

Maintaining a regiment in the face of public indifference, fierce cuts in the army grant, and in sight of a general distaste for any reminders of the Great War, was no easy task. The Hauraki Regiment was particularly lucky that in this period several able soldiers were given command of the Battalion.

The first of those who commanded the Regiment during the years of discouragement was Lieut.-Col. R. C. Allen, a farmer from Piako, who received his appointment on 12 November 1919. Lieut.-Col. Allen, a Major in the Regiment since September 1911, was awarded the DSO in France in 1917 and was thirty-eight when given his command. The new Commanding Officer was less than pleased with the Defence Department's attitude to Territorial Regiments and on being informed of his appointment he at once wrote to Lieut.-Col. E. W. Porritt, his predecessor:

*It seems to me that the Defence Department is going to work in entirely the wrong way. We do not yet know what is to be the new organisation of the Defence Forces. . . . I think it will be a most unwise course to throw overboard all the experienced Territorials before the transition stage is passed.<sup>2</sup>*

Allen's successor, Major Edwin Edwards, a Paeroa agent, had an even harder task to confront when he began his tour of duty as Commanding Officer in October 1922. With no annual training camps, and steep decline in parade attendance, the Regiment was at its lowest ebb.

Lieut.-Col. R. F. G. Gambrill, who took over the command of the Regiment on 13 September 1924, was one of the most determined and controversial of the Regiment's commanders, in its entire period. A former Commander of the Second New Zealand Infantry Brigade, a personal friend of Sir Andrew Russell who commanded the evacuation of the Anzac forces from Gallipoli, this barrister and solicitor, served for two years as the Hauraki's commander before he was appointed to the command of the Hawkes Bay Regiment in 1926. Gambrill was to gain later fame as one of the four colonels who in 1938 issued a manifesto strongly criticising the Ministry of Defence for its neglect of the army.<sup>3</sup>

Col. Gambrill, during his brief tour of duty, injected new vitality into the Regiment and insisted that physical fitness and military marksmanship should be given a fresh emphasis in the Regiment's training programme. Gambrill's successor was another barrister and solicitor, this time from Morrinsville. Lieut.-Col. S. S. Allen (later Sir Stephen Allen, KCMG, DSO and Bar) was the most distinguished of those who commanded the

Regiment in these two decades. Lieut.-Col. Allen had begun his military career in the Regiment when, in September 1911, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. As a Major, and then as a Lieut.-Colonel, he had campaigned in Gallipoli, France, Belgium and Egypt and had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Bar, a mention in dispatches, and had been created a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG). From 1928 to 1932, Col. Allen was Administrator of Western Samoa and he was created a KBE at the close of his term of office. He was military Secretary to the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force during World War Two and was famous for his patience with applicants for promotion. He always politely listened to their stories. He took no notes and said nothing during the interview and closed the interview with a polite 'Good-bye', and then, as far as anyone could ascertain, did absolutely nothing about the application. Under Allen the Regiment's pride in itself was greatly strengthened. At the annual camp in 1927 twenty-one officers from a strength of twenty-three and 690 other ranks from a total of 765 were in attendance.<sup>4</sup>

Col. Allen's successor, Lieut.-Col. Frances Prideaux, a Whakatane accountant and Allen's former Second-in-Command, took his new appointment in April 1928 and continued Allen's good work. The inspecting officer for the Regiment in 1928, Col. H. R. Potter, noted that 'the men of the regiment were well behaved and that discipline was good'.<sup>5</sup> During Prideaux's period of command, Lieut. J. M. Allen, who was to gain fame during the Second World War, was already marking himself out as an extraordinary soldier.

It was during Prideaux's command that a decision was made to purchase a new set of colours for the Regiment, and on 20 February 1930 the General Officer Commanding New Zealand Forces, Major General R. Young, CB, CMG, DSO, presented the new colours to the Regiment at a parade at the Regiment's headquarters at Paeroa. These colours are at present laid up in the Holy Trinity Church, Third Avenue, Tauranga.

The economic Depression of the 1930s weakened the Regiment further. Conscription was abolished by Order in Council in 1930 and with its end the nation's Territorial Forces strength dropped from 16,990 to 3,655. Officers were retired early without replacement and defence estimates were pared to the bone. Left with no troops to train, with promotion frozen, and subject to public service salary cuts, the officers and