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**The 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment Military
Guard at the St Helena Penal Establishment,
Moreton Bay, 1867-69**

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The role of British soldiers in the newly formed colony of Queensland in the decade of the 1860s was quite unlike their former service in the penal station of Moreton Bay during 1824 to 1842. Not only had convict transportation to the eastern Australian Colonies ceased, but the post-Crimean British Army itself had evolved into a more professional and humane organisation. Furthermore, with the cessation of transportation and the increasing cost of garrisoning a global empire with a thinly distributed British Army, came the realisation in Britain that those colonies which possessed self-government should also take on the responsibility, at least in part, for their own defence.² By comparing the role of British military detachments at Moreton Bay during its penal operation with their function in the colonial metropolis of Brisbane in the 1860s, we can see that the despised red-coated gaolers became the honoured representatives of Empire and an integral part of colonial society. This is not to say that the British soldier in early Queensland entirely escaped the onerous duty of guarding criminals. A clear distinction needs to be made between the 'convict' as a product of an imperial policy of transportation up to 1840 and the 'prisoner' who was a colonial civil offender in the 1860s incarcerated at the St Helena Penal Establishment.

This evolution in the role of Imperial soldiers at Moreton Bay saw a growing acceptance of these men (and their families) as a part of colonial

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society. With this change of role (and status) the British soldier was not only defender and gaoler, but his scarlet-coat served as a reminder in Queensland, as in other far-flung corners of the British Empire, of the 'imperial sentiment' which Governor George Ferguson Bowen so fervently fostered.³ Bowen envisaged the Imperial presence in Queensland serving as a visible and tangible reassurance to colonists. It also had the practical advantage of being a nucleus upon which local volunteer forces could be raised and his own gubernatorial authority as Queensland's first governor reinforced.⁴

The Experience of the 50th Regiment Detachments, 1866-69

The *Alice Cameron* arrived in Brisbane on 15 October 1866, direct from Auckland, New Zealand, bearing one company of the 50th Regiment. This force comprised 'Captain and Mrs. Creagh,⁵ child, and servant, Lieutenant Rolleston,⁶ Ensign Hunt, Assistant-surgeon McShane, 92 men, 5 women, [and] 12 children' of this Regiment. The steamer *Kate* brought these troops up the Brisbane River, and landed them at Queen's Wharf from where they were marched to the Barracks at Petrie Terrace under the command of Captain Charles Augustine Fitzgerald Creagh.⁷ These and other companies of this regiment arrived in their respective Australian garrisons after completion of New Zealand war service. The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 23 October reported in a detailed column upon the long and respected history of this Regiment:

The Fiftieth or 'Queen's Own' Regiment

The return of this gallant regiment to the colony after the lapse of so many years has no doubt awakened recollections of former times in the minds of many whose colonial experience is large enough to extend to a quarter of a century; and a former acquaintance with so distinguished a corps of Her Majesty's army will invest its career during the term of absence with considerable interest . . .

The head-quarters reached here on the 9th October [1866] with 350 men, one company being at Brisbane. The rest of the regiment is to remain in the Taranaki district, New Zealand.⁸

This account related details of the 50th Regiment's first Australian tour of service during 1834-41. Part of the regiment participated in the 1834 rescue expedition to Taranaki. After Australian service the regiment departed for India during the 1840s and before participating in the Crimean War in the 1850s. The regiment then served six years in Ceylon before commencing war service in New Zealand in late 1863:

In this war little scope was found for the bold dashing charges of the 50th, the Maori enemy preferring desultory and retreating tactics, but wherever the Maori would make a stand and dare a conflict the regiment did good

service. They were present at the storming of the important rebel position Rangiawahia [20 February 1864], and General Cameron referring to the affair in his despatch says, 'I cannot too highly praise the admirable conduct of the troops during the attack . . . and the operations of the following two days, but particularly that of the mounted artillery and of the 50th Regiment . . .' Again at Nukumarū [24 & 25 January 1865⁹] the regiment was engaged, and had two officers severely wounded, and of the killed and wounded rank and file the number was twenty-two . . . The last occasion on which they were actively engaged was in the attack, by a detachment . . . on the strong rebel position, Patahi [Te Putahi, 7 January 1866]¹⁰

Brisbane's 50th detachment was therefore largely replete with veteran officers and men whose presence was a major boost for the morale and training of the Colony's flagging volunteer movement.

Of the twelve regimental detachments of the British Army to have served at Moreton Bay since 1825, the detachment of 50th Regiment was to have the most significant influence not only upon the revival of the flagging Queensland Volunteer movement, but also on Brisbane colonial society in general.¹¹

Within a month of their arrival, Ensign Arthur Carew Hunt was appointed Adjutant to the Queensland Volunteers and Colour-Sergeant Robert Brady as drill and musketry instructor. Both were veterans fresh from the West Coast and Waikato campaigns in New Zealand. Whereas joint drills between the previous detachment (the 12th Regiment) and the Queensland Volunteers had been relatively infrequent, Ensign Hunt and his successor, Lieutenant Robert Stuart MacGregor,¹² ensured they were a matter of routine. These officers added the exciting public spectacle of 'sham fights' in which the detachment of the 50th Regiment and members of the Queensland Volunteer Rifles opposed each other in open skirmishing order.¹³ The zeal and dedication of these officers and NCOs imparted a fresh vigour into the local Volunteer movement. As a result these local defence forces were brought up to a standard comparable with the other Australian colonies, laying the foundations of stable permanency and professionalism within the colonial Volunteer Force. Similarly, the flagging Queensland Rifle Association, whose fortunes were inextricably linked with the Volunteer movement, also received full support from the officers of the 50th Regiment. Regular shooting matches were arranged between these two bodies, often with substantial prizes awarded.

While these shooting matches became significant events in Brisbane's social calendar with scores recorded in detail by the *Brisbane Courier*, the role of the 50th Regiment in colonial Queensland society extended far beyond military activities. A series of sporting activities also provided some distraction from otherwise quiet garrison duties. Within two months

of their arrival, soldiers of the 50th Regiment began to prepare their own cricket pitch and soon issued challenges to the volunteer fire brigade, the Queensland Volunteer Artillery and the Volunteer Rifles.¹⁴ By 1868 the 50th had formed their own football team to compete with the newly formed Brisbane Football Club (with the former soundly thrashed).¹⁵ The interaction of Brisbane's 50th Regiment detachment with the society, of which it now formed part, took on greater intimacy with the relief of Captain Creagh's force by a second detachment.¹⁶ This detachment arrived under Captain Thomas Millard Benton Eden¹⁷ in February 1868 accompanied by Lieutenant MacGregor and Ensign James 'Bloomfield' (although his name was in fact Bromfield he was often referred to by this misspelling).¹⁸

As early as December 1866, soldiers of the 50th had arranged a Christmas concert thus beginning a tradition of amateur theatrical performances, which came to assume a philanthropic role. A series of fund-raising efforts for the Brisbane Orphan School were financially successful in spite of the 'very amateurish acting' as reported by the *Brisbane Courier*.¹⁹ To these acts of social benevolence can be added the role played by Captain Creagh and his detachment in extinguishing a fire within the central business district and the spectacle of a public 'military fete' wherein Colour-Sergeant Brady demonstrated his considerable dexterity with the bayonet and broadsword.²⁰

Like the detachment of the 12th Regiment which they relieved, the 50th Regiment provided an impressive spectacle for ceremonial occasions such as the opening of Parliament, funeral processions, and Governor Bowen's final 'Volunteer Review' in December 1867, as well as Bowen's farewell parade on 4 January 1868.²¹ The most significant such event was the visit by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to Brisbane in February 1868. Planning for it by the detachment of the 50th as well as the Queensland Volunteers commenced as early as September 1867. The Australasian Steam Navigation Company had offered to convey the band of the 50th from Sydney to Brisbane for the occasion although this resulted in some grumbling in the press over the lack of attention the band of the Queensland Volunteers had received.²² The guns of the Queensland Volunteer Artillery were cleaned and polished by soldiers of the 50th, repeating what men of the 12th Regiment had done before them.²³ Ensign Hunt took careful management of the royal visit by personally meeting with and drilling both the Brisbane and Ipswich Volunteer companies of Rifles and Artillery. He also ensured that the detachment of the 50th Regiment was resplendent in their scarlet tunics and pipe-clayed belts.²⁴ The final official engagement of the 50th Regiment at Brisbane was to

form a guard of honour in November 1868 to welcome Governor Bowen's replacement, Governor Samuel Wensley Blackall.²⁵

The 50th Regiment Military Guard and the St Helena Penal Establishment

One aspect of the service of the Brisbane 50th Regiment garrison rarely acknowledged was their provision of personnel as a Military Guard during the construction and initial operation of Her Majesty's St Helena Penal Establishment in Moreton Bay, 1867-69. Although the surviving documentation is not clear, the soldiers who made up the Military Guard appear to have been regularly rotated with the rest of the garrison in Brisbane. The number of them required for this Military Guard is not clear, although figures sometimes referred to range from eleven to sixteen (including a Non-Commissioned Officer in charge). Again the surviving records do not state how long such soldiers served on St Helena, but it appears each Military Guard detachment served at least several weeks before being relieved by an incoming detachment.

Any analysis of the formative stages of the construction and development of the Penal Establishment on St Helena Island must also acknowledge the crucial involvement and management undertaken by the first Superintendent, John McDonald, who served in this capacity from 1867 until 1882.²⁶ McDonald is a significant example of colonial Australian settlers whose prior British (or Honourable East India Company) military service was to prove highly marketable in obtaining employment in the Australasian colonies. In the colonial Queensland setting such former military personages can be widely found throughout the civil services such as the Police, Native Police (as Officers and NCOs), Prisons, Post and Telegraph Departments, the Volunteers, and other government services. Their former Imperial service generally guaranteed access and employment in a variety of such occupations – for McDonald this was to include the Queensland Police, Water Police, and then the Prison service.

John McDonald, born in Nairn, Scotland (circa 1837), had joined the British Army and served in the 93rd (Sutherland) Highland Regiment, and saw active service in the Crimean War (1854-56). In correspondence in 1879, McDonald elaborated on his prior Army service and his rise from the ranks to commissioned officer:

I beg to point out that I know discipline in every shape from previous training, having served ten years in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders, as private, non-commissioned and subsequently commissioned officer . . . on the staff of Lord Raglan, and since then held appointments in the

Queensland service for nineteen years . . .²⁷

McDonald's first appointment in the Queensland civil service dates from 20 February 1861 according to the 1869 *Blue Book* but was not listed in the *Government Gazette*. On 15 February 1862, McDonald, who was then Acting Sergeant, was promoted to rank of Sergeant, and Sergeant in Charge of the Brisbane Police Station. On 10 October 1862, he was appointed Inspector of Water Police for the Port of Moreton Bay. In this role he was appointed as an Officer of Customs ('Coast Waiter') on 20 January 1863. After this McDonald became Keeper of the Hulk *Proserpine* on 18 May 1864,²⁸ and for which he was appointed Gaoler of this prison hulk on 1 June 1865.²⁹

In this transition from Police to Gaoler, McDonald became intimately associated with the establishment of the Penal Establishment on St Helena Island. In assessing the initial stages of building and works on the island, the Colonial Architect wrote in January 1867:

Some eighteen prisoners had been employed on the Island of St Helena from February 1866, first in the erection of a Lockup, and latterly in the construction of the two buildings, under the supervision of a Foreman of Carpenters, assisted by one freeman for the better joiner's work, the prisoners passing backwards & forward to the Hulk 'Proserpine' anchored off Fisherman's Island, some four or five miles distant, until within the last two months [November 1866], when the Hulk was removed to an anchorage nearer the Island in order to allow the full complement of prisoners to be put to work at the new Convict depot, in finishing the buildings above mentioned, clearing the scrub, and completing a jetty near the Lockup.³⁰

McDonald's importance in the works under way, and the control of the prisoners being employed, was confirmed by his appointment as the first Superintendent of the Penal Establishment at St Helena on 14 May 1867.³¹ He quickly established his imposing disciplinarian presence on St Helena, a position he maintained until resigning on 4 April 1882.³²

The Colonial Architect's report indicates some building construction had already taken place on St Helena as the island was initially intended to become a Quarantine Station. With the 'project of making St Helena a Quarantine Station being abandoned' these buildings were converted 'into convict buildings' so as 'to meet the demand for extra prison accommodation' when it was decided to use St Helena for that purpose.³³ This report also included details on the proposed accommodation on the eastern side of the island for the Military Guard who were shortly expected to commence duties:

The prisoners are now engaged on these works and one of the buildings, that on the West Side of the bluff, will be ready for the reception of about 60

prisoners in the course of a week . . . but as it is the intention of the Government to put a military guard over the prisoners on St Helena, and no shelter being as yet available, the prison wards cannot be used until the building on the East bank has been temporarily fitted up for the reception of the guard, and this cannot be finished for some three or four weeks to come, as the roof is not yet on the building, and the work being done by prisoners, a longer time is required than if it were being done by free men.³⁴

Following the receipt of approval of Governor Bowen, the role and duties of the Military Guard for St Helena on 14 May 1867 comprised:

The military guard stationed at St. Helena will be under the immediate control of the NCO whose Duty it will be to co-operate with the superintendent, and do all in his power to establish the security of the prisoners by night and day, and maintain order and repress insubordination on the part of such prisoners.

The NCOs in command of the military guard will act under instructions having been submitted to, and approved by, His Excellency the Governor in Council.³⁵

To assist the Non-Commissioned Officers of the 50th placed in charge of this Military Guard, 'Instructions' were also set out during November 1867, which elaborated upon their duties while stationed at the St Helena Penal establishment:

1. The Non-Commissioned Officer will be responsible for the conduct of the men, under his charge.
2. He will see that all Standing Orders and other Instructions which may be issued from time to time, are strictly and promptly executed, and shall duly report any neglect of the same.
3. It is not desirous to lay down any precise course of conduct for the Non-Commissioned Officer, or to say how much of his time should be occupied in the actual performance of his duties, but he will at all times co-operate with the Superintendent and render every assistance in his power for the maintenance of good order and the general security of the prisoners.
4. He will feel the importance of making occasional visits to the Sentries, seeing that they are on the alert and attending to their duty.
5. He will inspect every sentry before turning him out on duty, see that he is perfectly sober, clean, correctly dressed, armed and accoutred that his rifle is loaded and capped, and that he is supplied with ten rounds of ammunition and a proportionate number of caps, all of which must be in good condition. He will then march them to their respective posts, and see that the Sentries on numbers One, Two and Three posts do duty with fixed bayonets.

He will attend at every muster of the prisoners with the proper number of

Sentries required for duty. Station them at their respective posts, and see that each Sentry fully understands the instructions relating to his post.

He will see that the Sentry for number "Three" post is on duty at the time the prisoners are released from their Cells in the morning, and that he does not leave it until after the hoisting of the "All right" signal at night.

He will understand that 'Night Duty' is from the time the prisoners are locked up in the evening until they are released in the morning and will post his Sentries accordingly.

Day Posts

No.1. is in front of the Prison Buildings

No.2. is at the south-east corner of the Yard to command a view of the south and east angles.

Night Posts

No.1. is in front of the Prison Buildings including the ends.

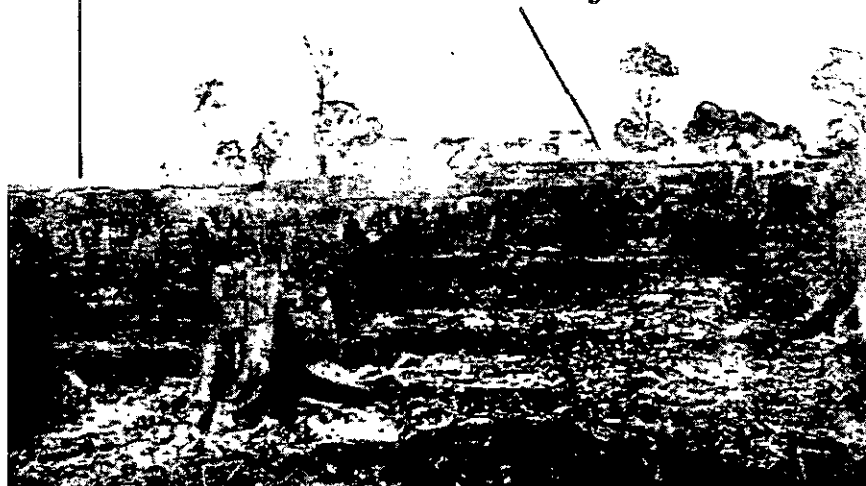
No.2. is at the back of the Prison Buildings within the Yards including the Hospital and Cook House.

No.3. Day Post only – is at the Stone Quarry on the beach, to command a view of all the south end of the Island and a portion of the West Side.

Apart from the instructions for use by NCOs, the Privates of the 50th who would serve as part of the Military Guard were also provided with lengthy and detailed 'General Instructions' for their guidance.

Prison stockade

Military barracks



St Helena being cleared in 1868, showing the position of the Military Guard Barracks in relation to the Prison Stockade.

By permission of the National Library of Australia: [album] 257c.

The formalisation of procedures and instructions for both NCOs and Privates serving in the Military Guard appear to have been at least partially instituted following complaints by McDonald about the manner these soldiers were carrying out their tasks to the perceived detriment of operations of the Penal Establishment. On 31 October 1867, he outlined to the Colonial Secretary:

I have [found] fault on several occasions with the manner in which some of the military guard performed their Duties . . . and more especially when on the points of landing. That orders on that post, or part of the orders is not to allow any person to land without the written order of the Colonial Secretary or Visiting Justice. But some of the military do not pay the slightest attention to the above order and their attention has been especially called to the part of their orders by the NCO in charge of the guard. On several occasions persons have been allowed to land from the steamer Kate without the sentries demanding their authority and allowed to pass to the prison, the consequence is that anything might be passed to the prisoners at work all over the island. It is necessary that the above order should be strictly carried out; there is another matter I should bring before your notice, viz, of sending Lance Corporals in charge of the guard who do not appear to have the least control over their men which is not the case with a full Sergeant or full Corporal. I think if the matter was brought before the notice of the Capt. Commanding the troops, that he would cause the duties to be more satisfactorily performed in future.³⁸

McDonald followed up his concerns with another complaint about the behaviour of the Guard in December 1867:

I had to complain to the visiting justice of the careless manner in which the military guard perform their duties. [This?] month I found soldiers while on guard talking with prisoners, and on one occasion I found one of them sitting down reading a book while on prison guard, there seems to be a great lack of discipline amongst the guard, as a rule, I have reason to believe that the guard conveys letters to and from prisoners on the island, and the prisoners are kept as well informed of all passing events as if they were in Brisbane Gaol! While such conduct amongst the guard which I have to depend so much upon, is allowed to be carried on, what confidence can be placed in them, there are some of the men trustworthy but, very few of them can be trusted out of sight with prisoners, I have on several occasions reported the men to the NCO in charge who very often is a L/Corporal who has little or no control over their men, if there is not soon a change for the better in the conduct of the military guard it will be quite impossible for me to carry out that order and discipline that should be carried out on the island.³⁹

Correspondence in January 1868 indicates that Superintendent McDonald made a specific charge of 'negligence of duty' against Private

Poynter, one of the Military Guard who had just been released from duty on St Helena. Captain Eden, 50th Regiment, Commanding the Troops at Brisbane, informed the Colonial Secretary he had 'in accordance with the desire of the Visiting Justice' taken action in the matter, though countering that this was only carried out as far as 'the conflicting evidence. I have gathered will permit'.⁴⁰

On 1 February 1868, McDonald reported to the Colonial Secretary that the 'large prison building' under construction was expected to be completed by the end of March. Once this building was ready it would allow for the accommodation of 150 prisoners on St Helena. He used his regular report again to complain about the Military Guard, suggesting in the process, Warders be used to replace them:

If the prisoners are increased to the above number the number of warders will also have to increase, there ought to be one warder for every ten . . . prisoners together with the military guard as at present established on the island. I would recommend that three warders be substituted for the military guard. The guard is of no service in charge of prisoners at work as they do not take the slightest interest, and pay little or no attention the orders I give them; and as a rule they make free with the prisoners, so that it is impossible to carry out the same discipline that could be carried out with warders.⁴¹

In defence of the conduct of the soldiers of the 50th Regiment, their use as prison guards was definitely a role Imperial troops were not generally used to, or expected to undertake in the latter 1860s. Nor was it a task for which Imperial soldiers would derive any satisfaction or sense of military purpose, though of course Imperial forces in Australia had often been used to assist the civil power in times of perceived or real crisis. The soldiers of the Military Guard were, for all intents and purposes, as isolated on St Helena as the prisoners they guarded. Being selected to make up the personnel for mounting this Military Guard was no doubt highly unpopular within the ranks of Brisbane's 50th garrison. They had to contend not only with the isolation but also with the strict regime of the prison administration and operation. When combined with general dissatisfaction at their placement, some of these soldiers quite naturally reacted adversely to their surrounds and duties – earning in the process the ire of Superintendent McDonald. The soldiers who made up this small Military Guard also quickly found that life on St Helena was a far cry from the facilities, opportunities and pleasures garrison life in Brisbane offered. Certainly if McDonald regarded the detachment of the 50th posted to St Helena as ill-disciplined, this poor behaviour was not evident in their comrades stationed in Brisbane; a fact which reflects more on McDonald and the penal duties on St Helena than of the men of the 50th themselves.

The soldiers who served on St Helena had complaints of their own regarding the conditions of their accommodation and the rations they were expected to tolerate. On 3 March 1868, Lieutenant MacGregor, 50th Regiment, temporarily 'Commanding Troops', wrote to the Queensland Colonial Secretary about certain grievances expressed by the Military Guard posted to this island prison:

I have the honour to bring to your notice the aged and dirty state of the beds provided for the military guard at St. Helena, and beg to request that you will cause the proper authorities to provide new ones at once. There being no change of beds, or bedcovers, nor means of [airing?] them I am unable to cast any blame on the soldiers of the guard.

I have also to request your attention to the inferior quality of the tea ration which is far below that required by the ordinary Commissariat contract.⁴²

On 17 June 1868, Captain Eden, the officer now commanding Brisbane's 50th detachment, in a detailed correspondence, also brought a variety of complaints from the men of the Military Guard before the Colonial Secretary.

With a view to its receiving your early attention I . . . bring to your notice that the Detachment 50th Regt., last returned from St. Helena . . . on the 8th Inst. complain in a body of the inferior quality of the rations issued to them at that station. I understand them to say among other things that for the space of their days they had no Bread whatever, and that no potatoes were issued to them for, I think, a period of eight days. I am informed that in the first case a certain quantity of some description of flour was presented to them, in place of Bread with a suggestion that they could make their own . . . The scale for the Issue of Rations to the Troops at St Helena, if I remember right, was authorized by yourself, and provides for a daily portion of bread and potatoes for the soldiers. I also . . . bring to your notice a pretty general complaint from the soldiers (and noncomd. Officers in charge) that have of late been stationed at St Helena regarding Mr. Turnkey Hamilton, who, by the way, I understand to be the Issuer above alluded to – his manner to them they designate as most irritating and annoying . . .

I can quite believe this complaint to be exaggerated by irritation, still, judging from the well known character of many of my informants, I am convinced that it contains sufficient grounds to warrant . . . the attention you may find it to deserve.⁴³

In this letter Eden also confirms visiting St Helena on a number of occasions, during which he naturally would have inspected the accommodation, duties and procedures of the Military Guard. Other complaints raised by the men were of offensive language or manner of the Chief Warder, James Hamilton, towards them; 'the total, or partial absence of Sentry Boxes' for the protection of sentries during inclement weather

and 'great complaints concerning an offensive cesspool' located near one guard post. But it was the actual duties these soldiers were expected to perform, and the number of men from the Military Guard used as sentries at any one time that was also of concern to Eden:

... the fact that they are a great deal to arms, and, as I rather think, not sanctioned by the 'Queens Regulations'. With respect to this I mentioned my objection to Mr Superintendent Macdonald, stating I could not allow the use of five sentries from a guard of but eleven effective men. My objection appears to have had no use yet with him, for I have ascertained that he regards the military Regulations, as expressed through me, with no attention whatever, and still continues to employ more sentries than the Guard can properly furnish.⁴⁴

Visiting Justice Barron's report on 22 June 1868 found some foundation for the soldiers' complaints. With respect to sentries, Barron stated:

Two sentries are required with the gangs employed clearing the scrub, another with the quarrying gang and two at the Gaol. The Superintendent could not do with less without knocking off one of the gangs at work in the scrub. An addition of three to the [Military] Guard would render the duties comparatively light. At present the Warders who are fewer in number than the Guard, are on duty five at a time during the day and two at night. There being an additional soldier on the island doing light duty, the duties of the day sentries are lightened as the soldier referred to supply five sentries once only out of the three reliefs. The Superintendent states that Captain Eden asked him whether he could manage with four sentries during the day until the Guard was relieved on account of one of the soldiers being disabled, he replied that he could but had to knock off one gang during the time there, were only four sentries, this is the only occasion he remembers Captain Eden speaking to him regarding the Sentries.⁴⁵

This correspondence, combined with McDonald's incessant complaints, shows that there existed a considerable conflict of authority and purpose between the Imperial and Colonial authorities that played a role in the operations on St Helena in this initial establishment phase. A clash of egos was also no doubt at play. Any questioning of the manner in which Superintendent McDonald operated his prison fiefdom received strong rebuke, as did criticisms which were levelled at the Military Guard with Imperial Officers reacting in defence of their men.

Another aspect of the Military Guard's role on St Helena was the unenviable position in which soldiers might at any time find themselves if called upon to fire at prisoners. Such a situation could potentially lead to whatever action a soldier took in the performance of his duty, he was not exempt from prosecution under either codes of law if any injury or death resulted. In June 1868, Captain Eden requested through Visiting Justice



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Warders Barracks and Armoury (formerly Military Guards quarters), St Helena Island, 1928.

John Oxley Library Negative No.1212

Barron, that the 'instructions for the guidance of the Military Guard' be amended by the Government so as to provide greater clarity on this point than those instructions already in use on St Helena. After receiving the Government's response, Eden replied on 16 June:

I believe it to be necessary, before these instructions can be put in force, that some addition to them should be made, that shall regard the necessity for using the loaded Rifles put into the soldiers hands, and explicitly set down when, and from whom an order to fire on a 'prisoner' shall be considered valid, and an exemption from any ulterior consequences that might arise out of such as act, the result of which was the wounding or death of a Prisoner. I am convinced that some rule providing for an emergency of this sort should be laid down and thus tend towards the greater efficiency of the St Helena Detachment.

Rule No.11, of "General Instructions" only forbids the discharge of a Rifle without the Superintendents sanction with a view to prevent any false alarm, and, consequently, denies the Soldier that means of giving warning when a real alarm is necessary, which, it is to be presumed, may occur [soon?] at St. Helena.⁴⁶

Eden concluded with the hope the Government would give this their immediate attention so he could put these 'revised instructions into force' the following week.

Despite the ongoing simmering antagonism between Superintendent McDonald and the soldiers who were employed as part of St Helena's Military Guard during 1867-69, the Imperial troops nonetheless played an important temporary role as prison staff while the penal establishment was being constructed.⁴⁷ The prison stockade was not finished until 1868, during which time the soldiers were especially important for mounting guards over the various prisoner work gangs and manning strategic posts on the island. Amongst the findings of the 1869 Select Committee into expenditure and management on St Helena is a breakdown of the annual costs involved with the Military Guard:

Original payment, by Government, for fifteen privates & one non-commissioned officer – in all sixteen men – at £40 per annum: Total = £640 0s. 0d.

Extra allowance to fifteen privates for acting as a penal guard, at 1s. per diem: Total = £273 15s. 0d.

Extra allowance to one non-commissioned officer, for penal guard, at 2s. 6d. per diem: Total = £45 12s. 6d.

Total Cost of the 'extra allowances' for the 15 privates & 1 NCO: = £319 7s. 6d. Rations for sixteen men, as above, at £10 5s. 4d. each per annum: = £164 5s. 4d.

Total cost for military guard = £1,123 12s. 10d.⁴⁸

Despite the fact that these Imperial soldiers were initially utilised as prison guards because of the parsimonious stance of the Queensland Colonial Government, and the associated problems, they nonetheless carried out their duties effectively.

Departure of the Last Imperial Garrison in Moreton Bay

Queensland enjoyed the presence of elements of the 50th Regiment until they were ordered to rejoin the main body of the Regiment in England in 1869. The detachment subsequently embarked aboard the troopship *Himalaya* on 10 March, departing Moreton Bay the next day.⁴⁹ The *Courier* relayed an account of their final 'inglorious' moments in Brisbane, including the removal of the last Military Guard at the St Helena Penal Establishment on 10 March:

The company of the Queen's Own 50th Regiment . . . embarked yesterday aboard the *Himalaya*, which is now lying in Brisbane Roads. The [steamer] *Kate* . . . left town early in the forenoon for the penal station at St. Helena, with a party of police to relieve the military guard there. The soldiers, sixteen in number, were then taken on board the *Kate*, and conveyed to the *Himalaya*. The soldiers in town, sixty-four in number (nearly all of whom seemed intoxicated), with their officers, Captain Eden, Lieutenant Macgregor, and Ensign Bromfield, were taken to the ship in the A.S.N. Co.'s *Diamantina*, which was chartered for the purpose of conveying the troops to the transport. On the way down the river an incident occurred which for the moment created some little excitement. Just as the steamer got abreast of the Custom House one of the privates, who appeared loth [sic] to leave Brisbane, suddenly jumped overboard with the intention of swimming ashore . . . he was picked up immediately, with no further hurt than a good ducking. He made some resistance to getting into the steamer . . . Finally, however, he was taken on board, where he was secured in a manner that prevented his getting into further mischief. The *Diamantina* having transhipped the men to the *Himalaya*, returned to town . . . It was expected that she would bring up the company of the 18th Royal Irish but there were no troops on board for Brisbane.⁵⁰

The departure of the 50th Regiment detachment from Brisbane did not, as it turned out, see the arrival of a replacement detachment from the 2nd Battalion of the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment, the last regiment of the line to serve in Australia. This is despite being contemporarily reported as expected, and even as supposedly arriving in Moreton Bay.⁵¹

The detachment of 50th Regiment was in fact the last Imperial force to be stationed in Moreton Bay, although individual Army and Royal Navy officers continued to be seconded to Queensland.⁵² The delay in the 18th Regiment departing for Australian garrisons was actually as a result of the renewed conflict that had broken on both the west and east Coasts of the

North Island of New Zealand during 1868 and early 1869. On 9 January 1869, a military party consisting of Major-General Sir Trevor Chute and Colonel Hyde Page left Melbourne for New Zealand, via Sydney aboard the steam ship *Hero*.⁵³ Despite the fact that Major-General Chute's visit was reported as a routine inspection of the British regular troops in New Zealand, it was also an obvious opportunity for the most senior Imperial officer in Australasia to judge first-hand the seriousness of the situation in that colony. Chute's decision to temporarily delay the removal of the 18th Regiment was later reported as having had a beneficial effect on public affairs of that colony, the reassuring presence of 'redcoats' bolstering morale in threatened townships such as Wanganui.⁵⁴

Apart from New Zealand yet again having an impact on the availability of Imperial military forces for the Australian Colonies, Queensland in 1869 made a financial and political decision whereby it refused the Company of the 2/18th Regiment that was to be allocated. Correspondence from Army Headquarters in Melbourne, in June 1869, on the distribution of troops with the 2/14th Regiment being ordered to England, and the 2/18th Regiment in the process of departing New Zealand, confirmed that the 'Government of Queensland [was] not desiring the presence of Imperial Troops'. As a result Tasmania was provided with two Companies instead of the one initially planned.⁵⁵ Queensland's refusal of this Company of the 18th Regiment – a far cry from the early 1860s when despite Governor Bowen's repeated correspondence, he was never able to achieve adequate troop numbers – signalled the end of the Imperial presence in Queensland.

Endnotes

1. Both authors have studied aspects of the British Army in Australia and New Zealand. Jeff Hopkins-Weise submitted his PhD doctoral thesis in 2001 entitled 'Australian Involvement in the New Zealand Wars of the 1840s and 1860s'. Rod Pratt is currently completing his PhD thesis entitled 'The British Army at Moreton Bay, 1824-1869'.
2. This central tenet of Earl Grey's policy is covered in greater depth in *Earl Grey's The Colonial policy of Lord John Russell's administration*, Vol.1 (London, Richard Bentley, 1853); and Robert L. Schuyler's, 'The recall of the Legions', *American Historical Review*, Vol.26 (1920), pp. 18-36.
3. CO 234/1, Bowen to Newcastle, 4 April 1860. Public Record Office (London).
4. See also Duncan Anderson's, 'Sir George Bowen and the Problems of Queensland's Defence, 1859-1868', *Queensland Heritage*, Vol.2, No.3 (Nov.1970), pp.32-8.
5. Captain C.A.F. Creagh was made Ensign on 8 September 1854 (without purchase), Lieutenant on 9 February 1855 (without purchase), and Captain 6 May 1863, 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment.
6. Lt. James Franck Rolleston purchased his ensigncy on 17 June 1859.
7. *Brisbane Courier* (hereafter *BC*), 13 October 1866, p.4; 15 October 1866, p.2; 16 October 1866, p.2; 17 October 1866, p.2; 19 October 1866, p.3. See also Governor

- Bowen's despatch dated 7 April 1867, GOV/G1, pp.232-233. Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA).
8. *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 23 October 1866, p.3.
 9. A.E. Fyler, *The History of the 50th or (The Queen's Own) Regiment* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1895), p.279-80 states that 11 privates of the 50th Regiment were killed and two officers and 18 privates were wounded during this engagement.
 10. *SMH* 23 October 1866, p.3.
 11. These regiments were (chronologically) the 40th, 57th, Royal New South Wales Veteran Corps, 39th, 17th, 4th, 28th, 80th, 99th, 58th, 11th, 12th and the 50th.
 12. According to Hart's Army List for 1875, MacGregor purchased both his ensigncy (11 February 1858), and lieutenancy (12 March 1861), and had served in the campaigns on the West Coast of New Zealand from 31st December 1864 to 16th September 1866.
 13. *BC* 18 October 1867.
 14. *BC* 14 December 1866.
 15. *BC* 8 June 1868.
 16. *BC* 1 February 1868.
 17. According to *Harris' Army List* for 1860, Eden gained his ensigncy on 22 February 1855, and lieutenancy on 26 February 1856, both without purchase. Eden later served in the West Coast campaign in New Zealand from 28 March 1865 to 16 September 1866.
 18. According to *Harris' Army List* for 1875 he purchased his ensigncy on 15 November 1864 originally in the 36th Foot, before transferring into the 43rd Light Infantry, and finally the 50th Regiment on 10 November 1865.
 19. *BC* 5 & 10 August 1868.
 20. *BC* 31 January 1867, & 29 June 1867.
 21. *BC* 16 December 1867; 6 January 1868; *Queensland Government Gazette*. Vol. IX, p.50.
 22. *BC* 24 September 1867.
 23. *BC* 14 December 1867.
 24. *BC* 17 January 1868.
 25. *BC* 18 November 1868.
 26. St Helena opened as a gaol 31 August 1866; was proclaimed a penal establishment 8 July 1869; reverted to a gaol, 15 November 1875; proclaimed a penal establishment 4 July 1879 and Petrie Terrace gaol was closed; St Helena Penal Establishment was closed on 17 February 1934. See *Guide to Prison Records which may be Useful to Genealogists*, QSA.
 27. S. Ba Pe, C. Ham, & P. McDougall, *St Helena: Moreton Bay* (Brisbane, October 1975), Section 3.2: Superintendents.
 28. The prison hulk *Proserpine* was proclaimed a prison on 29 March 1864 to relieve overcrowding at the Brisbane Gaol. It was closed as a prison on 22 March 1871.
 29. *Queensland Government Gazette* (hereafter *GG*), Vol.III, pp.108, 567; Vol.IV, p.53; Vol.VI, p.461 and 'Statistical Register of Queensland' for the years 1862-1866 published in the *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly*.
 30. In-Letter 116, dated 10 January 1867, COL/A87, QSA.
 31. *Statistical Register of Queensland*, 1866 p.44, 1867, pp. 43, 45 & 55; *GG* 1867 p.469.
 32. It appears a significant determinate in McDonald's decision was his wife's very poor health over the period 1880-81, during which time he took leave to visit her under care in Brisbane, as well as six weeks leave to take her to Victoria. Alice McDonald died in

Brisbane on 8 September 1881, and was buried at Toowong Cemetery. John McDonald died in Brisbane, Queensland, on 18 June 1895, and was buried in the family plot at the Toowong Cemetery.

33. In-Letter 116, dated 10 January 1867, COL/A87, QSA.
34. In-Letter 116, dated 10 January 1867, COL/A87, QSA.
35. In-Letter 1254, dated 14 May 1867, COL/A91, QSA.
36. In-Letter 3388, [dated November?] of 1867, COL/A99, QSA.
37. Ibid.
38. In-Letter 2832, dated 31 October 1867, COL/A97, QSA.
39. In-Letter 64 of 1868, dated December 1867, COL/A100, QSA. McDonald again brought to the attention of the Colonial Secretary and the 'officer in charge of military detachment Brisbane', the 'clandestine correspondence' between prisoners on St Helena and their friends in Brisbane through the aegis of the Military Guard serving at the Penal Establishment. In-Letter 1406, dated 11 May 1868, COL/A105, QSA.
40. In-Letter 1856, 'Military', dated 16 January 1868, COL/A107, QSA.
41. In-Letter 337, dated 1 February 1868, COL/A101, QSA.
42. In-Letter 610, dated 3 March 1868, COL/A102, QSA.
43. In-Letter 1854, 'Military', dated 17 June 1868, attached with In-Letter 1910 of 1868, COL/A107, QSA.
44. In-Letter 1854, 'Military', dated 17 June 1868, attached with In-Letter 1910 of 1868, COL/A107, QSA.
45. In-Letter 1910, 'Visiting Justice St Helena', dated 22 June 1868, COL/A107, QSA.
46. In-Letter 1855, 'Military', dated 16 June 1868 (and attached letter from Visiting Justice Barron, dated 6 June 1868), COL/A107, QSA.
47. McDonald had one last opportunity to decry the conduct of the soldiers of the Military Guard when he was called in August 1869 to give evidence before the Select Committee inquiring into the expenditure and the management of St Helena. *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly*, 1869, Vol.1, p.876.
48. Ibid., p.885.
49. It had been earlier expected that the Brisbane 50th detachment was to depart for Sydney en route for England on 27 February, but this was delayed a fortnight. *BC* 27 February 1869, p.5.
50. *BC* 11 March 1869, p.2.
51. *BC* 11 March 1869, p.2 and *Gympie Times*, 18 March 1869.
52. One example of an Imperial officer serving the colonial Queensland Government in the late 1860s into the 1870s, was Lieutenant George Hope Verney, 74th Regiment of Foot, see *GG* Vol.IX, p.971, Vol.X, pp.83 & 365.
53. *Argus* (Melbourne), 9 January 1869, p.4; 11 January 1869, p.4; 14 January 1869, p.5. Major-General Chute arrived in Sydney on 12 January, and departed for Auckland on 14 January. *SMH* 13 January 1869, p.4 and 15 January 1869, p.4.
54. Correspondence with the New Zealand Commissioners relative to the Employment of Imperial Troops: . . . No.2', *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand*: Vol.1. Legislative, Political, and Native: 1870, pp.4-5 of A.-No.9.
55. Chief Secretary's Office: GRG 24, Series 51, Special List No. 172. State Records of South Australia.