

APRIL MEETING

The Duke of York's Royal Military School

A talk by Andrew Nunn

Reported by Alan Lee

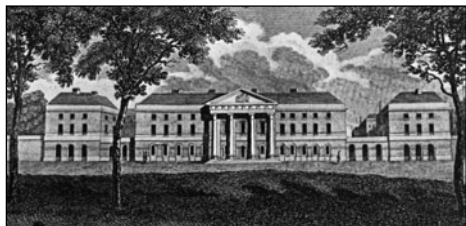
Pointing out that the school clocktower is visible to all passing traffic and passers by was the way Andrew led the meeting into his subject.

In the early 19thC only six women were allowed to travel with the troops when on overseas duties. These were drawn by lot. Woman with two or more children were not allowed to travel.

On 19th June 1801 Fredrick the Duke of York and Albany laid the foundation stone to the original school at Chelsea which opened in 1803. Now some 222 years later the school is a fee-paying co-educational establishment for 11 to 18 year-old pupils. Between 1801 and 1892 the school was known as 'The Royal Military Asylum'. The name was then changed to 'The Duke of York's Royal Military School'.

The school originally came into being following a proposal that the army should look after the children of their troops.

A report published on 25th March 1812 put the start up costs in 1801 of land and structures at £104,187 4s 2½d.



The Duke of York's Military Asylum, Chelsea 1804

At the outset there were three schools, based at Southampton, the Isle of Wight and at Chelsea. Entry was by petition, laying out reasons for the child/children to be allowed entry to the school.

The brief was that the three Rs had to be taught - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

At the beginning the children's diet was poor and 4% of them died of malnutrition. Food was set at beef, or mutton, four days a week providing a meal of 4oz of dressed beef, milk pottage, mild rice and pease pottage. [Pottage is likened to a thick soup]. Three days a week bread was set at half a loaf three times a day, butter, when there was no meat and 2oz cheese at supper. Weekly rations for the sergeants and nurses were Meat 1lb, Bread 1lb, Potatoes 1lb, Beer 2 quarts, plus ½lb butter and 1lb cheese for sergeants and 1lb butter and ½lb cheese for nurses.

Soap for the laundry was controlled by the steward, in 1801 the soap bill for the year was £321 16s.

For heating the hospital used 180 to 200 cauldrons of fuel a year, a cauldron is a large kettle and was a measure for fuel.

Light was allowed at the rate of 1lb of candles per person per week.

The committee choose iron bedsteads as wooden ones tended to harbour bed bugs.



Captain William Sibourne

A n d r e w mentioned that C a p t a i n S i b o u r n e , Adjutant of the school made a huge model of the Battle of Waterloo, 24 feet times 19 feet. Sibourne set his diorama of the battle at 7.15pm showing the true position of all troops at that

time, the completed model included over 90,000 hand-painted lead soldiers and went on display in 1838. He also wrote a book on the subject which the Duke of Wellington took exception to. In consequence Sibourne was never paid for his model.

Andrew then showed a series of slides depicting characters and views associated with the school during the 1800's. He also told us that since 1863 the name of every child who died is inscribed on a plaque.

In 1897 a second set of Colours was presented to the school.

The move from Chelsea to Dover came in 1909 when a site for the school was found at Lone Tree Hill, Guston. The first 167 boys led up to the school were those who had nowhere to go in the summer holidays. At that time the school consisted of a dining hall, eight boarding houses, four on either side of the dining hall, a chapel and housing for the staff. A Company Sergeant Major was in charge of each house.

Each boy had a walking out cane. Every pupil, on their left breast pocket, wears the

regimental badge of their father's regiment. If their father has no regiment, then the school badge is worn.

During the two world wars the school was evacuated. In August 1914 to Hutton, near Brentwood, Sussex and in WWII briefly to 'Benhall Farm', Cheltenham, between 30th July 1940 and 5th December 1940, before moving to 'The Saunton Sands Hotel', North Devon.

In 1928 King George V and Queen Mary visited and since then the school has seen royalty visit on a number of occasions.

Between 1920 and 1994 the school has gradually de-militarised opening up admissions to all. Now, some 222 years later, the school is a fee-paying co-educational establishment for 11 to 18 year-old pupils. Concentrating more on education coupled with a strong sports ethic.

A school magazine "The Yorkie" is produced at regular intervals.

Andrew said he is willing to organise a guided tour of the Duke of York's Royal Military School and grounds for members of The Dover Society.



DYRMS Guston