

**A STATEMENT OF THE CLAIMS AND
PRIVILEGES OF HER MAJESTY'S BODY GUARD
OF THE HONORABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN
AT ARMS, FORWARDED TO THE LORD
CHAMBERLAIN BY LORD FOLEY (IN
OBEDIENCE TO HER MAJESTY'S COMMANDS).
28 JUNE, 1851**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649431885

A Statement of the Claims and Privileges of Her Majesty's Body Guard of the Honorable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, Forwarded to the Lord Chamberlain by Lord Foley (In Obedience to Her Majesty's Commands). 28 June, 1851 by Lord Foley

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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LORD FOLEY

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A STATEMENT
OF THE
CLAIMS AND PRIVILEGES
OF
Her Majesty's Body Guard
OF
THE HONORABLE CORPS OF
GENTLEMEN AT ARMS,
FORWARDED TO THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN,
BY THE CAPTAIN, LORD FOLEY,
(IN OBEDIENCE TO HER MAJESTY'S COMMANDS.)

28 JUNE, 1851.

1865.

DATE: PRINTED BY WILLIAM LEWIS.



HENRY VIII.

THE Band of Pensioners or Speres was constituted by King Henry VIII. in 1509, as a Royal Body Guard, in confirmation of which, Hall the Chronicler states more than once, "the Kynge ordeined fiftie gentlemenne to bee Speres, every of them to have an Archer, a Demilaunce, and a Castrel, and every Spere to have three greate horses to bee attendaunte on his persone," &c. The Band was composed of Cadets of noble families, and of the higher order of gentry, according to "certain Ordinances and Statutes devised and signed by the King's Majesty for a Retineue of Speres or Men of Arms, to be chosen of Gentlemen that be common, and Extract of Noble Blood. With a form of their Othe." (See *Appendix*, No. 1.)

This is to be found among the Manuscript Addenda to the Museum copy of the Cottonian Library, and with the Yeomen of the Guard is the oldest military body in the kingdom.

King Henry VII., at his Coronation in 1485, had instituted a body of fifty Archers, under the title of Yeomen of the Guard; but Henry VIII., not contented with an escort of Yeomen, established, at the instance of Sir W. Compton, according to Hoyd, in his "Worthies," this new and sumptuous Troop of Gentlemen, composed of Cadets of noble families and the higher order of gentry, to attend his personal service.

In the year 1520 the Gentlemen Pensioners or Spears attended their Royal Master to the Field of Cloth of Gold between Guines and Andres, as his Body Guard, and are conspicuous in competing with the Noble Garde du Corps of the French King, a Corps similarly constituted.

In 1526 the Corps is described in the Household Statutes made at Eltham, as complete, and fully officered, the officers being Captain, Lieutenant, Standard Bearer, Clerk of the Cheque,

and Harbinger. About this period the battle axe was introduced, and the Corps began to do duty on foot in the Court, as well as on horseback in the Field, using the battle axe for chamber service, and the spear when mounted.

In 1539, on the ceremonial of the Reception of the Princess Ann of Cleves, when her Royal Highness was received with great state by the King and his suite on Blackheath, at the foot of Shooters' Hill, the Gentlemen Pensioners are again very conspicuous. Her Royal Highness was accommodated in a rich pavilion till the King and his train arrived, who was accompanied by the Corporation of London, Knights, and Esquires. Holinshed, the historian, states that the King was attended by the fifty Gentlemen Pensioners, and that behind them stood the serving men (the Constills) in good order, well horsed and apparelled, so that, as the old chronicler has it,

“Who so euer had well viewed them might haue said that they for tall and comelie personages, and cleane of lim and bodie, were able to

give the greatest Prince in Christendome a mortall breakfast, if he had beene the King'semie."

"In this order rode the King till he came to the last end of the ranke of the Pensioners, and there euerie person that came with him placed himselfe on the one side or the other, the King standing in the midst."

In this manner the interview took place, after which the Pensioners, with the Guard, departed to furnish the Hall at Greenwich. Here again the Band was on duty when the King and his intended Queen arrived there, for "below the hearth in the Hall were placed the Yeomen of the Guard, and above the hearth the fifty Pensioners, with their battle axes." The Band thus served as a Royal Body Guard to the King on horseback in the Field, and immediately afterwards on foot in the Hall at the Palace at Greenwich.

Soon after this the following Order was issued by His Majesty to grant the Band the liberty of Quarterly Waiting :—

The Order.

“Whereas it hath pleased the King's Majesty, at the special sute of Anthony Browne, Knighte and Captaine of His Majesty's Gentlemen Penconers, to graunte and enlarge His Highnes' said Penconers to the libtie of Quarter-Waiters, by the cheque as is in an Article before mentioned, so that continually th'one half of them shall be attendaunt without any excuse of sickness or otherwise, but that he or they that shall fortune to be sicke, or have any other lett within his said Quarter, shall, for the time of his absence, fynde one of his Companye that shall be oute of his Quarter, to waite upon the King's Majesty, and to furnishe his place, or ells to be in daunger of the check, and the other halfe, for the meane tyme of their half yere, so by the quarter to be taken att their libertye.

“Item. The whole Band of the said Gentlemen Penconers, at the fouer principall Feasts of the yere, that is to saye, Christmas, Ester, Whit-