

# CHATSWOOD ARMY CADET CORPS

© Terry Fogarty - 2021

Cadets have been in existence in Australia for over 155 years. The first unit was established in 1866, at St Mark's Collegiate School, NSW. Cadets remained under State auspices until 1906 when the Commonwealth Cadet Corps was established. Following the suspension of Universal Military Training in 1929, cadets were divided into two categories for the purposes of organisation and training: Regimental detachments affiliated with units of the Militia forces and Detachments that were generally school-based. (School-based units did not receive Army assistance).



*History of cadets*

In 1939 Permanent Army staff were withdrawn from the Militia and Regimental detachments were abandoned. School based units continued to function but with difficulties caused by staff and equipment shortages. In 1941 cadet units began to receive more Army support and in 1944 the provision of uniforms at public expense was authorised.

Affiliations between cadet units and Citizen Military Forces (CMF) were developed during the period 1949-51. At that time the title of 'Australian Cadet Corps' (ACC) was officially adopted. Cadet Brigades with Regular army staff were established and remained in operation until the mid-seventies when the Cadet Corps was disbanded by the Whitlam Government. The Corps was reinstated in 1976 but with a number of changes. Community based, rather than school based units were encouraged, war-like training was not to be conducted and an annual camp was to be provided at no cost to the cadet.



*Chatswood Superior School Cadet – 1904*

In 1984 school based units were given the opportunity to apply for 'full support' status and become community based units.

In 2001 the title of Australian Army Cadets was approved with the short title of AAC. To this day all units of the AAC are entitled to receive full support from Army. 'Full support' entails the supply of uniforms and equipment, an annual camp, transport to and from annual camp and training for the supervisory adults (Officers and Instructors Cadets). (Stockings).

There has been three Army Cadet Units in the Chatswood: – The Chatswood Superior Public School; Chatswood High and Pius X school.

## Chatswood Superior School Cadets 1899 – 1911

The first public school in West Ward was opened in Findlay Ave in 1883. In 1896 a brick building to house 240 pupils was established on its current site (cnr. Pacific Highway and Centennial Ave). In 1899 an Infants department was established and the school was raised to the status of Superior Public School. The **Chatswood Superior Public School** operated until 1914. It appears that a cadet unit was established at the school soon after it opened.



*Chatswood Public School Cadet Corp - 1900*

### PREMIER AT CHATSWOOD.

At the Chatswood Superior Public School yesterday afternoon the children assembled around the flagpole in the school yard. The school cadets acted as a guard of honour for the Premier, who attended the function and unfurled the Union Jack. As the flag broke out it was saluted by the children, who sang the National Anthem. Mr. Wade afterwards addressed the children, expatiating on the significance of Empire Day and the loyal sentiment that lay beneath the celebrations.

*The Star (Sydney) 1910*

Cadet units traditionally mounted a brass band and percussion band. Bands would perform at entertainment events or whilst marching in formation.

School cadets provided a number of community services. When the Premier of NSW visited Chatswood in 1910 the school cadets provided a guard of honour. This involved marching in formation with ceremonial colours and regalia. Standing at attention for an extended period before 'retreating' back to barracks in formation

### BAND FOR CHATSWOOD.

A cadets' concert will be given in the Chatswood Town Hall on July 23, and the funds will be devoted towards the inauguration of a band in that area. Organising work in connection with the function is being carried out by Sergts. Pike and Swinbourne, hon. secretary and treasurer respectively.

*Sunday Times 1913*



*Chatswood Superior School cadet unit c. 1902*

## St Pius X Cadet Corp from 1950s

The St Pius X Cadet Corp was operational prior to 1954, making it the second oldest unit in Chatswood.



*Cadet band*

Cadet band at celebrations for laying of foundation stone at Our Lady of Dolours School on 11th April, 1954 by Bishop Carroll. "I remember watching the cadets as a young bloke marching from the school to Beauchamp Park for practice, they were very good." **Cliff Gordon C.**

Part of the Pius tradition was joining the cadet unit, which was compulsory in Years 7 and 8. The senior boys were officers. The structure was there and it was pretty well managed. A few of the boys went on to Duntroon and became professional soldiers as a result of school cadets.<sup>1</sup>



*SPX College yard with cadets in the 1950s.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Daily Telegraph (Sydney) 2017 May 1



ABOVE: St Pius X College cadets 1966 at the cnr. Archer and Kirk Streets. We used to march around the streets of Chatswood - imagine doing that today. ..**Bazza Here**

### Drums as well as guns

The Pius X unit did not have a rifle range for their cadet unit, so marching bands and regimental displays and formation was a backbone of their activity. They did have ordnance in the form of .303 rifles and a munitions bunker. Got to SPX in 72, amazed to see the cadet's bunker lined with, I know they looked like 303's, but probably 22's. **Geoffrey J S.** *(it was common for .303 rifles to be choked to .22 gauge).*

I was in SPX cadets and shot there in about 1969. SPX didn't have a range just a tin shed with a padlock euphemistically called the Q -Store. We used to put to Long Bay to shoot 303s and Bren Guns. Some guys in the MMG platoon may have shot the Vickers but I didn't. **Mark H.** .

**So where did they  
shoot their rifles?**

### Inter school inter faith cooperation

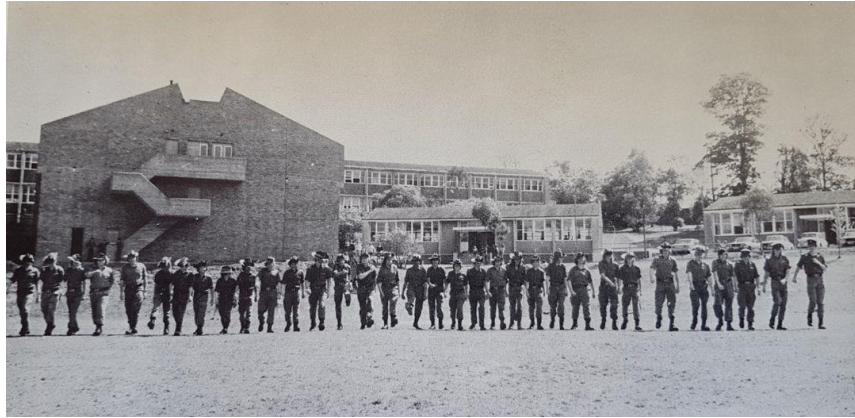
We used it (*CHS range*) twice a year with .22 rifles. *(most likely a Pius X cadet).* Bizarre to be shooting 303's in Chatswood in 1969/70. Pretty sure they would have been shooting .22's re-bored from .303 as the range was so small and it's pointing towards the school and tennis courts. .303 would've been too powerful. **Leo M.**



Extraordinary wasn't it? 14 y.o. boys firing live rounds in the middle of Chatswood, imagine the uproar if they tried that today! **Gary John E.** Joined SPX in 72, amazed to see the cadets bunker lined with, I know they looked like 303's, but probably 22's. Ole Jim Elmore, the 4 fingers of death was running it when I joined. And in the end, I effed up so little, he had to promote me, one hook Giffey, **Geoffrey J S.**

## Chatswood High School Rifle Range c.1959 to 2011

The **Chatswood High School Cadet Unit** was established in 1959 when the school opened. The unit closed in 2011. The unit was for boys only - - for boys only. Girls wore wide-brimmed straw hats and gloves.



*CHS Unit 1975 Punari (CHS Yearbook)*



Not only did Chatswood High cadets have their bands and regimental display, they also had their own rifle range at the back of their school.

The targets were mounted on a flat piece of galvanized iron (shown in photo).

By 2021 the target board had seen much better days.

What's left of it? That's the metal backboard lying on the ground. It fell down about 10years ago. **Andy W.**

*Target board 2021 CHS – Andy W.*

I remember the cadets taking a run up and seeing how far they could slide down the quad in their army boots. Remember holing up at the rifle range to miss a lap of the cross country races! **Steve D.**

## RECOLLECTIONS OF FORMER CADETS (Willoughby Living)

### Characteristics of the CHS Rifle Range

According to a teacher who taught at the school in the 1970s the targets were below the tennis courts (later staff parking area behind main school buildings). He recalls that there was a shed located near the tennis courts but the cadets shed and storage was in the top carpark by the girl's toilet. Later used to store yard equipment. **Ted K.**

The range was oriented south to north so they could shoot towards the bank under the tennis courts. **Peter W.**

Yes it was below the tennis court I remember the tin Nissan hut cadet store where we had 303 - *Bren guns and a vickers machine gun*. Just imagine today having the weapons in a school. **Peter B.** (*comments not triangulated*).

South to north I would say, so they could shoot towards the bank under the tennis courts. **Andy W.**

#### Behind the tennis courts

Yes, it was down behind the school tennis courts backing onto Eddy Ave. in the hollow. Had an angled steel sheet as the range backstop. We used 303 rifles that were bored to 22's. Red flags on all points of the school grounds and a dedicated range officer when the range was in action. Couldn't get away with having there in today's safety conscious environment

**Graham W.**

#### Machine guns

I remember the tin Nissan hut cadet store where we had 303 - *Bren guns and a vickers machine gun*. Just imagine today having the weapons in a school.

**Peter B.**

Looking a little passé nowadays **Andy W.**

Looking from front gate (SHED) was on the right down behind classrooms on the fence line. **Chang H.**

Hey, my school (CHS) also had mortars and a 6lb anti-tank gun as well as plenty of .303 Lee Enfields, Brens and a Vickers. **Tony W.** I remember the storage shed with all those weapons stored in a tin shed with a old padlock on it that was the security of the day. **Chang H.** We were still finding bullets at there when I was there from 90-95. **Michael D.** We fired bored down 303s there in the early 70s. **Peter W.** There was a shed of weapons on the other side just a padlock 4 safety. **Chang H.**

As a student 68 -72 and in the cadets we often took our .303 rifles home, ON THE TRAIN? Can you imagine that now. We also had a rifle range at James Ruse but the 303,s we used there were modified to .22. Remember we were in the middle of the Vietnam war and conscription was happening so lucky to have just missed out. **Phil H.**

In 2014 the Australian Defense Force advised personnel not to wear their uniforms to and from work and on public transport for safety reasons in the wake of increased terror alerts. Prior to then, cadets proudly wore their uniform to and from school.

### Lose that uniform

The cadets were funded by the Australian Army. Govt. cutbacks forced the closure.... well, that's the story we got fed at the time... **Richard P C.** I was at CHS at this time. Vietnam War had just ended, so you have to put it in that context - protests etc. Not too popular for public high schools to be spending money training boys to be soldiers ... no girls of course. Not allowed. **Marilyn H.** That was the last year of Cadets, when I started in 76, just the Rifle range remained. The Rifle range was between the back gate Eddy Rd and the tennis courts, (now a carpark). **John H.** All the fun went out of it once they stopped the cadets handling guns (68?). Remember the rifle range? We'd take a breather there when running the cross country course. Always remember the sound of cadets getting a run up and sliding down the quad in their leather soled boots! **Steve D.**



That would have been the last year . I was the Senior Cadet Under Officer in my last year 1973. I did 5 years in cadet year 2-6 and loved the experience. 🕶️  
**Andrew F.**

*Senior Under Officer Frater*

### WHO ELSE USED CHS RIFLE RANGE? Killara Army Cadet Unit (1975 - )

As a member of Killara's Cadets, we went to that range once. In 75, Killara's Cadets 'borrowed' the rifle range for an afternoon.... yes, I mean KHS. Cadets started in mid '74, I left in 75 after getting sergeant. I don't think they continued on after that.... **Richard P C.**

In **1975, the KHS Cadet Unit staged their first 'Trooping of the Colour'**, and the Non-Commissioned Officers **received their stripes.**

### SOURCES:

Stockings C.A (2007) The torch and the sword: a history of the army cadet movement in Australia. University of NSW Press

PREMIER AT CHATSWOOD. (1910, May 25). *The Star*, p. 4

Band for Chatswood. Sun 6 Jul 1913 Sunday Times (Sydney) Page 26