

PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES

UNIT HISTORY

Apr 53 - Oct 55.

by

Lt Col T.W. YOUNG

Commanding Officer.

INTRODUCTION.

The early vicissitudes of the Papua and New Guinea Volunteer Rifles have been described adequately in a Unit History, produced by Lt Col N.F. Maddern, covering the period from the formation of the Unit in 1950 to Mar 1953. The purpose of this paper is to place on record a brief summary of activities and developments from Mar 53 to Oct 55.

PARENT UNIT:

Lt Col Maddern's history gives some details of the formation of the parent unit, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. No comprehensive history is available, but at the instigation of the CO some notes were prepared by Lt Col J.C. Mullaly, a former Adjutant of NGVR. These notes are included as Appx A.

STAFF

Lt Col T.W. Young assumed command of PNGVR on 29 Apr 53 on the departure of Lt Col N.P. Maddern for Australia. The ARA staff position as at 30 Oct 55, and covering the period from Apr 53, is as follows:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Appointment</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Lt Col T.W. Young	CO	To be relieved by Lt Col J.K. Lynch in Nov 55.
Capt J.W. Burns	Adj/QM	Took over from Capt A.H. Lofts in Feb 55 who, in turn, took over from Capt S.T. Bendall in Aug 53.
WO2 Diggins R.	RSM	Posted as Instructor in Jan 53 and promoted RSM in Aug 54 vice WO1 Holding
WO2 Kennedy C.	RQMS	Relieved WO11 Needham in Mar 54.
WO2 Cairns G.D.	Instr	Arrived in 3 Feb 53.
WO2 Gardner	Instr	Posted from PIR in Nov 54, and took over from WO11 Shillaker A.W.S. in Lae
Sgt Moody J.C.	Instr	Arrived 10 Nov 64, and posted to Rabaul in Feb 55.
S/Sgt Mathews N.P.	Ord Room Sgt	Arrived Jan 54. Previous Ord Room Sgt was S/Sgt Jennings.
Sgt Marshall P	Int Sgt	Took over from Sgt Efford in Mar 54.
Cpl Eberle K.R.	Tpt NCO	Arrived 11 Mar 55 and took over from Cpl Syrett.
L/Cpl Heath S.	Storeman Inf	Since 19 Apr 52. Went South on leave and reposting Sep 55.
Pte Patterson	Storeman Inf	Arrived in Apr 55 and posted to Samarai.
Pte Bourke	Storeman Inf	Arrived 26 Jun 55. Pte Mathner F. departed Mar 55 Pte Anderson departed Nov 54.

While the above staff represents the full establishment of the Unit and, except for storemen, has been reasonably complete over the past two years, several members are cross-posted to HQ Area Comd. The Unit has suffered as a result and possible expansion has been hampered due to insufficient staff.

At the present time cross-postings are as follows:-

- (a) WO2 Diggins, RSM PNGVR cross-posted to HQ Area Comd as Chief Clerk. This has meant that not once, during the past two and a half years has it been possible to send the RSM on a tour of outcentres.
- (b) WO2 Cairns, Instructor, PNGVR, has been cross-posted to HQ Area Comd as CQMS. It has been necessary, at times, to call on WO Cairns for instructional duties, but, for the greater part of the time HQ Coy Port Moresby has been without an R instructor.
- (c) S/Sgt Mathews, Orderly Room Sgt, PNGVR, performs the duties of Unit Pay Representative for all units in Murray Barracks and, until recently, for PIR European personnel.
- (d) Sgt Marshall, Int Sgt, PNGVR performs intelligence duties for both HQ which is quite a satisfactory arrangement
- (e) Cpl Eberle, Vehicle Mechanic, PNGVR, performs the duties of Tpt NCO for both units.

ESTABLISHMENT:

The establishment of PNGVR is most unsatisfactory and is at the present time being reviewed and resubmitted. The following facts are relevant:-

- (a) The present CO does not subscribe to his predecessor's view that the CO should be a CMF member. To maintain interest, inspect training and generally administer command it is very necessary that the CO should pay regular visits to all outcentres. As this involves travelling between Port Moresby, Samarai, Lae, Madang and Rabaul, it is doubtful if a CMF CO could be found who could spare the time or leave his civilian employment to carry out these duties.
- (b) The provision of three instructors for a unit which already has five outcentres throws an added burden on CMF instructors and tends to lower the standard of training in the unit.
- (c) No General Duties personnel are available to the unit for maintenance and cleanliness of training depots and areas, handling of stores and associated tasks.
- (d) No drivers are included in the establishment, despite the fact that eleven vehicles are on charge. This, in addition to the inconvenience caused, has seriously affected the maintenance of vehicles.

ORGANISATION.

The organisation of PNGVR at the present time is as follows:-

HQ and HQ Coy, less one PI	- Port Moresby
One PI	- Samarai
A Coy, less one PI	- Lae
One PI	- Madang
B Coy	- Rabaul

POTENTIAL:

Lt Col Maddern has described in his report the closing of the Wau Centre. In the latter part of 1953 Cpl Nielsen, who was a member of A Coy, Lae and a Sub-Inspector of Police in his everyday employment, was transferred to Wau and set about reviving interest in PNGVR. The CO visited the area and also paid a visit to Bulolo. While the number of eligible vales in Wau totalled only about 10 the position in Bulolo was much more promising with approximately 40 potential members. Shift work presented some difficulties, but they were not insurmountable. However, the project was abandoned when not a single R of O officer could be found to take charge of the platoon. This area should be kept in mind as a possible

Other areas in the Territory have been investigated and it is considered that the potential for new centres is as follows:-

Kavieng.	Original interest was high but when actual signatures were sought the numbers did not warrant the formation of a platoon. It was proposed that this should be a platoon of B Coy.
Kokopo.	A Section could easily be formed in this area. For that Rabaul has a permanent Instructor. He could hold night parades on a night of the week other than the Rabaul parade night. Weekend training could be combined with the remainder of B Coy.
Wewak	At the present time the numbers available would probably not exceed sixteen. A possibility for the future.
Goroka	Several interested members and the position is being investigated as the present time. In a few years this will be one of the wealthiest areas in the Territory.
Minj	A request has recently been received for information relative to forming a sub-unit. The position is being investigated and offers decided possibilities. The area is somewhat isolated.
Sogeri	Some interest has been shown by residents in this area but it is doubtful if the interest could be maintained.

A further potential in the Territory is in the enlistment of Chinese, Malaya, persons of Mixed Races and Natives. Over the past two and a half years continued requests have been referred to higher authority but no change in policy appears likely at this juncture. In studying the potential of the unit in the Territory it is important to consider the availability of staff, their ability to cope with the additional responsibilities, and the chances of increases in establishment.

TRAINING

The programme of parades, as introduced by Lt Col Maddern has been continued, namely one-night parade of three hours duration each week and one weekend parade, from 1400 hrs Saturday to 1700 hrs Sunday, each month. Parade nights and weekends vary in each centre to suit local conditions and to allow visits by staff. Because of the varying conditions in each centre, it was considered impracticable to produce a satisfactory training syllabus at HQ which would be acceptable to all sub-units. Instead, a training directive and block syllabus are issued and sub-units are responsible for producing their own detailed syllabus.

The phases of war promulgated in AHQ training directives have been followed but emphasis has, naturally enough, been on jungle warfare. The continually changing population makes continuity of training most difficult and there are invariably a number of members undergoing recruit training while the remainder are doing more advanced work.

STRENGTH STATE

The combined strength of the unit in Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul, was in April 53, in the vicinity of 160 all ranks. It was soon apparent however, that a number of these were non-effective and in the three months May/Jul 53, some 53 members in this category were discharged. With increased recruiting activity and the opening, during the past two years of new centres at Madang and Samarai, the figure of approximately 160 has been maintained.

ACCOMMODATION:

PORT MORESBY

Accommodation for HQ and HQ Coy has at no stage been adequate. Unfortunately, the Q store was destroyed by fire in Sep 54 which further aggravated the position. However, in planning the new Q Store an opportunity has been taken to provide office accommodation for the whole of HQ staff. The Training Depot will then be handed over to HQ Coy.

LAE

The large iron building, situated opposite Emery House was of little use for training purposes as no electric light was available. To repeated enquiries the statement was made that there was already too great a drain on the existing power and that it would not be possible to install electric light until a new transformer was built. As a result the building was little used. The Administration, on the pretext that the Army was not using the building, proposed to take it over and convert it to a joinery shop. The CO then inquired of the Administration how they proposed to run the shop without power and was informed that power was to be connected. The unit reasserted its right to the building, the power was connected, funds were allocated for repairs and painting, and a very satisfactory Training Depot resulted. Some repairs have been effected to Emery House and it is quite livable. The greatest difficulty is that the Coy office and Q Store are in the dwelling. At the present moment estimates are being obtained to partition off portion of the Training Depot to provide these services.

MADANG

PI HQ is established at the Police Station and on removal of Government stores to another portion of the town a shed was made available as a Q Store. Training was carried out originally at the local school but moved later to a large native type building which is combined hall and picture theatre for the town. An area has now been made available by the Administration at Manus and is to be erected on the site. No ARA member is posted to this area and no accommodation is available. The Instructor from Lae visits the centre for weekend parades.

SAMARAI

The platoon was first housed in the Police Station and training was conducted in the prisoner's exercise yard which was floodlit. With the change of PI Comds the HQ was moved to a building belonging to the Co-operative Society. An ARA Storeman is stationed at Samarai and is accommodated at the local boarding house.

RABAU

Pressure has continued to be applied to remove the PNGVR from the Training Depot in Queen Elizabeth Park. While no immediate move is contemplated an application was made for a suitable place of ground while they were still available. An area of approximately two acres has been set aside for defence purposes. It is hoped that the first building on the new land will be the Instructor's residence. Following a long period when it was not possible to post an Instructor to the area because of the lack of accommodation, a private house is now rented on a personal basis by the present Instructor, Sgt Moody. This has made a great difference to the standard of the Unit.

CMF PERSONNEL

Early in the period under review Maj (LtCol) R.K. Wilson was transferred from Rabaul to Port Moresby. He was appointed 2IC of the Unit.

The officering of PNGVR has, with some exceptions, presented considerable difficulties. The standard of the officers is good, but once again the changing population has had its effect on the efficiency of the unit. Company Commanders for the period under review have been as follows:-

- HQ Coy - Maj T.C. Brockington, who was transferred to the R of O on 5 Jul 55 and whose place is to be taken by Maj D.H.C. Lloyd,
- A Coy - Maj H. Thompson MC, who was retired in Jun 55. No replacement Coy Comd has yet been found.
- B Coy - Maj C.W. McFarlane, MC, who was transferred to the R of O in Jan 54 and whose place was taken by Maj D. Barrett.

Independent sub-units have been commanded as follows:-

- Samarai PI: Lt F.G. Hoeter from 8 Dec 53 to 16 Feb 55
- Lt O. Graham From 17 Feb 55 to 23 Jun 55
- Lt Barker From 24 Jun 55.

- Madang PI: Lt P. Harbeck.

The remaining officer on strength as as Sep 55 are as follows:-

- HQ Coy - Lt H.S. Kerr
- Lt P.A. Broman
- Lt J. R. Wild
- Lt R.B.M. Digby
- Lt W.J. McMahon
- Lt V.B. McNeil
- Lt T.F. Warren
- Lt N.S. Garvey
- Lt P.G. Hollingsworth
- Lt L. Tomkies
- A Coy - Lt W.R. Harvey-Hall
- Lt R.M. McNaught (with Madang PI)
- Lt R.H. Sexton
- B Coy - Lt F.G. Hoeter
- Lt J.K. Dowling
- Kt F.W.G. Wilson

RIFLE RANGES

The rifle range at Port Moresby has recently been enlarged to eight targets. Regular shoots are conducted by PNGVR. Maintenance of the range is a difficulty and the unit is indebted to PIR for providing the necessary manpower for grass cutting. During a visit in Aug 55 the CRE, E Comd, was not satisfied with the location or safety limits of the range and a new area is to sought in the Taurama area.

Progress on the range at Lae was exceedingly slow. Wet weather made work impossible and it was not until Dec 54 that the range was ready for use. The area is a good one, though access is through the prison compound. There are several defects in construction which are in the process of being rectified.

The unit at Rabaul has the use of a very poor range at Vulcan or a two-target range at Kokopo. Provision of a range has been hampered by the proposal to establish an outstation of PIR at Rabaul, which would have its own classification range. Only the determined efforts of the present Coy Comd have ensured that range practices are fired on the existing ranges.

A 400 yard range has been constructed at Madang using combined Rifle Club and PNGVR manpower. No Army funds have yet been spent on the range. It is badly in need on concreting, as the heavy rainfall causes considerable damage to the existing mounds.

Two attempts have been made to establish a range at Samarai. The first at Kwiaro, which was quite successful until the nature of the ground changed and the range area became a swamp. Small range was then prepared at Rogea, but as this is a local picnic ground some opposition was encountered from the Administration. However, the District Commissioner, Mr Healy, agreed to the use of the area by PNGVR not more than one weekend every two months and in the meantime is making arrangements to clear an area for a range adjacent to a new DC3 Airstrip which is being built on the mainland at Loani.

An indoor miniature range is in use at Rabaul and further miniature ranges are in course of construction at Port Moresby and Lae.

MULLALY TROPHY

In Aug 54 Lt Col J.C. Mullaly forwarded to Co PNGVR a cheque for 50 Pounds to provide a trophy for competition between sub-units. Detailed instructions were issued by HQ PNGVR covering the competition, which is to cover small arms training and physical fitness. The competition began in Jan 55, the first winner to be decided in Jun 55. B Coy, Rabaul were the winners for 1955. Competitions in future will be on a yearly basis from Jul to Jun. The trophy is a Punch Bowl, standing on a plinth on which are mounted small shields for annual inscription.

CEREMONIAL

On 2 Jun 53, CO PNGVR commanded the Coronation Parade at Ela Beach oval. The parade consisted of armed detachments from the RAN (HMAS Macquarie), Pacific Islands Regiment, Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary and PNGVR. Representatives were also present from Ex-Servicemen's Association, Church of England Men's Society, Student Teachers, Native Marine Detachment, Scouts and Cubs, Guides and Brownies, European and Native School Children and the Hula Cricket Team. Approximately 2,000 European and 15,000 native spectators were present at the parade.

In Oct 55, His Excellency the Governor-General, Field Marshall Sir William Slim, GCB, GCMG, GSE, DSO, MC, visited the Territory and unveiled the Cross of Sacrifice at each of the War Cemeteries at Bomana, Lae and Bita Paka. PNGVR troops in Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul took part in each of the services.

Queen's Birthday Parade in Jun 54 was commanded by Lt Col A.O. Baldwin, MC, CO PIR. CO PNGVR joined the Administrator's party on the dias. Unfortunately PNGVR personnel did not take part in this parade. Queen's Birthday Parade, 1955 was commanded by Lt Col T.W. Young, CO PNGVR. Contingents from PIR, RP&NGC and PNGVR took part in the parade.

KOKODA TRAIL

Apart from bivouacs and Easter training on this end of the Kokoda Trail no concerted effort has been made on the Trail except for a party of four led by Sgt Power, who crossed the Trail to Kokoda in five days, at Xmas 1953. The party trained vigorously for the walk and rejected many members whom they considered would slow their progress.

ANNUAL CAMP

One of the greatest disadvantages in training is that the unit has no opportunity of concentrating and carrying out Battalion training. On actual strengths this is hardly a possibility, but collective training would be a great boost to interest and recruiting.

At Easter 1955, for the first time, two sub-units were able to train together, when the Madang PI was flown in to Nadzab and joined the balance of A Coy who had moved from Lae by road. A very good bivouac resulted and the possibility is being explored of concentrating the whole unit at Nadzab for Easter, 1956. It is hoped that the period might be extended to at least ten days.

ENLISTMENT OF NON-EUROPEANS

Since early 1953 repeated enquiries have been made to allow the enlistment of non-europeans in PNGVR. Any change of policy is naturally bound up with the role of PNGVR. A brief review of the situation throughout the Territory as at Sep 55 is as follows:-

Chinese – Some 2,500 resident in the Rabaul district from whom it is expected 50-100 would enlist if permitted. Smaller populations in Lae and Madang which would each produce a number of recruits.

Malays. - A request from ten members in Lae to be permitted to enlist. A number in Rabaul and Madang would enlist if allowed to do so.

Mixed Races – These are mainly mixed European/Native blood. One qualification would have to be a European style of living and the other an educational standard sufficient to absorb instruction. Approx 20 persons in this category have applied in Port Moresby.

Natives - A request was received from Samarai for the formation of a native company of PNGVR. These natives were, in the main, well educated and occupying jobs with the Administration and trading concerns. They were not willing to enlist for full time duty with PIR, but wished to train on a CMF basis.

CONCLUSION.

It is desired to place on record the unit's appreciation of the excellent co-operation received from the Administration, the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary and the RSSAILA during the tenure of the office of the Commander, Lt Col T.W. Young.