 p.a. In essence, nothing has really changed over the last 30 years.

our leadership potential, thinking processes, interactions and so forth. Phil Watson: *"I'm not exactly thrilled to say that I managed to get 'killed' in every one of the exercises, and was the only one to do so and yet I was also the only one of the group to be selected for Portsea."* This was a common experience for everyone; including those who most others felt were naturals. We had no real idea most of the time of what was going on although, as we all found throughout our Portsea experience, we worked things out, often with the help of those around us. Many of us, especially the civilian entrants, were not terribly accomplished at many of the activities; but there was obviously enough in each of us to be selected even if not in the top tranche. By virtue of the bell curve selection and assessment approach, a good number of us would have only just made the final cut. It was then up to each of us to prove one way or another where we stood in the various orders of merit; most ominously, through the ever-present Form 13-B for individual assessment and regular Boards of Study, or BOS, where an individual was formally advised of poor performance and a requirement to improve or anticipate removal. But all of this was still ahead of us and largely unknown.

Phil Watson: *"As with many, I was sleepless the night before I enlisted and I came out in hives; the only other occasion being the night before I married. After 'signing on the line' in the Army Recruiting office and taking the oath (I was surprised by and still struggle with the requirement to swear [or sing] allegiance to an admirable but foreign monarch as "Queen of Australia") we had some time to kill before catching the red-eye overnight flight to Tullamarine Airport in Melbourne – a second night of virtually no sleep immediately prior to a year of chronic sleep deprivation. There was no one to meet us but we eventually managed to get our little group of six Sandgropers into Spencer Street Station in the city to parade (a first for me) in the cold, grey and drizzly early morning – welcome to winter in Victoria! Everyone really felt for the unknown guy, then at least, when a woman came out from the crowd and spoke to Warrant Officer Lazarus (later the 2<sup>nd</sup> RSM of the Army and prior to that my RSM in my first officer posting) about the fact it was raining."*

Mick Barling: *"I had a feeling of trepidation as soon as I saw this vignette unfolding. It was like it was happening in slow motion. All of us were lined up as it started to rain at Spencer Street with Drill Sergeants barking at my poor civilian comrades in arms who were getting their first taste of pastoral care, Drill Wing style. Me with my smug "Been There Done That" self-assuredness arrogantly thinking, "phwww I've had worse". Then out of the corner of my eye I see her, my Mum, moving towards us. I'm thinking; "Noooo Mum, not here, not now." Then the conversation:*

*Mum: "Excuse me, my name's Marita Barling, I think you should get those boys out of the rain. My son's out there."*

*WO2 G. Lazarus (RASigs): "Which one's yours Mrs Barlingssssss?"*

*Mum: "That's him over there", pointing to me as I try to hide behind someone's long hair.*

*Lazarus turns, spots me, takes a picture with his photographic brain, files it under "Cadets to be tormented till they graduate or get BOSed", turns to my*

*Mum and says: "He's not yours any more Mrs Barlingssssss, he's miiiiiiiiiiiiine." And torment me for the next six months he did. Happy days."*

One wonders what Mick's Mum (and a few others) thought any of us was getting into but it sure wasn't an environment of genteel comfort and kindness.

*Andrew Maggs: "Coming from Queensland; things had to be different for us. Remember in July '83 the pilot's strike was on or there was some airline problem? So after being enlisted in Brisbane, instead of flying straight to Melbourne we had the rest of the day off. Great start. That night we stayed in the OR's transit lines at Enoggera. My 1<sup>st</sup> night in the Army. You could sleep straight on the floor, or lie on the bed until the wire sank down to meet the floor. What had I gotten myself into? Up early; can't remember how we got to Brisbane airport but our plane was late. So when we arrived at Spencer Street it was all over, just a mini-bus waiting for us. And a smiling Drill Sergeant. And it was our fault we were late. This was followed by a high speed drive to Portsea. But we were still running late. And it was still our fault. That set the pattern for the next 12 months: Sleeping on the floor, always being behind, and the Drill Sergeant/Warrant Officers always smiling."*

*Dan Perren: "I remember it being all our fault that we were late. I arrived with an ironing board wrapped in cardboard under my arm after a tip from a previous Portsea graduate and was quizzed by a Drillie if it was a f'ing surfboard. I think I spent a few hours in A Company only to be moved and separated from said ironing board and secreted carpet sweeper for several days. Neither were much use in the tents on the sports fields where us Queenslanders were subjected to the winter chill of Portsea. Crying for my mummy on one of several runs through the dunes in my Dunlop volleys, one of the guys looked at me and said "what's your f'ing problem?""*

*Jeff Harrison: "Vic Doust and I signed up in Perth and as we were bringing our cars, we drove across the country. We arrived at the centre of the known universe (Melbourne) wide-eyed and freezing; so immediately went looking for a jumper. Vic (a country boy from tropical Carnarvon) and I couldn't get over the fact that steam rose off our pee in the urinals! As I recall, it was a Wednesday and every bar we found seemed to have a distinct lack of girls, so it was apparent to us that everyone in Melbourne was gay... except us. We booked into the Spencer Motel that was so dingy that when you tuned the light on it made the room darker. Aah, happy memories."*

We boarded buses for the lengthy journey out of the city and down the Mornington Peninsula with very few occupants speaking as they were pre-occupied with their own anxious thoughts. After a long beginning to the day, we arrived at the Officer Cadet School, Portsea just in time for lunch. Most of the expected cadets climbed down from the buses with faces impassively set in stark contrast to their internal turmoil. Not everyone arrived as a formed group, a cardinal sin on our first day. We were corralled on the veranda outside the Cadet's Mess facing out onto the PMC's Lawn towards the cliffs overlooking Port Philip Bay and hemmed in on the left and right by two story accommodation blocks and confronted by the imposing figure of the RSM, Warrant Officer Class One Sam Hassell.

*Phil Watson: "I have little recall of what he said at the time other than something about the standards we were required to meet and then the rather curious statement*

he directed to any members of the media who might have made it into our cohort (heaven only knows what sort of madness would induce someone to put themselves so lightly into our circumstances.) He made reference to recent bastardisation issues at Duntroon and assured us that no such practices existed at Portsea. (I was actually somewhat re-assured by that although as it turned out, some minor practices did exist.) Having completed his address, the RSM formally yelled out instructions for the BSM to present himself. An impressive looking cadet in Battle Dress and cap marched onto the lawn and it was only moments later that he bellowed the command, “Company of Officer Cadets, On Parade!” As if from nowhere, the entire Senior Class bolted from where they had been secreted within and behind the accommodation blocks and from either side of the Cadet’s Mess. With what appeared to be lightning speed and great precision, certainly to a military novice like me, the Senior Class formed up in front of us. The RSM told us that this would be the standard expected of us very quickly. He informed us that from this moment we were required to run everywhere for the next three weeks and were not allowed to walk anywhere – not even from our room to the bathroom. When we moved around later, it was always marching; and if moving in a group of four or more, the senior or duty cadet was required to take charge. At the conclusion of the RSM’s address, we had our names called one at a time and a member of the Senior Class was detailed to take us under their wing for the next three days as we went through an exhaustive array of many uniform, equipment, weapon, book and other issues; and for those of us who had naively thought our expensive civilian version of a haircut would pass initial muster, we also experienced the (mal-ad)ministrations of the ubiquitous on-base barber.”



3 We troop from the buses to the PMC’s lawn with little grasp of what is about to befall us.



4 An impressive group of Senior Class Cadet Under Officers.



5 “Company of Officer Cadets, On Parade!”



6 Being claimed by a Senior Class member to begin the most intense 11 months of our lives



Civilian Candidates

Item	Qty	Item	Qty
Battle Dress	2	Clothes Brush	1
Khaki Service Cap	2	Shoes Brushes	2
Blue Service Cap	1	Raincoat Nylon	1
Blue Ceremonial Dress	2	Wallet, Waterproof	1
Polyester Shirt	2	Toilet Accessories Bag	1
Polyester Trousers	2 pr	Nail Brush	1
Hat, Khaki, Fur Felt	1	Shaving Brush	1
Trousers, Drill, Green	6 prs	Safety Razor	1
Shirts, Drill, Green	6	Comb	1
Flannel Blazer	1	Hairbrush	1
Shirt White	2	Hand Mirror	1
Trousers, Grey, Flannel	1 pr	Tooth Brush	1
Socks, Woollen, White	2 prs	Sewing Kit	1
Drawers, Cotton	6 prs	Band Service Head Dress	1
Undershirts, Cotton	4	Chin Strap	1
Pyjamas, Flannelette	1 pr	Sweater, Man's Pullover	1
Pyjamas, Poplin	1 pr	Tracksuit	1
Boots, Black	1 pr	Shorts, Football and	4 prs
Boots, Dress	1 pr	Athletic	
Boots, General Purpose	1 pr	Socks, Football	2 prs
Shoes, Black	1 pr	Jersey, Football	1
Boots, Gymnasium	1 pr	Shirt, Hockey	1
Trouser Belt	1	Undershirt Man's 'T'	3
Braces	1 pr	Coat Field Olive Green	1
Gloves, Brown, Leather	1 pr	Gaiters Canvas	1 pr
Handkerchiefs	6	Gloves Cotton White	1 pr
Neckties, Black	2	Trousers, Men's Cream	1 pr
Neckties, Worsted Khaki	1	Smocks, Tropical	1
Necktie, OCS	1	Knives, Clasp	1
Socks, Black	3 prs	Lanyard	1
Socks, Khaki	4 prs	Hat Utility	1
Trousers, SD 18oz	1 pr	Jacket, Mess Terylene White	1
Bag Travelling	1	Cummerbund, Scarlet	1
Towels	4	Trunk and Padlock	1
		Web Equipment Complete Set	1

7 Clothing issues for civilian entrants. (The list for serving entrants was only about a third as long)

## And so it begins...

We now began Day 1 with many long, demanding hours ahead of us before we would be allowed a brief restless sleep late that night. We experienced the many contradictions to be found in the Service – that we were required to get a good night of sleep and therefore ‘lights out’ was required at 11.30 pm with warnings that a light was not to be visible from inside or out. All of that said; it was made clear that we were required to have uniforms ironed and boots spit polished for the morning and most of us toiled well into the night “bogging” our gear by the light of our wall-mounted electric bar heaters while covering the space above our doors with a blanket to block out even that faint light. Andrew Grierson: *“The seniors used to say “the rats’ will be working tonight” which meant we would be bogging all our gear for the next day.”* David Metrikas: *“I remember that night, trying to write my name on all*

*those pams under the light of my radiant bar heater above the desk in the Building 6 room, with Seniors banging on the door of anyone who made a noise.”*

The next morning and for many following mornings in Junior Class, we were required to stand outside our door with our sheets stripped from our bed draped over our shoulder. We then had to madly make our beds perfectly ready for a detailed room inspection before racing off to breakfast. This must have been particularly galling for the serving soldiers, especially those who had earned rank in ‘the real army’. It became common practice for everyone to either sleep on the floor or on top of their security trunk in their sleeping bag as this was one way to reduce workload while at the same time minimising the likelihood of being awarded extra duties, or ‘extras’. (There was some kind of mad logic to each of us sending clean sheets off each week to be washed and starched as we left the same ones immaculately made on our beds all term while sleeping in our sleeping bags.)

Early each morning there would be the rapping on each door by the Duty Cadet and the shouted three questions: “*RAP, Light Duties, Evening Meal?!!*” to which the usual reply was “*No, No, Yes!*” but on those all too infrequent anticipatory days when we would have approved weekend leave, the happy reply would be “*No, No, NO!!*” Mind you, on the day of a Board of Study, there would sometimes be the flippant call, “*RAP, Light Duties, Early Flight!*”.

At night reveille would be played and countless officious announcements prefaced by the words, “*Listen in Company! Listen in Company!*”

On our third day we began our Junior Class Indoctrination Course (JCIC) under canvas in mid-Winter on the sports ovals for some two weeks. David Metrikas: “*I remember running to the showers in the half light of dawn, and at least one person tripping on those damned guy ropes every morning.*” Luke van Heuzen: “*I remember saying to Greg De Somer (as a very naïve and apparently poorly travelled Victorian) that the weather at Portsea was no colder or worse than Sydney and being howled down by a vast tribe of interstaters!! Who can forget that wonderful ‘alarm’ clock of the cooks arriving in an old Series II Landrover, slamming the doors, followed shortly after by the ‘woof’ of the hot water heaters being lit.*”

Glenn Keppel: “*One morning before parade I forgot to shave. Mick Wade noticed but it was too late to rectify the situation. Standing on the Parade Ground, in my fortunately coloured khaki trousers, the drillies hovering and ripping new arseholes for all and sundry, and who do I get? – Sergeant bloody Anderson. Now Anderson had spotted me earlier for my polished drill and outstanding dress and bearing; so, let’s just say he might have had an inkling who I was. Anyway, on the fateful morning he marches past and comments on the usual crap standard of my presentation - business as usual for me - so no worries. Off he marches to the next cadet and, for the briefest of moments, I thought I’d gotten away with it and then....the moment when my heart stopped. Anderson returns, and even though there were all of three hairs on my chin, he spotted my ‘oversight’. He eyeballs me from about an inch from my face...*”

Anderson: “Did you shave mister”?

*Roofing Nail: “No Sar’nt!”*

*Anderson: “Wtfff.....splutter....pttooie.....mumblefuck.”*

*Well, that was the only time in my stint at Portsea where Anderson was lost for words; well at least until those infamous words forced their way out of his cakehole, “Charge yourself mister!” I think he couldn’t believe that I’d told the truth. Strangely, I probably earned a tiny modicum of respect from him; it certainly was easier to take the punishment than it was to have Anderson on my can – after all I did throw the punishment book in the Bay, so it was almost habitual for me to visit defaulters. I might be wrong, but I felt that he left me alone from then on. For all the Riefenstahl stuff that went on, I actually felt that OCS staff believed in integrity.”*

*Dave Metrikas: “I remember forgetting to shave but got away with it, maybe because Sergeant McPherson was focused on my polished boots. Refusing to believe they were spit polished, he decided to drag the tip of his cane across my toe caps, followed by.... “Good spit polishing Mr Metrikarse. Fix those scratches by parade tomorrow.” “Thank you Sergeant”, was all I could muster in reply.”*

JCIC was intended to remove us from the overly enthusiastic coaching and guidance of the Senior Class which had caused issues in previous courses and was perhaps also a reaction to the recent bastardisation scandal at RMC Duntroon. During this period we learned all about marching and standing to attention and at ease, facing to the front and the rear, halts, inclines and turns, and getting used to being called “Mister!” which for most of us was a first time experience and not entirely welcomed – and that was pretty much just on the first day. We learned how to judge distances, how to observe and conceal, target detection, recognition and indication, fire control orders, constructing range cards, stripping and cleaning and re-assembling our SLRs, degrees of weapon readiness and immediate actions after a stoppage. There was also the organisation of a rifle platoon and a rifle section (which we would come to know intimately). They weren’t kidding when they said we would have to learn quickly. We learned to complete our ‘morning routine’ of shaving, showering, cleaning rifle (kept on a rack over the bed) and boots, making bed and dressing in an unbelievably short period of time (5 minutes perhaps) and to race from a formed up position downstairs up to our rooms and ‘leap’ regularly from one uniform to another and be back on parade and marching away in double-time in less than 10 minutes. (For most of us, it would be years before we re-trained ourselves not to respond to the heralding morning alarm with an instantaneous transformation from deep sleep to urgent and purposeful activity.)



8 Incongruous setting of ironing board and bed beneath SLR, webbing, helmet etc



9 Morning Parade



10 Leaps practice conducted at the very start to teach us to rapidly change uniforms and move to the next activity with little lost time. The mixed dress was less a form of bastardisation than it was a method of teaching us to assimilate complicated instructions after receiving brief orders. Inspections were rigorously conducted to check if anyone had failed to dress properly.



Reaching such an intense state of personal readiness is hard to contemplate these days and it was not easy to achieve. It entailed considerable practice under heavy pressure to learn it, not least through the application of the concept of 'concurrent activity' and a liberal dose of push-up punishments in those first weeks. Greg 'Suzy' a.k.a. 'Nancy' a.k.a. 'Marilyn' a.k.a. Vicki' a.k.a. 'Deek' De Somer was especially good at attracting the attention of the DS (Directing Staff), and while that helped to keep the heat off the rest of us, he took his hits with good humour which set an example for the rest of us. On one day alone he amassed 600 push up punishments from a single Drill Sergeant.

This intense state of readiness carried on into the field where we would put on a dixie for hot water straight after the pre-dawn clearing patrol came back inside the defensive perimeter, finish packing away our sleeping bags and hootchies, pour off some hot water to shave in [leaving the remainder to boil for a heart-starting coffee], make and eat breakfast and clean our rifles while eating and downing a hot brew – all in less than 10 minutes. Anyone who couldn't get it done in time would wear plenty of 'encouragement' which might mean even less precious sleep the next night.

It would be three solid weeks before we first surfaced from the beginnings of our training and savoured the delights of local leave. We had been told we were not to bring or wear jeans anywhere and no motorbikes were allowed (yet the Signals officer proudly sported a pink BMW). Cars had to be inspected before they would be allowed to be parked on base or used for leave. The overseas cadets had foster families and locals went home to their families to wash clothes and take respite but for those from far away and who had no local family, reliance on each other was heavy. Phil Watson: *“In my case I would catch the small fishing boat ferry from the Portsea Pier to Queenscliff where I would be met by family friends who would take me home to Portarlington. The only downside was the realisation that bad weather would cause the ferry service to be cancelled resulting in a very long trip via Melbourne to get back in time. Fortunately this never eventuated.”*

## Sleep, Family and Precious Sleep!

Sleep became the overriding desire for the next 44 weeks within a highly intensive training regime (commencing with 6.15 am reveille and 11.30 pm lights out and even less sleep in the field caused by frequent enemy ‘bumps’ in the night and two hour long staggered gun pickets every night) complicated by a never-ending succession of minor and usually unnecessary irritations.

Even when we were free to leave the barracks, the premier urge was usually to catch some sleep, or in cadet parlance, to ‘gonk’ or to ‘catch some zeds’. After boarding buses to leave the barracks, it was common for almost everyone to be sound asleep before we reached the front gate which was just as well since none of us enjoyed the sight during the summer months of hordes of holiday-makers sunning themselves in glorious weather along the Mornington Peninsula foreshore. During grenade practice, and to the accompanying lullaby of booming explosions, many of us took the opportunity to catch a few zeds whilst waiting inside the concrete bunker.

Sleep deprivation was so extreme in some instances that one cadet, on being able to rendezvous with his love interest, managed to fall asleep ‘on the job’ which was of course not well received. The demands placed on any ‘significant other’ during the course were extreme with very long hours, continuous unpredictability, demanding studies, the need to socialise at least a little with others, exhaustion, stress and so forth – all of which placed a great deal of strain on relationships, and even more where children were involved.

Christine Jackson: *“We arrived with a 1 ½ year old, I was pregnant with the second one, my bag was stolen out of the car and I had to go the front gates to see Peter. You were all locked up for 6 weeks and no wives were allowed in. I went into early labour and thankfully this stopped within 12 hrs. They let Peter home with me that night and then all the fun began. As a wife we were invited to the Mess to meet the officers’ wives. Sally Burgess was the CO’s wife at the time, and while I was in conversation with her, Neil turned on the drink container tap and cordial was running all over the nice wooden floor at the bar. I sprinted across the carpet and just as I was about to*

*step on the wooden floor I was promptly grabbed by one of the Privates working there. He calmly said "Ma'am, go back to your conversation and we will look after the children, besides you will slip on the floor." I was 7 months pregnant.*

*When you all became seniors the married soldiers were not allowed out for 4 weeks so the wives decided that every evening we would go into the grounds at the same time our husbands went for their run. Once this was discovered they let the married men go home.*

*I remember parties at our house, big bowls of chocolate mousse, the birth of David, polishing of shoes, Sam Brownes, chin straps and brass, football matches, the toga party, early mornings, rescuing Brian Cox when he ran out of petrol, and meeting your mothers prior to graduation.*

*The year for me as a wife was wonderful. We made lifelong friends and travelled personal journeys together."*

The morning after Chris and Peter's son, David (who grew up to become a Commando with multiple tours of Afghanistan) was born, the COC was on its usual morning parade and the RSM came on. He called out Jacko's name, went up to him in the ranks, and congratulated him on becoming the father of another son and said, "Next time, see if you can tuck the edges in". It took a few minutes to work out what he meant. (The next child was a son, Andrew.)

On the subject of children of our class growing up and entering the Army; David Steven's son graduated from RMC Duntroon on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his father's Portsea graduation.

Marty McKowen: *"The memory of getting married whilst on course and then having to be back by 6:15 the next morning - in hindsight I should have skipped that episode."* It is a marvel that the relationships of the "marridies" and their spouses survived the experience intact, and of course, some didn't.

Foreign students were blessed to be allocated sponsor families to care for them off base and the many of us whose families were spread far and wide were not a little envious. Wesley Sim: *"I have to acknowledge a fantastic couple, John and Rikki Callaghan from Sorrento. They were foster parents to a large number of foreign cadets ever since the 70's. Kelvin, Gordon and I spent many weekends with them, sleeping over on Saturdays. We often brought our laundry there to avoid the queue back at the barracks. Very often Rikki had the laundry done by the time we awoke on a Sunday (the one day we got to sleep in). Many of the Kiwis from our senior class knew them too. The Adjutant may know the story better but from what I heard at Rikki's funeral, it all started with Rikki offering to help some PNG boys with mending a ripped jersey (or was it to patch-up a knee?) after an OCS vs the local boys game of rugby. I understand that John was a regular guest at the Sergeant's Mess too. He assumed the unofficial role of butt kicker, getting us to pull our socks up if he heard that we weren't pulling our weight. From what they knew about what was happening, I often got the impression that they got a lot of feedback from the Adjutant too. They both passed away in 2010."*

David Grierson, Adjutant: *“The sponsors were a great bunch of people and I reckon that these folk were as keen as most parents were in seeing ‘their boys’ graduate. And yes, they sometimes felt obliged to give me a bell if they thought someone was having a tough time. This extended to the wider cadet body when they had a bunch over for whatever good reason. So, their concern (often perceptive) occasionally manifested in a guidance officer making a visit to a room after dinner, maybe an OC; or a visit by me. All of this was entirely unwelcome I’m sure because of an automatic cadet response: “WTF have I done now?” But we made a collective effort to help where we could.”*



11 John and Rikki Callaghan with Kelvin Wong, Wesley Sim and Gordon Low at Graduation. Note the careful, albeit perhaps unintentional, ordering of shortest to tallest.

For those who focused their leave activities on the Portsea Pub (*“where John Pickering regularly used his charms on the local girls while the rest of us were filled with a combination of admiration and blind jealousy”*: Ash Staude), some would avoid the lengthy walk along the circuitous road system and instead take the short cut along the foreshore. ‘Young Devo’ Grierson: *“I remember Rooster and my race back from the Pub. I decided to go via the beach and he took the road. All went well till the beach became impassable due to water and I had to climb the cliff. That wrecked my newly purchased wardrobe that I’d modelled on that sartorial star, P. Hogan, and I ended up in the Commandant’s back yard. After some rookie Escape and Evasion I ended up back in the lines with Rooster tucked up in bed well before my arrival.”* Craig Burn: *“During the race back to the block from the Portsea Pub between Little Devo, Rooster Coughlan and I, a car pulled alongside me somewhere inside the gate and suggested I should accept a lift. The Deputy Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Titley, then drove me all the way to the Cadet’s lines. Devo’s cream coloured trousers were destroyed with grass stains as he came on the beach side but high tide sent him up into various properties.”*

## High Intensity Training

For most of our time at Portsea, almost every one of us never expected to graduate and continued to be surprised when we were not paraded for inadequate performance. It was incredibly mentally demanding, emotionally, psychologically and physically tough and beyond easy description. The extremes to which we were pushed, and pushed ourselves, were such that it is hard to explain them and not have people think it is exaggeration.

Subject	1952	1965	1972	1977	1983
<b>Military Academic Subjects</b>					
Administration	23	23	45	44	50
Logistics	13	39	18	24	27
Military History	20	45	24	34	34
Military Law	54	45	30	30	31
Staff Duties & Intelligence	in (a)	(a) 61	73	74	66
Tactics	66	82	134	396	422
Training	(a) 43	in (a)	40	19	19
<b>Educational Subjects</b>					
Character Development	28	28	in (b)	in (c)	137
Communication Skills		54	105		130
Current Affairs/Government		29		78	
Leadership	32	40	(b) 75	(c) 113	54
Logic		70	36		
Etiquette	13	45	24	55	48
Social Studies/ Political Science		74	59		
<b>Operations</b>					
Air Support			31	14	10
Armour	23	28	11	13	12
Army Health & First Aid	5	32	52	68	52
Artillery	26	30	51	43	43
Infantry	(b) 299	(d) 325	(e) 339	13	9
Military Engineering	38	35	15	17	8
Signals	(c) 42	in (f)	21	15	3
<b>Drills and Skills</b>					
Battlecraft	in (b)(d)	in (d)	in (e)	285	450
Drill and Ceremonial	97	143	91	228	219
Field Training		220	138	153	137
Methods of Instruction	33	33	47	42	42
Navigation	59	92	76	107	91
Nuclear, Biological & Chemical Defence					20
Radio Telephone Procedure	in (c)	(f) 65	29	30	43
Weapon Training	(d) 185		176	172	158
<b>Other Activities</b>					
Course Administration & Directed Study	63	187	520	551	578
Leave	unlisted	unlisted	unlisted	605	626
Physical & Recreational Training	42	68	74	106	107
Reserve Periods	101	220	44	189	180
Sport	unlisted	unlisted	unlisted	194	215
Visits & Demonstrations	in others	in others	51	87	81
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,320</b>	<b>2,420</b>	<b>2,598</b>	<b>4,004</b>	<b>4,004</b>

12 The OCS Course Syllabus across five different eras

Apart from all the 57<sup>+</sup> hours each week of contact time<sup>2</sup>, plus private study and cleaning and preparation time, we also spent days and weeks in the field without showers for the entire period. It was uncomfortable and we would be plastered in dirt

<sup>2</sup> If one was to consider a standard 40 hour week instead of the heavy workload we enjoyed, the course content would have required 66 weeks to complete – an extra 5 months. The news we heard coming from Duntroon after the course was extended to 18 months was that the cadets were not exactly stretched for time.



and sweat but we all stank and looked as bad as each other so no one minded an awful lot. Our time in the field included patrolling and defensive exercises accompanied by the joys of flies, mosquitoes, ants, spiders and rats; and the particular intimacy of ticks and leeches about which we became quite *blasé*. Other exercises included *Rock Wallaby* where we worked with Leopard tanks and were carted around Puckapunyal Range in the back of M-113 Armoured Personnel Carriers (the old saying is true – “a 2<sup>nd</sup> class ride is better than a 1<sup>st</sup> class walk any day!”), while another involved exposure to airborne operations by being flown around in a flight of Iroquois helicopters in Puckapunyal and later on at the Canungra Jungle Warfare Centre.



13 UH-1H Iroquois utility helicopter with door mounted M-60 machine guns (Stock photo)

The Falklands War had occurred the previous year and there was much talk, based usually around a book released very soon afterwards and which was almost mandatory reading, about factors that now applied to us. While there was much emphasis on long route marches with excessive loads to be carried, I remember the surprise at the use of 66mm anti-armoured weapons as bunker busters.

## Double Pucka and Flying Wedge

We called it ‘Double Pucka’ but it was also called ‘Paving Breaker’ (named for the highly prized one-man, petrol driven portable jack hammers we all too rarely gained access to and which made such a difference to the manual digging with the almost pathetic fold-up entrenching tools we all carried on our packs). We endured this exercise in both Junior and Senior Class and while most exercises were extremely demanding, this one was a real toughie. A major element of the exercise, beyond interminable patrolling and defending was the digging of fighting bays. Stage 1 required a 2m long x 0.5 m wide and 1 m deep pit that would take two men. The plastic fantastic M-16 was 99cm long so it was also a rudimentary measuring tool. It never ceased to amaze us how our careful visual assessment of a commodiously dug pit was callously brought up short after applying the M-16 to the dimensions. Stage 2 involved deepening the bay to 1.2 metres and forming two other fighting bays, later to become sleeping bays, angled towards the enemy from the left and right ends of the first bay with the defenders fighting from the base of the ‘U’. Stage 3 involved laying heavy battens across the sleeping bays and covering them with the spoil already dug.

It would be laboriously excavated through near rock using light entrenching tools with a blade not much larger than a child's seaside spade. During night time sparks would randomly and momentarily illuminate our collective hell as we laboured through a quasi-ultra marathon pathetically chipping away non-stop for 3 or 4 days with the briefest of sleep allowed. One of very few pleasures at this time was the Padre coming around to say hello and to dispense the occasional treat from his bag of goodies.

During this, we would also go on fighting patrols, man listening posts and take our turn at gun picket, set up Claymore anti-personnel mines (*"700 ball bearings, clack!-clack!-clack!"* sung to the tune of Click Go The Shears), practice carrying casualties (always the biggest guys got 'wounded' leaving us smaller ones to labour under the weight), ammunition, ration and water re-supply, and defensive wiring which required considerable labour and thought to prepare, site and construct. There was 'bastard wire' laid as an impediment to easy enemy movement, CAT1 involved laying a single layer of barbed concertina wire, CAT2 involved a second row laid on top of the first and held in place by steel pickets and straining wire, with CAT3 involving a second row along the front of the first one. And, of course, we would always have to be ready to respond to enemy attack which extended beyond bullets and bombs to include gas attacks and their un-expected side-effects. Jeff Harrison: I remember *"nicking out of the pit to take a slash the morning after a TOPP3 gas attack. I managed to widdle on an unseen spent CS grenade; the heat and moisture combining to squeeze a bit more juice out of it. The next thing I know my face, hands and nether regions are starting to tingle and burn. EEEAAARGGH! A lesson well learnt."* Another lesson learnt in the bush, mainly for some of the overseas cadets, was the fairly obvious, 'don't piss into the wind' and don't drink from the centre of the metal cups canteen – in both cases, you'll find yourself unpleasantly damp.



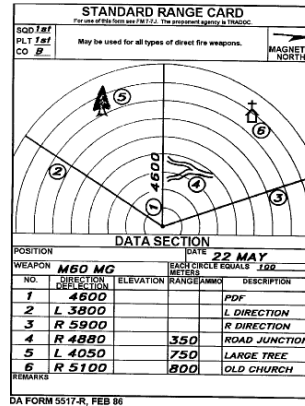
14 Section-strength patrol coming back into the position through CAT2 wiring obstacle



15 Jeff Harrison mans dug-in M-60 machine gun position under camouflage net



16 SLR, webbing, helmet - minimum life support system



17 Example Range Card for M-60 MG



18 Kitted up in TOPP3 (Threat Oriented Protective Posture Level 3) with M-17 gas mask during a simulated gas attack and cradling an M-16



19 Infantry defensive exercise, 66mm SRAAW (Short Range Anti-Armoured Weapon) and SLR resting against pack and sleeping mat, webbing at left knee – standard equipment



20 Armoured exercise 'Rock Wallaby'. Time out taken to observe Leopard dozer tank and tank bridge layer enabling M-113 APC crossing with dismounted infantry support



21 Armoured exercise 'Rock Wallaby'. Phil Watson seated at centre with M-16, yellow M-60 machine gun blank-firing barrel placed under camouflage to his left



22 Assembled APCs

John Scholten: *“I was Platoon Sergeant for that phase and as such was responsible for ammo, rations and water for my platoon. I remember repeatedly radioing for extra jerry cans of water because in the heat and strain of all that digging-in, the platoon was averaging 14 water bottles per man per day. After the digging was done and the weather turned, I was made Platoon Commander responsible for the defence of our position as we were relentlessly probed all night. I remember moving around the position between attacks to check on the troops, wire, etc and found very enthusiastic Junior Class men (Andrew Reichardt amongst them) in a gun pit madly assembling 7.62mm link belts from single rounds taken from SLR magazines and the disintegrated link under their M60. We had run out of link and they were improvising. Later that night I had to lead a fighting-withdrawal, falling back to a barely distinguishable rally-point I had reconnoitred the previous day. Counting every man off our position and co-ordinating the fire and movement in reverse at night and in the rain was exhilarating but exhausting. By about 0430 hrs, my voice was completely gone from shouting orders over the noise of the endless firefight. I turned to my Sig and told him my voice was stuffed and he would have to shout out my orders to the Section Commanders as my voice was barely louder than a whisper. Next morning, the DS (an Infantry Captain) took me aside and said, ‘That was f...ing well-done - I would give you a Platoon in my Company any day’. We then had a long route-march to breakfast (hot boxes of egg and bacon rolls as I recall). Completing that Defence and Withdrawal was one of the most satisfying experiences of my time at OCS.”*

Phil Watson: *“Double Pucka is where I began my passion for drinking coffee. After suffering from heat exhaustion one day I had a mild bout of hypothermia the next and then a really bad bout the day after that. I came in from a patrol soaked and freezing, my lips blue and my brain all mushy. I was placed in my wet sleeping bag and then given a vile cup of coffee to drink with no sugar in it. I attempted to refuse on the grounds that I didn’t drink coffee but Maggsy insisted that I now did and to drink it – and he wasn’t taking no for an answer. That was the beginning of the habit which has grown over time to become a ritual. It poured with torrential rain that night and our fighting pits filled rapidly with water resulting in some cadets having to duck dive for their belongings trapped in the covered sleeping bays. The base hospital quickly became fully occupied with hypothermia cases and I was one of those who could not be medevac’d since there were no remaining beds. The staff hit on a novel plan which would enable the exercise to continue: they decided we would have a ‘tactical*

*bonfire’! They used fuel to get a huge pile of wet wood lit and then we were called up in small groups to warm ourselves in the teeming rain – heat and steam rising from the side that faced the fire, cold and drenching wet on the other side. As we turned ourselves on a virtual vertical rotisserie we would alternately steam and soak ourselves. It was almost desirable to leave the fire after a while. Well before dawn the next night our platoon left the area and froze ourselves lying completely still in a rear guard defensive position. I don’t think I have ever been so cold in my life; it was like lying on ice and after a while it was painful, especially as we were not supposed to move as we lay there. I found out some years later that the Medical Officer was apparently investigated over his conduct during the exercise and the risk we were all put at.”*

Mark Walters recalled everyone disappearing after the deluge and only finding out the next morning everyone else was going up the hill to the fires. *“It was miserable weather and Mike Billingham and I were sitting with our legs across the top of our pit which was 5 feet deep and had filled with water to the point it was overflowing. Mike picked up the receiver part of the K-phone and lowered it into the pit pulling it out to report the water depth. This action just cracked me up and despite it being dark, cold, and bloody wet, the two of us couldn’t stop laughing about this new use for a K-phone. I can’t remember much of that night after that; only that I woke at day break in some ravine with my hootchie wrapped around me like a blanket. I went down the hill looking for respite from the weather when the fires were up the hill. Silly me.”*

While the Puckapunyal locals would insist that Puckapunyal means *Valley of the Winds*, there are many ex-cadets who would insist it is Aboriginal for *Shithole*. This has everything to do with the unpleasantness of every experience we had as cadets. *Exercise Flying Wedge* was meant to be our exposure to airborne operations utilising UH-1H helicopters operating as a formed flight, and though some of us had some great flying experiences, including coming in to land at speed and sliding along on mud and grass on the skids for metres at a time; the general consensus, given issues with low cloud, fog and mechanical issues, was that it should have been called *Walking Wedge*. Gary Spierings: *“A wise man would have ensured he took his most comfortable boots as they were going to cop some significant use.”* Mick ‘Wombat’ Mowle was of the view that *“anyone who got a ride in a helo on that exercise was either badly injured or BOS’d out and never seen again!”* Rick Parker was one of those who did *“get a free chopper ride to Pucka hospital when I cracked my head on my rear sight during fire and movement. Lots of blood but no real injury. Two quick stitches and they choppered me back – not even a night in a clean bed!”* (Similar issues with a shortage of track miles saw our armoured exercise grind to a halt for half a day until extra could be allocated. The power of administrivia to halt training, and the absence of common sense and logic to keep it going when it should have stopped, was extraordinary – but quite usual for the military.)



23 A stick emplanes onto a Huey on 'Ex Flying Wedge'

It wasn't all bad though. Wesley Sim, renowned for allowing his platoon to sleep in on more than one occasion, related, *"My most memorable event was the last couple of days at Pucka - I think because it was getting cold (come to think of it, it was always cold) and I was Platoon Commander and the whole platoon had a sleep in. I was surprised how bright the sky was when Mr Hayward came round to wake me for breakfast. I spent the rest of the exercise thinking how it would feel to be graduating (or maybe not)." The Adjutant only lately advised, "but the good news was that the staff had slept in and nobody was game enough bring up that bad news to the SI, let alone bump Wes."* Sometimes you just got lucky, but most of the time you just had to accept that you were, *"unlucky!!"*

Andrew McLean: *"Early in the bus trip to Pucka I had realised I'd left my SLR bolt securely in my sec truck. Ash Brunton thought it was bloody hilarious but the rest of the gut wrenching bus trip I spent trying to work out if I could get away without being caught for 2 weeks (I decided I couldn't) and then deciding which was the 'best' DS to confess to. I decided on WO2 Lazarus. The obligatory charge followed but it could have been much worse."*

Gary Spierings: *"Picture this - Puckapunyal, first light, stand to, in my pit (don't recall who was sharing with me – probably suppressed that memory to protect the joint-guilty), looking out into the great beyond, not a sound to be heard. Next thing, about two metres in front of me is one of the DS looking directly at me. He had clearly walked in from outside the perimeter, directly in my arc and I had not spotted him."*

*"Anything to report" he quizzes.*

*"All quiet, no enemy activity" was my response.*

*For about ten seconds there was this exchange of looks as he weighed up whether I had simply not seen him or that I had identified him as DS and made the call not to treat him as a foe. Poker face won out on that occasion. An additional part of my morning routine that day was to change to brown corduroy trousers!"*

Just two days separated the end of our final field exercise and the first of the Church Parade rehearsals that heralded commencement of graduation activities and only 18 days transpired from our last day in the field and our Graduation Parade. As was so often the case, we leapt almost manically from one thing to the next throughout the course.

## Canungra

Phil Watson: *“My recollection of my first time at Canungra is now quite sparse. I recall flying at more than 100 knots into and out of the thick jungle in a flight of six helicopters - it was just like a scene from a Vietnam War movie - and the musty, rotting vegetation and low, thick morning mists which felt strangely snug; and collecting water from the local streams in our water bottles and treating it with purification tablets.”*

Marty McKowen’s memories of Canungra included: *“Flash backs to Vietnam, although we were too young to be there (complete with the Flight of the Valkyries); Lutz rolling his ankle upon de-planing and getting thrown back on the helo and only then did we think about what he was carrying and whether we should probably have distributed that first; young (boggie) pilots putting us down 3 clicks from the actual LZ with the lesson learned that it was good practice to be doing your own navigation in the back; getting a round (blank) discharged into the back of my pack and the bewildered look on the door gunner as he lifted the feed cover to see what had happened as they flew off into the brightening sky; ensuring that salt is the first thing you get out of the ration pack to battle the leaches; and John Pickering and his ever present UD. I also remember being told at the start that we should put the tick repellent on the seams of our greens and it was only when we were sitting at an LZ and could hear the rotors there was a mad panic to get it done. And damn did it sting”*

By this stage we were well into Senior Class and were starting to be more successful at avoiding anything we possibly could. Mick Wade: *“During one ‘stand to’, a patrolling DS sneaked up to quietly question cadets about arcs of fire, action on contact etc. After a question or two, the DS stopped and asked, “Are you in your sleeping bag Mr Xxxxx?” “Yes Sir”. “Take 2 penalties” (insert preferred penalty here). The DS then moved to the next weapon pit to ask more questions. “Mr Xxxxx, are you in your sleeping bag during stand to?” “Yes, Sir.” “You can have two penalties as well.” The DS then stood up and yelled, “Righto, the next man I find in a sleeping bag during stand to will be on a F...ing charge!!!” Suddenly, the jungle came alive with the sound of 30 sleeping bag zips being unzipped and cadets falling over themselves to get out of their sleeping bags.”* For some of us though who had been equivocating whether to risk not being detected and having now left it too late to unzip without drawing irate attention had to trust to the very dark Canungra night and being well-enough hidden to avoid being discovered. Sometimes there was a very fine line between being lucky and unlucky.

John Scholten: *“The advice on insect repellent on the greens (and other regions) came too late for some. I recall stripping off at the end of that exercise to find the*

*inside of my strides covered in blood from the leeches I had squashed from rolling around in my fart-sack. Not that I remember getting that much sleep.....”*

Early in the piece when we were doing fire and movement, one of the guys got up and had a heap of blood on the front of his shirt. When he un-buttoned it, there was an engorged leech that had been torn off his chest. It must have been there for a good while to get that big and to have taken on that much blood. There were some philosophical discussions about the relative effectiveness of lighters versus insect repellent versus salt. Salt worked best. An indication of the perverse attitudes we developed in response to being preyed upon, we used to play games with the leeches, such as chase them along twigs with our cigarette lighters, or draw a circle of salt around one and leave just a small opening. If it could find its way out, it could go free. The small metal can openers in our ration packs were also the best tools to remove ticks – using two as a pair of tweezers and despite all our macho behaviours, having no qualms about asking someone else to search through our hair and dig the blasted things out. As for mosquitoes, Aeroguard wasn't nearly as effective as Rid. We became expert in defending ourselves against the invidious attacks of a cohort of vicious insects.

Phil Watson: *“I recall interminably patrolling in silence, field signals being almost the only means of communication, through the jungle and encountering many ‘enemy’ contacts every day as we trained in close country operations; progressively improving until we instinctively knew what we had to do with barely a word, a glance or a hand signal required – functioning as a combined team rather than nine individuals.*

*This was evidenced by the often told story of one of our overseas contingent doing an excellent job as Section Commander responding to an enemy contact and getting an assault under way quite quickly. The country was heavily populated with small knolls and surrounding steep drop-offs. It was Jeff Harrison who ended up on the left flank of the assault and was the recipient of the continually shouted order to “Brock Reft Harro! Brock Reft!” After much insistence from the Section Commander, Harro “Brocked Reft” right off the edge of the steep drop-off and ceased to participate in the assault.*

*At one point when I was performing in the role of Section Commander we came across a waste-high chicken wire fence in the middle of thick jungle which was long enough either side of us to take us too far off our assigned patrol course. I directed the patrol to go over the fence and through the head-height plantation of something I couldn't quite recognise. I kept feeling I should just know what it was but anything I could think of I discounted for one reason or another. Some of the guys broke off fronds and wove them into their packs and webbing as fresh camouflage. I remember writing in my Patrol Report that it was a vegetable patch knowing that it couldn't be right and providing a very detailed grid reference. After we had cleared the plantation and were on our way again one of the guys came up to me and confidently whispered the answer to the question that had been in my head – it was an extensive marijuana plantation. I'm not sure how things would have played out if those tending the crop had turned up as we were there – whether we would have assumed they were part of the exercise and so rolled into another contact drill and fired blanks as we attacked them, or whether they might have been properly armed and turned on us with live rounds.”*



Andrew 'Young Devo' Grierson: In the vein of performing a role and carrying it off with aplomb, 'Jungle/Jungleblood' (shortly afterwards removed) "*stood astride a large log looking around the general area, oblivious to security, sky-lining etc and generally making a bit of a target of himself.*

*Staff member: Officer Cadet Jongeblood! What are you doing there?*

*Jungle: Having a drover's breakfast sir.*

*Staff member: What's that?*

*Jungle: A piss and a good look around!"*

The 'enemy' were very skilled and creative. Mick Barling related being on "*gun picket late at night with Marty McKowen and challenging a person approaching their position. He said his name was "Marty". I turned to Marty and said, "Marty, do we have another Marty in our company?" Marty replied in the negative and the night got worse from there.*"

In a typical night location a platoon would occupy a feature with all-round protection. That would usually mean a radial pattern with the platoon HQ in the middle, and each section covering a 120 degree arc of the circle. Gun pits would be placed equidistant on the perimeter. Once the position of each section was settled, just before dusk, the position would be marked out with hexamine tablets, white paper etc so that cadets moving to and from the gun pits for their turn at gun picket could find their way around the position in the dark by following the faint white trail. However, in the pitch black darkness of the Canungra jungle, these could not be seen so the position would be marked out with hootchie cord instead. Cadets would grasp the hootchie cord and fumble their way along it to their turn at picket, then back to their sleeping spot.

John Scholten "*Those cunning enemy from 10 Independent Rifle Company penetrated the perimeter of our position in the dark, then upon encountering their first cadet, identified themselves as 'Marty' or 'Watto', and asked to be attached to the hootchie cord, "so they could find their way back to their farter". The unsuspecting cadet would take the hand of the enemy and put them on the hootchie cord from where they would feel their way into Platoon HQ to despatch the Platoon Commander or Sergeant. Some of our platoon woke up next morning to find red texta lines drawn around their throats. Not one of our better nights.*"

Phil Watson: "*Our extraction from the jungle by helicopter was memorable, not so much for the open grassy slopes on which we cleaned our weapons and basked in the sunlight, but because there was the recurrent sound for one unfortunate cadet of "click, BANG!, click" as he accidentally discharged an unauthorised blank round signalling what would be a self-charge and a consequential 28 day's Confinement to Barracks with accompanying inspections and stuffing around.*



24 Glen Keppel cleaning stripped down SLR in Canungra jungle clearing awaiting helicopter extraction at the end of exercise



25 After returning from the jungle and cleaning up – Hafner, Sutton, De Somer, Walters

*My experience of Canungra was memorable though for a full day competition over much of the surrounding landscape and involving tests of our navigation skills. (In later postings these skills were very important as most of us traversed great distances in vehicles in remote, isolated country on very old, unreliable small-scale maps with sparse detail. Learning how to read ‘map-to-ground’ was really important in being able to convert what one can see to what the map shows.)*

*The exercise started very early in the morning and every section was given a different route to a wide variety of ‘stands’ where we were tested on shooting, weapons safety, first aid, patrol skills, section orders, the ‘enemy’, radio procedures and so forth with everyone finishing up at the notorious obstacle course. This was reputed to be the longest and most demanding in the Army and involved a lung-burning, energy sapping series of obstacles. It aimed to expose fears about heights, dark enclosed spaces and drowning while assessing the will of the individual to persist when facing real adversity, and just to add to the mix, test the individual’s physical coordination and their ability to work effectively with others. To further add to the challenge, smoke grenades would be set off which would belch thick coloured smoke that would sear the back of the throat and lungs and heighten the demand for oxygen which compounded the physical and mental challenge.*

*The course consisted of a metal corrugated iron drainpipe that sloped steeply down into muddy water and which required faith to go through fully submerged in the dark under water with our relatively long-barrelled rifles and bulky webbing and come out the other side; the Burma Bridge comprising two high wires, one about 2 metres above the other, strung across a gap, one above the other and required to be traversed with difficulty as the wires jerked about; clambering over a high wall and dropping down over the other side into a bear pit full of filthy water; under a huge, heavy cargo net which caught at every part of one’s equipment and body; running on tip-toe through ‘bastard wire’ strung higgledy-piggledy at ankle height and hidden amongst un-kept grass; crawling at length under low-strung barbed wire; scrambling up and over a cargo net strung high above the ground; any number of other obstacles now purged from my memory; and finally arriving at the high tower on the edge of the dammed river which one had to climb up and then leap off fully clothed. It was surprising how my boots actually helped me to re-surface after dropping down so deeply into the water but not as surprising as to discover later that our section had*

won the “Hydra Despised” competition. When I repeated the obstacle course a few years later I found the challenge had not diminished with the passage of time – it was still incredibly demanding but kind of thrilling all the same.

All of that said, my Senior Class Section 2IC decided at the end of the exercise that he had had enough and resigned. It was unsettling for me as it made me wonder whether, when the next time it came around, I might feel I wouldn’t want to go on either.”

Wesley Sim: “In one of the exercises that started out from base camp, our mission was to deliver several 84mm SRAAW rounds to C Coy. We arrived at a defensive position just as they came under fire. Our Section of eager officer cadets quickly jumped into the available trenches and returned fire as well. When the enemy had been repelled, someone swaggered up, introduced himself as OC C Coy and thanked us for arriving just in time to help him out. He said words to the effect that our reaction was quick and appropriate, that we did a fantastic job and he had no doubt we would achieve whatever mission we had been assigned. As cadets conditioned to receive feedback after every possible test, these positive remarks were eagerly accepted and assumed to be deserved. So with re-inflated self-confidence, our Section Commander (can't remember who it was now) issued orders to move out and continue on our mission. Eager to keep presenting the image of proficiency and efficiency as a team, we were very quickly organised and on our way. It was not until some way down the track that someone panted "Where are we supposed to deliver these f\*#!@ shells to?", to which another questioned "Wasn't that OC C Coy who just spoke to us?". Needless to say, a bit of grumbling broke out as to whose fault it was when the DS said that we were not allowed to back track and had to carry the shells for the rest of the exercise all the way back home.”

Luke van Heuzen: “This may have happened to more than one section. My section was one that forgot our mission and carried 84 mm shell carrying cases full of, I assume, sand back to base camp. Mark Nolan was in my team. I do remember during the exercise Lofty Wendt doing a stint with us, complete with M-60 which at one stage he pointed at one member with an outstretched arm, without a shiver in his arm, and made a comment about hardening up.”

Mick Mowle: “Yep I remember that day too! Not sure who the Section Commander was but our DS was none other than Lofty Wendt. About 400m up the next ridge he leaned towards me and said, "You do know who that was Mr Mowle?" With head down, leaning into the hill, I replied "OC C Company" .....and then the lights came on. Oh shit - Too late!”

## Eildon – “Exercise 101” (Lost Horizons)

John Scholten: *“I will never forget Ex Lost Horizon at Eildon. That was the weekend of my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and my parents had booked and paid for an elaborate party at my old golf club in Melbourne. As we trudged around Mt Torbreck my thoughts were preoccupied with visions of my parents and friends wondering why I hadn't turned up for my own 21<sup>st</sup> and all the preparation and expense they had gone to for naught. I became quite angry about it at times during the exercise. I had enlisted and if the Army wanted to stuff me about, I guessed that was their prerogative. However, my family had not signed up, so why should they be inconvenienced, I thought. I found out after we returned to Portsea that the DS had called my parents, explained the exercise and sworn them to secrecy.”*

Sheena Scholten (Mum): *“A significant and substantially planned event was John's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday which was to include our whole family, many friends and a large contingent of John's comrades from Portsea. Well, less than 30 hours before the event I received a phone call at work from the commander at OCS explaining the rigid assessment requirements and long term plan to select the very best from within the cadet's course. It seemed the boys were going to face a surprise weekend, location unknown, on that Friday evening. The reason for the late call was to ensure secrecy of the assessment activity. So; very sorry Ma'am! OK, apology accepted. We had no choice but to cancel the 21<sup>st</sup> party plans for the following evening and attempt to reschedule. I was very concerned for John as I was told he would not be informed of the call to me. Three weeks later we rescheduled the event in a different venue and lots of fun and celebrations were enjoyed by all who attended.”*

We received no warning at all on a Friday night at the end of a lesson on military law in Badcoe Hall and were called to attention. We were abruptly told that our leave was cancelled, all medical chits were cancelled and we were to be on trucks in Patrol Order within the next few minutes. We had no food and no idea where we were going. Up until we fell asleep in the backs of the trucks hours later we had thought we were just going on a navigation exercise and would be back that night. We travelled through much of the night and were dropped off in the early hours with badly photocopied maps that made no sense at all as the place names had been whited-out and the contours to show hills and valleys were drawn as straight vertical lines after the fashion prior to World War II rather than the concentric circles most people are familiar with. We spent almost every minute of the next two nights and days struggling through the incredibly steep, dense, wet bush (often finding it easier to clamber up onto fallen logs and make our way up a slippery incline than fight through the vegetation at ground level), navigating to a succession of locations with almost no sleep (without any shelter and in the freezing cold it was almost preferable to just keep moving), almost no food (just a one-man ration pack eventually and grudgingly given to share between six of us and under close observation by staff to see how we divided it up, noting those who made sure they got the bigger portion), virtually no rest, no more warmth than a jumper amid near-zero temperatures, and no real understanding of what was going on. As we reached each checkpoint we initially thought we would have some respite but then the pattern emerged where our supervising staff member, who alternated between sullen silence, speaking only in a foreign language or making persistently disparaging remarks about every aspect of us as a group and as individuals, would swap with another and we would be immediately

required to move on to the next location – almost without rest for the entire time, night and day, for some 40 hours. Phil Watson: *“John Pickering and I concluded late at night when we had been given time to rest but without anything in which to sleep, that we had no choice but to find a mildly sheltered spot under a log and huddle up to try and share some warmth. We both assured each other that we didn’t have an interest in the other, and despite the natural discomfort with getting up close and personal, did our best to try and stay warm together. It didn’t really work emotionally or physically and at some point in the short remainder of the night, I found myself vainly seeking a warmer spot under some freezing shrub. Even with the limited opportunity to sleep, none of us got very much.”* It is remarkable how quickly extreme situations can wear one down and what it takes to dig down deep within oneself to keep going and maintain an effective mental outlook. It was further compounded for Peter Jackson who was very concerned about his wife and new born baby arriving at the airport and he not being able to collect them. His attempts to get the DS to simply say they would take care of it were met only with unknown words in a foreign language. Here was an example of a failure to determine the difference between realistic training and real world necessity. As it turned out, his wife and son were met but only at the last minute just as Chris was going to make her own way home.

Mick Barling: *“WO2 Dave Dockendorff was one of the DS tag team that our happy crew on Exercise 101 had the pleasure of working with. Ron Dempster was one of our little gang. After missing the 8.00am breakfast by arriving at 7.56am, we spent the rest of the day wandering around Mt Torberek. By Saturday evening we’d resigned ourselves to a very chilly night out in the boonies with nothing but our HG jumpers, japoras and one hootchie between us. Dave Dockendorff, who I later had the pleasure of working with at 5/7RAR, seeing our bedraggled state, sat us down, took out a Mars Bar, counted us, cut the Mars Bars into six equal portions for us to share and then proceeded to shove all six pieces into his gob. The only saving grace was that he nearly choked while he was laughing at us. All very character building.”*

Phil Watson: *“Our group had a particularly irritating staff member in the final leg, although we didn’t know it was at the time, who demeaned us as other groups were obviously being picked up from behind and delivered somewhere up ahead. He told us to not even think about them coming for us and to just keep going. When our turn came to be picked up he jumped in the vehicle and told us to get in too. We had all seen this coming and had seen through his charade. Without conferring, as one we refused. He ordered us to get aboard and by now we had really had enough – and we stiffly refused again. We had reached the point where we didn’t care what the consequences would be. He went on his way in a bit of a huff and we became the last group to arrive as we walked in un-assisted. We were completely spent but we felt pride in ourselves. We did not find out until later that the exercise was designed to weed people out by seeing the real person as they experienced hardship and we saw a dozen or so of our number disappear in the succeeding few days – the largest number in one hit during our 11 months, including one who had struggled through with us with an incompletely healed knee injury. It could be a very hard road sometimes.”*

After a late barbecue lunch, we were piled dirty, smelly, wet and exhausted into buses for the long ride back to Portsea. We spent the rest of the available time that afternoon and night carrying out the usual after-exercise routine - washing clothes,

cleaning equipment and removing every last miniscule speck of dirt and rust from our rifles, bayonets, scabbards and other equipment – much of it being the same as we used on dress parades. It seems incongruous now that the very same polished and showy items we used on flashy parades for the likes of Sir Roden Cutler, VC and for a Drum Head Service and Graduation were also used in the field and thoroughly exposed to the elements. We went through large amounts of Ripper Stripper, Brasso, black spray paint, clothes detergent and starch but only smallish amounts of boot polish since a little went a long way. Bayonets and scabbards were stripped back to base metal and spray painted ready for parade the next morning and the continuation of our training with no break until the end of the new week – provided we didn't get another surprise parade. Everything was closely inspected the next morning and those who had failed to pay sufficient *attention to minor detail* were awarded punishments which commenced that very evening. At the moment when we were all most in need of rest and sleep, many would be up until nearly midnight and again very early the next morning in time to prepare for the first of four defaulter's parades at 6.20 am (understanding it was necessary to get up much earlier than that to be ready for it) and the last being at 9.45 pm. On weekends there was consideration of the need to rest by delaying the morning parade by a few hours but this was easily compensated for by an additional two parades, and therefore, two more opportunities to have these punishments lead to another set of punishments, and then more, until one was able to cease being the object of attention and become what was derogatorily referred to as a *Greyman* – someone who slipped through un-noticed – and something the staff viewed poorly. This, however, was preferable to being a *Heat Seeker* although everyone else liked to have one or two of these types around as they took the attention off the rest. There was also the term *Asbestos Man* which referred to someone who could take all the heat when it was turned on them and take it with good humour. The trick was to strike a balance between the three of these.

The whole Eildon exercise was designed to see how we performed under pressure so that no 'Greyman' got through and so that the staff could be confident we were solid material as leaders in demanding situations. Tough but effective. We were each debriefed on our performance at our next review session. Phil Watson: *"I was told I had done quite well, which was pleasing, but I was chivvied for leaving the top left button of my shirt undone throughout. I explained that this was because it was to keep my compass secure and to make it easier with the continual requirement to pull it out and return it every 20 paces or so (after all the country was very dense, intense navigation was essential and we needed both hands to get through the vegetation). At my next review session, as a result of this comment, I was criticised for not being able to handle criticism well. After that, I naturally kept my mouth shut and it reinforced my view that I probably wasn't going to graduate."*

## High Jinx

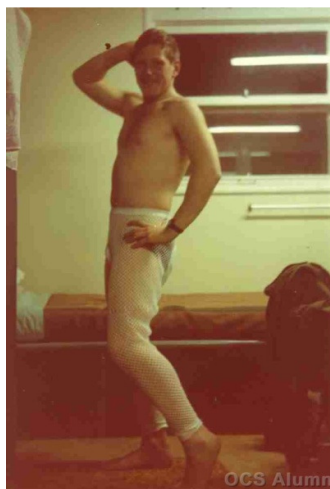
There was any amount of high jinx any and every day, from morning to night, and it didn't matter a jot whether one was awake or asleep and no one, cadet or staff, was likely to be safe. Ash Staude: *"On returning from Easter leave I was accosted by Harro casually standing in the corridor and flopping his old fella out together with both pockets, and "making like an elephant".*" It could go too far though as 3 Platoon discovered courtesy of Dave 'Brutus' Moylan one night when they were held in the Frankston Police Station cells. One of the most popular and highly regarded DS was New Zealand Maori Warrant Officer Macown. A couple of us caught a harmless snake when we were in Canungra and gave it to one of the more mischievous DS in a sand bag. The snake was released under the Kiwi's field chair, and being un-accustomed to snakes, WO2 Macown bolted and then immediately returned and tried to kill it with a machete only to be held back by the protagonist. Given that we were not allowed to harm the local wildlife, he had to be calmed down. It was a momentary relief from our trials.



26 3 Platoon just before heading out to a memorable evening in Frankston



27 3 Platoon demonstrating the art of corridor rugby. It explains the U.S. policy of "Don't ask, Don't tell"



28 Mick Wade models Long Johns. "Latent Talent"

Our high jinx revolved around inter-Company rivalry with the most appropriate focus being the A Company Aardvark, or as B Company liked to disparagingly call it, *The Earth Pig*. There were regular attempts to capture the creature and hold it to ransom; one of which involved theft during a sports competition where it was secreted in the B Company lines and drowned in the bay before being returned in a formal ceremony on the PMC's Lawn. The OC of A Company was generally considered to wish the damn thing had been blown up or buried but it survived beyond our time. As recorded by 'Gooch' in the Class Journal, "And it came to pass that the symbol of all that is precious to A Company (no, not the special leave forms) went missing. Yes the Angry Aardvark had fallen into the hands of the enemy; B Company. The Keeper of the Aardvark, Mick Barling, had failed in his duty to retain said Aardvark in good condition and safe custody. Somehow or other the Bimbos had got it. Summarily, said Keeper was brought to trial. The charge: Losing the Aardvark to the Bimbos. The case for the prosecution was presented by Leo Hogan before the Judge Aardvark General: CSM Ash Brunton. No case for the defence was allowed. The members of the jury (13 in all, Unlucky Mick Barling) listened with objectivity and sympathy, totally ignoring the calls for hanging, torture by TEWT, or other pleasantries from the audience. Leo Hogan said that the Keeper of the Aardvark was a position of trust (that's why Rick Parker did not get it) and that Mick betrayed that trust. The CSM interjected at this point uttering words like "You scum Barling". Mick's feeling of apprehension turned to utter fear and despair. The rest of the case was declared a shambles and the jury was instructed to retire for 10 seconds and find a verdict of guilty. This was done. Punishment – skull a jug. Mick Barling is still completing the sentence, but at least he got the Aardvark back."



29 A Company, the Aardvarks. "Nil Bastardos Carborandum"



30 The Aardvark being subjected to one of a series of appropriate indignities

At 100 days to go until graduation, we had a massed battle on the Parade Ground, referred to as the *Battle of the RSM's Hut*, with fire hoses, water and flour bombs and any other non-lethal implements to hand. Marty McKowen: "Battle for the RSM's hut, yes A Company did win that one. However, it may have been very different. In the first iteration we had arranged for an RAN patrol boat and aircraft from Point Cook to assist however we were subsequently told to cancel the Fire Support and go without." This was more than a shame as the only offensive equipment I recall A Company could muster was a single Land Rover.





31 Battle for the RSM's Hut

And then there were those harmless, silly, even zany, things done just to laugh off all the serious stuff.



32 Jeff Harrison's Pythonesque take on the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse as a way to blow off steam in 6 Platoon, usually on weekends. Harrison, Williams, Catchlove and Jongebloed



33 The 4 Horsemen, short one member, believed to have been on duty at the time

Cadet spirits could usually be assessed by checking the inclination of *Casper's* barrel, a retired Sherman, at Tank Junction. Cadets would routinely raise or lower the barrel to signal the level of morale amongst the cadet body – effected most often as we exited for leave or on returning. Marty McKowen: *“The mystery of the Sherman (Casper) barrel - did you ever notice that the barrel didn't just reflect the morale of the COC but anticipated the morale for the coming week? I found out at the final dining in that it was, in fact, the Training Major that elevated and depressed the barrel in anticipation of what was to come.”* (As this author changed the barrel on more than one occasion, we won't credit the action only to the Training Major.)

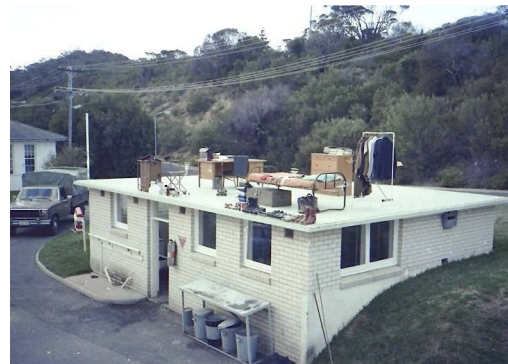


34 “Casper” the Sherman at Tank Junction next to one of the original Fort Nepean gun barrels

There was almost a constant stream of ‘fun’ directed often at the unfortunate by those who took delight in the ensuing discomfort. It might involve *fragging* someone’s room by rolling a can of shaving cream in a small towel, shaking it up and puncturing it with a bayonet before unfurling it through the louvres above the victim’s door whereon it would spurt its contents all over leaving a lengthy job to clean up. Another was to short sheet a bed, and yet another was to place the bed on toilet rolls. An even more creative option was to either re-organise someone’s room upside down or to completely re-locate the contents of a room, perhaps onto the flat roof of a small building and leave it to them to have to search for it, then have to climb up to their belongings, and finally, to relocate everything back to their room and put the whole lot back into inspection order. On one occasion we returned to the lines to discover our dress boots lined up on the parade ground – harmless and funny. Then there were the periodic threats of being marched off the end of the parade ground into the Bay – with ‘Digger’ Caldwell being the only one of us able to say that this dubious honour occurred to him. (One wonders at the effort required to clean up his high gloss boots after contact with beach sand, and perhaps, some salt water.)



35 An Upside Down Room



36 Mick Mowle’s relocated room on top of a laundry

Mark ‘Dougie’ Walters recalled when his SLR was taken to bits by some senior cadet. He probably expected Dougie would sit there all day trying to put it back together and that he and his mates would get a big laugh. Dougie simply, “*looked at the pile of parts, and there were quite a few, gathered them up, and took them to the armourer. I thought it was the clever solution. I didn’t make the mess so why should I struggle to*

*put it back together, was my thinking. I got the last laugh.” This was an example of how some were better at dealing with irritation than others. Marty McKowen: “A stripped rifle wasn’t an issue to us in Junior Class as Mark Williams had been an armourer in the NZ Army. So if we were ever caught with a stripped rifle we just said, “Mr Williams did it, Sir”. ”*

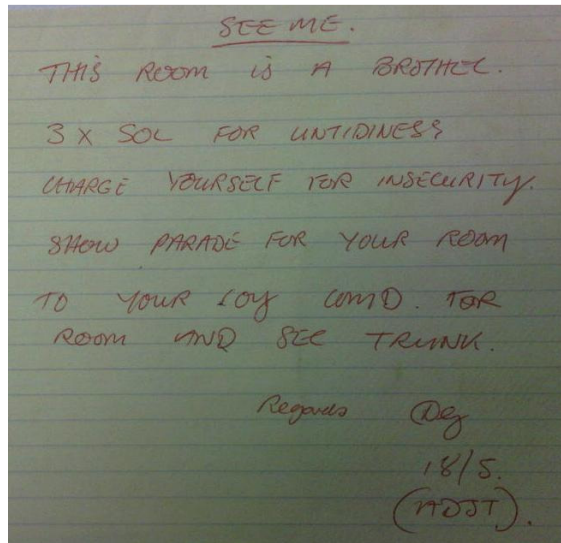
There were plentiful punishments administered by the staff and those cadets who were appointed to leadership positions with the galling requirement to charge ourselves with the offences we were assumed to have committed or for such petty matters as the loss of a 20 cent whistle in the field which required the submission of a Loss and Damage Report form and subsequent punishment. Each of us was also required to supervise punishment parades. Luke van Heuzen: *“I recall conducting a defaulter’s parade on the Parade Ground early one winter morning when the fog was quite thick. I amused myself by marching the small group of heinous criminals into and out of the fog, trying to predict each time where they would emerge. The inevitable happened where I lost control of where I had sent them having done too many right/left/about turns in the fog. I was forced to halt them and go searching. I found my small group standing by the edge of the parade ground on the sea side. They claim that I had almost marched them off the edge; I suspect they had used the fog to their advantage and simply found a spot to wait out the punishment period.”*

Andrew Maggs: *“I got the glory of the Catafalque Party Commander on Anzac Day with Lofty Wendt right next to me. I had been Duty Sergeant late enough in the year when Junior Class orderlies should have been expected to know how to fold a flag. Mine didn’t. Jon Hill was Duty Corporal I think. Unluckily for me, the CI, RSM, several other staff and the Death Row inhabitants (I think) were all standing at attention watching and waiting for the flags to fly. After many attempts I eventually had to order the Australian Flag bought down, re-folded, re- hoisted, then broken. All of my illustrious audience continued to stand fast the entire time. It turned out the Junior Classman had tied a knot rather than using a match that would break on a tug of the halyard. He got no punishments- it was my responsibility. After the flag finally flew, I heard the dulcet tones of Lofty calling me from the Lime Burner’s (RSM’s) Hut across the Parade Ground. He just said “Mr Maggs”, and I just said, “Yes Sir”. I knew; no more was needed. When I reported to him after the parade he was laughing so hard he was nearly crying. I was already crying in anticipation. But in the end I just got 5 flag parades, and the ANZAC day job. Sign on the line, do the time, don’t bitch or wimp out or try and shift the blame - and maybe life will be kind.”*

There was also the perverse joy staff derived from conducting room inspections and finding the smallest reasons to impose punishments. Marty McKowen: *“A motivated and gruff SGT DS was conducting room inspections when we went into the room of the young Mr De Somer. Deeks had displayed on his wardrobe door a photo of his lovely girlfriend taken whilst at the beach in minimalist attire. As in, topless. Upon seeing this photo the DS uttered words to the effect of, “Don't you know it is against regulations to display pornography in your room?” The young lawyer Deeks had a quick think (actually I’m pretty sure it was a prepared answer) and responded, words to the effect, “Sergeant, that is a photo of my girlfriend. Are you therefore saying that my girlfriend is a pornographic model?.....” Silence was the only sound and a gentle ‘whomp’ as the Sergeant’s brain exploded as we hurried out of the room.”*

Most particularly, ‘Big Devo’, the Adjutant, would leave notes, sometimes in obscure places, notifying the offence and punishment – increased if the note could not be found. A dead fly would lead to extras for keeping a pet (although there is an argument it was more to do with the dust in which the carcass rested), stale biscuits sampled from a sealed container leading to extras (imposed at Week 43 after having survived the term up to that point without punishments), and clean boot welts but dirty sprigs leading to others. A failure to document our own offences and admit guilt was deemed an integrity offence which would lead to immediate dismissal.

37 Rick Parker gets a message from the ADJT. Can't help noticing the absence of key content such as date or time

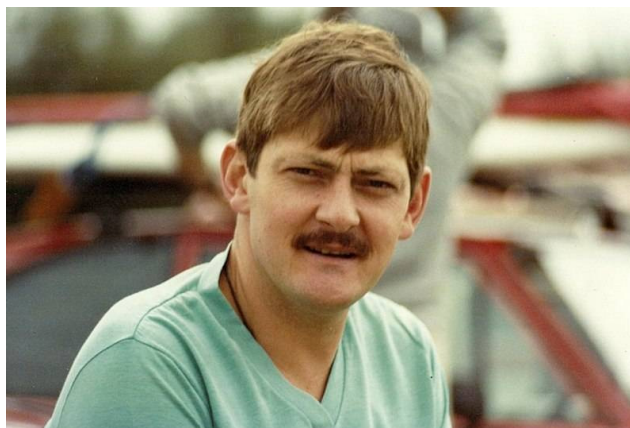


38 Mark Foxe also gets a message from the ADJT on returning from Double Pucka in Senior Class which meant most of the remaining time until Graduation was spent on punishments

Of course, the Drillies derived great enjoyment from their playful fault finding wherever they could and thereby instilled in us attention to minor detail and an enthusiasm to present ourselves perfectly whenever on parade. John Scholten relates a classic and representative anecdote of coming under the attention of the Drillies.



39 SGTs Anderson and Kelly ‘bashing’ Cadet slouch hats



40 The Adjutant, CAPT “Big Devo” Grierson

*"B Coy was formed up in the courtyard outside buildings 5 and 6 waiting to march off to classes in the lecture theatre down near Death-Row. Drill Sergeants Ron Anderson and 'Chance' Kelly were milling around amongst the ranks looking for transgressions in dress and bearing. Anderson glided up to OCDT Nigel Catchlove, stopped, snapped his head to the right and started assessing Catchlove top-to-bottom, from the chinstrap of his peak cap down. His eagle-like stare was penetrating, looking for any minor infraction in Nigel's personal presentation. Then his steely gaze caught sight of Nigel's name-tag, you know, the black plastic with white letters we used to affix to our breast pockets. Anderson looked at the name tag, then at Nigel's face, then looked back at the name tag, but this time his eyeball was perhaps just an inch from the offending item. "SERRRGEEANT KELLEEE!! - I HAVE FOUND SOMETHING QUITE CONCERNING HERE."*

*From this point it was game-on. Kelly came scurrying across, soothing Anderson's confected outrage as he arrived..... "What's wrong SGT Anderson? You seem deeply troubled and very upset - I hate to see you like this!"*

*Anderson feigned confusion and despair..... "I am upset SGT Kelly. There is something unusual about Mr Catchlove's name tag which I find very disturbing".*

*Kelly positioned himself in front of the hapless Nigel, looked him in the eye, then with exaggerated movements, stooped to closely examine his name tag, then back up to eyeball him, then back down to the name-tag again. Kelly delivered his assessment .... "It's distorted SGT Anderson. All mis-shapen and quite offensive."*

*Anderson replied.... "Much like Mr Catchlove's personality SGT Kelly"*

*Kelly enquired..... "Is that an OCS issue name-tag Mr Catchlove?"*

*"No SGT Kelly", replied Nigel.*

*Anderson asked, "Are you suffering from a crisis of identity Mr Catchlove?"*

*"No SGT Anderson" said Nigel.*

*Of course by this stage anyone within earshot of this exchange was choking back the impulse to burst into laughter and waiting to hear what fate Anderson and Kelly had in store for Nigel.*

*Anderson delivered his verdict. "I believe you have a serious identity crisis Mr Catchlove, take a Show Parade and I never want to see that offensive item on your uniform again"*

*With that Anderson and Kelly marched off to find their next defaulter and Nigel counted himself lucky for getting off relatively lightly. As we marched down the hill past Badcoe Hall there was a quiet critique of Anderson and Kelly's performance. It was agreed, it was amongst their best."*

*Jeff Harrison: "In drill lessons Chance Kelly would pick up the merest movement of a hidden finger on a rifle stock and say "I saw that Mister! I'm a sniper, I see*

everything!” *He used to play rugby on the weekends and regularly got his clock cleaned by the opposition so would turn up on the Monday with both eyes swollen shut and a fat lip and still do the lesson with comments like “Just because I can’t open my eyes doesn’t mean I can’t see you stuffing up Mister (Noel) Augustes!!!!” I suspect it was Chance who made the famous comment to Noel during a ‘For Inspection, Port Arms’ lesson in front of the Adjutant’s Hut (when Noel had somehow got his rifle onto his LEFT hand side), “Mr Augustes... why don’t you do us all a favour and go back to the family fish and chip shop!?!?”*

There was also another encounter with one of these Sergeants whilst marching around a group which included Mark Cooper. He had the misfortune to have not properly re-seated the baseplate of his SLR magazine. During a drill movement there was a metallic “*schloong*” sound as the baseplate sprang off the end of the magazine and landed on the ground. Coops knew he was toast as the Sergeant came up to accost him. With a large spring protruding from the inside of the magazine on his rifle, he could do little but admit that it was his baseplate. Coops awaited the words of doom, “*Charge yourself Mr Cooper!*” but instead he heard, “*You know Mr Cooper, I had a naughty last night and I’m feeling pretty good. This is your lucky day*”: And with that he wandered off to harass someone else and Coops breathed a sign of unbelieving relief.

Even the Adjutant admits these days, “*Emotional scarring caused by SNCOs was indeed a by-product of graduation. Whilst being taught to fix and unfix bayonets by Drillies of an earlier era, I vividly recall being told that my ‘unfix’ drill movements resembled a greyhound fornicating with a golf ball. While I mastered the drill I was unable to complete that particular movement, or watch it in the future, without very unpleasant images coming to mind.*”

Then there were the little requirements designed to set high standards but which came with punishments for breaches. (When a breach involved having to ‘front’ the OC and go through a formal disciplinary proceeding, there was never any point in pleading innocence because no one was ever found ‘not guilty’. The take up rate for smoking seemed to be quite high at the time – not least because every break seemed to be prefaced with the phrase, “*take five minutes for a smoko – if you don’t smoke, go through the motions*”. Smokers were required to twirl off the lit end of their cigarette butts before placing the remains inside a pocket until they could empty it later, and anyone caught with both hands in their pockets would hear the shouted order, “*Sew ‘em up!*” which meant they would have to show the next morning that they had neatly employed needle and thread to prevent use of the pockets until serving out the punishment. The most detailed inspections of anything and everything could easily result in punishments for the tiniest things and frequent changes of uniforms every day required many hours of *bogging* to prepare for only short usage. A readiness to impose punishments for any infraction of any rule, imagined or otherwise, was always the order of the day.

Marty McKowen: Indicative of the pressures to succeed led to some curious feats of logic. For the “*first uniform inspection of our Junior Class, special attention was paid the night before to making sure that uniforms were all good to go and with extra special attention given to some of our northern neighbours. On the morning of the inspection, there I was, one pace forward, head snapped to the left, and there was our*

*neighbour from the Highlands of PNG looking like he had just pulled his uniform out of the washing bag. "Did you sleep in your uniform Mister?" asked the supervising DS in a sarcastic tone accompanied by a full glare. "YES Sergeant!" the cadet answered in full and naïve honesty. "I didn't want to be late so I used my initiative to dress in my uniform before I went to sleep". "Some work to do here", suggested the DS."*

With such demands placed on our tolerance and patience, it was perhaps just as well that it was clearly understood that anyone caught striking another cadet – i.e. fighting or simply ‘contact counselling’ - would immediately be removed. For those of us not used to such robust behaviours, frequently associated with ORTs (Other Ranks Tendencies), as opposed to the desired OLQs (Officer Like Qualities), it was a saving grace from what might otherwise have been fairly unpleasant. To my knowledge, and in spite of a surfeit of opportunities to take umbrage at any number of things, there was no lasting personal antagonism or any real acrimony at all within our class.

There was however a notorious punishment meted out by cadets on their fellows as a form of celebrating a birthday or to communicate a not very subtle message to someone that they were not well regarded. While it was always insisted that this activity, called ‘bishing’, was not bastardisation, everyone knew it was. The most important thing was not to become associated in the minds of those who were looking to bish someone and to stay out of the way when it was on. We sure learned our lessons every day and in every way, robustly and without sympathy.



41 Officer Cadet School Portsea looking towards Point Nepean and Queenscliff. Cadet accommodation and Mess in the foreground, the Adjutant's and CI's Hut adjacent to the jetty, the Parade Ground to its left and Badcoe Hall and the Administration Buildings further to the left. Idyllic looking but it belied an incredibly intense life and long hours



42 Parade Ground, Adj-CI Hut, Model Room, Laundry chimney and Death Row (where 'George' the ghost resided) from the Bay



43 Badcoe Hall (Now the name of the main hall at RMC Duntroon)



44 Building I – Home of A Company



45 Building 6 – Home of B Company



46 Memorial Wall looking towards Building 5 (now at RMC Duntroon)

Bishing took the form of a ritual that rarely varied. A metal bed would be brought out onto the BSM's lawn which was surrounded by most of the accommodation blocks. The self-appointed members of the capture party would take themselves off to find the victim (or victims as the case may be) while a crowd would begin to congregate to see who the poor sod was and to watch proceedings. One I clearly recall involved a senior cadet who some may have thought needed some practical guidance and a junior cadet whose only fault was to let someone know it was his birthday. Both were brought out and pinned to the ground whereon all their clothing, bar their underwear, was forcibly removed. The first victim was carried to the bed and laid on the wire structure which was a poor excuse for suspension of a mattress and body. Short 'toggle' ropes were then used to tie the limbs to each corner of the bed and then the second victim was brought over and placed on top of the first but in the opposite orientation and lashed the same. They were then anointed with various condiments from the kitchen and buckets of dirty dish water in every nook and cranny. It was obviously a real test of forbearance to be able to cope with such treatment without losing one's composure and to even 'enjoy' the attention just a little. The bed was then turned on one end so one victim was upside down, and then it was turned the other way. At this point the bed was placed back on the horizontal only to be hoisted onto the shoulders of four cadets and paraded across the lawn, down the narrow, stepped pathway to the shore and then placed in the shallows – all the while escorted by a mass of caterwauling cadets. Usually the bed would then be moved further out, sufficient to allow the shockingly cold water to lap against the bare back of the victim, and one rope would be loosened enough so that he would be able to free himself – at which point the entire assembly would cry out, in best *Monty Python* fashion, "Run Away!!". This was important as any victim would naturally be highly motivated to catch anyone they could to mete out whatever revenge they could there and then.



There was a creative variation which occurred after arriving at the beach. We were all issued with long, slim plastic inflatable tubes which were a pathetic excuse for inserts for an air mattress. The only time they were ever used in our time at Portsea was when a whole set of them were blown up and affixed beneath the bed frame. The bed, with the victim still tied, was ceremonially carried and then towed out to one of the derelict jetty pylons and tethered. It really was a sight to see a bed with its bound victim quietly riding the small swell of Port Phillip Bay held in place by a rope attached to a post.



47 The waiting



Bishing, early 1984 (No names, no pack drill)  
48 The treatment



49 The release



50 Brian Cox 'man's up during a separate bishing



51 The aftermath - Wesley Sim and Brian Cox

Marty McKowen relates an occasion when the Junior B bished Senior B between the accommodation blocks – a fairly outrageous act of juniority standing up to seniority. *“If I remember correctly, Senior Class had been acting up and a retaliatory strike was planned, executed and all rejoiced. In the Mess that evening the Senior Class was picking us up for all types of infractions, real and imaginary. Paddy Hallinan, CSM B, subsequently approached me (for some reason he thought I was the instigator - I pleaded ‘no comment your honour’) and started to lay down the law. Subsequently we agreed a truce. The good thing about having a class made up of mostly serving soldiers was that we realised that this was training in order to obtain a commission and that all the fun and games were just a side event.”*

Not all punishments and high jinx were unwelcome. During one cadet dining-in night we were introduced to the concept of a Kangaroo Court by a number of the Drill Sergeants, principal among them as I recall, SGT Anderson of the bushy black moustache, the booming voice, rapier-like wit, the bombastic nature, impeccable grooming and the very essence of what a Drill Sergeant should be. (I don't think it was until we had been commissioned that we called it a *Subbies' Court* which became a much anticipated opportunity to exact some light-hearted vengeance on senior

officers and annoying peers and those who had acted in a way which warranted attention.

Phil Watson: *“A judge was appointed and seated at the head table and then two Sergeants-at-Arms were appointed to prowling the tables as the Judge parodied an inquisitor (it reminded me of Sir Robert Helpman as the evil Child Catcher in the movie Chitty Chitty Bang Bang) asking cryptic questions as clues to who might be the target in best pantomime fashion until at last, the two Sergeants-at-Arms pounced on the unlucky victim, dragged him from his seat and roughly hustled him to the end of the table whereon he was propelled up onto the table top to the derisive cries of all. From that moment he was referred to as the “Guilty Bastard”. An outrageously trumped up charge was then read out; the basis of which has long since been forgotten but as the charge was almost completely fabricated, the need to remember is moot. The assembled mass was encouraged to hysterically cry, “Guilty! Guilty!” but of course justice needed to be seen to be done so an accomplished, eloquent Prosecutor was appointed and then a ham-fisted, bumbling, inept Defender - no matter how much the accused begged for a replacement or the opportunity to defend themselves. The “evidence”, loosely based on an actual event, was presented and wildly applauded or booed as appropriate. The Defender attempted to refute the evidence but instead managed to dig the hole deeper and then begged the mercy of the court to take pity on such an obviously guilty accused. Punishment, naturally pre-determined, took the form of half a dozen ‘shots’ of port to be skulled. The Guilty called for a ‘catcher’ who had to stand behind him and as the glasses were emptied in rapid time, they were pitched from atop the table over his shoulder for the Catcher to secure in a peaked cap. A number were dropped and so the Catcher was required to skull that many glasses as punishment. This was the first of many formal dining-nights for us with accompanying deep enjoyment and stories to cherish for years to come.”*

## Hanging In and Lasting Out

All of us strongly resisted the temptation throughout junior class, and many through Senior Class, to resign due to the incredible demands of the course. We each got ourselves, often with robust encouragement from our mates, through a whole succession of parades and punishments, ceremonial rifle and sword drills (including fix and un-fix bayonets with the particular risk of accidentally stabbing oneself under the chin if not performed properly or of embarrassingly coming to the DS’ attention by dropping the bayonet off the end of the rifle if not properly affixed) and field exercises (our first full blown tactical exercise was to Cape Schank within six weeks of arrival).

Jon Hill: *“I remember our first field trip to Cape Schanck for a week of how to survive in the bush, some very basic minor infantry tactics and some other surprises we did not expect. I remember one of the guys getting bitten by a snake in our first ever fire and movement practice, getting charged for having a dirty rifle (almost the first one in the class to ‘charge yourself’) and perhaps more vividly was the hot box meal we had on the last night. It tasted OK going down but in the early hours of the*

*morning I didn't feel so good. I went to find the port-a-loos (it was State forest so we had to use them) to find a line of nearly all of us suffering the same fate. Welcome to Army food! (It didn't get much better as my career went on. We had a cook in the Regiment who forgot to turn the chops over when he was cooking them so they were burnt on one side and raw on the other, plus a cook whose sweat used to drip off his forehead into the food)".*

Rifle cleanliness was a matter of grave risk with not the least speck of dirt, dust or rust being acceptable. It was always tempting to try to avoid discharging one's rifle, or minimise the number of live or blanks rounds one fired, as the more there were, the greater the cleaning that would be required. John Scholten: *"A cadet was caught out by a Field Wing Warrant Officer at the end of a day's shooting on the Static Mechanical Range for using another cadet's rifle. The cadet had stripped and meticulously cleaned his SLR for a defaulter's parade and couldn't face pumping a day's worth of 7.62mm through it. (Perhaps, he had another couple of days of defaulter's parades ahead of him?). Anyway, the good WO2 seized the cadet's rifle, walked over to the ammunition Land Rover and pulled out 3 rounds. He then proceeded to pull the projectiles out with his teeth and feed them, one after the other, into the breach through the ejection port. By the time he had fired off the doctored rounds the rifle was filthy. The WO took the gas plug out and examined it just to make sure he had achieved the desired effect. He then told the cadet to clean his rifle on his return to the lines and present it to him for inspection before dinner. I don't think he came to dinner that evening."*

There was leadership training and the conduct of performance evaluations, tactical and operations training including patrolling and ambushing (as well as the military appreciation process and TEWTS – Tactical Exercises Without Troops), sometimes referred to as PENIS exercises – Practical Exercises Not Involving Soldiers), the principles of war, introduction to every Arm and Service (some scantily so but many to considerable depth), introduction to 'the enemy' and his organisation, weapons, tactics and capabilities and weapon demonstrations (who could forget the M-60 machine gun 'cones of fire' lesson into the ocean off Cheviot Beach? Only in Australia would the last known location of a disappeared Prime Minister be used as the site for a weapon demonstration). There were range practices, training programmes, unarmed combat, field defences, obstacles and mine warfare, navigation, military symbols, military history, military law and investigations, aid to the civil power, administration and logistics, weapons drills and shoots, radio-telephone procedures (RATEL) and codes, orders (SMEAC) and fire directions, instructional methods, interviewing and questioning techniques, first aid, extreme fitness tests, conduct of range practices and unit PT and team games (since devolved to junior ranks to address OH&S requirements) and the structure of military units and formations, customs, ranks, etiquette and mess protocols, character development, professional development, personal development, religion and basic psychology, written papers, public speaking, debating, water purification, how to conduct a kitchen inspection, how to manage welfare problems, wine appreciation and much more – not to mention joyous re-training and re-testing opportunities. (We did however have one lesson on counter terrorism which will have undoubtedly changed since 9/11.) When it came to getting paid, our weapons would first be inspected and then we would march up to the Pay Officer (appointed from amongst every unit's officers for each occasion) to receive our cash in a sealed envelope. A local bank

provided a rudimentary on-base service at these times. Little wonder the course was extended to 18 months straight after ours – and a relief on our part to have had the good timing to avoid those extra six months.

**SMEAC – Team Briefing Sheet**

<b>Situation</b> <small>Overview of the situation</small> e.g. Car with one elderly female swept into River Dent at 20.00 hours. Point last seen G.R. 473764	
<b>Mission</b> <small>What this team is to undertake</small> e.g. An effective search from bridge G.R. 365366 to bridge G.R. 367466.	
<b>Execution</b> <small>Plan of action</small> e.g. Your team: Jim Bann (party leader), Charvita Clarke, Ollie Henman and Tom Jones. Party leader to brief on arrival at search area. Allocate one searcher and two downstream backup.	
<b>Administration</b> <small>Essential equipment and resources</small> e.g. Each person must be equipped with: Torch, Helmet, Thermos, Whistle, Knife, Walking Boots, Group Equipment: Radio, Map, Mobile Phone, First Aid Kit...	
<b>Command &amp; Communication</b> <small>Who is in control</small> e.g. John Franks control and coordination, base channel 436, base phone number 01539 71234, John Franks mobile 0070 5921.	

52 Example of SMEAC Template

<b>Ground Brief (Defence)</b>
Map, Binoculars, Pointer, Compass, Pens  Orientate the group, Stand behind  We are at GR ..... and North/South is to your front/right/left  Let's now move from left to right, near to far:  Left of Arc is ..... On the left we can identify.....  In the centre we can identify.....  On the right we can identify.....  Right of Arc is .....  Enemy Approaches - FUP, Going, Obstacles, Direct FS positions  Own Forces - units, heavy weapons, coord locations, boundaries, killing grounds  Vital Ground - Key Terrain, rear boundary, Killing Ground  Are there any questions?

53 Example of Ground Briefing Template



54 TEWT group. Pickering in background with TEWT board. L-R: Hentschel, Doust, Warren, Hill, unidentified, Walters, Jongebloed, Perren, Cooper, Belford, Pearson



55 TEWT Syndicate preparing individual plans. L-R: Brunton, Keppel(?), unidentified, Brosnan(?), Barling, Heatherinton(?), Sutton



56 Mark Cooper prepares mud model prior to presenting TEWT solution

Phil Watson: *“The one lesson I remember above all others was the one about ambushing which was held in the theatre-like Model Room in front of Death Row. Every lesson required an arousal, often quite creative, followed by the words, “In this lesson you will be taught.....” and similar words at the end as a ‘confirmation of learning objectives’. In this lesson we went straight into the learning objectives and then began the explanation of the key characteristics of ambushing with the most important being.... “SURPRISE!”.... at which point a pyrotechnic went off outside the door and then it was flung open and an M-60 with blank rounds chattered away as it was fired across the front of the seating. The shock factor had our hearts pounding. We were, most definitely, “surprised!” by that arousal. This was all ended by the oft spoken words, “Thanks Demo”, to the resident Demonstration Platoon members who illustrated any number of skills for us to absorb.”*

It is also worth mentioning the ‘high tech’ nature of training prior to whiteboards, word processors and data projectors. Learning props then were as sophisticated as having magnetic strips with Dymo tape stuck to them and casually slapped onto metal boards – often skilfully launched from a distance with the aim being to have them land in exactly the right place, vertically and horizontally aligned. When it came to demonstrating the emergency response to a dropped grenade on the range, one poor cadet became the bunny who was violently manoeuvred backwards around the kink in

the revetment before the over-sized DS threw himself on top of the cadet to shield him from the blast. This happened for real on one occasion when a cadet got the lever of a grenade caught in the turned up sleeve of his Howard Green jumper and it wobbled out of his grasp and landed on top of the parapet, rolled along it briefly and then, fortuitously, toppled over the far side – but not before being roughly propelled back into the safety section and leapt upon like a bull upon a young in-season cow.

We each eventually worked out some of the rules of the game and by the time we reached Senior Class most of us managed to stop being the focus of attention which had brought with it punishments and extra work on top of an already heavy load. This was made all the more difficult for those with no prior military experience who had the most to learn. It was a really big gap for them to have to make up and they had to work harder than the ex-servies in order to close it. Phil Watson: *“I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most punished cadet of my Company in Junior Class managing to grow one punishment from an initial 14 days up to 21 days – with the unremitting pressure only temporarily interrupted by the variation of field exercises where there was even less sleep and greater physical and mental demands, saved only by Dave Warren being awarded a massive (and maximum) 28 days towards the end for a UD (Unauthorised Discharge of a weapon).”* At the end of each term, it was the privilege of the most punished cadet from each Company, Junior or Senior, in front of a rowdy COC to hurl the Punishment Book into the Bay being symbolic of the fact that none of the punishments were to be recorded on our Service Records and were only relevant in a training environment.

(Jeff Harrison: *“It would be a very interesting exercise to dive the water about 5 or 6 metres from the cliff face and see how many tons of incriminating evidence could be found after all these years. I can personally attest to a 10 foot long tubular iron sign saying “KAPYONG” brought back to me as a gift from an inter-college swimming comp by (and I stand to be corrected in my advancing years) a still-pissed Marcus Fox. How he’d got it all the way back to our lines defies logic, but for me it was 5 solid minutes of unbridled terror trying to sneaky-peek the bastard of a thing back out and into oblivion.”* Marty McKowen: *“As well as that sneaky "range produce" that escaped detection but which resulted in an "Oh crap" moment when cleaning your webbing in your room.”*)

At the conclusion of every activity that involved any ammunition or pyrotechnics, including blank rounds, every person would be formed up and would have to present their firearm and webbing for inspection. This was performed very formally and conscientiously. Each firer would cock their weapon and present the breach for physical and visual inspection to detect any stray round with the checker loudly declaring each time, *clear!*” at which the firer would ease springs and open their ammunition pouches on their webbing. As each person had their webbing vigorously examined by a checking officer, the person being checked would formally declare, in a loud voice so the supervising officer could hear, *“I have no ammunition or range produce in my possession, SIR!”* At the conclusion of these proceedings, the Conducting Officer would recite the declaration which only varied according to circumstances such as whether it was live or blank rounds: *“This has been a live-firing range practice. It is an offence, both civil and military, to remain in possession of ammunition or range produce after you leave this place. If you have any ammunition or range produce in your possession now, you must declare it to me and*

*nothing will be said. If on returning to the lines you find you are in possession of ammunition or range produce, you must declare it to your chain of command and nothing further will be said. If, however, you are subsequently found to be in possession of ammunition or range produce, you will face disciplinary proceedings. This may include a fine or imprisonment or both. Check your pockets!*" (This would be accompanied by much overt pocket slapping). *"You have been warned!"* (This strictly orchestrated conduct of a range practice and accompanying safety instruction and orders was nearly the undoing of many a cadet but it was fully ingrained in each of us for the safe conduct of the many range practices we would supervise over the years.)

John Scholten got through all of Junior Class without a single punishment. Clearly, as he observed, *"I had mastered the Grey-Art. In the last week of Junior Class, a list of every cadet's punishment record was promulgated in the orderly room window. The morning after it went public, I was doubling down to the trucks behind the Cadet's Mess as we were heading out for a range shoot. WO2 Lazarus, our Drill WSM, was waiting for me. He called me over and asked me if I had cleaned my boots (he didn't even look at them). I said "Yes Sir". He told me in no uncertain terms that the amount of dust that had accumulated in the welts of my boots was a disgusting health hazard and to take a Show Parade. The funny thing was they were brand new GPs; I had only collected them from the Q Store the day before. I knew better than to try and explain, so I took my lumps and doubled off to the truck."*

Marty McKowen: *"Regarding the "Charge yourself Mister" part of our training. It was one of my roles as the CSM B towards the end of our training to check the records to see who had not been charged and to remedy that situation as we all had to be charged at some stage to experience the event. The last person to be charged, as I remember it, was Ash Brunton as CSM A Company, for writing something on the white board in one of the class rooms that was deemed to be offensive. During the hearing the OC B (who heard the charge to ensure no conflict of interest) was a little put out that we all thought it was quite amusing."*

Anyone with any collection of punishments was unable to have any break from training or take time off the base or enjoy a weekend for upwards of two months in a term of 22 weeks. Phil Watson: *"In my Senior Class, and in contrast to my Junior Class experience, I barely featured in the Punishment Book and lifted my standings in the various achievement ladders. I was really slim back then and not as strong as many in my class. I do think though that I had managed to acquire a good quotient of what was euphemistically called "heartillage" – the desire and ability to 'put in' and/or keep going when the compelling desire of a rational person would have been to give in or rest. As was emphasised many times by WO2 Lazarus, with real passion and emphasis, "Guts! Determination! Driiiiive!!"."*

At the end of Junior Class, having seen our Seniors graduate and go on their way, we broke into platoon groups and headed off on a week of adventure training - Exercise New Challenge. Some went adventure canoeing in the Snowy River, others went Scuba Diving or horse riding, and others still went four-wheel driving to the outback. It was the first time we were really able to unwind and enjoy ourselves although no one was foolish enough to think we weren't still under observation by the DS. On

return we were awarded two weeks of very welcome leave with return travel back to where we had enlisted – all at the expense of the tax payer.



57 Nigel Catchlove and some of the DS survey one of the “indestructible” canoes taken by 6 Platoon to the Snowy Mountains. (Dave Mol has his back turned at the left rear. Mait Niilus was cleverer than Nigel in avoiding being photographed with the incriminating evidence. One wonders who had to submit the Loss and Damage Report.)



58 Adventure Training – Horse Riding



59 Adventure Training – SCUBA Diving: Glen Keppel and Mick Wade with instructor



60 Adventure Training – Four Wheel Driving – artesian bore



## Inter-Service Sports and Sacrificial Lambs

There were Inter-Service and Tri-Service Sports carnivals where we were not usually very successful. Our training emphasised strength and endurance over speed and agility and more than once we thought we would like to have seen a few running races conducted with a full pack and webbing. Like as not the lean, effete athletes we encountered wouldn't have been quite so competitive. This was evidenced perhaps by Andrew 'Blue Ribbon' Maggs who was a member of the OCS Swim Team at ISCSC in Canberra. The Inter Service Colleges Swimming Carnival was held annually between RMC, the RAAF cadets from Point Cook and midshipmen from the RAN college at Jervis Bay.

John Scholten: *"The OCS swim team arrived at Duntroon in the evening and we were shown into some spare rooms in the RMC cadet lines. Very soon the RMC cadets were hovering around trying to ascertain our rank and seniority - difficult given we were travelling in track suits. They started testing our resolve by attempting to throw their weight around. The OCS boys went into a tight defensive posture with all-round-protection. We told them Reggie Crawford (one of our Juniors) was our BSM and that another junior, Alvarez, was our CSM. I recall Dave Warren and Jeff Apitz quickly tiring of their pettiness and telling them to fuck off. I think it was this experience that demonstrated to me most clearly what we perceived was the frequent difference in maturity and loyalty between OCS and RMC cadets. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised as OCS cadets were on average a couple of years older and generally they had served in the regular army as NCOs or worked in civilian jobs, while RMC cadets were usually straight out of school with little wider experience. Very few OCS cadets went straight from high school to officer training. Greg DeSomer had practiced as a lawyer in Sydney, Andrew Maggs was a trained psychologist, Jeff 'Audey' Apitz was a knock-about surveyor from Newcastle and I had worked in business in Melbourne. There were plenty more of the same in our class.*

*We were the clear underdogs at ISCSC. Our coaches told us to expect this because the teams we were competing against could build greater team depth due to the tenure of their cadets at the various other Service colleges - RMC 4 years, RAAF Point Cook 2 years, etc. Also, the other Service colleges had much stronger swimming programs and bigger talent-pools to draw from (pardon the pun).*

*Well our coach's prophecy was accurate. About a third of the way into the carnival, OCS was getting annihilated. Now Maggsy wasn't our strongest swimmer and the towelling we were getting wasn't helping his confidence, so he turned to the team and selflessly confessed he thought he would let the team down and he wanted someone else (Greg De Somer I think) to swim his event. Greg took his race and we reassured Maggsy, telling him we would sub him into an invitational 100m freestyle event that carried no points towards the aggregate score. Unburdened, this was a great relief to him.*

*Well, toward the end of the carnival the announcers called the swimmers for the 100m invitational to the starting area behind the blocks. We sent Maggsy off with our best wishes and watched him walk towards the marshalling area. We waited and watched closely, looking for the cadets from the other Service schools that would be competing against Andrew, but none seemed to front up.*

*Then it became apparent why. The announcer took to his microphone and started winding-up the crowd with an enthusiastic introduction of the next event....*

"Ladies and gentlemen, we now come to this afternoon's blue-ribbon event. The premier 100m freestyle race where each college can pit their very best, including members of staff, against each other for the ISCSC shield. By invitation only, I would like to introduce each college's representative....."

*With this, each swimmer was called by name, asked to mount their starting block and acknowledge the adoring crowd. It was clear the other colleges had sent in their PTIs, except the RAN which had a ring-in clearance diver for this occasion. The competitors mounted the blocks in their speedos, Greek-gods all, with rippling pecs and washboard six-packs. One even flexed body-building style as his name was announced to the crowd. The last name called was Andrew MAGGS, representing the Officer Cadet School Portsea. Well, Maggsy didn't flinch. He climbed his starting block wearing the very fashionable white Bonds cotton T-shirt with his name handwritten in black texta across the front. He cast a confident glance around the pool, raising his open palm to the crowd to quell their enthusiastic applause. Then he looked across at us. Not one of us dared laugh until he had started and was face-down in the water - then the roars of laughter were almost uncontrollable.*

*'Blue-Ribbon' was born.*

*I thought to myself afterward that if ever Maggsy found himself leading soldiers into battle with the odds seriously stacked against them, the unflinching confidence he displayed on the blocks at the Dickson pool in Canberra that day would not betray the fact he was actually scared witless."*

Andrew Maggs: *"It should be noted that in my Blue Ribbon swim I was neck and neck after the 50m turn. Unfortunately it was a 100m race."*



61 OCS ISCSC Swim Team

Rear: G. De Somer, A. Last, J. Scholten, D. Evans, W. Deschow, S. Mitchell.

Front: F. Alvarez, J. Apitz, D. Warren, A. Skull, A. Maggs.

Absent: M. Lavers, R. Crawford.

There were also inter-company and inter-platoon competitions for athletics, Aussie Rules, rugby, cross-country, swimming, drill and so forth which were fiercely contested (perhaps none so much as the inter-company rugby game when the OC's of A and B Company bet their hefty Mess bills on the outcome – Captain Ken Noye being the B Company loser on the day and financially badly out of pocket) – almost as much as the energetic and vigorous cheerleading led by Leo Hogan, Ash 'now you've made me swear!' Brunton and Geoff 'Tracks' Tully closely followed by just about every other cadet. We were after all, meant to be leaders and able to inspire others to strive to win.

Phil Watson: *“One night after a day of inter-Service sports at Portsea between the Army, RAAF and Navy officer training facilities located in Victoria and following a mass storming of the tiny Cadets' Mess bar, I managed to slip away and catch some seriously needed zeds which would make for a good Sunday and set me up for a good week. I wouldn't have been asleep for very long before there was loud knocking and insistent calls to open up. I got up and opened the door only to be immediately and firmly grabbed by some of my classmates and bundled down the stair well and out of the building, escorted under tight guard down between the administration buildings to the car park where I was handed up into the RAAF bus and placed right at the very back. Tradition had it, as I discovered, that the RAAF or Army (depending on who was visiting who) would kidnap a cadet and take them back to their base and hold them for ransom – and I was the lucky fellow who had drawn the short straw! We started off for Point Cook via the circuitous road system and were stopped at the boom gate on the edge of our base. The Duty Officer climbed on board and, surprisingly, asked if there were any Army people on board and insisted that only RAAF people were to leave. I could have spoken up at this point, even though I was almost submerged and surrounded by RAAF-ies but it didn't feel very sporting and I figured they would have a plan for getting me back. It was kind of fun. We got through the boom gate and headed to Sorrento, the little seaside town about 3 kilometres away, before pulling over to the side of the road. There was a conference and it was decided that it was too risky to take me after all and they decided I should get off. As I was getting down the steps they asked me if I wouldn't mind making my own way back and then I realised – they had no plan. Bloody RAAF-ies! Well, this wasn't the time to let my side down so I told them it would be fine and just started walking back – barefoot and in my striped Army-issue pyjamas. It was hardly any time at all before a young couple pulled up in their Mini and, after asking a few half-knowing questions, kindly volunteered to give me a lift back to just short of the entrance. I asked them to let me out where I wouldn't be seen, thanked them and then sneaked my way along the left side of the entry area where it was darker before scaling the concrete wall (fortunately not much taller than me) behind the guard house. I got over easily enough and continued along the verge between the coastal Ti-trees and the lawn until I was out of the splash from the overhead lights and then, deciding it was worth the risk (after all, it was now late and the sense of fun was somewhat exhausted, I optimistically figured if I got caught I might be forgiven), decided against the really long bare-foot walk around the road system and instead crossed the road and went through the forbidden (to Cadets) Married Quarter patch, past the Commandant's house and the Cadets' Mess, back to my building and upstairs to my room to resume my restful weekend.”*

## Board of Studies – Form 13-B

Each of us came to appreciate the ominous relationship between our performance, the ever-present Form 13-B and our Guidance Officers. Some of the latter were quite thoughtful and decent while others had a real reputation for making a difficult situation even more so. As our Adjutant at the time wrote recently of his experience as a cadet a decade earlier, he also had no *“expectation of being accepted onto the course and expected at every Board of Studies to be removed”*. There were three BOSs held each term, so a total of six make-or-break obstacles to overcome. Most of us probably felt everyone else was in less danger of removal than themselves and it was an ongoing surprise for those of us who were not great performers to find we did not get paraded for it after every BOS throughout the course. Greg Belford spoke for most everyone in our Class Journal at the end of the course saying that his *“...greatest moment was passing each BOS”*. There would not have been many who felt they were secure in the hopes of graduation throughout the majority of their time at OCS. Some had the dis-comfort of having to escort those who were to be formally warned. Craig Burn: *“As an escort to someone who had to be marched to the CI’s office for a warning, I recall that the Chief Instructor, Lieutenant Colonel Kerry Gallagher, had a dog sitting by his desk that stared at the guilty as intently as the CI. I think that was Junior Class and maybe one of Senior B being warned”* which shows how merciless the proceedings could be – having a junior cadet escort a senior and be present while he was warned. Glenn Keppel: *“You weren’t allowed to look at the CI; you had to keep your eyes fixed on the Queen –from my own personal experience.”*

Those who didn’t make it went out either through injury, removal at own request, or being BOS’d out. Those who fell by the wayside included: Rob Wherret (own request, amongst the first to go), Dave Franklin (a popular and respected ex-apprentice who decided being an officer wasn’t for him and who was virtually swamped by all of us when we found him supervising a display at Holsworthy during Demo Tour), Mick Hollister (another soldier who decided against being an officer, went back to MPs and came under the command of his best mate Mait Niilus), Mark Lapham (who wanted to fight ‘everything and everyone’), Nietzsche (also an aggro man with ORTs and a talent for Aussie Rules which meant he was not removed until the Inter-Company footy match was over), Cameron Hetherington, Lyall (injury and self-preservation from the attentions of the RMO), Rob Lodden (injury), Don Wilson (ex-RAAF officer cadet), Suliano (overseas cadet), Hartley, Olley, Steve Ibbott, Quentin ‘Chits’ Barter, Dave Gilbert, Dave Gilbo (who had an unfortunate stammer and used to sleep talk. Jeff Harrison: *“When asked once by a Drillie what his name was, he answered “A-A-Gilbo Sergeant”, who then said “What the hell’s an Agilbo?”*), Dave Coote, Jim Klumpp (interrogated by a Drillie – *“Klump, what kind of name is that?; a clump is something that I kick on the Parade Ground!”*), Mick Jongeblood, Nigel Catchlove (injury, graduated next class), Craig Daniel, Jeff Pratt (decided to go back to martial arts and Zen Buddhism – Jeff Harrison: *“Pratt and Daniel used to spend ages practicing some martial art or other in Building 6. Pratt even had some weird looking sword thingies in his security trunk. During Adventure Training the two of them had the crap beaten out of them by a lone, drunken traditional owner on a bridge in Echuca.”*), Noel Augustes, Brad Ellis (who apparently used to see dead people), and Dean ‘my Dad’s a Brigadier’ Deighton (the fruit did fall far from the tree on this occasion). The high number who didn’t make it and the regard in which many of them were held illustrates the toughness and, in some

ways, the brutal nature of the course. Since it was all about leading men in battle, one would hope the standards were very high.

In the vein of gallow's humour, Marty McKowen recalled, *"I remember one BOS when I had been informed that it was a 'tradition' that the guns on the Parade Ground were turned to face the BOS location (lecture room) by 6 Platoon. Then finding out that one very eager Platoon Sergeant (Harro) had decided that this actually meant relocating the gun so that its muzzle was against the door. OC B then called me into his office and I calmly explained that this was "Tradition, Sir". I had learned early on that all was forgiven if "tradition" was used as the reason."*



62 Catchlove and Jongeblood letting their hair down after surviving a BOS where they thought they were toast. The former had graduation delayed due to injury, the latter didn't make it through the final BOS

For those of us without prior military experience, our situation was more tenuous as the first half of the course was all about military skills progressing from a raw recruit through to a qualified Corporal in just 22 weeks. This dynamic changed for most of the serving soldiers in Senior Class as the emphasis shifted to academics.

The usual routine to expel a cadet was to call them away at the beginning of a classroom activity - usually a double period. (An exception was during a cross-country run when it is reputed that one poor unfortunate was exerting himself at the end of the 10 kilometre course when a Hiace pulled up beside him, the door was pulled open, and he was told to get inside. He gamely sprinted on but it was a hopeless cause and he was taken away.) Each time we returned to our rooms after a removal, the victim's room would already be empty and he would be gone - usually never to be seen or heard from again. In a case when he was still packing up, it was clear the supervising DS expected us to stay silent and avoid him. That night there would be a variation to the nightly ritual of everyone standing to attention outside the door of their room. On these occasions the late cadet's name would be called out over the PA one final time and then the Orderly Room would play Queen's *Another One Bites The Dust*, ending with a disparaging final remark if he was not well liked. For

one of our Junior Class who went AWOL, I always remembered the words that ended that evening, "*Farewell Mr Kapi..... wherever you are.*"

The lengths to which any one of us would go to avoid coming to notice for any reason at all can be illustrated by a Section Commander in my Junior Class who inadvertently left his M-79 behind at a night harbour. (This is not so surprising given that we would regularly change roles in the field and this would require hand over or acceptance of any number of items, all faithfully recorded and signed for in our Field Message Notebook, with handy sheets of carbon paper so a copy could be handed to the other signatory.) At some point during the day he realised he was without his extra weapon but he naturally kept it to himself in the hope that no one would notice. He got through the day undiscovered but after nightfall he filled us in on the situation knowing none of us would even momentarily consider exposing him, but more importantly, to explain that he would need to get out of the position and back in again without causing any noise – a night on impossible feat without our cooperation if he was to avoid the possibility of the defenders assuming he was an enemy infiltrator. He got out undetected and navigated back to the previous night's harbour, found the M-79 in the dark and then got back to us and inside the perimeter and into a very late bed without causing any commotion. He didn't get much sleep that night but it was a small price to pay for avoiding punishment, probably a demotion, and a certain 13-B.


Similarly, Glenn Keppel guiltlessly and quite sensibly relates avoiding being caught or punished for being AWOL after weekend leave. Three of them were able to get home to their families in Melbourne one weekend in one of their cars which had been, along with all the others at the start of each class, formally safety inspected prior to being approved for parking and use off base. The agreement was that they would meet in the cold, windswept CBD at 2am Monday and travel back together in time for reveille. Unfortunately, Glenn Keppel kind of, sort of, slept in. In his view, the other two "*went jack on their mate and returned to the Stalag without me. Undeterred by such minor setbacks as not having a lift back to OCS, not being at reveille, morning duties or breakfast, and missing the first of the morning classes; I still managed to arrive at the back of the accommodation block by limousine (i.e. Mum's car) at about 10:00 am; whereon I nonchalantly floated into my room, put on a sort-of-ironed uniform, waltzed out to TOC and joined the throng. The staff and most of the COC were never-the-wiser.*"

## The Log Run

Fitness was obviously an integral and extremely demanding element of our training. It began almost immediately with a light 10 km bitumen run in Dunlop Volley sandshoes, which had no cushioning at all, out to Point Nepean and back on our first full day in training and extended to any and every form of physical fitness training to bring us up to a high state of fitness very quickly. Battle PT was hardest of all, especially when it involved rifles held by the butt at arm's length. 'Logs' were the worst of the worst regular Battle PT periods - and yet even that could be trumped. The Log Run and the double-ascent (no touching the ground on the first descent) Cat2 vertical rope climb represented the biggest hurdles to graduation for some and

required nightmare-inducing repeated re-tests with the added bonus of some who had already passed having to keep participating so others could re-test. It was relative though – just degrees of hard, harder and hardest. For those who could not swim, or were very weak swimmers, ‘hardest’ included the swim test taken in the invigorating waters of the bay just near the old sheep jetty. As we waded into the waters it was apparent that one or two were going to struggle but the stronger swimmers covertly bunched around those who literally needed support and helped them through without the DS noticing. These were the times when you knew where you stood in the mateship rankings. Luke van Heuzen relates another example of helping others out: “One of our PT tests was a run through the bush behind the scramble track with full kit which was followed by a kit inspection to make sure we had undertaken said test with the correct amount of equipment / weight. The test was done in alphabetical order so I headed on behind most of the others being a ‘V’. Needless to say my progress was not impeded by slow traffic although I did stop on several occasions to collect lost equipment that had fallen / was discarded by those ahead of me. This resulted in a quick swapping of gear when we assembled at the finish point in front of the PT instructors to complete the kit check.”

The table below barely gives an indication of how much fitness training preceded the periodic tests that were mandatory requirements for successful completion of the course.

TESTS:	RESULT:	TESTS:	RESULT:	TESTS:	RESULT:
2.5KM RUN	9m 54s (H)	300m HILL SCRAMBLE RUN	62s (H)	INCLINE TRUNK CURL	44 (Q)
8KM ENDURANCE RUN	42m 34s (Q)	ASSAULT CSE	11m 32s (Q)	SWIM 30M	Q
8 KM X/COUNTRY RUN	37m 12s (H)	3KM BATTLE RUN	17m 05s (Q)	TREAD WATER 2 MIN	Q
15 KM RUN	Q	HEAVES MAX	16 (H)	VERTICAL ROPE CLIMB x 2	Q
25KM WALK/RUN	Q	PRESSUPS MAX	45 (H)	PPT'S	A Pass
3.2KM LOG CARRY	Q	ARM DIPS MAX	18 (H)	BATTLE EFFICIENCY 1 AND 2	Q
REMARKS:					
Q = QUALIFIED					
H = HIGH PASS					
					



64 25 km battle walk/run. L-R: Rhind, Jackson, Mol, Rowe, Billingham, Johnston.

Note the shortened straps on the webbing to reduce chafing and bruising around the hips, especially from hooking the SLR across the tops of the water bottles to take weight off the arms.  
(Photo courtesy of Christine Jackson who stopped her car, loaded with a new born and a small child, at different points along the route to capture the moment.)

In Senior Class we undertook the 25 Km Battle Walk/Run which was not expected to be a great trial given we had all completed the 15 km Battle Run in Junior Class without any particular exertion over and above the norm. Every Junior Class would meet their Senior Class 10 kilometres into the latter's journey. Phil Watson: *"I found myself towards the front and on the outside (a good place to be in this sort of activity as there is clear air and a view to contemplate rather than the webbing of the guy in front and, more importantly, there is minimal impact from the concertina effect as individuals fall back and catch up becoming progressively exaggerated the further back one is and the consequentially greater effort required. Unfortunately a DS planted himself right on my shoulder and lodged there throughout. More unfortunately, he took the view that he needed to loudly and forcefully impose his personality on us which was neither here nor there really but he ordered us not to drink from our water bottles and to just rinse our mouths out so as to prevent stomach cramps (or some such thing). Against my better judgement, and concerned he would take umbrage if I dis-obeyed his order whilst under his watchful eye, I did as I was told and struggled to withstand the desire to take on fluids. Well, in the hot and slightly windy weather, it was inevitable that I would eventually stop sweating. I could feel the rasping of dried salt as I wiped my face but then we had come a long way by this time and I was still expecting to make it to the end. At some point I became a little woozy and then I started to lose control of my muscles and then the next thing I knew I was all wobbly and falling to the ground. By the time they carried me over to the Land Rover I had no real muscle control at all and I was lumped and rolled and shoved through the front seat (where they initially decided I should be placed), and then into the back and onto a stretcher. From there I was taken back to the RAP and placed fully clothed into a cold bath before eventually being released to walk back to the lines. I was not alone in failing to complete the distance. I was in good company as it turned out. As I recall, the BSM and the two CSMs also failed to make it as they attempted to demonstrate the effort expected of them as leaders of our*



*cohort. It seems to me that it was more a reflection of the DS than our endurance because when it came to the re-test a few weeks later, the four of us romped it in before changing quickly and heading into our foreign language aptitude test.” It was common to experience jarring shifts between activities such as a lengthy endurance run in patrol order being followed almost immediately by a demanding aptitude test. We considered it par for the course and took it in our stride.*

The dreaded log run was arguably the worst of all the extreme physical fitness tests – at least for the bulk of us. It involved six cadets being required to carry a large log about the size of a short telephone pole 3.2 kilometres in 16 minutes – any way we wanted. Groups were formed alphabetically and did not take into account differing physical and psychological abilities. Phil Watson: *“On all but one occasion, forming up of groups and queues would be ordered from A-Z leaving me (having a last name proximate to Z) as one of those who all too frequently ended up with the least time to get ready for the next pressing activity. On the one occasion when a thoughtful staff member decided to reverse the order there were howls of complaint from those who were accustomed to being first. It made for a very nice change.”* There was a view that the PTIs intentionally mismatched the groups. One recollection was *“I am 190cm tall and would be running next to someone six inches shorter than me whose shoulder couldn't reach the log. I also remember being asked to volunteer (Platoon pride and all that) to run with a number of cadets who had repeatedly failed the run. As we stepped off from in front of the gym, I heard Emil Hafner whisper to one cadet in front of him that if he saw his hands come off the log before we crossed the finish line he would kill him and throw his body to the sharks in Port Phillip Bay.”*

Many groups failed to meet the required time on their first attempt, not least when the weight of the log became a real trial and one person or another would give up some of their load – which would immediately be felt by the others – and an already almost unbearable burden would lead to others ‘piking out’ and then the log would end up on the ground – all the while everyone cursing and accusing and also encouraging in that strange military manner which is intended to be positive but comes across as a little bit desperate and false and which is usually a strong predictor of impending failure. For some, the logs became their nemesis and, despite all the other imposing obstacles to graduation, the most difficult of all. All the groups who failed were scheduled to repeat the exercise a few weeks later and no one looked forward to it having now understood how difficult it was as a challenge.

Phil Watson: *“We were all resolute when the day came and we were determined to succeed this time as we knew we would have to keep repeating it until we succeeded because no one would be allowed to graduate without passing every test – and repeating tests cut ever more heavily into precious time and energy. We set off and made reasonable time to the turn-around point, which helped in measuring our progress time-wise, and seeing that we were in with a chance, we pushed on with added drive. One of the team was not much of a contributor on the way back – but there was no point in doing anything more than shouting intermittent robust encouragement to each other as we each had little enough breath, let alone strength, and to shoulder much of his share of the load. We were so relieved to see the corner just before the finish line that we were able to put on a bit of a spurt to make sure we didn't have an issue with the time. We got over the line with the joyful numbers of our successful time being called out as we made it through. We were so thrilled and*

*relieved. We threw the log on the ground and hungrily sucked in air and then looked down the road to cheer on those behind us as was the common and expected practice only to discover we had lost one of our team. The immediate question was: would we be failed because we hadn't finished together? After a bit of angst, all but one of us was told that we had passed."*

## Weapons, Equipment and Facilities

Our equipment was old and unreliable, and so were many of our weapons, fixed and rotary wing aircraft, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, uniforms (Jungle Greens with *giggle* hats and WWII Battle Dress), boots and running shoes (we used to have to run great distances in Dunlop Volleys until we were given permission to wear proper runners that we had bought with our own money), packs, webbing, 77 Set radios, buildings and furnishings. At one point we were issued with thick plywood to address the deeply sagging metal and wire beds which were not to be replaced in preparation for moving the course to Canberra 18 months later and the difficult to accept usurping of our tradition and lineage by Duntroon (which was in turn overtaken by the joint officer training model about to be known as ADFA). We were issued with what we called 'Smocks Psychological' because they were about as waterproof as a tissue. Most of us paid out of our meagre wages for a set of black oiled japoras which barely stood up to the rigours of field work for more than a few months. The enterprising Kiwis gained approval to wear their tightly knitted woollen 'Swan Dry' which had the added advantage of being warm too although it was bulky and heavy when it got wet. (The Kiwis and at least one enterprising Aussie also did a brisk trade in sachets of 'Bel Pac' which was simply floor polish packaged up rather than in a bottle but it put a wonderful shine on leather, especially if one's spit polishing efforts had come up short and an inspection was at hand. The other New Zealand item I recall with fondness is chocolate-covered pineapple flavoured lollies.

We had entered the Army during a period of neglect with its origins arising some 13 years earlier as a result of the end of Australia's involvement in Vietnam and gaining political acceptance during a period when Defence White Papers proclaimed our regional situation to be 'benign' with no evident credible threat and underpinning the rationale to cut back spending. Almost everything we used dated from the Vietnam era and therefore suffered maintenance and reliability issues which added an additional degree of difficulty to already very demanding work.

We were trained on, qualified to instruct, and fired the ubiquitous 7.62mm SLR, 5.56mm M-16, 9mm Browning self-loading pistol, 9mm F-1 Sub-Machine Gun (modelled on the famous Owen Gun), the 7.62mm M-60 General Purpose Machine Gun, 40mm M-79 Grenade Launcher (affectionately known as the Wombat Gun due to the huge bullet-shaped projectile that was humorously asserted to be the only thing that could stop such a solid creature) and the 66mm Short Range Anti-Armoured Weapon (with each of us firing a 21mm sub-calibre rocket to great effect into a tank wreck). We also threw M-26 grenades and the M-30 practice version, and trained on the M-18 Claymore anti-personnel mine, and each of us had at least one controlling round over a 105mm M2A2 Howitzer battery and a sub-calibre round from an 81mm M29 mortar. We also became very familiar with the operation, and the weight, of the

AN/PRC-77 VHF radio. We also learnt to keep everything as dry as possible out in the field. Our TEWT folders contained transparent vinyl sleeves where we inserted templates on which to produce our tactical plans. A much smaller version, a *Vui Tui*, was used to write orders using either graphite pencils or permanent fine-tipped markers – both of which addressed the necessity of waterproofing against all the elements.



65 SLR and BFA



66 M-16 and BFA



67 M-206 and M-60 GPMG



68 Browning SLP and 66mm SRAAW



69 F1 SMG and M-79



70 M-26 Grenade, M-30 Practice Grenade and M-18 Claymore with cable and 'clack' tester



71 81mm Mortar and 105 mm M2-A2 Howitzer



72 OCS - Sub-Calibre Mortar Fire Direction on Jarman Oval –  
L-R: Cooper, Brunton, Caldwell, Dempster, Faulkhead

There were also parachute flares and various pyrotechnics, always called 'whiz-bangs'. We had a very good demonstration of the power of a blank round and a whiz bang when we first encountered them. The blank round could easily kill at close range due to the percussion effect (and was considered as a method of dealing with snakes if the need arose). We witnessed a pyrotechnic placed under a helmet liner after being ignited and saw it propelled an extraordinary way up into the air which left quite an impression on us about the importance of pyrotechnic safety.

## Demo Tour - Exercise El Alamein

My only real recollection of Demo Tour was the various displays we saw at Watsonia, Puckapunyal, Moorebank and Singleton, the most exciting of which were the firepower demonstrations at Puckapunyal and Singleton. We saw live fire runs by Mirage, F-111 and Huey gunships as well as Leopards, M-113s and TLCs. There were 155mm and 105 mm howitzers (including use of white phosphorous), 81 mm mortars and snipers with Parker Hales hidden right in front of us that we never even suspected were there. We saw men, vehicles, guns and stores air lifted and parachuted or extracted from very low flying aircraft by parachute as well as rations deployed by heli-boxes. Not quite as exciting were the floating bridges, fire services, guard dogs and bomb disposal guys. As for the signals technology, EME and the various catering, ordnance and ground transport demos – well I suspect they didn't, and still don't, feature that strongly in our minds – with one exception. We were seated on top of a cutting at Puckapunyal watching a mobile vehicle display that included how to respond to a vehicle ambush. Without any fanfare, we had been joined by three Chinese officers who took prime position at the front. After a series of innocuous vehicle displays passing in front of the assembled mass above a mild cutting, there was the sound of weapons firing from the other side of the road. The reaction was swift and effective and the three enemy were quickly dispatched. I never saw the reaction of the Chinese officers or their hosts as the 'bad guys' appeared from the scrub dressed in PLA field dress with the green billowy caps with a red star on the front but doubtless there was some apologising to be done. The Demo Tour was the first opportunity for most of us to begin to firm up our preferences for our future Corps.

*27 MAR 1985*

**Displays in Sydney, Londonderry and Singleton will follow similar exhibitions in Melbourne and Puckapunyal, where Army signals, electrical and mechanical engineers, catering and armoured units will hold centre stage.**

Local participation in Exercise El Alamein began at Moorebank ~~on Monday, 26 March~~, when the School of Military Engineering and 21st Supply Battalion displayed the Army's engineer and supply functions.

Included in the engineer display were heavy plant and equipment, mines, a heavy vehicle ferry on the Georges River, bridging equipment, assault boats, military dogs and a fire-fighting exhibition which included a mock aircraft crash.

The Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps highlighted a less active side of the Army's combat role with presentations on supply control, computing, the handling of perishable and non-perishable foodstuffs and parachuting, including aerial delivery of stores and equipment.

The following day soldiers from the 1st Air Transport Support Regiment went through their paces with the RAAF at Londonderry with a display of air despatch techniques.

Five paratroopers drifted onto the drop-zone, about one kilometre west of the township, to secure the point before an Iroquois helicopter delivered a slung load.

A giant Chinook helicopter then delivered its load – two Land Rovers and trailers slung underneath.

Also included in the demonstration was a LAPES (Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System) from a Caribou aircraft – the Caribou flew in to the landing field with its wheels down, about two metres off the ground, and when the parachute was activated it flew away from the load.

The air despatch display culminated with three Hercules transport aircraft flying in at one minute intervals demonstrating different load extraction systems.

On Saturday, ~~28 March~~, the exercise will reach its finale with a display of infantry, artillery and aviation capabilities at the Infantry Centre, Singleton.

After static displays of weapons in the morning, the afternoon activities will consist of demonstrations of each weapon being fired on the range, and the deployment of troops by helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and vehicles.

73 Army Newspaper clipping of the 1985 Demo Tour which almost exactly duplicated ours

There was the situation at Mangalore when Col Johnston was ordered onto our C-130 aircraft by one person and ordered back by our Loadmaster and wasn't sure which way to turn. In hindsight, he should have gotten onto the first aircraft as it was five hours later and quite late at night that the second aircraft arrived. The real highlight of the tour was of course the Kings Cross nightlife – much of which is still referred to but little has ever been fully disclosed and probably none of it able to be printed here, any more than the post-Canungra rest day at the Surfer's Paradise Centrepoint Room 901 party. Perhaps it is best that it remains so after all these years.



74 Puckapunyal – UH-1H Helicopter Gunship making a live run and Marcus Fox visualises his future Corps



75 Puckapunyal – Paul Hogan tries out the Leopard Commander's seat



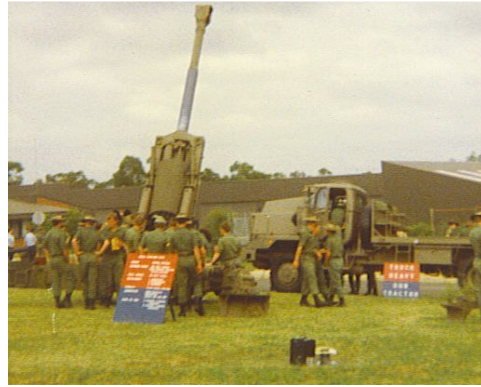
76 Puckapunyal – M548 TLC (Tilly) Tracked Load Carrier



77 Puckapunyal – Vehicle convoy just prior to the ambush



78 Holsworthy – Rapier Anti-Aircraft Weapon



79 Holsworthy – 155mm Howitzer



80 Londonderry – C130-E stores drop



81 Singleton – Marty McKowen serves a 105mm Howitzer



82 Being carted around – Rear: Marty McKowen, Andrew Grierson, Jeff Apitz, Mike Billingham. Remainder L-R: Dave Warren, John Hannan, Mick Jongeblood, Andrew Maggs



83 In Flight – Greg Belford and Craig Burn try to enjoy a packed lunch

## Language and Culture

Our language and culture was particular to us. Our sayings, nicknames, euphemisms, catch-words and mnemonics were almost always said with emphasis and many with derision. Neville Lindsay made a study of “Cadetspeak” in his history of Portsea so no attempt will be made here to duplicate that work.

We learned to count Army-style - *Wah-Two-Three---Wah!*, we used *Figure 11s* and we *zeroed*. We would be told one thing and then another and then another – “*Great*

*Coats On! – Great Coats Off!*” We would be required to turn up way before we needed to because each person in the chain of command would add another five minutes so they could check us and confirm we were ready - *“Five minutes before, five minutes before, five minutes before.....”* and *“Hurry Up! ..... and wait!* FUBAR was used a little but not so much as *BOHICA! (Bend Over, Here It Comes Again!)*. We were told, *“Don’t sit on the cold ground or you’ll get piles!”* and some of our own were wont to opine, *“When I was a digger back in the Battalion...”* and *“I can’t wait to get back to the ‘real Army’”* (which left most of the civilian entrants wondering what Army they had inadvertently joined). There were insults, *“You Space Cadet!”*, *“You’re supposed to be above average intelligence. God help us!”* and *“You’re supposed to have delusions of grandeur – just not that many”* and *“You have deprived some village of its idiot!”*; you might have been accused of being an *oxygen thief* or you might have been told you, *“can’t have it because someone else might need it”*.

There were biological imperatives, *“Keep your neck and eyes reaching for the back of the GP Boot, get those kinks out of your elbows, thumbs leading, swing round like a gate!”* and mercy help you if you marched up to receive the drill competition trophy *square gating* although not nearly so humiliating as putting your collar dogs or lapel badges on the wrong way and being accused of having *Poofter Lions*. We were told by RSM WO1 Sam Hassell on the Parade Ground to *“Get ‘em up! I’m 60 years old and I can get my knees up horizontal to the ground and hold them there all day so you can too”*.



84 Drill Competition – 6 Platoon under command Jeff Harrison in Slow Time. Note Senior Class with peaked caps and red lanyards; Junior Class with slouch hats and sand-coloured lanyards

We learnt to *“Run, Down, Crawl, Observe, Aim, Fire!”* and to *“cock-lock-look”* when our weapon stopped firing. We were constantly ordered to *“get a sense of urgency”* and to pay *“attention to minor detail”* and we lost count of the number of times we were interrogated with, *“What are you going to do now, Platoon Commander!?”* We accused each other of being *Greyemen, Asbestos Men, Jackmen, Brown Nosers* and of being *Consci, a Girly Swot* or of being a *Drill Pig*.

Of all the usual un-inspired and pretty average nicknames bestowed on most of us, we boasted a *Beastmaster, a Wildebeast, a Jungleblood* (at least until he fell asleep in



command of an ambush [not an uncommon experience given our extreme sleep deprivation] and found himself BOS'd out), a *Dangerman*, a *Mort*, a *Trigger*, a *Rooster*, a *Digger*, an *Angry*, a *Brutus*, a *Crusher*, a *Snatch*, a *Scaley* and a *Yard Bum*. We were issued with *Wombat Guns*, *gats* and TEWT stools and sometimes we even got given *Chairs Millionaire*, while our bayonets were kept in *frogs*, we wore *giggle hats* and our slouch hats got *bashed*. We were implored to “*put in!*”, to have “*guts, determination and drive!*” and we hoped we had plenty of *heartillage*. We went to the *farter* and slept in a *fart sack*. We were issued with our *KFS* (Knife, Fork and Spoon set), we ate *rat packs* in the field and sometimes we would be required for *dixie bashing* (washing dishes).

If we had to do things really, really quickly, especially when it came to drinking alcohol when there was little time or we were truly desperate, we would operate at the “*mega emergency rate*” which also occurred when we raced for *TOC* (Tea or Coffee) or *mornos* but at the opposite end of the scale there were those with a bent for *horizontal relaxation* while John Pickering was well known for being able to sleep and listen at the same time – which was not surprising given how many were *chatted* about falling asleep all the time. (During instructional periods it was common and expected that as one became drowsy from all the lack of sleep, we would stand up and move to the side or rear of the classroom since it is impossible to fall asleep standing up.) John Pickering frequently asserted that it was time for “*a little sleep and a BIG brew*”. There were those rare quiet moments when we were formed up and ordered to “*Rest!*”

Smokers lit *durries* while everyone lit plenty of *hexies* and the occasional *choofa*, and going bush or into the field was to go to the *boonies* or the *oo-loo*. There were *dummy spits* and there was *bumph* to be collected from the orderly room and we all hoped we wouldn't need a medical *chit* although those located on *Death Row* seemed quite happy to be such, while the opportunity to attend a *Badcoe Disco* punishment parade wasn't welcomed by anyone. If you said you had a problem, you'd quite likely be told to “*go see someone who cares*” or to “*go see the Padre*”, although the riposte might have been, “*but he told me to come and see you*”. We spent hours every week laboriously *bogging*, and became adept at *leaps* or *scaling away*. We did our best to avoid the order “*Charge Yourself!*” and the resulting *SOL*, *CB*, *ED* or *Show Parades*. *CS* was a gas worse than almost any bodily emanation although in some cases, only just. We were reminded that “*this is not a 'demokrakry'*”, we were often instructed to “*form half a semi-circle*” and we were told very seriously on many occasions, “*I'm very pacific about that*”. We embraced the colours of the rainbow when we zealously applied white colouring to our Dunlop Volleys, black polish to leather, black gloss paint to metal items, brasso to our belt D's, rifle slings and Sam Brownes, while it was greens that had a knack of tearing in the crutch from stooping to crawl under or through obstacles in the field.

The DS themselves, while always easy targets for a bit of fun, were on the whole top notch, and even where many caused us some grief, it was easy to respect and even admire most of them - but then, one would hope we would have the best for our instructors given we were destined to become the Army's newest leaders.

It would be easy to identify any number of DS who made a strong, admiring impression on us but there was one name which came up consistently for the way he

went about things. Andrew Grierson: *“I remember on the navex pre-Pucka, with WO2 Bob Gardham as our instructor. Instead of harbouring up with the duty gun piquet etc, we were encouraged to make a big fire, which we thoroughly enjoyed, and we were told that we should have a good sleep. As we enjoyed our fire and the prospect of rest, some of the other instructors came up and asked Bob if he didn't think we should be watching our arcs etc. I guess his couple of tours of Vietnam had garnered a fair degree of respect from his peers so he maintained his very relaxed stance to our couple of nights of navigation training. He was a relaxed cat, no doubt.”* (Coming from one of the coolest cadet cats in our class, that is saying something.)

Mike Billingham: *“I remember that respite from Gardham. Great bloke and great call at the time. Downhill from there though. I think it was the exercise I got sprung by Garry Brady testing the depth of the water in my pit with the k phone!!”*

*“He certainly had a quiet confidence and I do remember there was some Vietnam folk lore in there somewhere. As the years went by I often thought back on the calibre of the Field Wing instructors we had. Haywood was another fellow I remember. In Senior Class we got into a full on physical exchange in the Portsea Pub with some local boys started due to comments made about the death of a steward. Haywood took his jacket off and got very handy before herding us outside. From memory, the steward was killed under strange circumstances which created some comments to us from the locals. I also remember Lofty Wendt chasing off a news helicopter from the parade ground.”* Mark Williams: *“I remember the night of the ‘biffo’ well! Definitely one in, all in!!”*

Andrew McLean on the subject of altercations: *“When having a few beers in the Sorrento Pub, I obviously upset one of the locals and he decided he was going to teach me a lesson. We were having a few heated words inside the pub when John Luttrell (complete with some martial art black belt) wandered over and kicked the guy in the head without taking his hands out of his pockets. Needless to say our days at the Sorrento Pub were numbered and we beat a hasty retreat.”*

John Scholten: *“Megs Gardham was definitely not standard. I remember I was playing Section Commander at Pucka and Megs Gardham was DS. There we were walking through the oo-loo in arrowhead. Megs was walking just behind my left shoulder, gently quizzing me on the ground ahead, what I was going to do with the gun, upcoming obstacles, etc when he simply vanished. I was speaking to him one minute, then he was gone. I looked around for him as sometimes he had a habit of taking an easier line across deep re-entrants, etc, but I couldn't see him - he had disappeared. I stood in place for a minute or so, letting the lead rifleman at the rear of the section catch me up. I asked him if he had seen WO Gardham and he said he thought he was with me. All we could do was keep walking, so I re-shot my bearing and kept going. Maybe 10 minutes later, he popped up next to me again. I don't know from where, but the forward scouts (and I) had walked right past him - something he spoke to them about at the next pause. He was definitely in his element in the bush. I was told later that he had been a scout in Vietnam involved in 103 contacts. Apparently, he had initiated 101 of them, getting wounded on the other 2 occasions. Not sure if that was cadet folk-lore, but he was silent, serene and invisible on that day at Pucka.”*

Marty McKowen: *“My experience was in the role of Platoon Commander and the good WO2 Gardham was the DS and was positioned in between the Platoon Sig and me. As we were moving through the bush, every four or five paces I would check behind me to the Sig; and then on one of these checks he had just disappeared. I asked the Sig where he had gone and both of us were clueless. He just disappeared - only to reappear two check points later sitting down having a brew. The Vietnam rumour I heard was that he started as a number two scout and on one of his first patrols the number one scout was killed and he inherited the position. How much was true I don't think we shall ever know. The last I heard he had taken up deer farming.”*

Then there were the quotable quotes collected by Andrew MacLean some years ago in regard to the inimitable WO2 Gary Brady - to OCDT Mark Foxe (dressed in a tank suit), out the front of the Main Q store, ready to be broken up into range refurbishment work parties, *“Mr Foxe, some Armoured Corps digger is now running around Pucka Range in the nude because of you!”*, to a group from Junior B, in front of the 25 m range, whilst providing a safety brief, *“if you need to have a w..k, stay on this side of the road...there are plenty of good w..nking spots on this side of the road team!”*, whilst outlining the finer points of siting a platoon harbour as a DS on Double Pucka, *“when you get to the top of the hill team, you don't stand round like jelly babies on a Christmas cake!”*, and, again on Double Pucka, whilst outlining the finer points of a platoon obstacle crossing, *“and then the leader of men, on his dashing white charger, comes down the track, dances his baby blues along the track and announces,...SHIT HOT, it's an obstacle!”*

Neale Sutton: *“At the completion of a truly informative weapon lesson on the 84mm anti-armour weapon delivered by WO2 Brady, who at this stage was basking in the glory of his delivery, asked the Section if anyone had any questions. OCDT Gordon Low Wee Poh said, “Yes Sir I have one. Are you allowed to use the 84mm Carl Gustav against advancing troops?” WO2 Brady looked at him for just a moment whilst he simultaneously contemplated the question, remembered his heroism in Vietnam, and relished the moment of being able to deliver an answer that would be memorable. “Well, Mr Low Wee Poh, and the rest of you gentlemen who came here on the Colombo Plan, the Geneva Convention does not allow the use of anti-armoured weapons against advancing troops!” There was an impactful pause as our anticipation grew! “However gentlemen, I've been to Vietnam! They look pretty silly coming at you on soggy stumps ..... aim low!”*”

One of the benefits of coming under the tutelage of such unique and talented instructors was the endless stream of priceless humour wrapped around important learning points which very few of us could, or should, ever hope to emulate.

## Gas! Gas! Gas!

The very idea of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare was confronting, not least after watching a film on the effects of nuclear weapons, having to wear TOPP3 (Threat Oriented Protective Posture Level 3) and the idea of living for an extended period in a lethal landscape and the prospect of surviving such horrific warfare after having to stab oneself one or more times with atropine needles more commonly associated today with anaphylactic shock. The training required us to shout “Gas!, Gas!, Gas!” to warn everyone else and to then don our M-17A1 masks. We were exposed to this a few times during field training but it was nothing like the intensity of what we experienced during gas familiarisation. One of the purported reasons for gas training was to teach us how to cope with panic and to carry out our practices under extreme duress.

Phil Watson: *“We arrived on the 300 metre range with greens, webbing and helmet and then dressed ourselves in the thick, unwieldy suits which came with rubber gloves, masks and the associated carry bags which were attached to our thighs. To ensure we built up a healthy sweat (which was the essential ingredient to make the CS<sup>3</sup> gas activate) we ran down the range and back again, stopping along the way to have one of each small group told to lie on the ground whereon his fellows were required to lift him up and down from ground level to above the shoulders – all the while trying hard to suck oxygen through the filters and to see through the fogged up glass goggles. Having established that we had plenty of heat and moisture inside our suits, WO2 Hayward, who had an unnatural predilection for tear gas, instructed us to break up into small groups with the first to form up at the door to the tin shed which formed the gas chamber. Once inside, and one at a time, we were told to pull our masks a little away from our faces and as soon as the DS could see through the goggles that we were experiencing the sting of the gas, he told us to re-seal and clear the mask –being sure first to waft extra gas into the mask if he felt one or other of us was not gaining the requisite experience.*

*After all of us had been through the chamber, we were lined up for a second visit. We were told to place our masks in our carry bags and our helmets on our heads. We would be required to double into the chamber as a group and once we were all inside, we would be instructed to take our helmets off, secure them on our person off the ground, extract our masks from the carry bag, fit them to our faces and clear them of gas. Anyone who dropped their helmet was informed they had to leave it where it was and they would be required to return for a third time to retrieve it. Once we were all ready to leave the chamber we would be lined up at the door and one at a time we would be required to remove our mask and shout our name, initials, serial number and football team and then we would be released. It almost went as we were*

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<sup>3</sup> Sourced from Wikipedia: *“The chemical reacts with moisture on the skin and in the eyes, causing a burning sensation and the immediate forceful and uncontrollable shutting of the eyes. Effects usually include tears streaming from the eyes, profuse coughing, exceptional nasal discharge that is full of mucus, burning in the eyes, eyelids, nose and throat areas, disorientation, dizziness and restricted breathing. It will also burn the skin where sweaty and or sunburned. (In highly concentrated doses it can also induce severe coughing and vomiting. Almost all of the immediate effects wear off within an hour (such as exceptional nasal discharge and profuse coughing), although the feeling of burning and highly irritated skin may persist for hours. Affected clothing will need to be washed several times or thrown away.”*

*instructed with the unpleasantness of it being more than can really be described. The critical difference was that when we came to leave the chamber, it turned out that the amount of oxygen required to shout the required information was more than could be accomplished in one breath and so everyone inhaled a big lungful of gas – especially those who had taken a very big breath and had managed to blurt everything out only to then have to take a very large gulp of air. The other major difference was that it turned out that anyone who didn't say they barracked for Collingwood managed to be delayed before being allowed out. (If you ever wanted to test someone's loyalty to their football team, this is the way to do it. Some cadets admirably stuck to their team to the point that they were eventually let outside in pretty bad shape – but still refusing to support Collingwood.) Every one of us exited the chamber in distress with burning skin, eyes, nose, arm pits and everywhere that our bodies were hot and damp. As we embraced the open air, the DS told us to hold our arms out to the side and to keep our eyes open so our tears would wash the crystals out. It was akin to being told not to blink while someone stuck sticks in your eyes. Those who were blond, red headed and/or freckled suffered more than most with blood noses being common for them.*

*But for some, the trial was not over yet, even those who had extreme reactions to the gas. The half dozen unfortunates who had dropped their helmets were ordered to line up ready for their third dose. They had to enter with their masks in their carry bags and were told they could not put them on until they had a helmet. They rushed in as a group and then frantically searched for a helmet – all of which had been hidden either behind the door or in the rafters – I can't recall which after all these years.*

*On returning to the lines we were told to wash our clothes in cold water as hot water would reactivate the crystals. There was a story that some years before one class had sent their greens to the laundromat for steam cleaning which apparently caused an evacuation. One can never be sure how true those stories are. What I can say is some of us could still feel the itchiness of the residual crystals activating against hot sweaty skin for one or two washes afterwards. For many of us, this was not our last experience of CS gas but it was probably the worst exposure for most of us.”*



85 Stock photo of a gas warfare instructor activating CS gas prior to a familiarisation activity.



86 NBCD training - Mick Hollister emerges from the gas chamber. The lack of obvious distress on his face says more about Mick's inner composure than it does about his actual extreme discomfort

## Service Writing

Service Writing was the bane of our existence, especially for those without an academic bent. It required semantic, pedantic expertise in the structure and method applicable to a raft of communication types such as minutes, memos, demi-official letters, signals, operations and administration orders, charge sheets and the dreaded book review which caused so much of a challenge for so many cadets. (This was the inflection point where military skills progressively gave more way to ‘accas’ or academics.) There were specific manuals and precise rules that had to be complied with as defined in the Army Glossary, Manual of Service Writing, Manual of Army Law, countless Manuals of Land Warfare and Arms and Services manuals and other essential books that filled a commodious Army security trunk which required two cadets to heft and carry. (Effective writing was essential as everyone has heard of ‘Chinese Whispers’ [often explained through the example of “*Send reinforcements, we’re going to advance*” finally making its way to the recipient and being rendered as, “*Send four and sixpence, we’re going to a dance*”] so we had to be able to write with absolute accuracy, clarity and brevity.) One’s written labours could be brought to nought through the inadvertent inclusion of a stray full stop at the end of the last sentence in a formal message and the dreaded red pen that would signal the requirement to completely re-write and re-submit one’s many prior efforts. Craig Burn: “*I recall being made to stand on my desk in Badcoe Hall during a Captain Aird (a.k.a. The Smiling Knife) Staff Duties lesson to remind all and sundry that “there is a gap of at least two lines between the last addressee and the first line of the heading” when writing a message on a form OC 97.* That said, this training was highly valued by employers later in life as each of us went into the civilian world. For most of us, it was surprising how well we were able to write in contrast to those without such a demanding grounding in effective oral and written communication.

## Medical

The RAP was a place to be avoided at all reasonable cost – not so much because none of us wanted to be seen as wimps or because medical appointments consumed valuable time, and not just because we wanted to avoid any prospect of being held back – but because none of us seemed to have much regard for the skills of the RMO (a.k.a. ‘The Master Plasterer’ who was generally considered by even the staff as a ‘card carrying lunatic’). Craig Atkins: “*You could report to the RAP for a cold and end up in a body cast!*” Gary Spierings: “*The RMO was the man who decided that my mild chest infection was of no concern. Somehow, overnight though, I was “touched by Jesus” and it had developed into severe pleurisy. Never mind that, some antibiotics and a firm bandage around the chest should keep me “on-line”. This is probably why I still, to this day, refer to my local GP as either the “schanker mechanic” or “scab lifter”.*” One cadet chose to resign rather than let the RMO operate on him for some sort of leg injury. Lyall’s father was a top surgeon and the Army refused to let him operate – so resign he did. Craig Burn: “*I had two wisdom teeth removed, in the chair, by the dentist as he used a thing like a blunt screwdriver and just knocked them out of my jaw.*” Andrew Maggs: “*Hogan, L.T. couldn’t*

*convince the dentist he was NOT the Hogan, P.C. who needed fillings, until after he was forced into the chair and the drill was in his mouth.”*

Some of the guys ended up on half-crutches for a period (Andrew McLean was one I think) and rather than straggling along behind the rest of us as we marched or double-timed to and from locations – they would spastically propel themselves at a rapid rate. With such a high level of strength and fitness (and motivation), and having given themselves the opportunity to practice, they would perform the extraordinary feat of thrusting the crutches far forwards and then vigorously swinging their body through them in an arc landing on the good leg and then, pulling their crutches around their body they would take a great hop and simultaneously thrust the crutches forwards again before repeating the exercise. It hardly bears thinking the further injury they might have incurred if they had fallen over but it was performance art worth paying to see.



87 Jeff Harrison in Junior Class following some foot surgery with L-R: Marty McKowen, Mick Jongeblood, Brad Ellis, Andy Grierson (in the background) and Unknown in Jungle Greens and 'giggle' hat. Note the peaked caps, starch ironed Howard Green jumpers, bloused Battle Dress trousers and spit polished GP boots

The importance of avoiding injury played on everyone's minds, although the rugby players operated under the rather strange belief that they wouldn't get injured if they played without fear. Logic suggested the likelihood of injury had more to do with choice of activity than frame of mind. Adrian Skull and Glenn Keppel related the story of one cadet, *“a great guy who was kicked out after breaking his leg in a soccer game. I (Adrian) was next to him and vividly recall the snap of his leg – and then his despair that he was out. He was already on a warning and was booted out the next day!!”* On one occasion when we were in the field at Puckapunyal, we were being berated by one DS for our apparent lack of enthusiasm to throw ourselves full-blooded on the rock strewn ground during fire and movement. Phil Watson: *“There was obviously a balance required between foolhardiness and necessity. I also recall unarmed combat training and having the misfortune to square off against a PTI when we took turns to pummel each other in the stomach. I, being 'consci', did my best to punch this muscled and large Bombardier as best I could which seemed to encourage him to beat me progressively harder. The pain was incredible and I swear I finished the session black and blue. This had been the clever idea of one of the PTIs, and actually not a bad one, but talk extended to the idea of doing parachute rolls out of the backs of trucks. This was met by most of us with concern that here was one more unnecessary opportunity to get injured for no good reason and with disproportionate*

*consequences with regard to making it to graduation but fortunately it never eventuated.”*

The RMO first made his presence known early in Junior Class when he showed us spectacularly colourful, detailed and graphic photo slides of what was then called ‘venereal disease’ which must have been provided by some medical supplies company as the cases were as extreme as physically possible – and certainly beyond our wildest nightmares. They were sickening and had the effect of putting everyone off any thoughts of indulging in carnal activities – for a week or two at least – but it naturally didn’t prevent a couple of those undesirable outcomes that come from highly active and physically fit young men seeking the company of any member of the female persuasion. This would usually take the form of a local girl, a ‘Portsea Princess’, found at the local hotel whose sole appealing attribute was that she could be reasonably assumed to be female, and hopefully, willing. Anything beyond that was a bonus.

We were also shown what might now be called ‘classic’ footage from a Vietnam-era film illustrating the effects of low and high velocity bullet wounds incurred on operations and being treated in the operating theatre. It made me wonder what likelihood there would be of being lucky enough to be ‘only’ struck by a low velocity round (bearing in mind we were not in conflict at the time and there were no prospects of such) and whether it was possible that any of our potential antagonists might be considerate enough to only have access to old weapons.

## Social Events, Manners and Decorum

Little did we know on the first day we gathered on the PMC’s Lawn which of us would, in just six months, be appointed as the PMC and the ‘owner’ of the lawn with the unenviable task of trying to engender some fairly basic manners and decorum from a highly variable set of dining standards compounded by ravenous appetites. This would take the form of pleading lectures from Dave Mol that usually began, in a richly inflected Canadian accent, “*Gentlemen, we have a problem*” and the anticipation of the ‘word of the day’, the most popular being where he would employ the word “*illuminating*” – all of which would be liberally sprinkled with gentle sarcasm and mild threats. These paled against Ash Brunton’s animated and colourful, dare I call them, ‘rants’, punctuated with epithets and hat throwing as he realised he had once again failed to curtail his ORTs. This was contrasted against Jim Pearson’s quietly spoken usual opening, “*Just a quick one*” which was perhaps more in the perception of the speaker than the spoken to.

It was said that we were fed 1.5 times the standard rations due to the immense demands placed upon us. Glenn Keppel: *I remember a cadet, infamous for his ORTs, devouring a whole loaf of bread at a Wednesday dining-in night with the table chanting sotto voce “consume, consume, consume”. This was after 3 courses had been served.* Jeff Harrison: *“With an appetite like that it had to be Mick Lavers,*



surely? His gastronomic prowess at the Gold Coast prompted Mick Mowle to make the comment, "Mort, you eat like a relative". Ian Rhind: "One cadet asked at dining etiquette training - "Can you talk with your mouth full?" I seem to think he was gone a few weeks later." And then there was at least one of our foreign members who preferred to cook highly spiced meals in his room rather than eat the fare that was on offer.

Social drinking was a big feature of Mess life for which Mark 'Lou' Williams set an exceptional example as Bar Member, and there were the many social functions which presented ample opportunities for reprimands and punishments the following day. As recently as this year the Adjutant expressed a desire to know who, after a wine and cheese night in the Mess, left the contents of their stomach hidden cunningly behind a curtain for the staff to find the next day. On the other hand, there was the occasional fortuitous dining mishap. Marty McKowen: "*I believe it was Lou Williams who, when eating chocolate covered pears in crème de menthe, plunged his fork into the chocolate only to find that it was armoured and the fiendish dessert jumped into the air. Lou arrested its ascent with his spoon and propelled it back into the bowl and secured it there. With relief he looked up to see who was watching only to see the Chief Instructor staring at him. The CI put down his cutlery and showed his respect for a feat well done with a small hand clap.*"

Of the planned social events, one that was very popular was the mixed dining-in night. Craig Burn: "*At the training dining-in night, the PMC's (Dave Mol), blind date from Geelong was the shortest person in the room. He was the tallest. She was even shorter when she slipped and fell flat to the floor after taking a toilet break. A bit of an impromptu test for handling the unexpected social faux pas which Dave doubtless carried off with aplomb. Marty McKowen: "Some of the guests were 'hired' for the event. Dave Mol's guest walked head high as her heel slipped and the next thing there was a blur of legs and taffeta as she went A over T. Phil Watson: "For some stupid principle, I refused to go down to the Portsea Pub to pick up some chick for the dinner (not having any local female company to invite). I informed someone in charge, shock, horror, that I would be attending solo. The word must have gotten around because when I turned up at the entrance to the Mess, one of the guys grabbed me and said to come and meet my date for the night. I imagined some monstrosity who had been enticed out of a coastal cave with promises of food and male company. I'm not sure how it had been organised so quickly but there were half a dozen beautifully dressed young Sub-Leutenants from Cerberus gathered in a corner. I quickly assessed the relative visual merits of each one and was quietly pleased that even the least attractive of them was not so bad. I was gobsmacked to be introduced to the most beautiful one as my date for the evening and began to wonder if there wasn't some hidden joke. To this day I don't quite know how I ended up with a date who was the envy of many nor the name/s of the guy/s who helped me out; although as it turned out she was incredibly stuck up and not the least sociable for the entire evening.*"

Most notorious of all the social events was the Toga Party held in mid-Winter. Perhaps it was like the 60's: if you can remember it, maybe you weren't really there. What I do recall is the well-intentioned efforts of one cadet's mates hammering on his door to bring outside the woman he had inside. As it was a removal offence to lie, fight or have a woman in the lines (rather quaint logic there

and a more complex challenge for our Junior Class as women were integrated into the course after them), it was important to save himself from himself. That said, Ian Rhind was gallant enough to collect the Commandant's daughter on a white horse from the Commandant's house for this event.

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88 In preparation for the commencement of an integrated programme, a number of WRAAC cadets were brought to Portsea for a promotional shoot with our class in the Model Room. The women were strategically positioned to maximise the impression that the Army was progressive. Interestingly, the nametags belong to male cadets (Wilson and Coglean). It featured in national newspapers about 6 months later

Despite all the hammering and yelling, he seemed unaware of anything other than what was in his room. Dave Mol, writing in the Class Journal stated, *“The decoration of the mess and the final condition at the night’s end left a ruin that ranks right up there in architectural magnificence with the Parthenon. The costumes were outstanding in originality, design and innovation. The contribution made by the beach party participants rounded off the evening as a resounding success.”*





89 Innovation and creativity (note the novel use for Al-Foil and Sam Browne belts) characterised the Toga Party  
(No names, no pack drill)

Phil Watson: *“One of the more curious cultural things I witnessed in my Junior Class during a Staff/Cadet formal dinner occurred during coffee towards the end of the evening. My section was politely congregating around our somewhat arrogant and egotistical Guidance Officer holding court and obviously a little bit under the weather. He rattled on for just a little bit and then one of my Senior Class calmly and quietly said, “Excuse me, Sir, you have had too much to drink.” I was stunned. The response was quite different to what might have been expected. The officer braced up slightly, looked the Cadet in the eye and politely replied, “Thank you, Lance Corporal Batch”, he paused and then said, “Good night everyone.” He then turned on his heel and left immediately and without a fuss. If ever there was a lesson in a subordinate being able to speak the truth and have that respected, I think I saw it that night.”*

We used to sing as a drunken choir at full voice Redgum’s *“I was only Nineteen”* and Billy Joel’s *“Good Night Saigon”*. A few years later our successors were singing, to some notoriety, Daddy Cool’s *“Eagle Rock”*. I don’t know the details as to how it came to be adopted but as it involved the mandatory requirement to drop one’s pants and sing and dance along with everyone else, and by that time there were both male and female cadets, I wonder how much the latter influenced the requirement for the former.

*90 I Was Only Nineteen (A Walk In The Light Green)*

*Mum and Dad and Denny saw the passing-out parade at Puckapunyal  
It was a long march from cadets.  
The sixth battalion was the next to tour, and it was me who drew the card.  
We did Canungra, Shoalwater before we left.*

*And Townsville lined the footpaths as we marched down to the quay  
This clipping from the paper shows us young and strong and clean.  
And there's me in my slouch hat with my SLR and greens.  
God help me, I was only nineteen.*

*From Vung Tau, riding Chinooks, to the dust at Nui Dat  
I'd been in and out of choppers now for months.  
But we made our tents a home, VB and pinups on the lockers*

*91 Goodnight Saigon*

*We met as soul mates  
On Parris Island  
We left as inmates  
From an asylum  
And we were sharp  
As sharp as knives  
And we were so gung ho  
To lay down our lives*

*We came in spastic  
Like tameless horses  
We left in plastic  
As numbered corpses  
And we learned fast  
To travel light  
Our arms were heavy  
But our bellies were tight*

*We had no home front  
We had no soft soap*

*And an Agent Orange sunset through the scrub.*

*And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to sleep?*

*And night-time's just a jungle dark and a barking M16?*

*And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell me what it means?*

*God help me, I was only nineteen.*

*A four week operation when each step could mean your last one on two legs*

*It was a war within yourself.*

*But you wouldn't let your mates down til they had you dusted off*

*So you closed your eyes and thought about something else.*

*Then someone yelled out "Contact!" and the bloke behind me swore*

*We hooked in there for hours, then a Godalmighty roar*

*Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon,*

*God help me, he was going home in June.*

*I can still see Frankie, drinking tinnies in the Grand Hotel*

*On a thirty-six hour rec leave in Vung Tau*

*And I can still hear Frankie, lying screaming in the jungle*

*Til the morphine came and killed the bloody row.*

*And the Anzac legends didn't mention mud and blood and tears*

*And the stories that my father told me never seemed quite real.*

*I caught some pieces in my back that I didn't even feel*

*God help me, I was only nineteen.*

*And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to sleep?*

*And why the Channel Seven chopper chills me to my feet?*

*And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell me what it means?*

*God help me, I was only nineteen.*

*They sent us Playboy*

*They gave us Bob Hope*

*We dug in deep*

*And shot on sight*

*And prayed to Jesus Christ*

*With all of our might*

*We had no cameras*

*To shoot the landscape*

*We passed the hash pipe*

*And played our Doors tapes*

*And it was dark*

*So dark at night*

*And we held on to each other*

*Like brother to brother*

*We promised our mothers we'd write*

*And we would all go down together*

*We said we'd all go down together*

*Yes we would all go down together*

*Remember Charlie*

*Remember Baker*

*They left their childhood*

*On every acre*

*And who was wrong?*

*And who was right?*

*It didn't matter in the thick of the fight*

*We held the day*

*In the palm*

*Of our hand*

*They ruled the night*

*And the night*

*Seemed to last as long as six weeks*

*On Parris Island*

*We held the coastline*

*They held the highlands*

*And they were sharp*

*As sharp as knives*

*They heard the hum of our motors*

*They counted the rotors*

*And waited for us to arrive*

*And we would all go down together*

*We said we'd all go down together*

*Yes we would all go down together*

Mounted in a prominent place within the Cadet's Mess was the Countdown Board for the Senior Class. It was changed by the youngest cadet before every evening meal – in our case, from 157 days to go on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, with the numbers ever so slowly decreasing. The positive side of returning from weekend leave was to see a slightly more advanced reduction in days to go, and even better, on returning from one or two weeks in the field wet, exhausted and frayed around the edges, the numbers would be even further reduced until at last culminating with '0' on the evening of the Graduation Ball.



92 The traditional midnight hand-over of the 'Days To Go' Countdown Board to members of the Junior Class at the Graduation Ball as the numbers finally reach '0'

Dave Mol: “A summary of my appointment can only be described as an invigorating marathon, costly in terms of patience and excessive ageing and yet an undeniably enjoyable trial on the road to graduation.” (In retrospect, the tone is akin to a first time mother who, having braved all the pain of childbirth *in extremis*, saying shortly after the event that it wasn't so bad after all.)

## Graduation Week

As graduation week finally began and we could see that we really were going to make it, the week unfolded to a succession of celebratory events micro-detailed for any and every aspect and contingency, not least the likelihood of wet weather, in an 86 page administrative instruction that would have kept an anally retentive Staff Duties Nazi goose-stepping with joy. (We had been informed on Anzac Eve of our future Corps with many of us not obtaining our first choice and not going where we really wanted but most of us would become enamoured of our new allegiances quite quickly.) There was a Church Parade and church services in the preceding week and for those of a genuine religious persuasion, a Senior Class versus Staff golf day to begin the next. That night there were Corps drinks with the relevant DS, and later there was a formal father and son Graduation Dinner with marching in and casing of The Colours (the whole event being to the discomfort of many non-military fathers) and on graduation eve there was a cocktail party.



93 Church Parade - marching around in Quick and Slow time and Advance In Review Order

Best of all though was the highly anticipated visit to the Sergeant's Mess early in the week as this was a hallowed venue to which most of us had never been invited and would likely not be invited more than a few more times during our careers. The evening was a riotous success due, if my hazy memory serves me correctly, to the talented mimicry of Mark 'Coops' Cooper, Bill 'Rooster' Coglan, Dave 'Greyman' Warren, Dave 'Digger' Caldwell and Jeff 'Harro' Harrison) as they, with impunity, accurately and adroitly skewered some of the DS for their behaviours, sayings and mannerisms. The next day brought with it, finally, the Graduation Parade itself with the ensuing Graduation Ball under marquees that night.



94 Company of Officer Cadets formed up between the RSM's Hut and Badcoe Hall half way down the treacherous bitumen path during drill practice



95 Mark Cooper skewers Captain Crosland

We formed up with our Junior Class for the last time just after lunch on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1984 immaculately dressed in Patrol Blues and marched down the treacherous bitumen path from our accommodation. The occasional cadet experienced the not uncommon sudden slip and slide caused by our smooth leather soled mess boots with metal capped toes and heels. Each performed an athletic 'save' and expelled a brief curse before adjusting their step and re-taking their place with the rest of us as a single body. We made our way down to the roads that led to Jarman Field and our graduation parade. We halted under the tall, dark canopy of the long tunnel of overlapping cypress trees where six months earlier we had waited as we prepared to march on for our Senior Class' graduation. Now it was our turn. While we waited, we had time to contemplate all the hard work which had culminated in this moment

when we would put on our show. This included all of the rehearsals leading up to this moment, not least the fun ones where the DS would arrive in the vehicles (once or twice in something ridiculous) to formal salutes stepping out dressed up as dignitaries, including one occasion when 'Sir Les Paterson, Australia's Cultural Attaché', complete with the protruding teeth, florid complexion, outrageous clothes, risqué dialogue, spittle, vomit and a rather large 'schlong' in his pants leavened a demanding rehearsal with Aussie humour. The DS really made an effort sometimes and it was not lost on us.

But back to the real thing: We were called to attention and then we marched out into a typically intermittently bright, cloudy and blustery Portsea afternoon to eager family and friends. Video of the parade leaves a strong impression of the entire COC moving in exact synchrony. Every white-gloved hand and rifle or sword, every red-striped leg and polished boot moved in precisely coordinated timing despite being separated by the colour party in the centre carrying out often different movements. Only a military person can truly appreciate the spectacle – not just for the beauty of it, but in the knowledge of the time and effort required to achieve such a high standard. We marched around in quick and slow time and saluted the dignitaries as they arrived before advancing in review order.

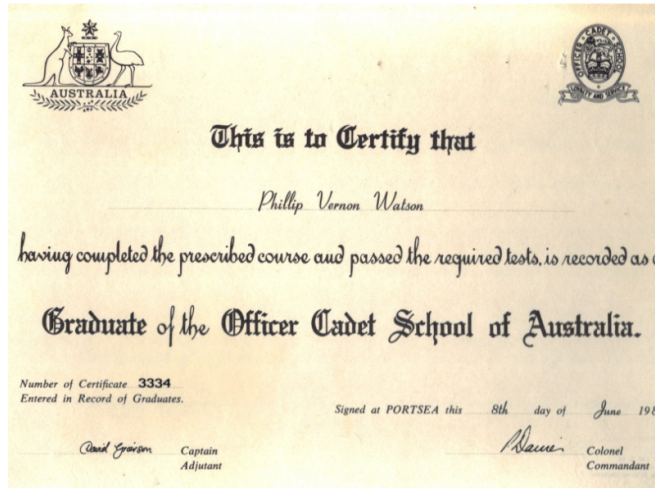


96 Graduation Parade – Marching on with RSM WO1 'Lofty' Wendt

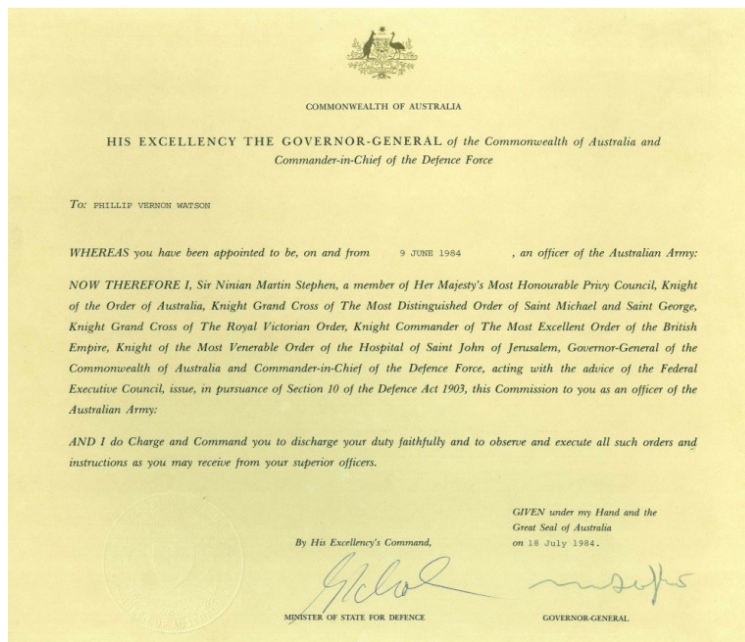


97 Graduation Parade on Wombat Oval

We then marched off to the edge of the parade ground before turning back and marching in slow time through the ranks of our Junior Class to the tune *Auld Lang Syne*. This was a special moment. They joined us off the parade ground a short time later and we handed our weapons, swords and belts to them for safekeeping before we marched back on to applause and took up our seats that had now been placed in front of the dignitaries. Speeches were then made; the only aspect which anyone can remember 30 years later was by Mick Mowle: "*Walk with kings but keep the common touch*". This was followed by the presentation of prizes and awards and then, most importantly, each of us individually marched up and received our Certificate of Graduation from Lieutenant General Peter Gratton, Chief of the General Staff (the role later re-titled to Chief of Army). (We were not to receive our Commissions until some months later, and then by post handed out in many cases by the unit Adjutant without any ceremony.) Then, finally, the moment came for that image that features so strongly in the minds of those who imagine a military graduation – the announcement that we had graduated and the flinging of caps into the air (making sure it was not too difficult to retrieve our own afterwards).



98 “...having completed the prescribed course and passed the required tests, is recorded as a Graduate of the Officer Cadet School of Australia”



99 “Whereas you have been appointed to be, on and from 9 June 1984, an Officer of the Australian Army”



100 Caps in the air in celebration of graduation



We then met with families and officer DS and dignitaries for a formal afternoon tea prior to changing into Winter Mess Kit for our new Corps (the first time for most of us to wear Corps-specific uniform) for the Graduation Ball on the Parade Ground in front of Badcoe Hall.

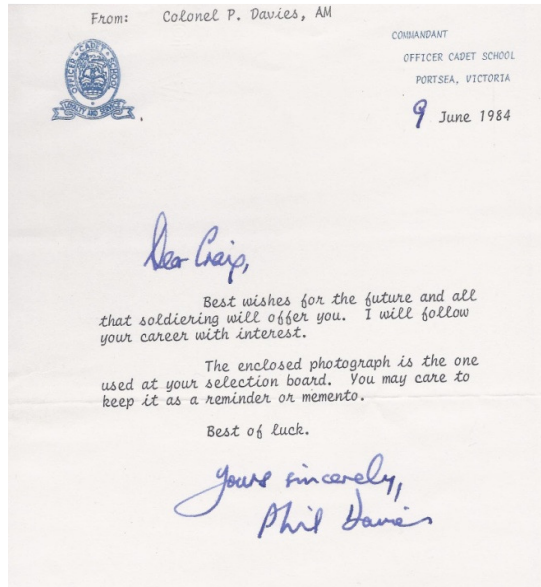


101 Graduation Ball - Geoff Tully and Mark Foxe with family prior to midnight and the pinning on of the pips. Note the Days To Go Board still set to 1 day to go

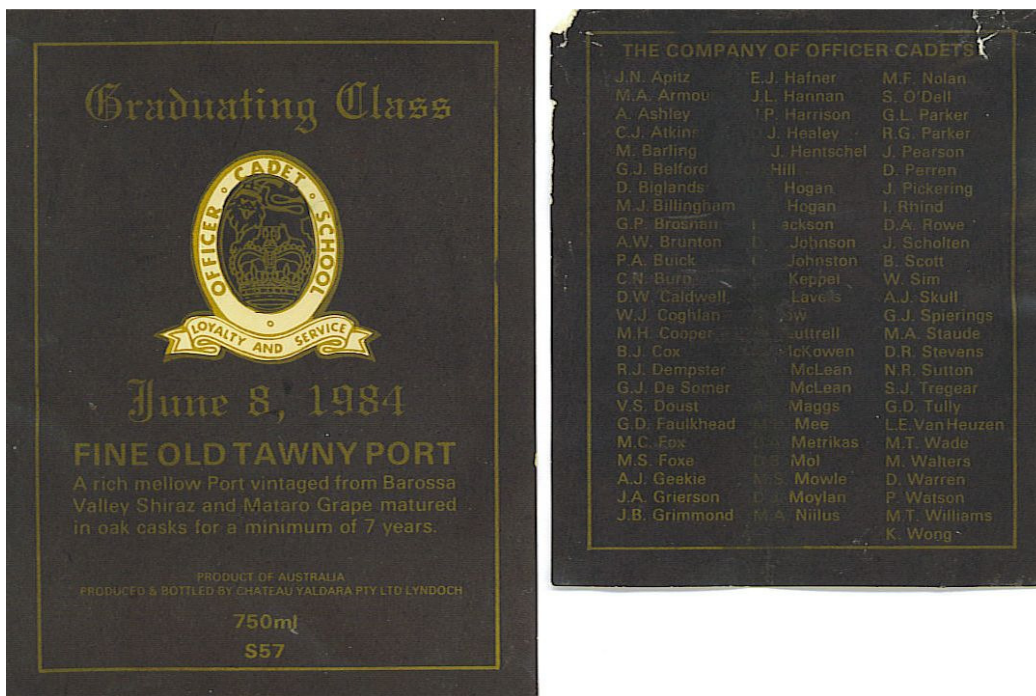


102 Graduation Ball - RAAC Graduates: Craig Burn, John Scholten, David Metrikas

My recollection of the evening is sparse but I do remember my main desire was just to get from the 8.00 pm start time to midnight and the ‘pinning on of the pips’ as quickly and painlessly as possible as we were all just about spent after 11 months of high intensity training and all the Graduation Week celebrations. Strategically located inside from the Cadet’s Mess was the Countdown Board set at 1 day to go. At midnight our pips were pinned on by one or more women who were important in our lives, the board was shifted to 0 days to go and there were cheers and streamers and balloons released from a net in the ceiling, musical accompaniment and champagne. The following morning as we completed our final administration prior to march-out and the Commandant’s final address, the RSM sought out each of us to give us our first salute. There were more than a few whose habit died hard and responded to the RSM as “Sir” but most of us managed to get a confident “RSM!” out the first time. (Mick Armour was perhaps the one exception as on an earlier occasion he had decided it would be appropriate to call the RSM “RSM” which was an inadvertent familiarity based on their close relationship on the rugby field. Still, he lived to tell the tale.) Our last activity was drinks in the previously excluded Officer’s Mess which was now our right as Subalterns, although it seemed to lack the prestige of the exclusive Sergeant’s Mess to more than a few of us. There was also the personal letter each of us received from the Commandant wishing us well.



103 Personal Graduation letter to Craig Burn from the Commandant



104 Labels from our Graduation Port including the list of graduates. One hopes we have mellowed better than the contents of the bottle

## In Conclusion

The intensity of the Portsea experience completely transformed us as individuals - both physically and mentally. We were fit, strong, sharply focussed, decisive, resilient, hardworking, highly motivated, brimming with confidence and full of life. Our families saw us completely transformed and many graduates experienced a seismic shift in their family relations as a consequence.

*A wife: "As a cadet's wife, and a new one at that, the year at Portsea was a wonderful adventure. In fact we both saw it as an opportunity to begin married life a few hundred kilometres away from all that was familiar, and we weren't disappointed... there was plenty of excitement and new things to be challenged by. It was a tough year for him and his cohort. They really were pushed extremely hard. I felt a bit sorry for the young fellas that didn't have the home comforts that he enjoyed, home cooked meals, a pair of ears to hear ALL the stories of hardships and of course a helper to do the ironing and ridiculous shoe shining procedure! Since we lived in a rented house in the village of Portsea, I recall having some of the other cadets over for meals. I do remember being on my own a lot hence with the other wives we organised many get-togethers and outings including day trips to Melbourne, Frankston and the Red Hill markets. The friendships that were forged among the ladies were enduring. The Mornington Peninsula is a beautiful place to live and I recall doing some exploring on my pushbike. I was grateful to secure a couple of teaching jobs at nearby Sorrento and Rye and this helped me have some connections in the community and filled in many of the days on my own. He and I often reflect on how joining the Army, going to cadet school and moving around the country has provided for us, and later our children, a unique and wonderful journey in life... and to think it all started at OCS."*

*A mother: "Just attaining selection to Portsea was a great achievement for our, or anyone else's, son. His father and I felt much pride. Our first visit to Portsea was one of great emotion for me; he looked so happy in his uniform as he quietly escorted us around the base. During the next few months we followed his progress (and survival) during the many adventures he experienced. Throwing hand grenades, handling various firearms etc, concerned me greatly. I couldn't stop worrying about these dangerous activities; however his father always kept reassuring me, "He is very capable". That statement was supposedly meant to fix all my concerns. The constant appraisals each month tested me as well as him as I hoped he would fulfil his ambition to succeed and not become another disappointed cadet to "bite the dust". The attrition rate in the first six months seemed high. Parades were a great fixture on our calendar; my mother would also accompany us for these wonderful spectacles. To see handsome, well groomed and disciplined young men marching around the parade ground was so enjoyable. These were usually followed by afternoon tea with the other families. It was good to meet other parents and understand we were not alone in our concerns or feelings."*

*Another turning point we observed seemed to be the adventures and experiences the cadets endured at the Canungra jungle training grounds. The group of young men who endured this test blossomed before our eyes. The growth in personal strength and self-confidence was evident between our visits or meetings with his friends who he would, on occasion, bring to our home.*

*Graduation, well what can I say? I had feelings of relief, pride and in some respects loss as I knew he would likely be posted interstate. I am sure there were unforgettable memories for all that had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremonies. The parade was breathtaking - proud young men looking so splendid in immaculate uniforms and marching to the exciting military music. The graduation parade, presentation of certificates and prizes, then the ball in the evening were all magnificent. Cadets who had finally become officers and entered the ballroom in Corps Mess Dress uniforms and the pinning on of the pips by my daughter and myself was the icing on the cake. I am sure all parents felt like we did: just bursting with admiration and pride for a job well done by all who passed this arduous test of character and leadership.”*

*A brother: “Looking back, I remember how breath taking it was. Such a huge leap from the world of education to such a profoundly base and basic, time honoured profession as being prepared for war. Being in the Reserves at the time I had some small concept of what you were in for. It seemed to me I had a choice, to either point out how extreme such an experience could only be, or simply support you. (Dad’s understated farmer’s view was, “It’s not what I would choose to do”. Mum, of course, was a mixture of pride and anxiety peppered with occasional moments of hysteria.) I was incredibly proud of your choice. Sending you off was not easy. It was easy to note your tensions and doubts or worries. I do not recall we spoke much about it but you were truly leaping into the unknown!! Contact was hard to maintain as it was pre-internet and email. Seeing you at home on your mid-course break was both great and hard. I still recall how you had to force yourself to go back. I wanted to support you and to protect you and it was hard at that moment to know if it would make you or break you. Now the story is as good as told from that time – great success with no small amount of struggle and effort. I can’t say it made you so much as you made something of it!!! It really was like sending you off into the great blue yonder.”*

*An uncle: “A nephew, whom I had never met, living interstate as he did, phoned to say he was participating in an Army officer training course at Portsea, and wondered if he could spend a leave break with us. Of course he was welcome! The first two days of his leave, the indoctrination of Service life took over his entire conversation [he was "Service happy"] until we had to suggest as nicely as we could, that for the rest of his stay, military matters were "off limits". What a challenge Army life must have been to him! Service life at that level brings a loss of privacy and a need to submerge one's feelings for the good of all. That requires "brain washing" not found in civilian life. Training to hold a commission requires the graduate to be able to make decisions. This requires self-confidence, and that is what the course did for him. He went on to hold senior rank, with responsibilities. Of course experience and knowledge has bolstered those feelings, but we will never forget that it was that initial training at Portsea that started the process that has made him the person he is. Those who know him no doubt will see underneath that veneer some residual effects of his early life but he should be, as we who care are, proud of his achievements. Long live Service life!”*

*Dave Mol: “We didn’t know what we were facing, we were perpetually knocked off-guard, and relentless stress, fatigue and uncertainty was the order of the day. But the*

*new experiences, new friendships, shared hardship, and enduring whatever was served up to us made it a life shaping experience that persists to the current day.”*

Like every class before and after us, and in the words of our Adjutant who had been through the mill a decade earlier than us and was with us as we went through it, *“I have memories from both sides of the fence, cadet 74-75 and instructor/Adjt 83-84. I never thought I did well on my Selection Day and I expected a knock on my door after every BOS. You had to have a remarkable sense of humour and of the ridiculous to survive.”*

Mitch Mee, Editor of our Class Journal wrote, *“The Beatles wrote a song quite relevant to the course at Portsea – ‘The Long and Winding Road’. Well we have reached the end of that road and depart to undertake what promises to be exciting careers. Portsea has brought together men from diverse backgrounds, states and indeed countries, and we have all made good friends, many of which will last a life-time.... Being involved in the publication of The Journal I have been able to see the humour that lies within people... Unfortunately many laughable incidents came under the close eye of the censor and were subsequently ‘axed’.”*

Some of these incidents and much more have come to light 30 years later. Perhaps our partners and children can appreciate our experiences and how they moulded us by delving a little into our history. More importantly, we now have a record of our shared experiences which so fundamentally shaped each of us as the person we are today and which binds us with the common thread of being graduates of the Officer Cadet School Portsea. Whatever the years have brought us, after all this time we remain what The Portsea Experience was intended to create in us – leaders.



105 Senior 'A' Graduating Class, June 1984

**Back Row:** M.H. Cooper, A.J. Geekie, D.J. Healey, M.T. Wade, M.F. Nolan, M.S. Foxe, M.J. Lavers,  
A.R. Ashley, J.B. Grimmond, D.A. Rowe

**Third Row:** R.G. Parker, Low Wee Poh, D.A. Biglands, D.A. Metrikas, P.A. Buick, G.L. Keppel,  
D.A. Johnson, M.D. Barling, M.D. Mee, W. Sim Boon Tek, G.D. Faulkhead, D.W. Caldwell

**Second Row:** S.G. O'Dell, L.T. Hogan, D.R. Stevens, A.R. MacLean, A.J. Skull, N.R. Sutton,  
M.S. Mowle, P.J. Jackson, C.L. Johnstone, B.G. Scott

**Front Row:** B.J. Cox, S.J. Tregear, I.M. Rhind, D.B. Mol, A.W. Brunton,  
G.D. Tully, R.J. Dempster, D.J. Moylan



106 Senior 'B' Graduating Class, June 1984

**Back Row:** V.S. Doust, J.L. Pickering, J.P. Scholten, A.D. McLean, M.T. Williams, M.J. Billingham, P.C. Hogan, G.J. Belford, E.M. Hafner, D.J. Warren

**Third Row:** L.N. Van Heuzen, J.C. Hill, M.A. Staude, C.N. Burn, G.L. Parker, M.C.O. Fox, J.L. Luttrell, M.A. Armour, K. Wong Kok Keong

**Second Row:** M.A. Nilus, P.V. Watson, M.P. Walters, W.J. Cogan, J.N. Apitz, J.P. Harrison, G.J. De Somer, M.J. Hentschel, A.F. Maggs, J.L. Hannan

**Front Row:** J.A. Grierson, G.P. Brosnan, J. Pearson, G.J. Spierings, M.J. McKowen, D.S. Perren, C.J.A. Atkins

Vale



107 Emil Matthew Hafner, RACT. 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1962 – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014



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This publication is available as an online e-book in the [Amazon Kindle Store](#) and can be found by typing “A Collective Memory” into the search box. Also findable at [http://www.amazon.com/Collective-Memory-Officer-Portsea-1983-June-ebook/dp/B00KTTYR60/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1402127503&sr=1-1&keywords=a+collective+memory](http://www.amazon.com/Collective-Memory-Officer-Portsea-1983-June-ebook/dp/B00KTTYR60/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1402127503&sr=1-1&keywords=a+collective+memory)

The [OCS Portsea Alumni](#) website has agreed to host the content.

A copy will be deposited in the RMC Duntroon Archives for their records.

A copy has been provided to Parks Victoria who, as trustee of the Portsea Barracks site within the Point Nepean National Park, plans to use extracts as part of their public and school education programmes.

With the passage of time, we have all mellowed and some of the more salacious aspects of our experience do not need to be told in full here. I have alluded to some aspects without naming names. I have tried to strike a balance between telling an interesting story and holding back anything that might now be unwelcomed by the subject or their connections.

For any errors, omissions or additions, please contact the author with a view to a further updated version being released if there is enough to warrant the effort.

For any lies, half-truths or innuendos that impugn anyone’s purported good character - please see the Padre.

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Cover image #2: 'Wordle' containing the most common repetition of key words in this book

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