

**REGIMENTAL RECORDS OF  
THE  
BEDFORDSHIRE MILITIA,  
FROM 1759 TO 1884**

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Regimental Records of the Bedfordshire Militia, From 1759 to 1884 by Sir John M. Burgoyne

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**SIR JOHN M. BURGOYNE**

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*From 1759 to 1884.*

BY  
LIEUT.-COL. SIR JOHN M. BURGOYNE,  
BART. //

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1884.

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RECORDS OF SERVICE  
OF THE  
BEDFORDSHIRE MILITIA.

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1759.

ALTHOUGH armed men of various designations had been formed in England from a remote period, it was not until 1759 that the Militia was raised.

It is very difficult to trace the early history of Militia regiments, as during the last century, and early part of the present, they were entirely under the Home Department, and the lists of their Officers were kept distinct, and were not published in the Army List.

Early in 1759, a Militia Act was passed by Parliament, to raise regiments of Militia in England and Wales, and on the 5th June a Circular was sent round to the Lords-

Lieutenant of Counties, ordering all Militia regiments to be immediately recruited and prepared for service.

Seven regiments of these only appear to have complied with this order, viz. the Devon, Dorset, Norfolk, Somerset, Surrey, and Wiltshire, which regiments, by a return called for on the 28th July, were reported to be "on duty," while twenty-four others were returned as "officered and near completion."

At this time the Duke of Bedford appears to have been Lord-Lieutenant both of Bedfordshire and Devonshire, as I found several official letters written by him respecting appointing officers to the Devonshire Militia. I, however, found the original letter from the Duke of Bedford to the Secretary of State, which was probably the first official letter ever written respecting the Bedfordshire Militia.

"Woburn Abbey,

"September 8th, 1759.

"SIR,

"In obedience to His Majesty's commands, signified to me in your letter of the 5th June last, to use my utmost diligence and attention, to carry into execution the several Acts of Parliament made for the better ordering the Militia Force in that part of Great Britain called England, I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have succeeded so far in this county, as to be able to send you the enclosed list of noblemen and gentlemen who are willing to accept the commissions set against their name, in the list I have the



honor to enclose you, and I desire the favor of you to lay it before His Majesty, for his royal approbation.

“I am, with great respect,

“ Sir,

“ Your obedient humble servant,

“ BEDFORD.

“ P.S.—I think it necessary to inform you that Lord Viscount Torrington is by his own particular desire placed as ensign; and as the Battalion is 400 strong, I think two Field Officers will be sufficient.

“ To the Right Hon. Mr. Secretary Pitt.”

A List of Noblemen and Gentlemen who offered themselves as Officers in the Militia of the County of Bedford.

The Marquis of Tavistock—*Colonel.*

Sir George Osborn, Bart.—*Major.*

*As Captains.*

The Right Hon. the Earl of Upper Ossory.

Sir Philip Monoux, Bart.

John Marshe Dickinson, Esq.

Thomas Potter, Esq.

Richard Orlebar, Esq.

George Edwards, Esq.

Ambrose Reddall, Esq.

*As Lieutenants.*

John Franklin, Esq.  
 Thomas Vaux, Esq.  
 John Salusbury, Esq.  
 Thomas Lee, Esq.  
 Charles Field, Esq.

*As Ensigns.*

The Right Hon. George Viscount Torrington.  
 George Boheme, Esq.  
 Joseph Franklin, Esq.  
 John Hervey, Esq.  
 Freeman, Gentleman—*Adjutant.*

(Signed) BEDFORD.

Commissions were issued to these noblemen and gentlemen, and they were the first officers of the Bedfordshire Militia. At the same time several County gentlemen were appointed Deputy Lieutenants, to arrange and carry out the balloting of men to serve in the Militia.

I found a curious old copy of a notice to the Dorset Militia, issued by their Colonel, June 23rd, 1759 :—

*“To the Militiamen of the County of Dorset.*

“The law enacts that in case of actual invasion, of imminent national danger, or in case of rebellion, the Militia, or any part of it, may be drawn out as His Majesty shall judge necessary, and marched to any parts

of this kingdom. But none of the Militia are ever to be sent out of it, nor are they to be commanded by any other regimental officers than their own, qualified as the law directs; and if any man ordered out leave families not of abilities to support themselves during their absence, such families are to be maintained, by order of any Justice of the Peace, at the expense of the county."

The following letter of an officer of Militia would show that the Militiamen of 1759 commenced with the same spirit and good conduct which has been handed down to those now serving in the force.

" July 8th, 1759.

" The business I am engaged in employs me continually. But the great spirit seen in every part of our Corps, and the cheerfulness of our private men, who observe the strictest discipline, make fatigue agreeable."

In July of this year, for the first time, mention is made of Militia regiments marching through various towns. The *London Chronicle* of July 21st, 1759, says:—

" Yesterday morning, six companies of the Norfolk Militia marched from Kingston in Surry to Cobham and Ripley, on their way to Portsmouth. They came into Kingston on Tuesday evening, and made a very good appearance; they were commanded by Major Wilton. Their drummers and fifers were all little boys with fur caps, and looked very pretty. Their uniform is red, faced with black.