

The Waltham detachment has duly arrived, and every corps in the district is now represented except the Amberley company.

The corps were engaged yesterday afternoon in company drill, the route marching arranged not being carried out owing to the wet. A flag-pole was procured yesterday and the New Zealand Ensign hoisted thereon. This was lowered for the first time at 7.15 last evening, the combined buglers of the battalions sounding the retreat.

Though the rain came on again yesterday afternoon the boys are remaining under canvas, and a very cheerful and hopeful air pervades the whole camp.

LETTER TO THE NORTH CANTERBURY EDUCATION BOARD ON THE CAMP AT ASHBURTON.

SIR,—

15th February, 1906.

I have the honour to inform you that the 1st and 2nd North Canterbury Battalions, numbering 554 of all ranks, went into camp for a week's instruction on the 2nd instant under my command. I am sorry to have to report that in consequence of the inclement state of the weather which prevailed more or less during the week, field movements and field training were greatly retarded. The inclemency of the weather was so great on the 4th and 7th instant as to necessitate the removal of all the corps whose tents were pitched in the lower portion of the Ashburton Domain (which had been kindly placed at the disposal of the cadets by the Domain Board) to the Borough and Catholic Schools, the Co-operative Stores, and Drill-shed. It is pleasing to report that on the above occasions a great number of the inhabitants were kind enough to billet the cadets at their own homes. I cannot speak too highly of their forethought and kindness in this matter, as also of the kindness of those who sent vegetables, &c., for the use of the camp, and on the termination of the camp I took the opportunity by means of an advertisement to thank them publicly on behalf of the Government.

The morning of the 8th showing every indication of the continuance of bad weather, I issued the following brigade orders, much to the regret of all in camp :—

"2. In consequence of the dampness of the ground and the inclemency of the weather, it has been decided to strike camp to-day.

"4. The Officer Commanding Public-school Cadets extremely regrets that through the dampness of the ground and the inclemency of the weather the proceedings of the camp must be brought to an end, for to continue would be to jeopardize the health of the cadets in camp. He cannot, however, allow them to return to their respective headquarters without bearing testimony to the excellent manner in which they have conducted themselves while in or out of camp, and it speaks well for their discipline when it can be stated that not a single breach of the same has been brought under his notice. He must also bear testimony to the manner in which the non-commissioned officers have carried out their duties."

Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Whitcombe, the Traffic Manager, sufficient accommodation was at once provided for the entraining of the battalions to Christchurch.

It affords me great pleasure in stating that the Chairman and members of the Ashburton County and Borough Councils met and welcomed the battalions at the railway-station on their arrival.

I was pleased to have a visit from Mr. Hardy, M.H.R., a member of your Board, on the 7th instant. He inspected the camp, and visited each tent and inquired if there were any complaints; and it is pleasing to report that none were made. Mr. Hardy also inspected the stores and kitchen, and considered the quality of the bread, meat, tea, &c., good, and the daily ration ample. No doubt he will in due course give the Board a report of his visit.

Divine service was attended by all the cadets save those on guard and other duties, on the 4th instant.

The health of the cadets under the trying circumstances was excellent. A few of the cadets were sent to the Hospital suffering in most cases through their own indiscretion consequent upon what they had eaten in town. There was one case where a cadet suffering from neuralgia was ordered home by Dr. Hunter; of another, who should not have been allowed to come to camp, he having just recently recovered from an attack of enteric fever; and of another who had a poisoned finger when he arrived in camp. A number of those sent to the Hospital were suffering from constipation.

I wish to thank your Board for allowing the cadets to go into camp, and it is pleasing to state that your district is the first to have initiated battalions undergoing instruction in camp. There is no doubt, if I may be permitted to make the suggestion for the consideration of your Board, that the last week of the school year would be the most suitable time for the annual training, thus guaranteeing a larger muster and less disorganization of the teaching staff.

You will be pleased to learn that while in camp the officers held a meeting and passed a resolution, which will be sent to you for the Board's approval, creating, in consequence of the increase in the number of corps in your district, three battalions out of the two existing ones.

Before closing this report it is only due to the masters, who were the officers present, that the attention of the Board should be called to Brigade Order No. 8, which stated "The O.C.P.S. Cadets desires to put on record his recognition of untiring attention which the officers as masters have given to the supervision of the provisioning and to the general welfare of the cadets under their respective commands."

In conclusion I must thank all ranks for the manner in which they helped to make the camp such a success, from a training point of view, and the only regret they and I have to record was the exceptional and unexpected wet weather which damped so much of our ardour.

I have, &c.,

L. W. LOVEDAY, Lieut.-Colonel,

The Secretary, Education Board, Christchurch.