

EXERCISE TROPICAL ENCOUNTER

CAPTAIN T.W. MACMULLEN

Dear Mum,

On the weekend commencing 7 March 80, all the officers of the battalion deployed to Cairns for a TEWT (tactical exercise without troops). The TEWT was for many of us an introduction to jungle warfare.

We arrived at Cairns on Friday and were immediately shown a piece of real estate and given a problem related to that piece of ground and were required to present a solution to the problem early the next morning. What a way to spoil a nice weekend especially since we had packed our bathers and fishing lines. We (the young officers) later discovered the real reason for being kept busy on arrival. The Majors (directing staff for the exercise) wanted a free hand in checking out the 'nice' places in Cairns.

They repeated the performance on the Saturday night which resulted in the young officers being given a hard time when presenting their solutions. They acted rather like Dad did when he had been out with the 'boys' from his club, arriving home late and short tempered.

However, everyone cheered up by lunch time as there was a bar with cold beer. There were many mutterings and excuses about the hair of the dog that had bitten them, not that I noticed any dogs that were prone to biting people. Anyway, the senior officers cheered up after lunch.

It was very interesting going into the jungle for the first time, some of us had a tangle with 'wait-a-while'. This is not a type of young lady, although by all reports some of the senior officers found some of these in the wine bar in Cairns; but rather a nasty vine with backward firing barbs.

Problems to which we had to present solutions were: clearance of an area by a company, position a company in ambush and a company attack. The



Who would want to take this god forsaken place anyway.

solutions to the problems must have been pleasing to the directing staff as were allowed to visit the night spots of Cairns on Saturday night. It was an enjoyable night which was made more entertaining by an encounter with some Australian navy officers. Sunday night was spent at a barbecue with 51st Royal Queensland Regiment (Army Reserve Unit), our hosts for the weekend. The evening was highlighted by a singing competition which was won by the Lieutenants. The Captains managed to perform satisfactory but the Majors were a dismal failure.

We returned to Townsville on Monday morning and despite having to work, the exercise was a great success. More exercises should be conducted in this manner. The Australians are 'super' and I will have many tales to tell to my fellow Irish Guards Officers when I return.

