

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

14th March 1881, No. 1505.

Military Buildings—Ranges.

Read the following papers:—

No. 238. *From Brigadier-General H. O'CONNELL, Quartermaster-General, to Colonel J. MICHAEL, C.S.I., Secretary to Government, Military Department; dated Ootacamund, 8th July 1880, No. 624.*

I have the honor, by order, to forward, for the information of Government, the accompanying letter, No. 267, dated 5th instant, from the Officer Commanding Mysore Division, with enclosures, regarding a request on the part of the Mysore Government for the removal of the rifle butts at Bangalore in consequence of the new line of railway running behind them, and it being considered dangerous to allow shooting to continue at the present ranges.

2. The butts have been in their present position for many years and have from time to time been added to and improved, at considerable cost to Government, to adapt them for use with the improved arms introduced in the army. The position of these butts is most convenient, as the troops can march to them for practice and return to their quarters the same morning.

3. In laying out the line of railway, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief thinks the position of the existing butts should have been considered, and the railway laid out so as to avoid interference with the shooting at the ranges. But if it is considered that the ranges must give way to the railway, it seems to His Excellency but right that the cost of forming new ranges elsewhere, and all incidental charges connected therewith, should be met by the Government constructing the railway, as it is for the convenience of the railway that the removal of an older structure is required.

4. The Proceedings of the Committee appointed to select a new site for rifle ranges will be submitted when received, but His Excellency considers it advisable to forward the enclosed correspondence to Government at once, that the Mysore Government may be addressed on the subject of providing funds for the construction of new ranges and of such shelter as may be required for the troops when at practice. The distance from barracks will probably be such as to require the detachments practising to remain at the ranges during their course.

From Major-General W. PAYN, C.B., Commanding Mysore Division, to the Quartermaster-General, Ootacamund; dated Bangalore, 5th July 1880, No. 267.

I have the honor to report, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, the following circumstances connected with the rifle ranges at this station:—

On 1st April last, the Engineer in Chief, Mysore State Railway, requested that practice might be entirely suspended on the rifle ranges for a time, to enable him to complete the formation of that part of the line which runs close behind the butts, and on which, he said, work could not be carried on without considerable risk while any firing was permitted.

Firing was, of course, temporarily suspended; but it appeared to me that the question of danger to trains and to persons employed on the railway from stray bullets should have been considered and provided for when the line was laid out. I therefore addressed the Chief Commissioner, Mysore, pointing out that the practice season would soon commence, when it would be impossible to suspend firing on the ranges, and requesting information as to what steps were proposed to be taken in the matter.

Meanwhile, having an opportunity of talking over the question with Mr. Gordon at Ootacamund, I learnt that the Madras Railway Company, by which this portion of the line when complete is to be worked, objected *in toto* to work it while the present rifle ranges were permitted to be used.

I explained to Mr. Gordon how, in my opinion, all risk of danger to trains or workmen on the line could be met without adopting the extremely inconvenient and expensive alternative of abandoning these ranges altogether; and it was then arranged that on my return here I should meet the Superintending Engineer, Mysore, and the Officiating Engineer-in-Chief, Mysore State Railway, go over the site, and decide in communication with them what had best be done.

The result of this meeting is embodied in my letter, No. 1074, of 7th June 1880, copy of which is enclosed; but for the reasons assigned

* No. 101-1171-R, 21st June 1880.

in the reply* thereto, copy of which is also attached, the Chief Commissioner appears to think it absolutely necessary that ultimately the present ranges should be abandoned, though he consents to their temporary use under certain restrictions.

I have assented to his propositions regarding the use of the ranges, and firing has been re-commenced accordingly; but after the rifle meeting is over, the annual practice of the troops has to be carried out, and it is necessary that in the interim new ranges should be provided, the cost of the same being, of course, met by the Mysore Government.

I have appointed a Committee, of which the Assistant Adjutant-General for Musketry and the Assistant Quartermaster-General are members, to select a site for new ranges, and as soon as any definite selection has been made and approved by the Chief Commissioner, I shall do myself the honor of furnishing a further report for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief; I fear, however, that no suitable site will be found available within such distance of the station that troops could march out to the ranges and after practice return to quarters each morning, as they now do.

From Captain D. J. S. McLEOD, Assistant Quartermaster-General, Mysore Division, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Mysore, Public Works Department; dated Bangalore, 7th June 1880, No. 1074.

I am desired by the Major-General Commanding the Division to request you will be good enough to submit for the consideration of the Chief Commissioner the following remarks embodying his opinion on the question raised as to the necessity of abandoning the present rifle ranges and butts at this station in connection with the safe working of the line of railway running behind them.

Having carefully gone over the ground and discussed the matter at length on the spot with yourself and Major Bowen, Major-General Payn is persuaded that the safety of trains passing to and fro on the line behind the butts can be perfectly provided for by the establishment of a system of signals, on which firing would cease, combined with certain protective works along the line.

Signal stations with lofty flagstaffs could be established at either end of the butts and placed in communication with the level crossing at the north and any other suitable point, which could be fixed, on the south, so that whenever from any cause, such as approach of train or engine, it may be desirable that firing on the ranges should cease temporarily, a signal would immediately effect this.

As regards protective works, the portion of the line where bullets are reported to fall when practice is going on extends over a space of 750 to 800 yards, its distance behind the butts varying from about 150 to 250. To protect the northern extremity of this exposed portion, a screen wall or bank would have to be erected for about 100 or 150 yards where the line runs on the ground level; and from that point southwards, where the line runs in a cutting, it will only be necessary to add to the height of the west bank of the cutting sufficiently to cover a train in the cutting.

The butts themselves might also be heightened 10 feet or so, and, to cover the spaces which now exist between the three butts and through which perhaps bullets fired at the long range butts may find their way, screen walls or catch butts might be provided in echelon behind the present butts.

General Payn would take every precaution possible to ensure the system of signals doing all that is requisite, but in case of their accidental failure, it is unquestionably desirable that the protective works should be provided, as affording additional security to the line.

Major-General Payn believes, from what passed on the occasion of his meeting with you, that you agree generally in the views he holds.

Before closing, I am to mention that the most important of the Major-General's objections to the abandonment of the present ranges is, that the only alternative site for new ones is situated so far from the quarters of the troops that its use would involve the formation there of a standing camp during the rifle practice season.

The formation of a standing camp is at all times more or less inconvenient, and now, with the garrison at its present reduced strength, the withdrawal of any part of it into a standing camp would probably be found not to leave a sufficient force in the station to provide for the guard duties, which fall very heavily on the troops as it is; in fact, the rifle practice of the garrison most likely would be entirely stopped.

From Major A. LEMESSURIER, R.E., Joint Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, Public Works Department, Railway Branch, to the Assistant Quartermaster-General, Mysore Division; dated Bangalore, 21st June 1880, No. 101-1171-R.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 1074, of 7th instant, embodying the views of the Major-General Commanding on the question of the abandonment of the present rifle ranges on account of their position in close proximity to the Mysore Railway, and to reply as follows.

2. The Chief Commissioner considers that the system of signals as proposed by the Major-General Commanding will only serve to minimize the danger and risk to life, and that, under such precautions even, there would still be considerable risk to workmen and passengers on the line.

3. The rifle range is admittedly defective, and the altered circumstances of Bangalore, present and prospective, would seem to require that it should be moved, apart from considerations arising out of the railway. It seems unnecessary, therefore, and undesirable to go to any great expense in raising additional protective works. Every purpose will be gained if, as a temporary arrangement, the range can be made available to the garrison until the ensuing rifle meeting is over, and then be moved elsewhere.

4. The Chief Commissioner is very reluctant at this particular time of year to take any action which shall put the garrison to inconvenience. On the other hand, the construction of the railway cannot well be stopped, and, as a solution of the difficulty, Mr. Gordon would therefore suggest for the consideration of the Major-General Commanding that arrangements be made for the rifle practice to take place in the morning of each day, and that no firing take place (say) after 10 A.M. The work of the railway could then go on in the afternoon,—any emergent work before 11 A.M. on the line being arranged for by a "cease firing" signal.

5. This arrangement, as proposed by the Chief Commissioner, would, of course, be very temporary and would cease at the end of September next.

No. 239. To the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, dated 16th July 1880, No. 4480.

No. 240. From Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. JOHNSON, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, Public Works Department, to Colonel J. MICHAEL, C.S.I., Secretary to Government, Military Department, Madras; dated Bangalore, 27th August 1880, No. 1368-4467.

In reply to your letter, No. 4480, dated 16th ultimo, I am directed to inform you that the Chief Commissioner is now in communication with the Military authorities at Bangalore, on the subject of a new site for the rifle range at that station; that if the site asked for can be given, it will be free of cost; and that he will be prepared also to provide butts, similar to those now in existence, at the expense of the Mysore State. But Mr. Gordon cannot recognize any claim on the Mysore Government to provide any buildings or shelter for the troops. The removal of the range by reason of the railway, and of the extension of Bangalore, was inevitable; and if the Mysore State provides, free of cost, another site, and erects butts similar to those to be removed, he is of opinion that it will have done all that it can fairly be asked to do.

No. 241. *From Brigadier-General H. O'CONNELL, Quartermaster-General, to Colonel E. L. HANKIN, Acting Secretary to Government, Military Department; dated Bangalore, 21st February 1881, No. 69-1435.*

In continuation of this office letter, No. 624, dated 8th July 1880, I have the honor, by order, to report, for the information of Government, that the committee assembled to fix on a site for new rifle ranges at Bangalore could find no suitable spot nearer than $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the British Infantry barracks.

2. The late Commander-in-Chief, His Excellency Sir Neville Chamberlain, considered this was a great deal too far for convenience, and in a letter to the General Officer Commanding Mysore Division, dated 13th October 1880, requested that this opinion might be communicated to the Chief Commissioner, and that it might be pointed out to him that the construction of a bank on the side of the railway towards the butts would, in Sir Neville Chamberlain's opinion, render the continued use of the present ranges feasible without the least danger to the public or to the railway. This was communicated to the Chief Commissioner on the 19th October 1880, and his Secretary in the Public Works Department now replies (copy of letter enclosed, No. 152-478, dated 10th instant,) that, reluctant as the Chief Commissioner is to remove the butts, he fears this step must be regarded as absolutely necessary, and that he had accordingly given orders for the construction of the new butts to be put in hand. Letter, No. 75, dated 18th instant, from the Officer Commanding Mysore Division, is also enclosed.

3. The Provincial Commander-in-Chief desires to bring very prominently to the notice of Government the very great inconvenience to the military it will be if the present ranges are given up and the men have to march a long distance to rifle practice. This practice is now a most important part of a soldier's instruction, and every inducement is held out to encourage the men to excel as marksmen. In addition to regular drill and practice, meetings are held, matches got up and every endeavour made to create and foster an interest in rifle practice. Bangalore is favorably situated for this purpose. A force of all arms is cantoned here, the climate is good and the position of the present butts most convenient, enabling the men to go backwards and forwards to them at all times of the day and giving them, within easy reach, a rendezvous for instruction and amusement. To remove the ranges to a long distance from barracks will do away with what has hitherto been a marked advantage at Bangalore. The regular practice will have to be carried on under unfavorable circumstances, and the great convenience of a range close at hand will also be lost, at the time of the annual contest for prizes, when teams from other stations come to Bangalore to compete with the troops of the garrison.

4. The objections raised to the continuance of practice at the present ranges are, danger to trains running on the new line of railway and the probability of ground in the vicinity of the ranges being required for the extension of the station in that direction.

5. With reference to danger to the trains, the Provincial Commander-in-Chief cannot believe that any exists. At all events, the erection of a small embankment on the side of the railway towards the butts would remove the most remote possibility of such danger. It can also easily be arranged to cease firing for the few moments that a train is passing behind the butts. A system of signalling could be instituted which would insure this being thoroughly carried out. The number of trains per diem on this line would also be very few. In June 1880, Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, Superintending Engineer, and Major Bowen, R.E., met the General Officer Commanding the Mysore Division, and agreed with him that the safety of trains passing to and fro on the lines behind the butts could be perfectly provided for by the establishment of a system of signalling on which firing would cease, combined with protective works along the line. It is also a fact that, whilst the line was being constructed and great numbers of coolies were at work on the line behind the butts, firing was carried on without a single accident.

6. There seems no reason to anticipate the extension of buildings in the direction of the present ranges. No houses have been built there for many years

past, and recent reductions in the numbers of British officers employed in the Mysore Commission have caused several of the houses on the high ground near the butts to be tenantless. Under these circumstances, it seems highly improbable that more houses will be built there.

7. After a careful consideration of this question, the Provincial Commander-in-Chief sees no reason why the military should be compelled to abandon the present rifle ranges, which are so conveniently situated and have been in use for years past. If, however, it is decided that the ranges must be moved, it will be necessary, considering the distance of the new site, that a barrack for the men, a small room for a hospital and quarters for military and medical officers be erected there, as the party at practice will have to remain at the ranges, it being too far for them to march backwards and forwards daily.

8. The construction of a barrack and of quarters for officers will add to the expense of a change of site, but such buildings will be a necessity, if it is determined that the present ranges are to be abandoned. For the reasons given above, the Provincial Commander-in-Chief can see no reason for giving up the present site, or for going to the expense of constructing new ranges and buildings.

9. With reference to your memorandum, No. 5886, dated 17th September 1880, enquiring under what circumstances the site of the present range was obtained, whether by grant from the Mysore Government or otherwise, I regret to state that no definite information can be obtained. It does not appear that any grant of land for the cantonment of Bangalore was ever definitely made by the Mysore Government. Such ground as was required from time to time for military purposes was given, but, as far as can be ascertained, under no treaty or definite conditions.

From Major-General W. PAYN, C.B., Commanding Mysore Division, to the Quartermaster-General, Bangalore; dated Bangalore, 18th February 1881, No. 75.

Referring to your letter, No. 1352, of 13th October 1880, I have the honor to state that, on its receipt, I at once acquainted the Chief Commissioner, Mysore, with the views of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief as therein communicated.

A few days ago, I received from the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Mysore, Public Works Department, the letter as per margin, copy of which is enclosed, giving expression to Mr. Gordon's opinion on the question at issue.

No. 152-478, of 10th February 1881.

In forwarding this, I have only to remark that I am unable to look on the butts as being now situated in the midst of an inhabited portion of the station, nor to consider that the station has of late years rapidly extended in this direction.

I am informed that it is many years since any houses in that neighbourhood were built, and as I am able to state that, during the time that I have been in command here, many of the houses thereabout have been vacant for long periods, I cannot acknowledge that present circumstances point to anything like a demand for house accommodation there.

The distance of the proposed ranges from the present ones is correctly stated at $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles, but it must not be forgotten that this extra distance would have to be passed over twice by troops marching to practice and back, and it should also be noted that the distance of $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the barrack guard of the European Infantry to the proposed ranges is measured to the 1,000 yard range point, so that, taking the 500 yards range point as the average, it may be said that troops going out and back to practice would have to march more than 8 miles daily instead of about 4 miles as they now do.

From Colonel W. R. JOHNSON, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, Public Works Department, to the Assistant Quartermaster-General, Mysore Division; dated Bangalore, 10th February 1881, No. 152-478.

Referring to your No. 1937, dated 19th October 1880, with which you forwarded copy of a letter conveying the views of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief on the proposed removal of the rifle ranges at this station, I am desired by the Chief Commissioner to inform you that the Agent and Manager of the Madras Railway has stated his opinion that the suggestions made by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief would not, if carried out, secure to the

public complete immunity from danger, and he must therefore decline to open that portion of the line until the firing at the existing butts has been discontinued.

2. Mr. Gordon is inclined to agree with Mr. Saunders as to the insufficient protection that would be afforded to passing trains and workmen by the construction of the wall proposed; but he desires me to repeat that it is not only, or mainly, by reason of the existence of the railway that a change in the present rifle practice ground is necessary. Bangalore has of late years rapidly extended in the direction of this range, indeed one house has already been built quite in a line with the butts; so that the position of the range is no longer, as it was when it was lent, on the outskirts of the station, but in the midst of an inhabited portion. Further extension of residences may be looked for, and, as time advances, the inconvenience and danger inseparable from a rifle range so placed must steadily and seriously increase.

3. The circumstances, in short, under which the situation of the present rifle butts was formerly found to be unobjectionable are now so entirely changed that, reluctant as the Chief Commissioner is to remove the butts, he fears that this step must be regarded as absolutely necessary.

4. The new site selected and approved is quite free from the objections above noted, and the additional distance is only $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles, the total distance from the European Infantry barracks to the butts being but $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles—a distance which contrasts favorably with other military stations, especially bearing in mind the climate of Bangalore.

6. As it is very desirable that further delay should be avoided, Mr. Gordon had given orders for the construction of the new butts to be put in hand. Everything necessary to prepare the ground, and make it suitable and convenient for rifle practice, will be carried out at the expense of the Mysore Government. The Chief Commissioner regrets, however, that he cannot consent to construct there any barracks or other buildings for the troops. In his opinion, the utmost that can fairly be expected is, that the Mysore Administration shall erect such butts as may be required of a kind similar to those erected on the existing rifle ranges. There are no barracks or other buildings on the present site, and if these be now required on the new ground, they should be erected, Mr. Gordon thinks, by the British Government, and not at the cost of the Mysore State.

No. 242.

ORDER THEREON, 14th March 1881, No. 1505.

The Right Honorable the Governor in Council is of opinion that, in the face of the objections raised by the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, the permanent retention of the rifle butts in their present position is impracticable.

2. The nearest available site for a new rifle range is said to be $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the British Infantry barracks, and it is alleged that this distance is too far to be traversed backwards and forwards daily.

3. The Government are of opinion that it might be possible for the men using the butts to be accommodated in tents, with thatched roofs if necessary during the cold season, to which the rifle practice is chiefly, if not altogether, confined, and, at any rate, wish the experiment to be tried, before the question of constructing expensive buildings of a permanent character on the site of the new rifle ranges can be entertained.

(True Extract.)

C. Saunders

Colonel,

Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Quartermaster-General.

„ Public Works Department. *with 10 copies*

Exd. A. Raitt.