



Warminster Troop of The Wilts. Yeomanry Cavalry

Entertainment At East Knoyle 1860

Tuesday last will be a day long remembered by the inhabitants of East Knoyle. H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP, is Lieutenant of the Warminster Troop of the Royal Wilts Yeomanry Cavalry, and as this body is not likely to be called out for their usual eight days' drill this year, that gentleman, with his well-known liberality, conceived the idea of inviting the members of his troop to spend the day at East Knoyle, the residence of his mother and brother (A. Seymour, Esq.), which idea was carried out in a most satisfactory and liberal manner on Tuesday.

Knoyle House is very pleasantly situated amidst scenery of the most diversified nature. A fine lawn adjoins the front of the mansion, on which 14 members of the Salisbury Rifle Corps Band discoursed sweet music, and the beautiful walks were promenaded in the morning by ladies and gentlemen who had received invitations to be present, and who evidently preferred the strains of music to the smell of gunpowder.

Meanwhile the troop proceeded to the target ground, the site for which was at the foot of a hill, but this situation did not shelter it from a strong easterly wind, which doubtless had a marked effect on the precision of the aim. The rustics, most of whom we are informed, have never seen a troop of living soldiers before, wended their way in throngs to the target ground in their holiday attire, all work being suspended for the day.

The firing commenced about half past 12, and continued without interruption till about three o'clock. A mound had been erected a little to the left of the target, behind which two of the troop were placed, and by a code of signals, made know to the competitors the results of their shots. The signals were as follow: A white flag when the ball struck outside the target; a blue flag when the centre of the ring was touched; and a red and white flag when the bull's eye was struck. A red flag waved above the mound was the signal for them to desist from firing; and a white flag waved in a similar manner denoted that all was right, and that they might "shoot on."

The first prize was won by Private Howe, who scored 7; Troop Quarter- Master Carpenter, and Privates Pope and Aplin scored 6 each, and an equal sum of money was divided amongst them; also to Privates Rickards and Godwin, who scored 5 marks each. The first five rounds were fired at a distance of 150 yards from the target;

and an additional round was afterwards fired at 200 yards distance

Captain Sandford, of Ninehead House (who was dressed in the uniform of the Taunton Rifle Corps) officiated as conductor, and was assisted by Ensign Devenish of the Dorchester Rifle Corps, Colour-Sergeant Belling of the Shaftsbury Rifle Corps, was also present in uniform.

Amongst the ladies and gentlemen on the ground we noticed, Lieutenant H.D. Seymour, Esq., Alfred Seymour, Esq., Gordon, Esq., and Mrs. Gordon (Wincombe Park), Captain Sandford, Hon. John Arundel, H. Bennett, Esq., (Shaftesbury), William Clay, Esq., (Pitt House), R. Graham, Esq., W. Matthews, Esq., (Gillingham), John Lock, Esq., (Chicklade), John Davis, Esq., (Lieutenant of the Hindon Troop), John Ravenhill, Esq., Captain Grove (Fern House), Captain Wyndham and the Misses Wyndham, Ensign Sinkins (of the Frome Rifle Corps), Rev. Mr. Glyn and Mrs. Glyn (Melbury), Rev. C. Morgell, Mrs. and the Misses Morgell, Rev. C. Tower (Chillmark), Rev. S. B. Ward and Miss Ward (Teffont Rectory), Miss Fane, Mrs. Archdeacon Hony and family, &c &c.

The precision of aim, as we before observed, was much affected by a strong easterly wind, coupled with the fact that the men used, for the first time, the Enfield Rifle; but notwithstanding these drawbacks, the firing, on the whole, was very good. The prizes amounted to several sums of money, which were afterwards distributed to the successful competitors.

The men were then marched back to Knoyle House, where the band played an appropriate air as they passed in marching order. They then proceeded to "Cloud Park." where they saddled their horses and went through their drill, the band playing at intervals. Here the scene was especially interesting. The sun shining in his May-day splendour; the horses manoeuvring at the will of their riders; the throngs of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen; the martial strains of the excellent band; and last, though not least, the singing of the birds, all united to make this event one of long – cherished remembrance.

The ground selected for the drilling was very uneven; but their various movements were executed with considerable skill. The men were capitally mounted, and great satisfaction was expressed at their general appearance. One accident, which was fortunately unattended with any serious consequences, befell private J. Sly, whose horse fell with him whilst the troop were wheeling into three sections; neither man nor horse were much the worse for their tumble, and they speedily rejoined the troop and went through the remaining evolutions.

After drilling about an hour the party proceeded to a very spacious and commodious marquee, which had been erected on the lawn in front of the (till now) deserted mansion called "Cloud House." Here a very elegant repast had been provided; and after their morning's exposure to the bracing air, the appetites, of the troop were not of the most moderate kind, and the viands quickly disappeared to be replaced by other, perhaps, of a more tempting kind. The champagne and other wines were excellent and abundant.

Mr. Danby Seymour presided at the centre of the table, the head of which was occupied by Captain Sandford, faced by Mr. Alfred Seymour. During the dinner the band played several popular airs.

After the removal of the cloth, Mr. D. Seymour gave the usual loyal and patriotic toasts, which were - as usual on such occasions - drunk with acclamation.

For the "Bishop and Clergy." the Rev. John Wyndham, Rector of Sutton Mandeville, briefly responded. The Chairman next proposed the "Army and Navy of Great Britain," which was briefly responded to by Captain GROVE, who proposed the healths of Mr. D. and Mr. Alfred Seymour (Loud applause.)

Mr. Danby Seymour, in acknowledging the compliment in behalf of himself, said he had been for many years connected with this troop, and he was very happy to see them here today. He should if an opportunity offered later in the evening, make a few observations upon their corps in general, therefore, he would only now repeat that he was happy to see them, and was exceedingly glad to find their numbers had considerably augmented. (Cheers.)

Mr. Alfred Seymour also humorously responded. He said, although he had not the honour of belonging to the corps of Yeomanry, a troop of which had been exercising here to-day, he belonged to a sister troop in a neighbouring county. Although he appeared before them with the faded honours of gold upon him (laughter), he confessed he had serious misgivings when the uniform was put out for him; for he feared, like most other things

that had been laid up for a time, that they had a most inveterate habit of growing too small. (Laughter.)

He was happy, however, to say that these misgivings had been entirely overcome, and after a violent struggle he had succeeded in putting on his uniform. (Cheers.) he congratulated them on their general appearance and also on the number of recruits they had. They had performed their evolutions remarkably well; and he doubted not, in another year, when they might be called out for a permanent duty, they would make not only a prominent, but as effective a body of men as they had appeared to be to-day. (Cheers.)

For the "Lord Lieutenant and Magistracy." Mr. Raven-Hill appropriately responded, observing of the former, that he believed, if they read the History of England during the last half century, they would find his name conspicuous on all occasions in promoting the advancement of the people of this country.

As a magistrate he had much pleasure in attending this meeting, for he had always considered the Yeomanry to form part of the civil forces of this country, and had, in former times, materially assisted to maintain peace and order. Although, since 1829, their services had happily not been required, they had always been in a state of efficiency, and always as ready to do their duty as they were on that occasion. (Cheers.)

They heard a great deal about the threatened invasion of this country: but whether that event ever took place or not, it behoved every man, whether his abilities were great or small – whether his strength was large or little – to do all he could to place his country in a proper state of defence. (Hear, hear.)

We always held out the right hand of fellowship to foreigners; and while we did this we ought to be able to meet them under any circumstances; if they came as friends we should be glad to see them; but if they come as enemies we should very well know how to deal with them. (Cheers.)

The Chairman, in eulogistic terms, then proposed the health of their able and gallant Captain. The Marquis of Bath. He (Mr. Seymour) would also propose in connection with the toast the health of the British corps. (Cheers.) He thought he might also appropriately call their attention to the present state of the Yeomanry of this country. He claimed that the Yeomanry stood out at the head of the British volunteers. (Cheers.) They had obtained a name which had been handed down from a very early period of English history. The British Yeomanry had been the strength and the backstay of this country ever since the Saxons had obtained superiority over the Romans. It was at Crecy and Poitiers that the British Yeomanry won the battle. Since that time they had raised this country to the pre-eminence which it now enjoyed.

By the term British Yeomanry was meant the great middle classes of this country, united with the upper classes, and in good fellowship with the lower ones. They had by their labour put by their savings, and attained an independence, and had left an independence to their families, and had thus contributed materially to the prosperity of their country.

It was by these savings of individual labour that the fortunes of the greatest capitalists had been made; it was by that steady, firm, and determined purpose of laying by for the future, that commerce had been extended to the most remote parts of the world, and the English name was revered throughout it.

The British Yeomanry (a name which they had arrogated to themselves) had a very great trust committed to them, which he had no doubt they would faithfully perform. It was not only their eight days' drill which would enable them to quell some such little disturbance as took place in 1829, but anybody who looked at them would assign them a much bigger post than this, for they were the employers of labour throughout the agricultural parts of the country. (Hear, hear.) They were, therefore, a most important element in this country; and being so, he thought they ought to make a grand struggle to maintain that position. He regretted to see, amongst other measures of the Government in the present year, that a slight had been cast upon the Yeomanry, as if it were not worth while to put them into the Army Estimates.

Some explanations might be tendered on this point; it might be said that one volunteer corps ought not to receive more than another, and he confessed that this was a very feasible argument. The British Yeomanry, notwithstanding, ought not to be overlooked, and he would charitably suppose that other volunteer corps, being younger than their own, would require more assistance from the public purse, and also more drill. The claims of the Yeomanry ought, in his opinion, to be reviewed; for if they were ignored this year, it might afford a pretext for their being ignored altogether in the future. (Cheers.) He thought the volunteer movement

was a most opportune one; for now that steam had made such progress, our shores were not in that state of immunity which had been enjoyed for so long a time. But although science might show us the means to invasion, it would also show us the means of defence. (Cheers). The rifle was the weapon of present day; and it was the weapon we must use not for offence, but for defence. (Hear, hear.)

On one side we had unbridled democracy, and on the other unbridled despotism; and we must hold the balance between the two with our rifles – (cheers) – and we must show them that we can be beaten without subservience. The volunteer movement at the present time had called into existence that energy that was in existence before; and when they saw such a large body of men who, in a few short months, had offered their services to their country, and at a great sacrifice of time, and who would probably in time make the first riflemen of the world – it was proof that peace had not rendered us warlike, nor had health rendered us effeminate. It showed that we were ready at a call to unite ourselves together as one man for the defence of our country (Cheers.) Let them show that they were a simple type of that important phase in humanity, the British Yeomanry; let them show that, small as they were, they represented the great body of Yeomanry who joined in their feelings and sentiments. (Cheers.)

The Hon. and gallant gentleman concluded a most effective speech by proposing for their acceptance “The British Yeomanry,” coupled with the name of their beloved captain, the Marquis of Bath. (The toast was drunk with the most unqualified enthusiasm.)

The “Health of the Volunteers” was then given, coupled with the name of Captain Sandford, Ensign Sinkins (of the Frome Rifle Corps), and Cornet Devenish.

Captain Sandford briefly returned thanks, and begged to propose a toast for their acceptance which he was sure would be received most cordially. The lady whose health he was about to propose possessed one of the highest titles a woman could possess, for she was not only the best of mothers, but the best of neighbours, he would give them the health of Mrs. Seymour (Loud and continuous applause)

Mr. Danby Seymour briefly but appropriately acknowledged the compliment which had been paid to his mother. The names of the successful competitors were then read over in the order detailed above, after which their healths were proposed by the Chairman, and acknowledged by them.

Captain Sandford observed that private Rickards and Aplin were pupils of his.

The health of the Commander of the Corps (the Marquis of Aylesbury) was then eulogistically proposed by the Chairman, and drank with musical honours.

Lieutenant Davis proposed the health of Lieutenant Danby Seymour, which was acknowledged by that gentleman.

The Chairman then gave the health of the Recruits, coupling with the toast the name of private Card, who, in responding, said he had served Her Majesty for 20 years, and had recently joined the corps, where he hoped to do his duty so long as God spared him health and strength. (Cheers.)

“The Ladies” was then proposed, and humorously responded to by Mr. Alfred Seymour.

The “Town of Warminster” was proposed by Mr. JOHN RAVENHILL; the health of Sergeant-Major Pattison; the health of Cornet Barton, who was, unfortunately, prevented from attending, he being in Weymouth; the health of Captain Jacobs and the Salisbury Band, with many thanks for their services. And other complimentary toasts having been given, the company, after singing the National Anthem, separated, Tea and Coffee were provided at “Cloud House” for such of the company as felt inclined for the refreshing beverage, and thus ended a day which will, doubtless, in pleasing remembrance by all who partook of its pleasure.

We cannot omit making special reference to the Salisbury Rifle Corps band, which have attained such a state of efficiency as would not disgrace a band of much longer standing, and composed of professionals.

They performed a selection of first-class music with the greatest precision and with excellent taste, and came in for a large share of attraction during the day.

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