

These camps are absolutely essential. The drill done during the remainder of the year is only sufficient to keep up the knowledge gained during the annual training in camp. I propose that the Naval Artillery corps at each centre should go into camp, at the most convenient time for each corps, for a fortnight yearly, and that at Easter these corps should also go into camp for their own particular work with guns and mines. The annual allowance of ammunition and stores necessary for the training of the men should be divided, so that a proportion be expended during the training and a proportion during the Easter encampment.

The corps go into camp close to the guns with which they are to work. After their work each day they go to camp, do some two hours drill in the evening, get up in the morning in time to do two hours more drill before leaving for their work, to return again to their camp in the evening.

In one case advantage was taken of the camp to do enough work to capitulate for the year, no previous drill having been done. This must be guarded against in the future.

The submarine-mining portion of the Naval Artillery corps at the four centres are instructed in very elementary matters, such as knotting, laying out stores, and connecting-up. It may be stated that the men have had no practice in laying out a line of mines. A continued course of knotting, splicing, and connecting-up is not sufficient to keep up interest in the work. The men are beginning to find it very irksome.

The Naval Artillery Volunteers, who pass certain examinations in gunnery and submarine mining, receive certificates of qualification entitling them to an allowance of £1 each for that year, together with a badge; and any man obtaining his certificate for three successive years becomes entitled to an additional allowance of £1 and an extra badge.

The difference between the work required from a gunner and from a submarine miner is enormous at the present moment; but I propose that the instruction must be made more thorough, and practical work in laying out mines and picking them up must be gone through.

The Naval corps throughout the colony are in possession of various boats and boat-houses, either bought and built by the Government, by the corps, or by both combined. Each corps receives an annual allowance of £25 per annum for the up-keep of their boats and boat-houses. The boat in possession of the Wanganui Navals is hardly worth £25!

It is absurd that the Government should continue paying £25 per annum to each corps, making a total of £450 per annum, when the boats are of no value from the defence point of view. It is very pleasant for the men of these corps to have a boating-club supported by the Government. I will not say that the boats at Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Port Chalmers are absolutely useless, but I will state that the boats at Wanganui, Thames, Napier, and the small ports in the South Island are of no value to the Government.

It will be a matter for consideration what should be done with the boats. In the four centres I consider the Government should hand the boats and sheds over to the corps, making each corps responsible for the production of boats for work when required. The extra capitulation which I propose for these corps should cover the small extra expense of keeping these boats in order.

The outlying Naval corps have in their possession certain pieces of ordnance as detailed in Appendices, page 67, with the amount and cost of ammunition supplied to the corps during the past year. It may be accepted as a fact that these corps have had no instruction in gunnery: they take no interest in it. The guns are in a disgraceful condition generally; and it is most reprehensible that the authorities should not only countenance the firing of these weapons by untrained men under no proper supervision, but even supply the men with the very possible means of causing some disastrous accident.

There is no advantage in keeping up these Naval Artillery Volunteer corps in the outlying districts. They get no instruction in their own particular work, whether gunnery or sub-marine mining. In some cases the service of the men as corps of Rifles may be made use of. The question of uniform is not pressing; at any rate, the corps should be granted time to wear out their present uniforms before being obliged to adopt another.

At the end of 1891 there were only 107 passed gunners and 107 passed submarine miners in the whole of the Naval Artillery corps. At the end of 1892 there were 142 certificated gunners and 92 submarine miners out of a total of 1,185 naval artillerymen.

I propose that the corps in the centres told off for gunnery and submarine-mining duties should receive £3 per efficient man, the qualification for efficiency being that the man must have been at least seven out of the fourteen days in camp at annual training, and must put in at least eighteen drills during the rest of the year, three of these being whole-afternoon drills.

2. GARRISON ARTILLERY.

There are two batteries of garrison artillery, one at Lyttelton, the other at Port Chalmers. The men of these batteries are told off for the working of certain guns. The battery at Lyttelton is in good order; that at Port Chalmers I found to be in a very inefficient state. It is not required, and should be disbanded.

3. FIELD ARTILLERY.

Taking the matter of instruction, which I have slightly touched on in reporting on the outlying corps of Naval Artillery, various field batteries throughout the colony have had no sound instruction for years, as for example the field batteries at Oamaru and Invercargill.

The guns throughout in these batteries are in a terribly bad state, some being unsafe to fire, while the wheels, limbers, and woodwork in some cases are absolutely rotten. I have been obliged to stop further firing from the 6-pr. R.B.L. and 12-pr. R.B.L. guns.

In the past batteries have been raised, and guns and stores sent, to various places in the colony, quite irrespective of the possibility of the battery being instructed, or a proper supervision being maintained over the material.