

## Somerset Volunteers of the Eighteenth Century.

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THE volunteer movement in its earliest days was closely connected with the militia. About 1778 officers commanding militia regiments were authorized to accept offers of voluntary service in their ranks, which were normally recruited by a quota of men from each township or parish, the choice being determined by ballot. These offers of service were first made by individuals and subsequently by companies under their own officers, but in either case such volunteers became merged in the militia units and were subject to their regulations. In 1782 a Volunteer Act was passed to encourage the formation of corps of men who would voluntarily enroll themselves for the defence of their districts in the event of invasion or rebellion. Although it is most probable that military associations were organized in this county their muster-rolls and records, if any have survived, are now in private ownership and unknown to me.

In the year 1794, when danger again threatened from France, another Act (34 Geo. III, cap. 31) was passed which may be justly described as the charter of the Volunteers, whether horse or foot, as we know them. This statute recognized these auxiliaries as an integral portion of our home forces, and provided for their organization by a scheme called the Plan which was to be adopted as the basis of defence in each county under the Lord-Lieutenant. The Volunteers were under certain conditions exempted from liability to serve in or find a substitute for the militia, a quite substantial boon. Each company of infantry was to consist of three

officers, six N.C.O., and sixty privates at the least, the Government furnishing the arms and accoutrements. Officers received the pay of their rank; each N.C.O. and private receiving one shilling for every day of exercise. Troops of Fencible cavalry, each not less than fifty men, were to be raised; also troops of cavalry consisting of gentlemen and yeomanry who would provide their own horses, the arms in each case being furnished by the State. Subscriptions were to be invited for defraying the expenses of formation.

Such, briefly, was the scheme communicated to a county meeting at Wells on 9th April, 1794, when a committee of magistrates and other well-known men was appointed to carry it into effect. The work of this committee was most successful, whether we regard the strength of the military units enrolled or the financial support which was forthcoming. Between April, 1794, and January, 1795, a sum of £11,766 was received from all parts of Somerset. It is at this point that the War Office muster-rolls and pay-lists of the Volunteers who served under the terms of the Act of 1794 become available, although it would appear that the returns are not complete. The deficiencies may be due, perhaps, to the absence of any obligation to transmit such details to the War Office before 1798. Indeed the earliest record known to me of the Volunteers in this county is medallic rather than documentary in character, being an oval silver badge of the Bath Volunteer Association, 1780, inscribed "The reward for military merit adjudged to Samuel Wilson. Major A. Molesworth commanding the corps."

The archives of the War Office and the Admiralty are now deposited at the Public Record Office where they can be consulted. The muster-rolls are most useful to those interested, but it is manifestly impracticable to print in these *Proceedings* anything beyond the names of the places and the officers, which must be limited approximately to the period before 1800.

I cannot find any references to volunteer artillery, batteries of which were certainly raised in other south-western counties. An almost forgotten branch of the local defences was under the control of the Admiralty, which organized companies of Sea Fencibles for guarding the coast-line. These men, re-

cruited from fishermen and others having sea-sense who were exempt from service in the Navy, formed a chain round the shores of the United Kingdom. Although they were established in 1798, the earliest surviving return from Somerset is that for Oct.—Nov., 1803, when Capt. James Stevenson, R.N., commanded twenty-five Sea Fencibles at Minehead, ten at Porlock, thirty-nine at Watchet and 113 at Bridgwater. Their pay was at the same rate as that of their brethren in the hinterland. (*Admiralty pay lists. Sea Fencibles. No. 88*). Returning now to the War Office forces, William Pitt told the Commons in October, 1796, that we needed, among other things, more cavalry at home, and that he intended to raise "irregular cavalry" as being less costly than the regulars. The prime minister's novel experiment was incorporated in a long Act (37 Geo. III, cap. 6) which required one horse, and a horseman duly equipped, to be enrolled in respect of every ten horses kept for riding or drawing a carriage in England. Persons serving in the militia or volunteers were exempted; otherwise the militia ballot, including the right to tender a substitute, applied, if necessary, to the new cavalry. The regiments so raised were to be known as "Provisional Cavalry," and were to be organized by the Lieutenancy in each county. Of course the Act of 1796 was in effect a compulsory levy of horses and men, and therefore would not strictly fall within the scope of this article. But the experiment being unsuccessful and "a burden to the country" the men were invited to transfer individually to the Fencible squadrons, and subsequently the name was changed to 2nd Somerset Fencible Cavalry, thus suggesting a voluntary basis, as would appear from a muster book of Capt. Faugoin's troop in my possession. Be that as it may, the regiment was disbanded in April, 1800, after a period of about three years' service, so it is fortunate that the War Office records have in this instance survived.

It will be seen from the foregoing notes that the auxiliary mounted corps in this county during the last decade of the eighteenth century were (1) Fencible Cavalry, (2) Gentlemen and Yeomanry, which are represented to-day by the Yeomanry, (3) Provisional Cavalry. Unhappily the official musters of group (2) during its earliest existence have not been

preserved ; consequently the names of officers to be presently mentioned have been gathered from the *London Gazette* and other journals, as the War Office records under the heading of "Yeomanry" do not begin until 1803.

We now reach 1798 when the Government, being once more alarmed at the probability of invasion, passed two additional statutes (38 Geo. III, caps. 27 and 51) "for applying in the most expeditious manner and with the greatest effect the voluntary services of the King's loyal subjects." In this connexion further Plans were published in April, 1798, containing detailed instructions to the Lords-Lieutenant of maritime counties. Among other requirements returns were to be furnished of men between 15 and 60 years of age, distinguishing those who were infirm or already serving in an existing corps. The Lieutenancy was recommended to form "armed associations" of cavalry or infantry as independent troops or companies, to be recruited from known and respectable householders. The commanders were to be residents possessing an income of not less than fifty pounds from land. To this scheme for increasing the security of remote districts we can attribute the detached companies included in the alphabetical list appended to this article. It will be noticed that whereas in 1794 the Volunteers were organized as battalions or regiments, in 1798 the system of small independent units was apparently preferred by the military authorities. Patriotic feeling was no doubt intensified by the raising and training of local corps, of which there was an instance in 1799 at Wrington where the members "objected to be regimented," notwithstanding the cajoleries of the officer commanding the Yeomanry regiment who wished to absorb the independent troop.

Printed literature dealing with Somerset Volunteers seems to be limited to two books, namely, the history of *The North Somerset Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry* (Bath, 1850), wherein the anonymous author shows that the origin of the regiment can be ascribed to the Frome Selwood "military association" of 1798 ; and *A View of the Volunteer Army of Great Britain in the year 1806*, by James Willson (London, 1807).

## FENCIBLE CAVALRY REGIMENT.

JUNE—DEC., 1794.

John, Earl Poulet, colonel. John Strode, lieut.-colonel.  
John Berkeley Burland, major.

W. H. Newton, John Raw Collins, John Lethbridge, and  
Peter Bluett, captains. George Wade, captain-lieutenant.

Wm. Roberts, Wm. Hanning, R. T. Combe, H. P. Collins,  
— Champion, and N. T. Kingsley, lieutenants.

Henry Dupont, C. H. Lewis, N. French, N. V. Palmer, John  
Greenhead, C. Staples, and Henry Sweeting, cornets.

W. Roberts, adjutant. John Greenhead, surgeon. Wm.  
Tudor, chaplain.

About 300 N.C.O. and privates.

The regiment is sometimes styled "Fencible Light Dra-  
goons," and was then employed on garrison duty at Welling-  
ton, Tiverton and Bridgwater. A pair of standards presented  
by the county cost £48 9s. 6d.

## GENTLEMEN AND YEOMANRY CAVALRY REGIMENT.

1794.

In this year each of the undermentioned captains undertook  
the formation of a troop, six of which I can tentatively assign  
to the districts in which they appear to have been raised. To  
each troop the county committee made a grant of £700 to-  
wards the expenses of equipment.

John Somerville . . . . .	Milverton.
John Hanning . . . . .	Iminster.
Robert Stevens . . . . .	Locality doubtful.
Samuel Burge, lieut. James Leach, cornet.	
Samuel Daniel . . . . .	Yeovil.
W. L. White, lieut. W. Whitmash, cornet.	
Sir Philip Hales . . . . .	Locality doubtful.
Hugh Somerville, lieut.	
William Hoskins . . . . .	Crewkerne.
Thomas Hoskins, lieut. John Perkins, cornet.	

John Tyndale Warre . . . . . Taunton (1795).  
John Jeans, cornet.  
Andrew Bain . . . . . Martock.  
S. Prior Bean, lieut. Wm. Ball, cornet.

(From the *London Gazette* and *Western Flying Post*).

## FENCIBLE INFANTRY REGIMENT.

OCT., 1794, TO JULY, 1795.

William Frederick Forster, colonel. Thomas Fownes Luttrell, lieut.-colonel. Hugh Antrobus, major.

Richard Tattam, Harman Jones, John Sandys, John Kiernan, Edward Mockler, Benj. Chapman, and Chas. Lord, captains. Sacheverel Harwood, captain.-lieutenant.

Wm. Cecil Edgworth, Francis Hy. Forster, Richard Hawke, Thos. Hall, Robt. Rowe, Francis Nodin, Robt. Walpole Dudley, Wm. Millington, Randall Kiernan, Henry Sweeting, Samuel Forster, Sam Hopkins, Jas. Flood, Thos. Edwards, John McPhail, John Horne, Walter Pearce, Thos. Gayner, Patrick Dowdall, Henry Mockler, and J. Castle, lieutenants.

Henry Thompson, Wm. Cooke, Jas. Chapman, Chas. Forrest, Hy. Lewis Sweeting, R. Gillmour, J. Cunnington, and John Thompson, ensigns.

Henry Sweeting, adjutant. Sach. Harwood, quarter-master. W. Millington, surgeon. Edward Cross, chaplain.

About 650 N.C.O. and privates.

The regiment was then quartered in Ireland, as the papers bear a Dublin imprint and the accounts were vouched at Londonderry. In August, 1795, the Fencibles were reviewed by General Rooke at Taunton.

## PROVISIONAL CAVALRY REGIMENT.

JULY—AUGUST, 1798.

John Berkeley Burland, colonel. Thomas Samuel Jolliffe, lieut.-colonel. Robert Everard Balch, major. Samuel Rodbard, major.

John Godfrey, John Rawlins, John Brickdale, and Charles Hutchings Lewis, captains.

John Sweeting, captain-lieutenant.

Richard Chapman, Henry Faugoin, Henry Warry Edwards, Charles Anderdon, John Galpin, Richard Crosse, and Charles Best, lieutenants.

John Crosse, Geo. Squires, Francis Jeffery, Thos. Bidwell, Thos. Hooper and Thos. Balne, cornets.

Thos. Goodson, James Doddrell, Edward Symonds, and Humphrey Webber, quarter-masters, 1799.

Charles Anderdon, surgeon. Henry Faugoin, adjutant.

About 450 N.C.O. and privates.

Each troop was trained in its own district, the regiment being first embodied at Wells in July, 1798. Subsequently it was on garrison duty in Dorset, Devon and Cornwall.

#### BATH (ASSOCIATION). 1798.

John Glover, col. com. Wm. Thompson, lieut.-col. Peter Boissier, major.

John Young, Chas. Dumbleton, Chas. Cobbe, Wm. H. Winstone, George E. Allen, captains,

Wm. Wyatt Dimond, Wm. Harris, Wm. Stroud, Joseph Batten, Wm. Bury, Abraham Redwood, Wm. Brookland, Chas. Wright Phillott, Chas. Logie, Chas. Parry, lieutenants.

James Phillott, chaplain. Charles Logie, quartermaster. James Nooth, surgeon.

#### INDEPENDENT COMPANIES AND TROOPS.

##### BECKINGTON. 1798.

Thomas Rogers, captain. Wm. Chislett, lieutenant. Joseph Mitten, cornet.

##### BISHOP'S LYDEARD. 1798.

John Fisher, John Lethbridge and Thomas Charter, captains. Three companies. Known only from newspaper records.

##### BRIDGWATER. 1794.

Thomas Allen, major. Jeffery Allen, captain. Joseph Jeffery, lieut. Joseph Darch and Robert Codrington, ensigns. Wm. Anstice, quartermaster and surgeon.

**CHEW AND CHEWTON. 1798.**

James Tooker, major. James Stephens, John Billingsley, captains. Richard Langford, capt.-lieut. Samborne Palmer, and Wm. Miles, lieuts. F. B. Wright, Thomas Randall and Wm. Hippisley, ensigns. Three companies.

**COMBE ST. NICHOLAS. 1798.**

John Cooke, captain. Joseph Winter, lieut. William Walter, ensign.

**CREECH ST. MICHAEL. 1798. (Known as "Somerset Riflemen").**

Wm. Burrige, captain. Richard Cross and Richard Bridge.

**CREWKERNE. 1798.**

Wm. Gray, captain. Isaac Sparks and Samuel Wills.

**CROWCOMBE. 1798.**

James Bernard, captain. George Legge and Moses Gard.

**FIVEHEAD. 1798.**

Joseph Bullen, captain. Francis Richardson and Wm. Norman.

**FRESHFORD. 1798.**

Thomas Joyce, captain. John Joyce and Richard Whittington.

**FROME. 1798.**

Henry Sheppard, captain. John Wayland and Edward Olive. (Infantry).

James A. Wickham, captain. Thomas Bunn and John C. Middleton. (Cavalry).

**KINGSBURY. 1798.**

R. B. Willy, captain. Stephen England and John Gardner.

**LANGPORT. 1798.**

John Chambers, major com. Edward Ash and Thos. Viney.

Richard Michell, captain. Walter Stuckey and John Michell.

Wm. Sharrock, quartermaster. (Two companies, Infantry).

J. Warren, captain. R. Utternare and J. Richards. (Cavalry).

**MARTOCK. 1798.**

Thomas Potenger, captain. Geo. Lilly and H. Culliford.

John Potenger Westcote, captain. William Adams. (Two companies).

**MILVERTON. 1798.**

John Weech, captain. John Nurton and Geo. Llewellyn Cross.

**MINEHEAD AND DUNSTER. 1798.**

John Fownes Luttrell, captain. Murdock Mackenzie and Richard Seton.

**NORTH PETHERTON. 1798.**

Richardson Harrison, major com. Thos. Hearne and John Bullen Coulthurst.

Edward Symes, captain. Wm. Harrison and John Baker. (Two companies).



## SOUTH PETHERTON. 1798.

Richard Toller, captain. John Baker Edmonds and Stephen Bridge.

## PITMINSTER. 1799.

Thos. Southwood, captain. Simon Billet and Robt. Daw.

## ROAD AND WOOLVERTON. 1798.

Thos. Whitaker Ledyard, captain. John Parish and Thos. Whitaker Noad. (Cavalry).

## SHEPTON MALLET. 1798.

Wm. Purlewent, captain. Richard Leir and Thos. Green. John Penfold Westley, captain. John Brown and Edward Moore. (Two companies).

## SOMERTON. 1797.

George Donisthorpe, captain. Wm. Bridge and Samuel Mogg.

## STOGURSEY. 1798.

A company was raised by John Acland and reported to the Government, but nothing further is known.

## TAUNTON. 1794.

Wm. Corfield, major com. Wm. Blundell and John Whitmash, captains. Prockter Thomas, John Clitsome, and John Pinchard, lieutenants. Francis Dovey, adjutant. (Three companies).

## WELLINGTON. 1798.

William Jones, captain. (Infantry).

Lord Porchester, major. Wm. Billett, capt.-lieut. George Piper, lieut. John Nott, cornet. Henry Sully and Thos. Corner, surgeons. (Cavalry).

## WELLS. 1798.

John Hill, captain. Benjamin Walker and Wm. Nettleton.

## WIVELISCOMBE. 1798.

Lacy Yea, captain. Philip Lovell and Thos. Lyddon Surrage.

(*War Office musters. Volunteers.* 13/3778, 3789, 3937, 4531, '33, '34, '35, '37, '39, '40).

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The plate is from a water-colour portrait of a Somerset mounted volunteer in 1798. His regiment is not indicated, but it was probably the "Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry" mentioned on p. 60.



SOMERSET VOLUNTEER CAVALRY, 1798.