

WOLVERTON DRILL HALL 1914-2014



When the Wolverton Companies of the 1st Bucks Rifle Volunteers were raised from 1877 on, the London & North Western Railway Company, owners of the Wolverton Carriage Works allowed the Volunteers to train in the “Large” Paint Shop. This they continued to do after 1908 when the Volunteers became the Territorial Force and became the Buckinghamshire Battalion, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

On Saturday 13th June 1914 a purpose built Drill Hall was opened by the Director General of the Territorial Force, General Bethune, for the Wolverton Companies (F & G) of the Buckinghamshire Battalion. It remained in military use until sold off in 1969, although during the intervening years many locals had passed through its doors attending non military events such as dances and dinners. It has always been known by locals as the “Drill Hall” and continues to be known as such despite it being renamed in the 1990’s as the “Millmead Hall”.

The buildings architect was John Chadwick of Bletchley who had strong links with the Volunteer and Territorial movements. It was constructed by the firm of “Messrs Archer” on land purchased from the Radcliffe Trust and St Bartholomews Hospital, and was built at a cost of £3132.

The Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteers Reserve for Eastern Wessex owned the Drill Hall for approximately fifty-six years. Then on 17 September 1969 it was bought by Buckinghamshire County Council and became the North Bucks Youth Sports Hall.

Bucks County Territorial Force Association - Grants for Special Services 1914/1915

SERVICE	NUMBER & DATE OF WAR OFFICE AUTHORITY	£	s	d
Wolverton Drill Hall Provision of <i>solano</i> target	9 BUCKS 107 25/5/13	36	0	0
Wolverton Purchase of land for 2 coys of Bucks Bn	9 BUCKS 107 9/10/13	147	0	0
Wolverton legal fees in connection with new Infantry Headquarters	9 BUCKS 107 7/9/14	95	19	2

Letter from: Wigley of Winslow to Colonel J Day Bucks Territorial Force Association, Aylesbury.

9th July 1913

Dear Sir,

STONEBRIDGE FARM, WOLVERTON.

We are much obliged for your letter of the 5th inst, in which you now offer £15.0.0. as the compensation to Mr Norman for the acre of land belonging to the Radcliffe Trustees, together with 3 guineas, our fee for negotiating the matter, which on behalf of Mr Norman we will accept.

Yours faithfully

(Cheque £18.3.0 sent 6th October 1913.)

Letter from Buckinghamshire County Hall Aylesbury to Bucks County Territorial Force Association Aylesbury.

26/9/1913

Dear Sir,

WOLVERTON HEADQUARTERS PURCHASE

In reply to your letter of the 25th instant I return herewith as requested the letter dated 13th June last from the Public Works Loan Board.

The purchase of the land will be completed almost at once, as I have heard from the vendors solicitors a day or two ago that the conveyance has now been sealed by the Governors of St. Bartholomews Hospital, and that they are prepared to complete.

Before completing, I shall want from you a cheque made payable to Messrs Longbourne, Stevens and Powell for £89.15.0 made up as follows:-

Purchase Money	£60	£	s	d
Less Deposit	<u>£6</u>	54	0	0
Fee of Mr Willmot, Vendors Surveyor, under clause 8 of the contract.		6	6	0
Costs of Messrs Longbourne, Stevens and Powell, Vendors Solicitors		25	0	0
Costs of Messrs Wilde, Moore and Co. Solicitors to St Bartholomews Hospital		4	9	0
		<u>89</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>

I enclose the 2 solicitors accounts which please return to me when sending the cheque.

Under clause 8 of the Contract the Association agree to pay all the costs relating to the preparation and completion of the purchase under schedule 2 of the Solicitors Remuneration Order. As soon as I receive the cheque from you, I shall be in a position to complete.

Yours faithfully

Wm Crouch

Letter -Secretary Bucks Territorial Force Association to The Secretary, The War Office

1st October 1913.

Ref: 130/13

“Wolverton Buildings”

Sir,

Owing to legal delays , we have only now been able to acquire the land at Wolverton on which to erect Headquarters for the Bucks Battalion Detachment there.

As this has invited a months delay, and the contract has been kept open pending the land purchase, the tender which was accepted from Messrs Archer cannot well be enforced.

Messrs Archer state that they are willing to take up the contract at an advance of 5 per cent owing to a rise in the price of materials during the last 6 months.

I attach a memo from the architect concurring in this, and this association recommend the acceptance of a revised tender at 5 per cent increase. I also attach the Architect and Surveyors certificate as amended.

The figures will be, in such a case as follows:-

Original tender	£2800
5 per cent	<u>140</u>
	2940
Architects fees 5%	147
Land Fees	<u>45</u>
	<u>3132</u>

If this is now approved, the Public Works Loan Board might be asked by you to increase the loan from £2985 to £3132.

I attach the letter we received from the Solicitor to the Board. To obviate further delay, please sanction Messrs Archers tender as early a date as possible.

I am ,

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant

Secretary Bucks territorial Force Association.

Letter from War Office to Territorial Force Association, of the County of Buckingham.

9th October 1913

9/Bucks/107 (F4)

War Office

London SW

New Headquarters-Wolverton

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. 130/13 dated 1st October 1913, I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that the tender of Messrs Archer for the erection of above headquarters may be accepted at the amended figure of £2940. The total cost including land and fees will therefore be £3,132, and the excess cost of £147 over the amount of the loan approved by the Public Works Loan Board, will be met by a grant from Army Funds.

Application for the same should be made in due course to the Local Auditor, Southern Command.

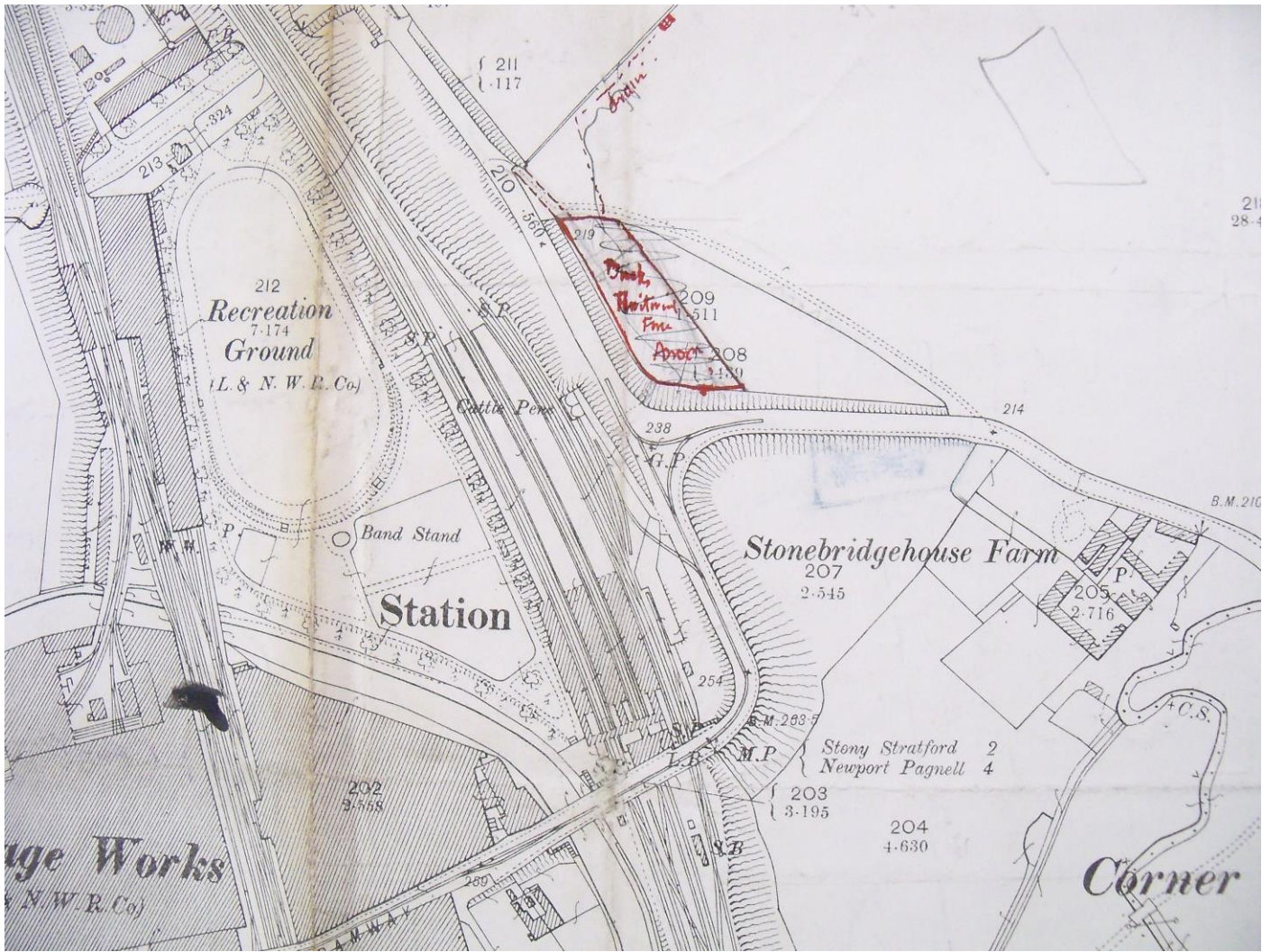
I am to state that the grant will form part of the purchase money for the land and should be drawn when application is made for the first instalment of the loan.

I am,

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant

Secretary,



Map showing the area of land purchased for the Drill Hall (in red).

(original in the Bucks County Records Office)

THE WOLVERTON EXPRESS 19th JUNE 1914

OPENING CEREMONY OF NEW TERRITORIAL HEADQUARTERS.

Not for many months has Wolverton been so gay and brilliant a spectacle as attended the opening ceremony of the Bucks Territorial Headquarters last Saturday. For an hour or more prior to the arrival of the principle officers, the roads adjoining the station and commanding view of the fine buildings and grounds were literally packing with sightseers, and the brilliant sunshine which favoured the afternoon brought out all the summer dresses so that the crowd was an absolute blaze of colour. Prior to entering one obtained a splendid birds eye view of the extensive buildings and parade ground, facing the building were the Wolverton Detachment of the Bucks Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the Stony Stratford R.A.M.C. , the members of the Wolverton National Reserve and the Wolverton Church Lads Brigade. Marshalling the ground were the Wolverton Boy Scouts. The whole parade was under the charge of Captain L C Hawkins of the Bucks Battalion. Looking down from the road the full dress uniforms of the various detachments made a brave show of colours, giving the sharp contrast to the brilliantly dressed assembly collected behind the lines of scouts.

Amongst those accepting invitations were: Mr H C Jenkins, Colonel and Mrs P Broom Giles, Dr and Mrs Barnes, Captain and Mrs Chadwick, Dr Powell, Captain and Mrs Moore, Dr Penny, Mr and Mrs F A Konig, Lieutenant Colonel the Honourable T F Fremantle, Colonel and Mrs Bull, Mr and Mrs Strachan, Colonel W J Levi, Lt Col F O Wethered, Mrs Bellairs Harries, Lt Col and Mrs Williams, Mr and Mrs W W Carlisle, Col J Day, Col Duncan, the Rev Father Walker, Mr and Mrs Rossignol, Capt Clayton Nunn, Mr R M Wylie, CA, Mr Bruce Wylie, Lt Col Deyns, Major J H Hooker, Mrs Gillespie, Mr A Smith, Mr B Roberts, Mr and Mrs E G Milner, Mr and Mrs C Borrett, Mr and Mrs E Hayes, Mr and Mrs J S Tibbetts, Capt G W Buxton, Dr C H Miles (Late Imperial Yeomanry), Mr W H Bettle, Mr and Mrs H Mennell, Sergt Major and Mrs Oldridge, Capt Bartlett, Lieut P A Hall, Rev and Mrs St John Mildmay, Mr and Mrs J S Cowley, Mr and Mrs J Rogers, Mr Art Elmes, Mr W J Elmes and many others.

Amongst those who sent apologies for absence were: Major General Keir, Mr S Smith Harvey, Colonel Finlay, Mr F W Woollard, Mr and Mrs C B Britton, Mr and Mrs J M Knapp, Lord and Lady Addington, Mr W Purslow, Lieut Col W G Bowyer, Dr Douglas Bull, Lieut E H Littledale, Lieut Col W H Briggs, Mr E Worley, Mr and Mrs H Grant-Thorold, Lieut Crouch, Mr P Phipps, Major Allfrey, Lieut Colonel and Mrs Bernard, Captain Barrett, Sir Harry Verney, Mr Gerald Uthwatt, Earl Spencer, Sir Robert Turnbull, Sir Gilbert Claughton, Lord Rothschild, Major Powell, Mr C L Mason, his Grace the Duke of Grafton, Mr Norman McCorquodale, Colonel McClintock, Rev K C Bailey, Captain Lloyd-Baker, Rev H Last, Mr Digby White, Mr R A Buckmaster, Mr W S Parrott, Captain Reynolds, Lieut Jackson, Captain Birchall, Lieut Viney, Mr A E Jones and others.

At half past four Lieut General E C Bethune CVO, CB, (Director General of the Territorial Force), accompanied by Mr Tonman Mosely (Chairman of the Bucks Territorial Force Association), Lt Col the Hon T F Fremantle, Col H M Williams VD, Col F O Wethered VD (CO Bucks Battn, Bucks and Oxon LI), Col P B Giles, Col W H Bull VD KHS ADMS SMD, Colonel J Levi, Col J Day, Capt Clayton Nunn, Col C J Deyns, Major J H Hooker, Adj Bartlett, Mr C Borrett, Mr W W Carlile, and Mr F A Konig, under Bandmaster Brooks inspected the troops on parade.

Following the inspection the Bucks Band struck up a lively march and the inspecting officers made their way to the capacious Drill Hall, and mounted the platform. The hall was soon filled with the guests of the occasion and the troops lined up at the back of the hall. From the ceiling and walls and draped above the Chair were dozens of Union Jacks and the gay military music, the bright and diverse uniforms of the officers gave a patriotic atmosphere which enthused the audience. Mr Tonman Mosely CB presided and gave an admirable and patriotic opening address. He said they were very much honoured that afternoon by the presence of Lieut General Bethune. He was sorry that he had received letters of regret from Major General Keir, who as much as he would have liked to was quite unable to attend and also from Col McClintock, Sir Gilbert Claughton and various others. In 1908 on the inauguration of the Territorial Force, they had a great farewell dinner to the old Bucks Volunteers in the Wolverton Science and Art Institute and at that dinner they also wished "God Speed" to the New Territorial Force. Gathered there was a most distinguished company. The War Minister of that day Lord Haldane, was there, and many great soldiers. He announced to them that the Territorial Force was a "baby" just born. It needed careful nurture and attention, so that it might gradually grow to a great and magnificent manhood. Many of them at the time wondered if it was possible. In the time that had elapsed they had been singularly blessed with splendid Director-Generals, and with General Bethune they had one, who was bringing it to a great maturity. During the last year or so the conditions had been greatly improved and they began to see how now that the separation which took place in 1908 was a necessary one. Those of them who had to attend to various counties were in a position to improve the Force by better Headquarters. They were coming to realise that each Battalion wanted a "home" for its work, and also for its enjoyment and recreation. General Bethune could have come to no better place than Wolverton. It was a centre of patriotism and both before 1908 with the old Bucks Volunteers, and since with the Territorial Force, it had a splendid record. The Wolverton unit had a consistent and steady strength of two companies, practically a quarter of the strength of the whole Battalion. They had other splendid units in the District. The Stony Stratford R.A.M.C. was practically up to full strength. Last year under the splendid arrangement of Col W H Bull and the whole of the Voluntary Aid Detachments in the District gave a wonderful field day exhibition of their work as in active service. The whole district was full of patriotism. Personally he had always been an optimist with regard to the Territorial Force, and Bucks certainly was going well ahead. He felt they were very much indebted to the Radcliffe Trustees for granting the site of the new Bucks Headquarters, and for a site for the new headquarters to be erected for the Stony Stratford R.A.M.C. They were also under a great debt of gratitude to the London and North Western Company for the generous loan of headquarters in the past. Speaking of the possibilities of the Territorial Force, the Chairman spoke of the body of determined men in Ulster, who by their enthusiasm and training were in a position, so many able men said, to defend that little province against Regular troops. What could be done there could be done in England, if the spirit of love for their country was with them. Again in Wolverton they had a detachment of the National Reserve, and under Mr W W Carlile it was making splendid progress: Mr Carlile had members in classes 1, 2 and 3 a large number having attained Class 1. If only this spirit was more general among the National Reserve detachments in the county it would make the force a great deal more efficient. For every man in Class 1, there were also 11 shillings, in Class 2 6 shillings, in Class 3 only 1 shilling per man. These figures spoke for themselves. In conclusion Mr Tonman Moseley said he hoped that the spirit of these units would be doubly keen in the future, making for efficiency and the credit of their county (cheers).

General Bethune, who was greeted on rising with long and continued cheers, said they had gathered together in the hall representatives of almost every one of England's defending force except the Navy.

Least of these he had what he called the “suckling” defence, the Church Lads and Boy Scouts, the youths who would one day become good citizens, and staunch and able defenders of their country. There were Territorials, Regulars, the National Reserve-men who had done a brave days work for their country, and were willing to take their coats off again should necessity arise. But there was another great section in the country and that was the general public. It depended upon public opinion whether they had an efficient force or not. Public opinion could do a lot to kill a force like the Territorial Force, just as it could build it up. Staring and laughing at the soldiers as they paraded, pretending to despise them, all that killed the enthusiasm in the young man joining. But if the opinion of the district was a patriotic one, if it looked up to its defending forces, and encouraged the young fellows to join, that force would soon be an efficient one. There was no money in it, but it developed the finest traits of character. According to reports the Territorial Force was improving both in efficiency and numbers. In numbers they gained 12,000 men during the first quarter of 1914. He hoped the present quarter would show as satisfactory an increase. As to efficiency, they were as efficient as possible. He thought it was well on the way to becoming a most satisfactory defending force, and so far as enthusiasm went, there was not the slightest doubt of that. His advice to the people of Wolverton was “Give a pat on the back to those who are in the Territorial Force and trying to serve their country.” The training they would receive would be of the greatest use to them in their lives. It taught them self restraint, to be good citizens, and better men. The worse master a man could serve was himself. Such a man was no good to himself, his family, or his country. “I am proud to meet a Territorial because I know that in him I am meeting a man.” He would like to say that he was strongly in favour of Voluntary service. The Territorial joins because he is a patriot, because he loves his country and wants to serve it. Compulsory service lacks that natural enthusiasm and in so doing lacks the mainspring that makes for efficiency should the country ever need defence. Sport took a great place in the interest of the country, but it must take a second place to this of national defence. Without defence the kingdom could not be kept going.

General Bethune, amid cheers then declared the hall open, adding that it gave him great pleasure to do so. Afterwards he graciously presented Capt John Chadwick with the Territorial Decoration, recently conferred on him by His Majesty the King, and Sergeant Ralph and Corporal Kettle of the Bucks Battalion with Long Service Medals.

Lieut Colonel Fremantle congratulated the Wolverton Detachment of the Bucks Battn on their splendid new equipment. It was a symptom of a changed condition of things. They owed a great debt to the L and N. W. Rly Coy for their generosity to the old Volunteers and Territorials over so great a number of years. But the time was gone when the private individual was expected to provide facilities for the great defending force of the country. In celebrating this opening they celebrated one phase in that altered condition of things. Under the County Association they must have their own buildings in which to train and assemble. They had now admirable headquarters and he hoped they would build on the reputation the county had made itself, and uphold that credit, and increase it, and have even greater success in the future than in the past. Wolverton had stood fast in the troublous times that were past and now that Force was turning the corner she must be enthusiastic as ever. The Territorial Force had had a rough time, mainly because that nourishment she needed was not granted to her. Now she was gradually getting what she asked for, and was on the upgrade. Conditions were improved and the outlook was brighter. In Bucks they were well up both in numbers and efficiency. The Territorial Association looked forward to a continuance of patriotism and keenness in Wolverton as in the past. The population of the county was so widely distributed that it was very difficult to bring the outlying district in touch with the centres.

Col H M Williams, V.D. proposed a very hearty vote of thanks and appreciation to General Bethune for his presence among them. They all of them in the Territorial Force knew that General Bethune never spared himself , and admired his splendid work for the force. The Bucks Band gave capital dance music and Messrs G Waller, F Sutton, W Marsh and B Cahill were the MC's.

THE WOLVERTON EXPRESS 19th JUNE 1914

TERRITORIALS ANNUAL DINNER

The annual dinner and smoking concert of the Wolverton Detachment of the Bucks Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, held on Wednesday evening served in a dual capacity to the members. Whilst it was held chiefly to commemorate the opening of the new Headquarters, it also afforded them an excellent opportunity to welcome their new Colonel (Lieut Col F O Wethered) for the first occasion since he took over the duties of Commanding Officer of the Battalion, a few months ago. The capacious drill hall was decorated for the occasion and the long tables ranging from end to end of the hall, were tastefully arranged. The rank and file of the local units were present in full numbers and in their full dress uniform, and were seemingly quite "at home" in their new quarters.

The Chair was taken by Capt L C Hawkins, Officer Commanding the detachment who most capably filled the position. He was supported by Lieut Col F O Wethered, Commanding Officer of the Bucks Battn and Mr A Smith who is adjutant of the North Bucks Battn of the Church Lads Brigade. Among the guests present were: Messrs H Baker, J Taylor, P Sykes, G W Thorneycroft, J Watson, T Cadwallader, J C Davison, W Dale, F Byatt, R Hopkins, G Sandwell, H Stringfellow, E Beesley, Eales, Wesley, Cooke, Sergt-Major Oldridge of the Stony Stratford detachment of the R.A.M.C. (T). Among the members of the detachment present were Sergt-Inst Wetherhead, QMS H N Wlato, Col-Sergts F Smith and W L Marsh, Bugle Major C Teagle, Bandmaster H J Brooks, Sergt-cook C Smart, Sergts Mold, Taylor, H Crowden, G Waller, Souster and D Whitehouse, Lance Sergts W L Ralph and Ellen.

There was in all a company of about 230 who sat down to a capital cold collation, admirably served by Mr W H Tarry, host of the Victoria Hotel, who put a most varied menu on the tables.

After dinner and before the tables were cleared, the chairman gave the toast of "The King" which was received with musical honours. He afterwards proposed the toast of "Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, The Prince of Wales, and all members of the Royal Family."

A short interval was held during which the tables were cleared and seats re-arranged. When the company again took their seats it was noticed that their numbers were augmented by male and female friends of the "Tommies".

A "smoker" formed the remainder of the evenings programme, and during this the chairman after a short address gave the toast of the "Colonel" which after singing "For he's a jolly good fellow," was heartily drunk.

The Colonel replied with a brief address in which he dealt with general and company matters.

An interesting presentation was made at the hands of the colonel of a handsome silver trophy to Sergt Waller who is in charge of No 3 Section of "F" Coy of the battalion, which maintained the best average attendance at drill in the inter section competition.

Capt Hawkins announced that a letter of apology for absence that evening had been received from Col H M Williams, who sent a message, wishing the detachment the best of good luck and every possible success in their new headquarters, Capt Chadwick, the designer of the building: Capt Birchall, Capt Bartlett (adjutant) and Mr E G Bowyer.

There was no dearth of musical talent as the concert, the programme of which was composed of varied items. The Woburn Concert Party, the performers of which were Messrs Bert Hill, F Walker (tenors) F W Barratt (baritone), J Crocker and C G Barratt (comedians) were the chief entertainers and their numbers which they presented included:-

“Hold your hand out”, “The Ringer”, “Wot a garden”, “Moirra of my heart”, “Wrong Numbers”, “Glorious Devon”, “who killed ragtime”, “ABC” and others. Contributions were also given by Mr Wesley Coke, Mr A Smith, Mr H Pinfold (selection Japanese fiddle), Bandsman A F Broks (cornet solo) and Sergt W L Ralph.

The arrangements were carried out under the superintendence of Q.M.S. H N Walton and Sergt Inst Wetherhead.

THE BUCKS STANDARD 20th JUNE 1914

WOLVERTON TERRITORIALS

NEW DRILL HALL OPENED BY GENERAL E C BETHUNE

LARGE COMPANY & INTERESTING SPEECHES.

The spacious new Territorial Drill Hall which has been erected at the junction of Stantonbury and Haversham Roads at Wolverton was opened with fitting ceremony by Lieut-General E C Bethune (Director of the Territorial Force).

The new hall is a very spacious and well appointed building and contains all the offices and equipment for the proper training of the Territorial Units. A strong contingent of the two Wolverton Company's under Captain L C Hawkins and Colour Sergeant W L Marsh and Colour Sergeant F Smith were drawn up into line on the parade ground which adjoins the building. Then there were some 88 members of the National Reserve of whom Mr W W Carlile is the commanding officer and these were in charge of Sergeant Croft. Fifty seven NCO's and men of the South Midland Brigade Field Ambulance swelled the ranks as also did a company of 40 Church Lads Brigade under Lieutenant Eady. A detachment of Boy Scouts completed the parade. Among the large and distinguished company present to meet the Director General were:- Lieut-Col F O Wethered, (commanding Bucks Battalion), Col the Hon F T Fremantle, Col W H Bull, Col W J Levi, Col and Mrs Broome Giles, Mr F A Konig, Col H M and Mrs Williams, Col J Day, Col W Duncan, Capt Bartlett, Capt J Chadwick, Capt Buxton, Col Deyns, Lieut P A Hall, Mr and Mrs Claude Borrett, Capt Clayton Nunn, Mr E Hayes CC, Dr C H Miles, Dr and Mrs Barnes, Dr Penny, Capt Moore, Alderman R Wylie, Mr B M Wylie, Rev Father Walker, Rev B W Barford, Mr A Sharp JP, Mr J S Tibbetts CC, Mr John Odell, Rev A J St John and Mrs Mildmay, Col and Mrs Mead, Mr W H Tarry, Mr A E Pinfold, Mr J Rogers, Mr and Mrs A Toogood, Mr and Mrs W H Bettle, Mrs Bellairs Harris, Mr and Mrs Le Rossignol and many others.

After an inspection of the lines General Bethune entered the main drill hall followed by the general public. The interior was gaily decorated in red and green material and the Battalion flag occupied a prominent position.

Mr Tonman Moseley, chairman of the County Territorial Force Association, presided and in his opening speech spoke of an event in 1908 when at Wolverton they had a great farewell dinner to the old Bucks Volunteers, at which dinner they also wished god speed to the Bucks Battalion of the new Territorial Force.

At the dinner there was a large flag at the end of the room, and only the previous night he had dug up from his treasures a photograph of that flag. On the flag was written "Bucks Battalion, 11th April 1908. Territorial Force": "First Bucks Rifle Corps: Peace with honour, March 31st 1908".

At that dinner they had amongst a distinguished company the Minister of War, now the Lord Chancellor – Lord Haldane. Lord Haldane had told them that they must look upon the Territorial Force as a baby just born, which required careful nursing and nourishment, and which he hoped in the course of time to see grow up and increase into a magnificent specimen of manhood. He knew that a good many of those present at the dinner wondered whether it was possible for that baby to grow up into magnificent manhood, unless it had sufficient nursing and all the benefits of useful nourishment. Ever since that time the territorial Force Association had been asking for concessions and improvements in the conditions of the Territorial Forces. They had been singularly fortunate, because they had had one succession of the most sympathetic and kindly nurses for the Force. The result had been that the conditions of the Force had very greatly improved.

The superannuation allowance which they all felt from the first was a necessary concession had been lately granted, the bonus had recently been given, and they who had to do with the associations in the various counties were now in a better position to improve the conditions of the Territorials, who served their counties and their country, by giving them better headquarters, by improving their conditions, and by putting into those headquarters all the means of enjoyment and recreation which they could possibly afford (applause).

General Bethune could not have come to a better place than Wolverton to open a new drill hall. Wolverton had been a great centre of much patriotic adherence to the Volunteer Service system and to the Territorial Force ever since the inception of that force in 1908, and they of the Association had looked with appreciation upon the consistent and steady growth of their two companies. They always felt that in Wolverton they could rely upon finding quite a quarter of the strength of the whole battalion. (Applause). "I have always been an optimist with regard to the Territorial Force" went on Mr Muxley, "and this year I feel there is great justification for this optimism as you will see when I tell you that the example of Wolverton is carried throughout the length and breadth of our county. We have a useful and intelligent detachment at High Wycombe with both companies recruited to full strength, a separate detachment at Chesham with 80 or 90 members in their new headquarters. We have new headquarters for the R.A.M.C. at Catlow and for the Yeomanry Battalion at Chesham, and we are building headquarters at Aylesbury, and for the R.A.M.C. at Stony Stratford." (Applause) After speaking of the kindness of the L& N-W Ry Co in housing the Wolverton Detachment for so many years, and to the way they had been met by the Radcliffe Trustees when they asked for building rites, the chairman said of course they had no politics in their force, but he reminded them that in a little island across the channel there were now two huge bodies of volunteer service men, lately recruited, some of them carefully trained and equipped. We had been informed by great authority that they were able to stand up and defend their little island, and that they were able to hold their own against any trained troops. What can be done in Ireland by volunteer service can be done here in England he urged. "I believe that the same spirit of loyalty for their country exists in the breast of every Englishman, and what you do here in Wolverton will be done all over the county and country." (Cheers).

Lieut-General Bethune, who was warmly welcomed, said they had with them that day every form of defence of the country except the Navy. They had the "suckling" of the Army – the Boys Brigades – the members of which were trying to equip themselves for good citizens of the country they live in, and to be worthy of the flag they served under. They had the Territorials and they had at last, but not least, the National Reserve men, who had done their days work and were still prepared to take their coats off and do another turn if wanted.

In addition they had a large section of the community upon whom a great deal depended for the defence of the country. They must remember that it depended upon them and on public opinion generally throughout the country whether we had an efficient Territorial Force or whether we did not. It rested with those who were not able themselves to give their services to encourage other people who could. The Territorial soldier who was a citizen of a great Empire gave a certain amount of time and money, and certainly did work hard to make himself efficient and he was glad to say that the Territorial Force, according to reports from all parts of the country, was improving in efficiency and in numbers this year (loud applause).

He went on to say that they gained 12,000 men in 1914, and he hoped that something like the same number might have been enrolled at the end of next month. If they could do that it would go a long way to wiping off the only stain – that they were short of numbers. The Force was as efficient as it possibly could be, and was a very good second line of defence; but it was going to be a great deal better.

Those of them who were not members of a Territorial Battalion if they could not join themselves they should give a pat on the back to those who were taking themselves seriously.

Every man who went in for a certain amount of discipline had realised how it taught him to be a man in the true sense of the word – a better man had a better citizen than he was before. They had to serve someone and the worst possible person one could serve was himself. If they were slaves to themselves they were no good to their families, their country or themselves. (Applause). He appealed to them to take the Territorial system as it was, work it with all their might and see if they could not make a success of it. (Applause). He was in favour of a volunteer system before any other. He appealed to the young men to take their proper place in the real serious things of life, so that they could keep their homes and their country going, and their pockets full of brass if it was possible. (Loud applause and laughter).

He had great pleasure in declaring that hall open.

General Bethune then presented the Territorial Decoration to Capt Chadwick, and Efficiency Medals to Sergt Rolfe and Corpl Kettle.

Colonel the Hon T F FREMANTLE received with hearty applause, said he had little to say except to congratulate the Wolverton Companies and the Bucks Battalion upon that great new equipment which was now at the command of the Wolverton Companies. It was a symptom of a changed condition of things. They could hardly overstate the debt which was owing to the London and North Western Railway Company for their constant support of the Volunteer Companies in Wolverton for so great a series of years: but the time had gone by under the new system when the employer or the private individual was expected or asked to provide accommodation and other facilities for the Territorial Force, now a well organised line of His Majesty's army. (Applause). In celebrating that day the opening of those new headquarters and drill hall they were celebrating one phase in that altered condition of things because now the Territorial Force was under the County Association with its own establishment and its own buildings for carrying out its assemblings and trainings at home. It was the greatest possible satisfaction to one who, like himself had been connected with the Battalion for 30 years – (loud applause) – to see such admirable headquarters, so well worthy to help on the two Companies which under their present and past commanding officer had always so well upheld the credit of the Volunteer and Territorial movement in that old and historic county. (Hear hear). And they were looking forward to no less a success and prosperity of the movement in Wolverton in the future than in the past (Applause). It was true they went through some troublous times as a Battalion in bridging over the change from the old system to the new. Perhaps they were a little bit spoilt under the old system - perhaps in some of the details of things which just lately had been done for the Territorial Force they might have avoided a very great part of the trouble, the discouragement, the loss of numbers which they went through a very few years ago; but it was and must be the greatest satisfaction to everyone of them that the conditions were again improved, that the outlook was good, and that the Territorial units of Bucks were not inferior in numbers nor in patriotism in their readiness to meet the requirements of national defence to the units of other counties (Applause). That being so that was an occasion for rejoicing and satisfaction. It was a matter on which the Territorial Association had taken a considerable amount of trouble to get those headquarters arranged and built and carried out; and the Association, he knew, under its chairman, who was the chairman that day, looked forward to a continuance of that patriotism and keenness which Wolverton had always shown. The population of Bucks was so distributed that there were a large number of places which it was impossible to bring into touch with the Territorial Force. Their scattered villages contained a number of men who would willingly do their duty but were not in reach of the organisation, and consequently they had to depend upon the larger centres for the greater part of their men, and nowhere more than in Wolverton was the spirit better or the determination to succeed keener (loud applause).

Colonel HM WILLIAMS, who for several years commanded with distinction the old Volunteer Companies of Wolverton, and who has just handed command of the Battalion to Colonel Wethered, made a happy little speech in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to Lieut-General E C Bethune. He praised the patriotism and loyalty of the Wolverton artisans, and congratulated them on securing.....

.....County, he had no doubt that in that new building they would have the same splendid example set to the county that had been set by Wolverton in the past (Applause). He mentioned that the training of the Battalion would this year take place in the neighbourhood of Marlow, and he extended to the public a hearty invitation to come and see the men he was proud to command at work. Anyone who would like to come to camp would be heartily welcomed. The work of the Battalion would start early early in the morning, and he hoped sometimes to get it done early so that “we may be able to play with those who come to see us.”

He reminded the men of the Battalion that the business of camp would not be all play, and he knew they would not expect it to be. He knew from past experience that they would be prepared for hard work in order that they might complete their efficiency. In conclusion Col Wethered proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Tonman Moseley for presiding.

The vote was carried with acclamation, and as a response the CHAIRMAN called for three cheers for General Bethune, and these having been heartily accorded the interesting proceedings terminated.

Drill Hall's future is sports centre for the young

Fifty-four years after it was opened as a training centre for the district's volunteer soldiers, Wolverton Drill Hall is to become a games hall for the young people of North Bucks.

Last week the Bucks County Council agreed, if the Minister of Housing and Local Government approves, to borrow £14,645 with which to buy this former Territorial Army Centre and improve its access.

This week Mr. Sam Powell, the County Youth Officer, explained what it is hoped to do with the building.

From next spring five-a-side indoor football and girls' netball matches can be

played in the large hall. It will also be used as a gymnasium not only by the 6,000 or 7,000 members of youth clubs and youth organizations throughout North Bucks, but also by local schools.

It will, says Mr. Powell, fit in with the objects of the sports council and cubs, scouts, girl guides, church youth clubs and other similar organisations will be able to take advantage of the amenities. "The more the merrier," exclaimed the youth officer.

The building will probably be renamed the North Bucks Games Centre, but for older residents it will always remain "The Drill Hall" where

hundreds of "Terriers" trained before and after two world wars and where many enjoyable social functions were held over the years, from roller skating sessions and wrestling, to annual dinners and dances.

The Hall was officially opened by Lieut.-Gen. E. C. Bethune, Director General of the Territorial Force on June 13, 1914. The parade of members of the Wolverton Detachment of the Bucks Battalion the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the Stony Stratford RAMC unit, Wolverton National Reserve and the Church Lads Brigade was in the charge of Capt. L. C. Hawkins.



On 10th August 2014 to commemorate the Centenary of both the opening of the Drill Hall and the Mobilisation of the Wolverton Companies of the Buckinghamshire Battalion of the Territorial Force a brass plaque was unveiled at the entrance to the Drill Hall:-





Millmead Hall

Formerly Wolverton Drill Hall