The Russians Are Coming!

The Defence of Colonial South Australia - 1837-1900

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What a thrill to the heart is sent
In the stately tramp of the regiment!
How the glare of the ensigns dazzles the eye,
And the flash of the bayonets passing by,
And still what a thrill
To the heart is sent
In the tramp, tramp, tramp of the regiment.

But when war, fierce war, with furious hand,
Scatters destruction throughout the land,
When the hope of a nation sinks or swells,
In the booming of cannon or crashing of shells,
Chill is the thrill
To the heart that is sent
In the onward sweep of the regiment.

Change ye the scene to a battle-field,
Where a beaten army loth to yield,
Cover the valley through which they came,
With leaden hail and wall of flame!
Then what a cheer
Is forward sent
In the last grand charge of the regiment!

Forward they dash with resistless strength,
Like bloodhounds loosed from the leash at length.
The wounded soldier stills his cry,
And the last faint sparks
Light up his eye
At the roar of the regiment rolling by.

But there cometh a day when wars must cease,
And the wounds of the nations shall rest in peace.
The bugle shall sound for the end at last,
And the regiments join in the grand march past.
Then what a thrill
To the heart is sent,
In the thundering tramp of the regiment.

(Observer, 16 July 1892)

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Come! Stir yourself and play a manly part!
See things that look so plain to earnest eyes -
Those weapons pointed at the Nation's heart.
Come! do your little bit before we mobilize
They will not come on bended knee to you;
Man! If you're man in anything but name,
Better yourself, and do your service due.
Your country calls, for God's sake PLAY THE GAME.

(Register, 24 July 1915)

Australians, we hear the call,
For we are Britons - Britons all -
And so we answer back and say -
'We'll fight for England - all the way.
Our blood is just what England made,
And never may her glory fade.
Shoulder to shoulder now we go
To fight against our homeland's foe.'

(*Register*, 10 August 1914)

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Chapter 1

1836 to 1849 - Protected by Drunkards

The colony rejoices in their recall. A set of more drunken, abandoned fellows never cursed society by profligate example than these puppets of His Excellency, but then, it was a pretty thing to have a guard at Government House.

Introduction

As to when the martial element was first made manifest in South Australia, early pioneers would have opted for the 28th day of December 1836, the so-called 'Proclamation Day', when the first 'scarlet-runner', that is marines from HMS *Buffalo*, bloomed on the shores and assisted in giving colour to a significant ceremony. Many years later Able Seaman Charles Moon recalled events of that day:

> Two boat's crews from the *Buffalo*, with Governor Hindmarsh and all the officers forming the colony, landed at Glenelg, and the proclamation was read by the Governor [*sic*], the flag, which I had carried from the boat, being unfurled by him under what is called the Proclamation tree - a remarkable, low, stunted blue gum, sloping to the west and standing quite alone, close to the landing place.
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> A portion of Scripture was read and prayers were offered by the chaplain, Rev. C.B. Howard, for the success and prosperity of the colony. The marines also fired three volleys. On our landing for the proclamation the blacks ran away, but soon came back again. They were invited on board, but would not come until we left some men as hostages. The Governor made the chiefs dine with him on board the *Buffalo*, but the wine took greater effect upon them than was expected. They left the ship well pleased and were friendly ever after.

The development of local defence strategies in South Australia is marked in some instances by over-wrought excitement, or perhaps enthusiasm, which in a measure defeated itself, and Cabinet coolness, not to speak of parliamentary parsimony, chilled the ardour of citizen soldiers and caused more than one long lapse of defencelessness. Nevertheless, by the time of federation of the colonies in 1901 it could be said that after many years of experimenting South Australia had a better show of war materials than it ever had before, for the old Enfield rifles, unkindly called 'gaspipes', were replaced by the long-reaching, rapidly loading, breech-feeding, accurate Martini-Henry. For the honest old cannon we had the rifled Woolwich and Whitworth guns and 'thunderers' at the two forts at Glanville and Largs Bay. Moreover, there were gun emplacements at intervals between Semaphore and Glenelg and the gunboat HMCS *Protector* on the water - all tending to show that the colony was awake to a sense of the necessity for commanding peace by preparation for war.

Local Defence - 1837-1849

The military history of South Australia actually began before the colony was founded because the provision of troops for the maintenance of law and order was one of the conditions of Colonel C.J. Napier's acceptance of the offer of being the first governor. He wrote:

> I will not attempt to govern a large body of people in a desert, where they must suffer considerable inconvenience (if not hardship), without I have a force to protect what is good against that which is bad; and such force is the more necessary where, as in Australia, the supply of spirituous liquors will be abundant.

This demand was held to be at variance with the self-supporting principles of the new settlement and so Captain John Hindmarsh accepted the post. The defence of the colony was in the minds of Adelaide people from the time of the foundation of the colony and it is thought by military men that Adelaide was given parks by Colonel William Light as a defence precaution, the idea being that the colonials living around Adelaide would flee into the city which would be protected by trenches commanding an interrupted view of the parks over which the enemy would have to advance before taking the town.

Let us turn back some of the pages of despatches, records and newspapers that tell the story of our defence, and see how it grew from a game played in uniforms of scarlet and blue to reality. Some of the defence history of South Australia was written in stone - in the buildings of the Barrack Square backwater of the quiet current of Kintore Avenue, where one could stand, when the noise of the city was silent, and in fancy see the ghost of a soldier in a tight fitting scarlet jacket, or start at the tap of a musket.

Even these epistles are not the beginnings of the story for those lie with Governor John Hindmarsh and ten marines from HMS *Buffalo,* whom he retained both as protectors for the embryo settlement and vice-regal guards. In the first task they were a signal failure and with the second a dubious success, for they were a roisterous, rioting crew who did as they liked, drank when they could and, like the praetorian guards of ancient Rome, would almost have taken control of the colony had not the Governor occasionally tied their ringleaders to a tree for a time to sober the brain and dampen the spirit. Sly grog shanty keepers were the only mourners when those blunderers left in the *Alligator* in 1838.

Having washed their hands of one lot of rascals the colony found itself somewhat in little better case when its next group of protectors arrived in the form of the first detachment of Imperial red coats - 'Lobsters', the town boys called them. Captain Butler's company, the 96th Foot, Captain Haire (51st), Lieutenant Baker (51st) and others, together with 84 rank and file soldiers, arrived from Hobart on 17 October 1841. Captain Butler who, for a time, was private secretary to Governor George Grey, was reputed to be very severe in the treatment of his men and it was no unusual circumstance for several soldiers to be under punishment, confined to barracks, banished to knapsack drill and 'other bothers', which annoyed them greatly. As one journal phrased it, that 'somewhat' was a euphemism, for extra police had to be enrolled to control the obstreperous guardians!

Having the 'Lobsters' here, the Colonial Government was embarrassed to find accommodation for them, so they went from a store in Grenfell Street owned by August Cooke & Company to a warehouse in Flinders Street, when Governor Robe wrote in December 1845 that the treasury vault at the corner of Flinders and King William Streets was completed and secured with three of the best locks procurable in Adelaide, a sentry had been posted there in a tiny hut, and the police ordered to patrol. The military barracks were in hail of the sentry.

In May 1845 the press announced the auction of the barracks next acre, 232, and opposite the SA Company's granary, opposite acre 272, so apparently these barracks were at the corner of Flinders and Freeman Streets - the latter is known now as Gawler Place. The Waymouth Street barracks were probably completed in time for a transfer of troops on the expiration of the Flinders Street lease in April 1851. In 1856 the growing dissatisfaction with the new site prompted the Colonial Architect, G.A. Hamilton, to report:

> As the government, in addition to high rent, is paying annually a large amount for improvements and repairs to the property, it appears to me that the troops, if possible, should be accommodated in a building, the property of the government. For this purpose the Female Immigration Depot, on the Park Lands, is exceedingly well adapted… The new hospital will be ready for occupation [soon] and I would suggest that the occupants of the depot might be removed to the old hospital and the depot be given up to the troops.

By January 1857 he had reported that the whole of the building, 'with the exception of the bake house and ovens is required for the military barracks. The bake house and ovens will be left for the use of the Destitute Asylum and a wall will be built to divide the entrance to it from the barrack yard.' This location became known as 'Barrack Square' and, probably, from it springs the term 'barrack' used today in sport as a declaration of support for a particular team. Its first appearance into our language is lost in the mists of time, but one suggestion concludes that it originated from the Imperial troops who, whilst barracked on North Terrace, were frequent and most determined combatants in matches played on the contiguous Exhibition Oval against the 'Kangaroos', as the young colonists were called.

When Governor Gawler began the gaol in 1839 there were no cannon in South Australia except two old carronades from HMS *Buffalo* and on 7 May 1839 John Anthony, the Glenelg Harbourmaster and Collector of Customs, wrote a letter to the Government storekeeper, Mr. Williams, saying Her Majesty's birthday was at hand and asking for some flannel to make up some cartridges to fire a salute and for assistance to remove 'the other carronade from the sand abreast of the Customs house, that they may be both together.' Another

report from an eyewitness in 1894 said that 'two old iron carronades landed from the *Buffalo* [were] lying ignored and rusted in the sand at Glenelg, their carriages having rotted in pieces.'

Martial example fired Governor Gawler's long-entertained opinion that the peace, prosperity and good understanding of the colony would be advanced and maintained by the formation of a corps of volunteer militia and, with the arrival of a supply of small arms, the last difficulty was removed when an anxious citizen expressed his concern in 1841:

> Every day ought to convince us of the necessity for a small military force... Surely there exists in the 7,000 who reside at Adelaide sufficient chivalry, if you will so call it, to induce 150 or 200 to join it.

So the Royal South Australian Volunteer Militia came into being, resplendent in scarlet, piped with blue. It is evident that the terms of enlistment were not attractive - the men had to bear the cost of their uniform, horse, fusil (light musket) and bayonet, drill an hour on three days a week until proficient, and stand the risk of fines.

The first brigade of the volunteer militia was: Major Commandant - Thomas S. O'Halloran; Captains - Charles Berkeley (Cavalry), Boyle T. Finniss, (Light Infantry), Robert Ferguson, (Cavalry); Lieutenants - John William Holmes, Henry R. Wigley, Edward Rowlands, Adolphous McPherson, Andrew Berry and Edward C. Gwynne; Second Lieutenants and Cornets - Alfred Hardy, Charles W. Stuart and Frederick Hancock; Staff - Captains, Henry Nixon, C.W. Litchfield, Alexander Tolmer; Surgeons John Knott and James G. Nash; Privates - W.A. Poulden and William Hancock. The illustrious barrister, W.A. Poulden, however, was required to resign and did so in a state of extreme disgust, when it was proven that he constantly came to drill when he was what was technically called 'tight.' Thus, with one stroke of an unmagnanimous pen, the fighting force within the lowest rank was reduced by 50 per cent!

Recruiting languished and after the first ardour, which led a perplexed sergeant-major to order a parade of three 'to form a square', had evaporated, the resplendent scarlet uniforms and pipe-clayed leggings were laid away. However, the Editor of the *Southern Australian* could not let the matter rest without a parting jibe:

> Pleased with a feather, tickled by a straw and glittering with buttons, the famous militia was formed to save the colony from aggression, but the joke was that while colonels, lieutenants and other officers of high rank were parading their fine uniforms and martial personages about the town and at Government House balls, there were only two privates to be found in the whole corps.

So ended the colony's first game of soldiers and many years later an old colonist recorded his views on the colony's first local defence corps:

> [Their] glorious deeds… are as yet unrecorded… although a volume might be filled of the terrific slaughter that took place at Government House balls when the fair ones used to look with notes of admiration in their eyes at these male butterflies of an hour playing their brief part on the stage of life.

South Australia had emerged from near economic collapse in 1846 when a concerned citizen addressed the defenceless state of the colony and envisaged imposed slavery and pillaging by foreign aggressors:

> A large military and naval force must be stationed in South Australia, for in the case of war with France or America, here would be the first blow aimed. The neighbouring colonies of Australasia are safe… The reverse is presented in this colony. Two regiments of American or French soldiers might here carry all before them, and it would form a comical and rather awkward divertissement in colonial life if this were followed up by the landing of a sufficient number of troops who, at the point of a bayonet, should compel us - by holding our women and children as hostages - to work the mines, drive bullocks, etc., for the purpose of enabling them to carry off as large an amount of possible of treasure, including, by the way, the Governor's strongbox, with very shortly about a hundred thousand sovereigns, ore, and metal of gold, copper lead and silver.
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> Let it be borne in mind, that as the invaders would have no concern… they might devote the whole population of the colony to labour at the mines… Verily, it would be a hard practical lesson for our colonial aristocracy to find that their delicate digits obtained fewer indulgences than the hard, horny hands of the habitual labourer. But 'sweet are the uses of adversity' and, if as a colony we survived, the ordeal might be to our benefit.

The year of 1847 was eventful when six field guns were imported from England in the *Kalliboka,* being the first of that type in the colony, while ninety men of the 11th Regiment arrived in the *Brankenmoor* from Launceston to relieve the 96th which departed for India. However, there appears to be no doubt that the new arrivals were cast in a similar mould to their predecessors; for example:

> In January 1847 another drunken riot with some soldiers of the 11th Regiment occurred at the British Hotel in Pirie Street and but for the timely interference and steadfast conduct of some citizens, would have been attended with serious consequences. Without any ceremony the soldiers forced an entrance, then took off their belts, and commenced assaulting indiscriminately those present. Mr. Williams, the licensee, a powerful man, set to work right and left, assisted by those of his customers who were not incapacitated from the soldiers' assault, and succeeded in 'getting them off', when a picquet was sent from the barracks, and the disorderlies were removed.

In October 1848 seventy men of the 99th arrived under the command of Captain Reeves; the 11th regiment seems to have remained until 1854, while the 99th went to Western Australia. However, in mitigation it must be said that the boisterous 96th regiment was of some economic importance to the colony for at least £5,000 was expended annually by the officers and men.

Also in 1848, the Legislative Council contemplated enacting a Defence Bill, but following adverse public criticism the project was abandoned and a citizen's response in the *Southern Australian* gave a fair and reasonable summation of its pros and cons:

> The publication of the outline of a Militia Bill has caused all the little scribblers of Adelaide to burst forth into a wonderful effervescence of declamatory abuse… The clause that intends to force acquiescence by imprisonment, or a fine fixed at an extravagantly high figure, is certainly objectionable and repugnant to every nation of liberty… From the daily declamation against the Bill no one can ascertain at what object our busy quill drivers aim…
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> The 'signs of the times' are very ominous and uncertain and no man of common sense can consider it either pusillanimous or over prudent to prepare for the worst. The great difficulty in organising a contented force in this colony would be the appointment of officers. The contemplated Bill provides that only persons possessed of a certain portion of property will be eligible for commissioned officers. Such a measure would send off talented and accomplished young gentlemen to the ranks, to be trampled on by ignorant and stupid officers…
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> For my part, I would pass years in gaol before I would join the ranks under such men; and I know that many young gentlemen in this colony are of the same mind. The gaol must certainly be enlarged if the Bill in its present form passes into law… With some modification, and local adaptation to our peculiar phases of society, the Militia Bill is not only a prudent but a necessary measure; and, notwithstanding the united unceasing chatter against its crude preliminaries, nothing can tend more to our prosperity and security than to be placed in a judicious and efficient position of defence.

And so the 1840s concluded with the colonists turning their attention to more mundane subjects that did not include the provision for an army recruited from the citizens of the colony. Indeed, the working class was well aware that if such a force came into existence they would do any necessary fighting, while the colonial aristocracy led from the rear.

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Chapter 2

The 1850s - The Russians Are Coming!

> *When the Russian war began the colony was without any adequate means for preventing a privateer's crew with a moderate share of audacity and hardihood landing on our coast, making their way to Adelaide and, while the citizens were quiet in bed, pillaging the Banks and returning to their vessel... Well we were aroused and took some measures to raise a force among ourselves to protect our hearth and homes.*

A letter from Captain Frome in 1850 describes the cottages of married sappers and miners standing on the banks of the River Torrens near the City Bridge and it conveys a vivid description of the type of dwelling available for the poorer people in the colony between 1850 and 1860:

> The accommodation provided is of the simplest and most inexpensive kind, giving two rooms for each sapper and his family, the front one 12 feet by 12 feet, the back room smaller, with a lean-to roof, the whole roof shingled, the back rooms paved with brick, the walls whitewashed, the front rooms plastered in one coat, the doors common ledged, common mantel-shelf and plain cupboards and shelves. It was necessary also to make provision for a small quantity of fencing and to provide requisite privies...

Another interesting aspect of the trials and tribulations of soldiers was that those who married, without consent of their commander, did so in defiance of a recognised and well-understood regulation and knew that they must submit to all of the consequences in the event of a violation. Their wives were not acknowledged and, when ever troops were removed, either to the seat of war or to some other station, the wives and families were left behind unless they could afford to meet the cost of transport out of their own resources. A few soldiers who departed for New Zealand in 1863 left a number of wives and children behind and a relief committee was formed in Adelaide in an attempt to meet, by private charity, the necessities of these destitute families.

With the news of deterioration in Anglo-Russian affairs having reached the colony in 1854 the Editor of the *Register* opined:

> The last intelligence is quite decisive. There is no longer any room for talking about the probabilities of war… The six day's notice given to the Czar was not likely to lead to any more negotiations… It is absurd to waste money in preparation for defence, as if the country were going to stand a siege and a bombardment… All that we require is a small steam frigate anchored at Hold fast Bay, which, in case of attack, would at least keep the enemy at bay till the inhabitants were aroused and mustered in sufficient force to protect their property and repel the invaders.

When the Crimean War began the colony was without any adequate means for preventing a privateer's crew, with a moderate share of audacity and hardihood, landing on our coast. Fortunately, although the Russians had a small force in the Pacific they were 'too anxious to get into safe quarters to attempt anything in the shape of enterprise'; but had the foe been the Frenchmen, who were politically, and otherwise, active in the islands of the Pacific Ocean, 'South Australia would have been taught a practical lesson severe enough to have cured it for a generation or two of the insidious habit of *laissez faire.*

However, the apathy to the necessity for some attention to the colony's defences did not arise from any deficiency of mettle, nor for a lack of love for the native land, but because of an indifference to the real dangers which beset an undefended country.'

Wisely, within the upper echelons of colonial society, a volunteer corps was preferred to a forced militia and the government professed to hold out strong inducements for volunteers. However this may be, it was more than counterbalanced by the ridiculous allowances to those who might be called out - £2.12s. per annum for clothing and the enormous sum of one shilling per day, with each man to find for himself:

> I am a clerk in a lawyer's office and have a salary of £130 per annum which, in these times is barely sufficient for the mere necessities of life; I am too poor to volunteer for the rifle corps as most part of the expense seeks to entail upon the volunteers; and should the Militia Bill pass, and people in my circumstances be drawn, it will deprive them of the means of subsistence and the

> militia of the colony will be composed of a set of men who will be totally reckless in regard to the safety of the place.

Our legislature, convinced that events might possibly arise in which our safety or destruction would hinge upon our own conduct, introduced a Bill on 2 August 1854 to organise and establish a military force. This was assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor on 14 September 1854, while another provided for the raising of an ordinary militia. By the former Act the governor was authorised to levy a force of not less than 850 men. In response our vacillating Editor was to suggest that:

> There are a few persons who evince to undervalue this organisation; but a very little reflection might satisfy even the most dubious that if the safety of the colony is worth caring for, it is worth preparing for… We cannot help expressing our concurrence with the opinion largely avowed that if proper inducement were offered, the required number of volunteers would be made up without much difficulty,

while a cynical citizen posed a question:

> The Czar has really sent His Excellency a red-hot shell… [and] a conclusion is rushed at with the speed of lightning to cast away the frightful intruder into the sea 'just at the North Arm.' Where would be the chance for escape for the 850 brave and valiant volunteers in face of the number which old Nick of Russia would send if he really meant invasion? Ditto repeated as to the 2,000 gallant militiamen…

Following the formation of the volunteer corps Brevet-Major Edward Moore, of the 11th Regiment, was gazetted Colonel-Commandant of the local troops and, subsequently, the infantry forces in the colony were organised as three battalions, known as 1st, 2nd and 3rd Adelaide Rifles, the respective commanders being Colonels L.G. Madeley, F. Makin and J.C. Lovely. In later years several soldiers reminisced on their experiences:

> When the volunteers were first organised in the 1850s we had an old musket which had been converted from the flintlock of the most ancient type… We had to bite the cartridge off, pour in the powder and ram it with an iron ramrod… The men's faces were often more or less bespattered with powder before they finished shooting. We managed with these old weapons to hit targets at about 220 yards. Beyond that range, however, it was hopeless.
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> Long before the cables were laid we expected a visit from the Russians, so three large cannons were placed on the south Park Lands and all volunteers were informed that, in the event of the enemy being sighted, three shots would be fired as the signal. One night these cannon were fired off for fun. Volunteers rushed to the city from all directions… The boys used to cry out, 'Oh, if the Russians come you will all run to Mount Lofty.'
>
> I was stationed at Port Adelaide in the mounted police in 1854. There we had three companies of infantry, mostly lumpers by occupation, and all fine powerful men. They wore a uniform like that of the Chelsea Pensioners - long blue coats down to the knees, large caps and blue trousers. At that time the artillery in Adelaide comprised two light six-pounders and a couple of twelve pounder Howitzers, which were mounted at the police barracks on North Terrace…
>
> By common consent all young men in offices and shops were called out. There was no conscription but universal volunteering prevailed. My employer thought it was wise for me to be connected with the movement. Accordingly, I joined the 1st Adelaide Rifles. I had to provide my own uniform, but the rifle, which was an old Enfield, was found by the government. We had to turn out for drill pretty early and often… I had three years service and when this was finished I entered for another three years, but before this had expired the scare had utterly died down and we were placed on full peace footing…

An Australian contingent for the Crimea was suggested, but nothing was done, and when the 'scare' had subsided the volunteers' clothing was 'sold by the government' but, although the corps was disbanded, the question remained as to whether they had been formally discharged and liable for recall into a newly established force. This was to be the subject of intense debate later in this decade.

In July and August 1854, 62 men of the 40th Regiment arrived and, later, a war relief fund was started, while a list of cannon, muskets and other arms was made and published. The general public subscribed and collected £6,000 in the colony for the use of bereaved families of soldiers and sailors who fell in the Crimean War, while the Editor of the *Register* was constrained to suggest that:

> If the Emigration Commissioners were instructed that it was the wish of the colonists that war-widowed applicants should be allowed free passage to the colony, there would be no insuperable difficulty in the way of granting accommodation. Even red tape would stretch for the occasion. The preliminary expenses of finding outfits, etc., for this class of emigrant might be supplied from the fund… Is there any valid reason why South Australia should not thus offer an asylum to the unoffending victims of war and hold out her arms to shelter in her bosom those whom the ambition of a Czar has bereft of their natural protectors?

In December 1854 it was reported that Captain Lipson had brought from a merchant ship then in port, eight carronades (nine-pounders) for the defence of Port Adelaide and a battery was marked out on Torrens Island.

Another egress of Imperial troops occurred when the 40th Regiment departed on the *Havilah* for Melbourne on 11 April 1858 and was superseded by the 12th regiment under Captain Vereker:

> After the soldiers had been mustered and inspected by the officers a liberal supply of bottled ale and porter was presented to them - chiefly by certain of the fair sex - and, the tops of the bottles being adroitly struck off with the bayonet, the 'barley brew' was imbibed with an amazing disregard of the sanguinary consequences resulting from the contact of the fractured bottlenecks with the lips of the eager drinkers.
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> The final order was given to embark and then hands were eagerly shaken, good-byes frequently uttered and the warm reproduction of tender salutes made up a scene as novel to the spectators as it was seemingly affecting to those who participated in it. The steamer left the wharf amid the vociferous cheering of the soldiers and the counter cheers of their friends on shore.

The Russian scare was revived in July 1858 when the local press reprinted a report from a Melbourne newspaper:

> Russians subjects are known to be present at the diggings and we know that no subject of Russia leaves his country without government permission and cognisance of destination and that any useful information he can transmit to it is fully appreciated and liberally rewarded.

This, and other reports, created a deal of uneasiness in all echelons of colonial society and, in September 1858, a governor's despatch to Her Majesty's Chief Secretary for State and the Colonies on the subject of colonial defences was laid before parliament, while a newspaper editor offered an opinion:

> It appears to us at present that all we require at present is the formation of small forts at certain defensible points of our coastline, which points we presume to be the two horns of the Bay and Glenelg and a rifle force to guard the natural line of defence afforded by the sand hills… In the erection of these redoubtables and the necessary buildings for a guard and ammunition, we would employ the convict labour of the colony under proper police or military surveillance.

Following parliamentary debates £4,500 were placed upon the Estimates and subsequently increased to £12,000 in 1860. In January 1859 an appeal from the government was made to the young men of the colony. It was proposed to lend out the Enfield rifles in the public armoury to volunteers who would be simply required to enrol themselves in companies and submit to one or two of the most liberal regulations concerning the care of their weapons and occasional attendance for inspection.

The companies could choose their own officers, adopt what uniforms they pleased and fix their own hours for practice. The demand upon them was very light; whilst, as to cost, even ammunition was to be provided by the government. At the outset it was limited to the enrolment of 525 men, in localities extending from Kensington to Brighton and Port Adelaide. This Act, No. 17 of 1859, did not have a liberalising tendency for it curtailed the scale of pay and abolished the right of companies to recommend officers for appointment.

Following this resuscitation, Major Nelson, then at the head of the military in Adelaide, was appointed to the position of supreme commander; after about a year he left for New Zealand and Lt-Colonel Blyth took over. However, some dark clouds were gathering amidst the ranks and among colonists generally for, by mid-1859, some misgivings about the new venture were being aired in the press:

> It is truly pitiable to behold the culpable indifference with which the great urgent question of preparation for defence is treated… The idea appears to have got hold of those who live at ease in the enjoyment of the comforts of prosperity - those who have, in fact, property to be defended - that it is for the working classes to do the fighting also for them, that it is those who

> ought to be enrolled and armed for actual warfare while they (the former) profess to guard their homes and firesides by keeping the feet firmly planted on their hearthstones.
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> This is not as it ought to be. The working classes have not that interest in the matter that should induce them to undertake this work more than any other without being well paid for it. They, living in hired houses, with no property that can be easily removed, can, in the case of invasion, retire with their families to places of safety. But such is not the case with the fixed proprietary, who cannot conceal their property, and who ought to feel the necessity of being prepared to defend it.

Thus, the reorganised volunteer corps of the late 1850s got off to a less than propitious start and with many of the working class still of the same mind they possessed at the close of the 1840s.

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Chapter 3

The 1860s - A Decade of Indecision and Procrastination

> *Our volunteers… are [dressed] in 20 widely different and strongly contrasting costumes… The officers have, in addition, exhibited great and special skill in the matter, for they not only dress unlike their men, but also unlike each other…*

As related in the previous chapter, after peace was signed between the allied powers engaged in the Crimean War and Russia, the first defensive paid volunteer force was disbanded but, although the military ardour of the colonials was no longer called into requisition, it was in abeyance only for a short time. Rumours of war were afloat and war clouds hung on the distant horizon. The arsenals of Europe were occupied in preparation for war and South Australians were disturbed by the American civil war, with the attendant element of danger to other nations.

The South Australian government was driven to take measures to keep up the confidence of the colonists in their means of defence against sudden predatory attacks and once more recourse was to the volunteers, but this time on a different, and less expensive, system. The experiment was tried of calling out a body of unpaid men and 2,000 enrolled themselves for three years on these terms.

In July 1859 the governor had applied to the Home Government for three or four additional companies of regular troops and fortified his application by remarks that showed that he entertained no very high notion of the prowess of civilian soldiers. But it would be a misrepresentation of his remarks to make it appear that he entertained a contemptuous estimate of voluntary military services, for it was only in comparison with regular troops that he seemed to value such a force at a much lower rate than in July 1860, after some months' observation of the spirit and progress of the volunteer companies. By Act No. 7 of 1860 the governor was authorised to enrol as many volunteers as would undertake to arm, equip and train themselves - the maximum of 1854 notwithstanding.

In response to the applications for arms the colony received the gift from the Imperial authorities of 2,000 Enfield rifles, then the most perfect weapon known in the British service. Committees met in the local parliament to consider the defences and the rifles were distributed amongst the volunteers with the necessary accoutrements and it was then determined to form a certain number of companies residing in Adelaide or on the lines of railway. This was accomplished easily and Lt-Colonel B.T. Finniss was appointed to command the Adelaide Regiment. With this organisation there was no difficulty in obtaining a fair muster of volunteers on 20 June 1860 by a 'Grand Volunteer Review' on the east Park Lands to celebrate the anniversary of the accession to the throne of Queen Victoria.

About 11 o'clock the royal standard was raised at Government House and within an hour several companies had assembled in the Gun Paddock ready for a start to the venue, where spectators were entertained by certain military exercises and the sight of Lady Blanche MacDonnell on horseback, when it was known that her husband was indisposed, 'created a great amount of interest, not for a few admiring her ladyship's decision of character [but] thinking of the time when Queen Bess, of glorious memory, received her brave army at Tilbury Fort.' By 31 January 1861 the number of all ranks totalled 1,519.

By the close of 1860 there was no doubt that numerous resignations had taken place and rumours were abroad that the most efficient companies of the Adelaide Regiment were to be disbanded, while it was a matter of fact that a review held on 9 November 1860 was performed in an 'execrable manner'. At this time there were certain rumblings in the ranks as to the efficacy of the training methods and one participant aired his views:

> After 20 months of voluntary attendance at drill what does our efficiency amount to? That we can perform some simple evolutions most discreditably when prompted and pushed into position by a staff of drill instructors; that when called upon to charge we do so very badly, some firing when advancing without orders; that light infantry drill, skirmishing, etc., is a hidden knowledge to most of us. In fact, we have just required sufficient knowledge to expose our defects…

It is apparent that, from comments such as these, it was decided to 'weed-out' unwilling and incompetent members and this action was regarded as a beneficial operation 'like that of removing a diseased limb from an otherwise unhealthy body.'

The corps struggled on aimlessly over the next two years and, by January of 1862, the volunteer force had, for the first time, been fitted out in regular uniforms - the cavalry with blue or green tunic, blue cap and trousers; the artillery blue with red trimmings, and the infantry cap, tunic and trousers were of a modest Melton grey cloth. The total strength was 2,049 with the cost of maintenance £12,000 per annum; but the government was apparently in a state of indecision as to the continuance and of the defence force. The number of persons enrolled had decreased and no fresh enrolments were taking place and the question arose as to whether an alteration in the system was desirable. B.T Finniss suggested that a militia force be considered as an alternative to the volunteer system for, under the Militia Act then current, 14,330 men would fall within its ambit.

The British troops stationed here were too feeble to offer any resistance to an invading force and it was on the volunteer military force that reliance was placed upon and, if this fact had been appreciated, the volunteers would have been regarded with very different sentiments from those current at the time. The corps' value would have been realised, its defects regarded with real concern and its powers held in high esteem and, above all, no neglect or carelessness would have been permitted to mar its efficiency or thwart its usefulness. The authorities acted towards the volunteer force as if it were a plaything to be tolerated, rather than a power to be developed.

By August 1863 the South Australian government was informed that Her Majesty's troops would no longer be stationed in the Australian colonies unless maintained to a much greater extent than at present by the colonies themselves. South Australia was offered six officers and 166 men, the estimated cost of which was estimated at £7,000 per annum and to this the Editor of the *Register* responded:

> We are sure that the withdrawal of the military from this colony should be taken advantage of in the way of developing and improving the volunteer system as now exists. There are many persons who believe the volunteers may be dispensed with if the Home Government accept the terms which have been offered for supplying the colony with a force of infantry, but even if this view is correct it would be unwise to allow the local force to fall to pieces before an answer is received.

Further, the Home Government advised that it was uncertain at what time the colony could obtain the services of regular troops because they were wanted in New Zealand. At that time very little was got from the Home Government in the matter of defence and Australia had the smallest share of the available sum of four million pounds that was made available for all British dependencies and, as for the local scene:

> The items of news we publish of the Russians at the mouth of the Amoor and of the French at New Caledonia ought to convince [the authorities] of the necessity of being prepared for any emergency which may arise. As for real soldiers, then, we are not able to get for love or money, we must do without them; the question is, what are to put in their place?

Radical changes were proposed while, acting under great discouragement, armed with a third-rate weapon and dressed in bad uniforms, the useful members of the force struggled on. In 1865 a very promising volunteer force, composed of men who enrolled for a period of three years, was raised and maintained for some time; but it did not receive that amount of encouragement in high quarters it should have done and eventually fell to pieces.

A rifle association, mainly composed of former volunteers, was all that remained for some time to represent the defensive element of the colony in the form of a rifle corps. Comments made by Henry Malpas, the prime mover behind the formation of a corps at Willunga, was indicative of the spirit engendered among the volunteers:

> Gentlemen, although you are unused to war, we trust that when your country requires your services in the field, you will be prepared to emulate the glorious deeds of your ancestors who fought and conquered at Cressy, Ramillies, Salamanca and Waterloo. May the god of battles give you the victory over all your enemies.

The unsettled nature of domestic defence forces, and the general acceptance of the principle that it was desirable for the colonists to learn the use of arms, was admitted by all parties. This fact, coupled with a generous measure of government procrastination, culminated in a public meeting being held in the

Adelaide Town Hall to decide whether the colonists should remain either unprotected, in favour of maintaining a considerable body of English troops; to see the resurrection of a volunteer corps or prepared to have the Militia Act enforced? After due deliberation it was resolved that:

> As great inconvenience and annoyance would result to all classes of the community from the enforcement of the Militia Act, it is highly desirable that a sufficient number of the colony should be at once enrolled.

An Act passed on 16 March 1866 completely altered the system and, roughly speaking, the force was reduced by one third because various volunteer companies were disbanded; by December 1867 the paid force numbered 856, together with 34 reservists. The defensive movement was deemed to be incomplete and, public opinion being in a very unsettled condition, the government was induced to appoint a Royal Commission. From this emerged a new force which was to consist of 'not less than 540, or more than 1,000' and, in addition, the governor was authorised to raise a 'reserve force' of 1,000 men - a force to be composed of volunteers who had served three years in the ordinary force. Under this amendment artillery had a better show and were paid higher, and a cavalry troop was provided for; the men to supply their own horses. An apprehensive editor of a local newspaper had certain misgivings on the latest proposal:

> Whether our volunteers are still in existence, or whether they have been snuffed out by the new Bill, is a question on which some interest is being felt… Have all the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war left our [defenders] in the lurch or [are] they still one of Her Majesty's soldiers authorised to bear arms in defence of the great British Empire. Shall [their] bosoms still swell with martial ardour as usual or shall [they] live and feel like an ordinary citizen? Our parliament will not have acted wisely if, in obtaining the paid services of a militia, they have thrown away unnecessarily the unpaid service of volunteers. There is a place for both amongst the numerous classes of settlers who occupy this country.

The year of 1866 saw, also, the formation of the first kilted Scotch company with Mr W.C. Buik as captain. As to the fate of Imperial troops; in 1855 a company of the 40th Regiment was in Adelaide and remained until after the outbreak of the New Zealand War. In October 1863 it departed and the colony was left unprotected for the nearly four years. It was not until the end of 1866 that the position of affairs in New Zealand enabled some portion of the soldiery to obtain their release from active service and seek stations elsewhere. As a consequence no less than two full companies were billeted in Adelaide and they formed part of the 2nd battalion of the 14th regiment of Foot (Buckinghamshire Infantry) and their date of arrival was 5 November 1866.

The 14th Regiment left for Tasmania on 10 August 1867 and a day earlier a detachment of the 50th (Queen's Own), consisting of three companies under the command of Lt-Colonel F.G. Hamley, arrived; it departed in April 1869 and was relieved by the 2nd Battalion of the 14th who returned from Tasmania and, in turn, on 30 January 1870 it was replaced by a detachment of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment.

Officers of the 14th Regiment of Foot of the British Army garrisoned in Adelaide playing billiards

On 17 August 1870 the latter took its departure from South Australia and on such an auspicious occasion the governor addressed the troops under the command of Colonel Rocke:

> I cannot find it in my heart to let you quit the colony - the last detachment of the Queen's troops'…which perhaps will ever be stationed here, without a word. You belong to an army which in every clime and country has been the representative of British power, of loyalty and of civilisation… I am happy to note how well you have upheld the character of the British army and of your regiment by your orderly and soldier-like behaviour...

For 30 years the 'Lobsters' had been familiar in Adelaide's city streets and Imperial officers 'ornaments of colonial society.' When the order for recall came, 50 men found it so hard to leave that they deserted from the barracks, while another made a last minute escape from the train at Alberton.

A little later the daily press took the opportunity of presenting a cynical and satirical view of the general apathy prevailing among the ruling class of South Australia in respect of defence matters:

> Upon the departure of the last regiment of Imperial troops in 1870 the way was open for civilian soldiers to be taken from their boxes again for another fitful game and a capital excuse for the show of gorgeous uniforms was furnished by the Russian scare, those faraway days of delicious memory when our grandmothers hushed our parents quiet in their cribs with, 'Go to sleep now, or the Russians will get you.' From the nursery the subtly instilled phobia was wafted to the parade ground and the volunteers of the 1870s were enlisted with martial ardour, stimulated by the two Russian guns captured in the Crimea which gaped with fearsome muzzles across Victoria Drive.

The Volunteers Resolve

We're men of peace, and mean to be
Quiet sons of the Southern sea:
No one need fear that we covet their land,
But our own to guard, our rifles in hand.

Though men of peace we mean to be,
The rifle crack has melody;
Well sighted, held firmly, the shot goes straight
To the foeman's breast, if he tempt his fate.

We're men of peace, and mean to be;
To ward off war we plainly see
'Tis best to be ready for home to fight,
Keep our powder dry and our rifles bright.

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Chapter 4

The 1870s - Governor Jervois to the Rescue

> *The present position of South Australia from a military point of view may be compared to that of a house destitute of bars and bolts, into which whoever wills may enter, whether his attentions be good or evil…If the government decide upon reorganising the force they will need to take warning in the future from the experience of the past and avoid mistakes - to use a charitable term - which were committed by some of their predecessors.*

Strictly speaking it was not until the 1870s that anything like a thorough system of military defences suited to colonial conditions was entered upon. Beyond the temporary stay of detachments of Her Majesty's regiments and the formation of a volunteer force, as discussed in a previous chapter, during its first 29 years of its existence South Australia was destitute of any trustworthy means of defence.

Much doubt prevailed as to whether a militia force could be called into existence without fresh legislation and, certainly, the question was not very clear. The 1854 Act had authorised the establishment of a militia, but was evidently intended to meet an existing emergency and not to be carried into effect unless the volunteer force, then established, remained below the minimum, or unless in case of invasion or imminent dread of it. The amending Act of 1859 was passed, providing that it should be lawful for the governor to bring the Act of 1854 into effect by proclamation at any time. Therefore, for certainty's sake it appeared essential that a new Bill should be passed.

In November 1870 a debate was held in parliament on military defences and it led to the usual conflicting expressions of opinion as to the use or uselessness of defences generally, and the relative merits of a militia and a volunteer force. The upshot was the striking out of the whole item in respect of military Estimates - a practical endorsement on the part of the Assembly of that *laissez faire* system of which Mr Duffield had always been the leading exponent. However, this retrograde action had many critics:

> We believe there is no alternative between a sufficiently paid force - call it by what name you will - into which men are encouraged to volunteer, and a modification of the Prussian system, by which every member of the community is trained to the use of arms… Our legislators think they act wisely in doing nothing… Let not our plan of defence be deliberated upon so long that the emergency may at last come and find us wholly unprepared.
>
> The treatment of the volunteers five years ago was enough to disgust and dishearten any community. Officers as well as men felt that their services, far from being undervalued, were systematically sneered at and churlishly dispensed with. It may be that the blame… is greatly ascribed to the fact that the colony at that time was governed by one of those unmilitary gentlemen [Mr Strangways] who, when the volunteer movement originated, took to it as fun, but abandoned it as soon as he found he must be amenable to discipline… A grave mistake was committed.

The alarm of a difficulty with Russia, backed, perhaps, by the encomiums bestowed by the London *Times* upon the energy of our neighbours in Victoria, stimulated the South Australian Government to make another effort to put the colony in a posture of defence when, on 4 January 1871, the Legislative Council adopted the motion of the Chief Secretary affirming the desirability of the government taking steps during a forthcoming recess to provide for the defence of the colony, either by embodying a force not exceeding 1,000 men under the Militia Act, or by accepting the service of such volunteers as might be willing to enroll. However, inaction was the order of the day!

Notwithstanding, in a token gesture, the rifle association was permitted the use of Enfield rifles in the Armoury and were supplied with ammunition, free of charge. Teaching of drill in public schools was undertaken and to Mr Madeley of the Model School credit must be given as being the first to introduce the scheme upon any extended scale in the colony. His actions bore fruit when the Education Board directed that drill should form one of the branches of instruction in licensed schools. And there the matter rested

until 1875 when the Commissioner of Public Works proclaimed that the government was 'doing all it could to obtain information as to a thorough scheme of defence, and it was generally agreed that the whole subject called for early consideration.'

The Russian scare freshened up the flagging spirits of the old volunteers, who had grown rusty for want of work on the parade ground, and many had found solace with the mild excitement afforded by a rifle association. Public attention was directed forcibly to the colony's defenceless state and pressure brought to bear upon the government to take the matter in hand.

A demonstrative meeting was held in the Adelaide Town Hall, where it was decided to petition the government to secure the re-establishment of a defence force and this culminated in a reorganisation of the troops, the first enrollment taking place on 31 May 1877, the artillery being the first arm of the service formed. The British government, at the instance of South Australian authority, recommended Colonel Downes, Royal Artillery, as commander and Major Godwin, of the 103rd Regiment Royal Bombay Fusiliers, as adjutant of the local forces. Those officers arrived towards the end of 1877 and at once took charge of the volunteers, who had previously been commanded by Colonel Biggs.

In consequence of the feeling of insecurity in the colonies, Sir W.F.D. Jervois, later to be governor of South Australia, and Colonel Scratchley were, early in 1877, appointed by the Home Government to visit the Australian colonies and furnish a report upon the means of defence best suited to their circumstances. They departed from England on 3 May 1877 and, subsequently, a memorandum on defence was laid before the South Australian House of Assembly on 12 December 1877.

Adelaide Battery of Infantry, 1877, taken on the old parade ground on the site of the present Museum. The building on the right is the old Ordnance Store and that on the left, the Police Barracks.

It recommended a land force to consist of 940 men; for land defences a battery for three heavy guns of 18 tons weight to be constructed on the sandhills near Semaphore, another for the two 12-ton guns already in the colony about three miles north of it; the completion of the military road from Lefevre Peninsula to Marino; a few electro-contact torpedoes to be placed across Port Creek and a supply of field guns.

A further recommendation was for 'the purchase of an ironclad' at a cost of about £150,000. Capital cost of the land defences was estimated at £35,000 (Semaphore battery, £10,000, Military Road, £15,000 and field guns, torpedoes, etc., £10,000) and an annual expenditure of £25,000.

Both parties had made a meticulous search of the ground between Marino and Pelican Point and the conclusion came to was that the sites recommended by the Defence Commission of 1876 were best suited for the purposes, that is, one about 1,300 yards to the south of the Semaphore jetty and the other about 4,700 yards to the north.. Both these sites were on land reserved in previous years for defensive and other

purposes. Sir William Jervois recommended that the best defence, generally, was more dependent on naval means than any other part of Australia and concluded that:

> Adelaide was much more open to attack than any other capital city in Australia, as they were more or less difficult to approach by an enemy who might desire to attack them by land, whilst the coast in the vicinity of Adelaide was a low, open, sandy beach, on any point of which an enemy could land, and from whence an approach to the city is clear and open.

The matter came before the Assembly in October 1878 when a Bill was presented providing for a permanent force of artillery or infantry to consist of about 80 men together with a volunteer reserve corps of 130, rank and file. The enlisted term was for either three or five years, extra pay being allowed to those who opted for the longer term. The appointment of officers rested with the governor and, as to the command of the permanent force, this proposal was subjected to severe criticism:

> It is evident that the object is to provide a comfortable billet for some pet from England, and although the salary passed now is £400 per annum with house, fuel and light, the same course will probably be pursued with him as that which was adopted with the two officers imported last year. They were engaged for five years, one at £1,000 per annum, the other at £700.

In November 1878 Mr Bundey pointed out in parliament that South Australia was the only colony on 'this side of the line' unable to defend itself and concluded by paraphrasing a popular rhyme and stating that unless some provisions were made 'we would continue to say':

> We don't want to fight,
> But by Jingo if we do,
> We've got no ships, we've got no men,
> We want the money too.

And so the 1870s drew to a close with a hope in colonial hearts that the proposed plans for the defence of the colony were 'on track' and destined for approval at home and abroad:

> Defensive schemes cannot be elaborated in a moment. It will take two or three years before our defences are placed on a thoroughly permanent and satisfactory footing, but a very cursory examination of the subject will show that the government is proceeding entirely in the right direction and that it only remains for the Parliament to provide sufficient money for a war establishment on a reasonable scale…

The Volunteer Review

Oh! Have you heard the awful do,
That marked the Volunteer review,
When troops and gazers, all wet through,
Vowed Downes deserved a booting;
For dragging us through mire and rain,
And causing us no end of pain
A steady footing to maintain
Upon the greasy, squashy plain;
While Downes, on horseback, dresed full fig,
Fitzroy and Godwin, looking big,
Rode, while their men through mud did dig,
As we went out a shooting!

At 1.15 they marched us out,
'Eyes front', 'half turn', 'face right-about',
The captains in command did shout,
The band played high-falutin',
Kapunda sent some forty men,
And Gawler nearly three score and ten,
The cavalry looked awkward when
But twenty horsemen came in ken;
Quoth Captain Beck, 'Well, bless my eyes,
Such feather beds I do despise,
At length we reached the famous hill,
Though some good Templars caught a chill,
And bolted off - they had their fill -
Admist spectators' hooting.
The Governor came on the scene,
We formed a line upon the green,
He eyed us with inspection keen,
The band let out 'God save the Queen',
'Well done, my lads', Sir William said,
You'd better far have stopped in bed,
But as you've to this spot been led,
Wire in, and do your shooting!'

I cannot well describe the fight;
Because the party on my right -
The pivot man - got awful tight
And kept suggestions mooting.
'Silence in the ranks!' 'Shut up.' 'I shan't!'
'I'll put you in arrest!' 'You darn't',
'Sergeant, remove that man!' 'He can't!'
'You're drunk, you scoundrel!' 'No, I arn't!'
He reeled about, with vacant stare,
And when the order came, 'Prepare!'

Out of my troop they'll take a rise
As we ride out a shooting.'

The band struck up and off we went,
For scene of gory contest bent,
Where in advance the guns were sent
For battle - and saluting;
The rain came down; we heeded not,
Nor for the deluge cared a jot,
For each pocket flask had got -
Although we couldn't take it hot -
Of Catto whisky, or 'The Bull',
We easy marched and took a pull,
Till some of us got pretty full
While going out a shooting.

He fired his ramrod in the air,
When we were out a shooting.

Then, after many a weary trudge
To 'hold the fort' through mud and sludge,
The enemy refused to budge,
The shelter much them suiting;
'Charge yet once more!' Fitzroy did yell,
Out came the cavalry, pell-mell,
We formed in square, and held them well,
Till back on our supports we fell;
Then, soaked, and sad, we tramped away,
Full up of such a frightful day,
And many in the ranks did say -
'I'll go no more a shooting!'

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Chapter 5

The 1880s - The Years of Parliamentary Perambulation

Events are proving that the possibility of a Russian attack upon Australia is not a contingency to be treated with indifference.

By mid-1881 large sums of money had been spent in procuring trustworthy means of defence; a fort, of which the colonists had every reason to be proud, had been constructed and fitted up in a manner comparing favourably with any other similar work, either in adjacent colonies or Great Britain. A volunteer corps had been maintained for more than three years and no pains spared to render its members effective in the event of their being compelled to take the field. Finally, a rifle association, governed by a general council, had been formed with the object of training its members to be useful to the colony in the case of emergency. But dissenting opinions were current as discussed later.

At the same time, South Australia took the lead among the Australasian colonies in volunteering aid to the British forces engaged in upholding British supremacy in South Africa and young volunteers from South Australia offered their services in large numbers. But, on forwarding the offer to the Home authorities, they were rebuffed when Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, said that the British government did not think it desirable to accept the services of volunteers in the Transvaal. Closer to home a local volunteer, unaware that there was no compulsion for him to seek 'overseas experience', addressed the local press:

> In reading of the terrible disaster that has taken place in South Africa, I have the same feelings as [other correspondents], but, really, I think it quite absurd to expect us who have joined the volunteer force to go and risk our lives in an affair that does not concern us. Some people are of a daring disposition, so if they want to go, let them by all means…

The prime mover behind the call for enlistment was a Mr D.C. F. Moodie who explained:

> You are aware that during the Transvaal war, and at the time of reverses to our troops, I, with your help, called for volunteers for South Africa, freely offered themselves. About 150 in all sent in their names to me… the majority from South Australia. Among them were many fine men - discharged soldiers of the line, Australian bushmen, and many Zulu war warriors who found their way over here - in fact, many smart men who, at least, knew how to shoot which our poor, plucky, short-service system soldiers at Mount Majuba did not…

Later, in July 1882, Mr Moodie made formal application to the Chief Secretary and asked whether the government would be disposed to entertain the idea of equipping a mounted troop of South Australian guerillas with the title 'Moodie's Gorillas [*sic*]', for the purpose of 'worrying and impeding an enemy should he advance to Adelaide.' Whether the offer was made with 'tongue in cheek', under the influence of drugs, spirituous liquors or otherwise, the offer was solemnly rejected within the hallowed halls of the responsible Minister!

By February of 1882, the prevailing position of defences of South Australia reminded many concerned citizens of the troubles of a resident in an Adelaide suburb. His garden was securely fenced and with one exception the gates had springs attached so as to ensure they were not left open. The one exception, an iron gate, did all the mischief. Indeed, one of the most striking, and at the same time one of the most common, evidences of human depravity was to be found in the circumstance that callers would not shut gates. The entrance in question was left open frequently for a few minutes and a flock of goats, those enemies of all horticultural operations, speedily took advantage of the opportunity, and promptly responded to the silent invitation offered by the unobstructed passage. The troubles of the resident in question were intensified by another cause.

It was his lot to live on the borders of a district council adjacent to a municipality, the authorities of which were very strict in arresting and impounding all stray vagabond goats. The authorities of the district council were, unhappily, not so strict. Goats, like other members of the wandering larrikin tribe, were quick to note

the difference and speedily made for the locality where they could carry on their depredations without fear of the pound, and where they would be sure of being unmolested by ranger or police.

This homely story is narrated with the intention of it being an allegory. Indeed, to prove its underlying message, South Australia had done something in the way of defence; but she had not merely one, but several gates which offered a ready means of access to any marauding foe so inclined to visit our shores. Leaving Western Australia out of the question for the moment, she was, of course, the first of the Australian colonies which a vessel from the west could reach; and though she could not claim to be the richest of colonies, it hardly admitted of doubt that she was more vulnerable than either Victoria or New South Wales. In short, South Australia was like the unlucky resident whose case we have used as a moral.

Not only were our entrances insecure, but the greater security of our adjoining neighbours rendered us more liable to become prey to a hostile force. Fort Glanville was, undoubtedly, well constructed and well furnished with warlike appliances, but it could not be said to be well manned. To an unprofessional person, the target practice of 4 February 1882 was not altogether satisfactory for 'several rounds were fired with such precision that it would have been dangerous for any vessel which might have been in the vicinity of the range.'

The South Australian "Defence Force," drawn up for the inspection of Lieut.-Colonel Scratchley and Sir Wm. Jervois.

Further, it was common for vessels to pass Cape Borda without being signalled. If any ship, coming with friendly intentions, had arrived with hostile intent, of what use would the fort have been? The facts were that our defence arrangements were miserably incomplete. As matters stood those responsible were leaving the front gate wide open and there was too much reason to fear that an enemy would find the inner gate. This was not creditable either to our common sense or our patriotism.

From this indictment flowed a resolution to 'ascertain the price at which a ship could be procured as was suggested in the memorandum prepared by Sir William Jervois.' The debate in Parliament was clothed with drama; the Chief Secretary was accused of 'sitting on the rail' and it was 'melancholy to see such an important question treated in such a way':

> If the matter was fairly treated before the house by a Minister who spoke with the accent of conviction, we believe the outlay necessary for placing the colony in an efficient state of defence would be cheerfully vested, but if it is introduced in a half-hearted manner, and the proposal is such as will involve a heavy cost, without affording any guarantee of efficiency, we fear that the subject may be definitely postponed.

Eventually, it was left to Mr Fraser, in an earnest and vigorous oration, to move a motion to take immediate 'remedial steps for the permanent defence of the colony'. In the course of his speech he said:

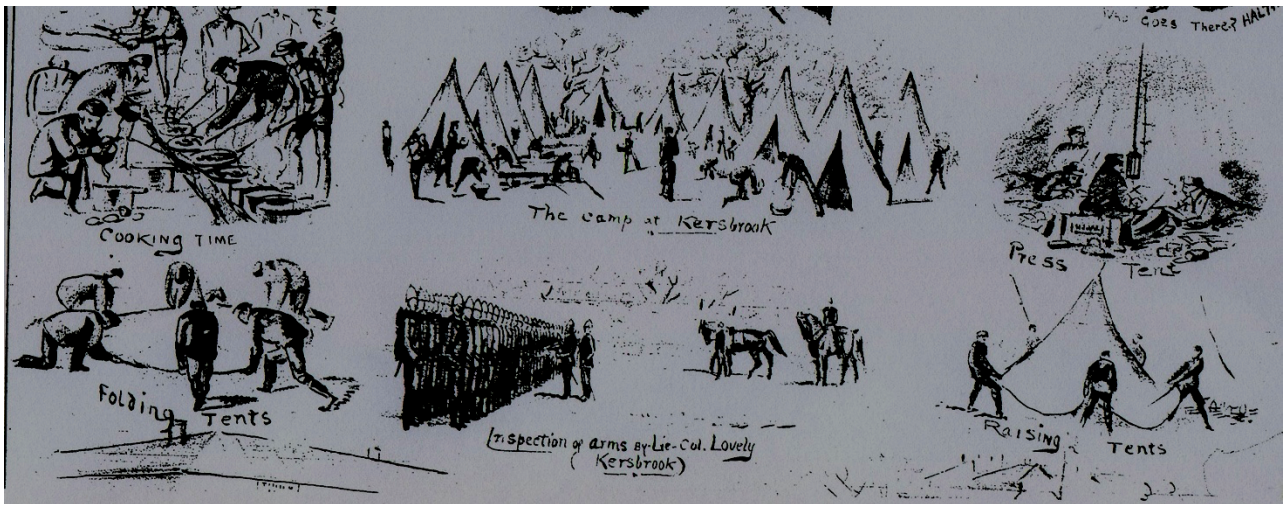
> There were only 140 artillery, 60 cavalry, 888 infantry of whom about between 100 and 150 were always absent in different parts of the country on permanent leave, and 900 members of the rifle volunteer force scattered all over the country from Quorn to Mount Gambier.

The government succumbed on 13 July 1882 when the Chief Secretary informed the House that the government had instructed the Agent-General to 'ascertain the price at which a ship could be procured in the memorandum prepared by Sir William Jervois a few weeks since.' At the same time the Editor of the *Register* commiserated with those who were prone to 'bury their heads in the sand':

> We can quite understand the feeling of the government. They are not personally convinced that a patriotic duty lies before them and they do not wish hereafter to be accused of having wasted the resources of the colony under the influence of a scare. This state of mind does not so much matter now that parliament is sitting and the public are in advance of their leaders in the desire for self-defence, but it might be exceedingly awkward if it was not sitting and the Ministry waited for the danger to come before taking means to meet it.

In some echelons of colonial society regret was expressed to the form in which the motion was prepared because it bound the government to a particular course which, it was feared, would not accomplish all that was expected; indeed, many would have been more satisfied with the recommendation if it had been untrammeled by any condition.

The *Government Gazette* of the 31 August 1882 contained the 'rules and regulations for the discipline and government of the South Australian Military Force under Act No. 125 of 1878', or rather for the force to so be raised, for by 1882 it had not been enrolled. It empowered the governor to raise and maintain a permanent military force, to consist of not more than one major, three lieutenants and 130 rank and file, either artillery or infantry, and to enroll a reserve force to 'consist of all such men as shall be willing to be enrolled therein', together with such members of the police force 'as shall be willing to undertake military service in time of need.'



The Riflemen's Campaign – May 1881 at Kersbrook

Early in September 1882 it was reported that gun emplacements, to the number of five or six, had been built at irregular intervals along the coast from Fort Glanville to Glenelg, access to which was gained from the military road by branches to each emplacement. 'Sooth to say, the feeders were in better condition for traffic than the road itself, which in many places was very heavy, owing mainly to the soft soil and its shifty character.'

In the same month a 'Local Forces Bill' was before parliament and meetings of the Rifle Volunteer Force were held, the proceedings at which were of such a character as to negative entirely the view, entertained

by some members of parliament, that the force was either indifferent to the passing of the Bill then before the Assembly, or that the provisions of that measure met with the general concurrence of those most interested.

Outside of parliament Major Fergusson, in a manly, straightforward speech, gave a military view of the situation and Lt-Colonel Lovely, in a temperate and conciliatory fashion, suggested a way out of the existing difficulty, while the Editor of the *Register* commented:

> The training of riflemen by the agency of the National Rifle Association is one thing; the subsequent conversion of them, or some of them, into semi-soldiers is another thing. The parliamentary attempt to confound these two very distinct aims and ends out of personal compliment to the personal merits which, we admit, cannot be over-rated, of Colonel Downes will, we are convinced, prove to be a grave mistake. We are still hopeful that the government and the Assembly, seeing the light in which the Bill is viewed by the Rifle Volunteers as a body, will bring the Force more directly under the control of the Colonel-Commandant without requiring it to renounce its distinctive character.

In January 1884 a citizen ventured the opinion that 'we might as well send our volunteers to the front with bows and arrows instead of guns, as be content to allow our forts and our vessel to be gunned with inferior instruments.' This opinion was forcibly illustrated in an article describing an imaginary attack on Adelaide; indeed, its underlying message did not go unnoticed by perceptive South Australians:

How We Captured Adelaide, South Australia

(Extracts from the private Log of Ivan Korfuloff, IRN)

> At last our orders arrived; we sailed from Vladivostock with 600 picked marksmen and veterans... [Our orders were] to make all speed and caution toward the coast of South Australia and there to act in the best interests of Holy Russia against the English enemy, for war would be declared by the time fixed (16 July) [and] the cables cut…Adelaide must be ours…On the 16th July we sighted Cape Borda Light…The night was thick and there was a moderate sea and at times a light rain fell…We now put on all steam and arrived off a place called Grange at 4 am on the 17th July. We here drafted into our steam cutters 1,100 of our picked men and officers and our trusty guides who had lived in the vicinity of this coastline for many years as the agents of our glorious country, who now returned to be our eyes and ears. For the cause was a holy one.
>
> We had no difficulty in landing; still dark, but thanks to our guide we soon found the jetty and road for Adelaide… A party started filling sandbags and to build a parapet against the T-head of the jetty, behind which to leave two machine guns and men to cover our retreat to the boats. We had nine machine guns ashore. Our ship was ordered to hover off Glenelg and Grange and our other ship had steamed up to Largs Bay where a large steamer was lying… Her orders were to steam alongside and board her... to slip the cable, steam up and join our sister vessel. All this was accomplished with the loss of only fifteen men and some spars, as the forts could hardly make out what was going on before we were out of range.
>
> The *Protector* gunboat did, however, suspect something, but had to get up steam. Meanwhile she made fair practice at us with her guns until we got out of range, damaging our spars.. .Our guide was most accurate in all his information as regards the enemy's ways. The three torpedo boats were dispatched with 60 men to watch and disable the *Protector* with a torpedo… [following which] she had to be run into Port Malcolm, where she lay awash and harmless…
>
> I now come to the capture of the city. My guide advised me to establish a signal station on the top of the high houses at Grange. The people were much frightened. My men were eager as hounds scenting a fox… A patrol then kept the military road, as they call it, and my advance guard pushed on up the road to Adelaide until we reached a place called Fulham, where we halted at 8.35 am.. My scouts returned and said they had descried a force estimated at some 300 men with four guns and some lancers marching in haste...
>
> We heliographed our ships and told them to demonstrate a landing, merely, off Brighton until any forces in the vicinity be drawn towards the point threatened and, meanwhile, annoy them by shelling their position… On came the Australians very well indeed, as if on parade. We opened fire, my men creeping forward, lying low, crawling on their stomachs and seeking cover of a tuft

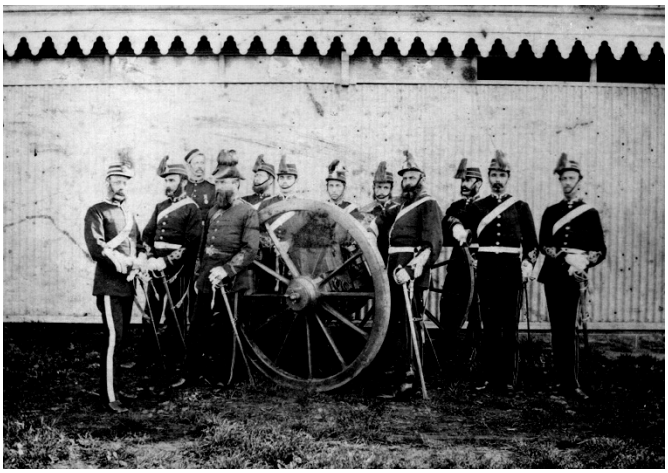
> here or a post there… Our machine gun soon cleared the artillery horses and gunners too... Our infantry now fired steadily… We noticed the inexperience of the enemy and the excited way in which they fired and the reckless way in which they exposed themselves.
>
> We could foresee what would happen... We had no time to take prisoners; once dead they cannot annoy us again. The shots of my steady boys told; the commander of the enemy saw his men unsteady… My boys were calm and knowing it was life or death obeyed me… The race was ours... We secured the bridge… The enemy could not dislodge; they could not stand our fire when they were in the open and now broke and retired in confusion.
>
> It was now 12.15 pm and the city, the deserted city was near. We now beheld a flag of truce coming from the left and the halt was sounded… We explained to them that they stood hostage against treachery, attack, or the non-compliance with our demands… Our information on the false security of this place was really good. But there was no time to loot. We knew not how soon the telegraph would betray us…
>
> The gold and silver being now forthcoming, and the city, not appearing to be very wealthy from what my guides had told me, we decided to return to our boats and our ships…We eventually reached Glenelg, embarked, taking our hostages and the passengers off the captured ship and headed away for the Investigator Strait under full steam… We lost 190 men in this expedition, but the Russian arms have added another glorious victory to a long list and revenge for the insults of years.

By mid-1884 the permanent force was composed of men who had joined as regulars and did their duty in the forts; at the close of that year the numbers were small, for the strength of the defence force was Cavalry-38; A Battery-100; B Battery (garrison) - 81; 11 companies of infantry - about 800 and about 600 Reservists. While the Russian scare persisted the volunteers were the heroes of the day; when it subsided they were targets for the ribald. And the target was broad, much broader in fact than the 'blues' on the rifle butts on the south Park Lands, when a commander, needing a centre to win a match, missed the bulls eye, missed the target, missed the butt and wounded a cow browsing on the pasture beyond.

Early in 1885 news was received that the Imperial government had accepted the offer of New South Wales to send a force to the Soudan and this greatly stimulated the ardour of the South Australian Volunteers. The South Australian government offered to send 250 fully equipped men, but there was a deal of dissent within the community:

> The course taken is of a most Quixotic character. Is England in jeopardy? Decidedly not. Is she unable to cope with the Egyptian foe? By no means…What is it that forces South Australia to incur an expense she cannot in any way afford and is not warranted in expending… I have for some years held a commission in the volunteers…

By mid-February 1885 a total of 278 men had volunteered and 'further applic…ations from ladies anxious to go as nurses have been received.' However, t…he offer was refused by the Home authorities, but New South Wales was permitted to send its contingent which departed in the *Iberia* in March 1885.



Defence Volunteers in the 1880s

This rebuff from the Mother Country was contemporaneous with a further 'Russian scare' when both citizens and the press expressed their misgivings and fears:

> It will be remembered that at the close of the Crimean War a Russian squadron was actually equipped to attack Australia and if in those days it was intended to put such a plan in execution how much more attractive at the present time…

The Pacific fleet of the Russians has for years hovered about on various missions and no doubt accurate estimate has been made as to where the cables are laid which connect Port Darwin with... Java…

In retrospect, Mr W.R. Wigley of Glenelg was to give a satirical, but none the less serious, interpretation of the colony's shortcomings at that time:

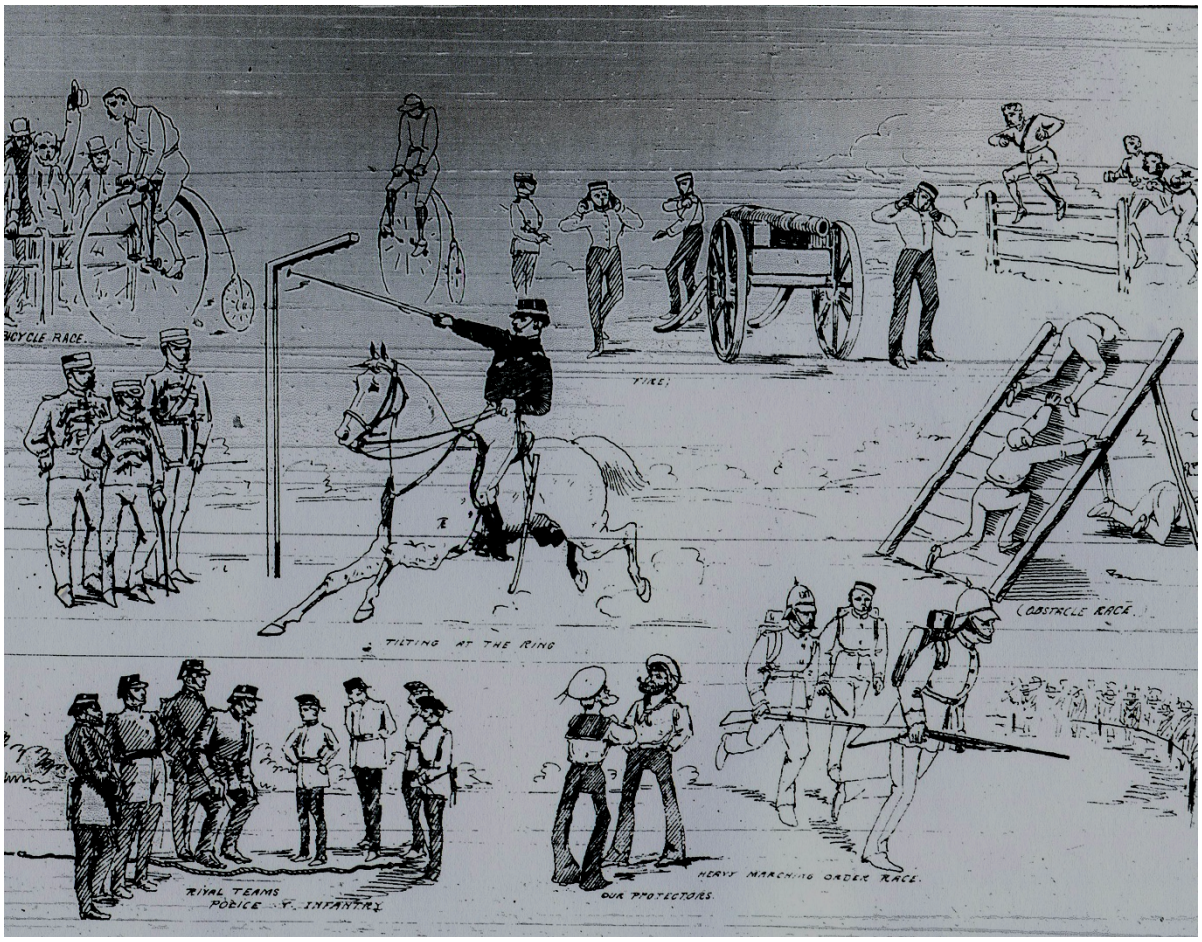
> We must prepare at once for combat for our enemies are near at hand.' And so said all of us a few short years ago when Russia threatened us with war. At an enormous cost we placed in the field an army of some 2,000 men, fortified Largs and Glanville Bays (to partly protect us seawards), made a fine military road along our coast, imported a good warship, and as keystone to the whole (regardless of expense) ordered from home two of the finest guns that could be cast for a fort at Glenelg to protect the entrance of the harbour. If the above had been carried out and kept up the colonists might now exclaim when 'Mars' again 'hovers o'er them with his sable shield', 'all's well.'
>
> But in spite of being dubbed a pessimist, let us view things as they are. We have coiled up like a dormouse, gone to sleep, and let things 'rip' until the growl from the dogs of war about to be loosened have awakened us, and we find our army dwindled down to a couple of hundred men, the plans of the Glenelg Fort not yet arrived from England, the metal for its guns not yet in the smelting pot - in fact, on visiting the spot I could not find one stone on top of another.
>
> In order to assist an enemy on landing, which could be done with impunity anywhere below Henley Beach, we have a fine military road perfectly unprotected leading to the backs of our two forts, so that he might take them and spike their guns…The Russians are not to be sneezed at…Those of your readers who have not read 'Reminiscences of General Scobeloff' I would recommend them to do so, and they will see the sort of soldiers we would have to deal with should we go to war with Russia.
>
> The *Protector*, although well-officered, with only a crew of forty, mostly lads, (her full complement for action, is I believe, 140 fighting men). [She] would only be an inducement for an enemy's ship to drop in and pick her up, as she would be a valuable acquisition to any navy, although I believe her present gallant officers and crew would fight her to the death. Methinks I hear above the din of war the cheery voice of her first luff singing his favourite opera:
>
> Here's a how-de-do,
> Here's a pretty mess,
> Here's a state of things.

I think the 'Military ones', of which there are several, might express their opinion upon 'our defences'. They have not done so at present.

By the end of March 1885 an unexpectedly rapid march of events had already modified the basis upon which colonial defences were planned by Sir William Jervois and Colonel Scratchley only a few years before. It was then assumed, as a matter of course, that the British Navy would effectually cope with all heavily armed and really formidable hostile vessels of war, and that the worst the colonies would have to defend themselves against would be the attack of a privateer or two which might elude the vigilance of British cruisers. In 1885, it was almost certain that if England was to become involved in a war with one or more of the great powers, with which her relations had become more or less strained, the Australian colonies would be liable to be attacked by a very much more formidable force than was contemplated when their defences were planned. To ignore this would have been exceedingly unwise.

Members of Cabinet met on 1 April 1885 when the grave nature of the situation, in view of war being declared between England and Russia, was considered. The various details suggested by the military authorities in the colony were discussed and it was decided that steps should be taken at once to resist an attack by Russian vessels, should they visit our shores. With regard to the local military force it was intended to increase its numbers until the limit of 1,000 fixed by parliament was reached.

Some colonial strategists considered that Russia would not send a sufficient number of men out here to fight us on land - 'Her cruisers would simply visit our shores, do as much damage as they could with their big guns, and then decamp.' However, instructions were given for the establishment of a night patrol between Fort Glanville and a point some distance south of Glenelg, while 48 horses, for eight field guns and four waggons, were put into more perfect training for artillery work; three field guns, horsed, were sent to Glenelg and the Kapunda infantry ordered to hold itself in readiness to come to town on short notice if wanted for immediate service.



These deliberations were not reassuring. What was proposed was all very well in its way, but if the Ministry wished to atone for past neglect, and convince the community of their capacity to cope with the emergency, they should not have stopped there. Indeed, following public agitation, they finally condescended to give some closer attention to the subject:

> That they should have remained inactive so long speaks well for the placidity of their temperaments, but ill for the sense of responsibility… Entreaty, expostulation, protest, denunciation have all been brought into play to arouse them to a conviction of duty. The full weight of public opinion had for some time been brought to bear upon them in vain.
> Instead of setting to work to allay public anxiety and check public excitement by showing themselves alive to the stringency of the crisis, and by a plain statement of what they were doing and prepared to do satisfying the people that every precaution that prudence could suggest was being taken to resist attack, they stood calmly by and waited to hear the respectful request to them to make ready grow into a war of mingled appeal, remonstrance and execration.

These complaints, given momentum by both morning newspapers, brought forth public criticism and, consequently, thoroughly aroused the government to the necessity for action and at subsequent Cabinet meetings it was decided that:

> The telegraph line at Warooka be extended to Cape Spencer at the head of the gulf, so that should the approach of an enemy be signalled from the Althorpes the news could at once be wired to Adelaide.
> The telephone between the forts at Largs and Glanville to be constructed.
> The Postmaster-General make the necessary arrangements for signalling by means of the electric light from the Post Office tower.
> Further consideration be given to the proposed construction of a Military road.
> Instructions be issued for the construction of a fort at Glenelg on the spit of land to the north of the Patawalonga Bridge (Two ten-inch Armstrong guns with a range of 12,000 yards were telegraphed for).
> A battery of Volunteer Garrison to be camped on land adjoining both forts.
> Men be enrolled at Glenelg and Brighton for the further protection of those towns.
> The government steamers *Lady Diana* and *Victoria* to be fitted with spar torpedoes.
> Two large vessels fitted with a gun be placed at the entrance to the gulf, one at Backstairs Passage and the other at Investigator Straits.
> Steps be taken to protect the deposits of coal in various parts of the colony.
> The Volunteer Force be increased to 1,500.
> Steps be taken for the formation of a Naval Brigade.
> The Port River to be protected by booms.
> Two 24-pound howitzers be placed north of Glenelg near Patawalonga Creek and two 12-pounders south of the jetty.
> Rifle companies to be formed in various parts of the colony, etc.

To any unbiased observer the fact was that the government did not enter enthusiastically into the defence of the colony. What they had done was, apparently, from a desire to satisfy an excited public feeling with which they had, evidently, never sympathised. Indeed, there was an appearance of half-heartedness about their proceedings which nothing but the adoption of a more determined and unhesitating action would counteract. However, in defence of the government, in retrospect it must be said that, at the time, it was unfortunate that military enthusiasm in South Australia was apt to be evanescent. Sometimes, as was the case in 1885, it rose almost to fever heat under the exciting stimulus of sensational rumours of war and then cooled down until the enthusiasm all but vanished.

In March 1886 it was proposed to alter the name of the Volunteer Military Force to the South Australian Militia Force, while in September of that year a Bill to consolidate and amend the law in relation to the defence forces was laid before the Assembly. It absorbed the vital provisions of eight Acts, which it repealed, borrowed numerous clauses from enactments in operation in New Zealand and Queensland and here and there took a leaf out of the latest book of Imperial regulations. Within it was to be found evidence of undue haste or carelessness and its drafting struck many as being contrary to the natural order of things:

It was not to be expected that the Act would give universal satisfaction but it simplified the law relating to the military forces and removed some of the difficulties which had interfered with the perfect success of the military organisations in the past.

Towards the end of 1887 it was evident that the colonial military force was unusually small. The estimates of the previous year had provided for a force of 850 men and 58 officers, yet at the Queen's Birthday parade, when a full attendance was insisted upon, the total muster was less than 500. In itself, the size of this force would not have been a serious matter if the second line of defence had been in a really effective position. But, as a matter of fact, both the Reserves and the Rifle Volunteers had been sadly neglected, for there was no proper plan taken to keep together the men of the Reserve, or for adequately encouraging them in regarding themselves as still forming an integral portion of the colony's defences:

> Under existing conditions, when the colony pays for a large militia and gets a small one, and when the second line of defence be so little to be relied upon, it cannot be said that South Australia is prepared to meet a hostile attack.

The natural curiosity of the public with regard to the actual state of the defence force was, to some extent, satisfied by the publication of the evidence given before a Select Committee of the House of Assembly late in 1887. Yet, as the old Scotch woman remarked whenever she expressed satisfaction, 'There is aye a something.' In this case the 'something' that was lacking was a very important matter.

The main subject of the enquiry was to discover the exact, 'trustworthy' numerical strength, first, of the militia, and, secondly, of the Volunteers. It should be understood that the term 'Militia' was expressly defined by the *Defence Forces Act* to exclude the Militia Reserve, which constituted an altogether different form. On 1 October 1888 the books of the Staff Office showed that there were in the Militia Force 853 men and 63 officers and 5 officers and 100 men in the Militia Reserve. At the beginning of the year the Militia had been reduced to 650 men all told and from that time a considerable number of men had been recruited, chiefly for the artillery, but the number of the force actually present appeared to be a matter which the commandant, General Owen, was quite unable to elucidate.

The General's figures were, surely, a piece of very cool assumption for an officer who was so distinctly in the wrong, not only in supplying untrustworthy figures to be read in parliament, but also refusing to answer, with reference to the figures, an enquiry put by the committee. From this and other transgressions the result of the enquiry was to show that great dissatisfaction existed both in the ranks and among the outside public and it was hoped that, 'during the recess the government [would] consider the advisability of introducing reforms and alterations with a view to obviating the dangers inherent in the present state of affairs.'

General Owen's term expired in March 1888 and he was not re-engaged. This decision was approved generally, although frequent changes in the command of local forces were to be deprecated. In spite of the money spent on defence the colony had not made progress in the previous three years. There was an absence of enthusiasm in the men, coupled with an undercurrent of dissatisfaction, and it was felt that if the services of Major-General Downes could again be secured there would be no doubt the appointment would be popular. Previously, he had considerable experience of the requirements of the colony and would come to work afresh with every advantage. As the local press put it, 'the present is a most important juncture in the history of the force.'

The position showed no improvement in ensuing months and South Australians were told, with wearisome iteration, that 'our men are badly uniformed, badly equipped, overwhelmingly officered and wholly adequate in numbers…The worst of it is that our critics have altogether too much reason on their side.' The question was asked - Is South Australia worth defending from enemies? If not, why have we an expensive staff and a system of instruction and inspection? If so, why are not the vigorous young men of fairly good position in the country more fully represented in the Militia? It was not enough that labourers, artisans and clerks should comprised he majority within the ranks.

It was considered, generally, that the defence of the country was one to which all classes should contribute, but this brought the colonists upon delicate ground for the only day that could be devoted to military training was that on which most of the citizens devoted themselves to the encouragement of manly sports. Thus, compulsory enlistment could have meant the abandonment of 'the fierce game of football or the milder pleasures of cricket.'

If men of fitting age did on many days wander their way to the drill ground on North Terrace instead of the ovals or the river they wouldhave been obliged to learn the value of self-sacrifice; but this, after all, was a necessary ingredient of what was called patriotism. Therefore, it seemed that nothing short of compulsory service could effect what was required in the way of ensuring the growth of that legitimate military spirit which the volunteer principle had failed to evoke in sufficient measure:

> So long as the force is regarded as a plaything instead of a real safeguard in time of need, and its maintenance is looked upon as a fad instead of a stern public necessity, so long will the present most disheartening state of things prevail.

On 9 October 1888, £35,797 was approved in parliament for military defences of the colony and during the debate many members spoke out against the proposed expenditure; some of their pearls of wisdom were as follows:

> In view of the peaceful condition of affairs in Europe the expense is too heavy.
> Why should we not abolish the defence forces altogether? What is their worth now?
> If an enemy landed tomorrow, what show could we make against them?
> No payment should be made for compulsory drills.
> To these and other objections the local press declared them to be a delusion and a snare and stated that a stop must be put to the sham together with a firm refusal to live in a fool's paradise. Indeed, thoughtful people were being convinced that the only cure was the compulsory enrollment of men as this would make people understand the reality of the affair:
> It is becoming only too evident that if our defence forces are not to be a sham we must have compulsory enlistment. Unless the sham element is eliminated, and our citizen soldiers become a reality, it would be infinitely better and safer for us to dismiss our officers and to become admittedly, as well as practically, a defenceless colony.

Upon his return from Victoria, General Downes presented a report to Parliament in October 1888 in which he condemned the arrangements for defence as they then existed and spoke of the 'dangerous state of affairs' as to the overall strength of the forces. He supported compulsory service and urged the government to give effect to the compulsory clauses of the *Defence Forces Act* of 1886 and 'I think there [could] be in addition to the 3,000 in the active militia, a reliable reserve of at least 5,000 men at the end of ten years' time.' In January 1889 a call for a complete overhaul of the defence forces went out:

> What we say most emphatically is that it would to become accessory to murder to oppose present forces to the onset of an enemy well informed, well equipped and largely surpassing in number our available troops.

The debate continued to rage into 1889 and in August of that year the *SA Register* was to proclaim that 'A House Divided Against Itself' was the description which only too aptly applied to the defence forces of South Australia. A report from Major-General Edwards, tabled in Parliament in October 1889, added further grist to the mill for he was of the opinion that local defence arrangements 'cannot be considered satisfactory [when] compared with those of either Victoria or New South Wales.'

Major-General Edwards had been sent to the colonies to discover how far the preparations for local defence would bear the strain which the actual necessity of beating off enemy would put upon them and he came to the conclusion that they would be found to fall far short of the requirements and this conclusion he did not hesitate to state in clear and cogent language. The burden of his advice to Australians was:

> Organise. Federate. Not only is great waste of money involved in the disconnected way in which you are going to work, but a fatal waste of strength. Divided as you are; acting independently of each other as you insist upon doing, you run the risk of falling an easy prey to an invader. If you will only act upon a well-arranged and uniform plan - if you would only combine your forces in place of working independently of each other, you could without having to spend much more money, practically insure yourselves against the assaults of a foe, even should he, having knowledge of your preparedness to meet him, have their hardihood to risk an attack upon you.

Of course, there were many dissenters to these claims and one parochial comment was that 'on the whole it is evident that General Edwards has yielded to the prejudices of his cloth and was prone to trust in soldiers rather than in naval and coastal defences.'

Closer to home, the attitude of the Ministry towards the defence forces of the colony was declared to be most unsatisfactory and difficult to conceive. The course they had adopted had always been an incentive

to disorganisation and it was an absolute fact that discontent prevailed throughout the forces. Indeed, the shuffling way in which the Ministry treated the question from first to last, and the cheese-paring policy they pursued in reference to it, might well have shaken confidence in their disposition to do the right thing in the matter. As a newspaper editor opined - '[We] suffer disgrace in the eyes of [our] neighbours].'

As the 1880s drew to a close, and with peace prevailing in Europe, concern was expressed in the South Australian parliament as to the extent of defence expenditure and a proposition was brought forward to disband the forces:

> Supposing that the enemy landed in South Australia tomorrow, what show could we make against them… Our militia has dwindled down into a red line whose thinness is painfully evident. The battalions at command probably could not be depended upon to muster over 100 men in time of need.

Such was the opinion of Mr H. Hussey, MP, while the Editor of the *Observer* traversed the pros and cons of the matter posed a question - Is South Australia worth defending? - and concluded that 'we must have, besides a reasonable line of defence by sea, trained men in sufficient numbers to meet any probable attack.' But there were difficulties in accomplishing this end; for example, leave of absence from employment was more readily granted on the concurrence of a great athletic contest than when it was wanted for men to 'play at soldiers', as the popular phrase of the day went.

At this time a weak army of scanty battalions marched through the city streets for all the world like the army led by Sir John Falstaff. On show days popular sympathy was with them, but in ordinary times they had to put up with the contemptuous calls and selfish jeering of people who should have known better. Indeed, it was becoming clear that, if the defence forces were not to become a sham, compulsory enlistment would have to be introduced, for unless the sham element was eliminated, and the citizen soldiers became a reality, it would have been infinitely better and safer for the people of South Australia to dismiss the officers and to become admittedly, as well as practically, a defenceless colony.

Thus, the 1880s closed with antipathy being shown to the government of the day, coupled with other members of colonial society girding themselves for another frontal attack to achieve their perceived goals in the 1890s. While this was pending the Russians waited silently and patiently in their lair to the northwards!

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Chapter 6

The Fortified Coast

> *Both were travesties of forts, for their designers, relying implicitly, apparently, on a problematical enemy playing fairly and attacking only from the front, had left the back unguarded so that the gunners on barbette were exposed to fire from the dunes. Largs, certainly, had a picket fence and Glanville, a caustic suggested, should be safeguarded by a notice - 'This fort must not be attacked from the rear.'*

The subject of forts along the coast of St Vincent Gulf was first mooted in 1858 when a newspaper editor suggested that 'at present all we require at present is the formation of small forts at certain defensible points of our coastline, which points we presume to be the two horns of the Bay at Glenelg.' Mr William Gray, a storekeeper at Port Onkaparinga (modern-day Port Noarlunga), with a sense of patriotism, and perhaps an eye for increased business, addressed the government of the day:

> Captain Lipson, RN, having reported that the defence of our coast, so far as is practicable, would be best attained by the equipment of gunboats, etc., to be stationed at Port Adelaide and the creek at Glenelg,, I have the honour to respectfully suggest for the consideration of Your Excellency, the following extension of his plan. That as the harbour of Port Onkaparinga is the first accessible and most unprotected part of the coast, which in all probability would be selected as an eligible landing place for effecting a 'coup de main' on Adelaide, it could be made another gunboat station and provided with the following defences:
>
> A battery on the northern reef similar to that on Pinchgut Island in Sydney Harbour.
>
> A Martello tower on Witton Bluff within range of the jetty, and a small enfilading, earthwork battery near Onkaparinga Bluff.
>
> As a tower would command a full view of the gulf from Cape Jervis to the lightship, it would be necessary to extend a telegraph wire to join the Adelaide and Melbourne line on the South Road, a distance of three miles.
>
> I have no doubt that the increased naval force of France in these seas will lead to the establishment of a naval as well as a postal station on Kangaroo Island, and now that the gunboat service is nearly over in China, some of them could be stationed here, by which means South Australia will become the centre of communication for these colonies and the best protected portion of Australia...

In 1864, £20,000 was voted by the parliament for the purchase of heavy guns of position for the defence of the colony against foreign invasion, or privateering attack, but a year later no steps had been taken to carry out the wishes of the legislature.

It was unarguable that the defence of the colony had to be provided for and the opinion was passed - 'let no one flatter himself that the Home government will do all that is requisite.' There were two motives actuating that body towards its colonial possessions - the one parental affection; the other Imperial pride and many colonists did not have much faith in the former. The prior conduct of the Imperial authorities towards the colony showed that there was little, indeed, of parental anxiety for its welfare, but much talk of the 'parent state', 'the mother country' and so on, but at home the colonists in South Australia were looked upon not as children, but as dependants, as appendages.

The colonies were 'dependencies' and Great Britain could, doubtless, revenge itself for any insult offered to the British flag; but as revenge was necessarily subsequent to the wrong inflicted, Imperial pride would not save the colonies from ruin. After the colonies were degraded, outraged and ruined, England talked about 'the honour of the flag', the 'insult offered to the Crown' and so on, and took revenge upon the aggressor, with a view to satisfying wounded pride and restoring tarnished honour. The 'parent state' was avenged in the eyes of the world, but that did not undo the wrongs inflicted upon unoffending and unprotected dependencies.

History knew no other empire like the British and its vastness appealed even to the most unimaginative. The sun, literally, never set upon it; the Union Jack flew on all five continents and it covered more than one-

fifth of the habitable globe and claimed about one-fourth of the entire population of the planet. No other nation had such a large number of people who had no voice in the ruling of their destinies, for of the 400 million subjects when King Edward VII occupied the throne, only 50 millions were self-governing, while the remainder dependend upon the goodwill of 'the Mother Country.'

For a long time it was not even conscious of its own power or greatness and the development during the 19th century was so rapid that its rulers 'stood aghast at the burden and responsibility of maintaining it':

Unlike classic examples, it was not a military empire won by lust of conquest, held by force or kept for tribute. Senates did not boast about it and the people were remarkable for indifference concerning their possessions. In a broad generalisation, one main feature of the British Empire appeared to be that it was an educational institution in contradistinction to the military type.

Through her government and administrators Queen Victoria acted as the mother of inferior races for the purpose of developing their character and promoting their happiness. The magnificent trusteeship is a noble heritage, but it involves the education of the educators. The rulers are subject to democratic control and each generation of electors require to be instructed afresh.

Such was the considered opinion of the British Empire as expressed in South Australia by a white Caucasian of British lineage at the turn of the 20th century. However, there would be little doubt that an opinion of a very different character would have been forthcoming from many of the 'inferior races' being subjected to the whims and fancies of British dominion.

In colonial South Australia many free thinking citizens did not trust England to take care of them. There was no mistake about that. And what did our legislature do? Nothing whatever. Year after year passed by and nothing was done. The colony was absolutely helpless in the water and an enemy with a very small force could have brought ruin without landing at all. In 1862, a report from Mr E.T McGeorge was laid before parliament in respect of defences for Port Adelaide and it said that in his opinion a battery should be installed at the northern end of Torrens Island which:

> Will command the entire passage from the Lightship to the North Arm with only 80 degrees of traversing and a vessel coming up would be 'raked' during the whole of her approach to the fort by, say, four heavy guns while she could only reply with a single pivot gun or, at the most, two.

Mr McGeorge also compared his proposed site with one previously recommended:

> I have examined the site proposed by Colonel Torrens, but think it is open to grave objections. In the first place it commands but a small part of the outward channel and that in such a matter as that a vessel could always have more guns to reply than would conveniently be brought against her… In the second place, the amount of traversing required would be quite double than at the spot I have indicated…

Following this difference between self-professed experts the government backed away from the idea of fortifying Torrens Island and in the Assembly its members declined to go into Committee upon Mr Finniss's motion in favour of the purchase of a heavy battery. However, £4,000 appeared on the Estimates for procuring six 12-pounder Armstrong guns.

By mid-1866 it was apparent that the legislators were completely puzzled by the numerous suggestions, reports and advice received over previous years. At first they inclined their ears to Messrs Thomas and Finniss, then to Captain Douglas, then to a Royal Commission and then again to Commander Parkin and even the voting of the sum for the fortress guns threw them into a state of perplexity:

> They have got the money, but they don't like to expend it because they are afraid that they might not purchase the right sort of guns for, while the Commission recommended weapons of the most approved modern description. Commander Parkin said, '…It would be better to trust the smooth bore guns of recent construction which are bound to send shot to long distances with great accuracy and penetrating power.'

Commander Parkin of HMS *Falcon*, in a report on 'The Best Means of Repelling an Attack on Adelaide and Port Adelaide by Armed Forces', recommended that three forts be constructed - one on Torrens Island and the others midway between the city of Adelaide and Port Adelaide and Glenelg. Some of the members of the Commission were strongly in favour of a military road from the Semaphore to Brighton, though they admitted that as a means of defence it would not be of much value 'as would justify the recommendation of its construction solely for that purpose.' Other members, however, reported that, in their opinion, whilst

the construction of such a road was the very thing an enemy would desire, it would be of no use at all as a means of defence:

> Were an enemy once to land below the Port the thing he would then most desire would be a good road, with his left flank covered, and his retreat open by his boats moving up parallel with his line of march, but without a road, they thought he would soon get into difficulty amongst the sandhills.
>
> But with all these and other suggestions at hand, and with money in their pockets, the government refrained from doing anything. Like Sancho Panza they had been unable, although hungry, to eat from the multiplicity of rich dishes set before them. They decided to wait for the arrival of an officer of the Royal Engineers, who was to 'examine into our wants, harmonise the contradictions of all other authorities and then prepare some scheme that shall exactly suit us.'

In 1866 Sir William Wiseman came to Australia in HMS *Curacao* and in respect of the proposed forts said:

> They would require few men, which is important when the disposable troops are limited. With heavy guns they would prevent any bombardment, and oblige any wooden ships to leave the spot. There should also be a battery of light guns, the lighter the better, to move along the coast under the sandhills and assist the infantry in opposing any troops that might be landed…Commander Parkin's plan of gunboats…would be very costly and not so effective as the towers on shore…One gunboat, however, would be of great utility to follow disabled ships and assist in defending the entrance of the creek…

Plans of the turrets recommended by Sir William Wiseman were prepared and carefully examined by Royal Engineers but 'no turrets for coast defence had been tried by the British government' and, in this state of uncertainty, the colonial government was advised to proceed 'one turret at a time.' By November 1867 a battery of Whitworth guns were on the way to Port Adelaide and the two heavy Armstrong guns, with the revolving turret, in which they were to be worked, were 'being got ready for shipment.'

The first fortress guns were landed at the SA Company's wharf and after lying for years in a shed in Nile Street, Port Adelaide, where there were neither carriages nor ammunition suited to them in the colony - nor could carriages be extemporised, but had to be imported from England. Finally, they were mounted in Fort Largs, but later condemned and removed. In passing, two Russian guns from Sebastopol were landed from the *Benevue* and after being in the Botanic Gardens for many years were removed to the parade ground at the rear of government house.

Objections were made in the Legislative Council to the effect that the shock of a 200-pounder would throw down any masonry that could be built in this colony and that it would be useless to erect such a structure in the absence of large blocks of granite:

> It seemed in fact to be supposed that we might as well attempt to construct an imitation of the Pyramids on the Park Lands, or to set up a Sphinx in Victoria Square as to build a fortification near Port Adelaide.

Fortunately, this objection was founded on a misapprehension!

Due to government procrastination, discussed in another chapter, the matter lay dormant until October 1876 when Mr James Boucaut's arguments for the commencement of defence works were denied and eventuated in £15,000 being struck from the Estimates, but in the following month an important debate took place when Mr Bower, the member for Port Adelaide, moved a motion that the government should, without delay, mount the two guns lying at Port Adelaide; this was duly carried.

Fort Glanville and Fort Largs came into being at a cost of about £9,000 each and an abortive beginning was made with Fort Glenelg, the fate of which is discussed in another chapter. Glanville dates from 1880 and Largs from 1884. The siege guns, two of 10 inches, firing a 400 pound projectile at Glanville and two of 9 inches with a 250 pound shell at Largs, were retrieved from stores at Port Adelaide, where they had lain for more than ten years. They had been the subject of protest, jibe and doggerel, and, finally, at the cost of toil at capstan and winch, hauled the few hundred yards over the sandhills skirting Military Road to their emplacement. The foundation, military occupation and other historical factors surrounding the forts are discussed in the next two chapters.

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Chapter 7

Fort Glanville

The way the fort is at the present a warship sighting it… would silence it at once... They have cut away their very best defensive work and made an actual and conspicuous target for a warship.

The construction of Fort Glanville was undertaken by Mr J. Robb at a cost of about £9,000 and work commenced in October 1878. A railway was laid down to join the Semaphore line with the site of the works and used for the purpose of carrying the greater part of the required materials, all of which, excepting only the lime, was conveyed to the scene of the operation, while water was laid on from Semaphore. By March of 1879 about 450,000 Victorian bricks lay on the sandhills near the temporary railway, besides a large quantity of stone and gravel intended to be used in the manufacture of concrete.

The sand used was brought from the River Torrens and the lime from Gawler, while two on-site running mortar mills were employed for the purpose of grinding the lime and making concrete and mortar. The foundations were of concrete, while a ditch in front of the escarpment was 15 feet wide at the bottom, sloping up on both sides. An underground passage, 20 feet wide, afforded means of communication with the caponier (covered passage) and a similar approach was provided for the magazine, the entrance to each passage being inside the walls of the fort. The laboratory, where carriages were manufactured, was placed at the southern corner of the fort. About 50 men were employed on the site during the construction period, while the works occupied an area of ground measuring 300 by 299 feet.

One serious difficulty to be contended with was the sand drift and everyone acquainted with the coastline was able to appreciate how troublesome it could become. This was overcome by following a suggestion from Dr Schomburgk, Director of the Botanic Gardens. The drift was covered with seaweed under which seeds and cuttings were planted from plants indigenous to the area. This scheme had already been tried at Glenelg where a fine reserve was made out of a formerly shifting sandhill. The shape of the fort was that of a segment of a circle, the guns forming the sector and a low-lying building forming the base. In this building resided the Master Gunner, Sergeant-Major Hanson, and his assistant-foreman, Mr Lawley, whose business was to look after the fort.

The opening ceremony took place on Saturday, 2 October 1880, although the fort had been ready some three weeks before; the delay being on account of a difficulty attending the mooring of a target in the form of a quarter-cask, with a flag attached. The practice firing was carried out by four guns, while the target was some 3,500 yards distant. The shells were brought from the magazine hard by and put on a truck which ran on rails to a position beneath the muzzle of the cannon as it ran back on its platform to a position, bringing the gun's muzzle inside the parapet. A small derrick was used to lift the ponderous projectiles into the mouth for ramming home. The great guns worked relentlessly, recoiling back on their platforms and being well checked by three hydraulic buffers at each explosion and then running easily up again under the power of the artillerymen.

Fort Glanville

Mr A.T. Saunders, an eye-witness to the opening ceremony, and a long time resident of the district, reflected in 1919:

> On Saturday, 1[*sic*] October 1880 the first guns were fired. I lived near the fort and signed a written protest against the guns having fired, as we thought our windows would be all broken; but we were wrong - no harm was done then or thereafter. There were two guns, each 22 tons and two 64-pounder guns, the latter made in 1878; the big guns had been recently made. Sixteen shots were fired, but one of the big guns misfired once; so its mate had an extra shot. Sergeants Oswald, Marshall, Bridgeman and Bombardier Dyke were each in charge of a gun. The target was a floating cask, only 3,500 yards distant, and the shooting was wretched, although a man was on the sea end of the Semaphore jetty and signalled where each shot fell.
>
> When Fort Glanville was first built there was at the front and sides an elaborate ditch protected by a caponiere [*sic*]; but the back of the fort was open (a loop-holed stockade of wood was put up after) and from the adjacent high sandhills the guns, which were on a barbette, were exposed to attack by riflemen. A friend of mine (a German, who had served through the Franco-Prussian war) caustically said: 'This fort should have a notice board saying that it must not be attacked in the rear.' The two original 64-pounders from Fort Glanville are now in Brougham Place Park.

At subsequent shooting exercises much amusement was afforded by the behaviour of a 'regimental dog', owned by Mr Turner, Special Magistrate. It took an extraordinary interest in the fort and whenever it saw the men marching to it, he started off to the scene of the operations, went in and, after carefully watched the loading, ran outside to watch the shot, generally stationing himself almost in the line of fire. He watched the course of the ball with as much interest as the men and as soon as a shell exploded rushed around into the fort to superintend the next loading. He was an immense favourite with officers and men.

The defence authorities, ever anxious to oversee and control its new installations, sent out regular inspection parties and, in 1882, Sergeant Astles led one that traversed the recent fortifications along the seaboard and reported as follows:

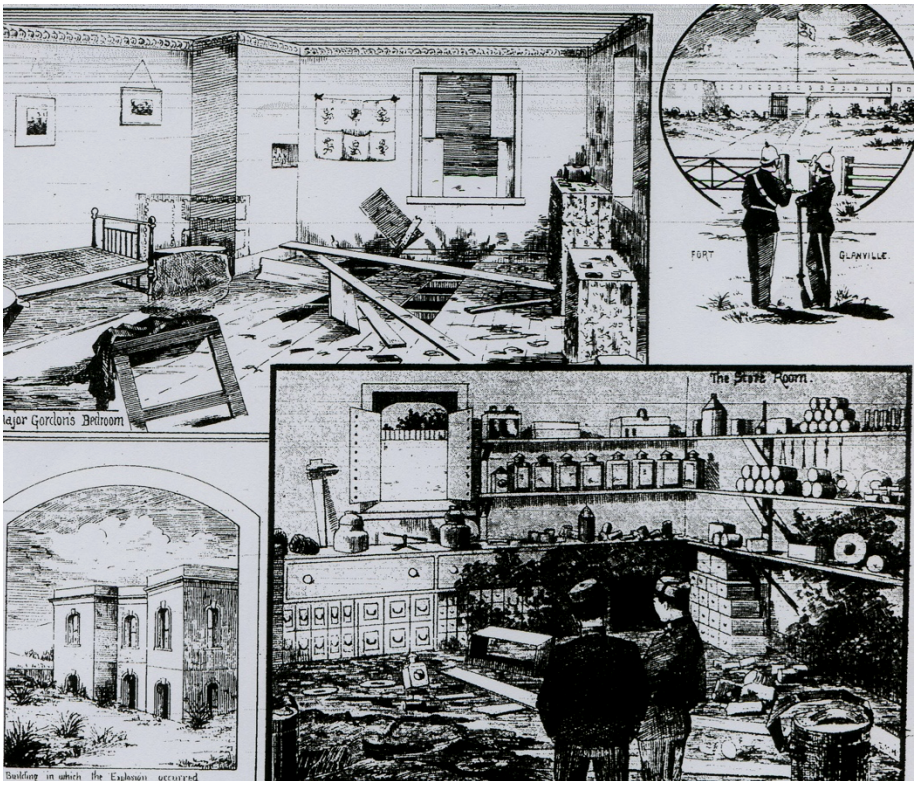
> The track from Jervois Bridge to Fort Glanville abounds in holes big enough for rifle pits, but it is called a road, nevertheless - the people of Glanville have such poetic imaginations. The first halt - official, not compulsory, for the horses halted unofficially 20 times - was made at Fort Glanville, where very necessary and well-devised improvements have been made. The sandhills at the rear and flanks of the fort have been levelled so as to prevent an enemy, who might have landed, commanding the interior of the fort with their fire, as they would have done with the high sandhills formerly in the vicinity. Now, the guns from the fort have a wider lateral range north and south, while from the stockades on the land side a sweeping fire of musketry could be brought to bear…Fort Glanville is now garrisoned by permanent artillerymen, who have joined for five years, and appear to be fine strapping fellows, already acquiring that peculiar 'setting-up' brought about by soldiers' drill. They seem full of enthusiasm, like their quarters, enjoy their drill, and altogether promise to be good, reliable gunners.
>
> There are 13 of them at present; one young man is a Majuba Hill hero and was with General Kitchener in the memorable march from Kandahar to Cabul [*sic*]…A steady young soldier who has seen active service is an acquisition in a garrison of greenhorns, because he carries a certain amount of prestige, and can keep up the enthusiasm of the men by tales of 'moving incidents by flood and field', besides showing the example of discipline and drill. After a look around the fort, which is kept in beautiful order by Master Gunner Hanson, the party took to the perilous passage of the road again…Reached the first gun emplacement not far from the fort. This consists of a breastwork of sand bricks with a kind of concrete platform and a gun track leading thereto.
>
> By the way, round the region of Fort Glanville the commandant has had planted a quantity of cacti, prickly pears and other hardy plants, to bind the sand as well as act as an obstruction to an assaulting party. We did not traverse the whole length of the military road because some of it passes through private property and wire fences prevent traffic. These can be removed when the road is needed, but at present serve to keep unnecessary traffic off the road and protect it. Landward of the military road there is excellent cover for infantry and the sandhills, which for several miles nearer Glenelg run in a double line, form fine defences, for they could be lined with sharpshooters, if only we had sufficient, who ought to be able to do great execution…
>
> The next gun emplacement was near the Grange…We came across an encampment of Afghans looking very wild and picturesque, in the desolate swamp, with a tangled growth of scrub for a background… The next voluntary stoppage was at Henley Beach where a third platform is situated, but it would require a keen eye to detect it, for the line of sand ridge seems unbroken from seaward and the narrow gun track affords only a slight clue…Number 5 has a range nearer Glenelg and a particularly substantial bridge built across the Patawalonga gives communication with the road. Here the larrikins have left more of their mischievous propensities, several of the stones forming the breastwork having been wantonly pulled down. No. 6, nearer Glenelg, has a good range, north and west, but southward is stopped by the Baths, therefore it will be necessary to have another emplacement the other side of the town…

The day to day to day duties of the men were not onerous but, it must be said, appeared to be more than monotonous. There was an early parade at 7.15 am when the men 'performed' setting-up drill for half an hour. Then there was drill again from 9 to 11, consisting of gun, carbine, sword and repository drill, shifting guns and a variety of other work 'tending to call forth the quality of smartness.' In the afternoon there was a further installment of drill, elementary exercises, etc., while spare time was filled up with study for annual examinations; there was school, twice a week, while Saturday mornings were devoted to general cleaning up.

The fort was open to visitors on Sundays and the officers in charge were only too happy to show them and their friends through, explaining the various departments. On 23 October 1887 a serious accident occurred when Sergeant-Major Slane, one of the principal officers of the fort, was taking five male civilians through Fort Glanville. He was with them in the artillery room, situated beneath the 'ordinary' ground, adjoining a kitchen. In the store were shelves and a counter upon which were lodged ammunition, magazine lamps and

candles, primers and small gear belonging to the artillery service. The Sergeant-Major was showing the visitors a friction tube which was a hollow tube of copper with meal powder, pierced with a conical hole, and 'carrying the flash.' The top was supplied with a detonating substance and a friction bar was attached. The Sergeant-Major placed his foot on the tube, pulled it and by some means, when an explosion occurred and the flash from the tube ignited some sections of the fuses, etc., lying nearby.

The Sergeant-Major staggered through the kitchen and headed for the ground above, his clothes all ablaze, when another officer got hold of him, put him in an adjoining wash house, and drenched him with water. Many of the visitors were also burning and they were got through the windows as soon as possible; while this was in progress the skin of their hands was dragged off. There was no time to lose and a chain of men with buckets of water was formed from barrack square to the store below. A large number of magazine candles were burning furiously and fuses alight. The fire was at last extinguished and the scene presented afterwards was a total wreckage of almost everything, except the walls.



Aftermath of the explosion

One man from the fort rode hastily up to Mr Ward's chemist shop at Semaphore 'without a hat!' and 'eagerly asked for a doctor or a chemist.' Finding no one there he rode on to Port Adelaide intimating to a few bystanders that there had been an explosion at the fort. The news spread and rumours gained currency. The messenger reached Dr Toll, who at once proceeded to the fort where he treated the men who were suffering from burns about the face, neck, hands and arms. Apart from the Sergeant-Major the other victims were, J. Turner, butcher, of Exeter; J.G. Stevenson of Angaston; T. Heddle, landlord of the Lord Exmouth Hotel; J. Irvine of Truro and J. Kurbines of Kapunda.

In 1885, when the Volunteer Military Force was denied the satisfaction of 'sweltering under a Soudan sun and showing El Mahdi what they were made of', Major-General Downes, their commandant, determined to give them a stiff night's work over a waste of sand well calculated to test their powers and patience. A more dismal, sandy waste, with swamp to vary it, than the stretch of district between Grange and Semaphore could hardly be found here for fighting over. It was ground broken into sand ridges, hollows, occasional levels, a winding creek, a ford or two and a bridge, with here and there clumps of trees affording excellent cover for skirmishers, besides being bounded by a high range of sand hills barring it from the sea

beach. Altogether it afforded plenty of scope for the exercise of intelligence and judgment, not to say endurance on the part of the commanding officers as well as the men they directed.

Another facet of this exercise was an assault against the fort itself. On reaching Glanville the attacking force was observed and the guns of the fort were opened upon them. They were then marching in columns of fours, and if a shell had fallen amongst them there would have been some serious casualties to report. On the land side of the fort there was an open plain and Major-General Downes extended his men in a semi-circle across this preparatory to the attack. M Company, under Captain Stutley, was ordered to creep through the trees to the right. From the loopholes and ramparts of the fort a heavy fire was poured into the ranks of the men and in actual warfare, had they attempted any such exploit as this without artillery, all must have been annihilated.

They advanced, lay down and opened fire, but against the thick walls of the fort the bullets from their rifles crushed harmlessly against the ramparts.. The cavalry had got under the wall of the fort without being seen and pressed the attack on that side. The scene was a 'grand and a picturesque one', and unattended as it was by the horrors of warfare, it would have raised the enthusiasm of any Quaker able to appreciate spectacular effects. It was impossible with such a force to capture the stronghold and, beaten off, the commanding officer caused his men to cease firing and brought the proceedings of the day to a close. The men were admitted to the fort, water supplied to them and they were refreshed. Later, the march home commenced.

Portion of the land between Grange and Semaphore South, known as 'The Pinery' was the site of stirring clashes between rival defence forces in training exercises aimed at repelling any invasion by the Russians which, as related in earlier chapters, was considered to be imminent throughout the latter half of the 19th century. To ward off the 'red peril' two forts were built and 'another planned for the Grange area', hence the name 'Fort Street' that still applies today in local nomenclature.

In September 1894 inhabitants of Grange and 'especially a few residents near that dismal swamp region of sand, swamp and teatree', that comprise part of the modern day Grange Golf Club, were surprised by 'the sudden sounds of seeming strife that disturbed the serenity of those solitudes of Saturday night.' The rattle of rifle fire and the heavy boom of 68-pounders from Fort Glanville, coupled with men shouting, and the 'indications of a sharp struggle going on between two opposing forces contending for the possession of the ford and bridge across the Port River at Grange, made not a bad imitation of real conflict… but the good folk of the seaboard are getting accustomed to such alarms, all ending in smoke and glory.'

The soldiers had a long march through miles of mud and stretches of water, sometimes knee deep, from their assembly point at Fort Glanville. The general idea was that the enemy had captured Grange and was preparing to march to Adelaide by way of the ford at Grange. Major Fiveash led his men along Military Road which was 'about as unmilitary as any foeman could wish to hamper the land forces', for some miles until they reached the river. A short distance from the ford a halt was made and a reconnoitering party went out sometime later 'decorated up to the knees with elaborate samples of swamp mud.'

A fierce attack was made through the creeks and lagoons within 'The Pinery', the only casualty being a private who 'scorched his eyes owing to his rifle going off by accident as he held the muzzle upwards.' Finally, the enemy was brought to heel in the vicinity of Hindmarsh, whence both the victors and the vanquished departed to their respective hearths where they lived to fight again another day.

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Chapter 8

Fort Largs

> *Largs Bay fort in its present condition could easily be captured. That fact, as is pointed out by a correspondent has been conclusively proved by the recent military manoeuvres at the place.*

During the latter half of the 19th century there were several proposals for the defence of Port Adelaide. A Martello tower was decided upon in the 1860s when it was proposed that a war vessel of the Hussar class, built about 1866 for the Peruvian government, should be bought - there is an account of the great fight between the Hussar and the Chilean navy in the *Observer* on 21 May 1898.

Until 1880, what is now Largs Bay was a jumbled mass of sandhills; overseas ships called at Glenelg and one or two farmhouses were the only sign of life on what was, aided and abetted by plans for a proposed fort, to become a favourite spot for land speculators of the early 1880s. Lefevre Peninsula had been linked to Port Adelaide by the Jervois Bridge and across it trains ran to Semaphore - two points that that helped Largs Bay salesmen.

When the land boom began buyers extended rapidly north of Semaphore jetty and the Largs Bay Land Company was formed. A private railway line was built connecting the new town with Glanville and as the company had no rolling stock, the government leased engines and carriages to it. On 21 January 1882 a ceremony was held in the new township in the sandhills, when the first pile of a jetty was driven. A campaign was commenced to have overseas liners berth at Largs Bay and a telephone line was laid down to a buoy so that ships could keep in touch with the mainland.

The purpose of the proposed battery to the southward of Semaphore (Fort Largs) was to prevent a vessel armed with guns of long range lying to the westward and throwing shot and shell into Port Adelaide, but it was not supposed that it would be of any use in repelling a hostile force attempting to effect a landing on the coast. Indeed, in retrospect, the castigation of an enlightened citizen many years later suggested to many that the expenditure was a blatant waste of public funds:

> Fort Largs is in the wrong position. If it were placed there to prevent cruisers entering the river then all I have to say is that the money was thrown away, as no cruiser captain would be fool enough to put his ship into such a trap where she could be blown up with torpedoes, as easy as a basket of eggs could be broken with a big stick. If the forts were placed there for defence of the shipping in the Port then again I say it was a waste of money, as a heavily armed cruiser could stand off and blow Port Adelaide to bits without being touched by the present armament of Largs or Glanville Forts… [and] could smash the two forts, bombard Adelaide… without loss of a life.

Early in April 1883 the Permanent Artillery was employed in getting the ordnance and ammunition from Port Adelaide to the site of Largs Bay fort. Although it was not to be completed for about five months, the ground where the guns were stored was required for building purposes. Two 84-pounder guns (muzzle loading) and two 12-ton Woolwich pattern had to be conveyed, besides some 300 rounds of ammunition, platforms, carriages, etc. The work all went well until Military Road was reached when fears were entertained as to its soundness. It was not, however, until after crossing the Largs Bay railway that any difficulty was met with the narrow road which, every hundred yards or so, was heavy with sand. The wheels of the waggon sank to the axletrees in two or three places, but the gunners soon lifted the vehicle by means of hydraulic jacks and a fresh start was made. It was found, however, that the horses were 'done in' and about 600 yards from the fort. Accordingly, Lieutenant Gordon decided to leave off and make a fresh start the next day.

A team of horses from Messrs Graves & Co awaited them when they arrived from Fort Glanville where they had bivouacked overnight and, after proceeding about 100 yards, the horses swerved and the waggon, getting off the track, sank deeper than ever. The horses were then sent back and the gunners took the guns off the conveyance and returned to the Port, lifted the other gun on to it and set off again but, alas, the

treacherous sand again defeated them. The guns were then both left on the road and, the next day 'the permanent artillery parbuckled [them] along the road to the fort.'

The fort differed slightly from Fort Glanville in the interior arrangements, but the general outline was similar, but was to be six feet higher. The fort contractor was Mr Evans and the contract estimate £9,098-19s; the structure was begun in January 1883 and, when completed, equipped with two nine-inch guns and two 80-pounders as flank guns. The guns on the left flank commanded the river and the land approach, as well as to seaward. Those on the right flank swept the mouth of the river and commanded a good range seaward.

The fort was surrounded by a deep ditch, V-shaped, differing in respect from Fort Glanville which was flat bottomed. The sword blade grass, so plentiful thereabouts, which, by the way, an enterprising colonist once tried to turn to account as a manufacture (see a note under 'Sources' below), was laid thickly on the slope to bind the sand and was itself kept down by a layer of silt. In the immediate neighbourhood there were not many houses whose stock of crockery could be cracked by the thunder of the guns, but the nine-inch pieces were quite equal to rattling the cups in the Largs Bay Hotel, about a mile distant.

On 19 April 1884 its guns were fired for the first time and a good deal of excitement was evident because the two guns used were those 'time honoured pieces' imported in 1868 and left to lie in 'solitary grandeur at the port.' The Engineer-in-Chief and Major Jervois visited the fort in March 1885 and inspected the work in progress on the barracks and other works. However, in view of the Russian scare of the time it was decided to create sandbag defences at the rear of the fort so as to prevent it being taken by a sudden attack by a hostile force of infantry.

When completed, the total force housed in the fort was 44 men, but there was not enough room for sleeping quarters under the main roof, so six tents were erected in the courtyard to accommodate twelve men. New platforms were constructed for gun replacements in 1890 in the form of six-inch breech loading Armstrong's that had been mounted in the Armament Hall of the Jubilee Exhibition in 1886.

Lay of the Port Guns

Beneath a shed in a seaport town,
I chanced one day to find
Two massive guns of several tons
A very peculiar find.

Their make was heavy, there bore was big,
So heavy and big were they
That I crept inside the muzzle wide
Of the nearest as it lay.

Then I heard the wind as it whistled past
Make a sort of sobbing moan,
And an eerie cry came trembling by
In a mournful monotone.

But I kept me still in that sturdy gun
As it lay on the gravelly ground,
And I heard it speak in a husky shriek
And startled I turned me round.

Its tones were husky in its throat,
As though it had caught a cold,
And it painfully, as it seemed to me,
This pitiful yarn unrolled :-

'Oh, we were the guns sent out here,
To guard Australia's shores,
But they have us to rust in the dirt and dust,
But still it went on in a wearisome tone -
'Why me and my brother chum
Have cost you a pot of gold, God wot;
You never would guess at the sum.

'For we are the guns that were sent out here
To guard Australia's shore,
And they have left us to rust in the dirt and dust,
We shall never be mounted more.

''Tis many a year since we landed here,
And down in the clinging clay,
Where we Whitworth's fell, for a weary spell
Begrimed and becalmed we lay.

'Then shelter at last in this shed we got,
And here we must long remain
To corrode and rust in the dirt and dust,
'Till we can't be of use again.

'A little sponging would sooth our throats,
But vain is our plaintive plea,
And our resonant roar will be heard no more,
For honeycombed soon we'll be.

'The gross neglect and a deep disgrace
That here in the busy Port,
We loll our length and spend our strength

We shall never be mounted more.’

Then it back recoils with a jingling jerk
That shook up the dust in my eye,
And I couldn’t help blinking as I lay a-thinking
How long it had been passed by.
When we might be defending a fort.

‘For we are the guns that were sent out here
To guard Australia’s shore,
And they leave us to spoil in the slimy soil,
We shall never be mounted more.’

I left those guns in their rusting place,
And I thought as I homeward went,
With a cynical smile, ’tis exactly the style
Of our sapient government.

Sources

Register, 8 November 1876, p. 4, 5 December 1876, p. 6, 19 April 1883, p. 6, 9 August 1883, p. 6, 21 April 1884, p. 6, 31 March 1885, p. 4, 1 April 1885, p. 5, 29 January 1890, p. 4, 3 October 1924, p. 14, *Express & Telegraph*, 6 July 1888, p. 4 . A proposal to manufacture paper from *Psittichoschaenus erythrocarpus*, a tussocky grass growing ‘plentifully on the sea coast’, is discussed in the *Advertiser*, 13 September 1870, p. 2; also see *Express & Telegraph*, 2 February 1872, p. 2.

Chapter 9

South Australia's Navy

> *There was a deal of scepticism abroad in the community and even among the nautical public of Australia opinions were evenly divided as to whether a floating armament on a small scale would be of any use to the colonies. Indeed, it may have been better to have obtained a couple of gunboats at about two thirds of the cost of the* Protector*, for it was all but certain that the arrival would be a very costly luxury*.

In the early 1850s, Governor Henry Young examined ways of protecting the colony of South Australia and informed the Home authorities that 'it would accord great satisfaction and increased confidence to this government if the English pendant was more frequently seen in these waters, and if a naval force, more proportioned to the nature and amount of the funds available in the colonies, were established on the Australian coast.' However, it would appear that his submission was looked upon as altogether too 'startling' to be even considered by the Lords of the Admiralty.

In 1862, Colonel F. Blyth, of the Volunteer Military Force, recommended, as additional protection for the colony, the stationing of a gunboat 'at the outer bar' of the Port River. Three years later Commander Parkin advocated six gun boats, each carrying a gun capable of firing a 100-pound shot - this notion was prompted by the exploits of the ironclad *Monitor*, used by the northern states in the American civil war.

At the same time Mr H.B.T. Strangways, MP, went one better by suggesting the procurement of a 'quick turret ship' capable of carrying two 150-pound shot guns and able to steam at 18-20 knots - a rather colossal speed at that time. At this time Sir William Wiseman arrived in the colony from the United Kingdom and, following the receipt of his recommendations, which are discussed in another chapter, the matter of procuring a war vessel remained in abeyance for more than ten years.

In 1867 the government considered the introduction of a naval training ship upon which an industrial establishment for the reception of boys 'liable to be sent to gaol on the commission of petty offences.' However, the Editor of the *Advertiser* was one of many voices opposed to the idea:

> For those who like it - for the embryo Nelsons who may be found sailing their boats in the gutters of our towns - nothing would be better than a nautical school. But there may be 'village Hampdens', 'mute inglorious Miltons' and all kinds of undeveloped celebrities to be found amongst our precocious juveniles. Why, then, should the whole of them be doomed to the one occupation of 'going down to the sea in ships.'

Despite this plea those in favour of the proposal proved to be in the majority and it was decided to go ahead with the purchase of a suitable vessel:

> The vessel should be so rigged as to afford facilities for the boys becoming thoroughly acquainted with the business of a seaman. Industrial trades, such as sail making, shoemaking and tailoring should also be conducted on board, so that boys may learn useful arts which would be of service to them whether they followed the sea as a profession or not. In this way, while the ship was a reformatory, it would also be an industrial school at the same time,

for such a scheme existed at the time in Victoria on the vessel *Nelson* and:

> When a boy is sent on board, the first thing done to him is to give him a bath and scrubbing. He is then put into a miniature sailor's suit and drafted off into a mess where, with a little coaching from his new companions, he soon drops into the routine of the ship… There are eight naval instructors and two schoolmasters employed, together with cooks and other men… The naval part of the training, however, being of so little practical use, it is a great pity the boys are not taught trades…

Subsequently, the hulk *Fitzjames* was purchased from its Victorian owner, towed to South Australia and anchored off the coast where she served as, among other things, a 'training' ship from 1876 to 1891. Although South Australia has an extensive seaboard, in reality she offered little scope for a naval or maritime career. Accordingly, for some time prior to 1891 it was realised that a land reformatory would

best meet the requirements of the colony. Finally, on 28 May 1891 the rickety old hulk ceased to be the scene of reformatory work and was vacated by its inmates for quarters at Magill.

In 1876 another wave of enthusiasm or fright seemed to have aroused the sleepers, for a defence commission was appointed and it recommended the purchase of three gunboats carrying 18 ton guns. The commissioners also voiced the opinion that, in peace time, these gunboats might be used as tugs, a suggestion which must certainly have aroused the ire of any real navy man.

The Treasurer, John Colton, suggested that a turret ship similar to the Victorian *Cerberus* might be useful and asked the price of such a vessel. He passed the question on to the Agent-General in London, F.S. Dutton, adding that all that was needed was 'a movable raft able to crawl about and defy boats.' Mr Dutton consulted Mr E.J. Reed, chief constructor for the British navy, and learned that a 1,000 ton ironclad carrying one 25 ton gun would cost £69,000 while a smaller unarmed vessel could be constructed for £29,500; this information was carefully pigeon-holed in the South Australian government's archive.

All preceding recommendations were eclipsed by that of W.F.D. Jervois for, in 1877, he declared that safety could only be obtained by the possession of a vessel superior to any that 'seemed likely to appear.' Consequently, he advised the purchase of a 2,500 ton ironclad having 10-inch armour and heavy guns for about £150,000, which sum naturally discouraged taxpayers and caused naval defences to slumber for another five years.

The name *Protector* struck a responsive chord in many colonists' hearts, since for a score of years she was the colony's navy - years when the Chief Secretary had the added portfolio of Minister of Defence and Largs was a colonial Chatham in embryo. One of Governor Jervois's expensive crazes, she left Newcastle on Tyne on 27 June 1884 and arrived at the Semaphore anchorage on 30 September with Captain Walcot and a crew of 80, following stops at Gibraltar and Malta for coaling purposes.

She was a screw steel gunboat with a rig of a topsail schooner, her dimensions being overall length, 185 feet; length in water line, 180 feet; beam, 30 feet; draught, 12 feet six inches and displacement between 900 and 1,000 tons. Her armament comprised of one 8-inch gun in the bow, four of similar character on the broadside and five machine guns - all fitted with carriages, working gear and all accessories, including ammunition. There were also five of 'the terrible Gatling guns' and she was driven by two pairs of condensing engines of about 750 horsepower each. She could race and out range the *Nelson*, Victoria's cumbersome flagship of the Australian station, a vessel five times her size.

The circumstances under which the *Protector* was ordered was that in the first half of 1882 Europe was in a most unquiet state chiefly owing to the Egyptian difficulty, and a general feeling of insecurity prevailed in those colonies where defences did not exist or were insufficient. This colony felt the infection and Sir William Jervois, our then governor, suggested, as mentioned previously, the acquisition of a warship which, in conjunction with the forts, could be fairly effective in coping with inquisitorial cruisers attempting a raid on our chief port. On a previous occasion he had recommended an iron clad, and he did so a second time but, knowing it was unlikely that Parliament would consent to such a costly luxury, he opted for a vessel of light draught capable of steaming 14 knots per hour and carrying a heavy armament.

William F.D. Jervois (1821-1897), Lieutenant-General, obtained a commission in the Royal Engineers in 1839. After service in South Africa from 1841 to 1848 he returned to England and in 1852 was involved in building fortifications at Alderney, one of the Channel Islands. He later became an adviser to the British Government on 'designs of the defences of dockyards and naval bases at home and abroad.' He was an associate of the Institution of Engineers. James Meadows Rendel (1799-1856), who lived for many years at Plymouth, was an engineer who, in addition to the construction of bridges and railways, reported on, designed and constructed harbours. In 1850 he commenced making a new harbour at St Peter Port, Guernsey. He joined the Institution of Engineers in 1824 and served as its president in 1852 and 1853. He had four sons all of whom were engineers, while three of them were partners in the firm of Sir William Armstrong at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, which built naval vessels.

As discussed in a previous chapter Governor Jervois was in England for some months in 1878 and while there had been approached by shipbuilders, who had heard that the South Australian Government wished to obtain a warship. In 1882 he submitted a memorandum to that body on 'Vessels of War for the Defence of South Australia' in which he stated that 'after due consideration of the proposals' 'by some of the best ship-building firms in England' submitted to him 'about four years ago', he recommended that the Agent-General be directed 'to obtain drawings and a tender for the supply of the vessel... from the firm of Sir

William Armstrong and Co.' All things considered, the government thought a medium-sized vessel the most suitable for the colony and, accordingly, in July 1882, authority was given for the construction of the ship.

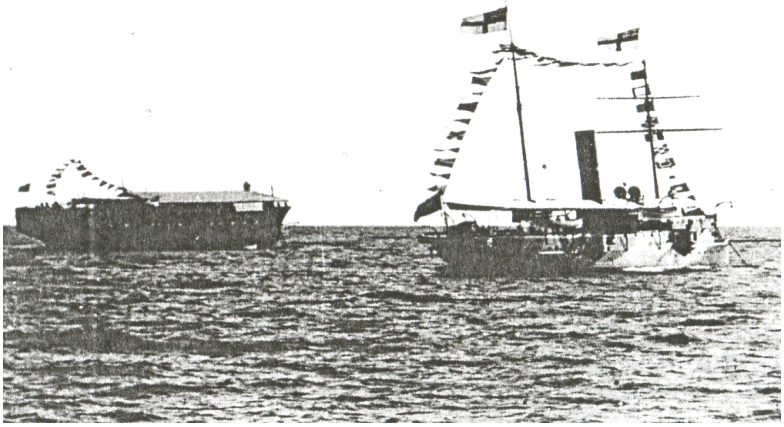
During negotiations there were many people in the colony who regarded with disfavour everything that savoured of warlike preparation, and who deprecated the introduction of the engines of strife and bloodshed, whether by land or sea, upon scenes which had, hitherto, happily been free from the horrors of war. Australia was, indeed, the only considerable portion of the earth's surface on which the influences of what is called 'civilised warfare' had never wrought devastation and death, and those who deprecated the rise of a warlike spirit among the people of Australia were, so far, acting wisely. But when defence alone was the object aimed at, the matter wore quite a different aspect and the comparative activity, characterising the military and naval preparations at this time, did not in any sense indicate a desire for war, but a determination to repel its approach.

As an aside for those readers interested in South Australian nomenclature, when Governor Jervois named the town of Rendelsham on 2 December 1879, he had been considering a proposal to which three of the Rendel brothers had probably contributed. On 16 November 1882 the South Australian Government signed a contract authorising the construction of HMCS *Protector*. Therefore, it is believed there is little doubt that the South-East town was named in honour of the Rendel family - 'ham' is Old English for 'home'; thus, the literal translation of 'Rendelsham' is 'Rendel's Home'.

During a war scare in the 1880s a temporary torpedo station was established at the North Arm 'on the site of the old fort' and, later, a substantial building was erected where all the gear in connection with torpedo warfare was stored. The galvanised iron building, 110 feet long, was divided into three compartments, namely, a store, an electrical lecture room and a dwelling for the torpedo officer, Mr Parnell. It was built by old reservists who reclaimed the site with mud trundled in barrows along planks. In the process many of the men fell into the mud to the accompaniment of loud laughter of their mates. Unfortunately, the whole of the area was submerged at high water spring tides.

A jetty ran out from the station into the river and a light tramway was laid down from the building to the sea end of the jetty to facilitate the dispatch or landing of goods. The whole place breathed war. At one end of the shed the implements of slaughter were present in bulk and, individually, there were haversacks, waterbags, belts, leggings, swords, rifles, pistols and other deadly weapons. From the back of the station there was a road running towards the False Arm and, in case of necessity, this could have been connected with the mainland by means of a light bridge. In earlier years a bridge did exist there but it was either burnt down or fell away and all that remained was a few piles. The station was extended in 1890 the whole of the work being undertaken by the men of the *Protector,* with the exception of a few stokers. A large amount of the wood used had been stored at the station for some considerable time, having been purchased for blocking the river during a war scare.

In 1885 there were no torpedoes in the colony but, having considered the matter, Messrs A.M. Simpson & Son stated that they could make cases for ordinary torpedoes if the government would fill them with the necessary combustibles. All the men from the *Protector* received instruction in torpedo work and each course of lessons lasted about six weeks. The members of each class left the Port in the *Protector's* boat each morning and rowed down and back. By the 1930s a few heaps of stones and an overturned gun on the river bank south of the North Arm was all that remained of the Port Adelaide torpedo station.

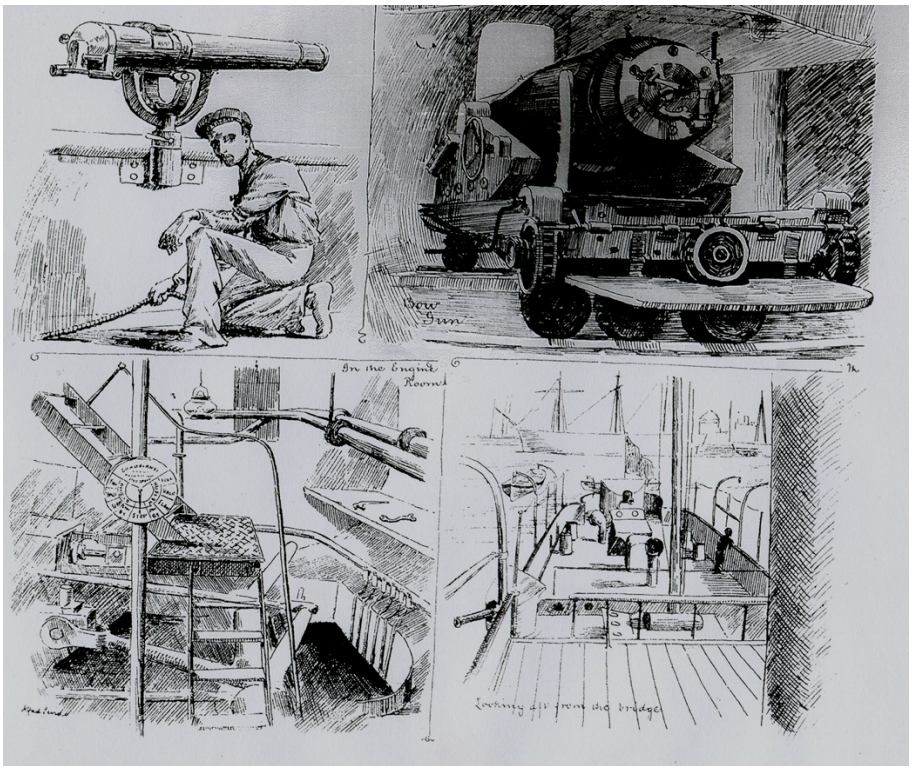


The hulk *Fitzjames* and HMCS *Protector* at Largs Bay – circa 1885

In 1888 there came to be thrust upon the *Protector* a very interesting and absorbing duty. The *Star of Greece*, a beautiful sailing ship, was wrecked in a south-west gale at Port Willunga and 17 of its crew of 28 were lost. Many hours after the ship foundered there crawled on to the scene a tired out old man, Frederick Gaskell, the Harbour-Master at Normanville, together with a horse and cart and rocket apparatus that had been housed at Normanville. It was generally conceded that an early arrival with an efficient crew and rocket apparatus would have saved most, if not all, of the crew; indeed, the *Protector* itself was left at anchor and to many this was the height of folly when her lifeboats could have been used in rescue attempts had she been ordered to the scene of the wreck. The result of the outcry over this tragedy was that the Naval Department was made responsible for the lifesaving service, formerly under the Marine Board. This meant the maintenance and supply of 18 rocket stations and four lifeboat stations.

From the first, with one exception, the *Protector* was very fortunate in avoiding serious accidents, but the exception occurred at Glenelg in 1885 when she was firing the anniversary day salute. The breach of a gun blew open and a young able seaman named Lewis was killed and another man seriously hurt.

In 1892 Captain Walcot left on a year's leave and, with the economic 'crash' of 1893, and in the absence of enemy privateers, the navy spent idle months at moorings in the Port Adelaide river, for diminished naval enthusiasm implied reduced parliamentary grants for cruises and the complement was reduced to half, with a handful of training reservists - chiefly Port Adelaide waterside workers.



Sketches on board HMCS Protector

On the 6 August 1900 the *Protector* sailed from Port Adelaide with a crew of 104 to take part in quelling the Boxer rising in China. Although she did not participate in any actual fighting, because of her shallow draught and speed she carried important despatches - wireless not then being in use.

The *Protector* well deserves to have her name perpetuated in the annals of the Royal Australian Navy, as two men who played a leading part in the development of the commonwealth service were associated with the ship, namely, Captain, later Vice-Admiral, Sir William Creswell and Engineer Vice-Admiral, Sir William Clarkson, who was chief engineer on the China trip. When the federation of Australian colonies occurred, state-owned warships were taken over by Commonwealth authorities to form the nucleus of the Royal Australian Navy and for some time the *Protector* was used to train South Australian and Victorian drafts of compulsory naval trainees.

With the *Protector* from this State went a small torpedo boat. It had an unpaid volunteer crew of real 'death or glory boys' as the torpedoes used in those days were attached to a spar projecting from the bow of the boat. The active service of the boat - and crew - would apparently have terminated with one torpedo explosion. The torpedo boat was purchased at Hobart and towed to Port Adelaide by the *Protector* and early in the voyage the little craft turned over in a heavy sea and had to be righted at Port Arthur.

As to the ultimate fate of the pride of the colonial navy, the chartroom, steering wheel and bell of the *Protector* in the Birkenhead naval depot and a six inch gun at Semaphore jetty were memorials to the ship. She was purchased by the Victorian Tug and Lighter Company and used as a cargo lighter, mainly between Melbourne and Geelong and, by the late 1930s, it appeared she was going to end her days in relative peace. However, during World War II she was commandeered by the United States Navy as a store ship and towed to New Guinea where she was bombed on several occasions, but survived. Later, she was, for a time, used as a breakwater at Heron Island and ultimately foundered in New Guinea waters.

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Chapter 10

Rifle Shooting, Clubs and Associations

There need be no unfriendly rivalry between the South Australian Rifle Association and the local military forces. Their characters differ.

From the 1830s until the turn of the 20th century astonishing changes were evident in the form of gunmaking. The percussion system appears to have been applied to guns at the close of the 18th century but in a somewhat primitive fashion. The old 'Brown Bess' was the weapon at the time of William III and weighed 11 pounds two ounces and had a barrel three feet six inches long, while the bullet was wrapped in a loosely fitting patch forming a cartridge. The inventor of the Minie rifle obtained from the government £20,000 for his contrivance and up to the turn of the 20th century it was succeeded by the Enfield, Snider, Henry and Martini-Henry. The latter weighed eight pounds two ounces with a pull of six pound and was very accurate up to 1,200 yards, with an actual range much exceeding that distance. The barrel was 32 inches long on the Henry principle with a spiral of one turn in 22 inches.

The culverin and matchlock had developed into the Krupp and Martini-Henry and the 'Joe Manton' of a past generation forsaken for the breech-loading choke-bore of many patterns. Not a great many years before, 45 or 50 yards would have represented the reliable shooting of an ordinary double-barrelled gun, but in 1881 the guns, of both local and overseas manufacture, exhibited by Messrs Ekins & Company of Adelaide, were guaranteed to kill with loose shot at from 90 to 100 yards. This great change was brought about by the adoption of what was called choke-boring - that is the boring out of the breech to a larger size than the muzzle. The results were an increased range and greater regularity of pattern and penetration than could possibly be obtained with the ordinary cylindrical barrel.

The question of rifle clubs in South Australia dates back to 1854 when the 'Member for West Adelaide' moved that the Volunteer and Militia Bill be replaced by one providing for 'the periodical training and exercise of volunteers [and] formed into local district rifle clubs.' Under such a system it was felt that military duty would become popular; the emulation of the various clubs would stimulate proficiency at the target, and discipline and efficiency acquired all the more readily because the training would be neither expensive nor needlessly irksome.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, upon the disbandment of the Volunteer Defence Corps, rifle corps were formed throughout the colony and the *Government Gazette* of 23 February 1860 announced the construction of rifle butts on the south Park Lands 'for the purpose of exercising and training the Volunteer Force.' It is apparent that two ranges of 700 and 800 yards were made available for the purpose, with two additional ranges being added within 18 months.

By 1861, the Editor of the *Observer* felt it a duty 'to make one more effort to rescue the rifle association from the oblivion its committee seem determined to plunge it.' A few months later he was pleased to announce that 'some agencies are in operation in South Australia for the establishment of a South Australian Rifle Association.' The chief object was to organise and sustain periodical rifle matches, not only between the volunteers of the city but to all comers. A further suggestion was that the city be divided into districts and a canvass of the merchants, tradesmen and others for subscriptions be undertaken with a view of funding the association.

The tender of Mr W. Lines was accepted in mid-1861 for the erection of new butts. It was the same size as the existing one but differed in construction for it had a target on each side, the mounds from the 600 and 900 yards consisting of retiring rooms, with standing places on top. The existing fence was continued from Goodwood Road to South Terrace, near the cemetery, and thence to meet that portion then standing opposite Brown Street. Large gates were erected opposite King William and Brown Streets, one on the north side, and near Goodwood and Unley Roads on the south, besides a number of footgates.

By October 1861 the butts were completed, ranges measured out, mounds raised and fencing finished and it was hoped that three butts would be opened for practice because 'now that the colony's money had been spent its credit was at stake, for public and private funds had been drawn upon in connection with the volunteer movement and the colony was on trial before the volunteers of the sister colonies and of

England.' This new facility was a great convenience to the city volunteers who, henceforth, had no occasion to go to Glenelg, Brighton or Semaphore for firing at long ranges.

A regret was forthcoming that the government had not fenced the range to prevent cattle and 'daring passengers', to and from Unley, crossing either range during firing. Indeed, it was the Park Lands that were fenced - an abject error neither contemplated when the money was voted by parliament nor authorised by that vote. Complaints were made that the cattle nuisance was worse than it was before the fencing for then, 'the cows, if let in, could walk out; but now, once in, they remained in for, "like Sterne's Starling" they "can't get out".'

The first rifle match under the auspices of the newly-formed association, and open to all comers, was set down for 29 October 1861 when 339 competitors enrolled. For the general public and the volunteers some accommodation for refreshments was provided near the butts, while patrons wishing to enter an enclosed space were charged two shillings and sixpence.

The match was a decided success and from 8 am to 5 pm the proceedings were 'unflaggingly sustained and excitement equal to that which attended a closely contested horse race animated the hundreds of spectators' who surrounded each of the shooting tents. The match, however, was so arranged as to prevent it being terminated on the first day and the public were, therefore, 'obliged to suspend their curiosity after having it wound up to the highest pitch.'

The association became firmly established and a suggestion from the press was that 'one or two bands, at least, should be employed to fill up the lugubrious intervals with cheerful sounds', thus giving spirit to the proceedings and rendering such matches still more attractive. In November 1861 matches were held at the butts and funds totalling £920 collected by the committee, while an Australia-wide competition was envisaged as 'an excellent supplement to local matches.'

Within a few months country rifle clubs were established at Strathalbyn, Kapunda and Gawler and it was hoped that this innovation would give fresh life to the old one, for there was no doubt that the spirit of friendly rivalry between city and country clubs would bring satisfaction to all sides. Further, it was hoped that in the near future matches would include competitors from the adjacent colonies and the role of the association would be such that it effected much good by increasing the skill of the colony's riflemen, especially at long ranges, and by causing a free introduction of the best weapons that were being manufactured.

The butts on the Park Lands had to endure many difficulties, for friend and foe alike aimed their missiles at it. In 1863, Mr Strangways moved in parliament that a new ground be selected to the south of the Reedbeds 'because no steps had been taken to increase the existing accommodation where there was really no convenience for a long series of matches.' No accidents had taken place on the ground which was attributed to luck rather than care on the part of the authorities. Loading and reloading were carried on in a variety of fashions and with muzzles pointing in all directions. Even pouches were falling into disuse and competitors could be seen stepping back from the firing places and rummaging for their ammunition in bundles scattered about the ground under the feet of lookers-on.

In June 1877 a deputation waited on the Chief Secretary urging the removal of the butts. Two reasons for the request were made; firstly, a new road connecting Unley and Adelaide was due to be opened thereby increasing traffic past the butts and, secondly, a number of inexperienced men used the butts with a consequent increase in danger to the passing public. Mr Shierlaw, one of the deputation, said that one morning he was walking by the butts, hailed the butt-man who responded to him and told to go on. He had not gone more than ten yards when the crack of a rifle and the whizz of a bullet reminded him of the danger through which he was passing. Early in 1878 the butts were closed and removed to 'a fine level stretch of ground on the west side of the Dry Creek railway and within a quarter of a mile of the local station.' It gave a clear range of about 6,000 yards and did away with the necessity for large expensive stone butts.

As for the rifle association, by 1877 its affairs were in a parlous state to which a newspaper editor opined that:

> If the South Australian Rifle Association ceased to exist it would be well for its friends to give it a decent burial. It showed no sign of life last year and there is no movement to resuscitation this year. October meetings had died out and Mr G.S. Kingston, the Honorary Secretary, now no longer appears annually on the Park Lands with all the 'pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war.'

Government aid to the association was struck off the Estimates and when Mr Rankine brought forward his motion for that body to be provided with £150 he was too late to obtain a division or even a discussion. However, although the association was in a bad state, the volunteers remained, but were armed with a weapon 'not at all calculated to give them a first place amongst either colonial or English sharpshooters.'

The association was rejuvenated when it held a meeting on the south Park Lands on 27 October 1874 and, in due course, there were several rifle clubs scattered throughout the colony. They had no assistance either from the public or the government, except a loan from the latter of a number of old Enfield rifles and a supply of ammunition at about cost price. Notwithstanding, the members of this association laboured with their worn-out muzzle loading weapons and some excellent shooting was done.

To this association is due the credit of having got up the agitation that resulted in the formation of the Volunteer Military Force (VMF) and, having accomplished that object, the association found that the work it had done was undermining the foundation of their own institution as so much interest was taken in the VMF that many of their members deserted them to join that body.

The council of the association then proposed to Colonel Downes that the government should issue Martini-Henry rifles on bond to a body of men whom they were prepared to raise, under the conditions that the force, so raised, would undertake to serve as an auxiliary to the VMF in the case of invasion or particular emergency. Colonel Downes favoured the proposal, the scheme was matured, the *Rifle Companies Act* was passed and assented to on 30 November 1878 and thus the association was thoroughly established by law. Soon afterwards the first company of the association was formed in Adelaide, to be followed by the organisation of other companies in different parts of the colony.

A circular issued by South Australian Rifle Association in June 1878 suggested a reorganisation of the various clubs whereby they would be self-governing and only requiring them to be under the management of the association; beyond this they could choose their own officer, hours of drill and practice regulations. Accordingly, as an adjunct to the *Rifle Companies Act* authority was given for the formation of the National Rifle Association. The rules of this measure provided that 20 or more persons could form themselves into a company to be distinguished by the name of the town or district in which they resided and that every such company should form part of the said association.

Rifles were lent by the government and the clubs supplied with ammunition free of cost. On the other hand, at their own expense they provided their own uniforms costing £3.18s.6d., subscribed nineteen shillings annually to the local company's funds and attended a certain number of drills. They were, with but slight reservations, absolutely free lances, and they could not entertain the least jealousy on account of the pay and privileges attaching to service in the Volunteer Military Force. At the same time they were not mere holiday soldiers, but formed a reserve which could, in time of need, prove to be a valuable auxiliary to the more regular establishment.

In time it became a habit to sneer at the National Rifle Association and to regard its members as merely indulging in the pretty pastime of playing soldiers, 'but no such charge will hold good against our riflemen,' proclaimed the morning press. Gradually, but surely, the ornaments of the force dropped out and their places taken by others possessed of serious military views - men anxious to do more than show off well-made uniforms and earn reputations of being fair shots and willing to expend the time and labour necessary to become disciplined and effective soldiers. However, one of the wants of the association was that of capable officers possessing the requisite military knowledge to enable them to instruct and discipline their men, and sufficient enthusiasm in the cause they had espoused to make teaching a labour of love.

At the close of 1880, partly owing to a desire to be free from the restraint of military drill, and partly to the fact that General Downes was opposed to the 'back' position in rifle shooting, a number of men formed themselves into the South Australian Rifle Club and Mr C. Taylor, of the Reedbeds, granted a piece of land running parallel with the road from the old Fulham Post Office to Henley Beach and targets were fixed in the sand hummocks, so that the firing could be from east to west. A low lying swamp cut off access to the targets, except on horseback, but this was remedied later by a footbridge being thrown over the swamp at the narrowest part. The existing road to the range was to the left of the post office, but when the bridge was completed a visitor could take the bus to Henley Beach and by walking about 300 yards southwards from the hotel would see the danger flag flying.

The range was opened on 11 December 1880 when among the matches fired was one by sides chosen by Mrs and Miss Smith, the competitors firing five shots each at 400 yards and at the closure they adjourned to a refreshment tent supplied with wines, etc., by Mrs Oliver of the Henley Beach Hotel.

The arrival of various teams of crack riflemen from the neighbouring colonies on 16 August 1882 marked an era in the history of rifle competition in Australia for the first time a trial of skill took place between a number of really representative rifle teams selected from all the best shots in four different colonies on the same ground at the same time. On 20 August 1882 matches were held for the selection of the South Australian team and the butts at Port Adelaide presented a more animated scene than it had on any previous occasion. Of course, local jealousies were aroused during the selection of the team and as it is said that no man ever poked a fire to another man's satisfaction, so it was that no committee ever selected a rifle team without exciting criticism.

As we draw to the conclusion of this chapter mention must be made of a man who served the interests of rifle shooting for many years and whose name was perpetuated by the Dean Range on Section 446, Hundred of Port Adelaide. The man who was to become Brigadier Dean joined a cavalry section of the volunteers formed at a meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall; three years later he received a commission. He began shooting early in 1878 with the volunteer rifles and was largely responsible for the formation of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of which he was appointed secretary in 1889. Ten years later, when new legislation was passed, he was appointed chairman. In 1921 he visited Britain and vacated his position after 12 years service. He was the first man in South Australia to receive the Volunteer Decoration at the hands of the Prince of Wales, the ceremony taking place on the Victoria Park racecourse in 1901. He was captain of the Commonwealth team which visited Great Britain in 1913 and led the State team on many occasions.

By the close of the State's 100th year in 1936 there were 153 rifle clubs in South Australia with 15 of them being linked to the militia and, of that affiliate's 807 members, 802 were pronounced 'proficient'. Until 1931 the clubs were under civilian control and. in each district there was a supervisor, while the whole movement was administered by the Defence Secretary. In 1931 control passed to the Adjutant-General's Branch at army headquarters and in each military district the clubs were administered by a staff officer for rifle clubs. In 1935 there were 47,622 members of clubs in the Commonwealth and South Australia, with less than one tenth of the total population, had considerably more than one tenth of the riflemen.

Rifle Shooting at Port Adelaide

A preliminary meeting was held in the Glanville Hotel on 2 September 1876 for the purpose of forming a rifle club. The chairman, Councillor C. Reynolds, 'expressed his surprise that the Port had not had a rifle club long before, as there was every facility offered in the shape of a safe practice ground.' Mr S.J. Skipper, the Secretary of the SA Rifle Association, told the meeting that Enfield rifles were lent by the government to the association which was under a bond to pay £2.10s. for each rifle lost or damaged and they were issued to members of rifle clubs on the same conditions. Mr Alan Quin was appointed as a *pro tem* secretary while Messrs C. Reynolds, W.D. Cook and G. Deslandes were appointed as a committee to wait upon the local council to explain the objects of the club and obtain permission to use part of the government reserve as a practice ground and to see Mr Hart and obtain his leave to shoot over part of his property adjoining the reserve.

Thirty persons attended a meeting on 14 September 1876 when the Port Adelaide and Suburban Rifle Club was officially established; Mr F.H. Rix was appointed as *pro tem* secretary and M.W. Little as treasurer, while the council consisted of Messrs J. and G. Deslandes, W. Goldsworthy, W.D. and W. Cook, James Ferguson and C.J. Reynolds. Those present were informed that the District Council of Glanville had given permission for the club to shoot on the military reserve, where the sandhills would form a natural butt and where a range of 700 yards could be obtained and that Mr Hart had given permission to use his land for longer ranges.

Following assent being given to the *Rifle Companies Act*, on 18 February 1879 a meeting was held at the Ship Inn of the 'newly-formed company' when Mr J.C. Lovely presided. Mr A.P. Hall, JP, informed the meeting that he had received 20 stands of arms for the use of the company and a wish was expressed for a grey uniform, but Mr Hall was 'empowered to use his judgment on the matter when representing the company.' The first competitive shooting was held at the Glanville Range on 6 December 1879, while a new

range in connection with C Company, South Adelaide Rifle Club, was opened on 26 July 1884 when Captain Oldham fired the first shot.

As discussed earlier, prize firing and practice were for some years carried out at Dry Creek, where the accommodation was not the best, or at Fulham where it was not much better, but in June 1886 a new ground was laid out near Port Adelaide 'on a spot [at the North Arm] near the old embankment where the land is of use for nothing better at present:

> After crossing the creek and getting up to the 800 yards range the pathway is met at right angles by other paths extending for 300 yards, one on either side, and giving access to thirteen different ranges… A 10-feet roadway is being made up to the old Magazine road to the North Arm…

From time to time complaints were made regarding the unsuitability of this site because of its proximity to the only road leading to both the North Arm and the North Arm Powder Magazines, and the danger was accentuated following the introduction of the '303' rifle. It was contended that the erection of new butts for the use of the naval force was a serious menace to the safety of the magazines and objection to their erection and use was made by the Inspector of Explosives:

The possibility of a stray bullet striking this dynamite was considered by the magazine keeper to be so great that he had asked to be relieved from duty…In one instance a boy on horseback…heard the whistle of a bullet, ducked his head, with the result that only the top of his hat was shot away.

Extensive alterations were made to the ranges in 1903 when the pits were substantially timbered, while above the level of the road 3-feet silt mounds were erected. Behind these were thick iron plates, so that the markers would be able to work in complete safety. However, prior to the alterations, early in 1903 a Mr Conyers was marking when 'some one cross fired' and a bullet from a Martini-Henry struck him and he was seriously injured, while in 1915 a member of a rifle club was killed when struck by a stray bullet - it was supposed that a bullet had struck some object short of the range and then ricocheted in another direction.

In conclusion, mention must be made of the fact that women formed rifle clubs in the 1890s but it was not until October 1907, at the behest of Lieutenant Leschen, that the Ladies' Smallbore Rifle Association was founded.

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Chapter 11

The Coastal Dunes and Military Road

The Coastal Dunes

> *Those whose business takes them to the Port [in 1838] must have witnessed the treatment of the poor bullocks in bringing a load over the sand[hill] - what swearing, tearing and lashing there is!*

When Europeans arrived in 1836 sand dunes ran along the coast from a little north of Largs Bay to Seacliff and comprised a succession of long ridges, dunes and swales. The taller of these sandhills were at Brighton and near Estcourt House between Semaphore and Grange, the highest being about fifty feet, while the breadth of them was no more than a few hundred yards.

Older sandhills, indicative of an earlier coastline and reddish in colour, commenced near Somerton, ran through the Kooyonga Golf Links and continued past Seaton along the eastern bank of the Port Creek to Port Adelaide, terminating in the western part of Torrens Island. They also stood up to fifty feet high and, following European settlement, were depleted steadily when it was realised that they were a ready source for garden and building sand.

In the ship *Guiana*, from India, which arrived in October 1840, Captain George Hall, the ship's master, brought some small prickly pears in pots and South Australians were delighted with them and that indefatigable recorder of South Australian history, Mr A.T. Saunders, recorded:

> At Captain Scott's house on a sandhill near the Alberton railway station prickly pear flourished and also in Queenstown around the house that Charley Lowe lived in. I think those prickly pear hedges are now gone [in 1926]. On what 60-odd years ago we used to call the plains, that is the vicinity of the Grange railway from Albert Park and Scholar's old white house, to the golf links, the prickly pear was planted, and now from the Grange railway carriages one can see it, and where it was planted on both sides of the train line…Grangeville [modern-day Seaton], [was] about the centre of the prickly pear country and Mr Fox, farmer and Port road carter, near sections 417 and 418, had large hedges of prickly pear on his land…

In 1855 the line of road, which was a direct one between Port Adelaide and the site chosen for Semaphore and its Pilot Station, was the 'first and last road' in the colony used for mail conveyance, and, 'all things considered it was the worst':

> Its condition can only serve to produce a very disparaging impression as to our national standing and the progress of internal improvements in South Australia. Of the lineal distance to be traversed, three-quarters of a mile is over quicksand which forms all but a barrier to communication, and occupies two-thirds of the time consumed in the transit between the city and the Port.

It was not until late 1859 that the road was completed when it was reported that:

> The public will soon realise the long anticipated pleasure of reaching the sea beach from Port Adelaide without being compelled to go through the ordeal of walking one mile in ankle-deep dand... Only two cuttings are found requisite through the sandhills to communicate with the platform of the boat jetty…

Reminiscing in 1900 an old colonist recalled a different impression of the peninsula:

> I remember that years ago the route from Port Adelaide to the hunting ground of the sandhill savage at the Semaphore was an extremely picturesque forest of honeysuckle, with their beautiful flowers dripping sweet tears of saccharine matter. The sand did not drift so much then…Now on the peninsula side, except near the North Arm, the river side is a dreary stretch of drifting sand and with a northerly wind thousands of tons of sand are blown into the river, where the Marine Board most industriously dredges it up at the expense of the bleeding country…

Mr A.T. Saunders remembered that, by 1870, the natural vegetation that covered Lefevre Peninsula had been destroyed by a man named Mullet who started a factory near the Lefevre Peninsula Model School for

the production of fibre from the sword-like rushes which then covered the peninsula. His factory was in the old waterworks establishment previously owned by Mr Davies, but his venture was not a successful one and 'it cost South Australians thousands of pounds as it allowed large quantities of sand to be blown into the river.'

In 1862 it was reported that, along the coast from Pelican Point to Glenelg, fresh water was attainable by sinking shallow wells at high watermark; indeed, throughout Lefevre Peninsula the same level supplied the inhabitants with this essential liquid. The depth of the wells varied according to locality; in some places from 40 to 50 feet was sufficient, but in other instances it was necessary to make immense excavations in order to avoid the danger arising from the tendency of the sand to fall in.

In November 1877 Samuel Tomkinson declared that he had always looked upon the sandhills as a 'breastwork of defence for our riflemen when engaged against the enemy attempting to land' and to his eyes they were 'coast lines of beauty', but while making an 'amateur reconnaissance' at Glenelg in November 1877 he proclaimed:

> I was grieved to observe that the sandhills - our natural bulwarks - are gradually disappearing; they are being levelled, lines of rails are laid and carts employed to remove the sand in order to beautify Glenelg and expose the ornamental villa residences, now building, to the shell of the enemy…I think it most unfortunate that our governments have parted with the ownership of the foreshore because a demand for marine building sites will soon convert the rough-and-ready protection which Nature has given to us into artificial smooth croquet lawns and strawberry gardens. But this mistake may cost the country several hundred thousand pounds…

Ten years later, in 1887 members of the Field Naturalists Society described the sandhills and painted a picture not to be seen by the citizens of South Australia today:

> On that portion of the sandhills between the Grange and Semaphore the graceful climber *Clematis microphylla* is in places very plentiful. On Saturday it was in bud and soon it will be covered with a profusion of elegant pale yellow flowers and will form a pretty picture. As it requires support it is to be found in most cases resting on the sword-leafed sedge, *Lepideepera gladiatum*. The shrub *Pimeles serpyllifolia* was just bursting into flower…

Further evidence of the degradation of the sand dunes became apparent in October 1893 when the Superintendent of Public Buildings inspected Section 108, Hundred of Yatala, upon which the government subdivision of Tennyson was to be proclaimed 5 January 1905. In a report to his superiors he said, *inter alia*:

> Military Road running north and south divides the section unequally leaving ten acres of sandhills cut off to the westward from the main section…I submit that the policy of allowing cattle to be grazed on the sandhills is very unwise as while the government obtains £1 per annum for the lease, the cost through shifting sand and consequent work in keeping the road clear may possibly be estimated at fifty times the amount received, including the cost of tarring the road in the immediate vicinity of the loose sandhill. I have no hesitation in saying that the cattle are solely responsible for the shifting sand and notice should be given at once to the leaseholder of resumption on the part of the government to prevent further damage and consequent expense.

A month later sixteen acres were resumed and, in due course, the township of Tennyson, named after the Right-Honorable Hallam, Baron Tennyson, Governor of South Australia, 1899-1902, arose on the former grazing ground:

> It is worth while paying a visit to the Grange to inspect the work being done there by the government… About 80 men are busy levelling the sandhills… The government should receive good prices for the land when cut up...

Another complaint against cattle grazing, together with another dismal appraisal of the military road, was made a few years later:

> Another preventative measure that the council should adopt is to forbid cattle to be allowed to graze and root up the protecting grass on the sandhills towards the beach… I am glad to see that the flooded condition of the road has attracted the notice of the council. At high tides in the winter, not only the land between the Port River and the military road in the neighbourhood at Estcourt House and towards the Grange is deep under water, but also the road itself is impassable.

In June 1898 a 'batch of supposed Greeks and Assyrians' camped at Largs Bay and for a time received assistance, occasionally of a dubious nature, and fell foul of the law which, eventually, saw them driven out of the colony:

> On the sandhills close to the Largs Bay railway station they have formed a gypsy-like encampment. Four or five rude tents - mere shelters of sail cloth supported by poles and open at one side - rise on the brow of a rushy knoll and about them move quaint, unfamiliar figures, clad in old clothes of no particular nationality, some of them provided by the residents of Largs…The following account of themselves was written in a little book - 'During the misfortunes of Greece we lost all we had in that country. Our houses were burnt by the barbarous Turks, who had also stolen our money. For a long time we were exposed in the moisture and cold. At last we entered an English ship and [were] brought to Australia...'

After spending four days on the sandhills, and having failed to touch 'the sentimental side of the Commissioner of Police', they were provided with means of transport by Mr Wilkin and other gentlemen, whose sympathy had been aroused by their pitiful pleas. They spent four days in the city on the Park Lands near the sheep market when they were again evicted and left for Norwood, only to be informed by the police that they were not allowed to camp again 'until they had made a fair day's journey.' Following this edict the bewildered immigrants headed to the hills.

On July 12 their arrival at Mannum 'in style' was reported by a disgruntled resident who obviously shared the views of the colony's law enforcers:

> Having driven down from Mount Pleasant in a four-horse spring van in charge of an old driver from that town… they are now camped opposite the post office… They are adept in the art of begging and are not satisfied with what they get, but like Oliver Twist 'ask for more.' … The residents of Mount Pleasant… were so kindly disposed towards them… that they subscribed together, and defrayed the cost of hiring the van and horses. Not to be outdone by our neighbours in good works, it is proposed to collect a sufficient sum in the township to pay the cost of passage to Murray Bridge…

The people of Murray Bridge played rather a grim joke on the hapless foreigners for they paid for their carriage in an open railway truck to Coonalpyn, a lonely outpost in the 90-Mile Desert, where the guard decided to take them on to Bordertown and the residents there soon 'franked' them to Serviceton. Thus South Australian was rid of them and in the year 2001, with frequent complaints emanating from entrapped 'illegal' immigrants, one might be excused for suggesting that the treatment handed down over a century or more to displaced people has changed but little.

At the turn of the 20th century the sandhills at Glenelg were a favoured venue for the 'game designated as two-up' and 'pitch and toss' and on more than one occasion the arm of the law descended upon them:

Across sandhills and ploughed fields and over fences the constables pursued the fleeing foe, but without effect... Possibly the presence of a plain clothes man, one who is not known in the neighbourhood would effectually stamp out what is a growing evil.

In the closing months of 1919 another 'two-up' school was reported to be assembling on Sundays at a spot in the sandhills, about a mile and a half north of Glenelg, and so well were the 'nitkeepers' placed that all efforts to arrest them proved unavailing. Finally, in October the police succeeded in getting well inside the line of sentries and 'in consequence a number of the offenders were captured redhanded.'

By 1923 the coastal sandhills contiguous to Military Road at Henley Beach were in a parlous state:

> The sandhills facing the Esplanade [at Henley Beach] are a boxthorn-grown rubbish tip and litter depot. The drains from various…houses run downhill; giving life to rank weeds, at the roots of which are held slimy and stinking typhoid-like conditions. The lavatory accommodation is a disgrace. Many patrons of the seats on band nights carry disinfected handkerchiefs.

Further references to the coastal dunes appear hereunder in chronological sequence.

The Military Road

An inspection of the 'thoroughfare' at present [1907] makes military men frown. A sea of sand has in many places swept over it, and fences and trees offer a resistance equal perhaps to a piece of '40 cotton' stretched between telegraph poles. The advance is ominous, and provides pitiable evidence of the neglect of years.

A meeting of residents residing on the sea coast between Port Adelaide to Marino was held on 13 June 1855 and, in August of that year, they petitioned the government for the construction of a military road

along the foreshore 'where alone its open character renders it liable to successful attack' In proof of their sincerity the memorialists subscribed the sum of £1,500 towards its construction and among the donors were Edward Stephens, Joseph Johnson, William Gray, J. White and A.H. Davis:

> A large sum of money has already been expended in military preparation [and it] is absolutely necessary to make a practicable road along this exposed portion of the coast so that, in case of the descent of an enemy, infantry, cavalry, and especially artillery, may rapidly concentrate for action.

On 9 January 1865 the Surveyor-General and Colonel Biggs rode over the proposed line of a military road from Semaphore to Marino and the Editor of the *Register* opined that there was likely to be a fort erected about 500 or 600 yards to the north of Semaphore and another upon a government reserve behind the sandhills, about a mile and a quarter to the southward of Semaphore towards Glenelg.

It was envisaged the road would then run southwards immediately to the rear of the sandhills and entirely through purchased land to the Glenelg Creek 'a little above the present footbridge'. Near this spot, behind the sandhills, would be placed the third fort and a comment was made that 'the erection of a fort at Marino is a matter not yet decided upon.'

To accommodate the road the only land to be purchased was that between the Semaphore and Glenelg Creek, the remainder of the line being along roads already laid down. The proposed line was so level and free from engineering difficulties that it was understood that the completion of the road might be looked for in the course of about six months. Apart from its primary use as a means of defence, the new line was considered to be an immense boon to the residents of Glenelg and the populated sections between that town and Marino, as there were no ready means of transit between Glenelg and Port Adelaide.

There the matter rested until 1867 when a public meeting was held on 21 June at Mr Stevenson's schoolroom at Glenelg to consider the best method of urging upon the government the immediate commencement of a military road. It was noted that, although Colonel Biggs's report had been brought forward several times in parliament, nothing had been done, except for declaring it a main line and placing it in the hands of the Central Road Board which obtained an estimate showing that the whole cost of construction would be £18,000. A deputation from this meeting waited upon the Chief Secretary on 1 July 1867 and was informed that no funds were available at that time for such a purpose and this rebuff was a great disappointment for the citizens of Glenelg who earnestly desired a short route to Port Adelaide.

Except for a plea from a citizen in November 1869, inactivity was the order of the day for many years until 1876 - its construction was urged because he was of the opinion that it would create employment for 'mechanics and others' and provide a 'conveyance for produce from the southern districts and general intercourse between them, Glenelg and the Port.'

At a meeting of the Central Road Board on 15 June 1876, Mr W.H. Gray, Chairman of the West Torrens District Council, presented a memorial signed by the Mayors of Port Adelaide, Glenelg and Brighton and the chairmen of the district councils of Lefevre Peninsula, urging the board to adopt as a main road the road at present running from Tapley's Hill via Glenelg to Port Adelaide, in lieu of the military road between the two latter places. He said the former was made nearly all the way, while the other would run over swampy ground and sandhills and entail a very large expenditure, besides being a longer distance than the other. The Chairman of the Central Road Board said that the military road was the only one gazetted by the board and it could not entertain the idea of having two roads. However, if the government abandoned the military road, and the one suggested by the memorialists was a better one, the board would not hesitate to take it over.

In January 1877 the government, dropped a bombshell when it announced that it was obvious that both the local press and public had completely misunderstood the government's intention because it had never contemplated running the military road as far as Glenelg. The road was simply to afford facility for rapid communication between the two points at which it had been arranged that batteries should be constructed, namely, at Largs Bay and a point about three miles to the south, and would have no connection with Glenelg:

> Unfortunately, the Boucaut team was turned out of office and their successors treated with undisguised and ignorant ridicule the idea of a gunboat. As for the military road, it seemed entirely forgotten…The Premier, a wealthy and worthy citizen, but a very poor statesman, named

> John Colton, silenced the complaints of energetic members with the vague promise that the question of military defences should be carefully considered during recess.

Accordingly, on 29 January 1877 four tenders for the construction of the military road between the Lefevre's Peninsula Road and the government reserve south of section 890 were opened at the office of the Commissioner of Public Works. The name of the lowest tenderer, however, was not declared, as two of the tenders were found to be apparently so near in their totals as to require to be checked by the Central Road Board's surveyor before a decision could be arrived at as to which was really the lowest amount.

The 2½ miles of road, constructed by Mr John Deslandes of Glanville, was commenced in March 1877 and completed in April 1878 and consisted of a silt roadway covered to the depth of seven inches with metal. The silt was obtained from Hawker's Creek and the metal from the Stockade at Yatala. As the contractor was not allowed to use drays over the work he laid down a light tramway to which he conveyed the necessary silt and metal.

In the late 1870s it was considered necessary to extend the road and have it pegged out and that was the way it remained for many years. Indeed, the road existed on paper only except for where it passed through the Semaphore district and in its then existing condition presented more obstacles than conveniences. It was one chain (22 yards) wide and beyond Fort Glanville it could have been looked upon as almost impassable, because it went through sand and swamp without any appearance of being a road at all, except from a vague suggestion conveyed by a line of forlorn-looking pegs.

After leaving Mr Bucknall's (present day Estcourt House) the sand was varied by swamp, but for military purposes there was good cover with the scrub in close proximity; while the sandhills thereabouts were compact and more solid, there being no drift. Travelling south a swampy road was traversed for some distance and much of it was under water in the wet season for when the floods of the River Torrens came down and joined the Port Creek, the road throughout Grange was represented by heavy drift sand, and to Henley Beach and beyond it was all but unmade.

Indeed, most of the country was barren waste and there was nothing to recommend the road from Grange to Glenelg, except the military bridge crossing the Patawalonga:

The road is certainly useless as it stands now. Artillery cannot be employed upon it because the track is heavy with drift sand. The horses usually used in our field battery could not drag the carriages along the road…If a military road is of any strategic importance it is because of the opportunities for the speedy transit of guns which a good road could afford.

In September 1880, a petition signed by 661 persons was presented to parliament seeking an extension of the road to Glenelg but their plea fell upon deaf ears. In the mid-1880s South Australians lived in the apprehension of hearing that war had been declared between England and Russia. The former country had organised and fully equipped fleets and armies, Victoria and New South Wales had made arrangements for their defences and the colonies, generally, had sought to put their citizens upon a war footing.

However, as discussed in a previous chapter, the government of South Australia had pursued throughout in what it might have considered masterly inactivity, but which most people called mischievous incompetence. Take the military road, for instance. In 1885 it was certainly useless as it then stood. At this time it was supposed to be a good macadamised track from the south end of Fort Largs to an undefined point beyond Glanville, but as a matter of fact the road had always borne a more unfinished appearance than the colony's defence measures themselves.

For many years the military road was a byword and a reproach, for where it did not consist of dense sandy patches an intrepid traveller was met with deep ruts and almost impassable holes. On several occasions the necessity for remedying this unenviable state of affairs was urged on the government and promises were made from time to time, but until April 1885 comparatively little was executed.

On 18 April 1885 a great flourish was made about the energy and organisation of the Public Works Department in finding work for the unemployed in constructing the military road which, it was said, would be finished in six weeks. To do this four parties of surveyors were sent to lay out the work and an experienced surveyor and twenty gangers were brought down from the north. It may have influenced the government in coming to this decision that there were a large number of men out of work, particularly so at Wallaroo and Moonta owing to the partial stoppage of mining operations. Free railway passes were offered to these men and the first lot came down on 23 April 1885, 'all sturdy fellows and apparently prepared to do ample justice to the department.' The Port Adelaide cabmen treated the miners rather

shabbily for they contracted to drive several of the men to the works at the rate of one shilling per head, but dropped them some distance from the site of the camp thereby forcing them to carry their swags and billies to their destination.

On the next day tents were put up and other things incidental to the camp attended to. In bringing along the tents, tools, etc., great difficulty was experienced owing to the extreme heaviness of portions of the road and waggons drawn by three stout horses had to be called into requisition. By the end of April 125 men were employed in road making and camped in tents south of Fort Glanville:

> It is to be hoped that when the road is made it will be better tended than has been the part which cost £7,000 a few years ago. Between Largs fort and Glanville the men are picking out the original metal which though it cost a good sum to put there, was a year or two later allowed to be buried in sand.

There was no 'government stroke' observable in the work of the men; their faces wore a contented look as though they were glad to have found something to do which would enable them to keep the wolf from the door of the houses containing their wives and children. Another gang of men were employed on the southern portion and, of them, about 90 with drays engaged in loading up seaweed on the beach for laying on the road. As to supplies, a butcher and grocer from Semaphore paid daily visits to the camp during the dinner hour when the men purchased whatever they might require. Fortunately, there was a good supply of water obtainable from wells in the locality and this was carted to the camp in tanks.

During a visit by the Commissioner of Public Works the first case against 'the prohibitory liquor law' was dealt with. The offender had secreted a bottle of spirits in his clothes and in the afternoon was discovered to be quite intoxicated. He paid his penalty for the indiscretion by receiving the 'sack', but 'pleaded hard for his six children before leaving.'

The road was completed in August 1885 and General Downes was questioned as to why it was not continued from the Sturt Bridge to Glenelg and the reply was that the authorities did not want the road worn by ordinary heavy traffic! Therefore, the necessity for making a road between Glenelg and the military road was forced upon the West Torrens District Council in 1892 and the contract was entrusted to Mr C. Fuller for a road of about half a mile at a cost of £320.

By 1904, in several places north of Estcourt House the road was lost beneath drifting sand and was impassable to anything but the lightest vehicle and for that reason the thoroughfare - once so popular a route to the city - was shunned. Some time previously the Woodville District Council had planted marram grass on the sandhills in an attempt to arrest the drifts. The condition of the road was keenly felt by the James Brown Home for Crippled Children and Aged Blind which was practically isolated from the outside world. Mr Adamson, the superintendent, informed some visitors that cartage to the home from Semaphore had been increased by eight shillings and sixpence a ton because of the difficulties experienced in negotiating the road.

The advance was ominous and provided pitiable evidence of the neglect of years. Schemes to remedy the matter had not got beyond the 'talking' stage and meanwhile the sand was banking up into miniature hills. The Woodville District Council and the Commissioner of Crown Lands were the responsible parties and each tried to evade responsibility and to shift it on the other. Meanwhile, of course, nothing was done, but it was established that to clear a course along the road would have necessitated the removal of 500 loads of sand.

The government then wrote to the Port Adelaide and Woodville councils offering to defray half the cost if they would execute the work. An estimate was formed that it would cost £130 to remove the sand and plant marram grass. The Corporation of Port Adelaide declined to take any part in it and the Woodville District Council objected to do it on the score of expense, which it estimated at nearly four times the amount mentioned. It is only fair to say that when the government handed over this portion of the road to the Woodville council an annual grant of money was made for its upkeep and repair and none of this was spent as intended. And as Dr Benham, a local and irate resident observed, 'it must be remembered that means were found to remove effectually some equally formidable sandhills near the Grange many years ago.'

It was said that the Woodville Council intended to appeal for assistance to the Federal Government on the grounds that the Military Road belonged to the Defence Department. But this was a forlorn hope, because even the most flighty novelist would hardly imagine that the road was likely to be used for military purposes. It seemed to many rate payers that this proposal was only an attempt to shelve the question - 'a proceeding

that should not be allowed as the existence of this horrible obstruction to a useful road [was] a disgrace to the country,' as Dr Benham observed.

In November 1906 near the 'Glanville blocks' two sandhills, each about four chains long and in some places eight feet deep, had formed across it and became effective block to any but the lightest traffic along the military road. Numerous experiments were carried out to prevent the sand from drifting, but perhaps the most successful was planting the sandhills with marram grass, but even this was only a partial success

Following urgent appeals from many quarters the government accomplished the removal of the offending sand and the road, maintained in a tolerable condition, was used by motor cars and light vehicles until 1917 when a disaster happened. A land owner on the sea coast side of the Military Road sold some of his land, including the sandhills, to one or more glass making companies which promptly set to work to dig away and remove a large quantity of sand from the dunes.

Consequently, the carriage along the road was effected by large waggons and, the loads being heavy, the road was cut to pieces and in places looked like a ploughed field. On receipt of a complaint the council acknowledged same, regretted the damage, but refused to make the necessary repairs and, instead of prohibiting the sand carting, merely passed a by-law limiting the weight of the loads. In February 1918 action was expected from the government to reconstruct the road but by April 1919 nothing had been done and the sand carting proceeded with further damage to the road.

Subsequently, a deputation to the Minister for Local Government said that if the road was not repaired 'the industry of glass bottle making would be lost to South Australia', while the representative from the James Brown institution informed the minister that he was having difficulties in getting trades-people to call; the glass companies won the day. Further removal of sandhills occurred in 1928-1929 when the subdivision of West Beach was created:

> This extensive and valuable sea frontage at present consists of high undulating sandhills lying between the beach and Military Road, to the east of which of which is an area of low-lying land. A contract has been let for the removal of the sand in the east of the road, thus raising the low-lying land to a height suitable for building purposes.
>
> The grading and topdressing of the sandhills, involving the removal of over 200,000 tons of sand; and the building of the esplanade and three roads connecting it with the Military Road was raised six feet and remade.

As the decades passed the spoliation of the sand dunes continued and, in the latter half of the 20th century, the sight of concerned citizens confronting land developers' bulldozers, as they raped the coastal dunes to the west of Military Road, was a not uncommon sight. However, that is another story.

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Chapter 12

The Defence of Holdfast Bay

The proposed fort would certainly prevent a possible landing at this point of the coast, but the only effect would be to oblige the enemy to land at other points nearly as convenient for a march upon Adelaide.

Following the cessation of the Crimean War, as discussed in another chapter, the colonial volunteers were disbanded and, before their reformation in 1859, the Glenelg citizens continued with rifle shooting as a pastime and the Bay, whose qualifications as a 'watering place' had been besmirched in the past, quite 'redeemed its character' on 1 January 1858 when a rifle shooting match added to the amusements of a fair. A target was set up on the beach and seventeen gentlemen entered their names to compete following which the judge, Mr C. Addison, presented the first prize of five guineas to Mr James Sutherland, the runners-up being Dr Popham and Mr Moseley. While the event was in progress several equestrians and numerous conveyances passed along the 'hard and cool sands' one of which got into quicksand and sank so deeply that the occupants were obliged to get out and wade ashore, 'much to the mortification of the ladies who were in it.'

Six months later, in June 1858 a meeting was held at the Pier Hotel to discuss the formation of a rifle corps in the neighbourhood, when those in attendance were advised that Minie rifles ín the hands of the government would be available, under proper regulations, for use by such a corps. Dr Popham was present and seconded a motion of Mr Strangways to approach the Chief Secretary. When this bout of colonial enthusiasm had waned the Glenelg citizens waited until 1877 before engaging in further patriotic pursuits of this nature.

On 28 December 1861 a meeting was held at the St Leonard's Inn, with Mr H.B.T. Strangways presiding, when a Volunteer Company was formed, while at a public meeting held at the Pier Hotel on 19 May 1877 discussion took place in respect of the formation of a defence force, Mr Wigley said that on 30 August 1876 he had moved in parliament that early attention be given to raising a volunteer force and pointed out that South Australia was the only Australian colony that had not provided for its defence:

> [I believe] that if a privateer were to enter the Bay with a couple of hundred men they could do just as they pleased with the place and the women and children it contained. [I can] organise a force similar to the previous one and we could give a good account in an engagement with an enemy… [I] can hit a haystack at a distance of 800 yards and am sure I could hit a host of armed men endeavouring to land on our shores at a distance of 300 yards… At present if a privateer came to attack [we] would feel it our duty to take our families across the Patawalonga Creek to the sandhills, while the men hid in Mr Gray's land and fired at the invaders…

A deputation waited on the Chief Secretary on 25 May 1877 when Henry Ayers concurred that men should be 'embodied and drilled in the neighbourhood and be complete in itself.' But, following its formation, all was not well as explained by a participant:

> They looked forward to being called out for drill and with proper care would have made an excellent corps. Since the time they were sworn in they have been quietly ignored and remain in the same happy state of awkwardness as when their patriotism prompted them to put their trust in a shadow. [Other companies] have been well and carefully drilled… but Glenelg, the so-called 'front door of the colony', where the enemy is most likely to ring a 'rat-a-ta-tat', has been coolly overlooked...

At this time the captain of the volunteers, Mr W.R. Wigley, was instrumental in having a shed built behind the police station, where it was proposed to introduce appliances for boxing, fencing, gymnastics and other amusements calculated to development of the physical powers of the men. Some liveliness was imparted to the proceedings of the E company of volunteers on 12 July 1879 when it marched around the streets of Glenelg to the stirring strains of a drum and fife band, which had been raised by subscriptions from the company, while the instruments were partly purchased out of contributions by local residents.

The Glenelg fort was talked about for more than twice the length of time required to build it and to bring it into action. In the first place, a conflict of military opinion arose as to the wisdom of having any fort at all at Glenelg. Both General Owen and Captain Walcot agreed that without such a protection an enemy's ship could easily shell Adelaide from below Henley Beach. Although the latter suggested that the bombardment would not last long, and possibly be resorted to extort an indemnity, it was clear that the national disgrace would be as great in this case as if the enemy's guns were to decimate the population of the city.

Sir William Jervois, who was specially consulted on the matter, also declared in effect that the fort was necessary. Though General Downes had written against it, the ground he really took was that more effective substitutes could be found for it - substitutes which would have proved more costly in the end. To all this procrastination an editor of the morning press elected to castigate at the Premier:

> If the foe be considerate enough to postpone a hostile visit for a few years it is possible he will find the Glenelg fort ready to give him a fitting reception, but there is no assurance of this. The airy persiflage indulged in by the Premier last year in response to the appeals of those in favour of immediate action betokened the incapacity of the Hon. Gentleman to appreciate the seriousness of the question. 'What's the good of a fort?', he in substance asked. 'If we put expensive guns there today new inventions in longer-range weapons will probably render them comparatively useless in a year or two, for the enemy will be able to lie out of reach and shell the city with impunity.'
>
> If this sort of reasoning were to prevail people would never start gasworks, because presently electric light might supersede gas illumination, and pioneers in a new country would never have teams upon their roads for fear of the ultimate incursion of railways compelling them to sell their horses.

For the proposed Glenelg fort two big breach loader guns, ordered during another 'scare' of 1884, were imported at high cost from England in 1888 and for many years remained half-buried in the sand at Glenelg. The importation followed the unsignalled arrival of Russian gunboats, *Afrika, Vestnik and Plastoon,* at Glenelg in March 1882 and, after wisps of smoke were sighted on the horizon, messages were hurried backwards and forwards between the shipping and customs authorities for they had received no prior notice of the arrival of any steamers.

Glenelg people flocked on to the jetty to await the arrival of the mystery vessels and, after the excitement had spread to Adelaide, trainloads of people sped down to watch. Many were the telescopes directed at the little fleet of three vessels when they appeared above the horizon, and even more considerable the surprise when it was seen that they were men-of-war, and foreign at that. There was nothing to be done but to await their arrival; but it was just a friendly call and the commander, noticing the suspicion of the colonists, feigned ignorance of the English language so that he would not say anything out of place. In his reminiscences Major-General Downes recalled that:

> The Australian is very apt to be hysterical in times of excitement and the newspapers were full of all sorts of crazy letters of advice to the government, as to what preparations should be made to resist a Russian attack; one, I remember, was that the road from Glenelg should have pipes laid underneath the surface [and be] filled with dynamite in order to blow up the Russian troops...

Following this 'Russian scare' a sandbag battery was formed on the northern side of Patawalonga Creek but, late in June 1885, due to the pending construction of the fort, it was demolished and the two 24-pounder guns, relics of 1852, removed to Adelaide and it was heavy work getting the howitzers across the sandhills They were taken to their old quarters in the city where they had been previously for 14 years before the war scare brought them into temporary prominence.

Steps were taken on 25 April 1885 for the defence of Holdfast Bay, but it was agreed by Glenelg's inhabitants they would require a great deal more before they were satisfied. They were hardly likely to be satisfied with a couple of sandbag batteries armed with ancient 24-pounder howitzers. However, those guns if properly manned and served could have been made useful, especially if a local battery of artillery were raised and provided with plenty of practice.

On the same day men of A Battery of artillery mustered on the parade ground and fifty eight of them, under command of Captain Schomburgk, were detailed for special duty at Glenelg. They were marched to the sandbag battery beyond the Patawalonga footbridge, where the afore- mentioned two respectable 'forty-twos' of the year 1852 and a plentiful supply of sandbags, as well as shovels, awaited them. A good number

of Glenelg residents turned out to watch the operations and aired their opinions as to the proceedings - one suggested the morgue, or the 'Dead House' as it was known locally, be utilised as a military store.

The *Star of Greece*, a fine-looking full-rigged ship, had the honour of landing the first of the 'big guns' for the fort at Glenelg at Port Adelaide in June 1888; the *Guy Mannering,* which arrived on 25 June 1888, brought the second gun, together with a large quantity of fittings and military stores. It was proposed to mount these guns in the centre of the Glenelg fort and to have two smaller guns of six tons on either side. The task of lowering a gun into barges for Glenelg was completed without mishap on 25 June and during the night it was towed away by the tug *Ariel*, while the SA Stevedoring Company contracted to deliver it on the beach opposite the fort site at high-water mark. The military road could not be used because the bridges en route would not have supported the load.

Major Gordon, with about thirty of his men and five trollies containing stores, provisions, etc., left Fort Glanville during the evening, arriving the next morning at 6 am. It was then discovered that the *Ariel* had overshot the mark, but a skyrocket and a few blue lights soon brought her into proper position. The barge was then run aground and, as the tide was ebbing, Captain Legoe of the SA Stevedoring Company decided to postpone further operations until high water. The permanent forces soon made themselves at home and preparations for a good substantial breakfast were proceeded with.

At high water, all arrangements being completed, the men gave one heave and the huge gun case slid down the slippery road prepared for it and settled down amidst unsuppressed cheers. The men worked throughout the night in order that the gun should be found beyond the reach of water on the returning tide. The second gun was landed on 10 July.

Although it was a few years since the fort had been decided upon the guns were not be mounted for some time. The site decided upon was originally fixed by Major Jervois, and not the one favoured by General Owen, and was situated about three quarters of a mile north of the Patawalonga bridge, where it was anticipated that the guns would command an all-round fire from Henley Beach to Marino, and also have a range over the plains leading to Adelaide.

The question of the fort had been talked about and played with for years and the shilly-shallying way of treating so important a project was, unfortunately, only too in keeping with the past action of the legislators in all matters affecting local defence. It might have been hoped that the periodical panics, which the prospects of European war had excited, would not have been without salutary effect in giving direction and stability to the aims of parliament in defence affairs, but the proceedings of the Assembly on 15 August 1888 dispelled this idea.

In reality, the members, and ministry most of all, made confessions of their own aimlessness and incompetency. It was well known that the erection of a fort at Glenelg was looked upon as a foregone conclusion - as a necessary feature in the colony's coast defences. So firmly established had this view been, the government, when meeting parliament, had proclaimed their determination to go on with the work and, further, it had obtained the necessary guns.

Surely, under these circumstances it must have been too late to turn back, but on that 'infamous day' in 1888 it was affirmed that all further steps in connection with the fort would be suspended until General Downes and Captain Walcot reported on the subject - the latter had already expressed unmistakably his approval of the undertaking and it was hardly likely he would go back on his own recommendations.

Mr W. Hooper, a resident of Glenelg, expressed his views and pointed out that the government had not even secured the land for the fort from the owner, Mr William Gray, and went on to say:

> So the guns are laying on the sandhills, for how long I cannot say. Will these guns improve by lying there a few years (which it is just possible they may) if our members trifle the time away as they do and come to no decision? I suppose the people outside this farinaceous village read the parliamentary news? How they must laugh at us. The whole thing seems adjourned *sine die*. Let the guns become rusty - they will sell to the founder for old iron… Is it any wonder that we are hampered with nearly £20 millions of a debt? Is it any wonder that we are taxed beyond all reason to pay interest? … Now Mr Playford says it is just possible that it may be necessary to bring in a Bill to take the land. For such want of judgment in legislation we pay £200 a year to each man and a free pass to Melbourne just when they please. Mr Duncan asked Mr Playford wisely, 'Why did you not have the site ready for you?' And a very sensible question to ask. So say I.

In October 1888 the report from General Downes and Captain Walcot was tabled in parliament; the former said that if he had been commandant in 1885, when the cry was first raised, he would have advised against it, while Captain Walcot stated that he was 'exactly of the same opinion as I was in 1885 when I advocated it.'

Admiral Tryon, during his visit to South Australia in 1886 in HMS *Nelson*, had strongly impressed upon the military authorities the need of having a fort at Glenelg. 'Without it', he said, 'a hostile vessel would be able to lie out of range of the other forts and shell Adelaide.' His opinion was, naturally, made the most of by those who advocated the filling up of the hiatus in our first lines of defence, and it was noteworthy that the first duty the Admiral was called upon to perform upon his return in 1889 was to renew his caution and to add, 'I am sorry to learn that the guns are lying on the beach, and that no fort is erected to receive them. It is a pity that more attention has not been given to this coastline defence.'

There the matter rested until May 1889 when the members for Sturt, the Mayor of Glenelg and other prominent residents of Glenelg, waited upon the Treasurer. Mr Stock, MP, informed him that the guns still remained on the sandhills 'far from the world's ignoble strife' and, accordingly, said the delegation wished to know the government's intentions. Thomas Playford informed them that a sum had been put in the Estimates to provide for the fort's foundations, place the guns in position and build a magazine.

However, in respect of the land on which it was to be built, the Government Valuator had valued it at £750, but the owner declined and asked for £3,500. A counter offer of £1,400 was made together with intimation if it was not accepted the government would have to act and compulsory acquire it. This offer was refused and Mr Gray, through his solicitors, asked for £2,000 and as a consequence the government proceeded to draft 'a Bill to acquire the land at a fair rate.'

A few days later Mr Gray's solicitors proclaimed in the morning press that they had had the land valued at £3,500 and took exception to the apparent underhand tactics and irresponsible statements of the minister:

> [Mr Gray's] offer was subject to modification if the government would exclude the spring (the only surface water on his land to the west side of the Military road), at which 600 sheep can water daily without shepherding… Moreover, Mr Gray has voluntarily offered, if the site of the fort is slightly altered, to give over an acre of land for a road through to the sea, there being no available means of access by made road to the north shore, either for guns in the event of a threatened landing, or for the less important purpose of access by private individuals for the purpose of driving along the shore towards Henley Beach…
>
> If the government will take the whole section at their own valuation our client will be happy to sell, but if they want a picked frontage of 12 acres, in all fairness they must pay a proportionately higher price and must also pay a reasonable sum for the severance and great depreciation to adjacent land caused by the erection of this fort… When the treasurer seeks to throw the odium of the delay and obstructiveness on a private individual, he should take care to properly refresh his memory of the facts and fully and accurately state them…

On 27 August 1889 the Assembly, including the representatives for Sturt, complacently acquiesced in the abandonment of the idea of erecting a fort at Glenelg and the Editor of the *Register* was far from pleased. He conceded that the reasons advanced by General Edwards against its construction were unanswerable, but asserted that the public had some rights in the matter and should have been acquainted with the grounds upon which such a sudden change of front had been determined upon. He believed that in reversing the policy, deliberately resolved upon years ago, the Assembly had passed an unqualified verdict of condemnation upon itself and should have made an attempt to 'put itself right with the public.' Further, he demanded that General Edward's report be made public.

In the aftermath of the government's procrastination the Glenelg people, realising the apparent helplessness of their town, asked that the *Protector* be stationed there, but Captain Walcot advised that 'the vessel would cruise at the entrance to Investigator Strait with a view to guard against possible surprise from that quarter.'

In a conciliatory move Mr Castine, MP, suggested that the 'Imperial government and the other colonies should join with South Australia in mounting the discarded piece of ordnance at Port Darwin', which could have been an improvement upon the idea of simply selling the guns without any special regard as to its destination. The irate Editor concluded:

> It is playing with the public for the Assembly one day to be hot and strong in favour of a certain policy in so important an affair as our defences, and the next day, at the instance of a distinguished military visitor whose opinion is casually asked, not only to turn its back upon that policy, but also to consider seriously how best and most promptly to obliterate all traces of it.

The irony of the whole furtive affair was that, but for Mr Gray's obstinacy, the guns would have been mounted! There were others, who in their satisfaction at the idea that Mr Gray had overreached himself in fighting for what was in some quarters considered to be an excessive price for his land, were more than content with the decision of allowing him to keep it, and others looked upon that gentleman as, in a sense, a public benefactor, because but for him an unnecessary expenditure would have been incurred.

In 1892 the Assembly decided, at the instance of Major Castine, to sell the two breech-loading guns that had lain in the sand at Glenelg since 1888. During the discussions the opinion was expressed by the Major that the guns would fetch from £15,000 to £20,000 but all the government was able to obtain was an offer of £11,500 from the English firm headed by Sir William Armstrong. This was accepted and 'as soon as possible [the guns will] be placed f.o.b. at Port Adelaide.' They had cost over £20,000, while interest and the cost of removal from Glenelg made the charge to the colony in excess of £25,000.

Thus, the beach to the north of Glenelg remained untainted by the presence of a fort, except for two monstrous guns that lay in the sandhills as a reminder of the government's folly. Upon their removal the adjacent beach became a place of public recreation, etc., for citizens with diverse opinions on the pleasures, and otherwise, to be found in the 'briny'; for example, appended are several comments made at the turn of the 20th century:

> I took a refreshing dip in the sea, clothed in bathing trunks; when, to our dismay, we were told that our bathing costume was not suitable. Does it not seem absurd that a person cannot have a swim without wearing a chemise, cold and clammy, and decidedly objectionable? At Port Elliot one wears bathing pants… but there is no nuisance there. Why so here?…
>
> So clothe yourselves that you could unblushingly enter the presence of ladies - your mother, sisters and maiden aunts… We admire… the perfection of bodily beauty; but, in the name that all that is graceful, symmetrical and artistic, let us keep covered - while bathing as elsewhere - our figures of today that fall so lamentably short of these qualities.
>
> Bathers of the male sex can testify that both Henley Beach and Glenelg are infested every hot day with numbers of so-called ladies who spend their time in strolling in the neighbourhood of men bathing in order they may satisfy their prurient curiosity.
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> A lady resident at a certain seaside resort objected to [scantily clad] people bathing from boats in the bay… When the corporation official remarked, 'But, Madam, surely they are far enough out?', she replied, 'But you can see them quite plainly with field glasses.'
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> That immorality is on the increase there is not the slightest doubt, yet vice in the shape of mixed bathing is openly encouraged… If half the women could hear the remarks passed about them by the men they would bathe in a more seemly way.

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Chapter 13

The 1890s - Towards Federation of the Colonies

> *On Saturday afternoons [the horse trams] experience a change and an increase of customers to the annoyance of our weary-shouldered and ditto-legged draggers - our horses. Our gallant defenders, the Volunteers, with clean accoutrements and dirty pipes, we then muster from each intersecting roadside.*

When the 1890s opened the permanent naval force of South Australia numbered 70 with 75 reserves and total military 2,481 with a reserve of 124 but, as for uniforms, they were 'a disgrace to the service and dampened the military ardour of the men.' The Field Artillery, together with the Garrison Artillery, were, according to military authorities, in a 'high state of efficiency' but furnished with obsolete guns, while the officers had to turn to the Commissioner of Police for the means of horsing the cannon.

The rifles for use of the infantry were, in many cases, so damaged by fair wear and tear that they were not to be depended upon, while the machine guns were altogether inadequate for its requirements. The camp equipment fell short of what was needed; there was a total absence of medical provision for the troops should they have been called upon to take the field, while the parade ground was too small for the purpose and the gymnasium and recreation reserve were wanting.

The most scurvy treatment was meted out to the colony's defenders. They were made the victims of miserable economy; they were mocked by promises which were not redeemed; they were discouraged and flouted in every conceivable way for 'when they asked for bread they were offered a stone.' When they put in a modest claim for increased pay they were denied it point blank and a call went out - 'Surely some members of Parliament will try to get justice done to the force.'

By August of 1890 the efforts made to strengthen the Militia had been successful, the total number enrolled being close up to the maximum number authorised by law, and it was of little consequence that this result had been brought about by the depletion of the ranks of the Volunteers, for that corps had all but ceased to be effective.

In spite of all the discouragement with which the Militia and Volunteers had to contend - in spite of official apathy and neglect - in spite of meagre privileges and persistent snubbing, they continued resolutely to perform the patriotic duty they had undertaken. The attitude of the government and parliament had militated greatly against them as a force, and it was hardly necessary to recall the number of appeals from the press for the authorities to bestow more liberal treatment upon the citizen soldiers. General Owen, a former commandant who had returned to England, pointed out many deficiencies in the local forces, while the Adelaide press called for the government to 'rightly appreciate its responsibility ... [and] let it properly apply the powers it has at command, and South Australia will soon have a military force which will lack nothing either on the score of effectiveness or popularity.'

The permanent forces were called out and marched under arms to the assistance of the government for the first time in 1890 when a strike paralysed Port Adelaide's waterfront. They patrolled the port with 400 policemen, but nothing happened and, therefore, the colonial army's first call to duty ended bloodlessly:

The government now recognised that the labour leaders had broken faith with them and accordingly every preparation was made to frustrate the rumoured attack. The police constables and troopers were held in readiness, the Permanent Force took up quarters at Port Adelaide for the night and the gunboat, *Protector*, was put under steam for emergencies. Arrangements had also been made to read the Riot Act. No disturbances took place, however, and from that time onwards good order was maintained. Many of the Unionists condemned the action of the crowd in throwing stones and these disorderly scenes have been attributed to larrikins.

Artillery, some fifty strong at Fort Glanville, [were] served out with ammunition and ready to turn out at a minute's notice and every now and then... marched through the town for a moral effect...

By December 1890, in some quarters it was considered that it was high time that something was done to revive the flagging interest in the colonial defence forces. There were men belonging to them who through reports, both evil and good, stood by them and did their utmost by precept and example to promote their

efficiency. But in spite of this situation the melancholy fact was being pressed home more and more closely upon the colonists that the position of affairs was the reverse of satisfactory.

Men upon various pretexts were quitting the ranks and the work of recruiting was not proceeding with anything like sufficient rapidity to make up the deficiency. The causes of this state of things had often been pointed out by correspondents to the press; that is, not only were the inducements offered by parliament to men to join the forces altogether inadequate, but the amount of sympathy and support accorded them in quarters, from which it should have derived its chief encouragement, was significantly small.

Therefore, there was little wonder that the flame of military ardour burned low and appeared to be on the point of extinction. With rare exceptions the wealthier members of the community, who had most to lose in the event of an enemy's attack, instead of cheerfully taking part in the work of defence, stood superciliously aloof and carefully abstained from doing anything to lighten the burden of patriotic duty to those who undertook it. Many of them were ready to spend time and money freely in horse racing, hunting and polo matches and other forms of amusement, but recognised no obligation to serve their country.

As a salve to public concern an amending Bill was placed before the Assembly in November 1891, but its provisions fell well short of accomplishing what was desired:

> We are no advocates for lavish expenditure upon our army, but we recognise it will be infinitely better to abolish it all together and trust to luck for our defence than to maintain it by an outlay of some ten thousands of pounds a force that must prove ineffective in time of emergency…What we wish to insist upon is the necessity of putting our defence force upon a more satisfactory footing, both as regards its component parts and the provision made in parliament for its maintenance.

The members of the Assembly, in their capacity as guardians of the public purse, deemed it a sacred duty to have an annual growl about the military and naval expenditure and there were few lines on the Estimates that provoked so much discussion and adverse criticism as those relating to colonial defences. However, an unfortunate part of the affair was that all the talking, like the firing at a sham fight, invariably ended in smoke. The opinion was commonly expressed that reforms were necessary, but a few reassuring words were uttered by the responsible Minister and the votes were passed as a matter of course.

The truth was that those who addressed the House upon the question were very much in the dark. Some of them had a shrewd idea of the direction in which improvements could be made but did not press the matter home and, consequently, it drifted. Of course, no sympathy was due to those who regarded outlay upon defence as a wasteful expenditure, for the colony was neither so poor nor so insignificant as to be unworthy of protection. But it was the bounden duty of those in authority to see that the money allotted to defence was spent effectively and not frittered away upon forces and armaments that would be all but valueless in times of need.

However, whatever the pundits in parliament decided upon, there was no doubt that in 1892 there were grievances within the ranks, for the pay for Militia men was far below that granted in the other colonies and there certainly seemed to be no reason why this should have been the case. With a view to remedying a parlous situation Major-General Downes reminisced upon suggestions he brought forward to improve the defence forces:

> It has always been a very strong feeling with me that every man was bound to give some service to his country and I thought I might be able to advance the population in South Australia, and from that, perhaps, to other parts of the Empire; anyway, it would make people think more of it and then maybe act.
>
> [I] had many talks with Mr Kingston, the minister who had charge of defence, also with Mr Playford the Premier, …and eventually he [Kingston] was told to embody my ideas in a Bill [which was] to [provide for] 'compulsory' or, better still, 'universal' service... The Cabinet agreed to it and Mr Playford determined to bring it before parliament... A feather in my cap; but alas, the government got kicked out and my Bill went into the waste paper basket.

Major-General Downes, who had been the supreme commander of South Australian defence forces for many years, elected to retire in 1892 and, accordingly, a cry went out as to whether his successor should be a 'local' man or otherwise. The class whose war cry was 'Australia for the Australians' strongly urged the claims of certain local officers and put forward Major Gordon on the grounds that, with all his faults, he possessed tact and had gone heart and soul into the study of gunnery, knew something of infantry and

cavalry drill and had the capacity to pick up the requisite knowledge and keep pace with the times. Other names brought forward were Lt-Colonels Madeley, Makin and Lovely and Brigade-Major Stuart. On the other hand there were those who insisted on an 'Imperial officer' because 'the stability of the force would be best maintained by a strict officer of the British army, who knew his work and how to do it.'

The high grass mound, along the northern side of the modern-day Government House, known popularly as 'Majuba Hill' was, in the early days, a stone quarry. Until August 1882 its ragged face was unsightly and, to clothe its nakedness, a large quantity of earth from cellars and basement excavations, together with road sweepings, was carted there to build the present well-grassed embankment. This work was undertaken following representations in parliament by Samuel Tomkinson and took one year to complete; at the same time the ground between it and the river was raised to a considerable extent and levelled.

The site underwent a transformation with a new parade ground being placed in the centre. In some places there was a fall of nine feet and an immense quantity of earth had to be filled in and men from the ranks of the unemployed were engaged at the work. The new military ground was 130 yards long from east to west and ninety yards wide, while metal from the Dry Creek Labour Prison was rolled in and the surface made smooth with screenings and, immediately surrounding, grass plots studded with palm trees were established.

Commencing early in 1893 the new commandant, Colonel Gordon, was in charge and extensive economies were contrived in connection with the defence department and there was no doubt that in previous years the colony's little army and navy had been cramped for the want of money, and its principal officers required to turn out fully efficient soldiers and sailors without adequate material. When General Owen was here the cry was for 'Money, money, money' and General Downe's lament was the same, while Colonel Gordon took up a similar plaint with even more pressing reasons than his predecessors.

In all Colonel Gordon's long catalogue of grievances there could not be found any which could be fairly objected to as being a specimen of grumbling, for the sake of grumbling, though his report showed the disposition which prevailed among legislators to have a defence force and yet not to provide for it. On one hand commandants were expected to keep up a certain muster without the means to do it. On the other, colonists relied upon forts and a warship to protect the city, but found that the guns in the forts were good enough to play with, but practically useless to fight with and that the warship, as a cost cutting venture, was carefully preserved out of harm's way by being 'laid up' at moorings in the Port River.

In August 1894 the government was handed a report on the military forces but, for some time refused to indicate the nature of its contents. The reason for its reticence was evident a few weeks later when it was revealed that some Ministers had not made up their minds concerning certain radical proposals contained in the document. The financial difficulties, caused through the stress of the times, were so real and perplexing that measures for economy were worthy of serious consideration but, in regard to the wholesale impairing proposed for the defence forces, any practical man could have been excused for putting to Cabinet a significantly pertinent question - If our citizen soldiers could be safely sent to the rightabout in the face of danger, was there any need for maintaining them as an organisation when no special jeopardy threatened?

By the end of the first quarter of 1895, hardly a session of Parliament had passed during this decade without a debate, which must have been wounding to the patriotic spirit that had impelled so many men to place their services at the disposal of the country for its protection. As the weapons in the colony's arsenals were in large measure obsolete, and the store of ammunition extremely limited in quantity, this was a particularly appropriate time in which to reorganise or disorganise the force and it was said that 'it will be well for South Australia to admit, without further farcical pretence, that it has not a substantial defence force at all.' In 1892 the annual expenditure of the local establishment was £55,363 and in 1894 this had been reduced to £28,000, while the provision for the current year was to be only £22,100.

It was evident that the government intended to make a clean sweep of the Militia in South Australia and hoped to save about £7,000 on the military vote in the ensuing year. In doing so it was influenced by the opinion of the Imperial conference on colonial defences, and also of the local defence Committee, that the principal and, indeed, the only danger in the prevailing circumstances would be from 'flying cruisers insufficiently manned to attempt any invasion.' Consequently, it was held that that the line of defence on which the colony would have to rely would be the defence seaward. However, a word of warning came from the local press:

> The government is acting more wisely now in so regarding the forts and gunboat as first and second lines of defence, but to abolish the army, the third line of defence, would be extremely undesirable.

Early in April 1895 a general order from the Staff Office directed the three regiments of local infantry, the lancers, the machine-gun corps, the signalling corps and the ambulance and bands to parade on Saturday, 20 April; the order required all noncommissioned officers and men to return to store their arms and accoutrements - everything, in fact, except their clothing was there and then to be delivered up. This action was interpreted on all sides as meaning a practical disbandment of the Militia.

Further, the method of dismissing the men was generally considered as being about as awkward and ungracious as could be devised. In full view of a crowd of civilians, collected to sympathise or to scoff according to their humour or their estimates of the value of the force, and amid the jeers of a mob of little boys, they dispersed under a humiliating sense of being publicly disarmed and sent about their business.

Thus, came an inglorious conclusion to the life of a force which, whatever its defects may have been at various times, had yet been the model which most of the other Australian colonies had taken for imitation in the more recent reorganisation of their local armies. However, it was a consolation to know that it was intended to retain the Garrison and Permanent Artillery on the same footing as before, but these bodies, even with the aid of the Volunteers would, it was feared, be 'a vain thing for safety.'

In a grudging spirit the Government granted a reprieve to the Militia after having virtually ordered it off for public execution. This was evident in instructions issued by the Staff Office which, in a lofty and condescending way, told the men that they would be allowed the privilege of serving their country for nothing. It would have been a far more manly course if the Government had directly requested the men of the militia to assent to a modification of the terms of their enlistment and to serve gratuitously until Parliament decided whether the force was to be disbanded or not.

The Defence Forces Bill dealt only with the men who might have been required to fight on land; it had nothing to do with the navy and owing to the protracted delay in the preparation and publication of the regulations made necessary by the *Defence Act* passed during the session of 1895, neither the men belonging to the old forces, which were disbanded by that measure, nor new recruits had been able to enroll. Thus it was that the colony found itself in the position of having 'a miserable attenuated army such as that now in existence.' Indeed, the feeling has been created that the government intended to act in a parsimonious spirit in regard to the pay of the rank and file and unless this impression could be removed enrollment was not likely to proceed with much enthusiasm.

By May of 1896 it was finally recognised that the basis upon which the military forces of the Australian colonies were organised was unsatisfactory and it was to cure defects and place matters on a more effective footing that a Consolidating and Amending Act had been passed in the previous session. In the dying days of Parliament its progress through all stages was pushed on and the headlong speed, with which it was carried through the two chambers, necessarily militated against the critical examination of its many clause.

The fact that the majority of the sections were merely repetitions of those in existing Acts was obviously no justification for dealing with the Bill in such a spasmodic manner. After the Act was assented to more than four months were allowed to pass without anything being done to bring the members of the old force together, with a view to acquainting them with the conditions under which they were to be asked to enroll and this policy of procrastination was observed to the last.

Many believed that there would never be a resurrection, but Colonel Gordon deprecated any such prospect of despair and prophesied a splendid reincarnation, while the local press thundered:

If the Russians should attack us tomorrow, beyond the influence of the first and second lines of defence we should not be able to oppose them with anything more formidable than one of the premier's passionate speeches of denunciation.

Finally, Colonel Gordon recommended to government that the new force be comprised as follows:

Forts Glanville and Largs, Garrison, Artillery Field forces	130
One regiment of Mounted Rifles	360
One Field Battery	68
One Machine-gun Corps	32
One regiment Infantry (Active 270, Reserve, 240)	510
Signalling Corps	18

Field Hospital.....	12
Total	1,130

Enrolment commenced in August but in the face of the many other allurements held out to the youth of South Australia in the form of cricket, football, baseball, lacrosse, and - most attractive of all - cycling, it was not to be wondered that the process of recruiting was painfully slow; by mid-February 1897 there had been 611 enrollments. With this change came the end of the colourful uniforms that marked the early military history of the colony. The scarlet tunics, white-striped blue trousers and white helmets that had followed the grey uniform of the 1880s - the 'Destitutes' they called the men in these uniforms - were replaced by khaki with maroon facings and a felt hat.

The first parade of the new military forces took place on 3 October 1896 when 'The South Australian Army' presented a rather nondescript appearance owing to the fact of so many recruits being in the ranks and yet unprovided with uniforms, and also a proportion of men in the old force whose uniforms were worn out and too shabby for wear. The public manifested little interest in the proceedings - it was race-day - and, moreover, the band was not expressively in evidence. A few people, probably the mothers and fathers, the sisters and the aunts of the new recruits, attended.

By May of 1898 there seemed to be a general impression prevailing throughout the colony that the so-called military force would soon have to be reorganised or else disbanded. What with retrenchments, reductions in the number of useful drills and a lack of enthusiasm in the rank and file, reflecting parliamentary and ministerial indifference, the general efficiency of the force had been so affected that it did not inspire confidence.

Indeed, during the 1890s practically little other than the passing of the Act had been done; the oak was still in the acorn. So, far from being improved, the South Australian defence forces had degenerated into almost a sham and this applied to both branches - naval and military. As the federation of the Australian colonies became near at hand local pundits, with both military and civil backgrounds, were to the fore and the inglorious performance of our parliamentarians over the decades revealed in certain published comments:

> The opinion of some of the most capable military men was that the in this matter we were living in a fool's paradise. Obviously military affairs in Australia can never be on a satisfactory footing excepting under federation and the best reform would be secured through the acceptance of a Commonwealth Bill and the placing of the militia under federal control.
>
> Defence is not a local, but a national matter, concerning which South Australia cannot act for itself alone.

Sources

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Epilogue

Probably the first South Australian to lose his life while on active military service was Major W.V. Herford, who in Nelson, New Zealand raised a company of Waikato Militia in 1863. He was an Adelaide lawyer and was only 36 when he died. The New Zealand papers had many eulogistic references to him and an amount in excess of £300, of which Sir George Grey gave £50, was raised for his widow.

In the 1890s much was said and written about the possibility of defensive federation amongst the Australian colonies and various schemes, of a more or less formal nature, were placed before the public with the object of knitting together the local forces of the different colonies into one great Australian army.

However, a considered opinion was that federation could be all the more permanent if it grew naturally out of the feelings and desires of the people themselves and, in this respect, one of the most powerful agencies in developing unity of sentiment was the frequent meeting together of representative men from the forces of the Australasian colonies. Indeed, it was very satisfactory that South Australia had the opportunity to lead the way in the inauguration of Australian rifle contests.

A school cadet corps was approved by the government in 1900 following a scheme being proposed by Lieutenant Leschen and the one essential condition was that 'No boy will be compelled to join':

The slouching boys need to be set up; the dull youths to be brightened and a little activity put into the lazy lads. We repeat that no harm, but much good would be wrought if this colony insisted that every able-bodied colonist - within certain age limits and under conditions ensuring a due regard to individual liberty - should attend a specified number of drills every year and acquire some practical knowledge of rifle shooting.

A striking feature in the history of the colony for the year ending July 1900 was the revival and wonderful development of the military spirit amongst the people, due to the outbreak of the Boer War in late 1899 and continued until the cessation of hostilities in May 1902. Indeed, it was said that:

> The sequel to the call to arms from the Motherland … caused feelings of patriotism to spread their influence over the whole of the English speaking race. Things military became the topic of conversation and listening to such talk kindled in the hearts of young Australians a growing desire for military life. Never before had the pulse of the colonial youth been so deeply stirred and the very air became resonant with martial music.

However, the departure of the contingents for South Africa, naturally, left the defence forces in a depleted condition and their reestablishment was begun immediately after the departure of the Fourth Contingent in May 1900.

During an Easter encampment of forces at Black Forest in March 1902, and with the transfer of colonial forces to Commonwealth control imminent, the Editor of the *Register* became lyrical;

> After all the question of defence is one for the people and preparedness for war is often a principal essential to peace. South Australians should encourage their defenders during the progress of their encampment and even the most Quaker-like of them will be none the worse for realising the significance of the stirring words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of King Henry V, when that intrepid warrior addressed his valiant soldiers before Harfleur:
>
> In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews; summon up the blood.

And, finally, a few months before the transfer eventuated, and with colonial jealousies still evident in parochial minds, the morning press had its final say on the matter of colonial defences:

> Concerning the whole subject it is manifest that South Australia will need to be constantly vigilant if it is to maintain its prestige and secure its rights in connection with defence, and it is gratifying to observe the earnest manner in which the government is cooperating to that end

> with the federal representatives of this state. The most ardent and cosmopolitan federalist resident in this part of the Commonwealth can with perfect consistency deprecate the sneering suggestion that no good thing can come out of South Australia.

It was not until 1903 that the Commonwealth took over the military forces of all States and Major-General (later Sir Henry) Hutton was the first commander. Under the Commonwealth, New South Wales had the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th battalions, Victoria, the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, Queensland the 9th and South Australia, the 10th - the Fighting Tenth they called it after its heroic baptisms of fire at Gallipoli twelve years later:

> If Anzac was a mistake, then surely it was a magnificent blunder. No indiscretion in military tactics can detract from that. The campaign may be wrapped up in the sombre shades of failure, but around that thrilling episode of the storming of the Gallipoli heights there gathers a resplendent memory of reckless courage, written down as if in the character of eternal sunshine! … Anzac was worth it all, even at that terrible cost. It saw Australia enthroned among the great fighting nations of the world… Anzac was not a mistake. It was a triumph!

Thus, the army continued until 1911 when universal training was adopted; then in 1929 the Scullin government suspended that innovation and returned to the militia system and with it the more picturesque uniform of the militia days. For instance, the garrison artillery uniform with its white helmet and striped trousers approximated most of the uniforms of the 1890s. Then, with the closure of the State's 100th year, came armoured cars and mechanical artillery, the latest and probably most far-reaching changes of all.

The holocaust of 1914-1918 needs no elaboration here except, perhaps, for a few quotations printed in the Adelaide morning press that express aptly the views of the 'average' South Australian in those far off days in respect of war itself *vis a vis* inherent patriotism, coupled with intense loyalty towards the 'Mother Country' and British Empire:

> The hell hounds of war are loose once more. Watch them with their jowls dripping with blood. Listen to the soft pad, pad of their feet. Nose to tail. Hear the tally-ho of the hunters…
>
> Popular speculation is again conjuring up the gory figure of war in Europe. It is not a little anomalous that after all the exertions of statesmen, which seemed for a time to have been successful to remove the perils of a continental conflagration, it should be within the power of greedy financiers to endanger peace once more.
>
> The Union Jack of the British Empire stands indeed for something great and admirable. It stands for a national existence which may acknowledge its defects but knows it has reached the top rung of a civilisation never abandoned to ignoble purposes…Who lowers the Union Jack stays the advancing tide of human evolution… Assuredly the Union Jack is worthy of our love and honor.
>
> [The Union Jack] stands for freedom and protection. Its motto is 'Let the weak be enlightened - The guilty punished'… Thousands of Australia's sons have died to keep this dear old flag clean and honorable…The world recognises it as the only flag which upholds small nations against oppressors.

The exploits of South Australian participation during the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, together with other aspects of the defence of South Australia, have been told by other historians and is outside the ambit of this history. However, it might be fitting to conclude by quoting a poignant stanza from a poem written by 'An Adelaide Poet at War [Leon Gellert]', in 1917:

> Yes, I have slain and taken moving life
> From bodies. Yes, and laughed upon the taking
> And, having slain, have whetted still the knife
> For more and more, and heeded not the making
> Of things that I have killed...

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LATTER DAY CARTOONS

The News - 3 December 1935

A lasting understanding between Great Britain and America would make war impossible," says the American Ambassador to London (Mr. R. W. Bingham).

The News - 19 August 1938