The Martock Volunteers 1798-1802



uring the Napoleonic Wars, there was a real fear that France would invade England with invasion fleets in French ports, kept at bay by the blockades of the Royal Navy. In the late 18th Century, many volunteer militia units were formed (or re-formed in some counties) to help with local defence to meet this threat.

Thomas Potenger, Esq. to be Captain.
John Potenger Westcote, Esq. to be Captain.
George Lilly, Gent. to be Lieutenant.
William Adams, Gent. to be Lieutenant.

Martock was part of this patriotic surge and, no doubt, this knowledge would have terrified the French invaders. Martock formed two companies of volunteers. Officers were appointed from the local merchants and landholders in the Government Gazette of 1798 and set about the task of building up an efficient force.

In the National Archives at Kew are pay sheets for the Martock and Langport Companies from 1799-1802 (PRO WO 13/4535). Tucked in to the pay sheets

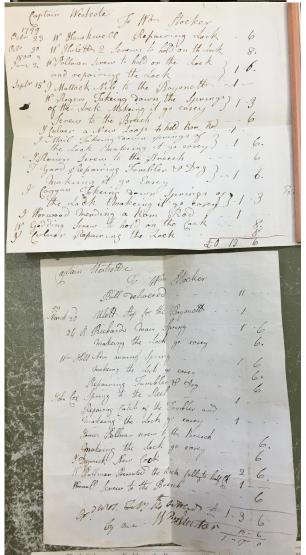
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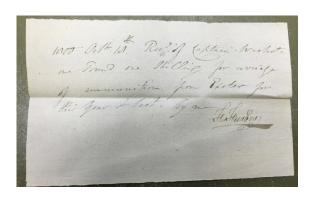
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for 1800 are some loose pieces of paper invoicing the Company Commander – Captain Westcote – for repairs and adjustments to the volunteers' weapons, the rent of land for training and for the cartage of ammunition from Exeter to Martock for the year.





Captain John Westcote commanded this company and had, as his second in command, Lieutenant William Adams. The other company was commanded by Captain Thomas Potenger with Lieutenant George Lilly as his second in command. Those interested in Martock history will recognise many of the names on the nominal roll of the company.

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Recently a Crewkerne auction firm offered two silver award medals from this time. The one pictured above has the Royal cypher and the words "Martock Volunteers" around the outside. The reverse of the medal shows it was awarded to Hugh Culliford in 1800 for rifle shooting.

Prepared by Noel Adams.