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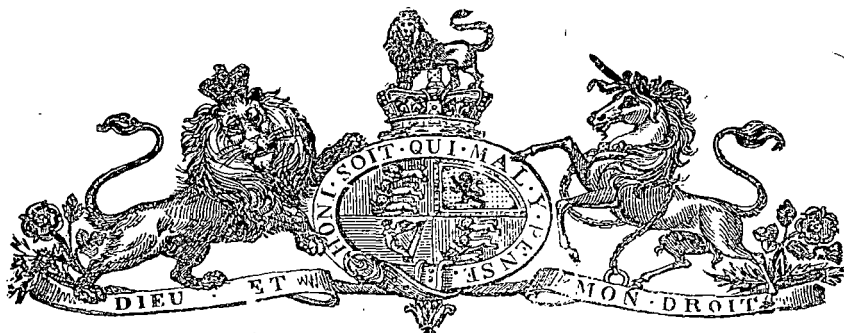
E A S T E R   E N C A M P M E N T :

REPORT BY THE COMMANDANT.

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## REPORT ON THE EASTER ENCAMPMENT, MERTON VALE, 1898.

*Head Quarters Office, Hobart, June, 1898.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to forward you my Report on the Easter Camp, held this year at Merton Vale, Campbell Town, commencing Thursday night, 7th of April, and ending Monday night, 11th April last.

### *Site.*

The intention before I took up command was to hold an Infantry Camp under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Wallack, and a site for the purpose was chosen by this Officer on the Merton Vale property, just outside the Campbell Town boundary. It was in every way admirably suited for a camp, and surrounded by excellent country for field training and manœuvring. On inspecting the general position I decided to have a small artillery force associated with the infantry in order to extend the scope of the training, and, on calling for volunteers from the two artillery corps, my wishes were well responded to. Two field-guns from Launceston and Hobart, with an extra detachment of garrison gunners from the latter, were furnished by the Commanding Officers of Artillery.

During the week prior to the Camp being formed, a reconnaissance of the Merton Vale Run was made by me, and lithographed by the Government Printer for distribution among the Officers. The maps proved of great assistance to those engaged in the manœuvres, and for the selection of sites for artillery practice and ball-firing from small arms.

### *Transport.*

Excellent arrangements had been made, and comprehensive entraining orders issued by Lieut.-Colonel Wallack prior to my assuming command, so that the transport of Auxiliaries from the Channel and the North and North-Western Districts, as well as of the Artillery and Rifles from the Cities, passed off without any hitch. Lieut.-Colonel Reid, Volunteer Staff, performed the duties of D. A. Quartermaster-General, rendered assistance in the Office at Hobart, and superintended the entraining of the Southern Contingent.

A satisfactory train service was instituted by the General Manager, who did the best that the material at his disposal permitted for the early return of the troops on Easter Monday night. It would be advisable however, in future, that the Railway Department allow any men (up to a limited number), to return from Launceston to their quarters east and west of that City on pass-warrants issued by the Officer there, if such men can show any cogent reason to that Officer why they should wish for a delay. An order dealing with this concession could be issued from Head Quarters to Officers commanding Auxiliary Companies prior to the formation of camp, which would clearly define what concessions the men might expect, and that these would have to be strictly adhered to.

The Southern Artillery and Head Quarters Companies, 1st Battalion, under the command of Major Watchorn, with the Detachments of Auxiliary Companies of this battalion from the Channel and Huon, Clarence, Glenorchy, and Kempton, left Hobart by troop train, starting at 8 P.M., and arrived at Camp about 2:30 A.M. The Launceston Artillery and the 2nd Battalion under the command of Lt.-Colonel Martin, consisting of the Head Quarters Companies and Detachments from the Auxiliary Company at Scottsdale, left Launceston at 8:30 P.M., and were joined by a portion of the 3rd Battalion, under Major Brown, at Evandale Junction. This train arrived at Campbell Town at 11:30 P.M. The 3rd Battalion was very weak, owing to the occurrence of a violent storm during the day (Thursday), which quite upset the arrangements of those who had to travel distances from their homes to the Station. Had it not been for this mishap the strength of this battalion would have been quite 100 in excess of the number which actually came into Camp.

### *Strength of Force in Camp.*

The following is the strength of the Force in Camp on the 10th April. The number of men in the Auxiliary Companies was much reduced by the storm which occurred, as mentioned above.

on the north coast. These men have only one suit of clothing on account of insufficient funds having been supplied to them during the past few years, and, therefore, hesitated about making the long train journey in wet clothing.

*Parade State, Easter Encampment.*

Campbell Town, 10th April, 1898.

Corps.	Field Officers.	Captain.	Subalterns.	Surgeons.	Paymasters.	Quartermasters.	Warrant Officers.	Staff Sergeants.	Sergeants.	Trumpeters and Buglers.	Band.	Rank and File.	TOTAL.
Head-quarters Staff .....	5	...	1	...	...	1	3	2	...	...	...	...	12
Permanent Artillery .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8	8
Launceston Artillery .....	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	20	21
Southern Tasmanian Artillery	1	1	2	...	...	1	...	...	4	1	...	34	44
No. 1 Battalion Infantry .....	1	3	6	1	...	...	...	...	19	2	39	158	229
No. 2 ditto .....	2	4	5	1	1	1	2	2	12	10	24	101	165
No. 3 ditto .....	1	3	5	...	...	...	...	...	10	2	...	67	88
Cadet Officers.....	...	...	6	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	7
	11	11	25	2	1	4	5	4	45	15	63	388	*574

\* Of this number 393 were from the Auxiliary Companies.

*Formation of Camp.*

The Camp was pitched by a small detachment of the Permanent Artillery, assisted by a few men of the Midland Company of the 2nd Battalion, who worked under the command of Captain Jones, late of the Auxiliary Force Staff, Sergeant-Major Goucher superintending the work. Captain Jones carried out his duties most satisfactorily, never flagging an hour from the time he commenced pitching camp till the last stores left the ground after camp was struck. He was Camp Quartermaster, and under him the commissariat work was carried through from start to finish without a hitch.

*Routine of Work.*

The Defence Force in this Colony labours under a fatal disadvantage; one from which the troops in the whole of Australia (with the exception, perhaps, of West Australia) is free, viz., the want of daylight drill and training, caused by the inability of the men to attend parade owing to the non-receipt of pay to compensate them for the loss of their time under their employers. The consequence is that the Easter Encampment is the only period of the year when the men can be brought together under their commanding officers in sufficient numbers to carry out any practical work; and on open ground under the light of day, where their officers can see to train them, and the men themselves thoroughly understand the nature of the drill they have to carry out. Every hour's work, therefore, at the Easter Camp is of the utmost value, and I endeavoured to make the routine of drill as practical as possible, devoting most of the time to attack and defence, outpost work, skirmishing, &c. and spending as short a time in "ceremonial" drill as possible.

*First Day (Good Friday).*—The morning parade was devoted to squaring up Camp and getting everything in working order. The artillery field-gun detachments marched to the stables where I had hired the horses for use in Camp, and harnessing them, proceeded to the station and then detrained the guns. The horses were then hooked in, and the guns brought to Camp by breakfast time. The horses proved all that could be desired, and at the 10 A.M. parade were harnessed with the "open" service bridle, and took to their work without any trouble. I was much surprised and pleased at this, and have no doubt that excellent horses could be procured for war service in the island when occasion demands.

At the midday parade the Artillery commenced field battery drill under Major Harrap and Captain C. Lewis, the detachments of both corps being under the command of Lt.-Colonel Evans. The Head Quarters Companies of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Battalions, and the better trained Companies of the Auxiliaries, were practised under their own officers in attack drill and skirmishing, while the untrained men were exercised in squad and company drill by the Sergeant Instructors, who were assisted by Sergt.-Major Welch, late Instructor of the Launceston Rifle Regiment. The whole were under the supervision of Lt.-Colonel Wallack, C. O. Infantry and Acting A.A. General.

At the afternoon parade the Artillery continued their field exercise, the newly mounted drivers progressing in their work remarkably well. The Infantry were exercised in company and battalion drill, including "extended order" and skirmishing.

During the morning Lt.-Col. Evans and a detachment of artillerymen, with Lieutenants ~~Gardner~~ and Walsh superintending, had proceeded to Mount Augusta, where a gun-pit had been marked out for construction. This was made in a short time, and a target erected in it for "practice" from the 12-pr. B.L. guns on the next day.

*Second Day.*—At the morning parade the field-gun sections were again at work, and the garrison gunners at company drill, and the infantry were at company and "extended order" drill. The Auxiliary detachments, which had not had the benefit of much instruction, were again placed under the sergeant-major instructors.

By this time a marked improvement had taken place in the steadiness, general bearing, and drill of the rank and file, there being a very considerable difference from what was observable on first coming into Camp.

At the midday parade the field-gun sections were practised in manœuvring, the horses answering well to the bit, and the drivers improving in their work. At 11.30 A.M. I inspected the Artillery, which marched past in column of sections, and carried out the work very fairly. This parade was devoted by the 1st and 2nd Battalions to "attack" with blank cartridge under the Commanding Officers, the Commanding Officer of Infantry superintending. The 3rd Battalion was exercised in drill under the Commanding Officer, Major Brown.

In the afternoon the Southern Artillery carried on practice at the gun-pit at a range of about 2100 yards. The range was taken with the Watkin range-finder by Major Harrap. Ten common shell and five shrapnel were fired with good results. The practice report is appended. The Launceston Artillery reserved their ammunition for the annual camp at Low Heads.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions carried out ball-firing at targets of kahkee uniforms stuffed and placed in kneeling positions. These targets presented most difficult objects to fire at, the colour being the same as the surrounding vegetation. The firing, however, showed how deficient the men are in this most vital branch of their training, which is owing to want of sufficient ammunition for practice throughout the year, and the absence of daylight parades for training. If a more liberal supply of ammunition were allowed in the annual expenditure there is no doubt that ball-firing could be carried on at both cities in the afternoons, where commanding officers could probably get sufficient men together for the purpose. A report of the practice is appended.

*Third Day (Easter Sunday).*—Camp was squared up before breakfast. At 10.30 A.M. church parade was held, when the men made a creditable turnout as to appointments and dress. The Rev. J. B. W. Woollnough, Senior Chaplain to the Forces, officiated. At the dinner hour an inspection of the tents and dinners was held. I found the rations excellent in quality and the cooking good, there being no valid complaints from the men.

In the afternoon at 2.30 P.M. the whole force paraded in review order for a brigade rehearsal in the "march past" for the Minister of Defence on the following day. Marked steadiness as the result of the past two days' training was observable at this parade.

In the evening the commanding officers were assembled, and the "idea" for the manœuvres and outpost work on the following day was communicated to them, and hints given as to how the work should be undertaken. It was decided that one battalion should proceed before daybreak to the hills known as "The Sisters," and marked in the "Reconnaissance," and take up the position of an "outpost," and that they should be attacked at daybreak by a similar force. The work so undertaken was of a more practical nature than the night alarms formerly carried out, when the men learnt little by the operations in the dark.

*Fourth Day (Easter Monday).*—The 1st Battalion, under Major Watchorn, turned out at a quarter to 4 keen for the work, and, after hot coffee was served, received their ammunition, 10 rounds per man, and marched to "The Sisters," about a mile from camp, where sentries, piquets, and supports were posted under the direction of the commanding officer. At 5 A.M. the 2nd Battalion, under Lieut.-Colonel Martin, advanced with scouts to the attack; the right flank of the defence was "closed" owing to paucity of numbers taking part in the operation, and the attack took the form of a feint in front and a flank attack on the left of the defenders. The work was fairly well carried out considering the inexperience of the men, the chief mistake being that the attack was precipitated by the scouts firing before there was sufficient light, and much firing took place into the pall of smoke that hung over the frosty ground when neither side could distinguish each other. Nevertheless, as the same thing not unfrequently occurs in warfare, an object lesson of some use was afforded when the futility of such a course was pointed out. By 7 A.M. the force engaged in this work were dismissed in camp. The Artillery were not employed.

At 9.30 A.M. the field artillery and three battalions paraded for the manœuvres, the recruits only being kept in camp for elementary work. The operation consisted in taking up a position for the defence of "The Sisters" and the road leading between them to Merton Vale, this being treated as a "military defile." The stronger force was used in the defence under Lieut.-Colonel Martin, who had with him the Launceston Artillery "section" under Major Harrap. The attack, under Major Watchorn, with whom the Southern Artillery were sent out, was a skeleton one, the object being mainly to practise the men in taking up a defensive position, work which must chiefly devolve in the future on the Tasmanian forces. The attack was made on the right flank of the defence by way of the Saltpans, and under the cover of the low range of hills extending to the south of "The Sisters." It was fairly well carried out, and a smart advance, under cover of a spur, on Colonel Martin's right flank nearly surprised him, owing to want of a piquet at an advanced position on this spur. Several tactical mistakes were made on both sides, but, considering the little practice which our Force has in daylight, the manœuvres were creditably carried out. The return to Camp was made at 1 P.M. Lieut.-Colonel Wallack and Lieut.-Colonel Eyans acted as assistant umpires, and I was accompanied by Captain Parker, Lieut.-Colonel Room, and the field A.D.C., Lieut. Steward.

At 2:30 P.M. the whole available Force was formed up in line to receive the Minister of Defence, and, after an inspection by him, the "march past" took place, the Artillery in column of sections and the Infantry in column, afterwards retiring in "mass of quarter columns" and then marching past in "line of quarter columns," which movement was very well executed; the review closed with the usual advance of the brigade in review order.

Preparations for striking Camp were well advanced by the afternoon, and a portion of the troops left for the north by the ordinary train leaving Campbell Town after 5 P.M. The southern contingent did not get away until after 10 P.M., and arrived in Hobart early on Tuesday morning, one carriage, however, being detained at Antill Ponds, which proceeded with the mail train, arriving in town at 7 A.M. These arrangements were the most satisfactory that could be expected, taking into consideration the congestion of traffic on the Tasmanian Railways at that time of the year.

I cannot speak too highly of the willing spirit that pervaded all ranks throughout this long day's work, commencing at 3:30 A.M., and extending into the night. Generally expressed regret at having to break up camp was heard on all sides; and as the corps marched out of camp the great improvement brought about by the four days' training was plainly visible. To a Force such as ours the advantage of the training the men get at the Easter Camp is incalculable. There are no daylight drills during the year, as there is no pay given to the men, except in the case of the Artillery. There is no opportunity to impart instruction in field training, the essential part of a soldier's work, and therefore the instruction given at camp is practically all the men get from year's end to year's end. It is absolutely impossible to make men efficient as regards field work in four days, and therefore the camp should last at least a week to do any lasting good; and, in addition to this, the Commandant should have the means at his disposal to call the men out for periodical daylight drills during the year, so that the work learnt at camp may not be forgotten before the next one comes round.

The more training volunteers have in time of peace the less time will have to be taken up in drill when they are called out for war, and the sooner they will be prepared to take the field. The unpreparedness of the American volunteers in the present war, and the enormous cost already incurred in mobilising an untrained force, is a glaring instance of the point in question. To come nearer home, I may here call your attention, without prejudice to the confidential nature of the document, to the heavy cost of mobilising about 200 artillery and 1000 infantry (500 for six weeks at a time) as shown by the recent Report of the Local Defence Committee. This was estimated at about £7500 at the reduced rate of pay which the Committee recommended, and which is now made law. With a shorter training much of this expense would be saved; and, therefore, by now incurring a somewhat larger annual expenditure for daylight instruction, a more liberal supply of ammunition, and an increase in the number of instructors, expense on the outbreak of war would be saved. The rawness of many of the Auxiliary companies at present is the result of a paucity of military instructors, these having been practically withdrawn some years ago; and the two now engaged cannot possibly suffice for the large number of men enrolled over such scattered districts. It is most necessary that there should be a separate instructor for the 3rd Battalion. The officers, too, (the weak element in all volunteer forces), require at least three classes of instruction a year in order to properly fit them for their duties.

It seems to have escaped realisation hitherto that owing to the insular position of this colony, with its many undefended landing-places, the bulk of the fighting may not improbably fall on the infantry, with field artillery and mounted infantry to assist them. Having regard to this contingency, it is absolutely necessary (while not neglecting the artillery, the first line as regards the metropolis) that every endeavour should be made to render the infantry thoroughly efficient, more particularly in the use of the arm they possess.

#### *Staff.*

The Members of the Staff employed on the work on the Camp were Captain P. Parker, R.N., who was present with the Artillery; Lt.-Col. Wallack, Commanding Infantry, on whom the bulk of the work fell, and who worked with untiring zeal; Lt.-Col. Reid, who acted as D.A. Quartermaster-General; Major Room, who performed the duties of Brigade Major efficiently, and Lt. Geo. Steward, Field Aide-de-camp, who entered into his new duties assiduously. Captain Jones, whose excellent work I have already referred to, was Camp-Quartermaster.

In concluding this Report, I am glad to mention the valuable services rendered by Mr. Henry Foster, Merton Vale, who gave permission for the Camp to be held on his land, placed his ground at our disposal for manœuvring, bespoke the horses for the artillery, supplied the Camp with excellent meat, gave straw for the tents and firewood free of charge, and did all he could to render the Camp a success.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. V. LEGGE, *Colonel Commanding,*  
*Lieut.-Col. late R.A.*

*The Hon. the Minister for Defence.*

REPORT of Practice from 12-pr. B.L. Guns by S. T. Artillery, Merton Vale, Easter, 1898.

Round.	Projectile.	Fuze.	Range. yards.	Effect of Round.					Target.	Remarks.	
				Over. yards.	Under. yards.	Right. feet.	Left. feet.	Above plane. feet.*			
1	Common shell	Percussion—bolt	2200	150	...	line			A gun-pit in ferny ground on slope of hill, with canvas target in rear of pit.	Three projectiles passed through the target; one burst in right parapet of pit.	
2	"	"		range	...	...	10				Numerous shrapnel bullets through the target.
3	"	"		range	...	line					
4	"	"		range	...	line					
5	"	"		...	50	line					
6	"	"		...	100	line					
7	"	"		50	...	line					
8	"	"		30	...	line					
9	"	"		range	...	line					
10	"	"		...	10	line					
11	Shrapnel shell	Time, small	...	10	...	...	20				
12	"	"	...	50	...	...	10				
13	"	"	...	20	...	...	20				
14	"	"	...	50	...	...	20				
15	"	"	...	100	...	...	20				

T. M. EVANS, Lt.-Col. (Bt.).

\* As judged by range party.

N.B.—The shooting would have been better still had the target been placed in the gun-pit, and not so much of it seen.—W.V.L.

## REPORT ON FIELD FIRING.

No. of Men.	Range of Fire.	No. of Targets.	No. of Hits.	Remarks.
200	1000 to 200 yards	20	41	The targets, stuffed kahkee tunics, low on the ground, were most difficult targets, showing the advantage of the grey colour.

A large percentage of the shots struck low, about 40 yards in front of the targets, an error on the right side. The result, however, is unsatisfactory, mainly owing to the deficiency in numbers on the staff of Instructors. (X)

ERNEST T. WALLACK, *Lieut.-Colonel,*  
*Commanding Infantry Forces.*