

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON THE WESTLAND, NELSON, MARLBOROUGH, AND SOUTH CANTERBURY DISTRICTS, AND ON THE EASTER ENCAMPMENTS.

WESTLAND VOLUNTEER DISTRICT.

I REGRET that I am unable to report favourably on the corps in this District, for although the men mustered well I found that there was a general want of instruction and supervision. The sergeant-instructor (Benning), whom I found to be a steady and capable man, anxious to do all in his power, only visits the corps on an average once a month; and the Commanding Officer is unable, owing to the calls of business on his time, to exercise that supervision and carry out the inspection which is so vital to the well-being of corps isolated as they are throughout the district. He has been unable to inspect some of the corps during the past year, and it is necessary to send an officer from Wellington at considerable expense to supervise the annual volley-firing and carry out the inspection of arms, &c.

There is a marked diversity in the pattern of the accoutrements in the district, and in the manner of wearing the pouches; while in several instances there were no slings, for which there is no valid reason, as they can be at once supplied from store. Excepting at Hokitika and Brunner-ton, where it is fairly stationary, the population is very fluctuating, and from Brunner-ton in war time it would be impossible to draw a man, as coal-mining, which employs all the men of that corps, would have to be continued.

I am of opinion that the corps in this district are not required for the defence of the colony; they should be disbanded, and the money now spent on them should go to improving the condition of the corps in localities nearer the vital points.

1ST WESTLAND RIFLES, HOKITIKA.—8th March 1893.

Present: 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 4 sergeants, and 57 rank and file. Absent: 4 rank and file.

Uniform.—Scarlet tunics; black helmets, in moderate condition, and of different patterns.

Arms and Accoutrements.—Snider rifles, brown belts, and black slings.

Officers.—Captain Wade: Good commanding officer, taking much interest. Lieutenant Malfroy: Energetic. Lieutenant Peake: Zealous.

Non-commissioned Officers.—Not up to the ordinary standard.

Men.—A good body of men.

Turn-out.—There was an excellent muster. The pouch was worn on the right front. Some slings were deficient; and two of the men were not in uniform trousers.

Drill.—Some company movements, manual and firing exercises, were done under the officers in the drillshed. The commands were generally badly given, and there was no proper supervision in the firing exercises. Subsequently the company was taken outside and exercised in the open. The drill was indifferent. The drill-instructor only visits this corps once a month, which is insufficient.

There is plenty of good spirit evinced by both officers and men. Taking it all round this is a fairly good company.

The rifle-range is dangerous, a road running behind the butt, which is barely higher than the target, and the bush is gradually disappearing between the butt and the road. Shooting should be stopped until the butt is raised considerably.

TOTARA RIFLES, ROSS.—9th March, 1893.

Present: 2 lieutenants, 4 sergeants, and 42 rank and file. Absent: 1 captain, and 17 rank and file.

Uniform.—Scarlet tunics; black helmets, in good order; officers in undress uniform.

Arms and Accoutrements.—Snider rifles; buff belts and slings.

Officers.—Captain Macfarlane: Absent on work away from Ross. Lieutenant Bruce: Energetic and keen. Lieutenant Cass: Zealous and anxious to learn.

Non-commissioned Officers.—Good men, desirous of learning.

Men.—A very fine stamp.

Turn-out.—The appearance on parade was good, the men being of fine physique. The pouch was worn on the right front.

Drill.—This corps has only been in existence for but little over a year, and for some time was without any instruction from the drill-instructor. He only now visits the corps once a month. The company is only capable of doing squad drill.

I learnt that there had been a considerable falling-off in attendance of late. There is but a very small community in Ross itself, and the population is very fluctuating.