

(No. 60.)



1883.

T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

DEFENCES OF THE COLONY:

REPORT OF THE ACTING COMMANDANT.

Laid upon the Table by the Premier, July 25, 1883, and ordered by the House to be printed.



Head Quarters, Hobart,
30th June, 1883.

SIR,

In accordance with your instructions, I have now the honor to furnish, for the information of the Government and the Parliament a Report upon the Local Forces and Defences of the Colony for the year 1882, and for the first five months of the year 1883, the latest period for which complete information is available.

LOCAL FORCES.

Commandant.—In consequence of the departure from the Colony of the late Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Angelo, on the 20th May, 1882, I was appointed Acting Commandant of the Local Forces. I have performed the duties appertaining to this office from that date to the best of my ability, having also, in addition, continued to discharge those of the Officer Commanding the Northern Division.

Strength of the Local Forces.—The Strength of the Volunteer Force on assuming the command was as under—

Strength of the Tasmanian Local Forces on the 31st May, 1882.

DISTRIBUTION.	Field Officers.	Captains.	Subalterns.	Surgeons.	Paymasters.	Quartermasters.	Staff-Sergeants.	Sergeants.	Buglers and Band.	Rank and File.	TOTAL.
Light Horse, <i>Launceston</i> .....	..	1	1	..	1	..	2	2	1	18	26
Artillery Corps, <i>Hobart</i>	1	3	4	2	1	1	7	12	24	132	187
Artillery Corps, <i>Launceston</i> .....	..	1	1	1	..	..	1	4	..	77	85
Rifle Corps, <i>Hobart</i>	1	4	9	1	1	1	3	17	20	100	157
Rifle Corps, <i>Launceston</i>	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	6	2	68	88
TOTAL STRENGTH	3	11	19	5	4	3	15	41	47	395	543

Strength of the Tasmanian Local Forces on the 31st May, 1883.

DISTRIBUTION.	Field Officers.	Captains.	Subalterns.	Surgeons.	Paymasters.	Quartermasters.	Staff-Sergeants.	Sergeants.	Buglers and Band.	Rank and File.	TOTAL.	Efficients, 1883.
Light Horse, <i>Launceston</i> .....	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	2	..	13	17	
Artillery Corps, <i>Hobart</i>	1	3	3	2	1	1	8	13	29	173	234	175
Artillery Corps, <i>Launceston</i> .....	..	1	1	..	..	..	3	4	..	68	77	70
Rifle Corps, <i>Hobart</i>	1	4	8	..	1	1	3	15	27	148	208	161
Rifle Corps, <i>Launceston</i>	1	2	4	1	1	1	3	9	22	70	114	54
Engineer Corps, <i>Hobart</i> .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50	50	
TOTAL STRENGTH	3	10	17	3	4	3	17	43	78	522	700	

Tasmanian Light Horse.—The number on the roll of this Corps on the 31st May, 1882, was 3 officers, 23 non-commissioned officers and volunteers; but by the returns for the last quarter only 17 members appear to have attended any drill, two of these only one drill, and three only three drills. All the drills were foot and sword drills, with the exception of two mounted drills, at which 6 and 8 volunteers only were present. Although the members of this Corps furnish their own horses and equipments, I would recommend that, under existing circumstances, no further expenditure for a Drill Instructor be incurred, and that all spare arms and accoutrements be called in.

Southern Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery.—Major Crowther continues in command of this Corps. In accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the authorized strength was increased to 275, exclusive of officers. The Corps was rather in excess of its former strength at the end of last year, and some (48) forty-eight recruits have since joined; this still leaves 51 to bring the Corps up to the required strength. I am of opinion that some little difficulty will be experienced in increasing the strength of the Corps sufficiently while adhering to the standard laid down as necessary by the Royal Commission under the existing regulations. A detachment of the Corps has been formed at Bellerive, but it will be necessary that arrangements be made to enable the members to attend the same drills as the remainder of the Corps, unless it is the intention of the Government to sanction the formation of Country Corps.

Launceston Volunteer Artillery.—Major Harrap resigned the command on the 13th February, 1882 Captain Collins has, since that date, been in charge of the Battery. Its authorized strength is 70 of all ranks, and the numbers are complete; indeed there are several recruits in excess of the numbers, who are being drilled, and can be brought in as soon as vacancies occur. I am of opinion that it would be advisable, as recommended by the Royal Commission, to obtain a paid Drill Instructor for the Corps, which would do away with the necessity of sending the Instructor periodically from Hobart,—an unsatisfactory and inadequate arrangement.

Tasmanian Engineer Corps.—In accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, an Engineer Corps has been formed at Hobart. The Corps has been formed of a most desirable class of men. The full number has been obtained, and every profession or trade considered necessary for the execution of submarine mining operations is represented. The whole of the men have signed a form of application stating that they will conform to the Regulations similar to those laid down by the Royal Commission as necessary, and have produced the necessary certificates as to character and proficiency. The men have been taught marching drill and rifle exercises, and have made fair progress in signalling. Lectures have been delivered to the Corps on Explosives, Telegraphy, and Electrical Testing and Submarine Mining. In all cases there has been an excellent attendance of members. The Corps has now been broken up into squads, and are now learning the details of Submarine Mining Work, Telegraphy, and Testing. The Staff Officer, Captain Boddam, in addition to his other duties, undertook the formation of the Engineer Corps, of which he has had the entire control and management. He has devoted much time and attention to the task, and the results of his labours are in every way satisfactory.

Tasmanian Volunteer Rifle Regiment.—Major P. O. Fysh remains in command. This regiment is still considerably below the authorized strength, viz., 250, exclusive of officers. It will be seen that the strength on the 31st May last was only 208, including officers. The falling off in the attendance and numbers of the Regiment cannot but be attributed, to a certain extent, to the bad attendance of some of the officers.

Launceston Volunteer Rifle Regiment.—Major Just has lately resigned the command of this Corps, having received a civil appointment necessitating a lengthened absence from the Colony. Captain Aikenhead, the senior officer, is now in charge. The authorized strength is 130. There were 16 short of this number enrolled on the 31st May last, but the Corps is now at almost its full strength, several recruits having since joined. The sudden increase in the numbers I attribute to the amended Regulations lately issued, and in some degree to the zeal and energy of the Sergeant-Major Instructor who has been lately appointed.

Inspections.—During the month I have made minute inspections of all the Corps.

- (a) *Hobart Artillery.*—There was a very good attendance of the members of this Corps. The whole of their drills were well performed, especially repository and field-gun drill. Every attention is paid by both officers, non-commissioned officers, and gunners in acquiring a knowledge of their respective duties, and the manner in which the work is done reflects credit on the Sergeant-Major Instructor, an efficient and zealous officer. This Corps is fairly up in the simple battalion movements, and on all occasions turns out well for parades.
- (b) *Launceston Artillery.*—This Corps mustered very strong, only 4 men absent without leave. The men, under their officers, were put through garrison, field-gun, and repository drill, and taking into consideration the little instruction and practice they have had in the

latter, I can report that all the drills were well done. I have had frequent opportunities of exercising the Battery, in conjunction with the Infantry, at battalion movements, which they performed in a creditable manner. As in the sister Corps in the South, officers and men take a very lively interest in their work.

- (c) *Tasmanian Volunteer Rifles*.—At my official inspection there were only 137 of all ranks present, 44 of whom were bandsmen and recruits. Those who were on parade were exercised in the various drills (which were conducted under different officers of the Regiment), some of which were fairly performed: but this Corps requires more frequent instruction, and steady practice in battalion drill and in extended movements. The men presented a very clean and smart appearance on parade, and I found their arms and accoutrements in good order.
- (d) *Launceston Volunteer Rifles*.—There was a very good attendance of the members of this Corps, only 4 men absent without leave out of a total of 115. I called out different officers to put the men through company and battalion drill, extended movements, and the manual and firing exercises. Taking into account the number of recruits in the ranks, all these exercises were fairly well done. Good progress has been made in signalling drill under the Sergeant Instructor who has recently been attached to this Corps, who has proved himself to be well up to his work.
- (e) *Torpedo Corps*.—Forty-five out of the fifty members of this Corps paraded for my inspection on the evening of the 21st instant. The Corps was put through the rifle exercises and marching drill, and went through the signalling code. A squad was also employed at crowning and pointing cables and splicing wire rope. A squad was also being instructed in practical telegraphy. I inspected the instruction rooms, work-shop, and engine-rooms, and saw both full-sized and model mines working. When the Electric Company have completed their contract for the supply of the stores, the Corps will have a very perfect and complete plant for instructional purposes. An Instructor, Quartermaster-Sergeant Falconer, of the Royal Engineers, has recently been appointed, and is expected to arrive in the Colony almost immediately.

Officers of the Force.—I am pleased to be able to report that generally the officers have shown attention to the execution of, and zeal in, the discharge of their duties. The falling off in the attendance of the members of the Rifle Regiments for a portion of the period embraced in my Report I cannot help attributing in certain measure to the poor attendance of some of the officers of these corps. I consider that officers can only be made thoroughly efficient, and good attendance at drill insured from all, by instituting reliable and practical examinations at stated periods and only allowing those to hold their commissions who pass the necessary tests.

Staff Officers.—The value of Captain Boddam's services, more especially in connection with the Defences of the Colony, is well known to the Government, and I have pleasure in acknowledging the assistance I have received from him, as also from Captain Hunt, Staff Officer in the Northern Division, who is an efficient, most valuable, and painstaking officer.

The Master Gunner at Hobart pays marked attention to his duties, and continues to give perfect satisfaction, as also does the Assistant Master Gunner in the Northern Division.

Instructors.—The Officers in command of Corps report favourably of their Sergeant-Major Instructors.

As the efficiency of a Regiment in a great measure depends on the Instructor, and the amount of zeal and ability exhibited by him, requiring long and careful training as well as a certain amount of education, I consider that in all cases Instructors should be well paid, and be required to confine themselves to their proper work.

Gun and Rifle Practice.—On several occasions I visited the Artillery practice at Hobart and Launceston. On one occasion, at Hobart, it was very good; but the shooting on the Queen's Birthday was not so good. The practice will, however, no doubt be improved by the daylight parades, the majority of which will be given to such exercise and drill in the batteries. At present the efficiency shown at practice is behind that shown at the ordinary drills.

Only about ($\frac{1}{3}$) one third of the Rifle Regiments completed the course of musketry last year.

It is to be hoped, by confining some of the daylight parades to target practice and field firing, increased efficiency in this respect may be obtained. I might mention that the per-centage of marksmen and first-class shots among those who fired, and the figure of merit, was good: but good shooting in a few is not so much required as general efficiency throughout a regiment. During the year 1882 some of the English regular regiments had more than 50 per cent. of marksmen.

Ammunition.—The proper reserve, 100 rounds per gun and 200 rounds per rifle, is in the Colony, together with sufficient for practice purposes. There is, however, no ammunition for the obsolete muzzle-loading carbines with which the Launceston Artillery are armed.

Small Arms.—Since the last Report on this subject 200 Martini-Henry rifles have been received, and have been issued to the marksmen and first-class shots of the Force. As it is presumed that this is the first step towards the re-arming of the Force, I would urge upon the Government the necessity for completing this object with the least possible delay.

Expenditure.—The expenditure on the Local Forces for the year 1882 was £5355 3s. 6d., being £652 6s. 8d. less than that voted by Parliament for the year aforesaid. There is no reason to suppose that the amount voted for the current year will be exceeded. The sum of £6500 was voted for the execution and completion of the Defence Works. Of this, contracts have been let for the completion of the Kangaroo Bluff Battery, £5450, including materials; and for Queen's Battery, £480. This will leave about £570 for finishing the Alexandra Battery. Although that amount is not sufficient to complete the work entirely, it will finish that portion of it which could not readily be carried out on the outbreak of war. There is no advantage to be derived by excavating the rear ditches of this work, or by erecting the stockade in front, until the actual necessity for it arises.

I have no means of knowing whether the cost of the armaments will be in excess of that authorised. The Torpedo Boat will, I understand, be obtained for the sum voted.

DEFENCES.

- (a) *Queen's Battery.*—During the past year this Battery has been repaired and altered. The main magazine has been rendered shell-proof and ventilated, and the left flank has been defiladed by means of a merlon between No. 5 and No. 6 Guns.

A contract has been entered into for the construction of a shell-proof chamber, in which will be placed the Engine and Electric Light Apparatus for the illumination of the mine field in the event of a night attack.

- (b) *Alexandra Battery.*—Two new 6-inch guns, of 5 tons, capable of penetrating 14 inches of iron, have been ordered for this Battery, which will, on their arrival, possess a very powerful armament.

Pending the receipt of full particulars as to the dimensions of the gun equipment and ammunition, the magazines and emplacements for these guns cannot be completed. The rest of the Battery will be completed as soon as the contract for the Queen's Battery is sufficiently advanced to admit the Clerk of Works carrying out the work. That portion of the outworks in rear, and the Battery enclosure, which could not readily be carried out on the outbreak of war, will also be constructed at the same time.

- (c) *Kangaroo Bluff Battery.*—A contract has been let for the completion of this Battery. No details whatever have been omitted in the plans and specifications to render the Battery complete in every way.

The time fixed for the completion of the contract is 12 months, and there will be no difficulty whatever in rendering it fit for service within the period specified.

The carriages, platforms, and ironwork, complete in every way, for the mounting of the heavy guns, have been shipped from England, and are expected to arrive in the Colony within the next month.

- (d) *Defence of the River Tamar.*—The guns for the defence of the River Tamar and Launceston have been ordered, and the contract is being carried out by Sir William Armstrong. An outwork will be thrown up at Brown's Bluff on the outbreak of war, the site being favourable for its rapid construction. The guns will be kept in Launceston, as the Artillery there will in this case be enabled to be thoroughly drilled to their use.

- (e) *Field Guns and Equipment.*—Contracts have been entered into with Sir William Armstrong and Company for the supply of the 13-pounder and 7-pounder guns sanctioned by the Legislature. The guns will probably arrive in the Colony by the end of the year.

- (f) *Torpedo Defences.*—The contract for the necessary supply of Torpedo Stores and Equipment is progressing. It would in all probability have been completed but that the Government were compelled to return the bulk of the mines supplied as unsuitable for the extremely deep water in which they will have to be laid. The Company have been ordered to complete the contract, failing which the penalty will be enforced.

- (g) *Torpedo Boat*.—A contract has been entered into with Messrs. Thorneycroft and Company for the supply of a 2nd Class Torpedo Boat. The contract is being carried out under the supervision of the Imperial Admiralty Department, and the boat will in all probability arrive at the end of the year, and will be a most valuable acquisition to the Local Defences.

Signal and Telegraphic Communication.—The sum of £500 having been voted for Signal and Telegraphic Communication, it is proposed to lay cables between the Batteries, and to provide suitable stations and apparatus for signal communication between the same. Range-finding can also by these means be accurately carried out. Proper provision has been made in drafting the plans and specifications for the works to effect this object. When this and the remainder of the works above enumerated are completed, the Colony will possess a very perfect plan of Defence, and one suited in every way to the class of attack to which it will be exposed.

Report of the Royal Commission.—A Royal Commission was appointed on the 7th September, 1882, to enquire into the present condition of the Volunteer Force, and to make suggestions for securing greater permanency.

A Report of the proceedings of the Commission was furnished on the 17th September, and laid on the table of the House of Assembly on the 28th September. Parliament voted only such money as they considered necessary for the carrying out of the recommendations of the Commission during last Session, but, in anticipation of the early arrival of an officer on the active list of H. M. Forces as Commandant, no action was taken regarding the proposals of the Commission as to the re-organisation of the Force until the 16th April, when, it appearing that the officer would not reach the Colony for several months, effect was given to that portion of the Report (by *Gazette* notice) suggesting that daylight parades should be held, and imposing fines for non-attendance and non-compliance with the Regulations. In the absence of an amended Act and Regulations (sanctioned by the Legislature) no scheme of re-organisation can be carried out. What is especially required is a proper Military Discipline Act, under which the Military Forces of the Colony should be sworn in for a period of three years. I attach the greatest importance to this fixed tenure of service. Under the present system there can be no classifying of the men, but having three years to serve they will be able to undergo progressive training and instruction. A Militia Bill should also be at once passed, providing for compulsory enrolment if necessary. The existing Regulations should be further amended, provision being made for all alterations suggested by the Commission. The numbers of the Infantry portion of the Force should be increased: if a really reliable Force is required, the numbers recommended by the Commission must be obtained. Requisitions for a complete equipment have been forwarded to the Government, and the order for the same should be executed with despatch to enable the Force to be properly trained during the coming year.

The appointment of the Adjutants recommended by the Commission is very necessary. No Instructor alone could instruct the number of men who will be enrolled in the several Corps when at their proper strength.

I have recommended that money be appropriated to allow for the necessary increase of the Infantry. This is most essential, especially at Launceston, where three Companies are required.

On the action of Government and the Parliament the efficiency of the Defence Forces must in a great measure depend. The Royal Commission have made such complete recommendations that I cannot too strongly urge the necessity for carrying out their proposals in their entirety.

Since writing the above and concluding this Report, I have had the honor to receive your letter intimating that the Government purpose to frame an amended Act, in order more effectually to secure the establishment and re-organisation of a reliable Volunteer Force for the defence of the Colony, and requesting my views with reference to the required amendments. It affords me much pleasure to learn that such are the intentions of the Government, and I shall lose no time in complying with your request.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. C. D. HOME, *Lieut.-Col.*,
Acting Commandant Local Forces.

The Hon. the Chief Secretary.