

The camps were held with the object of testing the defence of the four chief ports, and of ascertaining the value of the defence forces. Orders were issued for this purpose.

I regret that in the Auckland District the result was very unsatisfactory.

In the Wellington District there was an excellent muster of infantry and mounted rifles at Feilding, and of the D Battery at Island Bay, but all work was prevented by continuous rain and gales.

In the Canterbury District there was a good muster of field artillery, infantry, and mounted men at Kaituna. Very good work was done for the first thirty-six hours, but after that such bad weather prevailed that nothing more could be attempted.

Very excellent work was done by the Otago Volunteers, but three companies did not attend camp.

From the reports of the officers in charge I find that generally it was found impossible for the majority of the men of the naval artillery companies to remain in camp during the encampment. In consequence of the representations of their officers, who stated that unless the men were allowed to leave on Saturday they would lose their means of livelihood, a number of men were allowed to leave. It was therefore impossible to keep the guns in readiness.

It is with very great satisfaction that I am able to report that the conduct of the Volunteers at each camp was excellent. The men in camp in the Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago Districts experienced the most inclement weather and the most trying circumstances. Those who were in camp at Feilding were all late in returning to their homes, the Nelson contingent not reaching that town until the Sunday after Easter.

Under the circumstances, all ranks showed an excellent spirit; and it is most satisfactory that a strong desire to help the Government, in making no demand except for actual food, was evident. It is also most pleasing to note that the employers recognised that the difficulty was one for which their men could in no way be blamed, and that they at once took their men on again.

From my personal observation in the Otago District, I am satisfied that a great step forward has been made. Officers and men were most keen and anxious to learn their work and to go through any hardships.

The outpost line defending Dunedin was held by day and by night during rain and hail without a murmur. The march of the mounted men from Waikouaiti, starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning, pitching their camp at Warrington at 5 p.m., reconnoitring the defending outposts at 10.30 p.m., and, after an arduous night-march, attacking and penetrating the defending line at day-break on Sunday, was an excellent piece of work.

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