



W Company

WITHOUT DOUBT every soldier who served with W Company from December 1967 to November 1968 would agree his tour in South Vietnam with an Anzac battalion was a memorable one.

It was significant in that history repeated itself. Not since the First World War had there been a formation of Australians and New Zealanders proud to have the distinction of being known as Anzacs.

However, as proud as we were of this, there are some to whom this alliance will cause heartburn. I refer to our dear old sabre-rattling grandads, uncles and, in some cases, fathers; that is, all those who are feeling their age a wee bit. My advice to all when you meet these tacticians in future nocturnal visits to returned servicemen's associations and leagues is humour them. Your time will come when your sons and nephews become Anzacs.

Then you'll be able to nudge old Perreau and Brock and say with a wistful look in your eyes, "Oh yes, times have changed. Do you remember the time after Operation Sceptre when the fridge went on the blink and all we had was warm booze? War was hell. Trying to get rid of warm beer is as bad as drinking flat grog out of a railways cup." These are the unpleasant things you will remember and relive

Who will forget the loud voices issuing from the officers/sergeants mess during one of their frequent late-at-night "O groups"? Obviously they were far too busy to hold them during the day. Admittedly, these groups might appear to have been large, but this was brought about by the tactical requirement for supporting arms, and the large number of interested spectators from battalion headquarters, Support Company and Admin Company who wanted to voice their thoughts — often musically.

By the same token, it was noted with no little pride how the Kiwi warriors used to avail themselves of these sessions to hold vigorous discourse with their Aussie counterparts.

It was very reassuring to hear the clatter of empty cans being fired out the window, and to see the walls reverberating from the vigour with which these discussions were conducted. Occasionally there was a word of disagreement. Anybody who sat quietly amid this multitude would be educated beyond his wildest dreams in how to run companies, battalions and even task forces. It was, indeed, a fountain of knowledge.

Most of the stories banded around were topical, but entirely meaningless to me. "If Scoobie won't give it to you, go see Sinky," referred, I suppose, to some benefactor known only to the troops.

Or a member of a platoon which could see the wire faintly would boast, "Our Sunray Minor was lost last night, but we found him and carried him home." A member of another platoon would clamber proudly to his feet with, "Ours got home early," and then, somewhat disdainfully, "in a wheelbarrow." These two champions would then look at the third member of the trio who, with a shrug of his shoulders, would say, "Mine's still there, singing about the winky wanky bird!"

I would sneak away from my eavesdropping, none the wiser as to their jargon or the personalities involved, and rejoin my Sunray to seek guidance.

"Leader," I would say, "I reckon it's Buck's shout. What about another O group, because the subalterns are raring to go. But first I must try to locate Nutshell in his tent. The troops tell me his abode is something to behold."

ROBIN

The CSM's Soliloquy

If the CSM writes tactfully, he's verbose;

If he's brief, he's tactless.

If he drafts a report, it's wrong;

If he doesn't, there's nothing to work on.

If he speaks to the O group, he's butting in;

If he doesn't, he's useless.

If he sends reminders, he's a pest;

If he doesn't, he's slack.

If he asks for resolution, he's cheeky;

If he doesn't get things done, he's incompetent.

If the training's a success, it's the O group;

If it's a failure, the CSM's to blame.

If he asks for instruction, he's got no initiative;

If he doesn't, he's swollen headed.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,

If the others won't do it, the CSM must.

The Second W Company



THE SECOND W COMPANY came into being on 15 May 1968 as D Company, 1RNZIR, in Terendak Garrison, Malacca, Malaysia.

On that day a number of officers and soldiers were posted to form D Company, commanded by Maj L.G. Williams. At that time the three platoon commanders were Lt Gordon Keely, 2Lt Ross Milne and 2Lt John Sherriff.

One of the first social tasks the officers faced was to meet their future commanding officer, Lt Col L.R. Greville, who visited Terendak on May 16.

Soldiers were not very plentiful in D Company in the first few days and it was not until May 24, 25 and 26, when several replacement groups arrived from New Zealand, that platoons were formed and training started in earnest. At this stage the company still required 25 soldiers to complete its establishment. These, unfortunately, were not available until July 9, when a further group of replacements arrived.

The training time available was broken into three phases—platoon training, during which individual skills and section and platoon teamwork were practised; company training, during which company headquarters moved out into the field and commanded company activities; and specialist training, when all personnel in the company trained as signallers, trackers, pioneers, medical orderlies or M60 gunners. A junior NCO's course was conducted during the platoon training stage.

At the end of each phase of training suitable tests and exercises were devised, culminating in a final exercise in Johore State in October 1968.

Each of these intensive training periods was interrupted by other activities. One was Exercise Lath, which the OC missed because he had broken his arm playing cricket. This exercise was conducted in Trengganu State from June 22 to July 5. D Company, as part of 1RNZIR, carried out a river crossing and then moved 15,000 yards through rubber and jungle in one night.

During this exercise the company lost 2Lt Sherriff to V Company, which was already in South Vietnam. We gained 2Lt Martin Knight-Willis when we returned to Terendak.

The company party on the beach behind the camp hospital on August 2 was quite an affair. The 2IC was still wondering how he ended up at Lt Col Apiata's house when he left for Vietnam.

The 1RNZIR athletics day and the battalion cross-country race were run on August 29.

The Cameron Highlands were the scene of temperate climate training, where appetites improved appreciably.

While at the Cameron Highlands, Lt John Moller joined the company as a replacement for Lt Keely.

There was a second company party on October 12, and frequent mornings at the Jungle Bar for an OC's hour.

Lt Col George Pokoia's wedding on October 17 was a real occasion.

All remember that magnificent company rugby team which won the 1RNZIR inter-company competition, lost 12-3 to a Malaysian trialist side and won 19-0 against a Negri-Malacca team, and 16-8 against 28 Commonwealth Brigade.

With training completed, leave taken, final exercises over and sport and other activities behind it, the advance party left for South Vietnam on October 30, followed by the main body on November 13-14.

On 14 November 1968 D Company became the second W Company, and two days later was deployed to the Horseshoe, where it remained until December 28.

During this time, in-country training was carried out and the company familiarised itself with APC, tank and helicopter operations. It was at the Horseshoe that the com-



Cavnobile!

pany had its first contact, which resulted in One Platoon killing four VC. The enemy party was a D445 Battalion provisioning party, apparently moving into Dat Do to buy food.

Christmas Day functions, both religious and social, were conducted on the Horseshoe on December 25 by all except Two Platoon, which was on patrol. Its Christmas Day was celebrated next day.

The company was more fortunate than the rest of the battalion, which had to wait until mid-January to celebrate Christmas back in base.

The company was deployed by air on Operation Goodwood to join the remainder of the battalion on December 31. W Company had several small contacts and suffered its first fatal casualty with the loss of Pte Keith Herman. The company returned to Nui Dat on January 13 and on January 20 started a three-day operation with 1st Company, 2/48th ARVN, in the Long Green area. The operation ended with no contact being made.

The battalion deployed on the second phase of Operation Goodwood on January 27 and W Company worked in an AO to the west in the Hat Dich area. Several small contacts were made.

About 7p.m. on January 29 the company position was attacked by an estimated VC company. One VC was killed and seven blood pools with drag marks were found. The company had three wounded — Ptes Treves, Crowley and Malaquin. Treves and Crowley were evacuated and Treves was eventually medevaced from the theatre. The company believes the VC thought it was a small SAS patrol.

W Company remained in the Hat Dich area until February 2 when it was moved to an area on the Firestone Trail and linked up with a troop of tanks. These remained under command until February 8. During this time the company moved across country aiming to flush VC into stop groups provided by B, C and D companies. There were no enemy sightings, but a complex of about 130 bunkers was found and partially destroyed.

The company then moved to an area south of Long Thanh. On February 15 an agent was brought to the company to guide it to a large rice cache. The company then provided LP protection and support to B Company during that company's big contact with enemy in a bunker system.

On February 19 the company moved further north to the area east of the Long Binh complex. A company defensive position with bunkers and wire was established. Patrolling in the area began on February 21 and several small contacts were made.

About 8.20p.m. on February 23 the company base was attacked by elements of 525 VC Engineer Battalion. This engagement lasted until 10p.m. A standing patrol from Two Platoon, commanded by Sgt Flutey, also made contact with a small VC party before withdrawing to the company base. It killed one VC. He was later found to be the commanding officer of the VC battalion, a lieutenant colonel.

The results of the contact were six VC killed, mostly within the arc of Pte Dalziel's M60, 11 weapons, four RPG grenades, four grenades and 80 lb of explosive recovered, with 12 drag marks where the VC had recovered their injured.

During the contact large rockets had been fired toward Long Binh and a search next day discovered a 107mm rocket in a firing position. It was destroyed.

The company suffered five wounded— Bdr Jackson, the assistant forward observer with One Platoon, Pte Cope, Pte Atkinson, Lcpl Douglas and Lcpl Taipeti. All except Lcpl Douglas were evacuated but, with the exception of Bdr Jackson, returned to the company before the end of the operation.

One small contact involved Two Platoon before the company returned to Nui Dat on March 24, and then spent two days at the Peter Badcoe Club in Vung Tau.

This was followed by a three-day operation with a Regional Force Platoon under command in the area of the Nui Nghe feature. Many old camps were found and an old cache containing 20 weapons. No enemy were sighted.

When this book went to press, W Company still had six months to serve in South Vietnam. It profited tremendously from the experience gained with 4 RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn.



"But I keep telling you, I am in contact."

The Sergeant

There are all types of this species; tall ones, small ones, fat ones, skinny ones.

He's often misused and always abused,

Sometimes dreaming, he's forever scheming.

Some call him mother? He's never a brother,

He is a devoted soldier, to what, we don't know,

'Cause when he's about our faces don't show.

Sometimes he'll order, seldom he'll ask,

And all the time his face is a mask.

For he is a diplomat of the highest order,

And at times can make Kiwi Keith

Look a little bit smaller.

Ask him a question, he'll evade with a lie,

But try it yourself and your heels will be high.

Then, at last, promotion is nigh,

Thank God for that

And we all heave a sigh!

But along comes a new one like a bull in a ring,

"Oh, come back to us sergeant,

Man, you were a king."

PTE M. C. COX



The company sergeant major, WO1 Hedley.



Platoon commander Of Three Platoon, 2Lt Knight-Willis (right) and 1st Lt Jacobs during APC training.



The command post at the Horseshoe, DC (left), Sgt Jenkins MFC (right).



M60 gunner Pte Ashdown does his ammunition.

From left, Pte Mason, Pte Copo and Pte Dalziel, all of One Platoon.

