

Barracks Finder - Notes

1. **Units Included.** The *Barracks Finder* includes regular infantry and cavalry regiments only. It does not include militia or other volunteer units who may have been in the Camp for short periods while on training or exercises, but were not resident units. Also only complete units (regiments or battalions) are listed, small detachments are excluded. The first units to come into the Camp were four regiments of Militia in May 1855 (the West Kent Militia, 5th Lancashire Militia, East Middlesex Militia, and 1st Surrey Militia), but the *Barracks Finder* begins with the first regular units, 2nd Bn Coldstream Guards and 2nd Bn Scots Fusilier Guards, who arrived in June 1855.

In general, only British units are listed, as visiting overseas units tended only to be here for short periods (such as the visit by the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in 1910). However, for the Second World War the Canadian Units known to have been stationed in Aldershot are included. Aldershot became the centre for the Canadian Army Overseas and thousands of Canadians served in Aldershot between 1939 and 1946. Using some of the contemporary Location Statements a large number of these units and their locations have been identified and listed in the *Barracks Finder*.

2. **Artillery and Corps.** The *Barracks Finder* is for cavalry and infantry, as these are the units which changed barracks frequently. Within the Camp were also large numbers of Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, and other supporting corps. Because of their nature, these units tended to be largely based in their own barracks which had the necessary facilities required for their specialised roles. These barracks were:

Royal Artillery: Originally two of the Permanent Barracks (see below for explanation of the 'Permanent' Barracks) were for the artillery, named simply Royal Artillery Barracks and Royal Horse Artillery Barracks. When the barracks were named in 1892 these became Waterloo Barracks East and Waterloo Barracks West. There was also usually an artillery unit stationed in North Camp, in what became Lille Barracks.

Royal Engineers: The Royal Engineers had a large establishment in South Camp, originally in the Hut Lines and then after the 1890s rebuilding they were in Gibraltar Barracks. In the 1960s rebuilding Gibraltar Barracks became Browning Barracks and no longer housed the Royal Engineers, who moved to the new Gibraltar Barracks in Minley.

Military Train / Royal Army Service Corps / Royal Corps of Transport / Royal Logistic Corps: When the Camp was first established stores and supplies were handled by the Commissariat, which had stores in North and South Camps, with the main stores in South Camp. Transport was the responsibility of the Military Train, which usually had three battalions in Aldershot. The 1890s rebuilding coincided with the creation of the Army Service Corps (later Royal), so a new ASC barracks was built and named Buller Barracks. In the 1920s Buller Barracks was too small for the RASC, so an additional barracks was built to take the overflow, this was Clayton Barracks. In the 1960s the old Buller Barracks was demolished and a new Buller Barracks built for the RASC. When the RASC was merged into the Royal Corps of Transport they remained in Buller, and the RCT in turn was subsequently merged into the Royal Logistic Corps. In 1990 the section of Buller Barracks north of Alison's Road became Gale and Travers Barracks, used by Transport regiments.

Royal Army Medical Corps: The main RAMC barracks were McGrigor Barracks, part of the 1890s build, opposite the Cambridge Military Hospital.

Royal Army Ordnance Corps: Housed in Parsons Barracks, built in the 1920s.

Royal Army Physical Training Corps: Originally the Army Gymnastic Staff, founded in Aldershot in 1860. The first gymnasium was in the Permanent Infantry Barracks, but in the 1890s new gymnasia were built, the main being the Command Gymnasium in Queen's

Avenue, around which grew the Army School of Physical Training. The APTC staff were housed in Hammersley Barracks (named after the founder of the Corps), originally built in the 1930s and then re-built in the 1960s. In the 1940s the Command Gymnasium was named the Fox Gym, and later the ASPT complex was named Fox Lines.

3. **Regimental names and numbers.** Except for the Guards regiments, before 1881 infantry regiments did not have official names, they were simply known by numbers (eg 37th Foot). Some regiments gained unofficial names (eg the 42nd Foot was commonly known as the Black Watch) but such names were not officially recognised until the reforms of 1881. Under these reforms, most of the old Foot regiments were joined together in pairs to make a new regiment which was given a new name, the two old Foot regiments becoming the first and second battalions of the new regiment (see below for more on battalions), eg the 37th and 67th Foot were joined together to form the Hampshire Regiment. (The most senior regiments were not joined with anyone else, in recognition of their seniority, so for example the 1st Foot became the Royal Scots and gained extra battalions, but was not joined with any other Foot regiment.) The 1881 regimental names lasted largely intact until after the Second World War, but since then there have been numerous regimental mergers and with each merger comes a new name which is acceptable to all (eg the Royal Hampshire Regiment became part of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment). The lineage of British regimental names is complex and can be confusing, but a helpful guide is published by the Army Museums Ogilby Trust at <http://www.armymuseums.org.uk/succession-of-titles.htm>.

4. **Battalions.** There is often confusion surrounding battalions and regiments. For the cavalry, the battlefield unit was the regiment, however, for the infantry the battlefield unit was the battalion. The size of a battalion varied, but was usually around 1,000 men at wartime establishment, in peace time it would be considerably less, often 600-700. Before the 1881 reforms not all regiments had more than one battalion, so in the *Barracks Finder* some Foot regiments are annotated with the battalion and some are not. After the 1881 reforms most regiments had multiple battalions. The regiment was the overall formation to which the soldiers belonged (eg the Hampshire Regiment), but they served with their battalion. The idea was that there could be one battalion serving overseas, another at home, a reserves battalion, etc. When two of the old Foot regiments were joined together in 1881, the most senior (lowest Foot number) became the first battalion, and the junior became the second battalion. Other battalions would be the regiment's territorial (volunteer) battalions. In the *Barracks Finder* the battalions are shown as "1st Bn", "2nd Bn", etc. In times of war, extra battalions would be created for the duration of the war, these were known as "Service battalions". In the First World War there were so many volunteers coming forward that the existing Territorial battalions were sometimes split rather than creating new battalions. So, for example, the Hampshire Regiment's 4th Battalion was split to create the 1st/4th and 2nd/4th, the 1st/4th being the local battalion for Aldershot volunteers.

5. **Permanent and Temporary barracks.** The first Camp at Aldershot consisted of wooden huts, as it was founded during the time of the Crimean War and the priority was to build accommodation quickly. The first proper brick-built barracks were built between 1856 and 1859 in a line along the southern edge of the Camp, along what is today Wellington Avenue. These were three cavalry barracks, three infantry barracks and two artillery barracks, and in the contemporary documents these were collectively known as the "Permanent Barracks" to distinguish them from the wooden huts of the rest of the South Camp and all of North Camp, which were the "Temporary Barracks". Much of the *Barracks Finder* data has been compiled from the monthly "Distribution of the Army in Great Britain" compiled for the War Office, which in the early years did not include any details of the specific barracks of units in Aldershot, simply describing them as being in "Aldershot Camp", so for these years the entry in *Barracks Finder* just states "Barracks not specified". There were a few years when the individual barracks were not given but the returns did show if the units were in barracks or huts, so in *Barracks Finder* these are shown as "Permanent Barracks" or "Hut Lines".

6. **Names of Aldershot barracks.** The wooden huts of the “Temporary Barracks” were grouped into “lines” but these did not have names, they were simply known by letters. The contemporary returns do not specify the letters of the huts in which units were stationed, so in *Barracks Finder* these are simply described as “Hut Lines”. The “Permanent Barracks” had simple descriptive names, being East, West and South Cavalry Barracks; East, Centre and West Infantry Barracks; and the Royal Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery Barracks. With the replacement of the huts by new brick barracks in the 1890s, it was decided to give them names, so from 1892 the infantry barracks all have names of great British victories. They were grouped into three “Lines”, in North Camp were Marlborough Lines, with the barracks named after Marlborough’s battles; in the centre of the Camp were Stanhope Lines, with barracks named after victories of the Napoleonic Wars at which someone other than Wellington was in command; and the old Permanent Barracks became Wellington Lines, each named after one of the great Duke’s victories. The cavalry barracks remained as East, West and South until 1909, when they were named after great cavalry battles.

7. **Missing war years.** *Barracks Finder* does not include entries for the years of the South African War (Second Boer War, 1899-1901); the First World War (1914-1918). In these years huge numbers of soldiers and units passed through Aldershot, most being here for only a few weeks as they did final training or preparation for deployment. As a result the peacetime regimental returns were not compiled, and it would be impossible to track the huge numbers of units which passed through the Camp.

During the Second World War (1939-1945), Aldershot was the centre for the Canadian Army Overseas, and using contemporary Location Statements it has been possible to list a large number of Canadian regiments and their known barracks. However, in addition, during the war there were again a great many transient units as in the First World War and it is not possible to track all these units. *Barracks Finder* aims to list only resident Aldershot units and so does not include the many transient units during these major wars.

SOURCES

At the core of *Barracks Finder* is the work of the late Victor Waller, noted local historian and long-serving Secretary of the Friends of the Aldershot Military Museum. His manuscript notes are in the collection of the Aldershot Military Museum and the digitised version of these manuscripts made *Barracks Finder* possible. Building on Victor’s work, *Barracks Finder* has subsequently been extended using the following sources:

Quarters of Troops in Great Britain, 1852-1859. The National Archives, files WO 17/2806 - 17/2808.

Distribution of the Army: Monthly Returns, 1859-1865. The National Archives, files WO 73/1 to 73/6.

Distribution of the Army: Monthly Returns, 1866-1939. In the collection of the Prince Consort’s Library, Aldershot.

Army Lists, various volumes, in the collection of the Prince Consort’s Library, Aldershot.

Canadian Military Headquarters files (Copies of documents from the Public Archives of Canada, in the Aldershot Military Museum, File 22):

Accommodation Project 'A'. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 24, Vol 12, 682, CMHQ File 16/1 Div/1.

2 Canadian Division Location Statement No. 2, dated 14 Oct 1940. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 24, Vol 12, 347, CMHQ File 4/Locations/2.

3 Cdn Div Location Statement No. 3, dated 22 Oct 1941. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 24, Vol 12, 348, CMHQ File 4/Locations/2/3.

5th Canadian (Armoured) Division Location Statement, dated Fall 1941. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 24, Vol 12, 348, CMHQ File 4/Locations/2/3.

4 Cdn Armd Div Location Statement No. 2, dated 3 Sep 1942. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 27, Vol 12, 348, CMHQ File 4/Locations/2/10.

CRU Location Statement No 18, dated 27 July 1944, ref 404/Locations/1 (Ops).

Ministry of defence: Arms Plot Moves, 1952 - 1977. The National Archives, files DEFE 70/670 - 70/679; DEFE 70/383 - 70/396.

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