

THE FRAMPTON VOLUNTEERS

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On April 30th, 1798, a resolution was passed by the residents of Frampton-on-Severn, headed by their squire, Nathaniel Winchcombe, (who later changed his name to Clifford) to form a Corps of Loyal Volunteers to fight in defence of their country up to a radius of 8 miles from Frampton "but not more". This resolution is one of the collection of documents belonging to the archives of the Clifford family in the Gloucestershire Records Office. Why these parishioners came to form a Volunteer Corps and how they went about it provides an interesting light on the defence arrangements of the time, more particularly because this Corps was a small one, lacking the urgency and resources of those formed on the South Coast and in London, where the threat of invasion was more likely.

The resolution of April 30th 1798 stated that the Corps expected the Government to supply muskets and bayonets, while they themselves would supply uniforms and whatever else they needed. Attached to it is a list of the 110 names of the Volunteers, mainly Winchcombe's tenants, not all of whom came from Frampton itself; the remainder came from Eastington, Stonehouse, Whitminster and Arlingham. There were 48 farmers, 8 clothiers, 6 tailors, 5 butchers, 3 shopkeepers, 3 innkeepers, 3 cordwainers, 2 pig-killers, 2 wheelwrights, 2 surgeons, 2 schoolmasters, 2 clerks, 2 maltsters, 2 cabinet-makers, 2 gardeners, 2 chandlers, 2 carpenters and one each of the following: miller, chapman, carrier, glazier, builder, pig-dealer, farmer's son, bricklayer, accountant, cooper and mercer.

The next day, Winchcombe eagerly wrote to the Earl of Berkeley reporting the proposal to start a Corps "for the preservation of internal tranquillity and the maintenance of a proper policing in a very populous country within 8 miles". On May 4th Berkeley replied telling him to go ahead and simply apply to the Secretary of War for equipment. The tone of the letter implies that setting up of a Corps was straightforward and easy.

Local rivalry was soon forthcoming, for in a letter to the Earl of Berkeley on May 20th, Winchcombe anxiously pressed him to help speed up the commissions, so that they would get them gazetted at the same time as those of the Stroud Volunteers. "I will frankly confess to your Lordship that I shall be sorry to have the intended Corps disappointed or mortified, which must be the case if they are not soon to have the opportunity to show the pains they have taken to qualify themselves for military duty". But such pleading did not succeed and their officers were not gazetted until after their rivals. A full list of the commissions was printed in the Gloucester Journal for June 18th 1798. These commissions clearly illustrate points in the 1794 and 1798 Parliamentary Acts about Volunteer officers not being able to assume commissions in the regular army and the Corps not being under military discipline.

Sometimes there were delays in obtaining commissions and then the Volunteer Corps found need to have a regular agent in London to press their claims. W. Tustin who lived in Fludyer St., Whitehall acted as agent for

both the Frampton and Stroud Corps and was invaluable when tackling the problems of equipment or pay.

On July 18th 1798, when the Corps strength had reached 120, the Articles of their Association were drawn up. Nathaniel Winchcombe was listed as Captain, Henry Hicks, a clothier, as 1st Lieutenant, William Fryer, a farmer, as 2nd Lieutenant, Edward Gardner, a malster, as Ensign, the local vicar as Chaplain and Treasurer, J. Earle, as surgeon and Dr. Marshall as Adjutant. As allowed by the Government, they drew up disciplinary rules, which imposed fines for drunkenness, swearing, inattention, failing to turn up, and not looking after their equipment. The fines varied according to the rank of the offender and severity of the misdemeanor. Swearing was fined 5/- for officers, 2/6 for non-commissioned officers and 1/- for the rest. Failing to answer the call to active service was £50 for officers, £30 for non-commissioned officers and £20 for the rest. The fine money was to be used to buy drums and fifes and to clothe the drummer.

While negotiations about the supply of arms were in progress, the all important question of designing and purchasing uniforms was proceeding. The Order Book of the Corps lists the uniform as a round hat with cockade and scarlet feather, scarlet jacket faced with blue, lined and edged with white, blue turnbacks; white waistcoat and breeches, gilt buttons with "F.V." surmounted by a crown, white cotton stockings, black velvet hose and half gaiters made of black cloth. Late in 1798 the deliveries were made from London despite the drunkenness of a carrier who lost the sashes.

Naturally the arming of the Corps was of major importance and considerable correspondence was involved in securing their supplies from the Ordnance Office. On June 4th 1798, Winchcombe first wrote to Tustin for his help and on June 7th Tustin replied telling Winchcombe that Lord Berkeley had asked the Board of Ordnance to issue 60 firelocks and that he would send them in 10 - 14 days time. A week later he wrote again saying that no ammunition would be granted until the Corps was "perfectly disciplined to use it". However the Frampton Corps finally received their arms on June 22nd. An explanation as to why equipment for only 60 men was sent was given in a letter by Lord Berkeley, which said that the number available for Gloucestershire was limited, but that 60 would do until the Corps was up to its 100 mark. The shortage was a problem to Winchcombe and he succeeded in acquiring 20 muskets from the Royal Gloucester Infantry on August 4th. Four days later the pikes were issued to the sergeants and drums and fifes to those concerned.

The first time the guns were fired was 6 rounds to celebrate Nelson's victory on October 24th, 1798. On November 5th Winchcombe asking for a cartridge allowance for a 100 men to be sent immediately promised "I shall take care that it shall not be wantonly or improperly expended". The outstanding arms and ammunition were despatched from the Tower and received in December 1798. The ammunition consisted of 2,000 blanks, 600 musket balls and 200 flints. This allowance shows just how much practice was

permitted in a year: namely 20 blanks and 6 shots per man. It is recorded that on May 29th 1799 they fired these 6 rounds and on June 11th a letter arrived from the Ordnance Office saying that these had had their annual allowance until December 1799. Just what would have happened in the event of an invasion is obscure! The possibility of local rioting seemed a good enough excuse to prompt Winchcombe into writing to the Board of Ordnance on June 21st to explain their shortage and therefore inability to check local rioting if it did occur. "No man can be more unwilling than I am to make an improper application so that I feel greatly mortified at the appearance of having done so." He went on to say that he had bought a lot of powder at his own expense long before the Government had made an allowance. Furthermore their Colour's Presentation ceremony was to be held in a fortnight and they had to fire several rounds then. After that there was bound to be an inspection which would require a considerable amount. The result was that their annual allowance was forwarded immediately. Unfortunately rain prevented a celebration round being fired at the Colour's ceremony, but on October 16th they fired 13 rounds "extremely well" when the Captain of the Hereford Volunteers inspected them.

The formation of the Corps' band was considered one of the necessities of military activity. The uniform of the 19 men involved was exactly the same as the rest of the Corps except that their jackets were blue with scarlet facings lined and edged with white, with scarlet turnbacks. John Pearce was appointed bandmaster and he made a report recommending that no time should be lost in the purchasing of instruments "I have it on the best authority that Mr. Cramer manufactures the best Wind Instruments in Europe. Cramer and Milhouses' Clarionets are said to be superior to all others." He stresses that bassoons and clarionets would be usable for concerts and at church and that they would need 4 Clarionets, 2 French Horns, 2 Bassoons and 1 double or base drum. Captain Winchcombe duly noted in the Order Book that he himself had bought some of the instruments and that they must remain his personal property. When the band was completed it contained all the instruments requested by Pearce together with a triangle, 2 octave flutes and the regulation drums and fifes. The base and regulation drums, with the Colours and some swords are in the Regimental Museum, Westgate St., Gloucester, today.

All was not well as far as band practices went, for Pearce and seven others agitated for the dismissal of the horn player, W. Hooper. Hooper was quick to reply saying "I consider myself extremely ill-used by Mr. Pearce.....a person who is ready at any time to substantiate the same, told me Mr. Pearce went to Arlingham on Sunday last and Assembled the performers in a Public House and spent 4d or 5d in their Company and before he left he prevailed upon them to sign a paper he had prepared.....Mr. Wiles (the basson player) told me in the prescence of Mr. Earle that he did not know it was to dismiss me." It seems that Hooper may have been the victim of a trick and he concludes his letter saying that he will not play in the band if Pearce stays in it. As Pearce had already said the same with regard to Hooper, Winchcombe had to act and a Mr. Rider was appointed to replace Hooper, although he in turn was dismissed for failure to attend practices.

Equipped with uniforms, arms, ammunition and a band the Frampton Corps was now ready to design and purchase a banner and to attend to the all important ceremony of the Colour's Presentation. On June 3rd 1799, as the Corps had asked for a Colour, Winchcombe went to London to buy it and agreed that "the expence should not exceed 20 gns". In fact it cost 14 gns. which Winchcombe himself ultimately paid.

Winchcombe's next problem was to find an officer to inspect the Corps on the great day and a Lady to present the Colours. Consequently he wrote to Major Snell of Guiting Grange, Northleach, who accepted the invitation, provided it did not clash with the Assizes, the Sessions or the Oxford races. Writing nearer the date to Lady Mill of Arlingham, Winchcombe informed her of the date of "our Gala" and comments as requested on her proposed speech, saying that he promises "no person shall ever know the honor you have done me by permitting me to see your intended address and much less that you have condescended to ask my opinion of it". However their combined efforts amounted to very little when compared with the magnificent address given by the Countess of Berkeley to the Stroud Volunteers. Winchcombe then wrote to the Stroud Volunteers to "keep the ground" during the ceremony. The Stroud Commanding Officer feared that drunkenness might "tend to confusion", but Winchcombe replied that they should come in uniform but without arms and left them to judge the danger of drunkenness.

Winchcombe described the great day of August 22nd at much length in the Order Book, noting that the marquee and booths were fully stocked for the ladies' and Corps' refreshment. The Frampton Corps was on parade at 10 a.m. promptly and were followed by the Longtree, Bisley and Whitstone Gentlemen and Yeomen Cavalry and the Loyal Stroud Volunteers. The ladies and gentlemen crowded into Mrs. Phillipps' drawing room just before 11 a.m. and with rain falling at noon, Lady Mill and Major and Mrs. Snell arrived. Then the Frampton Corps was formed up in a semi-circle near the steps of the house and the Colours were presented. Lady Mill expressed pleasure in performing the Presentation and trusted that the Corps would live up to its duties and realize the importance of the trust placed in it. The Chaplain then consecrated the Colours, the Corps saluted them and Captain Winchcombe addressed the crowd "My Friends and Fellow Soldiers, Unaccustomed as I am to speak in public....." he went on to praise his Corps for its conduct and drew attention to their motto "Pro Deo, Rege, et Carissimus" and to the "excellent constitution of our country, so admirably calculated to secure the happiness of all persons, who can be happy under any Government".

Unfortunately the rain prevented the planned "manoeuvres", so that the order to dismiss was followed by a rush to the refreshments and the officers sat down to an excellent dinner (Ordinary) with "plenty of good liquors". Winchcombe ends his account in the Order Book by saying "the expences of the day (except the Ordinary) were born solely by me".

Great though the day was, it was soon to be overshadowed by the Stroud ceremony of the Colours at which 800 Volunteers were present and a crowd of

20,000 with them to hear the truly magnificent speech from the Countess of Berkeley.

The intricacies of the various statutes affecting the pay of Volunteers under certain conditions were not easy to follow and this can be seen from the correspondence between Winchcombe and Tustin. On October 5th, 1798, Tustin wrote to him to remind him to forward a signed request for sergeants' and drummers' pay which he would then forward to the War Secretary. The sums involved were:- Sergeant 1s 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d per day for 145 days - £11 6s 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ; drummer, 1s 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d per day for 145 days - £8 6s 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ . Although Winchcombe sent off the certificates, Tustin wrote again on October 22nd warning him that there would be no pay without certificates. In spite of the fact that he did finally receive them, no money was forthcoming because they had both overlooked the Government order of April 30th 1798, which said that pay would be dependent on a Corps' willingness to serve in its Military District. On December 2nd Tustin wrote that the War Office refused to pay up until the Corps would agree to serve.

Captain Winchcombe took care to see that his men claimed their exemption from the Militia, when he warned them of the absolute necessity for regular attendance in order to qualify. In due course he attended the Deputy Lieutenants' meeting in Gloucester and claimed exemption for his men. The claim for exemption from Hair Powder Tax caused some confusion among Volunteer Corps throughout the country with the result that an Act for exemption from Hair Powder Tax was passed indemnifying all those who had omitted to take out the necessary certificates.

In 1803 instructions were issued for the tightening up of inspections of Corps. The copy in the Clifford archives says that the River Severn District is to have one of 24 Inspecting Field Officers to be appointed in England. His function is to inspect the Corps drill and exercises once every 2 months and to report to the General Officer on the numbers present, absentees, state of clothing, horses and equipment and their arms and ammunition security. Each month he is to send the Muster returns to the Assistant Adjutant - General of the district and to the Lord-Lieutenant. His pay is given as 15s per day with forage for 3 horses and he is to hold the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The instructions then go on to give precise details as to the nature of the size of the Corps, its composition and details of payment.

The need to improve the drill of all Volunteer Corps is shown by the Frampton Corps' possession of a booklet entitled "General Orders and Observations on the Movements and Field Exercises for Infantry". Among many points it draws attention to are these "The ordered times of march and length of step to be scrupulously observed, and no others to be taught or practised". Words of execution, such as March, Halt, etc., are to be pronounced short, loud and clear and by no means lengthened out or given in a drawling tone of voice, they may be repeated more than once, if not instantly acted upon". The Commander of a line when giving these commands can make a "motion of the hat or sword" which will "greatly aid him".

By now Winchcombe had changed his name to Clifford and had been appointed Inspector of the Whitstone Hundred. It is in this capacity that his papers contain a collection of letters dated 1803-4 giving lists of horses, carts and waggons available for transport purposes. The list from the parish of Stonehouse says that their horses and waggons can be ready at an hour's notice and that each waggon has a bushel of oats tied on in a strong sack. Clifford was also responsible for putting into effect the War Office circular of 1803 calling for volunteers not in the Volunteer Corps to sign on as special constables because of invasion danger. The replies he received contained the names of 500 people, the largest group of which, 16, came from Frampton. The final mention of the Volunteers in the Clifford Archives is in 1806 when a call for new volunteers is made and they are asked to sign on in the chancel immediately after Divine service.

Other Volunteer Corps in Gloucestershire have a similar history to that of the Frampton Corps, which suggests that Frampton was typical of an inland corps in general and they provide an interesting illustration of how the various Acts and War Office instructions on the Volunteer system called forth and utilized the patriotic feelings of 18th Century countrymen. Self-interest shows through this patriotism both in the securing of exemption of service in the Militia and in the gratification of their social pride in parading before their fellow-parishioners. England has utilized the volunteer principle throughout many centuries of her history and the people of Frampton had probably not forgotten the famous march of the London Train Bands down the tobacco-covered hillside to save Roundhead Gloucester in the Civil War. Similarly Winston Churchill, in championing the Home Guard, was perhaps reviving Pitt's championship of the Volunteer Corps of his day.

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References

Glos. R.O., D149/X19-29

Order book, articles of association, correspondence and other records of the Frampton-on-Severn Volunteers, 1798-1806.