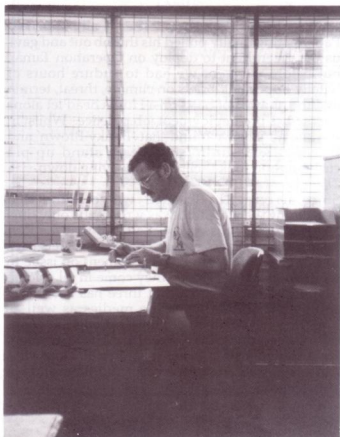




"The action never stops" SGT Hicks has a quick rest during Maxi Beagle 94



LCPL Picton - Maxi Beagle 1994

3 PLATOON

1994 began with a bang. We at last had a real Platoon SGT to replace the CPL "The Grand Master B Burton" and we gained CPL T.J. "Bullet" Brown to whip us into shape during PT.....or laugh at attempting to get into shape after block leave. Other new arrivals included LCPL "Sniper" Morton from 8/9 RAR, LCPL "Lazy" Tyrell from 2 Platoon, PTE Naiker (our Fijian diplomat) and PTEs Ware and the only two not in Rwanda - Jones and Bell. PTE Bell soon decided that the Army didn't meet his exacting standards and applied to go to the Pusses as a lead weight.

Our first sojourn to the field was to the Mecca of IMT's, the temple of footslogging, that magnificent oasis known as High Range Training Area. The intention was for a weeks worth of minor unit tactics but it was cut short at 22 hours for an on-line callout to marvellous Macrossan. Then the heavens opened and the spearhead of A Company was left on the parade ground muttering about "regardless of season, weather or terrain" but it was found that Macrossan was not an inland lake and that C130 Hercules weren't amphibious after all. Result: the ducks swam on in peace whilst we conducted yet more readiness checks!

From there we consolidated our losses and went onto that favourite campaign of ours - rescuing Australian Nationals from the clutches of the egg worshipping Lilliputians at the 25m range. We know that the Australian Defence Force is short of money but a 250m deployment to an area of operations is bordering on the ridiculous! Whilst at our Evacuation Assembly Area we learnt that the media have a natural attraction to Jake and the Boss took half an hour to undo the damage. SGT Rice also found that 77 set batteries don't work on battle trannies.

Gladiator week saw many of the Platoon emerge onto the battlefield to be basked in glory. It also saw the boss run on for his first game of Aussie Rules for the season.. Three minutes and a broken ankle later he was carted off for the rest of the year.

Thus a new Platoon Commander was given temporary reins over the Platoon. Enter the era of Super Sergeant, able to command a Platoon in that "most realistic" piece of training available - the Battalion Live Fire Exercise. On it we saw that realism is so important that safety is sacrificed. Spot the deliberate mistake? We soon learnt that as highly trained Infantry Soldiers we can't put out claymores as that is a section commanders job but a safety officer can walk up behind your section commander as he's setting the claymore and talk on a radio as that's always safe.....not!

The fighting third then switched allegiances and

nationality to become the bearded warriors of Lusaka to take on the "Big Blue One" aka the Donkey.....on their Battalion Exercise. During our time as evacuees and rebels we found that:

- Townsend Island is a nice place for a holiday
- The Sarge can't fish or grow a beard
- Morts and Jake don't know the meaning of high tide
- Jonesy had a fetish for goats
- Kiowas are bulletproof
- Fire and movement doesn't get taught across the road
- B Company 1 RAR make good targets on an landing zone
- Speargrass is everyone's enemy
- CS is good for crowd control

The rest of June saw us try our hand at Military Skills. We decided it wasn't our cup of tea but went out just for the hell of it and found that cold nights in Dotswood and ambushing in Dotswood just don't mix. The Sarge decided he didn't like the obstacle course and did his back in, Harro didn't like the 15 clicker and rolled his ankle and finally the Platoon decided enough was enough, it was bloody cold in the wrong ambush sit and half of us went to sleep.....but we still beat Recon.

July saw us hanging on to our short and curlies trying not to mention the "R: word as it mightn't come off. Maxi Beagle saw us get our first taste of working with the medics "just in case" and we soon learnt that there were difficult times ahead if we were to deploy with them. Then it all happened, Paul Keating finally pulled his thumb out and gave us the green light to deploy on Operation Tamar, but before we went we had to endure hours of 'vitally important' briefs on climate, threat, terrain and the number of hairs on a Hutus head let alone the medics pre-deployment job practice. Whilst in the line for jobs we found that 'Funky Brown' and 'Kreepy' Keep didn't like being stand up pin cushions and took their medicine lying down.

Since arriving 'In Theatre' we've found that everything we were told was wrong, the only time Rwandans hurry is on the road and that the RPA have got great dress sense. They wear berets back to front and the best bit of equipment on issue to them are their gumboots, they come in all colours of the rainbow. The mighty three has been busy setting the standards to the medics as well as guarding the hospital let alone ripping the yanks off for everything they're worth. The year might have started with a bang, it's going to close with endless pickets, convoy escorts and thousands of kids screaming biscweeeet!