

Padstow's Volunteer Artillery

Recent publicity about a greater use of the T.A. in modern warfare reminds me of the time, 153 years ago, when in 1859 the men of Padstow answered the call to arms to help protect the coast of Cornwall from the threat of invasion from across the Channel.

Artillery batteries would be formed in Padstow (No.1) on 27th September 1859, Looe (2nd) 17th October, Fowey (3rd) 25th November, Charlestown (4th). The fifth and sixth were at Par and Par Harbour and were later amalgamated. The seventh, at Polruan, formed in February 1860 and the eighth, at Hayle, in April. The ninth was solely of miners at Fowey Consuls and lasted until 1863. The tenth corp. was formed at Buryan in November 1860, moving to Newlyn in 1868 and Penzance in 1877. The eleventh corp. was at St. Ives in November 1850, disbanded in 1878. The twelfth formed at Marazion in April 1861 and the thirteenth at St. Just in September 1862.

In 1880 there were several adjustments to the corp numbering. No more No 13 !! Headquarters were originally in Bodmin and moved to Falmouth in 1888. In 1908 the corp. became The Cornwall (Duke of Cornwall's) Royal Garrison Artillery.

In the early years the uniform consisted of a long knitted blue jersey of fisherman's pattern, the collar cuffs and bottom edge being banded in red. On the front, embroidered in red wool, was C.V.A. over the corp. number. (in the case of Padstow this was number one) with the familiar 15 bezants of the Duke of Cornwall and the motto "One and All" beneath.

Most recruits bought their own uniforms at a cost of £2. In 1872 a more regular Artillery pattern was introduced.

The maximum establishment in Cornwall varied from 880 in 1870 to 1,040 in 1907. The Padstow Battery, in 1859, was led by Squire Charles Glynn Prideaux-Brune supported by John Tredwen the ship builder and Hender Pearse, farmer of Treator Farm. Shipwrights, farm workers and clerks all joined the corp.

We are lucky here in Padstow to have a copy of the Muster Role from this time. Some readers may remember the article in the Padstow Echo No. 33 (June 1973) which mentioned Albert Ellacott having the original list. Albert's wife Sylvia was the daughter of Sgt. George The DCLI man in Padstow at one time and later prominent in Padstow Council affairs. Albert and Sylvia's daughter Geraldine Tutton allowed me to make a copy which is in the town Museum and forms a much used part of our archive material.

Capt Milne in the only book written on the '1st Cornwall (Duke of Cornwall's) Artillery Volunteers in 1885 tells us 'The first Company of Artillery Volunteers in the county was raised at Padstow (owing mainly to the exertations of Charles Prideaux Brune Esq of Prideaux Place) the date of acceptance of service being 12th September 1859.

Considering the size of the town, and its somewhat remote situation it is particularly creditable to the inhabitants that they should be the first to offer their services in the defence of their native shores. The maximum establishment is fixed at 80, this included three officers.'

In July 1860 a large detachment went to Plymouth to fire a royal salute from Mount Edgcombe on the occasion of the departure of the Prince of Wales in the Royal Yacht to Canada.

In 1862 when HMS Vivid anchored in Padstow harbour with Prince Arthur on board they fired a royal salute.

Some indication of the spirit that existed can be read from a report made in 1869 of an inspection made at Par. Capt Tredwen in command along with Lt Seaton, five Sjts and 59 rank and file, including Band.

'The steadiness of the Padstow Battery deserved special mention for the manner in which they marched called forth praise from both the inspecting officer and the other volunteers. A military man on the ground stated that he considered them equal to even the Royal Artillery, and that they were as firm as a rock'. Praise indeed.

In 1871 after the premature death of John Tredwen and the temporary closure of the higher yard, numbers of the battery declined and a detachment was formed at St. Issey with their own gun and drill hall. Padstow continued to use the drill hall at the bottom of Horsemill (now St. Edmunds) Lane.

The centre of activity was the gun emplacement at Gun Point with commanding views out over the estuary. The remains can still be seen today with additions made during the second World War.

An important part of the corp. in Padstow was the band, which was a feature of parades and events in the town. Grandfather Buckingham was a prominent member, as several group photographs testify.

News reports give a flavour of the corp's activity. In June 1886 they attended church under Cpt. W.H. Martyn and Lt. W.S. Allport. There were 4 sergeants, 2 trumpeters and 45 rank and file. The band, under T Pascoe, was in attendance.

In 1893 there was an inspection by Col. Palby and Col. Gilbert. The corp. led by Maj. Allport and Lt. P. Griffin, was made up of 1 Sm, 1Qms, 3 Sgts, 1 drill instructor, 63 rank and file. The band was in attendance.

There was a gun practice of 2,400yd. range. At the annual supper at Lobb's Commercial Hotel was attended by Cpt. Norton, Cpt. Nilsen, Cpt. Rawle, Messrs. JP Tom and TV Henwood. After dinner songs were sung by Cpt. Thornton, Lt. Griffin, Sgts Chapman, H Biddick and Biscoomb. Cpt. Nilsen, Mr TV Henwood, Bombadiers TQ Pascoe and S. Sleeman, Gunners F Biddick, A Buckingham and TH Apps.

The Corp and Band continued to be an important part of life in the town with many familiar names being added to the Muster Roll. As well as my Buckingham and Hornabrook ancestors there are Curgenvens's, Brewer's, Ellery's, Henwood's, England's, Chapman's, Williams's, Trevethan's, May's, Gool's, Martyn's, O'Hagan's, Oldham's, Rabey's, Reynold's and many more.

The sons and grandsons of the founding members were now joining the ranks. The list runs out in 1908 at the time the Volunteers were renamed the Cornwall Royal Garrison Artillery to bring it in line with national reorganisation. The 'Terriers' were now training in earnest and postcards show them at Staddon Heights near Plymouth (1910) and Trawsfynodd in Wales (1914). There is an air of 'the great adventure' about these pictures. Little would they know what was in store for them. Gunners Edward Joseph Bruford, Richard George Dale, William Richard Dale, John Edyvean and Arthur Oswald Slawson all lost their lives, others joined infantry battalions. Those that returned got on with their peace time jobs in shops and on the land. For many a time to settle down and get married, start a family. They did not know that many of them would be in uniform again so soon. The Home Guard, Fire Service, Police, ARP Wardens and Red Cross all recruited from the men and women who had seen service in 'The War to end all wars'.

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