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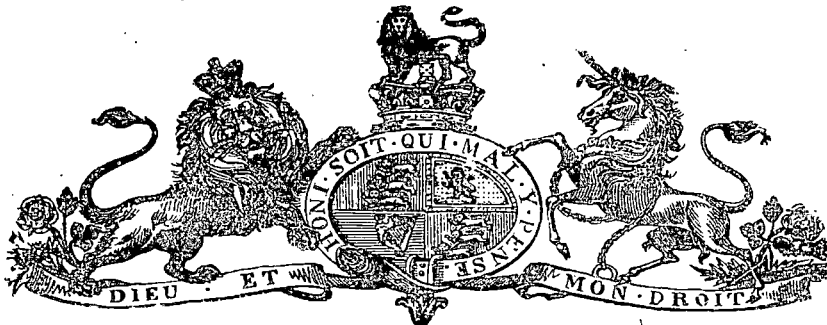
1890.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

TASMANIAN DEFENCES:

RECOMMENDATIONS BY LIEUT.-COL. LEGGE, R.A.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO TASMANIAN DEFENCES.

Head Quarters Office, Hobart, 21st April, 1890.

SIR,

IN relinquishing the command of the Tasmanian Forces, I have the honor to submit to you the following recommendations, based on the knowledge and experience acquired after a six years' command.

1. It is most necessary that the Artillery at Hobart should have a longer training at the guns in the forts. The training of the past two years has served as a good beginning, but it has not been by any means sufficient to make the men proficient at the service of the new guns.

The Southern Tasmanian Artillery should have at least 80 hours' training, besides being sent to the batteries every Easter, at which time they should carry out their annual practice.

The garrison-gun section of the Launceston Artillery should likewise be encamped at the Derwent batteries at Easter.

2. As a "Division" of a Field Battery has been organised at Hobart, and another Division will be created at Launceston when the new 12-pounder breech-loading guns arrive this year, another 12-pounder breech-loading gun should be *at once ordered* for Hobart and Launceston, so that there may be a half-battery at each place. These half-batteries will act at the Easter Encampment as a whole battery, and will at once place the Tasmanian Field Force on a powerful footing.

3. A company of Mounted Infantry should be organised with the least possible delay. The cost of equipment is trifling. I have had it on the estimates for two years, but it has been twice eliminated, otherwise the company would be now in existence.

The Field Force of this colony is of little use without Mounted Infantry, which is absolutely essential in connection with modern tactics. Every colony but Tasmania in Australia has its complement of Mounted Infantry, and its absence from this Force is a serious flaw in it.

4. The Engineer Corps should be increased by 30 non-commissioned officers and men, and this increment made into a Field Engineer Force, with the necessary carts, telegraph line, and usual Engineer equipment.

The men can be got together in a few weeks; they would be attached at the outset to the Torpedo Corps, and should be under the command of a lieutenant. The necessary instruction could be imparted by the present Instructor, and the transport cart could be made in the colony, after the pattern of the Victorian cart.

This necessary addition to the Force will represent only a small outlay.

5. (a) The class of instruction for officers and non-commissioned officers of the Auxiliary Force should be continued for two years, so that an opportunity may be given to them to learn their work, and thus be able to instruct their companies. I should recommend the next class to be held this year (about the month of August) instead of in February next year. Preparation will thus be afforded for the Easter Camp.

(b) The equipment per rifle for the Auxiliary Force should now be increased to 300 rounds. The money should be voted this year to pay for the 150,000 rounds thus required.

6. Transport waggons for field service, and some additional ammunition carts and water carts, should be supplied. The Victorian Government would be willing, I am sure, to sell a pattern transport cart, from which others could be made locally. The carts recently supplied by a local firm have been very well constructed.

7. It is most important that the Hobart Rifle Range should be converted at once into an exercising ground for the troops. The fences should be removed, and the land laid down in grass so that it may have a firm surface. This ground has been badly wanted for years, and now that it has been purchased the means are at hand for training the troops in field firing, shelter trench work, attack and defence movements, and other exercises. The acquisition of a proper site for field work is calculated to work a very great improvement in the training of the troops at Head Quarters.

8. There should be a *permanent* Camp established in the Midlands, at which Southern and Northern forces can attend without jealousy. A site is required with a good field artillery range and ground where infantry can be trained in battle practice. A permanent commissariat depôt, built of corrugated iron and timber, should be erected, and water raised by wind power, whence it could be laid on to tanks in the various lines. I have made enquiries in the Ross District, and find that the plot of ground, say $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres, for the commissariat and store depôt could be obtained for a small rental, and that the use of the ground for the Camp would be granted for a nominal fee per annum.

The field artillery would accompany the Force to Camp, and the garrison artillery should be camped at the forts on the Derwent, and there carry out their practice while undergoing additional training at the new guns.

From what has been said above, the advantages of such an arrangement are obvious. The disadvantages of a fresh Camp every year are very considerable. It is not possible to obtain always an advantageous site for exercise, there is great responsibility attendant on the supply of water, and the commissariat arrangements as carried on in tents are very undesirable.

9. The entanglement which I have asked for during the past two years should be put up at Alexandra Battery, and a second gallery made from the Redoubt to the main work. There is no safe means of communication in action between the two works, the ground being very exposed to fire from the sea.

An observatory, with the Walker "position finder," should be established, and the guns grouped for service in connection with the "position finder." I have already recommended this step, which will *double the efficiency* of the battery.

It is important that a small plot of land should be purchased on the summit of the hill to the east of the bottom known as the "Saddle" for an infantry post in war time. The land is rocky and practically useless, and might be acquired for a small sum. The men might be exercised in preparing this site and constructing a rough breast-work.

10. A modification of the armament in the Queen's Battery could now be made with advantage to the defences of the island elsewhere. This "work" is only suitable for the defence of the mine field, and there are three more guns in it than are required. I have lately mounted a 5-inch breech-loader on Vavaseur carriage in the right flank, and this gun with two 64-pounder M.L. and a Quick-fire gun are all that are required. A surplus armament in this battery *means a serious absorption of men at Hobart*.

The two 70-pounder muzzle-loading rifle guns should be removed, and mounted at Emu Bay; and one 64-pounder might be mounted at the Bluff, Mersey Heads, to be supplemented by two more, acquired by the conversion of two 8-inch smooth-bore guns now in the Island. This could be done in the same manner that I adopted in 1885, when I had those now in the battery "converted." The other two 64-pounder muzzle-loading guns now in the battery should go to Brown's Bluff, Tamar.

As regards the armament of the North Coast Ports, this should unquestionably be undertaken without delay. The Defence Committee assembled at Hobart in 1887 called attention to this subject in their report. A naval officer, deputed by the Admiral to report on the defences of the various Australian ports, has recently visited Emu Bay, and has unofficially communicated to me his entire concurrence with my views as to the vulnerability of the North Coast ports. It is certain that the presence of guns at any port on the North Coast would be speedily followed by the creation of a small corps of artillery, as the men would come forward at once when they saw the *matériel* at hand; and thus a military "centre" would be created in that part of the Island, which would exercise a beneficial influence on the Volunteer movement there.

It must be understood that I do not advocate this class of gun as a permanent defence of any port on the North Coast; but, as they are useless at Hobart, they may as well be the forerunners of a more modern type in other parts of the Colony.

11. The deferred construction of the Brown's Bluff battery, on the Tamar, I consider to be an unwise step, and unfair to the north of the Colony. In the absence of defences at the Heads this battery would form an excellent river defence. The land has been purchased, the mines procured from England and loaded, the plans prepared by me, and an estimate of the cost of the work prepared; and, notwithstanding, consent for the construction of the work has been repeatedly withheld. I once more urge on the Government the advisability of constructing this battery.

12. I would again advocate a daylight training for the two Infantry Regiments at the military centres. These regiments are the nucleus for the Country Rifles, and absolutely require to be more

highly trained than they ever can be with night drills on the Barrack Square (see my Report on Defence Force, 1889). The men must be properly instructed in the attack with ball cartridge, and must be made conversant with field work, which is manifestly impossible with the present system. I recommend a sum of £150 for each regiment, which will give a course of instruction of about 30 hours for each.

13. I recommend that my scheme for the defence of the Derwent at Crayfish Point and South Arm be entertained by the Legislature as soon as possible by utilising the two 8-inch M.L. guns now in Kangaroo Bluff battery, one of them being sent to England and converted into a B.L. gun with H.P. mountings. The battery on the west side might shortly be commenced, and subsequently the more expensive work on the opposite shore could be undertaken. By retaining one gun as an M.L. piece all the M.L. ammunition would be absorbed, and the gun could be mounted on a Vavaseur carriage with a particular form of emplacement (which I could submit) adapted to afford cover to the men when loading.

A Q. fire-gun and a R.C. machine-gun would be required for the defence of the gorge and blocking of the Kingston Road, the entire armament of the battery not exceeding £5000. The cost of the work would not exceed £5000. The two 8-inch guns should be replaced in the Bluff Battery by two heavy 5-inch B.L. guns on Vavaseur carriages.

I will not here touch upon the proposed battery at South Arm, to which I called General Edwards' attention, but I can furnish all particulars if required.

Finally, with reference to the choosing of ground for a permanent camp, furnishing of plans for a commissariat dépôt, construction of Brown's Bluff Battery, and all matters brought forward in this Report which require technical work and advice, I am willing to do all in my power to assist the Government, in order that the defences of this Colony, in which I have a considerable stake, may be placed on a sure footing.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. V. LEGGE, *Lt.-Col., R.A.,*
Commanding Tasmanian Forces.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.