



BIG YEAR



Dauntless Defender we walked, ran, climbed, fell over, slept sometimes, and broke ribs, cut hands, broke entrenching tools, and the ticks had a feast. We saw aerobatics and minefields and we ate TV dinners. We certainly earned our pay that time at High Range.

Our big day was 17th September. After six weeks of intense preparation and, admittedly, some moments of panic, we proudly paraded to receive new Colours for the 2nd Battalion. The plaudits were loud after our parade, some headaches were bad after our Ball. But without doubt that day was the 2nd/4th's best.

And then we went to Shoalwater Bay. We drove, we flew, and we walked, and then we got there. We walked, we dug, we stopped, we slept and we went home. We all want to know who breeds the sandflies at "SB". He must make a fortune. But Kangaroo Two exposed us to Americans, Singaporeans, Canadians, New Zealanders, the RAAF, and the RAN (and the Divisional Headquarters), as well as the sandflies.

We drove, flew, and "trained" home from Kangaroo Two and then we went on leave. One wonders, has twelve months just gone by?

We got the warning in 75, we got the word in 76, High Range, the Burdekin, Katherine, High Range again, the Parade ground, then, of all places, Shoalwater Bay! What a year.

Happy Swinger started as a short Battalion deployment, and wrote off half the Battalions boots (not to be confused with boots which went later). We had A Company here, B Company there and C Company? (certainly not here or there). The worst part was the walk in the dark in the middle, and the best part was the walk in the moonlight at the end.

Then we went to the Burdekin River for Survival training and somehow everyone survived. Brews still containing magpies feet and some attempts at eating tortoise were lowlights, while some of the bird snares could be called highlights. All companies participated in what was certainly a different form of training.

And then came the reason why we went on survival: we went to Katherine.

Exercise Big Country was our big field activity for the year. From the rocks of Mataranka to the Cliffs of the Katherine Gorge, it was a hectic six weeks. Despite the relatively long time away in these peaceful years, perhaps there were some who were sorry to leave KATH-ERR-IINE.

No sooner had we done our dash in the Top End when we lost our independence and went once again to High Range with the rest of the Task Force. On



C COY ASSAULT ON EXERCISE "LITTLE COUNTRY"