

16th Transport Squadron in 2015

By CAPT Tim Reid, 2IC 16 TPT SQN

In April 1915, the 16th Army Service Corps Company was raised and departed Melbourne on His Majesty's Australian Transport A19 Afric. The 16th Company was assigned to the 2nd Division Train and saw service in Gallipoli, Egypt and the Western Front.

A century on, in 2015 the 16th Transport Squadron participated in the centenary commemorations of both the ANZAC landings and the raising of the 2nd Division. These important events were part of a very busy year for the Squadron and for the 8th Combat Service Support Battalion, of which it is a sub-unit. However, no account of 2015 can overlook the enormous effect Plan Beersheba has had on 8 CSSB and its sub-units.

Beersheba has resulted in 8th and 5th Brigades raising Battlegroup Waratah as the reinforcing battlegroup in 7 Brigade's force generation cycle. 8 CSSB has responsibility for force generating Battlegroup Waratah's Admin Company during the readying phase.

The Squadron contributed the majority of Admin Company's Transport Troop (with a contribution from 3rd Transport Squadron from 5 CSSB). Other members of the Squadron held positions in Admin Company's Maintenance Platoon and in Company HQ. Throughout late 2014 and the first half of 2015, BG Waratah conducted several major training activities: the Ex MONT ST QUENTIN series of planning activities; the Ex POLYGON WOOD series of field training exercises and LFXs; and Ex DIAMOND STRIKE, the 7 Brigade CATA in June.

The POLYGON WOOD activities were conducted at Singleton. These were challenging but short and intensive and close to home depots. Ex DIAMOND STRIKE, however, required a road self deploy for BG Waratah's 80-plus vehicles over a return distance over 2600 km. Many of those Squadron members not on BG Waratah's EMD for DIAMOND STRIKE contributed their time to the 3 day drives up to Shoalwater Bay and back from NSW.

For Squadron members in BG Waratah, DIAMOND STRIKE was the culmination of a readying phase year that took members away from the civilian jobs and their families for over five weeks in total. The members who remained in Queensland for Ex HAMEL and TALISMAN SABRE contributed another two weeks. This was a significant effort that must have tested even the most generous of civilian employers, and the most understanding partners and families. The year will complete with Squadron members participating in BG Waratah's Ex FUNNELWEB COMBAT at Canungra in November.

Whilst Battlegroup Waratah activities were the main effort during the readying phase, other tasks and activities also demanded attention during the first several months of the year. The Squadron contributed personnel to multiple ANZAC Day and Centenary of Gallipoli commemorations and to the 2nd Division Centenary parade in Canberra in July. Having entered the ready phase of the force gen cycle, Squadron members have maintained their field and trade skills with live fire, field and road transport training activities at Singleton and Holsworthy. Training in RATEL, LZ and DZ procedures and vehicle recovery has also been conducted.

The Squadron has balanced the BG Waratah commitments with support tasks for 8th Brigade and its other units, School of Infantry, Special Forces Training Centre and Australian Army Cadets. Individual training requirements have also been met and several Squadron members have completed Subject 1 courses for CPL, for SGT and for WO2. The Squadron also ran an ADI course and contributed ADIs to other units' MR2 and LR2J courses.

The Squadron has one member currently deployed on Op RESOLUTE and more members are preparing for deployment early in the New Year.

This year has been the busiest for the Squadron in a long time. Balancing the often competing requirements of BG Waratah, sub-unit corporate governance, external support tasks and trade training has demanded a lot of Squadron members, both Reserve and ARA. Speaking of whom, the Battalion and Squadron ARA staff have moved mountains this year and their sterling efforts have been appreciated.

On behalf of the OC MAJ David Newman thank you to the members of 16th Transport Squadron for their efforts in 2015.

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