



100 years young

THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE, DUNTROON



The opening ceremony, 27 June 1911. Although Canberra had already been chosen as the site for the nation's new capital city, Duntroon's birthday predates Canberra's official birthday by nearly two years.

One of the best known, most respected and oldest institutions in Australia – the Royal Military College Duntroon – is celebrating its 100th anniversary throughout 2011 with a range of events and activities.

Significant among these celebrations was a Trooping of the Colours and exercising of the college's freedom of entry rights to the city of Canberra on June 11.

Trooping of the Queen's Colour is an annual ceremonial activity at the college, but this year moved off campus for the first time, to the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin.

After a modified (because of space restrictions) Trooping of the Colours, the college body progressed up Anzac Parade until it was challenged by city officials and eventually allowed to proceed with swords drawn, drums beating, band playing and colours flying.

At the head of the parade was Corps of Staff Cadets Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Jason Hedges, who believes he was the only person on parade who had also taken part in the initial freedom of entry parade in 2001.

"As a graduate of the college and as a previous instructor, to get the opportunity to come back as the commanding officer at any time is a huge honour and a privilege,

but in this unique and important milestone year for the college, it is a surreal experience," Lieutenant Colonel Hedges said.

"It's very important and very worthwhile to me personally and professionally, but it is a significant responsibility, noting we could well have a future Chief of Army in the centenary graduating class."

On June 27 – the actual 100th anniversary of the opening of RMC – the latest crop of Army leaders graduated on a parade

reviewed by retiring Chief of Army Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie.

Lieutenant Colonel Hedges said he had no doubt the junior leaders who were commissioned this year would prove themselves and would be welcomed by the Army as its newest generation of leaders.

"These people are all looking forward to getting out into an Army that is focused, well led, well resourced, well kitted and with a big job to do."

He said that he, like the rest of the staff at RMC, took the responsibility that the commandant had given him – to produce the very best junior leaders for the Army – very seriously.

"My staff have a very acute focus on our responsibilities for Army, noting that many of our graduates, in very quick time, will command on operations.

"So, we owe it to them and we owe it to the Australian soldier to ensure that the very best lieutenants graduate from here.

"The reality is, if they are not best prepared, the Army and our soldiers pay the price."

After a very big year for the college, staff will next year release a commemorative coffee-table book looking back on the centenary.

Lieutenant Colonel Hedges said staff who work at the college – many of whom also live on the grounds – would write the book collectively and collaboratively.

"I think that's something that will be fairly unique in capturing this snapshot in our history, for the institution and for all the graduates who have gone before us and all those who will follow."

The centenary publication will be published early next year by Big Sky Publishing.



A modern-day marchout parade.

A proud history

In 1910, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, reporting on the defence of Australia, recommended that a college be established to train officers for the permanent military force.

To that end, Colonel William Throsby Bridges was given the task of founding the new college as its first commandant, with the rank of brigadier general.

Before commencing, Colonel Bridges visited military colleges in England, Canada and the US and decided that the best elements of each of these fine establishments would guide the establishment of the Australian college.

The former sheep station and Campbell family property Duntroon was chosen as a suitable site close to the new Federal capital. In November 1910, a lease for the homestead and 370 acres was signed, at a rental of 750 pounds per year.

By June 1911, essential buildings had been constructed, staff appointed and the first intake of 32 Australians and 10 New Zealanders admitted.

On June 27, 1911, Australia's Governor-General, Lord William Dudley, officially opened the college and announced that it would be called the Royal Military College of Australia.

As per Kitchener's report, the curriculum at RMC was designed as a four-year course of half military and half academic subjects, with military-specific training, including PT, drill, signalling and weapons handling conducted throughout.

Over the years, however, with the impact of the two world wars, the duration and focus of the course changed as Army requirements changed.

With the outbreak of WWI, the first intake was specially graduated for overseas service in August 1914.

The next three intakes were also shortened and, consequently, the majority of cadets in the first four intakes served overseas with either the Australian Imperial Force or the New Zealand Army.

The now Major General Bridges was given command of the 1st AIF Division but was shot by a Turkish sniper at Gallipoli on May 15, 1915, and died of his wounds three days later.

His body was initially returned to Melbourne but later buried on the slopes of Mount Pleasant in Canberra, overlooking the college he founded.

During WWI, 158 Duntroon graduates were sent overseas on active service. Of those, 42 were killed in action, died of wounds or died from other causes, and another 77 were wounded.

From February 1931 to December 1936 the college was forced to relocate to Victoria Barracks, Sydney, because of budget cuts. However, the dislocation was short lived and an injection of funds allowed further construction and development on the original site – much of which is still in use today. The college reopened at Duntroon in February 1937.

During WWII, the normal courses were reduced from three years to two years and special courses of 12 months were held for serving members of the Australian Imperial Force or Australian Military Forces. Ultimately, 696 graduates of the college saw active service in the Australian, British or New Zealand armed forces, with 35 Australians and 14 New Zealanders either killed in action or died of wounds or other causes.

In 1967, the college affiliated with the University of New South Wales to offer Bachelor courses in arts, science and engineering. With the establishment of the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1986, this aspect terminated and the full-time General Service Officer Course was



reduced to 12 months for ADFA graduates and 18 months for non-ADFA graduates. Women were also accepted into the college for the first time.

Special-service officers and reserve officers are now also trained at the college.

MISSION

The mission of the Royal Military College is to train and educate officers capable of commanding platoon groups in the Adaptive Army, and prepare specialist candidates for commissioning in order to support Army and Defence capabilities.

How RMC works

As far as cadets are concerned, RMC is administratively organised into an infantry battalion structure with companies, platoons and sections forming the Corps of Staff Cadets.

There are five full-time companies in the corps – Long Tan, Alamein, Gallipoli, Kapyong and Kokoda. A sixth company, Romani, is comprised of trainees from ADFA during their single service training, reserve officers during their final module of training and specialist service officers during their initial officer training.

There is also a rehabilitation and administration company, known as Bridges Company.

While the corps is in barracks, cadets from all three classes are mixed, with an internal hierarchy that gives them responsibility for looking after their own administration, with guidance and supervision from training staff. Field training, however, is delivered by the NCOs and officers of the training staff, with the cadets separated into their distinct class groups.

Over the course of the training semester, the five full-time companies compete against each other through sporting events and academic studies for the title of The Sovereign's Company.

Throughout the course, cadets receive training in leadership, tactics, weapons systems, military law, military accounting systems, corporate governance and military history.

The majority of cadets at Duntroon are members of the Australian Army, although the college also accommodates some Air Force members training to become airfield defence guard officers.

By tradition, a small number of officer cadets from New Zealand and some other nations also undertake officer training at the college.