

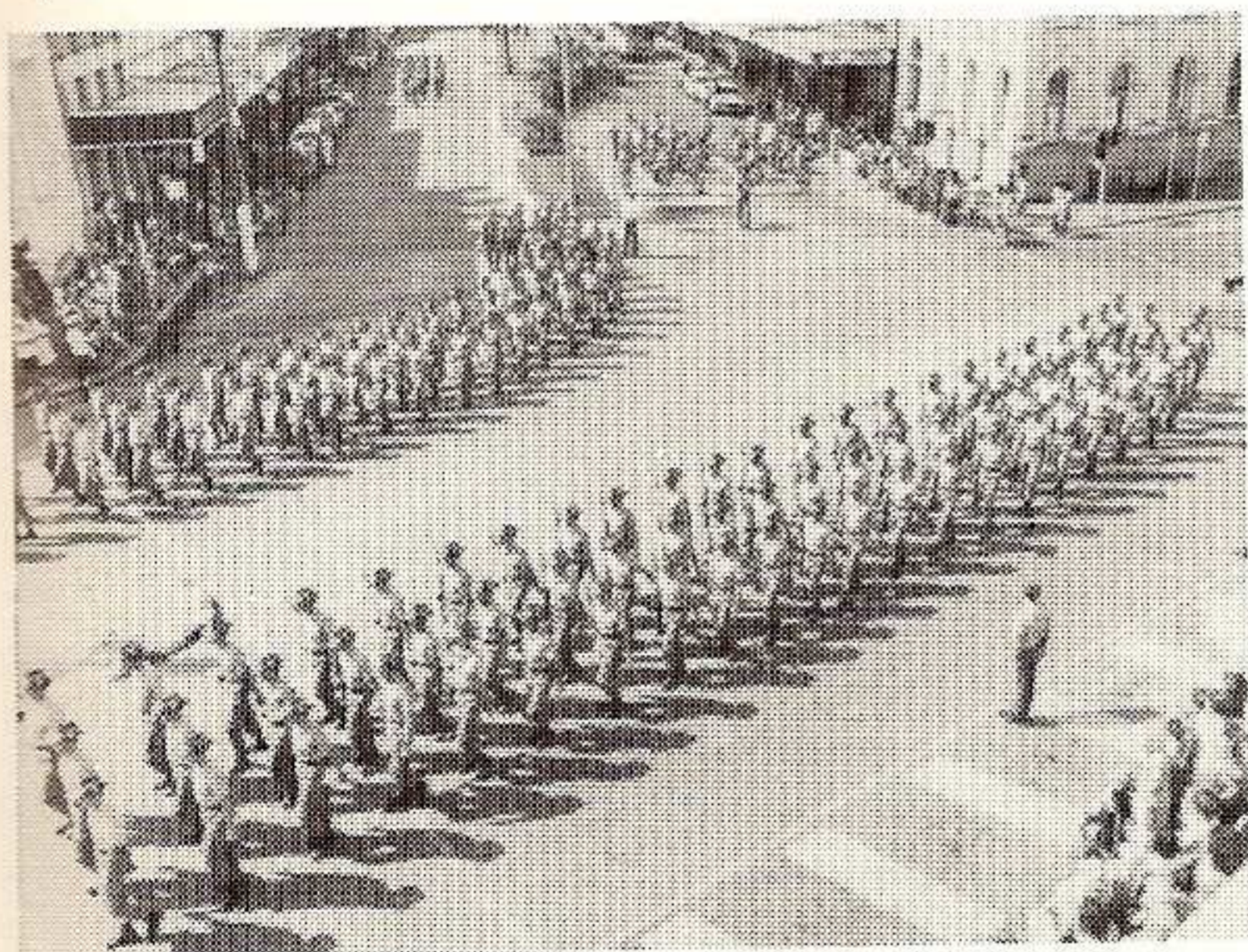
TOWNSVILLE CENTENARY

CAPTAIN M.C. PARSONS

From 6 to 14 June 80 the Army celebrated 100 years of military presence in Townsville. The celebrations were held in conjunction with the Townsville Pacific Festival and featured a march through the city, the opening of the Army museum at Jezzine Barracks, an Army spectacular at the Sports Reserve and a Queens Birthday Trooping of the Colours by 2/4 RAR.

As we hold the Freedom of the City of Townsville in trust for 2 RAR, the Battalion had the honour of leading the City March. Despite the RSM's fears for our crumpled pollies and behind the scenes attempts to wear greens, the tankies managed to get us to the start point intact and looking smart. After observing the customary 'hurry up and wait' we finally stepped off briskly and in good order.

The crowd, ranks swollen by wives and kids were responsive and appreciative. Though many a Dad was in danger of having his trouser leg fastened to by an over eager child.



The march went well and without incidents. Nonetheless, the RSM did have a contingency plan for protecting the Colours in the event of mass attacks by unruly demonstrators — 'They don't like it, up em'.

The Battalion in fact marched as per the Ceremonial Manual, 'Exercising their right and privilege to pass through the City of Townsville with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating, bands playing and colours flying.

The City March provided a valuable warm up to the parade the battalion had been limbering up for in the preceding weeks. Actually, we did have relatively little time to practice for the Trooping of the Colour — an involved and intricate parade. The last platoon through Tully barely had time to wash of the cam cream before starting rehearsals in early June.

Nonetheless, a combination of angry CSM's and a hoarse RSM managed to get the show on the road. Even the officers after several attempts 'got their act together' and passed the eighteenth century test of sobriety as they slow marched out with their swords at the recover.

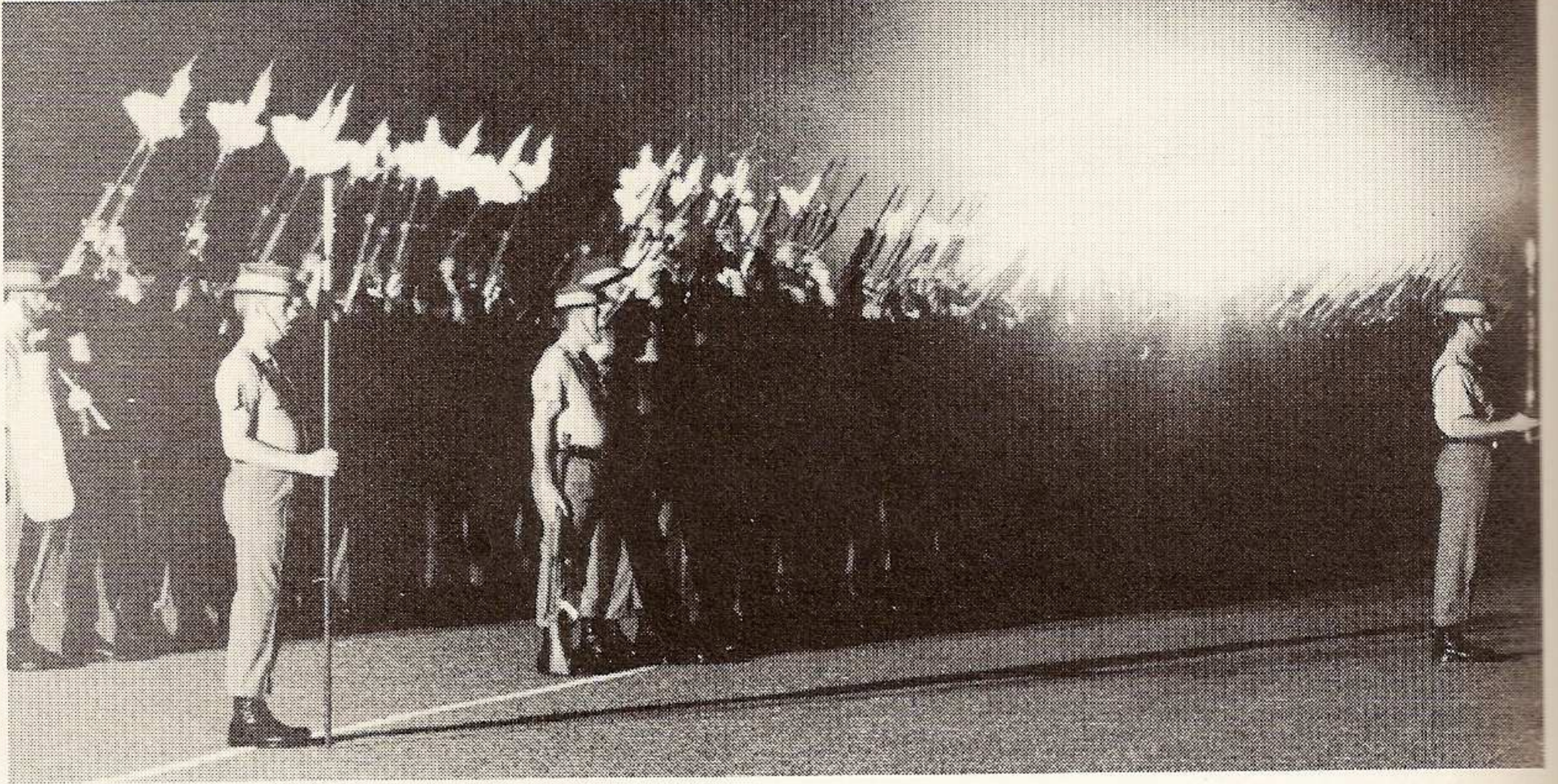
The parade was certainly unusual and spectacular being held under floodlights. It was well attended both by those associated with the battalion and the general public — regardless of the media advertising the time as Saturday morning. (Yet another plot to make people hurry up and wait?).

Starting with the 'bomb-burst' as the APC's roared into the parade ground the parade went smoothly. The Trooping itself, born of the days when the Colours were lodged in the Colonels' billet at the end of the days battle was very impressive. Though a few cursed Support Company to get on with it as the rifles weighed heavier holding the 'Present'.

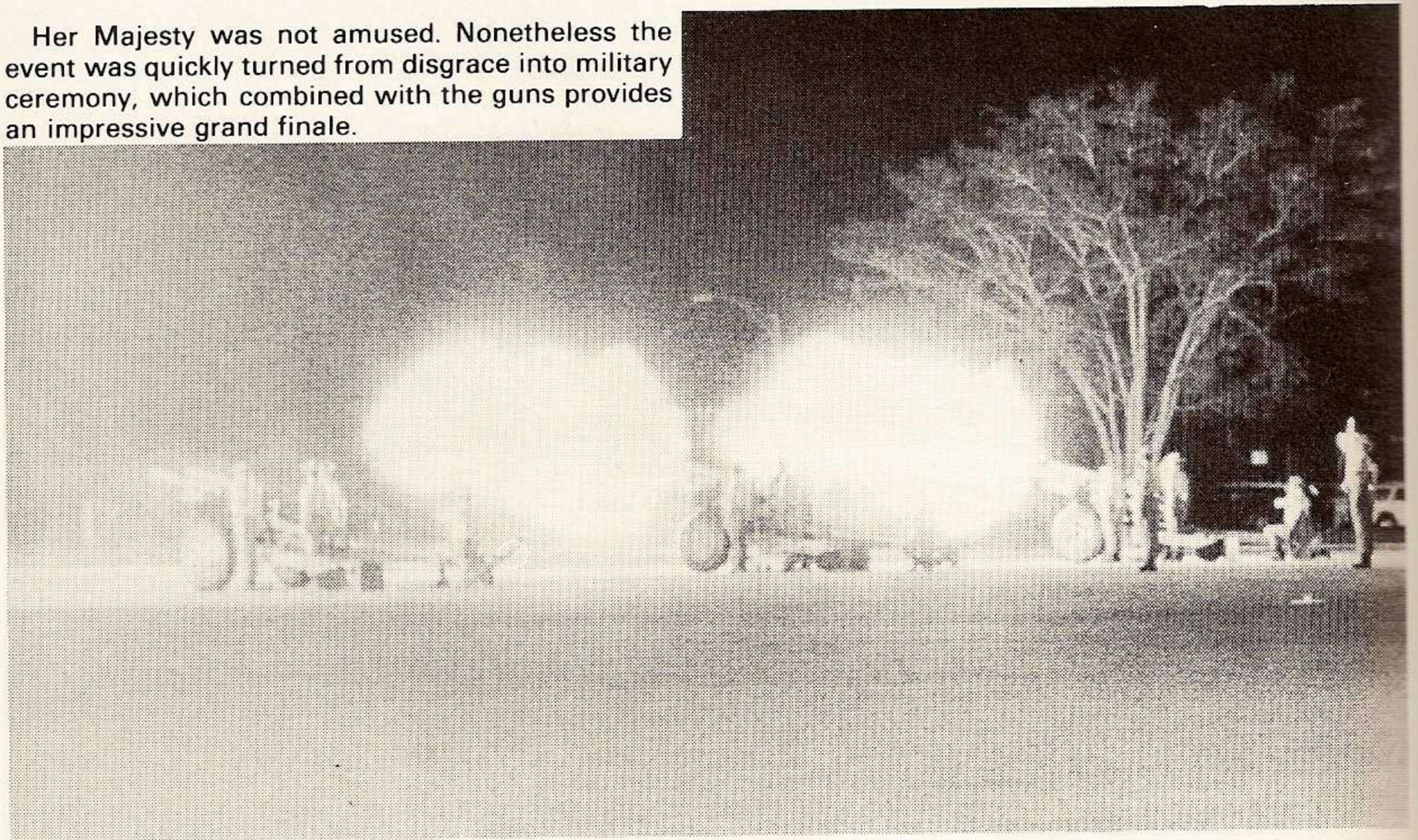


Doubtless the climax of the evening, heralded by Major Gould's tactful reminder that it 'may alarm the ladies and frighten the babies' was the firing of the Feu de Joie by the guards and guns from 4th Field Regiment.

The history of the Feu de Joie stems from the sixteenth century when a volley to be fired before Queen Elizabeth to demonstrate the new matchlock rifle, proved a disastrous series of ragged shots up and down the ranks.



Her Majesty was not amused. Nonetheless the event was quickly turned from disgrace into military ceremony, which combined with the guns provides an impressive grand finale.



Both the City March and the Trooping of the Colours were the drill and ceremonial highlight for the battalion in 1980. But, be warned, the RSM is conspiring still bigger and better plans for the Presentation of the New Colours next year.