

1905.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT OF THE) BY MAJOR-GENERAL J. M. BABINGTON, COMMANDANT OF THE FORCES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,—

1st August, 1905

I have the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of New Zealand, my annual report on the Defence Forces of the colony.

Advice has been received from the War Office that honours have been allotted to regular and auxiliary Forces on the following basis :—

Yeomanry and Volunteer corps, which furnished parties of twenty or more for service in South Africa, have been granted "South Africa" with the year or years during which they served in the war.

Trophies in the way of guns and rifles have also been received, and the question of their distribution has been referred for consideration.

A rifle team was sent to England, under Lieut.-Colonel Collins, V.D., to compete at Bisley last year, and rendered a highly satisfactory account of itself. It won the Kolapore Cup, was second in the Belgian Cup, and took third place in the Mackinnon Cup, England taking first place and Scotland second, and this I consider was the best result achieved by the team. A team has been sent this year, but it is not the strongest that might have gone.

Important changes have taken place in England with regard to mine defence of ports, &c. This has now become a naval service, and it is to be earnestly hoped similar conditions may shortly exist in New Zealand.

COAST-DEFENCES.

Important recommendations regarding the coast-defences of New Zealand have been submitted, but so far no decision regarding this matter has been received; it is urgently required to enable the necessary works, &c., to be proceeded with. Those ports it is decided upon to defend should be made secure. Such works as were in progress have during the past year made little advance, and until labour other than prison labour is employed, no change in regard to this can be expected.

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE.

I have submitted proposals for the reorganization of the Permanent Force, the present state of which is capable of improvement. These proposals contain recommendations regarding pay, extra-duty pay, promotion, and other matters pertaining to the interior economy and discipline of the Force. The conditions of a trust fund, to secure men a bonus on retirement, are also outlined in the scheme.

During the past year a large number of men have left to take up employment with the tramway company, &c., where their pay and prospects are both improved. This affects the efficiency of the Force. Discipline, too, suffers from the centralisation which exists with regard to it, as well as to the other parts of the Defence Force of the colony.

During the past year ten N.C.O.s and men have been retired for age; there are, however, still a considerable number who are too old, and should also be retired.

Too many men are extra-regimentally employed. These men are in many cases not available for regimental duty, and should be made supernumerary to the establishment.

The services of a submarine mining officer have been applied for; but the whole question of mine defence being now under consideration, advice has been received to await the decision arrived at.

A fatal accident occurred at Fort Ballance on the 2nd November, 1904, during annual practice with the 12-pounder Q.F. guns, through which one man lost his life and five others were injured. A Court of Inquiry, of which one member was a naval officer, an expert on gunnery, held a lengthy and careful investigation, but failed to account for the cause of the accident. The proceedings of the Court, together with the gun, &c., and seventy-eight rounds of ammunition from the same group as the cartridge that was fired when the explosion occurred, have been sent to England, but no reply has up to the present been received. I would record the satisfactory bearing of all present on the accident occurring; no confusion or loss of presence of mind took place.

VOLUNTEERS.

The strength of the Volunteer Force (inclusive of cadets and rifle clubs) on the 1st July was distributed as follows :—

Auckland (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	..	..	..	..	74
3 companies garrison artillery	..	..	..	..	211
2 companies engineers	..	..	..	..	160
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 22 companies)	..	..	..	..	1,276
2 battalions infantry (in all, 18 companies)	..	..	..	..	987
1 field hospital and bearer company	..	..	..	..	32
5 Defence cadet companies	..	..	..	..	244
16 Defence rifle clubs	..	..	..	..	374
1 garrison band	..	..	..	..	27

Wellington (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	..	..	..	..	77
2 companies garrison artillery	..	..	..	..	246
2 companies engineers	..	..	..	..	123
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 20 companies)	..	..	..	..	1,049
5 battalions infantry (in all, 39 companies)	..	..	..	..	2,096
1 field hospital and bearer company	..	..	..	..	25
23 Defence cadet companies	..	..	..	..	1,112
53 Defence rifle clubs	..	..	..	..	1,563
1 garrison band	..	..	..	..	27

Canterbury (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	..	..	..	..	78
2 companies garrison artillery	..	..	..	..	181
1 company engineers	..	..	..	..	81
3 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 14 companies)	..	..	..	..	719
3 battalions infantry (in all, 21 companies)	..	..	..	..	1,082
1 field hospital and bearer company	..	..	..	..	32
8 Defence cadet companies	..	..	..	..	387
9 Defence rifle clubs	..	..	..	..	197
1 garrison band	..	..	..	..	26

Otago (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	..	..	..	..	67
2 companies garrison artillery	..	..	..	..	238
1 company engineers	..	..	..	..	79
2 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 13 companies)	..	..	..	..	839
4 battalions infantry (in all, 34 companies)	..	..	..	..	1,883
1 field hospital and bearer company	..	..	..	..	43
15 Defence cadet companies	..	..	..	..	934
14 Defence rifle clubs	..	..	..	..	329
1 garrison band	..	..	..	..	27

Nelson (Officers and Men).

2 batteries of field artillery	..	..	..	..	140
1 battalion mounted rifles (in all, 4 companies)	..	..	..	..	267
2 battalions infantry (in all, 11 companies)	..	..	..	..	657
1 field hospital and bearer company	..	..	..	..	51
6 Defence cadet companies	..	..	..	..	329
15 Defence rifle clubs	..	..	..	..	456
1 garrison band	..	..	..	..	27

Summary (Officers and Men).

6 batteries of field artillery	..	..	..	..	436
9 companies of garrison artillery	..	..	..	..	876
6 companies of engineers	..	..	..	..	443
14 battalions of mounted rifles (in all, 73 companies)	..	..	..	..	4,150
16 battalions of infantry (in all, 123 companies)	..	..	..	..	6,705
5 field hospital and bearer companies	..	..	..	..	183
57 Defence cadet corps	3,006
107 Defence rifle clubs	2,919
5 garrison bands	134

Total	18,852
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This shows an increase of 89 on the total strength for the 1st July, 1904.

MOUNTED CORPS.

The state of the mounted troops is, with the exception of one district, satisfactory, and the battalion organization is producing good results.

The camp training of mounted corps, taking place as it does in the winter months, detracts considerably from its value, for as a rule bad weather is experienced and the work is interrupted. The disinclination to work dismounted has for the most part disappeared, and it is now accepted that the *role* of mounted rifles is to act dismounted. The shooting is not as good as in the infantry.

The men are on the whole fairly well mounted, but the saddlery is in many cases unserviceable. The care of horses requires attention, and with the establishment of a veterinary corps it is hoped an improvement in this important duty will take place. Veterinary officers when in camp with mounted troops will be required to give instruction in these duties.

Forage allowance at the rate of 1s. 6d. per horse per day is now allowed to mounted corps ordered out on escort duty on both morning and afternoon.

The drain on horses that the South African War occasioned is, I consider, still somewhat affecting the horse-supply. If at any future time requisition is made on the colony for horses, the number of mares sent should be limited. As regards breeding, too little attention to the points requisite to secure sound and serviceable horses appears to be given. If improvement is to be looked for, restrictions must be placed in the first place on the sires. I understand that considerable attention is given to the matter in Japan, and that a rule exists whereby all horses unsuitable at two years of age for breeding are gelded.

FIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

There are four three-gun (15-pounder) field artillery batteries, one at each of the centres, Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin. At Nelson there is a six-gun (6-pounder), at Westport a four-gun battery, also of 6-pounders. Application has been made to England for sixteen 15-pounder guns to complete the armament of the field artillery batteries in New Zealand, making each of them a four-gun battery.

The shooting of the field artillery is not as satisfactory as it should be, and more ammunition for practice should be supplied; the present allowance is insufficient. The batteries on the whole drill well.

I again recommend that at least six horses per battery be obtained. Batteries that have to execute their laying and drill in town cannot be expected to become efficient.

Batteries should go into practice camp for two days annually; this, together with extra ammunition and improved instruction, the latter of which is being arranged for, would very materially increase their efficiency.

A successful artillery tournament, inaugurated by the O.C. E Battery, took place at Christchurch on the 26th December, and exceedingly satisfactory results were obtained.

GARRISON ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The companies are efficient. In some the shooting was good, in others very good. In fire discipline and drill two serious mistakes were made by individuals—*e.g.*, firing at the tug-boat in Dunedin, and opening the breach immediately after a misfire, in Wellington; but, on the whole, it is very good. The ammunition was good throughout, and *matériel* generally is in good order.

The Garrison Artillery Volunteers are keen and willing, and anxious to learn. Were they only to put in the obligatory drills it would be insufficient, but the spirit of the men induces corps to very considerably exceed the stipulated number.

Instructional targets will shortly have been established throughout the colony.

The Sargood Cup was again won by No. 2 Company N.Z.G.A.V.

A revised drill-book will shortly be issued, and a question-and-answer book has also been compiled.

ENGINEER CORPS.

The field engineering companies at the various centres are, with one exception, in a very fairly efficient state. The corps referred to has latterly shown signs of improvement.

The camps were well attended, and some useful engineering work was done.

My recommendations as regards the strength of corps and their subdivision into sections have been approved. Unfortunately, approval was received too late to come into effect last year.

The weakness of the companies is in the electrical sections, but the fourth lieutenant now sanctioned and an improved equipment will, I hope, remedy this.

INFANTRY.

The first battalion Otago rifle volunteers has been formed into two battalions, as it was found that the ten companies comprising it formed too large a command. The state of the infantry is very fairly satisfactory, but more work in the field is required. The training-camps are not of sufficient value to compensate for their cost. Men arrive in camp after their ordinary day's work too late, and in many cases too tired, to receive proper instruction, and have to leave camp early in the morning to get back to their occupations.

In the town corps many of the men are much younger than used to be the case, and their physique in many cases is not as satisfactory as might be desired.

The shooting of the infantry is on the whole good, and the returns show an improvement on last year. Judging distance has been made obligatory, but necessity for more instruction in this is apparent.

The Easter manoeuvres, among other things, showed the necessity for more training of the infantry in scouting duties; this is one of the most important duties infantry have to perform in an enclosed country, and in which they take the place of mounted troops.

CYCLE CORPS.

There are five cycle corps in the colony. Of these, two corps have been increased to two officers and thirty-four men, the additional men to be trained as signallers. The corps are efficient, and intelligent work was carried out by them at the late Easter manoeuvres, where the country lent itself to this work; this was especially the case in the manoeuvres held in Canterbury.

MEDICAL CORPS.

Nearly all the staffs of battalions and artillery divisions have been completed, but the field hospital and bearer corps are still under-officered, undermanned, and under-equipped.

Ambulance training, first aid, and elementary nursing are fairly well taught.

The attendance of medical officers at parades or camps of instruction of the units to which they are attached is not satisfactory, and attention has been drawn to this matter.

The equipment of the forts is satisfactory, but no regimental equipment and no first field dressing-pads for men exist.

The equipment recommended by the Surgeon-General last year has not been obtained.

It is necessary that the Surgeon-General should visit periodically the various centres for the purposes of inspection, &c. I have, however, failed to obtain the necessary authority to enable him to do so.

VETERINARY CORPS.

Provision has been made for the establishment of a veterinary corps, and steps are being taken to secure an officer as principal Veterinary Officer. The number of officers available for this corps will be small, but its institution is necessary, and should be productive of valuable results.

Veterinary officers should be eligible for capitulation.

CADETS.

There are 3,081 cadets now serving, an increase of 194 on last year. An improvement in drill, &c., has taken place, and the arms are well cared for. Cadet battalions have been formed where practicable, and good results should ensue. There is a mounted cadet corps at Hawera, and another is proposed in the Auckland District. The capitulation of 5s. is too little, and should most certainly be increased; some corps have been obliged to disband, and the cadet movement will not develop unless increased capitulation is granted. The equipment of corps is far from complete.

In the Schools of the Empire Shield competition, in which over a hundred schools took part, the score of Wanganui College took thirteenth place on the list; only five schools in New Zealand, however, competed.

Nearly all corps went into camp during the year, and with beneficial results.

Provision has been made for adult officers of cadet corps receiving commissions.

Every boy in New Zealand should be trained as a cadet, and, beyond this, receive such training as an adult as will enable him, if called upon, to play his part in the defence of the country; the future of the colony may very well some day depend on the ability of its male population to do so. Such training, too, would but little, if at all, interfere with their ordinary civil vocations.

RIFLE CLUBS.

There are 107 rifle clubs in the colony, an increase of seven on last year. Their position should be improved. With the inadequate staff at their disposal, officers commanding districts can exercise practically no supervision over them. Rifle clubs should receive an additional grant of ammunition; they should fire a course of musketry each year; perform a stated number of drills; and, when local circumstances permit, be affiliated to a Volunteer corps.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

The annual meeting of the New Zealand Defence Force Rifle Association was held at Trentham on the 2nd March and following days. The entries were forty-nine in excess of those of the previous year, and the number of tyros (123) that came forward was very satisfactory. Thirty-eight Volunteer officers competed. The championship was won by Rifleman Milroy, with a score of 507, or thirty-five over inners. The shooting was the best yet accomplished, and at 700 yards with a 20 in. bull's-eye it has not been equalled in New Zealand; it is doubtful if it has been equalled anywhere.

Long-range shooting was introduced for the first time, and with excellent results.

The use of auxiliary aids was permitted in certain matches, on the plea that they are allowed at Bisley. I consider, however, that it would be an advance were all matches shot for under service conditions.

Target and range accommodation are still insufficient to carry out the meeting in a reasonable time. It is hoped improvement in these respects will be made before next year, as sufficient money for that purpose is now available.

CAMPS.

The system of holding annual training-camps is not found to be quite satisfactory. In mounted rifle corps this is less the case than with the infantry; but, although most mounted rifles remain in camp all day, they train during the winter months, when the weather is so broken that much time is lost.

With the infantry, who only sleep in camp, and return to their work during the day, value for the money expended is not received. In the proposals set forth for the reorganization of the Volunteer Force this, together with other points, has been taken into consideration.

Easter camps were held in the various districts this year. The attendance, except in Nelson District, generally speaking, was disappointing. The lateness of the season and bad weather immediately preceding Easter is put forward as a reason, but cannot be accepted as an excuse for non-attendance of men who could but did not turn out. There is much to be learnt at such concentrations; the country spends money on them, and the risk of roughing it for a few days should not be a deterrent. Good work was done by the troops present at the several camps. In some cases men of corps rode a hundred miles or more to attend, and the marching of the infantry during the manoeuvres was very good. The conduct of all ranks was most satisfactory.

In future I would recommend that such concentrations be held from time to time, not necessarily annually, in one or two districts, as funds are available. Better supervision could be given, and a larger number of officers would be available for staff and umpire duties. At such concentrations attendance should be made obligatory, and if held at Easter the Saturday should be declared a holiday for defence purposes. In order to give proper value to manoeuvres, the law of trespass should be temporarily suspended, so far as concerns the exercise of troops on duty, with a saving clause that whatever actual damage was done should be made good by the taxpayer.

ARMS, EQUIPMENT, AND CLOTHING.

S.A.A. carts should be supplied to battalions.

The bandolier equipment approved in 1903 has not yet been completed. There are sufficient tents for the Defence Forces in the colony.

Corps should be provided with greatcoats, mess-tins, haversacks, entrenching tools, and in the mounted corps, nosebags. A supply of waterproof sheets should be kept in store for issue when required.

The medical equipment for the forces is far from complete, and no veterinary equipment exists. Supply and transport equipment is also wanting.

A satisfactory reserve of rifles has been established. As regards the M.L.E. rifle, mark I., of which a certain number are on order, I would remark that the adverse criticism which has appeared regarding this rifle is only a repetition of the opposition which the rifle supplanting M.H., and in earlier times the Snider, was met with. Its acceptance by the Home and Indian authorities is a sufficient guarantee for its introduction.

All adult corps are armed with M.L.E. rifles. Twenty-five cadet corps are armed with M.L.E. carbines; thirty corps with M.E. carbines, and one corps with M.H. carbines.

More magazine accommodation, which is urgently required, is now arranged for.

Under the present conditions of service, and without a permanent clothing-factory in the colony, it is impossible to suggest a workable system of clothing the Force.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

During the year 1904-5 231 candidates received instruction at the school, and of these 168 completed the full course. Of the foregoing, 208 officers and 56 N.C.O.s were examined by the Central Board during the year ending February, 1904. Of these 172 officers and 44 N.C.O.s passed, and 36 officers and 12 N.C.O.s failed. The system now in vogue is unsatisfactory, in that comparatively few centres are visited during the year. I shall have further proposals to make with regard to this. Officers must be qualified for the position they hold, otherwise they are of no use on service, and in peace-time the corps they are connected with cannot flourish.

The Syllabus of Examination for promotion, &c., has undergone some change, and an examination for promotion of majors in tactical fitness for command has been introduced.

SIGNALLING.

It is satisfactory to be able to report an advance in the important matter of signalling. Without an organized body of signallers the waste of time and horse-flesh, even on manoeuvres, is very great, very much of the value of instruction is lost, and the proper handling of a Force in the field is impossible.

Sufficient equipment has been ordered, and is now on its way to the colony.

The strength of one company per battalion at District Headquarters has been increased by two officers and thirty-four men, and these additional men will be trained as signallers, and earn capitation as such. Their duties are most important, but there should be no reason why efficiency should not be readily acquired if the proper class of man is enrolled.

SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT CORPS.

The establishment of a supply and transport corps should be effected. Such a corps cannot be established and trained at short notice. It is an absolute necessity if a Force is to act in the field. In peace manoeuvres, too, its want is always severely felt, and realistic situations have often to be subordinated to the absence of means to feed the men. A nucleus of such a corps capable of expansion would cost comparatively little.

RIFLE RANGES AND DRILL-HALLS.

The situation as regards rifle ranges and drill-halls has been much improved since my last report, and may be considered on the whole satisfactory.

At Auckland the Penrose Rifle Range has been completed, and has been in use since the beginning of January. It is well equipped, and in every way suitable for the requirements of the garrison. At the Thames, land has been taken under the Public Works Act. In the Canterbury District the Sumner Range has been made safe and reopened. The Kaiapoi Range has been improved, and authority has just been received for improvements to the Woodend Range. In the Nelson District the Mud-flat and Brightwater Ranges are being improved, and when they are finished these ranges will be adequate. The range at Westport has been improved, and land for a range at Greymouth has been acquired. The final arrangements regarding the Pelichet Bay Range are under the consideration of the Government. The new range at Putiki is in use, and is satisfactory. Many of the ranges in the colony, hitherto unvested, have been vested in trustees.

As regards drill-halls, a new hall has been commenced at Oamaru. Tenders have just been accepted for a new hall at Nelson. The new drill-hall at Christchurch is in course of erection. A special Act was passed last session empowering the trustees to sell the Garrison Hall at Dunedin, and to erect suitable buildings in lieu. Minor alterations to the drill-halls at the various Volunteer centres have been carried out.

AMMUNITION.

A satisfactory reserve of gun and small-arm ammunition has now been established. The quality of the S.A. supplied by the Colonial Ammunition Company continues to be satisfactory. It was hoped to have been able to introduce Gaudet ammunition, and thereby effect a saving, while giving more rounds for practice, but this has been found unsuitable, although owing to what cause has as yet not been definitely ascertained. I am still of opinion steps should be taken to establish an ammunition factory in the colony, to render it less dependent than it now is.

CONCLUSION.

I have, as before remarked, submitted proposals for the reorganization of the Permanent Force. I have also put forward a scheme for the reorganization of the Volunteer Force, providing for a smaller but better-trained Force, and embodying in it proposals as regards rifle clubs and cadet corps.

As I have frequently pointed out, the present Defence Force of the colony is not an organized fighting-force. Whatever Defence Force is maintained, efficiency must, if it is to be of any value to the colony, be looked for, and to obtain this the Force must be properly organized, disciplined, and equipped. The Force maintained should, too, be composed of corps the localities of which are such that they can be more readily concentrated for training than is at present the case.

A trained staff for headquarters and each district is, as I have pointed out ever since my arrival in New Zealand, an absolute necessity. Every successive military invention adds to the necessity for a staff and increases its duties. Without a staff the most transcendent genius cannot command troops successfully in the field, nor can they be trained in times of peace. An advance has been made in this very important matter, and it is hoped that shortly Volunteer officers will be found to take up the appointments that have now been approved. The difficulty is to find suitable officers who can spare the time, but even if a portion of their time is devoted to this work very great advantage will accrue to the Defence Forces.

The idea that a man who can shoot is a sufficiently trained man is, I hope, exploded. The advocates of such a theory need read very little history to show that it is an erroneous one, and the present war in the East supplies an almost daily lesson on the imperative necessity of training and preparedness for war. It must be remembered, too, that when New Zealand is called upon to defend itself it will be against a trained and disciplined Force, and it is a pernicious fallacy to imagine that armed inhabitants can ever successfully oppose trained and disciplined troops. As Lord Wolseley has said, "A terrible lesson awaits a nation whose soldiers find themselves opposed to equally brave but better-trained opponents in the field of battle."

No Force in this colony will be efficient unless those who should have the executive and administrative control which should appertain to their offices are accorded it. Until this is done efficiency will not exist, and need not be looked for; true discipline, too, cannot exist.

The scheme for the reorganization of the Volunteer Force already referred to would be considerably more economical and produce a very much more efficient Force than the existing one. I do not fancy the enforcement of the Militia Act would be popular in this colony, and if the country wishes security and value for its money it must accept either such proposals as will conduce to those ends or militarism as part of their constitution.

The regulations have been rewritten.

The term of service should be reduced to one year; the majority of the men worth keeping would continue to serve beyond this, and those not worth keeping are better away.

That part of the financial branch which deals with direct disbursements to the Defence Force should, as in the Imperial Service, be under the Commandant.

An Ordnance Department, under the Commandant, should be formed out of the staff now at hand.

Fixed rates of pay for the paid officers of the Defence Force should be laid down, and the increments that are obtainable should also be defined. In many cases, too, at present the pay of officers is insufficient and out of proportion compared to that received by some who are their juniors in rank.

The extreme centralisation now existing is most detrimental to efficiency. It destroys initiative, weakens authority, and causes most injurious delay. No business or institution, civil or military, can be expected to flourish under such a system.

The material available in New Zealand is excellent, and I am satisfied that officers and men are most anxious that the Force should become an efficient one.

The election of company officers by corps is still continued, and I continue to most strongly condemn this system. Apart from its evil effects on discipline, it does not secure in many cases the most suitable men for the position of officers, and corps suffer in efficiency in consequence; there are too many cases in evidence to admit of doubt on this point.

Seventy-three Volunteer Service Medals have been awarded during the past year.

Lectures by Officers Commanding Districts have been attended with good results; this is especially the case in Otago District. With a staff in existence the benefit of the instruction will be very much more accentuated; at present Officers Commanding Districts have little or no time for this work.

I would again most strongly urge that steps be taken to put the Defence Force of this country in a fit state for service. Coalitions cannot all be foreseen, and the balance of power may be upset without warning. The question of the mastery of the Pacific is daily becoming a more momentous one; vast interests are involved, and the protection of New Zealand will not be the only matter England will have to consider when complications arise. The whim or interests of any party or individual should not be allowed to influence the question of national security; the risk of displeasing a few is a very small matter compared with that of disaster to a country.

At present the colony is in the position of an owner who is paying a comparatively large sum for an insurance policy without having taken the steps necessary to render such policy secure. It would be well for the country, too, were it more generally in sympathy with its deserving Volunteer defenders.

J. M. BABINGTON, Major-General,

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

Commandant of New Zealand Defence Forces.

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