

FROM BAILEY TO BAILEY

A SHORT HISTORY OF MILITARY BUILDINGS IN SHEFFIELD

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The HILLSBOROUGH BARRACKS (II)

The Sheffield Barracks at Hillfoot had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, become inadequate "Being of a very mean description, and miserably dilapidated...." [WDS 1879]. Opposition to plans to extend them resulted in the decision being taken to build completely new barracks about half a mile further from the town at Hillsborough. The chosen site covered an area of over 22 acres and building work began as early as 1848, official authority to construct being given on the 8th December 1847.

The plan is to divide it into three terraces. The first of these will be occupied by the mess establishment and officers' quarters, which will face the Oughtibridge road, and form the front of the barracks. From the back of this building, the two lower terraces will be overlooked. The second terrace will be occupied by two ranges of quarters for infantry, a hospital, and a spacious parade ground. The third terrace will contain four ranges of quarters for cavalry, with stables, enclosing a parade ground. The whole ground is irregularly shaped, and of this circumstance, advantage has been taken to dispose the canteens, stores, &c in side buildings. The whole ground will be surrounded by a wall, having a tower at each of its six or eight angles. The building immediately to be erected, is the mess establishment and officers' barracks. Its length will be about 354 feet, fronting, as we have said, to the Oughtibridge road, at its width and height each about 40 feet. It will be three stories high, and consist of a centre and two wings. The architecture is a mixture of the Gothic and castellated style. In the centre is the principal gateway, and over it an oriel window. On each side are embattled towers. The architecture of the two wings is of plainer character, the heads of the ground floor windows being Gothic, and those of the upper rooms square. The centre building contains the mess establishment, and the two wings the rooms of the officers. The ground floor and the first floor are devoted to the use of the officers, and the top story to that of their servants. The accommodation will be for 18 cavalry, and 19 infantry officers, and an equal number of servants. Arrangements will be made by flues in the walls, for the ventilation of the rooms; and the comfort of the officers will be consulted by several conveniences not generally possessed in barracks. It may serve to illustrate the discomforts to which gentlemen in the army have to submit, to mention what is considered one of the greatest of these improvements. It is the addition to each officer's room of a dark closet, capable of holding a bed, so that officers will not be compelled actually to make the same room serve as sitting room and bedroom, but will have the privilege to sleep in closets, without windows, separated only by curtains from their sitting rooms. And this arrangement, which no private person in decent circumstances would bear, is considered a great improvement in the accommodation of military officers, many of whom are gentlemen of birth and fortune. At the south east corner of the barrack yard, will be a back entrance from

the Owlerton road; and between the barrack yard wall and that yard, will be a piece of ground to be used as an exercising field. The capacity of the new barracks, when completed, will be as follows:-

	Cavalry	Infantry
Field Officers	2	1
Other officers	19	18
Officers' servants	21	19
Sergeants and privates	252	524
Hospital patients	32	58
“ staff	2	3
Horses: Officers	50	6
“ Troop	240	-
“ Sick	50	-

There will also be one provost-sergeant. The mess establishment and officers'

Barracks are to be completed by the 1st May 1849, and it is supposed to cost will be about 15,000. At present, the plans for only the mess establishment and the officers' barracks are prepared. For the rest of the building contemplated, the money has not yet been granted by Parliament.

We may anticipate, that when these plans shall have been fully carried out, we shall again have the advantage of having our barracks made the head quarter of any troops that may be stationed there. The Government appear to be quite alive to the fact, that the railways will make Sheffield an important military station. Situated upon the most direct east and west trunk lines, with easy access to Lancashire and the east coast, with ready communication into the heart of the West Riding, or with the Midland counties; troops stationed here, will have all the facilities of movement that could be desired.

[S&R1 06.11.1847]

The first part to be completed was the almost 200 yards long south front, the Officers' quarters and Mess, along Langsett Road. The contract for this stage of construction was let to Messrs Harrison & Hoyle of Chester on the 24th December 1847. Tenders for the work ranged from £17,000 to £24,000. This section was completed in 1850 and occupied almost immediately by the officer of the 3rd (PRINCE OF WALES'S) dragoon guards from the old barracks.

The OLD BARRACKS on the Penistone road were built in 1794, for the reception of several troops of cavalry, but New Barracks for cavalry and infantry, are now erecting on a very extensive scale, about half a mile further from the town, on the same side of the vale of the Don. These barracks will extend over 25 1/2 acres, and will rank amongst the largest in the kingdom, and will have entrances on the Penistone and Hillsbro' roads. When finished, they will have room for two regiments, one of cavalry and another of infantry.

[WDS 1852]

Completion of the remaining parts of the Barracks, including a Chapel (later the Institute), Hospital, Parade and Drill Grounds, Farrier's Shop, Riding School, Veterinary Infirmary and various recreational facilities, had been achieved by 1854. Later additions included Married Quarters (1859), Infants' School (1867), Gymnasium (1871), Miniature Rifle Range, Vehicle Shed, Obstacle Course and additional storage (1903). With entrances on both the Langsett and Penistone roads, the Barracks are considered to be amongst the finest and best arranged in the kingdom, and as a military depot ranked amongst the largest in the country. The first Barracks Master appointed in 1854 was Captain Francis Minchin.

The estimated cost of construction was £94,400 and in 1852, Parliament voted the sum of £100,000 towards the costs of building the new barracks in Sheffield large enough to house the numbers of Officers, men and horses mentioned above. When completed in 1854 over £126,000 had been expended. At least a further £17,000 was spent on later additions and conversions. The Barracks was solidly built in a substantial scale, having a turret at every corner of the perimeter wall, stone walls four feet thick in places, and hefty oak timbers.

A couple of interesting anecdotes concerning the Barracks have been made over the years. One is that the Barracks should have been built at Hillsborough near Belfast. The other suggests that because the accommodation quarters had verandas, the buildings are of a design more in keeping with the Indian climate, verandas being commonplace in Indian barracks for airing bedding. It has been mooted that plans were mixed up and that somewhere in India is a barracks which ought to have been built at Hillsborough. Whether or not there is any truth in either of these stories is uncertain but the Barracks were built in Hillsborough, Sheffield.

The Barracks had its own water supply, fed from the nearby Rawson Spring on the facing hillside towards Walkley. The spring kept 21 underground tanks filled with over half a million gallons of water. The smallest tank held 12,000 gallons and 50,000 the biggest. It was rumoured at the time that this water supply would be for the benefit of Sheffield's gentry who would seek refuge in the Barracks in the event of an uprising. There is no proof that this was ever the case.

The Barracks as, as mentioned above, were originally built to house regiments of cavalry and infantry, but by the early 1870s, batteries of the Royal Artillery were beginning to be stationed there. One of the first was 'E' BATTERY ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY.

In August 1897 the Barracks ceased to be used as an artillery station, and reverted to quartering a regiment of cavalry, the first such being 'A' SQUADRON 2nd DRAGOON GUARDS (QUEEN'S BAYS). This appears to have been only a temporary measure as, after that Regiment left in 1899, no other cavalry corps were stationed at the Barracks and the artillery, the 32nd BRIGADE, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY, returned in 1901. However,

members of the YORKSHIRE DRAGOONS and the YORKSHIRE HUSSARS who had volunteered for service in South Africa during the Boer War underwent training at the Barracks in 1900.

The Royal Horse Artillery used to practice with their horses and gun carriages on land now occupied by Owlerton Stadium. A comprehensive (through incomplete) list of regiments which have been stationed at Hillsborough Barracks is given later.

The 4th (ROYAL IRISH) DRAGOON GUARDS returned to Britain in 1856, after serving in the Crimea, and established their Headquarters at Hillsborough. On the 23rd July of that year, the Officers and NCOs of the 98th (PRINCE OF WALES'S) foot, also stationed at the Barracks, gave a dinner for the Guards. Later, on the 28th July, the Guards' Officers were entertained to a banquet at the Cutlers' Hall, which was attended by the Earl of Cardigan. Lord Cardigan returned to the Barracks on the 5th September 1857 to inspect the 7th (THE PRINCESS ROYAL'S) DRAGOON GUARDS prior to their departure for duty in India.

Fig 2 shows the layout of the Barracks around the year 1920. The following descriptions should be read in conjunction with this – the numbers in brackets relate to the buildings on the plan.

- (1) The Garrison Commander's Quarters was a detached house which stood outside the Barracks wall. It contained a large Lounge and Dining Room, A Bathroom and five Bedrooms. The Garrison Commander was usually the senior officer of one of the Artillery or Infantry regiments stationed at Hillsborough.
- (2) The Hospital was a two story structure, able to accommodate 58 patients. It incorporated a Barrack Room for RAMC personnel, a Dental Clinic and facilities for treating women.
- (3) The Institute, comprising a Billiard Room, Reading Room and other recreational facilities. This building was originally the Chapel, and was one of the first to be completed in 1850. It ceased to be used as a chapel at an early stage and the nearby St John's Church at Owlerton was used for church services and parades.
- (4) The Infantry Soldiers' Quarters, with large Dormitories on the first floor.
- (5) The Infantry Officers' Quarters and Mess.
- (6) The Artillery Officers' Quarters and Mess.
- (7) Originally Cavalry and later Artillery Soldiers' Quarters on the first floor, with stabling for 260 horses on the ground floor. The buildings on the south side incorporated an imposing Clock Tower. Together, the Infantry and Artillery Soldiers' Quarters could accommodate 918 NCOs and men.

- (8) The Gymnasium, built in 1871, being a single storey building 79'9"x 43'3".
- (9) The Riding School, a single storey building of dimensions 110'0" x 45' 0". Attached to the eastern side was a 100'0" x 34'0" miniature shooting range.
- (10) The Infants' School, built in 1867. The School could hold 80 children and was sited in a small playground. Accommodation for the Schoolmistress was also provided.
- (11) Married Quarters, built in 1859. Over 50 families could be housed in the flats.
- (12) Lecture and Education Room 40'0"x 30'0".
- (13) Gun Shed, 85'0" x 34'0". Each shed housed six Field Guns.
- (14) The Barrack Store. The main storehouse for the Barracks, with living quarters for the Barrack Sergeant.
- (15) The Guard Room, incorporating a Police Room and Detention Cells.
- (15a) Exercise Yard for the above.
- (16) Vehicle Shed, built in 1903 and could house 26 motor cars.
- (17) Veterinary Infirmary, large enough for eighteen horses and associated facilities and storage.
- (18) Wagon Shed, later used for warehousing.
- (19) Granary, raised off the ground on stone pillars.
- (20) Various shops, incorporating mainly Tailors, plus storage and No 1 Cookhouse.
- (21) Various shops, incorporating mainly Saddlers and Forges, plus storage and No 2 Cookhouse.
- (22) The Married Quarters' Laundry and Ironing Room. The Drying Area was between the Laundry, the Infants School and the Married Quarters.
- (23) Bakery and No 4 Cookhouse.
- (24) Armourers and No 3 Cookhouse.
- (25) Coal Yard, 50'0" x 29'6".
- (26) Forage Store, 43'0" x 36'0".

(26a) Forage Yard

Many other smaller buildings and sheds within the Barracks were mainly used for storage.

Along the north side of the Barracks ran the River Loxley which, on the night of Friday the 11th March 1864, burst its banks, having been swelled by the waters of the ill fated Dale Dyke Dam at Bradfield. This was the night of the Sheffield Flood. The waters breached a stone wall almost three feet thick and entered parts of the Barracks causing severe damage to the Married Quarters. In the deluge, two children of Sergeant Paymaster Foulds were drowned.

Another death within the precincts to the Barracks occurred on the 24th October 1912 – as case of some high spirited prank ending in disaster. It is recorded that a Private (name unknown) in the Royal Field Artillery stationed at the Barracks volunteered to be tossed in a blanket. The prank went wrong and the unfortunate Private suffered fatal injuries.

Some years earlier, on the 4th June 1907, the death occurred of Driver Harmes, a member of the RFA Brigade stationed at the Barracks. Whilst on the rifle range at Edale camp, the driver was accidentally shot dead by one of his comrades.

A number of presentations have been made at the Barracks over the years. One of the first took place on the 3rd May 1859 when new Colours were presented to the 24th (WARWICKSHIRE) FOOT. On the same date a year later, Lady Wharnccliffe presented new Colours to the 84th (YORK AND LANCASTER) FOOT.

On the 12th July 1905, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited the City to officially open the University of Sheffield. During the visit, the 2nd BATTALION KING'S OWN (YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) was presented with new Colours and members of the Battalion received Orders and Decorations. Lieutenant Colonel Whitaker and Lieutenants L Simpson and H C Johnson each received the Royal Victorian Order and Colour Sergeant Rowat, late of the KING'S ROYAL RIFLES, received the Royal Victorian Medal. The day was rounded off with a tattoo and fireworks display, to which members of the public were admitted.

A number of Sheffield men who had served during the First World War received their War Decorations at the Barracks from Brigadier General Benson, General Officer Commanding Royal Artillery, Northern Command, on the 30th October 1919.

The South African War of 1899-1902 was a lot of men volunteer for service through the local volunteer forces. Members of Militia battalions also volunteered. Stationed at Hillsborough Barracks shortly after the outbreak of the War was the 6th BATTALION (LOUTH MILITIA) ROYAL IRISH RIFLES. A detachment of the Battalion left for South Africa on the 15th December 1899.

After initially declining to volunteer for service in February 1900, more men of the LOUTH MILITIA eventually offered to go to South Africa, these being the majority of the 176 men of the Battalion still at the Barracks. However, the order for the Battalion to go to the War was countermanded a few days later.

The YORKSHIRE DRAGOONS and the YORKSHIRE HUSSARS formed the Yorkshire contingent of the 3rd REGIMENT OF IMPERIAL YEOMANRY. Men who had volunteered to serve with the Regiment in the Transvaal assembled at the Barracks in January 1900 for further training. The men were inspected on the 6th January by the Lords Granborough and Bolton and 60 of their number were selected for active service. The 4th (MILITIA) BATTALION PRINCESS OF WALES'S OWN (YORKSHIRE REGIMENT) arrived at the Barracks on the 14th October 1900 and 400 of them left for South Africa, as volunteers, on the 17th January 1901.

With three corps of Volunteer forces in Sheffield, plus a local squadron of Yeomanry, it was inevitable that the regular regiments at the Hillsborough barracks would often join in with the volunteers on parades and exercises. A sham fight took place on the 10th April 1876 in the Rivelin Valley in which the local Volunteers and the 1st BATTALION 19TH (1ST YORKSHIRE, NORTH RIDING) (PRINCESS OF WALES'S) FOOT participated.

A review of 1,200 Regular and Volunteer forces took place at Wardsend on the 10th July 1861 in honour of Queen Victoria's Official birthday. The officer in charge on the occasion was Colonel Hood of the 58th (RUTLANDSHIRE) FOOT. Later that year, on the 16th December, Volunteers escorted the 16th (BEDFORDSHIRE) FOOT to the railway station as the Regiment left en route to Canada. Another review took place on the 23rd May 1870, this time at Blackburn Meadows. Colonel Anderson of the 22nd (CHESHIRE) FOOT was in command.

On the 4th April 1906, the 'Battle of Sheffield' was fought in the Loxley and Worrall district. Blue Force, made up of local Volunteers, had the task of defending the City against an attack from the 2nd BATTALION KING'S OWN (YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY), then stationed at the Barracks. The Regulars won the battle and effectively 'captured' the City. Colonel Whitaker (KOYLI) was the Umpire-in-Chief, and he claimed that the reason for the Volunteers losing was that they vacated their position prematurely. This was strongly denied by Lieutenant Colonel Branson, the Volunteers' Commander and said the Colonel's claim was a grave injustice to the Sheffield Volunteers.

Keeping any large complex, such as a barracks, clean and well appointed would obviously be a full time job and more so in a place like Hillsborough Barracks – as solid Victorian structure. "BUILT TO WITHSTAND A SIEGE..." [Service & Shopkeeping April 1991]. Given the constant comings and goings, as regiments took up station and then left, added to the problem of keeping the place clean and tidy, which would only have been a secondary operation anyway. Soldiers must have dreaded being handed brooms and whitewash brushes.

Such a task fell to the mend of the 2nd BATTALION, THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT when they arrived at Hillsborough in November 1920 from Aldershot. They recorded their experiences in the Regiment's magazine "The Oak Tree".

There is very little of interest to record for the past month. Having moved to Sheffield, we have had little time for anything, but cleaning up Barracks, fitting clothing and providing funeral parties, the latter an almost daily occurrence.

At present we are endeavouring to settle down in our new abode. The Barracks are certainly looking much better since the men started colour-washing and white-washing. In fact the short service men are thinking of opening a business of their own as decorators etc, on their discharge from the service ('A' Company)

As anyone who has been a soldier or in any way connected with the Army can testify, a move means many discomforts and much inconvenience, probably attended by an aftermath consisting of a thing called work. Upon our arrival at Hillsborough Barracks, our much elevated exuberance came down with a tremendous crash, for lo and behold, to our dismay we found not as we had expected, a Barracks equal in cleanliness to those we have left, but only a huge Barrack's Square which would assuredly suit those who may be desirous of training a battalion in the way it should go, surrounded by large well built Dorms, which bore an aspect of solidity and comfort. Ah, but how deceiving, for upon investigation it was discovered that the inside had not been cleaned for what may be termed "donkey's ages", and did not therefore bear any resemblance to Barrack rooms or anything else except lumber rooms, and in some cases incinerators. ("B" Company)

Since our arrival at Sheffield the majority of our time has been spent in making ourselves comfortable and getting settled down. Once again the white wash brush was brought into plan and our energetic artists made busy. ("C" Company)

On the departure of the Battalion from Aldershot 'D' Coy came up to Strensall for a short, rest cure and have thus missed the joys of white-washing at Sheffield. Here we breathe the pure fresh air and take our pleasures simply far from the artificial excitements and overhyped or rather oversmoked atmosphere of Sheffield, not for us the vanities of this wicked world. ('D' Company)

The smoke of Sheffield's industry blackened everything and maybe soldiers disliked coming to Hillsborough. It must be remembered however that when the Barracks were suit, Hillsborough was a country hamlet. In fact one scene of the period shows cattle grazing in front of the Barracks.

Having soldiers in the neighbourhood though was a source of entertainment for the local people. Often on Sundays, crowds would gather outside the

Barracks to see the soldiers, in their smart and colourful uniforms, march off with band playing to St John's Church for the morning service. On Sunday afternoons, the public were sometimes allowed into the Barracks and treated to a band concert on the Parade Ground and children were permitted to visit the stables to see the horses being fed, and to watch them being groomed.

After the 29th FIELD (HOWITZER) BATTERY, 19th BRIGADE RFA left to join the rest of the Brigade at Newcastle in February 1930, the barracks remained unoccupied, save for a resident caretaker and a few Territorial Instructors, for the following eighteen or so months.

During a debate in the House of Commons on the Army Estimates, in March 1930, one speaker suggested that barracks in large towns should be done away with in favour of more rural centres, on the grounds that barracks in towns adversely affected recruitment. Later that year, in November, it was stated in a House of Commons Written Reply that it was necessary to retain unoccupied barracks (of which Hillsborough was now one) should they be required in future to house troops returning from duty overseas.

Eventually the War Department decided to dispose of the "...town within a town..." [Quality of Sheffield September/October 1984] and instructed local agents Eadon & Lockwood to dispose of the site by auction. The auction took place on the 26th July 1932 at the agents' offices on St James Street, Sheffield. With the bidding only reaching £12,500 the auction was terminated and the Barracks withdrawn from sale.

One report indicated that the City Council was considering purchasing the barracks and converting the premises into Corporation flats. Another that the site might be developed as a film studio and yet another that the Langsett Road frontage could be converted into shops. However, on the 24th October 1932 in the House of Commons, Mr J Gurney Braithwaite, MP for Hillsborough, asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if the Married Quarters could be auctioned off separately in any future auction, in view of the serious housing shortage in the City. This brought the reply that the whole property had just been sold. They had been purchased privately by Councillor H M Burdall, head of Burdall's Ltd – manufacturing chemists noted for their gravy salt – and from then on the Barracks became more popularly known as 'Burdall's Buildings'.

During the succeeding years, the buildings became occupied by a number of tenants and converted to more industrial usage. Some famous names have been associated with the Barracks under the guise of Burdall's Buildings. British Road Services, the Carlton Press, Chatburn & Chantry and Burdall's themselves, to name but a few.

In the mid 1950s the Sheffield Insulating Company was formed and rented an office and storeroom within the Barracks. The company went on to occupy a large areas of the site for warehousing and now the Company's headquarters are housed in the ex Officers' Quarters. The Garrison Commander's

Quarters, after having served as a filling station shop, have long since been demolished. The site is now a garage and enlarged filling station.

A major re-development of the site was embarked upon in the late 1980s, instigated by Messrs George Longden Estates. The result is the (as yet incomplete) large retail and business complex seen today, in which all the surviving structures have been cleaned. Apart from the Sheffield Insulation's headquarters, many of the original buildings have been converted for commercial and retail use, the focal point being Messrs Morrison's Superstore, situated on the old Artillery Parade Ground, which has been roofed over for the purpose. A central feature is the Clock Tower, the clock of which still works and chimes, the original bell weighing three hundredweights. The Infantry Parade Ground is now a two story car park, and the old Rifle Range and Football Ground are now the site of Messrs B&Q DIY Supercentre and its associated car park. The Married Quarters, which served as flats until the mid to late 1970s, have been demolished and the area now has a MacDonald's Restaurant on it. The complex also incorporates smaller retail units and a Job Centre.

The whole site is once again known as Hillsborough Barracks! As a Grade II listed building, it represents the only surviving example of a walled barracks in the country. This recent development of the Barracks has been welcomed. But plans were approved for the demolition of some of the historic Barracks building to permit further development.