

The History of the Jersey Militia

In the early 1900s some historians tried to date the foundation of the island militia to the end of the Roman period in the fourth century AD: however, it was probably a rather more unorganised creature altogether - the *levée en mass* which was raised in time of danger to protect property and controlled by local leaders. The first real record of a militia type body came in 1337 when, Thomas de Ferrers, the Warden of the Isles was ordered by the King to reorganise all men of the island capable of bearing arms and to form them into companies of 1000s, 100, and 20s.

During the Wars of the Roses the island was occupied by the French between 1461 and 1468. They were eventually defeated by an English army assisted by the Seigneur of St Ouen, Philippe de Carteret. In recognition of their services the St Ouennais were given the pride of place whenever the militia was drawn up - the right flank.

In 1545 the foundations of the modern Militia were created with the formation of 12 parochial bands with a captain in charge. In 1678 Sir Thomas Morgan decided to remodel the Militia and scarlet tunics were introduced as a form of uniform and from 1681 the Governor, Sir John Lanier, was given the power to appoint Militia officers. By the time James II became king in 1685, the Jersey Militia was made up of three red-coated regiments and a troop of horse who were all armed and equipped by the British Government. By 1730 the Militia had increased to 5 regiments with 6 battalions - the men were drawn from specific parishes:

1st regiment - St Ouen, St Mary and St John

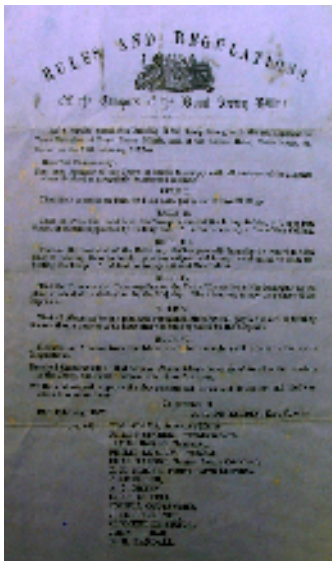
2nd regiment - Trinity and St Martin

3rd regiment - St Saviour, Grouville and St Clement

4th regiment - St Helier, St Lawrence (2 battalions)

5th regiment - St Peter and St Brelade.

Because of the belief that it was a man's sacred duty to defend his country the church was seen as the place for the storage of the artillery.



The 6th January 1781 saw the Jersey Militia together with the 95th and 78th regiments engaged in a major conflict under the leadership of Major Francis Pierson, against French forces led by Baron de Rullecourt. The pictured document (**L/F/97/M2/36**) written by Colonel Mathieu Gosset serves as an example from around this period to illustrate the rules that were set in place for all the Militia regiments. Dated 05/04/1793 it relates to basic rules for soldiers in the St Lawrence Battalion.

The period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars that followed saw the militia in a virtual constant state of readiness. After the failure of the Peace of Amiens and the recommencement of hostilities with France in 1803 there was an attempt to place the Militia under Martial Law, which was opposed by islanders. The final peace in 1815 was greeted with relief by the majority of islanders.

However, ever vigilant, the state of the militia had to be maintained and in May 1825 Military Vingtenier's for the Militia were introduced in each parish and in 1831 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Jersey, the Jersey Militia became known as the Royal Jersey Militia.

Change followed throughout the nineteenth century with the building of regimental arsenals beginning in 1844 which meant the cannon and powder were removed from the churches, whilst in the 1850s and 1860s many of the regiments were given new colours. The highest accolade was awarded the militia in 1881 when they were granted permission to inscribe the battle honour 'Jersey, 1781' upon their colours.



Islanders who served in the Militia were often rewarded for long service. The above postcard (**L/F/08/G1/4**) shows a presentation of long service medals taking place in the Royal Square for militia soldiers.

At 5pm, 29th July 1914, the Lieutenant Governor issued the order for the Militia to be mobilised in defence of the island and to take their places at all the island's fortifications. The postcard shown below (**L/F/08/G1/32**) illustrates soldiers from the Militia packing up camp at Fort Regent. As the Great War dragged on the Compulsory Military Service Act of 1917 was introduced in Jersey and this resulted in demobilisation of the militia but the formation of the Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion to defend the island.



Militia Form - 50

The Royal Militia of the Island of Jersey.
Five years' Service.

550809 **ATTESTATION OF**
No. 188 Name *Stanley Charles Perchard*

Questions to be put before Enrolment

1. What is your full name and postal address? *Stanley Charles Perchard, 17, Avenue St. Helier.*

2. What is the date of your birth? *27.4.1911*

3. Are you willing to be enrolled for service in the Royal Militia of the Island of Jersey for the term of 5 years? *Yes*

4. Are you a British subject? *Yes*

5. Nationality of parents at date of birth. *Both born British*

Stanley Charles Perchard do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the obligations made, in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Militia Law of 1929.

Stanley Charles Perchard SIGNATURE
19th May 1930

WITNESSES TO BE TAKEN BY SUBJECT OF ATTESTATION

Stanley Charles Perchard I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Empire against all enemies, according to the conditions of my service.

Stanley Charles Perchard SIGNATURE
19th May 1930

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER

Jersey I, *Col. H. G. Dyer*, do hereby certify that, in my presence, all the foregoing Questions were put to the Enrollee above named, that the Enrollee solemnly affirmed that he was ready to give to me, and that he has made and signed the Declaration, and taken the oath as above.

H. G. Dyer COMMANDING OFFICER

The situation reverted to normal once hostilities ceased in early 1919. However, times had changed and a New Militia Law passed by the States of Jersey in 1929 made militia service voluntary and reduced its strength to just 260 volunteers. Part of the enrolment in the Militia also involved completion of Attestation Forms for each man. An example of one of these forms (left) can be seen. It is the form of Stanley Charles Perchard completed in 1930 (L/F/M22/433). When the threat of war arose once again in 1939 the Militia were once more mobilized. A Pay and Mess Roll for the Royal Militia detailing the rank

and name of the soldier, as well as things like gross pay and rations, from this period can be seen below (L/F/97/M14/1). The mobilisation of the Militia for the defence of Jersey however was to be short lived, for on the 18th /19th June of that year the Island was demilitarised. Nevertheless, Colonel Vatcher gained permission from the Lieutenant Governor to take the force to England. The 11 officers and 193 men of the Royal Jersey Militia went on to form the nucleus of the 11th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment.

UNIT *1st Coy. Royal Jersey Militia* Pay and Mess Roll for the account period from *1st July 1939* to *31st July 1939* 1939

Serial	Name	Rank	Rate	Pay	Mess	Other	Total	Remarks
1	<i>Stanley Charles Perchard</i>	<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>
2	<i>Stanley Charles Perchard</i>	<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>
3	<i>Stanley Charles Perchard</i>	<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>
4	<i>Stanley Charles Perchard</i>	<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>
5	<i>Stanley Charles Perchard</i>	<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>23.0</i>

Following the end of the Second World War it was felt that there was no longer a place in modern warfare for a militia battalion and so in February 1946 the War Office contacted the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Edward Grasett, advising him to disband the unit.

The colours were eventually laid up on the 10th January 1954 in the Town Church. In 1987 the Territorial Army Field Squadron was formed and it was agreed that the name '*Royal Militia Island of Jersey*' could be used, which continues into the present day. Equally, re-enactment societies like the '*1781 Jersey Militia*' group help to keep alive the memory of the island's militia during those key moments in Jersey's history.

In order to learn more about Jersey's Militia, visit or contact Jersey Archive:

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Clarence Road
St Helier
Jersey
JE2 4JY

Tel: +44 (0)1534 833300

Jersey Archive is open to the public on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only (late night last Thursday in month and third Saturday of month). Further details are available from our website.

<http://www.jerseyheritage.org/>