

TheGenealogist launches the largest collection of Early Militia Musters

For the first time you can search early militia musters for all of England and Wales. The collection includes over 58,000 rare records of these part-time soldiers for 1781 and 1782. This is the largest number of surviving records available for this era.

This joins the largest collection of Army Lists available online establishing TheGenealogist as a major military research site.

The militia men were offered a bounty to transfer to the regular army and some did decide on a regular military career. If you're struggling to find out how your ancestor started their military career, the answer could be in the militia records!

In the troubled times of the 1700s, Britain faced a threat from the European powers of France, Spain and Holland at various times. All 'able-bodied' men were considered for the militia and put on a 'militia ballot list'. The chosen men then were required to meet or 'muster' at points for training. Four musters were taken over the time covered by the new records on TheGenealogist.

The records cover people from all walks of life who made up the officers and men, from M.P.'s to landowners, from carpenters to labourers, if they were physically up to it, they could be selected for the militia!

Regiments covered all of England and Wales and are represented in the new records. The records are from The National Archives series WO13 and feature the 'muster and pay lists' of all members of the militias. Men received 'Marching Money' when the militia was mobilised and were paid expenses for local meetings.

The new militia lists can further help track the movements and lives of our ancestors before census and civil registration times. In an easy to search format, it's possible to search for an ancestor to see if they served in any of the militia regiments of England and Wales. Search by name and any relevant keyword, or use the advanced search to narrow it down to 'Corps' , 'Company' or the actual 'Rank' of the soldier.

Mark Bayley at TheGenealogist comments: "These unique records really enhance our online military collection. Not all our ancestors served in the regular army and the part-time local militias were an essential part of the national defence, as was seen in the 'Battle of Jersey' at the time, when the local militia fought admirably against the French and Dutch".



In our example, we see Private Stephen Anchor of the Kent East Militia. The detailed records on TheGenealogist tell us he was present at all four musters, when he changed companies and who his commanding officers were and when he was promoted to Corporal. The location of the musters is also listed, in this case ranging from the towns of Stevenage to Hitchin to Romford and Warley Camp. We discover how long the regiments were gathered for at a particular location. The muster documents had to be formally signed by a respected official, in the instance here by John Hesse, a Justice of the Peace at Westminster.

An example of a 'Militia Muster'

Military » Militia Musters » Full	
Forename	Stephen
Surname	Anchor
Corps	Kent East
Company	Capt Papillon
Rank	Private
Reference	WO 13/1056
Muster 1	Present
Muster 2	Transferred To Col Sawbridge
Muster 3	Change of Rank (Cpl), Transferred To Maj Hammond
Muster 4	Change of Rank (Cpl), Transferred To Maj Hammond
Corps & Muster Details	<p>There were six Companies of Kent East Militia commanded by the following:</p> <p>Colonel John SAWBRIDGE Lt Colonel Narb? D'AETH Major William HAMMOND Captain Edward DERING Captain Thomas PAPILLON Captain John VANNER</p> <p>Captain Dering resigned 24 Apr 1782 and Lieutenant Johnson MACAREE of Colonel Sawbridge's Company was promoted to take charge of his Company.</p> <p>Some men transferred between Companies and this was clearly stated on the documents; others seem to have been discharged from one Company only to reappear as enlisting in another. Most of these have been identified and the second entry eliminated but there are a few that cannot be positively identified, either because the name is too common or because there were two potential candidates, so in those cases the second entry has been left. A small number of men disappeared from the Muster with no indication of their fate. In these cases, there is an X in the Muster column.</p> <p>In this document there are records of four Musters:</p> <p>1) All Companies met at Warley Camp on 16 August 1781 and recorded service from 25 December 1780 to 24 June 1781. All Musters were signed by Theodore Maurice, Commissary Musters and John Hesse JP at Westminster.</p> <p>2) All Companies met at Romford on 01 April 1782 and recorded service from 25 June to 24 December 1781. All Musters were signed by Theodore Maurice, Commissary Musters, David Turner, Constable and John Barwick at Waltham Abbey.</p> <p>3) All Companies met at Danbury Camp on 13 August 1782 and recorded service from 25 December 1781 to 24 June 1782. All Musters were signed by Theodore Maurice, Commissary Musters and John Hesse JP at Westminster.</p> <p>4) This Muster was held at Hitchin and at Stevenage on 10 February 1783 and recorded service from 25 June to 24 December 1782.</p> <p>Colonel Sawbridge's, Captain Papillon's and Captain Vanner's Companies met at Hitchin. Lt Colonel D'Aeth's, Major Hammond's and Captain Macaree's Companies met at Stevenage.</p> <p>All Musters were signed by Theodore Maurice, Commissary Musters and R Bayley, Mayor of St Albans. Colonel Sawbridge's, Captain Papillon's and Captain Vanner's Musters were signed by Thomas Swann, Constable. Lt Colonel D'Aeth's, Major Hammond's and Captain Macaree's Musters were signed by Thomas Crow, Constable.</p>

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More details on the new Militia Records are available. For more information on TheGenealogist, including a more extensive case study, please contact us.