A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
ARMY EMERGENCY RESERVE, THE TERRITORIAL
ARMY AND THEIR MEDICAL SERVICES

BY

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There is a history in all men’s lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceas’d,
The which observ’d, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.

King Henry IV, Part 2, III, i, 80.

Not all—and perhaps very few—of those who have joined the Army Emergency Reserve or the Territorial Army are aware of the long train of events which has gone to make these forces what they are today. Each has a long and honourable history and before coming to a description of their medical services it is desirable to know something of their evolution. In brief, then, the Army Emergency Reserve evolved from the Militia, through the Special Reserve and later the Supplementary Reserve, while the Territorial Army had as its predecessors the Volunteers, the Yeomanry and the Territorial Force.

HISTORY OF THE MILITIA

Militia is a term generally used for organized military forces which are not professional in character and not permanently employed, the Latin derivation obviously being from miles, a soldier, militia, military service. All ancient armies with the exception of the personal guards of their leaders—which were the prototypes of regular or standing armies—were militias or national levies, remaining under arms for the period of the war, and returning to their civil employment when the war or campaign ended. In Western Europe the tribal militia system developed into feudalism. The nobles or knights spent a considerable proportion of their time in the practice of the warlike arts and constituted the officer class. Their tenantry—the rank and file—were only obliged to give a certain number of days’ war service a year and no more.

In England the prototype of the militia was the Fyrd, also known as the General Levy. This was a force originated by King Alfred and continued by successive dynasties. Its function was to defend the realm against foreign invaders and also to suppress civil insurrection. In discharging the latter function it was repeatedly called out between 1066 and 1204 to suppress internal rebellion or to carry out border warfare against the Scots and Welsh. The
levy of each shire was first commanded by its alderman and after the time of the Conquest by the Sheriff. Every able-bodied free-man between the ages of 15 and 60 was liable for service.

After the Norman Conquest, King William I introduced the Feudal Levy, service in which depended upon tenure of land under the King as feudal lord. The holders-in-chief of large military fiefs from the Crown were the earls or barons, who in turn divided their domains into smaller military fiefs, the holders of which had the same obligations as the great tenants. These obligations were to attend the King at their own expense, on horseback and in armour, with their retainers. The knights on horseback served under the Feudal Levy, while the infantry were either the retainers of these knights, coming from the General Levy, or were raised by contract. The Feudal Levy was employed for service in continental wars, but was discontinued during the Commonwealth and abolished during the Restoration. Liability to service in the General Levy, however, has never been abolished.

In 1372 an Act of Parliament regulated the scope and limits of military service within the Kingdom, the cost to be borne by parishes and counties. Military service abroad, however, was chargeable to the Crown. Men and material for military service were raised by "Assizes of Arms," "Commissions of Musters" and "Commissions of Array." The Commissioners registered persons liable for service, sorted them into bands and trained and exercised them annually at the charge of the county. Hence the origin of the expression "train" or "trained bands." It is also interesting to note that the Commissioners of Musters became Lieutenants of counties, so appointed in 1549 by Edward VI. They were later made Lord-Lieutenants by Queen Mary and after the Restoration were appointed as Statutory Officers for the Militia, with the privilege of appointing officers but without any over-all control, this being vested in the King. Thus the General Levy became reorganized as the Militia, which had an obligation to carry out fourteen days' annual training, the cost being borne by the local authority. For nearly a century the Militia remained upon this footing, the supreme command being exercised by the Crown, but every precaution being taken by Parliament that this command should not be exercised in any unconstitutional manner. The Militia was, in fact, regarded as the army of the State, as distinguished from the Standing Army which was raised in 1661 and which was very much the King's personal army.

The Act of 1662, organizing the Militia, followed the old law requiring owners of property to furnish mounted and foot soldiers in proportion to the value of their property. In 1757 this was altered and each county was required to provide a certain number of men known as "The Quota." This total quota was subdivided down to parishes and each parish had to supply its quota by ballot. Exemptions were permitted in certain cases. Men chosen by ballot were also allowed to provide substitutes and volunteers were accepted. In 1852, however, the system was changed and the Militia became a volunteer force with the ballot kept only in reserve, either in case the quota was not filled by voluntary enlistment or in case of imminent national danger.
The rebellion of 1745 revealed grave inefficiency in the Militia, but not till 1757 was the force reorganized with a fixed period of service of three years and an age liability of from 18 to 45. In 1805 it was affiliated to the Line for the purpose of recruitment, and in 1813 nearly 100,000 militiamen joined the Regular Army. After the Napoleonic Wars the Militia fell almost into abeyance, but during the Crimean War it was again embodied, serving at home and also in Mediterranean garrisons, thus freeing regular troops. In addition it contributed over 30,000 officers and men to the Line.

In 1871 control was removed from Lord-Lieutenants of counties and vested wholly in the Crown, and in 1877 its officers were made subject at all times to military law. In 1881 it virtually became part of the Regular Army. It maintained its own reserve and special service sections, and this reserve could supply to the Regular Army in emergency one-half of the establishment of the Medical Staff Corps and different proportions to other corps.

This close affiliation led to what might have been expected. There was an increase of recruitment into the Regular Army and a gradual loss of the Militia character of the force, despite the fact that many Militia units served as such in the South African War.

When Lord Haldane was Secretary of State for War, one of the results of his reorganization of the Army was the passage of the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907. Under this Act the Militia was converted into the Special Reserve. This was a new branch of the Army Reserve which could also be joined by men who had not previously served in the Regular forces and its function was to supply drafts in the field to the Regular Army. In the 1914-1918 war the Special Reserve sent over two million officers and other ranks as drafts to the infantry alone.

In 1921 the title of Special Reserve was altered to that of Militia by the Territorial Army and Militia Act, but except for certain officers who had been commissioned before 5th August, 1914, and who were still retained, the Militia was not maintained in Great Britain or Northern Ireland.

In 1924 a new force, called the Supplementary Reserve, was formed under the Reserve Forces Act of 1882 and the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907. Although known as the Supplementary Reserve, it was in fact Militia. The Supplementary Reserve of Officers was designed for the following purposes:

(a) To ensure that all units, services and departments of the Regular forces should be complete in officers on partial or general mobilization.

(b) To maintain establishments in the Regular forces in war.

(c) To provide officers for Supplementary Reserve units.

The desiderata for other ranks of the Supplementary Reserve were very similar.

During the First World War conscription was introduced in 1916 by the passage of successive Military Service Acts. The call-up was, however,
suspended in November, 1918, and the Acts came to an end on 31st August, 1921. After having been in abeyance for eighteen years, conscription was reintroduced in 1939, some months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In 1947 conscription was continued under the National Service Act. The reasons for this continuance were (1) shortage of manpower and the need for a balance between industrial and agrarian requirements and those of the Services; (2) the failure to obtain a sufficient number of long-service volunteers; (3) the advent of new weapons and the power of delivering surprise attacks which allow no nation time to build up its forces.

Service was first limited to one year with the Regular Army and six years' part-time service. In 1949 this was changed to eighteen months' whole-time service and four years' part-time service. In June, 1951, whole-time service was extended to two years with three and a half years' part-time service.

Part-time service meant service either in the Supplementary Reserve or the Territorial Army. Officers and men who had completed their eighteen months or two years in the Regular Army were posted in their own arm of the service to Territorial Army units which were reasonably close to their homes. If this were not possible, or as Territorial Army units came up to their full strength, postings were made to the Supplementary Reserve. The Supplementary Reserve, in consequence, began to grow in strength and by the end of 1952 the total strength of the Army Emergency Reserve, as it had then become, was 91,809.

The latest chapter in a history stretching back to Saxon times was begun in September, 1952. On 6th September of that year Army Order 114 stated:

"Whereas it is provided by Sections 11 and 27 of the Army Reserve Act of 1950 that subject to the provisions of that Act it shall be lawful for Her Majesty by Order Signified under the hand of a Secretary of State to make, revoke and vary orders with respect to the government, discipline and pay of the Army Reserve.

"And whereas by order of the 30th day of September, 1924, His late Majesty King George V was pleased to establish a branch of the Army Reserve known as a Supplementary Reserve for the Regular Army.

"Now therefore, Her Majesty in exercise of the power conferred upon her by Sections 11 and 27 of the Army Reserve Act, 1950 . . . is pleased to order that the Supplementary Reserve shall in future be designated by the name 'Army Emergency Reserve.'"

By Army Order 115 of the same date the name of the Supplementary Reserve of Officers, a branch of the Regular Army Reserve of Officers, was to be designated the "Army Emergency Reserve of Officers."

The Army Emergency Reserve is divided into four categories, I(A) and II(A) and I(B) and II(B). All persons in Category A are required to carry out annual training in peace time. Those in Category B do not have this obligation. All volunteer and National Service officers and other ranks are posted to A except when specially notified to the contrary by the War Office.
All persons in Category A belong automatically to II(A) unless they voluntarily decide to undertake further liability by joining I(A). The liabilities of service in II(A) are as follows:

(1) To be called out for permanent service when the Royal Army Reserve, or any part of it, is called out by proclamation, and in that event to serve in any part of Her Majesty’s Land Forces in any part of the world; and

(2) To be called out on permanent service in the United Kingdom without proclamation in defence of the United Kingdom against actual or apprehended attack.

Any person who wishes to join I(A) undertakes the following additional liability:

(3) To undertake in writing the liability to be called out for permanent service outside the United Kingdom when warlike operations are in preparation or in progress.

**HISTORY OF THE VOLUNTEERS AND YEOMANRY**

Voluntary military societies existed in various parts of England as early as in Tudor times. An interesting charter was granted by Henry VIII to “The Fraternity or Guild of St. George: Maistars and Rulars of the Science of Artillery as aforesaid rehearsed for long-bowes, crosbowes and hand gonnas.” This guild later became the Honourable Artillery Company.

The idea of a large organized volunteer force, however, had its origin in the Militia Bill of 1757, which was amended in 1758 to allow Militia captains to accept volunteers instead of the militiamen which the parish or county were expected to furnish. This acceptance of volunteers for the Militia, or the buying off of a militiaman furnished by the parish, was recognized by Dickens, as is shown by the following passage from *Dombey and Son*: “If he could have bought him off, or provided a substitute, as in the case of an unlucky drawing for the militia, he would have been glad to do so on liberal terms.” By 1778 the volunteers were still voluntary substitutes for the militiamen, but had organized themselves into separate companies of the Militia units. Soon after this, volunteer corps began to form themselves independently of the Militia, but were disbanded in 1783 and re-formed in 1794 in consequence of the French Revolutionary Wars. By the Act of 1794 the volunteers were exempted from service in the Militia.

The fortunes of the volunteers continued to fluctuate in direct ratio to threats from abroad, especially from the French, until a letter from the Secretary of State for War addressed to Lord-Lieutenants of counties on 12th May, 1859, authorized the passing of the Volunteer Act. This Act provided, amongst other things, for the permanent maintenance of the Volunteer Force in times of peace and for the calling out of that force provided invasion was apprehended, even though the enemy had not made an actual appearance. Although only designed
for protection of the country against invasion, during the Boer War one-third of the Volunteer Force served in South Africa of their own volition.

A parallel volunteer organization of mounted troops for the home defence of the United Kingdom was created in 1761, but was not properly organized till 1794. This was the Yeomanry, who were formed on a county basis, and both officers and other ranks provided their own horses. The strength of the Yeomanry fell after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but during the Boer War 3,000 went to South Africa as mounted rifles, known as the Imperial Yeomanry. To these 3,000 were added 32,000 recruits.

After the Boer War came the usual period of apathy, and in 1904 a Royal Commission emphasized the fact that organization for war was almost nonexistent. In 1906 the military forces of the Crown comprised the first line or Regular Army, the second line or Militia, and the third line composed of Volunteers and Yeomanry. The third line was separately organized from the other two and, owing to a disbelieve in its value, was given no permanent place in any scheme for using the available military resources of the nation in the event of war. This was the situation which faced Lord Haldane and his advisers when they set about the task of reorganizing the British Army in 1906. The consequence of this reorganization was the passage of the Territorial and Auxiliary Forces Act of 1907. Lord Haldane, a Secretary of State for War whose services and foresight in reorganizing the British Army and its reserves on a sound and prudent basis were ill repaid by the British people, among other reforms united the Volunteer Force and the Yeomanry into the Territorial Force, the Yeomanry, however, retaining their old title.

With the passage of this Act the Special Reserve became a part of the first line or Expeditionary Force and the Territorial Force became the second line, organized to be a self-contained army in the same way as the Regular Army. Affiliated to the Territorial Force were Officers' Training Corps and cadet forces, the Haldane plan having as its express object the utilization of every sort of contribution to national defence. The original Territorial Force was intended for home service only, but the Act provided for individuals to volunteer their services overseas and, in fact, during the 1914-1918 war practically every Territorial Force unit volunteered for overseas service and whole Territorial Force divisions fought as such.

This force was organized on a county basis and county Territorial Force Associations were formed for each county under the presidency of the Lord-Lieutenant. The duty of these associations was to raise and equip the men, provide accommodation and generally relieve the units of all responsibility except training. The Secretary of State for War was responsible for training and formed a Territorial Directorate at the War Office for this purpose.

In the 1914-1918 war, fourteen Territorial divisions were overseas in 1915, while by 1918 twenty-one divisions were in various theatres of war and five divisions were constantly on home defence.

At the end of the war demobilization dispersed the Territorial Force, but it had proved its value to such a degree that it was re-formed in 1921 under the
Territorial Army and Militia Act and was henceforth called the Territorial Army. The reorganization which then occurred changed to some extent the terms of service. The old Territorial Force was liable for service in the United Kingdom only, but its members could, if they so desired, volunteer for service overseas.

In 1921 this was changed and the Territorial Army was constituted for Imperial Defence. Every officer and man was required to accept liability for service overseas, but could not be sent overseas until the passing of an Act of Parliament authorizing the dispatch of the Territorial Army abroad. The Territorial Army could only be embodied when the Army Reserve had been called up by Royal Proclamation in case of imminent national danger or great emergency, and the occasion must first be communicated to Parliament.

It was also laid down that if the Territorial Army was sent abroad, its personnel would not be used to supply drafts for the Regular Army, but would serve together as regimental units. If temporary attachments were unavoidable in emergency, the men so attached would be returned to their own units as soon as possible.

Recruiting improved by degrees, fell again in the early 1930's and grew from 1937 onwards when the country at last began to apprehend the threat of another world war. From 1935 onwards a new but gradually increasing commitment was given to the Territorial Army by the formation of Anti-Aircraft Command, almost exclusively manned by the Territorial Army. In 1941 Anti-Aircraft Command had grown to a force of twelve divisions. By the end of the war, Territorial divisions had taken part in every major campaign waged by the British Army.

In 1947 recruiting for the Territorial Army reopened very quietly. Those who volunteered, however, realized that soon the Territorial Army, as they might have known it before the war, would be a thing of the past, as by 1950 the volunteers would largely be diluted if not eventually swamped by the influx of National Service men who were required to complete their obligatory training in the ranks of the Territorial Army. None the less, it is felt that there are sufficient volunteers left to imbue the conscript Territorials with the old spirit of enthusiasm, and there is indeed much today over which the Territorial Army may become enthusiastic. At the end of 1952 the Territorial Army had a strength of 198,785 officers and other ranks, and this continues to increase.

All members of the Territorial Army, both volunteers and National Service men, have the following liabilities:

(1) To be called out on permanent service in an emergency when the Territorial Army or part of it is embodied. When so called out, they are liable to serve in any part of the world.

(2) To be called out on permanent service in the United Kingdom in defence of the United Kingdom against actual or apprehended attack, whether or not the Territorial Army is embodied.
DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGULAR R.A.M.C.

In 1883, Evatt, in one of his many pamphlets, wrote: “During the century and three-quarters that the English Army has existed as a force, it has existed as a series of detached regiments until 1871. . . . Corresponding in every way to the military organization, the medical organization of the service was wholly regimental and remained so until 1873 when the departmental system was introduced.”

In 1853 the Medical Services consisted of a grouping of medical officers commissioned by fours, threes, twos or singly to every battalion or battery in the Army. These officers wore the regimental uniform and were under the command of the battalion commander. In every garrison was a series of small battalion, regimental or battery hospitals, each separate and distinct, where the sick of individual units were treated by the unit medical officer. The Commanding Officer commanded the hospital, which was inspected daily by a subaltern.

The nursing was done by a regimental hospital sergeant and a certain number of privates of each battalion who were placed by the Commanding Officer for duty in the wards.

The hospital sergeant was the executive agent of the military commander to maintain discipline and see that the doctor’s orders were carried out, as the doctor had no power of command over the sergeant, orderlies or patients. The same system applied to the Militia and Volunteers on embodiment.

If the regimental surgeon went sick or on leave he was replaced by a staff doctor, of whom there was a pool of 50-60. In 1854 there were in England no more than three general hospitals; all the sick in each garrison were divided among the small regimental hospitals.

During the Crimean War the system of small regimental hospitals still obtained. There were no bearer companies, no field hospitals, no hospital ships and behind all was the chaos of Scutari. As a result of this, the Herbert Commission of 1857-8 introduced some improvements. It gave the doctors rank and pay; it founded the germ of a hospital corps; it formed two general hospitals to be training schools for war work, but it still maintained the error of maintaining the regimental hospital in peace.

It was not until after Sedan and Sadowa that progress was made. In 1873, due to the work of Sidney Herbert, later Lord Herbert of Lea, medical officers were removed from regiments, and staff and regimental medical officers were unified in the Army Medical Department; regimental hospitals were abolished and replaced by Central Garrison Hospitals; the Army Hospital Corps was formed for the performance of all hospital duties and the medical officers were made responsible for the control and management of hospitals in peace and war.

In 1877 command of the Hospital Corps was given to the doctors. The regimental medical officer was given sixteen regimental stretcher-bearers and a new organization, the bearer company, the forerunner of the field ambulance, was formed, four being allotted to a corps. Evatt, with great foresight, said:
The A.E.R., the T.A., and their Medical Services

"In any future wars it will be the most honoured and valued unit in the Army."

Behind the bearer companies were to be field hospitals, twenty-five to a corps. We now see the kernel of the organization which is with us in modern times.

In 1898 the Army Medical Department and the Army Hospital Corps were unified in the R.A.M.C.

After the South African War the arrangements for the care of the sick and wounded were examined and reported upon by Royal Commissions and inter-departmental and War Office committees. Many changes in organization, training and administration took place. A new nomenclature of administrative appointments was introduced which remains with us to the present day.

Between the years 1904 and 1906 it was found that the Regular R.A.M.C. was quite inadequate in strength to provide the necessary medical units for an expeditionary force. In the South African War each brigade had one bearer company and one field hospital and each division one field hospital of 100 beds. These units were independent of one another. In 1901 a War Office committee recommended that the functions of a bearer company and the field hospital be combined in one unit—the field ambulance—which would cease to be a brigade unit. This came about in 1905.

In 1907, following reports from American observers of the Russo-Japanese War, a fresh review of the adequacy of the medical services to evacuate sick and wounded from the field ambulances to stationary and general hospitals on the line of communications took place and the question of providing sufficient beds in military hospitals at home was considered.

Because of this and similar reviews at subsequent dates and the steps which were taken in consequence, not only was no reproach ever levelled at the R.A.M.C. in either the First or Second World War, but the extreme efficiency of the Corps in carrying out its duties was highly praised by all Army commanders.

(To be continued)
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