

MEDIEVAL BERWICK

Berwick has been a garrison town since the Middle Ages because of its strategic position on the Anglo-Scottish Border.

Through the centuries, the town has hosted soldiers of many nationalities.

In 1298, King Edward I installed a garrison of 60 men at arms and 1,000 foot soldiers, including some Gascon mercenaries.

A petition sent to King Edward II on 20th April 1317 relates to the arrival of an Irish soldier of fortune in the town: “The mayor, bailiffs and commons of Berwick greet the King and inform him that John le Irois [“the Irishman”] came to Berwick on the Monday before mid-Lent [March 7th] and sought leave of the Keeper to go to western parts to harass the enemy, and did so, and then returned to Berwick on April 12 with 38 men at arms and 54 hobelars (*light cavalryman*), well equipped, and John and his men are staying in defence of the town up to the date of this letter and still remain.” (*Ancient Petitions*)

Apparently the Irishman had complained that his mercenary men-at-arms all of whom were: “suitably mounted and armed with aketon (*a padded quilted jacket*), hauberk (*a mail shirt*) and bascinet (*open-faced light helmet*)”, were not receiving appropriate pay of 12d a day but were being treated as ordinary hobelars, who were paid only 6d.

The petition asks: “May the King recompense John as one who has deserved a reward, having grieved the enemy to the utmost of his power.”

After the final capture of Berwick in 1482, Edward IV appointed the Earl of Northumberland Warden of the East March and Keeper of the Town and Castle of Berwick. He had a garrison of 600 men, 500 to defend the town and 100 to hold the castle. The soldiers included 300 English archers and a company of Swiss mercenaries. If Berwick was threatened with a siege, the Earl was to bring 1,200 men from Northumberland to support its defence.

THE GARRISON IN THE PERIOD OF THE FLODDEN CAMPAIGN

In 1508, Henry VII required of Sir William Conyers, the Captain of Berwick, that he: “... shall have continually in his retinue 230 able men arrayed for war, vis. 100 “spears [lancers] well horsed and harnessed”, 50 archers on foot, 50 other footmen, 20 gunners, 8 constables and 2 clerks for the watch...”

... within the castle he shall have continually a constable, a priest, a cook, two porters, 32 soldiers and three watchmen...

... In the event of invasion or siege he shall furnish and garnish the town and castle with an additional 400 able soldiers, 200 to be therein before the invasion or siege and 200 within fourteen days thereafter...”

In July 1513, on the eve of the Battle of Flodden, the Lord Captain of Berwick had 500 men under his command to defend the castle and town.

By the 1530s, the number of soldiers had dropped to 152 men and five officers.

MERCENARY SOLDIERS IN TUDOR TIMES

English sovereigns continued to employ foreign mercenaries or “strangers” in Northumberland during the 16th century.

Not all behaved in a professional manner. For example, it was said that the Italians at Morpeth: “do so unreasonably behave themselves that the inhabitants do rather mind to leave the town and seek other dwellings.”

A list produced in 1549 of towns at which “horsemen and footmen lay upon the frontier” included the following “strangers, armed horsemen”:

Captain Andrea at Whittingham and Glanton; Charles de Guava at Little Ryle; Captain Lanciano at Yetlington and Captain Hungarian at Bolton and Lemington

“Strangers, footmen” recorded in Northumberland were: the Alemains at Scremerston and Fenwick; the Irish at Bamburgh; Sir Pero Negro at Haggerston; Captain Ventura at Charlton; and Sir Julian Romero at Rock.

Romero and his men were killed by French and German mercenaries in Scots service when they were taken by surprise at Coldingham in the summer of 1549.

A number of German mercenaries, or “Allemains” were ordered to Berwick from Newcastle in 1560.

THE ELIZABETHAN GARRISON

In the early years of the reign of Elizabeth I there were significant changes to the size and government of the Berwick garrison.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, the garrison was composed of the captain of the town; the captain of the castle with his forty soldiers, ten gunners and thirty watchmen; the marshal, the treasurer with four horse and twelve foot, the porter with six horse and ten footmen, and the master of the ordnance. Then there was the “old ordinary garrison” which comprised two tipstuffs, eight constables, thirty “gunners of the great ordnance”, 140 horsemen, 58 footmen, one trumpeter, one surgeon and twenty-two watchmen.

The “New Orders for the town of Berwick and the garrison of the same”, signed by the Queen in October 1560, increased the size of the garrison to some 1,500 men.

This garrison was divided into two groups: the “old crew called the great retinue”, who came to be known as the “old garrison” and the “new crew called the extraordinary crew”.

The “old garrison” comprised eight constables and thirty gunners, 80 horse and 42 footmen, a surgeon and a trumpeter. The two tipstuffs and 22 watchmen were gone.

The “new crew” was made up of 1,150 soldiers under twelve captains: 345 “armed picks” (lancers), 755 harquebusiers, and 50 gunners of the great ordnance, commanded by twelve captains, twelve petty captains, eleven ensign bearers, eleven drummers, six sergeants, two surgeons, a clerk and seven pensioners.

The “New establishment” also altered the structure of the government of the garrison and the town. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Berwick was governed by two captains: the captain of the castle and the captain of the town. The captains were assisted by a marshal, a treasurer, who was responsible for paying the soldiers at musters, a master porter who held the keys to the town gates, and a master of the ordnance.

From 1560, the two captains were replaced by a single officer with the title of Governor who, together with the marshal, treasurer and porter, formed the Queen's "councillors for the governance and order of Berwick". The Governor of Berwick was also the Lord Warden of the East March.

Under these officers, the garrison was divided among a dozen captains, each commanding a company of soldiers numbering between 50 and 150 men. In addition, there were the horsemen and footmen of the "old garrison".

The 1560 orders prohibited men from Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland and the Bishopric of Durham from serving in the garrison.

Lord Grey, the first Governor of Berwick appointed by Queen Elizabeth, inspected the new garrison in November 1560 and found "many insufficient soldiers" as well as "many skilful, valiant soldiers trained in long service", whom he was required to dismiss because they were born in the northern counties. In fact, he refused to discharge them due, he said, to lack of sufficient replacements.

Almost thirty years later Lord Hunsdon, who was then Governor of Berwick reported that he knew there were still many Northumberland men serving in the garrison.

RULES OF THE GARRISON OF BERWICK 1560 -1577

The soldiers of the garrison were uniformed in the traditional colours of the Tudor monarchs:

Every soldier (was) to have a Jacket of white and green

If there be any soldier of this garrison that is abled & admitted by the captain to take the Queen's wages, and if they have not a Jacket of the Queen's colours white & green and it to wear at all such seasons and times as he shall have summons from the said captain: he or they having no such Jacket and wear it, for the first default to lose 3 day's wages and for one day to be imprisoned, and for the second time to be dismissed of wages

The Rules attempted to curtail some of the vices of the soldiers:

No soldier to use dice or Cards for money but at Christmas

Also if any soldier of this garrison either dice or card for any money or play at Tables but for beer, ale or wine, either by day or by night within this town, as well the players' as also the owners of the said Tables, Cards or dice in whose house they play, they all so offending to be imprisoned by the space of 3 days and whatsoever they have lost and every penny thereof, to be delivered into the hands of the Captain -----except it be within the 20 days of Christmas, or else at any of the gates of the said town, or within the watch house or market place of the Tollbooth that money and every penny thereof to be employed by the Captain's Commandment to the use of the Queen's bridge of the said town of Barwick.

Soldiers were expected to be ready to be called to action:

No soldier to be in the streets without a bill or an axe

Also if any soldier walk or be found in the streets at any time either to the church, market or from thence, if he bear not a bill or an axe, he or they so found for the first time to lose 4d the second time 8d the third time 12d and the fourth time to be put out of wages.

And there was an understandable fear of spies:

No Englishman may lead a stranger on the Walls

Also if any Englishman lead any Scotch borne person or alien upon the walls of the said town by daylight or within the ditches, he for his so conducting to be banished the town for ever, and if he do any such things by night, he to be taken as a traitor.

None may over the town walls or measure the same deceitfully

Also if there be any person that goeth on the town walls or leapeth over or climbeth upon it by ladder, rope or any other subtle means, either in going unto or in going into said town by day or by night. or that measureth by any deceitful means the deepness of the wall of the town, or the wideness or the breadth thereof, or cast any stones of the walls into the ditches , either filth or annoyance, or hath carrieth any stones from the said wall to any his use. that person or persons so doing to be committed unto ward, and further to abide the Correction of the Captain.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TOWN AND THE MILITARY

Soldiers lived amongst and interacted with the civilians in the town, but they remained subject to a different governing authority.

The Rules of the Garrison banned soldiers from engaging in crafts or trade:

No soldier to use any vile occupation

...If there be any soldier of this town, or garrison man that occupieth with his own hands any vile occupation, or commonly fishing for any white fish or salmons: he or they so offending, for the first fault to lose a check of 18d and for the second time 3s 4d and for the third time 6s 8d to the bridge of Barwick, and for the 4th time to be put out of Wages.

Despite these regulations, there were frequent “grievous complaints” about the large numbers of men from the garrison who were involved in brewing and baking, for instance

Through the centuries, relations between garrison and town, and governor and mayor were not straightforward. In fact, there were long periods of open strife between the mayor and townspeople and the officers of the garrison.

Uniquely, the wages of the mayor of Berwick, as well as the other officers of the towns (the master mason, master carpenter, the customer and the comptroller) were included with the wages of the military officers and soldiers.

In 1583, the Governor of Berwick, Lord Hunsdon, refused to allow the mayor to leave the town to go to London to “renew their charter and liberties”. Hunsdon reminded the mayor that as a “principal officer” of the town, he could not leave without the permission of the governor or his deputy.

The mayor wanted to make clear to the Queen the “contempt and disliking” shown to the mayor and townsmen by “those that her Majesty hath placed here for the uphold and maintenance of the peace”.

Another of the issues the mayor and freemen wanted to raise in London was Hunsdon’s refusal to agree to their request that Scotsmen should be forbidden to retail in the town, which was causing the town’s traders to be “utterly undone”.

Hunsdon made it obvious that the licence for the mayor to leave the town should only be given for “weightier causes than this”.

What was the proportion of soldiers to civilians in the population of Berwick in Elizabethan times?

In 1563, Berwick's garrison was reduced from almost 1,500 to 860 men, including 8 captains and 42 gunners, plus 63 pensioners.

In 1565, there were 1,202 officers and soldiers and 2,309 civilians – or just over one third of the total population.

The garrison in September 1587, a few months before the Spanish Armada threatened England's shores, comprised 6 captains' companies, each of between 47 and 96 men, with two further companies based at Carlisle. Surprisingly, given the distance and the poor road system of the time, Carlisle was considered to be part of the Berwick garrison.

As well as these companies, there were 88 horse and foot of the "old garrison", 48 pensioners, 60 gunners with a master gunner and master's mate, and four quartermasters.

The brass and cast iron artillery mounted on the bastions and in the flankers included demi-cannon (36 lb shot), culverins (15lb), demi-culverin (10lb), sakers (6lb) and falcons (3lb). There were also some heavy mortars called "cannon perriers", some ancient bombards and fowlers, and a "venetian cannon".

What roles did the soldiers of the garrison perform?

On some occasions, Berwick soldiers were ordered to assist the March Wardens or were sent into the countryside to defend against Scottish incursions. In 1562 and again in 1564, the Governor sent men from the garrison to burn corn planted by Scots on English ground in order to maintain "the queen's majesty's title to that ground."

In January 1566, the Earl of Bedford, Governor of Berwick, sent 300 men and the horsemen of the old horse garrison to Chirnside to retaliate for spoils taken by Scots within the bounds of Berwick.

Three years later, soldiers from Berwick helped to put down the Rebellion of the Northern Earls and Lord Hunsdon led 300 foot soldiers from the Berwick garrison into Scotland to seek English rebels who had fled across the border.

Of course, the main purpose of the garrison was to assist in the defence of the Border against the Scots.

The 1587 Statutes of Berwick ordered "no Scottishman shall be suffered to lodge in the town or to walk up and down."

What did the soldiers eat?

In 1586, the soldier's allowance was as follows:

On the four "flesh days" each week: 24 oz of bread, 1 pottle of beer, 2lb of beef and mutton

On the three "fish days": Half a pound of butter or 1lb of cheese, or a quarter of a cod, or a "reasonable piece" of ling, or seven or eight white or red herrings.

What were the advantages of being a soldier in the Berwick garrison?

Soldiers had protection from certain processes of law and were relieved of some taxes and levies owed by civilian subjects. They were also exempt from serving on juries because garrison men were “appointed for special service for defence of the realm” and so not liable to such obligations.

Creditors were not able to sue soldiers for debt without first obtaining the permission of the garrison commander. As a result, the buying and selling of garrison pays and the granting of a soldier’s place in the garrison for favour or reward became commonplace.

Lord Hudson, Governor of Berwick in the 1580s told his deputy Henry Widdrington that it was a “common practice when any man owes more than he is able to pay either here in London or in the country...he makes friends to get a pay in Berwick..... “All the world” knows that anyone who falls into bankruptcy, or “robs his master and runs away with his money,” runs to Berwick for refuge.

The senior commanders had the power to grant places in the garrison, and often did so as a favour or reward to someone who had shown them service in one capacity or another.

Veterans with good service records were sometimes shown favour by their officers, too. For example, in 1592, Lord Hunsdon wrote to Widdrington asking him to give the post of footman to one Edward Stringer: “an old soldier of the garrison and one that often times had been hurt in her majesty’s service.”

Not all the men who received such favours were experienced soldiers. On one occasion, Hunsdon requested that John Amyett, the “kinsman” of one of the queen’s physicians and Hunsdon’s “very good friend” Doctor Bayliff, be placed in a soldier’s room.

What were the disadvantages of being a soldier in the Berwick garrison?

There were disadvantages to being a soldier in Berwick and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the weather was one of them!

In 1564 the Earl of Bedford, Governor of Berwick, wrote to the privy council complaining that some of the soldiers of the Berwick garrison would rather suffer “sharp imprisonment” than do a night’s watch on the walls of Berwick-upon-Tweed. In fact, the weather had been so cold that some night watchmen had “in the morning been found dead.” A month later, Bedford remarked again about the terrible “winterlike weather” and it was only the autumn.

In January 1595, several soldiers of the garrison were blown off the town walls and hurled to their deaths.

The uncertain weather conditions on the Northumberland coast meant that Berwick was considered an undesirable posting, even by senior royal officers.

In December 1595, Lord Hunsdon, the Governor of Berwick at that time, wrote: “If I were further from the tempestuousness of Cheviot Hills and were once returned from this accursed country, whence the sun is so removed, I would not change my homeliest hermitage for the highest palace there.”

The soldiers of the garrison were obviously equally depressed. In 1598, Lord Willoughby wrote to the Council: “The gunners were very poor souls; but the miserablest of all was the forty two foot which poor wretches perform in unseemly weakness.”

He also reported that the fortifications of Berwick were “a mere show and opinion of a strong thing.”

THE MILITIA

In the 1580s, the Crown revived the militia, an ancient system for local defence that had been allowed to decay. A lord lieutenant was appointed in each county to oversee the militia and provide troops for overseas expeditions as well as for the defence of the county. Every man from 16 to 60 years of age was eligible for service in the militia. They obviously possessed varying degrees of health and capability so, in the 1580s, a more effective fighting force was created from the general militia called the “trained bands”.

UNION OF THE CROWNS

Berwick’s role as a Border fortress town ended with the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland.

On 6th April 1603, James VI of Scotland crossed the Border on his journey southwards to be crowned James I of England. He was met at Lamberton by the Lord Governor of Berwick with a mounted party from the garrison and was conducted into the town.

When the cavalcade was within half a mile of Berwick, the artillery of the garrison fired a cannonade from the ramparts. A contemporary account of the Royal progress described Berwick as being “like an enchanted castle”:

“From the mouths of dreadful engines came such a tempest, as deathful, and sometimes more dreadful than thunder, that all the ground trembled as in an earthquake, the houses and towers staggering, wrapping the whole town in a mantle of smoke, wherein the same was awhile hid from the sight of its Royal owner.”

Passing through a double guard of soldiers, the King’s procession progressed down Marygate to the market cross (the site of the present Town Hall), where he was met by the Mayor and Freemen.

The following day, King James ascended the Walls: “whereupon all the cannoniers and other officers belonging to the great ordnance stood and the captains, with their band of soldiers, likewise under their several colours. Amongst which warlike train he made a shot himself out of a cannon, so fair, and with such sign of experience, that the most expert gunners there beheld it, not without admiration!”

The King then proceeded to survey the fortifications of the town, guarded by the Gentlemen Pensioners of Berwick commending the manner of the soldiers, and the military order of the town, being indeed one of the best places of strength in all the North of England.”

On the morning of 8th April, “the trumpets warned for the remove” and the King bestowed “rich and bounteous rewards” on all the officers and soldiers of the garrison, before continuing his journey to London.

In December 1603, the Crown ordered the dissolution of the garrison of Berwick and the number of soldiers was reduced to 100 men and pensioners under Captain Bowyer. The company was to be formed of a hundred of the oldest and most able of the garrison. The offices of governor, marshal, treasurer and gentleman porter ceased. The captains and other officers of the disbanded companies were allowed to continue to stay in Berwick and to receive full pay until their deaths. The ordinary soldiers were discharged, but the King paid for those who wished to join other military units. Some common soldiers transferred to Ireland or to the army in the Low Countries, while gunners went to the garrison at the Tower of London or joined the Navy.

Offences committed by soldiers were now to be punishable under the laws of the Realm and tried by the mayor and officers of the town, not their captain.

The new Charter granted by King James entrusted the keys of the town to the mayor, rather than a military officer.

The garrison at Berwick-upon-Tweed was intended to defend against Scots incursions into England and to assist in the government of the borderlands. After the Union of the Crowns, the garrison no longer possessed a viable purpose, and so it virtually disappeared – at least for a few decades.

In July 1604, all the ordnance from Berwick was shipped to the Tower of London and in 1611, the Crown placed the remaining 100 soldiers at Berwick on half pay for the rest of their lives and freed them “from all military service”.

The soldiers petitioned the Crown to be allowed full pay until they died, explaining that they had “spent the prime of our days in the service of the honour of our prince” and that it would not cost a great deal as many of them had “one foot in the grave already”.

The petition included a list of names and their record of service. Henry Boldt was the oldest soldier. He was 86 and had served in the army for 60 years.

(“Projects of Governance, Garrisons and the State in England: 1560-1630s – Andrea M. Shannon, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2013)

<http://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/42724/Shannon-Andrea-PhD-HIST-December-2013.pdf?sequence=1>

THE 17th CENTURY

A Scots army came to threaten Berwick again in 1639, during the First Bishop’s War. At that time, the garrison amounted to a mere eleven common soldiers, a handful of officers including some gentlemen pensioners, half a dozen gunners, eight horsemen and a preacher.

Fearing an assault by a large Scots army, the Mayor ordered three ancient cannon to be mounted to guard the bridge over the Tweed.

The tiny garrison was reinforced by some soldiers sent by the King from Lincolnshire and the town was eventually saved from Scots occupation when the Earl of Essex arrived with nine companies of soldiers from Durham and four from Northumberland, some 2,000 men in all.

After the debacle of 1639, Berwick’s garrison was strengthened substantially during the Second Bishops’ War in the following year. The “skeleton” garrison had cost only £386 10s 11d a year and the Crown proposed a restored garrison of 1,400 men equipped with an artillery train, at an estimated cost of £22,268. In the event, the cost was £45,000 per annum for an even larger garrison of four troops of carbines, supported by fifteen companies of horse and foot, although not all of those soldiers would be quartered in Berwick at one time.

In the event, the Scots army outflanked Berwick and marched southwards to defeat the King’s forces at Newburn on the Tyne.

THE CIVIL WARS

A Scots army did occupy Berwick between 1644 and 1647, during the Civil War. They were part of the Covenanting forces sent by the Scottish Parliament to support the English Parliament against the King. Those Scots soldiers constructed the “cavaliers”, or higher gun-platforms on top of the Elizabethan bastions.

Berwick was garrisoned by soldiers of Cromwell’s New Model Army during the Second Civil War. Following the Battle of Preston in 1648, Colonel Robert Overton’s Regiment arrived to garrison the town. For a while in that year there were two regiments stationed in Berwick. The soldiers were billeted on the townsfolk and placed a heavy burden on the local economy.

In November 1648 the Mayor, Andrew Crisp, wrote: “We have since the joining of this garrison maintained them at free quarter. Surely our poverty of late is much increased not only many of the poor are enforced to pawn their clothes, but likewise many have already cast up house. Indeed our condition is more lamentable than can be expressed. Nay, it can scarce be imagined the misery we are fallen into.”

In May 1649, Col. Overton was replaced by Colonel George Fenwick, who was responsible for the rebuilding of the Parish Church. His regiment later became the Coldstream Guards.

THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

Following the ousting of Catholic King James II in 1688, the garrison of Berwick declared for his daughter Mary and her husband, the Prince of Orange in what became known as the “Glorious Revolution”.

Through the 1690s and the first half of the 18th century, there was a continuing threat from James’ supporters (the “Jacobites”). As a result, Berwick once again became a frontline military base and its defences were inspected and repaired.

As well as guarding against the Jacobites from north of the Border, the town became a staging post for troops bound for campaigns in Flanders. In 1692, one of these regiments seized 70 Berwick men to bring it up to full strength before sailing for the Continent.

To add insult to injury, the townsfolk were frequently required to accommodate soldiers in their homes and had to wait months for payment.

When the war in Flanders came to an end in 1697, the householders turned out the soldiers that were billeted with them as they had not been paid by the government for over a year. Forty of the troops deserted and others were ready to mutiny until the town’s MP, Samuel Ogle, persuaded the government to pay up.

This unsatisfactory situation led to a meeting of the Guild in 1705 at which the idea of building a barracks was first mooted. The Mayor requested the Members of Parliament for Berwick to raise the matter with the government. A site at the old Correction House Yard (the site of the Library today) was proposed.

No further progress had been made by the time of the Jacobite Rising of 1715, but the imposition of yet more soldiers to bolster the town’s defences in that year prompted the government to act, once the emergency was over.

BERWICK BARRACKS

Early in 1717 the House of Commons voted the sum of £4,937 10s 7d to build the barracks in Berwick to hold 36 officers and 600 men.

A million bricks were made using clay from Tweedmouth Moor, and stone was taken from the castle ruins to face the new buildings. The Correction House Yard was found to be too small, so the work began on the present site.

The building consisted of two blocks of barracks facing each other across an open square. At the entrance there was an impressive gateway displaying the arms of King George I, a guardhouse and prison, or “black hole”. At the further end of the square there were storehouses and a gunpowder magazine.

The building was finished by May 1721, but there was no money put aside for furniture and utensils for the soldiers. A public subscription, supported by the alehouse keepers and other interested parties, quickly raised the necessary funds and the soldiers were at last able to march into the barracks in July of that year.

Further building took place in 1739-41 when the Clock Block was constructed to replace the storehouses at one end of the square.

Senior officers had quarters in the town and a military hospital was built in Ravensdowne, close to the Barracks.

The soldiers were accommodated in sections of eight men to a room. Two men shared a wooden bed.

There were no married quarters, but one man in each company was allowed to have his wife with him in a part of the barrack room separated by a blanket screen to offer a little privacy. The wives would carry out cleaning, carrying of water, and some cooking for the soldiers. On campaign they provided rudimentary first-aid for wounded men.

The soldiers ate two meals a day, which they cooked on coal fires in the barrack rooms. Each man was issued with a ration of one and a half pounds of bread and one pound of (often very poor quality) meat per day. The men had to provide their own vegetables.

The rooms were originally lit by lanterns holding tallow candles.

The Garrison Orders for 1st September 1797 recorded:

“As the Lanterns will be put up in the Barrack Galleries this day, it is Lieut. Col. Peter's Orders that no one do meddle with them by taking out the Candles, taking them off the Nails or otherwise.”

The Garrison Orders for 25th November 1797 show that some soldiers ignored this regulation:

“Complaint having been made to Col. Rae that the Candles are frequently taken out of the Lanterns in the Galleries of the private Rooms almost as soon as they are Lighted. He therefore acquaints the Garrison that any Man found guilty of such a shameful practice, shall on conviction most assuredly be punished. And to prevent the like being done by Idle Women or others, the Sentry in the Barrack Yard is not to suffer any person except such as belong the Barracks to go into the Entries after night Fall and the Sentry at the Gate is not to suffer any such people to enter the Barrack Yard either by day or night.”

If you visit the restored barrack-room today you will see some of the original graffiti on the ceiling, created by the soldiers using stencils and candle-smoke.

THE 1745 JACOBITE RISING

When Bonnie Prince Charlie entered Edinburgh, the Mayor of Berwick raised 15 companies of 50 men each to defend the town against the Jacobites. This represented a large proportion of the adult male population. They did not expect uniforms but they had 250 muskets, and the Government sent 500 more, but without bayonets. There was sufficient gunpowder, but flints were in short supply

General Cope arrived on 22nd September, following his defeat at Prestonpans. He quickly set about putting the defences into a state of readiness.

He made a quick inspection and found that the walls were missing stones, some of which had been removed for building. In other places the dung-heaps in the town were heaped against the wall, they were so high that anyone could climb over the walls using them. What was worse that there were others of equal height on the outside of the walls.

The gun platforms on the walls were ruinous and the moat was dry with no water supply to fill it. Twenty houses outside the walls had been demolished in the crisis of 1715, but these had since been rebuilt and many more added.

The garrison comprised five companies of Invalids; about 300 men but obviously not the most able-bodied troops.

Two units of dragoons had arrived with General Cope, but they had run away at Prestonans and some of their men deserted while they were in Berwick.

There were 48 guns to cover the whole of the walls, but only 60 gunners. Even when a further 60 or so soldiers and sailors were added to support them, each gun had a crew of only two or three men. The Navy had provided HMS Ursula to be used as a floating battery to protect the town.

Cope ordered the houses outside the Scotsgate to be pulled down once more. Corn, hay and horses were brought into Berwick to increase supplies and to deny the rebels the chances of finding forage in the vicinity.

Sandbags and timber were used to reinforce the parapets, logs were placed there to be rolled onto scaling ladders, and crates set on the wall to be lit at night if the town was attacked, to give light for the defenders.

Cope's efforts proved sufficient to persuade the Jacobites to take a different route into England.

THE FRENCH WARS

At the time of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Berwick was garrisoned by companies of Invalids and battalions of militia or fencibles.

These were three types of unit formed to release the regular regiments for front line service.

The independent companies of Invalids were made up of men who were older or unfit for normal service, but were capable of carrying out garrison duties. The companies were scattered around the country, mainly in coastal forts. The title of "Invalids" prompted cartoons showing ancient soldiers with wooden legs and unable to lift a musket. In 1804 they were renamed "veteran companies".

The Militia Act of 1757 was an attempt to create a more professional military reserve. They were organised by county and, like the Elizabethan militia, they came under the command of the Lord Lieutenant. The men were selected by ballot and the militia companies were "embodied" from time to time for training or in time of particular emergencies.

The fencibles were temporary units of volunteers commanded by regular officers. They were raised for home defence and had no liability for overseas service. The fencibles battalions were disbanded in 1802.

Here are some extracts from the Garrison Order Book 1797/8:

Punishments could be severe, but were sometimes tempered with mercy by senior officers

6th July 1797

Joseph Thomson of Dawson's Company, try'd by a Garrison Court Martial for being absent from his Guard, is found guilty of the Crime laid to his Charge and Sentenced to receive one hundred Lashes; but in consequence of some favourable circumstances, Lt. Col. Peter pardons him, and orders him to be released. At the same time he assures the Men of the Garrison that this is the last time he will pardon the same Crime.

Berwick was a staging post for the transfer of French prisoners-of-war.

22nd July 1797

The Main Guard to be immediately reinforced with Six Men to furnish a Sentry on the French Prisoners.

28th July 1797

It is Lieut. Col. Evelegh's Orders that a Party consisting of 1 Serjeant 1 Corporal and 12 privates of the 8th Fencibles to parade tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock and lead from the jail here Twenty One French Prisoners and escort them to Dunbar and deliver them to the Commanding Officer there. This service being performed, the party are to return to Berwick without delay. The party to be furnished with 12 Rounds of Ball Cartridges and two good flints for each man - The Serjeant is to bring back a receipt for the Prisoners from Dunbar.... The Six Men that reinforced the Main Guard are to be discontinued and the Sentries taken off as soon as the French Prisoners are marched away.

An entry for 6th August 1797 gives a picture of conditions in the Barracks at the time

When it does not rain, every window in the Men's Barracks and passages is to be fix'd open at 6 o'clock in the morning and remain so all the day; the Serjeant of the Barrack Guard to be answerable that this order is observed.

Every morning (when the ground is dry) the whole bedding in use is to be taken to the ground on the East side of the Barracks and spread out from Eight O'clock till Ten. Two men from each Corps on Fatigue must be appointed to watch it and a Serjeant from each Corps to be ordered daily to see this is done.

An orderly from each Corps will see the whole of the foregoing orders complied with and before the bedding is brought in at Ten O'clock, he will go round every room and see that they are clean swept particularly under the Beds, and everything hung up properly.

The Commanding Officer of the Garrison will sometimes go round the Rooms and he will expect the Orderly Officer to be answerable to him that they are in good order.

No washing is to be allowed in the Rooms or passages. The water may be heated in the Rooms but all Washing must be done at the back of the Barracks and the women are to be careful not to throw the water about the yard but to put it in the places appointed for it.

The prisoners of the Garrison will go on with cleaning the Barrack yards according to a former order.

24th August 1797

It is Lieut. Col. Peter's orders that Alder the Drummer and Hanley the Fifer of the Invalids be struck off duty for the present as they are employed in teaching some boys for the Volunteers.

The soldiers of the garrison augmented their pay by assisting with the harvest

14 Sept. 1797

120 private men of the 8th Fencibles and 62 of the Invalids will have leave to work at the Harvest till further orders, but are not to be permitted to go farther from the Garrison than such distance as they can be call'd in at an Hour's notice. The men allowed to work are to have passes signed by the Officer Commanding the Corps to which they belong, and none but such as have passes are to be allowed to quit the Garrison.

After the indulgence of men being Allowed to work at the Harvest, Col. Peter assures the Garrison that if any one of them is found working on the outside of the walls without a pass they may depend on being brought to a Court Martial.

The men allowed to work must inform the Serjeants of their Companies where they are to be found.

27 Sept. 1797

By Field Marshal the Duke of York's Command: His Majesty's order for the disuse of Hair powder has been repeated to Lieut. General Musgrave, and the General directs it may be most strictly adhered to by the Troops in this district.

The soldiers of the garrison were required to patrol the streets every evening and to guard the gates after they were shut for the night. Berwick continued to be under active curfew until 1815.

8th October 1797

A Corporal and four privates will be added to the Main, and the like number to the Barrack Guard at Retreat Beating every Evening for the purpose of Patrolling the streets.

The patrols will go every hour from dark till 12 o'clock and every 2 hours afterwards till daylight, and take up all Soldiers found out of their Barracks without a pass, and confine them in the Guard to which the patrol belongs.

The patrol from the Main Guard will go along the Main Street down Hyde Hill, and along Bridge Street and return the same way. That belonging the Barrack Guard will go down the back way (Ravensdowne) along the Wool Market and up Church Street.

The Barrack Gate to be locked at dark and a Serjeant from the Fencibles stationed on the inside, who is to have the Key, and is to be answerable that no Man is permitted to go out without a Pass; if a Servant, from his Master, and if not, from the Commanding Officer residing in the Barracks; Three Serjeants to be appointed for this purpose, as a duty of Fatigue who will parade with the Picquet every Evening at Retreat beating, and will relieve each other every hour till 12 when they will deliver the Key of the Gate to the Serjeant of the Guard who must be answerable that after that hour the Gates are not opened till daylight, unless for the Patrols or by an order delivered in person by an officer which is to be mentioned in the Report of the Guard.

The patrols will return to their Barracks at Daylight, and the Serjeants or Fatigue at the Gate at 12 o'clock.

The soldiers were not officially allowed to have their families with them in the Barracks.

20th October 1797

The Commanding Officer of the Garrison is given to understand that notwithstanding orders were given a few days ago that all women and Children of the Invalids should forthwith quit the Barracks yet that order is not in any manner attended to. He therefore informs the Garrison that the Barracks must at all times and in all respects be occupied according to the King's Warrant for the Regulation of Barracks; and all furniture not belonging the Rooms must forthwith be taken out of them nor any issues be made but to such men who actually reside in the Barracks.

As always through the centuries, locals complained about some of the activities engaged in by the soldiers of the garrison

24th November 1797

The Tenant of the Fields betwixt the Cow Gate and the Sea Shore who complain'd last year of the trespasses of the Soldiers of the Garrison playing at Knotty (*a variation of shinty*), destroying his Fences and otherwise hurting his Property has again Complained to the Commanding Officer, and threatens to prosecute without further notice at Civil Law the first offender that he can lay hold of. The Commanding Officer therefore cautions the Garrison accordingly.

The Invalids seem not to have been the most efficient of soldiers.

1st February 1798

It having been reported to the Commanding Officer of the Garrison that the part of the Barracks Occupied by the Invalids is in the greatest disorder, some Rooms being lock'd up, others without either Fire or Coals in them, and without the least appearance of being occupied; Women and Children reinstated and Tables and Chairs brought back into the rooms contrary to the Barrack Regulations in every respect, the Invalid Officer is for the future to be answerable that all orders relative to that part of the Barracks under his Inspection are strictly complied with, and he will report in Writing to the Commanding Officer of the Invalids the situation he finds them in, who will give the necessary orders that everything be immediately settled according to the Barrack Regulations. The Orderly officer must be very particular in the Report he makes and not allow the least Infringement to be made as he will be answerable for everything that is wrong during the time he is on Duty.

4th April 1798

Complaint having been made to the Commanding Officer of the Garrison that the Sentries at the North Gate are very remiss in opening the Gate when any of the inhabitants are coming in. A gentleman having been very near killed a few nights since by their neglect. The Officer Commanding the Main Guard is required to give the strictest orders to his men with respect to opening the Gate properly to prevent any accidents happening for the future.

Just as today, the Ramparts presented an enticing danger for the youth of the town.

8th April 1798

Two Men to be posted without arms tomorrow, Tuesday and Wednesday on the Walls near the Barracks to prevent boys and others from climbing the parapets or injuring the works, they are to be posted at 7 o'clock each Morning and relieved every Two Hours till the people leave the walls in the Evening. The man posted by the 8th Fencibles is to have charge of the Parapet and from the Garden down to the Magazine, and the one by the Invalids to have charge upwards from the Garden to the Brass Mount. Each Corps to relieve their own Sentry..... No Harsh or uncivil treatment to be made use of by the Sentries.

There was a serious threat of invasion by the French in the Spring of 1798

20th April 1798

The whole duty of the Garrison having now devolved on the Invalids by the marching of the 8th Fencibles to the South and Major Cashell, the Commanding Officer thinks it necessary at this Critical period when the enemy may be supposed to be at our doors, to give out the following orders, and he hopes the Officers and Non Commissioned Officers will join in seeing them properly executed, that there may be no Complaints afterwards.

The Commanding Officers of Companies will take particular care that none of their Men be permitted at this time to go out of the Garrison to work. The Commanding Officer of the Garrison is sorry he is obliged to give this order, but the Necessity of the times require it, and if he finds it is not strictly obeyed, he will be obliged to order frequent Roll Callings which he hopes there will be no necessity for, as he flatters himself every officer and soldier in the Garrison must be convinced how necessary it is for the duty of the Garrison to be done in such a manner as not to give any cause of Complaint..... The Orderly Officer will visit the Guards frequently and if he finds any deficiency or neglect of Duty, he will report in Writing to the Commanding Officer.

The Troop, Retreat and Tattoo are to be beat from the Main Guard and all the Drummers are constantly to attend..... and to acquaint the Commanding Officer on all occasions when the Flag is to be hoisted, previous to it being done.

An orderly drummer is to stay at the Barrack Guard constantly to Beat any Call that may be necessary either by day or night.

The orderly gunner is to be particularly attentive to all parts of his duty and Report immediately all Fleets or Ships of War that may appear

These orders to be read to the Guards every morning at Guard Mounting by the Orderly Officer 'till Sunday, when they will be read to the whole Three Companies together.

1st May 1798

The Corporal of the Bridge Guard is to be answerable that the Sally Ports leading to the Quay be regularly shut half an hour after sunset at latest, and the Sergeant of the Barrack Guard is to observe the same at the Cowport.

The officers of the town took advantage of every minor nuisance to exert their authority over the military

16th May 1798

Complaint having been made by the Inhabitants of the ashes being thrown down at the end of the Bridge Guard being a Nuisance, the Commanding Officer of the Garrison therefore orders that they be Immediately removed and for this purpose Acting Quarter Master Serjeant Stewart with Six Men per Company of the Invalids are to assemble this afternoon at 3 o'clock who are to take them to the hollow ground within the railing opposite to Mr Sandy's Ice House, where all ashes and dirt belonging the Guard are to be thrown in future. The Non Commissioned Officer of the new Guard is not to relieve the Guard till they are all taken away.

The Orders for 14th June 1798 reflected official concern resulting from that summer's republican risings in Ireland and the vicious lampooning of George III and Queen Charlotte by cartoonists like James Gillray

It is Major Cashell's Orders that if any Invalid, or other Soldier of this Garrison do speak disrespectfully or improperly of His Majesty or any of the Royal family, or otherways interfere with the proceeding of Government or the Constitution of the Country as by Law Established, or make reflections on their Measures, such Soldier on conviction shall be most severely punished. And any Soldier being present and hearing such discourse who does not Immediately make it known to the Commanding Officer will be deemed equally guilty as if he uttered such Language himself. In either case application will be made to Chelsea Board, that such Offender, if an Invalid, may be struck off the Pension List.

This to be a Standing Order and is to be read at the Head of the Guard every day till next Sunday when it will be read to the whole Garrison.

THE LATER YEARS OF THE GARRISON

Berwick's role as a garrison town was downgraded again at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The guns were removed from the ramparts and sent to Leith in 1820 and the post of Governor ceased in 1833. The Barracks stood empty for a number of years. In 1845, it was reported that potatoes were being grown in the Barracks square.

The Barracks were occupied for a while during the Crimean War, but was abandoned again soon after. In 1864, the government considered selling the buildings.

Later in the 1860s and in the 1870s, parts of the Barracks were used by staff of the Northumberland Artillery Militia and by the 1st Berwick-upon-Tweed Artillery Volunteers and the 1st Berwick-upon-Tweed Rifle Volunteers.

The Volunteer Artillery manned the guns emplaced on Windmill Bastion.

Between 1879 and 1881, the 5th Foot, Northumberland Fusiliers were deputed at Berwick while new barracks were built at Fenham in Newcastle.

In 1881, Berwick Barracks became the depot of the King's Own Borderers (later the King's Own Scottish Borderers) and the buildings continued to be used for basic training of recruits. For the next 80 years.

The gymnasium was added in 1901

In 1908 the Territorial Army replaced the rifle volunteer battalions and the volunteer artillery. A drill hall was built in Ravensdowne, close by the Barracks, for the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, the Territorial Army battalion for north Northumberland.

The KOSB depot closed in 1964 and the training for all the regiments of the Lowland Scottish Brigade moved to Glencorse, near Edinburgh.

After centuries of military occupation, Berwick's role as a garrison town had finally come to an end.