
◆ 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: Badges & Sergeant of The West Melbourne Rifles: Picture courtesy of Jeff Cossum.

THE EDITORIAL

On behalf of the VCIA, our condolences go out to Ian Douglas on the passing of his wife Melva and his daughter within a day of each other.

The AGM was held on Sunday 19th August 2007 at Cape Otway.

As no expressions of interest were received for any of the committee positions, the structure remains the same as for previous years. Fees remain the same as last year, and these are now due.

If you can't get a lawyer who knows the law, get one who knows the judge.

We have just returned from Tamminick 2007, with the news that we are host group for Tamminick 2008, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Mt Alexander battalion in Bendigo in 1858.

We will be having a meeting soon to discuss what needs to be done for this event and the allocation of duties etc.

We receive newsletters from a number of other organisations
The Watch... 42nd
Scuttlebutt ... Shenandoah's Crew
Despatches... Military Historical Society (Victorian Branch)
RVR Association Newsletter

All are available from the Secretary for reading.

Heritage Victoria, in conjunction with the RSL and others are conducting a survey of all the Military sites, memorials, halls Honour boards etc throughout Victoria, with the project expected to be completed by Feb.08. Interesting to see what they do with the report at the end.

Indexing Project is progressing along at a steady rate, all the Mt Alexander Battalion, which covers Castlemaine, Bendigo, Kyneton, Maldon & Malmsbury Rifles to 1883 have now been completed. Victorians in the Boer War is also complete. Enquiries to the Secretary.

Separation tree event was held in November at the botanical Gardens, apart from almost being carried away by the flies, it was a good event. As we participate in the Victoria Day celebrations each year, I thought that it would be interesting to include an article about how the Volunteers celebrated the event in 1861.

I would like to wish all our reader a Merry Christmas And Happy New Year and we can all look forward to an exciting 2008.

Tom Corfmat
Secretary
Victorian Colonial Infantry Association Inc.

Jottings From Journals

The two items below were recently reported in the RVR newsletter.

VICTORIAN SCOTTISH REGIMENT MEMORIAL PLAQUE

A plaque commemorating the contribution by members of the Victorian Scottish Regiment to both regular and reserve forces during the period 1898-1960 is to be unveiled on 9 November. The unveiling will be part of the Ceremony to be held in the Remembrance Garden of the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital at 1045 hrs on Friday 9 November to mark Armistice Day.

God must love stupid people, he made so many of them.

Ed Hawkes, President of the VSR Association, wishes to acknowledge the generous donation of a proud stalwart of the Regiment and the RVR, SSGT Ian Robertson BEM. Ian's gift made the production of the plaque possible.

Persons wishing to attend the ceremony should enter the hospital grounds via Gate 9 of Waterdale Rd. and follow the directions of the security staff in relation to parking. Limited refreshments will be available after the proceedings.

VALE THE GUNS

The October field firing activities will mark the end of CMF field artillery in Victoria. A decision has been taken to equip the Victorian based RAA regiment with mortars. This will at least ensure that technical skills in indirect fire control are maintained.

As part of this change mortars will be withdrawn from the infantry battalions.

While on the subject of Artillery, the following appeared on 27 April 1861, in "Bells Sporting Life In Victoria"

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COMMENCED AT TWO O'CLOCK.

HOTHAM ARTILLERY.—This company met on the evening of the 19th instant, for the election of an hon. medical officer to the company. It was stated in the room that more than one medical man had offered to give £100 towards the expenses of the company for the honour of the appointment. The result of the ballot showed Mr. Moore almost unanimously elected.

GENERAL PRATT'S LEVEL. — Major-General Pratt

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Anyone know of a Doctor who wants the honour of joining the VCIA?

SEPERATION DAY IN MELBOURNE - 1861

The first of July was celebrated by a route march from Melbourne to Brighton, and a sham fight at Picnic Point. We were glad to see that a very credible amount of reserve was maintained about the proceedings, and the result was, that the troops were able to manoeuvre without being interfered with by the huge mass of spectators who generally so impede the movements of the men that nothing can be done. People act most unreasonably on all occasions of reviews and parades, and by their over eagerness, defeat their own object, The result is, that a review or sham fight, to be successful must be conducted with as much secrecy as possible, unless indeed there be a parade ground from the neighbourhood of which the public can see without impeding the various operations. Pursuant to a brigade order to the members of the various corps in and around Melbourne were paraded before Colonel Pitt, in the reserve opposite the University, at nine a.m. The following table shows the total strength reached 992 men. —

<u>Companies</u>	<u>Officers,</u>	<u>NCOs</u>	<u>Privates</u>
Artillery	6	12	90
Engineers	6	2	32
Rifles:-			
Melbourne Proper	2	6	41.
Melbourne West		1	19
Melbourne North	1	4	43
Collingwood	2	7	79
Collingwood East	1	5	57
Fitzroy	1	5	35
Carlton	2	5	68
Richmond	1	4	50
Emerald Hill	1	6	58
Prahran & Sth Yarra	1	5	53
First St. Kilda	1	6	44
Second St. Kilda	1	2	31
Hawthorn	1	4	55
Williamstown	1	3	16
Brighton	1	4	50
Pentridge		2	14
Mounted Rifles	2	4	24

The artillery did not bring their great guns into the field, but were armed with rifles, orders were issued to form for "route marching," but prior to getting into motion every man on parade was served with ten rounds of blank ammunition. An advance guard was then thrown out, after which the main body got into marching order four abreast, headed by the Collingwood and Hawthorn bands; while the Melbourne, Emerald Hill, and Carlton bands occupied the centre of the column. A rear-guard having been thrown out, followed at some distance, The line of march was down Elizabeth street into Bourke street, through Swanston street, over Princes bridge, and along the St. Kilda road to the Gardiner's Creek road, thence by this road to Chapel street, which was followed to the

St. Kilda Esplanade. Here a halt was called, and, after a short rest, the bugle again sounded the assembly, and the forces proceeded along the heavy flat to the 'Red Bluff'. Arrived here, they were formed into line on the beach, and maintained an incessant fire seaward (to repel an imaginary enemy's flotilla) for some time. Presently a party was detached under the command of Captain Hall, who led his men to the Brighton road, along which they rapidly though cautiously proceeded some distance, to turn the right flank of an advancing hostile force that was presumed to have effected a landing lower down the shores of the Bay. Skirmishers were thrown out, and they kept up a lively fusillade as they advanced; they were twice relieved in companies, so warm was their work. Subsequently this force worked down to the beach, and being drawn up in line, engages in file firing upon the retreating foe until he was beyond range. The men were now ordered to fall back, and the Bluff having been reached and "pile arms ordered, luncheon was discussed. After due respect had been paid to the *dura ilita*, the bugle sounded for the return march, The forces were drawn up in line and fired one volley with admirable precision; immediately afterwards, they formed into close masses of column's facing the sea, and were ordered to 'stand to attention.'" Colonel Pitt then briefly addressed the forces—he said, probably for the last time. On the present occasion, as on all previous occasions, the volunteers had appeared in the field satisfactorily. But he wished to say a few words about rifle shooting, though at the two meetings of the Victorian Rifle Association, volunteers had given great satisfaction, they had not altogether satisfied him. They did not as a body attend sufficiently to position drill; and unless they did, all their random firing,—their target firing.— never make them good riflemen, he dwelt upon the advantages of good riflemen, and also upon the necessity of their being able to act well together; and he concluded by stating that the volunteers must attend more closely to position drill and to eye drill. Let them take his word for it, they had too much of the cartridge and not enough of position drill, Depend upon it they would as a body of men never become good riflemen without close attention to position and eye drill, The homeward march then commenced, the St. Kilda companies leaving at the entrance to the gate of the St. Kilda park. Princes Bridge was crossed a little after six. and each company proceeded to its own parade ground, where it was dismissed.

Source: Bells Sporting Life In Victoria; 6th July 1861

VOLUNTEERS MOUNTING GUARD.—It has been found necessary to call upon the volunteers to furnish a guard to the magazine at Footscray, and each company will, in turn, supply a sergeant and three men for that purpose, such men to be changed daily. Orders to this effect were issued to the different corps yesterday.

From Bells Life: 13 April 1861

The following Brigade Order No. 158/72 was issued on 6th December 1872.

“During the summer months Officers serving on either local or volunteer staff are authorised to wear on all parades and duties between sunrise and sunset, the sun helmet termed “The Bombay Staff Corps Topie”

The Helmet is to be worn with the spike and white regulation puggaree, chain chin strap to be worn when on duty under arms, mountings to be of the same metal as accoutrements.”

(I believe that this refers to what we now call a Pith Helmet.— Ed.)