

RICHMOND DRILL HALL
106 Gipps Street

History and Description

The volunteer concept for the defence of Victoria arose from a general concern by the colonists in 1860. Renewed threats of Russian aggression, and the distances from British Military support, coupled with a depletion of Imperial troops in 1860, formed the background to the formation of Metropolitan Corps.

The volunteer corps provided temporary guards for the Treasury Building, Government House, and Powder Magazines. The Richmond Rifle Corps was established during this period, and numbered seventy men, led by David S. Campbell (local Parliamentarian). The Richmond volunteers, were enthusiastic for their defence duties, at one stage remaining on permanent alert for six months. The Richmond corps were continuously called out from midnight to early morning for impromptu drilling, and night route marches.

In 1861, the Richmond Corps were presented with colours, made by the ladies of Richmond. The Richmond Drill Hall was commenced in 1860, with members' donations and public subscriptions.

Early drill halls became obsolete by the 1880's, as more extensive and complex facilities were required. In 1884 the Government took over ownership and management of existing facilities and the Public Works Department became responsible for the construction function. A programme of alterations and additions and new buildings for military units commenced in 1884.

By 1886, plans were drawn up for proposed alterations and additions to the Richmond Drill Hall. Architect for these works was most probably S.E. Bindley. These plans however were not executed until 1891.

In 1896, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Boards of Works plan shows the enlarged timber Drill Hall in Gipps Street extended between Docker Street and Little Docker Street (now Dickman Street).

The Drill Hall is constructed to a rectangular plan, and was executed in timber with a corrugated iron roof. The building is utilitarian in style to house its functions. The external appearance of the building was originally highlighted by decorative barge boards, collar ties and finials.

The building is substantially intact and is repainted in an appropriate early colour scheme.

Statement of Significance

The Richmond Rifle Corps, were an important component of the early Metropolitan Volunteer Corps, of the 1860's. The movement later expanded, and facilities were extended in 1891. This timber Drill Hall is an important reminder of the service of the volunteer defence movement in Richmond.

References

W. Span, Castlemaine Orderly Room Report for Charge of Annuity, prepared by Department of Housing and Construction, August 1983.

M.M.B.W. Plan of Richmond, 1896.

Australian Archives, Richmond Orderly Room, Proposed additions 1886.