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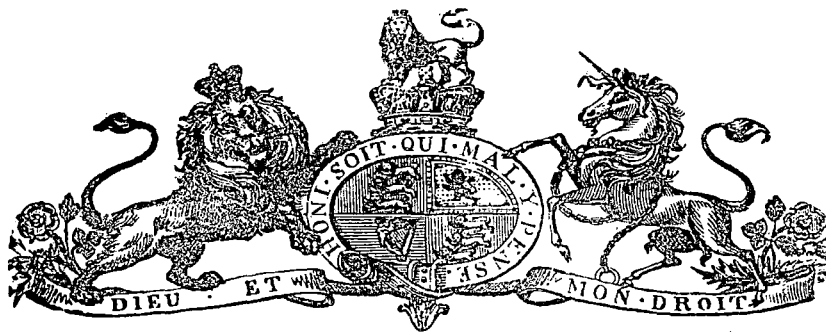
TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

VOLUNTEER FORCE:

REPORT OF CAPT. CROWTHER TO THE COMMANDANT.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Crowther, January 29 ; and ordered by the Council
to be printed, January 30, 1880.



Hobart Town, 2nd January, 1880.

SIR,

As upwards of two years have elapsed since the first meeting was held that, in a short period, resulted in the formation of the Southern Volunteer Corps, I think it but right to draw up a Report on the present condition of the Corps.

Although much has been done by the Government to assist this most important branch of the Service I have the honor to belong to, yet, in the vital matter of Drill Instructor and modern field pieces, we are exactly in the same position as when we started, viz., without either.

I am free to admit even now that, with the rapid changes (intending to increase efficiency) that are taking place in the construction of artillery, waiting has been an advantage, but I cannot say the same in reference to the non-obtaining of an Instructor.

You will never get the full value of the money that has been, or is to be, expended until you place in the hands of those willing to learn a properly qualified teacher.

I know the difficulty of getting such a man, but it does not in the least alter the necessity.

There is another matter that also might with advantage have been attended to, viz., the repair of the Drill Sheds, and generally placing them in a more fit condition for us to drill in.

I am grateful for what has been done, but when we contrast the Barracks and their condition it disheartens us Artillerymen, the more so as the contract for the repairs was actually agreed to and never carried out.

Another great disadvantage we laboured under, viz., the absence of any paid officer to look after the clerical work of the Corps: thanks to the present Government that has been rectified.

I have alluded to the above drawbacks in order to bring out into stronger contrast the hearty co-operation of my officers and volunteer instructors.

Thanks to their untiring efforts the Artillery Corps is in a high state of efficiency; in fact will, I think, challenge comparison with any Volunteer Corps in existence that owes its present position solely to the instruction given by its own officers.

The most will never be got out of the money placed at the disposal of the Corps by Parliament until there is the absolute certainty that every efficient member will have the capitation grant yearly. This will enable us to get out of the same money a good outfit at once, and thus ensure more fixity than the hand-to-mouth policy we have now to pursue,—the more so as £2 10s. is not enough to provide a plain cloth uniform (without helmet) unless the men pay something towards it themselves.

Do not misunderstand me. In the present financial condition of the Colony I am not asking for a larger grant (although the Artillery ought to have more than the Rifles, as the wear and tear of their clothes is greater), but that we may be enabled to calculate upon the next year's capitation grant with a degree of certainty.

In England you are at once provided with an outfit of full and undress uniform, &c., that costs about £5, and yet the grant per man is no larger than in this country, with two exceptions: First—Extra efficient for marksmen earn a little more for their Corps. Second—All officers and non-commissioned officers that pass their examinations have an increase of grant which goes towards the Corps expenses.

I may state that every non-commissioned officer in the Artillery above the rank of bombardier has passed a searching examination before having their rank confirmed.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned drawbacks, I have the greatest pleasure in stating that the Southern Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery is in a high state of efficiency, as the perusal of the last returns sent to head-quarters will prove.

The Artillery Corps actually having enrolled and drilling a number of men over and above their fixed strength, so, after deducting any late resignations, the Corps consists of 241 men in the place of 230.

The strong point of the Artillery Corps is in its Band; and this is so from the fact that all ranks of the Corps are proud of and work hard for it.

Since its formation, a period of a little over twenty months, no less a sum than £759 10s. 11d. has been expended upon it. Out of this the Government has provided two Capitation Grants of £100 in all.

Further, the Officers' Capitation Grant has invariably been given to the same fund,—thus leaving £569 10s. 11d. that has been raised by the enterprise and public spirit of the officers and gunners of the Corps, well assisted by the public of Hobart Town.

The efficiency of the Band in a musical point of view is undisputed. Its efficiency in a military point of view I vouch for, as every member of it is sworn in, and either takes his place at the garrison or field gun, or with a Snider, as the occasion requires.

On Colonel Scratchley's last visit every member of the Band was on duty in the battery.

I earnestly trust that there will be no attempt to curtail *the Artillery portion of the Force* for the coming year.

With such a shifting population as the young men of Tasmania are composed of, the Artillery has not a man too many for the work imposed; and any curtailment of the Capitation Grant would probably cause the break up of the Corps, and very likely that of the Band, as both are only kept in their present condition by the greatest exertion on the officers' part, aided by a fair *Government Grant*.

I may state as a fact, on the last day of Colonel Scratchley's inspection I had, although it was not a public holiday and was a most inconvenient day, about 190 men under arms. Further, although it was the *first* time we ever fired at a moving object or fired shell, and the *third* time we ever fired shot—and that too virtually from an obsolete smooth weapon, as most of the shots were—yet the majority of the shots fired would have struck the hull of the *Wolverene* had she been the target, and two-thirds would have struck hull, masts, rigging, &c.

In conclusion I have to thank the Government for the support invariably given to the defence movement as a whole; and take this opportunity to state that during the present year no exertion will be wanting on the part of myself and brother officers to give the country the greatest possible value for the money spent upon the Artillery Corps.

I have the honor to remain,
Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD L. CROWTHER,
Captain Comdg. S.T.V.A. Corps.

To the Commandant Local Forces, Hobart Town.

Colonel Scratchley's Report has since been received. If it is acted upon it means that the Artillery Corps *must be disbanded about midsummer*.—E. L. C., *Jan. 21*.

REASONS why the Artillery and Rifle Corps cannot in the matter of reduction of Capitation Grant be treated alike.

1st. That they (the Artillery) were formed and in uniform and efficient on May 24th, 1878, before the Rifles got to work.

2nd. That, owing to the lesser number of uniforms found at first and paid for by the men, the material was inferior. This money was subsequently returned by the Government, but this did not affect the quality.

3rd. That the wear and tear of an Artilleryman's uniform is double that of a Rifleman's; and had the Commandant been an Artillery Officer he would have never recommended both being treated alike.

4th. That the men have due to them 5s. that they have paid themselves towards their uniforms, which could not be obtained for the sum of £2 10s.

5th. That the Officers also advanced about 3s. for each uniform and cap.

6th. That the trousers were in use last Queen's Birthday and constantly ever since, and will not hold out until the middle of this year.

7th. That many of the Artillery are unable to attend drill, the caps which have been in use for nearly two years being worn out.

8th. The Rifle Regiment is not yet in their last year's uniform, whilst the Artillery have been in the principal portion of theirs for about 10 months, and doing double the work.

9th. That if the Officers' £5 be dropped (which goes to the Band Fund) the Band will probably be broken up, as, even with this, upwards of £500 has had to be found to bring the band to its present condition in about 21 months.

10th. If the Artillery Corps is not to be disbanded after the Queen's Birthday, the Capitation Grant must be as heretofore—50s. per man. Rather reduce the staff than the rank and file, the more so as there will be less for them to do with fewer volunteers proposed.

11th. That the Artillery Corps was enrolled and for some time served under an *Enabling Act* that never applied to the Rifles.

12th. That the men voluntarily gave up the £3 earned in the Chiniquy row. They will regard the stopping of the Capitation Grant as almost a breach of faith, as it would never have been given up if any idea had been entertained of this withdrawal of a portion of the Capitation Grant.