

in 1869 to 74 per cent. in 1871. Having this year visited almost every district in both Islands, I will endeavour to report upon the state in which I found the several corps.

PROVINCE OF AUCKLAND.

In June, 1870, the Volunteers in this Province consisted of 1,663 enrolled members, which, by March, 1871, had increased to 1,767, divided amongst the following districts :—

Auckland ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	713
Wairoa ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	112
Waiuku ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	397
Poverty Bay	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	38
Bay of Plenty	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	85
Thames ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	422
								1,767

Auckland District.

The Auckland District comprises thirteen corps, of which four are Cavalry, one Artillery, one Naval and a battalion of six Rifle Companies. The whole spirit of volunteering had been growing very slack in this district for some time past; but since my inspection in April, 1870, there has been a very great improvement, and especially in the rifle companies forming the battalion. I attribute this in a great measure to the appointment of Major Gordon to the command of the district in January 1871, who has spared no pains to instruct the Volunteers, and has displayed unusual zeal and attention to his duties. His efforts have been greatly assisted by several gentlemen joining the force, who had hitherto taken no interest in the matter; and now the ranks of the battalion are being gradually filled up with young and active men. I inspected the battalion in May, and found it much improved in steadiness and general appearance since last year. The attendance was good, the few manoeuvres that were performed were creditable, and particularly when the number of new members is considered. Two or three of the companies were exercised at company and light infantry drill by their own captains, and showed a disposition to be attentive and make themselves creditable corps.

I regret that I cannot speak so highly of the four Cavalry corps in this district. The Auckland and Prince Alfred Troops have been declining in numbers and attendance at parades since my last inspection, barely one-half of them having qualified for capitation money this year. This may be attributed in a great measure to the loss of their captain, who was most zealous, and the corps have not yet been able to replace him. The Otahuhu and Howick Troops are only in a tolerably good state; many of their members have been irregular in attendance, but, as they expressed a wish to have the continual absentees struck off the roll, and the two troops drilled together, I hope to see an improvement next year.

The Auckland Artillery, which I found in good order last year, have increased in numbers and efficiency. They are a well-dressed, smart-looking body of men, and pay great attention to all their duties; their practice was good, and of 55 enrolled members there was only one not qualified for capitation.

I had no opportunity of seeing the Engineers, as they are quite newly raised.

I regret that I am unable to notice improvement in the Naval corps, who appear to have almost neglected all drill, except the exercise of the battery guns at Fort Britomart, in which they showed some activity. They labour under some disadvantage in being composed principally of sailors, who are unable to attend except at irregular intervals when they are in port.

I shall speak again of the rifle practice of this district when alluding to the prize-firing of the Colony, but I cannot here omit expressing great pleasure in being able to report that the great disadvantage under which Auckland has laboured for so many years will shortly be removed—viz., the want of a good range near town. The old one was five or six miles off, which was a great hindrance to members of corps being able to go often to the butts, and quite prevented any attempt at class firing.

The Provincial Government have now reserved a piece of land near Mount Eden, within easy access of all parts of the town, and have given a sum of money which has been supplemented by the General Government, for making a thorough good range. I trust this will be a means of encouragement to the Auckland Volunteers to go through a course of class-firing, and that next year I shall be able to report favourably on their progress in this important part of their duties.

Wairoa.

The Wairoa District has only two Volunteer corps, the "Wairoa Rifles" and "Pokeno Rangers." The former have improved in steadiness since last year; the latter appear willing to learn, but only drill fairly. Some allowance may be made for this company, as it is composed of the poorer class of the country settlers, who have to come long distances to parade, and have no drill-shed for wet weather.

Waiuku.

The Volunteers in this district consist of one Cavalry and six Rifle corps. The Waiuku Troop have been formed for some years, of the most influential and substantial settlers of the district, and have always had the reputation of being a good corps. They are well mounted, attentive to their drill, and take an interest in rifle practice. On reference to the attached *Gazette*, it will be seen that this troop won three out of the eight prizes allotted to corps armed with the breech-loading carbine in the whole Colony.

The Rifle companies have made some little improvement since I saw them last year, but are still far from the state of efficiency in which I should wish to see them.

They labour, however, under the same disadvantages as the Wairoa District, but even to a greater extent, as, from the formation of the country, and the rough roads, their means of communication prevent their meeting oftener than at the monthly inspection parades.