

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MILITIA LISTS FOR 1759: A SOCIAL ANALYSIS

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The effective creation of the so-called 'New' Militia owed much to an increased fear of French invasion during the summer of 1759 which forced Pitt's ministry to take more active steps in ensuring progress in raising Militiamen under the Act of 1758, a process which had suffered from the distinct lack of enthusiasm for accepting commissions amongst many county gentry. A bill passed by friends of the Militia in November 1759 compelled Lord Lieutenants to hold meetings to seek offers of commission in order to complete establishments, resulting in renewed vigour in most counties where Militia activity had languished.¹

Under the Militia Acts each county was required to submit an annual return of men between the ages of 18 and 50 (45 from 1762) eligible to serve in the Militia to the Privy Council which would fix a county quota so that each county theoretically contributed the same proportion of its able bodied males. A general meeting convened by the Lord Lieutenant would order chief constables to produce hundredal lists, a task effected in turn by parish constables, and would then proportionally fix hundredal quotas. A series of subdivision meetings within the hundreds, having heard appeals against inclusion in the list and notified the results to the general meeting, would apportion parish quotas and organise the ballot to fill them. The process could be both cumbersome and expensive, particularly in urban areas where those balloted might easily abscond,² but, in fact, it was within the means of large numbers of those balloted to avoid serving at all either through the payment of a £10 fine or by providing a substitute willing to serve. The advantage of providing a substitute lay in the exemption of the balloted man from being drawn during the three years service (two years for men over 35 years of age) of the substitute and thereafter until his turn came again by rotation, whereas payment of the fine resulted in a man being automatically appointed to serve the following year. There was a wide range of total exemptions including such persons as articled clerks, clergymen, apprentices, poor men with three children born in wedlock, and a balloted man might also be able to plead physical disability or unfitness. In some cases a parish might find volunteers to fill its quota and, as a last resort, a man might join an 'insurance club' in which subscriptions were either used to hire substitutes for members drawn or returned if no member of the club was drawn. Thus it can be seen that the proportion of men balloted who actually served ('principals') was small with no man forced so to do unless he was willing for some individual economic or domestic reason or unless he was unable to afford one of the common methods of avoiding service.

In such circumstances it might be expected that the ranks of the Militia would be filled with the lowest orders of mid-eighteenth century society. In his monumental

1, J. R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue* (London 1965), p. 140-61.
2, *Ibid.* p. 277-85.

TABLE 1 Ashendon Hundred (Quota 55 men)

	DRAWN	FOUND SUBSTITUTES	PRINCIPALS	SUBSTITUTES
FARMERS				
Farmer's Son	3	3		
Yeoman	6	5	1	
TRADESMEN				
Butcher	1	1		
Hog Dealer	1	1		
Tailor	3	3		
Victualler	1		1	
CRAFTSMEN				
Carpenter	1	1		
Cordwainer	1	1		1
Needle maker	1	1		
Perukemaker	1		1	
Weaver	1	1		
Wheelwright	1		1	
SERVANTS				
Dairyman	1	1		
Grazier	1		1	
Husbandman	1		1	1
Servant	21	7	14	7
LABOURERS				
Labourer	8	1	5	14
NO TRADE GIVEN	—	—	—	2
TOTAL	53	28	25	25

TABLE 2 Buckingham Hundred 23 August 1759 (Quota 52 men)

	DRAWN	FOUND SUBSTITUTES	PRINCIPALS	VOLUNTEERS	SUBSTITUTES
FARMERS					
Farmer	1	1			
Yeoman	1	1			
TRADESMEN					
Butcher	1	1			
Tailor	1		1		1
CRAFTSMEN					
Blacksmith	2	2			1
Carpenter	1	1			2
Collarmaker	1		1		1
Cordwainer	1	1			
Parchmentmaker	1	1			1
Shoemaker	1	1			2
Weaver	1	1			
Wheelwright	1		1		
SERVANTS					
Dairyman	4	3	1		
Gardener					1
Grazier	1	1			
Groom to Lord Temple					1
Hostler	1		1		
Servant	8	4	4		8
Shepherd	2	1	1		
LABOURERS					
Journeyman					1
Labourer	14	9	5	4	6
NO TRADE GIVEN	1		1		3
TOTAL	44	28	16	4	28

TABLE 3 Newport Hundred 26 August 1759 (Quota 100 men)

	DRAWN	FOUND SUBSTITUTES	PRINCIPALS	SUBSTITUTES
FARMERS				
Farmer	4	4		
TRADESMEN				
Baker	1	1		1
Butcher	1	1		1
Fellmonger (skin dealer)				1
Innkeeper	1	1		
Tailor	1	1		2
Victualler	2	2		
CRAFTSMEN				
Breechesmaker				1
Carpenter				1
Blacksmith	1		1	
Matmaker	1	1		1
Shoemaker	1	1		1
Wickerman	1	1		
SERVANTS				
Haymaker				1
Servant	6	2	4	6
LABOURERS				
Labourer	14	9	5	6
NO TRADE GIVEN	4	1	3	2
TOTAL	38	25	13	24

TABLE 4 Cottesloe Hundred 25 September 1759 (Quota 72 men)

	ENROLLED
TRADESMEN	
Baker	2
Barber	2
Butcher	2
Malster	1
Tailor	4
CRAFTSMEN	
Blacksmith	1
Brazier	1
Cordwainer	4
Currier	1
Gunsmith	1
Joiner	1
Painter	1
Flaxdresser	1
SERVANTS	
Drover	1
Keeper to Duke of Bridgewater	1
Ratcatcher	1
Servant	8
LABOURERS	
Labourer	40
TOTAL	73

TABLE 5 Desborough Hundred 27 July 1759 (Quota 71 men)

	DRAWN
FARMERS	
Farmer	2
TRADESMEN	
Butcher	2
Chapman	1
Higler	1
Innholder	1
Lace Buyer	1
Publican	1
Shopkeeper	1
Victualler	1
MISCELLANEOUS	
Fisherman	1
Bargemaster	1
Bargeman	3
CRAFTSMEN	
Blacksmith	1
Carpenter	2
Cordwainer	2
Currier	1
Hoopshaver	1
Lathrender	1
Papermaker	6
Perukemaker	1
Painter	1
Sawyer	1
Staymaker	1
Wheelwright	3
SERVANTS	
Gardener	1
Husbandman	2
Servant	11
LABOURERS	
Labourer	20
TOTAL	71

TABLE 6 Aylesbury Hundred (Quota 82 men)

	DRAWN	FOUND SUBSTITUTES	SUBSTITUTES
TRADESMEN			
Barber			1
Malster			1
CRAFTSMEN			
Collarmaker	1	1	
Cordwainer			1
Hempdresser			1
SERVANTS			
Dairyman			1
Servant			1
LABOURERS			
Labourers			5
NO TRADE GIVEN			9
TOTAL	1	1	20

TABLE 7 Stoke Hundred 25 August 1759 (Quota 49)

	PRINCIPALS	SUBSTITUTES
TRADESMEN		
Butcher		1
Tailor		1
CRAFTSMEN		
Blacksmith		1
Carpenter		3
Cordwainer		1
Flaxdresser		1
Gunsmith		1
Marble polisher		1
Papermaker		1
Sawyer		1
Turner		1
SERVANTS		
Servant		1
LABOURERS		
Labourer		16
NO TRADE GIVEN	6	
TOTAL	6	30

TABLE 8 Social Analysis of Militiamen known to have served (Total Sample)

	PRINCIPALS	VOLUNTEERS	SUBSTITUTES	COTTESLOE HUNDRED
Farmers	1			
Tradesmen	2		10	11
Craftsmen	5		25	11
Servants	27		28	11
Labourers	15	4	48	40
TOTAL	50	4	111	73

TABLE 9 Social Analysis of Men Drawn who provided Substitutes for the Hundreds of Ashendon, Buckingham and Newport

	DRAWN	FOUND SUBSTITUTES
Farmers	15	14
Tradesmen	14	12
Craftsmen	19	14
Servants	46	19
Labourers	36	21
TOTAL	130	80

TABLE 10 Social Analysis of 238 Bucks Militiamen, 1759

Farmers	1
Tradesmen	23
Craftsmen	41
Servants	66
Labourers	107
TOTAL	238

work on the eighteenth-century Militia, the late Professor Western reasoned from the little evidence available to him that most principals and substitutes were likely to have been manual workers of one kind or another. Although some references hinted at social composition he was able to consult only three detailed lists of Militiamen's occupations, all of which related to various subdivisions of Northamptonshire and dated 1763, 1766 and 1787.³ Extant Militia lists from this early period which provide full details of men's occupations are therefore of considerable interest, and fortunately, lists survive for seven of the eight hundreds of Buckinghamshire for the year 1759. The lists are to be found in the Bodleian Library amongst the papers of Sir Francis Dashwood, Baron Le Despencer and Colonel of the Buckinghamshire Militia in 1759. Dashwood* was closely associated with the drafting of an abortive Militia bill in 1746 and his biographer, Miss Betty Kemp, has shown the similarity between Dashwood's original idea and the bill, eventually passed in 1757 although the scale of Militia established was considerably less than Dashwood had envisaged in his earlier draft.⁴ Miss Kemp's appendix on Dashwood's Militia connections was based on the papers preserved in the Bodleian but the Militia lists in the same collection have gone unremarked.

The Buckinghamshire county quota was 560 men, a figure maintained without alteration until 1796 despite considerable variations in the numbers returned as eligible. In 1776, for example, a total of 10,838 men was returned, a figure which had fallen to 9,622 in 1782 and risen to 10,152 by 1785.⁵ No exact figures of effectives survive for 1759 but an abstract from the returns of May 1762 preserved in the Huntingdon Library may well give a close indication, since it is preserved with the quotas for both 1759 and 1762 as follows⁶:-

Effectives, 1762	Hundredal Quota 1759	Hundredal Quota 1762
Ashendon 1046	55	55
Aylesbury 1610	82	84
Buckingham 919	52	49
Burnham 1514	79	79
Cottesloe 1309	72	69
Desborough 1447	71	76
Newport 1867	100	98
Stoke 995	49	50

The hundredal quotas were settled by the general meeting held under the chairmanship of the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Temple, at Aylesbury on 12 July 1759, the parish quotas being reported to a second general meeting on 1 September. The County regiment was to be formed in ten companies of approximately 60 men each with Dashwood as Colonel, William Drake of Shardeloes as Lieutenant Colonel and

3. *Ibid.*, p. 255-64, 271-2.

4. Betty Kemp, *Sir Francis Dashwood: An Eighteenth Century Independent* (London 1967), p. 25-7, 188-92.

* Dashwood (1708-1781) held the posts of Treasurer of the Chamber 1761-2, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1762-3, Keeper of the Wardrobe 1763-5 and Joint Postmaster General 1766-81. He is best remembered, however for his connection with the 'brotherhood' of Medmenham, the myths surrounding which owed much to his Militia subordinate, Wilkes. When Wilkes' patron, Earl Temple, was dismissed as Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire in May 1763, Dashwood replaced him.

5. Bucks R.O. Lieutenancy L/P 1. Minutes of General Lieutenancy Meetings, 1759-1831.

6. Huntingdon Library. Stowe Mss L7H1. Misc. Papers, 1762-1845.

George Carter as Major. The Captains were Charles Chester, Sambroke Freeman, George Grenville, Matthew Knapp, Charles Lowndes, William Lowndes and John Wilkes, later to be dismissed as Lieutenant Colonel in 1763.⁷ The Militia lists themselves record the results of the ballots held at subdivision meetings in each hundred, these normally being convened at venues such as the Red Lion at Wycombe, the Cock at Wing, the Griffin at Amersham, the Crown at Chilton, the White Hart at Aylesbury, the Cock at Stony Stratford, the Cobham Arms at Buckingham and the Crown at Colnbrook.⁸

Lists exist for seven of the eight hundreds, that of Burnham being missing and those of Aylesbury and Stoke clearly incomplete. The information is best shown in tabular form but in order to impose some degree of social classification it is necessary to outline a broad definition of the social divisions assumed. Of necessity, this is based upon the concept of social status utilised by contemporaries rather than upon any form of 'class' concept, which would be inappropriate for pre-industrial English society.⁹ It should be noted that this concept of status is not necessarily dependent upon economic factors and there might be little practical difference between one group or another economically but considerable differences in terms of contemporary status. The 'middling sort' of people is taken here to include farmers and tradesmen, a term utilised for shopkeepers of all types, butchers, bakers, victuallers and other dealers. The labouring groups are here sub-divided between craftsmen, servants and outright labourers. Craftsmen or artisans are taken to include all those using their hands in basic skills, for example, cabinet makers, carpenters, cordwainers and blacksmiths. Servants in contemporary terms were those living as part of the farmer's household and included with them are other agricultural workers whose occupations might be similarly secured on a longterm basis such as gardeners, shepherds and dairymen. In comparison to servants, who were generally hired on an annual basis, labourers were hired on a short term basis and as casual labour did not enjoy the same degree of security as the servant. In each of the accompanying tables all occupations are given in full to indicate the way in which the broad classification outlined above has been utilised, where percentages are given they have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

The three most useful lists are those for the hundreds of Ashendon, Buckingham and Newport. That for Ashendon (table 1) is undated but gives a total of 78 men of whom 53 were drawn to serve in the Militia. Of these 53 a total of 28 found substitutes although details of only 25 of the substitutes are given. The occupations of a total of 76 men are given and the list further indicates that 3 men had paid a £10 fine to be exempted and a further 3 had been given more time to find substitutes.¹⁰ The Buckingham list (table 2) is dated 23 August 1759 and gives a total of 76 names with 71 occupations including 28 substitutes and 4 volunteers.¹¹ The Newport list (table 3) is dated 26 August 1759 and records 62 names including 24 substitutes. The occupations of 34 of the men drawn and 22 of those engaged as substitutes are known.¹²

7. For Wilkes and the Bucks Militia see W. J. Smith (ed), *The Grenville Papers* (London 1852) Vols 1, II passim.

8. Bucks R.O. L/P 1.

9. For a discussion of the beginning of 'class' in English society see Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London 1969).

10. Bodleian Library. Dashwood Mss D.D. B8 2/23a.

11. Ibid. B8 2/25.

12. Ibid. B82/19a.

The list also shows that 14 of the 38 men drawn and 16 of the 24 substitutes could not sign their own name which confirms the tendency towards illiteracy amongst principals and substitutes observed by Western in later examples.

The list for the hundreds of Cottesloe and Desborough are not as useful in that they fail to give as much detail as those listed above. That of Cottesloe (table 4) is dated 25 September 1759 but gives the occupations of those actually enrolled without making clear any distinction between those serving as principals and those serving as substitutes. A total of 73 men are listed and a note gives the additional information that two of those enrolled (a baker and a labourer) had since enlisted in the Regular Army compelling those for whom they served (a farmer and a labourer) to find others. The labourer had refused to be sworn and had been fined £10 for exemption when he failed to produce another substitute.¹³ The Desborough list (table 5) is dated 27 July 1759 but records only the names of 71 men drawn before any had secured substitutes, a fact indicated by the presence on the list of 2 farmers who on the evidence of other lists would almost certainly have done so.¹⁴

The remaining lists for the hundreds of Aylesbury and Stoke are incomplete. That of Aylesbury (table 6) is undated and records the names of 20 substitutes of whom 11 had no occupation entered for them.¹⁵ The Stoke list (table 7) is dated 25 August 1759 naming only 30 substitutes and 6 men who were serving as principals although no details of their occupations are given. A note indicates that 2 men drawn were ill and 7 had run away to avoid service.¹⁶ The occupations listed for the Buckinghamshire hundreds show no particular concentration of trades in any one area with the exception of the list for Desborough which includes 6 papermakers, a bargemaster and 3 bargemen. This trend is borne out by a further undated list for Desborough to be found amongst the papers of Sir John Dashwood-King (1766-1849) but similar to the others and almost certainly dating from the same period.¹⁷ This lists 79 men although it does not indicate whether they are those drawn or actually enrolled. It includes craftsmen, which may indicate that it is a list of those drawn, of whom 4 are papermakers, and it also lists 6 bargemen drawn mainly from Marlow. This might be taken to indicate the relative importance of the paper industry around High Wycombe and of river traffic around Marlow but the remainder of the lists only confirm that Buckinghamshire was predominantly agricultural in 1759.¹⁸

Excluding those drawn for Desborough, who may or may not have subsequently found substitutes, it is possible to construct a social analysis of 238 men known to have served in the Buckinghamshire Militia of 1759 representing roughly 42% of the total county quota of 560. These 238 men comprise 50 principals, 4 volunteers, 111 substitutes and 73 men enrolled for Cottesloe (table 8). The proportion of principals to substitutes is in every respect similar to the trend observed by Western for later in the

13. *Ibid.* B8 2/22.

14. *Ibid.* B8 2/21.

15. *Ibid.* B8 2/23a.

16. *Ibid.* B8 2/20.

17. *Ibid.* F2 3/1.

18. Had the full parish returns of effectives survived, it would have been possible to give the same sort of occupational census of a majority of the county's male population between 18 and 45 years of age as in the case of the published 1777 returns for Northamptonshire which, although showing the predominance of agricultural occupations, indicate the importance of weaving and framework knitting and shoemaking in the county. The Buckinghamshire lists are, however, more useful in showing who actually served in the Militia at a given time. Cf. V. A. Hatley, *Northamptonshire Militia Lists, 1777* (Northants Record Society 1973), esp p. xiv-xxiv.

century.¹⁹ Of the 50 principals whose occupations are known, it is not surprising that 30% were labourers and 54% servants since these were the social groups least likely to be able to avoid service. Similarly, the 111 substitutes show the same preponderance of servants (24%) and labourers (43%) since it may be assumed that these groups were also those most attracted by the relative security of paid military service despite its apparent disadvantages. By comparison the proportion of those avoiding service from the figure available for the hundreds of Ashendon, Buckingham and Newport (table 9) shows the higher proportion of farmers (17%), craftsmen (17%) and tradesmen (15%) although it can be noted that substantial numbers of servants and labourers also found the means to escape the ballot. When groups are considered individually it can be seen that 93% farmers drawn, 86% of tradesmen drawn and 74% of craftsmen drawn found substitutes as compared to only 58% of labourers and 41% servants. As a whole just over 61% of those drawn provided substitutes. An analysis of the 238 known Militiamen as a whole (table 10) shows that the largest groups comprised labourers (45%) and servants (28%) with craftsmen (17%) and tradesmen (10%) much less significant. It can be therefore be concluded from the evidence of these Buckinghamshire Militia lists that in an agricultural community it was the lower orders of society who, through choice or destitution, would most likely bear the burden of the Militia ballot.²⁰

19. Western, *op cit*, p. 256/7.

20. The author gratefully acknowledges his thanks to the following for permission to quote from mss in their possession: Sir Francis Dashwood, Bt.; the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; the Buckinghamshire Record Office.