



## The King's Shilling: Life in army barracks 1855-1871.



- Life for the soldiers manning Littlehampton Fort was very gruelling even though they were not engaged in warfare.

### 1. Recruitment.

Unlike other European countries Britain did not conscript men into the Regular Army; Victorians were proud to have a force of patriotic volunteers. However, poor levels of enlistment meant the army often faced a severe manpower shortage and it was necessary to pay teams of recruiting sergeants to persuade volunteers to enlist. The country was divided into five recruiting districts, with headquarters respectively at Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol, London, and Glasgow; and in Ireland there were three districts based at Belfast, Dublin, and Cork.<sup>i</sup> Recruiting parties were given a bonus of £1/7s/6d for each new man enlisted.<sup>ii</sup> The middle classes provided hardly any soldiers for the ranks as they realised there were no prospects of promotion to officer status, as all commissions were sold to the upper classes, and so nearly all the new privates were poor, uneducated and rootless; often recruited at taverns whilst under the influence of alcohol.



The King's Shilling by Thomas Falcon Marshall (1818-1878)

The abuses of this system were well known. In 1858 J.R. Godley, Under-secretary of State for War wrote:

*“No thoughtful man can have observed the scenes that take place daily and nightly at the taverns frequented by our recruiting staff without feeling shame and disgust that such proceedings should form part of the recognised machinery of the British Military Service.”*<sup>iii</sup>

It was found in 1859 that of 78,000 privates of the line regiments, only 2,000 had acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic; 20,000 could neither read nor write in the smallest degree; 18,000 could read, but not write.<sup>iv</sup>

Volunteers were given a medical examination and if they passed they were asked to swear an oath of allegiance and fidelity:

*“I do make Oath, That I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors; and that I will, as in Duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity, against all Enemies; and will observe and obey all Orders of Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.”*

From 1847 men signed up for an initial period of 10 years followed by an optional second period of 11 years. Soldiers who served for the whole 21 years became eligible for a pension. New recruits were given a cash bounty, the value of which varied according to the demand for new troops; in 1859 it was £3.<sup>v</sup>

Enlistment was referred to as “Taking the King’s Shilling” (even in Victoria’s reign) as a soldier’s pay was a shilling a day (a shilling was 12 pence). The benefit of joining up for a poor man was not just the regular pay, but also the guarantee of accommodation, food and clothing, as long as he obeyed the orders given to him.

## **2. Accommodation.**

When stationed at Home the men would live in army barracks. Each man was allocated a bed, with a straw mattress, a blanket and sheets, and a barrack box for his personal possessions. There was about 12 inches between the beds and about the same between the foot of the beds and the communal dining table that ran down the length of the barrack room.<sup>vi</sup> There were outside privies but during the night the men used tubs which were emptied in the morning.



*Portman-street Barracks: Lower Room.*

Portman Street Barracks, Lower Room. Illustration from *Town Swamps and Social Bridges* by George Godwin 1859.

Each morning the mattress had to be rolled up and placed at the foot of the bedstead to prevent the soldiers from sitting or lounging on the bed.<sup>vii</sup>



*From this it appears that if the army at home were as healthy as the population from which it is drawn, soldiers would die at one-half the rate at which they die now.*

*To show it more in detail: the rate of mortality per 1,000 per annum of the total army was 17.5; household cavalry 11.0; dragoon guards and dragoons 13.3; foot guards 20.4; infantry of the line, 18.7. ”*

The report attributed the high death rate among soldiers to increased levels of lung disease.

*“Of the entire number of deaths from all causes in the army, diseases of the lungs constitute the following proportion; namely, in the cavalry 53.9%; in the infantry of the line 57.3%; in the guards 67.69%”*

The commissioners blamed this on the living conditions in the army barracks.

*“From a variety of facts stated, the conclusion arrived at is that the ravages committed in the ranks of the army by pulmonary disease are to be traced in a great degree to the vitiated atmosphere generated by overcrowding and deficient ventilation, and the absence of proper sewerage in barracks.”*

*“The dormitories or barrack-rooms are very confined, the minimum cubic space allowed to each soldier by regulation is 450 cubic feet, but in a majority of cases even this minimum is not attained. In the barrack, it is stated by some non-commissioned officers examined by the Barrack Committee, that even the regulated space of one foot between the beds is practically unattained. Owing to the ordinary construction of the buildings, the barrack rooms very seldom have windows at opposite sides or ends of the room, and there are, consequently, very insufficient means of ventilation, though the number of men sleeping together in a confined space, renders every access to fresh air the more necessary. The result is that the soldier sleeps in a foetid and unwholesome atmosphere, the habitual breathing of which, though producing for the most part no direct immediate effects, probably lays the seeds of that pulmonary disease, which is so fatal in the British army. Of the state of this atmosphere, abundant evidence, though of a most disgusting nature, is to be found in the statements of the witnesses before the Barrack Committee. Serjeant Sotheran, of the 85th, who had seen beds in a barrack-room so closely packed as to be only six inches apart, said that a day-room separate from the sleeping room would be a great advantage, and proceeded to describe the accommodation afforded to the men under the existing system in these words:—‘ They are confined to one room all the day; they have very little room to walk up and down; there is a row of tables up the centre, and a row of beds on each side, and the men are cramped’ ‘It is rather too much,’ says Sir John MacNeill, ‘that our soldiers should be worse lodged than our paupers.’ A sergeant explained how the air was offensive both from the men’s breath and from the urine tubs in the room, and of course, some soldiers do not keep their feet very clean, especially in summer.”*

In 1866 the government upgraded regulations for the construction of barracks and issued ‘*A Manual of practical hygiene prepared especially for use in the medical service of the army*’ by Edmund Alexander Parkes MD FRCS. According to the new rules:

- *Each man is allowed 600 cubic feet of space.* There is no evidence that the accommodation at Littlehampton was extended but the 1871 census shows that by then only 3 soldiers were stationed there.

- *The rooms are directed to be narrow, with only two rows of beds, and with opposite windows—one window to every two beds.*
- *It is very important that the men should take their meals elsewhere than in their barrack room.*
- *In all new barracks indoor urinals are introduced whereas formerly, urine tubs were brought into barrack rooms every night.*
- *A dry and non-malarious site be chosen, and the subsoil drained, the plan of sewerage must be fixed.* In 1860 in a debate in the House of Commons Mr White MP described Littlehampton Fort as being built on a boggy foundation.<sup>ix</sup> At the beginning of the 1914-1918 war a body of yeomanry occupied the fort with their horses stabled in the disused moat. But after only a fortnight the men and horses had to be evacuated because so many of the troops went down with dysentery.<sup>x</sup>

### Married Quarters.

Women were not allowed to join the army during the nineteenth century. In every company (100 men), 6 soldiers were given permission by the commanding officer to marry "on the strength of the regiment." "On the strength of the regiment" meant that the women and children lived in the same barracks as the soldiers and drew rations at no extra cost. When the Regiment was moved to a new posting the family would travel with the regiment for free. Although standing orders would vary, it was understood that the women would do work for the army- washing and repairing shirts and uniforms.<sup>xi</sup>

Until the reforms of 1866 conditions for married couples were very unpleasant.

*"The present habits of the soldier tend to brutalize his feelings, that in many regiments the meaning of leave to marry, is leave to bring the woman into barracks, where, with the help of a bit of curtain, she creates a matrimonial chamber in the midst of a room occupied by some twenty men; and commanding officers under these circumstances very properly refuse leave to marry as often as they can."*<sup>xii</sup>

By 1866 medical officers had identified marriage as a cause of good health among the regular soldiers. There appeared to be fewer cases of venereal diseases, and of other health problems in regiments with a high ratio of married men. Some doctors expressed hope that the army would do all in its power to allow and encourage regular soldiers to marry.

*"In Woolwich hospital alone from 1837 to 1857, there were 31,003 admissions from venereal diseases, in itself a sufficient proof of the importance of the question. If the building of huts for married men and free leave to marry were given, it would doubtless lessen this evil."*<sup>xiii</sup>



*Married Soldiers' Quarters, Albany-street Barracks.*

Married Soldiers' Quarters, Albany Street Barracks.

Illustration from  
*Town swamps and social bridges*  
by George Godwin 1859

Under Dr Parkes' instructions<sup>xiv</sup>

- *Married men are entitled to separate quarters, each family receiving one room 14 feet by 12, or 168 superficial and 1680 cubic space. At Littlehampton Fort in 1861 there were no women present, but in 1871 all three soldiers there had their families with them.*

Name	Relationship to head of family	Condition	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace	Date of Birth
FERGUSON, William	Head	Married	M	34	Corporal Coastal Brigade Royal Artillery	Dublin, Ireland	1837
FERGUSON, Charlotte	Wife	Married	F	21	Soldier's wife	Guernsey	1850
CLOTHER, William	Head	Married	M	41	Gunner Coastal Brigade Royal Artillery	Guernsey	1830
CLOTHER, Mary	Wife	Married	F	39	Soldier's wife	Guernsey	1832
CLOTHER, Thomas	Son	Unmarried	M	14	Royal Navy Boy	Hampshire	1857
CLOTHER, Samuel	Son	Unmarried	M	9	Soldier's son	Limerick, Ireland	1862
CLOTHER, Fredrick	Son	Unmarried	M	7	Soldier's son	Cork, Ireland	1864
CLOTHER, Peter	Son	Unmarried	M	3	Soldier's son	Guernsey	1868
CLOTHER, Mary Jane	Daughter	Unmarried	F	1	Soldier's daughter	Guernsey	1870
HAWTON, Thomas	Head	Married	M	39	Gunner Coastal Brigade Royal Artillery	Devonport	1832
HAWTON, Mary Jane	Wife	Married	F	37	Soldier's wife	Cornwall	1834
HAWTON, William	Son	Unmarried	M	9	Soldier's son	Chichester	1832
HAWTON, Francis	Son	Unmarried	M	4	Soldier's son	Littlehampton	1867
HAWTON, Alma	Daughter	Unmarried	F	3	Soldier's daughter	Littlehampton	1868
HAWTON, Rosina	Daughter	Unmarried	F	2	Soldier's daughter	Littlehampton	1869
TRITEYNOWEN, Susan	Sister-in-Law	Unmarried	F	29	Dressmaker	Cornwall	1842

The Coast Brigade Royal Artillery consisted of non-commissioned officers and men selected from the other brigades on account of their good conduct and long service. They usually did duty in small detachments, at the various forts and batteries in the United Kingdom.<sup>xv</sup>



The camp at Aldershot – ‘On Duty, Married Quarters.’

*The Graphic* Saturday, 16 September 1871

### 3. Food

Soldiers' pay was nominally 1 shilling a day, but out of this there was a compulsory 'stoppage' of 4½ pence a day for food, leaving each man with 7 ½ pence. The 'stoppage' covered a daily ration of bread, meat and beer. If the soldier wanted vegetables, butter, cheese, condiments, puddings, tea, coffee, sugar, etc. he had to pay extra. The set daily ration

at home, by an order dated 1813, consisted of 1lb. of bread and  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of uncooked meat (which generally became less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb of cooked meat). A soldier's wife, on the strength of the regiment, received half of these rations and children under the age of 14 received a quarter of these.<sup>xvi</sup>

The menu was the same every day:

*“With respect to cooking and food in British barracks, there is one kind of ration at all times and under all circumstances—for summer and winter, for spring and autumn; time and the seasons bring no change. There is one form of cooking—namely, boiling. It is boiled meat new, boiled meat old, boiled meat hot, boiled meat cold, boiled meat tender, boiled meat tough; and the British soldier, after his twenty-one years' servitude, may 'thank God' (and the Government) 'for boiled meat enough.’”<sup>xvii</sup>*

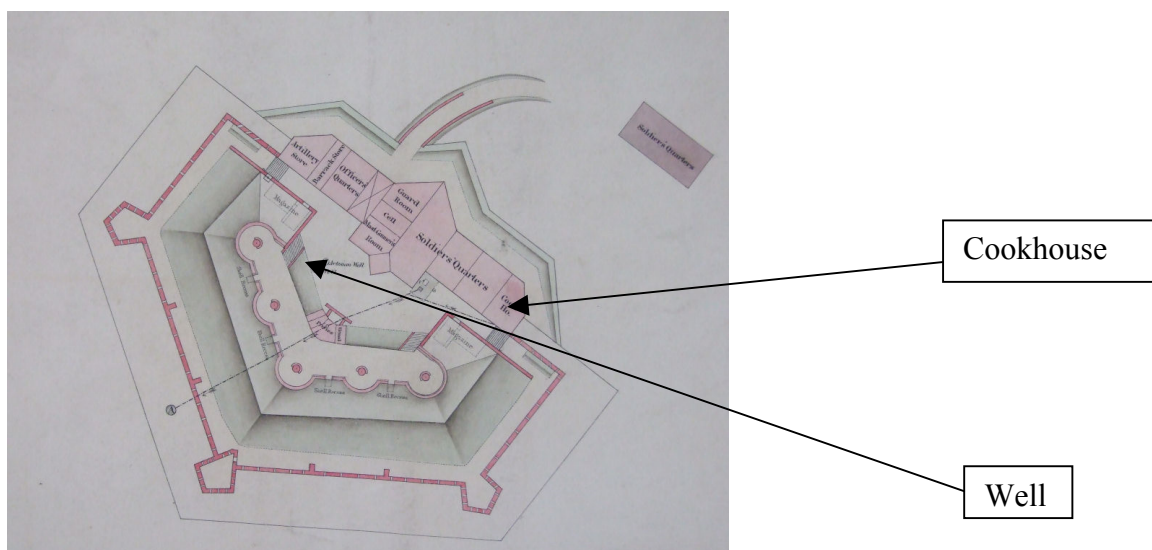
This lack of variety was another contributory factor for the poor health of the soldiers.

Gen. Sir R. Airey said

*“The men are perfectly sickened of it. I have seen the meat, after it has been boiled down to shreds, thrown away; the men would not look at it. One error is the parent of another; as the men cannot eat the same unvarying mess forever, they send their meat to the baker's and defray the expense out of their vegetable-money. This diminution of their vegetable diet tends to produce diseases of a scorbutic character.”<sup>xviii</sup>*

The Commissioners of 1858, those who highlighted the need for improved ventilation in barracks, also recommended that the soldiers should have the means of roasting, stewing, baking, and frying, as well as of boiling their meat. Therefore in barracks built after this date the cookhouses were equipped with ranges as well as boilers.

Traditionally the task of being the company's cook was undertaken by the men in rotation: they would begin after the evening meal on Saturday and continue for one week; but things improved in 1862 when a school of cookery was established at Aldershot which gradually supplied both regiments and army hospitals with cooks capable of giving men a wholesome meal.



Part of the daily meal ration was 1 penny's worth of beer. This was given partly for nutritional reasons (the sugar content) and partly because it was deemed essential for maintaining the morale of the men. Soldiers could also club together to buy extra alcohol.

*"The state offered every inducement in the way of monotonous diet, monotonous occupation, climatic discomfort, bad housing and abundant alcohol that could lure men to drink, and then complained of drunkenness."*<sup>xix</sup>

Any soldier found to be drunk when on duty or parade was fined a penny a day of his pay for any period not exceeding thirty days.<sup>xx</sup>

In 1873 there was a fatal accident at Littlehampton Fort caused by drink:

*"On Monday last F.J.Mallin Esq., coroner, held an inquest at the Littlehampton Fort, on the body of John Thornley, a private of the 107<sup>th</sup> Regiment, drowned in the sea on Saturday.- From the evidence given by Private Patrick Callaghan, Lance Corporal John McCarthy, and Private Patrick McGuire, it appeared that the deceased soldier was 34 years of age, and had been 14 years in the service. He had been frequently punished for drinking, and on Friday he was intoxicated; on the Saturday he was in liquor, and he threw a basin of soup over the tables at dinner time. After dinner he slipped off, and, as the party deceased was under orders to march to the station, Callaghan and McCarthy were sent to search for him. An hour after dinner his body was found lying on the beach, naked and dead, with his clothes in a pile on the sand. He had evidently gone to bathe, but how he met his death there was no evidence to show, and the jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally Drowned".*<sup>xxi</sup>

#### 4. Clothing

Until 1854 new recruits had their uniforms supplied by the Colonel of their regiment who was allocated by the government a fixed sum for clothing all his men. This system allowed Colonels to make private arrangement with contractors and issue men with garments of very inferior quality.<sup>xxii</sup> The scandal this caused led to the system being changed, so the Government undertook to provide centrally the uniforms, with the Colonels being given fixed payment of £500 a year in lieu of these profits.<sup>xxiii</sup>



Punch June 1849

Every recruit received, on enlistment, a complete set of uniform and what were called “necessaries” - a pair of fatigue trousers, three pairs of worsted socks, two flannel or three cotton shirts, and a few sundries, such as brushes, towels, etc. The uniform was replaced free of charge after a fixed time: the tunic, trousers, and boots were expected to last one year; the helmet two years and the great-coat three years, but any unusual renewals or repairs, if at all attributable to the soldier’s neglect, were charged against him.<sup>xxiv</sup> After the first outfit, the soldier had to pay for replacing any of the “necessaries” out of what remained of his daily pay, costing him up to 3 pence a day.<sup>xxv</sup>

The army uniform helmet was called a ‘shako’. The design changed every so often in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with models known as “Regency” Bell-topped”, “Albert”, “French” and “Quilted” . The helmet was made of stiffened felt with a leather top and peak. It had a brass badge on the front and it was kept in place by a brass chain backed with leather that went under the soldier’s chin. On the top were woollen tufts according to rank and regiment.



Officer's Albert Shako 1844 -55, Grenadier Company, 1st Battalion, 1st (The Royal Scots) Regiment of Foot

The uniform jacket (coatee) was always red. In 1856 a new style was introduced which was single-breasted and shorter than previous styles. It was worn with a stiff collar called a stock. Originally trousers were white, but they were changed to black in 1845 as it was said that the constant washing required for white trousers and the lack of proper dying facilities caused rheumatism.<sup>xxvi</sup> The waist-belt was white leather with a brass buckle, and from it hung a black leather cartridge pouch which held sixty rounds and ten caps. On his back a soldier carried a large black canvas pack containing his mess-tin and on top of the pack was his rolled up greatcoat.<sup>xxvii</sup>



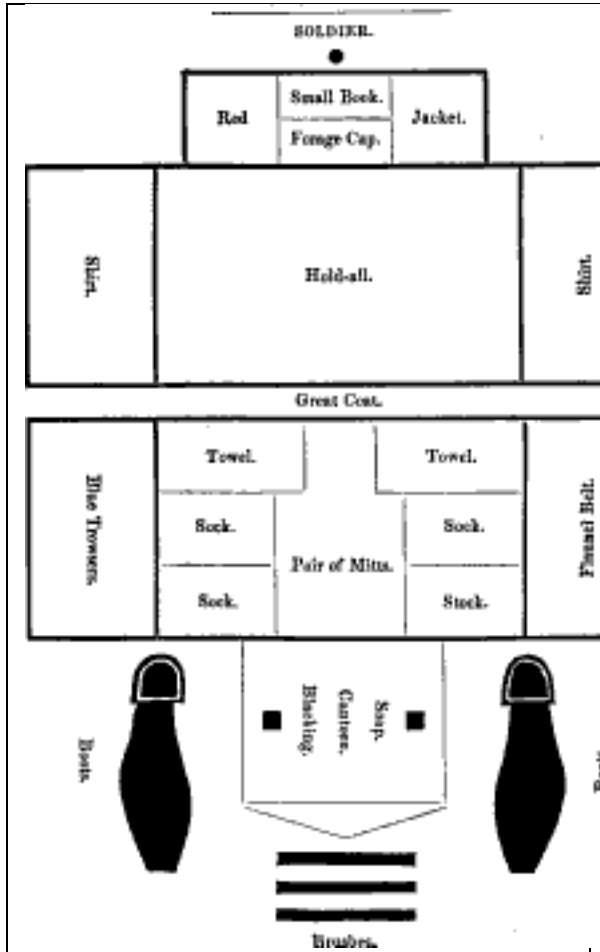
The Royal Marines, Light Infantry Changing Sentries, 1855.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The change of supply system in 1854 was supposed to improve the quality of the uniform provided to ensure greater comfort for soldiers, but in fact no such benefit was achieved, as was widely acknowledged.

*“As he stands at drill, almost every article of clothing that a soldier wears is constructed not for the object that such articles are generally intended to serve, but for some other purpose. He is clothed in under-garments that are with one exception little useful in preserving the warmth of the body, although they are cumbersome in hot weather; his coat does not keep out the weather, but pinions his shoulders; his trousers fetter his legs, but do not protect them; his stock chafes his neck in cold weather, and produces apoplexy in hot weather by the pressure upon the veins of the neck; his hat does not protect him from the sun and rain, but presses his head, and is in some cases difficult to keep on; his socks, of which he has not enough pairs, are worn and comfortless; his shoes are heavy, ill contrived, and do not keep out the wet; the belts to support his knapsack are so constructed that they press with much precision on a vein in the shoulder, and benumb his arms so as to render his hands unfit for the management of his weapons; it is uncomfortable for him to stand, fatiguing for him to march, and the garments which should protect and sustain are troublesome encumbrances of very partial utility. We might cite no end of evidence for these statements; the difficulty in reproducing the language of the officers is the tedious similarity of it all. Major General Sir Richard Airey, K.C.B., (not a subversive demagogue,) is asked whether he thinks the Army well-clothed and equipped —" No, I do not think that our clothing is at all good." He particularly objects to the coats and to the cloth trousers. "All our cloth is bad." He is asked whether the cloth is very much improved of late? " The last issues were improved; but it is a hard and unpleasant cloth for a man to wear; it chafes him, and it does not wear well either; and it is full of size and stiffening." "The stock," says Sir Richard "is not so good as a handkerchief," which "looks untidy but is more comfortable to the soldier." Sergeant Kenton says, "I hear the men complain of it (the stock) coming off guard; it makes the neck quite sore." The head covering receives the same general condemnation in all its various forms. Major-General Lawrence says, "Military men have never as yet agreed upon the one head-dress proper to the foot-soldier"; and "it is still a desideratum for the Army." The great object formerly was that the head-dress should protect the soldier's head against the enemy's sword or lance; and though this, with the long range of modern rifles, has become quite a secondary consideration, the heavy shako or bearskin is still continued, when the chief object of the head-dress ought to be to protect its wearer against sun or rain. There is little doubt that at present more men are killed by the heavy bearskins than protected by them against a fatal shot. The boots enjoy no better reputation than the head-dress. "They are," says Sergeant Henry Russell, "very bad indeed. The boots of this year are the worst we have had for a long time; I never saw them so bad." xxix*



*Punch 1855*



Manner of laying out a Kit for Inspection.



An 1857 ink hand drawn kit inspection sheet for the "Fifth Fusiliers".<sup>xxx</sup>



Razor



Mess tin



Forage cap



Boots

*Q. How are Necessaries packed in the Knapsack?*

*A. The Knapsack is packed by placing two Shirts in the centre of the Pack, a Towel is then spread over them, and a Boot, with the sole uppermost, is placed on each side. The Socks will be laid under the toe of the Boots on each side. The Flannel Belts, Brushes, &c, occupy the space between the Boots and the Shirts. The Red Jacket, Forage Cap, and Blue Trowsers are put over them; and, lastly, the Cloth Trowsers are folded over all.<sup>xxx</sup>*

The problems with poor uniform seemed to stem from the fact that traditionally army uniform was seen as a form of livery to bring glory to the king, rather than a form of equipment to enable efficient fighting.

*“Viewed from head-quarters in peace time, the soldier is not an individual man, who is to be equipped for the purpose of military activity, with direct regard to his freedom, comfort, and health—he is part of a picture. The hat upon his head occupies exactly the same place that is occupied by the knobs of an area railing—it is the conspicuous pinnacle in the series of ornaments.”<sup>xxxii</sup>*



Dress Uniform: Queens Royal Surreys 1860

From 1853 onwards British soldiers were issued with Enfield Rifles, but their uniform seemed more suitable for eighteenth century swordsmen.

*“In the words of a well-known general officer, the present dress of the army is an insult to common sense. Although all are agreed that the introduction of rifles, not to mention breechloaders and rifled ordnance, has greatly modified to conditions of warfare, necessitating greater rapidity of movement and a system of running drill, the dress of the army remains unchanged. It is not too much to say that the soldier's work now-a-days when on service is a compound of that of the chamois hunter, the American trapper, the Highland ghilly, and the Norfolk gamekeeper. Now, what would be said if one of these professionals turned out for duty arrayed in a tightly buttoned up, pocketless tunic, stiff black cloth trousers, badly fitting blucher boots, a knapsack of inordinate weight, with pipe-clayed straps arranged so as effectually to fetter the free action of the arms, an awkward box, misnamed a pouch, to hold ammunition, placed in the most inaccessible position, and suspended by a thick unpliant belt constantly needing pipe- clay, the entire equipment being crowned by an incongruous headdress resembling an ingenious adaptation of an inverted flower pot? Such is the dress still retained for men who, in order to win success in future warfare, must be prepared frequently to march all night and fight all day.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>*

Dover, April 1925

As No 4274 Albert Robinson I enlisted at Westminster on the 9th January 1855, for the 28th Regiment, at the age of 17 years. I was born on February 11th 1840, so that actually my age was 14 years and 11 months when I joined the regiment. The doctor was doubtful about passing me on account of my age but a very good friend in the person of Sergt. Scattergood, 60th Rifles, came to my assistance, and I got through.

On the 16th of the same month I joined the Depot at Parkhurst, Isle of Wight, and was posted to No. 4 Company, commanded by Captain Webb (a Waterloo veteran). The following day I was marched to Newport to obtain my kit from the Army contractor (Isaac & Co.) After that I drew from the Headquarters Stores a shako, coatee, boots, pair of trousers, and a great coat. My bounty was £6 from which I had to pay for the following articles of my kit, viz: knapsack straps, mess tin and cover, one pair of boots, one pair of summer trousers, shell jacket, forage cap and number, haversack, 3 white cotton shirts, 2 towels, 2 pairs of socks, one pair of braces, stock and clasp, and holdall complete. When I mention that the small pipeclay sponge in those days cost 1/- and a tin of blacking 4d it will be realised that the bounty did not go far. Every article of kit had to be marked at a cost to the owner of 1/2d per article. Add to this the fact that the older hands made a habit of relieving the recruits of many small articles, and it will be easily understood that frequently at the end of the month, when I paraded to sign my accounts, I found I was in debt. Consequently, when this happened, I was placed on 1d per diem pay, out of which I had to provide my cleaning materials. Boot repairing was a heavy item, owing to the rough state of the Barrack Square, whilst the Barrack damages (after the departure of a draft) were very high. In addition we had to pay 2d per month for sheet washing, and 1d for haircutting.

We were armed with the 'Brown Bess' shoulder belt, with pouch to hold 90 rounds of ball and cartridge, and caps. In a small pocket of the coatee we carried a cap pouch. I commenced drill the day after I joined, and the end of seven weeks I reached the first squad, where I remained for about sixteen days under Drill-Sergt. White. I was then selected for a musketry course at Sandown. I remember well, although it is so many years ago, I thought I should drop on the way; the breast strap of the knapsack pressed so heavily on my chest, and I was at the time only 15 years of age. Still, I managed to get through.

All the equipment of a soldier had to be kept thoroughly clean and was inspected on a daily basis. White coloured items were cleaned with 'pipe-clay'. Pipe-clay was a very white clay used extensively for making pottery as well as clay pipes. Black coloured items were cleaned with 'blacking' a polish made of wax and soot. Brass items were cleaned with 'rotten-stone' which was powered limestone, rather like pumice.

*Q. How are Belts cleaned?*

A. Belts are cleaned with pipeclay and water, mixed to about the consistency of cream, and it is applied with a smooth piece of sponge; care being taken to put it on smoothly and lightly. The pipeclay of a Company should all be mixed together in one Tub, under the superintendence of an experienced Non-commissioned Officer, as the only way to preserve uniformity in the appearance of the Belts. A small piece of Prussian blue mixed with the pipeclay takes off the chalky look and improves it very much.

*Q. How are Pouches cleaned?*

A. Pouches are cleaned solely with Blacking and Grease, no composition of any kind being allowed, as liable to injure the leaf of the Pouch; the Blacking is applied with a sponge, and afterwards brushed with a very soft brush.

Q. How are the Brasses on appointments cleaned?

A. The Brass Ornaments on Soldiers' appointments are cleaned with "Brass Ball," a composition of rotten-stone and oil, &c.; it is lightly rubbed on with the finger, and removed again with a soft piece of cloth or cotton stocking; or, where there are crevices, with a hard brush used solely for that purpose.<sup>xxxv</sup>

All this effort did not actually make things clean.

*"The dress which is loaded with ornaments occupies a large portion of time for adjustment; and, besides the time wasted in an useless purpose, the means employed to clean and decorate, that is, pipe-clay for the clothing, grease and flour for the hair, actually pollute the skin, and obscure the genuine and manly expression of the countenance. Pipe-clay is employed to cover dirt. A soldier until lately, notwithstanding he might be incrustated from head to foot, was said to be clean if his small-clothes and facings were covered with pipe-clay, and the head was said to be dressed if the hair was matted with a paste of grease and flour. A common observer, who looked at the British army a few years back, would be disposed to say that military cleanliness was positive dandruff; and as the pleasure which arises from the sensations of personal cleanliness is one of the greatest of which man's nature is capable, the soldier might then be considered as continually in penance. Pipe-clay does not clean: it only covers the appearances of dirt. Grease and flour, employed to form a matting of the hair, constitute a sacrifice to appearance at the expense of comfort."*<sup>xxxvi</sup>



Blackening

## 5. Activities.

Being stationed at home after a period abroad at war must have seemed a welcome relief from the fear, trauma and exhaustion of the battlefield; but the very inactivity of barrack life was also regarded as stressful for the soldier and was believed to be another cause of ill health.

*"A cause that lowers the general health of the soldier and predisposes him to disease is the wearying monotony of his life. The evil appears to be inseparable from the soldier's calling. Even in a state of war there are periods when armies suffer perceptibly from this monotony. It is a well-known fact that the spirits and health of troops improve on the near prospect of action. At home, in time of peace, the permanent duty of our army is that of a garrison, and the routine becomes injuriously irksome."*<sup>xxxvii</sup>

As well as boredom apparently the soldier suffered a lack of self-worth from the apparent pointlessness of the activities associated with holding a fort in peacetime.

*"In the first place, the soldier is of no immediate use,—he is himself a precaution, not an actively useful agent. He has none of the interests of successful work. He has nothing growing into existence under his care. The army is a provision against a contingency, and is*

most really useful when its mere existence prevents that contingency. Still that is not a kind of usefulness -which presents itself strongly to any one's mind. When a man is engaged in fighting,—when he is spending his life for his country,—then he feels the value of his services. But when he is merely a precautionary institution, it is impossible he can feel any glow of satisfaction in discharging that useful function. <sup>xxxviii</sup>

The 1858 government commission set up to *Inquire into the Regulations affecting the Sanitary Condition of the Army* heard evidence from Colonel Lindsay of the Guards:

*“Perhaps no living individual suffers more than the soldier from ennui. He has no employment save the drill and its duties; these are of a most monotonous and uninteresting description, so much so that you cannot increase their amount without wearying and disgusting him. All he has to do is under restraint: he is not like a working man or an artisan. A working man will dig, and his mind is his own; an artisan is interested in the work on which he is engaged; but a soldier has to give you all his attention, and he has nothing to show for the work done. He gets up at six; there is no drill before breakfast; he makes up his bed and cleans up his things; he gets his breakfast at seven; he turns out for drill at half-past 7 or eight; his drill may last half an hour. If it be guardedly, there is no drill except for defaulters.--The men for duty are paraded at ten o'clock; that finishes his day-drill altogether. There is evening parade, which takes half an hour, and then his time is his own until tattoo, which is at nine in winter and ten in summer. That is the day of a soldier not on guard or not belonging to a company which is out for rifle practice.”*



Enfield Rifle

PLATE XV.



AS A FRONT RANK  
STANDING, READY.



AS A REAR RANK STANDING,  
PRESENT (1st Motion).



AS A FRONT RANK KNEELING,  
READY.



AS A REAR RANK KNEELING,  
PRESENT (1st Motion).

Army drill. Field Exercise and Evolutions of Infantry, as Revised by Her Majesty's Command. (Pall Mall, 1867).

Littlehampton Fort was manned originally by detachments from the Royal Sussex Artillery who arrived in May 1855 although the cannons did not arrive until the end of 1856. For most of the time the fort housed detachments making use of the two rifle ranges beside the fort on what is now the golf course.<sup>xxxix</sup>

*ROYAL SUSSEX LIGHT INFANTRY MILITIA- four companies of the above have completed their usual course of ball practice at Littlehampton.<sup>xl</sup>*

*“The third annual prize meeting of the Sussex Volunteer Association was held at the Littlehampton Fort Government ranges on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> of June. The competitors for the prizes on the first two days were enrolled volunteers and the disembodied militia of the county. All the prizes were shot for with three-grooved Enfield rifles of bona-fide Government pattern (1853),<sup>xli</sup>*

In July 1860 there was a ‘melancholy catastrophe’ at the Fort at a time when two hundred men of the 21st Depot Battalion are receiving rifle instruction and one man named Dockerell accidentally shot two of his comrades.<sup>xlii</sup>

By 1866 the Fort seems to have been staffed by only a few men who had precious little to do. In 1872 John Jordan, a gunner in the Royal Artillery, stationed at the fort, murdered the infant son of his commanding officer. Jordan’s defence was depression.

*“It was about two years and a half ago since my wife went away, and of course, I have had a great deal on my mind ever since. Of course, since I’ve been at this Fort it has preyed more on my mind, not having sufficient company nor enough work. Had I been in a livelier place and among different, or more companions, I have no doubt it would have worn off. I think that is all, sir. I can say.”<sup>xliii</sup>*

The government made efforts to improve conditions by setting up libraries in barracks. The Inspector-general of Military Schools made a selection of books and periodicals; and a small public allowance was made for the pay of librarians. A payment of 1d. per month entitled the soldier to the use of the library.<sup>xliv</sup> But Littlehampton Fort was too small to have a library. The government also encouraged soldiers to practise athletic exercises and out-door games as much as possible but there was no gymnasium at Littlehampton either.



Myrtle Street gymnasium Liverpool; a drill master can be seen instructing two lines of men in physical training exercises. Illustrated London News November 15<sup>th</sup> 1865

## 6. Punishment

Compliance with orders was maintained through strict discipline. Traditionally soldiers were flogged for insubordination with a cat o' nine tails. In 1846 a maximum of 50 strokes was set, down from the previous 200, but the reduction caused the number of floggings to increase: in 1833 there were 307 cases but the number of men flogged in 1863 was 518, and the number of lashes inflicted 23,668; the number of men in 1864 was 528, and the number of lashes, 25,638; the number of men in 1865 was 441, and the number of lashes 21,561. In 1865 men were flogged for habitual drunkenness, breaking out of prison, disobedience of orders, loss of necessaries, unlawful possession, drunkenness in camp, and one man had been flogged for an offence entitled "miscellaneous."<sup>xlv</sup> The campaign against flogging was spearheaded by Arthur J. Otway, Liberal MP for Chatham, who successfully achieved an amendment to the Mutiny Act of 1867 which meant that the use of flogging was restricted to mutiny and violence to superiors. This greatly reduced the number of floggings until 1879 when there were 546 cases during the Zulu Wars.



A military Flogging 1844.

After 1867 the main disciplinary method was confinement to cells with extra duty or loss of pay, or loss of good conduct badges. For serious offences soldiers were sent to civil prisons but for minor offences with sentences up to three months they were confined to the barrack cells.<sup>xlvi</sup> A 'black hole' was a cell for solitary confinement reserved for cases of drunkenness, riot, violence, or insolence to superiors.

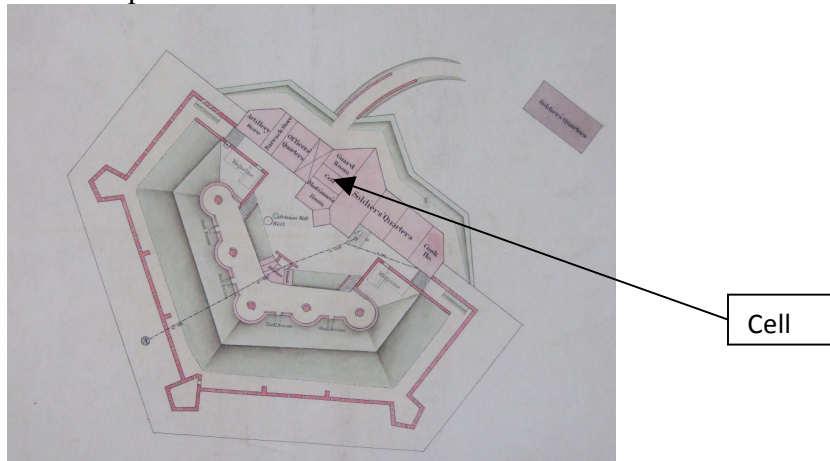


Black Hole for the Cavalry, Knightsbridge Barracks.

Illustration from  
*Town swamps and social bridges*  
by George Godwin 1859

For sentences under a week, soldiers were given a single blanket; longer terms meant that after the first week, bedding was provided, but it was removed every third night for the remainder of the sentence. Rations reflected the nature of the crimes and ranged from full rations to bread and water. Alcohol and tobacco in any form were prohibited in the cells.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Littlehampton Fort was built with a cell but how much it was used is not known



In 1872 John Jordan was kept prisoner for two days in his own barrack-room there for having absented himself from the Fort for eleven hours without leave.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Soldiers guilty of desertion were branded with the letter "D" on their left arm (until 1871). Originally the branding was done by hot iron but from 1840 marking instruments were used with tattooing ink or gunpowder. Another brand used was "B.C.", which referred to Bad Character. The practice of marking increased in the 1860s possibly because some men who would otherwise have been flogged found themselves marked instead, but the most likely explanation of the dramatic rise in marking soldiers is that this represented an attempt by the army to ensure that deserters did not re-enlist and claim the enlistment bounty again.

YEAR	No. imprisoned	No. flogged	No. branded
1865	16 804	601	1 636
1866	19 257	510	1 584
1867	19 854	150	1 805

xlix

In 1861 a student at Bishop Otter's Training College, Chichester, was murdered by a rifle shot and the suspect was a soldier called Cleary from the 59th Regiment stationed in the nearby barracks.

*"Cleary, the soldier who shot him, is 21 years of age, stands five feet and three-quarters high, of sallow complexion, with dark brown hair and hazel eyes; he has the mark of a scar in the middle of his right fore arm, with the letter D on the left side. He is a native of Ireland. He had on at the time of breaking out of the barracks a tunic coat or jacket black cloth or regimental trousers, and took with him his rifle, with 10 rounds of ball ammunition and his greatcoat. He bears a bad character in the 59th Regiment, to the depot of which he was attached. In October, 1861, he deserted; afterwards he was tried and convicted for stealing property belonging to an officer. Very recently he has had SIX days' extra drill given him for bad conduct."*<sup>l</sup>

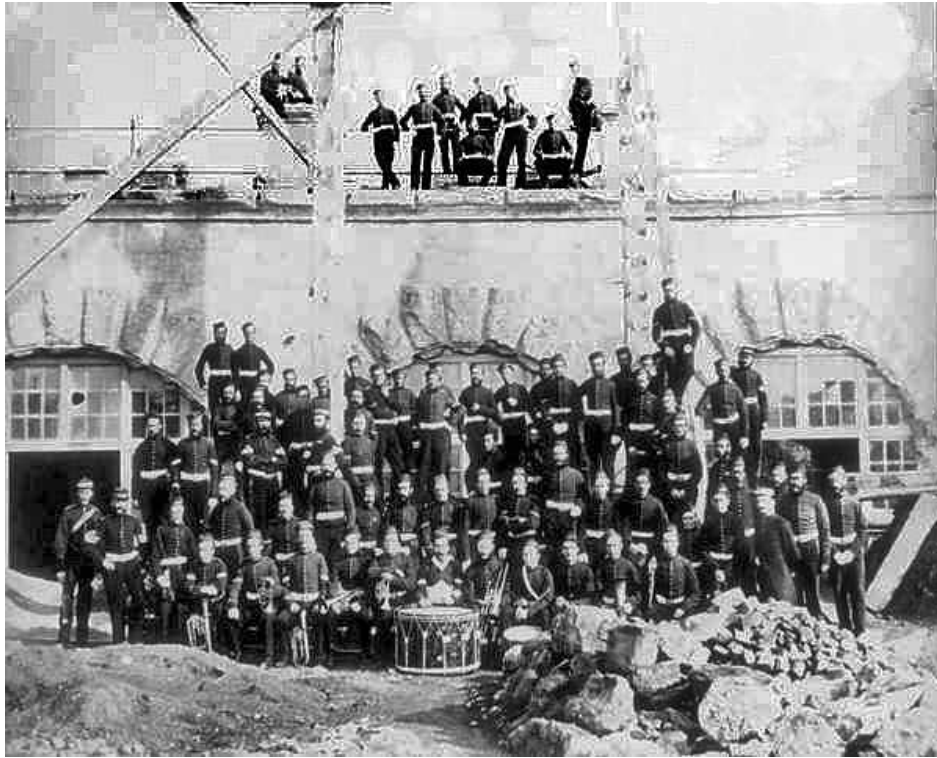
## 7. Not quite so stupid.

At the time when Littlehampton Fort was constructed, soldiers in the Regular Army were generally regarded as having to endure deprivations so appalling that only the most desperate would enrol.

*“The soldier is generally a boy from the class of the labourer, or the mechanic, who, having been out of employment for some time, or inclined to be idle, gets attracted by the recruiting placard, gets into conversation with the recruiting sergeant, whose interest it is to tell him every lie he can invent, at the rate of 5s. per man, and finally enlists. He is sent off with a batch of other stupid boys to join the depot, and he is there put through a course of instruction which brings into play muscles and nerves he has never made use of before. The exercise he gets is constant, and in the cavalry and artillery it is arduous. And there is a regularity in his exercise, though not in his meals, which tries the constitution to a great extent. He is told that he is a soldier, and that he must not mind standing at attention on parade of a cold winter's morning; that he must not mind the stock and the knapsack on the hot summer's day, and that he must not mind the thin cloak during his sentry hours, in the depth of winter. His leisure is spent in the public, and his night, when at home, in the unwholesome barrack-room. And there is nothing whatsoever, at least in infantry regiments, to occupy his mind. Drill under the sergeant-major, when everybody is to blame; drill under the adjutant, when nothing is right: picket, guard, fatigues, and roll-call, occupy the steady soldier's time; the orderly-room drill, and cells, the man who is unsteady. But once a soldier has been three months with his regiment, he has learned all his lessons, and he finds he is in for it for ten or twelve years.”<sup>li</sup>*

But by the time the Fort was decommissioned, conditions for the soldiers had improved considerably as moves were made to establish a more professional army; although there was still a way to go.

1847	Enlistment period reduced from life to 10 +11 years.
1852	Militia Act. Volunteers paid to enlist for 6 years and do 21 days training a year.
1854	Government takes over supply of uniforms.
1853	Establishment of Hythe Musketry School.
1857	Report of the Royal Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Army.
1859	The Rifle Volunteer Movement established.
1862	Establishment of Aldershot Cookery School.
1863	Report of the Barracks and Hospital Commission: Regimental Management of Canteens.
1866	Manual of Practical Hygiene published.
1867	Abolition of flogging for all offences except mutiny.
1867	Pay rise of 2 pence a day awarded.
1870	Enlistment period reduced to 6 + 6 years.
1871	Abolition of Purchase of Army Commissions.
1871	Abolition of branding for deserters.
1871	2 pence pay rise cancelled, but 4.5 pence food stoppage abolished.



The 26th Company Royal Engineers during their construction of Fort Weymouth, 1859-69.

### A Soldiers Balance Sheet.

Victorian money was recorded as pounds, shillings and pence – written as £/s/d

£1 was worth 20 shillings  
 1 shilling was worth 12 pence  
 So £1 was worth 240 pence

There was also a halfpenny coin and a quarter penny coin (known as a farthing.)

**Enlistment bounty: varies, possibly £3**

<sup>iii</sup>**Daily Pay:**

	£	s	d
Private		1	0
Sergeant		1	10
Colour Sergeant		2	4
Regimental Sergeant Major		3	0

## Stoppages:

Daily:

	£	s	d
Basic food ration			4½

Monthly:

	£	s	d
Washing bedding			2
Haircutting			1
Use of library (optional)			1

Occasionally:

	£	s	d
Marking items of kit on enlistment.		1	0
Marking replacement kit –per article.			½
Replacing lost guns or ammunition- per article.		1	0
Receiving medical treatment- per day.			10
Being absent on authorised leave –per day.			4
Extra bread; tea, coffee, and potatoes – per day.			31/2

xix Replacement costs:

	£	s	d
Trousers		8	3
Boots		7	6
Shirt		1	9
Fatigue Jacket		7	6
Pair of socks			10
Stock		1	1
Braces			9
Knapsack		15	0
Forage cap		3	0
2 shoe brushes		1	0
Blacking			6
Clothes brush			10
Razor		1	0
Soap & shaving brush			7
Sponge			4

Hilary Greenwood  
November 2011

<sup>i</sup> Chambers's encyclopaedia: a dictionary of universal knowledge , Volume 8, 1868

<sup>ii</sup> Skelley, Alan Ramsay, The Victorian army at home. Croom Helm 1977. pg 241

<sup>iii</sup> ibid

<sup>iv</sup> Chamber's journal of popular literature, science and arts by William Chambers, Robert Chambers vol. xi 1859

<sup>v</sup> Skelley, Alan Ramsay, The Victorian army at home. Croom Helm 1977. pg 240

<sup>vi</sup> Holmes, Richard. Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties from Redcoats to Dusty Warriors. Harper Collins UK, 2011 e-book

<sup>vii</sup> Stocqueler, J.H. The British Soldier: an anecdotal history of the British Army 1857

<sup>viii</sup> *The Westminster review*, Volumes 68-69 July-October 1857. pg 293

<sup>ix</sup> Fortifications (Provision for Expenses) Bill Second Reading 1860

<sup>x</sup> *Littlehampton Gazette* December 24<sup>th</sup> 1954

<sup>xi</sup> <http://www.royalengineers.ca>

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- <sup>xii</sup> *The Westminster review*, Volumes 68-69 July-October 1857. pg 304-5
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xiv</sup> A Manual of practical hygiene prepared especially for use in the medical service of the army By Edmund Alexander Parkes MD FRCS 1866
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- <sup>xxvii</sup> <http://www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk>
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- <sup>xxix</sup> *The Spectator* March 6th 1858
- <sup>xxx</sup> Post by Graham Stewart <http://gmic.co.uk/index.php/topic/24025-british-army-kit-layouts/>
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- <sup>xxxii</sup> *The Spectator* March 6th 1858
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<sup>xxxvii</sup> The *Times*, February 16, 1858

<sup>xxxviii</sup> *The Economist* February 20<sup>th</sup> 1858

<sup>xxxix</sup> Thompson H.J.F. Littlehampton Through The wars 1978. Pg 19

<sup>xl</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*: Saturday, May 21, 1870

<sup>xli</sup> *The Penny Illustrated Paper* Saturday, June 20, 1863

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<http://www.royalengineers.ca> (The British Columbian detachment, Canada.)