

The South African war brought some important changes to the Regiment's life. A reorganisation of the Regiment brought the Huntly Rifles into the battalion, but transferred the Te Aroha Rifles to the Waikato Mounted Regiment. On 15 November 1900 the Thames Naval Artillery became No. 1 Company Thames Rifle Volunteers, while the Rotorua and Waihi Rifle Volunteers began their association with the regiment. On 1 October 1901 the name 'Hauraki' became at last formally incorporated within the Regiment's title, when the unit was redesignated Second Battalion Auckland (Hauraki) Infantry Volunteers. On 14 November 1901 three new defence rifle clubs were formed within the Regiment's district, encouraged and instructed by the battalion's officers and N.C.Os — the Matata Defence Rifle Club, the Thames Defence Rifle Club, and the Mercury Bay Defence Rifle Club (Whitianga).

Those who served in the South African War found themselves in hard conditions, against a farmer-foe who was well versed in guerilla warfare, who with an army no larger than the present population of Tauranga, kept the forces of the Empire at bay for four years.

Hauraki troopers in South Africa received a daily scale of rations of 1 lb of fresh or preserved meats, 1¼ lbs of bread or 1 lb of biscuit, flour or meal; 2/3 of an ounce of coffee or 1/3 of an ounce of tea, 3 ounces of sugar, 1/2 ounce of salt, 1/36 of an ounce of pepper, half-a-pound of potatoes or 1 ounce of compressed vegetables, a quarter pound of jam and lime juice when ordered by the medical officer. These supplies were not always available and men and horses were left to forage from an alien landscape as best they could. Horses and men were the victims of hunger and disease and often Hauraki troopers were forced to change their ragged uniform for captured Boer farm clothes, even at the risk of being mistaken as enemy and shot. As soap was not provided to New Zealand soldiers in this campaign, they were often less than welcome, even in friendly townships.

The South African War introduced a new realism into the New Zealand Volunteer Force. War wounds, fever and typhoid cost New Zealand over 200 dead, and several of these had served with RSM Bradford of the Haurakis. Tactical exercises, based on Boer War actions, followed the war, like the exercise held in 1905 between the Tauranga Rifles and the Te Puke Mounted Rifles. However, the Volunteers still followed some civilised customs, even in simulated warfare, and the *Bay of Plenty Times* correspondent noted one when he observed that

'at 4.25 p.m. both bodies stopped and took afternoon tea in Mr Turner's paddock'.³

Those who returned to the Regiment from South Africa brought new legends of bravery and new tactical experiences to the battalion. Untried troops soon learnt from the returned troopers new army ditties, expressive of the hardships of veldt-life. The 'Rum Night' chorus was perhaps the best known of these ditties:

*Grooming! Grooming! Grooming!!!
Always—well grooming.
From reveille to lights out,
It's grooming all day long.*

*Trekking! Trekking! Trekking!
Always—well trekking.
From reveille to lights out,
It's trekking all day long.*

*Biscuits! Biscuits! Biscuits!
Always—well biscuits.
From reveille to lights out,
It's biscuits all day long.*

New weapons had also appeared during the South African war and after the war the Regiment's old Martini-Enfield carbines were replaced by Lee-Enfield rifles, sighted up to 2800 yards, instead of the earlier weapons' maximum range of 2000 yards.

The Regiment emerged from the South African War enlarged in numbers, improved in military knowledge and with its first battle honour. But for British arms the Boer War was a disaster, and New Zealand had participated in that disaster. In the years that immediately followed, the Imperial General Staff conducted a stock-taking of the shortcomings of the British and colonial armies, and as a result of this survey New Zealand's Volunteer units, the Hauraki Regiment amongst them, were soon to be subject to a massive reform of the nation's defences.

REFERENCES

- 1 'A New Zealander's', *NEW ZEALANDERS AND THE BOER WAR*, (Christchurch, 1902), pp.100-101.
- 2 I am indebted to Mr C. W. Vennell for this information.
- 3 Notes from the Ohinemuri Rifle Companies retained in the Hauraki Battalion Headquarters.
- 4 *NEW ZEALAND OFFICIAL GAZETTE*, 12 September 1898.
- 5 T. C. Wallace, 'War in South Africa', in *NEW ZEALAND HERITAGE*, (5, 64), p.1769.
- 6 *BAY OF PLENTY TIMES*, 6 February 1900.
- 7 *NEW ZEALANDERS AND THE BOER WAR*, p.163.