

Belfast Newsletter

Thursday, July 8th, 1886

THE ARMY MILITIA TRAINING

The trainings of the several Irish militia corps has on the whole not been very satisfactory, especially with respect to musketry instruction. It is stated that some of the battalions have not fired a shot for more than two years, whilst others only fire by half-battalion. At Curragh Camp there were so many men to fire that time was an object, and the men were hurried through their rounds weather permitting not being taken into account. A military paper, speaking upon the subject of the training, says "Our correspondent has recently been looking at several militia batteries and battalions out for training in different parts of Ireland. Whilst he praises the turn-out of the men on parade, and also their drill he very properly takes exception to the pernicious system of billets. It cannot be denied, he writes, that the system of billeting soldiers on the people is vexatious and burdensome, and that the morals of townspeople and villagers are vitiated thereby. Army physicians recommend 600 cubic feet of room space per soldier, and this is the standard now demanded by the War Office. Is this the case, or can it possibly be the case, in the ordinary kinds of billets? In many of the billets he visited he found that it was the rule rather than the exception for two men to be in one bed, and the number in each room was far too many. Militia trainings under such conditions he rightly looks upon as valueless, and he inquires why, if the War Office regulations forbid two prisoners to be confined in one cell, militiamen should be subjected to the indignity of sleeping two in a bed."



THE WEST SIDE, "DONNELLY'S HOLLOW."

A CHARACTERISATION OF THE CURRAGH CAMP



Some information on billeted accommodation on the Curragh Camp taken from
“A Characterisation of The Curragh Camp”
By Stephen Coy
Submitted to the University of Edinburgh 2011-12

Accommodation

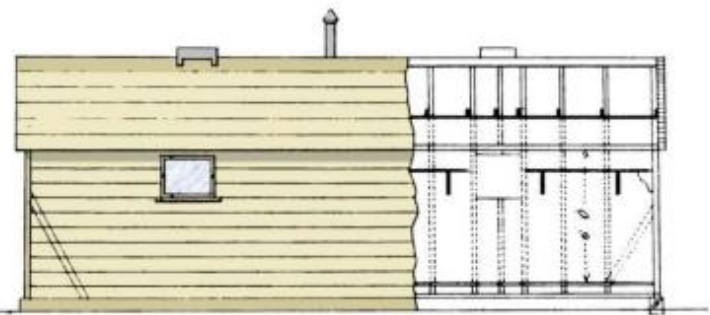
Regardless of the variety of building uses on the camp, the vast majority of huts were just variations of the same unit and “the size common to nearly all huts may be quoted at 40 by 20 feet.”⁴⁵

Figure 8 shows the plan, section and elevation of a typical hut expected to accommodate 25 men.

At just 6 x 12 x 2.4 meters, the huts would have been extremely cramped, offering each soldier an area of just 2.8m² to himself and just over 7m³ of breathing space per person. Soldiers were not only expected to sleep and live in these conditions, but would have to return to the huts after retrieving their food from the cookhouse and eat there also. The full extent of how overcrowded and unsuitable these conditions must have been will become apparent further on when discussing some of

the barrack reforms that occurred not long after the building of the Curragh Camp.

Heating was provided by a “Canadian stove” which would have been located at the centre of the billets while ventilation was provided by two small windows on each of the long elevations, one small window above the entrance on each gable and two vents installed to the ridge of the roof.



ELEVATION AND SECTION

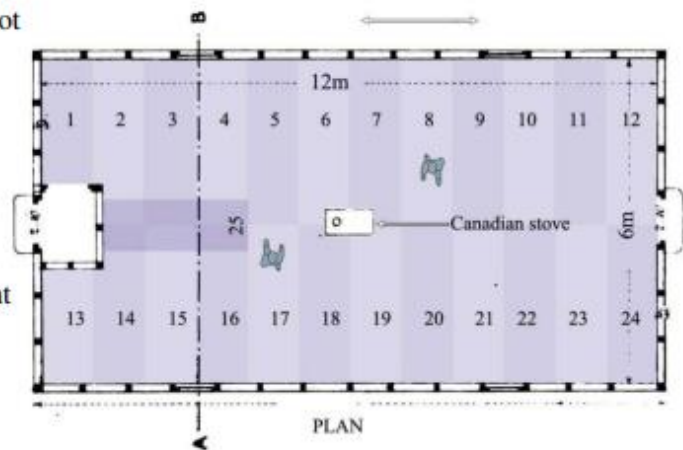
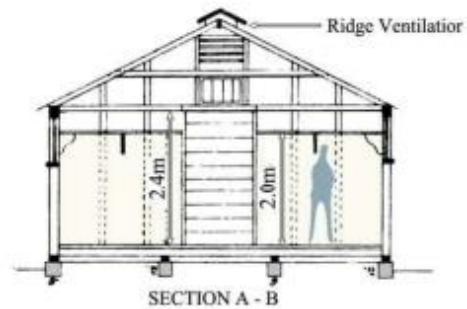
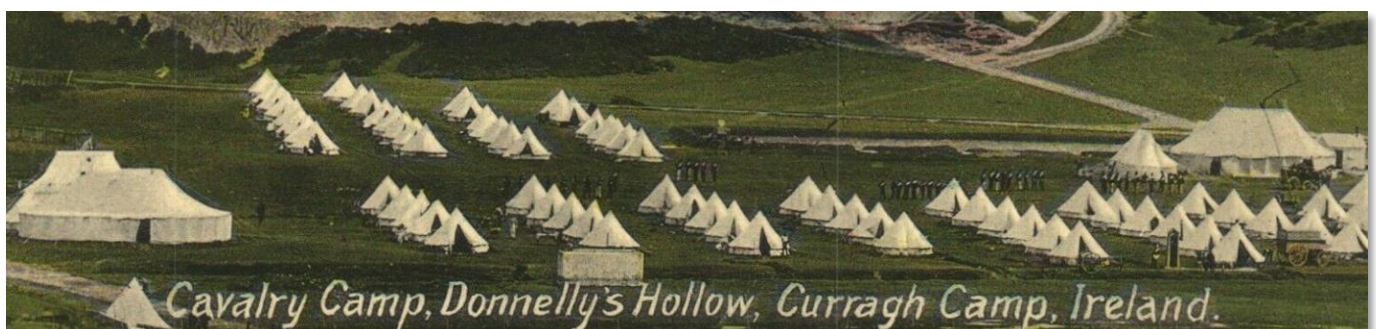
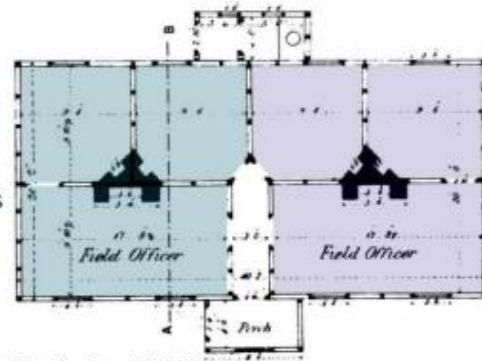


Figure 8 Diagram of typical soldiers accommodation

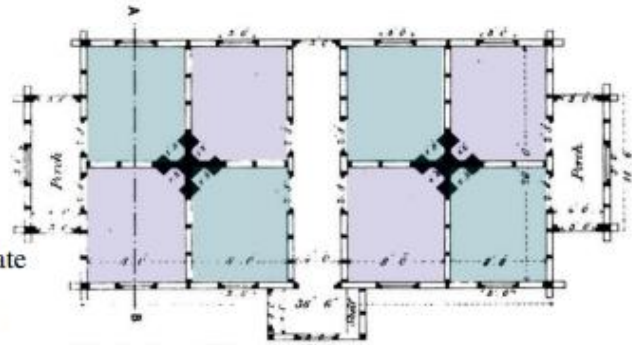


Not all huts were so confined however and a comparison (Figure 9) between the living quarters afforded to the different ranks clearly demonstrates the hierarchical divide present in the British Army during the middle of the 19th century.

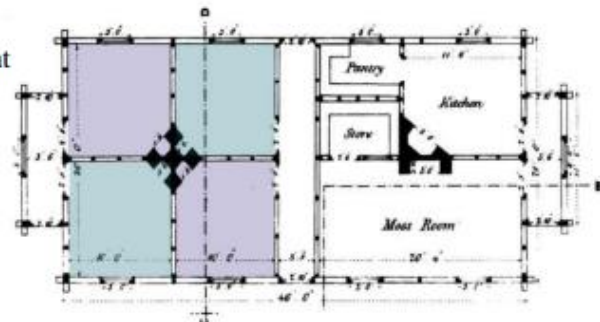
An officer (second class) enjoyed the personal space which would have had to be shared by 4 enlisted soldiers, that being an area of 11m². Despite having to accommodate far fewer men, the N.C.O.'s and officers huts received much more consideration regarding ventilation and heating. Larger and more frequent windows were provided, while brick fireplaces faced directly into each partitioned room. Although far from opulent, it shows with how little regard the conditions of the enlisted soldier were measured. Those enlisted soldiers who wished to get married and were fortunate enough receive permission⁴⁶, were expected to live with their wife and family in one room the same size as that afforded to the officer (second class). Although this might seem inadequate, it was actually an improvement on previous



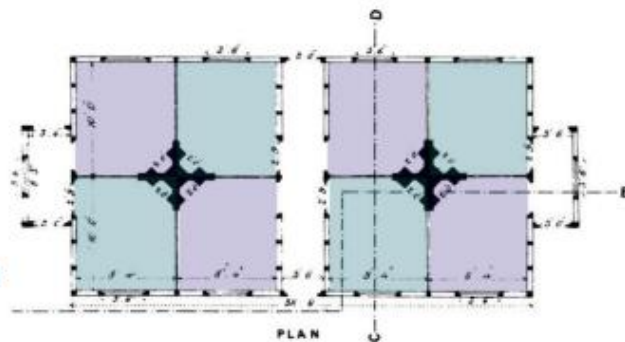
Hut for 2no. Field Officers



Hut for 8no. Officers



Hut for 4no. Staff Sergeants incorporating mess facilities



Hut for 8no. Married Soldiers

Figure 9 Layout of different living quarters according to rank and circumstance

