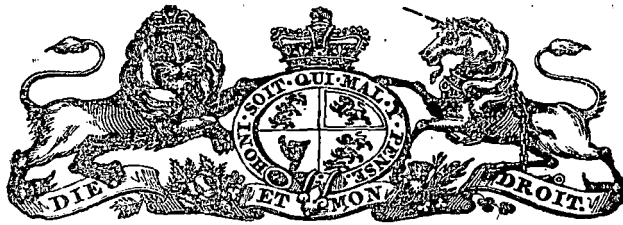


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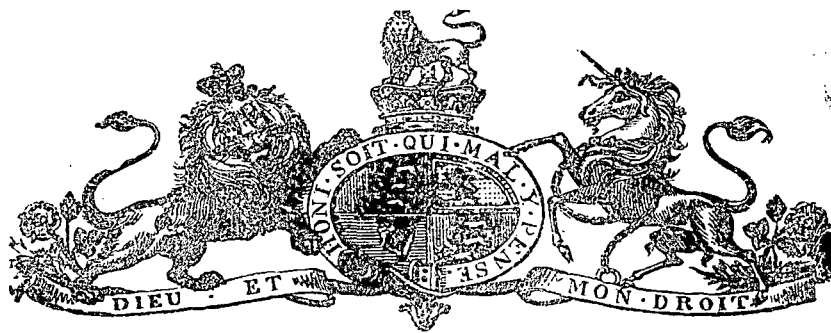
1884.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

LOCAL FORCES IN TASMANIA:

COMMANDANT'S REPORT.

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



Head Quarter Office, Hobart, 3rd July, 1884.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward you my Report on the duties I have carried out since my appointment as Commandant of the Local Forces in Tasmania, combined with my remarks on the various Corps composing them.

Employment in England.

While in England, after accepting the appointment which the Government did me the honor to offer me, I was employed by the Crown Agents in ordering from Sir William Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., the new armament intended for the defence of the Colony. I was in consultation with General Scratchley on all important points, and sought to get the *matériel* best suited for the Local Defences; but there were not funds enough to complete the equipment required and purchase all the ammunition for the guns which were ordered.

I left England in October, arriving in Adelaide on the 16th November, where I stayed a few days to see and enquire into the system adopted by Colonel Downes, the Commandant, for the maintenance of the Force there. I have advocated the introduction of that system here, based as it is on a three years' enrolment, as I believe it to be the best in any of the Australian Colonies.

I arrived in Hobart on the 6th of December, and the same evening went over the Engineer stores and inspected the *matériel* connected with the technical work of the Corps, seeing the men also at drill and at work in the shops.

Inspection of Northern Division.

Having to proceed to Launceston on business immediately after my arrival, I took the opportunity of holding an inspection parade of both Corps connected with that town on the 11th December. There was a very fair muster, particularly of the Artillery, whom I saw at gun-drill after the "march past" was over, and was pleased with their smartness. Colonel Home being ill at the time, Major Aikenhead was in command of the parade.

Inspection of Southern Division.

On the 19th December I held an inspection parade of the S. T. V. Rifles, at which there were 144 of all ranks present. Major Fysh was in command. The Battalion marched past, and was put through the manual and firing exercise, the bayonet exercise, and a few simple manoeuvres, all of which were executed in a creditable manner, though a want of system in the drill instruction was apparent.

On the 21st of December I held an inspection parade of the S. T. V. Artillery. Major E. L. Crowther was in command, and there were 145 of all ranks present. The march past was creditable, and the gun-drill and repository exercises, which I called for afterwards, were well carried out, and I found that the battery officers knew their work well.

On the 5th January I inspected the Engineer Corps, after having seen them at the work of the annual training frequently during the previous month. For my remarks on this Corps, which promises very well, see my special Report, dated 31st March.

Work in Launceston.

During the past six months I have held frequent parades of the Force at Launceston, as the Commandant of the Northern Division applied for leave on the plea of ill-health from the 1st of April till the 30th September; and up to the present time I have been carrying on his work, conducting my correspondence with the two Corps through the Staff Office at Launceston. I regret

much the delicate state of Colonel Home's health. He is a very zealous officer, and takes a keen interest in the Volunteer movement, having long served the Government of the Colony in a faithful manner, but I do not apprehend that he will again resume work, as he finds the responsibility of his command too much for his constitution. I take this opportunity, while speaking of the Northern Division, to testify my appreciation of the Staff Officer's ability and zeal. I find Captain Hunt to be an excellent officer, well posted up in his drill and office work, and anxious to carry out my instructions for the maintenance of discipline, &c. to the letter.

I found the rifle range at Launceston in an unsatisfactory state, owing to the reported danger to residents in the vicinity from bullets passing over the butts; and I took immediate steps to have a plan already submitted for heightening them carried out. Dissatisfaction, however, still exists; and complaints have been made to such an extent that I have been forced to stop all firing at the longer ranges, except by first-class shots and marksmen. This is detrimental to the efficiency of the Force; and, as the range will eventually have to be given up, I have applied for a piece of ground on the Trevallyn estate, which I hope may be purchased for this purpose.

Artillery Practice at Hobart.

At Hobart I have introduced a system of heavy gun practice, which is of great importance for the Artillery. There have been two half-day parades for firing from the Queen's Battery held by me, and the results have been satisfactory. There are some excellent shots among the non-commissioned officers; and a few of the rank and file are proficient in "laying," but they have not had opportunities for sufficient exercise in this important part of an artilleryman's profession,—the carrying out of shot and shell practice. The firing has been carried on under my own supervision, with instruction where required, after the manner of the Imperial Service.

As I have said in my Report on the Defences of the Colony, I wish to set apart a certain amount of ammunition for this purpose, to be fired away yearly, otherwise it is not possible to fill the ranks of the corps with gunners trained as they should be. The quantity of smooth-bore ammunition now in store, and which would become useless after the 8-inch shell guns are done away with, will furnish plenty of material for some time to come. On the 21st of May, the second occasion, the practice was chiefly at a moving target, and some excellent shooting was made. The men are drilled in laying at a moving object, which has been recently made by my instructions, and is used in the evening at the drill-yard.

Gun Sheds.

I have had increased accommodation for the new guns which have just arrived in view, and have applied for the construction of a gun-shed at the yard, which is now finished, and will be occupied by the two 13-pr. B.L. guns now in store. At Launceston the same want existed; and for the accommodation and proper upkeep of the two 40-pr. B.L. guns and two 7-pr. mountain guns extra shed accommodation has been provided. These four guns, three of which I caused to be purchased last year at Elswick, and which arrived in the *Gulf of Papua* a few weeks ago, form an efficient field armament for the Launceston Artillery, and should make that branch of the service popular in the North.

Drilling of Rifle Regiment.

At the commencement of the year I instituted a course of spring and "setting-up" drills for the Rifle Regiment, as this class of drill is much required in Volunteer Corps. This, however, was unpopular with the men; and as they are not engaged for any fixed term of service, their officers had no hold on them, and I have reason to think that some few resigned in consequence. A new system of drill for attack formations, which works well in South Australia, and a method of field firing not hitherto practised in this command, have been introduced by me since the beginning of the year, and find favour with the men; but the small attendance at evening instruction parades militates against any efficient training in new drills.

Garrison Parades.

I have held several evening garrison parades, composed of the three Southern Corps, in order to get sufficient numbers together for battalion drill, and the ordinary parade movements of inspection. These parades are required chiefly for the instruction of the Rifle Corps, as their attendance is so small that they cannot be properly drilled without joining them with the other corps in the Division. On two occasions I have marched the corps out to the Domain by moonlight in order to practise the men in route marching.

The appointment of a Garrison Sergeant-Major was necessary to carry out the usual duties of this official, and to undertake the drill of recruits under one uniform system. I had Sergeant-Major Anderson appointed to this post, in conjunction with his duties as Staff Clerk. I regret to say that he was taken ill shortly after his appointment, and is at present absent on sick leave, which expires at the end of the month. I have elsewhere referred to Sergeant-Major Anderson's qualifications, and I consider him an excellent warrant officer.

Resignations in the Force.

I regret to say that the strength of the Force has been much reduced since the 1st January, owing to numerous resignations consequent on the inability of members to attend the daylight parades. As I have remarked in my Reorganization Report, these parades were well attended at the end of last year, as there was evidently a strong desire on the part of the men to render themselves efficient for the first time under the new Regulations. As soon, however, as it became a question of commencing another year under these Regulations, the pressure brought to bear by employers in their unwillingness to allow their men leave to quit their work produced discouragement, and resignations were the result. Here is apparent the serious evil of the Force not being engaged for a fixed term, so as to give a Commanding Officer some hold over his men; at present he has not the slightest control over them; nor have I it in my power to render the several corps I command efficient so long as the men composing it can leave the service for any and every reason they choose to bring forward. A number of men have also been struck off the rolls for non-attendance at drill; and though the decrease in the force is to be lamented, I do not consider that it carries with it a corresponding loss in efficiency, as most of those who have left (though of course there are many exceptions) are men upon whom but slight dependence could have been placed, and those who are standing to their post in both corps form the really efficient nucleus of the Force.

Among the resignations are the names of several officers, viz., Major P. O. Fysh, Major E. L. Crowther, Captain Burgess, and Lieut. Butler. The three former resigned owing to the provisions of the Regulation of Parliament which debars them from drawing Government pay while holding a seat in the House. The Artillery and Rifle Corps of the Southern Division have thus been left without Commanding Officers, and I have not been able to take steps to appoint officers in their places until Parliament should discuss the merits of the regulation here mentioned. The officers in temporary command,—viz., Captain Evans and Captain O'Boyle,—I consider quite qualified to fill the vacancies in question.

Half-yearly Inspections.

I have carried out, before the meeting of Parliament, half-yearly inspections of all corps, after the custom of the Imperial Service; and on the result of these inspections I frame my remarks on the present efficiency of the Force.

Launceston Artillery.

On the 12th of last month I inspected the Launceston Artillery who mustered well, there being 60 of all ranks on parade. The only officer present was Captain Collins, in command,—Lieutenant Harrap being on the sick list. After the inspection, the men were put through garrison, field, and mountain gun drill, as also repository exercises, knotting, and gyn drill; and a very satisfactory amount of efficiency was shown. This corps is second to none in the Colony, and owe much of their smartness to the Instructor, Assistant Master Gunner Martini, who performs the duties of Battery Sergeant-Major as well. He is well up in his work, both as an artillery man and a non-commissioned officer on parade, and the natural result is that the men are smart and well drilled. The equipment of this Corps is, however, not satisfactory. The men are armed with muzzle-loading Enfield rifles, which are useless. A repeating carbine or revolver should form the small-arm equipment of this and the Hobart Corps of Artillery, as an ordinary rifle is not sufficient defence for an artilleryman on service. A certain proportion of Martinis have been served out to the Launceston Artillery for class firing. I do not propose, however, that this arm be retained for the actual equipment of the corps, but would rather restrict it to the Engineers and Rifles.

Launceston Rifles.

On the 17th I held an inspection of the Launceston Volunteer Rifle Regiment. Major Aikenhead was in command of the corps, and there were 74 of all ranks present, exclusive of cadets, who mustered 36. The attendance was not so good as it ought to have been, although on inspecting the books I found that the Companies were properly divided into squads, each under a sergeant. This is a most necessary measure in a Volunteer Corps, as (if the sergeants do their duty) it is the only true means of getting a good attendance at parade. After the "march past" the men were put through the manual and firing exercises by a Company Officer, and the bayonet exercise under the Adjutant; Company drill under Officers of Companies, and a few battalion movements, followed by "extended order" drill under the Commanding Officer, were then carried out. This Corps has not made the progress that I should like in drill during the interval elapsed since my first inspection. The Commanding Officer is zealous and untiring in his efforts to make his Corps efficient, but the attendance of the Officers at parade of late has not been very regular, and this, together with a want of supervision of their squads by the Sergeants, results in a bad attendance of the men, and, as a matter of course, imperfect drilling when more than the usual number are brought together at inspection parades. The Adjutant is zealous and up in his drill, but his professional duties will not permit of his devoting the necessary amount of time required to make the Corps smart, and a want of military training prevents him from supervising the drill of the Officers and instructing them in the profession of arms. This *cannot be properly done* without the services of a paid Adjutant from the Army, whose appointment I have advocated in my Reorganization Report.

Cadet Corps.

The drill of the Cadets was very satisfactory considering the short time they have been enrolled. I look upon this Corps as an important factor in the Northern Division of the Force, from which many good volunteers will be furnished for the Rifle Regiment, and every credit is due to Major Aikenhead for his exertions in forming it. I have recommended a small capitation allowance for the cadets, and if it is granted encouragement will be given to this portion of the Volunteer movement. A similar corps is much wanted in Hobart: it would be productive here of beneficial results, as there is at present a want of military spirit in the town, apparent in the above mentioned falling off in the strength of the two corps; and I believe the formation of a good Cadet Company would act as an incentive to recruiting.

Southern Tasmanian Rifles.

On the 23rd the half-yearly inspection of this Corps took place as an evening parade. There were 114 of all ranks on parade, and 43 absent. This latter number comprised a good many men who are repeatedly absent from parade, and similar defaulters have been struck off the lists during the past four months for a like reason. The poor attendance at parade of this regiment is, to a great extent, owing to the want of interest taken by the sergeants in the men of their companies; they do not visit those who are absent from parade and endeavour to induce them to attend; and I have been unable to correct this evil as yet, though I have several times addressed the non-commissioned officers on the subject. I have now instructed the Commanding Officer to have the regiment divided into squads, each under a sergeant, who shall be responsible for the attendance of the men thus placed under his supervision.

The parade was under the command of Captain O'Boyle. After the "march past" the manual and firing exercises and the bayonet exercise were gone through under a captain and the Adjutant, and companies were then exercised by their own officers, the parade terminating with practice under a captain in the new attack drill. A fairly satisfactory amount of proficiency was shown in drill, but not so much as would have been the case had those who were on parade been more regular in their attendance during the half year. The Commanding Officer is zealous, and desirous that his corps shall become thoroughly efficient; and the company officers are as fairly up in their drill as can be expected with so few men to exercise.

The musketry course for the present year has not yet commenced, so I am unable to report now on the shooting of the corps. The present range is unsatisfactory, and, I understand, cannot be retained on existing conditions much longer; a new locality must therefore be sought for, and land purchased for this purpose.

Before leaving England I caused a few "Morris" tubes to be purchased for the instruction of recruits and 3rd class shots, and during the winter months ammunition will be served out for use with the tubes. Beneficial results have accrued from this mode of tuition in England, and I trust that good shooting will be produced by like instruction in this Force.

Engineer Corps.

On the 24th I inspected the Engineer Corps, seeing the men at "marching past" and company drill, and afterwards at signalling, knotting, splicing, jointing, crowning cables, and other technical work connected with their duties as submarine miners. The officers present were Captain Boddam, still in command of the corps, Lieut. Burnett, and Mr. Henry. There were 37 of all ranks on parade,—several being on the sick list, and a few at work in the country. The same want of officers still exists, and I fear it will be a matter of some difficulty to fill the two vacancies at present in the corps.

During the past six months the men have been going through a course of work under their Instructor, Quartermaster-Sergeant Falconer, R.E., and I carefully inspected each man's operation and found that very satisfactory progress had been made by all the men. The signalling squad is well up in its work, and by the end of the year, before the corps commences its annual training, I apprehend that every member will be proficient in the work allotted to him. The test-table has been fitted up by the Instructor, and care will be taken to render the testing squad thoroughly efficient in this important branch of a submarine miner's work. I have only to refer to my report on this corps already rendered, and to point out that the equipment is still in an unsatisfactory state. A steam launch is required for laying down mines, a cutter for various uses connected with the work to be done, and a storeman for work under the Instructor, all of which requirements I have already pointed out.

The question of the electrical machinery for the use of the corps, the lamp for search purposes, and the torpedo boat, are dealt with elsewhere in my Defence Report.

Southern Tasmanian Artillery.

The last quarterly inspection was that of the Southern Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery, which took place on the 25th June. There were present of all ranks, 80, including 18 recruits, at drill

under the command of Captain Evans, the other officers on parade being Lieutenants Bennison and Harvey. The corps, which is composed of two batteries, were marched past by the Commanding Officer, and then put through the manual exercise under one of the Lieutenants. The men were then broken up into detachments for garrison and field-gun drill, gyn drill, and repository exercises, so far as these latter could be carried out at a parade of 2½ hours' duration; finally the detachment was examined by me in simple knotting. A very satisfactory amount of proficiency was exhibited in nearly all these operations. The gun drill and elementary repository were carried out under the direction of the Lieutenants, who are both well up in their drill; and I must here testify to my appreciation of the good services of Capt. Evans and Lieut. Bennison, who are excellent artillery officers in every respect. Many of the gunners are smart men, and, as I have already stated, there are some excellent shots in the Corps; but among the men of the detachment whom I examined in garrison gun drill there was a want of knowledge in gunnery which was not satisfactory, although I must mention that they were some of the younger members of the Corps. This fault, I find, is partly the result of a disinclination on the part of the men to acquire that knowledge of theory which is necessary to be in the possession of all good artillerymen; but I trust that this will be remedied on the advent of an Instructor from England, who will be required to impart instruction in gunnery as part of his duty. There have been numerous resignations in this corps, as already mentioned by me, owing to the difficulty, as stated by the men, in their attending daylight parades; it is all the more necessary, therefore, that the nucleus of the Corps, composed of those members who have remained, should be thoroughly efficient in all their duties as artillerymen: for even though the small permanent force, of which I have advocated the reorganisation, be created, they will, for some time to come, require to be supplemented by detachments of the Volunteer Corps in working the new guns shortly to be mounted.

This Corps has, unfortunately, been left without the services of an Instructor since February, owing to the sudden resignation of Sergeant-Major Brears, who held the appointment for the past three years. It is not my intention to go into this subject at length, but I have to refer to it briefly, as it relates to circumstances which have occurred during the epoch I am reporting upon. When I arrived in the island I found that this non-commissioned officer was not desirous of entering into a new agreement with the Government of the Colony, and he was endeavouring to procure a money payment in lieu of passage. I induced him, however, to re-engage for another year, and an agreement was drawn up for that term, commencing from September last. I had occasion to censure him severely in my office, in my capacity as his commanding officer, for disrespectful conduct in connection with an order I gave him to make out the quarterly returns of his Corps, complaint having been made to me, at my inspection of the Artillery "office books," that he did not do so. A few days afterwards he suddenly resigned, on plea of his wife's ill-health, and the Corps was left without the services of an Instructor. This event was signalled by an outburst of insubordinate feeling in the Press, based upon gross misrepresentation of what had taken place, and which was highly prejudicial to the interests of good order and discipline in the Corps. In fact, the countenance given by a portion of the Press in this Colony to every complaint which volunteers and their friends choose to make against their commanding officer, in utter violation of all discipline, is working the most serious harm possible to the Defence Force of the Colony, inasmuch as it saps the authority of the Commandant to the core, and prevents recruiting on the part of those who are foolish enough to take heed to the statements of anonymous complainers.

In the present instance was exemplified in a marked manner the evil of an undue influence exercised over a corps by an Imperial non-commissioned officer. I have already referred elsewhere to this in advocating the appointment of commissioned officers as Adjutants to counteract this influence. I think I can safely report that a different feeling now exists in the Artillery Corps, under the efficient command of Captain Evans, who, by the soldierlike spirit borne both to the men under his command and to his Commanding Officer, cannot fail to bring about a desirable *esprit de corps*, which will carry with it discipline off parade as well as on,—a state of affairs just as necessary to the well-being of a volunteer force as to a truly military one.

A new Instructor, Sergeant Andrew Reid, has been appointed, from the North Irish Division, R.A., and will arrive during the present month in the Colony. His services will at once be required in teaching the new drill for the breech-loading rifled guns recently imported.

I conclude with mention of the garrison parade held in the Domain on the 2nd instant, and for which event this Report has been deferred to this late period. On this occasion, to celebrate the Queen's Birthday, the whole of the Southern Division paraded at noon, under my command. A salute of 21 guns and a *feu-de-joie* were fired, after which His Excellency the Governor minutely inspected the ranks. On the termination of the inspection I marched the Division past as a Battalion, and put it through a few simple movements suitable only for a combined force of Artillery, Engineers, and Infantry. Considering the difficulty experienced in getting the Force together in any numbers for practice in parade movements, I have reason to be satisfied with the result of this parade, although there is much to be desired yet in the way of precision in drill. There were 278 of all ranks present, out of a total of 305 in the Division. Among the 27 absentees were 15 on the sick list, which leaves only 12 absent from parade, of which 9 had leave. This is a satisfactory result as regards attendance.

A similar parade was held under the command of Major Aikenhead, at Launceston, on the same day, at which there were present 203 of all ranks, including 36 cadets.

Staff Officer.

Captain Boddam, the Staff Officer, still continues ably to superintend the work being carried on in the construction of the Batteries, and recently accompanied me to George Town to assist in making a military reconnaissance of the mouth of the Tamar. I have a high opinion of his abilities as a military engineer, in which capacity his services to the Colony are of much value.

In conclusion, I have again to refer to the absolute necessity of having the Force engaged for a fixed term of service. I have strongly advocated this elsewhere, and the evils of the present system are clearly demonstrated in more than one instance in the present Report.

Constant resignation of members of the Force for every conceivable idea interferes with the discipline and *esprit de corps* which should be maintained,—renders it impossible to train men up to the requisite standard of efficiency,—and is, finally, a source of needless expense to the Colony, where payment has to be made to those who enter and leave the ranks when they choose, leaving the Force with a partial training only, and necessitating the filling up of their places with recruits, who, in their turn, are liable to act in the same manner.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

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

The Hon. the Chief Secretary.