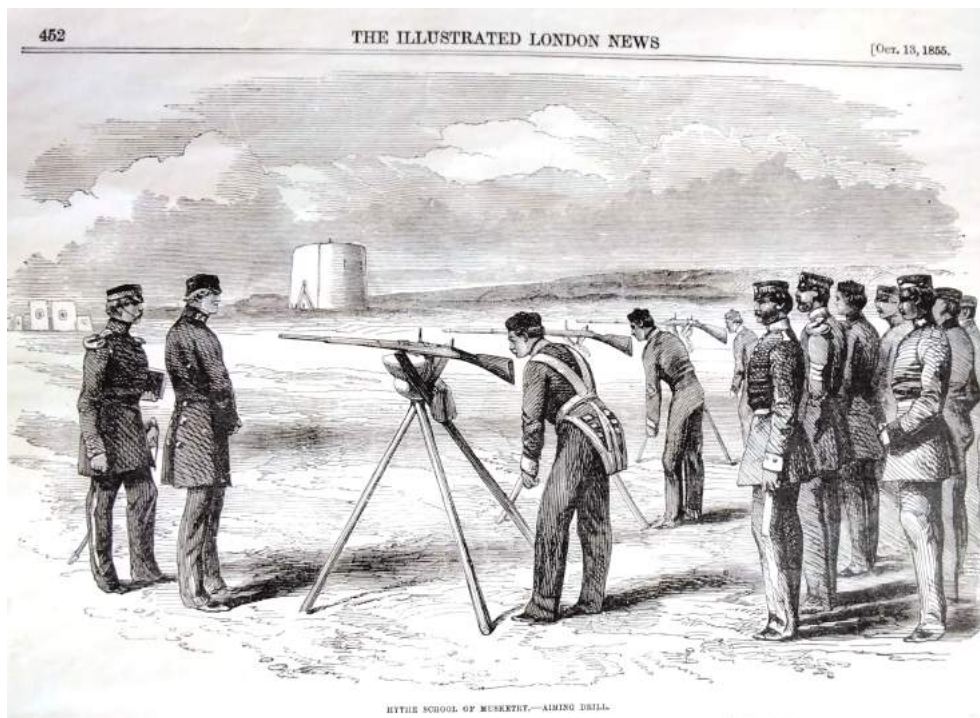


The School of Musketry, Hythe



The School of Musketry has been established in the barracks formerly occupied by the Royal Staff Corps at Hythe, Kent; this place, owing to the great extent of level beach, being well adapted for the purposes of the establishment. It was formed by Lord Hardinge in June 1853, but its operations were not in force till the spring of 1854. The object, or design, of the School of Musketry is not to teach the whole army, or any particular regiment thereof, to shoot, but to train officers and non-commissioned officers as instructors of musketry for the several regiments and battalions on a system which will not only ensure uniformity but a maximum efficiency in the use of the rifle with which the troops are now armed in the least time and with the least expenditure of ammunition.

This system is divided into two parts, viz, Drill and Practice; in the former are included instruction in the theory of musketry, aiming, position and judging distance drills, cleaning arms, and the manufacture of cartridges; and in the latter, target and judging distance practices. In target practice are embraced — firing singly or individually at every distance of 50 yards; from 100 to 900 yards in classes formed according to merit; firing in platoon by file and volleys, and in extended order as skirmishers, in which practice the proficiency in judging distance, and knowledge of the elevation necessary for said distance are brought into operation.

Before any soldier is allowed to fire, it is insisted on that he shall be exercised in the drills before mentioned, except the manufacture of; cartridges; a brief detail of their object may not, therefore, be uninteresting, the views having a reference thereto.

Instruction in Theory - Under this head the soldier is taught the causes which prevent the projectile discharged from a musket proceeding in the direction of a straight line, and is made to understand that its course describes a curve. The object and use of this knowledge to the soldier is to give him an idea of the error he may make in estimating his distance when firing at an object without at all affecting his fire, as also to give him such confidence, should he be required to cover an advance to a rising ground, as to enable him to fire from the rear over the heads of the body advancing, till it was within a moderate distance from the point of attack; he is likewise made to understand by familiar illustration the necessity of holding his sight upright in aiming at an object, to ensure its

being hit ; as also the external influences which affect the flight of the bullet, and the means of overcoming them.

Aiming Drill - Here the soldier is taught the principle of aligning the fore and back sight of his rifle on an object at every distance of 50 yards from 100 yards to 900 yards. A double object is gained in thus causing the soldier to aim at these several distances, for the instructor is not only enabled to point out and correct any error that is manifested in each man's aim, and to discover if there is any defect in his vision, but the soldier, while aiming, receives a true impression of the actual distance the object aimed at is from him. The manner of conducting this drill is as

follows:—From eight to ten men are assembled at a tripod rest which consists of three poles six feet long, tied near the top with a bag of sand laid on it, to rest the rifle on. Every man in turn is called upon aim; after each man has done so, he steps to the rear, when the instructor comes forward and examines the same, should he discover any fault, he calls the next man to the front to inspect and repeat what he can see wrong, in order that he may avoid the like error when taking aim himself; the fault is at once corrected by the individual whose aim it is.

Position Drill - In this exercise the soldier is taught and practised in that position standing and kneeling, which will ensure the greatest steadiness in maintaining his aim while discharging his rifle; this drill is of paramount importance, for with it a man may be taught to become a good marksman without ever firing a shot, and it in a great measure compensates for the limited allowance of ammunition at present authorised for practice; the instructor is here enabled to ascertain if the soldier can aim from the shoulder with the fixed elevation for the several distances, as also if he can maintain his aim while pulling his trigger—on which hinges, to a very great extent, the certainty of hitting his mark; the kneeling position, as now taught, is one which ensures great steadiness. The body is rested on the right foot, which is drawn in under it and perpendicular; and the left elbow is brought well forward over the left knee which is kept upright, thus affording a firm rest to resist the recoil.

Judging Distance Drill - In this exercise the soldiers are called upon to make observation on men placed at known distances of to yards apart, from 50 to 600 yards ; their attention is first directed to the distance.

