

ARMI WANTOKS JOURNAL

Vol 1, 2011

The Journal of the Queensland teachers who served in Papua New Guinea in the Royal Australian Army Educational Corps from 1966 to 1973.

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Hello All,

This is our first Armi Wantoks Journal for this year and there is much of interest to Chalkies in this volume.

Our main article is a piece written by Andrew Dalziel. Andrew lives in Melbourne and was posted to the Military Cadet School in Lae for his Chalkies service (1971/72). This is an important article as we have had very little information about the role of the Chalkies there. I trust you will enjoy this excellent account.

Ian and Greg

NEWS

1. I have been delighted to have met up with Tristan Moss in Canberra, recently. Tristan is a PhD student at the Australian National University who is researching the experiences of Australian soldiers in PNG in the lead up to independence in 1975. I have set out below the details of the project as supplied by Tristan, to give us all a clear idea of the scope of this study.

‘This project will document and analyse the experiences of Australian servicemen in PNG in the lead up to and after independence in 1975. In doing so, it will analyse three key aspects of the Australian presence. First, it will focus on the individual level of Australian involvement, asking how the Australian defence forces trained, led, advised and interacted with their Papua New Guinea counterparts. Second, the study will place this analysis within the wider context, asking how Australia’s lengthy role in PNG was shaped by and in turn shaped Australian efforts elsewhere as well as how the military as an institution was affected. Finally, the thesis will compare the Australian role in PNG, in particular the effort after 1975, with similar Australian involvement in other countries e.g. Malaysia.’



Tristan Moss

Tristan is very interested in the work of the National Service teachers and is planning to visit Brisbane later in the year to interview as many Chalkies as possible.

We will keep you posted on the planning for this.

A special thanks to Greg Ivey who first connected with Tristan in this regard.

2. ANZAC DAY

The Brisbane Anzac Day march will be held on the Easter Monday this year. The secretary/treasurer of the PNG Ex-servicemen's Association (PIB, NGIB, HQ,PIR), Kev Horton, has spent some time finalising the details of the involvement of this association. The latest organisational information from Kev is as follows:

- the parade starts at 10 am
- aim to be there by 9.30 am
- the AGM of the Association will be held at the Geebung-Zillmere RSL after the march (approx 12.45 pm)
- more information will be available closer to the day
- Chalkies intending to march should let Kev know at lindyhorton@hotmail.com

THE MILITARY CADET SCHOOL (LAE)

By Andrew Dalziel (PNG 1971/72)

The Military Cadet School (MCS) in Lae was established in the 1960's as the initial officer training school for PNG officer cadets. Cadets entered the school having either successfully completed Year 10 at high school or having already shown leadership qualities as NCOs in the PNG forces. The age at entry of cadets was between 17 and 23 years, the variation largely depending on their means of entry.

The MCS OC was an Australian infantry major who was assisted by other training staff including a PNG lieutenant and several NCOs. In 1972, the educational side of the school consisted of a RAAEC captain (Ken Jorgensen) who was a regular army soldier and six National Servicemen,

one of whom was a second lieutenant who had completed the officer training course at Scheyville in NSW. The other five were sergeants from the 1/71 National Service intake. All of the educational instructors had teaching qualifications and most were university graduates.



MCS Chalkies in 1972 (Andrew is second from left).

A primary focus of the MCS was to enhance the cadet's existing educational skills and knowledge to enable them to cope with the intensive one-year officer training course at Portsea in Australia. Cadets spent 18 months at the Military Cadet School, 6 months in each of the junior, intermediate and senior classes. There were 15-20 cadets in each class with approximately 50 cadets in total at MCS. Having successfully completed this course they then proceeded to Portsea to hopefully complete their officer training course and graduate as a second lieutenant. As with any fairly intense cadet training programme, they were constantly assessed and at any time could be exited from the MCS and of course, Portsea.

Given the focus was on improving their education skills, cadets spent four days per week in the classroom and one day per week on military training. They studied four subjects - English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. I taught the latter which was interesting as it involved some conceptual work on topics such as democracy and communism. The classrooms were very good as the buildings were new, clean and light. The pattern for a normal week was interrupted from time to time when one or more of the cadet classes 'went bush' for military/endurance training. At these times, in addition to the military instructors who led these activities, the education instructors who taught the classes concerned, went bush as well.

I taught the senior and junior classes and there were two significant occasions when I went bush with them.

1. Wau-Salamaua walk. This was a forced march from Wau in the highlands to Salamaua in the northern coast of New Guinea. It had to be completed in five days to replicate the feat of World War 2 troops. Although we were not being shot at, it was still very physically demanding. Superficially, one might think you would be going downhill all the way but in reality, we spent four days walking up mountains and valleys and then dropped down some 1200 metres in the last five or six kilometres to the coast. Points of interest included the inability to take photos for much of the time because of the tropical canopy restricting the amount of light, walking carefully and quietly for 500 metres across a rock fall which disappeared down the side of the mountain at a very steep gradient, receiving a great welcome from isolated villagers who would only see white people rarely and, near Salamaua, Japanese war graves. We spent a pleasant day at Salamaua resting and recuperating and then returned to Lae by a military transport vessel.



MCS Cadets on Wau-Salamaua walk.



2. Madang for tactical bush manoeuvres. The native Papua New Guineans were very skilful in their own bush environment. The Madang exercise, as I remember it, was an infantry training exercise based on the standard training methods for tropical warfare. Chalkies spent much of the time acting as enemy under the command of a PNG lieutenant. On one memorable occasion, he led us at night, in pitch black, some 800 metres through the rainforest to where the cadets were in a defensive position and obviously tired from the day's activities and nodding off to sleep. The only way we could move forward was to hold hands as we could see absolutely nothing. However, with more highly-developed senses and bush instinct, the lieutenant knew exactly where both we and the cadets were. When we were near the cadets we opened fire on instruction. When they returned the fire, we were astonished to find the nearest one was no more than 5 metres away. How our lieutenant managed to navigate through the jungle in those conditions had to be experienced to be believed.

Other Activities:

1. Each year, the Highland Show was held alternating between Goroka and Mt Hagen and the cadets always attended as it was a cultural awareness raising activity. In 1972, the show was held in Goroka and we accompanied the cadets driving up the beautiful Markham Valley from Lae on the Highlands Highway - the longest road in PNG. The show was an interesting cultural event for all concerned as many different Highland tribes attended and there were a variety of activities over the weekend.

2. One mid-week afternoon, the OC of the MCS whose father fought in PNG in World War 2 and who was interested in military history, announced that he was taking a four-wheel drive trip into the hills surrounding the barracks to look for military relics. Any one of the staff who wanted to accompany him could do so. Armed with maps, he had pinpointed the area where he believed we would find a lot of Japanese material and he was absolutely right. The area we went to was only an hour or so from the barracks. We drove as far as we could and then walked. When we reached the designated area, the instruction was to dig. The digging was quite easy and the amount of gear we unearthed in a very confined area in no more than an hour, was astonishing - helmets, weapons, regimental badges, food canisters etc. This indicated that many Japanese had perished in the immediate area having been pushed back by the Australians and lacking food and supplies. I think an American parachute regiment had also landed nearby to help finish them off. I took an amount of material back to my

room including a Japanese marine's helmet and it is to my great regret that I left it there and did not bring it back to Australia.

3. The mess. The sergeants' mess was an interesting experience for young national servicemen who received privileges it took regular soldiers years to obtain. Considering the situation, we were accepted well by the regulars, most of whom were considerably older than us and in one or two cases, were World War 2 veterans. I also had a local native named Festi who was my wash-iron boy. We had to use them and pay them the standard rate of \$2 a week. He was a lovely fellow and presented me with a bilum bag, which the natives use to carry various items in, at the airport when I was leaving.

I had a wonderful experience in PNG at the MCS which although I may not have realised it at the time, was one highlight of my life. I often wonder what happened to the cadets who went through MCS during my time there and how many had successful careers in the PNG forces after independence.



1972 MCS Cadets. Sgt Andrew Dalziel centre rear.

