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THE BIRTH OF THE VOLUNTEERS IN OTAGO  
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It appears certain that the first meeting in Otago to consider the formation of a Volunteer Unit was held at Tokomairiro (Milton). In "The Otago Witness," of 11th February, 1860, there appears a report covering the election of James Smith as member for the district, and a subsequent meeting of those present, where it was proposed by Mr. Dewe that a memorial be presented to His Honour The Superintendent to allow a Volunteer Rifle Corps to be enrolled in the district, as under present circumstances the people of the Province could not offer the slightest resistance to an enemy in the event of war, even to the landing of a boat's crew from a hostile ship. The proposal was seconded by Mr. Ayson and approved by the meeting. (This is probably the meeting referred to by other writers as having taken place in January, 1860 and, in the undermentioned official letter, on 1st February, 1860). It is commonly accepted that a number of men enrolled after the meeting, and actually attended parades during the ensuing months.

Enthusiasm was dampened, however, by the receipt of a letter from the Superintendent of the Province, James Macandrew, addressed to James Smith, Esquire M.P.C., Chairman of Meeting, Tokomairiro, and dated 19th April, 1860, wherein he referred to a resolution passed by a public meeting of the settlers of Tokomairiro on 1st February, last, respecting the formation of a Rifle Corps in the district and to which was annexed the reply from the General Government to his application on behalf of the Province for rifles. This annexure<sup>1</sup> is repeated verbatim as giving in reasonably concise form the situation regarding the formation of Volunteer Corps from a general Government point of view, voiced from the Colonial Secretary's Office under date of 26th March, 1860.

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your Honour's letter of the 20th ultimo on the subject of the formation of a rifle corps in the District of Tokomairiro. The Government is most anxious to encourage the organisation of the settlers throughout New Zealand for purposes of National Defence ; and, fully appreciating the public spirit which actuates the settlers generally on this subject, will be glad to accept the services of any Volunteer Corps formed under The Militia Act, 1858, in the province of Otago.

To enable a Corps to be formed for Tokomairiro, it should belong to some Militia District. By an Order-in-Council dated the 27th ultimo, published in The New Zealand Gazette of the 1st instant, a Dunedin District and an Invercargill District have been constituted. As neither of these Districts (embracing circles within twenty and thirty miles respectively from the present Police Office at each place) includes Tokomairiro, it will be necessary to constitute a Militia District there with such boundaries as may be deemed most convenient by those whose local knowledge will enable them to judge (care being taken not to overlap the boundaries of the Districts already formed). As soon as the Government being informed on this point, the Government will be advised to proclaim the District accordingly. In all cases of bodies of men desirous of being enrolled, they should memorialise to that effect to His Excellency stating their number, and at the same time suggesting the names of persons competent and willing to act as officers. The Adjutant will be appointed by the Government, and must have been previously in the Military Service. If no such persons resident in each District can be found for that office, an Adjutant will be sent from here.

<sup>1</sup> Otago Prov. Gazette, Vol. IV. No. III, 3 May, 1860.

I enclose copies of the Regulations of the Auckland Rifle Corps, and those of Taranaki, Christchurch and Nelson. It is very desirable that the Regulations for Volunteers should be as similar as possible through the Colony : persons desirous of forming Volunteer Corps should therefore transmit recommendations founded on the Regulations now in force, with such variations as local circumstances may require on such proposed

Regulations. His Excellency will be advised to issue them, and all necessary steps will be taken for completing the organisation of the Corps.

As regards the supply of rifles, orders have been some time since forwarded to England for a sufficient quantity of the best description of rifles, accoutrements, etc. for the Militia, and on their being received a supply will be forwarded to Otago."

Now followed a public meeting in Dunedin on 23rd July, 1860<sup>1</sup> with the Superintendent in the Chair ; well attended despite the bitter winter weather. It was there resolved:—

"That it be indispensably necessary that a Rifle Corps be at once organised for the Dunedin Militia District."

A list was laid on the table for signature by those willing to volunteer, and as a practical result about one hundred names were subscribed. Parades were held in the yard of the old Police Barracks and on Bell Hill (where First Church now stands). Mention is made of 75 men as the number attending one. Just when these parades took place, or under what authority or whose command is difficult to determine, unless it was that the participants, carried away by their enthusiasm, on their own initiative elected their leaders to organise and carry out training.

In any case, the first military appointment to Dunedin was that of William James Balfour Junor, to be Lieutenant and Adjutant in the Dunedin Regiment of New Zealand Militia: date of commission, 8th December, 1861<sup>2</sup>

It should be understood that the Militia Battalions were compulsory service units (vide The Militia Act, 1858 and The Militia Act Amendment Act, 1860), though it was provided by regulation that Adjutants and Staff Sergeants appointed to Militia Units would also act for Volunteer units within their areas.

Not to be outdone, the settlers of Tokomairiro held a further public meeting at a Ploughing Match on 25th July, 1860<sup>3</sup> to receive a report from the committee and deputation which had been appointed at a previous meeting—probably convened after receipt of the letter of 26th March from the Colonial Secretary's Office, quoted earlier herein. Mr. Dewe as Secretary, stated that the members of the committee were satisfied with the reception of the deputation and with the progress made. Between 40 and 50 men had already signed the memorial to the Superintendent, and this example was expected to be followed by many others.

<sup>1</sup> "Otago Witness," 28 July, 1860: *Cyclopedia of N.Z.*, Vol. iv, Otago, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, No. 39, 14 December, 1860.

<sup>3</sup> "Otago Witness," 4 August, 1860.

Details of the boundaries of the proposed Militia District were agreed to, and credit must be given for the enthusiasm and initiative of those present in deciding to plan for the formation of three companies in South Otago :—

1st (Victoria) at Tokomairiro ; 2nd (Prince of Wales) at Inchclutha and third (Albert) at Warepa. Uniforms were to consist of grey tunic ; cap with square peak ; and trowsers (note the "W") with green bead and facings ; sheepskin leggings ; and watertight boots—all to be paid for apparently, by the individual soldier.

By Order-in-Council, published in *The New Zealand Gazette* of 4th January, 1861, the first Regulations under which the services of Volunteers were accepted in the Dunedin and Invercargill Militia Districts came into force and gave those interested something more tangible to work on. Certain prescribed sections of the Militia Act and its Amendment were made applicable to Volunteers as well as the Regulations. The principal items of interest to the prospective Volunteer were the term of service—one year from the date accepted; a maximum of 168 hours' training in any one year ; penalties for misdemeanours; and freedom from jury service if applied for. In addition, there were included, inter alia, provisions for the election and appointment of officers, for command, organisation and administration, while an appropriate section of the Act empowered the Governor to call out those serving to meet danger in their own District but not beyond, unless they agreed voluntarily. If seriously wounded on such service, they were to be entitled to a pension.

Tokomairiro and Clutha Militia Districts were gazetted and boundaries defined in May<sup>1</sup> (no District could exceed 30 miles in its greatest diameter; hence the two), in all probability as the result of the memorial to the Superintendent already mentioned as being prepared. Documentary evidence is available to show that six representatives from Otago competed in firing for Government prizes in 1861<sup>2</sup>; but whether Militia or Volunteer personnel is not stated. In these, nine rounds were to be fired by each competitor 3 each at 100, 200 and 300 yards. (It is perhaps of interest to note that there were 66 competitors from Canterbury, and 307 from Auckland, among others.)

Indications that the whole movement required a "shot in the arm" were provided early in 1862 by vigorous action on the part of the Government. New Regulations for Volunteers<sup>3</sup>, cancelling those previously gazetted, became effective in January in an endeavour to stimulate public interest and recruiting. There was now to be no limit to the term of service of Volunteers, except that after four years no further training of the individual was required. Officers, Sergeants and Corporals were to be required to pass prescribed examinations, after election, but prior to appointment. General parades were to be held quarterly in each District, on dates to be fixed by the Governor. A form of oath to be taken by each soldier appeared in paragraph 14, and as a grand culmination each troop or company of a minimum strength of 60 was to receive annually from the Government the sum of £75 ! Otherwise there was little variation from the old rules.

Captain W. J. B. Junor was appointed Adjutant of Volunteers in the Militia District of Otago on 12th February, 1862<sup>4</sup> and with effect from 5th February, 1862, John Larkins Cheese Richardson was appointed to command Militia and Volunteers in the Otago Militia District, in the rank of Major.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N.Z. Gazette, No. 22, 6 May, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Otago Prov. Gazette, Vol. IV, No. 163, 13 Feb., 1862.

<sup>3</sup> N.Z. Gazette, 20 Jan., 1862.

<sup>4</sup> N.Z. Gazette, 13 Feb., 1862.

Meanwhile Dunedin had felt the needle and had not been inactive, for a meeting of those who had signed, or were willing to sign the Volunteer Roll was held in the Court House in early February<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N.Z. Gazette, 23 April, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> "Otago Witness," 15 Feb., 1862

Disappointment was expressed by His Honour The Superintendent from the chair at the absence of so many who were expected to take a prominent part. In the somewhat extravagant language of the day, he is alleged to have described them as "deserters" and to have suggested that they be brought to Court Martial. On a request for suggestions, an ex-Victorian cited the policy of that State regarding Volunteers and suggested it might be followed to the extent of the Government providing free uniforms and an annual grant to each efficient member, to which the Chair replied that the Government could not be committed without reference. Another speaker voiced the opinion that it would be desirable to form a company of artillery as well as one of rifles. Mr. Junor (Adjutant) stated that rifles and accoutrements would be provided by the Government to an extent: there were already 50 rifles in Otago and he believed more would be available if required. The meeting then resolved :-

"That it is desirable that the Government should encourage the Rifle movement by engaging to furnish arms, ammunition and accoutrements, and in assisting to clothe the company."

Regulations for Volunteers were then read by the Adjutant, on which it was agreed that a Rifle Corps be formed, to be called "The Dunedin Rifle Rangers".

Mr. Cargill now arrived and outlined the English system of forming Volunteer units centred on an influential individual in the area. Debate followed and it was ultimately resolved :-

"That the 43 individuals who subscribed their names be assumed to be the nucleus of the 1st Company, and that His Honour, as interim commander, proceed to make the necessary arrangements for squad drill to be gone on with at once."

Twenty-five additional names were added to the roll before the meeting closed, and agreement reached that drill would be from 7-9 p.m. every evening at the Police Barracks, commencing the following Thursday ! !

Quotation of the following letter, dated 3rd April, 1862, from the Colonial Secretary's Office' and addressed to His Honour The Superintendent of Otago, in short compass, will inform readers of immediately subsequent happenings :—

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your Honour's letter dated the 20th ultimo forwarding for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor the tender of the services, under the New Volunteer Regulations, of a number of the inhabitants of Dunedin, and in reply to inform you that His Excellency accepts with great pleasure, these services, and fully appreciates the public spirit which has led to this offer.

It will be requisite that the company or companies to be formed should be sworn in and that the names of their officers should be transmitted for His Excellency's approval.

The Government are anxious in every way to give practical effect to the wishes of the inhabitants of Otago to form Volunteer Corps, and if it be desired that more than two companies (the present number allotted to Otago) should be formed, they will be disposed to give such proposal favourable consideration.

One hundred rifles will be sent down to Otago by the steamer on the 8th inst.

Relying on your public spirit and your willingness to aid this Volunteer movement among your fellow citizens, I transmit by this mail for your acceptance, Commission (with the rank of Major) as a Commanding Officer of Militia and Volunteers."

And so we see the Volunteers (Rifles or Infantry) firmly established in 1862: the Dunedin Volunteer Artillery Corps was to follow in 1863: and the Mounted Rifles and the Naval Brigade of Port Chalmers in 1864. Their subsequent courses were far from smooth, and would require space to describe far beyond the scope of the present sketch. Suffice it to say that they laid the foundation on which over the years was built the structure from which the young men of Otago went forth to serve, alongside their contemporaries from other provinces, in North Island units in the Maori Wars, and later to make history overseas in the several wars in which New Zealand has taken part.