

PIPES AND DRUMS

By Pipe Major W.M. Gail

Before producing the P/D yearly summary of activities I would like to mention that they are too numerous in order for them to all be individually mentioned, in the space of this article — over 150 engagements were fulfilled.

1984 was drawing to a close as we departed for a three month tour of duty at RAAF Base Butterworth. The P/D became part of the Australian Company Group (A Coy) as HQ Pl and carried out all duties and training activities as directed by OC A Coy. This was a change in pace for the P/D and gave members a chance to be reacquainted with the skills of an infantry soldier. The relaxing times were enjoyed — Bangkok and Singapore.

While in Malaysia the P/D performed many PR functions in a variety of venues including RAAF messes, Snow's Club Penang, Hong Kong Tavern, RAAF Recreational Centre, Chinese New Year celebrations, Malaysian celebrations, A Coy Christmas concert (between patrols) and many others.

The highlight of the tour was the preparation and recording of the P/D tape with a record total of 64 tunes — better than any other battalion.

The master tape was produced by RAAF Radio in their humble studio, which produced a reasonable sound. Many favourite regimental tunes were recorded — Ringo Inverbrackie, 2/4 RAR, Samichon, The Hook, Royal Australian Regiment, Waltz, Drummer Boy, Amazing Grace, Aussie War tunes and many others. Unfortunately the P/D could only afford a master tape. We were unable to raise the 1200 Ringitt for the 800 tapes and covers we would have liked to have returned home with.

We were well supported at our engagements by "Hans the Video Photographer" (CSM A). No matter where we went he was always there with his camera rolling. Overall it was a demanding trip and one that the P/D do not wish to repeat too soon.

Our next major commitment was the RAR Pipe Band Competition which was followed by the presentation of new colours to 3 RAR. After a stop-over at 6RAR where we picked up our new jackets we proceeded to cold Holsworthy where we were hosted by 3 RAR. On 23rd April the bands of 2/4, 3, 5/7, 6 and 8/9 RAR competed for the RAR Banner in rather cold, wet and windy conditions. The final results were 3 RAR first, 2/4 RAR second, 6 RAR third, 5/7 fourth, and 8/9 fifth. The points were very close and believe it or not 2/4 and 6 RAR were equal first in bugling (and it was not because of 1 RAR support) — determination under pressure!!!

Kapyong Day (24th April) saw the combined Pipe and Drums of the RAR massed again and this time under gale force winds and buckets of rain. Fortunately for 3 RAR the rain eased for the consecration of their new colours and then resumed in earnest. An hour after the parade we were on our way to RAAF Richmond to fly to Brisbane to dry out and prepare for the Brisbane Anzac Day march. (Mind you we still had the Dawn Service and gunfire breakfast to survive before that.) After Anzac Day we had a few more smaller commitments and then it was home to Townsville for a wee rest.

The Queen's Birthday weekend saw the P/D off again. This time to Cooktown for the annual celebration of Captain Cooks landing there. This trip saw a few "extras" tagging along — namely "Uncle Keith Gridley" our advisor on all things



RAN and Army as well as our "art critic", "Beachball" Shorty Davis came as our photographer come art dealer. The third extra was that notable TAFE student photographer Sgt "Cookie".

Our photographers knocked out about 400 photographs in 3 days and we were all thankful the trip finally ended as we were sick of sardines, crackers, tinned mushies and pies. We did not come back empty handed from this cultural oasis of the north. Shorty and the Pipe Major purchased all the neglected "Mona Lisa's" which in turn were handed on to a truly dedicated collector of local art — Major Charlesworth. I'm surprised he has not converted the painting in to a dashboard (maybe he likes it.)

The next few months saw us working at the following places — Bde Comd Mess, Mt Stuart Officers' and Sgt Messes, 11 FFGp Sgt Mess, 1 RAR Coral Day (Pipe Major) War Widows, 31 RQR old boys function, Qld 11 Bde Gp Reunion, 2/4 RAR Military Skills Competition (23 guard mounts in 4 days) 3/4 Cav Regt concert, 2 Fd Sup Bn Parade and Jezzine Barracks Open Day. Our next trip away was to Ingham for the opening of the new ARES barracks there.

Next came the Innisfail Show. We were ably assisted by Sgt Steppleton and his staff at the Innisfail Barracks who offered us extremely hospitable service — so much so that I'm sure Mrs Steppleton was glad to see us leave.

One of those "you will supply" requests came from Canberra and the CO lost his merry band of music to the tenth Independence celebration in PNG. The group consisted of 2MD band (the fairy boys) 5/7 RAR and us. Once again the AABC took up most of the cargo space and some equipment damage to 5/7 RAR and our equipment resulted — drums mainly.

On arrival at Taurama Barracks we were a day early and accompanied by 35 AABC musos who were not expected. Not to be put off we settled into our (mmm...mmm) quarters??? the next morning the P/D rehearsed for the presentation of new colours to IRPIR (no AABC required). The parade was the following day (no AABC required). The day after that a 20 km charity march was held by the PNGDF Engnr Bn, Signals Coy and a contingent from 7 Gurkhas from Hong Kong (no AABC required). After the completion of those tasks we had a break and then a hairy flight to Lae in a DC-3 (Cricky canvas wings nearly). Air Forces are obviously the same world over as once again our drums were damaged.



Pipe Major explains a point to CO

While we worked at Lae we experienced an audience of 10,000 tribesmen and did they love the Scottish and Irish lap lags and bagpipes.

After three very busy days it was back to Port Moresby and the holidaying AABC boys — who had managed three engagements. On return to Townsville — you guessed it — more damage to our drums.

Throughout the year all requests for our assistance were handled by the President of the Pipes and Drums Major Charlesworth. A job with its share of frustrations as some organizations think that we are always sitting around ready to go at a minutes notice. The P/D thank Major Charlesworth for all his assistance this year.

Next year the P/D may possibly travel to Adelaide for the 150th Anniversary Military Tatoo with all the RAR Pipe and Drum Bands, HM Scots Guards AUR Band and 27 RSAR Pipes and Drums.

Your P/D has vacancies for pipers and if you are interested and have some experience with music, no matter how little, come down to the band hut — you will be warmly received.