

The Times July 21, 1860

MELANCHOLY CATASTROPHE AT LITTLEHAMPTON

Two hundred men of the 21st Depot Battalion are receiving rifle instruction at the fort here. Last Wednesday, after the practice with the long Enfield at 400 yards' range, the men were pointing their unloaded rifles and snapping caps at each other while the officers were engaged in comparing the register of the shots made with the target. One of the men, named Dockerell, when directed to unload had not done so, and, to conceal this, when ordered, as usual, to ground arms, had removed the cap. Forgetting - so we learn on inquiry - what he had done, he joined with his comrades in pointing his rifle at one of the groups who lay around, and having placed a cap on he directed his piece at a comrade named Cotton, who, with two others, Dwyer and Green, was present at the time. The rifle, of course, went off immediately, and the shot took effect on the right side of Cotton's nose, carrying away part of his jawbone and passing out at the right side of his neck. Dwyer had moved a little on seeing the piece levelled, and thus he escaped, but the bullet, after passing through Cotton's neck, entered Green's throat, passing out at his mouth and taking with it several teeth and a portion of the jawbone. Green was not out of danger on Thursday evening last, and but slight hopes are entertained of the recovery of Cotton.

Brighton Guardian quoted in Birmingham Daily Post Friday, October 12, 1860

SINGULAR EVENT – It will be recollected that recently two men were shot through the head, at the Fort Littlehampton, while at rifle practice, by a comrade snapping his gun as he had intended at one of them, but the piece, contrary to his belief, being loaded, the ball passed through the head of the first one and then the other. It is not a little remarkable that both have recovered; but, strange to say, the man by whom the accident was produced has since died, so depressed was he, and so great had been the shock on his system, at having been the cause of the disaster, that he could not be rallied.