
◆ RIFLEFIRE ◆

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PO Box 752 Ringwood 3134 Vic. Australia

Newsletter of the **Victorian Colonial Infantry Association Inc**



Incorporating **Mt Alexander Rifles**

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AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1. To research the history of the Victorian Colonial Infantry Regiments with particular reference to the Volunteer Rifles in the period 1865 - 1895, and particularly the Mt Alexander Rifles Regiment.
2. To establish & maintain a living history group to recreate the Mt Alexander Rifles in the 1865 - 1895 period.
3. To research and preserve the skills and attributes of the 19th Century Rifleman.
4. To provide a resource to other historical organisations and the Community at large.

Cover Picture: Richmond Rifles, Captain Martin.
 Photo from the LaTrobe Collection State Library of Victoria

THE EDITORIAL

Well 2006 is just about over, Personally I am looking forward to 2007 as this year had more lows than highs for me.

It is with regret that Eva McKellar-James, Captain Garry McKellar James wife, passed away on the 3rd October 2006. She survived Garry by only a little more than 9 months.

Plagiarism saves
time..

The AGM went well, all office bearers were returned unopposed, and no increase in membership fees which are now due.

We attended the genealogy expo in August. We received quite a bit of interest and enquiries along with offers of photographs that people had of distant relatives who were in the local forces.

September was Tamminick 2006, our numbers were down on previous years, but a good time was had by all, with the only problem was the mix up with tents and poles.

November saw us attending the ceremony at the Separation tree in the botanical gardens along with the 40th Regiment.

December saw Phyll McMillan, myself and 4 others attend the 5/6th RVR Gala ball.

I have received the RVR Journal "Melbourne's Own" along with the "Soldier Information Pack" that they give new recruits. Both these make interesting reading and are available from the Secretary.

Interesting to note is that 5/6th will be opening their Museum in 2007, more details on that as they come to hand.

The indexing project of the Victorian Forces is progressing. The Microfiche of the Volunteers for 1860/61 will be available from the State Library before the New Year, and the index of all members that appeared in the Government Gazette will be accessible as a searchable database on the State Library's web site early next year.

With those 2 parts now under wraps, the next phase is the Anglo-Boer war index. This will be particularly interesting as apart from listing all the details of the 5 Victorian Contingents, it will also list where photos of the men can be found. Of the 5 Contingents that Victoria sent, individual photos of each member of 4 of these contingents were published.

The only Contingent that was not photographed was the 4th Imperial Contingent. There is also listed the Nurses who accompanied the 3rd Bushman's Contingent.

We have received notification that we are invited by the Australia Day Council to attend their celebrations at the Alexandra Gardens.
The drawback to this is that they require payment from us to attend.

I have recently acquired a copy of a presentation given to the Victorian Historical Society in 1937 about "Richmond's Early Military History" This is a interesting look at the early units in the Richmond area, and goes from the inception of the Volunteers up to 1920's I will include parts of this over a number of issues of Riflefire.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to wish everyone a safe and prosperous Christmas & New Year.

Tom Corfmat
Secretary
Victorian Colonial Infantry Association Inc.

Rome did not create
a great empire by
having meetings;
they did it by killing
all those who op-
posed them.

Anglo-Boer War Index

I have recently come across copies of the original Muster Rolls for the 5 Victorian Contingents to the Boer War between 1899 and 1901, the very end of the period that we are interested in.

The problem for the researcher is that the men are listed in these rolls by their Regimental Number in the contingent, so if you are looking for an individual it can be time consuming.

This came about the same time that I discovered that prior to embarkation, while the men were training at the Langwarrin camp, 4 of the 5 contingents were photographed, that is each member had a head and shoulder photograph taken and published in the newspaper. These photo's were sometimes used more than once, for example if there was a story concerning the individual.

What the index will provide will be the information provided in the Muster Rolls, along with the date and page number of where their photo, if it exists, can be located, in alphabetical order.

The information provided in the muster rolls varies with each Contingent.

1st Contingent— Rank, Surname, Christian Names, Martial Status, Corps, Occupation, Usual address

2nd Contingent— Regimental Number, Rank & Name, Martial Status, Regimental Number in Corps from which Selected, Corps, Occupation,

Usual address

3rd (Bushman's) Contingent— Regimental Number, Rank & Name, Date of Birth, Martial Status, Occupation, Usual Address, Next of Kin, Address of NOK, Relationship, Religion, Height, Chest Measurement.

4th (Imperial) Contingent— Regimental Number, Rank & Name, Date of Birth, Martial Status, Occupation, Usual Address, Next of Kin, Address of NOK, Relationship, Religion, Height, Chest Measurement

5th Contingent— Regimental Number, Rank & Name, Date Joining Contingent, Date of Birth, Martial Status, Occupation, Usual Address, Next of Kin, Address of NOK, Relationship, Religion, Height, Chest Measurement, If Serving in Victorian Military Forces Number Rank and Corps.

Where photos of other Victorians accompanying the troops are published, eg Nurses, these names and locations are also included, but there is not as much detail.

Richmond's Early Military History.

By COLONEL R.. A. Crouch.

(Read before the Society 23rd March 1937.)

INTRODUCTORY.

The earliest reference I can find to the defenses of this State is in a letter dated the 20th June, 1846, which- the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, sent to Mr. Gladstone the Colonial Secretary in London. It encloses a memorial from the mayor and town councillors of Melbourne asking that its defenses should be attended to. The reply was dated the 6th November, 1846, and came from Lord Grey, his successor at the Colonial Office. It stated that he concurred with the Melbourne authorities that the important town of Melbourne ought not to be left in its present defenseless condition, but that the English Government cannot propose to Parliament that a grant should be made from the revenue upon which there are already so many and such heavy demands; and that the early attention of the Sydney Colonial legislature should be called to the subject.

But what London refused to do, and Sydney neglected, to do, sectarian riots in Melbourne succeeded in accomplishing. On the 30th April, 1847, Sir Charles Fitzroy reported to Lord Grey that he had sent a detachment of 100. men to Port Phillip, on the earnest representations of Mr. La Trobe, "necessary by the occasional religious riots of the lower orders of Melbourne."

Amongst the repercussions in this country of the Crimean War arose the desire that Australians should take some 'steps for their own defence. On the 29th September, 1855, a meeting was held by the residents of Richmond, then one of the most desirable of the suburbs of Melbourne, for the purpose of forming a company of riflemen, from Richmond and East Collingwood, at the Exhibition Building, then situate at William_-street. It was adjourned until the 10th October to Sheedy's Royal Hotel, Swan-street, Richmond. An advertisement signed by Captain F. H. Holland, adjutant, on the 5th October, asked intending members to attend this later gathering, and it resulted in a corps being instituted.

The Richmond Rifle Company thus formed, drilled in the Carlton Gardens,-, but its parades were only occasional, and its existence, after the war was terminated, only spasmodic. General Parnell, when State Commandant of Victoria, told me the Richmond Corps dated from 1854, so it has a history of, at least, 82 years. At that time the 40th Regiment', an Imperial Corps, provided such military defence as Australia needed, but its removal from Melbourne, 'its headquarters in 1860, for service in New Zealand, awakened the citizens to the necessity of providing a more efficient. local defence; and in the *Government Gazette* of the 1st July 1859, the following proclamation by Sir Henry Barkly, the - Governor; appeared

The Volunteer Rifle Corps proposed to be formed in *the* neighborhood of Melbourne will consist of ten companies.

“Richmond one company.”

The municipal authorities were asked to promote the scheme and at the council meeting of the municipality of Richmond on the 20th July, 1859, the chairman announced, in reference to the proclamation received by the council last week, that the

Clerk of the Petty Sessions was directed by the Government to receive the names of all persons desirous of joining the volunteers.

On the 25th July, 1859, the first general meeting of the Richmond Rifle Club under the new scheme -was held in the Railway Hotel, Swan-street, and a president, treasurer, Secretary, and committee of seven elected, and rules adopted. Richmond Australian - '30th July 1859)On the 26th October 1859, a meeting of twenty members of the Richmond Company of- the Victorian Rifle Corps, at the Commercial Hotel, Bridge-road, was held at 4 in the afternoon. Amongst those present were Colin Mackinnon, Septimus Martin, Cameron Compton, and D. S: Campbell, M.L.A. Mr. Campbell moved the resolutions which were carried. They read -

1. That general meeting of the Richmond Victorian Rifles Company be held at 5 pm., Monday, the 31st October, 1859, and Colonel Dean Pitt be requested to attend.
2. Morning drill to be from 6 to 7 a.m.
3. Evening drill 6.30 to 7.30 p.m..

(40th Regiment (2nd Somersetshire) came to Australia, 1852; departed to New Zealand, Maori War, 1860 returned to Victoria 1862, recalled to England, 1867.-)

Mr. Campbell placed a paddock near his residence at the disposal of the corps for purposes of drill. The local parliamentary representative was evidently the moving spirit in the matter, as the *Government Gazette* of the 13th December, 1859, announces that "Daniel Stodhart Campbell, Esquire, was appointed acting lieutenant of the Richmond Company Volunteer Rifles from the 3rd December."

The Company was formed, and the 'local newspaper (the Richmond, Australian) in its issue of the 17th December 1859, reports;

RICHMOND VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS.

On Monday evening after drill the members of this company to the number of 64 received their uniform; consisting of a grey cloth tunic, trousers, and cap, edged with green. On Wednesday evening the further accoutrements, consisting of belt, cartouche box, kneecap case, and sword strap, were distributed. Yesterday morning at a quarter to 6, this corps, to the number of 70, met in the Police Paddock, to the westwards of the barracks, where they were joined by the Collingwood and Melbourne companies; each company being attended by their lieutenant and drill sergeant. They were inspected by Captains Pitt and Hall. The united force went through the manual exercise and various evolutions very creditably, and to the satisfaction of their commander, Lieut.-Col. Pitt. Before dismissal, the Colonel informed the united companies that rifle practice at the target (150 to 200 yards) would be held on each Thursday and Friday, from

4 o'clock, and on Saturdays, from 2 p.m., until dark, near the Sandridge Battery The only compulsory drill henceforward will be in the Police Paddock every Friday morning at a quarter to 6. The usual drill will be from 6 to 7 a.m.. and p.m., 6 to 7 a.m.. on Tuesdays, and 6 to 7 p.m.. on Wednesdays.

There seem to have been giants and early risers in those days, Seventy Richmond men parade at 5.45 a.m., and are to have compulsory drill every Friday morning at the same hour. Another thing to note is that six weeks after the first meeting, they were able to go through manual exercises and evolutions "very creditably." The 40th Regiment's departure for the New Zealand war made it necessary for the new volunteers to take up routine duties- previously performed by the Imperial troops, and it is recorded that, on the 21st July, 1860, five members of the Richmond Volunteer Rifle Corps marched to Government House, Toorak, to take up 24 hours' garrison duty, consequent on the departure of the 40th Regiment to New Zealand.

The Richmond Corps distinguished itself then, as it did in later by its military spirit. In order to prepare the forces for a sudden assembly the military' authorities „adopted a system of unexpected call-outs at inconvenient hours, this being necessary from the complete, absence of speedy communications from England; and from the fact that, at any time, the Melbourne community might be exposed to the attack of a raiding force. It is recorded-" On the 22nd December, 1860, at twenty to 12, the Volunteer Rifles were called out, and by five minutes past 12, 60 members of the Richmond Corps had mustered, and under the command of Captain Septimus Martin, were marched through the Richmond Paddock to Prince's-bridge, where they awaited the arrival of other companies, but, these not appearing on the scene, a retreat was beaten, and Richmond again reached at half-past 2 in the morning." Richmond had scored ; and the noble 60 returned, very tired, but full of pride at being the only real defenders who had responded to their country's call.

In 1861 the corps was favored by receiving one of the only two officially authorized colours in Victoria, until after the 1914-1919 war, when many regiments received these honors. They were made by the ladies of Richmond, and presented by them to the corps with the following address :

Address ON PRESENTATION OF COLOURS TO THE RICHMOND VOLUNTEER RIFLES. Captain Martin, and gentlemen of the Richmond Company of Volunteers.-The ladies of Richmond, being desirous of giving some tangible expression of their appreciation of your patriotic motives in forming yourselves into a military corps, for their defence and that of their country, from foreign aggression, after mature consideration; resolved to adopt the time-honored practice of presenting you with a set of colours. The system of volunteering has now become almost universal throughout the British Dominions, and the utility of the movement is so generally admitted that I need not dilate upon the advantages contributed by the volunteers to this colony in particular. They are, however, peculiarly valuable here, in consequence of the withdrawal of nearly the whole of the regular troops usually stationed in Victoria. I believe. I am justified in stating that in no other portion of Her Majesty's vast possessions has the movement been carried out with more spirit and efficiency; and I think I may also say, without disparagement of other portions of the force, that the Richmond volunteers will compare favorably with any other company. You are now requested to accept these color's as. a token of the interest taken by the ladies of Richmond the volunteer movement and of their desire to afford it encouragement and -support, and they are sure you will not undervalue the gift or the motives prompting it. Wherever you may be called upon to carry your colours, rest assured, the good wishes of the donors will accompany you_ They. have every confidence that you will on all occasions preserve the colours with jealous care, and fervently hope you may never be called upon to carry them to the battle field ; should it become your duty to do so, they feel certain they could not be entrusted to better hands- and that the Richmond company will be amongst the foremost to meet the rash invaders, and will do no dishonor to the colours this day presented.

Gentlemen, I have now the pleasure, on behalf of the ladies of Richmond, to request your acceptance of these colours.

The colours are still in existence? They were formally presented on a Saturday afternoon, in 1861, by Mrs. Philip J Johnson, wife of a solicitor, who was then Mayor of Richmond, and resided on Docker's Hill.

When I took command of the Yarra Borderers, the successor of the old Richmond Rifles, parading in its drill hall in Docker-street, Richmond, I thought it a duty to try and preserve some of the past history of

the corps, and for that purpose interviewed, as far as I could, all the old members living. Amongst those were Mr. George Gordon McCrae, the poet; Major George Clipperton, J.P.; and Mr. E. A. Atkyns, solicitor, all three of whom have now passed away. I am using their information and notes, in this paper. Major Clipperton told me:

I was No. 64 on the first swearing in of the Richmond Rifles. It was carried out on Docker's Hill, near St. Stephen's Church, where there were large open fields. Colonel Neild, commanding the Imperial Artillery stationed in Melbourne, swore the men in. Amongst others were Colin Mackinnon (brother of the Argus Mackinnon); George Gordon McCrae, the poet; Alexander McCrae, his brother; Sydney Woolley; W. H. McKenzie; Harold Mortimer, a prominent cricketer and first sergeant; T. S. Small, afterwards Colonel Small, son of J. W. Small, photographer; and A. H. Massina, the publisher, and afterwards lieutenant and captain. Colonel Neild died shortly afterwards, being thrown from his horse near the Church-street bridge. In 180 all volunteers received a Crown grant of 50 acres of land. Many of the members of the corps gave their grants to help the building of a drill hall, which was put up by this method and by public subscriptions. The corps hired the Cremorne Gardens for an entertainment for the fund, and he (Clipperton), J. S. Small, and Massing went round Richmond for several nights previously, posting bills and advertising the function. The building commenced in 1860. There were at first two iron sheds which they used for lectures and meetings; but all the drill was carried on in the clear open fields stretching from St. Stephen's Church to Lennox-street and Swan-street--the fields being known as Docker's Hill. The first uniform was French grey and green facings, brown belts and gaiters, and cap. This was changed some years later to dark iron-grey, all black braid and pipings. Bronze bugle on collar and cap. Chevrons black, on scarlet cloth. Black stripe down trousers.

At Colonel Crouch's suggestion, application was made to the C.O. 22/29 Battalion at Fitzroy, Lieut.-Col. Carre Riddell, who kindly lent the colours, for the meeting. The "Queen's" of silk was much worn, the "Regimental" with crossed rifles worked in the centre was well preserved.

Note: the Richmond colours were recently restored and are on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

This is the first part of this presentation, the remainder will follow in subsequent editions of Riflefire.



Merry Christmas & Happy New

