

Oxfordshire Yeomanry and Rifle Volunteers

There was a Deddington Troop of the Queen's Own Regiment of Oxfordshire Yeomanry Cavalry, a volunteer regiment, but the only press reports on its activities during the 1850s relate to dinners of the Troop at the Red Lion Inn in 1855 and 1859, following a regimental drill at Woodstock.

The dinner in May 1855, described as "sumptuous", was provided by the officers (noblemen and gentry of the county), followed by enthusiastic toasts and songs. The volunteers comprised tradesmen, farmers and mechanics.

The Yeomanry dinner in September 1859 was at the invitation of the commanding officer, Captain C. Cottrell Dormer, of Rousham House, one of the local J.P.s. "A substantial dinner, with plenty of ale, was served up On the removal of the cloth, sundry bowls of punch appeared, and the usual loyal and patriotic toasts were drunk", often with loud cheering.

The meal may have been a late lunch, since Captain Dormer retired at 6 o'clock, "amidst loud cheering", following which the convivialities of the evening were kept up, with further songs and toasts.

1859-1861 saw the rapid growth of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, arising from fears of a French invasion.

Mr. R. Keppell of Deddington, a Sergeant-Major in the Yeomanry, wrote to the *Oxford Journal* in November 1859, also advocating the formation of a volunteer Cavalry Corps, principally formed of loyal farmers. He recommended that they be armed with a sword and lance 12 feet long, suggesting that the uniform be based on hunting dress "because many of the farmers are fond of field sports, and might possibly, one day, have an opportunity of pursuing the wild Zouaves and the savage Turcos. The long spear would drive terror into the very soul of those barbarians."

A public meeting to form a Deddington Subdivision of the nascent Oxfordshire Rifle Volunteer Corps was held at the beginning of December 1859 in the Town Hall. The *Banbury Guardian* published a *verbatim* account of the meeting, occupying almost a whole column.

The adoption of rules and regulations was proposed by Colonel North M.P., and seconded by the Vicar, Rev. James Brogden, who made some well received observations. The other principal speakers were Samuel Field (55), who offered the Castle Ground for drill and rifle practice, and C.D. Faulkner (32). 16 members "of all classes" were enrolled.

A degree of impatience was manifested in mid-December 1859 when C.D. Faulkner and nearly 50 others requisitioned the County Volunteer Rifle Corps Committee to convene a second meeting at Deddington to provide more information and proceed with the enrolment of volunteers.

The *Oxford Journal* printed a lengthy list of donations and subscriptions to the county Volunteer Rifle Corps, including 10 guineas from Samuel Field.

A second public meeting was held at the Town Hall at the end of December 1859, when a local committee was appointed and further members enrolled, the target being 30.

The *Oxford Journal* also published the below rousing poem composed by Rev. Brogden.

A CALL TO OXFORDSHIRE RIFLEMEN.

Shall Heythrop, resounding with full cry of hound,
If menaced, be slack with the rifle ?
The spirit of TALBOT, roused there, will be found,
Proclaiming invasion no trifle.

Who will not watch over Rosamund's bower ?
CHURCHILL's glory, with beauty enshrined,
Mistletoe oak, guarding each fairest flower,
Bearing time-honoured exploits in mind.

Though inland we are, still the Cherwell's pure rill,
Joins Old Father Thames, with the Isis,
Then let Oxfordshire men be quick at the drill,
And march in the ranks at this crisis.

The initial officers of the Deddington detachment, when it was officially formed in 1860, were Samuel Field, Lieutenant, and C.D. Faulkner, Ensign, who, with the support of the Vicar, had been the prime movers of the project. Field had previously been involved with the Deddington Troop of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry. The detachment soon had its own band, thanks to public contributions from at least 112 subscribers, 65 from Deddington.¹

The press reports in the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 2,² which continue until 1887, contain numerous reports on the activities of the Deddington detachment of Rifle

¹ *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times*, post 1 June 1860. There is a transcript of the list of subscribers in the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 2 (1855-1888), folio 5.

https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/17016/Scrapbook2nonnewspapertranscripts.pdf

² https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/17015/Scrapbook2IndexA.pdf

Volunteers in subsequent years, including drills, parades, shooting competitions, and various social events.

