

Duke of Gloucester/MacDonald Cup

With a view to the Royal Australian Regiment sending a section to compete in the prestigious Cambrian Patrol Competition conducted in Wales each year by the British Army, the Battalion broke new ground in the selection and training of its team for the 1986 Duke of Gloucester/MacDonald Cup Competition.

The competition itself had a much broader scope, was physically more demanding and placed greater emphasis on the initiative and individual skills contained within the rifle section than had the previous competitions. To facilitate the selection of the most suitable members for the Battalion team, each Company identified a composite section to participate in an assessment exercise conducted at Mt Spec during May.

This was Ex "Calumni" and during its conduct the sections were assessed under arduous conditions in the following areas:

- teamwork,
- endurance,
- initiative,
- leadership, and
- flexibility under stress.

The results of this exercise were interesting to say the least with some highly individual trials being observed. Going without food for four days, walking in circles for the same period and mass loss of all items of shaving gear, being just some. There are obviously some strange section/platoon SOPs out there in the long green.

As the sections finally arrived at the first check point, which was as far as anyone got, they were assessed on both their physical and psychological condition. It was this individual and group assessment combined with the manner in which they had approached the allotted tasks that led to the selection of the Battalion training squad for the competition.

Twenty two members were selected and this number was gradually reduced to the final thirteen who represented 2/4RAR in the Duke of Cup Competition at the Infantry Centre. The team consisted of:

Cpl S.G. Hart (A Coy), LCpl B. Langabeer (Spt Coy), Pte R.J. Mills (A Coy), Pte T.S. Willcox (Admin Coy), Pte J.R. Kiernan, Pte G.L. Henry (Spt Coy), Pte C.L. Ostler (Spt Coy), Pte S. Oddy (D Coy), Pte G.W. McIver (D Coy), Pte P. Delapain (D Coy), Pte T.J. Cuming (C Coy), Pte S.S. Brouff (Admin Coy), Pte E.J. Martin (Admin Coy).

The squad spent the period June/July revising all known and some unknown military skills. Subjects ranging from "Tac Durries" to "how to talk Pte Wall out of taking us over the Iron Man track again" were covered in theory and practice. This training was concluded with a recon activity to secure Normanton race course for the commencement of Exercise Maxi Beagle.



The team completed the training to their individual and group benefit, and had the additional bonus of qualifications as marksmen and preparation for the life saving award of the Bronze Medallion under the guidance of Pte Walls efforts and a large part of their success was due to his enthusiastic and well co-ordinated conditioning programme.

On arrival at the Infantry Centre for the conduct of the competition, Cpl Hart immediately assessed the condition of his troops and following the normal appreciation process, chose to launch his section at the assembled cream of the Royal Australian Regiment and the Subject Two for Sergeant Course. This enabled the highly trained and ruthless jungle fighters of 2/4RAR to dispel their anxieties and inhibitions without recourse to the civilian population. Pte Ostler's Kamikaze raid on the only SASR unarmed combat instructor available at the time was particularly memorable - futile but memorable.

On the completion of the reorganization following this sorting out period (and Pte Ostler's casevac), it was into the competition proper.

The team performed extremely well throughout the event being placed either first or second in seven of the fourteen activities that made up the competition. A couple of minor misunderstandings and a degree of bad luck were all that prevented the team from winning the event, but it was an extremely good effort on all their parts to place the Battalion second in such illustrious company.

Cpl Hart and his men, along with Pte Wall are to be congratulated for the effort they put into preparation for this competition and for the professional soldierly manner in which they brought it to so successful a conclusion.

NOTE: The 1RAR team that beat 2/4 RAR by a handful of points participated in England and came out first. It gives some indications of how we would have gone as well. Congratulations 1RAR.