

# THE DUNTROON SOCIETY

Newsletter 2/1997

October 1997

## Formation of the Duntroon Society

P.J. Day

An event which occurred nine months before the birth of the Duntroon Society deserves to be recorded even if only as a footnote to history. I cannot claim it as the moment of conception for, as Major General A.L. (Alan) Morrison (1945) wrote in *Newsletter 1/1980*, the idea of a Society was considered as early as 1920. However, the event which I shall describe almost certainly induced a birth earlier than might have been the case.

On Friday, 21 September 1979, the Commandant received a visit from three officers forming the 'DBD Study Team'. Their visit would probably be described by Alan Morrison as a shock rather than an event.

The DBD Study Team had its genesis in the controversy surrounding the establishment of the Australian Defence Force Academy or Casey University, as it was then called. Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Public Works had declined to support the project and this seemed only to increase the determination of the Prime Minister to force it through. In a time of dissension and uncertainty, the CGS decided that moving the RMC well away from Canberra would be in its own best interests. On 18 September 1979 he tasked three brigadiers to report to him as soon as possible on the way ahead.

Leader of the Team was Brigadier D.A. (David) Drabsch (1949), Deputy Chief of Operations at Army Office. The other members were Brigadier W.P. (Bill) Broderick (1949), Director General of Personnel Policy, and myself as Director General of Accommodation and Works. Grouping of the first letters of our family names gave rise to the unofficial title of the Study. But there was another reason for it. This amounted to a bad pun, almost certainly conceived by Bill Broderick, on the initials of the CGS, Lieutenant General D.B. Dunstan (1940).

One of the major issues of the Study was the system for pre-commissioning training. The CGS believed that 18 months was the minimum time to turn a civilian into a subaltern at the redesignated RMC. On the understanding that Academy graduates would have completed six months Army training during their three years of academic study, the RMC courses were planned to be 12 months long. Some special arrangements were therefore necessary for those entering the RMC direct. One suggestion put to us was for officer candidates to complete the recruit course at Kapooka, serve with regular units for three months and then commence their officer training at the RMC. In the event, the RMC course was devised as three six-month modules with the Academy graduates joining at the start of the second module.

The other major issue for the DBD Team was to recommend a new location for the RMC. The CGS believed that the RMC and the Land Warfare Centre could happily co-exist at Canungra

and a preliminary paper reconnaissance by the Team led to the same conclusion. A detailed site inspection was arranged for 24 to 26 September 1979. A plan to establish a Junior Wing of the Command and Staff College at Canungra was the cover for a visit at short notice by three brigadiers. But before the visit it was necessary to consult the Commandant, RMC.

Accordingly, on 21 September 1979 we were received by an hospitable but puzzled Commandant. As David Drabsch outlined our task, a range of emotions struggled in the Commandant for expression. However, his self control was admirable and he listened in silence. Much to our relief he fully appreciated that arguing for the status quo was not an option for us. We noted his views on the matters we had to consider until, finally, he expressed disappointment at the prospect of the RMC moving from Canberra. One of us, if not all three, suggested that if he wished to ask the CGS to reconsider the relocation he would do well to gather allies, serving as well as retired, to his cause.

The DBD Report was discussed at a meeting of the CGS' Advisory Committee on 7 December 1979. What-ever the outcome, it quickly became irrelevant because none of the proponents of the Defence Academy was prepared for it to be based on second-hand buildings at Duntroon.

Just two and a half months after Alan Morrison was briefed by the DBD Team, the Development Council of the Duntroon Society met in Canberra. Five months later, on 30 April 1980, the RMC Commandant briefed all Military District Commanders on progress with the formation of the Society. He mentioned that Portsea graduates may wish to join the Society in the longer term and distributed a Provisional Charter. Two months later the formation of the Duntroon Society was announced in *Newsletter 1/1980*.

In the first Newsletter there was no reference to the influence, if any, of the activities of the DBD Team on the decision to form the Society. At the time it would have been inappropriate, or worse, to do so. While it is dangerous to assume the truth of 'Post hoc, ergo propter hoc' in all cases, I feel sure that the threat of moving the RMC from Canberra at the very least hastened the formation of the Duntroon Society.

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*Major General P.J. Day, AO, entered the RMC on 14 February 1953 and graduated into the Royal Australian Engineers on 11 December 1956. His final posting was as Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy. He retired on 27 March 1990. He has contributed to earlier editions of the Newsletter.*

# The Tennis Party

R.W. Eastgate

“This function is organised for the benefit of Fourth Class, and is held in the First Term, normally on a Sunday. It is the first opportunity the new cadets have of meeting the young ladies of Canberra. The function extends over the whole day, with cadets and their partners participating in various activities including tennis, bowling and swimming. At night dinner is provided, followed by a dance at which music is provided by the College band. It is a most enjoyable day, and provides a welcome relief after the tensions of adapting to a new life at the College.” *ENOBSRA, Cadets' Handbook, AGPS, 1971.*

One of the favourite diversions of the Roman Empire was the practice of feeding Christians to the lions. This was done in the name of sport, but was a particularly popular form of public entertainment. It was heavily weighted in favour of the lions. The Duntroon equivalent of lion feeding in 1968 was the Tennis Party, during which an equally hapless Fourth Class was fed to a voracious pack of selected Canberra ladies.

The Tennis Party was both a College and a Canberra institution. It dated from the days when Canberra was a lot smaller and a lot more genteel than it was in the late nineteen sixties. Ostensibly it was an opportunity for the newly arrived Fourth Class cadets to be introduced to suitable eligible young ladies from Canberra society. Each cadet was required to invite a young lady to an afternoon of tennis and other diversions, to be followed by a buffet dinner and evening of dancing.

In the halcyon days of the Tennis Party, the venue was the gardens of Duntroon House, with its manicured lawns and carefully cultivated gardens, including the famous maze. Cadets and their partners actually played tennis, took high tea and strolled the College gardens under the discreet supervision of chaperones.

The Tennis Party traditionally occurred about week 12 on the College calendar and on a Sunday afternoon and evening. Week 12 was well within the 16-week no leave period before Fourth Class had attempted the Screed Test, a prerequisite to being allowed out on leave.

Since the vast majority of cadets had had no contact with anyone in Canberra, locating a partner was difficult. The Canberra cadets were invaluable in providing the names and addresses of suitable young ladies, and this was probably the most reliable method of finding a Tennis Party partner. The least reliable method was that of relying on one of the senior classes to provide the details of a potential partner. There was a list of names of Canberra ladies which was provided to unsuspecting Fourth Class. Most of the ladies had found their way on to this list by way of some defect in looks, personality or behaviour, or a combination of all three. Some, but not all, would have been shocked to know that they were on the list. And when it came to the actual party, some of the young ladies knew better than their hosts the format for the afternoon and evening's activities.

By 1968 tennis was no longer the popular diversion that it had once been. Few people actually played tennis at

the Tennis Party, although the programme had been little altered and still showed Fourth Class cadets and their partners as playing tennis between 1.00 pm, when the ladies arrived, and the evening meal.

In 1968, the maze had also disappeared. Cadet legend had it that it had been removed because a previous Commandant had been embarrassed to discover irrefutable evidence of illicit passion within its confines while showing it to some distinguished guests. The real reason probably had more to do with horticultural rather than moral degeneracy. Both the maze and the hedges which bordered the College parade ground had been removed, either through disease or old age, and then replanted. Both were undergoing a period of regeneration during my time as a cadet, and have now been restored to their original glory.

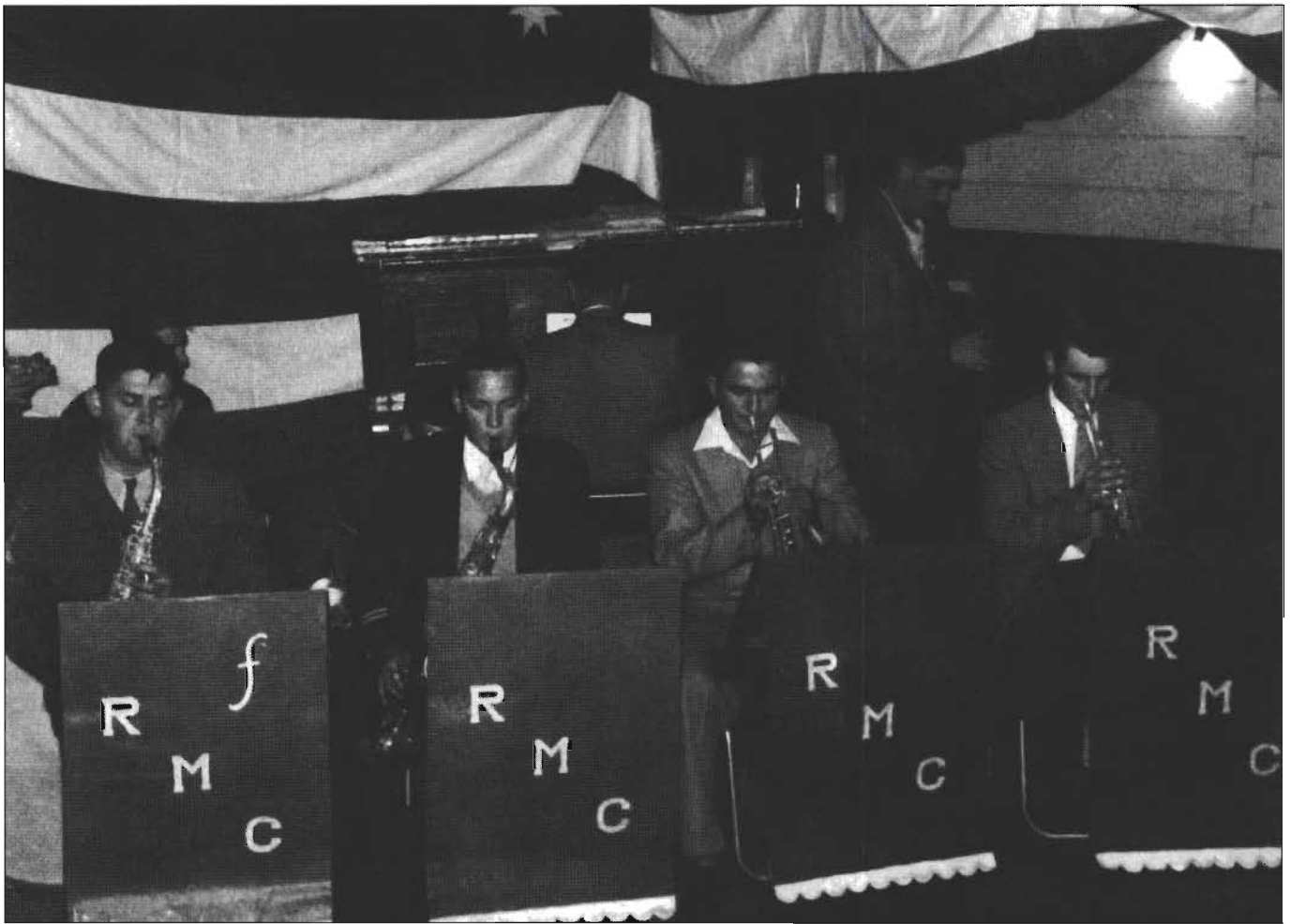
I had severe reservations about ringing an unknown female and inviting her to almost 12 hours of dubious entertainment. I procrastinated as long as I was able, but we were under tremendous pressure from the senior class cadets to have our partner arranged well in advance of the event. Attendance with a partner was compulsory, even for those unfortunate cadets who were repeating fourth class and who had attended the Tennis Party the year before. They, at least, had had an opportunity of meeting young ladies and were not necessarily in the position of being forced to take someone that they had never met.

I was provided with a name and a telephone number by one of the senior classmen, probably by the second class member of my section, whose base sense of humour was limited to whoopee cushions and leaving tacks on the pews in chapel. The Fourth Class in my section was from Canberra, M.R.(Mick) Roseblade, but I do not remember that he was any help in finding a partner.

Having procrastinated as long as I was able, I eventually faced the inevitability of having to ring a total stranger and inviting her to an afternoon of tennis. Despite having grown up in a home which boasted a lawn tennis court and despite several attempts at tennis coaching, I still did not do tennis. I was equally recalcitrant about ball room dancing.

On the ground floor in the foyer of the barrack block in which I lived there was a public telephone. It was the old black variety with A and B buttons which one pressed at the command of the operator, or when the called party answered. I was in the phone booth calling the young lady, whose name I had been given, when my 'grandfather', R.C. (Bob) Pothof (1965) chanced by. He immediately recognised the name and number and depressed the telephone cradle, cancelling the call. It appeared that I had been given the name of a lady who was a regular attendee at Tennis Parties and who was known to several classes of cadets as 'Big Red'. How he knew this I do not know, but his timely intervention was one of several favours that he voluntarily performed for me that year.

My confidence was severely shaken by this near miss with notoriety, for we had all heard of the supposedly fierce reputation of 'Big Red'. Partnering this Tennis



*The 'College band' listed as one of the attractions of the Tennis Party existed in a variety of forms. In 1956 it was an eight-piece dance band drawn from members of the RMC military band that had been established in April 1954. In this photograph however, the tall figure playing the bass violin is the RSM of the time, Warrant Officer Class 1 P.G. Steer. During the period described in The Tennis Party, the band had developed into a 'rock' group consisting of members of the Corps of Staff Cadets.*

Party legend would have attracted the unwelcome attentions of the senior cadets as well as the unwelcome advances of the young lady concerned. She apparently compounded matters by insisting on playing tennis.

The build up to the Tennis Party was intense. As the actual day drew nigh, a programme of individual preparation was instigated by second class, who bore the brunt of the responsibility for 'Fourth Class Training', also known as bastardisation. Legends of old Tennis Parties and Amazonian guests were dusted off.

It was not unknown for cadets ultimately to marry their Tennis Party partner. Indeed, more than any other achievement, the fact that one married the girl that one took to the Tennis Party would be cited above distinguished or gallant service as the most memorable milestone in one's career. It was not unknown, but it was rare. Most cadets had a very different experience and attendance at the Tennis Party was not always a pleasant experience for the ladies involved either.

Apart from the legendary list of names, Second Class were determined that each and every Fourth Class cadet would be in the peak of physical condition for the big event. This mainly consisted of regular supplements of Vegemite, which was known at the College as 'Crotch' and was reputed to have beneficial effects on the libido. When lightly spread on fresh buttered toast it is one of life's essential pleasures. When taken by the teaspoon or

desert spoon, it is vile. In the weeks and days leading up to the Tennis Party, the sight of Fourth Class cadets consuming vast quantities of Vegemite in the Cadets' Mess was a common sight.

The other most common form of preparation consisted of performing immense numbers of push-ups. These were, in any event, the most common form of unofficial summary punishment for Fourth Class for all sorts of minor infringements of the myriad written and unwritten rules which so dominated their existence. However, the number of push-ups awarded increased significantly as the Tennis Party approached, again for their alleged efficacy in improving one's libido.

Final preparation took place at around the lunch-time meal on the actual day of the Tennis Party. Dress for the Tennis Party was 'Rec'(recreation) Dress, which consisted of grey slacks, white shirt, College tie and blazer, known as a reefer jacket and black issue Army shoes. The jacket and trousers at least were tailor made. Most Fourth Class still sported the alarmingly short haircuts that they had received at Point Hut.

Second Class closely supervised the showering and excessive shaving which they considered essential before we should meet our partners. They also applied excessive quantities of cheap after shave and other vile deodorants, all the better to impress the young Canberra maidens. What little hair we possessed was slicked down with

California Poppy and Brylcream. Such creams and potions were, by 1968, unfashionable and most of us eschewed their use. This mattered naught to Second Class who wished us to look our best, and seemed to have forgotten that just 'a little dab'll do you!'. Washed, shaved, primped, perfumed, pomaded and fortified with excessive doses of Vitamin B and Niacin, we were sent forth to meet our dates.

After my near miss with 'Big Red', I had been hesitant in seeking out another partner. My classmate, D.R. (Darryl) Crunkhorn, came to my aid when, but a few days before the party, he noticed in the Canberra Times a photograph of two young ladies. He had looked up one in the phone book and asked her to the Tennis Party. She accepted. When asked about her friend, she supplied details which Crunkhorn gave to me. She likewise accepted my invitation to attend.

The Army provided a bus to collect the young ladies from their homes and deliver them again afterwards. The bus was due to arrive about 1.00 pm and Fourth Class were gathered by the Bell Tower outside Duntroon House to meet their prospective partners. Introductions were made, and soon the various couples were making their way around the various attractions of the College. Some actually played tennis.

One cadet, who was repeating Fourth Class and who had to endure the torture of a second Tennis Party, stood discreetly in the background as the young ladies disembarked from the bus. Realisation soon dawned that the stout young lady in the tennis dress, robustly practicing a variety of tennis shots, was to be his partner for the evening. She had the confident air of someone who had been before and who was familiar with the proceedings. In an act of extreme cowardice he surreptitiously retired to his room. She spent the remainder of the day determinedly trying to find him.

The young ladies organised by Crunkhorn had declined the use of Army transport, preferring to make their own way to the College. The young lady who had accepted my invitation arrived on the back of her boy friend's motorbike. She was wearing an exceedingly short mini skirt of the day and had slung over her shoulder her evening attire, another miniskirt of similar length. Mercifully she was not carrying a tennis racquet. Having put her belongings in the rooms put aside for the purpose, we set about attempting to amuse ourselves in the intervening period between her arrival and the evening's activities.

I have little recollection of what we did. My partner was incredibly short on conversation, most of which consisted of monosyllabic responses to my strained attempts at polite conversation. I seemed to remember that we actually watched a few athletic souls disport themselves on the College's tennis courts, which abutted the site of the replanted maze. At a reasonable hour the ladies retired to shower and change for the buffet dinner which was to precede the dance scheduled as the final activity of the evening.

One cadet claimed that he secreted himself in a room adjoining the room set aside as a change room for the young ladies. By his account they were equally unimpressed with some of their partners, and he claimed to have heard some interesting discussions on the alleged shortfalls of his fellow classmates. And it appeared that the cosmetic excesses of Second Class generally had the opposite effect to what was intended. He certainly retrieved a bra inadvertently left behind by one of the

young ladies, which he later gallantly returned to her in a bold move intended to inveigle his way into her affections. Her embarrassment was such that the attempt failed dismally.

The evening's dance was alcohol free and closely chaperoned. The predatory nature of some of the cadets came to the fore, and there was some rearrangement of couples as reluctant or unwilling partners sought greener pastures. At least one cadet discovered a partner willing to engage in activities more stimulating than tennis or ballroom dancing, attempting to consummate the relationship in another cadet's room until being discovered by the ever vigilant members of Second Class, and to the everlasting chagrin of his classmate who had made the initial introduction. At the end of the evening Cadets were permitted to accompany their partners home on the bus. I had been divested of my original partner at some time during the evening, and ended up with a young lady who had either cast off or had been abandoned by her original partner. At her home, I escorted her to the door then spent a cold and miserable forty or so minutes sitting on the kerb awaiting the return of the bus.

I never contacted either of the young ladies again, nor they me. Some of the class however, continued to see their partners for some time and at least one contracted a very happy and successful marriage with a young lady that he first met at the Tennis Party. And in the following year when we were supervising our Fourth Class, as the next crop of invitees disembarked from the Army bus, there were some awfully familiar faces.

Tennis, anyone?

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**Major R.W. Eastgate entered the RMC in 1968 and graduated in 1971. He transferred to the Inactive Army Reserve in 1992. His first article, Reminiscences of UN Service appeared in Newsletter 1/1994. He has contributed to three other issues of the Newsletter since then.**

## Profile of the Corps of Staff Cadets

Current strength (15 September 1997)	317
First Class	173
Second Class	69
Third Class	75
Fiji	4
Malaysia	1
New Zealand	4
Papua New Guinea	7
Philippines	1
RAAF	7
Singapore	4
Thailand	1
ADFA Graduates	101
ADFA Transfers	2
Married	41
Females	43
Cadets with previous military experience	125

# The Prodigal Son's Corner

[This is the ninth in the series of personal stories with the theme as set out in the *Newsletter 2/1989*. What follows generally fits the criteria for these accounts although it was written after the subject's death (*Newsletter 2/1995*). Colonel R.J. Gardner (1946) used published sources and his personal knowledge to contribute this brief summary. Ed.]

## A Fine Soldier – Scholar

On 5 June 1994 one of Australia's most distinguished and best-respected soldier-scholars died in London.

Thomas Bruce Millar, born in Kalamunda in Western Australia in 1925, entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, on 27 February 1943. Those who knew Tom as a staff cadet remember him as a kind, gentle man and many have commented upon his obviously strong attachment to the Christian values which directed all that he did and which were to continue to do so throughout his life.

Tom graduated on 12 December 1944 and was commissioned in the Australian Staff Corps. Allotted to infantry he was posted to the 2/11th Australian Infantry Battalion in New Guinea, before joining the 67th Australian Infantry Battalion, later 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. In that force he served with distinction as an intelligence officer. A short period of staff appointments and regimental service was to follow before Tom left the Army. His military career had been a short one but his service to his country was to continue all the days of his life.

After taking his degree in Arts Tom began a career in teaching, as his father before him had done. He taught at a secondary school for some five years before beginning study at the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy which was conferred upon him in 1960. He was ready now to begin the career which was to lead to his pioneering the academic study of defence in Australia and, in 1983, to his being appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia.

Tom began his academic career as a professorial fellow in the Department of International Relations at The Australian National University and it was here that, in 1965, his first, and possibly his greatest, work was published. *Australia's Defence* was a ground-breaking work which, at a difficult time in the country's defence commitments and international relations, put the issues clearly and with great force. Tom was a prolific writer: he was to produce a stream of articles, pamphlets and chapters in larger works and nine books; the last, *South African Dilemmas* being published in 1985. Among his initiatives was a series, *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*, which continues to this day.

In 1966 Tom founded the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre within The Australian National University, now the principal Australian forum on defence and highly regarded throughout the world. It is to Tom's rare ability as an administrator and his genius as an innovator and academic entrepreneur that this success is largely due. Yet during all this time Tom was always ready to take on additional responsibilities when asked, or when he felt it right that he should do so. In addition to his normal duties he was, at various times, Director of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Visitor to the Institute for Strategic Studies in London, Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into the CMF and he spent a year on secondment to the Department of Foreign Affairs as it was then called. As if this was not enough for any man, Tom also undertook consultancies and honorary appointments in other fields, notably broadcasting, education and Scouting, while pursuing with great vigour his love of music, reading and devotion to his Church.

In 1985 Tom left the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, of which he had been head from 1966 to 1970, and again from 1982 to 1984, to take up the appointment of Head of the Centre of Australian Studies in London. Funded by the Fraser government, the Centre soon struck trouble under the Hawke administration. It was characteristic of Tom Millar that, without undue fuss or panic, he successfully set about to raise private funding for the Centre. Renamed the Sir Robert Menzies Centre of Australian Studies, it is still a going concern! Tom retired as Head of the Centre in 1990.

Tom Millar was universally respected as a scholar and well liked as an outgoing person interested in other people and their views. I remember well, being asked, after a tour as Defence Attaché in Japan, to brief Tom on the defence of Japan in preparation for a visit to that country. His innate courtesy, his clarity of thought and his skill in seeking clarification of fact or ambiguity of expression with great humour made it the most pleasant of duties. Perhaps my experience encapsulates the way most of his pupils found him; courteous, patient, helpful and, I have no doubt, most assiduous in his supervision!

Tom Millar was always quietly proud of his time at the Royal Military College – and he never forgot the friendships forged there – and on active service. He is perhaps one of the greatest among the Corps' prodigal sons.



# The Royal Military College, Duntroon

[The article below was discovered in the August 1915 edition of *The Brighton Grammarian*, the magazine of Brighton Grammar School, by Lieutenant Colonel A.M. (Tony) Stove (1960), the present Convener of the Victorian Branch. He notes that the author 'L.B.' is Lewis Ernest Stephen Barker, who attended Brighton Grammar from 1909 to 1913 and who entered the RMC on 12 March 1914. The article was written while he was a staff cadet at the RMC. After graduation he went on to complete a successful military career, retiring as Brigadier L.E.S. Barker, CBE, DSO, MC. His two sons, Robert and Trevor Lewis also attended Brighton Grammar from where Robert served in the AIF during the War of 1939-45 and Trevor entered the RMC on 26 February 1944 to graduate on 10 December 1946. Ed.]

Many have heard of the Federal Capital, Canberra, but few have heard of the Royal Military College situated at the foot of Mount Pleasant (2,175 feet), not more than four miles from the foundation stone.

The College has for its core the homestead of Duntroon Station. Around this has sprung up a colony of white and brown buildings. The white ones are the home and lecture rooms of the cadets, whilst the brown ones are stores and the homes of the numerous employees. When there is a full complement of cadets at the college the number of souls at Duntroon is about 400.

The College is run on the latest principles, for which Australia has to thank the late Major General Bridges, KCB, CMG, who worked so hard to bring the college to perfection. For instruction in civil work, 12 class rooms are provided. In addition to these, there is a lecture theatre capable of holding the whole Corps of Staff Cadets and two up-to-date laboratories – one for physics and one for chemistry. Outside the Universities there are no laboratories to compare with them.

To enable a cadet to become an efficient marksman, and also for instructional purposes, the College has three ranges – one miniature for the .22 rifle, one for the service rifle and a large range for field practices. For infantry drill there is the whole of the Federal Territory to wander over. In order that staff cadets may acquire the art of riding, the College has about 80 horses. These also serve as gun teams for artillery. The College has two 18-pounders and two 15-pounders, so cadets are able to do battery drill.

The normal course for a cadet is four years. The first two years are spent in improving his mind with civil work. This is relieved by a few hours, weekly, for infantry drill, musketry, signalling and physical training – last, but no means least. In the second year a cadet also has the privilege of learning how easy it is to fall off a horse when jumping without stirrups. The third and fourth years are spent in artillery, light horse, engineering and topography, at which subjects, very often, a class will be out all day.

With the four-year course behind him, a graduate from the College can call himself a competent junior officer.

## Branch Reports

### Australian Capital Territory

Brigadier R.J. Moyle (1953) has undertaken the task of Co-ordinator of the Duntroon Guides. [This subject was outlined in the Commandant's letter accompanying *Newsletter 1/1997*.] An introductory meeting of the Guides was held at Duntroon House on 14 September 1997.

### New South Wales

The Annual Race Day, on 9 June 1997, the fifteenth year of this event, was an excellent day, in glorious mid-winter sunshine marred only by the fact that we just managed the 75 needed to meet the Australian Jockey Club's minimum requirement. It is a pity that many Members do not attend on the grounds that 'they are not racing people'. It has been difficult to get the message across that the racing is merely the floor show and that the major activity and interest is the convivial atmosphere and enjoyment of meeting old friends.

### Queensland

The last two functions, namely the Lyre Bird Winemakers' luncheon and the evening at Silks Restaurant were attended by eight and 32 Members/partners respectively. The luncheon attendance was disappointing, but the Silks evening was a great hit and seems destined to become a fixture in the Branch social calendar.

## Officer Training Unit Association Report

Mr Bruce Thorpe has been elected National Chairman of the OTU Association and takes over from the retiring Chairman, Mr Owen Williamson. Mr Williamson will remain the Representative for the Duntroon Society with Colonel W. Jackson as the Proxy.

As part of the Queensland State Reunion, the Association will hold the National Film Premiere of *The Scheyville Experience*. This film on the history, activities and life at the OTU was compiled as a documentary for the Army Training Unit by Lieutenant Colonel D. Keyes. It is hoped that approximately 300 guests will join ex-OTU members and their families at the Bardon Conference Centre, 390 Simpsons Road, Bardon, Queensland on 24 October to be part of this significant evening.





*Following the presentation of the winner's sash by the NSW Branch Convener, those involved line up from the left; Mr R. Ellis, part owner; Mr K. Callaghan, trainer & part owner; Lusty's Bank, the winner of the Duntroon Society Handicap; her strapper; Major General K.W. Latchford (1945) & Lieutenant Colonel R.D. Hamlyn (1954), Secretary/ Treasurer, NSW Branch.*

## Council Column

At its meeting on 16 September 1997, Council, in addition to routine business, dealt with other matters including the following:

### Centenary Project

In his report, the Commandant detailed the progress of the sporting field upgrade. He mentioned a desire to enhance and fully utilise the sporting facilities by building a recreational facility (club house) adjacent to the RMC playing fields, providing for recreation and post-match fellowship, notably for RMC sporting teams and their opposition. The building would also house the RMC Golf Club, which would operate the facility on behalf of all users. The Duntroon Community Centre, currently located in a condemned building, would relocate to the old Golf Course Club House. It does not appear that the project will attract public funding.

Council felt that the recreational facility may be a suitable

Centenary Gift to the College and proposed the following Notice of Motion:

*That the Society recommend the option of providing a major recreational facility in a location near the playing field and golf course to replace the existing Golf Course Club House.*

### The Newsletter

On the understanding that *Newsletter 1/1997* was well received by many Members of the Society, Council agreed that the four-colour process may be used when the Editor feels that it is appropriate to do so.

Council also decided that the policy of adding the year of entry after the first appearance of the name of an ex-member of the Corps of Staff Cadets in each Newsletter would in future be changed by using the year of graduation.

# A Visit to Duntroon Castle

R.J. O'Neill

[In *Newsletter 2/1995* there were references to Duntroon Castle and in *Newsletter 2/1996* was printed a photograph of it taken by R.W.O. Pugh (1946) during a visit there in 1995. Another visitor from the RMC was the author of this article written in 1962 and which is now reprinted with the kind permission of the Editor of the *Journal of the Royal Military College*. Ed.]

The massive grey walls of the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland sprang in a continuous curve out of the living rock. The base of the high outcrop on which the castle was built was only visible in fleeting gaps as the mist went swirling around, driven off the sea by the powerful west wind. Behind the castle the waves crashed and smashed themselves into a fine spray as they met the first obstacle in their path after being funnelled off the Atlantic up the Sound of Jura and into the wide mouth of Crinan Loch. This lonely part of the Western Highlands looked very much as it must have done eight centuries ago as boat loads of wild Irishmen stormed ashore to test the strength of the newest Campbell fortress.

The whereabouts of the Castle had been imprinted on my mind during one of those meals that one has at the RMC in the first few weeks of Fourth Class, so I made a point of seeing the original Duntroon during a trip to Scotland in March of this year. As I came up the long drive, the chilling wind, the rain driving into my face, the wild rocky shore and the grey sea combined to give me the sort of feeling that Canberra Railway Station used to do after an August leave. Suddenly the mist was swept away and from the highest turret of the Castle flying straight out from the pole, held firm by the wind, was the Australian Flag.

I stepped through the small front doorway, after crossing the Castle courtyard, into an atmosphere of warmth, rich carpets and rich drapes which hung against the mellow stone walls. A steep climb up a winding newel stair in a turret took me into the Great Hall where I met the owners – Colonel and Mrs Malcolm of Poltalloch. The Castle passed out of Campbell hands in 1791. However, the name of Duntroon was preserved on Campbell property by Robert Campbell when he built Duntroon Station. Since 1791 the Castle has been owned by the Lairds of Poltalloch, Chieftains of Clan Malcolm.

The Castle was built as part of a great defensive system of the Campbells. All the likely landing places on the Argyllshire coast were protected against the Irish by a string of castles and fortresses some five miles or so apart. It is evident that there must have been many more inhabitants in the area than there are now. Most of these fortresses are now in ruins, as the Irish did a thorough job of demolition when they captured one. Duntroon's splendid present condition is due to the fact that it has never fallen to anybody. The whole area must have been planned with great brilliance as a defensive area. The principle of mutual support was observed by constructing watch towers on the tip of the main ridge that runs through the length of Argyllshire, out to the long finger of the Mull of Kintyre, so that calls for assistance could be relayed

from castle to castle and reserves moved accordingly.

However, Duntroon had a narrow escape in the 17th century when most of the neighbouring castles fell. Duntroon at this time was called the Castle of the Turrets. Coll Macdonell of Ireland, an ambitious desperado with a debt to be settled in Argyll, decided to invade Scotland from the west. His mother, a daughter of the Earl of Argyll, had eloped with his father, who was considered to be a person of lower rank and therefore ineligible for his wife's dowry. Coll Macdonell thought that he would settle the matter to his own satisfaction by means stronger than argument. His Chief, the Earl of Antrim, was displeased with Argyll for joining the Covenanters and readily agreed to help the expedition by raising 3,000 Ulstermen. With this army Macdonell landed in Kintyre and moved northwards, destroying the castles and property of every Campbell in Argyll. From Castle Swin, he approached Loch Crinan, intending to attack Duntroon Castle. He sent his piper ahead to gather information by cunning. The piper was received into the castle but, finding it strongly defended, concluded that his chief would have little success there. The entrance to the Castle in those times was only a slit in the outer wall some eighteen inches wide and seven feet high. If the doorway was battered in – unlikely, as it was of heavy iron – a winding newel stair had to be climbed which would only admit one man at a time. These stairs are cunningly designed so that they spiral to the right as you ascend. This restricts the sword play of a right handed attacker to ineffective hacking strokes brought down from his left shoulder, while the defender has plenty of room on his right side to deliver whatever strokes he wishes.

The Castle defenders had discovered the identity of the piper and he was imprisoned in one of the turrets. From this turret he saw Macdonell's forces approaching. With his pipes he played a signal to Macdonell who then turned away and went off on his route to the north. The faithful piper was then killed and his body disposed of down the Murder Hole. This is a long chute that runs from a chamber that is now the Malcolms' bedroom, down through the walls at a steep angle into the jagged sea-washed rocks a long way below.

The interior of the Castle has been completely restored and refurbished by Mrs Malcolm recently. It is crammed with objects of great interest and beauty. Colonel and Mrs Malcolm take a great interest in the RMC, Duntroon, so any Duntroon graduates that visit Scotland are recommended to see one of the finest of the few old castles that are still kept up in the old tradition.

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*Professor R.J. O'Neill entered the RMC on 5 February 1955 and graduated into the Royal Australian Corps of Signals on 9 December 1958. After completing his studies at Oxford and serving in Vietnam with 5RAR he became a Senior Lecturer in History at Duntroon in July 1967. He transferred to the Australian Regular Army Reserve on 30 June 1968. He is presently Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University and a Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford.*





*Duntroon Castle from the private boat landing on Loch Crinan, Argyllshire.  
The photograph was taken by R.W.O. Pugh in October 1995 with permission  
from Malcolm of Poltalloch, the son of the owner who met  
R.J. O'Neill during his visit in 1962.*

## Corrections

The following errors appeared in *Newsletter 1/1997*:

- p.3. Photograph caption, 3rd line. The initials of Brigadier Cosgrove should be P.J..
- p.6. Footnote 2. The rank of H.C.H. Robertson should be shown as Lieutenant Colonel.
- p.7. **As It Once Was.** The Sub heading **20 Years Ago – April 1977**, should have appeared below the item referring to Group Captain A.D. Garrison.
- p.16. **Annual Postal Golf Competition.** The last name in the Queensland team should read, D.N. Collins with no year of entry.

## Obituary

Since the publication of the last Newsletter we have learned of the deaths of the following:

16 Feb 1997	Lieutenant C.G. Cummings (1952)
4 Apr 1997	Major I.R. Hosie (1964)
25 May 1997	Mrs P.L. Crellin
2 Jun 1997	Mr D. Dennison
8 Jun 1997	Colonel D.R.O. Cowey (1937)
7 Sep 1997	Lieutenant Colonel C.C. Boyce (1942)

# Coming Events

## ACT Branch

Monday, 1 December 1997. Annual Postal Golf Competition at Royal Canberra Golf Club.

## New South Wales Branch

Tuesday, 9 December 1997. Annual Buffet Luncheon and Biennial General Meeting at the Officers' Mess, Victoria Barracks, Paddington.

## Queensland Branch

Thursday, 9 October 1997. Visit to Enoggera Barracks and Annual General Meeting.

Wednesday, 15 October 1997. Black tie dinner at the Officers' Mess, Victoria Barracks with the Commandant RMC as the Guest of Honour.

Friday, 24 October 1997. Annual Postal Golf Competition at the Royal Queensland Golf Club.

## South Australia Branch

Thursday, 13 November 1997. The Annual Postal Golf Competition at the Royal Adelaide Golf Club.

Tuesday, 2 December 1997. The Graduation Luncheon in the Officers' Mess, Keswick Barracks.

Friday-Sunday, 27-29 March 1998. In conjunction with the Victoria Branch, the third biennial reunion of Members is to be held in Swan Hill, Victoria. Members from all other branches are most welcome to what has proved to be a most successful and enjoyable occasion. Expressions of interest to be in to Branch Secretaries by 31 December 1997.

## Victoria Branch

Thursday, 2 October 1997. The Spring Buffet Luncheon in the Officers' Mess, Victoria Barracks when Brigadier N.D. (Neil) Graham (1962) will brief Members on the Defence Review Programme. Interstate Members who may be in Melbourne at that time are most welcome.

## Open Day

With the completion of the Duntroon House additions and restoration, the earlier practice of holding Open Days will be resumed with the first planned for Sunday, 5 October 1997.

## RMC Ceremonial Parades

Tuesday, 9 December 1977. The Graduation Parade.

Saturday, 14 February 1988. The First Appointment Course Graduation Parade.

Saturday, 7 March 1998. The Sovereign's Banner Parade.

Thursday/Friday, 12-13 March 1998. Beating Retreat/1812 Overture.

Saturday, 14 March 1998. Alumni Sport's Day.

Further information can be obtained from the SO3 (Protocol/History), Warrant Officer Class 1 K.F. Noon on (02) 6275 9539.

## Letters to the Editor

From Brigadier F.T. Whitelaw, CBE (1937).

In *Newsletter 2/1996* the review by John Coates (1952), *Duntroon to the Dardanelles*, and the column **This, That and the Other**, are connected to a degree in that my father J.S. Whitelaw, Dawkins, Patterson and Morgan [all 1911] were a very close group. All my younger days were regaled by stories of these contemporaries. My late elder brother, Major P.S. Whitelaw was named after and in honour of Price Jacob Morgan – the budding artist.

[This letter was received last year but lack of space prevented its publication in *Newsletter 1/1997*. Brigadier Whitelaw sent with his letter, a photograph of P.J. Morgan and letters written by J.S. Whitelaw (1911) to his mother in 1913 and 1914, to be deposited in the RMC Archives. Ed.]

## Opposite Page

*Two of those mentioned in Brigadier Whitelaw's letter following their early graduation in August 1914. P.J. Patterson on the left and P.J. Morgan.*





## Shorts

- In this column in *Newsletter 1/1997* it was noted that Brigadier General Arthur Pulsifer had become the oldest living graduate of the United States Military Academy (USMA) on 12 September 1995. Just two months short of his 101st birthday he died on 21 May 1996. His place was taken by Major William J. Regan who was born on 21 March 1897 and graduated from the USMA in 1919.
- The Duntroon Society Award for the class that graduated on 9 December 1996 was awarded to Corporal S.W. Wakelin who is now in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps as a member of 4 Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.
- Since its founding in 1911, the largest graduation from the RMC was that of December 1996 when a Class of 216 finally marched off the parade ground.
- As part of the process of providing a permanent and secure home for the appropriate records of the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, the Officer Training Unit, Scheyville and the WRAAC Officer Cadet School, the RMC Archivist, Mr Ross Howarth, has attempted to locate them. He has met with some success with those of the OCS, Portsea but the remainder are proving to be elusive. The particular records he is seeking are the training and personal files generated during each cadet's training in either of those two institutions. He would be grateful for any leads as to where some or all of these records may be found.
- Although graduations of staff cadets are now held in June as well as December each year, the Major General Sir James Harrison Memorial Lecture is delivered but once each year. This is to occur shortly before the traditional graduation on the second Tuesday in December when both First and Second Classes attend. This arrangement began on 6 December 1966 when Major General M.P. Blake, AO, MC (Retd) (1957) was the guest speaker.
- During 1960 the Chemistry Laboratory was moved from its home of 23 years in the building now housing the Bridges' Library, to a new building (Academic Block) on the slope above. With the establishment of the Australian Defence Force Academy in January 1986, the Academic Block became the Military Skills and Field Training Wing. On 30 October 1997, although continuing its present role, it will be formally named the Geddes Building in honour of the founding Commandant of the Officer Training Unit at Scheyville.
- The reconstructed ovals and playing fields 'come on-line' in late Spring this year. To mark this event the Commandant is seeking ideas for their names which can be wide ranging as to subject. Without wishing to inhibit creativity, but rather as an example, one suggestion is to use the names of Duntroon sporting identities.
- Since the completion of the new entrance road to the RMC, the Corps badges have been affixed to the facing wall of Patterson Hall. All are in position except that of the Australian Army Public Relations Service which is now being manufactured.
- For those with access to a computer, the home page address of the RMC is [www.rmc.trg.army.def.gov.au](http://www.rmc.trg.army.def.gov.au).
- On 3 January 1998, 126 General Reserve candidates on the First Appointment Course will march in to Duntroon for the final module of their officer training. When that course graduates on 14 February 1998 it will be the largest number of subalterns to graduate into the General Reserve at any one time.

## As It Once Was

### 80 Years Ago – September 1917

- 1st Class will undergo a Camp of Training in 3 MD with A.I.F. recruits under a College Officer.
- September was a very wet month and the appearance of black spot in the grape vines about the College was probably due to this wet weather.
- Permission has been granted for the Director of Military Art, Major (temp Lt-Colonel) E.F. Harrison, RAA to proceed on active service.
- Owing to the presence of large numbers of venomous scorpions and centipedes all persons on the College strength are warned against handling firewood carelessly.

### 40 Years Ago – September 1957

- Placings in the A.C.T. Cross Country Championships on 22 September include 1st, L/Cpl A. Hammett (1955) 27 mins 11 secs, 4th S/C R Stuart (1956) and 6th S/C P. Calvert (1955).
- A polling booth for the election of members to the ACT Advisory Council and Hospital Board to be conducted on Saturday 14 Sep 57 has been established in the RMC Barber Shop.

### 20 Years Ago – September 1977

- Colonel Kim Hyu, Military, Naval and Air Attache, Embassy of the Republic of Korea visited the RMC on 29 September.
- Guides for conducted tours of the College for the period 12-16 September are to report to the 'Bell Tower' no later than 1425 hrs.