



The Bath Volunteers: Civil Defence against the French, 1779-1815

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Military forces in Georgian Britain took three principal forms: the army, county militias, and local volunteers. The regular Army was designed primarily to fight abroad. Never large in any case by continental standards, it waxed in numbers during wartime, partly bolstered by hired mercenaries, but quickly dwindled when peace returned and many soldiers were discharged into civilian life again. There was never a large permanent military force stationed at home. Freeborn Britons saw national standing armies as expensive, dangerous to civil liberties, and symbols of despotic control. Compared with the Navy, the guardian of our vital overseas trade, the peacetime army enjoyed no great popular support or esteem. Nor were the county militias very popular in times of peace, and for a special reason – the liability of ordinary citizens to serve. First established in the 1660s and raised on a county-by-county basis throughout England and Wales, the militias had the primary job of home defence. From the 1750s every county had the legal obligation to provide a given quota of able-bodied men chosen by parish ballot to serve and train for at least three years. Even though certain categories of citizen were exempt and others who were liable could escape service by paying for a substitute, the element of coercion and the extra burden on parish rates were still resented and it was hard for any Lord-lieutenant to maintain his militia units up to strength when there seemed no danger of foreign attack. In the case of Somerset, after the remodelling of the militia in 1757-8, the quota amounted to 840 men, though during the emergencies of 1778 and 1796 this figure would be doubled and then increased to 2960. Each time Bath had to contribute its share.

The third military force by contrast had no permanent basis or structure. Volunteers, though sanctioned by Parliament, were in effect private defence organisations, usually formed on the initiative of local residents in response to a perceived threat such as the fear of enemy invasion. Auxiliary to, but not subject to the control of, the regular Army or militias, volunteer units – both infantry and cavalry – operated only within their own geographical regions and were officered and manned by ordinary, mostly non-professional citizens in the manner of a home guard. The volunteer movement reached its high point during the wars with France in 1775-83 and 1793-1815, but at Bath it had already been prefaced by two earlier episodes in the 1720s and 1740s.¹

The first private voluntary corps seen here was something of a curiosity, for it came into being not to meet an emergency but rather to express loyalty to the crown. Ever since the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1715, when some at Bath had sympathised with the Old Pretender's cause, the city had been suspected of lukewarm feelings towards the Hanoverian dynasty. The accession and coronation of George II in 1727 offered a chance to silence unhelpful talk of disloyalty for good and the Corporation duly celebrated both events with processions, bell-ringing, bonfires, illuminations, feasting and royal toasts.

fig 1: **A Visit to the Camp.** *Bath in Time* - Bath Central Library.

Seemingly on his own initiative and at his own expense, Thomas Goulding, an ultra-royalist Bath jeweller, took things a step further by forming a ceremonial company of grenadiers that participated in the 1727 processions and in 1728 paraded again during the visit of Princess Amelia, and at the anniversary of the coronation, before finally disbanding. Ready enough to march through the streets and to salute the visiting princess with volleys of musket fire, Goulding's gentlemen volunteers hardly amounted to an effective fighting troop.²

In the same way the volunteer corps that Ralph Allen organised in February 1746 looks like something of a showpiece, especially since by that stage the likelihood of a Jacobite incident at Bath, which was presumably the pretext of its formation, had already passed by with the halting of the Young Pretender's invasion at Derby some weeks earlier. Allen's troop of one hundred volunteers, kitted out in blue and red uniforms, drilling in the Market Place before crowds of onlookers and firing off their muskets at his Dolemeads stoneyard, nevertheless proclaimed his patriot sympathies and acted as a reminder that as a young postmaster in 1715 he had first won his spurs with the Whig establishment in opposing the first Jacobite rebellion. His men remained nominally under arms for another four years, indeed until the thanksgiving in April 1749 that marked the end of the Austrian war, when Allen summoned his troop to Prior Park for the last time to a sermon in the chapel, a convivial dinner, and a valedictory parade with obligatory rounds of musketry. According to his clerk-of-works, Richard Jones, who served as a lieutenant in the company, it had altogether cost Allen some £2000 to organise and maintain.³

The county militia system, so deficient in 1745, was finally reformed in 1757-8 under the exigencies of the Seven Years' War. There was much immediate opposition to the new measures, but by early 1759 when a French invasion loomed closer, Lord Poulett, Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, had managed to enlist an almost full complement of officers and men. One of the three uniformed commanders of the Bath division, who could be seen drilling their band of local recruits in spring 1759, was the architect John Wood the younger. No volunteer companies were formed on this occasion, however, since a Parliamentary Bill to approve them had been rejected. Once peace resumed in 1763, enthusiasm for militia training again evaporated and, despite the penalties and inducements of a further Act in 1769, the system survived only under sufferance.⁴

Revival of the militias and the first major embodiment of volunteers eventually came with the War of American Independence, especially from March 1778 when France, and then in 1779 Spain, openly sided with the American rebels. Until then British opinion had been highly polarised on the question of American Independence, but invasion scares coupled with fears of disorder from radical opposition movements at home led to a countrywide rallying of patriotic support for active defence. At Bath bounties were offered for recruitment into the Army, Navy and the newly strengthened militias, and in August 1779, following an abortive attempt by Sir John Miller to raise a local squadron of light dragoons, a Military Association of Young Gentlemen and Tradesmen – soon renamed the Royal Bath Volunteers or Bath Volunteer Association – began regular drilling at the Tennis Court/Riding School site, north of the Upper Assembly Rooms. Apart from the patriotic urge to defend their homes and community, the volunteers had other motives for joining, from the exemption it gave from militia duty and hair powder tax to simple peer pressure, the camaraderie of the corps, and the glamour of appearing in uniform. Mostly they were drawn from the middling ranks rather than the working class. By October, under the command of a former dragoon officer, Major Arthur Molesworth, they made a brave show in their scarlet coats faced with blue; and though the Corporation declined to help finance

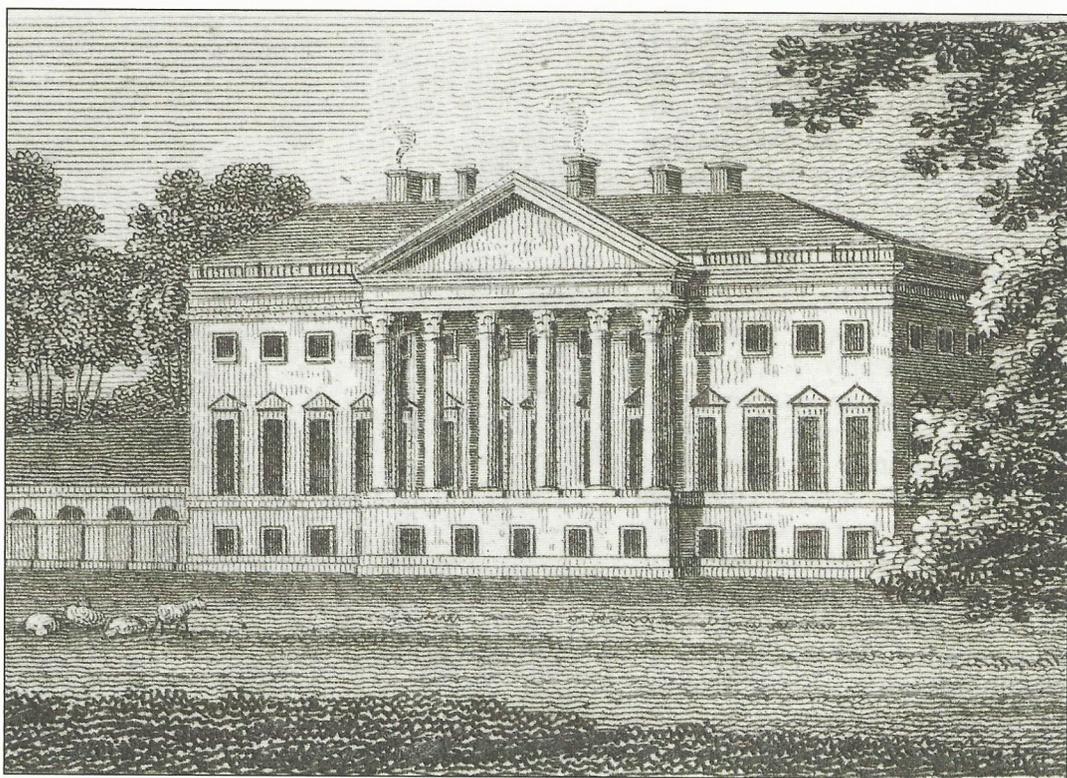


fig 2: Prior Park, c.1800 . *Bath in Time* - Bath Central Library.

a second company of volunteers, the Mayor officially welcomed the original body on the Queen's birthday in January 1780.⁵ One observer mentions them 'drawn up & firing 6 rounds on North Parade... pop, pop, pop' before they marched with fifes and drums to the Guildhall and fired another three volleys.⁶ The authorities were only too grateful for the Bath Volunteers' assistance the following June in helping to quell the Gordon Riots. In the event the Volunteers saved the Roman Catholic chapel from being burned down, facing a shower of missiles from the mob, and afterwards patrolled the streets until army and militia reinforcements arrived from Devizes and Wells.⁷

The Volunteers' parades and drills gave wartime Bath a military air that was reinforced by day-long bell ringing to celebrate news of victories in the field or at sea, as well as by the passage though the city, or the actual billeting there, of army and militia units deployed from elsewhere.⁸ Edmund Rack recorded in late 1779 that 'since the breaking up of the Camps we have had a great number of officers in town, and many regiments passed thro in their way to winter quarters'.⁹ They were not always an impressive spectacle:

300 soldiers came in to day on their march from Leeds to Exeter. They are going to Jamacia [Jamaica], & a miserable corps as ever I saw. They are mostly old men & boys – all drest in white uniforms & their officers mere clodhoppers... They got into the Pump Room & stared about like asses.¹⁰

Following the Gordon Riots, the 2nd Queen's Regiment of Dragoons and the

Hereford Militia (whose contribution to restoring the spa's normal tranquillity had been rewarded with 100 guineas from the Corporation) remained quartered at Bath for some time as a precaution against further disorder. They were succeeded by the Inskillen Dragoons who stayed over the winter of 1780-81.¹¹ Further contingents of troops turned up rather unpredictably at Bath as the war progressed to its conclusion in 1783, but by then the city's Volunteers seem to have disbanded – with a specially designed medal in recognition of their services. They had nevertheless set a precedent for the more perilous conflict ahead.

News of the French Revolution of 1789 was greeted at Bath with some approval, seen as the noble uprising of an oppressed nation against a despotic regime. But as the Terror took hold, as the French royal family were seized and émigrés started arriving at Bath, and as the French revolutionary armies became increasingly belligerent, the mood changed. A wave of radical agitation at home was furthermore alarming Pitt's ministry and provoking a loyalist reaction across the country. At Bath, as in many other places, a Loyalist Association sprang up in late 1792 to combat 'the wild doctrine of equality'. It received widespread support, with hundreds of residents signing their assent at the Guildhall. In the meantime the country prepared for war. It finally broke out in February 1793, causing a credit crisis at Bath and two bank failures. Patriotic feeling rallied to the cause of the British army abroad and to supporting the Somerset militia force at home. Thanks to gifts, subscriptions, and the sewing effort of many Bath women, over the next couple of years the city sent quantities of warm clothing – shirts, flannel waistcoats, gloves, caps, stockings, women's petticoats, children's gowns – to the troops and their camp followers in Flanders. Hannah More and her sisters organised a donation of shoes to the regiment of militia, while another subscription raised funds for the widows and children of fallen soldiers and seamen.¹² Citizens took lessons in broadsword, and a unit of Somerset Light Cavalry, headed by John Strode of Marlborough Buildings, was formed to augment the militia force. Bath being something of a crossroads, there was a constant movement of infantry and cavalry through the city, sometimes stopping only overnight, sometimes stationed for weeks or months – Hereford Militia, Scots Greys, Cameronian Volunteers in their Highlands dress, Royal Irish Rangers, Cornish Light Dragoons, together with other contingents of up to a thousand men at a time. It must have been some such corps that so upset one spa visitor in October 1795 as they held manoeuvres and fired their weapons in a field behind her garden.¹³ Quartering all the officers, men, horses, wagons and equipment threw a great strain on the Bath inns, taverns and stable yards, notwithstanding the national subsistence rate on offer. A protest to the War Office in July 1794 when over twelve hundred Irish Rangers, Cornish Cavalry, Devonshire Militia and others were billeted in the city brought

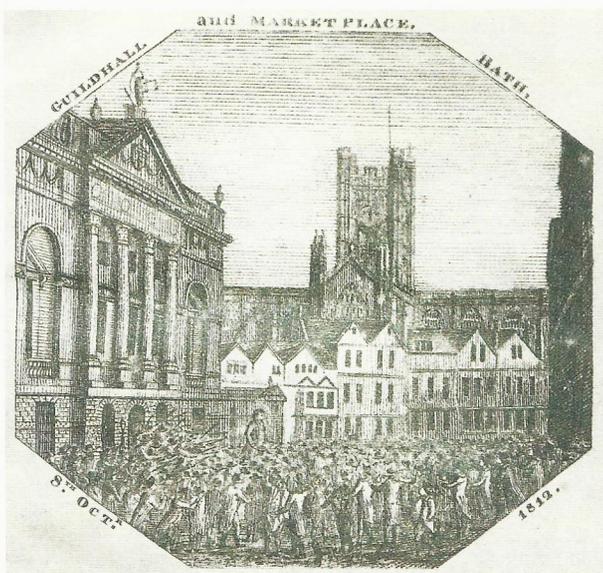


fig 3: Bath Guildhall and Market Place, c.1813.
Bath in Time - Bath Central Library.

an order for some of them to be dispersed to the surrounding villages. Yet in April 1795: so astonished were a number of respectable Tradesmen a few days since at seeing the expences incurred within this twelvemonth by one of our Innkeepers, that they immediately resolved on a voluntary subscription for the general benefit of One Shilling a week, in order to alleviate these burthens, and which they intend to continue during the war.¹⁴

The city's statutory requirement to provide extra militiamen had increased as a result of the Supplementary Militia Act of 1796, but any attempt to raise an actual volunteer force was delayed until the French invasion scare at Fishguard in February 1797 at last persuaded Bath loyalists that 'at the present critical junction of Public Affairs it will be necessary to Arm with the View of protecting our Lives and Properties'. On 27th February a public meeting chaired by the Mayor accordingly resolved to establish a volunteer military association to defend Bath. Officers and men were to serve unpaid under the general jurisdiction of the city magistrates, and would not be deployed 'beyond a moderate Days March from Bath.' They would provide their own uniforms 'as little expensive as possible', but the government must supply arms, ammunition, drums and other equipment.¹⁵ This plan, with the proposed list of officers, needed royal approval. It was duly submitted via the Somerset Lord-Lieutenant but was rejected – perhaps because the risk of giving weapons to groups who might harbour seditious individuals seemed just too great at this time of acute national paranoia about dissident infiltration.¹⁶ Would-be volunteers were therefore kept waiting.

A year later the situation had changed again. Foreign invasion now appeared a greater threat than domestic insurrection. 'The French are still busy in preparing rafts, floating-islands, and row-boats', joked the Bath Chronicle. But it was no joking matter, and Bath citizens responded generously to the call for voluntary contributions to a massive defence fund led by the Corporation which itself made a donation of £1000.¹⁷ In spring 1798 a renewed campaign to form a volunteer home guard succeeded at last. Within a week of the public meeting that sanctioned the proposal, three companies of infantry and a troop of cavalry had come into being, officers selected, and the pattern for uniforms decided on.¹⁸ Edward Dash, master of the Riding School, would help train the cavalry; the firm of Stothert & Pitt announced it could supply flintlock muskets, pistols and swords; Sydney Gardens became a regular parade ground; and a reorganisation in July 1798 brought the three infantry companies under the general command of Colonel John Glover and the cavalry under the Bath wagon-master, Captain John Wiltshire of Shockerwick House. In September some four hundred uniformed Bath Volunteers were sworn in, received their arms and colours, and in October were feasted at the Guildhall by the Corporation.¹⁹ But they were not the only military in town. The Somerset Provisional (Militia) Cavalry stopped at Bath for two months and held field exercises on Claverton Down. A contingent of 350 Ulster Volunteers passed through. At short notice the Mayor had to requisition 22 wagons and other vehicles to transport another band of troops with their baggage and artillery on their way to embarkation for Ireland.²⁰ Meanwhile, following the Defence of the Realm Act, the Bath parishes were interviewing all able-bodied men aged 15 to 60 to provide government with detailed information about the further potential for recruiting. It must have been a relief to be able to celebrate the victorious Battle of the Nile that autumn with a splendid civic illumination and a thanksgiving service at the Abbey Church naturally attended by the Volunteers.

War fever remained at a high level, with patriotic prints displayed in shop

windows, Haydn's Military Symphony performed at concerts, and a show of platoon drills and swordplay staged by dragoons at the Theatre. In June 1799 the Volunteers – in their full name of the Bath Associated Corps of Foot and Horse – were presented with new colours, i.e. two flags created by the Miss Smiths of Argyle Buildings and a fine banner by a Leicester needlewoman. In August they again proved their value to the city authorities by calming a rowdy, drunken troop of militia who had arrived unannounced in coaches and chaises.²¹ The following year, a time of food scarcity and high prices, they were called on three times to help keep the peace – in March to guard the premises of a brewery on the Quay after an arson attack, in May to deal with a band of hungry marauders trying to seize garden produce at Larkhall, and in October to aid the Inniskillen Dragoons (then stationed at Bath) in clearing the streets of Mendip colliers demonstrating against the near famine conditions they were facing.²² All the same, it seems that the Volunteers' strength was well down on the four hundred or so men reported in 1798, since Robbins' Bath Directory of 1800 records that the three infantry units then comprised 16 officers, 18 NCOs, 12 fifiers and drummers, and 187 rank and file, and the cavalry troop a mere three officers, a trumpeter, and 20 privates – a grand total of 233. The appeal that November for more recruits to come forward caused no surprise.²³

Renewed fears of a French invasion in summer 1801 may well have brought an increase in numbers however, and the new policy of high-level military inspections probably also had some effect. In October the Bath Volunteers were reviewed by General Horneck, a seasoned officer of the standing army. Dined after the review by the Volunteer officers at the Sydney Hotel, the General professed himself delighted by the forces they commanded: their 'appearance and performance were extraordinary, perfectly correct, and truly military'.²⁴ Yet it was a bizarre moment, since peace with France was already in the air, and scarcely a week later Bath was luxuriating in a grand celebration for the end of hostilities. The army was already preparing to reduce its establishment, though volunteers and yeomanry cavalry could remain embodied if they so wished. On 12th May 1802 the Bath Volunteer infantry mustered a final time at Sydney Gardens to hear read out the thanks of King and Parliament before they marched to the Guildhall to deposit their colours and weapons. In June the Volunteer cavalry attended the Abbey Church to hand over their own standard, 'there to be preserved till the shouts of war shall again grate harsh thunder on the public ear'. They then joined the disbanded infantry companies in a farewell entertainment at the Guildhall. The cavalry dined together once more in August when their zealous former captain, John Wiltshire, accepted a silver tureen and ladle presented by his grateful troop.²⁵ It sounded very final. In fact it was all very premature.

With the Peace of Amiens many British citizens took the opportunity to visit Paris. Their recent enemy exerted a strong fascination, and at Bath every print-shop displayed pictures of Napoleon, every linen draper sold kerchiefs bearing his face, every puppet show portrayed him mounted on his horse.²⁶ But guarded admiration would soon turn to mockery and revulsion. The peace went sour and in 1803 the two nations were at war once more. In June the government increased county militia quotas and upped the penalties for not meeting the required intake for this 'new army of reserve'. Again parishes had to compile statistics of available men and such resources as wagons and horses. On 18th July Bath resolved to reconstitute its volunteer forces once more, backed by a subscription to enable the less affluent recruits to be equipped – a sign that working-class members were now acceptable.²⁷ Plans were approved for a city regiment of nine companies of infantry, including one of grenadiers, plus a troop of cavalry – with the county division of Bathforum (including Bathwick) furnishing its own separate regiment.²⁸ Though they

would receive no pay for routine parades and drills, volunteers were to be recompensed for obligatory training musters lasting a fortnight or so, or what was called 'permanent duty', on a national scale rising from a shilling a day for an infantry private to over a pound for a cavalry colonel. They were also subject to (non-enforceable) fines for missed parades, improper dress, lost equipment and the like. By contrast, the punishments for desertion, subordination and other offences occasionally meted out to line troops and militia stationed at Bath could be harsh, especially the penalty of lashing which could be fatal.

The Levée-en-Masse Act (1803) that required male citizens aged 17-55 to undertake training in weaponry, might be circumvented if enough local volunteers came forward to serve. This alone encouraged recruitment on top of the genuine patriotic desire to defend the homeland. Speeches and sermons amplified the call to arms, the Theatre Royal performed a new farce, *The National Spirit Roused*, and a set of stanzas in the Bath Chronicle caught the prevailing mood with its repeated refrain: 'Then wield the sword, and load the gun // And hurry to the field, // We'll soon compel the French to run - // JOHN BULL will never yield'. By September 1803 the Bath Volunteers were organised enough to parade before their colonel, John Strode, at their current drill ground of Villa Fields, site of the former Bathwick Villa pleasure garden. Even so they were still not properly armed – a set of pikes was issued as late as October – and not in uniform until December. Their area of duties now extended well beyond Bath to the whole military district, so it was quite proper to order the cavalry troop to escort a batch of French prisoners from Wells to Bristol.²⁹ The county militias by now were liable for draft abroad.

There was less resistance to such wholesale mobilisation in Bath than in some other places, yet not everyone approved. The well-known curate of St James's, Richard Warner, who had already objected to the Volunteers' Sunday manoeuvres, bravely spoke out against the war itself in a fast-day sermon on 25th May 1804, *War Inconsistent with Christianity*, notwithstanding the presence of many uniformed Volunteers in his congregation.³⁰ Among those taking the alternative viewpoint, Dr William Falconer argued the case for self-defence in a pamphlet pointedly dedicated to the Volunteers' commanding officers, Strode and Wiltshire, and their men.³¹ Rather more insidious a threat to military morale than Warner's sermon was the seditious, pro-French propaganda circulated within the very ranks of the Volunteers by one of its own disaffected recruits, a printer called George Wilkinson with links to the banned United Irishmen.³² The Bath Volunteers could ill afford resignations at 'this critical juncture', as a meeting of their cavalry component admitted on 26th March 1804:

RESOLVED, That it is with regret, and some share of indignation, that we find, at a period when the emergency is the greatest, and when we are in daily expectation of an attack from the hostile and inveterate foe of this Country, that some individuals of the Corps have thought proper to withdraw their services, and by their resignation have weakened the strength and exertion of the Corps... [who now] pledge themselves to each other, to let no trivial causes prevent a constant and uniform attendance to their duty, as a means of securing such musters as may prevent the complaint so often heard – that those who rarely attend are materially injurious to the evolutions of the Corps.³³

Morale could be stiffened by competitions, special events, processions and reviews as well as by exhortations. Two prominent citizens, John Palmer (one of the Bath

M.P.s) and Walter Long, awarded annual challenge cups and shooting prizes for the best marksmen in the various companies. A request performance of Henry V at the Theatre Royal attracted a good Volunteer audience, and on the King's birthday in 1804 the Bath and Bathforum regiments themselves put on a spectacular public show of drills and marching before being feasted by their officers. In June the Bath Volunteers did their annual spell of 'permanent duty' at Bristol and were officially inspected and commended four times in all in 1804 – in January on Lansdown, April on Claverton Down, in July on Durdham Down, Bristol, as part of a larger muster, and in October again at Bath. At Durdham Down the Volunteers' own rifle company, formed in late 1803 and armed with the recently introduced (but unreliable) new firearm, the rifle, came in for special praise.³⁴ The reviewing officer in October 1804 was General Banastre Tarleton, a veteran of the American War, who in his pep talk to the assembled troops stressed the importance of discipline and regular drill practice. In May 1805 he was applauded by the Bathforum Volunteers drawn up on Claverton Down, when he reminded them that at that very moment enemy fleets unknown might be lurking off the Irish coast ready to land an army. A week or so later he presided at another grand muster on Durdham Down. This again called out the Bath Volunteers who travelled over to Bristol in special wagons, a large crowd of spectators having risen early to see the troop pass through Queen Square at 3.30am. And there was more public exposure during the presentation of colours to the Bathforum regiment on the King's birthday, when the Bath Volunteers 'kept the ground' by acting as guards. The Bathforum Volunteers were then on their fortnight's 'permanent duty' at the spa, whereas their Bath colleagues were apparently granted leave of duty in 1805 in order to help bring in a bumper harvest.³⁵ In 1804 they had carried out their duty residence at Bristol, as they would in the future.

The years 1804-5 probably marked the peak of volunteer activity. Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar in November 1805 removed at a stroke some of the urgency about civil defence. Actual invasion now appeared unlikely, and volunteer units nationwide found their support ebbing and their numbers in decline.³⁶ If numbers somehow kept up in the Bath region, it was partly because local parishes were paying recruits to come forward, thus evading the wider requirements for training and militia service. Indeed in summer 1807 the Bath and Bathforum corps even grew – 'with all their ranks greatly augmented by fresh recruits'.³⁷ In December the Bath Volunteers' commanding officer, Colonel John Strode, died and was succeeded by their Lieutenant-Colonel, Charles Dumbleton, who had already supervised their autumn manoeuvres, drills and formal inspection, plus an officers' entertainment at the York House hotel 'where the band attended'.³⁸

By the time of the militia ballot of late 1807 Somerset had been ordered to provide another 1167 men and the cost of finding substitutes for those unwillingly balloted had risen. County militia regiments found themselves increasingly likely to be sent to fight abroad, leaving the many ad hoc, self-run associations of volunteers scattered across the kingdom to shoulder more responsibility for internal defence. Given the risks this entailed, an Act of Parliament in 1808 established a new kind of military unit, the permanent local militia, paid for by the state and from a parish rate, and more professional in tone. Existing volunteer bodies were encouraged to disband and join these half-way organisations, but in the event most of the Somerset volunteers elected to preserve their independent identity. The Bath Volunteers went about their usual business of drilling, public parades, inspections, resident duty fortnights, and private celebrations. In September 1808 the officers presented their colonel, Dumbleton, with a gift of silver plate. At the royal Jubilee celebration of October 1809 they marched in the civic procession to a service at the Abbey Church and fired off a *feu de joie* in Crescent Field. In May 1810 they aided the Lancashire Militia, then quartered at Bath, in recapturing the ringleaders of a mutinous band of West Mendip Local Militia

and then guarded the subsequent court-martial on Claverton Down. The Corporation's general gratitude to its home defence force was acknowledged by handsome gifts of silver cups to Dumbleton and Wiltshire, commanders of the foot and horse, in October 1810.³⁹

The end of the Bath Volunteers was now in sight. One of their last public acts was to help disperse the somewhat riotous crowds gathered in the Marketplace in October 1812 when the political reformer John Allen tried to contest a Bath Parliamentary election.⁴⁰ Six months later Lord Sidmouth, speaking for the government, informed the remaining contingents of Somerset volunteers that the formation of permanent local militia regiments had made them redundant. They had been allowed four years of grace since the new local militia became effective and the country was of course grateful for all their past services, but they must now disband. On 29th March 1813 the Bath companies therefore

assembled one more time, deposited their weapons and equipment at the Guildhall, heard a spirited farewell address from Colonel Dumbleton, and departed with money for each man to toast the King and Prince Regent. The officers rounded off their military service with a farewell dinner.⁴¹ Fifteen months later Bath went wild when the mails arrived confirming the seeming end of the war, celebrated with a grand illumination and a *fête champêtre* on Claverton Down. Again it was premature. The 'hundred days' and Waterloo were still to come.

Only the rifle and cavalry companies had survived the Volunteers' cull. Increased to two companies in 1815, the Bath Volunteer Rifle Corps lasted until 1826 – but re-formed in Victorian guise in 1859. The Volunteer cavalry merged briefly with the North Somerset Yeomanry in 1814, then regained its autonomy – confident enough in 1815 to offer to escort the captured arch-foe Napoleon should he be passing through Somerset on his way to London.⁴² To the civil authorities its main use lay in crowd control, though this might on occasion be carried too far. John Wiltshire, respected commander of the Bath cavalry, called out to a riot at Radstock even faced a murder trial in April 1815 for shooting dead a collier.⁴³ Both Rifle Corps and Volunteer Cavalry took part in the operation to police the provocative open-air meeting held by the radical reformer Henry Hunt in Orange Grove in January 1817. Their presence alongside a squadron of the 23rd Lancers and the several yeomanry cavalry units summoned specially to Bath prevented any violence but was evidence to Hunt that Britain still suffered a military despotism. It was of course only two years before the massacre of Peterloo.⁴⁴ In the end the Bath Volunteers had never confronted the French, but they did sometimes square up to their fellow-citizens.



fig 4: **Rev Richard Warner.** *Bath in Time*
- Bath Central Library.

Notes

1. For the wider picture see Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement, 1794-1815* (Oxford, 2003); Alexandra Franklin and Mark Philip, *Napoleon and the Invasion of Britain* (Oxford, 2003); Roger Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: the Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* (London, 2013).
2. *An Essay against Too Much Reading...* [by Thomas Goulding] (London, 1728); *Gloucester Journal*, 24th Oct. and 7th Nov. 1727, 23rd April, 4th June and 24th Sept. 1728; *Farley's Bristol Newspaper*, 11th Nov. 1727 and 1st June 1728.
3. *Bath Journal*, 3rd/6th Feb. 1745, 21st Apr., 14th July and 6th Oct. 1746, 1st May 1749; 'The Life of Richard Jones' (Bath Central Library, MS B926), p.25.
4. J.R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1965), pp. 150-2, 197ff, 217; *Bath Advertiser* 21st Apr. and 5th May 1759.
5. Molesworth himself acquired the tennis court in 1780, so he had a personal interest.
6. W.G. Fisher, *The History of Somerset Yeomanry, Volunteer and Territorial Units* (Taunton, 1924), p.77; Bath Council Minutes, 27th Oct 1779; *Bath Chronicle*, 29th July, 19th Aug, 2nd, 9th and 16th Sep., 2nd Dec. 1779 and 18th Jan. 1780; Edmund Rack, 'A Disultory Journal of Events &c at Bath' (Bath Central Library, MS.1111) 18th Jan. 1780.
7. *Bath Chronicle*, 15th June and 20th July 1780.
8. During celebrations muskets were sometimes discharged from the Abbey Church roof – *The Journal of Samuel Curwen*, Loyalist, ed. A. Oliver. 2v. (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), v.2, pp.596-7, 29th Feb. 1780.
9. Edmund Rack, 30th Dec. 1779.
10. Edmund Rack, 21st March 1780.
11. *Bath Chronicle*, 22nd June, 6th July and 30th Nov. 1780.
12. *Bath Chronicle*, 24th Apr. and 22nd May 1794.
13. *The Girlhood of Maria Josepha Holroyd.... 1776 to 1796*, ed. J.H. Adeane (London, 1896), S.M. Holroyd to M.J. Holroyd, 25th Oct 1795.
14. *Bath Herald*, 12th and 19th July 1794 and 25th April 1795. Parliament voted an increased subsistence rate a few weeks later. Individual householders were exempt from billeting thanks to an exception clause in the Mutiny Acts. Earlier in the century it is said that Richard Nash's influence protected Bath from billeting orders - Alexander Sutherland, *Attempts to Revive Ancient Medical Doctrines* (London, 1763), p.128.
15. *Armed Volunteer Association Committee Minutes 1792-7* (Bath Record Office), 23rd 27th and 28th Feb., 2nd March 1797.
16. W.G. Fisher, p.67.
17. *Bath Chronicle*, 22nd Feb., 5th April 1798.
18. *Bath Chronicle*, 26th Apr., 3rd May 1798. The 3rd May issue gives two different accounts of the uniform – either scarlet coat trimmed with black plus blue pantaloons or blue coat trimmed with red plus white pantaloons.
19. *Bath Chronicle*, 3rd and 10th May, 16th Aug., 6th and 13th Sep., 4th and 11th Oct. 1798; W.G. Fisher p.67.
20. *Bath Chronicle*, 2nd, 9th and 16th Aug., 6th Sep., 11th and 25th Oct. 1798.
21. *Bath Chronicle*, 6th June and 15th Aug. 1799.
22. *Bath Chronicle*, 13th March, 15th May and 23rd Oct. 1800.
23. *Bath Chronicle*, 6th Nov. 1800.

24. *Bath Chronicle*, 8th Oct 1801.
25. *Bath Chronicle*, 13th May, 17th June and 19th Aug 1802.
26. Hester Lynch Thrale, *Autobiography, Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi*, ed. A Hayward. 2nd ed. 2v. (London, 1861), v.2 p.259, letter dated 3td Feb 1802.
27. *Bath Chronicle*, 11th Aug. 1803 and 13th Sep. 1804 – when poorer volunteers were provided with the standard knapsacks.
28. *Bath Chronicle*, 21st and 28th July, 4th and 11th Aug, 1st and 15th Sep. 1803.
29. *Bath Chronicle*, 29th Sep, 6th, 13th and 20th, Oct, 8th Dec 1803.
30. St James', Bath, '*Parish Accounts, Vestry Meetings... Minutes*' (transcript, Bath Central Library), 22nd Dec. 1803.
31. *A Remonstrance Addressed to the Rev. Richard Warner...* [by William Falconer] (Bath, 1804).
32. Steve Poole, 'Radicalism, loyalism and the 'reign of terror' in Bath, 1792-1804', *Bath History* v.3, 1990, p.129.
33. *Bath Chronicle*, 29th March 1804.
34. *Bath Chronicle*, 12th Jan., 23rd Feb., 19th Apr., 21st and 28th June, 5th and 12th July, 6th Oct 1804.
35. *Bath Chronicle*, 6th Oct 1804, 30th May, 6th Jun, 22nd Aug 1805; *The Diary of Abigail Gawthorn of Nottingham, 1751-1810*, ed. A.Henstock (Thoroton Soc. Record Soc. v.33, Nottingham, 1980), 1st June 1805.
36. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1996), p.322.
37. *Bath Chronicle*, 9th Apr. and 11th June 1807.
38. *Bath Chronicle*, 8th Oct 1807.
39. *Bath Chronicle*, 8th Sep. 1808, 26th Oct. 1809, 4th 25th Oct 1810; W.G.Fisher, pp.58-9.
40. *Bath Chronicle*, 15th Oct. 1812.
41. *Bath Chronicle*, 25th Mar., 1st and 8th Apr. 1813. The band had also performed at the pleasure gardens. The bands of other military units sometimes gave public performances, e.g. the well-known band of the Leintrim Militia before an Assembly Rooms concert – *Bath Chronicle*, 3rd Dec 1812.
42. W.G.Fisher, pp.38-9.
43. W.G.Fisher, p.58; *Bath Chronicle*, 6th Apr. 1815. At Taunton Assizes Wiltshire claimed his pistol had gone off accidentally and he was acquitted.
44. *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette*, Jan 8th 1817; *Bath Chronicle*, 9th Jan. 1817; *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq., Written by Himself*. 3v. (London, 1820-2) v.3, pp.406-8.