



A Brief History of 1st/19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment

Unit motto

The unit motto *Primus Agat Primas* (Let the first be foremost) was first approved in 1928 vide AAO 578/1928 as the motto of 1st Battalion (Militia) has been adopted by 1st/19th Battalion, RNSWR

Raising the Battalion

The Battalion was raised as 19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment at Marrickville NSW on 12 December, 1966 as a CMF “Special Conditions” Battalion.

The unit’s *raison d’être* was to cater for National Service Registrants, who elected to serve in the CMF for six years in lieu of two years’ continuous service within the Regular Army, followed by a further three years on the Active Reserve list, but because of their living in remote areas or employment circumstances were unable to serve in existing CMF units.

Special Conditions

The significance of the “Special Conditions” was that unlike existing CMF units which conducted weeknight parades, weekend bivouacs and one camp per year, 19th Battalion RNSWR conducted only two 33 day camps each year.

Members were not required to attend weeknight or weekend parades. However, with a reduction in the number of training days training opportunities originally based on two 33 day camps a year were

reduced to two camps per year: to an Autumn Camp and a Spring Camp each of 16 days.

Unofficial title

As the majority of the members came from country areas in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, the unit soon unofficially became known as “The Bushmen’s Rifles”.

Relocation 1

In August, 1967, the Battalion moved from Marrickville to Old Holsworthy, NSW which provided more suitable accommodation with BHQ offices, Officers, Sergeants and Other Ranks messes and accommodation for various Companies.

Re-designation

On 1 May, 1971, 1st Battalion RNSWR (Commando) was reduced to Company strength.

On the same day 19th Battalion RNSWR following a precedent set in 1930 was once again linked with the 1st Battalion and redesignated as 1st/19th Battalion RNSWR.

1st Battalion Colours

During a ceremonial “handover” parade held at Victoria Barracks, Sydney on 8 August, 1971 1st/19th Battalion RNSWR was entrusted with and took into its custody the 1st Battalion’s Queen’s and Regimental Colours which formerly had been in the custody of 1st Commando Company.

19 Battalion Colours

The Queen's and Regimental Colours of 19th Battalion RNSWR were presented to the Battalion by His Excellency, Sir Roden Cutler, VC, KCMG, KCVO, CBE, The Governor of New South Wales, on a ceremonial parade at Tobruk Lines, Holsworthy, on 13 August, 1972.

Relocation 2

With the expansion of the Regular Army and relocation of Regular Army units into the Holsworthy area, the Battalion moved again in October, 1971 to Wallgrove Army Camp. It was not long before the unit received further orders regarding another move.

Relocation 3

With the Wallgrove complex to come under the auctioneer's hammer, the unit was instructed to move to Bardia Barracks, Ingleburn and take over the Depot Company Lines, which were then part of the Infantry Centre.

National Services ceases

The cessation of the National Service Scheme in December, 1972 saw the Battalion strength drop from 600 to 450 overnight. The strength continued to drop to approximately 200 for the first camp of 1973. A vigorous recruiting campaign was initiated and with bi-annual recruiting tours the strength increased.

Relocation 4

Bardia Barracks was to become the home of many other Army Reserve units. Accommodation was becoming scarce, so once again 1st/19th Battalion

RNSWR was given orders to move. The Battalion moved again at the conclusion of its October, 1976 camp to the Army Training Depot at 68 Davies Road, Padstow which it was required to share with an Anti- Aircraft Battery which suited neither unit.

During its time at Padstow, the unit outgrew the depot and needed a larger home.

Relocation 5

In March 1981 1st/19th Battalion conducted a "Courses Camp" in the vacant Mount Olympus Lines at Ingleburn recently vacated by 1st Signal Regiment. Finding it more suitable to its needs the Battalion decided to become squatters and not return to Padstow.

However, after seeking permission and assistance from the Garrison Engineer the Battalion gained permission to move there permanently ensuring that the Army retained a valuable training facility often shared by other Army Reserve units for a few more years.

On 1 May, 1989 the Mt Olympus lines were renamed Mont St Quentin Barracks.

Increase in strength

By 1981 the Battalion was close to reaching its establishment strength of 580. However, due to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and amid concerns by early 1982 of another global conflict the Battalion was ordered to increase its strength with a promise that should it reach 1,000 it would be de-linked.

The Battalion recruited heavily and had well over 900 members by the September Camp of 1983.

Decrease in strength

However, the concerns over a global conflict foreshadowed by the Russian invasion of Afghanistan diminished and at the end of the September Camp 1983 the Battalion was ordered to reduce its strength back to its establishment total of 580.

However due mostly to the numerous cuts in Defence spending the Battalion's current strength is nearly 200.

Relocation 6

Following the restructuring of recruiting boundaries in 1994 by HQ Second Division, the Battalion was again ordered to move. This time "west of the mountains" and to relocate the Battalion Headquarters Support and Administration Companies to Romani Barracks, Orange, NSW where they are now permanently located.

The move also signalled the end of Special Conditions of service for its members.

Company Depots

On 25 March, 1994 the unit took over the former 2nd/17th Battalion RNSWR depots at Orange, Dubbo, Parkes, Lithgow, Bathurst, Cowra and Mudgee, also the former 4th/3rd Battalion RNSWR depots at Wagga Wagga, Leeton, and Cootamundra.

Recruiting boundaries reduced

The introduction of "flexible conditions of service" for all 2nd Division units and the restructuring of recruiting boundaries in January, 1994 restricted 1st/19 Battalion to recruiting applicants from New

South Wales who resided west of the Great Dividing Range in southern New South Wales.

Training with the Regular Army

Members of the Battalion trained with Regular Army units and participated in exercises such as "Dark Knight" at Singleton, "Kangaroo II and III" at Shoalwater Bay, north off Rockhampton in Queensland; Exercise "Droughtmaster" at Bourke NSW; Exercise "Pacific Reserve" in Hawaii, USA; Exercise "K89" at Darwin in the Northern Territory, and exchange visits to New Zealand.

One of the Battalion Companies also trained at the Land Warfare Centre, Canungra and at the Battle School at Tully in Queensland.

The unit competes in the annual Peter Evans Memorial Marathon in Perth, Western Australia and at the ASSAM marksmanship competition in Queensland.

Overseas and interstate tours

In 1982 the Battalion committed a composite Rifle Company to exercise with the NZ Army on the South Island. In return in 1983 a NZ Rifle Company was placed under command of 1/19 RNSWR during a 5th Brigade exercise in the Singleton area

The Battalion was represented at the 1989 Tercentenary of The Royal Regiment of Wales in the United Kingdom and a Beating of the Retreat Ceremony held on Horse Guards Parade, London in 1990.

In August, 1993 a Colour Party from the Battalion with the Queen's and Regimental Colours of the 1st Battalion toured France and Belgium to



commemorate the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice.

The Battalion's Pipes and Drums also participated in the Bi-centennial Army Tattoo which toured Australia during 1988.

In more recent times the Battalion deployed a Company-sized group to New Zealand taking part in exercises with other regional Reserve Forces and ceremonial activities.

The Battalion has continued a commitment to contribute to Rifle Company Butterworth in Malaysia.

In May 2010 1/19 RNSWR provided a platoon to operation Anode Rotation 21 for service in the Solomon Islands as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

Freedom of the City of Sydney

The Battalion has exercised its right to the Freedom of Entry into the City of Sydney on a number of occasions. The most notable of these was in February, 1992, before HM Queen Elizabeth II, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the City of Sydney.

Freedom of the City of Orange

In 1996 the Battalion was granted the Freedom of Entry into the City of Orange which it first exercised on Saturday the 7th of December 1996.

The Olympic and Commonwealth Games

During the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 the Battalion provided personnel to undertake search tasks as part of the Australian Army's security operations in support of the Olympic Games.

In 2006 the Battalion took part in Operation Acolyte performing a similar role in support of the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Freedom of the City of Bathurst

In 2009 1st/19th Battalion RNSWR was granted the Freedom of Entry to the City of Bathurst and exercised that right and privilege on Saturday the 26th September 2009.

Affiliated Units

The unit maintains a strong affiliation with The Royal Regiment of Wales and The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, which has resulted in reciprocal visits between members over the years.

The Bush Telegraph

To foster unit spirit and maintain contact with members between camps, a unit newspaper, "The Bush Telegraph" is published periodically and sent to all members.

Above: Lieutenant Colonel Peter Morrissey the Commanding Officer of 1st/19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment leads the Battalion as it Exercises its right to the Freedom of Entry to the City of Bathurst on 26 September 2009.