



Brigadier John Handcock Studdert, AO, OBE

John Studdert was born in Bungonia New South Wales in December 1923, the oldest son of Charles Handcock Studdert and Bertha Geraldine Cripps-Clark. His father had emigrated from Ireland in 1912 and was the manager of the *Spring Ponds* property at Bungonia. In early 1917, Charles enlisted in the AIF and was sent to the Middle East, where he was posted to one of the battalions of the Imperial Camel Corps and on that unit's disbandment, to the 15th Light Horse Regiment. He served against the Senussi in the Western Desert and against the Turks in Palestine and was in the Aleppo area at the time of the Armistice.

Charles Studdert was not wounded or gassed during his war service, but developed ailments as a result of his service - stomach ulcers, sinus and antrium infections and later arthritis in his hands. His health never recovered after his return from the War and he died in 1936.

Before his father's death, John, known throughout his life as Pat to his family, had moved with his parents, sister Vivien and brother Charles (known as Mick) to their own property, *Danganelly*, a thousand acres on the banks of the Wollondilly River at Towrang, about 15 kilometres along the Hume Highway north of Goulburn. The property was named for Charles senior's birthplace, *Danganelly House* in County Clare Ireland and remains the family property, run since the mid 1950's by John's brother Mick.

John's high school years were spent at the Goulburn High School where he played rugby and cricket (not very well by his own description) and where he became a prefect in his final year.

In December 1943, John graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon and was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA). During World War II he served as part of the AIF in the 2/6 Australian Field Regiment in the Netherlands East Indies (Halmahera and Borneo). He served also in Japan as part of the occupation forces, on the Headquarters of the 34th Infantry Brigade.

On return to Australia John had postings as an instructor at the Artillery School North Head and as Adjutant of the 6th Field Regiment in Tasmania. He completed Staff College training at the Canadian Staff College at Kingston Ontario. A short posting at the 1st Field Regiment was followed by appointment as the Instructor Artillery at the Royal Military College and subsequently by attendance at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham in England.

In April 1960, John became the first Commanding Officer of the re-raised 4th Field Regiment where his task was to prepare the unit for service in Vietnam. Following his command posting and without ever deploying to Vietnam, he returned to the UK as the Technical Staff Officer Grade 1 at the Australian High Commission in London. A number of Materiel related postings followed until, in 1969, he was posted as the Commandant of the Officer Training Unit Scheyville. For his service as Commandant OTU Scheyville, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire. He moved to Canberra in 1972, serving in the Materiel Division and retiring in December 1978 as the Deputy Chief of Materiel. For his work in Materiel Division he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

Jack Studdert, as he was universally known by Army colleagues, is remembered by those who served with him and under him as a tough but scrupulously fair commander with absolute integrity, who was entirely focused on the well-being and welfare of the soldiers for whom he was responsible. He took the responsibility of command very seriously and saw high standards of training and discipline as essential for soldiers who may be sent to war. This applied whether he was training cadets at RMC, National Service platoon commanders for Vietnam or soldiers of the 4th Field Regiment for the same conflict. He believed that officers should lead by example and that the old adage of 'firm, fair and friendly' was pretty right. His old bombardier driver/operator from 4th Field Regiment days sent a delightful email to the family following John's illness in which he recounted a tale of the CO and he lugging ammunition for the guns during a mud-stricken Tianjara exercise.

Some of the cadets that he trained at RMC recall his solution to a 'group' misdemeanour that the cadets regarded as safe because of the large number of cadets involved - 'he can't charge all of us' was the optimistic appraisal. 'Happy Jack', as he was known, lined them all up and 'did the lot of 'em' (his words). On leaving the Army in 1978, he was presented with, amongst

other things, a mounted tyre pressure gauge, recalling his propensity to check truck and gun tyre pressures before departing on exercise with the 4th Field Regiment.

John regarded his role as Commandant of the Officer Training Unit Scheyville as the most satisfying job of his career. He felt that the quality of the young officer who graduated from OTU was exceptional and that they made and continue to make a disproportionately high contribution in both military and civil service. His respect for and ongoing friendship with so many of the trainers and staff at the OTU, amongst others, Max Almond, Wally Hall and Dick Flint bears genuine testimony to the high regard in which he held the job as Commandant.

In the 24 years following his retirement from the Army, returned to the region where he grew up and worked a property, *Bunratty*, just south of Goulburn in NSW. He spent most of those years as the Secretary of the local Gundarry Bush Fire Brigade and is very warmly remembered by his neighbours, colleagues in the Bush Fire Brigade and by the people of Goulburn. His contribution to the Rural Bush Fire Brigade at the local level reflected his approach to service and duty that he had maintained right throughout his military career. He wrote a 5-year equipment replacement and upgrade plan, established an effective command, control and communications system for the Brigade and planned and implemented regular and meaningful training for the fire fighters.

John suffered a series of heart attacks from October 2002 and died in Canberra Hospital on 18th February 2003. He was buried at the Goulburn cemetery. The funeral service at St Nicholas' church was well attended by friends and colleagues from throughout his life and included a large number of representatives of the OTU Association. The Rural Fire Service provided the pallbearers. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Mavis, sons David and Martin, daughter Fiona, their partners Valerie, Helena and Steve and by two grandchildren Nicholas and Hannah.