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1880.

T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

LOCAL FORCES :

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 3, 1880.



Head Quarters, Hobart Town, 13th August, 1880.

SIR,

1. *Report.*—In compliance with your instructions I have the honor to submit for the information of Government the following Report upon the Local Forces and Defences of the Colony.

LOCAL FORCES.

2. *Command.*—On the 24th May last I took up the command of the Local Forces of Tasmania, and have had since that date opportunities of judging their general state and, to a certain extent, of testing their efficiency. I held inspections of both the Hobart Town and Launceston troops immediately after my appointment, and have frequently attended the parades of those at Head Quarters.

3. *Strength.*—The present strength of the Volunteer Force is as follows:—

Corps.	Efficients.	Recruits.	TOTAL.
Tasmanian Light Horse.....	—	30	30
S. T. V. Artillery.....	204	13	217
N. T. V. Artillery.....	74	—	74
Rifle Regiment—			
Hobart Town, 4 Companies	227	16	243
Launceston, 2 Companies ..	105	19	124
Launceston Garrison Band ..	20	—	20
TOTAL	630	78	708

4. *Efficiency.*—Regarding the efficiency of these Troops I must leave to the next paragraph some important points appertaining to the subject; but, speaking in general terms, I have no hesitation in saying that the Force, viewed as a whole, consists of a fine body of officers and men of marked intelligence, of good physique, and capable of fulfilling all the requirements of regular soldiery under certain conditions enumerated hereafter. Speaking then of their efficiency in this restricted sense, I am able to report as follows; viz.—

5. Lieutenant-Colonel Home, commanding at Launceston, manœuvred the Troops there in my presence, and evinced his ability to handle them satisfactorily. The services of this officer are in every way valuable to the Force and to the volunteer movement generally, as the interest he takes in its cause and the labour he has devoted to its details can best testify. I found Lieutenant-Colonel Home thoroughly conversant with all the particulars of his command at Launceston, and ready to afford me the most cordial support.

6. Major P. O. Fysh, having only lately been appointed to his corps, has not yet qualified for his work, but from his evident desire to learn it, and the zeal he displays in the volunteer movement generally, I feel assured he will soon be in a position to fulfil the requirements of his post and prove a valuable acquisition to the force.

7. Major Harrap and the Captains of both the Artillery Corps and the Rifle Regiment showed themselves capable of commanding their respective companies on parade, and the junior officers performed their duties creditably.

8. But all the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men require more instruction and practice in battalion drill, especially in extended formations. Brigade drill has not yet been attempted, nor have I yet, owing to the unfavourableness of the season, been able to give much instruction in outpost duty, with which I found them totally unacquainted. In the summer I propose putting the whole Force through a course of instruction in that important branch of their work, and I feel confident that it will not take long to make them efficient in this particular.

9. The returns of last year's Rifle practice show that the Rifle Regiment and a proportion of the Artillery went through a course of musketry drill and practice. The shooting was on the whole "good," so far as the limited extent of the ranges would admit of the practice being carried out. The volley and independent firings were carried out strictly in accordance with the Regulations, and

the result of those two practices compare most favourably with the standard laid down in the authorised edition of Musketry Instruction (of 1879), as will be seen from the following figures:—

	<i>Very good.</i>		<i>Good.</i>		<i>Moderate.</i>	
	Standard.	Average obtained.	Standard.		Standard.	
Volley Firing	9	10·20	8	—	7	—
Independent Firing	9	12·98	8	—	7	—

With regard to this and other exercises, see paragraphs Nos. 25 and 26.

10. I saw the nucleus of the Launceston Light Horse at a dismounted parade. They went through the sword exercise very creditably considering the short time they had been under instruction. It will take a long time before this corps can be properly organised; and Captain Mason, its commanding officer, will require material aid and encouragement to accomplish it.

11. Referring to the Staff Officers: Captain Boddam's services are well known to the Government, and I need only remark here that I have found him ready at all times to afford me every assistance in the discharge of my office. Lieutenant-Colonel Home speaks in high terms of Lieutenant Hunt, the Staff Officer at Launceston; and, so far as I have had to do with that officer, I can endorse his opinion.

12. Master-Gunner Chisholm, Sergeant-Majors Alderton and Young, and Assistant Master-Gunner Martini, are all valuable non-commissioned officers, thoroughly up to their work, and carrying out their duties to entire satisfaction.

13. The non-commissioned officers of the Northern Artillery appeared to be smart and well up to their duties. Owing to a breach of discipline, which had to be summarily dealt with by reducing several sergeants to the ranks, the Southern Batteries are at present short of well-trained non-commissioned officers, and it will take some little time before the new hands can be brought up to the mark.

14. The rank and file of the Artillery, both north and south, are good material. Those of the latter are under the standard height for heavy guns, but the smaller men could be detailed for the field pieces; and as most of them are very young there is every probability of their filling out to required size.

15. The non-commissioned Officers of the Rifle Regiment are smart and active, and give promise of meeting all demands upon their professional acquirements with a little more practice in taking up points and in detached duties.

16. The rank and file of the Rifle Regiment are above the average of regular troops in height, but they do not cover as much ground as ordinary British Infantry; *i.e.*, they have not the same chest measurement apparently.

17. There are three good Bands in the Force: one Garrison Band at Launceston, while both Artillery and Infantry have a Band each at Hobart Town. These Bands are all trained by professional musicians, and, I need hardly add, play marches in excellent time.

18. There are no pioneers at present.

19. The Force is well supplied with medical officers, but there are no hospitals, and none needed, unless the troops were required to take the field, when field hospitals could be at once extemporised. Ambulance duties are practised in the Hobart Town Artillery with good result.

20. *Expenditure.*—The estimate for the next year shows that a sum of £4637 1s. is required to maintain the Force as it now stands.

I did myself the honor to bring to the notice of Government, in my letter No. 6, of 28th June last, when I forwarded that estimate, the fact that the Forces of this Colony are totally destitute of camp equipage, without which they cannot be deemed efficient for service even in the vicinity of their stations; and that many articles of equipment are needed, especially great coats, to admit of their taking the field even for a day. In the communication above referred to, I submitted two supplementary estimates, one of which, to the amount of £2383 15s. 1d., was calculated thoroughly to equip the Volunteer Force at its present establishment; the other, amounting to £1588 2s. 8d., only provided for what I consider absolutely necessary for the training of the troops, and to allow of their quitting cantonments. The most superficial comparison with the military expenditure of any other British Colony should be sufficient to satisfy any one that the estimates have been framed with the strictest regard to economy compatible with efficiency.

21. *Requirements.*—Besides the necessities alluded to in the preceding paragraph, I beg to bring to the notice of Government the following requirements:—

22. *Guns*.—Provision has been made in the scheme of defence, and amounts have been voted by Parliament for £6000 for new armament, which sum was recommended to be expended as follows; viz.—

<i>Field and Garrison Guns.</i>	£
2 Guns of Position, 40 prs.	850
2 Six-inch Guns.....	2900
3 Field Guns	1000
2 80 prs. or 64 prs., Rifled.....	950
	<hr/>
	£5700

The balance, £300, for Ammunition.

But these guns have not yet, so far as I am aware, been ordered from England, and until they arrive it will be impossible to train the Artillery Force thoroughly. I therefore strongly recommend that the order for these pieces be issued at once, if not already given.

23. *Ammunition*.—The ammunition in store for the garrison guns now in the Colony is both of obsolete pattern and has deteriorated from age. Requisitions and estimates for fresh ammunition have been submitted, and it is of great importance that no further delay should occur in supplying this deficiency.

There is a sufficient supply and proper reserve of ammunition for small arms, except for the obsolete pattern of muzzle-loaders (*i.e.*, Enfield rifles and carbines), which arms might as well be sold off.

24. *Small Arms*.—The small arms in use with the Local Forces are the Long Rifle Snider, pat. '63 and '53, the Snider Rifle, pat. '56 (naval), and the Carbine Enfield, m.l.

The Infantry are armed with the first, the Hobart Town Artillery with the second, and the Launceston Artillery with the third.

Should the Government be prepared to change this armament for improved weapons, I presume the Martini-Henry Rifle and Carbine would be substituted, which would proportionately increase the value of the Force for offence and defence.

I understand that the Imperial Government charged a sum of about £3000 for the Sniders now in use, which it had been contemplated would have been issued gratis to the Colony. Could the Imperial Government not be applied to for a supply of Martini-Henry weapons in exchange for the comparatively obsolete arms issued and paid for? It would be well worth while for this Government to offer the difference in price between the two articles.

25. *Ranges*.—Proper Rifle Ranges are very much needed both at Hobart Town and Launceston. The papers connected with both these ranges are now in your office; I therefore refrain from further notice of them.

26. *Camp of Instruction*.—A Camp of Instruction would be of great service; and provided camp equipage were forthcoming, no great difficulties would be likely to arise or prevent the formation of one for a week or fortnight during the summer of each year. In point of fact it is impracticable to train any force sufficiently, to operate in the field against an enemy, without affording the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men the opportunity of acquiring that knowledge of military details, and of their respective duties in connection with them, which a camp of exercise alone can secure. I may here remark that these camps of exercise are recognised as most important adjuncts to military service, not only in England but in all its other colonies and dependencies. If it were found practicable to establish a Camp of Exercise in this Colony, and at the same time to obtain the use of a run of ground sufficient in extent and adapted to the purposes of field firing (*i.e.*, with ball cartridge), I should ask the Government to permit of my putting the Force through a course of this most interesting instruction. The cost of such a practice would be little beyond the actual value of the ammunition expended; and no exercise that has yet been instituted has been found to afford such practical advantages during peace operations.

Having enjoyed special opportunity of witnessing the practice of an entire brigade at this exercise, and having had the experience of organising the details of the same during my service abroad, I am in a position to know how much useful instruction can be obtained in this way at a very small cost.

27. *Artillery Instructor*.—The Artillery are in much need of a Drill-Instructor, to teach both officers and men the details of the various Artillery exercises. There is no record in this office to show that one has been applied for by the Government, and I beg I may be instructed on this point.

28. *Engineers*.—An Engineer Corps is absolutely necessary for the torpedo service in connection with the defence of the harbours, and for carrying out the arrangements for signalling. As the subject is before Government at present, in the shape of an offer of service from a number of skilled

artisans and mechanics well adapted to form such a corps, I need not refer to it at length in this report.

29. *Discipline.*—A report of this nature would be incomplete without direct reference to the subject of “discipline,” and with regular troops it would necessarily be of the first importance; but with volunteers it is only on parade as a rule that we have to deal with the general conduct and bearing of the individuals composing the mass. Judging then from parade experiences, I have much pleasure in stating that the conduct and bearing of our local troops is excellent. I have seen nothing but an earnest desire to do right in all ranks, and no sign of intemperance or insubordination has come under my notice. I found on assuming the command that the channel of communication in official matters was not observed, and that an extraordinary custom prevailed of officers addressing Government direct, instead of through the authorised channel of this office. I pointed out the mistake in a communication to your office, and issued orders to the Force on the subject, which have corrected the erroneous ideas then in operation.

30. *General remarks on the Local Forces.*—Considering the short time the Local Forces of Tasmania have been in existence undoubtedly much has been done, but from what I have noted above it will be seen that I consider a great deal is requisite to render the Force ready for emergency. I have already submitted a scheme of re-organisation, and I consider that thorough efficiency can only be effected by placing the Volunteer Troops on a more *permanent* footing. If that be done, and the scheme I have proposed adopted, I believe our Local Force would be capable of considerable and rapid expansion, and fit to meet any strain that it might, within the field of probabilities, be called upon to sustain.

LOCAL DEFENCES.

31. A detailed report on the Defences of the Colony was forwarded on the 10th May, 1880.

32. *Requirements.*—The greater part of the requirements of the scheme of defence have not yet been provided. These requirements have been fully set forth in memoranda submitted by the Consulting Military Engineer and the Staff Officer's Report thereon.

33. With regard to the works now in construction:—

Queen's Battery.—Queen's Battery is now completed, is self-defensible, and thoroughly equipped, with the exception of the ammunition, which, as has been pointed out in paragraph 23, is of obsolete pattern and most unserviceable.

34. *Alexandra Battery.*—This Battery is approaching completion, nearly all the heavy work having been performed. The Battery will be made thoroughly self-defensible, and field works will be added to protect the rear. Its armament is in the Colony and the guns are now being mounted.

35. *Kangaroo Bluff Battery* has been surveyed and marked out as a self-defensible work for five guns, but not yet commenced for want of orders, which are now solicited. With the exception of two S.B. guns its armament, *vide* paragraph 22, has yet to be procured, and this should no longer be delayed, as if now commenced the battery would be completed before the guns could arrive. The soil and the regular nature of the work will render its cost probably less than that of Alexandra Battery.

36. *Launceston.*—No defence has yet been provided for the River Tamar, the guns of position, *vide* paragraph 22, not having yet been ordered.

37. *Torpedo Defences.*—No Torpedo Defences for either Hobart Town or Launceston have yet been provided, and no electric light has been procured for Hobart Town. The defence of Hobart Town could not of course be performed efficiently without both submarine mines and electric light, as the river is navigable at night.

38. *Survey of Roads.*—A survey of roads in the vicinity of Hobart Town and Launceston is highly desirable to complete the scheme of defence, as at present there are no reliable statistics to base military dispositions upon with accuracy.

39. *General remarks upon the Local Defences.*—The whole scheme of Local Defence having been conceived by highly experienced Engineer Officers of standing, and approved of by the Government of this Colony, it would be out of place for me to refer to it more than to assure the Government that it is the aim of this office to work out that scheme in its entirety, availing itself of such opportunities as the present for expediting its completion with a view to being prepared for any eventuality.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD F. ANGELO,

Lieut.-Colonel, Commandant Local Forces of Tasmania.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.