

REPORT

BY

COLONEL HARINGTON

ON THE

MILITIA AND VOLUNTEER FORCES.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF
HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1870.

REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR OF VOLUNTEERS.

No. 1.

The Hon. D. McLEAN to Lieut.-Colonel HARRINGTON.

SIR,—

Auckland, 18th November, 1869.

With a view to ascertaining, generally, the extent of the power of the Colony for purposes of self-defence, and, particularly, the number and character of the Local Forces of Militia and Volunteers in the North Island, upon which in case of emergency the Government might rely, it is proposed to send an officer on a tour of inspection through both Islands, and you have been selected for that duty.

You are hereby authorized to inspect all Volunteer Corps (and such Militia as are called out for active training) and report on their numerical strength, general efficiency, the number of parades held, the average number of those who attend, whether the officers are well acquainted with their duties, what progress has been made in target practice, the state of the arms, &c., &c.

In the performance of this duty you will be able to collect much information that the Government desire to possess relative to the state of the public sentiment in the several districts as regards the Militia and Volunteer organization, and to the disposition and temper of the persons liable to be called out for service under the Militia Acts.

The Government would also be glad to receive any suggestions which might tend to the improvement of the Militia and Volunteer Forces, without, however, causing any great additional expense, and wish you generally to encourage the Militia and Volunteer movements in order to make them an efficient means for the internal defence of the Colony.

You will produce this letter of instructions to Commanding Officers of Corps and Districts, who will be certain to render every assistance to enable you to make a Report to me.

You will be employed on this duty for two months, from the day you leave Auckland. Your salary will be at the rate of £500 per annum, with an additional allowance of £1 per diem for travelling expenses. Passage per steamer will be provided, but you are to avail yourself of Government boats when opportunity offers.

Lieut.-Colonel Harrington, Auckland.

I have, &c.,
DONALD McLEAN.

No. 2.

Lieut.-Colonel HARRINGTON to ACTING UNDER SECRETARY, DEFENCE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st March, 1870.

I have the honor to acquaint you for the information of the Hon. the Defence Minister, that in accordance with his letter of instructions of 18th November, 1869, I proceeded on my tour of inspection of Volunteers throughout both Islands on the 1st December, and since that date have continued travelling on this duty.

No time whatever has been lost in the performance of this duty, but from the very scattered distribution of the several corps in the country districts, I have found it quite impossible to complete the tour in the time specified (two months). I have now finished the districts of Taranaki, Wanganui, and Rangitikei, besides the whole of the Southern Island. My inspection of this district will also be completed on the 12th instant, when I shall proceed to Napier and Auckland by the first opportunity.

I have therefore the honor to request that you will be good enough to obtain the necessary authority for the continuance of my pay and allowances from the 1st February.

I have, &c.,

PHILIP HARRINGTON, Lieut.-Colonel,
Acting Inspector of Militia and Volunteers.

The Acting Under Secretary,
Defence Office, Wellington.

No. 3.

(No. 60-3D.)

Mr. COOPER to Lieut.-Colonel HARRINGTON.

SIR,—

Colonial Defence Office, Wellington, 11th March, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st instant, reporting that, owing to the scattered distribution of the several corps in the country districts, you have found it impossible to complete your inspection of the Volunteers in both Islands within the time specified in your letter of appointment.

In reply, I am directed to inform you that the Hon. Mr. Gisborne has approved the extension of the time for this service to the end of March, and that your pay and allowances will be continued to that date.

I am further to inform you that the Government are desirous you should proceed to Dunedin in April, to superintend the firing for the annual prizes, and to request that you will be so good as to hold yourself in readiness for this duty. Information will be sent to you of the date which may be fixed for the firing.

Lieut.-Colonel Harington, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

G. S. COOPER.

No. 4.

Lieut.-Colonel HARRINGTON to the Hon. D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Auckland, 31st May, 1870.

In accordance with instructions contained in your letter of the 18th November, 1869, directing me "to proceed on a tour of inspection of the several Volunteer Corps of both Islands (and such Militia as were called out for active service)", I have the honor to make the following report:—

On the 3rd of December I went to Taranaki, and inspected the several detachments of Militia that occupied the posts between New Plymouth and the White Cliffs. Owing to the late disturbances in that district, the detachments which were usually small, were mostly confined to the redoubts on guard duties, and had little time for drill. They had few opportunities for rifle practice, but the Bushrangers at Papatiki under Captain Messenger had a range near the redoubt, and made good practice.

On the 8th of December I inspected the Taranaki Cavalry Volunteers. Although the notice was short and many of the members had a long distance to come to parade, the attendance was good; they were well mounted, and drilled fairly.

Their rifle practice was not good, but this may be attributed to the state of their carbines, which have been a long time in use on active service, and also to the fact of there being no properly qualified musketry instructor in the district.

On the 9th the Militia of the town were paraded for my inspection, and were put through several evolutions very creditably by Major Stapp. The frequent disturbances in this district for several years have no doubt made the whole population evince a more military spirit than in other parts of the Colony, and this disposition has been taken advantage of by the Commanding Officer, to render them efficient.

On the 16th of December I went to Wanganui, and inspected the detachments of Militia stationed between that place and Patea. There were only a few men at each post, who had but little opportunity for drill or rifle practice; they appeared, however, to be efficient, and their arms were in good order.

On the 21st of December, I inspected the Wanganui Militia, whose muster was small, owing to the very busy time of year; they appeared anxious to do well, but their drill and rifle practice was not good, and showed the necessity of having some more regular system of training if they were required for active service in the field.

On the 22nd of December, I inspected the Wanganui Cavalry Volunteers, who only turned out in small numbers. Their drill was fair but their firing indifferent, which is attributable to the state of their carbines, as in the case of the Taranaki Cavalry.

On the 24th I inspected the Rangitikei Rifles, who were in good order and efficient in their drill.

On the 27th the Victoria Cavalry were paraded for inspection; their muster was good, they were well mounted, and acquitted themselves very creditably in their manœuvres.

Owing to the scattered distribution of the various corps in the Rangitikei district, I found it impossible to assemble them at a short notice, but the return of the parades attended for the half-year ending 31st December, 1869, shows that the Volunteer movement in this district is well supported.

On the 28th December I went to Wellington, and thence to Otago. From the 5th to the 15th of January, I was employed in the inspection of the Volunteers of the Province of Otago. The several corps paraded strong both in town and country; their general appearance and efficiency in drill prove them to be the most zealous Volunteers in the Colony, and this superiority is demonstrated practically by the excellence of their rifle and artillery practice.

On the 16th I went to Canterbury, and from that date to the 31st was employed in inspecting the various corps of the Province.

The numbers generally assembled on parade were small, but this might be accounted for by the great scarcity of labour at this season of the year, when all hands were required for harvest.

The several corps were tolerably steady under arms, but there is decided room for improvement in the general zeal of the Volunteer movement throughout the Province.

On the 1st of February I went to the West Coast, and from that date to the 11th was employed in inspecting the Volunteers of the County of Westland.

The several corps (with the exception of the Westland Cavalry, who did not parade) were in good order, and showed every disposition to make themselves efficient, and especially the "Totara Rifles," at Ross, who were very steady under arms, and know their drill well.

On the 13th of February I went to Nelson, where I remained till the 25th.

The rifle practice was good, as also that of the Artillery; but the several Companies did not muster in good numbers, nor were they as efficient in drill as might have been expected.

On the 26th of February I went to Wellington, and was employed from that date to the 12th of March in inspecting the various corps of the Province. On the whole the corps in the Wairarapa were in good order, and especially the Carterton Rifles, who were very steady under arms and efficient in their drill. I think that the Volunteers of this district deserve special commendation for their zeal, as they are much scattered, and have considerable distances to go to attend drill. They are much in want of targets for rifle practice, and urgently solicited me to request the Government to supply them. I think it my duty to make especial mention of the Wairarapa Cavalry, who were very well mounted, clean in their appointments, steady in their drill, and were altogether the most efficient Cavalry Corps that I have seen in the Colony.

On the 5th of March I inspected the Taitai and Hutt Rifles whose drill was fair ; also the Hutt Cavalry, whose efficiency was not equal to that of many other corps in the Colony.

On the 8th the Wellington Artillery were paraded for inspection ; they were in very good order, and made excellent shot and shell practice. I also inspected the Rifle Volunteers of the City of Wellington, who were steady at drill and made good target practice.

On the 15th of March I arrived at Napier, and inspected the Volunteer Corps. The Artillery were newly raised, and had no opportunity of receiving instruction, owing to the want of a qualified Instructor. The Cavalry were tolerably well mounted and drilled fairly ; the Rifle Volunteers acquitted themselves creditably in drill, but their rifle practice was indifferent.

On the 20th of March I arrived at Auckland, but was unable to inspect any corps in that district for the remainder of the month, as they were all occupied in firing for the choice of representative competitors at the annual prize firing meeting at Dunedin.

From the 2nd to 7th of April I was employed in inspecting the corps of the Waiuku and Wairoa Districts. The Waiuku Cavalry are well mounted and efficient in drill, but the greater part of the Volunteers in these districts are newly raised men, and require attentive instruction.

On the 9th I went to the Thames, where the numbers on parade were small in comparison with those returned on the strength of the district. This might be accounted for by the absence of some on service at Tauranga, and also the depressed state of the Gold Fields ; as they had just completed their practice for representation at Dunedin, I contented myself with examining the registers of their practice, and found the average to be very good.

Their drill might be better, but every allowance should be made for newly raised corps on a Gold Field at a time of such depression, when the men have to make great sacrifices to attend instruction drill.

On the 11th I inspected the Administrative Battalion of Auckland Rifle Volunteers. Those that were present drilled well, but the numbers on parade bore no reasonable proportion to those who are enrolled. The Artillery made very good practice, and are decidedly an efficient corps.

On the 12th I inspected the Auckland, Otahuhu, and Howick Troops of Cavalry, all of whom displayed zeal and attention to their duties, but are capable of improvement.

The Naval Volunteers acquitted themselves creditably in company drill, and also displayed much activity in their gun drill at the battery in Fort Britomart.

The rifle practice of the Volunteers of this district has been conducted under many disadvantages, owing to the great distance of the range from the town, but this will shortly be rectified.

On the 15th of April I went to Dunedin to superintend the Colonial Annual Prize Firing, the result of which has been already reported. As I have been requested to ascertain the extent of the power of the Colony for the purposes of self-defence, and particularly in case of emergency in the North Island, and also the general sentiments of the public with regard to the Militia and Volunteer organization, I beg to make the following remarks:—

I am of opinion that the present Militia Act, which can compel all men from eighteen to fifty-five years of age to be liable to training and active service is most unpopular. Assuming that they are called out, in their present state of inefficiency, their actual strength would be more nominal than real.

I cannot but think it to be impracticable as a continuous system, except possibly in small outlying districts, where the population is more stationary than in the great centres ; and to make them efficient would involve an expensive staff, which the Colony could ill afford.

If it is an object to have a certain number of men trained to form a reserve in case of need, I am of opinion that greater encouragement must be given to induce the younger portion of the community to serve as Volunteers.

They should be trained only to simple manœuvres adapted to the character of the country, such as skirmishing and other drills calculated to inspire mutual confidence, and above all every encouragement should be given to make them good marksmen and perfect masters of their rifles. On all sides the Volunteer Corps complain of the insufficiency of the present rate of capitation allowance, which was reduced nearly two years ago, and many young men are willing to join the Volunteers and give their time to make themselves efficient, provided they are not called upon to sacrifice money in addition to time. At present the capitation allowance is not sufficient to provide necessary clothing, and many men are prevented from joining corps, because they can ill afford to pay for it.

Some of the corps in the outlying districts expressed their willingness to receive nothing in kind instead of money, subject to any reasonable regulations which the Government might think fit to make for their own protection. This is especially apparent in the outlying districts, where it is more desirable to give every encouragement to the movement, as for instance in Taranaki, where the Volunteers have frequently done good service in the field, but are now decreasing in numbers.

In order to ensure a more uniform system of drill, all drill instructors should be sent to a dépôt, where they should undergo a course of drill, and be sent out to their several districts when they have acquired a certificate of efficiency. I recommend that the several corps should be annually inspected to see what benefits they have derived from their instructors.

I also think that the qualification for "efficient" Volunteers should be altered, and that they should be compelled to attend a certain number of "preliminary drills," and fire a certain number of rounds to entitle them to capitation allowance, and to compete for all District and Colonial Prizes.

I strongly recommend that Cadet Corps should receive more encouragement, as they are more easily trained at an early age, and acquire a knowledge of their duties, which makes the work a source of pleasant occupation.

Without doubt, the Volunteers in the Province of Otago are the most zealous and efficient in the Colony, and I consider that in a great measure this superiority has been attained through the encouragement given them by grants from the Provincial Council, and the general support which they receive from the public of their Province.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Donald McLean,
Defence Minister, Wellington.

PHILIP HARRINGTON, Lieut.-Colonel,
Acting Inspector of Militia and Volunteers.

