

GOSBERTON VOLUNTEERS.

THE Gosberton contingent of Volunteers originated in 1859, when there was a general movement throughout the country in this direction. A public meeting was convened at Donington during this year, which resulted in the establishment of a corps in the district.

All companies at that time were called corps; but after 1874 they became companies, all the different corps of a county becoming joined together and known as the county regiment. It is therefore of course incorrect now, to speak of any body of volunteers, as a corps. As a result of this meeting a corps was formed, with a gentleman named Calthrop as captain. Volunteers at that time being allowed to give any name to their corps, christened the Gosberton one, the 17th. Lincolnshire Volunteer Corps, by which name it was known up to 1874, when it became the G company of the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment.

Option being given in the first instance as to the choice of patterns in uniform, the Gosberton corps were clothed in grey without any facings, the headdress being the old shako. The uniform of those days would compare very unfavourably with that of to-day: sealed patterns were then unknown, and owing to change in tailors and special fancies of individuals, it must have

been a matter of difficulty to get two uniforms exactly alike: at present to the smallest details (even of the buttons) exact uniformity has to be adhered to, the present regulation dress being precisely the same as the regular battalion of the line, substituting silver for gold—it is scarlet with blue facings, the ornament being a sphinx. Before the issue of government arms, the appearance of the company to a critical eye must have looked somewhat strange: those happily possessing any sort or condition of private rifle or gun no doubt looked most soldierlike; but the appearance of their less fortunate comrades, who for their warlike armament had to be content with broom-sticks, blind-rollers, etc., is difficult to imagine. The early volunteers, in addition to providing themselves with their own arms (as above) also had to provide their own uniform, and the company funds were responsible for the drill-instructor, who, in the case of the Gosberton corps was an ex-militia private named Hudson, whose knowledge of drill was very little, if any, in excess of the raw material he had to mould. From this brief account of the Gosberton corps, at its origin, it is indeed difficult to conceive how the movement was continued and the present efficient company developed. In passing, one cannot help stopping to pay a tribute of respect to those early pioneers, who, however rough and ready their organisation was, persevered in the face of public ridicule and official want of recognition, and sowed the seeds out of which the present splendid Volunteer Service has sprung. Since its foundation five gentlemen

have successively held the command of the company, namely;—Capts. Calthrop, Holland, Major Casswell, J.P., V.D., Capt. Kingston, and Capt. Stack, who is at present commanding officer. To these gentlemen, the company owe a large debt of gratitude, as in addition to the time they have given up, their position has necessitated a considerable expenditure, and had not such gentlemen been found ready to come forward, the company would of necessity have been disbanded. In addition to Private Hudson whom I have before alluded to, the government have supplied the following sergt.-instructors: from 1859 to '63 Sergt. Faye of the Grantham Militia; from 1863 to '80 Sergt. Lomas of the 57th regt.; from 1880 to '81 Sergt. Bowring of the Royal Marine Light Infantry; from 1881 to '95 (when he retired) Sergt. Ratcliffe of the 90th regt. of Light Infantry. Sergt. Mattocks of the 27th regt. occupied the position for a few months after Sergt. Ratcliffe retired, and was succeeded by Sergt. Martin of the 10th Foot, who is the present sergt.-instructor of the company. Without drawing any distinction between these instructors, an account of the company would be incomplete without some allusion to Sergt. Ratcliffe, probably the most popular sergt-instructor of the entire battalion. Sergt. Ratcliffe has the record of 34 years active service out of which he has been for 30 years a N.C.O. He served with distinction in the Indian Mutiny of 1858, the Kaffir war of 1878 and the Zulu war of 1879; for the latter two of which, he gained the South African medal. He was also recently presented

with the long-service medal. He has now retired on a pension, and taken up his residence in Gosberton, where he is ever ready to re-fight his battles. In 1874 the company went first into camp for their annual training. For some years previously, they joined the other companies of the battalion, in single day battalion drills, at different towns. The first Colonel was the present Sir John Thorold, Bart., who recently retired, after holding the command for a long period.

Col. J. Hutchinson is the present officer commanding the battalion. The class firing of the company is done at Quadring, on a range lent by Mr. H. Casswell, a gentleman who has at all times been a friend to the Volunteers. There are two annual Cups, presented by the officers of the company, competed for before Camp, the officers also give about £20 annually in prizes.

Several members of the company have distinguished themselves at the annual meetings of the National Rifle Association at Wimbledon, Sergts. Bevis, Cocks and Williamson, having been frequently successful competitors. Sergt. Bevis, (now retired) has been one of the most successful Cup-winners of the company, having for years, in succession, carried off the annual officers' cup, as well as cups presented by Messrs. Milson, Holt, W. Dickenson, Mrs. Kingston, and others. He has also frequently been the winner of the Everard Challenge Vase (a company cup competed for annually) and in 1885 won from the entire county the much coveted Aveland Vase. A few years since,

Major Casswell was decorated with the Volunteer Officers' decoration and distinction only granted for long and meritorious service. A large number of members of the company have been recipients of the long service medal, viz., Ex-Lieut. H. Garner, Ex-Sergts. J. E. Dickens and Bevis, Colour-Sergt. Freemantle, Ex-Privates Garlick, Noble, Farr, Coxell, Graham, Thomas Casswell and W. Titman. Ex-Private Garlick on his recent retirement, after over 30 years' service, was presented with an easy chair by his old comrades at the annual dinner. Notwithstanding the decrease in population the company is stronger to-day than it has ever been before, which is a matter deserving of great credit to Captain Stack and his staff of non-commissioned-officers. We are pleased to be able to present to our readers a portrait of the deservedly popular and energetic commanding officer, Capt. Stack.





CAPTAIN STACK.