

## **Agricultural Education at 2 PIR**

Agricultural Education was carried out at only one location in Papua New Guinea - Moem Barracks, Wewak. Since this has now come to an end, I feel that I could contribute something worthwhile to the records of RAAEC by giving an outline of the course in my time, 1972-74.

Agricultural Education at Moem began as a three months course incorporating more practical and field work than actual classroom study. It was designed to cater for older soldiers who were close to discharge and required some additional training to help them settle back into civilian life and to pass on some of their agricultural knowledge to other member of their clans or villages. As part of the activity a small demonstration farm was set up by the soldiers incorporating pigs, poultry and ducks. Talapia fish, from the Sepik were introduced with the idea of utilising piggery waste but this proved impractical as the fishpond was far too small. The conceiver of this idea is commemorated in the name of the fishpond "Trout Lake".

The course gradually changed to two months full-time study in which practical and theory work were evenly divided. Students of slightly higher educational level were nominated and this, together with the instructors' growing knowledge of Pidgin, allowed a faster rate of progress. In addition to these changes, the demonstration farm was expanded greatly by cutting down and burning (in true slash and burn style) the rainforest surrounding the piggery. An automatic watering system was set up to include the piggery and additional poultry houses which were constructed by students as a part of practical training. Stock numbers were increased from about 25 hens to over 200 and at times up to 400; pigs from 4 sows to 12 and ducks (despite snakes and lizards) from 3 to about 30. For additional instruction and area beautification, a comprehensive nursery of local ornamentals, shrubs and trees was set up. As many vegetables as could be grown locally were grown in the area reclaimed from the rainforest. These included ginger, kau kau, vanilla, soya beans, tomatoes, taro, yams, corn, pineapples and peanuts.

Although small, and at no time capable of supporting more than a few people, the demonstration farm showed, I feel, the potential for this kind of activity within the Defence Force of Papua New Guinea. The piggery itself was making approximately 100-150.....per month at no cost to the unit since scraps from the Messes, supplemented by food grown at the farm, was used to feed the pigs.

The fact that resources from within the Defence Force can be used for this type of activity will become increasingly important in future years as Papua New Guinea must begin to finance (and feed) her own forces. A peace-time Army could provide a fair proportion of its own food, both protein and carbohydrate-type foods (i.e. meat and vegies such as kau kau, taro, yams and bananas) through its own activities and could well be considered in efforts to reduce the costs of running the Defence Force of Papua New Guinea.

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