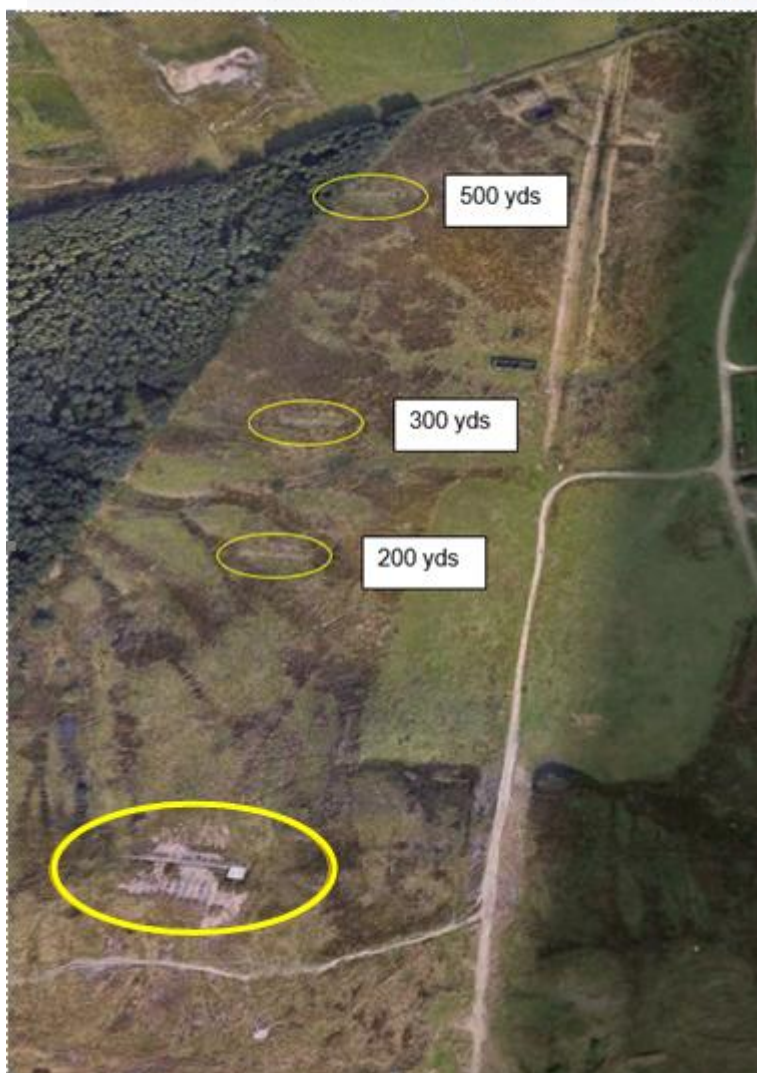
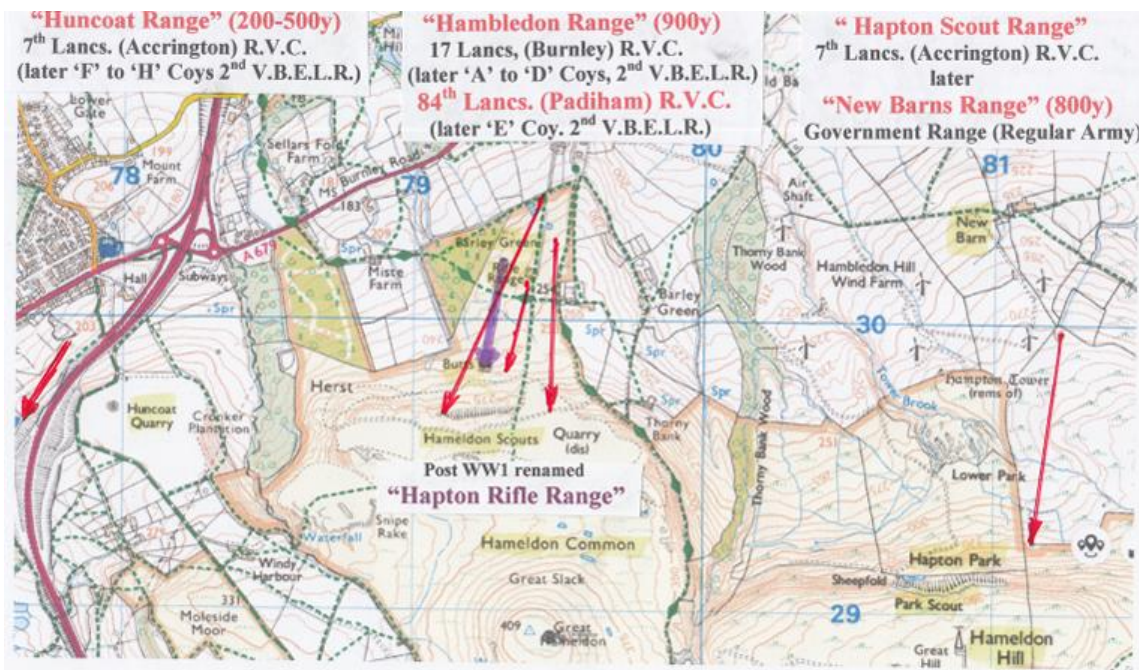


A Summary of the History of Rifle Ranges in the Burnley – Accrington Area
A chronological account of the development and events on three range locations *[based on unpublished research by D. Harding, A. Crawshaw and W. Flentje, with additional contributions and editing provided by R. Horrocks]*

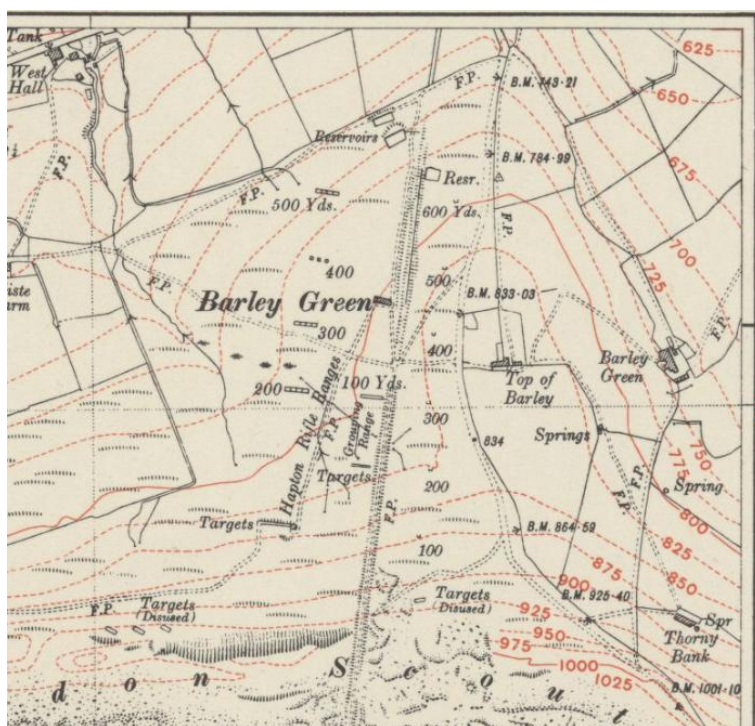


The rifle ranges within the Huncoat/Hapton/News Barns area comprise three quite different ranges, each with a unique history as outlined separately below. All three when superimposed on a modern map are shown below, on which the Huncoat Range (closed before WW1) site is now covered by the M65 motorway, the site of Hapton Scout range (closed circa. 1900?) is more difficult to identify on recent maps and only the Hambleton or Hapton range site (closed circa. 1969) has obvious original features, such as stop butt/target frames and firing points out to 500 yards.

A recent Google map of the Hapton (Hambleton) Range area provides a current view of the 500 yard range closed in 1969.



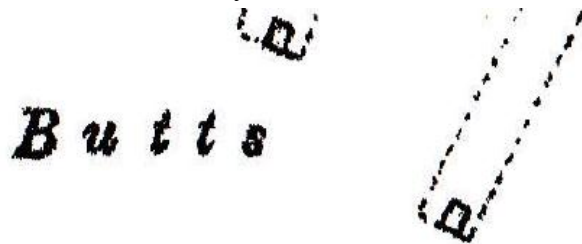
OS 6-inch Lancashire, 63.5E re-surv. 1890-91 publ. 1894



OS 25-in Lancashire, 63.12 rev 1929, publ 1931 – the 'Gallery' & Target shed

Accrington's Huncoat Range at Rake Head, with its butt located @ NatGridRef SD776296

This was the second range of the 7th Lancashire (Accrington) Rifle Volunteer Corps, formed in 1859 with John Hargreaves Jun. as captain. The Corps' initial use of a range at 'Hapton Scout' was reported from 1860. The year the corps' rifle range at Huncoat was taken into use has not been established so far. However, it was mentioned in **1865**, when at the Huncoat range competitors of the 22nd Lancs. (Church) Artillery V.C., were defeated by men of the Accrington Corps in a rifle match at 100 & 200 yards [*Burnley Gazette*, 11.11.1865]. In **1866** a similar match was reported from the 'Accrington range at Huncoat', citing distances of up to 300 yards, and another defeat for the men from Church was recorded [*Burnley Gazette*, 20.10.1866]. In **1880** the Accrington Volunteer Corps was re-designated to become 'G' & 'H' Companies of the 'new' 3rd Corps, itself in 1889 re-named the 2nd Volunteer Battalion, 'The East Lancashire Regiment'. In **1883** the Annual Shooting Competition at 200 & 300 yards, of 'G' Company 3rd L.R.V., at their Huncoat Range, was reported [*Volunteer Service Gazette*, 06.10.1883]. Re-surveyed in **1890-91** and published in 1893/94, Lancashire, LXIII.SE (12) is part of the O.S. 6in (25in) County Series of maps. It shows the 'Rifle Range', with 2x converging alignments, firing in a SSW direction to 'Butts'. The 25in map section, shown below, suggests that 2x 'Disc Marking Shelters' [Captain Hill's pattern iron mantlets] were in use, with an iron target attached on either side, allowing signalling directly on the target. Firing points were shown at 100 & 200 yards.



The official **1903** Rifle Range Return, periodically prepared for the House of Commons and listing the details all rifle ranges in Britain, listed the range as 'Huncoat', numbered '98' in the North-Western [military] District, located at a distance of 1.5m from the companies' Accrington H.Q. The range had been available to 'G' & 'H' Companies of the 2nd V.B. East Lancs. Regt., with 2x canvas targets provided at distances of up to 600 yards, but allowing 'independent' firing only. However, under 'Remarks', the Return states that the range was '**Closed**'. The **1909** revision leading to the new OS 6in map edition of 1913, showed that a new small gallery had been constructed for the markers, now allowing the use of canvas targets. Not surprisingly, and in line with the Return, the annotations now read 'Targets (Disused)'. The **1913** Rifle Range Return no longer mentioned the range. In **1985**, the range location, being close to the Accrington bypass [A56], was likely to have been disturbed or landscaped during the construction work.

Burnley's Hambleton or Hapton Rifle Range, was located in the shadow of 'Hameldon Scouts', in an area shown as 'Barley Green', SE of Hapton.

This was predominantly the range of the 17th Lancashire (Burnley) Rifle Volunteers, formed in January **1860** with John Dugdale and Henry Moore as captains. Records suggest that it shared the location with the 84th (Padiham) R.V.C., formed 1861 with James Dugdale as captain. In **1862** a brief description of the range was given as: '*Range of 1000 yards at Hambleton [sic] Hill. There are 15 targets* [note: 'targets' in this context meant 15x cast iron

target plates, each 2ft wide and 6ft high] *placed against a hill about 1,700 feet above the sea , and 1000 feet above the targets.*' [*Volunteer's Book of Facts: An Annual Record*]. This book was edited by William Harnett Blanch, at that time a gunsmith and volunteer in the Liverpool and Southport areas. In his second, **1863** edition, he added: '*...the Hapton Station, three miles from Burnley, on the E. Lancashire railway , is within ten minutes' walk of the range, and the turnpike road is within five minutes' walk. Twenty-one targets, facing N., backed by a hill 1,000 feet high.*'. Still quoting from Blanch's 1862&63 editions of '*Book of Facts*', we learn the following about the range of the 84th Padiham Corps of Volunteers: '*Range of 900 yards, at Hambleton. There are 12 targets [iron plates], placed against a steep hill, which forms a natural butt.*' Showing this range for the first time was the OS map re-surveyed in **1890-91**[map details above under 'Huncoat Range'], depicting the range as having 3x distinct groups of 'Butts', with a total of 7x separate diverging lines of fire, being aligned towards them in a SSW directions. The alignments of the most westerly group are 1x at 900yds and 2x at 600yds, firing towards 'Butts', which consisting of three markers' shelters [mantlets], each marking and signalling 2x targets. A central group of 3x 'Butts' served distances at 400 & 300yds. To the east of the raised tramway, the single alignment of a 600yd range allowed firing towards a single butt, i.e. 1x mantlet with 2x targets. All 7x alignments had firing points every 100 yards, and their target positions were similar to the Huncoat range, with direct disc marking on iron targets. In **1895** extensive improvements to the range at Hambledon Hill were reported, with the construction of '30 new beds', likely to have been raised firing points [*Burnley Gazette*, 06.04.1895]. It is probable the alterations included the scrapping of the iron targets and the installation of frames for penetrable targets in their place. For this purpose, 'pits' would have been created, in each of which 2x new target frames to be installed. In **1901**, in respect of adapting the range for the use the Lee-Metford Rifle, the War Office had granted retrospectively £90 [c. £11,000 in today's money] towards a cost of £280 [*Burnley Express*, 20.03.1901]. The **1903** Rifle Range Return listed the range as located in the North-Western District. Still named 'Hambledon' and given the number '96', it served companies of the 2nd V.B. E. Lancs. Regt, i.e. Burnley's 'A' to 'E' Companies and Padiham's 'F' Company. A total of 14 canvas targets were available with 6@300, 6@600 and 1 each @ 800 & 900yds. 'Independent and Collective Firing', as well as 'Field Practices', were permitted. The distances to Burnley and Padiham are given as 5.25m and 2m respectively. In **1909** the OS 6in & 25in maps were revised, followed by their publication in 1913. A total of 14x targets, were shown to be available to the shooters, 2x in each of the 7x target pits. These were arranged in 3 groups, the most westerly with 3 pits, i.e. 6x targets @ c. SD791267, their firing points @ 5 6 7 & 800yds'; a central group, again with 3 pits and 6x targets @ SD793298, their firing points @ 1 2 & 300yds; and a single most easterly pit with 2x targets @ SD795297 and firing points @ 1 2 3 4 5 & 600yds.



Remnants of the three most westerly target pits

Changes were recorded some four years later, in the *1913 Rifle Range Return*. The 'Hambledon' range was now part of the 'Western District' and numbered '24'; 6x targets were recorded as available, with the max. possible firing distance quoted to be 900 yards and 'Field Practices' still being permitted. The **1928-29** map revision, published in 1932, showed that the range had again undergone major alterations. The former most westerly and easterly butt areas were now shown as 'Targets (Disused)', while at the former central location of butts, the latter had been replaced by a single medium sized gallery, some 140 feet in length and served by firing points at 2 3 4 & 500yds. A target shed had been added at the E end of the gallery. Between the new range and the elevated course of the tramway, a 100yd 'Grouping Range' [possibly a 'Zeroing' range] has been sandwiched. The map now names the facilities 'Hapton Rifle Range'.



The combined erosive forces of running water and gravity try hard to bury the gallery under a slow, but steady landslide.

The *1932 Return* still listed the range under 'Hambledon' and showed it to have 12x targets, with firing points back to 600 yards, and 'Field Practices' still permitted. In **1949** the 'Hameldon' range, now numbered '917', was found on a 'List of Small-Arms Ranges, Western Command, North-Western District', as having 12x targets. [NatArch W.O. 32/13770]. An OS map published in the early 1960s still showed the range with firing points at 2 3 4 & 500yds, aligned in a SSW direction towards the gallery at SD793298, with the 100yd 'Grouping Range' also still being shown. It seems likely that these details were simply adopted from the previous 6in map edition. In the late **1960s** it was reported in Parliament that the 'Hameldon range had been given up by the military and closed within the last four years, but being subject to a potential takeover over by a School or Rifle Association, with this, regrettably, never having materialised. [Hansard, 24. Feb 1969, HoC Debate Vol. cc231-

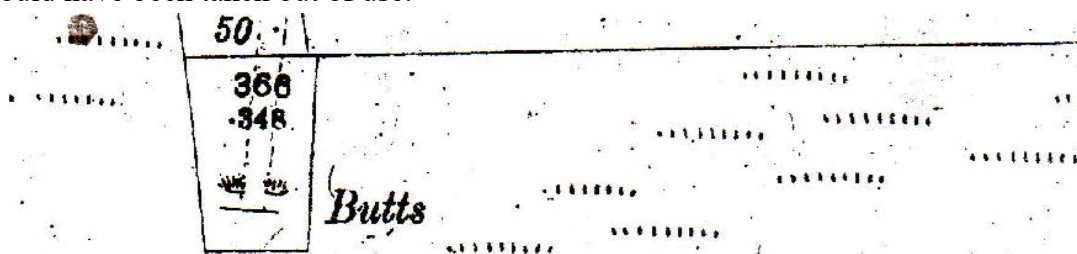
2W]. In early **1970s**, the report of the '*Defence Lands Committee*' ['Nugent Report'] made no reference to this range.

The range at **Hapton Park** below **Park Scout** (=Hapton Scout?) and **Hameldon Hill**, later referred to as '**New Barn Farm Range**'.

c. 1860 the range was reported to have been used by the '7th Coy Lancashire RVC [*The Volunteer Artillery and Rifle Corps Almanac*, Jan 1860], and later that year: Rifle Contest on the Accrington Practice Ground at Hapton Scout, at 2 3 & 400 yards [*Burnley Advertiser*, 10.11.1860]. In **1862**, Maj.-Gen. Hay, Inspector-General of Musketry on his visit to Burnley and its Hameldon range, raised anxieties amongst Volunteers, as it was feared that the Government considered to expropriate this range, to make it available for the use of Regular and Militia troops, quartered at Burnley's Depot. We know that this did not happen, and instead Accrington's early range at Hapton Scout would become the range for the Depot's troops. One wonders if this had been planned or decided already in 1862, during the general's visit. [*Burnley Advertiser*, 22 March 1862].

In **1863** Blanch (see above) published the following details: '7th and 36th (Accrington) R.V. – The targets are placed at the Hapton Scouts, to fire over which would require that the rifle should be held almost perpendicular.' [*Volunteer's Book of Facts*]. Two years later the Accrington Corps have the use of their new range at Hancoat.

1887, a 'Return of Government' [Regular Army] Ranges is published as part of the 1891 '*Select Committee Report on Rifle Ranges*', which investigated range safety issued as result of the issue of the .303"cal Lee-Metford magazine rifles. It listed this range under the name 'Hopton, New Barn', located 2.5m from Burnley in the North-Western District. It was available to Regular Troops and 3rd & 4th Battalion's (Militia) posted to the Burnley Depot. The range provided 2x target and had a maximum firing distance of 800 yards. It was considered safe for the .303"cal magazine rifle and all range and field practices. In **1887**, a shooting competition was reported between 16 Sergeants of the 30th Regimental District and likewise of the Blackburn Rifle Volunteers at the New Barn Farm Range [*Blackburn Standard*, 03.09.1887]. **1891-92**, saw the range included during the re-survey of the 6in Lancashire, LXIV.SW map, which would be published in 1895. Firing slightly W of S to 'Butts' at NatGridRef SD811292, distance markers are shown every 50 yards from 100y to a max. distance of 800yds. **1898**, with the closure of the Burnley Depot that year, the range too would have been taken out of use.



The corresponding OS 25in map above, revealed the close proximity between markers' shelters and iron targets, 'Bland's Sunken Markers' Pits', recommended and illustrated in *Musketry Regulations*, would have suited this particular setting. No reference was made to this range in connection with future maps or *Returns*.

'New Barn' which lent its name to this range, is still shown on modern maps at SD811304, some 600 yards to the north of remains of 'Hampton Towers'.