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CHAPTER 6

5TH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

A BRIEF HISTORY

On 5 Nov 65, 5 RAR held its inauguration parade which was inspected by the Minister for the Army, Dr Forbes. Present on this parade were 250 National Servicemen from the first intake who had marched into the Battalion to complete corps training.

Early in 1966, the Government announced that 5 RAR was to serve in South Vietnam, as one of the two battalions of 1 ATF. After an intensive training period, including jungle training at Canungra, 5 RAR marched through Sydney on 21 Apr 66, and departed by air and HMAS SYDNEY for South Vietnam. The Battalion had the first National Servicemen ever to serve overseas.

After landing at Vung Tau Beach, in-country training preceded the first operation. In Operation Hardihood, which began on 24 May 66, 5 RAR cleared and secured the area known as Nui Dat, the site of the 1 ATF Base Area. The Battalion was under command of 173 (US) Bde (Airborne) during this operation.

During the first tour of active service 5 RAR participated in 31 operations. Nine cordon and search operations were also conducted by the Battalion in villages in Phuoc Tuy province, the Battalion developing techniques in this type of operation that were to be accepted and used throughout the Australian Army. An additional seven operations of company size were undertaken with 6 RAR.

Awards for gallantry earned in 1966/67 included one DSO, three MCs, two MMs, one BEM and 19 MIDs. Casualties suffered by the Battalion were 25 killed and 79 wounded.

5 RAR established a comfortable base camp in the Ap An Phu rubber plantation at Nui Dat, naming most of the roads after soldiers killed in operations. The Battalion handed the camp over to 7 RAR before returning to a tumultuous welcome in Sydney on 12 Mar 67.

In Nov 67, 5 RAR began in preparations for a second tour of service in South Vietnam.

With the exception of 80 old members of 5 RAR the Battalion was re-formed and spent 1968 training at Holsworthy, Tianjara, Gospers, Singleton, Canungra and Shoalwater Bay. Battle PT became a highlight of 5 RAR training in 1968 and soldiers will long remember the daily battle-equipped runs, obstacle, rope

and assault courses. It was during 1968 that the unit forged lasting links with the 2/5 Battalion Association (who presented the bronze plaque in front of Bn HQ) and the Rats of Tobruk Association.

After a farewell parade at Holsworthy, reviewed by the Deputy Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John McEwen on 24 Jan 69, the Battalion once again departed by air and HMAS SYDNEY for South Vietnam.

During 1969/70, 5 RAR was faced with a different type of war from that met on the first tour. This year was characterised by continuous battles with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong enemy entrenched in bunkers. In excess of 10,000 bunkers were located and destroyed during the year. Some 2,000 of those located had been occupied by an enemy armed with rocket propelled grenades, claymores and AK 47 automatic rifles.

The year was also marked by the 'mine battle'. Over 100 casualties were suffered by 5 RAR on enemy planted mines, especially the M16 in the Dat Do - Long Hai area.

Almost four months were spent on operations outside of Phuoc Tuy province in Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Binh Tuy. Some of the most successful operations were conducted in the northern Hat Dich area in Bien Hoa province where over 100 enemy main force soldiers, mainly of 274 Regiment, were killed. Other notable operations were the capture of Military Region 7 HQ in Apr 69 in Long Khanh and the Battle of Binh Ba against a Battalion of 33 Regiment in Jun 69. D Coy 5 RAR played the leading role in both of these actions.

Pacification operations were undertaken for one month in Jun/Jul 69 around the town of Dat Do and B Coy trained an ARVN Battalion on the Horseshoe feature in Aug.

The battalion killed 353 enemy in 1969/70 and captured large quantities of arms and rice. The Battalion suffered 25 soldiers killed and 250 wounded.

Awards to the Battalion for this period include one DSO, three MCs, two DCMs, three MMs and 10 MIDs.

The Battalion was once again welcomed home by a memorable reception during a march through the city on 12 Mar 70, after its return aboard HMAS SYDNEY.

After leave and reorganisation the Battalion started platoon and company training. In Oct 70, B Coy went to New Zealand and participated in Exercise 'Tasman-Nine'.

During 1971 the Battalion continued its training and also provided support to Exercise 'Monara Mall', a shakedown exercise for 4 RAR prior to its departure for South Vietnam.

The training in early 1972 concentrated on physical fitness and endurance. The Battalion started limited warfare training

with an emphasis on night training.

This training continued well into 1973 and in Mar 73 the Battalion sailed on HMAS SYDNEY to New Zealand for the Tasman Exercise 'Jack Horner'. In Sep 73 the Battalion took part in Exercise 'Dark Moon', a 1 TF limited warfare night exercise, conducted in the Cobar region of western NSW. In Nov 73 the Battalion was reinforced by C Coy 1 RNZIR and took part in phase two of Exercise 'Temple Tower' which was held in the Townsville area.

5 RAR was linked with 7 RAR at Tobruk Lines Holsworthy on 3 Dec 73 to form 5/7 RAR.

Appendixes:

1. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment - Theatres of Service
2. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment - Commanding Officers
3. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment - Regimental Sergeant Majors
4. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Allied Regiment - The Welsh Guards
5. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment - Mascot
6. 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment - Miscellaneous Information

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THEATRES OF SERVICE

FROM	TO	COUNTRY	BASE	BDE/DIV/TF
Mar 65	Apr 66	Australia	Holsworthy	1 Div
Apr 66	May 67	Vietnam	Nui Dat	1 ATF
May 67	Feb 69	Australia	Holsworthy	10 TF/1 Div
Feb 69	Feb 70	Vietnam	Nui Dat	1 ATF
Feb 70	Apr 72	Australia	Holsworthy	10 TF/1 Div
Apr 72	Dec 73	Australia	Holsworthy	1 TF/1 Div

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COMMANDING OFFICERS

01 Mar 65 - 31 Aug 65	LTCOL P.H.G. Oxley
01 Sep 65 - 17 Nov 67	LTCOL J.A. Warr, DSO
27 Nov 67 - 30 Jun 70	LTCOL C.N. Kahn, DSO
13 Jul 70 - 13 Sep 70	LTCOL G.O. Thompson
14 Sep 70 - 13 Jan 72	LTCOL J.A. Hooper
14 Jan 72 - 02 Dec 73	LTCOL K.E. Newman

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REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJORS

Mar 65 - Jan 66	WO1 F.J. Glynn-Armstrong
Jan 66 - Oct 67	WO1 L.T. Foale
Oct 67 - Jan 68	WO2 R.R. Burns
Jan 68 - Feb 70	WO1 C.R. Vagg
Feb 70 - Jul 70	WO2 R.G. Armitage, BEM
Jul 70 - May 71	WO1 R.C. Wormald
May 71 - Dec 73	WO1 J. McFadzean

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ALLIED REGIMENT - THE WELSH GUARDS

Origin

The expansion of the British Army for the conduct of the 1914-18 war provided an opportunity to fill the complement of Regiments of Foot Guards identified with the various countries of the United Kingdom, by the inclusion of a Welsh Regiment of Foot Guards and on 26 February 1915 a Royal Warrant was issued for the formation of the Regiment.

South Wales had been the recruiting area for the Grenadier Guards but permission was given for an appeal to be made for all Welshmen serving in the Brigade of Guards to transfer to the new Regiment. So ready was the response that the Welsh Guards were able to mount the King's Guard in London for the first time on St David's Day, 1st March 1915.

Battle Honours

The following Battle Honours are those that are carried on the Queen's and Regimental Colours:

Loos, Ginchy, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, Pilckem, Poelcappelle, Cambrai 1917 and 1918, Bapaume 1918, Canal du Nord, Sambre.

Defence of Arras, Boulogne 1940, Mount Pincon, Brussels, Hechtel, Fondouk, Hamman Lif, Monte Ornito, Monte Piccolo, Battaglia.

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MASCOT

1. On 1 Mar 67, the Director of Taronga Zoological Park Trust in Strahan, presented a Sumatran tiger cub as a mascot. It was named Quintus and now holds the rank of WO2 (No TF005). An equivalent cub (of manageable age) is normally present on Battalion ceremonial occasions. Quintus is quartered at the Taronga Zoological Park where a plaque indicating his association with the Battalion is displayed. An annual subscription of \$500 is paid to the Park from the Battalion's Regimental Fund. Quintus is now held in trust by 5/7 RAR.

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MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Battalion 'Firsts'. Shortly after the formation of the Battalion 250 National Servicemen were accepted direct from recruit training for corps training. When 5 RAR left for service in Vietnam in Apr 66, it was the first time in Australian history that soldiers other than volunteers had accompanied a unit departing for service outside Australia and its territories.

The Tiger Emblem. 5 RAR has been known as the 'Tiger Battalion' since its raising, stemming mainly from the fact that black was used in conjunction with the Battalion colour, gold. The presentation of the tiger mascot in 1967 confirmed this unofficial title.

Battalion Associations. A close association has been engendered with the 2/5th Battalion Association and the Rats of Tobruk Association of NSW.

Memorial Park. It is customary to hold a Memorial Parade and service in honour of deceased members of the Battalion on 21 Feb annually.

5 RAR was linked with 7 RAR at Holsworthy on 3 Dec 73 to form 5/7 RAR.