



# **The Story of Catterick Camp**



# THE STORY OF CATTERICK CAMP 1915 - 1972

By

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By that time the need was diminishing, for the tempo of demobilization had increased. The original purpose of the schools had been achieved, and the Catterick School was amalgamated with the Bedford School to form the School for Vocational Education.<sup>1</sup>

The rate of demobilization was speeded up and it was not long before the life and movement of the camp began to change its mode and tempo.

The Catterick Reserve Centre closed down in November 1919, and, the Headquarters was re-opened as "Garrison H.Q. Catterick Camp", Captain H. Harding of the Northamptonshire Regiment being appointed Camp Commandant. In September 1921 this appointment was abolished and the administration of the Camp was carried out by an Administrative Officer working under the Command of the O.C. Troops, Catterick at the time.

Early in 1920, Northumbrian District was designated "No. 5 District" of Northern Command, the District Commander having at that time his Headquarters at Harrogate. In May 1920, the area was re-designated "No. 1 Area", the Area Commander being the G.O.C. of the Northumbrian Division (T.F.), then Major General Sir P. S. Wilkinson, with his H.Q. at Newcastle. Two months later "No. 1 Area" Northern Command had been renamed "Northumbrian Area". By October 1921 the Headquarters of the Northumbrian Division (T.F.) had been re-designated 50th (Northumbrian) Division (T.A.) and, the Headquarters had been moved from Newcastle to Catterick Camp.

During this time the Camp had been under the administration of the D.A.A. and Q.M.G. of the Division, Bt. Lieut. Colonel H. A. Kaulbach, of the King's Own Royal Regiment who had first been appointed as D.A.A. and Q.M.G. of the Catterick Reserve Centre in April 1916.<sup>2</sup>

In July 1920 Catterick became the No. 1 Depot of the Royal Garrison Artillery and, in January 1921, the Headquarters of the 2nd Reserve Brigade R.G.A.<sup>3</sup> In the following year we find "D" and "E" Coast Batteries R.G.A. also in the Camp, and, these R.G.A. units remained at Catterick until July 1923. In January 1921 Catterick had become the station for the 804th (M.T.) Company R.A.S.C., which was joined, in July 1923, by the 19th (M.T.) Company and by "H" Supply Company R.A.S.C. in 1925.

Between the years 1920-22 Catterick Camp was one vast army "Dump" of surplus stores and equipment. By the close of 1919 there were but few troops in the Camp, and these were, in the main, personnel of the R.A.S.C. and R.A.O.C. Throughout 1919 and in the years that followed cadres of formations and units from France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Salonika and other theatres of operations arrived in Catterick bringing with them (the G.1098) stores and equipment of the disbanded and demobilized Armies. Vast quantities of equipment and weapons rolled into the area to be taken over by the Ordnance Depots and dumped, or stored, or prepared for disposal by the War Office Disposals Board.

At one time there were over fifty thousand 18 pdr. Field Artillery Equipments standing in long lines, wheel to wheel; over two and a half million blankets were stored; and seventy-eight thousand G.S. Waggons stood in rows, covering acres of land. Public sales were held under the direction of the Disposals Board, and buyers of all descriptions gathered in the Camp, arriving by train, traps and in cars ranging from the most luxurious "touring cars" of the day down to the popular

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<sup>1</sup>"Education and the Army" by Colonel Lord Gorell, C.B.E., M.C. (Oxford University Press) (1921).

<sup>2</sup>Lieut. Colonel Kaulbach remained at Catterick in this appointment until February 1924. ←

<sup>3</sup>Royal Garrison Artillery.



## CHAPTER IV

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### Catterick Camp To-day

Let us now look at Catterick Camp to-day, possibly better described as the Military Town of Catterick, for, as Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery said, on the occasion of his visit on the 22nd April 1947, "This isn't a Camp, it's a town."

In approaching the Camp from the historic town of Richmond one follows the Sign posts which are marked "CAMP CENTRE 2 MILES", passing down Frenchgate, and Station Road, crossing the River Swale in the Richmond Rural District and past the now derelict Railway Station<sup>1</sup> on the left, the Station having been closed, following the cessation of the Passenger Service in March 1969 (the railway lines and sleepers being subsequently removed).

Before one lies the main road from Richmond into The Camp which was built during World War I by German Prisoners of War. At this point, about a hundred yards from the bridge over the River Swale on the right of the road opposite the Bus Station, jutting out on to the footpath by the hedge, is a large smooth stone, the base some 5 feet by 4 feet. It bears the War Department Broad Arrow Sign, the date 1917-1918, and the inscription: O POTENS ME MOVE SI POTERIS which locally is alleged to mean "It would take a powerful man to move this stone" or "If you can move this you are a better man than I am" (or, very roughly, "translated", means "Oh! How drink is able to move me"). The stone marks the point where the Germans completed the road.

The road—the A.6708—which was at first marked on the map as Rimmington Avenue<sup>2</sup> runs through pleasant undulating countryside; pasture land, well wooded and, looking back, with a fine view of Richmond.

The first military touch comes with a road-side notice, "CAMP LIMITS", and, as one looks ahead, away across the hedge rows, one sees the line of the large brick built "Sandhurst Block", with its central clock tower, which is Gaza Lines. Passing a plantation of firs one comes on the first buildings which are officers' quarters, and, on the left stand houses—senior officers' quarters—which, at one time, all had military names, Menin House, Aisne House and so on. The married officers' quarters stretch away to the right down Haig Road<sup>3</sup>—which runs through to Plumer Road on the Waithwith side of the camp—and extends through French Road,<sup>4</sup> Rawlinson Road,<sup>5</sup> Jutland Road,<sup>6</sup> and the post-

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<sup>1</sup>The site of which is scheduled for the construction of a Swimming Pool.

<sup>2</sup>Named after the first General to command in Catterick, Major-General Sir Michael Rimmington, K.B.E., C.B., C.V.O. (See page 20.)

<sup>3</sup>After Field Marshal Earl Haig.

<sup>4</sup>Named after Field Marshal The Earl of Ypres, who as General Sir John French was Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in the field in France and Flanders in 1914.

<sup>5</sup>Named after General Lord Rawlinson.

<sup>6</sup>The only road in the Camp with a name associated with the Royal Navy, the Battle of Jutland fought on the 31st May 1916.



war constructed Montgomery,<sup>1</sup> Alexander,<sup>2</sup> Slim,<sup>3</sup> and Wavell<sup>4</sup> Roads.

On the left of Richmond Road one sees playing fields and parade grounds of Jaffa Lines and the red brick barrack blocks of Gaza Lines; more playing fields lie on the right of the road.

Just beyond Smuts Road<sup>5</sup> which leads off from Richmond Road is the entrance to a drive. Here, through the original gateway, one passes up an avenue of trees, shrubs and laurels to the secluded Hipswell Lodge,<sup>6</sup> one of the houses which stood in the area before the establishment of the Camp. This, in its day, was a Shooting Lodge belonging to the Prior-Wandesford family, whose estate was absorbed into the Camp area and it was the residence of the first G.O.C. during the 1914-18 War. Built of local grey limestone, with a grey slate roof, the walls are partly hidden by ivy and creepers. Leading from the original out-buildings are a number of recently constructed red brick and wooden huts, for to-day, Hipswell Lodge is No. 1 Resettlement Centre and the badge of the Royal Army Education Corps appears on the large notice board at the entrance to the drive.

Leaving Hipswell Lodge one approaches St. Oswald's Cross Roads. On the left is the wide expanse of asphalt, the barrack square of Gaza Barracks.

At the cross roads, where Richmond Road is traversed by Hipswell Road, the corners are open with well kept triangular grass lawns surrounded by white painted wooden railings. The road to the left runs out of the barrack area down to Hipswell Village. That on the right runs through to the Waithwith Road on the West of the Camp. On the corner of this road until 1967 stood St. Oswald's Garrison Church.<sup>7</sup>

On the opposite corner of the cross roads stands the red brick building which is the former Church of England Services Institute, now Civil Service Sports Club, with its frontage on Hipswell Road, and its main entrance reached up a red brick path leading through a small lawn, from the Cross Roads corner. The building was opened by Major-General G. W. Howard on the 16th February 1937.

Beyond are a group of roads named after early historic associations with the area, for here are Roman Place, Dane Road, Norman Road, Celt Lane, Gaul Road and Saxon Road.

Back on Richmond Road, past the Club, one tops the brow of the hill looking down to the Camp Centre and beyond to the rising ground of Scotton, for the centre of the Camp lies in a saucer shaped depression.

On the right of the road is the Central Sports Ground,<sup>8</sup> and beyond, past Gough Road, which runs through the sites of the former Ypres and Aisne, and Hooze Lines to Plumer Road it passes the site of the former Officers' Club which

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<sup>1</sup>After Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein.

<sup>2</sup>After Field Marshal The Viscount Alexander of Tunis.

<sup>3</sup>After Field Marshal Sir William Slim.

<sup>4</sup>After Field Marshal Lord Wavell.

<sup>5</sup>After Field Marshal The Right Hon. Jan Christian Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa 1939-48.

<sup>6</sup>Prior to 1939, this was the Headquarters of the 13th Infantry Brigade and during the 1939-45 War became the Officers' Mess of the Catterick Group A.T.S.

<sup>7</sup>St. Oswald, King of Northumbria, was the son of Ethelfrith, King of Bernicia whom he succeeded and, by defeating the Britons extended his domain and formed, from the territories of Bernicia and Deira, the Kingdom of Northumbria over which he reigned until his death in battle at Oswestry against the Kingdom of Mercia in A.D. 642. St. Oswald was canonized for his efforts to promote and foster Christianity.

<sup>8</sup>The Grandstand on the ground which seats 1,200 was completed in March 1952 at a cost of £4,200.