

## Australian Army Rifle Team UK/Canada 1986

In June of this year a signal arrived in the unit confirming my inclusion in the Australian Army Rifle Team to represent the Australian Army in the British Regular Army Skill at Arms Meeting (RASAM) at Bisley England and the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association Meeting at Connaught Ontario. In the usual fashion, and not untypically, it was a mad rush to complete final administration required for the trip, and to find some A\$4,000 required for the airfare and associatist costs.

The team assembled in Sydney and consisted of the following:

|                       |                          |               |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| WO2, R Yorke-Simpson, | 4 TRG GP,                | Team Adjutant |
| WO2, P K Oakford      | DSU TVL                  | Team Manager  |
| WO2, N Iszlamb        | 42 RQR                   | Master Coach  |
| SGT G S Sawle         | 1 RTB                    |               |
| SGT S Ainslie         | 2/4 RAR                  |               |
| SGT J Dixon           | 6 RAR                    |               |
| SGT G Howells         | DSU Adelaide             |               |
| SGT T Hallis          | 2 FD SLIP BN             |               |
| CPL C Curnow          | 3 RAR                    |               |
| LCPL R King           | 1 RAR                    |               |
| PTE P Richards        | Puchapunyal<br>Base WKSP |               |
| CAPT P Cousins        | 2 RNSWR                  |               |

The team commenced final administration while practising at the Malabar Rifle Range. Although we used Australian targets and ammunition, the practices which the team actually fired were British. Members new to the team found the practices a novel experience, especially during the run-down competition from the 500 m firing point.

### Bisley England

The team arrived at Heathrow and was bused to the ranged complex at Bisley, approximately 70 miles from London. The range is located amongst the typical English countryside of small lanes and communities huddled around the local pub. The complex has several ranges, the largest having 120 frames, with firing points back to 800 yards. One particular range used during target rifle competitions has only 50 frames, however the firing points extend rearwards to 1200 yards.

The first few days were spent in familiarizing ourselves with British ammunition and light conditions. The ammunition provided a few surprises and resulted in re-zeroing all SLR's. The propellant in the British ammunition is less powerful than that of the Australian type used in the F-4 currently in service with the ARA. Unlike Australian ammunition, British ammunition is graded into categories from sniper use only to training ammunition only. Light conditions were unusual, as it was bright yet very hazy, and these factors combined to produce generally difficult conditions for sighting. British targets were a new experience entirely as they are similar in size and shape to the ATA dart targets used in Australia, yet there the similarity ends. The targets are

black and orange with scored concentric circles/rectangles on each target, and the 6 inch bull is a terrifying prospect at 300 yards. With the combination of light conditions and target columns it was noticed that the targets blended rather well with the bullet catcher (butt stop.)

## AASAM

The individual events were also very well contested with 90% of the team receiving medallions for being in the Top 10% of the various practices. An excellent performance by CPL Neron and CPL Daly in the MG Pairs Championship, (they won easily), has given them the opportunity to attend the trails, in Canberra next year, to go to Brunei for a shooting competition. CPL Neron also earned himself a chance with his pistol shooting.

However the rifle range was not the only place in which the team performed. The teams vote for the best Clayton performance went to LT Chard for a good effort under duress. The unanimous vote for best stuff up goes to movements for getting us on the bus at 0400 hours at Randwick to go to Richmond air Base and finally stepping off the bus 18 hours later at Amberly air base.

All in all the BN was well represented by its shooting team and can look forward to an even better performance next year.

The Australian Army skill at arms meeting (AASAM) is an annual shooting competition run by the Australian Army Rifle Association, at Anzac range, Malabar Sydney. The competition attracted over 400 competitors in pistol, MG, Sub-machine gun, Parker hale and SLR events.

This year, 2/4 RAR was the best represented team of the regiment and 3rd largest team overall. The shooting teams representatives were:

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| CAPT Hasson | LT Chard      |
| SGT Symons  | SGT Ainslie   |
| SGT Smith   | SGT O'Donnell |
| SGT Beattie | CPL Heron     |
| CPL Daly    | CPL Phillippi |
| CPL Holmes  | CPL Hart      |
| CPL Kemp    | LCPL Grant    |
| LCPL Mailer | PTE Tweedie   |
| PTE Breen   | PTE Rees      |
| PTE Stanton | PTE Tarrant   |

A week's build up at Mt Vince, in which to practice the actual events that the team were to compete in, ensured very good results for the team e.g.

- 3rd BDE Trophy — Pistol Teams Championship — 1st
- SAF Trophy — MG Teams Championship — 1st
- ME Falling Plate — Pennant — 4th
- 3 RAR Para Trophy — Pennant — 3rd



**In Shooting, Officer CAPT Hasson.**

The competition began in earnest with teams from the British Regular Army, Navy, Air Force and Territorials (Area). Countries represented were, Sultanate of Oman, Dubai, Australia, and Canada (approximately 800 competitions.) All of these competitions would be graded as A Class in Australia, and as such the standard of competition is invariably very high, with teams often preparing for 10 months prior to the event. Another problem encountered by team members on their first trip was the English commands on the range, as not only were commands different, but there was no explanation of the conduct of the practice, since firers are expected to have read the practice before hand, and to be familiar with the timings, ammunition expenditure per exposure, and the firing positions allowable. An example of this would be: "Range 8, load, ready, practice 12 Watch Out."

The team performed well with two notable performances: CPL Chris Curnow (3 RAR won the "BSA" (200 yards deliberate), and SGT Jim Dixon (6 RAR) won for the second successive year the sitting (200 yard snap).

As the competition drew to a close, the team held a function/BBQ which proved an enormous success. With a few days to spare before Canada the team went exploring, and at one stage were spread from Wales to Switzerland.

### **Connaught-Ranges Canada**

The team arrived in Canada with Ottawa the final destination where Major Sandford (Australian Attache

Staff) met the team and guided us to the range complex at Connaught, a fringe suburb of Ottawa. The first sight of the ranges at Connaught is awesome, as the main range complex has 400 frames with firing points back to 1000m. This range is flanked by the shorter pistol and small-bore ranges. Again, the team had to re-zero as the ranges were metric as opposed to the imperial ranges in England.

We were all quite aware of the 'disreputation' of Canadian ammunition and once practice commenced our fears were confirmed. It was not uncommon to receive ammunition where the projectile was not aligned with the case. The standard IA adopted by the Canadian regulars appeared to be:

1. Place the offending bullet in the flash suppressor,
2. Bend until the projectile appears to be aligned, and
3. Reload into the magazine and prepare for firing.

During competition a statement often heard from the Australian team was flying high with ICI, as a bullet either missed the target completely or was well away from the expected scoring area. Notable achievements in the competition were by:

1. SGT Jim Dixon won the individual sniper
2. SGT Jim Dixon/WO2 Noel Iszlamb won the sniper pairs match, and
3. CAPT Peter Cousins won gold in the 500 m deliberate.

Eventually it was time to farewell Canada and the team held a function at a small restaurant called "Ned Kelly's Last Stand". With stopovers in San Francisco and Hawaii the team finally arrived in Sydney and prepared for onward journeys.

The trip was a success with the Australian Army well represented, with each member of the team agreeing that the experience was worth the expense. The reaction of both the British Army and the Canadian Defence Forces to our participation and presence was outstanding, and will no doubt foster the continuation of military rifle competitions in the years to come.

In 1988, our Bicentennial year, the responsibility for hosting the British and Canadian rifle teams shall be ours. This competition will be an event on the calendar not to be missed, and offers many opportunities for young shooters to strive for.