

## Enclosure 4 in No. 1.

Lieut.-Colonel PACKE to the UNDER SECRETARY for DEFENCE.

SIR,—

Militia and Volunteer Office, Christchurch, 7th April, 1879.

In accordance with instructions received from the Hon. Colonel Whitmore in your letter No. 33-2c of the 11th February, I have the honor to report for his information that I proceeded to Nelson from Lyttelton, arriving there on the 1st March, to take command at the meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association, having with me on the staff Majors Noake, Baillie, and Lean.

Upon arrival we were warmly welcomed by the Bishop of Nelson, the Mayor, and a Reception Committee, after which the representatives were driven to town and dispersed to their several allotted quarters.

Whilst speaking of our arrival, I would take this opportunity of suggesting that, for the next meeting, the Union Steamship Company should be requested to place a larger steamer on the line, as the s.s. "Wellington" was unduly crowded, and was a source of the greatest discomfort, not only to the representatives, but also to the travelling public.

On Sunday morning the Nelson Volunteers and the representatives paraded for Divine service, and were marched to church, where the sermon was preached by the Bishop of Nelson, chaplain to the Volunteers. The total strength on parade was 290 of all ranks.

On Monday morning, the 3rd March, the representatives paraded at the drill-shed at 9 o'clock, when I addressed the parade, and informed them that I had appointed Major Noake camp adjutant, and that I expected strict discipline to be maintained during the meeting, and as long as they were Volunteers under arms. This was duly carried out.

They then marched to the railway station, arriving in camp at half-past 10. The site selected for the camp and ranges is situated on the Nelson and Foxhill line of railway, twelve miles from Nelson and about three minutes' walk from the Brightwater Station. I do not consider that a more advantageous position could have been selected, nor for the general convenience of competitors from the North and South Islands could a more suitable spot have been chosen than Nelson. I am informed by the oldest settlers that during February, when the meetings will take place, rain is very rare, with little wind and warm weather.

The camp and the butts were laid out by Armourer Christie, with his usual skill and diligence, and, as far as his work went, gave general satisfaction.

At 3 o'clock the first meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association was declared open by the Hon. Major Richmond, Vice-President, and the first shot fired by Mrs. Pitt, the wife of the officer commanding the district.

No. 1 match then commenced, but considerable delay occurred by the discovery that the ranges were wrong in measurement. This was caused by the carelessness of one of the Range Committee, to whom the work had been intrusted. Considerable discontent was the consequence, as well as delay in remeasuring the ground.

I much regret to state that two days after arrival in camp I lost the valuable services of Major Noake, who was compelled, after much suffering, to leave the camp, and was confined to his room during the entire meeting.

I appointed Major Lean to the post of camp adjutant, who performed the duties of this office to my entire satisfaction.

I may here mention that a captain and subaltern of the day, as well as non-commissioned officers, were duly detailed for duty. The lights were extinguished at a stated hour, and strict order kept in the camp.

I beg to bring to the notice of the Hon. Colonel Whitmore the close attention to their duties paid by Majors Baillie and Lean, who remained in camp during the entire meeting, and were indefatigable in their attendance all day on the range. Also to Captain Wildman, of the Thames Naval Brigade, who, in the absence of Major Noake, volunteered his services, and performed the duties of staff officer with zeal and energy. Major Pitt's services were at my disposal when required, but his time was fully occupied during our stay with duties connected with his district.

Staff Surgeon Boor visited camp on several occasions, and treated Major Noake with the greatest skill and kindness. Beyond this there were only two slight cases of sickness during the meeting.

Mr. Stevens, the Secretary of the Association, performed his various duties with much satisfaction, but was unable to remain all night in camp owing to a recent severe illness.

The telegraph office opened in camp was of great service, and I wish to draw special attention to the manner in which Mr. Halliday in charge performed his duties. Cheerful and obliging, he gave satisfaction to every one.

I regret to state that the catering was a source of universal complaint. In no encampment have I ever seen the messing so bad.

The firing ended on Thursday morning, the 13th March, when a special train brought the competitors into Nelson, where, at 3 o'clock, the prizes were presented by Mrs. Suter, attended by the Hon. Major Baillie, Vice-President, in the absence, through illness, of the Hon. Major Richmond.

The Volunteers and representatives, to the number of 276, were present on parade under command of Major Lean. I inspected them before the presentation, after which they marched past, and were then dismissed.

Before concluding this report of this first and most successful meeting of the Association, I beg to record our most sincere thanks to the Mayor and citizens for their reception and welcome, also for their kind hospitality during our stay in Nelson.

I attach hereto a memorandum handed to me by Major Baillie, showing an approximate account of money paid by the Association.

I have, &amp;c.,

GEO. PACKE,

Lieut.-Colonel.

The Under Secretary for Defence, Wellington.

By authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1879.