

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE FORMATION OF THE VARIOUS CORPS AND THE FORMATION OF THE 1st. SOMERSETSHIRE BATTALION OF THE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS IN 1860

Volunteer Militia forces in and around Bath had been common from very early times, along with most other cities, towns and large private estates, they were small companies of armed and drilled men funded by private or public purse for the protection of the local inhabitants and property under control of the local authorities. Although the Napoleonic War had been going since 1793 it was in 1803 that the threat of invasion by the French was at its most dire. The war had involved Russia, Prussia, Spain, Holland and Austria, as well as Britain. The Union of Great Britain and Ireland took place in 1801 and the United Kingdom was created giving better all round defence, and by 1802 with the Treaty of Amiens signed the war was considered over. Napoleon restarted again in 1803, and the French decided to invade Britain. A national volunteer movement raised forces throughout the country for national defence (*an early form of Home Guard*), which in 1803 had mustered 380,000 men of the Militia, Rifle Volunteers and Yeomanry, and along with the regular army meant that one in every four adult British males was in some form of uniform. The Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, when Nelson defeated the French and Spanish fleets effectively ended the threat of invasion, and finally in 1815 the French army was completely defeated at the Battle of Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington and the Allied armies.

During the Napoleonic War the standard sidearm of the British army had been the smooth-bored flintlock musket, the '*Brown Bess*' of which the basic design had differed very little from the musket produced in 1722, almost 100 years earlier. The rifle on the other hand, although well developed and accurate, was not suited to full battle conditions where continuous rapid fire was necessary. The slowness of loading the ball or cylindrical bullet into the tightly fitting grooves of a rifled bore, particularly once the bore had become fouled from burnt powder residues, made the rifle unreliable for volley firing. A fouled bore made it almost impossible to load after a small number of shots as the ball or bullet would stick or jam in the barrel. Once this occurred the only thing to do was to remove the jammed ball or bullet by fitting a special screw attachment to the end of the ramrod, and then clean the barrel, preferably with hot water. Regular infantry soldiers had no real need for highly accurate weapons, as their purpose was to fire in volleys, whereby one line of troops would fire en-mass and then reload while the following lines fired in turn and if bullets were to jam in the barrels during loading the effectiveness of a whole troop could quickly break down. Percussion cap locks replaced the flintlock, but the barrels remained smooth bored. It was for this reason that the rifle did not readily become a general issue sidearm in the British army, and the old tried and trusted muskets remained in use by many infantry units up until the late 1840's.

Britain had almost become bankrupt during the war and once the war was won in 1815, most of the volunteer corps were disbanded, and by 1822, only two Volunteer Corps were in existence, which were the Honourable Artillery Company and the Duke of Cumberland's Sharp Shooters (*later to become the Royal Victoria Rifles*). During the following thirty years, volunteer brigades had bitty existences, with local forces being first raised and then disbanded as past-times, as interest in joining and maintaining volunteer forces dwindled.

Rifling in gun barrels had been known since before the 16th century when it had been discovered that spinning the ball as it travelled up the gun barrel by adding slightly spiralled grooves to the length of the inside of the barrel made the ball travel on a much more accurate trajectory. It then took until the middle of the 19th century for the rifle to make it work efficiently, with the introduction of the Enfield P.53. Before 1853, the Baker rifle was the most eminently produced rifle used by the British army with 1,800 being issued, in rifle form to the Rifle Brigade and in carbine form to mounted troops. In 1848 it was decided that rifling was necessary in all firearms in order to keep pace with other countries advancements, and a practical weapon, capable of sustained loading and firing, and produced at reasonable cost had to be developed. The culmination of which, was the Minié bullet and the Enfield P.53 rifle, which became the standard issue military rifle of the British army along with their many derivatives in the forms of short rifles and carbines and even pistols, which later all were easily developed into the Snider breach loading.

The Crimean war of 1854, in which the Britain and French expedition fought the Russians, brought the requirement for some form of home defence force to the forefront again, while the bulk of the regular army was away in the Crimea.

The raising of volunteer units spread again and once again with great national fervour, but only to settle down once again when the war was over. The Rifle Volunteers were not seen as a long-term necessity during peacetime, costing taxpayer's money to maintain and by 1858, only the Victoria Rifle Volunteer Corps and the Exeter and South Devon Rifle Volunteer Corps had managed to stay in continuous existence.

A new requirement for volunteer defence forces materialised after the 14th January 1858, when a fanatical Italian Count named Orsini, along with two collaborators, made an assassination attempt on the life of Napoleon III in Paris by throwing two bombs at the Emperor's carriage. Although the Emperor was not injured by the explosions, several other people were killed. Count Felice Orsini was arrested and executed, and when it was discovered that the plot had been hatched in England, and that English law would not permit the surrendering of Orsini's accomplices to France, the French were angered, and anti-British feelings again ran high with the French military leaders once more demanding an invasion of England. The British Army by then was inferior in numbers to the French army, as it had been greatly reduced after the war in the Crimea and was divided between the British Isles and control in India. A hurried increase in Britain's defensive forces was necessary in case an invasion attempt actually became a serious threat, and a new call went out for volunteers.

The two existing volunteer corps quickly increased in numbers as national enthusiasm was whipped up throughout the country, and every effort was made to raise further volunteer corps wherever possible, in cities and towns, from large estates, villages and communities. Men from every occupation and life style began taking an interest in rifle shooting and marksmanship. The threatened invasion lasted only a few months, but as things began to settle back to normal the interest in rifle shooting amongst men continued, and the Government felt there was a requirement for keeping a national volunteer support defence force, to be maintained to an efficient standard necessary to the countries defence. It was also seen as a means of inflicted a sense of duty, national unity, pride, and self-discipline, amongst the labouring communities, particularly the young men. The first attempt to raise a Volunteer Rifle Corps in Somerset was at Williton in May 1859, though it was not until November 1859 that a small corps of 30 men was established. Bath had been more successful during the intervening months, and starting in mid 1859, it quickly gained the surrounding corps to become a Battalion made up of seven separate corps. The 1st Battalion of the 45th Somersetshire Rifle Volunteers was raised, and by early 1860 the battalion included the 14th (Warleigh) Corps, locally known as the 'Warleigh Manor Rifle Volunteers' and later as the 'Avonvale and Warleigh Manor Rifle Volunteers' and the 'Avondale Rifle Volunteers'. The decision this time was taken by the government to keep the volunteers forces running in support of the regular army at home, and to increase their efficiency and skills further.

By the time the Rifle Volunteers had formed into individual Battalions nationwide, the threat of invasion was long past, but the use of rifles firing the Minié bullet maintained the interest and rifle shooting became a very popular activity, and their skills and accuracy in rifle shooting quickly developed into serious competition. So began the National Rifle Association, with its official range on Wimbledon Common in 1860, where Queen Victoria fired the first shot to open this new range by pulling on a long cord attached to the trigger of a Whitworth rifle securely supported on a stand at a safe distance. As time passed, the Wimbledon range became unsafe to use, due to the expansion of London, and a new national range was created in 1890 near Woking, on Bisley Heath.

The Somerset Rifle Volunteers remained in full existence from 1860 until 1882, when they became the Volunteer Somerset Light Infantry, and in 1908 became the Somerset Territorial Light Infantry, the "*Territorials*".

RIFLE VOLUNTEER COUNTY ORDER OF PRECEDENCE (1872)

1. Devonshire
2. Middlesex
3. Lancaster
4. Surrey
5. Pembrokeshire
6. Derbyshire
7. Oxfordshire
8. Cheshire
9. Wiltshire
10. Sussex
11. Edinburgh (City)
12. Essex
13. Northumberland
14. Renfrewshire
15. Northamptonshire
16. Dorsetshire
17. Norfolk
18. Staffordshire
19. Berkshire
20. Gloucestershire
21. Brecknockshire
22. Suffolk
23. Stirlingshire
24. Buckinghamshire
25. Lanarkshire
26. Kent
27. Glamorgan
28. Nottinghamshire
29. Merionethshire
30. Yorkshire (W. Riding)
31. Leicestershire
32. Midlothian
33. Aberdeenshire
34. Roxburgh
35. Cinque Ports
36. Monmouthshire
37. Cornwall
38. Ross-shire
39. Worcestershire
40. Inverness-shire
41. Warwickshire
42. Lincolnshire
43. Denbighshire
44. Hampshire
- 45. Somersetshire**
46. Forfar
47. Cambridgeshire
48. Shropshire
49. London
50. Yorkshire (E. Riding)
51. Hertfordshire
52. Perthshire
53. Berwickshire
54. Sunderland
55. Kincardineshire
56. Haverford west
57. Haddington
58. Isle of White
59. Ayrshire
60. Dumfries
61. Elgin
62. Argyll
63. Cardiganshire
64. Durham
65. Wigtown
66. Buteshire
67. Yorkshire (N. Riding)
68. Cumberland
69. Herefordshire
70. Dumbarton
71. Huntingdon
72. Caernarvonshire
73. Montgomeryshire
74. Orkney
75. Carmarthen
76. Caithness
77. Kirkcudbright
78. Westmorland
79. Fifeshire
80. Bedfordshire
81. Newcastle-on-Tyne
82. Linlithgowshire
83. Selkirkshire
84. Banffshire
85. Radnorshire
86. Flintshire
87. Berwick-on-Tweed
88. Clackmannan
89. Tower Hamlets
90. Nairn
91. Peebleshire
92. Isle of Man
93. Kinross shire
94. Anglesey

THE SOMERSETSHIRE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS (No. 45)

THE CORPS 1861

1st Administration Battalion

- 1. Bath
- 2. Bathwick
- 7 Keynsham
- 14 Warleigh Manor**
- 17 Lyncombe
- 18 Walcot
- 22 Temple Cloud

2nd Administration Battalion

- 3 Taunton
- 5 Bridgewater
- 8 Wellington
- 9 Williton
- 11 Stogursey
- 12 Wiveliscombe
- 16 Yeovil
- 20 Crewkerne
- 21 Langport

3rd Administration Battalion

- 4 Burnham
- 6 Weston-Super-Mare
- 10 Wells
- 13 Frome
- 15 Shepton Mallet
- 19 Glastonbury
- 23 Wincanton
- 24 Somerton
- 25 Baltonsborough

THE 14th (WARLEIGH) CORPS SOMERSETSHIRE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS 1860

Raising of the Rifle Corps at Warleigh Manor, 5th March 1860

Entitled: The 14th Corps of the 1st Battalion of the Somerset Rifle Volunteers
Somerset was No.45 in county order of precedence.

Also locally known as 'The Warleigh Manor Rifle Volunteers' and later as the 'Avon Vale and Warleigh Manor Rifle Volunteers', and also the 'Avondale Rifle Volunteers' as the recruitment area increased to reach from Freshford along the Warleigh valley to Bathford and Box.

First Officers of the Corps

Captain E. Sawyer
Lieutenant W. Sanderson
Ensign E. M. Skrine
Paymaster H. D. Skrine

Commanding Officers of the 14th (Warleigh) Corps

Captain	E. Sawyer	1860 – 1862
Captain	W. Sanderson	1862 – ?
Captain	E. R. May	? – 1879
Captain	W. S. Bennett	1879 – 1884
Captain	F. Clutterbuck	1884 – 1898

THE SKRINE'S OF WARLEIGH MANOR

The line of the Skrine family in the Bathford and Warleigh districts is known to have encompassed over five hundred years from 1446 - 1956.

Henry Duncan Skrine was the founder and paymaster of the 14th Corps at Warleigh Manor. He was a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset.

Henry Mills Skrine son of H. D. Skrine was born 20th May 1844. He held a commission in the 14th Warleigh Corps from 1860 – 1867, and held a commission in the North Somerset Yeomanry from 1863 - 1874. In 1883, appointed Major of the 1st Volunteer Battalion Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry, he died 7th March 1915.

E. M. Skrine Ensign

Duncan W. H. Skrine Lieutenant

Walter C Skrine Lieutenant



*A Rifle Volunteer Officer's pouch badge
from the 14th Warleigh Manor Corps
1860-1867*

The 14th Warleigh Corps was section of the 1st Administration Battalion, with Bath being the Battalion Head Quarters Corps. The 2nd Administration Battalion was South Somerset, with its HQ at Taunton, and the 3rd Administration Battalion was East Somerset with its HQ at Weston-Super-Mare. There was also the North Somerset Yeomanry Cavalry, which was separate from the Rifle Volunteer Corps.

Drill

Drill sessions took place during evening and weekend at Bath, Bathford (Warleigh) and at Box, and even battalion drill assemblies were held at Warleigh, to which volunteers travelled from as far away as Temple Cloud. Duncan Skrine wrote in March 1882:

‘Next to Tynning a narrow strip of meadow now thrown to a kitchen garden led to a field called Clotmead – Here have been frequently held Battalion drill and sham fights of the Warleigh Corps of the Volunteer Rifles.’

See also Page 8: The cost of being a Rifle Volunteer

Travelling

Many men travelled over 5 miles to and from normal drill sessions, after work. It was possible to catch a train from Box to Bathford Halt for Warleigh and into Bath for battalion parades, and from Freshford and Limpley Stoke to Bathampton or Bath, the cost of rail travel was a concern to many on low paid employment.

Consolidation

In 1882, the 1st Administration Battalion consolidated into the 1st Volunteer Battalion of The Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry (166). The 14th Corps (Warleigh) was then designated ‘D’ Company of the 1st Battalion.

Original Corps No.	Corps	New Company Prefix 1882
1	Bath	A
2	Bathwick	B
7	Keynsham	C
14	Warleigh Manor	D
17	Lyncombe	E
18	Walcot	F
22	Temple Cloud	G
	Twerton (added 1885)	H

The Box detachment

The village of Box raised a detachment of 32 men, which was annexed to ‘D’ Company with permission from the Wiltshire Rifle Volunteer Rifles.

Recruitment area coverage

In 1887 the ‘D’ Company recruitment area extended from Freshford along the Avon valley to Box, including Limpley Stoke, Claverton, Warleigh, Bathford, Batheaston, and also Combe Down and part of Bath.

The Head Quarters of the 1st Battalion was at the old Militia Barracks at Lower Bristol Road, Bath (*now demolished*).

The Boer War

Volunteers from the Somerset Battalions saw active national service, in the African Boer War 1899 - 1902.

In 1908, the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Volunteer Battalions Somersetshire Light Infantry became the 4th & 5th battalions of the Somerset Light Infantry and the word ‘Volunteer’ was dropped; they were battalions of the new ‘Territorial Army’ (*further details on transformations on pages 9-12*).

COMMANDING OFFICERS

**1st BATTALION
SOMERSET RIFLE VOLUNTEERS**

&

**1st VOLUNTEER BATTALION
THE PRINCE ALBERT'S SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY**

1860 - 1908

Lieutenant Colonel	Inigo W. Jones	1860 – 1868
Lieutenant Colonel	John Randle Ford	1868 – 1883
Lieutenant Colonel	Henry Mills Skrine	1883 – 1888
Lieutenant Colonel	A. F. B. Write	1888 – 1893
Lieutenant Colonel	Henry Mills Skrine	1893 – 1898
Lieutenant Colonel	H.F. Clutterbuck	1898 – 1908

A BRIEF LIST OF EVENTS & TRANSFORMATIONS 1859 - 1908

The following are very descriptions of events and occasions in the history of the 1st Battalion, Somerset Rifle Volunteer s and the 1st Volunteer Battalion, The Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry, most of which the 14th (Warleigh) Corps, or men from it, would have made attendances.

1859 November 11th First parade of the Bath Corps of Somerset Rifle Volunteers

1859 Autumn H. D. Skrine of Warleigh Manor and Captain (later Colonel) Sawyer decided to form a company of volunteers from along the valley of the Avon, which would be designated the 14th Somerset Rifle Volunteers. This Corps was to be clothed and equipped chiefly by its founders and friends in the district, receiving arms from the Government, as did the rest of the volunteer forces at that time.

1859 November 30th

THE COST OF BEING A RIFLE VOLUNTEER

A letter to the editor of the Bath and Cheltenham Gazette newspaper for the 30th November 1859 from an Administrative Officer of the newly formed Bath Rifle Volunteer Corps gave answers to enquiries made to the paper of the costs of joining the Rifle Volunteers. The following costs are as given in pounds, shillings and pence sterling:

Annual subscription	1. 0. 0
Short Enfield Rifle & Sword Bayonet	4. 10. 0
Belt pouch and accoutrements	1. 0. 0
Uniform	<u>2. 12. 6</u>
	£9. 2s. 6d

‘But a volunteer whose means are insufficient to bear the whole expense, will be provided with a rifle and sword out of the funds of the corps, thereby reducing the outlay to £4.12s.6d only. The subscription of £1 is the only annual expense, the government supply of ammunition for all members being paid for out of the fund.

The duties of a volunteer are to attend the general weekly parade, unless prevented from doing so by unavoidable circumstances. The parade is now fixed for the present season for Thursday, at 8 0'clock in the morning. For instruction of recruits and improvement of the volunteers generally, a parade takes place at the orderly-room, Cornwall buildings, every morning at 8, and every evening at 7, under the command of one officer of the corps, assisted by one of the militia sergeants, and a fortnights regular attendance at these drills is found sufficient to enable a recruit to join the general parade.’

Old Sterling currency

12 pence (pennies) = 1 shilling

20 shillings = £1 (or 240 pennies)

The rifle and sword bayonet cost - Four pounds, Ten shillings and Six pence.

The uniform cost - Two pounds, Twelve shillings and Six pence.

1860 January 1st Sunday Church parade of the Bath Corps at Bath Abbey. Over 100 volunteers attended.

1860 March The Warleigh Corps was finally together and the first officers appointed to a company of thirty-five men.

1860 April 19th A General Parade in Bath and acceptance of the Lyncombe & Walcot Corps.

1860 September 18th Attended a Review of Volunteers at Gloucester.

1860 October 8th Field Day at Lansdown, followed by a banquet at the Guildhall, Bath, to commemorate the founding of the Corps independently. Six Corps attended - Bath, Bathwick, Keynsham, Warleigh Manor, Lyncombe and Walcot.

1860 November 5th Competition at Hampton Down shooting range between the four Bath Corps, (Bath, Bathwick, Lyncombe and Walcot) with £10 donated prize money divided into four prizes.

1860 Autumn The 1st Battalion Somerset Rifle Volunteers officially began.

1861 January 27th Church parade at Bath Abbey.

1861 March 7th Funeral of a young Volunteer from Bath. Full account on page 42.

1861 July 30th The first time all three Somerset Rifle Volunteer Battalions (all 25 Corps) were reviewed together at Kelston Park, Bath. The Review was taken by Lord Portman the Lord Lieutenant.

1861 Warleigh Corps had a compliment of 64 men.

1862 June 17th Attended a large Review at Durdham Down, Bristol.

1862 June Inspected by Lieutenant Colonel Hume at Bath.

1863 March 10th A march through Bath from Sidney Gardens to the Park and fired a salute in honour of the marriage of HRH Prince of Wales.

1863 August 3rd All Somerset Volunteers reviewed at Taunton.

1864 Took part in the Hyde Park Review, London.

1865 August 2nd Lord Lieutenant reviewed the three Somerset Battalions, plus the North Somerset Yeomanry at Wells.

1866 July 25th Review at Lansdown of the Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Volunteers with Colonel Robert Bruce in command. H. D. Skrine wrote in 1887 concerning such reviews:

‘It is much regretted that owing to high rates demanded by the Railway Companies and the low state of finances of the Volunteer Corps in this district, it has been impossible of late years to have a similar gathering in this neighbourhood.’

1866 September 10th Somerset Rifle Volunteers furnished a Guard of Honour under Captain Holme to receive the Lord Lieutenant on his visit to Bath to open a Bazaar in aid of the Royal United Hospital.

1868 June 20th Attended the Windsor Park Review before HMS Queen Victoria.

1868 September Inspected by Colonel R Bruce at Kelston Park.

1869 Summer The last Review of the Somerset Rifle Volunteers held at Bridgewater. This was the final rundown for the individual Rifle Volunteers Corps, as the volunteer forces became more and more consolidated into the ‘Administrative Battalions’ by 1872.

1870 Complaints were made about the poor state of the government issue rifle barrels, the volunteers were still using muzzle-loading rifles dating from the 1850’s.

1871 Muzzle loading rifles replaced with Snider-Enfield breach loading conversion rifles.

1873 Guard of Honour at Bath Horticultural Society Show.

1874 June 10th Brigade drill held at Claverton Down with 2nd Militia.

1874 November 26th Captain H. M. Skrine A Presentation and Testimonial made by a troop of the North Somerset Yeomanry at the Drill Hall, Montpellier, Bristol, on his retirement after ten years association with the regiment. He was presented with *'hansom centre dish and knife'*.

Notices.

THEATRE ROYAL, BATH.

Lessee and Manager, Mr. WILLIAM DUCK.

Doors open at 7; commence at Half-past. Prices as usual.

FIRST SOMERSET RIFLE VOLUNTEERS.

A PERFORMANCE will be given on **WEDNESDAY** NEXT, December 2nd, 1874, by the **VOLUNTEER DRAMATIC CLUB,**

Under the immediate Patronage of his Worship the Mayor of Bath (Admiral Paynter), Colonel Hayter, M.P., Major Bousfield, M.P., Lieut.-Col. Ford, and the Officers of the Battalion.

The Proceeds to be devoted to the Funds of the Corps.

To commence with a Farce, by W. Brough, Esq.,
No. 1, ROUND THE CORNER.

To be followed by a Melo-Drama, in Two Acts,
AUBERGE DES ADEET;
or "ROBERT MACAIRE."

"PAS DE DEUX," BY THE SISTERS HULBERT.

The Band (under the direction of Mr. Salmon) will perform the following Music—Crown Diamonds (Overture)—William Tell (Overture)—Volunteer March (*Salmon*)—Prize Cup Galop (*Salmon*)—Scotch Fusilier Guards Valse (*Godfrey*).

To conclude with
RETAINED FOR THE DEFENCE.

Stage Managers—Sergt. T. G. Brown and Private G. Hawkins.
"R. A. MOGER (Capt. 1st S.R.V.) Hon. Sec.

N.B.—Volunteers are requested to appear in Uniform.
TICKETS may be obtained of the Members of the Committee, or of the Hon. Secretary.

Advertisement in the Bath Weekly Chronicle for 17th November 1874

1875 - January H. M. Skrine appointed Major & Adjutant of the Battalion.

1876 August 10th Field Day at Warleigh.

1877 Amalgamation to form a consolidated 1st Battalion.

1880 February Amalgamation of various Corps to form an even more consolidated Battalion.

1880 July 5th First Regimental Camp at Kingsdown by kind permission of Colonel Northey of Box Manor. The camps were held successively for three years until 1883. Inspections at the same venue were then carried on until 1888.

1881 Two guards of Honour.

1881 Further consolidation, whereby the regular army lost their old regimental numbers, and from 1881 were known only by their county titles, which are still used today.

THE VOLUNTEER CAMP ON KINGSDOWN.

To the EDITOR of the BATH CHRONICLE.

SIR,—I am desired by the Colonel and officers of the 1st Somerset Rifle Volunteers to beg you will be so kind as to insert in your next issue their request to the employers of labour in the city of Bath and neighbourhood that they will afford every facility in their power to Volunteers in their employ to join the Regimental Camp to be formed at Kingsdown on Saturday next, the 25th inst.

F. J. BAMPFYLDE,
Major and Adjutant 1st S.R.V.C.

Head-Quarters, June 20th, 1881.

1882 Under General Order 261 of October 1882 The Somersetshire Rifle Volunteers became volunteer battalions of the new regular army regiments, *e.g.* the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Rifle Volunteer Battalions became the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Volunteer Battalions, The Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry (166). This meant that the 14th Corps (Warleigh) became designated 'D' Company of the 1st Volunteer Battalion Prince Albert's S. L. I. Almost all of the smaller Corps and sub-units had lost their individual identities with this restructuring, but Somerset was the first to adopt the new title.

1882 June 1st A presentation was made to Major Francis Bampfylde on his retirement as after 22 years of as Adjutant of the 1st Volunteer Battalion. The presentation took place at the Headquarters in Lower Bristol Road, Bath. Major Bampfylde was presented with a silver salver, a silver claret jug, and a silver tea and coffee service.

1882 June 1st

The parade state of the 1st Battalion on that date was:

Company	Officers	Sergeants	Band/Buglers	Rank & File	Total
A	2	5	9	38	54
B	2	5	8	65	80
C	2	4	1	35	42
D	3	4	2	34	43
E	2	4	5	42	53
F	2	3	8	42	55
G	2	3	0	9	14

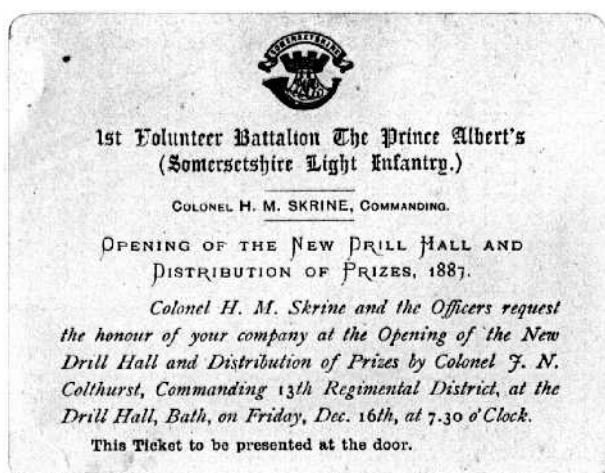
In his speech, major Bampfylde included the following gift from himself:

'With Col. Ford's permission, he wished, in order to keep up his memory – although he thought they would not want that – he wished to give, every year that he might be spared in this life, a cup of the value of not less than £5 to be shot for. He had first thought of a challenge cup, but then remembered that such a cup was sometimes a "white elephant". The men might never win it, and it was a great responsibility to those who won it every year. When they found the cup did not come forward they would know what had become of their old adjutant.'

1883 August 11th Conclusion of the camp at Kingsdown

1883-1888 Lieutenant Colonel Henry Mills Skrine as Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion.

1883 December 16th The 1st Battalion, The Prince Albert's Somersetshire Light Infantry, took over the refurbished old Somerset Militia barracks, Bath as their new drill hall.



1884 Early Brigade drill at Durdham Down, Bristol, in company with the Bristol Artillery Engineering & Rifles.

1884 Spring Ambulance detachment, 32 men trained

1885 Warleigh 'D' Company won at Bayonet Exercises, and also the Bampfylde Cup for shooting.

1885 Twerton 'H' Company raised.

1886 Private Hodges of Warleigh 'D' Company won Flag Signalling competition.

1887 Sergeant Allen was the only remaining original member remaining from the founding of the 14th Warleigh Manor Corps in from 1860.

1887 January 23rd A presentation of Colours by the Mayor of Bath to the 1st Volunteer Battalion Somerset Light Infantry. The flag passed into the possession of the 4th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry in 1924.

1887 April 19th–23rd THE GRAND VOLUNTEER BAZAAR held at the Assembly Rooms, Bath, recorded at the time as an unqualified success in aid of a Drill Hall Fund. The object of this fund was to erect a Drill Hall, Orderly Room, Armoury and Reading Room at the old Militia Barracks in Lower Bristol Road. The Bazaar was held under the patronage of HM Queen Victoria. Lieutenant Colonel H. M. Skrine, Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry, issued a booklet/programme.

1900 March 8th Volunteers from the 1st Battalion left for the first and only active service in its history to South Africa, and returned home on the 16th May 1901.

1893–1898 Lieutenant Colonel H. M. Skrine's second period as Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion.

1908 April 1st 'The Territorial Reserve Forces Act 1907' came into force and the Volunteer and Militia forces were disbanded. The 1st 2nd & 3rd Volunteer Battalions Somerset Light Infantry became the 4th & 5th Battalions Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry, having two companies each, and then became Somerset Territorial Light Infantry - "*The Territorials*"

EXTRACTS FROM THE BATH WEEKLY CHRONICLE NEWSPAPERS

The following, taken from the Bath Weekly Chronicle give a good indication of the often vivid first-hand accounts and reports found in local newspapers, they are reproduced as written, and therefore grammar and punctuation may differ slightly from the present day form.

24th November 1859

CAUTION TO RIFLE VOLUNTEERS – A correspondent of the *Times* cautions riflemen against arming themselves with rifles not supplied by the Government. The Government rifles, he says, are the best the trade can make, and the whole of them carefully and individually viewed by experienced War-Office viewers before the rifles are set up. On the other hand, he intimates that quantities of inferior rifles which have been rejected by the War-Office are being purchased by riflemen who wish to be armed faster than Government can supply the weapons. This is an important hit, and must not be lost sight of by the public. The interest which is now felt in the formation of rifle companies proves that this country will spend at least a million sterling from its private resources to obtain the necessary arms and outfit, and is most desirable that the money should be well spent.

29th December 1859

THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT – Her Majesty's Government have determined to issue to Rifle Volunteer Corps, after 1st of January next, an additional supply of long Enfield rifles (pattern 1853), to the extent of 50 per cent, on the effective strength of the corps. This supply will raise the aggregate issue to 100 per cent on the effective strength of the force.

12 January 1860

MILITARY and NAVAL

Proposed Army of Reserve – Government has issued official announcement of the intention to organise an Army of Reserve, that may be made available should circumstances arise to require their services. The Secretary of the War Department has laid down rules and regulations for the enrolment of volunteers, which are similar to those under which the organisation of the Royal Naval Reserve force has been commenced. Men who have served in the army, and not been discharged more than five years, if fit for duty and having good characters, are eligible to join the force and will receive their pensions, if any, during the time they serve. When called out for training, or required for active service they will receive pay, rates, and allowances of soldiers of Her Majesty's regular service, and entitled to similar rewards for good conduct, and their time will reckon in granting pensions. Travelling expenses at a rate of 1p per mile will be allowed. Each volunteer, from the date of enrolment will be entitled to and paid £1 per quarter, being at the rate of £4 per annum, as a retaining salary, but each man must reside within his respective district, unless leave to the contrary be obtained.

19 January 1860

THE RIFLE MOVEMENT

To the Editor of the Bath Chronicle.

Sir – The "Rifle Movement" is daily gaining ground in the country districts, and during the past fortnight the villages of Bathampton, Bathford, Claverton, Limpley Stoke, and Freshford have united, and it is expected, be shortly formed into a Corps. We cannot but admire the alacrity with which the people of these parishes have come forward; but we would wish to remove an impression we have observed among the young and ignorant that the rules are harsh – and that they ought to be permitted to keep their rifles and clothing at home. By all means let them keep the latter, if they pay for them, no one would wish to prevent that, but, in name of order and safety, who would place rifles in the hands of the community, and why should raw countrymen be allowed, when not on duty, to do different from our soldiers, and carry about such dangerous weapons at their discretion. We feel sure that none but the most ignorant could for a moment expect to do so, and that these, when the case is fairly placed before them, will be convinced of the necessity of conforming to the established rules.

I am Sir, &c., &c.,

A RIFLEMAN

The next 'letter to the Editor' from the same newspaper page, but from a member of the public, gives some credence to the previous concerns.

19 January 1860

DANGEROUS RIFLE PRACTICE

To the Editor of the Bath Chronicle

Dear Sir, - I would call your attention to the dangerous practice of firing of rifles in the neighbourhood of Bath, and in close proximity to our suburban cottages. There is a rifle ball in the shutter of my house, which was fired on Monday last, supposed from the neighbourhood of the Bath Gas Works. It is within eight inches of the parlour window, and I think it needs only publicity to be a caution to all in whose hands the rifles are placed that they practice only on proper ground, and not in the neighbourhood of our towns to the imminent danger of the inhabitants.

I remain, yours truly,

CHARLES GREENMAN

2, Twerton East; Jan. 17th, 1860

1st March 1860

MILITARY & NAVAL – Sir Robert Peel has followed up his remarkably foolish attack on the Volunteer Movement last Friday week by a notice for an amendment for reducing the sum put down in the army estimates for promoting the formation of Rifle Corps.

5th April 1860

THE AVONDALE RIFLE CORPS – Captain Sawyer, late of the Second Somerset Militia, is increasing the strength of this corps, and it now numbers 70 members in the parishes of Bathford and neighbourhood, Claverton, Hinton, and Combe Down. Colour-Sergeant Duffy, of the Second Somerset, has been engaged as drill instructor to the corps which promises in a short time to be a thoroughly efficient body.

19th April 1860

CARELESS RIFLE SHOOTING – The *Manchester Guardian* says that – “On Good Friday several members of the rifles corps assembled for the purpose of having a little practice with the rifle. The target was at a distance of around 200 yards from the standing point. The very first or second shot which was fired missed the target, and at 1,200 yards distance found a lodgement in the leg of a valuable horse belonging to Messrs. Salis, Schwabe, and Co. This horse was ploughing, or harrowing, and the man attending was, fortunately, one yard from the point where the deadly ball found its resting place.”

24th May 1860

DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT OF A VOLUNTEER. – A gentleman writing to *The Times* very truly says that the following facts ought to be made public:– “This day, at about half-past three p.m., I was walking on Wandsworth Common with my sister and some of my children. Four persons, dressed in the uniform of the rifle corps, were practicing on the common; one of them aimed at and shot a very handsome dog belonging to my sister; one of my little girls was close to the dog at the time. These four ‘gallant defenders’ of the nation immediately ran away, leaving us, in great distress at the moans of our poor dog, to seek the aid from a couple of workmen, who presently came in sight, and who showed no lack of sympathy with the victim, nor of indignation against those whom they scrupled not to call cowards.” We can only regret that the writer did not publish the name of the corps to which the cowardly ruffian belonged, and give information which would lead to his identification.

24th May 1860

THE SHAKO FOR THE BATH RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

SIR – I find that some of the Bath Volunteer Rifles are adopting the Shako, while others suggest “that they should have a small plum of feathers on their present caps.” But as the present neat and useful dress and cap is highly approved of by those who look to use before ornament, I beg respectfully to submit to the Artizan Rifle Volunteers that they hoist *no feathers until they have won them*; at the same time without comment, allow others to do as they so please on the matter. Yet as many of the hard-handed sons of toil are not blessed with any surplus cash, and that when occasion occur that they be required to pay for Railway and other expenses to be present at a field day, at a distance from home, they may feel it inconvenient to do so.

Continued:

I think if they formed for themselves an excursion and incidental fund, and to which the generous public who valued the patriotic efforts made by the Artizan Corps of the city, should be invited to join, it would enable these Volunteers, who pay their sovereign per year, and willingly give their services, to take advantage of any passing opportunities, without feeling the momentary pecuniary difficulty, and thereby promote the true interest of this useful body of men. The funds to be collected and applied under the management of a committee, formed from companies willing to join in this movement, while at the same time, application should be made to the directors of the various Railways to afford every facility for the Volunteer Rifle Companies to use their Railways at excursion fares, when they are paying a reciprocal visit, or going to field exercise, the property of the Railway being much exposed to the injury of invaders, and thereby requiring special protection.

Yours respectfully
AN ARTIZAN

Bath, May 21st, 1860

The Bath Artizan Rifle Volunteers were a separate corps that formed in early 1860, attached to the Bath corps.

26th July 1860

MILITARY & NAVAL – The following commissions have been signed by the respective Lords Lieutenants named . . . By the Lords Lieut. Of the County of Somerset – Avon Vale, and Warleigh Manor, or 14th Somerset Company of Volunteer Rifle Corps – The Rev. William Hale, Clerk, to be Chaplain .

21st February 1861

VOLUNTEER UNIFORMS – The Liverpool Albion of Monday says:-

“We have excellent authority for believing that the Government may be induced, if extensively memorialised, to supply volunteer uniforms (scarlet or blue) at a cost price, which is one third less than any contractor can supply and the material superior. We trust that if the Government do undertake this matter, they will insist upon uniformity. No time should be lost in urging the matter with the War-Office.”

15th August 1861

RIFLE VOLUNTEER GATHERING AT WARLEIGH

The annual gathering of the Avon Vale and Warleigh Manor, or 14th. Somerset Rifle Volunteers took place on Thursday last in the grounds of Warleigh Manor House to which spot they had been invited by H. D. Skrine, Esq., who still continues to warmly support the corps he spiritedly originated. The company, numbering 51 officers and men, with a band of 10, assembled in the Ham Meadow at two o'clock, and then crossed the river in order to execute a variety of manoeuvres in the fields adjoining Mr. Skrine's mansion. The officer in command was Captain Sawyer; Lieutenant Saunders, and Ensign Skrine were also present. Near the flag-staff were Captain and Adjutant Bampfylde and H. D. Skrine Esq., treasurer of the company. Cornet Yeeles, of the North Somerset Yeomanry officiated as aid-de-camp. Under the direction of Capt. Sawyer, the men performed a series of evolutions very creditably, considering that they are scattered over ten miles of county, and have in many cases to walk long distances in order to attend drill. The various movements were witnessed from the terrace of the Manor House by a select party of ladies and gentlemen. A brief rest followed the parade in the level field, and at its termination the Volunteers engaged with unmistakable relish in a sham fight. The hilly ground to the right of the mansion was well suited for displaying the tactics of mimic war.'

The attacking force was divided into two sections; the first advancing in skirmishing order up a steep slope and opened fire on an invisible enemy.'

The “enemy” however, did not remain concealed for a party of game-keepers, with double-barrelled guns, were collected to represent infantry, under the command of Cornet Yeeles, and a diminutive fieldpiece, worked by two members of the Bristol Artillery, banged and boomed at the assailants.

A forward rush was then made, a new position taken, and the other section advanced to the extreme left and blazed away in capital style. Amid peals of laughter from the looker-on, the “enemy” again withdrew, still keeping up a valiant defence, and carrying away their canon in a gunner's arms.

The riflemen next prepared to receive cavalry, which, however, did not appear.' ‘Several volleys were afterwards fired with praiseworthy precision and at last, with ringing cheer, the enemy were charged at the point of bayonet and driven from their position.

Continued:

The victorious company, headed by their band, then marched to the terrace, where Mr. Skrine and his friends were assembled, and where a handsome banner floated, exhibiting the appropriate motto 'Tuttamen'. A general salute was given, the band meanwhile playing the opening bars of the National Anthem.

26th July 1866

GRAND VOLUNTEER REVIEW AND SHAM FIGHT ON LANSDOWN

FIRST BRIGADE

1st. Batt. Somerset Volunteers
 2nd. Batt. " "
 3rd. Batt. " "

SECOND BRIGADE

1st. Batt. Wilts Volunteer
 2nd. Batt. " "

THIRD BRIGADE

Bristol Rifle Volunteers
 Gloucester Admin Battalion

Artillery

Two Whitworth 3-pounders and
 four 9-pounders, with 10 riding and
 24 draught horses employed

THE CAVALRY

North Somerset Yeomanry (incl. Lieut. Skrine)
 P.W.O. Wilts Yeomanry
 Gloucestershire Hussars

Engineers

The 1st & 2nd Gloucestershire Engineers

With little need to including the whole proceedings, which involved hundreds of volunteers, and was generally the same as the gathering at Warleigh, but on a much larger scale, the following extracts might be of interest, referring to the 'sham fight':

'We have heard of no serious accident having occurred'

This was lucky, as the report pronounces a little further on:

' . . . there were several narrow escapes, particularly during the firing, two or three instances coming under our notice in which the ramrods having been left in the rifles after loading were fired out. There was a hospital tent on the ground where the injured were attended to; Mr. J. S. Bartrum of the Bath Corps, was the senior surgeon in charge.'

' . . . the march from the field to the City of Bath showed that fatigues of the day had in no wise diminished the ardour of the volunteers, for their step was lithesome and regular as when they set forward ten hours previously to reach the rendezvous.'

30th March 1899 (Thursday)

VOLUNTEER DINNER

On Saturday the D Company 1st V.B. Somerset Light Infantry had their annual dinner at the Crown Inn, Bathford, and the company being unfortunately without an officer, Colonel Skrine very kindly presided and presented the prizes, there were also present Sergt.-Major Hills, Q.M.S. Bunting, Col.-Sergts. Burns and Hodges. The senior N.C.O. Col.-Sergt. Hodges, gave the statistics for the past year and was very proud to say they were the best shooting company in the battalion for 1889, though not large in numbers they were very efficient and he hoped they would win the Out-Company Bayonet Exercise Cup in 1899. The best shot in the company (outside the permanent staff) was Private Webb, winner of the Challenge Cup presented by Captain Scarth, 2nd. Corporal Milsom, 3rd. Q.M.S. Bunting. Kindly criticism having been offered the members by Sergt.-Major Hills and Staff-Sergt. Instructor Burns, some good advice was given the men by Colonel Skrine (who has always taken great interest in D company, late the old Warleigh Manor company). Numerous singers were easily found, and a pleasant evening resulted.

SOME OF THE MAJOR CHANGES TO THE UNIFORM

- 1860 First uniform: Jacket – plain grey with black braid facings on lower sleeves and collar.
Overalls – grey with double black strips down the outer seems.
Forage cap – grey with a black braid band, a black peak and brass badge
Brown leather belts.

The Bath Weekly Chronicle - 26th January 1860

NAVAL and MILITARY

The uniform recommended by the War Office Committee for Volunteer Corps is a brownish grey tunic, and facings green, black, red or county colour, as well as the nether clothing – are left to taste of the different corps. We understand that grey was adopted instead of scarlet by a majority of one.

- 1866 Forage cap changed to grey Shako (*Chako*), with silver Plate (badge) and black ball.
- 1869 Darker grey uniform with black facings, similar to the Rifle Brigade.
- 1871 Shako replaced by low Buzbies.
- 1877 Scarlet tunic with black facings, white belts and black Buzbies for full dress.
- 1879 Buzbies replaced by cloth helmets with silver Plate (similar to police helmets but with a spike on the top).
- 1889 Tunic remained scarlet, but with the facings changed from black to royal blue. Officers continued grey with black cross belts. Sergeants supplied with white belts.



Forage cap of an officer of the Somerset Rifle Volunteers of the 1860's. Similar caps were worn by the riflemen, but with plain peaks.



Officer's cloth covered helmet of the Somersetshire Rifle Volunteers 1879

A Shako was a round box-like hat, similar to the forage cap, but taller, with sides that either sloped slightly in, or slightly out, to a flat top. It had a horizontal broad almost flat peak, a large badge on the front, and often adorned with, or a ball (pom-pom) on top to the fore, (some had a plume of feathers). Most had a chinstrap. There were many variations, but the Somerset Rifle Volunteer shako had a black ball. Drawings of shako's and also helmets and Glengarry hats can be found on the walls of Box quarries, drawn by at least one local quarryman (see page 40).

The Somerset Light Infantry Museum at Taunton Castle has a good display of the original uniforms.



THE VOLUNTEER RIFLE SONG

Come stir yourselves brave cavaliers,
The fight will soon begin;
With English forces in the field,
We'll show them who will win –

The vict'ry must be ours, brave boys,
Or else we lose our fame;
And well we know the Englishmen,
Will ne'er be put to shame.

When on the battle field,
Amid the noisy din;
With warlike English shouts
We'll make the echo ring –

Then hoist the British banner!
O' carry it on high;
And shout "hurrah for England,
We'll fight for her, or die".



**Details
of the
Guns & Ammunition
used by
the
Rifle Volunteers**

GENERAL DETAILS OF THE RIFLES USED BY THE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

ENFIELD RIFLES

The general firearm in use by the regular infantry in 1859 was the muzzle loading .577-calibre P53 Enfield (Long) rifle introduced into the regular army in 1853, it had 3-groove rifling and fired the Minié bullet, which had been found very effective in use during the Crimean War. It had an overall length of 55" (149.7 cm) and took a triangular section spike bayonet 22" (55.8 cm) long. Sergeants and some Rifle Brigades were equipped with the P56 Enfield rifle, which was a shorter version of the P53, with a 5-grooved rifling to compensate for the shorter barrel. The P.56 was preferred for target shooting by the Rifle Volunteers and many corps purchased their own. It took a large 'Yatagan' bayonet, which was similar in appearance to a short sword, with a fullered blade that curved gently away from the firing line. The hilt incorporated a sprung catch in the hilt pommel and a muzzle ring, the bayonet was fixed to the barrel by slipping the muzzle through the ring, and a cut out in the pommel slid onto a lug on the right-hand side of the barrel to latch it securely. The bayonet was removed by depressing a button on the side of the pommel in similar style to the majority of later style bayonets (detailed later).



P53 Long Enfield and triangular spike socket bayonet

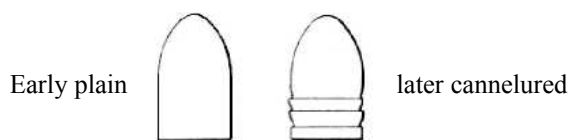


P56 Short Enfield and Yatagan bayonet

Rifles had been in use by the Rifle Brigade and rifled carbines by the cavalry of the British army for well over forty years, before a bullet was invented that would load easily, even into a badly fouled barrel, and yet still fit tight into the rifling when fired, which made it capable of continuous volley fire. The Minié bullet was the creation of a French Captain named Claude-Etienne Minié, for which the British Government awarded him £20,000 for the idea. Each wax-coated bullet was contained in a tubular waxed paper sheath, along with the correct amount of powder and wadding. To load the bullet into the rifle, the twisted end of the paper case opposite the bullet was bitten and torn off open and the powder poured into the muzzle of the barrel, followed by the bullet with its rounded end facing the right direction of travel. Using the ramrod, the bullet was pushed down tight onto the powder and the paper sheath tamped down to stop the bullet falling back out. The hammer was cocked by pulling back with the thumb until it latched, and a small brass percussion cap placed on the firing nipple. The rifle was ready to aim and fire.

The cast lead bullet was wide and short with a conical hollow in the base, and the bullet was of a diameter slightly less than the .577 diameter bore in order to allow it to slide easily down the bore, even when fouled by burnt powder residues. On firing, the hollow section would be forced to expand under pressure and from the assistance of a conical clay plug in its base, which squeezed the bullet into the rifle grooves, sealing the expanding gasses as it travelled up the bore.

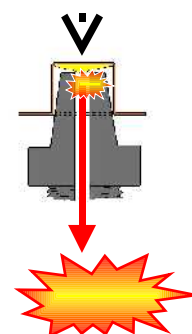
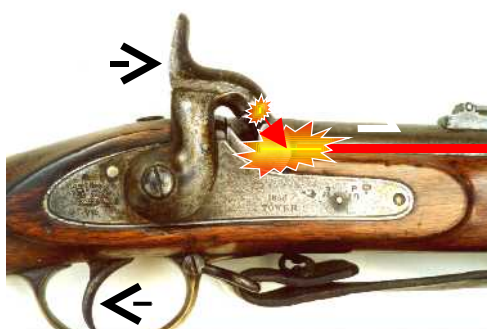
Early Minié bullets were plain smooth lead, whereas later bullets had cannelures (grooves) around the sides to assist the expansion into the rifling and to hold wax lubricant, a wooden dowel cast into the end prevented distortion when being rammed down the barrel and when being fired. The first bullets had small iron plugs in the bases, but these were soon replaced by clay plugs, which created better balance of the bullet and cheaper to produce.



Many volunteer corps bought their own privately made rifles, because the government supply rifles were old, and well used, and not suitable for competition target shooting. The private manufactured rifles were built to the basic design of the standard issue weapons, but were usually of a better quality and finish. They had maker's names on the locks such as BARNETT, ADAMS or TURNER and bore no government markings apart from proofing marks, whereas the regular military rifles had TOWER, ENFIELD, WINDSOR or L.A.C. (*London Armoury Company*) on the locks, and normally a profusion of other marks on the barrel and stock.



Comparison of sizes, 12 percussion caps and a .577 bullet.



The soft copper 'top hat' percussion cap contained a very small amount of fulminate of mercury was placed on the nipple of a P53 or P56 rifle; the compound detonated when the cap was struck by the hammer, causing a flash which travelled down the hollow centre of the nipple to ignite the gunpowder in the barrel.

THE SNIDER CONVERSION TO ENFIELD RIFLES

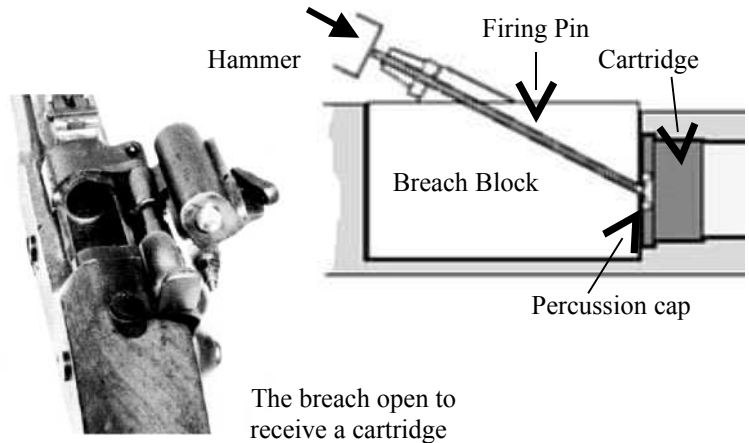
In 1866, a Dutch-American wine merchant named Jacob Snider won a competition out of fifty different competitors to find a suitable breach-loading rifle for the British army. His design only required a cheap conversion to the Enfield rifles already in use, and the use of self-contained ammunition, designed by Colonel Edward Boxer, Superintendent of the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich, which still used the Minié style of bullet. It was reliable and was sufficiently accurate.

When the 'Snider' conversion was introduced in 1867, all first-class P.53 and P.56 service rifles had a short section of barrel removed at the breach, and the new section fitted in its place. The designed of the new section incorporated a side-hinged breach block containing a firing pin. The breach block was flipped open to allow the insertion of a fully contained 'Boxer' cartridge into the breach of the barrel. The firing pin ran diagonally down through the breach block from the position and place of the original percussion nipple, thus allowing the retention of the original side-hammer lock mechanism. The hammer struck the protruding end of the firing pin sending it forward so that its opposite end would strike the percussion cap in the base of the cartridge. In order to hold the block in the closed position, the early models had a spring activated pin protruding from the rear of the block, which located in a recess in the rear of the breach section to hold it closed. The later Mk III breach blocks had a sprung thumb-operated latch to keep the breach firmly locked.

It was several years before the volunteers were equipped with these weapons from government stocks, and then only second-class weapons. During the mean time, many Volunteers units used privately purchased Snider's for target shooting and used the government issued rifles for drill purposes.



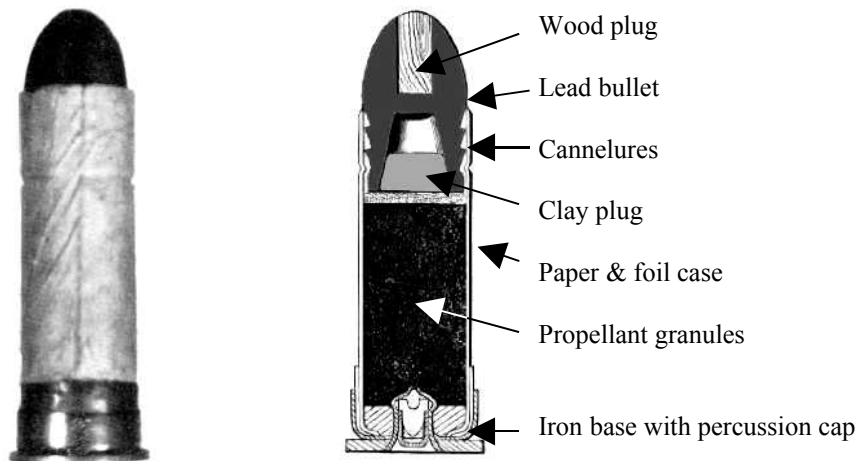
The hammer cocked ready to fire.



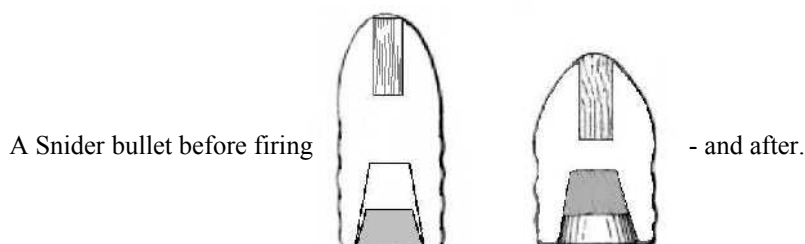
The breach open to receive a cartridge

The shape of the lead bullet was improved from the early smooth-sided Minié bullets by the addition of 'cannelures' (*moulded grooves*) around the outside filled with a beeswax solution to increase lubrication, of which a thin coating also covered the tip and sides of the bullet. The cannelures altered in shape and size several times after trials, and later increased from three to four. The cannelures helped the bullet seal into the rifling grooves to stop the expanding gasses escaping past the sides, while the wax solution lubricated the bore and reduced fouling. A wooden plug moulded into the bullet tip helped control distortion and keep its balance in flight and a small clay plug inserted into the conical hollow base forced the lead to expand out sideways into the rifling grooves quickly and efficiently giving the weapon greater power than the earlier muzzle loaders.

The casing of the self-contained cartridge was made of rolled paper and thin brass sheet with a cast iron base containing a centre-fire percussion cap. When inserted in the new breach block the cap lined up with the firing pin, and on firing, the hammer struck the firing pin, which in turn struck the percussion cap to detonate the cartridge.



The pressure from the expanding gases thrusts the clay plug into the hollow base of the bullet causing it to compress and expand laterally tight into the bore and rifling of the barrel. The bullets were cast to .573, which expanded to .577 when fired through a .577 diameter barrel. The 1st Volunteer Battalion Somerset Light Infantry was issued with Snider rifles in 1871 after complaints made about the poor condition of the P.53 & P.56 rifle bores.



In a booklet/programme entitled 'The Book of the Grand Volunteer Bazaar' produced in 1887 by Lieutenant H. D. Skrine, the following excerpt gives a clear image of the problem at the time.

'In Sept. 1870 in consequence of the impaired state of the grooves of the Enfield rifles then in use, an order was issued to the War Office reducing the number of points requisite to be made by Volunteers in their annual source of class firing. This was however only a prelude to replacing the foresaid arms by Snider Enfield's', done the following year.'

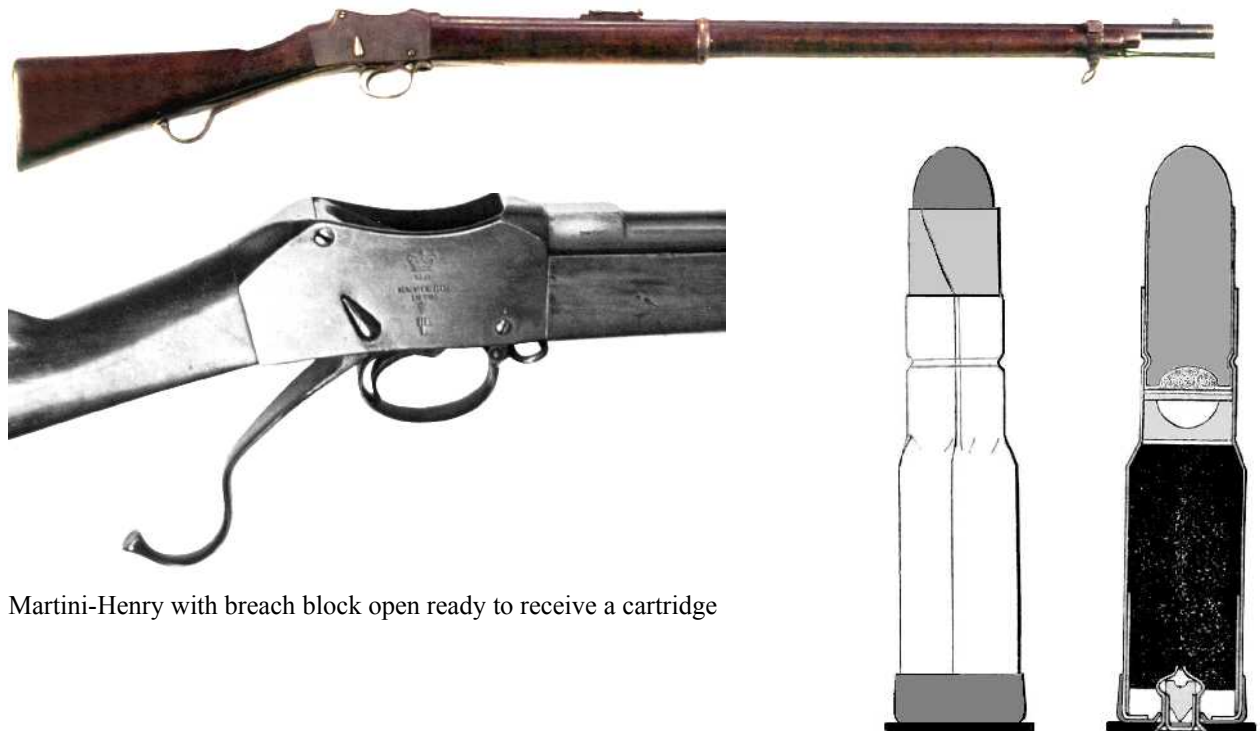


The original Snider Enfield rifles were converted P.53 and P.56 muzzle-loading rifles that were already in use, but as these wore out new replacement Mk III rifles were manufactured, which although basically the same were in fact true Snider rifles. A Snider Enfield carbine was issued to mounted troops; these were at first created from cut down P.56 rifles with the snider breach-block fitted, and followed by newly manufactured Snider-Enfield carbines as the old conversions wore out.

Once the regular troops had moved over to the snider converted rifles the volunteers were issued the cannellured lead bullets in place of the smooth sided bullet for their muzzle-loaders, as the basic rifle remained unaltered, with the only differences being the method of loading.

MARTINI-HENRY RIFLES

In 1871, the .450/577 Martin-Henry rifle superseded the Snider Enfield in the regular army, it was a combination between a Martini falling-block breach and a Henry rifled barrel. It was quicker to load and had a greater muzzle velocity than the Snider. The breach block dropped open by the action of a lever beneath the fore part of the butt and hinged just behind the trigger guard. The Martini took a high-powered cartridge, with a solid bullet of .450 which was smaller in width than the Snider bullet, but maintained the same diameter of case as the Snider, the case being swaged-in to take the smaller calibre bullet in a bottlenecked fashion.



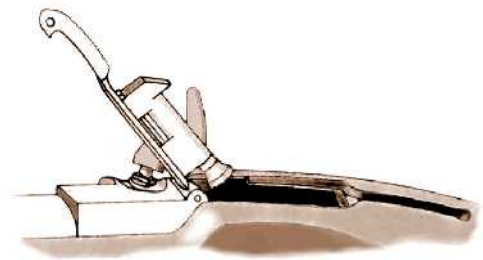
Martini-Henry with breach block open ready to receive a cartridge

WESTLEY RICHARDS 'MONKEY TAIL' CARBINE

Besides the Enfield and Martini rifles used at Warleigh, at least one Westley Richard 'Monkey Tail' rifle or carbine was fired there. Carbines were popular with yeomanry and were standard issue to British cavalry until 1871 when the Martini carbine replaced it. The one (*or maybe more*) used at Warleigh would have almost definitely been privately owned, or had been handed down to a volunteer yeoman after 1871, probably brought there by an officer, or on special loan to the volunteers, as it was not a standard weapon issued to volunteer rifle corps. Carbines, with saddle rings and leather sight protectors, were normally carried by mounted troops, being short in length and easy to handle from the saddle. Enfield's were also made in carbine sizes. Carbines were also issued to Artillery officers and some NCO's, but those were slightly longer in length than the saddle carbine, pictured below.



'Monkey tail' breach ready for loading in the raised (open) position.



The left hand (*counter lock -side*) view.

Captain Vivian Dering Majendie, in a book on Breach-Loading Rifles and Boxer Ammunition, first published in 1896 and revised in 1870, describes the monkey tail carbine as:

'In 1861 this arm was definitively adopted. It is a great improvement on others which I have named. It is an accurate arm; it fires six or seven rounds a minute with comparative ease and certainty; it spills no powder; it does not burn the firer's face or facings. Until the recent competition Westley Richards' was accepted as the best type of military breach-loading arm known in this country, and, with its many objections, I would still pronounce it one of the most effective capping breach-loaders which has been produced.'

The other rifles, which Captain Majendie considered the monkey-tail to be an improvement on, were Spencer, Sharp's, Green's, Terry's, a Prussian needle gun and even the Snider.

LEE-METFORD & LEE-ENFIELD

Although bullets from the above rifles have been found in the meadows at Warleigh, no Lee-Metford or Lee-Enfield bullets have been found there. This is because the Warleigh range was no longer used by the time the .303 calibre bolt-action magazine rifles were issued to the volunteer brigades. The new and safer range at Ashley near Box was more suitable for Martini-Henry and .303 shooting. The high target butts were more suitable to prevent over-shooting or ricocheting bullets reaching beyond the safe boundary, as these rifles had a killing range of over a mile. Early .303's rifles were definitely used on the Box range.



BAYONETS



Spiked triangular bladed socket bayonet for P53 model Enfield & Snider conversions of the same.



'Yatagan' bayonet for the P56 short rifle & Snider conversions.



Bayonet for Lee-Metford & early Lee-Enfield .303 rifles.

THE SHOOTING RANGES

HAMPTON DOWN	600 yards.
WARLEIGH	1,000 yards.
DINDER	600 yards
DUNBALL	600 yards
ASHLEY, Nr. BOX	600 yards (commissioned much later than the others).

Between 1869 and 1880 all long distance firing of the Battalion was done at Warleigh.

WARLEIGH SHOOTING RANGE

THE TARGET

The targets were mounted on a mound built of stone and earth, which still exists at the edge of the wood, although extremely overgrown and finding it is a challenge not for the feint hearted. When it is found all there is to see now is an oval mound approx. 1.5 metres (5ft) high built soil with loose stones around outside, covered in bushes, high nettles and brambles.

THE FIRING POINTS

There are now no visible signs of the firing points along the valley floor from 0 – 700yards, this may be due to farming over many years, or there may only have been marker posts and a few sand bags or wood benches to rest the rifles on. There is a slight mound running across the field at approx. 100 yards from the target but this is a land drain of more recent years from a spring in the woods to the river.

The 800-yard firing point could possibly be a levelled off area below and to the right of the old track on the hillside leading down from the farm, facing towards the aqueduct.

At 900 yards, there is a definite mound with a level top on the left of the track

The 1,000-yard firing point is on the left of the track, on the inside as the track curves, approx. 40 metres from the farm entrance.

BUILDINGS

On the 6 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884 map there are two buildings shown. One at the edge of the wood close to the 250 and 300 yard firing points, and the other was very small square hut in the centre of the field near the 500 yards firing point (possibly a latrine at the halfway point, though a bit of a dodgy position if the 600 – 1,000 yard ranges were in use). No visible surface signs of either remain today.

The said Captain or Commanding Officer of the said Corps shall also compensate the Tenant of the said Lands for any loss damage or injury he may prove he has sustained to his Cattle, Sheep, Horses or Pigs, through the said Meadows being used by the said Corps.

Term. One year from the 29th November 1868 and this arrangement is to continue until either of the Parties to this Agreement shall give the other Twelve months previous notice in writing to expire on the 29th November to determine such arrangement, and after the expiration of Twelve months after such notice has been so given by either party to the other, then the said Meadows shall cease to be used by the said Rifle Corps for any purpose whatever.

The said Henry Duncan Skrine will have to compensate the Tenant of the said Meadows for the use of the said Meadows by the said Rifle Corps, but not for any damage or injury to his Cattle, Sheep, Horses or Pigs.

William Sanderson

The second page of the agreement on the use of the 'said' meadows at Warleigh as a shooting range, dated 18th June 1868, stating 'We the undersigned hereby respectfully agree to the Terms and Conditions hereinbefore contained' and signed by both Captain William Sanderson of the 14th Corps Somerset Rifle Volunteers and Henry Duncan Skrine Esq. the landowner.

A shorter range must have been in existence before this date, because a Treasurers Report of the 14th Corps dated for the year 1862 includes 'For labour altering the Butts - £23. 12s. 4d.' The earlier range probably effected the use of one field and not the whole length of the meadows (1,000 yds).

HAMPTON DOWN SHOOTING RANGE

Built on a wide flat plateau just below the top Hampton Down escarpment above the village of Bathampton, the firing points have long gone and the area is now part of a golf course. The target mound and butts still exist at the southern end of the range, but it is so covered by trees, dense undergrowth and blackberry bushes, in similar to the Warleigh range, that it is very difficult to recognise or to actually reach without suffering physical injury.

BOX SHOOTING RANGE

The shooting rang at Ashley near Box, was much later than the other two local ranges. It had stepped butts cut into the hillside and entrenched protection at the targets. First used by the volunteers in 1880, and a rise of the ground between the firing points and the target area made it necessary to build two raised platforms at the 500-yard and 600-yard firing points, so that the firers could see the targets without the necessity of placing the targets higher on the hillside. There are now no visible remains of the platforms. Bullets found on this range have proven to be very old round-tipped .303, later pointed-tipped .303 bullets, 9mm from Sten and Sterling sub-machineguns. The range was in use by the military throughout both world wars and up until the late 1960's. Almost all of the bullets from .303 rifles had been smashed from high impact with the very stony ground of the butts.

BULLET FOUND AT WARLEIGH & BOX

In the meadows to the south of Warleigh Manor a number of bullets have been found, where the Rifle Volunteers had their 1,000-yard shooting range, many of which had been badly damaged by impact, but all have been easily recognisable. These are mainly the .577 Enfield Minié and Snider bullets, but along with a few others. Although having been fired, impacted with stones and soil, and then having remained in the ground for over 100 years, many of the bullets retained their small clay plugs.

The following list gives the numbers of similar bullets found, the calibre, the type of firearm, and small distinctions between various bullets of the same type:

- 7 .577 Enfield muzzle loading P.53, having smooth sides without cannelures, 3-groove rifling.
- 5 .577 Enfield Snider early conversions and possibly P.53 & P.56 muzzle-loaders, having 3 cannelures, 3 & 5-groove rifling
- 10 .577 Enfield Snider conversions Mk I & II and possibly P.53 & P.56 muzzle-loaders, having 3 cannelures, the upper cannelure having fine swage marks in it, 3 & 5-groove rifling.
- 9 .577 Enfield Snider conversions Mk I & II and possibly P.53 & P.56 muzzle-loaders, having 3 cannelures, the upper two having fine swage marks, 3 & 5-groove rifling.
- 2 .577 Enfield Snider conversions Mk I & II and possibly P.53 & P.56 muzzle-loader, having 3 cannelures, all three cannelures having fine swage marks, 3 & 5-groove rifling.
- 4 .577 Enfield Snider Mk III, having 4 cannelures, the upper three having fine swage marks, 5-groove rifling.
- 3 .450 Martini-Henry, solid section with 2 cannelured grooves, both with fine swage marks, and a slight hollow in the base, having distinct 7-groove Martini-Henry polygonal rifling marks. These bullets have been forced through the rifling, and not expanded into it as the Enfield/Minié system.
- 2 .451 Westley-Richards 'Monkey tail', smooth sided and solid section throughout. These bullets were forced through the 8-groove rifling.

The smooth sided .577 bullets are definitely Minié bullets from muzzle-loading P.53 long rifles. The rifling marks are faint, the sides are smooth and clean, and only one, out of the seven of this type found, had its clay plug still in it, which is consistent with very clean and well cared for P.53 rifles. The shallow rifling marks, along with the missing clay plugs, show the lack of power of the smooth-sided muzzle-loading bullets, when compared to the later cannelured bullets of the Snider conversions, which have expanded tight into the bore to cut deeper rifling marks, and have also retained well pressed-in clay plugs. The cannelures and bases of some .577 bullets retain traces of the original red coloured beeswax-based lubricant.

Many of the .577 cannelured bullets appear to have markings consistent with worn or badly fouled 3-groove rifled barrels. Though bad fouling is unlikely, as the Rifle Volunteers were target shooters, for which a fouled barrel would be a total waste of time and effort. The scored bullets were probably, fired from worn muzzle-loading rifles, of which complaints were made concerning the poor state of the barrels in 1870. The bullets showing the least amount of damage, were probably, fired from the 600 yards firing point, or further, and have not struck anything other than soft soil. While those having been fired from 5-grooved rifled barrels (*all of which are cannelured*), indicate a good probability of having been fired from either Mk II Snider converted (Short) Enfield's, or Mk III Snider Enfield's.

Top Row from left to right - Warleigh
.577 smooth-sided (*muzzle-loading*)
.577 unfired with cannelures
.577 fired with cannelures
.577 smooth-sided (*muzzle-loading*),
which has struck something very solid.



Bottom left - Warleigh
Martini Henry .450
Westley-Richards Monkey-tail .451

Bottom right - Box
Lee-Metford .303 (shallow rifling)
Early Lee-Enfield .303 (deeper rifling)

Below

Raised broad arrows cast in the base rim of the flattened .577 bullet (*pictured above*)



DETAILS OF VARIOUS BULLETS FOR COMPARISON



Fired

- a) .577 Minié Enfield P.53 & P.56
- b) .577 cannelured Enfield P.53, P.56 & Snider
- c) .450 Martini-Henry
- d) .451 Westley-Richards
- e) .303 Lee-Metford (shallow rifle grooves)
- f) .303 Lee-Enfield (deep rifle grooves)



Unfired

- a) Solid lead ball used with smoothbore muskets before the introduction of rifling.
- b) .577 cannelured bullet for Enfield Snider cartridge.
- c) Snider cartridge with rolled paper/foil case and iron base.
- d) Early Martini-Henry .450/577 cartridge with wrapped foil case and iron base.
- e) Later Martini-Henry cartridge with drawn brass case.
- f) Early .303 cartridge with round nosed nickel coated bullet.
- g) Later .303 cartridge with pointed nickel coated bullet.

RIFLES THAT VOLUNTEERS USED



Firing a P53 Tower Enfield with fixed bayonet.



The round stamp mark on the butt of this Tower Enfield rifle denotes that it was refurbished at Pimlico in 1863, and in addition is an Arabic figure '2', which denotes that it has been passed for further use in a serviceable condition, but as a second-class arm, for re-issued to the Volunteer Rifle Corps.

This particular rifle was a 2nd edition Tower Enfield P53, and is dated 1855, having modifications only required during the Crimean War (*the barrel bands being secured by spring-clips to enable quick barrel removal for cleaning*). After the Crimean War, all new rifles had the clamp-style barrel bands in similar fashion to the original 1853 1st edition rifles. This particular rifle was already five years old by 1860 when the Somerset Rifle Volunteers began, and by 1863, when refurbished it was eight years old, and consequently no longer required by the regular forces.

OFFICERS SIDE ARMS

RIFLE VOLUNTEER OFFICER'S SWORD

The steel guard has the strung bugle horn surmounted by the Victorian crown cut out in relief, the blade is finely etched with the VR cipher of Queen Victoria, and the grip is of wood covered with fish skin bound by copper wire.



1856 MODEL .54 BORE BEAUMONT-ADAMS REVOLVER

Multi chambered percussion revolvers were available for many years, while rifles remained single-shot. When first introduced a revolver would only have been available to Volunteer officer through private purchase, and later only handed down by the Army as refurbished used weapons.

Below is a Beaumont-Adams 54-bore double-action 5-shot revolver, which was a standard British made pistol of the mid. 19th century. Each of the five chambers had to be loaded separately in turn from the front of the cylinder. The bullets were either self-contained, similar to the muzzle loading rifles with the powder contained in a paper sheath attached to the lead bullet, or the gun was loaded using a powder flask. The paper sheath was first torn open and the powder tipped into a chamber, the bullet was then placed in the chamber and pressed home, using a rammer pivoted on the left hand side of the frame, which, when not in use was clipped flat alongside the barrel. When all five chambers were loaded, a percussion cap was then pressed onto each nipple and the revolver was ready to fire.

These revolvers, and other similar quality revolvers, with names such as Tranter, Gibbs and Webley, were highly regarded by the military. The Adams had a solid one-piece frame and the Beaumont double-action mechanism; the latter meant there were two alternatives to firing it, dependant on the time allowed. The action could be cocked by pulling the hammer back by thumb until it latched, taking deliberate aim and gently squeezing the trigger to fire, but required two hands when firing quickly in succession, in similarity to most American revolvers at the time, which were single-action only. The Beaumont action however, incorporated a self-cocking mechanism, which allowed the firer to take a rough aim and fire by simply squeezing the trigger repeatedly. Once fired though, as with all percussion revolvers, it took time to reload, and therefore was only of any use as a cudgel when time did not avail. The revolver was still far in advance of the earlier single-shot pistols, and the self-cocking action allowed the other hand free to handle a sword or whatever.



Further details & Bibliography

THE PURCHASE OF A SMALL BADGE BY AUCTION

On the 19th August 2003, an auction took place at Bonham's; 39 Park End Street, Oxford, entitled 'Arms and Militaria, including The White Collection of Military Badges' Included in the 499 various Militaria lots, were 153 military badge lots from one of the largest complete privately owned collections in the world, renowned as the 'White Collection', which was originally formed between 1882 and 1908 by a gentleman named Mr J. H. White.

One badge in the auction catalogue raised particular interest, although there was illustration in the catalogue:

Lot 400 (not illustrated in the catalogue)

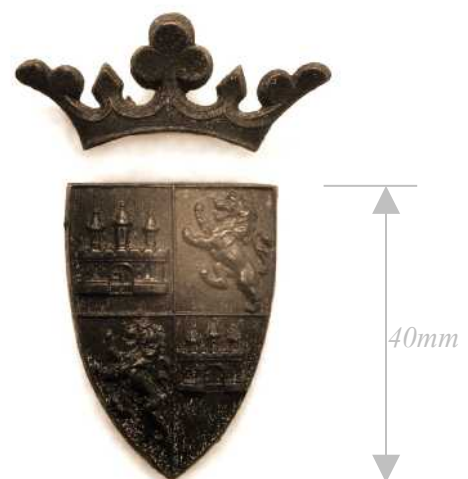
14th (Warleigh Manor) Somerset Rifle Vols,

A rare two part bronzed pouch badge circa 1860-1866 being a separate Ducal Coronet over a shield displaying the Arms of "Skrine of Warleigh Manor". Two members of the family were early officers, Ensign (later Lieutenant) Henry Mills Skrine, and Duncan W. H. Skrine, Ensign 1863. By 1867 the Skrine's had left the Corps and possibly the "Family" badges were replaced. Three screw fasteners.

The condition was classed as, 'Very good'.

At the auction rooms, an assistant looked at the number in the catalogue and pointed the direction of a large glass topped counter at the side of the room. The estimated value in the catalogue had been £40, and I was more than a little surprised to find that it was so small. It was made of stamped out metal and coated a dull dark brown in colour, it was even in two separate pieces, and there was not even a name or motto on it, just a coat of arms. The catalogue said it was from Warleigh Manor, though I had no idea what the Warleigh coat of arms was like, so I just hoped that the auction catalogue was correct. Inside its clear polythene self-sealing pouch it looked decidedly unexciting, amongst all the other glittering and shining brass and silver Victorian helmet plates and badges, and I began to doubt whether anyone else would actually look at it, let alone bid for it. Having no interest in collecting badges, I began to wonder whether if a raised hand at £20, I might end up with owning something that no one else wanted, and have paid dearly for it, but I felt determined after travelling to Oxford, that I would have it.

Lot number 400 arrived and the auctioneer began with "A very rare two-part pouch badge from the Warleigh Manor Rifle Volunteers, - who'll start me off at fifty-pounds", no one moved, deadly silence. He dropped to forty pounds, still no one moved, - thirty pounds, - and still no one moved. At twenty pounds I raised a hand, and then someone behind me raised a hand at thirty pounds, I raised a hand at forty – and so it carried on until things began to waiver after £75. I finally secured it on a very determined though uncomfortable bid of £90, (plus buyer's premium, and vat on the buyer's premium) – total £108.



The price of £90 may appear excessive for such a small badge, but it is probably rare as there were very few officers during the early years at Warleigh, when the Skrine's were fully involved. The bidding reached £880 for a single badge, and to £1,400 for a selection of twenty various badges. All badges in the auction were original, and the following are two examples are typical of prices that secured single badges at the sale, both being of West Country interest:

Lot 361 - illustrated in the catalogue and described as:

13th (1st Somerset) (Prince Alberts Light Infantry),
a very rare officers gilt metal forage cap badge circa 1859-1872, die stamped strung bugle horn with mural crown and wavy Jellalabad scroll, two loop fasteners. Mint.



The estimated value of this small bright gold gilt badge was £120 – 140, it sold for £190 (*with the addition of the buyer's premium and vat on the buyer's premium*).

Lot 339 - this was the badge auctioned immediately before the Warleigh badge, described as:

62nd (Wiltshire) Regt.
An excessively rare O.R.. brass Glengarry badge of "Crown and Garter" pattern, "62" in the centre with "Wiltshire" on the strap (only one other example noted), lugs re-soldered. Very Good.



Estimated value £150 – 200, the badge sold for £260 (*plus buyer's premium etc.*).

THE SKRINE FAMILY COAT OF ARMS



The Skrine Coat of Arms attached to the family tomb in Bathford Church graveyard. It is basically, a quartered shield with a lion rampant in the upper right quarter, and the same in lower left quarter, and a castle keep in the upper left quarter, and again in the lower right quarter.



The Coat of Arms is also found in one half-segment of a carved stone shield above the front door of the Lodge opposite Warleigh Manor main entrance gates.

The Skrine family motto '*Tutamen*' on the scroll below the shield is Latin, and is said to be from '*tuērī*', meaning – '*To look after*' or '*To keep safe*'.

FREDRICK GAY - LABOURER - QUARRYMAN - RIFLE VOLUNTEER?

Box Quarry

Not far inside one of a now blocked "Bridge Gate" entrance passage into the Box Hill quarry, in what is commonly referred to as "Bridge Gate Road", there is an inscription written on a flat stone wall of the large haulage-way, concerning the embarrassment of one 'Private Gay' after a small incident on Kingsdown.

*Notice that private gay promoted to
sargent for having on the 1 June
behaved with great courage and
presence of mind while on duty on
Kingsdown Camp the ? gay seeing
someone approaching cried halt who
comes here receiving no answer he
cried advance one more inch and you
are a dead man guards turn out cried
gay when lo behold twas only two
children looking for Mamma*

The Somerset Rifle Volunteers held a camp at Kingsdown for four consecutive years from 1880 to 1883, on land belonging to Colonel Northey from Box. The start of each camp was:

1880 - 5th July
1881 - 25th June
1882 - 14th July
1883 - 11th August.

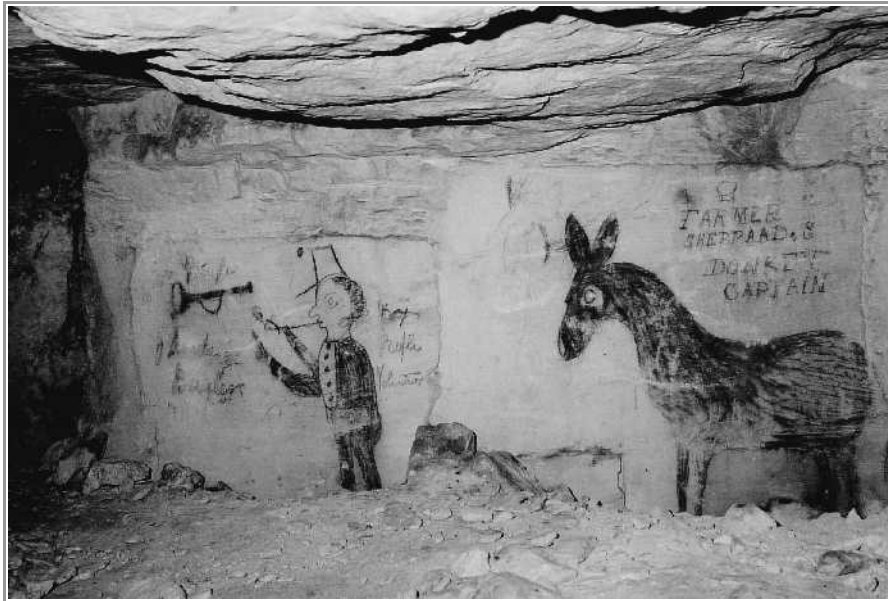
The 14th Corps (Warleigh) became designated 'D' Company of the 1st Volunteer Battalion The Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry in 1882 with restructuring of the volunteer battalions.

During late 19th century, there was one Frederick Gay, a labourer, who was born at Box in 1863, which made him 18 years old in 1881. He lived at Millsplat, Box Hill, Box. His Father was Alphonse Gay, aged 40 at that time, an agricultural labourer originally from Whitley near Corsham. He had a brother George of 12 years of age and still at school, and his mother Jane, aged 44, originated from Calne. This was the only family of that name in Box at that time. There was also George Gay, a gardener living at Warleigh. He may have been in the volunteers, and possibly at Kingsdown camp, but he would have been unlikely to be connected with the Box quarry. The only means of finding which person it was for definite, would be to obtain the muster roll for Kingsdown Camp and check the initial if there was only one Gay there, but these appear to be missing at the Taunton Records Office along with all other records of musters and pay for the period 1879-1889.

The name Frederick and Fred Gay has been written at least in seven places on various walls in the same area of quarry workings, some having dates written close by of the 1880 and 1890's, and one with a drawing showing a man with a goatee beard and long sideburns. A booklet produced in 1974 by members of the Cotham Speleological Group of Bristol gave short details of various Box quarrymen. In which, Frederick Gay is described '*He was the father of Stan Gay, and was more than once in trouble for offences such as poaching*'; obviously someone must have known him quite well.

There is a possibility, that it was the Kingsdown Camp of 1881 which began on the 25th June, and that the '*incident*' actually occurred on the 1st July (*just 5 days later*), instead of the 1st of June as written on the wall. The writer of the tale would probably have been writing hurriedly and furtively, (*note the spelling mistake of sergeant*) and all being written by the light of a small quarryman's oil lamp or candle, and probably egged on by a sniggering accomplice or two, thereby writing '*June*' instead of '*July*'. It may have been some time, before the event became general knowledge. Furthermore, the writer may not have been a member of the volunteers and instead may have been slightly envious of Private Gay.

PICTURES DRAWN ON THE WALLS OF BOX STONE QUARRIES



A 'Box Rifle Volunteer' and a 'bugle' (plus 'Farmer Sheppard's donkey Captain')



Drum Major
(No.12 Company)

Man-



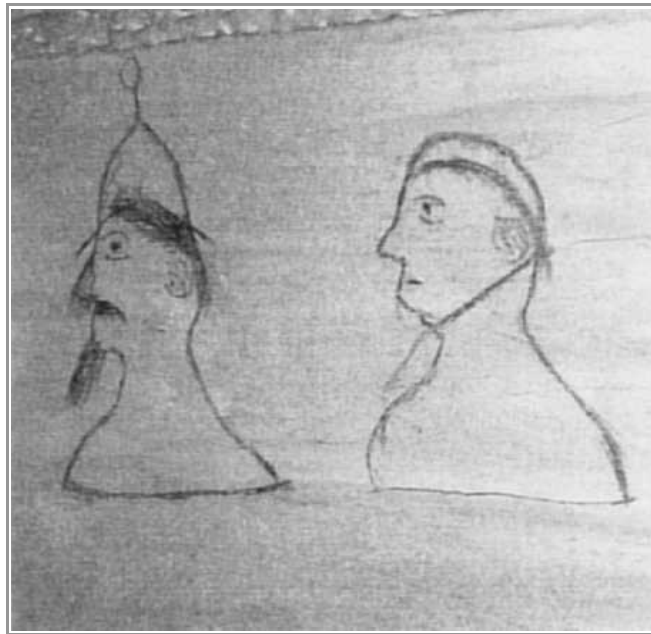
Frederick Gay - as someone saw him, with sideburns, a goatee beard



Rifle Volunteer cap & drum (with a picture of a 2,567 ton of-War ship)

A Rifle Volunteer wearing a shako cap

and bowler hat (*probably later than 1881*).



Two heads drawn on the quarry wall, which may have been just the casual doodling by one slightly bored quarryman, but may have been part of a serious discussion and possibly drawn to illustrate the forthcoming new style headdresses when the Rifle Volunteers were due to become a Company of the Volunteer Somerset Light Infantry in 1882.



A cloth covered Somerset Volunteer Light Infantry helmet c. mid. 1880's, and a 'Glengarry' style cap from the same period.

A VOLUNTEERS FUNERAL

This final piece has not been included earlier, as it required space and would have swamped the other newspaper clippings taken from the Bath Weekly Chronicle newspaper (*see pages 13-16*).

1861 March 7th

FUNERAL OF A BATH VOLUNTEER – A young man named Slade, a member of the 18th. Company, (*Walcot Corps*) having died, it was arranged, in compliance with the expressed wish of his comrades, that he should be buried with military honours, and the funeral accordingly took place on Sunday last, the body being interred in the churchyard of St. Mark's Church, the vicar, the Rev. J. W. Sproule, officiating on the occasion.

THE VOLUNTEER'S GRAVE.

To the Editor of the Bath Chronicle.

Sir, - Passing along the Pulteney Road on Sunday afternoon last, my attention was suddenly arrested by a stream of human beings coming down the road, all seeming intent upon some particular errand. The sun peeped from behind the angry-looking clouds, as if eager to watch the onward course of the multitude. Old men and maidens, sped their way in the same direction; and servants, just released from their "toil", moved with anxious steps towards the place of assembly. The schoolboy who had been sent to Sunday School seemed determined, for once to play the truant, and onward he went with sparkling eyes, to join the great congregation. While I stood thus watching the vast concourse of persons, there appeared in sight a living wall of Volunteers, in marching order. The cause of the gathering was now evident, for the hilts of the officers' swords were covered with black crape, as were also the drums of the Rifle Band. The Volunteers had met to pay this last sad tribute of respect to a departed comrade.

Having viewed for some moments this noble body of men, who do honour to our country, and bid defiance to the aggressor, I passed through the crowd with the intension of visiting the Volunteers grave before the vast assembly moved in that direction.

Passing towards St. Mark's Churchyard, the spot that had been selected for the resting place of "the Rifleman", I noticed that every available place was occupied. Persons from the house-top and from windows gazed with eager curiosity on the sea of human beings below. Having gained the massive iron gates of the churchyard, I found the entrance guarded by two policemen, but inside those gates a spectacle presented itself that I shall not forget. Thousands of persons were ruthlessly treading down graves that had been decently preserved by those who mourned departed friends. The small trees and plants at the head of those quite sepulchres were greatly damaged by the intruders.

At the foot of a sturdy tree was the Volunteer's grave, and around it were gathered a number of persons looking at the yawning chasm, and asking a variety of questions concerning the deceased. All is confusion, and the spectators are acting as though they had forgotten the occasion that brought them together. At length the sound of drums is heard, and there is a buzz in all directions. Onward come the Volunteers with slow and solemn tread, and some are bearing upon their shoulders the last remains of the deceased

They have reached the outside of the gate, and it is with difficulty they gain admittance to the interior. There is a rush – a fearful rush – and by one effort, Volunteers, policemen and crowd, are carried into the churchyard together, while the drummer boys of the corps have great difficulty in protecting their drums from injury.

The minister has now commenced the Burial Service and the corps is being borne into the church, while outside the Volunteers are drawn up in line, and the firing party take their proper position by the side of the grave. The gravedigger stands with a handful of earth at the head of the grave, waiting for the words to be pronounced, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." And now the corps is brought from the Church and lowered into its final resting place, and the ceremony being ended, the firing party gave three volleys over the VOLUNTEERS GRAVE.

Although it would have been preferable had the ceremony been divested of the bustle and tumult by which it was marked, through the unseemly conduct of many of the spectators, it is gratifying to notice that the Bath Volunteers have not allowed the opportunity to pass of showing, in military style, how they respect a "companion in arms," and have given proof to the relatives of the deceased that he was highly respected by them.

Yours & c.,
SPECTATOR

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DD\SK/2/5/7	1868-1902	Papers, (Skrine's) legal doc's, various, including other local interest
DD\SK/5/4	1864-1890	Papers, prize draw programmes, annual reports, treasurer's reports etc.
DD\SLI/3/2/17	1861-1877	Papers, incl. nominal rolls etc.
DD\SLI/3/2/18	1867	Paper (Combe Down squad)
DD\SLI/3/2/19	1867-1878	Papers, incl. rolls of members, musketry drill & practice returns
DD\SLI/3/2/22	1873-1875	Papers, incl. rolls & register of those attending drill
DD\SLI/15/5/2	c.1890s	Photographs (2 documents), Somerset Rifle Volunteer
DD\SLI/15/2/4	1865	Photograph, group of Somerset Volunteers, prize winners
DD\SLI/15/5/26	1890	Photograph, Somerset Rifle Volunteers on parade
DD\SLI/15/5/27	1890	Photograph, group of Somerset Rifle Volunteers
DD\SLI15/6/37	c.1900	Photograph, unknown officer in full dress uniform, 1st S.R.V.
DD\SLI/18/6/20	1890-99	Newspaper clippings from the Bristol Times and Mirror newspaper
Q/AM/3	1881-1886	Papers, Leases and plans of (ex. Militia) Barracks