



Devon Family History Society
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MILITIA RELIEF OF FAMILIES

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The county militia was a voluntary force for home defence, distinct from the regular army, although some militiamen did go on to join the army later. Men could choose to enlist in the militia, but usually they were conscripted by ballot, with a certain number of men from each parish being required to serve. If a man was balloted but did not wish to serve, he could pay someone else to take his place. This person was known as a 'substitute'. Usually the substitute was a labourer or someone in a similar, low-paid, job who would be willing to accept a payment in return for giving up his time to serve in the militia. A diligent private in the militia could be promoted to the rank of drummer, then corporal and finally serjeant, while the higher ranks were open only to gentlemen who could pay for their commissions. In peace time, the militiamen would remain at home, only spending a few weeks every year away in camp, training. In war time, the men could be sent to any part of the country, although they were not expected to serve overseas. Once a militia substitute was serving away from home, his family was left with little or no income and so the parish overseers of the poor would support them, recovering their expenses from the County Treasurer.

This document is an account of money paid by the County Treasurer for the families of substitutes who were serving as non-commissioned officers or drummers in one of the Devon militias. It lists the names of the men, states if they have a wife and gives the number of their children. It also names the parish where the family lives, the length of time the family was paid and the amount of money they were given.