



**A HISTORY OF**  
**8<sup>TH</sup>/13<sup>TH</sup> VICTORIAN**  
**MOUNTED RIFLES**  
**1948-1982**

**Jan Hunter      1982**  
**with Addendum      2023**



**Grant days 1948-1955**

**Centurion days  
1955-1959, 1966-  
1973**



**Ferret days 1959-1966**

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**Carrier days 1970-1990**



## PREFACE

This account of the 8th/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles Regiment (hereafter referred to as 8/13 VMR) in the Albury-Wodonga District has been written as the culmination of a history course with the Riverina College of Advanced Education. The primary aim of the project has been to acquaint students with the delights as well as the pitfalls of historical writing.

This history is brief and leaves untouched some area of interest. A more extensive work could be undertaken by an amateur or professional historian with a military background, gathering information still available from the World War I Light Horse men and the mechanised troops of the World War II, as well as long serving members of the unit since 1948. Any further work should delve into the role of the Cadre Staff and give due emphasis to the Squadrons at other centres, and the attached RAEME units. I regret these subjects have been beyond the scope of my assignment.

All history writing is selective and an oral history perhaps more so. Members of the Unit may not always agree with my interpretation of the recollections told to me, or with my omissions of many wonderful anecdotes. This is not a technical study, but accuracy has been my aim. If I have erred, I crave the Unit's forgiveness.

Jan Hunter  
Albury  
November 1982.

### Facilitator's Note:

There are histories of the antecedent regiments of the 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles but this document, prepared as a tertiary studies paper in 1982, is the only history of the post-WWII regiment. It drew upon many sources, few of whom are still with us today. Jan Hunter has kindly allowed the work to be published and have photographs from the regimental heritage collection held at the 8/13 VMR Museum, Simpson Barracks, added. An addendum has been included covering the period 1983-1991. The addendum includes Major Robert Morrison's account of his time as Officer Commanding 1988-1990.

Doug Hunter  
March 2023

## INTRODUCTION

This history of the Australian Army Reserve <sup>1</sup> in Albury-Wodonga is an account of the recollections and experiences of past and present members of the Unit.<sup>2</sup> The common strand that emerges is adaption to change. The role of the unit has been to respond to the changes of national defence policies which in turn have been influenced by the world political situation.

A brief introduction to the unit is followed by sections on the significant areas of conscription, the equipment and roles, the training programmes and the annual camps. The later problems of recruitment and retention have been the subject of much discussion, but throughout all the interviews the traditional links with past serving men have been evident.

In 1947 when the Australian Government proposed a five-year scheme of development for the Defence Force<sup>3</sup> a group of Reserve Officers in the Albury district volunteered their services.

**Officers of 8/13 VMR at Albury c.1950 including former WWII officers who offered their services for the newly raised regiment. Major Reg McDermott at left of group and Lieutenant Colonel Tom Fogarty at centre. Most had WWII service.**



Consequently, an Armoured Regiment, 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles, was raised on 1 May 1948 with Regimental Headquarters (RHQ)<sup>4</sup> and Headquarters Squadron at Carlton Melbourne; A Squadron (Sqn) at Albury; B Squadron at Wangaratta and Benalla and C Squadron at Sale.<sup>5</sup> The title, originally 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles), was changed to 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian

<sup>1</sup> Officially, Active Citizens' Military Forces known as CMF now generally known as "Army Reserve"

<sup>2</sup> "The unit" denotes the 8/13 VMR in its various stages. Also referred to as the "regiment" pre – 1976 (Nov) or "the squadron" 1976 onwards

<sup>3</sup> *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, Grolier Society of Australia, 1977 Ed.

<sup>4</sup> Army organisational chart included in appendix.

<sup>5</sup> C Squadron was transferred to Albury in 1952 and merged into A Squadron in 1960. RHQ was transferred to Wangaratta in 1955 and to Albury in 1972.

Mounted Rifles in 1949. In 1976 the Regiment became an Independent Cavalry Squadron.

The Commanding Officer (CO) of the Unit was Lieutenant Colonel T. Fogarty, an armoured man who had been part of a contingent which toured the Middle East and Italy late in World War II and who saw action in New Guinea. He was an imposing figure and a “great inspirer of men”.<sup>6</sup>



**Lieutenant Colonel Tom Fogarty was the first Commanding Officer of the 8/13 VMR.**

Almost seventy to eighty men paraded the first night in Albury and the varied wartime experience<sup>7</sup> of the initial group of officers is said to have given the Unit the “accuracy of the infantry and the dash of the armoured men.”<sup>8</sup>

Quite a few of the lower ranks had service experience, including John Neale, later Lieutenant Colonel ED who overstated his age to join the Navy during the war. Lieutenant Colonel Neale later became CO of the Regiment, as did another initial recruit T.I.A. (Alan) Cunningham (later Lieutenant Colonel).

Other officers included Reg McDermott, ex 2/8 Infantry Battalion; Bev McGeoch, ex 2/8 Infantry Battalion; Norman Whitehead, MC ex 2/6 Armoured Regiment; Louis Jackson, ex 2/8 Armoured Regiment; Robert Wiltshire, ex 2/8 Armoured Regiment; Ken Menzies, ex 2/8 Armoured Regiment. Victor Moulder, ex 2/2 MG Battalion.

The following men went on to fill commissioned and senior non-commissioned ranks in the regiment – Ron Braddy, Kevin Monte, Jack Larkin, Ian McKie, Mac Young, and George Atkinson.

<sup>6</sup> Major N. Whitehead MC RL

<sup>7</sup> Lieutenant J. Neale later Lieutenant Colonel J. A. Neale ED (Efficiency Decoration)

<sup>8</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE OSt.J

## PERMISSION TO WEAR EMU PLUMES BEHIND BADGE ON BERET

(Letter to author from Lieutenant Colonel Hibberd 1970)

*During camp 1955 (?) trials were conducted to ascertain if it would be possible and worthwhile to wear a small emu plume behind beret badge. As luck would have it, both G.O.C. Southern Comd (Gen Garret) and the G.G. (F/M Slim) were in favour of the move, so without further delay it was adopted, ably assisted by a party from Albury who bagged a few emus to get the effort off the ground.*

Extract of letter written 1970 by former CO LTCOL H Hibberd

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**Lieutenant Colonel Jim Allard**  
wearing plumes behind badge on  
beret. Lt Col Allard followed Lt Col  
Hibberd as CO 8/13 VMR in 1959

## HOME TRAINING

Report to the CO 1957....after a typical weekend bivouac.

*The weekend show went off quite well in spite of a chapter of incidents.*

*We started off from Albury and moved to Wodonga Rifle Range Road, however while leaving the Depot Yard a Ferret stopped suddenly and another ran into the back of him. The accident broke the brake discharge head lamp and rear view mirror off the left hand side of the rear vehicle the front vehicle was not damaged.*

*We arrived at the Rifle Range Road without further mishaps and started off over the hills on the two separate routes. However the troop on the left route had only gone about a mile when the generator panel burnt out so we had to return it to Albury and send another car back with it in case it stalled on the way. This left that troop with only one vehicle, so I had it join the troop on the right route and made it up to a 3 car troop.*

*We carried on the way until the escort vehicle returned from Albury and practised Blind Corner Drill, Defile Drill, Minefield Drill, Snake Patrol and Road Block Drill. After the escort vehicle joined us we carried out the same drills on the one route but kept passing one troop through the other.*

*I might point out that at that stage the E/T procedure and set handling was terrible and that only one RCO knew how to net a set in correctly.*

*We RV in the Indigo Valley and harboured there for the night. It was at this stage that the Saracen's batteries packed up and prevented us using its wireless and made it a tow start.*

*We worked out these mistakes on Saturday night and on Sunday the procedure improved out all knowledge and by Sunday lunch was quite good, as was the map reading.*

*We moved down the Indigo Valley to Barnawartha and as by now we were short of fuel direct to Wangaratta to refill and leave the Saracen. We left Wangaratta at about 1100hrs and moved north west on to the Wahgunyah sheet and practised map reading and wireless. The wireless went well until about 3 o'clock when two sets went off due to minor faults and as by now we had reached Rutherglen I decided to call the exercises off and move home by the Murray Valley Highway.*

*We arrived back at the Depot at 1645 hours.*

## TRAINING

At inception, “effective service” in the Army Reserve required weekly parades, usually one weekend a month and an annual camp of fourteen days. The legal obligation now is 26 days which must include a period of fourteen days continuous training.<sup>9</sup>

Parades are held at the local barracks, sometimes referred to as the drill hall or depot, and the 8/13 VMR barracks were named after campaigns in which the three affiliated units had seen service. In 1955/6, under the CO, Lieutenant Colonel H. Hibberd<sup>10</sup> the Albury property became Buna Barracks; Wangaratta became Beersheba Barracks and Benalla Romani Barracks. (Benalla was closed in the early 70s and re-opened again in 1981.) Salamaua Barracks at Cobram were taken over by 8/13 VMR in 1973.



**Vehicles departing Buna Barracks Albury for weekend training in the district. The drill hall built in 1900 was closed in 2000 and demolished 2004.**

In the past, parades were two hours, one night of the week, but this has now been increased to three hours. Drill, small arms, radio training, etc are taught and lecture, demonstrations and practical work all contribute to equipping a soldier with the required knowledge. Weekend bivouacs may consist of intensive training at the depot, a field exercise or courses at Puckapunyal.<sup>11</sup>

For many years wages have been paid to those serving in the Army Reserve. The rate was, for a long time, very low and the yearly cheque was looked upon as a Christmas bonus.<sup>12</sup> Army Reserve involvement was often the result of strong conviction, but also became an all absorbing hobby for many. The many hours of voluntary labour probably explain the high levels of efficiency reached in certain areas. During the early sixties a sizable number of White Scout cars were painted in camouflage patterns – biscuit coloured paint applied from fly spray pumps made the khaki vehicles blend well with the light and shade under a gum tree in the bush.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> One night parade is counted as ½ day’s service.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Hibberd 1970

<sup>11</sup> See list of skills on recruiting forms in Appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>13</sup> Captain P. Hartung

Private vehicles, with the addition of a wireless set, were used on weekends when army transport was not available. Instructors often worked every night to prepare lesson plans and instructional aids, teaching equipment being in very short supply. Any soldier who wanted promotion spent many weekends on courses at the depot or at Puckapunyal in addition to his normal involvement.<sup>14</sup>

Of interest is the fact that the first migrant volunteer joined in 1958. Trooper Hartung (later Captain) had been in the Panzer (tank) Division of the German Army and his experience of tank warfare was a useful adjunct to practical training.<sup>15</sup>



**White Scout Cars camouflaged using 'fly-spray' pattern. The Whites were WWII vintage vehicles but were reliable, easily maintained and had a good cross-country performance. They were popular training vehicles in 1960s.**

A Classroom Instructional Model (CIM) of a Centurion tank at the depot was used to train gunners but caused some public relations problems when nearby residents found spent bullets in their yards. (Some members allege this only happened when the police were practicing target training).



**Warrant Officer Bill Woolford, ex Royal Marines, and Sergeant Peter Hartung ex Panzer Corps, both served in 8/13 VMR in 1960s.**

Early photos show troops ready for a bivouac in the snow and a similar exercise was carried out at Mt Buffalo in July 1978. The aim of the weekend was to gain experience in the prevention, recognition and treatment of hypothermia, and to practice general adaptive skills.<sup>16</sup> Survival exercises in the bush have also included living off the land and the galah is not recommended as regular cuisine.<sup>17</sup>

Over the years practical training has taken place in the local area. Map reading and compass work has been practiced along the Nail Can Hill range, and Friday night trips to Jindera, Mungabareena and Bowna in

<sup>14</sup> WO2 E. Roberts

<sup>15</sup> *Border Morning Mail* report

<sup>16</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>17</sup> Captain P. Hartung

Ferrets and Landrovers helped with reconnaissance training. The mobility of these vehicles had an advantage over the more cumbersome APCs. <sup>18</sup>

In 1964 Lieutenant Colonel M. Fairless, as 2IC of the Regiment spoke to groups of professional men in the district. As a result an Officer Training Cell was set up where accelerated training produced a group of officers whose civilian expertise was useful to the Unit. <sup>19</sup>

Officer candidates now transfer to Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) in Melbourne for eighteen months or join the Monash University Regiment. Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOS) take a fourteen day camp at Puckapunyal, as well as qualifying in technical subjects.

During the conflict in Vietnam, Army Reserve Officers were attached to the Australian Task Force there for short periods, to gain experience in counter-revolutionary warfare. Lieutenant Colonel Fairless, Major Neale (later Lieutenant Colonel), Captains D. Short (Later Major), M Hough (later Lieutenant Colonel) and Lieutenant G. Cole (later Major) all had fifteen-day tours of duty and their pooled experience was helpful to unit training <sup>20</sup>

The Regular Army has provided full time staff (known as the Cadre staff) since the inception of the unit and the relationship between the fulltime and volunteer soldiers has been generally good. The early Cadre staff consisted of two or three men at each depot, but this has increased at Albury over the years where there is now a staff of



**Cadre staff members Captain Dennis Cameron and Warrant Officer Ted Beasley advising Lieutenant Colonel Doug Hunter during training exercise 1984.**

ten full time soldiers, a permanent typist and one cleaner. The task of the Cadre is to conduct the day to day running of the Unit and to monitor the standard of training. Although the early Cadre staff did not do as much instructional work as in later years,<sup>21</sup> posting to a Reserve Unit carried a heavier workload than with a regular unit. Most officers value the range of experience gained in a Reserve Unit.

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<sup>18</sup> Major I. Docking

<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant K. Higginson

<sup>20</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Fairless, letter 1970

<sup>21</sup> Captain N. Cognet



**Private Teresa Roach at the wheel  
of a Land Rover during exercise,  
1984.**

One aspect of training that many had misgivings about was the acceptance of women soldiers but this was accomplished with a minimum of fuss. Although women cannot be trained to carry weapons, they capably do the tasks allotted them mainly in the orderly room, the Q store and as drivers. Women in 4 Troop (Light Horse) are used as instructors and must be competent riders and recruit trained. They are not allowed to ride in traditional ceremonies.

#### **SENIOR CADRE STAFF**

Cadre staff were fundamental to the running of the regiment providing a full time administrative, training, and logistical presence at all depots.

Adjutant/Training Officers were:

Captain F Duncan

Captain G Ayre 2.7.68

Captain MC Gardner 1.4.53

Captain PM Coleman 14.10.70

Captain R Joshua 19.6.57

Captain JD Levens 14.11.72

Captain NW Butler 14.7.60

Captain WD Burgher 14.8.74

Major DJ Duff 9.61

Captain GR Dickens 13.12.76

Captain RJ Ferrier 4.63

Captain PJ O'Brien 4.12.78

Captain JW McEnerney 4.65

Captain NJ Cognet 27.10.80

Captain TH Arrowsmith 4.7.61

## CONSCRIPTION

Military conscription, called National Service, was re-introduced in Australia in 1950<sup>22</sup> All young men of eighteen years were required to do a basic course of ninety days full time training, with a further two years part time in Army Reserve Units.<sup>23</sup> The injection of such a large number of soldiers into the voluntary system taxed every resource of the unit here. Parades had to be held twice weekly to accommodate the numbers,<sup>24</sup> and a shortage of instructors<sup>25</sup> meant that training was not always at a satisfactory level. One National Serviceman recalls being marched around the block, held for half an hour, then marched back again to fill in time.<sup>26</sup> Equipment was World War II cast offs.<sup>27</sup> Camps required a great deal of organisation and activity plans were drawn up every night to ensure that at the first sight of the purple pennant fluttering from the CO's Jeep, every soldier was fully occupied<sup>28</sup> In the early years it was felt that existing officers were held back in their own promotional course.<sup>29</sup> The general consensus is that most National Service soldiers worked well and showed a satisfactory level of enthusiasm, many fulfilling more than the required obligations. However, all types had been selected for training and the unit had to spend valuable time dealing with a few recalcitrants and chasing up those absent from obligatory parades.<sup>30</sup>



**Two young Wodonga men, Troopers Jackson and Hore, completing their 98 days continuous training in 20<sup>th</sup> National Service Training Battalion at Puckapunyal. They emerged as qualified Centurion tank crewmen and were posted to 8/13 VMR to complete a further two years' service.**

Selection by ballot was introduced in 1957<sup>31</sup> reducing the numbers coming into the unit and the scheme was disbanded in 1960. The government had reached the "inescapable conclusion...that there must be a major re-organisation of the Army to enable it to concentrate on the provision and equipment of the type of forces required by the strategic situation and that some present Army commitments must

<sup>22</sup> Announced by Mr Harold Holt, Minister for Labour and National Service, quoted in *Modern Australian Documents Vol. II 1930-1970*, F. K. Crowley, Melbourne 1973.

<sup>23</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>24</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE, OSt.J

<sup>25</sup> Sgt B. Bullock

<sup>26</sup> Lieutenant Colonel T.A.I. (Known and referred to as Alan) Cunningham

<sup>27</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE, OSt.J

<sup>28</sup> Letter, Lieutenant Colonel H. Hibberd 1970.

<sup>29</sup> Major N.Whitehead, MC, RL; Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>30</sup> *Modern Australian Documents, ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid* p. 391

be reduced.”<sup>32</sup> However by 1964 Sir Robert Menzies saw a “deterioration in our strategic position...as a result of recent Indonesian policies...and the growth of Communist influence and armed activity in Laos and South Vietnam”<sup>33</sup> Conscription was re-introduced for selected twenty year-olds with overseas service mandatory if necessary. Exemption was granted under certain conditions, and many chose six years in the Army Reserve as an alternative to two years full time service. A large number of these soldiers were unhappy with the system and did not contribute positively to the unit.<sup>34</sup> However as National Servicemen returned from Vietnam in the seventies some joined the Reserve and their experience proved very helpful to training.<sup>35</sup>

The end of the National Service in 1960 left large gaps in the ranks of trained soldiers. Although the majority of these had co-operated well in the unit most left when their obligations were discharged. An estimated 20% had stayed with the unit and at the end of 1958 camp only three or four soldiers stayed on out of a National Service platoon of 40.<sup>36</sup> One of these men, Trooper D. Hunter (later Major) became Officer Commanding (OC) the Independent Squadron in 1976.



**Trainee Centurion drivers Colin Hore (closest camera), Kerry McLure, Jim Black, John McGrath and unknown, hard at it at Armoured School Puckapunyal 1956. All served out their two years CMF in 8/13 VMR.**

The change of Government in 1972 affected the unit dramatically. All National Servicemen received a letter stating their obligations had ceased. Most took this to mean that it was no longer possible for them to fulfil their commitment and abruptly terminated their association with the unit, thus, as well as a loss of manpower, much equipment was never recovered.<sup>37</sup>

Whatever the initial reaction to conscription most participants felt the period of 90 days training (reduced to 78 days in 1958) was a time of personal gain – former officers still meet soldiers who express their enjoyment and gratitude for the training received.<sup>38</sup> Mothers and employers appreciated the maturity of the young men after their enforced stay in the services.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* P 469 Sir Robert Menzies

<sup>33</sup> Major G. Cole

<sup>34</sup> Major G. Cole

<sup>35</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>36</sup> Lieutenant Colonel J. Neale ED

<sup>37</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>38</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE OSt J.; Major N. Whitehead MC RL

<sup>39</sup> Major N. Whitehead MC RL

## EQUIPMENT AND ROLES

As an armoured unit, 8/13 VMR was equipped with General Grant tanks<sup>40</sup> of World War II vintage with low mileage but deteriorating electrical systems owing to the storage period.<sup>41</sup> The batteries were regularly flat, so the tanks were winched out of the hangars by a 4x4 Chevrolet Blitz truck and tow started. These starting difficulties meant that much of the annual camp time was spent in mobilizing the vehicles. At the final camp parade faulty tanks<sup>42</sup> were placed in front of those that were reliable so push starts would have every vehicle moving.

Any weekend training outside of the barracks required council permission. Although the tracks were rubberized, sharp turns would tear up the bitumen roads.<sup>43</sup> Some training was done at the Albury Aerodrome and at Gerogery. Movement of tanks to any exercise at Bandiana or the gunnery range at Bonegilla used the NSW route over the Hume Weir wall because the Lincoln Causeway bridges were not strong enough to withstand the weight of the tanks. On one occasion permission from the Albury and Wodonga Council was obtained for the tanks to be displayed at the Wodonga Show. This caused great interest at the Show and had the Unit been recruiting ten-year-old boys two hundred could have been enlisted that day. It later transpired that the local Council had no authority to give the permission they did and the matter was ultimately raised in Parliament.<sup>44</sup>



**General Grant tanks were in plentiful supply following World War Two. The whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Brigade which included 4/19 PWLH and 8/13 VMR, was able to go to camp at the one time. While this allowed higher level training, the poor condition of the tanks meant much time was lost to breakdowns.**

To avoid traffic interruption tanks were always despatched at ten minute intervals. On a Sunday, movement was planned to avoid church service times. The planners once, however, forgot about Sunday School and a local minister was in the middle of his story when every pupil rushed outside to see the Grant go past. Order

<sup>40</sup> Photos and description of all vehicles used are included in the Appendix

<sup>41</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham ED

<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham E

<sup>43</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE OSt J

<sup>44</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE OSt.J

was just restored when a second vehicle caused another exodus. He abandoned the task when the same thing happened a third time.<sup>45</sup>

The change from Grants to Centurion tanks in 1956 equipped the Unit with



**Centurion tank entered service with 8/13 VMR in 1955 replacing the antiquated Grant. Crewmen were primarily National Servicemen trained at the Armoured School Puckapunyal. Limited numbers of training tanks meant the regiment could only go to camp in squadron packets.**

up-to-date vehicles. However, a reduction in the number allocated to the Reserve meant that brigade<sup>46</sup> camps were no longer possible. The unit would henceforth go to tank camps by squadrons.

At the end of the fifties the role of the unit was changed to that of Reconnaissance and the Squadrons were equipped with Scout Cars and a Saracen Command Vehicle (for the CO) in lieu of tanks. World events had altered the concept of defence and the British difficulties in Asia gave impetus to counter-revolutionary training. The Reconnaissance Regiment benefitted by the experience of English officers from Malaya who attended camps in an advisory capacity.<sup>47</sup>

1962 saw the role of the unit change again, this time to an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Regiment. The task of the APC is to transport the infantry, but this function was never practiced at this time by the 8/13 VMR. The Australian Army possessed few genuine AOC vehicles, so the unit was equipped with White Scout cars and Humber one-ton trucks. Considerable skill in convoy driving and cross-country manoeuvring in battle formation was achieved but the vehicles were not suitable for the realistic carriage of infantry.<sup>48</sup>

Six weeks before annual camp in 1966, Centurion tanks were re-introduced to the unit. Again, the world scene, now in Vietnam, influenced the training philosophy. There was enormous effort put into training or refreshing key instructors

<sup>45</sup> Major R. McDermott MBE OSt.J

<sup>46</sup> "Brigade" See organisational chart in Appendix

<sup>47</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>48</sup> Major D. Hunter

and organising the unit for camp. A letter of commendation was received from the Commander of 3 Division after this effort <sup>49</sup>

After camp intensive training continued with emphasis on close country warfare. One officer recalled spending twenty-seven consecutive weekends training, but he also commented that the camaraderie engendered by the concerted effort was of great benefit to the Unit.<sup>50</sup>

In 1970 the Unit reverted to its previous role as an APC Regiment. This time, however, it was equipped with M113 APCs which made the carriage of infantry possible. The unit trained with infantry on bivouacs and at Task Force Camps in 1970, 1971 and 1972.

The role was again changed in 1973, this time to the new role devised in Vietnam for light armoured forces, that of cavalry. Cavalry tactics were based on a troop consisting of two light reconnaissance vehicles<sup>51</sup> supported by two Fire Support Vehicles (light tanks) (FSV) and an APC carrying a section of assault troopers. This new role was a very versatile one, but unit training was hampered by a lack of FSVs (these were eventually delivered in 1981) and a lack of numbers which precluded the training of assault troopers. (These were first trained and employed in 1977.<sup>52</sup>)



**Assault troopers dismounting from an M113 Carrier during exercise c.1970. The versatile M113 fulfilled both APC and Reconnaissance roles.**



**Humber 1 ton truck lightly camouflaged during exercise at Puckapunyal c.1965. Humber trucks together with Whites APCs were used in an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) role.**

The cavalry role continued till 1975 when, in line with all reserve armoured units, the role changed to reconnaissance again. It has remained unchanged to the present time.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Letter Lieutenant Colonel M. Fairless

<sup>50</sup> Major G. Cole

<sup>51</sup> Mechanised infantry with an assortment of heavy weapons trained to fight on foot in conjunction with the armoured vehicles.

<sup>52</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>53</sup> Major D. Hunter

## ATOMIC BOMB AT MARALINGA

(Letter to author from Lieutenant Colonel Hibberd 1970 )

During Sept 1956 I was fortunate in being selected to be amongst many officers from UK, Canada & NZ and Aust to witness the first Atom Bomb exploded on mainland Aust at Maralinga.

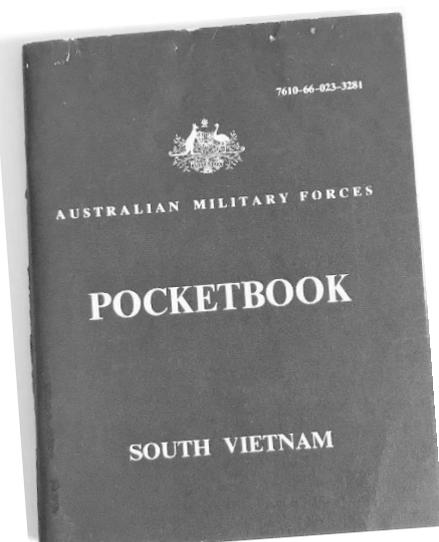
The expected stay of 3-4 days turned into a stay of 33 days, due to unfavourable weather. However time was well spent with lectures and working parties conducted

(by the

Extract letter written in 1970 from LTCOL H Hibberd  
CO 1955-1958.

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*The expected stay of 3-4 days turned into a stay of 33 days, due to unfavourable weather. However the time was well spent with lectures and working parties conducted [by the British].*



**Handbook issued to 8/13 VMR officers who were attached to RAAC units during an observer tour to South Vietnam.**

## CAMPS

The annual camp is the culmination of the year's training and should be the practical application of the theoretical work learned at the Drill Hall and on weekend bivouacs.

The tank camps were held at Puckapunyal or Wangaratta with exercises into the surrounding area of Yea, Rushworth and Echuca. An early brigade camp saw a Grant tank battle between 4<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Prince of Wales's Light Horse (4/19 PWLH)<sup>54</sup> and 8/13 VMR literally bog down after heavy rains. Nearly every vehicle was immobilised, and much effort was needed to recover them. Later a bogged tank was mistakenly identified as a target and was wrecked by an anti-tank platoon.<sup>55</sup> (The authorities were not amused.) The notorious weather in the Puckapunyal area caused many delays – photos show bogged vehicles, and one crew was stranded for 14 hours on the wrong side of a swollen creek.<sup>56</sup>



**Crew working hard to extricate White Scout Car bogged on Puckapunyal Range during camp c.1960.**

Those involved with the Centurion in the sixties all recall the physically demanding effort to keep the tanks operational. The vehicles were old and maintenance was a constant problem.<sup>57</sup> Hours were spent cleaning the air filters



**Centurion crewmen Milan Brndusic and Don Ross lifting engine covers on Centurion tank to carry out maintenance.**

which first of all required two men to lift the hatches, (it was an offence for one man to do this) while a third man traversed the gun. If the tracks were slack it was heavy job with sledge hammer and crowbar to remove a link.<sup>58</sup> Once, during these years a crew commander was unable to get his tank out of workshops for the fourteen days of camp, but these types of difficulties did result in a high level of mechanical expertise.<sup>59</sup>

During exercises tanks moved out at first light and harboured after dark. By the

<sup>54</sup> Another regiment of the Brigade, HQ at Melbourne

<sup>55</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham

<sup>56</sup> Lieutenant K. Higginson

<sup>57</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>58</sup> Lieutenant K. Higginson, Major D. Hunter, WO2 E. Roberts

<sup>59</sup> Major G. Cole

time daily maintenance was done everyone was usually dropping from exhaustion.<sup>60</sup> It was not surprising that early one morning a guard fell asleep, and the crews only awoke when the car lights of the Cadre staff appeared along the road. First parade maintenance was accomplished in record time and the men were amazingly in position ready to move at the appointed time.<sup>61</sup>

The tanks were issued by the Armoured Centre in less than perfect condition but had to be returned ready for “white glove” inspection.<sup>62</sup> The last few days of camp were particularly pressurised as the four-man crew worked valiantly to have every tool in its place and everything clean and operational. A close watch on the

“borrowing” of tools or equipment between the tanks was necessary – the cost of any missing item was docked from the soldier’s pay.<sup>63</sup>



**Centurion at the tank wash being prepared to be handed back at end of camp in ‘white-glove’ condition.**

A task force camp<sup>64</sup> at Jamieson (near Eildon) in 1964 gave the Regiment an



**Alister Barrie standing beside Squadron Headquarter’s Armoured Command Vehicle (ACV) on exercise ‘Marathon Run’ near Ivanhoe, 1978.**

opportunity to train in mountainous country, with a Commando Company and 4/19 PWLH being the “enemy”. Three Infantry Battalions, two Artillery Regiments and 8/13 VMR were the friendly force. The first week was taken up with unit level manoeuvres and the second with Task Force exercises. Working with helicopters was a new experience for the unit, although the aircraft spent much time ferrying water to infantry men who collapsed due to the terrain and heat. Again long hours, meals on the run and bad climatic conditions left many men exhausted. Two relatively minor accidents were attributed to fatigue and a twelve hour rest period was called. The regiment acquitted itself very well in the field and gained the commendation of the

<sup>60</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>61</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>62</sup> WO2 E. Roberts, Lieutenant K. Higginson

<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant K. Higginson

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix for Organisational Chart

Task Force Commander who found 8/13 VMR the 'only unit who could be relied upon to be in the right place at the right time and who stayed in constant radio contact...' <sup>65</sup> Navy jets provided realistic air defence training as they flew sorties against the mechanised convoys. <sup>66</sup>

At a more recent camp 8/13 VMR joined with 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment, a Regular Army unit, at Ivanhoe, southern NSW, in an exercise titled "Marathon Run". Emphasis was on reconnaissance activities as seen in the concept of the defence of continental Australia. Nine helicopters worked in conjunction with the ground forces. <sup>67</sup> Other camps have been at Hattah in Sunset Country (South West Victoria) and more recently in the local districts bounded by Cobram, Balranald, Hay, Narrandera, Urana and Albury.

Incidents from camp are always remembered. After thirty years one former soldier recalls the troop which drew a day's rations, went bush and ate the lot at lunch. The Squadron OC had to scour the nearby country towns for bread for breakfast. <sup>68</sup>

The "enemy" also went hungry once. An 8/13 VMR truck broke down at an intersection, effectively blocking the supplies coming through for 4/19 PWLH. Being unable to repair or shift the vehicle (or unwilling?) victory was conceded to 8/13<sup>th</sup>. <sup>69</sup>

A parade through the main street of Echuca with the Grants caused some embarrassment. To "salute" an official party a tank's gun is turned at right angles and dipped in the direction of the dais. The first tank to salute decapitated the marble statue in the middle of the nature strip <sup>70</sup>.

A story is told of the rivalry between the regiments resulting in the successful capture of the 4/19 PWLH Regimental Trophy – a saddle. Retaliation was swift the Brigadier Hammer's sheepskin vest was seen flying from a flagpole. <sup>71</sup>

In later years when local runner, Merv Lincoln, was attempting a four minute mile, permission was given to listen to the description on the radios. After the sets were tuned to the correct frequency a radio instructor made a final adjustment and completely lost contact for the duration of the race. <sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham, Major D. Hunter, Captain R. Ohlin

<sup>66</sup> Major D. Hunter

<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant L. Shefford

<sup>68</sup> ? Alan Young

<sup>69</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham ED

<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant G. Atkinson

<sup>71</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham ED

<sup>72</sup> Captain R. Ohlin

## CAMP SCENES



**Camp 'Run-a-muck' Puckapunyal c.1972  
Clockwise from above: Tent lines; Shower  
Point; Wash Point; Latrines.**



**Meal times on Puckapunyal training range. Crews prepared  
their own meals from ration packs**

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTIION

During the early days of the unit a Cadet Troop was attached to the regiment. The enlistment age was fifteen or sixteen and when a cadet turned eighteen, he joined the regiment proper. The Cadet Unit was to be a source of personnel to supplement the volunteers.<sup>73</sup> The cadets were trained as part of the unit although as a separate



**Cadet Bullock standing beside two troopers of 8/13 VMR c.1950**

entity. They had separate sleeping accommodation and were not allowed in the messes.<sup>74</sup> At camp time they were deployed in useful positions although not allowed to get into a tank. One camp exercise was “won” by 8/13 VMR through the judicious use of cadets posted in trees over the road. Although not strictly legal the ploy worked, with the enemy being taken quite unawares.<sup>75</sup> The Cadet Troop seems to have been phased out when National Service began.

At the end of National Service the decline in numbers became a cause for concern and recruitment efforts were stepped up. During the seventies “Open Days” were held with members of the public being able to watch displays of skills and weapons and to meet members of the unit. Large numbers of people attended Open Days and in 1980 it is

estimated that 5000 people passed through the gates of the Victoria Street Barracks. Some enlistments always followed these days.<sup>76</sup>

Displays have been held at local events<sup>77</sup> and recruit teams, usually led by an officer or senior NCO have spent many hours handing out recruiting literature.

Despite this effort the unit continued to lose almost the same number of soldiers as it recruited. Often the losses were from higher ranks. It is of interest also that the Army Reserve consistently loses men to the Regular Army. In 1982 that number is 15.<sup>78</sup> Varying opinions are offered as to the reason for the difficulties in maintaining and building up numbers.

<sup>73</sup> Major R. McDermott, MBE, OSt.J

<sup>74</sup> Social quarters for soldiers

<sup>75</sup> Major N. Whitehead

<sup>76</sup> Major G. Cole

<sup>77</sup> WO2 E. Roberts

<sup>78</sup> Official figure

It seems that heavy business commitments are not compatible with the time needed to maintain a leadership role in the Army Reserve.<sup>79</sup> Most men also speak of the wives' difficulties in accepting the number of weekends spent away from



**Recruiting stand in Dean Street Albury arranged and manned by 8/13 VMR c.1972. Reserve Units were expected to do their own recruiting and recruit trailing.**

home, not helped by the many delays experienced in “knocking off” at the end of bivouacs.<sup>80</sup> It is a standing joke that weekend parades always seem to be scheduled for Mothers' Day and usually Fathers' Day as well.

Lack of interesting training is also cited as a reason for wastage. The high level of activity at recruit or annual camp is not always sustained and longer hours in the lecture room, with fewer practical exercises lead to boredom or frustration.

One attempt to build up unit numbers was the raising of a Special Conditions Squadron in 1975. The requirement was two camps a year only – this was seen to be particularly helpful to country members. However, the squadron was abandoned after a short time.<sup>81</sup>

Under a national directive an Employer Support Group was set up about 1979 with a local committee in Albury consisting of members of the community and a member of the unit.<sup>82</sup> The aim was to secure support of employers so that employees could attend camps and courses without detriment to their employment position. It also was to act as a liaison between the unit and the business community. (Commonwealth and State public



**Recruiting advertising in shopfront Dean Street Albury c.1972. Retailers offered window space free during recruiting campaign.**

<sup>79</sup> Opinions in this section are the writer's gained from comments of those interviewed.

<sup>80</sup> Major I. Docking, WO2 E. Roberts

<sup>81</sup> Major D. Hunter, *Sabre Magazine* 1975

<sup>82</sup> Local committee consisted of representatives of Trades Hall Council; Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers; Managing Director, Community Leader of military background; 8/13/VMR.

servants are by law allowed four weeks full paid time off each year.) All large business were circulated with information concerning the Army Reserve and those who signed a policy statement were presented with a certificate for display.<sup>83</sup>

In the early seventies the first woman officer joined the ranks of 8/13 VMR, but as a member of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) Over the years the number has steadily increased. In 1981 women were admitted to the Armoured Corp and the unit now has a full complement of thirty women and a waiting list.

Some feel that the decline in numbers could be due to the fact that financial restriction have led to cut backs in field training and also that a lack of officers mean that instructional training is not kept at full pitch. The loss of officers has been significant. There were 29-32 officers from 1965-1970 but by the end of 1979 the unit was down to seven.

Two volunteers from the early sixties, however, have come up through the ranks to the position of OC, Major G. Cole, who was OC 1980-82 and Major I Docking who took over as OC of the squadron in 1982.

However, the rate of pay has risen significantly in recently years and one hundred days can be accrued. To reach this level a soldier would have to attend two camps of fourteen days, plus 25 weekends and weekly parades. There are not many men who can maintain anything like this level of involvement thus raising the question as to whether part time units can ever function in the way most would like.



**Troopers from 8/13 VMR demonstrating the Browning Machine Gun to interest potential recruits. Often, they attracted many who were interested but under the target age.**

“Digger for a Day” was the most successful recruiting campaign the unit has held. Taking advantage of a national advertising campaign late in 1981 the unit issued a general invitation to take part in realistic exercises showing the various aspects of Army Reserve life.<sup>84</sup> Over 200 suitable recruit prospects responded. It was a valuable logistics exercise for the unit requiring a great deal of planning without knowing how many would take part. The result was 28 enlistments.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix

<sup>84</sup> Major G. Cole, WO2 E. Roberts

<sup>85</sup> Captain N. Coggett

Of significance to the 8/13 VMR has been the Millar Report, released in 1974.<sup>86</sup> This “Committee of Inquiry into the Citizens Military Forces” recommended changes that would build up a concept of a “Total Force” and a rationalisation of resources to make the Army Reserve more efficient. As a result of reorganisation taken by 3<sup>rd</sup> Division the 8/13 VMR Regiment became an Independent Squadron at the end of Lieutenant Colonel Neale’s time of command (1976).

The change in status was seen by most as a direct result of the Millar Report. Although the Committee had written that any changes made did not “represent a down-grading or an up-grading of any group, but rather a rearrangement to take account of present realities...”<sup>87</sup> the general consensus of the unit seems to be one of disappointment as much of the squadron activity had been geared to building up to regimental strength again.

To this end Lieutenant Colonel Hough was appointed as CO Designate in 1980, his task being to guide the squadron back to regimental strength. His transfer out of the area in 1982 left the position vacant and it has not been filled. The unit is still twenty soldiers short of the required strength to commence action for return to regimental status.<sup>88</sup>



**Group photograph of 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles taken at Puckapunyal at completion of Annual Camp 1974**

<sup>86</sup> Major G. Cole

<sup>87</sup> Committee of Inquiry into the CMF Report March 1974

<sup>88</sup> Major D. Hunter

## TRADITIONAL LINKS IN A MODERN SETTING

Throughout the unit's history traditional service links<sup>89</sup> have been maintained. An affiliation with 8<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Irish Hussars( 8KRIH) was greatly strengthened by the visit in 1954 of the Commander in Chief, H.R.H. Prince Philip who met members from the regiment<sup>90</sup>.The 8/13 VMR made a gift to the Hussars, a silver cigarette case in a kangaroo skin pouch.<sup>91</sup> A recording, with a message of thanks and items by the Hussars' band and choir, was received by 8/13 VMR the following year. The CO Lieutenant Colonel de Claremont spoke of the "friendship and goodwill" between the regiments. On the reverse of this message, from the Hussars<sup>92</sup> at their posting in Germany, are speeches of friendship from Lieutenant Colonel Hibberd, the CO 8/13 VMR at the time, and the first CO of 8/13 VMR, Lieutenant Colonel T. Fogarty. Later a shako<sup>93</sup> was sent out for the 8/13 VMR Regiment's Mess.



**Crimean War Busby  
presented by 8 KRIH to  
8/13 VMR c. 1950  
Now on display at 8/13  
VMR Museum Simpson  
Barracks.**

In 1982 six members of the 8/13 VMR<sup>94</sup> visited the 14<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars (14/20 KH), (another affiliated regiment, at their NATO posting in Germany, in response to an invitation from that regiment to attend the presentation of the Guidon<sup>95</sup> by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Anne, Mrs. Mark Phillips, G.V.C.O., Colonel-in-Chief. The 14/20 KH were delighted that such a contingent, including other ranks and one member of the Cadre staff attended at their own expense and the 8/13 VMR men were accorded the honour of taking part in the March Past. This was somewhat difficult for Lieutenant Morrison who was filming a video of the presentation and had to hastily leave his camera in the hands of an Old Comrade.<sup>96</sup>

A copy of this video was left with the Hussars who had omitted to arrange any filming of the historic proceedings, as well as the gift of an inscribed silver tray and a slouch hat, complete with emu plumes, from the Australian visitors. The Commanding Officer of the 14/20 KH ordered that the hat be worn by the Duty Officer, a gracious gesture from a regiment whose history dates

<sup>89</sup> See Lineage Affiliations in Appendix

<sup>90</sup> Colonel H. Hibberd, letter 1970

<sup>91</sup> Major N. Whitehead MC RL

<sup>92</sup> This recording is in the museum at the Albury Officers' Mess.

<sup>93</sup> Headgear similar to a busby

<sup>94</sup> Lieutenant R. Morrison, Captain T. Fraser, Sgt H. Wilson, Albury, Cpl Walch, Benalla, LCPL McMullen Wangaratta, Trooper Moscrop, Cobram

<sup>95</sup> A banner

<sup>96</sup> Former member of the 14/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars

back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The building used by the Officers' Mess of 14/20 KH was built in 1900 and is part of Hohne Camp (Hohne Lager) which was the headquarters of Hitler's Panzer Division.<sup>97</sup>

The raising of a ceremonial mounted troop at the Independent Squadron of 8/13 VMR at Albury in March 1981 re-established traditions begun in 1885 when Colonel Tom Price raised the Victorian Mounted Rifles from the existing Victorian Mounted Units. The slouch hat, with the clutch of emu feathers behind the badge,<sup>98</sup> worn by the troop is the same as that introduced by Colonel Price when the regiment was granted £1.0.0 per annum for each effective member and the men paraded without pay.<sup>99</sup>

In May 1979 a meeting was held<sup>100</sup> to gauge the interest in and feasibility of the Light Horse Troop in Albury. As a result two men paraded as a Light Horse officer and corporal at the Upper Murray Stock Horse Association Stampede in Wodonga. Subsequently the Victorian Mounted Rifles Equestrian Club was formed, its members being from the unit and the Military Historical Society. Equipment was privately owned as were the horses. Invaluable advice and assistance with drill came from Lieutenant Des Martin, a former member of the 8<sup>th</sup> (Indi) Light Horse and Major N. Whitehead, MC ED formerly of the 21<sup>st</sup> (Riverina) Light Horse. As a club the group took part in the Anzac and Australia Day celebrations as well as the Beersheba Parade<sup>101</sup> in Melbourne in 1980. The Uiver weekend at Albury in that year also provided an opportunity for the public to see Light Horse tactics old and new when the club gave an exhibition in conjunction with the M113s from the squadron. Under Major G. Cole permission was given to raise a troop as part of the Independent Sqn with a limit of twenty members. The troop is currently able to equip fourteen soldiers. All members must be from the Albury squadron and have undergone basic recruit training. Ability to ride is not a requirement but a keen interest in horses is essential. The



**Captains T Fraser and R Morrison speaking to HRH Princess Anne in Germany, 1982.**

<sup>97</sup> Brochure 14/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars

<sup>98</sup> Authorised for the Australian Light Horse by General Order in 1903

<sup>99</sup> VMR historical papers

<sup>100</sup> Those present on 14/5/79 were Lieutenant Des Martin; Albury RSL representative Major N. Whitehead MC RL; WO1 C. La Motte, Curator Museum Bandiana; Mr D. Campbell, Military Historical Society, Lieutenant R. Morrison 8/13 VMR VMR

<sup>101</sup> Held by 4/19 PWLH and 8/13 VMR to commemorate the Light Horse charge at Beersheba Sinai Peninsula, 1917.

considerable cost of purchasing and maintaining a horse hinders membership of the troop.<sup>102</sup>

The difficulties experienced in obtaining equipment and training instruction sheets have been gradually overcome. Original Light Horse papers have been forthcoming from the general public and the Military Historical Society has provided a great deal of help in procuring equipment. A most generous donation of £1000 from Miss Myra Bowman of Wodonga enabled the purchase of uniforms from disposal stores. The Army found original Light Horse groundsheet in a store at



**8/13 VMR Heritage Troop escorting Governor General Sir Zelman Cowan on a visit to Bandiana, 1981.**

Perth and issued 1914 .303 rifles from 31 Supply Battalion, Bandiana.<sup>103</sup> The initial mixed reaction from the Unit has become one of acceptance and the Army now supplies rations and training time. Members of the troop exceeded 100 days training during 1981/82. The first camp for the troop was at Cobram where the tactical exercises carried out strengthened a contention that horse mounted soldiers could have a valuable role to play in the modern army as a reconnaissance troop. The report of that camp was forwarded to

NORFORCE<sup>104</sup> at Darwin for their perusal in connection with coastal defence.

The RAAOC<sup>105</sup> honoured the troop by inviting it to act as escort to His Excellency the Governor General of Australia, Sir Zelman Cowan, on the occasion of the presentation of the Sovereigns' Banner to the corps at Bandiana on December 4, 1981.

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<sup>102</sup> Sergeant S. Berg

<sup>103</sup> Lieutenant R. Morrison

<sup>104</sup> NORFORCE – the unit concerned with the defence of northern Australia

<sup>105</sup> Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps

## CONCLUSION

In setting out significant areas in the history of 8/13 VMR two points of interest have merged. The first is the adaptability of the unit. Most of those interviewed saw at least several major changes of role and willingly accepted the challenges to adapt to new vehicles and concepts of training. A reserve unit has to respond to decisions made far from the barracks and quite often there are practical difficulties not foreseen by those in the political or administrative arena. However, 8/13 VMR has been innovative and resourceful and taken a pride in gaining the best level of efficiency possible. The 8/13 VMR has always acquitted itself very well when taking part in competitive or tactical training with other units, either regular or reserve. Despite some difficulties in maintaining adequate instructional personnel every effort has been made to bring soldiers to a high state of preparedness.

The second point of interest has been that most of those interviewed have had a link with the services. Some had actual war service and nearly all had fathers or brothers who had been involved in some way with the armed forces. The Army Reserve has been, for them, a way of carrying on a family pattern.

Every soldier is influenced by the past and the traditions of valour and efficiency have been taken as an example and inspiration thus contributing to "esprit de corps".

The unit has been part of Australia's National Defence System for 34 years and during that time men and women have developed worthwhile skills and attributes which have been beneficial on a personal and community level.

I hope that this history of recollections and experience will add to the sense of union and of common responsibility within 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles.

*Jan Hunter*

1982

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Lt Col JA Neale ED	Cpl F Reynolds
Maj R McDermott MBE OStJ RL	Tpr Y Wilson
Maj G Cole	Mr G Atkinson
Maj I Docking	Mr J Larkin
Maj D Hunter	Mr A (Mac) Young
Maj NG Whitehead MC	Mr K Higginson
Capt N Cognett	
Capt T Fraser	
Capt P Hartung	
Capt R Ohlin	
Lt R Morrison	
Lt L Shefford	

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## **Appendix A**

### **8/13 VMR ROLES, COMMANDING OFFICERS and HONORARY COLONELS**

Since establishment of 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1948 the regiment has undertaken the following roles:-

- 1948-1956 Armoured Regiment (M3 General Grant Tanks)
- 1956-1959 Armoured Regiment (Mark 3 Centurion Tanks)
- 1959-1960 Reconnaissance Regiment (Ferret Scout Cars)
- 1960-1966 Armoured Personnel Carrier Regiment (White APCs & Humber 1 ton CT Trucks)
- 1967-1970 Armoured Regiment (Mark 5 Centurion tanks)
- 1970-1976 RAAC Regiment (Cavalry and APC) (M113 carriers & Fire Support Vehicles)
- 1976-now Independent Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance) (M113 carriers)

#### **Commanding Officers**

- 1948-1955 Lieutenant Colonel T. Fogarty (later Brigadier)
- 1955-1959 Lieutenant Colonel H. Hibberd
- 1959-1962 Lieutenant Colonel J. Allard
- 1962-1965 Lieutenant Colonel A. Cunningham
- 1965-1969 Lieutenant Colonel M. Fairless
- 1969-1976 Lieutenant Colonel J. Neale

#### **Officers Commanding**

- 1976-1980 Major D. Hunter
- 1980-1982 Major G. Cole
- 1982 – Major I. Docking

#### **Honorary Colonels**

- 1959-1961 Major General H.H. Hammer CBE DSO ED
- 1968 Brigadier C.V. Anderson OBE ED
- 1974-1978 Colonel L.G. Coleman
- 1978-1981 Colonel R.A. McLean MBE RL
- 1981- Sir David Fairbairn KBE DFC

## Appendix B

### THE LINEAGE OF THE VICTORIAN MOUNTED RIFLES

The first unit of Mounted Rifles was raised in Victoria on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1860. This unit was known as the South Melbourne Company of the Mounted Rifles. In May 1885 the Victorian Mounted Rifles were formed with sub-units at Geelong, Colac and Kyneton with those at Sale and Woodend following shortly after.

By December that year, the Victorian Mounted Rifles had 45 sub-units in nine companies, and these were formed into two battalions on 18 June 1891.

During the South African War 1899-1902, Victorian Mounted Rifles provided all Victorian cavalry.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE

8<sup>th</sup> Aust Light Horse Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

King's Banner presented 14 Nov 1904<sup>106</sup>

"South Africa 1899-1902"

Allied to King Edward's Horse (King's Overseas Dominion Regiment Yeomanry)

16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

16<sup>th</sup> (Indi) Light Horse

8<sup>th</sup> (Indi) Light Horse

King's Banner Presented 7 August 1920<sup>107</sup>

Guidon Presented<sup>108</sup>

Battle Honours for World War 1 Awarded

8th Indi Light Horse "More Majorum"

Allied to 8<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Irish Hussars

8<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion (Indi Light Horse) 1 Dec 1941

8<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (Indi Light Horse) 13 July 1942

8<sup>th</sup> Australian Cavalry Regiment (Australian Imperial Forces) 10 Oct 1942

Disbanded 16 March 1944

Battle Honour for World War 2 awarded

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<sup>106</sup> Holy Trinity Church, Benalla (1938)

<sup>107</sup> Holy Trinity Church, Benalla

<sup>108</sup> 8/13 VMR Victorian Mounted Rifles

**13<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE**

10<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

King's Banner presented 14 November 1904<sup>109</sup>

"South Africa 1899-1902"

Allied to King Edward's Horse (King's Overseas Dominion Regiment) Yeomanry)

13<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

13<sup>th</sup> (Gippsland) Light Horse

King's Banner presented 7 Aug 1920<sup>110</sup>

Guidon Presented<sup>111</sup>

Battle Honours for World War 1 awarded

13<sup>th</sup> Gippsland Light Horse "Loyal Till Death"

Linked with 19<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment (which will not be maintained)

13/19<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment

13<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment (Gippsland Light Horse) 20 Aug 1940

13<sup>th</sup> Motor Regiment (Gippsland Light Horse) 14 March 1942

13<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment (Gippsland Light Horse) 8<sup>th</sup> May 1942

13<sup>th</sup> Australian Motor Regiment (Australian Imperial Forces) disbanded. 19 Oct 1943

**20<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE**

7<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

King's Banner presented 14 Nov 1904<sup>112</sup>

"South Africa 1899-1902"

Allied to King Edward's Horse (King's Overseas Dominion Regiment Yeomanry)

15<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles)

Guidon Presented<sup>113</sup>

20<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles "Pro Rege et Patria"

Allied to 14<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars

Battle Honours for World War 1 awarded

20<sup>th</sup> Motor Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles) Dec 1941

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<sup>109</sup> St Paul's Cathedral, Sale (1938)

<sup>110</sup> St Paul's Cathedral, Sale (1938)

<sup>111</sup> 8/13 VMR Victorian Mounted Rifles

<sup>112</sup> Council Chamber, Seymour (19380)

<sup>113</sup> 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles

20<sup>th</sup> Australian Motor Regiment (Australian Imperial Forces)

20<sup>th</sup> Aust Pioneer Battalion (Australian Imperial Forces )14 Feb 1945

Disbanded 15 Nov 1945

Battle Honour for World War 2 awarded.

### **8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> VICTORIAN MOUNTED RIFLES**

8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles (Citizens Military Forces) raised comprising 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments:

8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles) raised

8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles (Royal Australian Armoured Corp)

8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles "Pro Rege et Patria"

Allied to 8<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Irish Hussars

Allied to 14<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars

Regimental March: "The Victorian Rifles"

Regimental Flag authorised

8<sup>th</sup> Kings Royal Irish Hussars now the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars

## Appendix C

### BATTLE HONOURS

#### 8<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE

South Africa 1899-1902  
 Sari Bair  
 Maghdara Rafah  
 Jerusalem  
 Megiddo  
 Damascus  
 Defence of ANZAC  
 Rumani  
 Gaza-Beersheba  
 Jordan (Es Salt)  
 Sharon  
 South West Pacific 1943-44



#### 13<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE

South Africa 1899-1902  
 Pozieres  
 Arras 1917  
 Amiens 1918  
 France and Flanders 1916-1918  
 Egypt 1915-16  
 Somme 1916-18  
 Bapaume 1917  
 Ypres 1917  
 Albert 1918  
 Gallipoli 1915



#### 20<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE

South Africa 1899-1902  
 Gallipoli 1915  
 Palestine 1917-18  
 ANZAC  
 Egypt 1915-17  
 South West Pacific 1944-45



## Appendix D

### VEHICLES USED BY 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> VICTORIAN MOUNTED RIFLES

#### Medium tank M3 General Grant



Specification

Power plant	Continental 9 cylinder radial air cooled engine giving 340 bhp
Speed	25 mph
Armament	75mm Quick Firing Gun in side sponson 37mm Quick Firing Gun and .30 calibre machine gun coaxially mounted; .303 inch Bren AA machine gun or .30 calibre machine gun
Crew	6 - commander, gunner, loader/operator, driver, hull gunner, hull loader.
Weight	26.8 tons
Armour	63mm
Designed	United States Tank Arsenal 1941

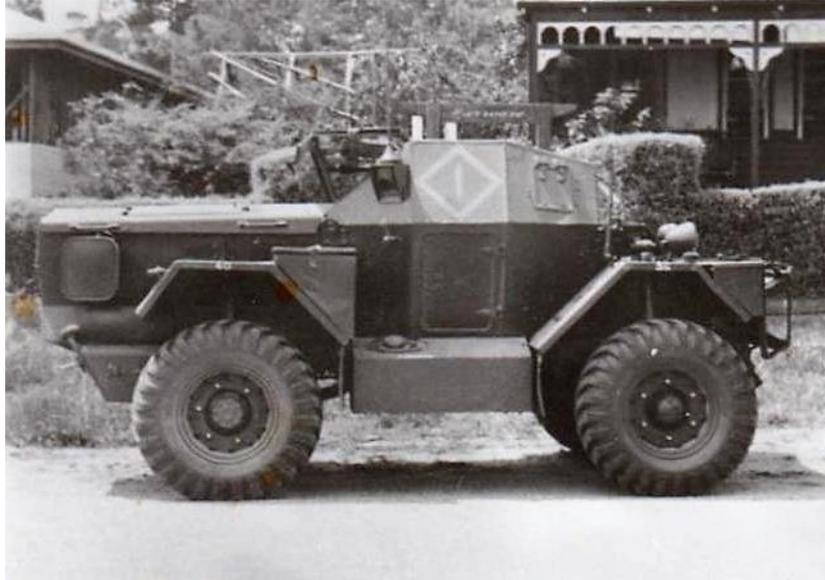
## Armoured Car T17 E1, Staghound



### Specification

Power plant	Two Chevrolet 6 cylinder petrol engines each giving 97 bhp
Speed	55 mph
Armament	37mm Quick Firing Gun and coaxial .30 calibre machine gun in turret .30 calibre machine gun in hull 2 inch bomb thrower
Crew	5 - commander, gunner, loader, driver, hull gunner
Weight	11.5 tons
Armour	37mm
Designed	United States 1942

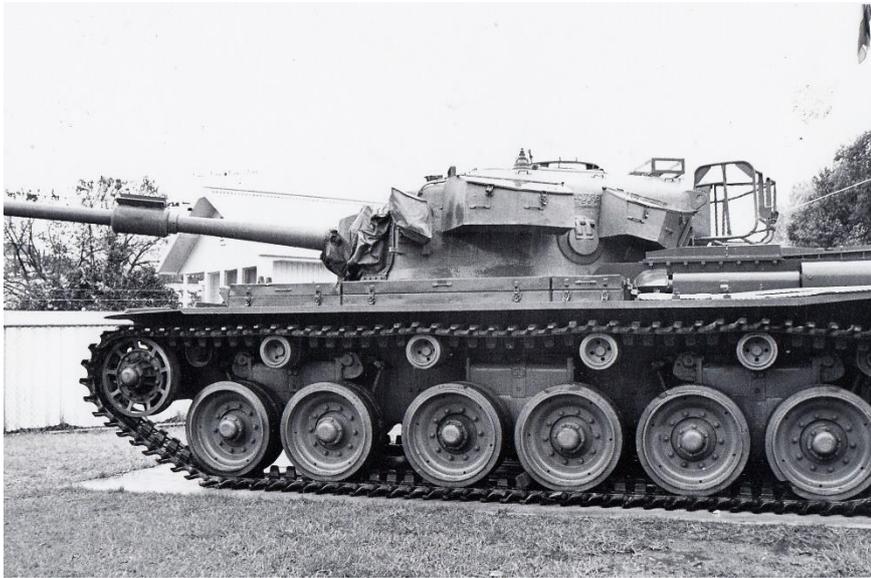
**Car, Scout, Canadian MK III, Lynx**  
**[known during Australian service as Doodle bug or Golfball]**



**Specification**

Power plant	Ford V8 engine giving 86 bhp at 3600 rpm
Speed	53 mph
Armament	.303 inch Bren machine gun
Crew	2 – commander and driver
Weight	4 tons
Armour	30mm
Designed	Ford Motor Company of Canada 1942, based on original British Daimler Scout Car of 1939

## Main Battle Tank Centurion MK V



### Specification

Power plant	Rover Meteor MK B, V12 Water cooled petrol engine developing 650 bhp at 2550 rpm Charging Set Morris 8 HP MK2/1 developing 13.5 bhp at 2000 rpm coupled with dynamometer with output 3kw, 100A, 27 V at 1650 rpm
Speed	21.5 mph
Armament	20 pr (83.4mm) Quick Firing Gun, .50 calibre Ranging machine gun, .30 calibre coaxially mounted machine gun .30 calibre machine gun on flexible cupola mount
Crew	4 - commander, gunner, loader/operator, driver
Weight	53.2 tons
Armour	Max 152mm
Designed	United Kingdom 1944, first deliveries 1945

## Carrier Personnel Wheeled MK II – Saracen APC



### Specification

Power plant	Rolls Royce B80 straight eight petrol engine giving 160 bhp
Speed	45 mph
Armament	.30 calibre Browning machine gun in turret
Crew	2 – commander/gunner and driver, with seating for 11 passengers
Weight	10 tons
Armour	Welded armour small arms proof
Designed	Alvis Company Coventry UK 1950

## Scout Car MK I – Liaison, Ferret I



### Specification

Power plant	Rolls Royce B60 Mark 6a 6 cylinder petrol engine giving 129 bhp
Speed	45 mph
Armament	.30 calibre Browning machine gun on pintle mount
Crew	2 – commander and driver
Weight	3.5 tons
Armour	Welded armour, small arms and shrapnel proof
Designed	Daimler Company 1954

## Scout Car MK II, Reconnaissance, Ferret 2



### Specification

Power plant	Rolls Royce B60 Mark 6a 6 cylinder petrol engine giving 129 bhp
Speed	45 mph
Armament	.30 calibre Browning machine gun in turret
Crew	2 – commander and driver
Weight	3.5 tons
Armour	Welded armour, small arms and shrapnel proof
Designed	Daimler Company 1954

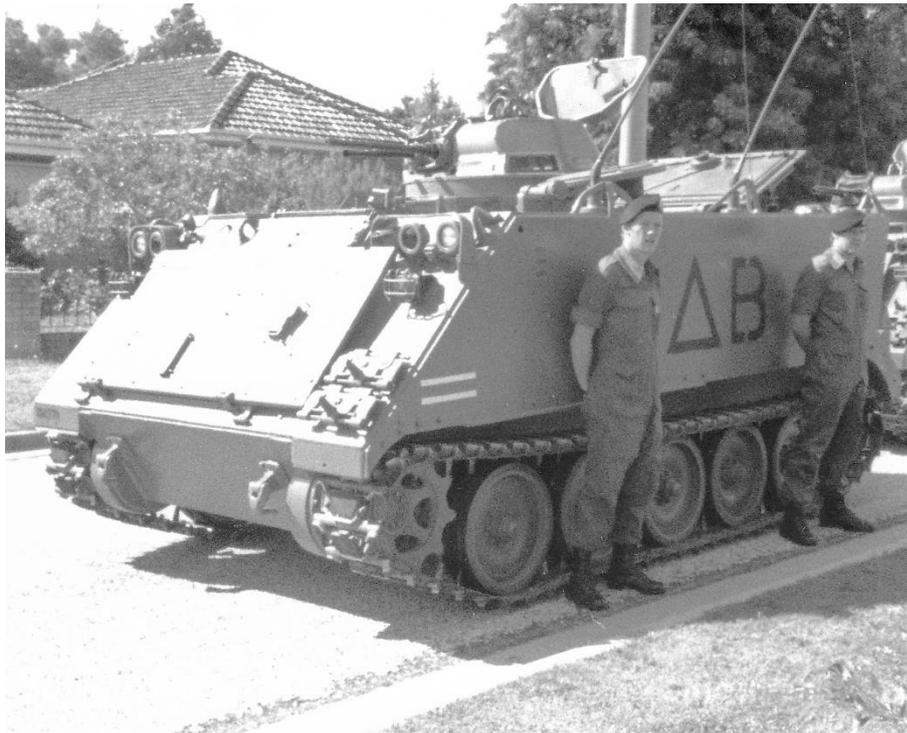
## Scout Car M3 A1, White



### Specification

Power plant	Hercules 6-cylinder petrol engine giving 110 bhp
Speed	55 mph
Armament	Two .30 calibre Browning machine guns
Crew	2 – commander and driver, with seating for five passengers
Weight	5 tons
Armour	6mm
Designed	United States 1940, by White Motor Company

## Armoured Personnel Carrier M113 E1



Specification

Power plant	Detroit Diesel 6V53T, 6-cylinder diesel engine 275 hp (205 kW)
Speed	67.6 km/h (42.0 mph), 5.8 km/h (3.6 mph) swimming
Armament	.50 calibre machine gun and .30 calibre machine gun
Crew	2 – commander/gunner and driver, with seating for 11 passengers
Weight	11 tonne
Armour	Aluminium armour
Designed	Food and Machinery Corporation (FMC) USA, 1960

## M1131 Fire Support Vehicle



Specification

M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier hull modified to include a Saracen turret.

Armament	76 mm L5A12 gun 0.30 calibre machine gun coaxially mounted and .30calibre machine gun on pintle mount
Crew	3 – commander, gunner, and driver
Weight	12 tonne
Armour	Aluminium armour
Modification	4 Base Workshops Bandiana, Australia, 1970



## Appendix F

### BASIC ARMY STRUCTURE

SOLDIER	
SECTION	10 Men – 1 Corporal + 9
PLATOON OR TROOP	1 Officer + 32 Other Ranks (ORs)
COMPANY OR SQUADRON	5 Officers + 103 ORs
BATTALION OR REGIMENT	3 Coys or Sqns
TASK FORCE	Usually 3 Battalions
DIVISION	3 Task Forces.

### RANK & INSIGNIA

The army uses rank structure to mark degrees of seniority. The most senior ranks are the General Officers, ranging down to the first step on the ladder of authority – the corporal. A badge or symbol for each rank is worn on the uniform so that the position of that person can be recognised.

Officer rank is worn on the shoulder, while Warrant Officer's and Non-commissioned Officers wear rank on the sleeve. Here is a guide to the ranks in the Army Reserve Armoured Regiment:

**PRIVATE (Pte)** Private is the basic army rank but certain corps have alternative names. In Armoured Corps and Special Air Service Regiments a private is called a trooper (Tpr).



**LANCE CORPORAL (LCpl)** This is an intermediate appointment that recognises a soldier's potential before his appointment to Corporal. At this stage, he is learning the rudiments of leadership.

**CORPORAL (Cpl)** A Corporal can commands a section of ten men, but in RAAC he is likely to be a vehicle crew commander.

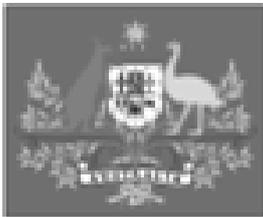


**SERGEANT (Sgt)** Sergeants hold administrative and instructional positions in every segment of the army. In RAAC he will likely be a crew commander.



**STAFF SERGEANT (Ssgt)** Normally the Staff Sergeant is a unit's full-time administration man controlling stores and overseeing clerical work.

**WARRANT OFFICER Class II (WO2)** The Warrant Officer Class II is the 'foreman' of the unit. He controls the soldiers in a company, squadron or battery. In different Corps he can be known as Company Sergeant Major (CSM), Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) or Battery Sergeant Major (BSM).



**WARRANT OFFICER Class I (WO1)** The Warrant Officer Class I is the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer. In larger units he is in charge of discipline and ceremonial and is known as the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). He can also be the senior technician in special units. The RSM works closely with the Commanding Officer.

**SECOND LIEUTENANT (2Lt)** A Second Lieutenant, the most junior Commissioned Officer, generally shares the responsibilities of a Lieutenant. He may command a Troop of Armoured vehicles. Most Second Lieutenants in Army Reserve graduate through Officer Cadet Training Units. (OCTU).



**LIEUTENANT (Lt)** Although senior to the Second Lieutenant he shares similar jobs and responsibilities.

**CAPTAIN (Capt)** A Captain is employed in a wide range of jobs. He may command Support Units, be second in command of an RAAC Squadron, or work in Staff and Training. All these tasks broaden his military knowledge and prepare him for higher ranks.



range of jobs. command of appointments. prepare him



**MAJOR (Major)** They are the first of the "Field Rank" Officers and hold increasingly important appointments on Headquarters and Army Schools. A Major is likely to command an RAAC Squadron or the position of Regimental Second-in-Command (2i/c). In the case of an Independent Squadron a Major will be Officer Commanding (OC).

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL (Lt Col)** A Lieutenant Colonel is Commanding Officer (CO) of an Army Reserve Regiment or fills a top level post at Task Force or Division Headquarters.



## ADDENDUM

A Squadron 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles continued as an Independent Cavalry Squadron for a further nine years, 1983 to 1991, when a Force Review citing 'budgetary pressures' resulted in a restructure of the Army Reserve in Victoria.

Officers Commanding for that period were: Major Ian Docking 1982-1986, Major Joshua Gay 1986-1988, and Major Robert Morrison 1988-1990. In 1990, Captain John Baines was offered the command of the squadron on promotion to major but was unable to accept owing to his employment and domestic situation. There being no other suitably qualified ARES officer available in the district, command passed to Major Frederick Cobain (ARA) who commanded from 1990-1992 and unfortunately found himself having to manage the amalgamation process which descended upon Army Reserve in Victoria. Training Officer/Adjutants for the period included Captain Norman Cognett, Captain Dennis Cameron and Captain Paul Williams.

### EXERCISE SWIFT WARRIOR 1984

The 1984 annual field exercise was typical of several carried out on the extended plains and riverine terrain of southern NSW. Exercise Swift Warrior, 8-23 September involved A Squadron 8/13 VMR under the command of Major Ian Docking deployed as a reconnaissance screen to seek out and contact a Musorian (enemy) force advancing east from South Australia and were known to have advanced as far as Broken Hill.

The Musorians were a conventionally organised and equipped land army with naval and air support. They made their appearance as the background for training exercises, TEWTs and promotion exams 1960-1990. They were cited as the enemy to set a realistic context to tactical problems.

For Exercise Swift Warrior an advanced 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Headquarter element commanded by Staff Officer Grade 1 Armour (SO1 Armd) Lieutenant Colonel Doug Hunter with Major Gordon Cole from Reserve Command and Staff College (RCSC) as Second in Command (2iC) provided direction for the exercise. A small enemy party mounted in 'captured Australian vehicles' provided a live enemy.

The initial intention was to have a number of the M113 Light Reconnaissance Vehicles (LRVs) airlifted to Hay by C130 Hercules while



**Major Ian Docking commanded A Squadron 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles 1982-86.**

the remainder were transported by Mack trucks. Captain Terry Frazer took a detachment of drivers and crew commanders to Air Movements Training and Development Unit (AMTDU) Richmond where they were trained in loading and securing LRVs in a C130. The crewmen proved apt and keen students receiving a glowing report at the end of their training. "The enthusiasm displayed by the members of 8/13 VMR in digesting their training was impressive to say the least", wrote supervising officer Captain David S Cole, US Army Exchange Officer.

There had been rain in the Hay area preceding the exercise and an inspection of the surface of the Hay airfield concluded it was unsuitable for the heavily laden C130s to land there. Consequently, the airlift was rerouted to land at Albury airport. 8/13 VMR crewmen were responsible for steam cleaning, loading, strapping down the LRVs at Wagga and unloading at Albury. The LRVs were then transported by road to a concentration area at Hay Showgrounds. The valuable air movement training and practice made 8/13 VMR one of few units in the Australian Army able to carry out this task.

An advance party deployed to Hay on 8 September to undertake the unloading of the M113s and to establish a base area at the Showgrounds. The remainder of the Squadron arrived by road three days later to marry up with vehicles and commence reconnaissance immediately.

The first phase was an advance astride the Cobb Highway to clear One Tree Hill and secure Booligal, a distance of 80 km. Phase two was an advance beyond Booligal until contact was made with the enemy. The Squadron would then become the Division covering force fighting delaying actions as it withdrew. The all-important bridge over the Lachlan River at Booligal was a reserve demolition target requiring it to be defended and only destroyed on higher authority orders. The exercise culminated in the complex procedure demanded of a demolition guard. Major Cole prepared and issued the reserve demolition orders

Revised Feb 79 MESSAGE FORM  
NOTE: Shaded areas are for COMMEN/SIGS use only.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AND SPECIAL HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS  
EX SECRET

LINE 1: received  
LINE 2: 1300hrs  
8.9.84  
LINE 3:  
LINE 4:  
LINE 5:

PRECEDENCE - ACTION: ROUTINE  
PRECEDENCE - INFO: ROUTINE  
DATE - TIME GROUP: 081000 K  
MESSAGE INSTRUCTIONS: EN CODE OR SAFE OR HAN

ROUTING INDICATORS  
FROM: 3 DIV  
TO: A SQN 8/13 VMR

INTSUM 1 FROM 0418 #00 TO 071800 K  
10 301 ME DIV CONSOLIDATING AT BROKEN HILL LOG UNITS AND STOCKS BEING BROUGHT FWD BY RAIL FROM SOUTH  
AVIT RECON ELMS REPORTED 50 KM EAST AND SOUTH EAST OF BROKEN HILL ON BARBIEC HWY AND MENING RD  
20 STR RECON GPS PLN (+) UPT COY (-) MORALE AND DISCIPLINE GOOD  
NO CHANGE IN TACTICS  
20 ARMAMENT REPORTED :- SML ARM 120 MM MOR , RPG 7  
30 COUNTER INT ACT :- MIN RAD TRAN SOME USE LOW LEVEL CODES  
40 WEATHER AND TERAIN :-  
(A) GD VERY WET IN AO  
(B) CREEK SYSTEMS FLOWING  
(C) MINOR TO MODERATE FLOODING EXPECTED ON MURUMBIDGEE AND LACHLAN RIVERS  
(D) UNSEALED ROADS OF DOUBTFUL USE TO B VEH

PAGE NO: 1 DRAFTER'S NAME AND TITLE: HUNTER J01(OP) PHONE NO: INT REF FILE NO: 1  
NO OF PAGES: 1 REASER'S NAME AND TITLE: HUNTER J01(OP) SIGNATURE: DATE: 08SEP  
FOR USE: DATE: TIME: SYSTEM: OPERATOR: DATE: TIME: SYSTEM: OPERATOR: SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: EX SECRET  
Stock No 7330-66-094-8819

**Intelligence summary issued by HQ 3 Div. during Exercise Swift Warrior. This was a method of giving up-to-date information about the enemy location, strength and intentions.**

by radio then delivered written confirming orders to the guard commander Major Docking.

One incident which occurred during the exercise illustrated the dangers of travelling on dirt roads following a shower of rain. A 3 ton truck transporting supplies from B Echelon at Hay to A Echelon just north of Booligal slipped into the table drain and overturned. When the vehicle failed to arrive at the Echelon a search by an attached helicopter was conducted which quickly spotted the upturned vehicle. Driver and passengers had escaped serious injury but were conveyed to Hay Hospital for observation as a precaution.

Swift Warrior concluded with the Squadron rallying at Hay prior to a night move to Salamaua Barracks, our depot at Cobram. There administration was concluded; cleaning of vehicles, return of stores and pay parade followed by dispersal to home depots. It had been a satisfying annual exercise. Soldiers had practised their skills in air mobility, vehicle operation and maintenance, navigation, observation and radio communications. Officers had developed tactical skills, the preparation and issuing of orders and a better understanding of logistics. All had gained a better appreciation of the difficulties of operating in flat terrain with little cover and no points of elevation to aid observation.

#### CENTENARY YEAR 1985

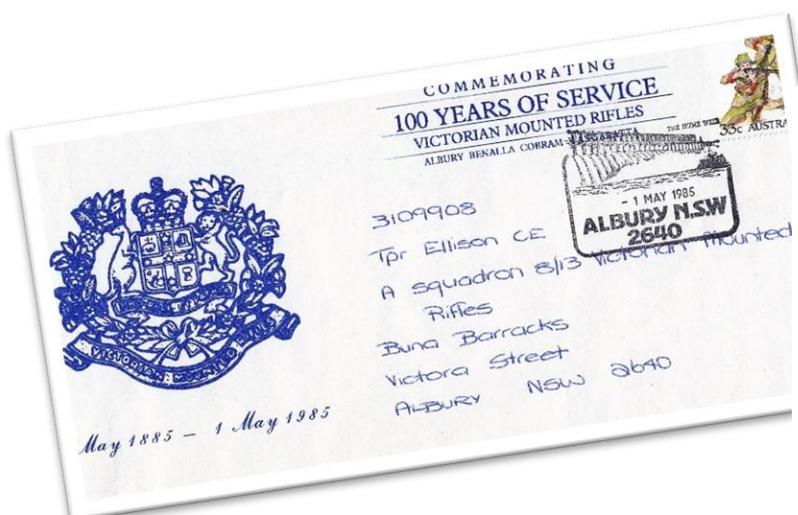
The year 1985 was a momentous one for the regiment; it was the centenary of the Victorian Mounted Rifles which had been established by drawing together a conglomerate of rifle clubs and volunteer units to form a coherent defence force for the Colony of Victoria. It was under the command of Colonel Tom Price with the

mounted arm known as Victorian Mounted Rifles.



Centenary celebrations began with mail being collected at 11.00am 1 May from a special post box at Buna Barracks and carried to the Albury Mail Exchange by mounted troopers of the Light Horse Troop where it was postmarked. The mail consisted mainly of limited edition first day covers bearing commemorative postage stamps.

**Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs Doug Hunter  
at the Centenary Dinner Tuileries Winery  
4 May 1985.**



**First Day Cover commemorating the centenary of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, 1 May 1985. Mail was cleared from a special post box at Buna Barracks and carried to the Mail Exchange by mounted troopers of the 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop.**

Tuileries Winery at Wahgunyah was the venue for a centenary dinner four days later. Men dressed in dress uniforms while ladies' dresses reflected the colonial era. Occasional music was provided by the Palm Court Ensemble – Albury Wodonga Symphony Orchestra led by Helen Isbister.

On Saturday 27 July a mounted parade with the Squadron mounted in armoured fighting vehicles and led by the horse mounted Troop paraded through the main street of Albury. The parade was repeated at Wangaratta a week later, 3 August.

The following day the Squadron paraded in Benalla and marched to Holy Trinity Anglican Church for a Centenary Church Parade. Benalla had been the main centre for VMR companies in colonial times then following Federation in 1901, headquarters of 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. King's Colours awarded to the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse were laid up in the church. Rector of the church Rev R McInnes assisted by Anglican chaplain Rev D Lamond and Catholic chaplain Fr L Ring

officiated at the service. The third mounted parade took place on Saturday 23 August this time through the streets of Cobram.



**A Squadron 8/13 VMR led by Major Ian Docking marching through Benalla to a Centenary Service at Holy Trinity Anglican Church 4 August 1985.**

Centenary commemorations concluded with a Regimental Ball at the Wodonga Civic Centre on Saturday 23 November. The Kapooka Band and Scots School Pipes & Drums provided the music.

Captain Robert Morrison had been project officer for the centenary celebrations but there were other things on his plate that year, too: participation in the Anzac Day march in Melbourne and the mounted escort of two very important people, HRH Prince Charles and Princess Diana on their visit to Puckapunyal to open Hopkins Barracks.

The 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop participated in the Anzac Day March in Melbourne, 25 April 1885 and continued on to the Service at the Shrine. The guidons of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments in their cases were displayed on the steps of the Shrine. Captain HG (Bob) Fyffe rode with the Troop in the march, a ride which lasted over 3 hours and he was one of the fittest riders in the group when they dismounted back at the Victorian Mounted Police Barracks in South Melbourne.

Bob Fyffe had led the Tocumwal Troop, 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, prior to the Second World War. It was the troop which had won the Hutton Trophy 1937 and 38. When war broke out, he joined the 9<sup>th</sup> Division Cavalry Regiment and distinguished himself leading an attack mounted in captured Italian tanks at the battle for Trig 22, 17 July 1942. Captain Fyffe was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership and courage in the action.

On 31 October 1985, HRH Prince Charles, accompanied by his wife HRH Princess Diana arrived at Puckapunyal where the Prince, as Colonel-in-Chief RAAC, was to open the recently completed Hopkins Barracks. The royal couple were escorted by a mounted guard drawn from 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop commanded by Captain Robert Morrison. It was without doubt an honour for the Regiment second only to the occasion on 2 March 1954 when 8/13 VMR mounted guard at Government House Melbourne with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in residence.



**Captain HG (Bob) Fyffe MC  
ex 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse with  
Corporal Keith Dudley and  
Troopers Lewry and  
McDonald waiting to join  
the Melbourne Anzac Day  
march 1985. Captain Robert  
Morrison is standing with  
back to hedge.**



**Escort for HRH Prince Charles and HRH Princess Diana at the opening of Hopkins Barracks Puckapunyal 31 October 1985. Guard drawn from 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop was commanded by Captain Robert Morrison. This was the only occasion since the Royal Visit in 1954 that the Regiment had provided a guard to royalty.**

Also present that day was a colour party from 8/13 VMR carrying the guidons of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments who joined with colour parties from other regiments so that the standard and guidons of all RAAC units were paraded. In the evening, Major Ian Docking and Mrs Docking were among a select group of RAAC officers who attended the Gala Dinner Dance at the Southern Cross Hotel where the Prince and Princess were guests of honour.

#### “THE LIGHTHORSEMAN”

A highlight of 1987 was the premiere of the film “The Lighthorsemen” which included Gary Sweet and Sigrid Thornton in the cast, at the Regent Theatre Albury 10 September 1987. The regimental museum arranged a display in the foyer of the theatre and troopers from the Light Horse Troop armed with lances manned the foyers and stair landings. Squadron Commander Major Josh Gay was the



**OC Major Josh Gay greeting guests, and Trooper Chris Ellison on stair landing at film premiere, Regent Theatre Albury 10 September 1987.**

host for the evening and together with the Honorary Colonel John Neale ushered the official party including the Area Commander AWMA, Colonel Brewer, and Mrs Brewer to their seats to view the film.

### 8/13 VMR REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

The Regimental Association was constituted on 26 February 1987 with the aim to perpetuate the close bonds of comradeship and *esprit de corps* created by past and present members of 8/13 VMR, and to preserve and foster the good name of 8/13 VMR.

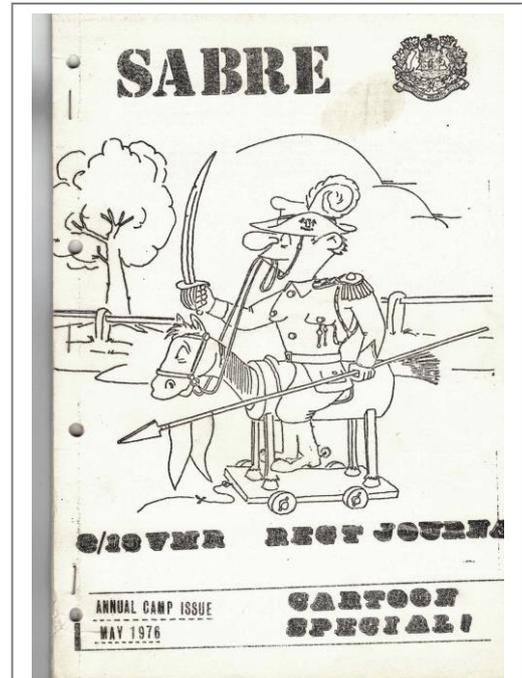
The Association issued a Newsletter annually or bi-annually to advise of Anzac Day and other events: Unit birthday, Nek Dinner, Cambrai Dinner, Regimental parades and open days, news of old members especially those with whom it had lost contact, and a Last Post segment with tributes to those who had gone where old soldiers go leaving only memories.

The Association remains active with a calendar of activities and a bi-annual Newsletter.

### REGIMENTAL HERITAGE COLLECTION

The Regimental Heritage Collection was developed to collect, conserve and where possible display significant documents, photographs and objects associated with the history of 8/13 VMR and the units in its lineage: 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments and 2/8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment.

The Collection was first displayed in a museum in a vacant married quarter at Buna Barracks, Victoria Street, Albury. The museum was developed by a team of volunteers under the direction of Colonel J A Neale OAM ED. The team included Bill Woolford, Lou Madjeric, Don Campbell, Ian Docking and Alan Williams. This museum was officially opened by Colonel G K Howard on 1 May 1988.



### SABRE

No 8/13 VMR history would be complete without mention of the regimental journal "Sabre" prepared and issued at the completion of annual camp in the 1970s under the editorship of Lieutenant Len Shefford with the assistance of the Orderly Room clerks who typed and duplicated copies. It was a mixture of humour, general information and serious historical articles relative to the unit's role. A popular feature was the cartoons depicting humorous camp incidents and some of the colourful characters who made up the regiment.

In 1991, the 8/13 VMR and the 4/19 PWLH were linked to form a single RAAC regiment, 4/19 PWLH. The Collection continued to operate as a History Room at Buna Barracks. However, in 2000, Buna Barracks closed, and the Army Reserve squadron moved to Building 105 at North Bandiana. Building 105 was extensively refurbished prior to the move. Space for the History Room was included in the refurbishment.



**Work party installing a display at Building 105 Bandiana. From left: G Robbins, J Larkin, G Myers, J Bauerle, G Brown, K Carey and D Hunter.**

An expanded team of volunteers, again under the direction of Colonel Neale spent five years fitting out the History Room and displaying the collection. The team included new members, John Bauerle, Kozzie Carey, Jack Larkin, Kevin Monte, Doug Hunter, Garry Treeve, Russell Johnston, Geoff Myers, Brian Gibson, Graham Garvie, Graham Green, Niel Russell. The new facility was officially opened by Major General R P Irvin on 2 August 2003. The Collection was popular with the serving members and the public. Community groups including ex-service clubs, schools, Rotary, Probus and Historical Societies visited. Volunteers led conducted tours.

Building 105 was declared structurally unsound in April 2009 and immediately placed out-of-bounds to all occupants including the museum volunteers. During the next year, limited access was allowed for the purpose of dismantling and removing the collection. Time in the building was severely limited so the dismantling and packing up of the collection was rushed. Storage space was allocated in the basement of Building 129 at North Bandiana. The following two years, 2010 and 2011 were spent, sorting, cataloguing and tagging the 5000 items in the collection and repacking and storing on salvaged steel shelving.

An outreach program was commenced in 2011 whereby displays were placed at Wodonga Library, SS&A Club Albury, Gateway Island Tourist Office, and the foyer Building 129. A temporary exhibition was installed in the Lavington Library from November 2011 to February 2012.

The outreach program reached new heights in the WWI centenary years 2014-18 with highlights being participation in Anzac Centenary travelling exhibition launched at Wodonga September 2015 and collaboration with Albury Library Museum in a major exhibition The Trumpet Calls. A drawcard in this exhibition was

a life-sized replica of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Shellshear's Western Front bunker. In addition, the collection provided objects and assistance with centenary displays throughout the district.

After ten years in storage at Bandiana and it being apparent there were no suitable options to redevelop a museum either on or off base in the region, a space of 150 square metres at Simpson Barracks, adjacent to the 4/19 PWLH Museum, was made available.



**Museum installation team at Simpson Barracks, April 2021. From left: G Cole, R Dawe, K Carey and G Garvie.**

Work began immediately to develop a new museum. The volunteer team now included Maurice Greene, Gordon Cole and Robert Dawe. Regrettably some of the original team were either deceased or unable to continue owing to age and health issues. Prefabrication and refurbishment of cabinets was carried out at a workshop at Latchford, Bonegilla then transported to Simpson Barracks for assembly and installation.

Phase one was complete making it possible for the museum to be officially opened by Mrs Joan Finlayson, 2/8 AR Association, on 6 December 2019. Work on phases two and three was interrupted by COVID 19 lockdowns but with a last two-day effort, 1&2 December, the museum was complete and ready for inspection at the regimental Open Day 5 December 2021.



**8/13 VMR museum, Simpson Barracks, 7 August 2022. Regimental trophy cabinet, horseman, guidons and honour boards.**

A bus load of 8/13 VMR Association members was able to visit on Nek Day 7 August 2022 and came away satisfied that the heritage of the regiment was in good shape.

## TWO STIRRING YEARS AS OFFICER COMMANDING

Major Robert Morrison RFD takes up the story of his tumultuous years as Officer Commanding A Squadron 8/13 VMR 1998-1990; the work-load, the euphoria and the disappointments.

April 1<sup>st</sup>, not a day to take things too seriously, but on Good Friday 1988 I was taking things very seriously. That day I was promoted Major and more importantly I assumed command of A Squadron 8/13 VMR.

The day was spent with other members of the 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop preparing our horses for the annual Beechworth Golden Horseshoes Festival Parade and Fair the following day. The horses last outing had been the Australia Day parades in January and so it took quite a bit of work, grooming, and trimming to get them out of their paddock shabbiness, and up to the accepted parade glossiness, that we were well known for.

On Easter Saturday, one day after assuming command, and mounted on horseback, I led elements of my Squadron at the head of that parade. The 8/13 VMR contingent consisted of 2 sections from the VMR Light Horse Troop, 3 Ferret Scout Cars from the VMR Heritage Vehicles Troop, and 2 M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carriers from 1 Troop.

After the parade we mounted a static recruiting display, as part of the Fair, featuring the horses and vehicles before heading back to the Albury depot and dispersal. Thus began my time as the Officer Commanding (OC) of one of the most historically significant serving cavalry units in the Australian Army.



**Major Robert Morrison commanding the VMR Light Horse Troop. Major Morrison was the prime mover in the raising and training of the heritage unit which was the public face of the Regiment and in many cases the Corps during the 1980s and early 1990s.**

The Victorian Mounted Rifles had existed on the Australian Order of Battle for 103 years when I assumed command, and the battle honours covered every theatre of war from South Africa 1899 -1902 to the South West Pacific Area 1943 -1945. Current members of Squadron had also served in Malaya, and Vietnam with other units. It was a proud history to live up to, and I was determined not to let it down.

I had assumed command of an Independent Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron in direct support of Victoria's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and thanks to my predecessor Major Josh Gay, it was a going concern, even if a bit short of all the M113s needed by APC squadron.

The Squadron's vehicle holding at that time was for an Army Reserve Reconnaissance Squadron, ten M113s and

one Armoured Command Vehicle (ACV). An APC squadron's entitlement was 26 M113s, two Mortar Carriers, two ACVs, and two tracked load carriers (TLC).

Major Gay had rearranged his training program to accommodate the change of role, from a Reconnaissance Squadron to that of an Armoured Personal Carrier Squadron, a year earlier, when the Hawke Labour Government changed Australia's Strategic Defence Policy from Forward Defence to Defence of the Sea/Air gap, by a strengthened and up gunned RAN and RAAF, with the Army tasked to provide National Vital Asset (NVA) protection within Australia. For the first time in our military history, defence policy became Homeland Defence. The acronym NVA caused some confusion among the Vietnam Veterans who were familiar with the acronym meaning North Vietnamese Army.

The Dibb review, released in 1987, had recommended, that to achieve this new Home Defence policy, a 'One Army' concept be adopted, whereby the reconstituted Army Reserve (ARES) Brigades would be tasked similarly to the Regular (ARA) Brigades in that NVA protection role.

Doctrine required an armoured mobility lift capability for one battalion in each brigade, and as a result A Sqn 8/13 VMR would be re-rolled and placed in direct support of 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade in order to provide that capability.

Major Gay had set about holding a number of courses camps to qualify the necessary additional drivers and crew commanders needed to man the increase in M113s and variants required by an APC Squadron. Parade night and weekend training was devoted to APC tactics and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

During the Brigade Annual Field Exercise (AFX) in March 1988, the A Sqn 8/13 VMR had acquitted itself admirably, albeit with four borrowed vehicles and crews from 4/19 Prince of Wales's Light Horse (4/19 PWLH), our sister Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) regiment enabling us to field one APC Troop of 12 vehicles thus providing a company lift capability. Our ACV with Squadron Headquarters (SHQ) provided communication for the battalion and two further M113s served to lift the Commanding Officer (CO) and Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of the battalion.

The APC Troop (1 Tp) commanded by myself (I had stepped down from my posting as Second in Command (2IC) in order to experience APC Troop leading prior to assuming command in April) was in support of 8/7 Royal Victoria Regiment (8/7 RVR), and we carried an exchange company of the North Auckland Infantry Regiment for the first week. The bonding of 1 Tp with the New Zealanders was



**A Squadron 8/13 VMR training with infantry of 8/7 RVR at Puckapunyal. The role of the APCs was to carry the infantry close to or onto the objective and provide covering fire while they dismounted to engage the enemy.**

obvious by the unofficial insignia that mysteriously appeared on the side of the carriers featuring a kiwi poking out of a kangaroo pouch.

These had to be removed when the vehicles were handed over to 2 Tp.

I learned a lot about Armour/Infantry co-operation during that week with the New Zealand company and had observed that Infantry soldiers had difficulty thinking much faster than a walking pace, whilst Armoured Corps soldiers had the ability to, and needed to, think at the gallop.

After the vehicle handover (and the removal of the kiwi/roo sign), 2 Tp, commanded by Captain Colin Carrington, carried a company of 5/6 Royal Victoria Regiment (5/6 RVR) during the second week, and 1 Tp personnel took over the dismounted defence of Battalion Headquarters (BHQ) and I resumed duty as Sqn 2IC.

I was immediately tasked with conducting an investigation into an Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) incident that had occurred in the 1 Tp harbour area soon after the vehicle handover. The Ordnance was no longer unexploded, and this had resulted in the hospitalisation of 3 soldiers, plus ringing ears for a day or so for most of the remaining members of the Troop, but that is Major Gays' story to tell, as it happened during his tenure as OC.

My first parade night as OC, 5 April, was not spent with the Squadron, but in Melbourne attending the Brigade Commander's monthly conference, usually referred to as an 'O Gp', along with the other COs and OCs that made up the Brigade.

The Brigade Commander, Brigadier Doug Perry, was a Gunner (artilleryman) and he was the epitome of the check, check, then check again thoroughness for which his Corps was renowned. That night he announced the Brigade Mission "To protect the newly established RAAF Base Tyndal" located near Katherine in the Northern Territory, and that the Brigade would be performing that task as part of Exercise K89 (Kangaroo 89) in July next year. He also advised that HQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Division (3 Div) would be conducting a Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT) at Tyndal over the June long weekend. We were all to attend. All Brigade units were to rearrange their training programs to achieve the Brigade Mission, and present them for approval by the next O Gp

I was also tasked with providing my plan and costings for getting at least 28 vehicles to Tyndal, by the cheapest means, ready to roll not later than the 3 July 1989. Brigadier Perry was aware that we were trained in airlifting M113s and the ACV, so had allocated two C130 Hercules aircraft for one day, a four vehicle lift.



**Shattered tree stump in the centre of the Squadron harbour area caused by the explosion of an old shell or mortar bomb which had failed to detonate on firing and had not been recovered following a range shoot. It might have lain against the stump and become buried over time. A refuse fire had caused it to explode. Fortunately, injuries to soldiers were not serious.**

He wanted both ACVs to go by air so that Bde HQ would have reliable communications when the battalions arrived at Tyndal. The rest of my vehicles would have to go by road or rail. I was going to be busy.

On the flight back to Albury next morning it dawned on me that I could delegate much of the research and the costing to my ARA Cadre Staff, and on landing called my Adjutant/Training Officer, Captain Paul Williams and asked him to convene a lunch time meeting with all 10 Cadre Staff members at the Albury Depot.



**Vehicles of the VMR Heritage Vehicles Troop leading a parade. The vehicles were owned and maintained by serving members of the Squadron.**

Participation in K89, the biggest Army Exercise ever to be held on Australian soil, was met with some enthusiasm, as I recall, but when I mentioned that we would be transporting 'at least' 28 vehicles, my Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) WO2 Peter (Nobby) Clark, muttered "I'll believe that when I can count them." So, the planning for K89 began. I put the adage 'He who plans early plans twice' to the back of my mind as I left the Depot.

The routine of spot checks, and signing pay slips which I could not delegate, and reading the copious files placed in my in-tray by the chief clerk kept me occupied the rest of the month.

ANZAC Day saw members of the Squadron performing memorial guards all over Northeast Victoria: Light Horse Troop Sections taking part in local ANZAC parades, the Heritage Vehicles Troop taking part in the Albury parade, whilst I was Guest Speaker at the Benalla RSL Service.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May the Squadron celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the linking of the 8<sup>th</sup> Indi Light Horse Regiment, the 13<sup>th</sup> Gippsland Light Horse Regiment, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles), with a dismounted parade, and then (what turned out to be first of three) the Official Opening of the VMR Museum.

Both the Brigade Commander Brigadier Perry, and the Director of Armour, Colonel Geoff Howard, attended the Regimental Dining-In on the Saturday night, where I listened to their discussion about additional vehicles needed so the Squadron could perform its task during K89. The Brigade Commander was adamant that he could not successfully protect Tyndal with less than a battalion lift and how could the Director of Armour assist. Colonel Howard said he'd see what could be done. I was left hoping Nobby's mutter had not been prescient given the Director's response.

Next day during the parade, it was the first time that the Squadron had been joined by members of the recently formed 8/13 VMR Regimental Association, who attended in force, and the parade was accompanied by the Pipes and Drums from 5/6 RVR. A fact not lost on the Brigade Commander. The Heritage Tp vehicles held ground, and the Light Horse Tp escorted the reviewing Officer, Colonel Howard, on to the parade, and then held ground on the right flank of the parade ground. The parade went well, and after march off the VMR Museum was opened by the Reviewing Officer.



**No 2 Guard commanded by Captain Colin Carrington marching past the saluting base at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade at Buna Barracks 1 May 1988.**

The Museum was an acclaimed success and the hard work of the Honorary Colonel, John Neale, and his team of volunteers was rewarded by the amount of praise the displays received. It was a project close to my heart, as I believed that soldiers needed to know their Unit History and thereby know what was expected of them whilst they served in it. The colonial VMR and the three Light Horse regiments whose linking anniversary we commemorated that day had much to be proud of, and so I felt did we. We had done our antecedent units proud. Now for the future.

At the Brigade O Gp the following Tuesday night, thanks to my cadre staff's research, I presented the most cost effective plan to transport the remaining 24 APCs from Puckapunyal to Alice Springs by rail, and then from Alice Springs to Tyndal by the 3 Div Transport Company, from Tasmania, which would be in camp during the lead up to K89. The research was nothing but thorough. The plan was met favourably by the Brigade Commander.

The battalion COs then raised concerns about the extra man days they needed to accommodate the mounted training weekends which they saw as an add-on to their normal training program. Neither had consulted with me so I enquired when I was likely to receive their bids for APC support so I could consolidate my own training program, bearing in mind that I had barely enough vehicles for a company lift at that time, and that I needed to also train my new crew commanders and drivers in APC tactics and SOPs; plus there was a constant need for vehicle servicing to be carried out.

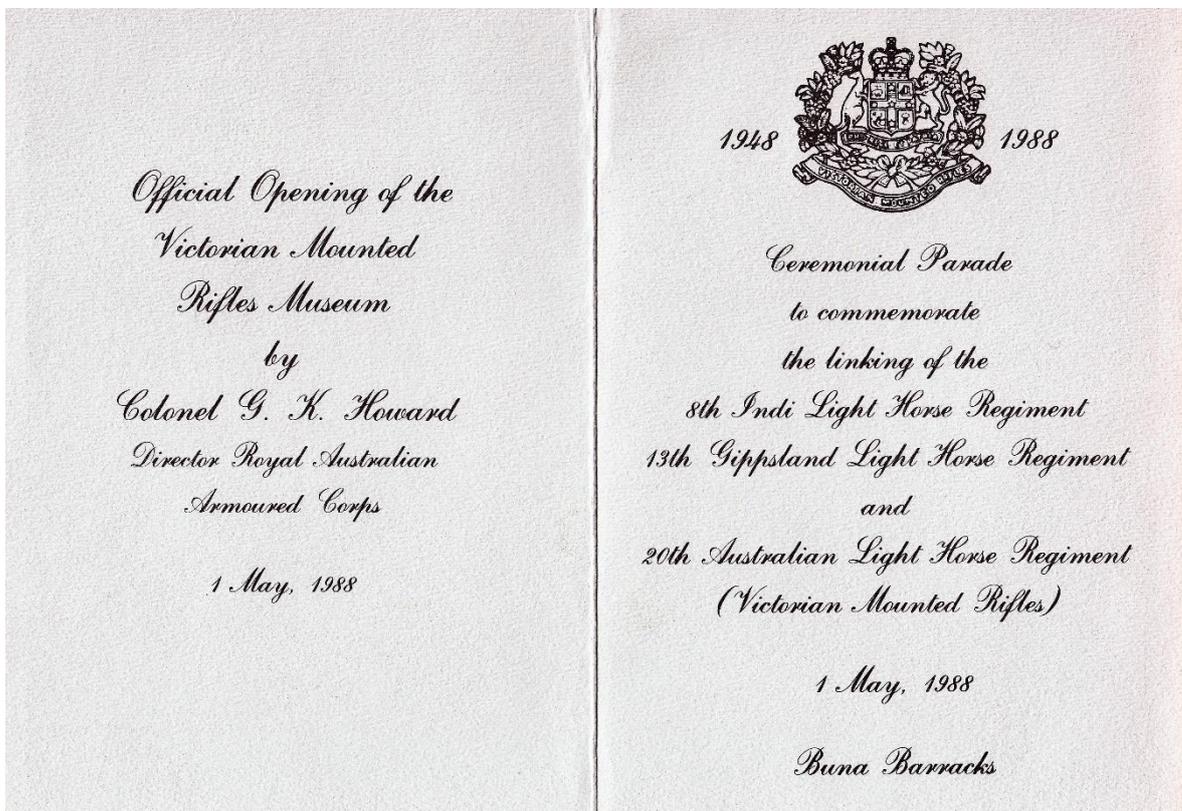
Both the Brigade Commander and the COs would have to learn to account for track miles and fuel consumption as part of their budgeting, as I had barely sufficient to train my own people. HQ 3 Div had allocated the rest to the battalions and Brigade HQ. They too were learning about Armour/Infantry co-operation.



**Major R Morrison with Colonel G K Howard and Honorary Colonel J A Neale inspecting a section of the VMR Light Horse Troop at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade, Buna Barracks.**

It was finally resolved that one company a month from alternate battalions would conduct mounted training and the now established 1 Tp-8/7 RVR grouping would have M113s during the odd months, and the 2 Tp-5/6 RVR grouping would have them during the even months. I could now juggle servicing weekends between the battalion support tasks, but how to train my new drivers and crew commanders if the APCs were either supporting an Infantry company or being serviced?

The Honorary Colonel, John Neale, provided the answer during one of my informal visits to the Museum at lunch time, some days later. It was not the first time that 8/13 VMR had been rolled as an APC Unit, and had, had to deal with insufficient vehicles to carry out all its tasks. Newly trained drivers and crew



**Program of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Linking parade at Buna Barracks Albury and the Official Opening of the Regimental Museum by Director of Armour Colonel GK Howard, which followed.**

commanders in those days, learned their APC tactics and practiced SOPs in FFR Land Rovers, and when proficient graduated to the APCs.

Albury Transport Unit had FFR Land Rovers aplenty, and radios could be drawn from Camp Earmark, and were easy to fit. One or two hours on a Friday night and a Troop of 12 vehicles would be ready to go.

With no requirement to book a range, they could train anywhere in Northeast Victoria and Southern New South Wales. Thus, the Troops could train during their month without APCs. I decided to give it a try.

The Squadron settled into a regular training routine with their grouped Infantry units, and the Brigade Commander and battalion COs were happy with the way their companies were being prepared for the protection of Tyndal as part of K89.

The 3 Div TEWT over the June long weekend saw both 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade senior officers deployed to their respective 'Tactical Areas of Responsibility' (TAOR). 4 Brigade to Tyndal and 9 Brigade to the RAAF Base at Darwin by C130 aircraft on the Friday.

Brigadier Perry was heard to comment, as we toured the Tyndal perimeter in the back of a Mack Truck on Saturday morning "Those poor buggers in Darwin, they'll have to contend with Urban Warfare, whilst we have room for manoeuvre". He was referring to the seemingly endless Northern Territory savannah scrub that stretched to the horizon. Ideal M113 country I thought. It was going to be a fun K89.

That afternoon we met with the Airfield Defence Guard (ADG) officers who left us in no doubt that their responsibility was inside the wire, whilst ours was up to 30 kilometres outside the wire in the savannah scrub. We would be living in the field. "No!" was the curt response from the ADG CO, when our Boss suggested that Brigade HQ could co-locate in the ADG airconditioned premises. It seems, Brigadier Perry too would be living in the field. The meeting finished with the ADG CO telling us that if the Airfield Defence Guard had to deploy during K89 we would have failed in our task. Army/RAAF co-operation had some way to go I felt.

That evening the staff officer grade 1 Personnel (SO 1 Pers) 3 Div advised me that the Land Commander, Major General Nevil Smethurst, had requested my release for detached full time duty with Army Tattoo 88, the Army's Bicentennial gift to the nation, and that I had been selected to be the narrator for the Australian tour beginning in August. He suggested I think about whom I would appoint to administer command of the Squadron on my behalf, during my four and a half month detachment.

Captain Paul Williams was at that time treble hatted as the Training Officer, Adjutant and Second in Command, there being no third ARES Captain to fill my old posting when I was promoted, and no Lieutenants yet ready for promotion to take over from one of my APC Troop Leaders. Some of the 2IC duties I had handed to a Pay Corps lieutenant, Bruce Marshall, who was parading with the Squadron as the Admin Officer, whilst working in the Wodonga Area.

Paul was also a former APC Troop leader with B Squadron 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, so he was the obvious choice. Appointing him to Administer Command

would cause the least disruption to the Squadron routine. I advised the SO1 Pers that when the time came, I would raise a routine order to that effect.

On Sunday we TEWT-ed the backside off the protection of RAAF Base Tyndal outside the wire, and came to the conclusion that it was, at the least a nine battalion divisional task, and quite impossible for a two battalion Brigade to achieve, but that was our Mission.

The best option was aggressive patrolling on foot, in Land Rovers, and Mack trucks if necessary, out to enemy mortar range by day and night, with two company strength 'Ready Reaction Forces' mounted in APCs strategically positioned, and at a moment's notice to move, went some way to achieving the Brigade Mission. The fun was beginning to wear off K89.

Brigadier Perry asked if I had heard anything about my extra vehicles, and when they might be issued. Sadly, I had to tell him I had not. We flew back to Laverton RAAF Base the next day with a good idea of the challenges we would face next July.

My first experience with a Commonwealth Audit Board occurred a few days later, and I learned that a green tick was good, a green ? was bad, and a green X was very bad, according to the auditor, an overweight public servant who seemed to think that every Army Reserve unit was a waste of Public Money, and told me so during the initial briefing he conducted before beginning the audit.

Green ticks were appearing on all 'Q' accounting documents, my cadre staff had been thorough in the execution of their duties, but when he came to my Non Public Monies account book, which contained the Combined Mess account, the Heritage Light Horse Troop account, and the Heritage Vehicles Troop account, green question marks began appearing, meaning I would have to provide a plausible written justification or be severely sanctioned. A green X I had been told would mean instant dismissal.

Double question marks appeared next to the Mess profit margin of 7% which made that explanation more urgent than the single question marks. I felt confident that my answer would satisfy him, as the Mess members had voted to raise the profit margin themselves, in order to purchase a commercial beer fridge sooner than the 3.5 – 4% recommended margin would allow. It did not. The recommended margin would be re-applied immediately, or consequences would be dire, was his recommendation. I may be able to write off a million-dollar APC, but ripping off my soldiers by allowing higher than recommended profit margins could cost me my job, were his parting remarks.

I was relating this to Colonel Neale after the Audit Board had departed and I had the written recommendations on file with me. He asked to look at them and as he read a wry smile came over his face. "You know what I used to do with these", he said, handing me back the file, "I would write NOTED beside each recommendation, and then give the file back to the chief clerk to put away until the next audit. By then all issues would be fixed."

The Mess purchased a new fridge after ANZAC Day in 1989, and the profit margin returned to 3.5% the day it was fitted in place. The Light Horse Troop stock crate was donated to the Museum Trustees, and taken on charge as Museum Property, and the privately owned Ferret Scout Car was formally placed on long term loan to the Museum and could now legally be housed at the Depot and used

for Museum displays. Honorary Colonels and Museums were worth their weight in gold, and the Auditor would have to find something else to hang me with next time.

July was spent on routine tasks and preparing for the handover/takeover by the incoming Administrative Commander, which occurred on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, when I departed for my attachment to the Tattoo Regiment. I would not be the only member of the Unit spending some time with Army Tattoo 88.

Every Army Reserve unit in Australia had been tasked with training a team of 10 soldiers who would compete in an Obstacle Course race as part of each performance in their State. We were to compete during the Melbourne season in late November, and the team, and a coach, had been selected and were in training before I departed. Unfortunately, VMR lost our heat of the Soldiers Race to 4/19 PWLH on a count back, but we were no slouches, coming 6<sup>th</sup> in the top ten times for the course.

A section of the Light Horse Troop had also been tasked for the Melbourne performances. They would be spending their 2-week camp with the Tattoo Regiment and performed mounted drill as part of the Light Horse segment. Melbourne would be the only City where serving soldiers on horseback would perform in the Tattoo Light Horse segment. The other cities: Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, Darwin, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, and Canberra, would feature State or Territory Mounted Police in Lighthorse-era uniforms.

An informal visit to the RAAC units in each of these cities provided me with useful contacts, and ideas for future training activities. It was in Adelaide that I met my South Australian Mounted Rifles (SAMR) counterpart, Major Roger Burzacot, when all RAAC officers attached to the Tattoo were invited to the SAMR Beersheba Day Parade. He too was waiting for an influx of vehicles to enable him to carry out the new role that the SAMR had been tasked with.

The Light Horse section gained quite a bit of attention during their morning ride along the Tan, which meanders around the Botanical Gardens and past the Shrine of Remembrance, and Government House, during the two-week season of Tattoo 88 in Melbourne. The Tattoo Director Colonel Tony McGee referred to us as "real Light Horsemen" in his farewell speech to the Melbourne only participants.

I resumed command of the Squadron just in time for the Christmas break up in mid-December. During my absence Captain Williams had overseen our Courses Camp in September where we conducted both a Radio Course, and a Driving & Servicing (D&S) Course with students from 8/13 VMR, 3/9 SAMR, and 4/19 PWLH, and had sent students to the 4/19 PWLH run Crew Commanders Course being



**Crewmen from 8/13 VMR and 3/9 SAMR in joint training Driving & Servicing Camp at Cultana range c.1989.**

conducted at the same time. He had also managed to gain places for 2 students on a Crew Commanders Course being run by 3/9 SAMR in October. Armour/Armour co-operation was working well.

January 1989 and still no word on the issue of additional M113s, let alone Mortar Carriers and Tracked Load Carriers. Victorian Railways, South Australian Railways, and the Commonwealth Railways, who would be involved in the rail transportation of the M113s, were asking for confirmation of vehicle numbers so they could order the necessary Flat Bed carriages needed for the trip.

Victoria and South Australia had adopted the broad-gauge rail system in colonial times, which ran from Puckapunyal via Melbourne, Adelaide, Port Augusta and on to Maree, in outback South Australia, where the Commonwealth Railways standard gauge line began for the journey to Alice Springs.

Once loaded the flat beds could go from Puckapunyal to Maree with only a change of railway engines required at Border Town when Vic Rail handed the train over to South Australian Railways (SAR). At Maree the broad-gauge flat beds would have to be unloaded and the vehicles then driven on to the standard gauge flat beds for the remaining journey. Consequently, a sleeper carriage had been included to accommodate the accompanying drivers.



**Official table at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner Buna Barracks Albury 30 April 1988. Seated from left: Major J Gay, Colonel Brewer, unknown, Major R Morrison, Colonel GK Howard, Colonel JA Neale, Major General G Garde and Colonel P Tremain. Sergeant R Ellison standing with waitress at rear.**

There was no shortage of volunteers to accompany the vehicles on their three-day, two-night journey to Maree, in order to carry out the transfer, and then spend a night and day getting to Alice Springs. before riding shot gun with the drivers from the 3 Div Tpt Coy after loading the vehicles onto the back of their Mack trucks for the two-day run from Alice Springs to Tyndal. Six man days per driver gone and K89 had not yet begun.

“There has been a change to our Mission” announced the new Brigade Commander, ARA Colonel John McAloney MC, who had taken over from Brigadier Perry in December, when he opened the Brigade O Gp in February. 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade would now only have to protect two small (10 square kilometre) sectors outside the wire perimeter at Tyndal, and not the whole RAAF Base. A collective sigh of relief was audible.

“Rob,” I was the first to be addressed at each O Gp because The Royal Australian Armoured Corps held right of the line on the Australian Army Order of Battle, “you won’t be getting any more vehicles before K89, but I’ve secured the four pool vehicles at Puckapunyal for you until after the exercise, so count on moving your ACV and 3 M113s by C130 as planned, and the rest by rail. I want your new costings to the Brigade Admin Officer ASAP. and you’re to continue training with the battalion company/troop groups right up to the end of June.” He then followed the order of battle to task his other Officers.

Colonel J.D. McAloney MC had commanded the First Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) and on being promoted colonel had been posted as Chief of Staff HQ 3 Div, where he had spent the last 2 years, prior to picking up command of 4 Brigade, due to there being no suitable senior ARES officer to take over from Brigadier Perry. He was a no-nonsense, can-do warrior, type of officer, who led from the front, and I enjoyed working with him during the rest of my time as OC.

Both of us would, at times, be exasperated, dismayed, furious, and absolutely flabbergasted, by the machinations, and decisions being made by those above us, both Service and Political, as we progressed toward Exercise K89.

He had devised a code for the decisions being made:

Due to Financial Constraints – The Government had no money for this to be included;

In accordance with the Tactical Scenario – Decision imposed by Land Headquarters, and

Due to the likely Tactical Situation – Decision imposed by HQ 1 Div.

At my regular lunch time briefing with the cadre staff next day my new SSM, WO 2 ‘Shine’ Jordan, exclaimed “Nobby told me that would happen” when I announced that the vehicles we had, were all that we would take to Tyndal.

After consulting with the battalion COs, we agreed on a plan to present to Colonel McAloney at the March O Gp similar to that for the 1988 AFX. The 1Tp-8/7 RVR group would be mounted during the first week, and the 2Tp-5/6 RVR group would be mounted during the second week. It had been tried and we knew it worked, and the dismounted Troop was a valuable asset when employed as the Bn HQ/SHQ protection party.

“The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Plan has been changed” were the opening remarks by the Commander 4 Brigade at the March O Gp. Major General Smethurst, Commander Land Command, had decided to deploy Land Headquarters to Darwin for the duration of K89, and therefore all but Larakia Barracks would now be a ‘Non-Tac’ (non-tactical) zone. The 9 Brigade Mission was revised, and they would now protect the RAAF Base ‘Curtin’ near Broome in Western Australia. The 3 Div

TEWT planned for the June long weekend was hastily being rearranged and would now be held at Curtin instead of RAAF Base Darwin.

“But the 4 Brigade Mission has not” Colonel McAloney continued, then asked us to detail our plan for achieving it with the reduced number of APCs. After listening to our presentation, he made the following changes.

The Troop Leader, and Troop Officer of the dismounted Troop would be detached to Brigade HQ during that week as Watch Officers, and so would one junior officer from each battalion. The Troop Sergeants would command the Bn HQ/SHQ protection party.

All Catering Corps soldiers in the Brigade would be based in the Tyndal kitchens, as we would be on fresh rations owing to financial constraints, and meals would be ferried out to our location each day. Only the train party would be issued ration packs for their journey.

All trained radio operators not needed for the execution of the Mission were to be detached to Brigade HQ so it could operate 24/7 during the Exercise. This pleased me as I could now tell my female soldiers, all trained radio operators, that they had a job at Brigade HQ for K89.

Brigadier McAloney also advised me that the Brigade Admin Officer had added 2 flatbeds to my train for the carriage of the Brigade HQ Connex, a container that had been converted to an air-conditioned Command Post, and a container filled with Brigade stores. Two personnel from Brigade HQ would accompany the containers to supervise their transfer at Maree. I had decided to travel with the rail contingent as the Train Manager and that way ease myself into Exercise K89, and indulge my love of train travel. Colonel McAloney concurred with my decision.

There was no April O Gp as Colonel McAloney had taken some long overdue leave, but our preparations for K89 continued unabated. Maps of our TAOR were being prepared for the ACV, the four pool vehicles were being brought up to scratch and fitted with radios and equipped with the necessary Complete Equipment Schedule (CES). Morale was high because the soldiers had a purpose for their work, and they intended to do well during the ‘biggest exercise ever’.

As I expected my female soldiers were eager to play their part as Brigade HQ radio operators and thanked me for arranging it for them. Although the credit was not mine to take, I decided not to enlighten them any further.

For ANZAC Day 1989, the Albury RSL had asked me to be Host Officer for the Area Commander Albury Wodonga Military Area (AWMA), Colonel Colin Brewer, who was the Parade Reviewing Officer and guest speaker for their service on Monument Hill. I was pleased to oblige, and my wife Dinah and I had an enjoyable day with he and his wife Delphia.

We visited various reunion groups at the Commercial Club, and SS&A Club and after the Official Lunch he asked me to take him to the Two-Up game being held at the Albury Depot by the VMR Museum Volunteers. This game had been the main fund raiser for the Museum for about 4 years now, and the Combined Mess did a roaring trade as well. The considerable funds raised by the game were the reason for the high standard of the displays in our museum.

With our wives settled in front of the fire in my Office, and my driver Corporal Anton Florent making them a cup of tea, the Area Commander was off to play swy.

That sort of gambling had never interested me, and I had to admit to him that it was the first time that I had ever seen the now famous Albury Depot ANZAC Day Two Up game. After half an hour or so he called it quits, having donated more than I think he intended to the VMR Museum fund.

“The K89 plan has been changed and the Exercise has been scaled back, due to financial constraints.” began the Commander 4 Brigade as he opened the May O Gp.

“The battle phase however will now run for four weeks rather than two, and all Units will come under command HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Div. Only the Army Reserve battalions will be on Exercise to carry out their Mission with a hand-over take-over, in the middle of that phase. In order to accommodate the extended battle phase. 8/7 you have the first two weeks; 5/6 you’ve got the final two. Details of your airlift TBA.”

“Brigade HQ, and the remainder of the Brigade units will not now deploy on K89.”

Colonel McAloney paused to let this information sink in then said “Sorry Rob your train has been cancelled.” I was gutted. More than my train had been cancelled, my credibility with my Squadron was about to take a hit.

Both battalion COs asked if my drivers and crew commanders could still deploy with them as their HQ protection party, and the Brigade Commander authorised their detachment as the Battalion Transport Platoons with the Troop Sergeants in charge. The Squadron cooks were also still needed in the Tyndal kitchen. That salvaged things a little, but it was a small consolation.

Colonel McAloney advised me after the O Gp concluded that he’d authorised my secondment to HQ Northern Command as a Duty Staff Officer, so my long service leave would not be wasted. It would involve another stint of full-time duty and cover the full 12 weeks of K89. He said there was a position for another VMR officer if there was one available for the full 12 weeks. Captain John McLean my REAME Technical Support Troop Leader would later fill that position.

I now had to tell my soldiers that K89 was off for all but a few. If someone had wanted to deliberately destroy the morale of my Squadron, they could not have found a better way to do it I thought.

To my surprise they took it better than I did, and stoically looked forward to the alternate courses camps that were being hastily organised in place of K89. It appears they had heard stories about the Northern Territory scrub and the beasties that dwelled therein and were quite happy that they now would not have to contend with bumping into them. My soldiers never failed to amaze me.

The 3 Div TEWT at RAAF Curtin was designed to assist the Commander 9 Brigade, Brigadier Oscar Weyland, a former CO of 3/9 SAMR, with some idea as to how he could protect his TAOR of 10 square kilometres, without a mounted lift and with only the Land Rovers, and Unimog trucks, that would be pre-positioned at Curtin during phase 1 of the exercise. Nobody seemed too sure how many that would be. His was a dispersed Brigade with one Battalion 10/27 Royal South

Australia Regiment (10/27 RSAR) in Adelaide, and 12/40 Royal Tasmania Regiment (12/40 RTR) in Hobart and Launceston, Tasmania.

The air base consisted of a hard standing runway surrounded by a cyclone fence and at one end of the runway a couple of Atco demountable huts that contained a kitchen and a mess hall, which we were putting to good use as it was air conditioned.

Acclimatisation of southern state soldiers would be a problem if they were faced with a full workload on arrival. Their ARA counter parts from Sydney, Brisbane and Puckapunyal would have at least a week at a minimum to acclimatise. 3 Div Staff would take this up with the Land Commander. I hope they did, and I took quite an interest in the heat exhaustion numbers being reported during my shifts at HQ Northern Command (NORCOM).

Captain Lyle Jackel, a Wangaratta officer, had returned to the Squadron in the latter months of 1988 from the Inactive Reserve and I had appointed him 2IC. It was he who would administer command, on my behalf, during my secondment to HQ NORCOM.

K89 was a three-phase exercise. First the build-up, where the surveillance units would patrol, and report signs of enemy incursion, which would then activate units under command 1 Div to deploy to their TAORs. As these units entered the Northern Territory they came under command for administration of the Commander NORCOM, Brigadier Ian (Luigi) Bryant, until HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Div arrived in location to begin Phase Two. This was the busy time for HQ NORCOM and would last for four weeks.

Luigi Bryant, as he was known because of his Italian looks, was a former CO 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment (2 Cav), and he had flare and elan to spare. Like General J.S. Patton, he believed that "If you aint Cav you aint". He had stepped up from Commander 7<sup>th</sup> Military District when as a result of the Government change in strategy, Northern Command was raised. K89 would be his first big test.

Phase Two would begin when all units were in their respective TAORs and HQ 1 Div was established and able to assume command of all units in the Northern Territory, North Queensland, and Northwest Western Australia. (Even with the cutbacks it was still a big exercise). This is when my dismounted VMR soldiers would deploy with their respective battalions.

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion RAR (Parachute Regiment) would act as enemy, and their activity would be co-ordinated by Land HQ which would assume the role of Exercise HQ and would also deploy to Darwin just prior to Phase Two beginning. This main phase would also last four weeks and would still be busy for HQ NORCOM. The surveillance units would now be patrolling in enemy occupied territory, and Brigadier Bryant's Intelligence Cell would be providing much of the enemy situation reports.

Phase Three would be the dispersal phase. HQ 1 Div would close down and all units would again come under command for administration of the Commander NORCOM. The HQ would again be busy. The dispersal phase would also last four weeks. As it turned out, due to a commercial pilots dispute, it actually lasted six weeks.

I was only able to visit the 1 Tp contingent during their deployment and found a group of not so happy campers. They only had two Land Rovers allocated to the Transport Platoon, and their main task was to ferry the hot boxes to and from the Tyndal kitchens out to the deployed companies 3 times a day. The rest of the time they mounted picket to protect Bn HQ. Not what they'd signed up for, and a waste of their talents, was the consensus.

Shortly after I was in the battalion Command Post (CP) with the CO 8/7 RVR, Lieutenant Colonel Doug Ball, a sheep farmer from central Victoria, and I suggested he give my soldiers a bit more transport work if he could. "I would be glad to, if there was more of it to give" he said and went on to thank me for releasing such good soldiers who were enabling his people to operate the CP 24/7 and still get some sleep. "We'd be lost without them" he finished. I asked that he pass that on to my soldiers as soon as he could.

The afore mentioned pilots dispute meant all soldiers now had to return to their home locations in southern Australia via RAAF flights and as 2 thirds of the C130 aircraft had been loaned to the Commercial Airlines by the Minister of Defence, Kim Beasley so their schedules could still operate, this was going to take some time.

The day after the last remnants of K89 left the Northern Territory, the Commander NORCOM declared a day off for his HQ staff. The first full day any of us had had off for nearly 12 weeks, and the HQ ceased 24 hour operations. The attached staff officers now waited for a seat on a C130 masquerading as a commercial airliner for our trip home.

Some thirteen and a half weeks after leaving Albury I returned to again assume Command of the Squadron. There was only one unresolved issue handed on to me by Captain Jackel when I returned, and that was a missing rifle, which had disappeared from the armoury about half way through his time administering command. Fortunately, the bolt was still accounted for, so it could not be fired.

Both internal and NSW and VIC Police investigations had failed to find a culprit, assumed to be a member of the Squadron, and the rifle's whereabouts was an ongoing case. Although the culprit was never identified, the rifle was discovered some months later discarded in Wodonga Creek when the water levels dropped owing to the low summer release of water from Lake Hume. Caked in mud and in no fit condition to be used it was returned to the Bandiana armourer for refurbishment. From now on two people had to be present when the armoury was open.

"Nevil Smethurst has been SACKED!", Colonel McAloney roared as his opening remarks to the October O Gp, "SACKED FOR TELLING THE TRUTH!". The Commander Land Command, in his After Exercise Report, had informed the Government that the Australian Army was only sustainable in the field for 3 months, with battle casualties even less, and if the Government was serious about Vital Asset Protection, the Army would need to at least double, and preferably treble in size, in order to achieve their stated Mission. A day later Major General Smethurst was on extended leave pending his retirement from the Army. The Commander 4 Brigade was not pleased.

After Exercise Reports from 8/7 and 5/6 RVR were the main topic for that O Gp, and their recommendations were in line with those of the now retiring Land

Commander. Whether Colonel McAloney revised those recommendations to make them more palatable to the Government we never knew, but I suspect not, as both Lieutenant Colonels Doug Ball and Adrian Cran relinquished command of their battalions soon after.

At the November O Gp we were advised, that due to financial constraints, 4 Brigade was now tasked with the protection of vital assets in South-eastern Victoria, namely RAAF Base East Sale and the Power Generation plants at Yallourn and Morwell, all in East Gippsland. National Vital Assets in the Northern Territory would now be protected by 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade units that would begin their move from Holsworthy Barracks to a new barracks to be established just south of Darwin as part of the "Army Presence In the North".

A new acronym 'APIN', which we would hear a lot about in the media as the Government tried to convince us that the defence of the country was in good hands, had been added to the long list of Army acronyms that already existed.

At the December O Gp Colonel McAloney outlined the Brigade training program for 1990. It consisted of the 3 Div TEWT, at Kununurra in North East Western Australia over the June long weekend, and a number of Brigade TEWTs at each of the vital asset protection sites, followed by a series Command Post Exercises (CPE) to determine the Brigade plans for the protection of these assets. The Brigade AFX would be held at East Sale during September to test one of those plans. At last, I would get to command my Squadron on exercise I thought.

Interestingly the 3 Div TEWT would involve the protection of the Ord River Dam, under the direction of the new Divisional Commander, Major General Warren Glenny. He was being transferred from Sydney in his civilian job with the Coles-Myer Group and would replace Major General Barry Nunn as Divisional Commander in January 1990. Major General Glenny was an RAAC officer and had commanded 1/15 Royal New South Wales Lancers (1/15 RNSWL), he was also a good friend of Colonel Neale, my Honorary Colonel.

That was the good news. A reduction in track miles, fuel, ammunition, ration packs 1 and 10 man, and Reserve man days was imposed on all Brigade Units, due to financial constraints. There would only be enough for APC Section/Infantry Platoon training weekends, and training for new Crew Commanders and Drivers was to be curtailed during 1990 and probably out to 1995, was the bad news.

The effect of these constraints began to tell early in 1990 when it became obvious to the soldiers that they would spend more time servicing vehicles than they would using them, because what had been alternating Troop activities were now reduced to alternating Section activities which meant each section would have their 3 vehicles for one weekend training activity with their Platoon every six months, and there was only so much that could be done in Land Rovers.

Parade nights had been reduced to two hours to conserve man days, and although troop training continued every alternate month with Land Rovers, monthly servicing was the main task for crew commanders and drivers. Gradually leave applications were being replaced with requests to discharge.

The issue of the new Disruptive Pattern Combat Uniform (DPCU another new acronym) was not the incentive to stay that the Divisional Commander had hoped for. No sooner had the new uniforms been issued, worn, and washed for the first time, they were recalled. They were made from a highly inflammable

material which was most unsuitable for RAAC Soldiers, and an interim tank-suit was issued instead. It consisted of a commercially available 'King Gee' overall that had been dyed in the disruptive pattern. A new cotton DCPU tank-suit would be some years coming.

However, Colonel McAloney initiative to give junior officers, NCOs, and soldiers a taste of working in Northern Australia, by sending 20 of them a month on a 10-day patrol of the Brigade TAOR, did go some way to help retention. Exercise Northern Explorer, as these patrols were known, was considered by the Government to be in line with APIN and so no financial constraints applied to them. Flights of C130 aircraft ferried the participants to-and-fro' each month, and by the time I relinquished command of the Squadron, all my junior officers and many NCOs and soldiers had taken part in one.



**Lieutenant Colin Carrington with 3 Troop A Sqn 8/13 VMR conducting a familiarisation patrol near Tindal Air Base NT, 1988.**



Also on a brighter note, 2 newly qualified second lieutenants (2Lts) had marched into the Squadron after completing the 3 Div Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) course, and at my instigation, two more VMR officer candidates had commenced their officer training in February.

The initial Brigade TEWT at RAAF Base East Sale coincided with the opening of duck season in Northeast Victoria, and the Brigade Commander was not pleased with the number of leave applications from VMR officers nominated to attend the TEWT. I asked the two officers, both from Wangaratta, to re-consider their decision not to attend the TEWT, but they were adamant that duck opening was sacrosanct and that was final. They would not attend the TEWT.

"Where's your 2IC?" Colonel McAloney asked when we arrived at East Sale that Friday night. "Gone duck hunting" I replied.

"No he hasn't, he's there," the Brigade Commander pointed to Captain Carrington who was just entering the Mess. So Captain Colin Carrington became 2IC of A Squadron 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles, and 2 Troop had a new troop leader.

That wasn't to be the only officer posting the Brigade Commander would become involved with. He was very keen to raise a Brigade Administrative Support Battalion (BASB) at the Wangaratta Depot and recruit from the pool of retired RAAOC and RAEME officers, senior NCOs and soldiers who had taken discharge from the ARA and now lived in Northeast Victoria. He had used the Wangaratta Depot, a former Migrant Hostel, and now one of my four Depots, as a base for the 1989 Brigade Headquarters Camp in place of K89 and was impressed with the facilities it offered.

He needed officers to post to the BASB and in April discussed the possibility of transferring Lieutenant John Burke, my only officer at the Cobram Depot, to the BASB. John had attended the RAAC ROIC during 1989 and had received a poor course report, concluding that he was not to be promoted in the RAAC. However, John was useful in his role as the Cobram Depot Commander, although doomed to be a perpetual lieutenant as long as he stayed posted to the VMR.

Although sorry to lose him, I agreed with Colonel McAloney that John deserved a chance at promotion in another Corps where his talents as an Australia Post Agent could be utilised by the Army. He marched out of the Squadron in May 1990, but as far as I know was never promoted captain in his new posting.

During the early months of 1990 my incoming Training Officer/Adjutant, Captain Fred Cobain, was on extended leave. Fred was due to succeed me as OC when I retired in early November, as the Corps felt there was no VMR officer suitable at that time to take over from me, and that there was no point posting a substitute in the meantime.

Another captain from the School of Armour would travel up to Albury each Tuesday, attend to any urgent business that needed actioning during the parade, then deal with ARA matters on Wednesday morning, before returning to Puckapunyal. Not ideal, but better than nothing. This was the arrangement that lasted until I handed over to the now Major Cobain at the end of July 1990.

A signal arrived in Early March 1990, ordering all RAAC units to parade their standard, for 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Regiment, and guidons for the other 9 Cavalry Units of the RAAC at the Corps and Army farewell to Lieutenant General Laurie O'Donnell who was retiring as Chief of the General Staff (CGS) in April.

General O'Donnell was the senior officer of the Corps and had been CGS for the last 3 years. He was to be farewelled at a Parade and Dinner at Hopkins Barracks, and the Corps wanted to put on a show worthy of his high office.



**Guidons of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments being paraded at the opening of Hopkins Barracks by HRH Prince Charles, 31 October 1985.**

The only other occasion the three 8/13 VMR guidons had been on parade, since becoming an Independent Squadron, had been in 1985 at the Opening of Hopkins Barracks, when the Light Horse Troop had escorted Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales. The sight of our 3, among the 19 significant insignia belonging to units of the Corps, fluttering in the breeze that day was long in my memory.

This time I was their custodian and as the 8<sup>th</sup> Indi Light Horse, 13<sup>th</sup> Gippsland Light Horse, and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles) regimental guidons marched past during the general's farewell parade, I was overwhelmed with a sense of great pride, and tears welled in my eyes. An unexpected, emotional, experience I will never forget.

ANZAC Day 1990 saw me host, a future deputy prime minister, Mr Tim Fischer who was the Member for Farrar and Opposition Spokesman for Trade. He was the RSL guest at the Albury parade and service. Thankfully after lunch he did not wish to visit the Albury Depot Two Up game, and I spent a rare afternoon at home with my wife and children.



**8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop escorting their Royal Highnesses Prince Charles and Princess Diana at the opening of Hopkins Barracks, 31 October 1985.**

Although man days had been reduced, that did not seem to put the brake on both HQ 3 Div and HQ 4 Brigade activities that were mandatory for COs and OCs to attend and occurred on weekends in Melbourne.

On one of my parade night visits to the Wangaratta Depot, a corporal complained to me that he was about to do his third weekend in a row that month. I felt like telling him to come and see me when he'd done nine in a row as I had just done, and four of them voluntary.

Such were the demands on Unit COs and OCs in the aftermath of K89 as financial constraints and changes in accordance with the 'tactical scenario' were passed down the chain of command, and positive results were expected to flow back up.

At the May Brigade O Gp Colonel McAloney advised me that I would relinquish command of the Squadron at the end of July, when Fred Cobain would be eligible for promotion, and that I would be posted to HQ 3 Div where the Divisional Commander had a special project for me.

June 1991 would be the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and Major General Glenny wanted a pageant produced that would be the centre piece of the Division's celebrations of that milestone, and he wanted me to write and produce it. I was about to protest that I was in my 47<sup>th</sup> year (compulsory retirement age for majors) when he added that my over-age extension had already

been approved by Army Headquarters, and I could now serve until age 60. The Army would actually employ my civilian skills until December 2011, well past my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

May 1990 also saw the celebration of the VMR's 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an Officers Formal Dinner on the Saturday night and a Parade on the Sunday. It was obvious that the Regimental Association had more people parading in their ranks than the Squadron had soldiers on parade. It was a much lower keyed affair than our parade 2 years previously, but it helped raise morale, and involved members family's afterwards as we held an open day for them.

I attended the 3 Div TEWT at Kununurra in June and was surprised by the sheer size of the Ord River Scheme. During the TEWT the Divisional Commander took the opportunity to brief me on the task that lay ahead for me after I relinquished command of the VMR. As it turned out it would cease to be the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Pageant and would in fact, owing to financial constraints, become the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Disbandment Pageant.

July consisted of farewell visits to my outer depots and preparation for the handover takeover to Major Cobain which occurred at a parade at the Wangaratta Depot on 30 July. Wangaratta was chosen as it was central to the other three depots and would reduce travelling time on a parade night.

After inspecting my soldiers for the last time, I turned and saluted the incoming OC. "Take good care of them Fred." was all I could say as he returned my salute. I then turned and, 11 years after posting in, I marched out of the Victorian Mounted Rifles.



## RESTRUCTURE

The 1990 restructure program was not a happy time. Disbanded was Headquarters 3<sup>rd</sup> Division together with the Divisional Intelligence Unit. Linked to form new regiments were 10 Medium Regiment and 2/15 Field Regiment; 105 Field Workshops and 301 Field Workshops; 4 Field Supply Company and 7 Field Supply Company; and 4/19 Prince of Wales's Light Horse and A Squadron 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles. In each case the newly amalgamated unit took the name of the first designated unit thus the name of 4/19 PWLH survived on the Order of Battle but that of 8/13 VMR did not. Strength of the squadron at the time of linking was 11 officers and 102 other ranks.

The new armoured reconnaissance regiment was to be of two squadrons: 4/19 PWLH Squadron and 8/13 VMR Squadron. Each squadron would continue to wear its own cap badge. This arrangement continued for some years until a decision was made that all members should wear the 4/19 PWLH cap badge. This was perhaps inevitable but nevertheless caused resentment.

A memorial to the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse was dedicated at a service 6 August 2000 in the grounds of Beersheba Barracks Sisley Avenue Wangaratta. The memorial featured a template of the regimental badge set against a red background and fixed to a granite rock. When the 8/13 VMR transferred the Sisley Avenue depot to 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade the badge was removed and is now in the heritage collection at Simpson Barracks. The rock was left in position.



**Memorial Rock with 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse badge at Beersheba Barracks Wangaratta.**

## LINKING PARADE & FREEDOM OF CITY

The linking parade took place on 3 May 1992 and on that occasion the City of Fitzroy conferred upon the newly linked regiment the Freedom of the City. Both Honorary Colonels, Colonel Sir John Young AC KCMG and Colonel John Neale RFD ED were on the podium with the Mayor of Fitzroy, Councillor Angela Ireland to receive the salute in the march past. Lieutenant Colonel Peter Fernleigh RFD was the CO, Major Fred Cobain was OC 8/13 VMR Squadron with Captain Lyle Jackel, 2iC.

The guidons of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse were added to those of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Light Horse at Regimental Headquarters at Simpson Barracks and remained there till 7 August 2005 when they were laid up at the Shrine in Melbourne. A replica set of the guidons coupled with the honour boards are the focus of the exhibition in the 8/13 VMR History Room at Simpson Barracks.



**Official Party outside City of Fitzroy Town Hall 3 May 1992 awaiting the 4/19 Prince of Wales's Light Horse having just received the Freedom of the City from Mayor Angela Ireland.**



**Lieutenant Colonel Peter Fernleigh RFD leading the recently linked Regiment past the Fitzroy Town Hall 3 May 1992. Captain Lyle Jackel third from left.**