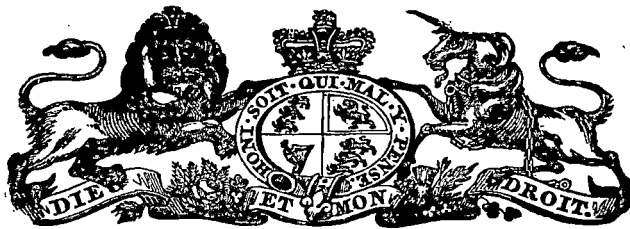


(No. 90.)



1889.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

TASMANIAN DEFENCE FORCE :

REPORT BY COMMANDANT.

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



Head Quarters Office, Hobart, 24th July, 1889.

SIR,

THE striking out of the annual camp of exercise from the programme of military work for this year has, in my judgment, had an injurious effect on the Defence Force, which is shown chiefly in the cessation of recruiting during the summer months, the period in which commanding officers during the last few years have had the greatest increase to their corps. Prior to this year every man has enrolled and taken the oath to serve with the camp as one of the conditions for efficiency. This annual gathering has been looked forward to by all ranks; Northern and Southern corps met together, a healthy spirit of rivalry in drill and "turn-out" was engendered, and the only opportunity throughout the year was offered the men of learning the duties and work required of them on service. Those who thought little of the military aspect of the question looked upon the camp as an outing, and, attending it, shared in the benefits which their more zealous comrades looked forward to. The necessity for a camp of exercise increases every year. It is simply a waste of effort to try and teach troops field work, and the manifold duties which must fall to their lot on service, by a series of monotonous night-drills on the Barrack Square: the thing is out of the question. Infantry tactics in connection with the deadly arms of the present day are becoming more advanced year by year, and it is absolutely necessary that the defenders of this Colony should be trained in the field with daylight drills, as they are in other Australian colonies. Not only is a camp of exercise indispensable, but a daylight training is required as well, to teach the infantry of the Force their work in a proper manner. It cannot be done at night-drills, which are short, unsatisfactory, and conducive generally to slackness and slovenly work. Two-thirds of the night-drills could be done away with if the men could be made to attend a short daylight training in the summer, and subsequently have the advantage of four days under canvas to practise what they had been taught previously in the training, and when company officers would have an opportunity of learning to handle their companies in the field as they ought.

I received instructions from you to endeavour to assemble the Rifle Regiments for unpaid daylight afternoon drills to compensate for the loss of training at the camp. I have done so, and the attempt is a failure. There are many who cannot afford to give up half a day's wages to attend drill, and others who are so taken up with football and other amusements that they will not come to drill unless some satisfactory inducement is held out to them.

As bearing upon the above remarks, I give here a statement of the strength of the Force during each year since 1885, accompanied by a remark showing cause of increase or decrease. The figures are taken from my annual reports, deducting Staff:—

1885—Strength of Volunteer Force	1044
War scare and camp at Mona Vale.	
1886—Strength of Force	711
Men enrolled for unfixed period under excitement of war scare left; would not enrol under new Act. Camp at Ross.	
1887—Strength of Force	878
Vigorous recruiting in Launceston in Rifle Regiment, owing to camp at the North. Camp at Newnham.	
1888—Strength of Force.....	834
Disbandment of Reserves, the corps having dwindled away. But little recruiting in Rifle Regiments, owing to uncertainty as to pay for camp.	
1889—Strength of Force.....	696
No camp, and pay withheld for last one until end of year.	

So long, therefore, as there is a paid camp the strength of the Force is kept up, and, moreover, an opportunity is afforded for the military authorities to assemble a large body of men together and give them a better insight into the actual duties of service than can be done with a whole year's work in the Barrack Square.

I propose, as in last year's report, to touch, first, upon the defences of the ports, and afterwards to treat of each corps in the Force separately.

DEFENCES.

Derwent.—Since my last Report I have modified the interior of the Alexandra Redoubt to suit the armament which is being obtained for it.

A second emplacement has been made for the 5-inch H.P. gun, which allows of its training on the land in rear of the fortification as well as towards the mouth of the Derwent. Adjacent to this a concrete, closed-in emplacement has been made for the 6-pr. Q.F. gun shortly expected from England. The mountings not having arrived yet, the interior of this emplacement cannot be finished until the arrival of the gear. This gun will have an all-round training.

Beyond this another concrete emplacement has been constructed for the 5-barrel R.C. Nordenfeldt, which is mounted therein. This gun has been provided with a large curved shield, designed in this office, and made by Messrs. Davidson & Brown. It affords much more protection than the service pattern. The traverse in the centre of the redoubt has been lengthened and heightened, and other minor improvements effected. In the main work of the fortification new and improved elevating gear has been fitted to one of the 7-in. M.L. guns, which acts well, and I hope to get funds to supply the other gun with the same description of gear. I called attention last year to the necessity for a small workshop in this battery, where repairs to the hydraulic-power machinery might be effected. This has not been constructed owing to want of funds. It is an absolute necessity, for in fighting the battery repairs may have to be carried out *instanter*, and without a shop in the battery this is not possible.

The electric light for this battery is being proceeded with rapidly, and the engine casemate, which is being made from my designs, will furnish a defence of the hidden road beneath the battery, as well as providing accommodation for the engine. A Westinghouse engine of 75-horse power has been ordered from America, the boiler for which is being made by Messrs. R. Kennedy & Son, the local agents for the engine. The amount of money voted for the whole service, exclusive of dynamo, lamp, and projector gear, is £1500. When the light is installed it is expected that the river will be well lit up across to the opposite shore.

I regret that two important items in my schedule for the strengthening of this fortification were struck out by the House last year. I refer to the entanglement and land mines and the gallery between the redoubt and the main work. The amount asked was only £600, a small matter when it is considered that the construction of the work cost more than £10,000, and that very serious results might ensue during an engagement from the absence of these works.

The Alexandra Battery is, as I frequently point out, the present key to the defences of the Derwent: it should be made as strong as possible, and the weak link eliminated in what may some day prove to be a very valuable chain?

There is need of the covered way to provide a safe means of communication between the main work and the redoubt, the intervening space being thoroughly exposed to hostile fire from the river. The entanglement and land mines are necessary wherever a fort is exposed to attack from the land side, and are now to be found in all positions of any consequence.

Two or three machine guns are badly wanted for this fortification—one for fire on the beach, and another for the road approach from the south, and a third for the redoubt. A gun will likewise be required for the casemate on the side of the road. I have called attention to the want of machine guns in former reports.

Small plots of land are also required: for an observatory in rear of the battery, for an intrenched position on the hill, and likewise at Crayfish Point, where an advanced post with a long-range gun is required (*vide* Report for 1888). I estimate the cost of these plots at about £150.

In the Kangaroo Bluff Battery an emplacement is about to be constructed for the 6-pr. Q.F. gun. The work has been delayed a little in order to push on with the electric light at One Tree Point. The concrete emplacements require new surfaces, the original work having given way under concussion from the heavy charges fired from the 8-inch guns. Telephonic communication is being made with this battery as well as the Alexandra and the Queen's.

In the Queen's Battery it is intended to mount temporarily the 5-inch gun on Vavaseur carriage, so that the volunteers may have an opportunity of being instructed in the drill and service of this gun.

The electric light in connection with this battery continues to work very satisfactorily. Its rays will intercept with those of the One Tree Point light, north of that position.

The torpedo boat has not been run since the Naval Expert left in November. This official refused to re-engage with the Government for a further term of service owing to a dispute in regard to his fuel allowance. In the absence of an expert it is not possible to exercise the boat with the Whitehead torpedoes, which are now charged in the shop ready for shipment, and run for certain "lengths" at stated times. There is no crew available for the service of the torpedoes, and negotiations were opened last year with the Marine Board for subsidising their men as a crew in peace and war time; but these fell through owing to the men requiring higher pay than was offered them.

An expert, to fill the late Mr. Pirie's place, should be engaged from England, and negotiations should again be opened with the Marine Board for the services of their men. These matters being attended to, the boat will become a useful factor in the defence of the port.

I desire again to draw attention to the necessity for an "advanced" system of defence in the Derwent; the positions chosen for the forts being at the narrowest part of the river, and beyond long-range fire of the town. A battery at the north end of South Arm has been advocated by me for several years past (see former reports), and in my memorandum written for the consideration of the Federal Council I pointed out that the Derwent could be defended at the above-named positions for about £25,000, including an electric light at Crayfish Point, the locality of one of the proposed batteries. As an adjunct to the two batteries at South Arm and Crayfish Point, and to complete the system, there should be a long-range Q.F. gun, with one or two of smaller nature and of the same system at Drouthy Point. This work would act as an auxiliary to the Alexandra Battery, and defend the passage into Ralph's Bay. Considering the great importance of this port as a strategic position in the Australian group, I do not see why the Colony should not negotiate a small loan of £30,000 to carry out this further scheme of defence. The interest on this sum would be paid chiefly by the next generation, and it is only right that posterity should share in the burdens placed upon the present defenders of the Colony.

Tamar Defences.

No steps have been taken to construct the Brown's Bluff Battery as yet. I have written twice since my last report urging its construction, both as a practice battery and an inner defence of the Tamar, pending further extension of the work towards the mouth of the river.

An idea seems to exist that, owing to the intricacy of the navigation, the Tamar could not be ascended by hostile vessels in war time. The fact has been apparently lost sight of that persons are always found at such times who will take bribes to pilot vessels to their destination, and even were such not the case, on the north-west coast of Tasmania it would be an easy matter for a hostile commander to impress those into his service at the Heads who could pilot his vessel up to Launceston. It must not, therefore, be believed that the tortuous course of the river is an element of perfect safety to Launceston. The Brown's Bluff position having been chosen for the "inner" defence of the town, and the ground mines prepared for it, designs for the battery submitted, an estimate made of cost of same, and the timber for the stockade purchased three years ago, it is a matter of regret to me that the money provided on the 1885 loan has not been spent in providing the Northern capital with this defensive position.

The question of providing defences for the Northern ports, Formby and Emu Bay, referred to at a recent interview, is apart from the defence of Launceston, and I hold that because a considerable outlay is to be expected on the north coast ports in some years time, that should not militate against carrying on the defence of Launceston, the only wealthy port at present in the North.

In concluding my remarks on the Defences of the Colony, I beg to call attention to (1) the almost entire want of field equipment; (2) the necessity for purchasing, as soon as possible, some Maxim guns; and (3) the necessity for speedily acquiring a reserve of ammunition, both artillery and small-arm.

There are no ammunition carts, water carts, or transport wagons for commissariat, and the Force at present, if ordered on active service, has not the necessary equipment to go out with. Every other Colony is furnished with such equipment, and I have this year submitted a sum of money on the Estimates for this service, which I hope will be passed.

With regard to the second point, at the recent experiments by General Strange, R.A., with the Maxim gun in this Colony, its wonderful shooting powers and superiority over the Nordenfeldt

R.C. calibre gun were fully demonstrated. The rapidity of its fire, the absence of mechanical motion in firing it, thereby rendering its aim surer than that of other machine-guns, and the facility for setting the traversing gear so that the gun can sweep over any arc up to 600 yards while delivering its fire, are among the many qualifications which this gun has to recommend it for service in a Colony like Tasmania, where men are difficult to obtain, and when obtained are expensive to clothe, ration, &c. A Maxim gun may safely be set off against a half company of men with repeating rifles, or a company with "Martinis," and is much less costly in its service to the country. I have submitted the cost of several of these guns in this year's estimates, which I trust will meet with favourable consideration from the Government and the Legislature.

In reference to the third point, there is no ammunition available for service beyond the equipment for each gun and rifle, as the supplies for practice and annual S.A. firing are drawn upon so soon as they are received. There should be a permanent reserve [to be drawn upon and replaced by fresh supplies, of course as the equipment is now] of at least 300 rounds a rifle and 100 rounds a gun. The S.A. reserve could be gradually accumulated by ordering 50,000 extra rounds annually with the practice ammunition, but the artillery reserve would have to be acquired by voting a sum of money for the purpose on the annual Estimates, or by recourse to a small loan.

Permanent Artillery.

The conduct of this corps has been very good since my last Report. I have held two inspections, and found everything satisfactory. No falling-off in the smartness characteristic of this corps is appreciable. The men are drilled at the guns on every possible occasion, but the variety of work which they are called upon to do in connection with the batteries, armament, military stores, and torpedo department takes up so much time that not enough is available for drill and gunnery. The regimental guard is also a serious drag on such a small body of men.

There is ample duty in this command for 30 or 40 men, and I trust the time is not far off when the numbers will be increased. I called attention to the necessity for an increase in last year's Report.

Fifteen rounds of 65-pounder plugged shell were fired at a moving target. There was no money available for an increase in the practice ammunition. In addition, however, the station practice from the 8-inch M.L., 7-inch M.L., and 6-inch B.L. guns, was carried out by this corps. This year the amount of practice ammunition has been slightly increased.

The corps passed through a course of musketry with satisfactory results. Twenty-two men fired; of these, 10 qualified as marksmen, and 9 as first-class shots. The figure of merit was 135.2, against 115.4 last year. The classification is "very good."

Launceston Artillery.

The strength of this corps at present is 71. A good many time-expired men have taken their discharge, and there has been a paucity of recruits to fill up the vacancies owing to there being no camp.

I held inspections of this corps on the 10th September and 3rd December, 1888, and the 11th March and 17th June, 1889. These were all very satisfactory, the "turn-out" smart, and the drill good.

The officers are the same as last year. Captain Harrap applied to be attached to the Victorian Militia Artillery at Queenscliff during the Easter encampment, and was present there during the training.

The annual practice was carried on at George Town on the 9th November. The 40-pr. and 7-pr. guns were transported thither in one of the river steamers from Launceston. The corps was under canvas for the day, and some excellent shooting was made.

There should be an annual training, with pay, for this corps. It need not be so long as the course should be for the Southern corps, but of sufficient duration to allow of a thorough grounding in gunnery, at the termination of which the non-commissioned officers should pass an examination.

Southern Tasmanian Artillery.

The strength of this corps at present is 78. A number of time-expired men have left this year, some having to go elsewhere for work, and others being tired of service. Doing away with the Easter camp militated against recruiting, notwithstanding the inducement held out by the training, with pay, in the forts.

The course of drill commenced on the 2nd of February, and terminated on the 12th of April last. The results of the training were satisfactory, the non-commissioned officers and men becoming familiar with the drill at the heavy guns in the forts. Much more work, however, is required to make the corps thoroughly reliable for war. A longer training is necessary, for which funds should be voted. Theoretical instruction is required for the non-commissioned officers and men, and non-commissioned officers should pass a qualifying examination at the end of the annual training.

A high standard of work is required of artillerymen in the present day, and the responsibilities which will devolve on the Tasmanian Artillery in war time are so great that money should not be spared to render the corps thoroughly efficient. The amount of pains to be taken by the non-commissioned officers and men in acquiring a thorough knowledge of their branch of the service is more than can be expected to be undergone without payment.

The two field-guns are to be horsed in future, and manœuvred as a section of a field battery.

The practice ammunition allotted for 1889 has not yet been fired away, but the balance (five rounds) remaining from last year was fired at a moving target from the 7-inch M.L. guns in the Alexandra Battery, and the firing was very creditable.

Surgeon Crouch has been promoted to the rank of Surgeon-major. Lieut. N. E. Lewis has been transferred from the Reserves, on the 9th October, 1888.

Torpedo Corps.

Strength at present, 62. Three inspections held since last Report. The annual training commenced on the 5th of January, and ended with the 10th of March. The course was a thoroughly practical one, carried out on the same lines as last year, by the Torpedo Director. The daylight work on Saturday afternoons was chiefly devoted to laying *extempore* mines on the E.C. system, which were fired from the test-room on shore, as would be the case on service. The largest charges used were 50 lbs. of gunpowder.

During the training some ground mines intended for the Tamar were loaded, and they are now stored with the E.C. mines for the Hobart defence.

Fifty-two of all ranks passed through the training.

The interest taken by members of the corps in musketry as a voluntary duty continues, and a number of men are now going through their annual course with satisfactory results.

Lieut. Clarke resigned his commission in January, and Lieut. Henry has been appointed to the command. Lieut. Buckland was transferred to the corps, and Lieut. H. Packer appointed to a lieutenantancy. The commissioned ranks have always been vacant in this corps, and it is satisfactory to find them filled at last, placing the corps in this respect on a proper footing for service.

Tasmanian Rifle Regiment.

The strength of this regiment at present is only 119, and many of this number have scarcely attended any parades this year. The corps began to fall off at the beginning of last year owing to the withholding of pay for the camp, the effect of which was to stop recruiting. Reference to this was made in my last year's report, in which I pointed out that had the Elwick Camp been made as popular as its predecessor at Newnham, the ranks of the Tasmanian Rifle Regiment would have been filled up.

The abolition of the camp this year has completed the work of emptying the ranks, which are now largely composed of one-year men, who have re-enrolled after their three years' period of service.

Inspections were held on the 24th of September and 10th December, 1888, and on 10th March and 10th June, 1889, at the two latter of which the musters were very poor. The drill is good, the men attending the inspections being those who most frequently come to parade. There is also an improvement this year in steadiness in the ranks.

The musketry course is at present being carried out, and the shooting so far has been "good."

The Cadet Corps numbers 54 at present, but the attendance at parade of late months has been poor.

Since last report Lieut. Hull has resigned his commission, and Captain Addison has been placed on the unattached list.

In order that this regiment and the Launceston Rifles might be properly trained in their duties for the field, it is necessary to place a small sum, say £150, on the estimates for each, to pay for an annual course in the summer. The daylight instruction which could be provided for this sum would work wonders, and fit the men for the practical application at the camp of exercise of what they had learned. Unless this course be followed, the infantry branch of the Defence Force cannot be properly trained, for no amount of night drills will produce the desired effect.

Launceston Rifle Regiment.

Strength of this corps on the 30th June last, 236. This is, however, a paper strength, as there are 65 men who have attended no parade this year. Withholding the pay for camp last year, and not having one this year, are the causes adduced by the commanding officer for non-attendance at drill. Unfortunately, commanding officers of corps cannot compel attendance, as they are not empowered under the present Act to fine, and, if they were, the power would be nominal, the Force being an unpaid one.

Four inspections have been held—on the 11th September and 4th December, 1888, and the 13th March and 18th June, 1889. At the two former there were good musters, but at the two latter there was a falling-off, as might be expected. The drill of the corps is "good," the Sergeant-Major is most zealous in his instruction, the Commanding Officer has the interest of the regiment at heart, and works assiduously to render it smart and efficient; and all that is wanted is encouragement from Government to make the Launceston Rifle Regiment a strong element in the Defence Force of the country.

The musketry course is now being carried out. More interest in rifle shooting is taken in the North than in Hobart. The garrison rifle club brings marksmen together, and there are a few leading spirits in the garrison who foster shooting. There is no doubt, however, that the withholding the prize-money for shooting during the past year has done an immense deal of harm in both corps to rifle shooting, and affects the musketry course very materially; furthermore, it was given to the Country Rifle Clubs last year and withheld from the Rifle Regiments, which caused increased dissatisfaction.

Since my last report, Lieutenants Reid and Chambers have been provisionally promoted Captains; the latter, together with Lieutenants Sams, Fulton, Cragg, and Gould, passed their examinations. Captain Fairthorne has been placed on the unattached list, and Captain Young resigned his commission.

The Cadet Corps numbers 52. The lads drill well, and are generally steady in the ranks, but the attendance of late has not been so good.

On the 9th November a detachment of the regiment went down the Tamar to George Town with the Launceston Artillery, were under canvas one night, and engaged in some instructive manoeuvres under Lieut.-Colonel Warner.

Country Rifle Clubs.

I append the report of the Officer Commanding the Clubs. Since the date of my last report, Colonel Bernard, who did such excellent work in organising the movement, resigned his commission, and Colonel Warner, Commanding Northern Division, was appointed to the command of the Clubs.

This branch of the Force has increased considerably since last June, owing to the addition of eight new Clubs. The strength of the then existing Clubs has not been much increased, some few having gone back; in many instances it has been where no volunteer or retired soldier has been present with the Club to teach drill and give a military spirit to it. Rifle-shooting alone is not enough to keep the movement up; it must be combined with drill and military exercises to foster a sufficient interest in the work.

The weak point now in the Force, which under the new Act is to become an auxiliary branch of the Defence Force, is the want of trained officers and non-commissioned officers. At present, a fine body of men exist, without the directing spirit of all military life—the officers and non-commissioned officers. The Force, therefore, would be unmanageable in war time, and of little service as at present constituted for the actual defence of the country.

A garrison class of instruction was advocated last year as a means of training the officers and non-commissioned officers, and until this is done they will have no means of learning their work. The cost to the Government of this would consist of transport to Hobart and a daily allowance for rations. If the classes were held in the summer, accommodation could be given in tents; the time necessary for the course occupying from a fortnight to three weeks.

The absence, however, of a camp of exercise every year will militate as much against the efficiency of this Force as it does now in the case of the Rifle Regiments. There will be no opportunity of putting into practice that which officers and non-commissioned officers have been taught, and of training the men to their work in the field. I beg to call attention to the remark of the Officer Commanding the Clubs to this subject.

Under the new Act, it is proposed to centralise Rifle Corps into administrative battalions throughout the country, which will enable the men to be brought together for drill and manœuvre, but it will necessitate the appointment of a volunteer staff—Commanding Officer and Adjutant—for each battalion.

Mounted Rifles.

This valuable service—such a powerful element in the Defence Forces of the Colonies—has not yet been organised in Tasmania. A sum of money for the equipment of a Company has twice been submitted by me, but has not yet been granted. The cost to the State is not much more than that of a dismounted man, consisting only of the value of a service bridle and leggings, the rifle and accoutrements being in store; whereas the value of the man's services to the State is three times that of the latter.

Great mobility and celerity of movement, both in scouting, reconnoitring, and conducting a fight, speedy information of an enemy's movements, and power of harrassing his advance or retreat, are among the characteristics of this service, which is destined to exercise a powerful influence on modern warfare.

I deprecate strongly putting off any longer the organisation of a Company. I attended the Victorian camp of exercise this year, and was attached to the Head Quarters Staff, my object principally being to see the working of the Mounted Rifles at the manœuvres. They proved a magnificent Force, and did admirable work, their great usefulness being apparent to all.

School Cadet Corps.

I regret to say that the Hutchins' School Corps, which has done in the past such good work, has been practically disbanded since Christmas. At that date a number of boys in the corps left the school, a contingency which is always likely in corps of this kind, and since then their commanding officer has been unable to resuscitate it. An effort is, however, to be shortly made to start the corps again. At Michaelmas a camp was held at New Norfolk. I inspected it, and saw the cadets at drill, where their smartness was very gratifying. Several desirable members of the Defence Force, including one officer, have joined from this corps, and it is to be hoped that it will again do good work.

The following table shows the strength of the Force at the present date, and the number of Efficients:—

<i>Strength of the Force.</i>	<i>No. of all Ranks.</i>
Launceston Artillery.....	70
Southern Tasmanian Artillery.....	78
Tasmanian Torpedo Corps.....	61
Tasmanian Rifle Regiment.....	119
Ditto Cadets.....	54
Launceston Rifle Regiment (with Band).....	236
Launceston Rifle Cadets.....	52
Garrison Band.....	26
Total Force.....	696
Permanent Artillery.....	25
Torpedo, Permanent.....	1
General Staff, with Instructors.....	7
GRAND TOTAL.....	729
Country Rifles.....	1459

The following are the Efficients for the year ending 31st December, 1888:—

	<i>Number.</i>
Launceston Artillery.....	70
Southern Tasmanian Artillery.....	67
Tasmanian Torpedo Corps.....	50
Tasmanian Rifle Regiment (with Cadets).....	114
Launceston Rifle Regiment (with Cadets).....	141
Garrison Band.....	20
TOTAL.....	462

Tasmanian Rifle Association.

This Association is now thoroughly established on a firm footing, and has brought the Colony to the front in the matter of rifle shooting. Two meetings have been held since my last report. The first took place during the week ending 22nd December, and was a special intercolonial meeting, at which Tasmania came off victorious in a contest with teams from Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia. It was a stubbornly contested match, and was won by the steady good shooting of the local men. This is a result which the small Colony of Tasmania, with proportionately few riflemen to choose from, may well be proud of. The names of the winning team were:— Private Gow, L.R.; Sergeant F. Lovett, T.R.R.; Captain Hunt, unattached; Sergeant Gurr, L.A.; Lieut. Croft, L.A.; Sergeant Paul, T.R.R.; Colour-Sergeant Reid, T.R.R.; Sergeant Stewart, T.R.R.; Corporal Easther, L.A.; Lieutenant Penny, T.R.R. Total points 1787; number of shots, 15 at 300, 500, and 600 yards; highest individual score 191, Private Gow, L.R. The second meeting was held at Launceston at Easter, which came off successfully, although the amount of prize money which, with the reduced subsidy it was possible to offer, was not satisfactory to some sections of the Association.

Major Davies, the Hon. Secretary, who very ably filled the post from the formation of the Association, and contributed largely towards the success of the intercolonial meeting, resigned the position at the beginning of the year, and Captain Richardson, T.R.R., now carries on the work as the new Secretary with zeal and ability.

The Association proposes sending a team to Victoria to compete at the intercolonial match next November.

GENERAL.

Parades of the Northern and Southern Divisions were held at Launceston and Hobart on Queen's Birthday. At Launceston there were present 223 of all ranks, and at Hobart 276, showing a falling off of 116 and 87 in the "states" as compared with last year.

A Church Parade was held at Launceston on the Sunday previous to the Queen's Birthday, and one at Hobart on the 9th of September last.

Garrison Parades have been held at Hobart and Launceston throughout the year, and lectures given on tactics, drill, and technical subjects, by Lieut.-Colonel and myself.

The same Staff are working under me as last year, with the exception of Colonel Bernard, who resigned the command of the Country Rifle Clubs, and whose loss as a valuable assistant and most efficient officer I much regret, though his place is very ably filled by Lieut.-Colonel Warner.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

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

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

REPORT ON COUNTRY RIFLE CLUBS.

On the 1st January, 1889, I assumed command of the Country Rifle Clubs, and the office was transferred to Launceston. I have visited every Club, with the exception of the one recently formed at St. Mary's.

Strength.

At the date of last Report there were 35 Clubs, comprising 1279 members. At the present date there are 43 Clubs, with three branches—(viz., Cleveland, branch of Midlands, Westbury and Chudleigh, branches of Western) comprising 1459 members. The Clubs at Port Cygnet and Lilydale, though gazetted, have never been armed and equipped, the latter on account of being unable to procure a rifle range. They are not included in the 43 Clubs.

Rifles.

980 Martini-Henry Rifles have been distributed to Clubs, and 413 Snider Rifles. 33 Clubs are armed with Martini-Henry Rifles; 10 Clubs are armed with Snider Rifles. At the conclusion of the present Musketry Course the whole of the Snider Rifles will be recalled, and Martini-Henry Rifles issued to the 10 Clubs.

Musketry.

The Annual Musketry Course for 1889 is progressing satisfactorily. 38 Clubs have commenced the course. 216 men have already concluded their course.

Instruction.

On the 31st December, 1888, Sergeant-Major Witham resigned his appointment as an Instructor. On the 1st February, 1889, Sergeant-Majors Alderton and Welsh were (in addition to their other duties) appointed Instructors, and they now visit the Clubs in the vicinity of Hobart and Launceston respectively. Sergeant-Major Rafferty assists me in the work of the Office, and also visits the more distant Clubs.

From the 1st July, 1888, to the 30th June, 1889, the number of days occupied by my predecessor and myself in inspection and instruction were 106. The number of days occupied by the Instructors were 145 (this includes days spent in travelling and Sundays).

Infantry Drill Books, 1889, have been ordered from England, and on receipt will be distributed to the Clubs.

Clubs having the advantage of the services of old retired soldiers and ex-volunteers have made fair progress in Squad and Company Drill, but in some Clubs, where there are no men of this class, little or no interest is taken in drill, the sole object being rifle shooting. To remedy this, I strongly recommend that a Class of Instruction as proposed by my predecessor be formed for the instruction of Officers and N. C. Officers. At present the Rifle Clubs, though numbering upwards of 1400 men, would be useless as auxiliaries to the Defence Force for the want of trained Officers and N. C. Officers to lead them.

Uniforms.

I recommend that in future uniforms be only issued to those men who, in addition to undergoing the Annual Musketry Course, undertake to attend a certain number of drills in the year—say, 1 Inspection and 12 Drills.

Camp of Exercise.

The not holding of a Camp this year was a great disappointment to the Rifle Clubs, a large number of men having made up their minds to attend it. The holding of a Camp of Exercise is essential to the efficiency of the Clubs. There is no other opportunity for the assembling of the whole together. Such annual Camps excite a spirit of emulation, and in addition to the valuable instruction imparted, the men are taught to conform to military discipline.

Ammunition.

Between the 1st July, 1888, and the 30th June, 1889, Clubs have purchased Martini-Henry ball cartridges, 166,000 rounds; Snider ball cartridges, 50,000 rounds.

A. H. WARNER, *Lieut.-Colonel,*
Commanding Country Rifles.

Staff Office, Launceston, 6th July, 1889.