

THE FIGHTING EIGHT



Pte Gair, Pte Bevan and Pte Ostler — Note Pte Bevan's GP tread.

1984 has been a year of mixed fortune for the members of 8 Pl. The year started badly with the platoon being split between courses and a wet trip to the FFBS at Tully. Cpl Stokes managed to get himself into a slight spot of trouble at Tully and helped out the NCO'S on rear details by donning his guard gear for over a week for "extra training". Sgt 'Snow' Kahler and Cpl 'Eddie' Edwards gave the students on the Subject 2 for Corporal Course being conducted by Charlie Company a rough time while the remainder of the platoon (most of them sportsmen) did Spt Coy courses and moved across the grass to help raise Support's standards.

Following the reunification of the platoon at the completion of the courses, it was off to Tully for another try. The platoon worked well as a team and nobody got into trouble.

The next part of the travel bargain offered by the Army was a shooting trip to Mt. Vince, (less the Australian Rules players who remained behind to play football). Although it was a "dry" trip this time, scores were still better than those achieved by the platoon at the Mt. Stuart ranges.

After a break, the platoon conducted some training, liberally dosed with duties and standown. We decided to join the rest of the 'real' soldiers in Lavarack Barracks on a little jaunt titled Exercise Spartan Challenge. This involved a stroll of 87 km (by map) over some pretty easy country, in marching order, in three and a half days. Somehow, however, it developed into a slog of over one hundred kilometres over the standard North Queensland hills, a lot in the middle of the night. On the morning of 7 Jun, we heard someone singing to himself. Thinking that someone had finally cracked, we investigated to find Lcpl Mark Chester sitting on the rock on which he had tried to get some sleep in the early hours of the morning, singing 'happy birthday to me, happy birthday to mel' We all thought it was a damn fine day to have a birthday. However, he was told to go jump when he suggested someone make him a brew to celebrate. After getting our bearings (we had been slightly misplaced during the night - again), we pushed on to the Battalion assembly area. We were told that as no enemy were to be found in our AO, we would move across to 1 RAR's AO and kill their enemy - again! After trekking 12 km to the FUP -

again, we did a Battalion attack with left twist, half spin and double back somersault. Finally we climbed over the trucks to come home and finished the inaugural Townsville - Mingela Challenge.

A rather intensive training programme for the **Annual Mil Skill Competition followed.** The result of this training was in increase in the standards of the platoon and a decrease in the video rentals and book sales around town.

Between training Cpl 'Radar' Baker provided some light entertainment, when, on Guard, he decided that the unit's flags needed ironing. He detailed two of his guard for the task. They had no problems with the Australian flag but discovered to Radar's cost (\$132 to be precise) that the Battalion flag had a tendency to disintegrate under a hot iron.

The teams task was to regain its rightful place as champion platoon. We managed to raise two sections

for Mil skills and with Cpl Edwards leading his sect to victory and with 6 sect led by Cpl Stokes putting in a good effort, we again are right of the line in '85.

With Mil skills complete we took to the scrub for Ex Northern Warrior. The PI learnt a lot from the various stands and managed to pick up a few nicknames such as the Alpine 8th or as the Coy 21C says 8 Coy.

On deployment to Mt. Spec the PI was attached to Bn HQ and were soon to be introduced to the problems of mine warfare. This put us in good stead for the Brigade attack where most members of the PI got to see anti-personnel mines first hand (or foot).

Overall it has been a good year for the fighting eight and we are already looking forward to '85.

9 PLATOON

The year began hectically with the commencement of courses. Things started to level out as the various members of the platoon finished their courses and resumed their roles back in the platoon. The first exercise done as a platoon was at Tully. The trip lasted for a period of ten days with the climax to the exercise being an air lift in the American Black Hawk helicopters.

The next exercise conducted was a 14 day trip to High Range as enemy for RMC cadets. Due to sporting commitments some section commanders and diggers were unable to attend, thus enabling experience to be gained by understudys.

Cpl Skaines true to form scored a trip to Sydney to fire a few rounds with reasonable success. Meanwhile Cowboy ventured to Sydney to play Queensland Army Rugby, once again deserting his men to achieve his goal as a professional Jock Strap - (he did drag himself away long enough to walk to Mingela).

9 PI has always had its share of clowns and comics and this year has been no exception with the inclusion to 9 PI of Pte (Dasha) Wheatley who has thrown in his little sarcastic comments not to mention his love affair with the bitch; and Pte (Gonzo) Corbett's devil may care attitude. Life on the top floor has been like 'Sons and Daughters'.

The final exercise of the year was an all singing all dancing excursion to High Range and Mt. Spec, where the platoon went through a number of stands. The lads most enjoyed the APC phase, however the highlight was the tranquil beauty experienced by all in the rain forest. The Brigade attack was a good training lesson with Pte Jolly coming back a foot short.

All in 9 PI would like to thank Lt Nairn for his patience and understanding for putting up with all our bad attitudes and problems, (that is of course when he is not off playing sport), as next year he takes up a role in a more demanding position in a comfortable chair behind a desk in Bn HQ (Asst Adjt).