

Deepdale Rifle Ranges



A Deerbolt Shooting Team

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There has been a long tradition of military activity at Deepdale, associated with the military camp at Deerbolt. For many years the camp occupied the high ground at Deerbolt, with the nearby part of Deepdale being used for rifle and other weapons training.

The earliest mention of the Deepdale Rifle Ranges is in the Teesdale Mercury of 25th May 1864, though the ranges seem to have been well established by that date. There were regular training events for enlisted and voluntary troops, including the South Durham Militia and also target shooting competitions that were open to all comers, with prizes awarded for the best marksmen. Large crowds gathered

for these competitions, often at Whit Sunday and Christmas, regularly reported in the Mercury. The 1864 competition was the “annual contest for the Silver Medal”, which suggests that the event was of long standing. It was won by Private Ainsley.

The ranges occupied the flat land along the valley bottom, close to Barnard Castle. The target area can still be seen, consisting of a sheltered bunker and a small stone building with a more recent concrete roof. These had become overgrown with trees, but these have recently been cleared. The shooters fired from positions 150, 200, 300, 500 and 600 yards downstream. The firing lines can still be identified, just visible as lines of brick foundations across the valley floor. The 500 yard position is better preserved, since it is raised on a small bank to allow line-of-sight to the targets. In those days, the valley bottom must have been kept clear of trees and shrubs.

Musket balls, powder flasks, rifle bullet casings from Martini-Henry rifles and several mortar-type shells have been found in the ranges area over the years. There is a “Danger Live Firing” sign attached to a tree, much further upstream on the north side of the Beck.

After the Second World War, the ranges continued in use, and there were sometimes conflicts about public access to Deepdale, since the woods were regularly closed when firing was taking place. The Deerbolt Camp was closed in 1972, after which the ranges were also disused.

The title picture is a postcard photograph of a shooting team of the 4th Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry, including Colour-Sergeant Clark, second left, seated, 1907

The plan on the next page is based on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map. The woods have been coloured in green and the becks in blue, for clarity. The red boxed area shows the ranges, with the red arrow showing the direction of firing. The shooting distances in use at that time are on the OS map- the distances used seem to have varied over the years, depending on the weapons in use. "Mantlets", indicated close to the target area, were protective shelters for the people doing the score keeping.

Most of this information comes from the Teesdale Mercury Archive and from the Durham Light Infantry Museum.

The shooting contests seem to have been a popular local event, and were reported in detail in the Mercury. Cash prizes and an interesting range of goods and food were donated by the local gentry and local businesses. On New Year's Day 1879, the ranges were used for a shooting contest which was won by Colour Sergeant Ainsley, who perhaps was the same man that had won in 1863, as a private. He won 9 shillings and a cheese.

The lists of prizes donated and the winners are listed below.

List of donors: (There are some familiar names here.)

The prizes are in pounds, shillings (s) and pence (d).

Major Headlam,	£ 1 1s. (which is one Guinea)
Capt. Watson,	£ 1.
Mr J. Scott	10s
Lieut. Atkinson,	10s.
Lieut. Boarman,	10s.
Rev. T. Witham,	10s.
Rev. F. Brown,	10s.
Mr Watson,	10s.
Mr J. D. Holmes,	10s.
Capt Beamish	10s.
Rev. W. Cumby,	10s.
Mrs. Stanton,	10s.
Rev. J. Erskine,	10s.
Sr. Mitchell,	10s.
Dr. Monro,	5s.
Capt. Pechell,	5s
Mr J. Kirby,	5s.
Mr F. Raine,	5s.
Mr R. J .Dent,	5s.
Mr J. Rudd,	5s.
Mr W. Waistell,	4s.
Mr T. Hough,	4s.
Rev. J. Brockbank.	3s.
Dr. McNanght,	2s. 6d.
Mr J. Lamb,	2s. 6d.
Mr D. Badcock,	2s. 6d.
Mr J. Harris,	2s. 6d.
Mr J. Nixon,	2s. 6d.
Mr R. Barker,	2s. 6d.
Mr E. Angus,	2s. 6d.
Mr J. J. Bailey,	2s.6d .
Mr B. Hepworth,	2s. 6d.
Mr R. C. M. Cooke,	2s. 6d.
Mr Redding,	2s. 6d.
Mr J. Kennedy,	2s. 6d.

List of Shooters, Scores and Prizes.

Col-Sgt. Ainsley,	22 points,	9s. and cheese
Sergt. T. Longstaff,	22,	9s. and sewing machine
Pvt. J . Harwood	22,	9s. tongue and bottle spirit
J. Hogg,	21,	8s 7d. and revolver
J. Tinkler,	20,	8s. 3d. and tongue
J. Baxter,	20,	8s. 5d. and chair
W. Harwood,	19,	7s. 10d. and bottle spirit
R. Donald,	19,	7s. 10d. and teapot
R. Hall,	19,	7s. 10d. and cigar case
R. Harwood,	18,	7s. 6d. and bottle spirit
W. Brass,	18,	7s. 6d. and teapot
H. Down,	18,	7s. 6d. and album
Sergt. W. Knox,	17,	7s. and slippers
Pt. J. Hooker,	17,	7s. and bottle sherry
Sergt. F. Law,	17,	7s. meerschaum pipe
Pt. R. Hooker,	17,	7s. razor and brush
Drill Inst. Darby,	17,	7s. and bottle spirit
Pvt. O. Slater,	16,	6s. 7d. and 2 rabbits
J. Brown,	16,	6s. 7d. and round of beef
T. .Wigham,	16,	6s. 7d. and 2 rabbits
C. Hopper,	15,	6s. 3d. and Christmas loaf
G. White,	15,	6s. 3d. and teapot
F. Clarke,	15,	6s. 3d. and chicken
R. Walker,	14,	5s. 1d. and kettle
J. Stephenson,	13,	5s. 10d. and 1lb tobacco
F. W. Little,	13,	5s. 5d. and bottle whiskey
R. Thompson,	13,	5s. 5d. and 3 lbs. sausages
J. Butter,	13,	5s. 5d. cigarholder and case
Stoddart,	13,	5s.5d. and round of beef
J. Clark,	13,	5s. 5d. and bottle whiskey
T. Borrowdale,	13,	5s. 5d. and ornamental iced cake
J. W Bewick,	12,	5s. and bottle of port
R. Ashmore,	12,	5s. and 1lb. tobacco
H. Clark,	12,	5s. and 1lb. tea
Angus,	11,	4s. 7d. and 1lb. tobacco

Thornton,	9,	3s. 9d. and pipe
F. Kelson,	9,	3s. 9d. and 4lb. tobacco
J. Graham,	8,	3s. 4d. gents tie
W. Goundry,	6,	2s. 6d. and Christmas loaf
J. Jefferson,	5,	2s. and collection of fruit
G. W. Lowes,	5,	2s. and figs
J. Hobson,	4,	1s. 8d. and thread mat:
T. Hobson,	4,	1s. 8d. and 1lb. tea
Q. Brass,	4,	1s. 8d. and 1lb. tea
Parkin,	4,	1s. 8d. and 1 lb . tea
J . Murphy,	2,	10d. and 1 lb. tea
S. Young,	2,	10d. and decanter mat.



Sergeant, 68th Regiment of Foot, later included into the Durham Light Infantry. (Old postcard)



Safe zone under target line (after trees removed)



The safety zone at the target area and stone building (before trees removed)



Mortar-type shell, 20p for scale



Raised shooting position at 500 yards



400 yard position, raised area and brick foundations.