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33
77

HISTORY OF THE TOCUAWAL TROOP - 20th LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT

When the Commonwealth Government decided to increase the Militia Forces in 1936, Lt. Col. J.C. Barrie, Commanding Officer of the 20th Light Horse Rgt. decided to establish a training centre in Tocumwal.

The first Parade was held on 14th November, 1936 when 36 men were enlisted from the Tocumwal, Finley, and Cobram districts. It was thereupon decided to establish a second Light Horse Troop at Finley.

Some two years later when the international situation was growing more serious and the Militia Forces were again increased to put them on a War Establishment two more Light Horse Troops were formed at Berrigan and Jerilderie.

This comprised a complete Light Horse Squadron and was commanded by a very distinguished soldier who had served in the "COVERING FORCE" at "THE LANDING" at Anzac and in France, Major G.J. (Nobby) Clarke, D.C.M. M.A. and D.R.

Tocumwal Troop went into its first annual Camp at Seymour in February 1937 at full strength and was selected to represent the 20th Rgt in the competition for the Hutton Trophy.

This famous Trophy was competed for annually by all Light Horse Rgts. in the 2nd Cavalry Division which was raised in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

After returning from Camp, training commenced in earnest and for two months members of the troop gave up every Sunday and many Saturdays to make themselves efficient. They were assisted to the utmost by the permanent regimental staff, particularly warrant Officer D. Roney of the Australian Instructional Corps.

On the 23rd May, 1937 Tocumwal Troop won the Hutton Trophy with a record score and two minutes under the allotted time.

The scores were as follows:

20th L.H.R. (Victoria)	411 points
9th " (Sth Australia)	337½ "
10th " (West-Aust)	314 "
22nd " (Tasmania)	306 "

On the 30th October 1937 a Military Gymkhana was held on the Tocumwal Recreation Reserve attended by many Light Horsemen from the surrounding districts. The Hutton Trophy was presented to Tocumwal Troop by the Commander of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade - Col. G. A. Street M.C. It is interesting to note that Col. Street was soon to become Minister for Defence in the Commonwealth Government.

In 1938 the Tocumwal Troop again competed for the Hutton Trophy and won it for the second time in succession on the 29th May.

On this occasion the scores were as follows:

20th L.H.R. (Victoria)	407 points
22nd L.H.R. (Tasmania)	356 "
9th L.H.R. (South Aust)	352 "
10th L.H.R. (west-Aust)	335 "

On the 17th July, 1939 the 20th L.H. Regt. was selected to provide the Light Horse Escort for the arrival of the new State Governor Sir Winston Dugan K.C.M.G. C.B. D.S.O. The total escort required 16 and of this number Tocumwal Troop provided one officer and 12 N.C.O's and Troopers. It was in fact virtually provided by the Tocumwal Troop. The Escort was very well spoken of. Extracts from one letter to the Tocumwal Press, from a Melbourne correspondent, read as follows:

.... " To congratulate the Tocumwal Troop on their wonderful performance as cavalry escort to the Governor of Victoria. We feel sure in the first place that all will agree it was a great honour for the Troop to be selected to act as escort, not to our minds and hundreds of others who saw their work here, they certainly proved themselves worthy of selection. They carried out the duties of escort in such a splendid manner and looked all over a well groomed and trained troop. This is not our opinion, only, as we could hear the remarks of many people along the route"

In addition to the normal routine of home training Parades and Camps, members of the Troop attended many competitions at local shows and sports and at regimental shoots at Seymour. Many fine trophies won by the troop are still on display in the R.S.L. Club rooms at Tocumwal.

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On the outbreak of War 2 the Troop went into Camp with the regiment at Nagambie Road, for one month. While in training there the Governor General, Lord Gowrie V.C. closely inspected the various units camped in the area, riding around all day on horseback. He watched the Tocumwal Troop at manoeuvres and through their troop leader thanked them for all that they had done to prepare for the defence of their country.

Early in 1940 the troop went into the big Brigade Camp at Torquay for three months. Most of the men were still hoping that they may get a chance to serve overseas as Mounted Cavalry as they would have liked to serve together if possible. Such was not to be. Soon after returning home from this camp, France fell and the majority of men in the troop enlisted for service in various units of the 2nd A.I.F.

However, the Militia units were still carried on for Home Defence Forces. With the progress of the war the 20th Light Horse Rgt. was mechanised and was known as the 20th Motor Regiment. Tocumwal Troop continued to serve but from this time was known by a number and not a name.

The 20th Motor Rgt. was now a unit in the Armoured Division.

Later on the 20th Motor Rgt. embarked for active service in Western New Guinea and was stationed there for 18 months.

As our forces advanced in the South West Pacific the 20th Rgt. was withdrawn to the Atherton Tableland. This was to prepare the unit to take part in the Bougainville campaign and it was now re-named the 20th Pioneer Battalion.

However, before the unit embarked the war ended. In due course the unit was demobilized.