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Fulwood Barracks: A Tribute

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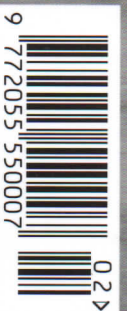
Gunners Honour Saint Barbara

The Flying Scotsman

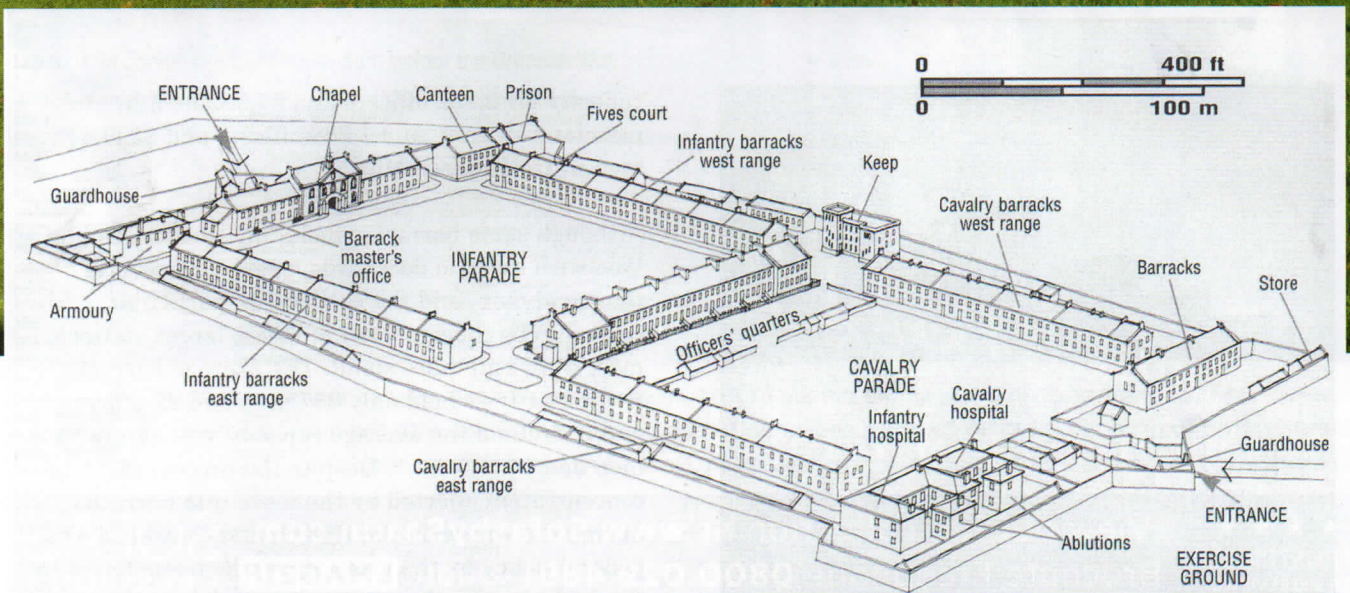
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Fulwood Barracks A Tribute





MAIN: The sun is setting on Fulwood Barracks.

LEFT: An early drawing showing the original Fulwood Barracks.

RIGHT: The southern entrance to the barracks before the guardroom was relocated outside the wall.



By Andrew Harris in response to the announced closure of the historic barracks

Fulwood Barracks occupies only 28.5 acres of land but the site epitomises the military – and in some ways the social – history of Preston, Lancashire and our north west region. By the time the barracks close in 2022 they will have served the ever-changing needs of the British Army for 174 years.

Fulwood Barracks were completed in 1848 but history didn't start then. In medieval times the site formed part of the Royal Hunting Forest but over time it became Fulwood Moor and was used by the people of Preston. The location played a marginal role in the 1648 Battle of Preston which was history-changing and led to Charles 1 being beheaded the following year. The battle was fought on Ribbleson Moor but the right wing of Cromwell's Army swept across the eastern part of the site to outflank and help defeat the Royalists.

1715 saw another Battle of Preston thought to include the site of the future barracks when the Jacobite rising led by James Stuart – aka the Old Pretender – attempted to regain the thrones of England, Ireland and Scotland for the exiled House of Stuart. The English Jacobites linked up with a Scottish force led by Viscount Kenmure and others who marched as far as Preston. They won the first round – on day one – but Government reinforcements arrived on day two and the Jacobites surrendered. The site of Fulwood Barracks has seen blood and sweat!

By the 1840s the Government was alarmed by the Chartist movement which was dissatisfied by the 1832 Reform Act and demanding six changes to make the political system more democratic. These included votes for every man aged 21 or more, a secret ballot, payment for MPs, equal constituencies and annual elections. The response wasn't reform but action to base troops near rebellious northern cities and towns. Although – like today – it is hard to discern what is in the mind of government this is thought to be the reason for creating Fulwood Barracks. Early deployments of troops confirmed this motive.

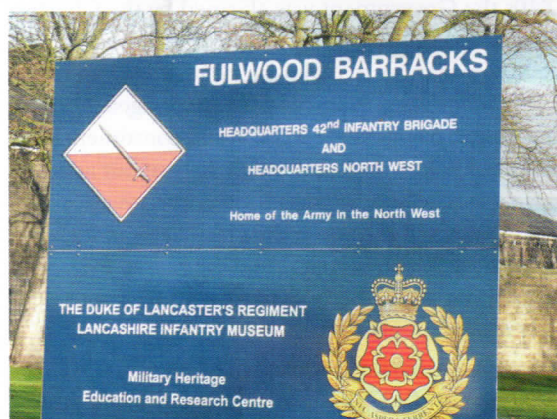
Construction of the barracks started in earnest in 1843 at an estimated cost of £137, 616 which was a princely sum

in those days. Completion was achieved in June 1848 at a final cost of £137,921 – so the estimate was 99.78% correct putting many modern estimates to shame. Six months before completion the barracks were part-occupied by two companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 60th Rifles who were followed by the 52nd Regiment of Foot in mid-March but they moved to Liverpool within days. Many other units were staged through the new barracks

1873 saw the introduction of 'Brigade Depots' and reforms linking regiments to the areas from which they recruited. Fulwood Barracks became the 12th Brigade Depot for the 27th (Lancashire) Regiment and the 81st Loyal Lincoln Volunteers which later became the Loyal Regiment. To accommodate these and other units the barracks had south and north guardhouses plus a chapel, canteen and prison. There were separate barracks and hospitals for infantry and cavalry and a Keep which is the redoubt – or final fortification - of any military establishment. Much of the site was used as parade grounds which in time were part used for temporary billets and car parking. The isometric drawing shows the original 19th century scheme for the barracks; married quarters were added later and the infantry barracks east range has been demolished.

From the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 to the Boer War in 1898 the 19th Century was relatively peaceful due to 'Pax Britannica' unlike the bloody century which followed. The main exception was the Crimean War but little is written about the role – if any – of Fulwood Barracks in that conflict. The main purposes of the barracks appears to have been as a depot for the Loyal Regiment – which became the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment –and providing aid to the civil power which in those days was code for suppressing uprisings.

Rationalising the defence estate is not a new idea. As the 19th century was coming to a close the War Office realised



ABOVE LEFT: Inside the barracks long ago. The buildings on the south side of the infantry parade ground.
MAIN: The Barracks Chapel as it is today. It is said to have been re-modelled by Engineer Lieutenant John Chard VC who commanded at Rorke's Drift in 1879 as depicted by the 1964 film ZULU.
INSET ABOVE: Part of the Lancashire Infantry Museum which showcases the regiments associated with Fulwood Barracks.
LEFT: The roles of Fulwood Barracks today.



that their barracks in Burnley were costing too much to maintain so they were closed and the East Lancashire Regiment was relocated to Fulwood Barracks which became their depot from 1898. The East Lancs occupied the West Barracks as the Loyals were established on the eastern side. Fulwood Barracks accommodated the Depots of the Loyals and the East Lancashire Regiment throughout the Boer War and the 1914-18 Great War although your columnist fails to understand what was great about it.

Throughout the terrible years of the first world war – as it was called after another one – Fulwood Barracks saw vast numbers of soldiers being recruited and equipped so they could be despatched for training then service at the front. The 7 regiments that eventually united to form the modern Duke of Lancaster's Regiment contributed an incredible 53 battalions - each of up to 1,000 men – for the Battle of the Somme which was the most painful and infamous episode of that bloody war. On the 1st July 1916 – the first day of the battle – 19,240 British soldiers were killed and nearly 38,000 were injured. It was the bloodiest day in British military history. Fought to take some of the pressure from the French struggling to defend Verdun it lasted 141 days. The British never managed to advance more than 7 miles yet it reinforced the Anglo-French alliance, wore down the Germans and the lessons learned led to victory 2 years later.

At least 11 of these new battalions must have passed through Fulwood Barracks. For many it would have one of their last sights before they were swallowed-up by the military machine and sent to their fate.

Following the First World War the 2 Regimental Depots at Fulwood Barracks trained recruits who were then posted to the home service battalions of their Regiments. With the outbreak of the Second World War it was clear that both Depots couldn't expand at Fulwood so the East Lancashire Regiment Depot relocated to The Squires Gate Camp in Blackpool which became an Infantry Training Centre. The Loyal Regiment Depot was also an Infantry Training Centre and remained at Fulwood Barracks until 1942. Thereafter the barracks were used intensively by the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and the Royal Army Service Corps which provided transport.

After the war the Depots for the Loyals and the East Lancashire Regiment were again based at Fulwood Barracks until the old Depot system was abolished in 1959. The barracks became the base for the newly-formed Lancastrian Brigade which was formed from the King's Own Royal Border Regiment, The King's Regiment, The Lancashire Regiment (Prince of Wales Volunteers) and the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire). More reorganisations followed in 1968, 1971, 1974 and 1992. In recent years it has been home to the 42nd Infantry Brigade, the Headquarters of the Army in North West England and the Isle of Man, 3 Medical Regiment, The Duke of Lancaster's Regimental Association and the Lancashire Infantry Museum.

Our region has many reasons to be grateful to the Army command based at Fulwood Barracks. When Foot and Mouth Disease threatened animal farms in the region - and devastated many – in 2001 the faltering response of other



Inside Fulwood Barracks as it is today. The West block beyond the infantry Parade Ground

Brigadier Christopher Coles commanding 42nd Infantry Brigade and the Army in North West England



agencies was replaced by the more robust approach of the army led by Brigadier Alex Birtwistle who had commanded the army in the north west from Fulwood Barracks. They fought Foot and Mouth like a battle – and won. When the region was drowning due to unprecedented floods in 2015 the Army Command at Fulwood Barracks caused soldiers of 2 Lincs (2nd Battalion Duke of Lancaster's Regiment) to provide quick and much needed help. With help from the RAF they mended breaches, provided supplies and rescued the stranded.

What of the future? Brigadier Christopher Coles has commanded 42nd Infantry Brigade and the Army in the North West from Fulwood Barracks for the last 3 years. He and his deputy – Colonel Phil Harrison – have a clear vision of the Army's role in our region. Brigadier Coles explained "One of our roles is to be a hub for the army and the emergency services in the region. This role will continue and should not be affected by our likely relocation to Weeton Barracks in the next 5 years." He continued " We greatly value and welcome our contact with the people of the North West. This may be achieved

in different ways after our relocation but we are confident that the north west community will continue to be as supportive in the future as they have been in the past."

The closure of Fulwood Barracks in 2022 will be the end of an era but hopefully THREE objectives can be achieved:

- Soldiers based locally should enjoy better accommodation and facilities at Weeton Barracks;
- Weeton Barracks may realise its potential to accommodate additional army units to reflect the strong recruitment into the army from our region;
- The future of the Fulwood Barrack after 2022 should have regard to 16 of the structures being of major historic interest and listed so that their heritage value will be preserved for all time. All involved should visit the former Peninsular Barracks in Winchester to appreciate how heritage can be preserved and combined with a modern and worthwhile role in the community. The continued presence

of the Lancashire Infantry Museum would be a major contribution to such an outcome.

Countless thousands of soldiers have passed through Fulwood Barracks during the years 1848-2016 and done their duty. We salute them whether they died or survived.

Andrew Harris – www.andreweharris.co.uk - gratefully acknowledges the help provided by Brigadier Christopher Coles, Colonel Phil Harrison and Jane Davies – Curator of the Lancashire Infantry Museum – in the preparation of this article. The historic illustrations are courtesy of the Museum and the recent pictures are by your columnist who hopes to contribute an article about the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and its history later in 2017.

