

# LOOKING BACK AT 1979

by MAJOR J.D. GUY

The year started with as many sub-units as possible rushing off to enjoy the advent of the wet. This resulted in one platoon commander getting lost and another trying to get a ticket home by enticing a dog to bite him. This latter officer is being posted back to Infantry Centre!

It all proved too much for C Company who flew off to the flesh pots of Penang. A Company began to see the flaws in being foot mounted and went to Puckapunyal on Exercise SABRE FOOT. B Company concentrated on having overseas trips cancelled.

Meanwhile everyone shared the experience of the delight in plenty of duties and, if it could be fitted in, some training. Looking back at KANGAROO III we can now see the value in individual training and the development of initiative. Take for example the situation of a severe shortage of radios on KANGAROO III and the alternatives examined. There was the horse mounted dispatch rider (or dispatch rider mounted by a horse?). Then again there was the use of smoke (one puff, no enemy in sight, two puffs, enemy in sight, three puffs enemy in sight in large numbers, one very large sustained puff, I am on fire, and so on). Or the use of heliograph (heliograph sets are available in the Main Q!) which suffered severely from the presence of thick scrub and occasional cloud cover (alternate uses were shaving mirrors and self adoration sessions).

Working with our allies it became quite clear that we have the edge in the field of navigation. In this area of study there is no better appreciated or understood item than the compass prismatic and we shall all proceed on leave remembering that:

- a. It always points to the north.
- b. It costs a mint
- c. It is to be regarded with suspicion
- d. It will not tell the time by the sun
- e. No matter what bearing you take, it still points north.
- f. Always have one hanging around your neck on a rope (for the benefit of higher authority etc).
- g. It still points north.

On exercise HARD LUNGE and KANGAROO THREE a deeper understanding of text book teachings became apparent. A single shot in the middle of the night would be explained by, 'I thought I saw an enemy' or 'I have taken the second pressure without applying the safety catch' or 'It is dangerous to come near me' or 'I am a US Marine' or 'I don't understand these M16s very well'. While waiting for these explanations the well trained soldiers in the company would react instinctively; on day one the company would silently unroll itself from sleeping bags and stand to. The CSM would be heard muttering, 'Where the hell are my trousers?' On days two and three the company stirs uneasily in its sleep

and the CSM sends runners in all directions. The second in command sleeps on and a belated apology comes from a platoon commander by radio, line and runner. Towards the end of the exercise a sleepy voice is heard to murmur, 'Some people ought not to be trusted with firearms'. On the last night, reaction nil.

But, of course, all this training is of no value if there is no information to react to and so it was that all looked to the Recon Platoon. When two companies of 2/1 RNZIR (Kiwi) were seen advancing towards a recon patrol the commander was heard to assess it as 'only a clearing patrol'. Meanwhile the platoon commander was explaining that when twenty men harass four thousand one need not fire a shot. After a while, however, they gained their confidence and when they could not make it for Orange Force orders they went instead to the ones being delivered by Commander 6 TF. On finding that Blue Force did not appreciate this sort of thing the Recon Platoon, in their imaginative style, simply shot them. A bit more of this and they could have approached the efforts of One Platoon's also in the area of the Glen!



While the 'bayonet troops' were preoccupied with death and destruction there were others who concentrated on alternate facets of life. The Pipe Major, for example, and his band of dedicated musicians took their art to several championships and did much for the image of the Battalion. The Pipe Major won the prestigious title of Queensland Champion in October based on the Queensland Championships and the aggregate of placings in minor championships. He came second in the broader East Coast titles conducted in Newcastle. This type of performance has become almost common place through the years and so in 1980 when WO1 Doug Thoreson will no longer be in the Battalion we will notice a definite silence. He has given the Battalion eleven years of dedicated service and has capped his many awards by earning the Churchill Fellowship which will take him to the

Edinburgh Institute of Piping in Scotland from July to October next year.

While talking of people leaving, 1979 saw the departure of perhaps the most colourful character in the Battalion, CPL R.L. 'Corbs' Corby. An original member of 2/4 RAR and, for that matter almost an original member of the Regiment. He will be missed especially for his ability to keep lawn mowers going and checking WEMA bins.

On the other side we also welcomed new members, the bulk of whom came via the two IET courses run by D Company. Both courses experienced immediate deployment on major exercises on graduation and got an early taste of regimental life in the field. To all our new members a very hearty welcome. More people for duties!

The IET courses involved a large slice of the Battalion resources and companies did not see some of their NCOs for nearly six months. 'You harvest

what you sow' was the motto of D Company. The product of the two courses clearly bear that motto out.

None of us (notably the editor) look particularly starved and we owe this largely to the efforts of our catering staff who can produce miracles at minus one week's notice. If the economists could run the country in the manner the WO Caterer runs the ration account we would have no problems! But please — no more TV dinners. At least not until next year.

Well, so ends another year! How quickly those long moments of weariness cold (or hot) and wet misery disappear into the mist of dim memory and instead the lies and humour remain. Perhaps that is a good thing. One thing is certain and that is unless someone rushes in with more material this article must come to an end. So here's cheers until this time in 1980.





