

Celebrating the traditions of a Corps

Colonel Glenn Wells, RAAMC



In times of rapid change and uncertainty, a focus on the history and traditions of our Corps can provide a sense of stability and purpose.

ALL SERVICES AND CORPS have their individual traditions and customs that bring pride to those wearing the embellishments of that particular Service or Corps. This is essential in times of turmoil or rapid change, and provides a focus for stability, purpose and reflection. Even when the focus is on drawing the Defence Health Services into a more coherent Joint Health Service and the development of closer working and cultural ties between the Services, there is still very much a place for the *esprit de corps* fostered by a Corps identity and associated traditions.

It was indeed an honour to be appointed Honorary Head of Corps for the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. It is a daunting and humbling task to be called upon to protect the traditions and status of the Corps, especially in an era where Corps identities and functions have been diminished within Army and Defence structures. Clearly, teamwork and utmost cooperation between the Corps of the Army Health Service (and across the Services) are essential for the delivery of effective

and quality health care, but every Corps has an individual history and tradition of which its members can truly be proud. We should all ensure that we have knowledge and understanding of the events and people who have contributed to and helped shape our Corps.

The Royal Australian Army Medical Corps has nearly one hundred years of tradition since the amalgamation of the individual State Army Medical Services, and a history that dates back to the initial settlement of New South Wales. This tradition includes providing medical support to many campaigns, from the Boer War in South Africa, through the major World Wars, to the many peace-keeping missions of the last two decades. Part of this tradition involves associations with the Royal Army Medical Corps and members of the Royal Family. For nearly 50 years Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother has been the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. In 1958 the Queen Mother presented the Corps with a special ceremonial sword and in 1974 the Queen Mother's Banner was presented to the Corps.

As Honorary Head of Corps, I recently had the privilege of representing the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps in a number of activities celebrating the 100th birthday of our Colonel-in-Chief. A small contingent representing the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps travelled to London and on 19 July 2000 members of the Banner party were proud to represent the Corps on parade before the Colonel-in-Chief, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother.

The Ceremonial Parade, held at Horse Guards, London, was part of the numerous activities celebrating the 100th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, who turned 100 on 4 August 2000. There were over 1000 military and 7000 civilian participants in the parade. All of the Regiments associated with the Queen Mother and the civilian organisations of which Her Majesty is Patron were represented. There were over 12500



On parade before Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, at Horse Guards, London, the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps was represented by Major Sue Winter (National Flag Bearer), Lieutenant Phillip Corkeron (Banner Ensign), SSGT Kim Felmingham, NSC, and SGT Angel de Santa-ana (Escorts to the Banner).



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother inspects Her Centenary Tribute Parade.

invited guests at the parade, which was also broadcast live across the United Kingdom and to many other countries. It was an impressive pageant, with all of the splendour and tradition normally associated with the Royal Family. There was a clear show of respect and affection for The Queen Mother and one could not help being moved by the occasion.

The Royal Australian Army Medical Corps has a proud association with The Queen Mother that now stretches back for over half a century. Along with the Australian National Flag, the Queen Mother's Banner and Ceremonial Sword were carried on this parade with great pride. The Queen Mother's life of commitment and service has long been an example and inspiration to members of the Corps.

After the parade the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps

representative party were honoured to attend the reception at St James's Palace. It was particularly inspiring to learn that our Colonel-in-Chief was aware of, and impressed with, our health support activities in East Timor.

The Queen Mother's Centenary has now become one small, but important, aspect of the traditions associated with the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. As we enter another millennium it is important and helpful to remember the various traditions of the Corps as well as the history of service, sacrifice and lessons of the past. We must all ensure that during our individual periods of service we strive to add that little bit more to the Corps and Defence Health Service (little by little — *Paulatim*). This will ensure the continuance and progress of the Corps and the survival of the traditions of service. □



The Honorary Head of Corps of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps, Colonel Glenn Wells, being presented to the Colonel-in-Chief, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, at St James's Palace.