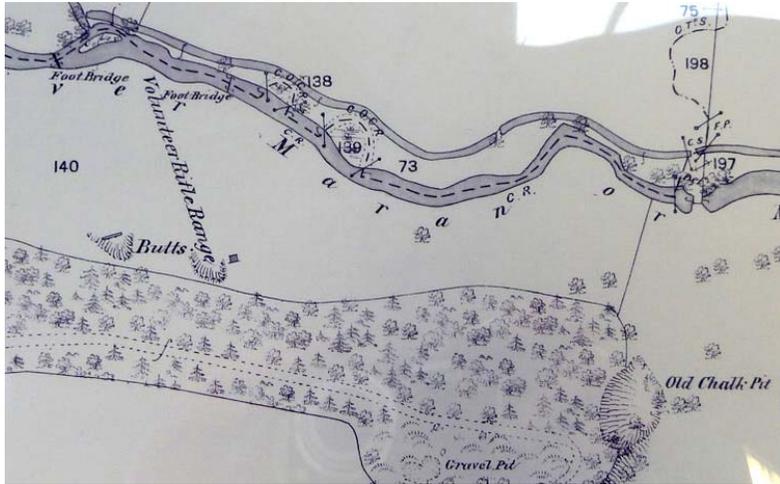


The Rifle Butts

In the 19th century, training for Rifle Volunteers was particularly important in the years before the Second Boer War (1899-1902). At this time Panshanger played an important part in national life with the Prime Minister, AJ Balfour, visiting Panshanger no less than 24 times as one of the Souls, the distinguished social group which met at Panshanger. In the period before the Boer War, Sir Alfred Milner, Governor of Cape Colony and influential in the Boer War, also visited Panshanger several times.



Hertfordshire volunteers too played their part and the 1st (Hertfordshire) Volunteer Battalion, which was attached to the Bedfordshire Regiment, trained at the Rifle Butts set against the northern slopes of Chisel Shelf. In 1877 similar Butts at Tewin Water cost a total of £154.1s.10d for earthworks, carpentry and the making of the Butts.

The Panshanger Butts were closed in 1894, due to complaints from the tenant farmer, Mr Campkins of Bury Farm, of stray bullets. After a new Butt was laid out, to which Lord Cowper contributed £20, it was re-opened for the exclusive use of the Hertford Town Companies. The only men who were allowed to use the 500 and 600 yard Butts were those who had passed out of 3rd class. Haileybury Cadet

Corps members belonging to the Hertford Town A Company were also permitted to use the Butts. From 1899 Lord Cowper stipulated that firing was allowed only from Saturdays to Mondays with the minimum numbers of rounds possible.

Although The (Hertfordshire) Volunteer Battalions were not sent to South Africa, 279 men volunteered to served as part of the Second Battalion, The Bedfordshire Regiment. A memorial to those Hertford men who served in South Africa during the Boer War is on the side of the old library at Old Cross, Hertford. Perhaps some of them trained at Panshanger.



Hertfordshire Gardens Trust (www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk)

